

School Improvement Plan
Narrative Overview

Mount Tahoma High School

PROGRESS TOWARD PREVIOUS YEAR'S GOALS
2010-11

Our students' progress in the area of Reading, as measured by the High School Proficiency Exam (HSPE), demonstrated overall that our students are continuing to strive to achieve Adequate Yearly Progress in this area. Sixty-seven percent (67.0) of students in grade ten met or exceeded standard in Reading. This is a drop of 3.7 % from the scores of the previous year and, although the overall group of students met standard, two of the subgroups did not. We are not satisfied with our current indicators of growth on the HSPE 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 HSPE.

In the area of Mathematics, significant improvement is needed due to the fact that our student performance as measured by the 2010 HSPE did not meet our established targets. A significant emphasis on mathematics through the TDG studio math project, along with many layers of support across our school district and within our school have been implemented to more effectively address the concerns in this area. If we are to stop the downward trend in student performance in mathematics, as measured throughout the school year with formative assessments and in a summative manner on the 2011 HSPE, we will need to continue our work on instructional improvement.

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 departmental teams and as a part of whole-staff work sessions. Our action plan outlines our school-wide reform efforts and it is reviewed and ratified by our Site Based Decision Making team. Our plan is a result of our review of student assessment data, results of the BERC evaluation, the prioritization of staff and team goals, and the identification of specific next steps in our work to improve student achievement. One change that we are piloting this year is creating two cross content blocks, one at the 10th grade and one at the 12th grade. The tenth grade block of students will attend classes in English, geometry, and biology. The twelfth grade team will attend classes in English, video production, and graphic arts. These two teams are an addition to the one piloted in 2009-10 that included sections of algebra, physical science, and exploring technologies for freshmen. We believe that this change will have a positive impact on our students reaching standard in these areas due to an increase in relevance and the development of more productive relationships. The establishment of goal and focus areas for our school's work is also established in partnership with our SCDM and/or SIP team of which includes parent representation. 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 10	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Reading	63.4	69.6	70.6	70.7	67.0
Mathematics	26.1	30.8	21.6	21.4	18.7
Writing	59.3	68.1	83.7	85.7	79.7
Science	15.9	21.8	18.1	12.3	18.0

The school-wide data from the 2010 HSPE indicates marginal strength in Reading performance. Our students' performance on the Reading portion of the 2010 HSPE indicates that our students have improved over a five year period, but have dropped a few points from 2009-10. Our work in this area continues to be the addition of language arts classes, support through a Read 180 program, and credit recovery options. After school tutoring is also available three days per week.

In the area of Mathematics, our student performance did not meet the state standard. Our instructional focus in this area will be the continuous work with the Teachers Development Group to increase student engagement in learning and further develop mathematical thinking skills. Participation in the studio math process will lead to improved instruction and an increase in the level of academic success of our students in mathematics. The District's support of this work with ongoing professional development for teachers and principals, combined with our tutoring opportunities, lab support classes, and credit recovery classes, will all contribute to the work designed to significantly and positively influence our students' achievement.

Attendance

(Average daily attendance)

2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
93%	94.5%	92.1%

Dropout

2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
6.2%	6%	6%

Graduation

	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
On-time	73.6%	72.1%	74.2%
Extended	78.4%	76.1%	82%

College

	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
College Direct	43%	38%	50%	48%	52%
College Direct 2-year	25%	19%	30%	27%	28%
College Direct – 4 year	19%	19%	22%	21%	27%
Persistence Rate	82%	74%	72%	80%	79%

Planning for Transitions (between grades 8 and 9)

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. We know that a poor ninth grade performance after transitioning from middle to high school can often lead to poor attendance, lack of academic progress, and eventual drop out from school. Eighth and ninth grade teachers of English and math are meeting in content specific groups to discuss every child’s areas of strengths and concern, line up the curriculum in order to establish a clear scope and sequence of concepts, and discuss methodology and student work in order to plan for and improve instruction. A summer orientation program, accompanied by a year-long mentor program, has been implemented to support student transition from the eighth to the ninth grade. As mentioned earlier, academic “blocks” have been created to increase relevance, connect the concepts of one content area to another, and promote positive relationships.

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 being developed to create a 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 in collaboration with the Teachers Development group. The specific work will focus on learning targets, student engagement, and critical mathematical thinking, and all three will be carefully studied through data snaps and studio class observations. We work continually on promoting **High Levels of Collaboration and Communication**. We will address this characteristic through formal structures such department, SCDM, and team meetings, as well as regularly scheduled staff meetings. These efforts will parallel 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, and connecting with our school community. Finally, **Effective School Leadership** is demonstrated by a range of staff members at Mount Tahoma High School. 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 Mount Tahoma 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 through the studio work with the Teachers Development group. The math and science departments regularly review student work and plan and review

lessons. The English department is beginning the process of lesson study. Our principal and administrative team, with the assistance of the department chairpersons, 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 Mount Tahoma High School, 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 on student activities that include athletics, a variety of clubs, student government and leadership, Renaissance program, an Army JROTC program, a school website, and video production projects. Students are provided opportunities to explore the arts through drama, visual arts, instrumental and choral music, and various CTE pursuits. 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 Mount Tahoma High School staff is purposeful and intentional in its work to create a safe and supportive environment. Built upon the school motto of “T-Bird Pride is Justified,” our staff and students believe in the direct instruction, modeling, and ongoing practice of expected behaviors and attitudes for learning within our school. Initial steps are now being taken by a team consisting of all stakeholders to establish a school-wide positive behavior support system. A no-tolerance approach to behaviors that violate safety and respect and a counseling program that addresses issues such as drugs and alcohol, grief, and abuse, and a strong student leadership support group are combined to create a supportive safety net for the student body as a whole, small groups, and individual students. Working together, staff students, and parents 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 HSPE indicate 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 all content areas, and especially in math, will address culturally competent teaching strategies that can be applied to daily lessons. Interventions that include lab support classes, credit recovery classes, and individual tutoring 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 counselors and our Communities in Schools site coordinator will continue to work together to assist in fulfilling needs in this area. In addition, Mt. Tahoma has an active Achievement Revolution Committee (ARC) made up of all stakeholders that is working diligently to improve school climate, promote culturally competent activities and instruction, and positively support the growth of relationships.

Technology

Mount Tahoma High School 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 in multiple computer labs, internet research for project-based learning, and the use of a technology-supported student career center. Our Boosters are assisting teachers with projects that are focused in this area. This year, the District has provided laptops for all teachers in the next phase of technology infusion that provides additional tools leading to improved instruction.

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 increase communication and collaboration in order to build a stronger parent involvement component into our school program. We are fortunate to enjoy a increasing support from our Booster Club as they funnel their energies and resources directly back to students and learning. Additionally, we have a new site coordinator from Communities in Schools whose task will be to develop partnerships with the business community, develop additional support systems for students and families, increase volunteer participation, and regularly review student attendance in order to help students stay involved in learning and on track for graduation. This year we will have several evenings where we bring parents into the school to participate in learning activities. We will host a “high school and beyond” night to highlight postsecondary and career opportunities, several cultural celebrations, and student led conferences. We know that many of our parents work and are unable to volunteer in the classroom or throughout the building so we provide these opportunities so parents can be involved in other very meaningful ways in their child’s education.

Coordination of Fiscal Services

Much of what we are able to do to support student learning comes from our district allocation which is actually quite small. We have also benefitted from a variety of grants that provided for improvement in technology, teacher collaboration, and achievement gap work. Fundraising through our Boosters provides some academic and non-academic support to teachers and students.