

Mason Middle School

Tacoma Public Schools

Narrative of School Improvement Plan, 2010-2011

Mason Middle School, Context

- Mason Middle School is located in Tacoma, Washington
- Mason Middle School has 828 students, 55 staff members
- Our school is located in an urban setting
- 26% of our students receive free or reduced lunch
- Mason's enrollment in 2009 was 780, in fall, 2010 it rose to 828
- Mason's students are 1.3% American Indian, 4.6% Asian, 5.3% Pacific Islander, 7.9% Black, 4.9% Hispanic, 81% White

Progress Towards Previous Year's Goals, 2009-2010

- Mason's scores in all areas on the Measurement of Student Progress are flat, falling approximately 10% short of previous year's goals in all tested areas.
- Mason followed-through on all initiatives from the 2009-2010 plan to improve achievement, including standards based instruction, increased formative and summative assessment, pacing guides for Math, and increased parent communication.

Review of Data to Establish Improvement

Achievement

Spring, WASL and MSP Data (expressed as percentage of students meeting standard):

Grade 6	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Reading	77.6%	83.1%	74%	81.8%	72%
Mathematics	59.8%	64.5%	59.3%	61.7%	60%

Grade 7	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Reading	70.7%	75.6%	79%	66.5%	66.4%
Mathematics	56.4%	65.4%	68%	63.9%	59.2%
Writing	64.5%	76.7%	81.1%	75.2%	74.4%

Grade 8	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Reading	78.4%	71%	73.6%	79.8%	73.9%
Mathematics	60.2%	60%	66%	62.1%	58.2%
Science	55.7%	46.4%	63%	64.6%	62.8%

Attendance (Average Daily Attendance at Mason Middle School)

2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
96.54%	97.64%	94.1%

Continuous Improvement Process and Stakeholder Participation

Mason Middle School has strengths and areas for improvement which include:

- A knowledgeable and experienced teaching staff focused on student success
- Content and Grade Level Teams meet regularly to assess student data and align that data to classroom instruction for multiple opportunities for success
- Teachers participate in continual improvement process by participating in book studies focused on increasing differentiated instruction into best practices
- Renewed commitment to IBD program among Language Arts teachers to support reading, writing, and thinking which will be aligned with state standards
- Peer coaching and sharing of high yield instructional strategies by participation in Math Studios
- One on one tutoring provided by AmeriCorps volunteers for students not meeting standard in Reading and Math
- After school L.A.P tutoring for students with math scores less than 400 on MSP
- College Bound Scholarship opportunities provided for free and reduced lunch students
- Application for AVID Grant for increased academic rigor within socially cohesive student network
- Additional staff needed to meet the needs of a growing student population

Planning for Transitions

- Mason has received the Raikes Grant to support students in transition from elementary to middle school
- Mason Mustang Advisory Program supports transitions by providing a community focus for students that address's the social and academic needs that occur within the transitional process
- Mason holds open house for new students, and makes visits to feeder elementary schools.

Characteristics of High Performing Schools

Clear and Shared Focus- Mason staff has developed clear and shared focus and can articulate the vision and belief statements and feel they understand its purpose.

- Many important decisions are based on the mission statement which is *to promote a safe, successful, and rigorous academic community for diverse learners*. This includes district wide and state wide program goals of standards-based instruction
- Mason's School Centered Decision Making team guides the school in, "improving student learning and in the implementation of the school improvement plan," The school improvement plan includes guiding principles for improvements with a strong focus on standards-based instruction. This guides decisions that lead to continuous school improvement and growth

High Standards and Expectations for All Students

- Mason staff members are dedicated to constant improvement and change and meet regularly in content and grade level meetings to support learning that aligns with standards
- Mason staff meets after school to partipate in book studies to increase skill of high- yield instructional strategies, especially focused on differentiating instruction to meet the needs of all students
- According to the 2009-2010 Climate Survey, and felt that "teachers are teaching us a work ethic and the importance of being disciplined."
- Teachers are working to increase student opportunity to question and re-question for clearer understanding

Characteristics of High Performing Schools (cont)

Effective School Leadership

- Principal at Mason Actively recruits highly qualified staff members who reflect the demographics of the school
- Staff monitors students according to implementation of Standards Based Instruction
- Principal makes regular formal and informal visits to the classroom and uses walkthroughs to assess posted learning targets and level of student engagement
- Staff members report that instruction has improved as teachers begin to take responsibility to post learning targets
- Staff reports a desire for more peer observations to improve work already done at grade level, with content meetings, and critical friends and feels they could benefit from this in terms of improved instruction, and to discuss changes that need to be made
- SCDM team consists of representatives from each team, ASB advisor, administrator, counselor, classified staff member, librarian, technology staff member, a parent, tow teacher leaders to make decisions centered on standards of behaviors, academics, an building concerns for students and staff members.
- Staff is open to assume leadership roles and willingly assumes responsibility for programs that enhance student achievement and acknowledge hard working students, such as reward programs, and special events that enhance learning such as Finance Park Field Trips

High Levels of Collaboration and Communication

- Individual planning time is given to each teacher at Mason Middle School in order to manage and structure classroom logistics and events
- Staff willingly participates in Book Studies to enhance teaching and learning and to assimilate high yield instructional strategies, with the current focus on differentiated instruction
- Staff members meet before school, afterschool, and at ling to review data and discuss strategies and classroom management, and work on interventions
- Teachers expressed a strong desire for a common planning time at grade level, which increased staff could possibly accommodate
- Mason Middle School uses a variety of methods to communicate with school

community including the Booster Club, emails, teacher websites, Connect-Ed, a monthly newsletter, student planners, coffee get-togethers, and phone calls to parents

- Staff members hold special conferences for at-risk students in danger of failing and report immediate parent contact if a child is struggling
- SCDM decisions are distributed to staff via email

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessments Aligned with State Standards

- Mason Middle School uses Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALR's), Grade Level Expectations (GLE's), and Performance Expectations (PE's) to guide student learning
- Curriculum materials provided take care to ensure curriculum is aligned with the state standards
- Learning Targets are posted and referred to within the lesson in every classroom in Mason Middle School
- High expectations are communicated daily to students through the learning target
- Staff uses Standards Based Instruction as a strategy for school improvement
- Assessment data is gathered from District tests, SRI, MSP and unit and classroom based assessment both summative and formative
- Curriculum assessments discussed in Math Studio and IBD are incorporated into lessons on a daily basis
- Staff members reported that assessment data is used to provide meaningful information about student achievement and identify students with special needs

Frequent Monitoring of Learning and Teaching

- Students of need are supported through Mason Mustangs, and advisory class where goals for academic and personal growth are articulated by students and monitored on a regular basis
- TAD data is used and accessed by all Mason Staff which gives the opportunity to provide regular review of data and monitor progress
- MSP data is combined with other formative and summative assessments to identify student need and build support for those students

- Student learning plans are available for high-performing and low-performing students
- Regular meetings take place to identify concerns for Special education and struggling students
- High risk conferences for students who are struggling occur at key times of school year
- After school homework club, and one on one tutoring are available
- Teachers will participate in frequent monitoring of student data in math and literacy using Math Studios and IBD systems of collaboration and decision making to inform instruction

Focused Professional Development

- Staff is encouraged to use professional development opportunities provided by the district for instructional improvement
- Professional development meetings to align curriculum by grade level and content are planned by the literacy coach and attended by Mason Staff
- A Literacy Coach works regularly with teachers for work-embedded professional development that meets the concerns of each individual teacher. Pre, and post conferences for non-evaluative feedback occur on a regular basis, as per teacher request
- Book Study's that focus on six hours of guided practice to apply concepts in Fulfilling the Promise of Differentiated Instruction, by Carol Ann Tomlinson will be attended by the majority of staff members
- A pilot group of language arts teachers will be participating in regular IBD trainings and Peer Learning Labs

Supportive Learning Environment

- Mason Middle School provides a safe and orderly environment for all students
- The climate is warm and friendly
- Honor Level Management Program is in place and provides a proactive reward system that is geared toward creating positive behaviors in students
- Mason Mustang Advisory Program works on anti-bullying strategies that help decrease negative behaviors
- Teachers and administrators build relationships with students. They meet with

students daily and often eat lunch with them in order to bond more fully and provide opportunities for informal positive interaction

- Counselors actively work with students to help them to accept responsibility for their behavior and work toward positive change
- Award assemblies and special events acknowledge building positive social and academic skills

High Levels of Community and Family Involvement

- Staff members at Mason have systems in place for effective home/school communication to notify of behavior and attendance, and academic progress
- Partnerships with community organizations are strong. The Booster Club does regular fundraising to supplement additional money for teacher classroom supplies and fundraisers go to events not covered by the district
- Local businesses such as Starbucks and the Blue Mouse Theatre help provide incentives for students
- Parents and high school students volunteer to help regularly in classrooms

Professional Development Opportunities

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Highly Qualified Teachers

- District provided trainings are well attended by Mason Staff
- An Instructional Facilitator is available and in building three days a week to provide ongoing, job embedded staff development
- Para educators and other educators attend both district and school workshops
- All staff is encouraged to participate in all Reading and Math curriculum and assessment
- Parents are informed of their right to know their teachers and para-educators qualifications
- Many building teachers have completed their National Board or the Professional Certification Process
- All teachers in Tacoma are required to meet the NCLB highly qualified teacher requirements

Recognition of Additional Academic Learning

- One on one tutoring in Math is provided with an Americorp education specialist
- Regular award ceremonies acknowledge academic achievement of students who exceeded expectations
- Mason Mustang Advisory meetings help students to assess their social and academic accomplishments and emphasis, “giving knowledge and acquired skills back to your community
- Highly Qualified students are encouraged in accelerated academic rigor
- Student’s participate in Junior Achievement to increase knowledge and apply skills to informational text, and apply the learning beyond the classroom

Safe and Supportive Learning Environment

- Mason Middle School provides a safe and orderly environment for all students
- The climate is warm and friendly
- In August, 2010, staff developed a new management program that provides a proactive reward system that is geared toward creating positive behaviors in students
- Mason staff volunteer to supervise areas outside of their classroom to help improve staff visibility and increase safety
- Mason Mustang Advisory Program works on anti-bullying strategies that help decrease negative behaviors
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Equity Issues

- Staff encouraged to participate in culturally relevant district trainings
- All students participate in anti-harassment assemblies
- Anti-bullying messages are delivered weekly during school news broadcasts
- Mason has equal access and opportunities to athletics and clubs for girls and boys

Technology

- Mason has three “computers on wheels” consisting of classroom sets of wireless laptop computers
- Teachers have students use computers for research, and use various software applications for communicating learning
- All Mason teachers post student grades online on a weekly basis
- Parents may easily contact teachers through classroom websites and email

Parent and Family Involvement

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