School Improvement Plan
Narrative Overview

Geiger Montessori School

PROGRESS TOWARD PREVIOUS YEAR'S GOALS
2010-2011

Our students' progress in the area of Reading, as measured by the Measurement of Student Progress (MSP), demonstrated overall that, taking into account demographic factors (using a formula created by our research department) our school is the lowest performing school in the entire district, K-12. We have not made AYP for the last four years.

At the same time, our enrollment had dropped below 175 students in 2009 from a high of nearly 500 several years ago. Our poverty rate was 71%. Our mobility rate was second only to Franklin among Tacoma elementary schools. Over thirty students from our attendance area opted to University Place School District. The school had experienced four principal changes within an eight year time span.

Last year, changes began that will undoubtedly improve the school's performance over time.

- We began implementation of Montessori as a way to reform Geiger. Students were taught using the Montessori method through second grade in our first year, we have added third grade in 2011-12.
- Primary grades teachers changed their approach to reading instruction by using a balanced literacy approach.
- A team of seven staff members attended the extended training on personalized education that was provided by the district. They have been working to embed learning targets and progressions of learning into their instruction.
- Last summer, one of the fourth/fifth grade teachers attended AVID training and is working with her colleague to provide strong focus on the AVID strategies in fourth and fifth grades.
- This year, both Upper Elementary teachers are attending the Montessori training at Spring Valley Training Center this school year.

These changes have already dramatically increased student enrollment (now at 305), student engagement, and parent/community support. In addition, we have experienced dramatic reductions in our mobility rate and poverty rate (58%). Over time, these changes, combined with focused administrative attention to quality instruction will positively impact MSP scores.

However, we are not satisfied with our current indicators of growth on the MSP, and are intentionally focusing our efforts to significantly improve our students' achievement. We look to higher achievement as measured by the 2012 MSP, especially as we begin to see the impact of Montessori, the changes in reading instruction, influence of personalized instruction, targeted interventions for students, increase in collaboration through PLC's, and use of AVID strategies.

All of this is influenced by the presence of a stable instructional coach and actively involved principal with high expectations.

In the area of mathematics, we continue to see a significant need for improvement. An emphasis has been established on mathematics within our school as well as the district, which has communicated urgency and increased focus. Our teachers are participating in the periodic grade level meetings to discuss student work. Our academic coach is supporting teachers with implementation of Math Expressions through demonstration lessons, technical assistance with lesson planning and cooperative learning strategies, as well as management of the materials. In addition, we are providing systematic interventions to student in Grades 3-5 by having each at-risk student receive 30 minutes of pre-teaching prior to Walk to Math and providing a third level of intervention outside the school day.

OVERVIEW OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT
2011-2012

Continuous Improvement Process and Stakeholder Participation

The content of this plan began with the commitment the Tacoma School District has made to transform Geiger from its lowest performing school into a thriving, academically successful Montessori school. Using information from Bryant Montessori School's success combined with data regarding where we lose enrollment to (public and private), they decided to place a second Montessori school at Geiger. The West Slope Neighborhood Coalition, the local mosque, and Temple Beth El and local community members have been highly supportive of this plan and are working with us to communicate with their members.

The goals and strategies in this plan represent and are influenced by the work of our staff members within grade level teams and SCDM (Site Council). The specifics of our attached Action Plan set forth our school-wide reform efforts and are a result of the district's decision to launch a new choice program, our 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 student achievement. The establishment of goal and focus areas for our school's work is also established in partnership with our SCDM team, which (in addition to certificated and classified staff members) has three parent/PTA representatives and is led by a parent.

Review of Data to Establish Improvement

Achievement

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

Grade 3	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**
Reading	61.4	71.0	73.3	60.6	50.0	42.9
Mathematics	54.5	71.0	56.7	45.5	25.0	23.8

Grade 4	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**
Reading	62.5	67.6	61.3	59.1	41.9	48.1
Mathematics	33.3	51.4	61.3	36.4	19.4	11.1
Writing	60.0	70.3	29.0	31.8	61.3	25.9

Grade 5	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**
Reading	78.9	78.6	65.9	41.7	70.6	33.3
Mathematics	50.0	72.4	46.3	29.2	41.2	43.3
Science	34.2	62.1	31.7	12.5	17.6	20.0

This year, our work in reading is focused on several things:

1. Infusion of a rich Montessori language curriculum for students aged 3-8
2. Infusion of a balanced literacy program using the "Daily Five" and "Daily Café" in grades 1- 3.
3. Walk to Read for grades 4-5, with a variety of interventions that occur before, after and during the school day.
4. Ongoing formative assessment, with research on best practices for students who need supports and intervention to succeed.

In the area of Mathematics, our student's performance did not meet the state standard at any grade level. Because of the district's commitment to Montessori, our instructional focus in this area is two-pronged:

1. In the primary grades, implementing a waiver from the district math curriculum to fully implement Montessori, with a deep focus on standards and assessment, integration of the five core structures of math and ongoing review of formative assessments, and addition of components of Math Expressions that are not embedded in Montessori math curriculum. We have developed a matrix which aligns the common core standards, Washington State's performance expectations, Math Expressions and Montessori math materials.
2. In grades 4-5, we will continue to implement of our new math program with fidelity. We will use Walk to Math to create grade level instructional groups. The District's support of this work with the infusion of math coaches, ongoing professional development for teachers, coaches and principals combined with our school's weekly grade level collaboration sessions and the development of intervention and enrichment plans to respond to student achievement will all contribute to the work designed to significantly and positively influence our students' achievement.
3. Ongoing formative assessment and progress monitoring, with research on best practices for students who need supports and intervention to succeed.

Attendance

(Average daily attendance K-5)

2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-2011
94.4%	94.5%	94.1%	

We make daily phone calls home to confirm student absences. We use the BECCA process as a means to apply pressure and supports for families who are struggling with school attendance.

We had several students with chronic absenteeism that required close collaboration with the district's truancy officer. Hopefully, this work will show improvement in attendance rates during the 2011-2012 school year.

Planning for Transitions (between grade levels and grades)
Research tells us that students who struggle with school are most likely to "fall through the cracks" when transitioning from one grade span to the next. Knowing this, we have tried to bridge that gap in house. Our fifth grade teachers and counselor worked closely with the our designated feeder middle school to provide supports for students including 5th graders visiting Truman to tour the facility, teachers observing at Truman, and counselors' collaboration. In addition, transition summer school was provided for our outgoing fifth graders.

An exciting, recent development is that our school was one of several feeder elementary schools and middle schools included in a Raikes grant that is providing AVID training for our fifth grade teachers. This grant will provide us with the opportunity to provide a systematic approach to the middle school transition, deepening our capacity to support our students.

Characteristics of High Performing Schools
It is difficult to isolate just a few of the characteristics of high performing schools as they are so interrelated and foundational to the work. However there are three that emerged as needing our attention this year. This is particularly true because of the disruptive change that was brought to our school with the District's decision to make Geiger a Montessori school.

A **Clear and Shared Focus** is promoted through the strong alignment by all staff about our beliefs and values about working with children, about learning, and about our climate. This year, as we reconstituted ourselves as a Montessori school, we developed a new mission, vision and clearly articulated and commonly held beliefs about our students. We dedicated significant time to this task in 2010-11, and have come away with a clearly articulated and shared mission and vision.

High Levels of Collaboration and Communication. We addressed this characteristic through formal structures such as our weekly team meetings (attended by instructional coach and principal), Team Leaders, SCDM, HELP Team, SRT, and regularly scheduled staff meetings. We also used other communication tools such as our website, calendars, staff bulletin and other more informal structures.

Effective School Leadership is provided through a distributive leadership model which includes teachers and parents. Our SCDM (Site Council) has a representative structure that honors the voices of parents, PTSA and Golden Beads (nonprofit that supports Montessori); as well as grade level teams, classified staff and other members of the faculty.

Professional Development Opportunities
As we embark on our transition to becoming a Montessori school, our focus is on ensuring that teachers have rich opportunities to become more skillful in this very different way of teaching that includes three year multi-age groupings, and individualized teaching through a highly constructivist method. Therefore, Montessori training will be provided for all teachers who wish to work here but come without that initial training. This training is quite extensive and generally requires teachers to commute to Bothel five days a week for two summers or every Saturday for an entire school year.

Our academic coach and principal will continue to lead the work in implementing the elements of the 5 Dimensions of Teaching and Learning, ensuring the appropriate use of Learning Targets, student engagement and student discourse. *Student engagement will also be addressed through a*

Montessori lens: how are we ensuring that ALL students are actively engaging in academically rigorous work? What do we, as Montessorians, need to change in order to facilitate that engagement?.

In support of these goals, our teachers had multiple opportunities to observe one another and exemplary teachers in Tacoma as well as outside TPS as we moved toward excellent Montessori instruction, implementation of Math Expressions, the Five Dimensions of Teaching and Learning, personalized learning and AVID.

Recognition of Non-Academic Learning

At Geiger Montessori, we believe in educating the whole child. This belief is demonstrated by a strong emphasis on creating a focused, structured, and nurturing environment. Students are provided opportunities to explore the arts through after-school enrichment programs. A rich menu of cultural, arts and sciences assemblies and field trips are provided for all students, as well. Children are offered alternative and enrichment experiences such as an indoor game room as a recess alternative, before school band and orchestra explorations and ASB. PTSA has begun to provide after school arts enrichment opportunities. Overall, we work to promote the values of helping others, giving back to community, and the building of a collaborative work culture.

Safe and Supportive Learning Environment

The Geiger Montessori School staff is purposeful and intentional in its work to create a safe and supportive environment. Built upon the three school-wide expectations of "care for yourself, care for each other, and care for this place," our staff believes in the direct instruction, modeling, and ongoing practice of expected behaviors, as well as a focus on peace and conflict resolution within our school. There is a pervasive attitude that all Geiger students belong to all Geiger adults.

A no-tolerance approach to behaviors that violate safety and respect is combined with a supportive safety net through our HELP Team as well as a comprehensive counseling program for whole groups, small groups, and individual students. Working together, we actively and explicitly promote a safe and supportive learning environment for all students.

We have focused attention on safety related matters related to emergency preparedness as this has been an area of concern and relative weakness. Emergency supplies have been bolstered and coordinated, teachers received training on the Incident Command system, and parents assisted with drills.

Equity Issues

The District's focus on cultural competency and the Action Plan for closing the achievement gap drove our school's efforts last year. Our professional development in math and Montessori addressed culturally competent teaching strategies that can be applied to all subject areas. Intervention activities that include additional time for struggling students were built into the day and provided before and after school as well. In mathematics, eligible students were provided with 30 minutes of pre-teaching the day's math vocabulary and concepts prior to receiving whole group instruction. Because many of our students are on free or reduced lunch we acknowledged

that their learning needs cannot be met if their basic needs at home go unmet, therefore, our counselor continued to work with Tacoma 360 to assist in fulfilling needs in this area. We continued to explore options for creative funding opportunities for high poverty preschool children, so they can access the Montessori method during their "sensitive period."

Technology

Geiger Montessori continues to build upon the use of technology in a variety of ways to enhance student learning. Technology within the classroom includes regular access to computers in every classroom (two sets of laptops on COW's), two stationary PC computers in all classrooms, the daily use of document camera/LCD projector bundles in upper elementary classrooms, and opportunities for word processing, internet research for project-based learning. In addition, we have expanded instruction through technology by integrating "RazKids," "Think Central," Pearson and AR into instruction, interventions and family support opportunities.

Parent, Family and Community Involvement

We believe strongly in the power of parent and family involvement in our school and have worked very hard to develop a strong parent involvement component in our school program. We have added three parents to our SCDM, one is serving as the chairperson.

Last year, we had have several evenings where we brought parents onboard with Montessori pedagogy and our new math program so that they could know how to help their children at home. We will continue this practice this year. In addition, our counselor and classroom teachers will offer book studies, information nights on a variety of topics, and support parents who wish to observe and tour.

We have been building systems and supports to find volunteers, match them to jobs that need doing, have a number of volunteers who regularly work with children to support learning, who help monitor progress in reading and math, and who make classroom presentations in the arts. Beyond working with families, we have regularly sought out ways to partner with our greater community through such strategies as mentors from the neighborhood church, an annual food drive to support our families in need, food, clothing and back to school supply donations, and Veterans' Day presentations.

Coordination of Fiscal Services

Because of our transition to Montessori and into a new school, the District is supporting our development at a much higher rate than is usual. Our teachers have had their Montessori training funded and fully supported, and capital projects funds are being used to purchase Montessori materials. Tuition preschool funds paid for Montessori classroom assistants. Ending fund balance funds provided FTE for a preschool teacher as well as classroom assistants. Training will also include opportunities for a team of teachers to attend the AMS conference in San Francisco and to be trained on reading interventions for students who are struggling and falling off track developmentally. Our LAP budget will be used to support additional supports for struggling students.