

School Improvement Plan
Narrative Overview

Point Defiance Elementary School

OVERVIEW OF SCHOOL
2011-2012

Point Defiance Elementary is a supportive, and caring community. Pt. D is a place where commitment and dedication to the success of each and every student is demonstrated by staff, students, and parents. We are a school where commitment and dedication to the success of each and every student is evidence through academic rigor, high expectations for all, and instruction of the state standards. We focus on the whole child by providing a variety of academic and social support services such as: Head start, three full-day kindergarten programs, a ELL and LAP resources, and an LRC room.

Point Defiance is located on the North End of Tacoma. The student population is around 450 students. It is made of 71% white and 29% a mix of all other ethnicities. We presently have over 100 students who are of Russian decent and 66 who are served in the ELL program. These wonderful students make up about 25% of our population. We are well over 60% of our students are of poverty level receiving free and reduced breakfast and lunch. This is a difference over 40% in the past ten years and changes the dynamics of our community drastically.

At Point Defiance we currently have 20 classroom teachers with an average of 13.2 years of teaching experience. Our certificated staff has 39.1% having a Master Degree and additional certification in their chosen field of study. Our partnerships with the University of Puget in a collaborative partnership allows our staff the opportunity to gain additional inservice opportunities.

Point Defiance offers students the opportunity to be placed in reading and math levels that sustain learning goals over time. We currently offer an uninterrupted 90 minute reading block and a 70 minute math block school wide. Point Defiance also receives funds through LAP, a federal program to provide additional reading and math assistance to students. Our after school tutoring sessions are attended by students who need additional support in math and reading.

Point Defiance is also the home of one of the district's SAIL Programs. This is a self-contained advanced individual learning program which serves 4th and 5th graders. It is a program for children who demonstrate exceptional ability, exceed grade level standards in literacy and math, demonstrate exceptional creativity and possess strong motivation to excel.

Our fifth grade students are able to partake in band and orchestra at Truman prior to the start of their school day. We take pride in the fact that our library is open before and after school to make sure children have many opportunities to take Accelerated Reading Tests. Over the past five years, our PTA and generous donations from community organizations have spent considerable time and effort into purchasing rich and diverse books for students of all ages.

Fifth graders also have begun learning about AVID programs (Advancement Via Individual Determination). This is an in-school academic support program that prepares students for college eligibility. This program has allowed our school to have a strong collaboration with Truman Middle schools where approximately 95% of our students go from the elementary setting.

Community Partners support our children with their time and generous donations. Point Defiance Rotary Tacoma North, Round Table Pizza, FISH network food bank, Tacoma Elks, University of Puget Sound, Shari's Restaurant, Pizza Hut, St. Luke's Memorial Church.

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 our students are continuing to make Adequate Yearly Progress in this area. Students in grade three performed with 84.3%, and students in grade 4, 74.7% of students meeting standard in Reading. While this progress represented growth in our third grade scores, we did not achieve the expected results as measured by our fifth grade students as measured on the 2011 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 saw a significant area of improvement in our 3rd grades by a score of 74.3% and 62.1% in 4th grade passing the math portion of the MSP. Our student's performance as measured by the 2010 MSP did not meet our established targets in the 5th grades. A significant emphasis on mathematics, along with many layers of support across our school district and within our school in order to effectively address the concerns in this area is needed 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 by the 2012 MSP.

OVERVIEW OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT 2011-2012

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 school year. The goals and strategies in this plan represent and are influenced by the ongoing work of our staff members within grade level teams 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 team goals, and the articulation of specific next steps in our work toward student achievement. One addition to our staff this year is having an Instructional Facilitator in math. Even though she is only in our building .5 FTE, we are using her expertise to emphasize math. The establishment of goal and focus areas for our school's work is also too established in partnership with our SCDM and/or SIP team. Our PTA's focus on supporting learning at the classroom level, specifically through the infusion of the support of the arts as well as opportunities to work with various families through field trips, parent nights and health and safety issues effecting our community. Our 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

GRADE 3	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Reading	67.4	72.7	75.5	74.6	73.3	84.3
Math	48.9	78.2	75.4	70.4	68.3	74.3

Grade 4	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Reading	75.0	66.1	72.0	78.5	75.3	74.7
Math	45.9	51.8	54.0	44.6	46.6	62.1
Writing	66.7	53.6	58.0	62.2	64.4	69.0

Grade 5	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Reading	69.2	72.6	73.2	63.2	73.9	62.1
Math	23.1	62.9	53.6	57.9	40.6	48.5
Science	14.8	24.2	35.7	42.1	39.1	48.3

The school-wide data from the 2011 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 2011 MSP indicates that our students made adequate yearly progress in grade 3 and 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 in the classrooms.

In the area of Mathematics, our student's performance at all grade levels made growth toward the goal for the year. Our instructional focus in this area will be the implementation of our 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 (PLC's), 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.

Attendance

At Point Defiance we believe daily attendance is critical for the success of every child! We have established a three tier approach to working with and supporting families who find it difficult to have their children attend school on a daily basis. We seek to support families using our counselor to promote motivation in classrooms by giving "100% Attendance Award" and a trophy to the top class at semester, daily phone calls and reminder letters by our secretary and ASB announcement daily for perfect attendance. Students are beginning to understand the importance of being here everyday on time. Beneficial Life Insurance supports our school at the end of the year with a bike drawing for any child who has not missed any school. Monthly

“Target” cards are provided to five lucky students at the Student-of-the-month assembly for perfect attendance.

Attendance

(Average daily attendance K-5)

2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011
93.9%	93.8%	93.3%	94.2%

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 develop their 6th grade schedules. Towards the end of the year 5th and 6th grade teachers meet to discuss students who have exceptional learning needs. Pt. Defiance has also been fortunate enough to be part of the Raikes Foundation Grant this year and having the AVID program as part of our 5th grade learning. Our 5th grade teachers attended a workshop last summer and are on a committee with Truman and Mason Middle school to discuss how to better make the transition from Elementary to Middle School (see above on overview).

Our transition from area preschools, daycare centers and head start continue to be strength in our building. Starting in early March, a collaborative team has been established to partner with early childhood providers in our area to provide ongoing visitation and information about transitioning to the public school system. Families are invited to Point Defiance to meet with the staff members in throughout the spring and summer months.

We will continue to be a part of the Head Start Transition Grant that brings together community early childhood centers in our area where monthly meetings are held to align early childhood goals with Tacoma school district Kindergarten curriculum and expectations for student success..

In late August, our Kindergarten teachers conduct “*Popsicles with Teachers*” for one afternoon for our new Kindergarten students and families. This provides an opportunity for the children to preview the school, meet new friends, and have families questions answered prior to the start of school.

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 diverse student population will be what we will focus on this year. Our **BERC report indicated we needed improvement on collaboration and communication within our learning environment.** Our goal this year is to work continually on promoting **High Levels of Collaboration and Communication.** We will address this characteristic through formal structures such as our weekly collaboration time that's built into the school day, regularly scheduled staff meetings, and small team meetings. Programs that will work in conjunction with our more informal strategies for regularly communicating and working interdependently with all staff about school-wide initiatives, teaching and learning goals, daily routines and procedures, while connecting with our school community.. Finally, **Effective School Leadership** is demonstrated by a range of staff members at Point Defiance 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 Point Defiance 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 coaches 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. Our teachers are also involved with two book studies this year covering such topics as assessment and coaching.

Highly Qualified Teachers

- Provisions for staff training in Tacoma include opportunities, incentives and compensation. The district provides a broad spectrum of classes on assessment, standards-based instruction and best practices in the content areas. Staff members receive extra pay to attend these classes and clock hours/university credits are frequently offered. The district also supports and encourages school-based training that support the school's SIP goals with building-based optional day pay for certificated staff. In addition to classes, instructional facilitators at each LAP school provide ongoing, job embedded staff development. Para educators and other staff receive workshop pay to attend both district and school workshops. Para educators and other staff are encouraged to participate in all Reading and Math curriculum and assessment professional development.
- Parents are informed in the Parent Handbook of their right to know their teachers and Para-educators qualifications.
- HQ Para-educators meet a rigorous standard of quality and can demonstrate knowledge and ability in instructing reading, mathematics and writing.
- Tacoma actively recruits highly-qualified staff with our job fair, letters of intent, recommendations to hire and applicant searches. We seek to attract and keep highly-qualified staff at our school by providing opportunities for quality staff development and professional growth.

All teachers in Tacoma are required to meet the NCLB highly qualified teacher requirement. Human Resources send each school a list of the teachers with their teaching qualifications. THE SCHOOL principal signs an attestation form to confirm all staff are highly qualified. In the event

that a staff member does not meet the highly qualified requirements, a NCLB Plan of Assistance is developed for the teacher.

Recognition of Non-Academic Learning

At Pont Defiance Elementary, 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 drama with the Broadway Center After School Program. PTA sponsors the Reflection Program and Artist in Residence to bring additional art into our school. In addition our students study, cultivate and grow fruits and vegetables in our garden. Last year over 200 pounds of food were giving back to community and elderly neighbors. Students learned the importance of “paying forward” and building of a collaborative work culture. In the 2011-2012 school year we have added a component of “Hip-Hop” for after school activities with the YMCA and our PTA sponsoring this program. Our first session of 2nd and 3rd graders had over 45 students attending school for an extra hour of exercise and fun. This program helps promote the standards our Physical Education Teacher is promoting in his classes.

Point Defiance also has space available for Champions Day Care on site. This is an opportunity for parents to know they drop off and pick up their child at school. We have worked with the company to provide a homework club and opportunities for students to read and take tests on the Accelerated Reading program while at Champions.

Safe and Supportive Learning Environment

The Point Defiance Elementary School staff is purposeful and intentional in its work to create a safe and supportive environment. Built upon the three school-wide expectations of Respect, Responsibility, and Safety, our staff believes in direct instruction, modeling, and ongoing practice of expected behaviors and attitudes for learning within our school. A no-tolerance approach to behaviors that violate safety and respect is combined with a supportive safety net through our 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 WASL and now MSP show that we have **narrowed the gap** between our Caucasian student population and minority students 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 provided after school. Because many of our students that are on free or reduced lunch are struggling academically, we acknowledge that their learning needs cannot be met if their basic needs at home go unmet. Therefore, we will continue to work with our community partners such as the Rotary Tacoma North, Round Table Pizza, FISH network food bank, Tacoma Elks, University of Puget Sound, Farrelli’s Pizza, Shari’s Restaurant, Pizza Hut, and St. Luke’s Memorial Church.

Technology

Point Defiance Elementary 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, the daily use of document camera/LCD projector bundles, opportunities for word processing, internet research for learning, and the use of a technology lab and a school wide Computer on Wheels.

Our students, staff and parents love the opportunity to read and get motivational/acknowledgement with awards for reading.

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 a strong parent involvement component into our school program. We are fortunate to enjoy a rich and intentional support from our PTA as they funnel their energies and resources directly back to students and learning. Additionally, we have used our LAP money to provide for family curriculum nights where we have taught parents how to help students with academic needs. This year we will have several evenings where we bring parents onboard with our new math program so that they know how to help their children at home. We know that many of our parents work and are unable to volunteer in the classroom so we provide these opportunities so parents can be involved in very meaningful ways in their child's education. We do however, have a number of volunteers who regularly work with children to support learning, who help monitor progress in reading and math, and who make positive relationships during lunch time activities. Beyond working with families, we regularly seek out ways to partner with our greater community through such strategies as mentors from the neighborhood an annual food drive to support our families in need during the holidays, back to school supply donations, after school enrichment programs, and the hat and glove program.

Coordination of Fiscal Services

Much of what we are able to do to support student learning comes from our LAP funding as a flow through from the school district. TITLE I office. Curriculum and Instruction provides professional development. Research and evaluation provides data and instructional support while purchasing supports expenditures. Human Resources facilitate staffing and provide Highly Qualified information. The Tacoma School District provides technical assistance for school improvement including School, Family and Community Partnership liaisons, Finance, Elementary Directors and Instructional Coaches. While categorical and basic education funds are tracked separately in Tacoma, the programs work together to meet the needs of all students. Finding resources through grants help our school with additional activities such as our recycling and grow lab. A grant from the Science Center brought "Science on Wheels" to our school and the Puyallup Farm. Students were able to enrich their knowledge of science. Our PTA supports many facets of the school from buying library books to providing additional funds for projects in the classroom. Our 5th graders were also able to attend "Science Camp" at Camp Seymour by coordination from our PTA and parent programs.