

School Improvement Plan
Narrative Overview

Lowell Elementary School

OVERVIEW OF LOWELL 2010-2011

Welcome to Lowell Elementary School, home of the Leopards!

Lowell Elementary stands as the oldest school in the Tacoma School District, having been founded in 1869 in a log cabin on the corner of North 28th and Starr streets. Lowell's current building, built in 1951, is located in Tacoma's historic North End at the corner of No. 13th and No. Yakima Ave. A 7 classroom primary addition was added in 1961. Lowell houses 450 students in 20 classrooms. There are three classrooms at each grade level Kindergarten through Fifth grade, as well as an Autism (K-5) classroom and a Highly Capable (JAWS 3-5) class that supports Lowell students in addition to students from neighboring public and private schools.

Lowell's enrollment of 450 is made up of 3% Hispanic, 3% Native American, 7% Asian, 9% Black, and 78% White students. Our special education students represent 7% of our total student body. In addition, our Free and Reduced lunch percentage ranges between 20% and 25%.

At Lowell we currently have 24 classroom teachers with an average of 19 years of teaching experience. 50% of our teachers have a Master Degree and additional certification in their chosen field of study. Lowell maintains a partnership with numerous universities throughout the state of Washington, in addition to local community colleges, and several high schools, to provide perspective teachers with experience and our students with additional support for academic success.

Students are provided numerous opportunities to participate before, during, and after school in programs such as foreign language classes, after school art and science enrichment classes, seasonal activities such as the Running Club, noon intramurals, the All City Track meet, and the Punt, Pass, and Kick Competition. 5th grade students are able to attend band or orchestra class at Mason M. S. prior to the start of their school day and along with 3rd and 4th grade students participate in Lowell's 125 member Chorus.

Community and community service are not taken idly at Lowell. Community building events such as the Apple Cup Walk, the Jingle Bell Walk, the Leprechaun Walk, the Cocoa Concert, and the Welcome Back BBQ, contribute to the strong connection between home and school. Community service manifests itself in a very active food collection program. We begin our collection in September and continue it monthly as the year progresses. Each year we contribute nearly 10,000 items of food to the Food Connection. Lowell Elementary is a focal point of the community. The school is used after hours by the PTA, outside athletic teams, enrichment classes, and other community based groups. Many adults give of their time on a regular or as-needed basis at Lowell. Typically 300 registered volunteers provide assistance over the school

year in such activities as field trips, the Science Fair, Art Night, PTA Carnival, 5th Grade Camp, small group and individual tutoring, Green School Committee, Garden Club, and Art enrichment.

The Lowell PTA is recognized as an integral part of our school. The PTA board and members through hard work and fundraisers such as the 2010 Auction, Scrip, Academic Triathlon, Sally Foster, and Book Fairs, support numerous programs for our school and community. Lowell's library, school technology, enrichment in drama, creative writing, art, Thanksgiving Food baskets, the Holiday Giving Tree, 5th Grade Camp, and Walk Your Child to School Day are a few of the many endeavors supported by the Lowell PTA.

PROGRESS TOWARD PREVIOUS YEAR'S GOALS 2009-10

Our students' progress in the area of Reading, as measured by the 2010 Measurement of Student Progress (MSP), demonstrated overall that our students are continuing to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in this area. Yet, we did not achieve the expected results as set forth in our School Improvement Plan (SIP) goals for our third, fourth and fifth grade students on the 2010 MSP. We are not satisfied with our current indicators of growth on the MSP and are therefore intentionally focusing our efforts to significantly improve our students' achievements in this area. We look to higher achievement as measured by the 2011 MSP.

In the area of Mathematics, we see a significant area of improvement needed. Although our students continued to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in math, student performance as measured by the 2010 Measurement of Student Progress (MSP) did not achieve the expected results as set forth in our 2009-2010 SIP goals for our third and fourth grade students on the 2010 MSP. A significant emphasis on mathematics, along with many layers of support across our school district and within our school are needed, in order to effectively address the concerns in this area if we are to see a significant increase in the level of student performance in mathematics as measured throughout the school year with formative assessments and in a summative manner on the 2011 MSP.

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 2010-2011 year. The goals and strategies in this plan represent and are influenced by the ongoing work of our staff members within each grade level and as a part of whole-staff work sessions. The specifics of our attached Action Plan set forth our school-wide reform efforts and are a result of our staff's review of student assessment data, the prioritization of staff and grade level 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 SIP and/or SCDM team of which includes parent representation. Our PTA's focus on supporting learning at the classroom level, specifically through the infusion of technology and the support of the arts as well as opportunities to work with various students through programs such as our Learning Assistance Program (LAP), affords us the opportunity to both share and seek input from our stakeholders in the development of school areas of focus. This ongoing process influences our work and the establishment of our goals.

Review of Data to Establish Improvement

Achievement

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

| Grade 3 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |
|--------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Reading | 71.2 | 82.5 | 89.2 | 89.0 | 83.1 |
| Mathematics | 74.2 | 80.4 | 86.5 | 86.7 | 66.2 |

| Grade 4 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |
|--------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Reading | 90.6 | 86.2 | 82.8 | 86.3 | 78.7 |
| Mathematics | 66.0 | 73.8 | 82.8 | 71.1 | 72.0 |
| Writing | 69.8 | 78.5 | 82.8 | 62.7 | 85.3 |

| Grade 5 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |
|--------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Reading | 87.7 | 73.5 | 86.2 | 86.7 | 86.8 |
| Mathematics | 63.9 | 65.3 | 69.2 | 75.8 | 75.0 |
| Science | 48.6 | 40.8 | 40.0 | 51.6 | 55.3 |

The school-wide data from the 2010 MSP indicates marginal strength in Reading performance. This data matches the progress as measured in our primary classrooms using district and classroom-based assessments. Our students' performance on the Reading portion of the 2010 MSP indicates that our students made adequate yearly progress in grades 3-5. Our work in this area continues to be teachers coming together to review student work and reviewing ongoing formative assessments to make instructional decisions that support student learning interventions that are provided through our LAP program and our volunteer based Read Naturally (See action plan for specific intervention strategies.).

In the area of Mathematics, our student's performance at all grade levels met the state standard. Our instructional focus in this area will be the implementation of our new math program as we work to increase the level of academic success in mathematics. 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 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 (See action plan for specific intervention strategies).

Attendance

Lowell staff recognize that daily attendance is critical to the academic and social success of all students. We seek to support our families using our office staff, guidance counselor, school nurse, and principal. Daily, attendance personnel call the homes of absent students to check on their welfare. Lowell students that demonstrate excellent attendance are recognized at regular 60, 120 and 180 day intervals in support of their achievement. Our goal is to increase average daily attendance to 98% by 2015.

Attendance

(Average daily attendance K-5)

| 2007-08 | 2008-09 | 2009-10 |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 94.4% | 95.2% | 95.2% |

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, as part of our counselor’s guidance activities, 5th grade classroom visits to talk to students about middle school expectations occur after winter vacation and later in the spring middle school counselors come to our school to assist students in developing their 6th grade schedules. This series of discussions support the continuous day to day preparation our 5th grade teachers practice with students to ease the transition. Towards the end of the year, 5th grade teachers will communicate with 6th grade teachers to discuss students who have exceptional learning needs. This year we plan to add opportunities for 5th graders to spend a day at the school they will be attending where they will meet their “buddy” for the next year and get a feel for their new school. We also plan to build in summer activities for students that include home visits for those students who have had attendance problems in elementary school. Grade level transition activities will be conducted between the outgoing and incoming teachers who will discuss every child’s areas of strengths and any areas of concern.

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. We know that we really need to move in each of the nine areas of school improvement as outlined by the state, however there are three that emerge as needing particularly attention in this year’s work. 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. Differentiating instruction around math so that our teachers are identifying and supporting the learning needs of our student population will be what we will focus on this year. We will work continually on promoting and improving **High Levels of Collaboration and Communication**, which the Baker Evaluation Research Consulting (BERC) report indicated is an area with room for growth. We will address this characteristic through formal structures such as our regularly scheduled staff meetings, small team meetings (SCDM and grade level), and in LAP and Special Education programs that work with more informal strategies such as, regularly communicating and working interdependently with all staff about school-wide initiatives, teaching and learning goals, daily routines and procedures, and connecting with our school community. Finally, **Effective School Leadership**

is demonstrated by a range of staff members at Lowell Elementary. Small teams gather and set goals and one or more team members takes the lead for moving tasks forward and sharing with the whole group. Various staff members participate in district and state level leadership opportunities in order to bring the work back to our entire staff and lead particular ventures. In these larger, and in daily small situations, staff members are empowered and take the initiative to make decisions and move our professional work forward for the benefit of students and their learning.

Professional Development Opportunities

A great deal of the staffs' learning at Lowell is a result of our teachers coming together around student work and learning from each other as they constantly seek to improve their practice. More formal professional development from the district will inform our school-based training around our focus area of math. 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 and Student Engagement.

Highly Qualified Teachers

Leave Blank for CAB Title I staff to complete.

Recognition of Non-Academic Learning

At Lowell Elementary, 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, music and movement. Each classroom is provided the opportunity to perform a class play and all Lowell 5th graders participate in the longstanding tradition of our Spring Play. Children are offered alternative and enrichment experiences such as a rainy day indoor game room as a recess alternative, before school band and orchestra, an outdoor environmental education program at Camp Seymour for 5th grade students and varied (year to year) after-school enrichment activities for K-5. The Lowell garden provides students the opportunity to watch nature at work. Overall, we work to promote and recognize the values of helping others, giving back to the community, and the building of a collaborative work culture.

Safe and Supportive Learning Environment

The Lowell Elementary School staff is purposeful and intentional in its work to create a safe and supportive environment. Built upon three school-wide expectations of Respect, Responsibility, and Safety, our staff believe in the direct instruction, modeling, and ongoing practice of expected behaviors and attitudes for learning within our school. Lowell staff and students have adopted the Big 10 School Rules which are posted in all classrooms at all grade levels. The Rules are reviewed on a regular basis and emphasize safety and kindness. Lowell staff understand that elementary years are formative years and that teaching appropriate behavior while enforcing appropriate behavior are equally important tasks. A no-tolerance approach to behaviors that

violate safety, respect, and the instructional process, is combined with a supportive safety net through our 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.

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 Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) and now MSP show that our greatest gap is between our white student population and African American and Latino males in both math and reading. Our professional development in math will address culturally competent teaching strategies that can be applied to all subject areas. Intervention activities that include additional time for struggling students will be built into the day and additional assistance from the Learning Assistance Program (LAP) will be provided as well. The school administration and guidance counselor will continue to connect with outside agencies and resources that support our families in need.

Technology

Lowell Elementary continues to build upon the use of technology in a variety of ways to enhance student learning. Technology within the classroom includes access to computers in every room, the daily use of document camera/LCD projector bundles, opportunities for word processing, internet research for project-based learning, Smartboards and the use of a technology-supported computer lab and laptops on wheels. Our PTA's fundraising efforts this year have been focused in this area and have allowed us to purchase SMART Boards and SMART Slates toward this exciting next phase of technology infusion into the hands of our students.

Parent, Family and Community Involvement

We believe strongly in the power of parent and family involvement in our school and have worked hard over the years to have developed and nurtured a strong parent involvement component into our school program. We are fortunate to enjoy rich and intentional support from our PTA as they funnel their energies, talents and resources directly back to students and learning. Additionally, this year we will have several opportunities where we bring parents onboard with our new math program so that they know how to help their children at home. This will include Open House, Curriculum Night, and PTA meetings. We know that many of our parents work and are unable to volunteer in the classroom so we provide additional opportunities for parents to be involved in other very meaningful ways in their child's education. We do however, have an incredible 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 regularly seek out ways to partner with our greater community through such strategies as mentors from neighborhood and district organizations, annual food drives to support our families in need during the holidays, back to school supply donations, and Veterans' Day presentations.

Coordination of Fiscal Services

Much of what we are able to do to support student learning comes from our basic education budget. This is our district allocation which is actually quite small. We have also benefitted from a technology grant that provided for some SMART Boards and laptops, so that now every

teacher will have a district issued laptop that may be transported between school and home. Fundraising through our PTA has allowed us to purchase additional technology this fall, attend professional development workshops, and allow classrooms to go on field trips. Learning Assistance Program (LAP) funds are utilized to support student achievement and NCLB efforts with small group tutoring and some 1:1 interventions.