

School Improvement Plan
Narrative Overview

Baker Middle School

PROGRESS TOWARD PREVIOUS YEAR'S GOALS
2009-10

Baker Middle School is truly a community school. Baker provides an excellent learning environment for students and hosts many community events during the school year. Our students represent many cultures, ethnic backgrounds and traditions. Baker also provides services to the deaf/hard-of-hearing population as well as English language learning students from across the district. Baker is a school that appreciates and celebrates diversity of its student body.

Because we serve a diverse student population, with many different types of learners, Baker offers an array of supplemental learning programs and activities. Those programs include: English Language Learner classes, Learning Assistance Program (LAP), special education classes, Extended Learning Opportunity program and the 21st Century afterschool homework program. Each of these programs provide extra opportunities for our students to learn and practice new skills and knowledge---as well as to complete their homework. In addition to these curriculum based classes/opportunities, our students are able to participate in interscholastic sports, after school clubs (e.g. Art Club, Chess Club, Cooking Club), SPARX, HERO and TRIO programs (which prepares students for high school and beyond.) We have also added a Communities In Schools Coordinator for the 2010-2011 school year to connect students and families to resources. These programs enhance student learning and provide students with new opportunities to develop their skills.

In December of 2011, Baker will be moving to a new building currently under construction directly next to the present building. This will move Baker Middle School from South 84th Street and "I" street to a less congested South 80nd Street and South "I" Street. The students and staff are excited for this upcoming change and expect it will continue to enhance the learning process here at Baker Middle School.

While we did see an increase in Reading and Science in our 8th grade, we did not reach performance goals set for Reading and Math as a building. The most significant area for improvement is in Mathematics. The new District Math adoption, professional development for Math teachers, and formative assessments will address many of the concerns we face with our Math performance.

Baker had no performance "Gap" between the scores of minority students and Caucasian students in 6th grade Reading. This is a cause for celebration. However, we still see a gap of up to 11% in other areas. While this is lower than many district and state scores, it is still unacceptable. Baker's goal is to have no performance gap for any group of student represented in our community. A major focus for our development over the next five years will be to address this issue.

OVERVIEW OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT
2010-11

Continuous Improvement Process and Stakeholder Participation

Baker's School Improvement plan represents ongoing work from the 2009-2010 school year as well as new goals set for 2010-2015. All members of school staff, and representatives of as many other stakeholders as possible, participate in the planning process. Participants reviewed a broad database that includes information about student achievement, demography, learning environment, and perceptions about the school. These goals are aligned to District Improvement goals and taken from the School Improvement Plan Team (SIP) to the School Centered Decision Making Team (SCDM) for approval. School improvement planning is a journey of continuous improvement, and the plan is a road map for an ongoing discourse on school improvement.

The written plan document is only as good as the quality of thought that goes into it and the time and commitment that is given by everyone who has a stake in the plan. Regardless of the quality of the plan, the real improvement must occur in the classroom. Teachers must be willing to be reflective about their practice and tenacious in their attempts to fine-tune the art of teaching to meet the needs of every student. Readiness is a primary factor and can have a major impact on staff cohesiveness, trust levels and perhaps most important, student growth. It is for this reason that much of our professional development revolves around quality teaching. In addition to implementing standards based lessons, Baker uses a "teacher as trainer" model to deliver 6 sessions of professional development on Classroom Assessment for Student Learning by Rick Stiggins. The focus on quality formative assessment will increase the quality of instruction in all subjects. All Baker staff participate in Professional Learning Labs where they are able to observe colleagues classrooms and reflect on their own teaching. Because Baker serves a diverse community, staff have been trained on strategies by both Donna M. Beegle, Ed.D and Dr Sharroky Hollie on culturally responsive teaching and teaching to students of poverty.

Review of Data to Establish Improvement

Achievement

Spring, 2010 MSP Data (expressed as percentage of students meeting standard):

Grade 6	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Reading	51.6	47.7	54.5	53.3	42.7
Mathematics	22.2	38.2	34.3	33.9	32.4

Grade 7	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Reading	43	62.1	53	44.4	45.6
Mathematics	17.8	40.2	41.3	32.1	31.9
Writing	48.9	54.3	72.5	69.4	61.7

Grade 8	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Reading	60.5	51.3	49.1	55.5	56.9
Mathematics	32.2	24.1	33.6	39.2	31.5
Science	21	19.6	21.7	27.5	38.7

While we did see small increases in Reading for the 7th and 8th grade students, our overall reading goal was not achieved. Minority students and white students had identical Reading scores in the 6th grade, there was an average gap of 10% in the seventh and eight grade Reading scores. To reach our goal of 100% by 2015, we will need to see an annual increase of 11% across grade levels and a 13% annual increase for gap students. Our focus on formative assessment in Peer Learning Labs (PLLs), our intervention and LAP classes, and focus on standards based instruction will be key strategies in achieving this goal. Many assessment items for Math require high reading skills. An increase in Reading scores should contribute to the overall Math scores as well.

In the area of Mathematics we saw a decrease in scores across grade levels and overall our Math scores are well below our goal. Sixth and seventh grade saw a decrease of approximately 1%, while eighth grade saw an 8% decrease. There was an average gap of 10% between the Math scores of White students and that of Black and Hispanic students. To reach our goal of 100% by 2015, we will need to see an annual increase of 14% across grade levels and a 16% annual increase for gap students. The new District Math adoption, professional development for Math teachers, and formative assessments will address many of the concerns we face with our Math performance. Training and strategies from Donna M. Beegle and Dr Sharroky Hollie will be utilized to address low performance in minority student scores.

**Attendance
(Average Daily Attendance)**

2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
96.07 / 3.93	96.29 / 3.71	96.31 / 3.69

Attendance data from the last 3 years show small improvements from year to year. Baker staff strives to provide engaging lessons which involve the student in their own learning. Students who find value in school have higher attendance. This year we have also utilized our Communities in schools coordinator to connect with families having attendance difficulties. Many of the difficulties in attendance are symptomatic of other problems which we may be able to support. While we are well under 4% daily absent, our goal is under 2% then ultimately to have every student in classes every day.

Planning for Transitions (between grade levels and grades)

We know from research that struggling students “fall through the cracks” during the transition from elementary school to middle school then again from middle school to high school. To reduce this transition effect, Baker purposefully plans activities and trainings to support our students and families. Our incoming 6th grade students are visited in the elementary school and provided opportunities to request classes. We provided transition summer school for both 6th and 9th grade students. Baker conducts “exchanges” with our feeder schools to give

students a chance to interact with students and classes which lessen the overall transition. Our 6th grade staff hold a “Surviving Middle School” night for students and parents. Our 8th grade students participate in activities with Mt Tahoma to strengthen the connection and reduce drop out in the high school.

Characteristics of High Performing Schools

One of the foundational elements of a High Performing school is a Clear and Shared Focus. The Baker staff dedicated much of our professional development time during the 2009-2010 school year drafting our Mission, Vision, and Beliefs. During the 2010-2011 school year we will refine these documents. This shared focus allows us to define a successful learner, effective staff member, and the best way to deliver high quality instruction.

Another key factor of a High Performing school is High Levels of Collaboration and Communication. Baker staff implemented Peer learning Labs as a tool to increase instructional skills. This format allows teachers to view colleagues teaching and ask critical questions about teaching and learning and sharpen their own skills. Staff also meet in grade level and content teams to discuss topics specific to each class. Each grade level also meets twice a month to discuss students who may be struggling and how to provide the best support. This communication helps Baker staff to provide better instruction in the classroom and provide assistance to struggling students in a timely manner.

Professional Development Opportunities

Baker Middle School provides job-embedded Professional Development designed to build capacity and support staff. Baker leadership researched Peer Learning Labs (PLL) to provide opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s practice. Book Studies include: Classroom Assessment for Student Learning, Crucial Conversations, Language Arts Continuum, and CHAMPs: A Proactive and Positive Approach to Classroom Management. Baker staff planned, and is currently offering, 6 nights of professional development covering Classroom Assessment for Student Learning by Rick Stiggins. Baker staff collaborated in the development of vision, mission and beliefs documents. During the 2010-2011 school year we will be continuing work focusing on Culturally Responsive Teaching centered on the work of Donna Beagle and Shorroky Hollie. All Baker professional development is driven by building goals with the focus on delivering the highest quality instruction for Baker students.

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 Title I 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 sends 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 HOUSSE Plan of Assistance is developed for the teacher. To support teachers working to achieve highly qualified status, along with all staff striving to provide excellent instruction, our school's professional development/training is focused on best practices in reading and math.

Recognition of Additional Academic Learning

At Baker we recognize that educating the “whole child” requires more than what happens in the standard academic classroom. LAP Math and Reading classes utilize appropriate “double-dosing” techniques to increase instructional time for students needing basic skills according to identified gaps in learning. Each grade level provides after school homework help. The 21st Century and Extended Learning Opportunities offer additional supervised homework and instructional time to students who might not otherwise have the support at home. HERO and TRIO offer college awareness and mentoring experiences to first-generation college-bound students. Our AmeriCorps volunteer connects 7th and 8th grade students to College Bound Scholarships and teaches college preparedness. We have added a Communities In Schools Coordinator to connect families to community resources. Baker provides ongoing opportunities for community and family engagement with the programs at Baker through the use of our Newsletter, SWIFT site, and web page. We involve parents in the school through “Surviving Middle School,” and other educational and curriculum nights. We involve students and parents through two Student Led Conferences as well as traditional parent teacher conferences. Baker provides for social-emotional and community oriented services through Advisory and Peer Mediation. We offer a variety of after school clubs such as: computer, guitar, art, and dance. Educating the whole child requires a “menu” of options so that each student is recognized as an individual learner with individual needs.

Safe and Supportive Learning Environment

A student who does not feel safe is not free to learn. According to the "Baker Middle School Climate Survey," seventy percent of the students feel safe at school. This leaves thirty percent of the student body who feel that "something" negative could happen to them at school. At Baker we strive for every student to feel safe both physically and emotionally. We have a no

tolerance approach to behaviors which violate this safety. Not only do we make it a priority to address fighting and bullying, but also the emotional safety to learn and take risks. We practice being safe from fire by conducting monthly fire drills. We practice being safe from harassment by creating a safe classroom environment where students feel free to share. We have had upgrades to our physical building by having new cameras installed. We have upgraded our social safety by addressing harassment in each classroom. Each Baker student has a right to feel safe, both physically and emotionally.

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 our greatest gap is between our Caucasian student population and African American and Latino males in both math and reading. Not only do we know that overall quality instruction will help close this gap, but focused training is also required. During the 2010-2011 school year we will be continuing work focusing on Culturally Responsive Teaching centered on the work of Donna Beagle and Shorroky Hollie. All Baker professional development is driven by building goals with the focus on delivering the highest quality instruction for all Baker students.

Technology

We recognize the need for Baker students to be technologically competitive as they move on to high school and beyond. Baker Middle School recently added 3 mobile computer labs and 4 SMART boards. Each classroom utilizes a document camera and projector for both teacher and student work. In designing our new building, Baker will have 3 computer labs as well as a SMART board, document camera, projector and multiple computers per classroom. We will also be utilizing an audio visual lab for announcements and student productions. Baker middle school students will have all the technological advantages expected for success.

Parent, Family and Community Involvement

Baker Middle School values the vital contribution that parents make to their child's education. The focus of our "Bite of Baker" is to invite parents to come and celebrate the new school year and connect with teachers. Student led conferences allow students to share goals and work directly with their parent. Parents can access student grades on-line and important community announcements are made using "Connect Ed" phone calls. Baker PTSA is active and sponsors many events throughout the year. We offer educational nights covering topics such as, gangs, bullying and how to help with homework. Not only have we seen the benefit of parent involvement, but also community involvement. Many churches and organizations provide resources that families and the school cannot. We have an active partnership with the Lions Club and local stores. Educating the whole child requires the whole community. Baker has a part-time "Communities in Schools" program coordinator who facilitates relationship between the school and the community for the benefit of all Baker students. We have made progress in community and parent involvement, but we have yet to see the full potential for our students.

Coordination of Services

Much of what we are able to do to support student learning comes from our Learning Assistance Program (LAP). This is addition to our district allocation which is actually quite small. Much of what we provide beyond this budget is provided by our PTSA. We strive to make each dollar provide as much educational value for all Baker students.