

School Improvement Plan  
Narrative Overview

## **First Creek Middle School**

### **PROGRESS TOWARD 2010-11 GOALS**

#### **Overview of Neighborhood**

First Creek Middle School is located at 1801 East 56<sup>th</sup> Street, Tacoma, Washington and is a Title I school. First Creek is one of nine middle schools in the Tacoma Public School District. First Creek Middle School was established in 2009 and replaces Gault and McIlvaigh Middle Schools in the heart of Tacoma's Eastside Community. Currently 790 sixth through eighth graders are enrolled. The majority of incoming FCMS 6<sup>th</sup> grade students hail from Roosevelt, Blix, Boze, Lister, and Sheridan Elementary Schools. The majority of eighth graders transition on to Lincoln High School.

First Creek Middle School is situated in a predominately low income neighborhood. Housing consists of rental, single and multi-family housing units. Easy access to Interstate 5 and a newly rebuilt Salishan Housing Development have revitalized the neighborhood attracting young families to the area. Employment is limited within the community with a modest number of large businesses and industry. A number of small businesses operate within the community and most have been supportive of the new school and the students. However, most adults are forced to seek employment outside the First Creek area.

There are community resources in close proximity as well. The Tacoma Housing Authority operates as a resource and support services (preschool through adult basic education and ESL, job skills training with focus on employment and more...) center for the Salishan Neighborhood. The First Creek Community has recently seen the opening of The Milgard Family Dental Clinic and the Eastside Medical Clinic – both serves low-income clients, accept Medicaid and sliding scale fees. The area is well served by the city bus service. Also available to families of the community are a number of small parks, a city owned pool, and the Portland Avenue Community Center.

#### **Overview of Organization**

Collaboration, rigor and support are the pillars of FCMS's work during the 2011-12 school year. With AVID as the vehicle, PLCs and grade level teams are working together to integrate Writing, Inquiry, Collaboration, Organization and Rigor (WICOR) into all corners of the FCMS organization. First Creek's inquiry emphasis is clearly articulated and apparent in our Language Arts (IBD), Math (TDG) and Science (OEL) classrooms. The SCDM, PTA and Race and Equity and Student Voice Summits are growing in numbers and shaping the trajectory of the work at FCMS.

## MSP Data

First Creek Middle School opened its doors to students for the first time in 2009. Thus, there is limited comparative data. The Measurement of Student Progress (MSP) scores listed in the tables below represent a comparison of MSP data 2010 to 2011. In the area of Reading and Mathematics, as measured by the MSP, our students did not meet the established targets when looking at the state's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) benchmarks.

### **Data Comparison 2010 to 2011**

#### **Math MSP**

Grade	Increase/Decrease
6	+10.2
7	-7.7
8	-3.6

#### **Reading MSP**

Grade	Increase/Decrease
6	+4.3
7	-8.5
8	-14.3

#### **Writing MSP**

Grade	Increase/Decrease
7	+14.8

Staff continues to intentionally focus our efforts on significantly improving our students' achievement in the areas of reading and math. A considerable emphasis on mathematics, along with many layers of support across our school district and within our school in order to effectively address concerns is needed if we are to see a significant increase in the level of student performance as measured by the 2012 MSP. Throughout the school year, we will continue to analyze and interpret data utilizing classroom formative and summative assessments in an effort to raise achievement on the MSP.

## Strengths & Challenges

FCMS staff members are committed to utilizing our strengths to address our challenges. We look to use PLC's as a vehicle to address our greatest challenge - MSP underperformance. PLC groups have identified research based instructional practices and high yield engagement strategies (focusing on student dialogue, collaboration and inquiry) to fuel their best practices exchanges. They calibrated their grading practices and determined focus standards to drive student work exploration in PLCs.

Staff also FCMS honors the wisdom in the room and believes that staff members will implement with greater fidelity self-identified, grassroots systemic change. Administration is committed to responsive action as evidenced by the recent change to the structure of math intervention classes -from stand alone to integrated approach. Concern voiced by staff wishing to have a greater impact on achievement gap subgroups resulted in the formation of the Race and Equity committee. This committee meets once a week and trains quarterly with the “How Race Affects Teaching and Learning” district PLC.

AVID and Advisory are two school wide targeted interventions designed to target under-performing students. The mentorships in Advisory and the academic coaching via AVID are designed to address specific student needs.

TPS Climate Survey Data identified a need for more rigorous instruction and curriculum. In response to this raised concern, FCMS administration and teaching staff (SCDM) have agreed that routine “walk throughs” are necessary in order to examine and improve our instructional practices. This data gathered through “walk-throughs” will determine next steps in building wide professional development.

## OVERVIEW OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT 2010-11

### **Continuous Improvement Process and Stakeholder Participation**

The content of this plan represents the ongoing work and goals established within our school for the 2011-2012 year. The goals and strategies in this plan represent and are influenced by the ongoing work of our staff members within grade level teams, Professional Learning Communities (PLCs/Content Area Teams) and as a part of whole-staff work sessions.

The Action Plan articulated in this document is a direct reflection of staff’s review of student assessment data, the prioritization of staff and team goals, and the articulation of specific next steps in our work toward increased achievement.

Last year, our PLCs mined assessment data. This year, PLCs launched with a thorough examination of their grading practices, identification of high yield engagement strategies, and determination of focus standards that will guide their student work examination second semester. Although FCMS is at the beginning stages of student work examination, we believe that this change will have a positive impact on student learning and increase the number of students reaching standard as measured by the MSP.

Our Learning and Leadership Team and AVID site team continue to focus on planning, implementing, and reviewing building-wide and program goals. Students are at the heart of all decisions, and staff members are encouraged to have courageous conversations regarding the climate and culture of the school while focused on embedded instructional best practices.

At this time, FCMS is solidifying the membership of the School Centered Decision Making (SCDM) team whose ultimate goal is to positively impact teaching and learning decisions. Our PTA is actively building its membership and focuses on supporting learning at the classroom and building, as well as the family and community level. Title 1 resources are utilized for meaningful professional development activities and parent/family involvement. College Sparks/Nav 101 Grant funding resources assist teachers in creating positive mentorships through lessons that build community and personal growth as well as goal setting for future opportunities. First Creek’s Eagle Center for Learning and Leadership launched this year providing additional academic supports, mentorships, and recreational activities for students.

All in all, our ongoing efforts at FCMS will impact achievement and narrow the achievement and opportunity gap by raising the performance levels of all students.

### **Review of Data to Establish Improvement**

#### **Achievement**

Spring Data (expressed as a percentage of students meeting standard)

<b>Grade 6</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>
<b>Reading</b>	-	-	-	-	28.0	32.3
<b>Mathematics</b>	-	-	-	33.9	11.2	21.2

<b>Grade 7</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>
<b>Reading</b>	-	-	-	-	25.9	17.4
<b>Mathematics</b>	-	-	-	-	19.7	12.2
<b>Writing</b>	-	-	-	-	26.7	41.5

<b>Grade 8</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>
<b>Reading</b>	-	-	-	-	43.2	28.9
<b>Mathematics</b>	-	-	-	-	14.3	11.9
<b>Science</b>	-	-	-	-	22.6	19.6

The school-wide data from the 2011 MSP indicates the mathematics performance is well below standard. Our work to increase the level of academic success in math continues. All FCMS math teachers are involved in “math studio” work, ongoing, focused professional development (Teacher Development Group) and Math PLC work. In collaboration, teachers are reviewing assessment data, walk through observations, and student work. Teachers are calibrating common assessments and developing meaningful formative assessments to that support student learning and on grade level mastery. As well, all math teachers are working on the implementation and fidelity to the Prentice Hall math curriculum. Interventions are provided through basic education and our Title I program. (See action plan for specific intervention strategies.) District Math

Assessments provide regular feedback and inform instructional practice at FCMS. Additional supports for struggling students include Eagle Center mentors, AVID tutors and Extended Learning Opportunity (ELO) support.

Results on the MSP indicate a need for a systemic approach to reading deficiencies. Currently, our Advisory program integrates Critical Reading Strategies using AVID Weekly to support a building wide focus on literacy. A Title I Reading Intervention classes target our lowest performing students. Reading in all content areas is a focus and quarterly Scholastic Reading Index [SRI] benchmarking informs instruction and placement.

## **Attendance**

(Average daily attendance)

<b>2007-08</b>	<b>2008-09</b>	<b>2009-10</b>	<b>2010-11</b>
		92.7%	* Ask Lisa

### **Planning for Transitions** (between levels)

According to research, students who struggle with school are most likely to “fall through the cracks” when transitioning from level to the next (5<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> grade and 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade). In light of this information, FCMS has created a “pipeline” to vertically align our support programs. These include:

- Visits to elementary feeder schools to recruit for AVID
- Transition activities hosted by First Creek Middle School (May)
- Student Unions (BSU, API, LSU, GSA, ASU...) create a support and pipeline for traditionally underserved and marginalized students
- Feeder elementary schools are implementing AVID in their fifth grade classrooms creating a seamless transition for students entering FCMS
- FCMS’s Extended Learning Opportunity (ELO) is closely aligned with the Lincoln Center model
- TRIO and AVID students also regularly visit college campuses
- Title I Summer School transition activities

### **Characteristics of High Performing Schools**

First Creek must improve in each of the nine areas of school improvement as outlined by the state, however there are four that emerge as needing particular attention in this year’s work.

Staff works continually on promoting **High Levels of Collaboration and Communication**. FCMS addresses Collaboration and Communication through formal and informal structures which include PLC and grade level meetings. Regular meetings include Staff, Learning and Leadership, AVID Site Team, SCDM and PTA - the focus of these include school-wide improvement initiatives, professional development, family/community partnerships and teaching

and learning goals. Teachers are working to become reflective practitioners as they incorporate student work evidence into the existing PLC structure.

Instructional alignment and improvement is the **Clear and Shared Focus** of First Creek Middle school during the 2011-12 school year. Our instructional foci will be AVID/WICR with a emphasis on inquiry in Math (TDG), Language Arts (IBD) and Science (OEL).

### **Frequent Monitoring of Teaching & Learning**

Monitoring is “analyzing what we are doing against the results we are getting and wanting.” (*Schmoeker, 1999*) We must inspect what we expect in our classrooms. To this end, First Creek Middle School teachers have agreed to both open their instructional practice and welcome walk-throughs to gather the necessary data to inform their professional conversations and development. Another tool for evidence gathering involves all math teachers progress-monitoring five students over the course of the academic year. This “Five Folder” concept is designed to gather student work evidence, assessment and reflect district initiative training in best instructional practices.

Finally, **Effective School Leadership** can be defined at both the administrative and staff member level. In identifying the leadership strength at First Creek, the new administration provided an open application process for teacher leadership positions. This process was open to all who endeavor to grow their teacher leadership and resulted in a new distribution of leadership among the school community. Opportunities for staff to join committees such as PLCs, AVID, Race and Equity, SCDM, and the PTA have provided a foundational support for effective new leadership at FCMS.

### **Professional Development Opportunities**

First Creek staff members are encouraged and supported in their efforts to grow and learn as professionals. Staff development opportunities at the building level focus on student work, data and on the discussion of best practices.

- 3 Day All Staff Summer Retreat
- AVID Summer Institute
- 2-1 hour Professional Development sessions focused on equitable grading practices, high yield instructional strategies and focus standards
- Teacher Development Group (TDG) and Math Studio
- Weekly PLC meetings
- District Coaching Support for Math and Literacy
- AVID Strategy Integration (Costa’s Levels of Questioning)
- How Race Affects Teaching and Learning PLC
- Washington Educational Research Association (WERA) focused on Habits of Mind
- Release Days for PLCs focused on aligning scope and sequence, lesson planning and common assessments.
- Learning Targets and Examination of Student Evidence of Learning with PLU consultant

## **Highly Qualified Teachers**

Leave Blank for CAB Title I staff to complete.

## **Recognition of Non-Academic Learning**

At First Creek Middle School, we believe in educating the whole child! This belief is demonstrated by a strong emphasis on creating a focused, structured, and nurturing environment. We look for opportunities to recognize and promote non-academic learning with a particular focus of integrating the arts throughout the curriculum. Students are provided opportunities to explore the arts through drama, visual arts, technology, music and movement. Before school band and orchestra explorations are among the many before and after school enrichment experiences offered at FCMS. These include after hour access to the library, the Eagle Center for Learning and Leadership, Extended Learning Opportunities (ELO), Metro Parks Sparx recreation programs, extensive offerings of ASB high interest clubs, and athletics. Overall, FCMS works to engage the every student, promote high character and the values of helping others, giving back to community, and building a collaborative work culture.

Of note, additional academic core program strengths are the longstanding, impactful community partnerships forged by our instructional staff and the Navigation 101 program. Youth and Government (civics), Finance Park (math), and Centrum (arts) augment and support content area instruction.

A supplemental program which supports achievement in all content areas is our FCMS advisory. Navigation 101 focuses on remediation as well as college and career knowledge/readiness.

Student Voice Summits are held several times throughout the year in both advisory classrooms and at the Professional Development Center. Designed to empower and teach students civic engagement, the Summits also model self-advocacy, networking, positive solution seeking, consensus building. School culture and climate concerns are addressed by student leadership at the summits and solutions implemented. Additionally, student unions are caucusing at these summits to develop a pipeline with similar clubs at the high schools and colleges.

## **Safe and Supportive Learning Environment**

The First Creek Middle School staff is purposeful and intentional in its work to create a safe and supportive environment. Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying policy 3207 has elevated the concern and awareness of student emotional and physical safety. FCMS counselors, administration and staff weave a supportive safety net designed to model positive interactions and conflict resolution. The administrative discipline philosophy ensures that students are not just corrected, but educated through our discipline responses, policies and procedures. Working together, staff and families at FCMS actively and explicitly promote a safe and supportive learning environment for all students.

Systems of support for students include

- Reporting procedures
- Transparent discipline matrix outlining a consistent process for redirection and documentation,

First Creek Middle School knows that strong parent/guardian rapport is foundational to our work to ensure a safe, civil, respectful school environment. As a school community, First Creek Middle School holds monthly family forums to encourage active participation from families and community.

The FCMS advisory program is designed to create a supportive environment where students can access mentors, monitor academic performance and explore interests/goals. Additional climate cultivating measures are undertaken by the ASB where schoolwide themes of unity and belonging are celebrated year long.

### **Equity Issues**

The District's focus on cultural competency and the Action Plan for closing the achievement gap will drive our school's efforts this year. Our performance data trends on the WASL (previous Gault and McIlvaigh scores) and now the MSP shows that FCMS's greatest Achievement / Opportunity Gap is between our white students, our African American and Latino males, and our ELL students in both math and reading.

Rich in diversity, the student population at First Creek according to 2010-11 data is

17.5% Black  
 20.8% White  
 32.3% Hispanic  
 20.1% Asian Pacific Islander  
 16.7% Asian  
 7.5% 2 or more races  
 3.4% Pacific Islander  
 1.9% American Indian/Alaskan Native

In 20110-12, 13.6% of FCMS student received Special Education services- including, Adjustment, Developmental, TLC, and Learning Resource Programs. 15.7% participate in Transitional Bilingual classrooms.

### **Technology**

First Creek Middle School continues to integrate technology in a variety of ways to enhance student learning. Technology usage/availability within classroom includes SMART boards, computers, and a document camera/LCD projector bundle. Students are provided opportunities for word processing, power point, digital story telling, and internet research for project-based learning. In addition, students also have access to computer labs and portable laptop computers on wheels. First Creek has a video production studio and weather station which are utilized on a

daily basis. Computers on Wheels (COWs) are available as an instructional tool in all classrooms.

### **Parent, Family and Community Involvement**

We believe strongly in the power of parent and family involvement at First Creek and have worked hard over the last year to develop a strong parent involvement component. We are fortunate to have the support of a full-time, on-site Parent Liaison who is fluent in Spanish. This person affords us rich opportunities to create and build strong partnerships with families and community outreach programs. Our FCMS PTA will continue to apply their energy and resources to support student learning and family involvement. Additionally, FCMS applied Title I resources to provide for monthly family curriculum nights and Latino family informational nights where we teach parents about how to support students in their learning. FCMS recognizes that many of our parents work and are unable to volunteer in the classroom so we provide these opportunities as another way to involve families in meaningful ways. We do, however, have a number of volunteers who regularly work with children to: support learning, to help monitor progress in reading and math and on-line grades, and to make classroom presentations in a variety of subjects. Beyond working with families, we regularly seek out ways to partner with our greater community and families through mentoring programs (from the neighborhood churches and other organizations), an annual food drive to support our families in need, back to school supply donations, and assemblies that usually feature guests from the city or state.

Tacoma 360 convened community partners and with the Northwest Leadership Foundation and seven community agencies to launch the Eagle Center for Learning and Leadership (ECLL). The ECLL is a full service school model designed to meet the academic and recreational needs of students, while serving as a clearing house of supports for parents (DSHS, TANF, HUD, etc...). This model is the first of its kind for Tacoma Public Schools.

### **Coordination of Fiscal Services**

Much of what we are able to do to support student learning comes from our Title I budget. This is, of course, over and above our Basic Ed district allocation which is actually quite small. We also benefit from a Navigation 101 College Sparks grant. We indirectly receive Special Education and ELL resources based on district and state allocations.

### **Title I School Attachments:**

ITEMS TO BE INCLUDED AS APPENDICES:

- Professional Development calendar
- Parent Involvement Calendar
- Parent Involvement Policy and Compact
- Budget Page
- Budget Matrix (Title I office provides)

