

**MSAD #11 6-12 Academic Audit: Data Collection
and Analysis Report**

January 17, 2008

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An Open Letter to the Citizens of MSAD 11

In order to carry out MSAD #11's mission of improving the educational experience for all students, the Academic Audit Committee has gathered and reviewed data from Gardiner Regional Middle School and Gardiner Area High School students, teachers, and parents in order to identify positive aspects of the students' educational experiences, as well as, specific areas of concern. Because of this work, together, MSAD 11's School Board, Administrators, Teachers, and Community Members have a unique opportunity to lift the educational experiences and social environment of our schools to levels heretofore not reached.

For the last year and a half, we have been taking an intense inward look at who we are and where we need to go, and have identified three obstacles we face in getting there....

1. **The Academic Experience** – Many of our students do not see our schools as places where the learning experience is consistent or valued, and there are major disconnects between how teachers and students view the classroom experience.
2. **Meaningful and Relevant Learning** – We have far too many students who feel that what our schools offer is not tailored to their abilities and interests and is irrelevant to their future.
3. **Student Safety and Support** – Many of our students go to school every day not feeling as safe as they deserve to be, nor do they always feel recognized for and proud of positive achievements.

All of these problems are undeniable. There is hard data supporting the fact that they exist. These problems are easily measured and we have measured them. The old excuses of being a low income community, with low parent education levels, and a high percentage of special needs kids have all been proven either false or irrelevant. There are no excuses left to hide behind. It is time for us to act, and to act with a sense of urgency. It is very simple – if we focus on and solve these problems, we will take an already good school system and make it great.

We believe these problems should be addressed immediately. The focus should not waver. Many of our teachers and administrators are already overburdened. These problems will be much easier to solve if we can increase parent and community involvement in our schools. When we reach out to you for help, we hope you will be there for us.

We believe that five years from now, our schools won't look a lot different from the outside. Starting today we encourage everyone in MSAD #11 to be committed to creating an educational and social experience inside school walls that will be the envy of every other school district in the state of Maine.

SECTION I- Academic Audit Background

Introduction

In the spring of 2006, the MSAD #11 School Board established a “ 6-12 Academic Audit Committee” (see Acknowledgement on p. 28) to review student performance and educational instruction with the intention of creating a plan of action to do what it takes to improve student academic performance. Frustrated with years of below average performance on standardized tests, all the while knowing that MSAD #11 has the staff talent, student interest and community support necessary to solve the problem, the Board established a 15 member committee of educators, school board members and community representatives to assess the situation and develop solutions to improve academic performance. Concerned about performance in all grades, Pre Kindergarten through 12th grade, but also recognizing the need to prioritize the work, the School Board narrowed the focus for this first effort to grades 6 – 12.

The 6-12 Academic Audit Committee’s Charge

“Through multiple conversations, information gathering, and examinations, review facets of the Gardiner Regional Middle School and Gardiner Area High School learner experiences make recommendations for necessary changes to improve teacher practice, learner experiences, and raise student aspirations and academic achievement.”

Audit Approach

The Academic Audit Committee began their work in the spring of 2006 and met once a month to define the audit process, determine priorities, establish timelines and responsibilities, and to implement the work of the audit. A sub-group of the team including the education consultants from the University of Maine met more frequently to keep the data collection and analysis process moving between team meetings. The audit process followed four stages of focusing the audit by conducting a review of best practices in education, reviewing existing data, designing and implementing additional data collection, and the analysis and synthesis of findings.

While there were 15 members on the official audit team, the audit process was conducted in an open, inclusive, manner, inviting comment, review and participation from all staff at both the Gardiner Regional Middle School and the Gardiner Area High School at each stage of the process.

The work progressed as follows-

Stage 1- Team Reviewed Education Best Practice Manuals and Identified Gaps Between MSAD#11 and Best Practices

The first stage of the work was to review and discuss three books discussing education reform¹. In this stage, the team reviewed the “core education principles or ideals for

¹ The team reviewed the following books discussing best practices in teaching-Promising Futures: A Call to Improve Learning for Maine’s Secondary Students, Breaking Ranks In The Middle: Strategies for Leading Middle Level Reform, Breaking Ranks II: Strategies

successful education experiences” identified in these books describing best practices in education. After reviewing the principles and ideals, the audit team shared their thoughts and experiences on important themes and noted where MSAD #11 differed from the best practices in a “gap analysis”. The audit team prioritized “the ideals for a successful education experience” to focus the work of the audit.

Three “Ideals for Successful Education Experiences” Identified for the MSAD #11 Audit

Highest Priority- for first stage of the audit

1. Learning works best when learners are engaged through multiple and appropriate learning styles and a variety of relevant learning experiences”.
2. Learning works best when learners are free of fear (of failure, of the unknown, of harm, of social ostracism, etc.); when learners feel confident they can learn.
3. Learning works best when it is relevant (connected) to each learner and when it is interdisciplinary and integrated around the learner’s goals and reality.

See Appendix A for the full list of 6 priorities identified by the Audit Team.

Stage 2- Reviewed Existing Data on Academic Performance

In the second stage of the audit, the team identified and reviewed existing academic, student and community data to paint a picture of the school, the students and the community. Once these data were reviewed, discussed and assessed, the group identified needs for additional data collection. The Audit Sub-Committee reviewed the following information and reported it to the larger audit team-

- Attendance rates
- Maine Educational Assessment Test data,
- Scholastic Aptitude Test data,
- MSAD #11 Bullying and Teasing Survey data,
- Maine Youth Drug and Alcohol Use Survey data for MSAD#11
- MSAD #11 Aspirations Survey
- Census Data
- Student Academic Performance Data

Stage 3- Conducted Interviews and Survey with Staff and Students to Understand their Experiences in MSAD #11

In the third stage, the group, under the direction of the smaller Sub-Committee designed and implemented additional data collection including focus group and web-based surveys of both staff and students at the Gardiner Regional Middle School and the Gardiner Area High School. These focus groups and surveys were designed to provide insights into teacher and student experiences with the three priority “ideals for a successful educational experience”. Finally, again under the direction of the Sub-Committee, four parent focus groups were conducted (two middle and two high school parent groups)

for Leading High School Reform

asking parents about both theirs and their student(s)' experiences related to the three priority ideals.

The information gathering included the following-

- Student and staff focus groups at the Gardiner Regional Middle School (20 students in three groups and 16 teachers in three groups)
- Student and staff focus groups at the Gardiner Area High School (18 students in three groups and 20 teachers in three groups)
- Student and staff web-based survey at Gardiner Regional Middle School (416 students and 31 staff members)
- Student and staff web-based survey at Gardiner Area High School (574 students and 46 staff)
- Parent focus groups (approximately 35 parents, though not a representative parent sample, they were involved parents with diverse children)

Stage 4- Analysis of Findings from Review of Existing Information and Data Collections Stages

Finally, the Audit Committee and Sub-Committee spent considerable time reviewing both the existing information and the data collected through the surveys to provide insights into the best practice priorities identified in the first stage.

The Audit Findings

The following sections of the report share the findings from the audit. The findings are presented in two sections; the first section describes the academic performance and student behaviors in the middle and high schools and is based on school records and existing performance data. The second section describes student and staff experiences in the district as reported in the focus groups and surveys. The survey and interview data are organized and analyzed by the three priority ideals for a successful education experience that were established by the audit team in the earliest stage of the audit. The detailed findings from both the existing data and the recent interviews and surveys are included in the Appendices.

SECTION II- The Current Situation at MSAD#11 on Student Performance

MSAD #11 tracks and reports many measures of student performance including test scores, grades, attendance, graduation rates, risky behaviors and other indicators. These measures can be compared to other schools, districts as well as statewide level. As the first step in the audit, the Audit Sub-Committee reviewed the data and compiled a description of the current situation of student performance and student behaviors in MSAD #11. The following reports the highlight of findings and key themes from the review.

Academic Performance at MSAD #11 is Low

For more than 10 years, MSAD #11 has performed below state averages on the state's standardized educational tests, the Maine Educational Assessment (MEA). These tests have been administered to students statewide in grades 4, 8 and 11 to measure and compare school and student educational achievements. This is an important measure, as it is one type of assessment of student mastery of their lessons; it is also used by the state and federal government as a means to determine funding. The MEA's are not the only measure of student performance. Taking a look at student, grades, last year, close to 14% of Gardiner Area High school students failed at least one class, with 9% failing two. High school dropout rates in MSAD #11 are higher than county and state averages and high school completion rates are lower than state average. At Gardiner Regional Middle School 9 students failed to be promoted to the next grade last year and 97(18%) students failed at least one class. Twenty-five eighth grade students were required to attend summer school because they failed two or more classes. (See Appendix B for a year by year comparison of MSAD #11 MEA scores to state averages.)

Poorer Communities and Those with a Greater Proportion of Special Needs Students Out Perform MSAD#11

Comparing MSAD #11 performance on MEAs to other districts, shows that MSAD #11 has consistently lower performance than schools in regions with lower household incomes, as well as, regions and districts with higher proportions of students requiring special services. Communities such as Waterville, Biddeford, Caribou and others not only score higher than MSAD #11, but test scores in those districts exceed the state averages. These findings dispel the myth that somehow, the social and economic characteristics of the four school communities determine academic performance. (See Appendix B)

A Greater Proportion of GAHS Graduates Intend to go to College

While high school completion remains a problem for students, more students that stay in school are showing interest in attending college. For the past 4 years, Gardiner Area High School has implemented a college access program that encourages students to consider college after high school. As part of this program, students visit college campuses both in Maine and New England and learn more about the requirements for college admission. Since the program was implemented, an increasing proportion of high school graduates have reported intentions to attend college after high school. In 2007, 136 of the GAHS graduating seniors reported these academic plans: 57 – 4 year college, 14 – 2 year college, 5 – other, 2 – military. (See Appendix C)

MSAD #11 Students, Like Students in Other Districts, Engage In Risky and Unhealthy Behaviors

Every two years, MSAD #11 students in grades 6- 12 participate in the Maine Youth Drug and Alcohol Survey (MYDAUS) to assess alcohol, tobacco and other drug use among students. The survey also assesses risk factors within and outside the school that may influence risky behavior in both a positive and negative manner. The 2006 results for MSAD #11 are alarming, at the high school, 4 out of every 10 students reported drinking alcohol in the last 30 days, with almost one half of all juniors and seniors reporting drinking. While the high school rates are similar to statewide rates, it is clear that a sizeable population of students is engaging in behavior that not only impacts their achievement in school, but is also jeopardizing their health and safety. Even more alarming are that the rates of previous 30-day alcohol use among middle school students is 16%, higher a higher rate than the state average of 13%. (See Appendix E for detailed findings from the MYDAUS.)

MSAD#11 Students Are More Likely Than Their Peers to Volunteer for Community Service

The MYDAUS survey also tracks behaviors that can help a student succeed in life, one of those measures is the percentage of students participating in community service. MSAD #11 has a very high success rate for engaging students in community service (75%), far surpassing the state averages (60%). In fact, the majority of MSAD #11 students, report participation in community service in the past year. Engagement in service activities exposes students to new experiences and helps them link work to positive outcomes. Simply put, community service helps students feel good about themselves. However, when high school student are asked if they experience rewards for community, family and school service, a smaller proportion of them report positive experiences than their peers statewide. (See Appendix E for detailed findings from the MYDAUS data).

SECTION III- Analysis of Survey and Focus Group Findings

The following section provides a summary of the student and staff survey and focus group findings. The data describe the current experiences at MSAD #11 with the three priority best practice ideals for successful education experiences. Findings are presented to highlight the experiences that are positive and that are working in the district as well as the opportunities for change. In many cases data apply to and support more than one ideal, rather than repeat data in multiple places, the group focused on the most important data to support each ideal. Survey question numbers are indicated in parentheses with a “Q” followed by the survey question number.

Best Practice Priority 1- Learning works best when learners are engaged through multiple appropriate learning styles; learning is multi-modal and relevant to students

Varying Learning Activities- What’s Working

Teachers and students in both the focus groups and the survey strongly agreed that learning works best when students are engaged through multiple learning styles.

- 80% of all teachers at the middle and high school reported student-directed activities as effective. (Q21)
- Focus group findings from both the middle and high school students revealed that students feel that the best lessons include hands on activities, allow students to move around. Specific ideas included games, labs, group projects, and trivia activities.

Varying Learning Activities- The Opportunity

While both students and teachers agree on the benefits of varying instructional activities, they differ widely on perceptions of what is implemented in the classroom. Teachers report that they vary instruction, students do not agree. Both middle and high school teachers lamented the loss of “hands on” classes over recent years. Students complain about too many lectures and worksheets.

- 45% of middle school and 37% of high school students agreed that “teachers give them a variety of things to do” (Q 10) while 95% of teachers, holding a very different opinion, reported exposing students to a variety of learning activities (Q 18).
- Focus group findings of both middle and high school teachers cited the recent cuts in home economics, industrial arts and other hands on programs as a great loss to students who learn by using their hands.
- In the focus groups, the high school students reported that the least interesting activities include- teacher driven, lectures, bookwork, worksheets, endless reviews, and “read this and do the problems” types of instruction.

- In response to the question “one thing students would change about school”, one of the top responses from high school and middle school students was “more hands on work”. (open-ended comments at end of survey)
- In the parent focus groups, parents emphasized teachers, while comfortable with a certain teaching style, need to diversify their approach.

Valuing Education- What’s Working

Most students say they value education and an increasing proportion of them are declaring their intention to go to college.

- Most students at the middle (83%) and high (77%) school students believe “that getting a good education is very important” (Q54).
- In recent years, MSAD 11 had an increase in the proportion of graduating seniors declare intentions to attend college, bringing it up to the state average.

Valuing Education- The Opportunity

While individual students value education, it is not seen as a value shared by their peers. Students in focus groups remarked that their peers did not value education and did not want to be in school, those statements were confirmed by survey findings. In the answers to “what they would change”, students reported that they would change unmotivated students and those disruptive to learning. Teachers also indicate frustration in reaching some students.

- When asked if students agreed that other students felt learning was important, only 16% of high school and 37% of middle school students agreed (Q53).
- 45% of middle school and 54% of high school teachers agree that they can get through to the most difficult and unmotivated students (Q29).

Preparing Students for Learning- What’s Working

Teachers are working to reach students and teach them to be “learners”. The majority of teachers report a belief that student motivations come from within the students themselves. An overwhelming majority of teachers at both the middle school and high school believe that students’ achievement is not necessarily determined by their home life.

- Students at the middle school (73%) and high school (53%) report that teachers encourage them to be involved in their own learning (Q41).
- 71% of middle school and 78% of high school teachers **did not agree** that student motivation depends primarily on the home environment (Q36).

Preparing Students for Learning- The Opportunity

Students’ perceptions of “being prepared” do not meet their teacher’s expectations. Teachers feel that students are unmotivated and disengaged; they are not stepping up to take responsibility for their education. In both middle school and high school teacher focus groups, teachers voiced frustration with student’s lack of motivation, preparedness and engagement.

- At the middle school, 76% of students see themselves as prepared, while only 35% of teachers agree (Q49 and Q25)

- At the high school, 65% of students agree that they are prepared for class, while 28% of the teachers agree(Q49 and Q25)
- In the high school focus groups, teachers reported that their students are not prepared when they show up for class. Some described this as not having the required materials or homework preparation, while others described “not prepared” as not ready to learn and engage in learning. Others mentioned that students did not have the academic background to be successful in high school.

Best Practice Priority 2-Learning works best when learners are free of fear (of failure, of the unknown, of harm, of social ostracism, etc.); when learners feel confident they can learn.

Student Safety- What’s Working

There have been improvements in student perceptions of physical safety at the middle school in recent years. Middle school student reports of bullying have decreased since 2004. According to the audit survey, most students feel safe in their classrooms.

- Bullying survey shows decrease of reports of bullying behaviors in 8 out of 8 locations for middle school
- 81% of middle and 66% of high school students report feeling safe in their classrooms (Q27)

Student Safety- The Opportunity

More students report feeling unsafe at the high school than in previous years and the rates are higher than the state averages. Students voice concern over how students treat each other at the high school, with many indicating that school climate was the one thing they would change at school.

- 25% of high school students report feeling unsafe at school (MYDAUS 2006) compared to 18% statewide²
- In middle school, 52% feel respected even if they have not behaved appropriately and 55% feel they are respected whether they do well in school or not (Q5 and Q25).
- In high school, only 43% feel respected even if they have not behaved appropriately and 40% feel they are respected whether they do well in school or not (Q5 and Q25).
- When asked what they want to change at school, high school students report they want to change “the way students treat each other”. Middle school students called for more discipline and less fooling around in class. (open-ended comments at end of survey)

² These data are from the Maine Youth Alcohol and Drug Use Survey and have comparative state data.

- In the parent focus groups, the concern about teachers' use of sarcastic remarks, or students' perceptions of teachers' words and mannerisms was voiced as reasons for some students feeling unsafe.

Acknowledgement for a “Job Well Done”- What’s Working

Almost every teacher agreed that they encouraged students to do their best, and they agreed that their peers did the same. Students at both the middle school and high school confirmed in the focus groups that they respond positively to teacher encouragement, praise and recognition of a job well done. Teachers mentioned that success, breeds success and when students are set on a path to be successful, it will continue. High school staff agreed that school staff treat each other with respect.

- 100% middle school, 91% in high school teachers agreed that “staff in this school treat each other with respect” (Q43)
- 75% middle school, 72% high school agreed their colleagues encouraged students to do their best (Q35)
- In the focus groups, high school teachers mentioned that student’s relationships with teachers play an important role in building student confidence.

Acknowledgement for a “Job Well Done”- The Opportunity

While students acknowledge the importance of praise and feedback, they consistently report on a variety of measures that they do not feel emotionally safe or respected at school. Students report mixed experiences with feeling comfortable speaking up in class and being given opportunities to speak in class. Moreover, about one out of every two students reports feeling respected, being treated fairly by teachers, and being cared about as a person.

- 47% of middle school and 63% of high school students report feeling comfortable speaking up in class (Q23).
- 56% of middle school students feel they’ve been praised for doing well and 54% report they have been built up more than they’ve been put down (Q8 and 17).
- 52% of high school student agree that they’ve been praised for doing well and 40% believe they’ve been built up rather than put down (Q8 and 17).
- 57% of middle school students and 41% of high school students feel teachers treat them fairly (Q15).

Best Practice Priority 3-Learning works best when it is relevant (connected) to each learner and when it is interdisciplinary and integrated around the learner's goals, interests, and reality.

Adjusting Teaching to Student Learning Styles- What's Working

Teachers report that they adjust their teaching styles to students learning abilities. Students in the focus groups report that when they are grouped with similar students, they perform their best. High school students also ask for a change to group students in class with similar learning styles "to match abilities".

- 97% of middle school and 87% of high school teachers said they adjust their teaching styles to students learning abilities.(Q23)
- In student focus groups, middle school students said they prefer to be in study groups with students of similar interests and abilities and that if all students are grouped together, the teacher teaches to the lowest ability and keeps students back who want to go forward.
- The lower performing middle school students in the focus groups reported that they prefer to be with students of similar learning styles so that they can spend time to learn their lessons and have the opportunity to participate in the class discussions.
- In response to the one thing students would change about school, high school students asked to change how students are grouped and asked to have expectations match abilities. Some thought too little was being asked of them, others thought too much. (open-ended comments at end of survey)

Adjusting Teaching to Student Learning Styles - The Opportunity

Students do not see their lessons as relevant to life after school. They report being bored in class, uninterested, and unmotivated. There is a drop in relevance students see in their coursework as they progress from middle to high school. Some teachers reported that changes in text books and curriculum for the alternative education students made the lessons less relevant.

- 65% of middle school and 44% of high school agreed that the things they are taught help them later in life (Q18).
- 49% of middle school and 33% of high school students see their teachers making connections between lessons and how it relates to life outside school.(Q40)
- Parents felt the schools should organize groups of students according to their aspirations, which would allow students to feel more connected and to not feel so anonymous.

Meeting Individual Student Needs- What's Working

Teachers at the high school feel that there are several recent initiatives that help build student confidence and meet individual needs. Middle school teachers in the focus groups remarked that more students arrive at middle school with a better academic foundation.

- In the focus groups, high school teachers described the academic tutorial, the encouragement for all students to take the honors and Advanced Placement courses at the high school, to name a few.

Meeting Individual Student Needs - The Opportunity

Teachers report that the focus on assessments and common outcomes forces them to provide undifferentiated lessons to students. Time constraints at the middle school are also cited as an impediment. Across the board, teachers find that they need more professional development to be able to provide differentiated instruction in a single class.

- Only 3% of middle school teachers and 20% of high school teachers believe there are sufficient professional development opportunities to improve teaching. (Q26)
- 71% of teachers at the middle school and 48% at the high school see a greater emphasis on management rather than professional teaching issues at faculty meetings.(Q27)
- 48% of middle school teachers and 54% at the high school feel they have adequate resources to make their teaching interesting and relevant to all students.(Q16)
- 39% of middle school teachers and 57% of high school teachers feel that the school's schedule is advantageous in designing learning activities that reach all students' learning styles. (Q5)
- 68% of middle school teachers and 46% at the high school believe that their workload is too big for them to be effective in the classroom. (Q41)

SECTION IV - Recommendations

Together, MSAD #11's teachers, administrators, students, parents and community members have the opportunity to elevate and improve the middle school and high school educational experiences and social environments. The MSAD #11 Audit Committee's intense work has revealed that while many aspects of students' school experiences are on target and positive, there remain areas of concern. These concerns, if not addressed with a sense of urgency, will continue to be obstacles that stand in the way of making learning and teaching experiences better in our district.

Challenge #1 – Educational Coherence

Ensure that the learning experiences of every child are logically connected, developmentally continuous, and supported by uniform policies and conditions.

Many middle and high school students do not see their schools as places where learning experiences are **consistent** and **valued**, and in some cases there are significant **disconnects** between how students and teachers view classroom and school experiences.

How will we get students to...

Experience Learning Consistency?

Ensure that curriculum is developmentally continuous across all grades and that practices focusing on academic achievement, assessment, and grading (including homework and late work policies) is consistent across every classroom and every grade. Ideas include:

- Transition teams (Grades 5 to 6, 8 to 9)
- Interschool professional development/staff meetings, and
- Early intervention to ensure that all students are at least on grade level

Value Education?

Keep students' attention in class with hands-on activities. Ideas include:

- Altering schedules to allow for more creative, hands-on lessons.

Reduce disconnects between students and teachers?

Increase communication. Ideas include:

- Striving for 100% student engagement in classroom discussions/activities
- Formalizing a process for frequent student feedback to teachers and teacher feedback to students.

Challenge #2 - More Diverse Learning Opportunities:

Ensure that every student is engaged on a daily basis, in meaningful, relevant learning that addresses his/her interests, needs, and learning styles. If this can be successfully accomplished, students will have more intrinsic motivation (drive) rather than students who need extrinsic motivation (rewards and penalties).

Many students feel that their learning experiences are not tailored to their **abilities** and **interests**, and have no **relevance** to their future.

How do we tailor education to...

Abilities?

Offer classes with various levels of challenge. Ideas include:

- Grouping students by ability levels or learning styles.

Interests?

Design multiple ways to group students. Ideas include:

- Grouping students by their life/career interests

Relevance?

Link school to life. Ideas include:

- Using the CATC model for all students - a morning of academics followed by an afternoon of study driven by interests, business apprenticeships, and a career-based Speakers Bureau.

Challenge #3 - Safe and Educationally Supportive Climate:

Ensure that every student feels safe, accepted, and educationally supported for her/his entire career at GRMS and GAHS.

Many students go to the middle school and high school every day not feeling as **safe** as they deserve to be, and wanting to be **respected** and **recognized** for their accomplishments.

How do we make students feel...

Safe?

Increase the feeling of a safe environment for all students. Ideas include:

- Taking the Middle School Anti-Bullying Program district-wide.
- Increase supervision at the middle school and high school prior to 7:00 a.m. and after school.

Respected?

Students need to feel respected by adults as well as fellow students. Ideas include:

- A district-wide PK-Adult Code of Conduct with consistent expected behaviors and consequences
- More activities for non-athletes

Recognized?

Recognize students for accomplishments beyond Honor Roll and Athletics. Ideas include:

- Creating a district-wide PK-Adult Code of Honor that will provide tangible rewards for positive behavior.

Using the lenses of **systemic consistency, role and responsibility, and assessment and accountability** will be keys to success in any action plans developed to address the above listed concerns.

The MSAD #11 6-12 Academic Audit Committee recommends that the MSAD #11 School Board, the Gardiner Regional Middle School Faculty, the Gardiner Area High School Faculty, and MSAD #11 Parents and Community Members take immediate steps to improve student experiences.

Appendix A - Six Priority Educational Best Practice Themes Identified for MSAD#11

Highest Priority- for first stage of the audit

1. Learning works best when learners are engaged through multiple and appropriate learning styles and a variety of relevant learning experiences”.
2. Learning works best when learners are free of fear (of failure, of the unknown, of harm, of social ostracism, etc.); when learners feel confident they can learn.
3. Learning works best when it is relevant (connected) to each learner and when it is interdisciplinary and integrated around the learner’s goals and reality.

Second Priority- for future stages of the audit

4. The ideal learner learns how to function well in groups and in all the roles needed in effective teams/groups.
5. Learning works best when learners receive “early, accurate & frequent” feedback on their learning and can use it to frame the next learning tasks.
6. Learning works best when the goals/outcomes, learning tasks, rubrics and assessments are made public and are useful tools for students, parents, and teachers to focus the learning process, as well as products.

Appendix B Analysis of MSAD#11 Maine Educational Assessment Tests (MEAs)

Summary Analysis of Maine Educational Assessment/Scholastic Aptitude Test Scores

4th grade –1999-2003 MSAD#11 scores were 2.8 points below average
2004-2006 MSAD #11 scores were 1.1 points below average (gains, especially in math)

8th grade –1999-2003 MSAD# 11 scores were 3.4 points below average
2004-2006 MSAD#11 scores were 2.7 below average

11th grade-1999-2003 MSAD#11 scores were 2.5 points below average
2004-2006 MSAD#11 scores were 3.0 below average

Between 4th and 8th grade a typical student's reading and science MEAs scores decline, while math scores improve. A typical student's writing score improves between 8th and 11th grade.

Household/Family Income Impacts on Maine Educational Assessment Scores

MSAD #11 is above the state average in household income and in the middle of the Kennebec County towns in household income (12 poorer communities, 12 richer communities). The poorest town in Kennebec County, Waterville, has scored above state average on the Maine Educational Assessment Test the last 3 years (average of +2 2003 to 2005).

Parent Education Achievement and Maine Educational Assessment Scores

Method: Thirteen randomly selected schools with lower parent bachelor degree percentage than MSAD #11 were compared with the results of the 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 Maine Educational Assessment Scores to MSAD #11 (note in 2004-2005 MSAD#11 Grade 11 students scored well on the Maine Educational Assessment Test).

Results: In 2003-2004, 12 out of the 13 Schools had higher Maine Educational Assessment Scores than MSAD # 11. In 2004-2005 11 of the 13 Schools had higher Maine Educational Assessment Scores than MSAD #11.

Also, 7 of the 13 schools scored higher than the State average in at least one of the 2 years. Although MSAD #11 is below state average in parental education levels, it does not mean we cannot have above average Maine Educational Assessment Scores.

Schools Compared: Madison, Oxford Hills, Sanford, Mountain Valley, Dexter, Lisbon, Madawaska, Skowhegan, Lewiston, Houlton, Biddeford, Greeneville, and Caribou. (source, MDOE)

The Presence of Special Education Students and Schools MEA Scores

Below are 10 randomly selected schools with their percentage of special education students. Each of these schools has a higher proportion of special needs students and yet each exceeds state averages on MEA tests.

Augusta 466/2400= 19.4%

Lisbon 184/1418= 13.0%

Bangor 587/4015= 14.6%

Saco 435/2772= 15.7%

Biddeford 547/2806= 19.5%

Skowhegan 541/2857= 18.9%

Hall Dale 138/982= 14.1%

Waterville 333/1986= 16.8%

Lewiston 857/4627= 18.5%

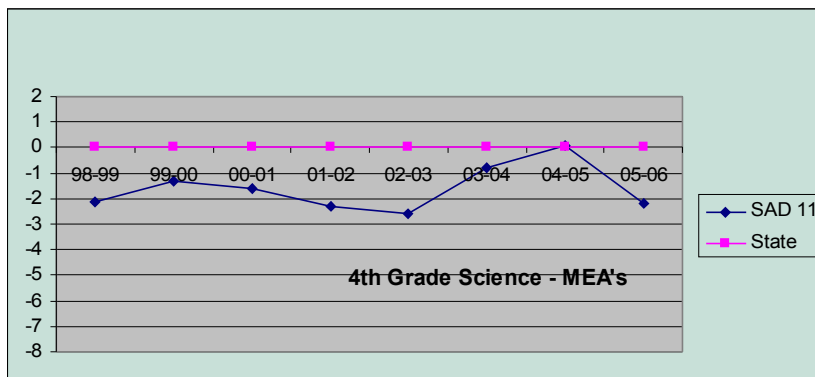
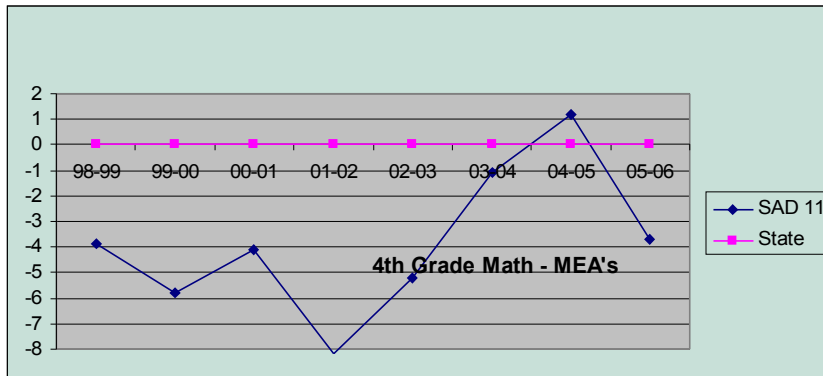
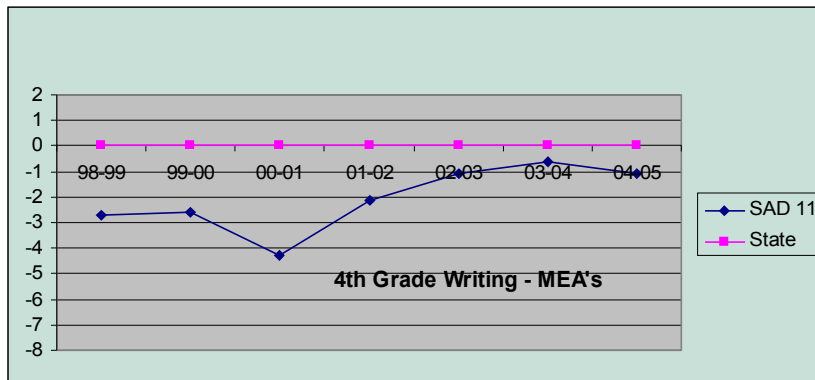
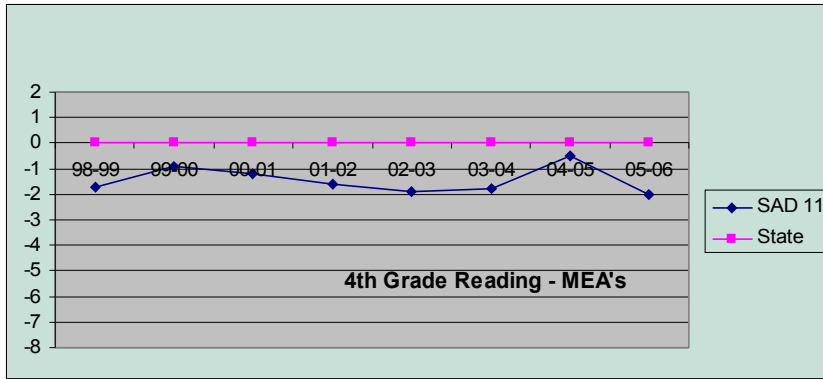
Winslow 185/1362= 13.6%

MSAD 11 294/2250= 13.1%

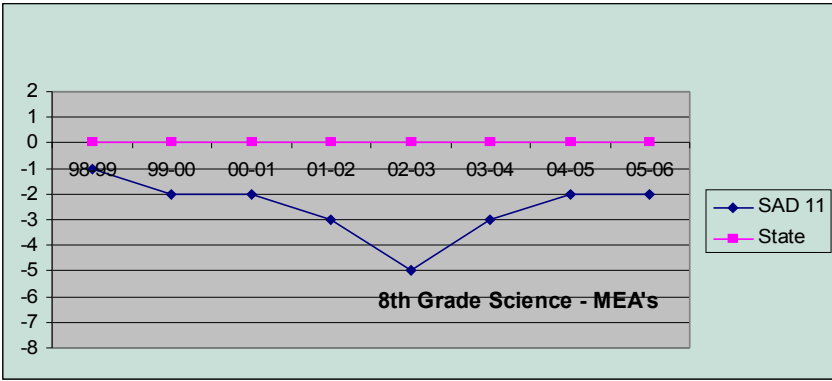
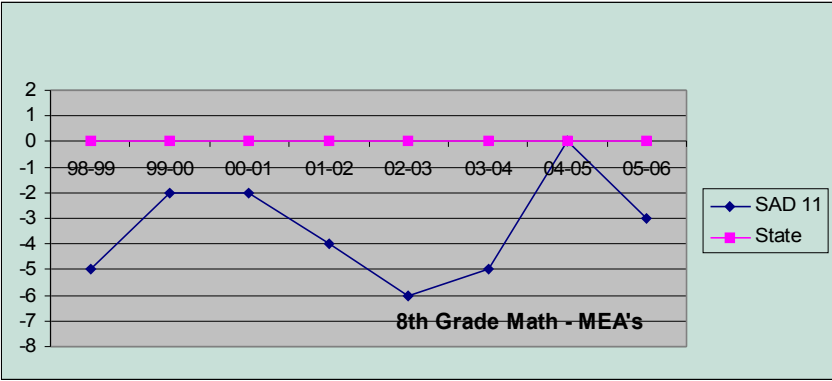
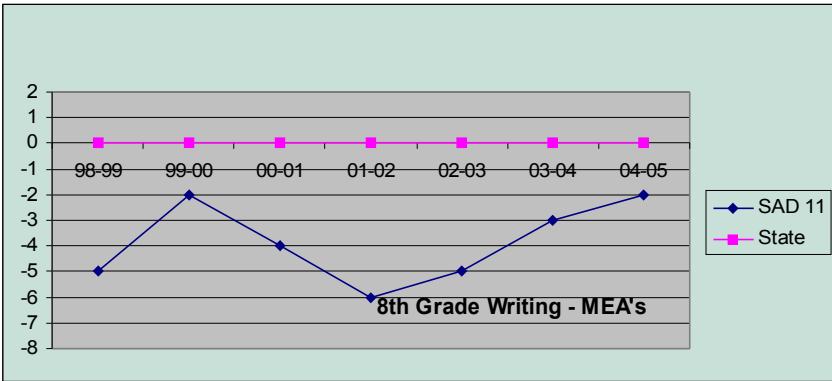
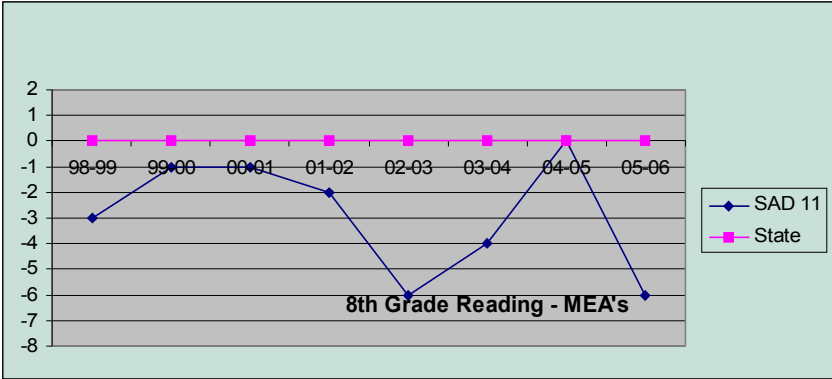
(source, MDOE)

MSAD #11 Maine Educational Assessment Scores are plotted on the following 3 pages

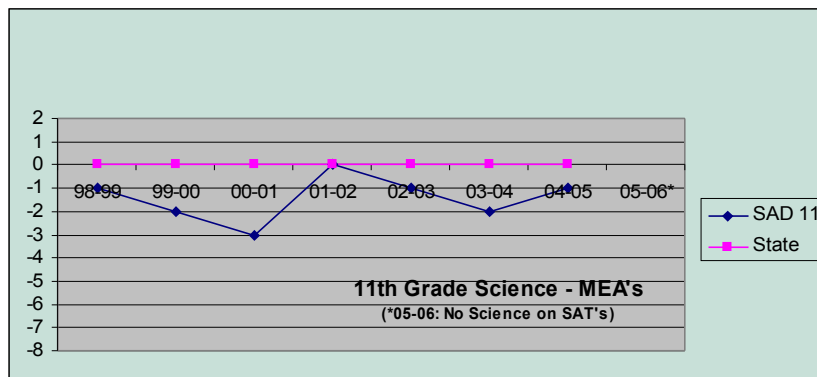
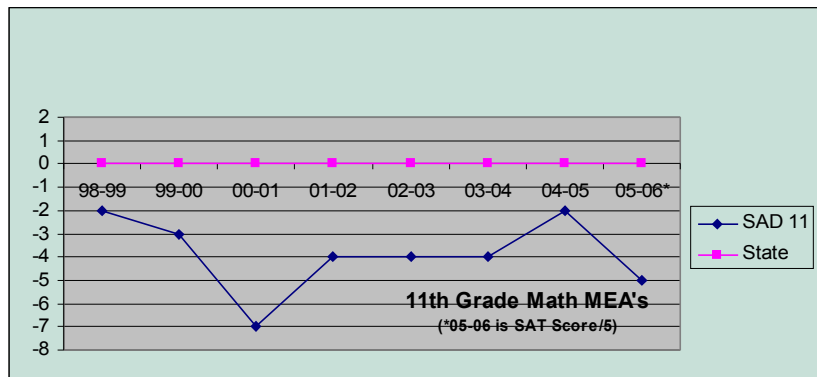
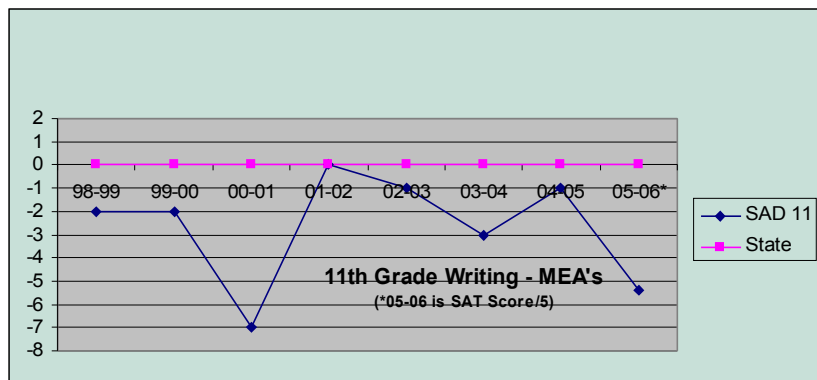
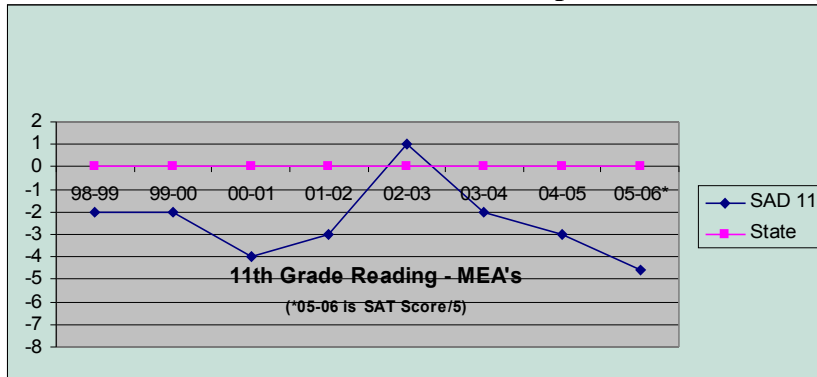
**Maine Educational Assessment Scores for Grade 4 MSAD#11 Compared to State Average
MSAD #11 Score – State Score= number plotted in the chart)**



**Maine Educational Assessment Scores for Grade 8 MSAD#11 Compared to State Average
MSAD#11 Score – State Score= number plotted in the chart)**



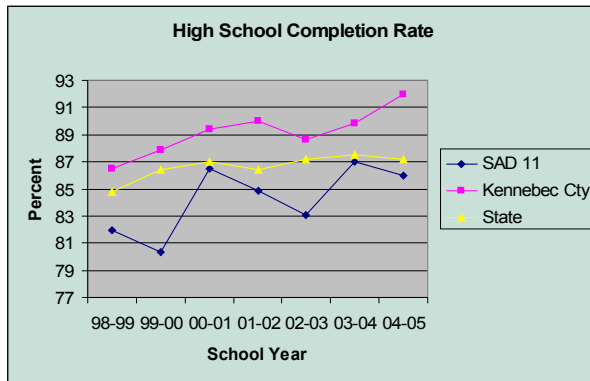
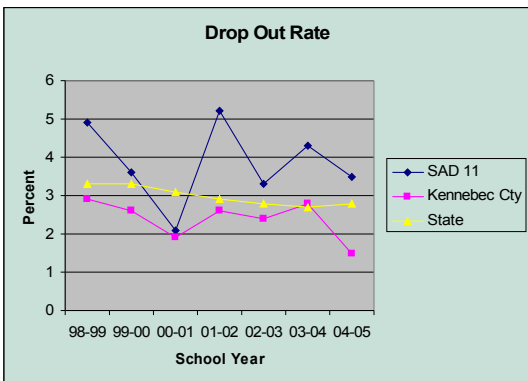
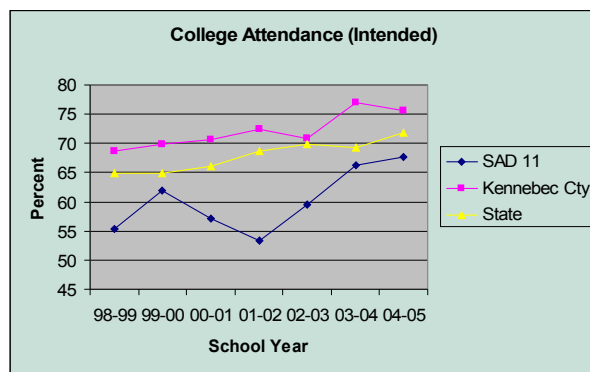
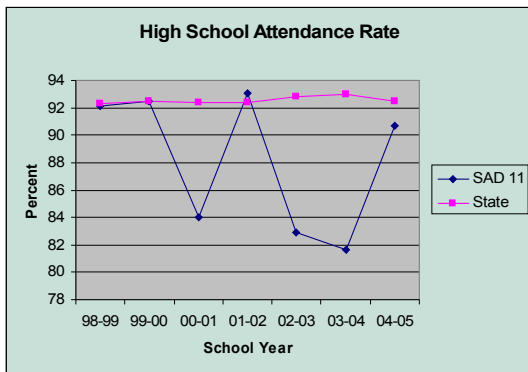
**Maine Educational Assessment Scores for Grade 11 MSAD#11 Compared to State Average
(MSAD#11 Score – State Score= number plotted in the chart)**



Appendix C Student Attendance and High School Completion Data

Attendance, Drop Out, and High School Completion Rates- 7 years of data (99-05) show MSAD # 11 below both state and county averages in high school attendance. There was a positive change in 01-02 school year (above average) which was the year a car was given away for perfect attendance.

College Attendance Intent- MSAD #11 has noticed major progress in this area during the last 3 years, to the point where MSAD #11 is at the state average. This progress seems to have coincided with the MELMAC grant, GGCAC activities (primarily college visits).



Appendix D- MSAD #11 Performance On No Child Left Behind Measures

CIPS (Continuous Improvement School) Status – Measure of Adequate Yearly Progress under the No Child Left Behind Federal Law.

CIPS1- Schools that did not make AYP in the same subject for two consecutive years

CIPS2- Schools that did not make AYP in the same subject for three years

CIPS3- Schools that did not make AYP in the same subject for four years

School Name	Title 1 School	Reading Status & Identification Codes	Math Status & Identification Codes
Gardiner Area High School		Monitor 02-03 W CIPS1 03-04 S CIPS2 04-05 W CIPS3 05-06 W, E, S	Monitor 04-05 S CIPS1 05-06 W
Gardiner Regional Middle School		Monitor 02-03 E, S CIPS1 03-04 S Made AYP 04-05 CIPS2 05-06 S	Monitor 02-03 W,E,S CIPS1 03-04 W, E Made AYP 04-05 CIPS2 05-06 S

Identification Codes: Groups that did not make AYP

A	American Indian/Alaskan Native
B	African American/ Black
E	Economically Disadvantaged
L	Limited English Proficient
S	Students with Disabilities
W	Whole School
ADA	Average Daily Attendance

School Name	Title 1 School	Reading Status	Math Status
Pittston Consolidated School	yes	Made AYP	Made AYP
Laura E Richards School	yes	Made AYP	Made AYP
Helen Thompson School	yes	Made AYP	Made AYP
River View Community School	yes	Made AYP	Made AYP
Teresa C Hamlin School	yes	Made AYP	Made AYP

Key to Abbreviations

CIP= Continuous Improvement School

AYP= Adequate Yearly Progress

Appendix E Student Behavior Survey Data

School	Percent Feeling Unsafe 2007	Percent Feeling Unsafe 2004
Riverview Community	20.3	10.1
Helen Thompson	17.0	16.1
Pittston Consolidated	16.1	14.3
Gardiner Area High School	14.8	11.8
Teresa C. Hamlin	11.9	14.6
Gardiner Regional Middle School	11.3	18.6
Laura E. Richards	10.4	11.8
	-----	-----
	101.8	97.3

Based on the Bullying Survey given to students in 2004 and again in 2007, District wide, there has been a 4.4 percentage point decline in the proportion of students reporting feeling safe. Gardiner Regional Middle School has made the most progress from having the highest rate of students reporting “feeling unsafe” of the seven schools in 2004 to the second lowest reports of “feeling unsafe” in 2007. Gardiner Area High School and Riverview Community School had worsening trends during those 3 years.

Maine Youth Drug and Alcohol Use Survey (MYDAUS) Data for Grades 6 - 12

	Prior 30 Day Use					
	Cigarettes		Alcohol		Marijuana	
	MSAD11	State	MSAD11	State	MSAD11	State
2004	17.7	14.6	31.0	29.7	16.8	14.8
2006	18.7	13.8	33.6	29.0	19.3	14.1

Source: Maine Department of Health and Human Services, Maine Youth Drug and Alcohol Survey, 2006 School Reports.

Appendix F Survey Findings

Description

In the spring of 2007, the audit team administered an on-line survey to students and teachers at both the middle and high schools in MSAD#11. The audit grouped questions by topic relevant to the priority ideals for successful education experiences. The survey responses follow. At the end of each survey, students and staff were asked to list three things they would change at MSAD#11, their comments are summarized and provided after the survey responses.

HS= Gardiner Area High School

MS= Gardiner Regional Middle School

A= respondents selecting agree and most agree on the survey

D= respondents selecting disagree and very disagree

Student Respect for the Value of Education

54. Getting a good Middle School education is very important.

HS 77%A, 7%D

MS 83%A, 7%D

53. Students in this school think learning is important.

HS 15%A, 48%D

MS 26%A, 32%D

49. I come to class prepared to learn

HS 65%A, 12%D

MS 76%A, 8%D

18. The things that students are taught here will help me later in life.

HS 44%A, 26%D

MS 65%A, 11%D

School Atmosphere

17. I feel I've been built up here more than I've been put down.

HS 40%A, 24%D

MS 54%A, 17%D

6. Students can count on teachers to listen to their side of the story and be fair.

HS 32%A, 39%D

MS 55%A, 22%D

51. I feel comfortable participating in my classes.

HS 51%A, 19%D

MS 69%A, 15%D

Student Perception of Teaching Quality

41. My teachers encourage me to be involved in my learning

HS 53%A, 17%D

MS 73%A, 9%D

32. My teachers vary activities.

- HS 37%A, 32%D
MS 58%A, 17%D
40. My teachers make connections between what we're learning and how it relates to life outside school.
HS 33%A, 36%D
MS 49%A, 25%D
23. Classroom discussions are dominated by only a few students.
HS 63%A, 12%D
MS 47%A, 26%D
19. Teachers keep students attention in classes.
HS 26%A, 44%D
MS 46%A, 26%D
20. The teachers in this school know how to teach.
HS 36%A, 30%D
MS 72%A, 11%D
22. Teachers explain things in a way that I can understand
HS 42%A, 28%D
MS 59%A, 17%D
29. I often feel like I don't know what I'm doing in my classes.
HS 32%A, 39%D
MS 4%A, 52%D
30. When I have a question for a teacher, I can usually get a helpful answer.
HS 36%A, 22%D
MS 67%A, 13%D

Teacher Pride/Enthusiasm

12. Teachers in this school are proud to be teachers.
HS 54%A, 11%D
MS 84%A, 0%D
7. This school is an exciting place to be.
HS 46%A, 4%D
MS 74%A, 10%D

Teacher perception of Students and Parents

51. Parents talk to their children about school work.
HS 11%A, 35%D
MS 19%A, 32%D
25. Most students come prepared to learn in my classes
HS 28%A, 61%D
MS 35%A, 42%D

Administrative Support of Teachers

5. The school's schedule helps me to design learning activities that reach all students learning styles.
HS 57%A, 30%D
MS 39%A, 36%D

26. There are sufficient professional development opportunities here for teachers to improve their teaching.

HS 20%A, 63%D

MS 3%A, 74%D

27. Faculty meetings deal with professional teaching issues more than mundane management.

HS 28%A, 48%D

MS 6%A, 71%D

41. Teacher workloads are too big for them to be effective in the classroom.

HS 46%A, 28%D

MS 68%A, 19%D

Six Most Common Themes from the Survey Written Responses to “one thing you would change about school”

Gardiner Area High School Student Top Six Responses - “One thing you would change about school”

#1 Teacher ability/style/attitudes... Typical comments “They act like they don’t want to be at school, and it’s very disheartening”... ”In a class of 22 kids and only 5 are passing something should be done about the teacher”... “one of my teachers just has read us a chapter then quizzes us on it”... “better teachers that actually know how to explain what we’re doing”... “teachers should actually understand what they’re teaching”

#2 More hands on work... “I would like to have more hands on activities because I learn more that way and so do many others in the school”... “The long *** f***ing lectures”

#3 Kids are not serious/bad attitudes... “the way that students treat each other”... “students to take work more seriously”... for the teachers to keep the kids under control”... “the disrespectful students, they need a good *** whopping”... “put the idiots in one class and leave the ones that want to learn in another, seriously”+

#4 Tracking – Make things harder/easier – More/Less Homework... “Less stupid people that slow down all my classes... “”Stupid standards that EVERYONE is supposed to meet, we should have standards to match our ability, I could do better but I match my work down to what’s expected of me, it’s stupid, teachers have no room to improvise, school is boring now, it sucks”... in general many conflicting comments calling for more/less homework, or complaining classes are too hard or too easy.

#5 Shorter Classes – Many comments wanting shorter/less boring classes

#6 Count homework toward your grade - “I like when homework actually counted for something, now I do not try as hard on it, which results in me not getting the practice I need, makes me question why I am really doing it. It no longer feels well to complete homework you know is correct, you do not get rewarded by a grade and no one looks at it but you.”... “homework does not get graded which is absolutely ridiculous”.

Gardiner Regional Middle School Top Responses to “One thing you would change about school”

#1 Less Homework – Many comments just calling for less homework, specific suggestions were to: have projects due in a more realistic timeframe, not to have a lot of things from different teachers due at the same time, not having so much due in the same week, and have the due dates for projects more spread out.

#2 More Discipline – Overboard fooling around, fooling around a lot in class and it get really annoying, removed from class because they are annoying, peers don’t want to learn, and they fool around in class, and kids if they fool around in my class should be pulled out of class so they don’t stop the rest of us from learning.

#3 More Challenge – Some of the classes aren’t challenging enough. In most classes I feel like I am learning the same things over again that I had learned in previous grades. More advanced units. I am not learning anything I didn’t learn years ago. A lot if time explaining things that all of the class know except one or two people. Have different pods be at different levels of learning kind of like high school. I would like to see all lasses separated by intelligence and improvement.

#4 More Hands On Activities – We get worksheets to do a lot. Teachers could put aside books and websites and teach us what they know instead of straight from the book. More activities because it makes learning more fun and everyone participates. Change the lessons, so they are more active.

Positive Student Responses

The Varied Activities – Teachers incorporate activities and answer your questions. I have a hard time learning from books. Teachers with lots of energy, and we have lots of fun in class.

The Caring Teachers – Teachers keep you interested and answer your questions. I have support in all my classes using a tutor and teachers. They do all they can to help me when I struggle. I have the best teachers in the whole wide world. I don’t want it to stop. That some will go over the work til you get it. I can talk to my teacher about any problem with school or my friends.

Freedom from Fear to Participate in Classes - They always make me feel like I’m doing something right. I can say certain things without feeling stupid. I feel so comfortable in my classes. How they explain things to me when I don’t get it. All the teachers are kind and explain problems to us. That we each get a chance to ask questions and talk about what we don’t understand.

Gardiner Area High School Teacher Top Two Responses to -“One thing you would change about school”

#1 ***Better Student Motivation, Less Apathy*** – “Many are happy with a passing grade”... “Better accountability about attendance”... “I wish kids had more genuine curiosity”... “Lack of motivation”... “More earnest effort”... “Negative attitude that rubs off on others”... “Students held responsible for their behavior”... “Material is not relevant to their current life”... “More hands on life learning opportunities”

#2 ***Better Curriculum*** – “Teachers decide curriculum, not administrators”... “allow teachers to collaborate on instruction, not just assessment”... “Curriculum based on students' individual needs and not just a generic set of standards”... “Some students do not belong in the classroom, they need the hands on learning (vocational), and I feel that we feel that a lot of work is hands on in the regular classroom when really it is not”.

Gardiner Regional Middle School Teacher Top Six Responses to - “One thing you would change about school”

#1 ***Better Student Motivation, Less Apathy*** – “WORK ETHIC”... “Better work habits”... “Lack of motivation”... “Less apathy, more motivation”... “These kids don’t see the value of academics, or the fact that their lives can improve if they know more about how the world works”... “Students have low expectations for themselves”... “

#2 ***Better Curriculum*** – “Most of our meeting time is used to deal with management issues and paperwork rather than planning interdisciplinary activities”... “ability to teach content that most interests students”... “Hands on has been eroded with assessments, I would like to see a return of the hands on middle school”...

Appendix G

Report Recommendation Action Plan

Targeted Recommendation:

Specific Action(s) To Be Taken:

Specific Timeframes For Actions To Be Taken:

Staff/Administration/School Board/Parents Roles And Responsibilities:

Professional Development/Resources Needed:

How Progress Toward Meeting the Specific Actions Will Be Assessed:

MSAD #11 Academic Audit Report Action Development and Implementation Plan Proposed Timeline

- **January 17, 2008 – The 6-12 Academic Audit Report is shared with the MSAD #11 School Board.**
- **January 18, 2008 – The 6-12 Academic Audit Report is shared with the Gardiner Regional Middle School and Gardiner Area High School Staffs and MSAD #11 Community Members.**
- **January – March 2008 – The MSAD #11 School Board’s Long Range Planning Committee, the Gardiner Regional Middle School and Gardiner Area High School staffs review the report and identify *priorities* for short term and long term actions.**
- **March 21, 2008 – The identified priorities are given to the Academic Audit Oversight Committee for its review and feedback.**
- **April 8, 2008 – The Academic Audit Oversight Committee returns feedback to the Long Range Planning Committee and the Gardiner Regional Middle School and Gardiner Area High School staffs.**
- **April – June 2008 – The Long Range Planning Committee and the Gardiner Regional Middle School and Gardiner Area High School staffs develop short and long term actions with a timeline for implementation which address the identified priorities.**
- **September to December, 2008 – Action(s) Implemented**

Acknowledgements

The School Board and Administration would like to acknowledge the team of staff and community members who served on the audit committee

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