

FMS moving on to second phase of grant

Coventry school among 75 trying for NextGen

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COVENTRY — Department heads at the Alan Shawn Feinstein Middle School are ready to move on to phase two of the NextGen Personalized Learning grant.

This grant is part of the New England Secondary Schools Consortium (NESSC), a New England partnership that promotes forward-thinking innovations in the way secondary education is taught across the region.

The NextGen Initiative is the plan that will be submitted to the NESSC by schools all across New England who are part of the League of Innovative Schools in December in the hopes of being selected to move their school forward.

In all, there are 75 schools that will submit plans.

The first phase focused on schools making a public commitment to advancing educational equity, personalized learning, alternative learning pathways and ongoing school improvement.

Alan Shawn Feinstein Middle School Principal Dr. Arthur Lisi explained how the school got involved last year after department heads submitted a proposal outlining their wishes to take a more personalized approach to teaching.

Both the middle and high school were selected and received grant funds for further professional development training as well travel opportunities to see how other schools are implementing their personalized

Grant for personalized learning at Feinstein

Continued from Page A-1

plans.

"Alan Shawn Feinstein Middle School is poised and positioned to become a school that serves all students through a more personalized learning environment," said Lisi. "We are the largest middle school in the state with close to 1,150 students and more than 125 adults. Our one middle school represents the only school in the largest geographical area in the state, thus it has become the social/cultural/learning mecca for young adolescents."

Lisi said the middle school has been a leader in reform for the last 20 years.

"The vision of our school is a place where students, staff and the community partner to foster growth and where all have opportunities to maximize learning and personal growth," he said. "Thus, every student will be prepared for the future through flexible, rigorous, student-centered pathways called Proficiency-Based

Education. Every student will feel supported and safe at school and believe they can achieve and make good choices."

Lisi used the metaphor of a tree with a canopy to explain the school's philosophy because when a tree is placed in the right environment with the right conditions, he said, it can't help but grow. -

"Student learning is similar to trees," he said. "Students develop and succeed when given appropriate instruction, accommodations, feedback and inspiration. Students may be at different levels in the tree because students learn at different rates. Some also climb differently than others because every child learns differently."

After learning they were chosen in the first phase, they were assigned a school coach who will serve as their support as the schools go through the second phase.

If the middle and high school are awarded a second time, that will mean more grant funds for further study.