

School Improvement Plan

Whitman Elementary School

Welcome to Whitman Elementary School, home of the Whitman Elementary Wildcats. Beautifully remodeled in 2003, Whitman Elementary is an unique elementary school that offers students many opportunities to excel. Our motto is “Work Together, Learn Forever.” Whitman Elementary offers half-day Title I Pre-school, Head Start Pre-school and full day kindergarten programs. Whitman Elementary also receives funds through Title I, a federal program, that provides additional reading and math assistance to students. Whitman Elementary maintains high standards of instruction by hiring only highly qualified teachers in accordance with District Human Resources procedures and with the support of building level hiring teams. Students completing fifth grade and living in our attendance area usually attend one of two schools: Stewart Middle School or Guadrone Middle School. Whitman Elementary is located at 1120 S. 39th St., Tacoma, WA 98418. We invite parent and community comments and input for our plan. Eric Konishi, Whitman Elementary principal, can be reached at (253) 571-7272.

Whitman Elementary School is located on Tacoma’s South End area in one of the city’s most revitalized neighborhoods. Our current school was built in 1952 and has 23 classrooms, one computer room, library, gym and lunchroom, as well as an instructional room. Although most of our area of attendance is residential, the section of our neighborhood along 38th Street is home to numerous businesses. Since we are located close to downtown Tacoma, cultural activities and the arts are close by for our enrichment. Our local community shows support of and pride in Whitman Elementary.

Our Mission is to work with parents and the community to educate the children, respecting their learning styles, so they can function responsibly and successfully in a diverse society.

Our vision is to involve students, staff, parents and other community members in the creation of a learning environment which will be safe, academically successful, and socially enriching for all. Each individual will be treated with courtesy and respect. Our vision is to have high expectations for success and a commitment to support one another in our efforts. Our vision is to focus on the use of written and oral language for communication, critical thinking, and problem solving. Our vision is a school society that celebrates individual differences and cultural diversity. Attention will be given to developing and nurturing unique talents, encouraging creativity, and building self-esteem. Our vision is to have a coordinated program which will provide each student with a strong foundation in the skills needed for continued success into the future.

PROGRESS TOWARD PREVIOUS YEAR’S GOALS

2010-11

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 nearly 62% 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 fourth (49.2%) and fifth (37.9%) grade students as measured on the 2011 MSP. We are not satisfied with our current indicators of growth on the MSP and are focusing our efforts to significantly improve our students’ achievements in this area. We anticipate higher achievement on the 2012 MSP.

In the area of Mathematics, we see that significant improvement is needed. Our students' performance, as measured by the 2011 MSP, did not meet our established targets. A significant emphasis on mathematics is needed, along with many layers of support across our school district and within our school, if we are to see a significant increase in student performance as measured with periodic formative assessments and the 2012 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 2010-2011 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 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 goals and focus areas for our school's work is also in collaboration with our SCDM which includes parent representation. Our PTA's focus on supporting learning at the classroom level, 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.

The main themes that emerged from our comprehensive needs assessment are: Reading and Math Student Achievement, Family and Community Involvement, and Supportive Learning Environment. Based on the needs of our students and community, goals in these areas were developed and aligned with state standards and AYP targets. Our goals set high standards and expectations and reflect a clear, consistent and shared focus. Research-based materials and instructional strategies are implemented for all students through our reading and math strategies and activities.

Math and Reading Leadership Teams will provide the Grade Level Teams with reading and math data and specific activities will be frequently monitored. The leadership teams will review the data and recommend adjustments to the school-wide program, as needed. The school wide program is monitored periodically throughout the year. Adjustments are made as needed at these times. At the end of the year, MSP data is reviewed, evaluated, and our action plan is revised based on the data and community input.

Review of Data to Establish Improvement

Achievement

Spring Data (expressed as a percentage of students meeting standard)

Grade 3	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Reading	44.9	72.3	54.0	50.0	55.7	61.5
Mathematics	41.8	57.8	49.2	44.3	63.9	37.7

Grade 4	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Reading	78.1	67.3	69.0	51.5	51.6	49.2
Mathematics	37.5	38.2	69.0	29.9	37.5	28.8
Writing	35.9	64.8	59.2	43.9	33.3	42.4

Grade 5	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Reading	68.6	66.7	73.2	74.0	51.6	37.9
Mathematics	50.0	52.0	48.2	59.2	37.1	44.8
Science	29.6	20.0	32.1	28.9	14.5	32.8

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 grades 3-5. Our work in this area continues to be teachers coming together to review student work and formative assessments to make instructional decisions that support student learning in the classrooms. Layers of intervention are provided through our Title I reading program. (See action plan for specific intervention strategies.)

In the area of Mathematics, our student's performance at all grade levels did not meet the state standard. 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, Title I math teachers, ongoing professional development for teachers, coaches and principals combined with our school's monthly grade level collaboration sessions will contribute to improvement in student learning. In addition, 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. (See action plan for specific intervention strategies.)

Attendance

(Average daily attendance K-5)

2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
93.8%	94%	94.9%	94.3%

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. Whitman's school-wide program provides support to parents and families of students who will be experiencing a significant grade transition (P-K; K-1; 5-6). Our plan for transitioning incoming Kindergarteners includes: a discussion with incoming parents regarding available services, First Day of School Open House, contacting District Early Childhood for transition support.

Whitman's Title I Preschool helps parents and students with the transition into the elementary program. Kindergarten staff also works with the Head Start preschool programs to assist parents and students.

Whitman staff work with receiving schools to assist parents and students with transition from elementary to middle school. We are continuing to work on a Whitman-Giudrone Middle School transition plan that will ensure a smooth and successful beginning for our fifth grade students as they enter the middle school setting. At our Transition Summer School, 5th grade students are enrolled in Summer School at the Middle School they will be attending. Vertical teaming and grade level planning ensure our students' needs are addressed.

Characteristics of High Performing Schools

Characteristics of high performing schools are interrelated and foundational to our work. We know that we need to focus in each of the nine areas of school improvement as outlined by the state, however there are three that emerge as needing particular 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. We work continually on promoting **High Levels of Collaboration and Communication**. We will address this characteristic through our monthly grade level collaboration meetings, regularly scheduled staff meetings, and small team meetings in our Special Education programs. Finally, **Effective School Leadership** is demonstrated by a range of staff members at Whitman Elementary. Small teams gather and set goals and one or more team members take the lead for moving tasks forward and sharing with the whole group. Various staff members participate in district level leadership opportunities in order to bring the work back to our entire staff and lead particular ventures. Through these opportunities staff members are empowered to make decisions and move our professional work forward for the benefit of student learning.

Professional Development Opportunities

Whitman's school-wide goals are focused on helping students meet state standards in math and reading. Our professional development in standards-based instruction and classrooms is an example of our work to align curriculum, instruction and assessment with the state standards. The SCDM and Principal plan building trainings based on staff input and achievement data.

Whitman is in the second year of the new math program. Whitman staff will meet monthly to learn more about curriculum administer weekly assessments, monitor implementation and plan interventions. Technology will be integrated into trainings so that staff becomes proficient with Whitman's new technology. Our Principal, math coach, and half-time math specialist provide on-going and embedded support and follow-up to professional development. The Principal ensures implementation in the classroom. The math coach provides coaching, modeling and feedback on the use of skills and strategies.

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 receives 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.

Highly Qualified Teachers

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. Whitman's 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 HOUSE 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 focuses on best practices in reading and math.

Para educators and other staff receive workshop pay to attend both district and school workshops. Administration and teachers work with para-educators to focus on successful student performance on the State Standards. All para-educators that work with students in the instructional setting meet NCLB highly qualified requirements. Ongoing professional development is offered at the district level. As an integral part of our staff, para-educators are encouraged to attend Whitman's trainings.

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. Through the Professional Learning Community, staff has a voice. Our goal to provide a supportive learning environment includes support for staff. For the last 3 years, our staff turn-over rate has been around 5%, with most changes due to staff retirement.

Professional Growth Plans for each teacher includes Standard III, “Demonstrates knowledge of subject content and the elements of effective instruction” and focuses on Component IIIA, “Demonstrates command of content-area knowledge and state standards as well as implements district-adopted resources and curriculum.” Staff development to support teachers includes the following: Standards Based Classrooms, Assessment and using data to inform instruction, Goal Setting, Grade level instructional strategies.

Teachers receive substantive feedback through formal observations, required by the district, and informal observations. Staff also receives feedback as part of their Project Quality Professional Growth Plans.

Recognition of Non-Academic Learning

At Whitman Elementary, we believe in educating the whole child. This belief is demonstrated by a strong emphasis on creating a focused, structured, and nurturing environment. Once a month students are provided an opportunity to participate in drama, visual arts, music, movement, healthy living, and other enrichment experiences. 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 Whitman Elementary School staff is purposeful and intentional in its work to create a safe and supportive environment. Built upon the CHAMPS school-wide expectations of our staff believes in direct instruction, modeling, and ongoing practice of expected behaviors and attitudes for learning within our school. Having adopted the Compassionate Schools and Champs programs consistency exists across all classrooms and grade levels in this area and there is a pervasive attitude that all Whitman students belong to all Whitman adults. A no-tolerance approach to behaviors that violate safety and respect is combined with as well as a 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 drive our school’s efforts this year. Our performance data trends on the WASL and MSP show 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 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 various community resources to assist in fulfilling needs in this area.

Technology

Whitman 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 SMART boards and

computers in every classroom, the daily use of document camera/LCD projector bundles, opportunities for word processing, and internet research for project-based learning.

Parent, Family and Community Involvement

Increasing parental involvement is one of our main goals. At Partnership Conferencing we meet with parents and students, establish academic goals, and set up compacts for the year. These are then monitored on an ongoing basis throughout the year. Along with compacts, parent policies are shared with parents at the beginning of the school year. Student academic progress is shared with parents during Partnership Conferencing in November, December, and March. At these times academic goals are set, assessments and report cards explained, and compacts and expectations shared. Progress reports provide additional information on student progress.

We have included our parent involvement plan in our building plan. Title I parent involvement funds have been allocated to our school as required to support meaningful parent involvement activities. Parents and staff work together to develop and support parent involvement training/activities for 2011-12. We have a Parent Involvement Associate who works 15 hours per week with staff and parents to increase parent involvement, address barriers to meaningful parent involvement at our school, and provide parents the opportunity to meet regularly.

Whitman's School-Parent Compact is reviewed and revised with input from parents annually. The compact is then printed in our handbook and distributed to all parents and families at the beginning of the school year. The compact was discussed with parents and students during the first session of Partnership Conferencing. (See attached copy of Whitman's School-Parent Compact.)

One of our priorities is to organize partnerships with parents and community members and create a comprehensive plan to improve our school, strengthen families and help children succeed. During community meetings, parents, Tacoma Police Department, community organizations and schools have all expressed concerns about the increase in gang activity and the need for a pro-active approach to address gang issues and safety-related challenges.

Whitman's counselor and nurse work with local county programs to help families connect with needed health and social services. The district McKinney-Vento liaison connects homeless families in our school with social services and provides ongoing support. Staff works with the district's Homeless liaison to identify and provide intervention services for homeless students and their families.

Whitman continues to build strong relationships with the community: Community Mental Health, Kiwana's Terrific Kids, Square Foot Nutrition WSU, Public Library Summer Reading, CPS, Safe Streets, World Vision-Kids in Need, BoxTops-General Mills and Campbells Labels, Lincoln High School, and Bellarmine Prep School.

Coordination of Fiscal Services

Whitman's School Improvement Plan has been aligned with the Tacoma School District's Improvement Plan. Our school improvement efforts coordinate our district Bilingual and Migrant services, Title I School wide Plan, Special Education (IDEAA) and McKinney Vento Act to meet the needs of all our students. Basic Ed staff work with Title I, LRC, Special Ed Self Contained Adjustment classes, and ELL to provide differentiated instruction and timely assistance to our students at risk of not meeting state standards. Partnership Conferencing, Individual Student Assessment Portfolios, Student Learning Plans and 504 Plans involve parents and families in the work.

While categorical and basic education funds are tracked separately in Tacoma, the programs collaborate to support the school wide program goals and meet the needs of all students. Title I Facilitators help teachers coordinate intervention instructional services for our students with high academic needs.

In addition to Title I providing technical assistance and NCLB support, the district provides the following support for school wide implementation: Curriculum & Instruction provides professional development, research and instructional support, Purchasing supports expenditures, Human Resources facilitates staffing and monitors Highly Qualified information, Research & Evaluation provides data.