



# *Belmonte Middle School*

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Geoff Bruno  
*Principal*

October 2, 2009

Dear Belmonte Parent or Guardian,

This letter is to notify you that the Belmonte Middle School has been classified as a school in need of improvement according to the federal NCLB (No Child Left Behind) Act. Specifically, Belmonte has been identified as “Restructuring: Year Two” in Math, and “Improvement: Year Two” in English Language Arts. This identification is a result of our school not being able to demonstrate Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) as measured by student performance results on yearly MCAS tests. In recent years, student performance on MCAS in Math and Language Arts has faltered or remained static; this is true when looking at the performance of all enrolled students as well as the subset of students identified with special learning needs.

While we are by no means satisfied with this designation or with the static MCAS performance over recent years, it is important to note that the Belmonte is not alone; many schools are being identified as needing to improve as the expectation of 100% of students being proficient in Math and ELA by 2014 gets closer. This letter is meant to inform the entire school community of our designation and outline the many efforts currently underway to improve student performance and strengthen our school community. The following steps are being taken to address improved outcomes for students:

1. The 2009/2010 school year has opened with a new administrative team, including the Principal and two Vice-Principals. Our new team began the year ready to tackle multiple initiatives aimed specifically at improving student achievement and strengthening the school community. Some of these initiatives will be outlined below.
2. At the beginning of the school year, we hired four additional teachers: two in mathematics, and two in language arts, to work with 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade teams. These teachers provide an additional academic block of support in Math and Language Arts at both grade levels and serve to lower class size from an average of 30 to 25 and under.
3. Curriculum Maps in all academic areas and at all grade levels have been completed and are currently being implemented in classrooms. This ensures the curriculum taught is closely aligned to the MA frameworks and standards assessed on MCAS tests. It also encourages collaboration and accountability for teachers and support staff.
4. Federal Title 1 money has been used to hire two math support teachers who work alongside classroom teachers to provide additional support and more individualized instruction to identified students. Additional funds secured through Title 1 grants are currently being used for professional development related to utilizing data to inform instruction and improve student learning.
5. Students in grades 7 and 8 continue to receive an additional MCAS Math course that meets once per week. This course serves to support specific skill development necessary to improving performance on the MCAS test.

6. Professional Development days for the 2009/2010 school year will be utilized specifically to address student achievement through using data to improve student learning and performance on MCAS. The goal is to improve outcomes and make Adequate Yearly Progress in both Math and Language Arts.
7. We have hired a full time library/media specialist, and after ten years, the library has re-opened! It has already become a hub for students and faculty for professional development meetings, research projects, and after-school assistance for students.
8. A leadership team, comprised of 20+ faculty members has convened to set school improvement priorities. They have broken into subgroups to tackle school-wide initiatives including strategies to improve achievement, support students at risk academically and otherwise, develop a schedule that allows for greater professional collaboration and increased time on learning, potentially re-submit the Expanded Learning Time grant application, integrate classroom technology school-wide, and improve school/home communication.
9. The School Council, comprised of administrators, faculty, parents, and community leaders, has convened and will work together to draft a school improvement plan that identifies budget priorities for the 2010/2011 school year and addresses resources necessary to strengthen achievement.
10. The use of technology to enhance instruction and communication will continue to expand at a rapid rate. Over 20 LCD projectors have been deployed to be used daily in classrooms, four smartboards are now in use every day, interactive remote clickers are being utilized to get instant assessment data from students, and the use of the X2 student management system to communicate within the building and to home is quickly being expanded. Starting later this year, parents and students will be able to track academic progress online, improving communication and strengthening responsible work habits.

Our goal is to take every step necessary to provide the best possible educational experience for your child. We encourage you to get involved in our school community and communicate with us regarding your child's educational experience and progress. By working together we can continue to improve student achievement, build a stronger school community, and ensure students leave us ready to be successful in high school and beyond.

Sincerely,

Geoff Bruno  
Principal  
Belmonte Middle School