

Joseph L. McCourt Middle School
Cumberland, RI 02864
Servicing students in grades 6-8

Mission Statement:

Joseph L. McCourt Middle School (JLMMS) is committed to providing an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust between teachers and students. Teachers will engage in best practices to provide all students with meaningful learning experiences. These experiences will ensure appreciation of one's individuality, as well as a passion for all students to become life-long learners and productive members of society.

Vision Statement:

We believe in:

- exemplifying cooperation, determination, responsibility, respect and pride
- fostering a safe, nurturing environment
- embracing different learning styles
- supporting academic, social and emotional needs
- creating curricula that is relevant, exploratory and challenging
- collaboration to form family and community partnerships

Who We Are:

At Joseph L. McCourt Middle School, we (faculty, staff and administration) believe that all students can reach their academic potential. We have a multitude of instructional resources available that not only address the core instruction in the classroom, but also target intervention and enrichment as well. The enrichment mindset means fostering intellectual curiosity, emotional engagement, and social bonding. We make clear curriculum choices that meet our students' needs on their continuum of learning. The faculty and staff demonstrate great care for our students' and their needs. The curriculum that we have adopted and implemented is coherent and standards-based. We regularly assess our students formatively and summatively providing them with both informal and formal feedback. One of the most important strengths of Joseph L. McCourt Middle School is the ability to make decisions that are in the best interest of supporting ALL students. We utilize a collaborative decision making process that allows for a collective sense of expertise in the building, as well as a sense of accountability to one another. We are a learning community which embraces one another's diverse background. We operate as an orderly climate that has a strong ability to collect, build, and make decisions utilizing student performance data. We place a high importance on reading skills and build our intervention model around research-based best practices.

that place reading first. We believe that all skills, no matter what the content area is, build off of a student's ability to read well.

Standards of Practice 2014-2017

Central office

- One of the most important partnerships that school leaders can establish with the district office personnel is to leverage support for their individual school needs. Central Leadership team members from Central office have read and approved the standards of practice, and have pledged to provide support for the unique needs of Joseph L. McCourt Middle School. Support is defined as resources, personnel, autonomy, and shared responsibility for the needs of the learning community at JLMMS.

School Administration

- The work that we (faculty, staff and administration) complete each day at JLMMS tends to be more heuristic. Current research regarding best practice in heuristic work calls for experimentation. Because there is no algorithm (single path to a solution) to complete the work, the JLMMS learning community will work tirelessly to devise novel solutions to heuristic problems/work.
- Routine day-to-day tasks completed by all staff will come with direction
- Non-routine tasks completed by all staff will depend on self-direction and will have autonomy. Individuals experience more drive and greater motivation when they are able to have creative autonomy. By allowing staff members the ability to be autonomous, they have the opportunity to pursue mastery and communicate how their daily duties relate to a larger purpose.
- All stakeholders (students, faculty, staff and administration) at JLMMS will complete all work to the best of their abilities. When the performing and completing of the work is the reward, the learning experience deepens. All work at JLMMS will be performed at optimal levels, resulting in deep learning and ensuring success for all stakeholders
- All faculty and staff work includes rationale as to why the requested work is important or necessary. In addition, all faculty and staff will be provided with meaningful feedback about their completed work.
- Feedback will focus on the specifics of the work completed. Positive feedback will focus on the effort put forth. The more that the feedback given is about one's effort and strategy, rather than about achieving a particular outcome, the more

effective it is. Current research on best practices show that adults have three innate psychological needs: competence, autonomy, and relatedness. When those needs are satisfied, adults are motivated, productive and happy. By agreeing to these standards of practice, all stakeholders at JLMMS will move closer to achieving a productive and purposeful learning environment.

- We understand that intrinsic motivation emerges when people have autonomy over the four T's: task, time, technique, and team. Additionally, people strive to achieve autonomy over four aspects of work: what people do, when they do it, how they do it and with whom they do it. All efforts will be made by the school administration to provide autonomy over the four T's in order for them to achieve autonomy over the four aspects of work. As professionals (faculty, staff and administration), we know that encouraging autonomy does not mean discouraging accountability. We (faculty, staff and administration) presume that people want to be accountable. By combining autonomy with accountability, we ensure that we (faculty, staff and administration) have control over our tasks, time, technique and our team.
- The school administration will allow faculty/staff to take risks and try new strategies to address school wide/classroom issues. Research on best practices in schools that are high poverty/high performing support this approach.

School Wide

- By reviewing data, we (faculty, staff and administration) realize that truancy is a concern that needs to be addressed in a proactive manner. We will review our current practices, as well as best practice methodologies to
 - increase attendance
 - improve pedagogy
 - improve climate
 - reduce discipline violations
- Establish programs that help support students struggling with social and emotional needs
- Establish academic coaches for struggling students to help promote a primary and reliable relationship.
- Build strong, long-term relationships with families
- Provide an outreach, or offer opportunities, for families to identify their most critical areas of need in understanding the content that is given to their child.
- Develop community partnerships for support (medical, dental, mental health). Identify the characteristics of our school's demographics, and acknowledge and embrace our population's diversity.

- As educators, we will become knowledgeable about issues related to our school's diversity in the broader society and take action where we can have the most influence in our own school community.
- Recognize the difference between taught skills and hard wired skills by embedding and modeling skills with explicit teaching. As educators, we need to model the behavior we expect students to exhibit
- Use assessments, both summative and formative, to help guide instruction and utilize resources to serve as a healthy part of everyday teaching and learning.
- Work to develop effective partnerships to garner resources from sources external to the school and to become a larger part of the community.

Faculty/Staff

- All faculty/staff will utilize a method of communication (website, calendar in the student information system) to provide information to families, students, community members, and stakeholders.
- Faculty/staff will develop a positive recognition strategies for students that is flexible in nature, but consistently administered.
- Minutes will be recorded and shared with the school administration through Google Forms for teacher meetings (horizontal/vertical CPT during the school day or early release Wednesdays). The school administration will review and support faculty/staff regarding needs that (need) to be addressed through the minutes.
- Special Education department will coordinate with general education teachers/paraprofessionals to work with students who have any incomplete work during academic enrichment.
- Faculty/staff will meet monthly to share best instructional practices that help meet academic standards in their content.
- Faculty/staff will understand how demographics and diversity influences families lives and student learning.
- Faculty/staff will explore and establish community-based learning programs that have successfully demonstrated particular effectiveness for students living in low-income homes and those of other risk factors.
- Faculty/staff will explore schools that offer a blend of before and after school tutoring, weekend and vacation catch up sessions and sheltered classroom support.

References

Jensen, E. (2009). *Teaching with poverty in mind what being poor does to kids' brains and what schools can do about it*. Alexandria, Va.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Parrett, W., & Budge, K. M. (2011). *Turning high-poverty schools into high-performing schools*. Alexandria, Va.: ASCD.

Pink, D. H. (2011). *Drive: the surprising truth about what motivates us*. Daniel H. Pink.. New York: Riverhead.