

School Improvement Plan
Narrative Overview

Whittier Elementary School

**PROGRESS TOWARD PREVIOUS YEAR'S GOALS
2010-11**

Our 3rd and 4th grade 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 (89.76%) and grade four (87.5%) met targets for meeting standards in Reading. While this progress represented growth in our third and fourth grade scores, we did not achieve the expected growth in our fifth grade (69.4%) 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 2012 MSP.

In the area of Mathematics, we saw significant area of improvement in 3rd and 4th grade. Although students in fifth grade met established targets, our student's performance in grades 3 and 4 as measured by the 2010 MSP did not meet targets. 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 on the 2011 MSP.

**OVERVIEW OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT
2011-12**

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 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. The establishment of goal and focus areas for our school's work is also 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 technology and the support of the arts as well as opportunities to work with various families 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	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Reading	68.0	82.2	83.8	89.2	89.7
Mathematics	70.7	72.6	64.7	66.3	73.5

Grade 4	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Reading	69.4	76.4	89.4	78.1	88.6
Mathematics	73.5	76.4	60.6	60.9	68.4
Writing	73.5	73.6	500	59.4	69.6

Grade 5	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Reading	78.2	91.1	79.4	88.0	70.8
Mathematics	60.0	68.9	60.3	86.0	72.9
Science	37.0	64.4	69.8	46.0	66.7

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 met improvement targets in grades 3 and 4, but not in grade 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 and layers of intervention that are provided through our Walk to Read and Learning Assistance Program. (See action plan for specific intervention strategies.)

In the area of Mathematics, our student's performance at all grade levels met Adequate Yearly Progress on state standards, but we did not meet our improvement targets in grades 5. 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 Response to Intervention Model (RTI) and LAP Program will all contribute to the work designed to significantly and positively influence our students' achievement. (See action plan for specific intervention strategies.)

Attendance

(Average daily attendance K-5)

2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
95.3%	95.4%	95.8%

The Whittier staff promotes regular school attendance by encouraging and recognizing students with exemplary attendance. Students with perfect monthly attendance are recognized at our Terrific Kids Assemblies, receive a certificate and have their picture posted on the Perfect Attendance Bulletin Board. Student Assist Teams are convened to develop action plans with

parents of students having chronic attendance issues. The school works as partners with the parents to address the issue. The Whittier front office makes daily phone calls to confirm student absences and completes BECCA notices if needed. Whittier attempts to create an environment where students, parents, teachers, staff and administrators see attendance as a primary responsibility. We consistently respond to attendance data in a way that communicates the importance of being in school.

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, our counselor’s guidance activities include 5th grade classroom visits to talk to students about middle school. This occurs after winter vacation then 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. 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 in general get a feel for their new school. Between our K-4 classrooms grade level transition activities will be conducted between the outgoing and incoming teachers who will discuss every child’s areas of strengths and concern.

Whittier is also participating in the Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID) program this school year. This is a program being implemented in Mason Middle School and Truman Middle School and each of the fifteen elementary schools that feed into them. This transitional program is designed to provide our students with the skills, strategies, and support necessary for their academic success during this pivotal developmental stage in their lives. Implementing the program at both the elementary level and at the middle school level will provide a structure that is consistent and comprehensive even as students move from one location to another in our district.

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 need to deepen and strengthen 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 of all staff about our beliefs and values around working with children, about student learning, instructional best practices and the building climate. Differentiating instruction around reading and math so that our teachers are identifying and supporting the learning needs of our diverse student population will be what we focus on this year. We work continually on promoting **High Levels of Collaboration and Communication**. We will address this characteristic through formal structures such as collaboration time that’s built into the school schedule, regularly scheduled staff meetings, and small team meetings in our LAP and Special Education programs that will work in conjunction with our more informal strategies for regular communication and working interdependently with all staff around 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 Whittier Elementary. Small teams gather and set goals then 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 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' professional development at Whittier 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.

This year teachers will attend the district Math PLCs to further analyze student work to guide their instruction. Each teacher will also develop math portfolios for a minimum of five of their students. A district math assessment will be implemented four times during the school year so teachers can track their students' progress and make instructional adjustments.

Highly Qualified Teachers

Leave Blank for CAB Title I staff to complete.

Recognition of Non-Academic Learning

At Whittier 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. Children are offered alternative and enrichment experiences such as before school band, choir and orchestra explorations and an after-school art, piano, sewing, Math Club and intramural sports. Students have the opportunity to perform throughout the year during school assemblies. Second and third grade students will be participating in the First Chess program this year. 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 Whittier Elementary School staff continues to 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. We have adopted the CHAMPS Approach to teach a proactive and positive approach to building and classroom management. A no-tolerance approach to behaviors that violate safety and respect 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 continue to drive our school's efforts this year. Our performance data trends on the WASL and now MSP show that our greatest gap is between our white students and students from other ethnicities in both reading and math. 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 as well. Because many of our students are on free or reduced lunch we acknowledge that their learning needs cannot be met if their basic needs at home go unmet, therefore, our counselor will continue to work with Tacoma 360 to assist in fulfilling needs in this area.

Technology

Whittier Elementary continues to build upon the use of technology in a variety of ways to enhance student learning. Technology within the classroom includes the daily use of document camera/LCD projector bundles, opportunities for word processing, internet research for project-based learning, and the use of a technology-supported student publishing center. Our PTA's fundraising efforts allowed us to purchase another group of laptops toward this exciting next phase of technology infusion into the hands of our students. The PTA has also purchased a Smart Board that is stored in the library and can be checked out for classroom use. This school year we will be preparing students in grades 3-5 to take the MSP on-line by having them take reading unit assessments and the math DMA tests on-line.

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 develop 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 Learning Assistance Program money to provide for family curriculum nights where we have taught parents how to help students with homework and math. 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 other the 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 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 the neighborhood church, an annual food drive 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 district general education allocation, Learning Assistance Program budget and PTA contributions. Fundraising through our PTA allows for educational field trips, enrichment assemblies, extended day art and piano classes, and upgraded technology.