

Featured Schools: Profiles and Vignettes

The 23 schools featured in the profiles and vignettes to follow exhibited attributes of effective middle level schools which are closely aligned with the seven principles in “Turning Points 2000” (see page 11 for a summary). For analysis and reporting on the schools in this report, the first two “Turning Points 2000” criteria were collapsed resulting in six areas of focus around which the profiles and vignettes are organized:

- Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment
- Staff Development
- Instructional Leadership
- Data Based Decision Making
- Student Success and Caring Environment
- Parent and Community Involvement

Appendices D, E and F provide contact information for each of the featured schools as well as student demographics, school characteristics, WASL score data, and curriculum resources used. As you read the school profiles and the highlighted strategies in the vignettes, think about your school and decide which practices may be most applicable for your students and in your setting. You may also wish to refer to appendix G, which offers tips on how to use this report as you engage in school improvement efforts.



Cascade Middle School
Longview School District
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Quick Facts

Enrollment
823

Grades Served
6-8

Free/Reduced Price Lunch Percent
32.7

Ethnicity Percentages

Asian	3.3
American Indian	2.1
Black	1.5
Hispanic	4.5
White	88.7

WASL Percent Meeting Standards

	1998	1999	2000
Math	16.6	29.1	32.7
Reading	41.2	49.1	49.3
Writing	32.2	42.5	49.8

Improvement over time is the key concept at Cascade Middle School. The school is organized around interdisciplinary teams, some of which have been in place for nearly 10 years. Teams create small learning environments for students and allow teachers to share common planning time which is used to integrate the Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs) in reading, writing, and social studies as well as in math and science.

Teaming is ubiquitous at Cascade, but varies in organization and purpose. There are three teams for the sixth grade. Two of these teams have four teachers with 120 students, and a third team of two teachers shares 60 students. The third team is organized along an elementary model to meet the needs of students who require fewer transitions between classes. Teachers on each of the sixth grade teams are responsible for core academics in math, social studies and language arts. Students also take a semester of science and have daily classes in physical education, music, and an exploration period that includes art and health.

At the seventh grade, there are three teams consisting of two, three or four teachers. The larger team has integrated math with other subjects to create interdisciplinary projects for all students. This team has a special education teacher who is responsible for one section of the team's reading instruction. Students are "off team" each day for a period of music or a non-music exploratory wheel that consists of art, home economics and industrial arts. Students also take one period of health/physical education each day.

At the eighth grade level, there is an intentional move away from teaming to prepare students for the more departmentalized high school environment. Students have one teacher for a language arts/social studies block. Each of their math, music, science, electives, and health/physical education classes are one period long and make up the rest of their day.

Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

Interdisciplinary teams link various content areas and create units that include final assessments aligned with the EALRs. Interdisciplinary projects can include community service segments as well as focusing on diversity and cultural issues.

Curriculum mapping is used to identify areas of overlap and omission in delivery of the EALRs within departments and between grades. Students are taught the language and vocabulary of the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) in each content area.

Staff Development

Staff development plans emerge from activities identified in Cascade's site-based action plans for improving achievement. In addition, state money has been made available to staff in the form of mini grants for which they can apply to pursue interests that align with district- and site-based goals.

The English department took the lead in training staff in *Six Trait Writing* and has also put into place schoolwide rubrics and grade level writing prompts and assignments. Staff in the English department have been engaged in writing and scoring activities and have participated in discussion groups based on Nancy Atwell's books. All teachers in the building have been taught specific University of Kansas reading strategies and routines that are taught and reinforced throughout the school.

The implementation of *Everyday Math* in the sixth grade required large blocks of time for training, follow-up and support throughout the year.

Instructional Leadership

Team and department heads, the site-based leadership team, and the building principal work together to make decisions regarding instructional improvement. The administration also participates in all staff training, modeling the importance of increasing instructional skill.

Data Driven Decision Making

Cascade staff has a history of using data to develop site action plans. Site plans for instructional improvement aligned with the EALRs have been in place since 1993. Staff worked together to match curriculum and instruction with the EALRs at the building and district levels. Using the school district's Strategic Planning Process, a site action plan was developed, with specific steps, to improve reading, writing, and math. The process includes reports, reviews, and annual presentations to a Strategic Planning Review Committee made up of local citizens, community leaders, district employees and others. The Site Based Leadership Team is responsible for the overall design and monitoring of site action plans to improve teaching and learning.

Teams analyze data extensively at Cascade. Some teams do their own disaggregation and interpretation of data from a variety of assessments. Each year, the administration provides all eighth grade teachers with data on the seventh grade WASL performance for each of their students. Additionally, the school keeps a database that includes performance information on the fourth grade WASL, fifth grade Terra Nova, sixth grade ITBS, Orleans Hanna Algebra Screening, eighth grade Terra Nova, and *Oral Reading Fluency* program scores for all grades. Teachers also have access to students' writing portfolios, which are required in the district from sixth grade through graduation.

The district also provides student level data for instructional planning including extensive, individual transition information that is provided to all sixth grade teachers. Department heads analyze the data with district specialists and the building principal, and plan departmental strategies for using the information to improve student performance.

Student Success and Caring Environment

Success on the WASL is supported and recognized through individual classroom presentations by administration and guidance personnel. There are also schoolwide celebrations put on by successful alumni now in high school. Students who meet the standards on the WASL receive seals for each area on their eighth grade completion certificates. Newsletter articles and press releases to the local newspaper focus community attention on successes at Cascade.

Teams have high expectations for completion of assignments; failing grades are not an option. Teachers often take a working lunch to spend more time providing help to students, who receive regular communication about expectations for continual improvement on the WASL. Each seventh grade class is expected to perform better than the previous class.

Corrective Reading is used for students needing remediation. This is taught collaboratively by regular classroom teachers and special education staff. *Oral Reading Fluency* program checks are conducted at several points throughout each year, and student progress is tracked. Staff members are engaged in research that correlates reading fluency with comprehension and success in meeting the reading standard on the WASL.

Extra help is provided for staff during administration of the WASL. For instance, parent volunteers are present to monitor students so teachers can form smaller groups of test takers. This helps greatly in providing accommodations for students

who may need more time to complete the assessment.

Parent and Community Involvement

Parents are directly involved in the learning process at Cascade. Grade level teams teach and train parents on the EALRs and assessments. Parents report that a key strength of the team approach is that it provides the opportunity for teachers to share the delivery of academic content and assessment processes with both parents and students.

The PTSA supports the efforts of the school through major fundraising efforts. Money is raised for technology, *Accelerated Reader* materials and various classroom projects. Parents provide direct support to classroom teachers in a variety of ways including helping with the administration of *Oral Reading Fluency* program checks, participating in *Writers' Workshop* and supervising students during community service activities.

College Place Middle School
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Excellence over time is the hallmark of College Place Middle School. For nearly a decade, it has been cited in numerous publications as an exemplary school. It is particularly noteworthy that College Place has continued to improve in spite of changes in principal leadership and key staff over the years. Staff planning time has been an important factor in the continuous improvement. There are 80 non-student contract hours spread over 20 days throughout the school year.

Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

College Place is a 21st Century school with a strong emphasis on a standards-referenced, integrative curriculum. Block scheduling is used for math and science, and for language arts and social studies. Consensus-based departmental standards for each core content area have been developed and shared with feeder elementary schools and the high school.

Language arts curricula and classroom-based assessments are aligned with the Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs), as are the objectives and assessments for oral communication and reading. The English/language arts department implemented class activities and tasks (approximately 25 per year) similar to those found on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) and only teaches units which are aligned with the EARLs. They use consistent, frequent assessment feedback to monitor instruction and student learning. *Accelerated Reader* is used schoolwide with specific time allocated during the school day. The program includes graded participation and progress checks and silent reading occurs three times a week.



Quick Facts

Enrollment
622

Grades Served
7-8

Free/Reduced Price Lunch Percent
28.4

Ethnicity Percentages

Asian	10.8
American Indian	3.2
Black	3.9
Hispanic	5.9
White	76.2

WASL Percent Meeting Standards

	1998	1999	2000
Math	18.0	22.0	37.7
Reading	44.6	40.0	47.7
Writing	28.7	41.6	49.5

The math department staff worked with high school staff to articulate their curriculum and is beginning a similar relationship with elementary schools. *Math Thematics* was selected for the math curriculum, a decision based in part on the results of parent focus groups that reported ease of helping at home.

Staff Development

Extensive work has been done to align curriculum and assessments with the EALRs. Areas of focus for staff development during the last three years have included Socratic seminars, reading in the content areas, math curriculum implementation, astronomy, earth science, best practices for remedial reading, and inclusion strategies. This staff development work occurred during summer breaks and school release time.

There are continuing efforts within departments to transmit curricular and instructional expectations and norms. Informal social events help with new staff orientation and existing staff morale.

Instructional Leadership

College Place has a resilient, positive staff culture resulting from a shift of responsibility to the teachers for owning decisions. One staff member described the school's administrative ethos as creating a climate where people are enabled to find their passion within clear, common goals. For instance, staff engaged in a program of study review that led to the delineation of core values for teaching and learning in the middle school years. This process enabled ongoing, realistic planning, which led to programmatic revisions at College Place.

Data Driven Decision Making

Student and staff climate surveys are administered annually. Results from these surveys, along with student assessment data, are used to evaluate programs and to plan strategies for goal attainment. The staff recently completed a com-

prehensive program evaluation and revision of the school plan. Data, research and best-practice models were studied and used to guide program changes.

Student Success and Caring Environment

At College Place, the staff is committed to the success of every student, and students demonstrate commitment and ownership for their academic success. For instance, student-led conferences showcase the well-developed student portfolio system, which individual students must complete for grade promotion.

Staffing decisions are driven by a goal to increase individualized learning opportunities for students. All available funds are spent to hire additional teachers to keep the lowest possible student/teacher ratio. A special education position was converted to a reading specialist for the lowest non-IEP readers. The program is inclusion oriented.

There is a study club every day after school, and transportation home is available on the "activity bus." Clubs meet twice weekly during the school day. Most staff participates in after-school study clubs and activities. In addition to summer school opportunities, students who do not earn credits in required courses during seventh or eighth grade take "7.5" and "8.5" classes to make up credits.

Parent and Community Involvement

Strong parental concern about student progress and safety is evident, and there is significant parent and community outreach from the school. For instance, along with implementation of the new math curriculum in the fall of 1999, the math department hosted parent "Math Nights" to introduce the curriculum and present ways in which parents could help their children at home. The sessions were well attended and participants felt that this contributed to significant gains in math.

Covington Middle School
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Two years ago, Covington made the transition from a junior high to a middle school. Using a three-person team model for each of the grades, the core curriculum is presented in 80-minute blocks. Each interdisciplinary, grade-level team shares common planning time which enables coordination of efforts across subject areas .

School improvement efforts at Covington revolve around the implementation of the *Learning Network*, an improvement program chosen by staff.

Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

The *Learning Network* provides staff with a common language in planning instructional goals to teach the Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs), and has resulted in the use of schoolwide writing prompts and *Writing Across the Curriculum*. The *Learning Network* provides a structure that assists teachers in the process of examining their own instructional practices. Key components of this approach are the use of formative assessments to determine next steps in instructional practice and peer mentoring with teacher-leaders. Lead teachers work with six to eight teachers during the year as instructional coaches and to support attention to individual students’ instructional needs.

School policies in reading and writing, which are based on common understanding about students and their learning styles, drive instructional practices at Covington. Support for reading and writing has been a focus in all classes, including electives. Teachers work diligently to help students



Quick Facts

Enrollment
918

Grades Served
6-8

Free/Reduced Price Lunch Percent
34.5

Ethnicity Percentages

Asian	4.6
American Indian	0.9
Black	3.9
Hispanic	4.5
White	86.2

WASL Percent Meeting Standards

	1998	1999	2000
Math	4.0	20.3	31.7
Reading	17.3	29.3	35.3
Writing	17.7	31.2	22.1

value reading and writing, and instruction in these areas is based on the workshop model. A new math adoption, the *Connected Math Program*, is based on the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) standards.

Small group instruction is a schoolwide goal. Instructional models support the organization of smaller units within classes.

Staff Development

The *Learning Network* enables teachers to engage in peer evaluation of instructional practices. Lead teachers meet regularly with the teachers they mentor and conduct classroom observations. After observing a lesson, they provide feedback through a dialogue process. This voluntary program has helped the school generate policies for reading to promote life-long reading skills and habits. Because the emphasis is on literacy, it has been a vehicle for bringing teachers on board regarding the importance of aligning curriculum and instruction with the EALRs.

Instructional Leadership

The *Learning Network* model gives everyone in the school a common language from which to work. As the principal noted, the school is attempting to move the entire staff in the same direction, recognizing that reading and writing must be taught in language arts classes and supported in all other programs.

The principal's job under the *Learning Network* model is to support teacher-leaders as they mentor their colleagues. The principal understands the importance of his role as a coach and monitor. In this role, the principal is frequently visible in classrooms measuring progress in the use of assessment and small group teaching strategies to help students in their individual learning. The principal also provides time for instructional dialogue among staff. Faculty meetings are designed to allow staff to work together to

align assessment, curriculum and instructional practices.

Data Driven Decision Making

When Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) scores are received in the fall, school staff reviews them with help from district assessment analysts. Based on the needs identified, WASL-type activities and assessments are woven into instruction. To prepare students for the WASL, teachers take the approach that these intentional learning activities are a part of everyday life. As a result, students don't view the WASL as an event that is much different from their regular classroom assessments.

Student Success and Caring Environment

A supportive learning environment for all is created at Covington Middle School. All students participate in an advisory program which focuses on extending their classroom work rather than addressing only affective concerns or offering "just for fun" activities. The experience here has been that when advisories are connected to coursework they are more meaningful to students and enjoy more support from teachers.

One benefit of stressing classroom work during advisory period is the alignment of focused instruction throughout the school. Students are taught organizational skills and keep calendars that track their regularly scheduled self-directed learning days. It is on these days that students work on their projects independently or in small groups.

Grants provide funding for an after-school program that includes transportation home.

Parent and Community Involvement

The Parent Network Group at Covington sets an agenda, with the support of administration, for activities related to school improvement. One such project is a school clean-up day to beautify the

building and grounds. Other events and activities include a Dr. Seuss reading day with costumes and prizes, and a bimonthly newsletter to increase communication with the community.

A Shared Leadership Team – made up of certified and classified staff, parents and community members – meets once a month. The team's goal this year has been to improve the school's learning environment.

Church leaders within the district boundaries have been recruited to help find ways for the schools and churches to work together to provide for the needs of students in the community.



Ephrata Middle School
Ephrata School District
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Quick Facts

Enrollment
392

Grades Served
7-8

Free/Reduced Price Lunch Percent
38.4

Ethnicity Percentages

Asian	1.0
American Indian	1.3
Black	0.8
Hispanic	13.5
White	83.4

WASL Percent Meeting Standards

	1998	1999	2000
Math	20.1	21.6	28.4
Reading	33.5	43.1	43.7
Writing	32.1	32.5	35.8

Rural and ready describes Ephrata Middle School, which is located in an agricultural area in the center of the state. Seventh and eighth grade students have a seven-period day and the 18 teachers assigned to these two grades are organized by departments.

Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

When visiting Ephrata, one notices a pervasive attention to the Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs). A clear understanding of the standards is obvious during classroom visits. For instance, in every math classroom, assignments are posted on the board along with the relevant EALRs and a copy of the problem-solving rubric. Staff focuses their teaching on the curriculum frameworks and supports each other in their alignment of instruction with the EALRs.

Rather than “teaching to the test,” Ephrata staff takes collective responsibility for student learning through instruction and curriculum aligned with the EALRs. Resources employed by math and language arts teachers to develop their instructional materials and curricula include the state scoring rubrics, Toolkits and Frameworks. Teachers use the Toolkits as models but go beyond them to find other similar supplemental materials. Students and teachers use rubrics and score work together.

Language arts teachers make the reading and writing learning goals clear to students. There is a focus on the EALRs and the Frameworks, not just the WASL itself. A *Reading and Writing Across the Curriculum* inservice supported all content area teachers who now integrate reading strategies and *Six Trait Writing* strategies into their lessons.

Improving the teaching and learning of math is a high priority at Ephrata, and focused staff development has increased teacher confidence in this subject area. The introduction of math portfolios also aided the reform process. Attention to problem solving extends down to the feeder elementary schools and this articulation has helped students enter middle school with the math skills they need to succeed. Student participation in *Math Olympiad*, *Math Counts*, and other extracurricular math-related activities further encourages this focus.

Staff Development

A key facet of Ephrata Middle School's continuous improvement process is strong communication within and between departments, as well as with district personnel and staff at feeder elementary schools. For instance, after attending workshops around the state, the middle school teachers began math training with the elementary school teachers. They believe this approach has made a big difference because students are coming to middle school better prepared for the math curriculum.

A Summer Institute was organized within the district in science and math, and staff also attended a mathematics conference in Idaho. The staff development budget is focused on activities related to the EALRs, and teachers have had training in *Six Trait Writing* and *Writing Across the Curriculum*. Staff members have also attended workshops focused on the WASL within the district and outside the district.

The staff has also invested in cross-discipline work at the middle school. For example, the shop teachers participated in *Six Trait Writing* training and use it in their lessons, and the physical education teacher is credited with having the best note-taking system for students.

Instructional Leadership

At Ephrata Middle School, there is a feeling that "we are all in this together." Staff communication about instruction is positive and focused on helping students succeed. Staff expertise is utilized, building resources are geared toward improving teaching and learning, and instructional leadership is shared. The principal supports the shared leadership model and focuses supervision and evaluation on how well lessons connect to and deliver content aligned with the EALRs. Teacher evaluations include evidence that their daily classroom activities are related to the EALRs, Benchmarks and Frameworks.

Data Driven Decision Making

In the past, Ephrata rarely utilized data in a way that promoted specific school improvement efforts. Now data analysis is an activity focused on by staff. With assistance from Educational Service District 105, staff members meet twice a year to examine data and find focus areas in curriculum and instruction. A team from Ephrata also attended a planning conference held by Educational Service District 171. The team then led Ephrata staff in goal setting exercises. They planned accommodations for individual students by looking at individual student scores and trends. These activities also facilitated the schoolwide focus on the EALRs.

Student Success and Caring Environment

A *Second Shot Reading* program is used in conjunction with Title I/LAP services. This program focuses on improving students' reading rate, which in turn, improves fluency and comprehension. Students who are below grade level in reading are assigned to a *Second Shot Reading* class, in addition to their regular language arts block class. There is also a basic math class taught on an individual basis for students who are not performing at grade level.

One intervention that the staff credits as particularly successful is the student mentoring program. At the end of the second quarter every teacher picks one or two students who are below a particular performance level. The teachers meet with their students every week to help with homework, organizational skills and time management.

Parent and Community Involvement

While there is no formal parent organization at Ephrata, parents are given updated information on curriculum and instruction at open houses, all school events and in newsletters. Staff also shares WASL scores with parents and sends home pre-WASL guidelines regarding attendance, sleep, and nutrition.

Hanford Middle School
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Alignment and articulation lead school improvement efforts at Hanford Middle School. The school is organized around a six-period day with four core and two exploratory classes. There is a short advisory period preceding or following lunch for sixth and seventh graders. Advisory classes are focused primarily on developing organizational and study skills. Each day during advisory, students are required to update their daily planners and work on a specific skill area, such as test-taking strategies.

The grade-level teacher-team structure at Hanford results in common preparation periods for each team. The strongest teams meet every day. Students have early release days once a month, providing additional planning time for teachers. Three early release days per year are devoted to team planning, two are reserved for building-based inservice and two are used for districtwide inservice.

Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

Teachers have worked diligently to gain an in-depth understanding of the Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs). Two years ago, the staff engaged in extensive professional development using the state-developed Toolkits and Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) scoring rubrics. This helped build an understanding of how the WASL is scored and what skills and knowledge students need in order to perform well on the assessment. As a result of these inservice activities, teachers are able to focus lesson plans around specific EALRs.



Quick Facts

Enrollment
732

Grades Served
6-8

Free/Reduced Price Lunch Percent
27.0

Ethnicity Percentages

Asian	4.8
American Indian	0.5
Black	1.8
Hispanic	5.7
White	87.2

WASL Percent Meeting Standards

	1998	1999	2000
Math	27.1	35.6	46.9
Reading	45.5	45.5	46.9
Writing	32.9	38.6	51.2

Each teacher has a copy of the EALRs. Teachers use the EALRs to weed their routine curriculum of favorite lessons that don't align with the standards. State funds for professional development helped reimburse teachers for time spent aligning curriculum and classroom-based assessments with the EALRs.

Grade level teams coordinate themes and integrate the curriculum, as well as establishing common classroom rules and procedures. Each year, teachers who teach the same subject and grade level work together to map their curriculum so that the same concepts are taught in each class. In order to accomplish this, brief descriptions of teaching units are typed and attached to magnetic strips. Teams then work together to determine what each teacher plans to teach during the year. Teacher teams work cooperatively to see where they can integrate or coordinate instruction. The magnetic strips are then organized by month on a board to show when each idea or concept will be taught during the year. Once each quarter, lessons are reviewed and shared with the entire staff and an opportunity for writing new plans is provided.

Thirty minutes of *Sustained Silent Reading* (SSR) occurs schoolwide every week. Each core subject area is assigned one week per month during which students read for the first 10 minutes of class on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. All students and teachers are required to read during this time. Other staff including principals, counselors, librarians and, occasionally, secretaries, drop into classes during SSR to read alongside students.

Articulation with the high school is very strong, as the two schools share the same campus. Articulation with the four feeder elementary schools is not as strong; however, in order to coordinate assessment of reading for individual students the feeder elementary schools and Hanford Middle School use *STAR* (a diagnostic tool used to determine the

level at which students should be in the *Accelerated Reader* program).

Staff Development

State staff development funds support training related to building goals and inservice plans. School improvement dollars provide support manuals that focus on teaching reading across the content areas. Additional funds are available so teachers can attend subject specific training to support building goals. Some of the workshops teachers have attended include:

- What are the EALRs?
- What is the WASL and How is it Scored in Reading and Writing?
- Use of the Toolkits
- Teaching to Standards
- Reading in the Content Areas
- Performance-based Assessment in the Classroom

Teachers are given many opportunities to share successful lesson plans and teaching strategies and are often called upon to assist with staff development in their areas of strength. For instance, teachers who attend workshops and conferences are required to write a summary of what was learned and present what they learned to other members of their departments.

At the beginning of the current school year, staff went on a retreat devoted to identifying reading competencies in every grade and subject. For example, the social studies department focused on developing lessons designed to teach students to use, read and comprehend a textbook. Teachers developed lessons to show how they would intentionally teach the skills identified. Lesson plans developed in each subject area were shared with the whole group at the end of the retreat.

Instructional Leadership

Teaching staff worked with the principal to create a standard lesson plan format. The format enables teachers or teacher teams to develop unique lesson plans that include certain elements and allows the principal to review plans according to the criteria developed. The lesson plan format requires teachers to delineate: what students need to know or be able to do as a result of each lesson, the EALRs to which the lesson corresponds, how the lesson was designed from the assessment backward, the activities of the lesson, and the manner in which student success will be identified and assessed.

Teachers know they are accountable for student learning during evaluations. When a problem is identified through evaluation and observation, teachers are provided resources to assist their efforts towards improvement. These might include observing other teachers, working with a mentor, working out lesson plans with the principal, or attending inservice training.

Several opportunities for sharing leadership are available for school staff, parents and community members. Teachers, parents and community representatives form the Learning Improvement Team, which focuses solely on issues related to improving student learning. In addition, the principal and teacher representatives from each grade level team sit on the school's steering committee. While participation is open to all, grade level teacher representatives often gather information from their colleagues and report to the committee. The committee then makes decisions and disseminates information. Steering Committee decisions about expenditures of school improvement money always focus on the building goals or technology. Teachers also serve as department chairs for math, language arts, science, social studies, special education, and exploratory education.

Data Driven Decision Making

Staff examined WASL scores for the last two years to identify strengths and challenges among the seventh graders and to set learning improvement goals based on results of the analysis. Also, a district middle school study last year reviewed current research and best practices. Research indicated that one deficiency in many middle schools is lack of teacher inservice opportunities that focus on subject area knowledge. When the Hanford Middle School staff saw this information, they determined this was a weakness in the staff development plan for the school. This resulted in increased building-based, subject area teacher training.

Data resulting from daily student work are closely monitored. Teachers create their own monitoring systems, but all use some method for tracking student progress against the EALRs. Some have notebooks or charts that allow them to check off EALRs and Benchmarks when students have completed lessons related to particular standards. One teacher has two sets of labels for each EALR. She puts one label on the lesson plan to which the EALR corresponds and the other label on a chart when she thinks students have reached mastery on that particular standard.

Student Success and Caring Environment

Staff acknowledges student success throughout the year in a variety of ways. Success on the WASL is acknowledged but so are many other student accomplishments. Students who make the honor roll are announced quarterly and given a small token by the principal and assistant principal in front of their classmates. Teacher teams award students with "Team Members of the Month" awards. At the end of the year, the Presidential Fitness Awards and Presidential Improvement Award are given to qualifying students. Those who win awards and competitions are acknowledged in the school newspaper, newsletter and at assemblies.

Systems are in place that make it easier to teach and therefore easier for students to learn. For instance, parents who want weekly progress reports enter into a “contract” with the school. Parents must provide self-addressed stamped envelopes for mailing the reports and must ensure that missing work is completed and returned in a timely manner. The contracts encourage parents to follow through when they request weekly reports.

To help with timely academic intervention and support, teachers keep logs of students’ progress. Intervention plans are implemented for any student that is struggling, with modifications and accommodations clearly identified for and agreed upon by the student’s teachers. Components of intervention plans may include modification of assignments and referral to the *Help Our Students to Succeed* (HOSTS) program that helps students improve reading skills. HOSTS community volunteers read with participating students for 30 minutes each week.

There is also a tutoring center for after school help with two teachers in the center every night. Teachers refer individual students to the tutoring center and contact parents. Remedial language arts and math classes are scheduled for seventh and eighth grade students with class sizes of about 24. In sixth grade, remedial reading takes the place of an elective.

Teachers are sensitive to the fact that students learn differently and design lessons to fit diverse learning styles. For instance, the seventh grade math teachers create groups for high- and low-achievers, and have implemented a team teaching model to differentiate instruction. Math teachers have also increased hands-on learning opportunities and incorporated more writing requirements into math lessons. The school’s gifted coordinator also trains staff in methods for differentiating instruction.

Parent and Community Involvement

Throughout the year meetings are held for parents to hear about and discuss a variety of topics, including school safety, assessment and curriculum. Grade level teacher teams hold parent nights to show off student work and invite parents to participate in activities with their children during the school day. Parents are particularly encouraged to be involved in culminating activities for specific units of study. The principal and counselors also attend family nights and fall orientation for parents at feeder elementary schools.

In a number of classes, community members are brought in to mentor students as they work on special projects (e.g., the Science Fair, History Day, and Passion Projects). In addition to community participation in the HOSTS program, *Drug Abuse Resistance Education* (DARE) and *Junior Achievement* are part of the school’s curriculum.

Parents of every student on an intervention plan, which includes students failing any class during any quarter, are brought in to meet with the student’s teachers and counselor so that plans are written in collaboration with parents.

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Solid district support and dedicated teachers make a difference at Hawkins Middle School. Hawkins' teachers are organized into four grade level teacher teams; two for seventh grade and two for eighth grade. The students' day is divided into five 60-minute periods, although most language arts and social studies teachers team for a two-period block. Students attend math, science, language arts, and social studies classes daily, and enrichment courses and physical education are scheduled every other day. A 20-minute advisory class and a 15-minute *Sustained Silent Reading* (SSR) period occur each day. Teachers have a daily 60-minute planning period.

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

District curriculum committees have played a vital role in helping the school and district adjust and adapt instructional practices to prepare students for standards-based assessment.

At Hawkins, strong teacher leadership and innovative planning are apparent and efficacious, particularly in the areas of math and writing. For example, the math teachers worked to analyze the math sub-test areas on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) and then developed a notebook of ready-to-use materials for each sub-test area. Another way the math department used the information gleaned from the WASL analysis was to develop a process whereby students practice a particular problem in a variety of ways each week. Starting on Monday, students simply solve the problem in their journal; on Tuesday they solve the problem without using any words; Wednesday they share how they solved



Quick Facts

Enrollment
398

Grades Served
7-8

Free/Reduced Price Lunch Percent
28.9

Ethnicity Percentages

Asian	5.3
American Indian	1.5
Black	2.3
Hispanic	3.0
White	87.9

WASL Percent Meeting Standards

	1998	1999	2000
Math	12.9	22.4	36.4
Reading	44.4	38.6	40.1
Writing	33.1	37.2	50.2

the problem with a partner; Thursday they work with a partner to create an extension to the problem and have the partner solve the extension problem; and on Friday the class revisits an old problem and solves it in a new way.

Teachers in the language arts department developed a selection of anchor papers, and students work in groups to identify levels of quality for a variety of writing characteristics. Students across all content areas have been asked to write using a compare and contrast format that is used for literary texts and informational texts. *Six Trait Writing* strategies are used districtwide and all staff has been trained on NCS mentor. Teachers use thinking models and rubrics and students are asked to self-reflect on their work and the work of others.

Staff Development

District committees, which include staff from each building, help facilitate an aligned and articulated curriculum. These committees play an important role in keeping all teachers up-to-date with new information and training opportunities. The district holds regularly scheduled curriculum meetings that address skills and content across all grade levels. Communication among central office and building staff is always open to respond to staff development and program needs.

The district as a whole has also worked on curriculum alignment and material adoption to support the EALRs in all content areas, and articulation issues between grades and levels continue to be addressed. As new employees come on board, they are required to have certain training to ensure that the district maintains consistency over time.

Although Hawkins has made great progress in the areas of math and writing, staff continues to focus on reading; in particular, skills related to informational reading.

Instructional Leadership

Due to its relatively small size, North Mason School District's strengths include its instructional focus and ability to involve many teachers in districtwide decisions. Teachers from each building are routinely involved in districtwide curriculum decisions, resulting in positive staff buy-in. For example, when the district adopted its new math program shortly after the WASL assessment began, many teachers from all grade levels worked collectively to determine the strengths and weakness of several programs. They then selected the best collection of materials and tools to reflect the math EALRs across all grade levels. Inservice training based on the new materials was provided for math teachers and training has been ongoing for all staff.

Strong teacher leadership and a schoolwide focus on the EALRs have made a positive difference at the building level as well. Teacher leadership is encouraged and many opportunities exist for staff input at Hawkins. The building principal provides teachers with additional planning time when needed and provides support for program development. Curriculum integration is supported by common planning time for teachers across content areas, as well as through a schedule that permits blocked language arts and social studies classes.

Data Driven Decision Making

Analyses of all WASL sub-test areas have helped the staff be more deliberate in their planning. Hawkins' staff meets in the fall to review student assessment data and to develop plans for the year that address areas of concern. Plans include specific instructional strategies and staff development activities to support the goal of improved student performance. For instance, if the data reveal weaknesses in particular areas on the seventh grade WASL, articulation meetings are scheduled with fifth and sixth grade teachers to discuss areas that need more attention.

In addition to working on specific instructional goals related to the EALRs, the staff at Hawkins have also embarked on a plan to reestablish principles and programs in line with middle level philosophy, such as teacher teaming, advisory periods and developmentally appropriate approaches to class management. The staff believes they will have more instructional success if students' developmental needs are considered and met. Consequently, staff not only reviews formal test results, but also reviews data such as classroom failure and discipline referral rates. Throughout the school year, they continue to evaluate student performance and other indicators of student and school success to determine whether their efforts are yielding positive results.

Student Success and Caring Environment

Students not yet meeting standards are supported through a variety of programs at Hawkins. For instance, students with low reading skills are served through LAP and participate in the *Soar Reading* program. The Gates-MacGinnitie Reading Pre/Post Test is given to students once a year to confirm placement decisions in the LAP program. An after school reading and math academy is provided for targeted students, and a weekly tutor/study session also supports low-performing students. In order to address student needs, Hawkins has also made staffing decisions to reduce class sizes for math.

Keeping middle school students motivated to do their best is often a difficult task. Hawkins has put a program into place that allows students to set goals according to their ability at the beginning of each trimester. Students are recognized with seals when the goals are accomplished. The program has motivated many students who have previously failed to consistently put forth their best effort.

Parent and Community Involvement

Over the past several years, Hawkins has greatly increased its communication with parents. Advisory class teachers contact all parents at the start of the year to invite them to work together with school staff to meet their children's needs. Throughout the year, all academic and behavioral information is funneled through the advisory teacher who serves as the primary contact with the family. This increases the school's ability to develop a positive relationship with students' families.

Student contracts and plans are developed early in the year, and teacher team conferences are held with parents when appropriate. Weekly progress reports are available, and schoolwide progress reports or report cards go home every six weeks.

Parents and the community are actively involved in, and provide financial support for, the *Welcome Everybody (WEB)* program. WEB serves as both a summertime middle school transition program for incoming seventh graders and as a student mentor program which pairs seventh and eighth graders during the school year. The program enables seventh grade students to start off the school year with confidence. Parents and the community staff and provide supplies for the WEB family barbecue during the summer and provide other materials throughout the year to support the student mentor program.



**Horse Heaven Hills Middle School
 Kennewick School District
 Susan Denslow, Principal
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Quick Facts

Enrollment
826

Grades Served
6-8

**Free/Reduced Price
Lunch Percent**
25.8

Ethnicity Percentages

Asian	1.7
American Indian	0.0
Black	1.7
Hispanic	14.9
White	81.7

**WASL Percent
Meeting Standards**

	1998	1999	2000
Math	22.2	21.6	35.1
Reading	34.6	46.9	51.2
Writing	32.2	42.8	46.4

Horse Heaven Hills is designed with three separate wings – one for each grade level. Teachers are organized into two or three teams for each grade, and each team shares a cohort of students. The schedule is organized to maximize integration of instruction and flexibility in instructional grouping.

Students have a seven-period day. Core academic classes include reading, language arts, math, science, and social studies. Students may select Spanish in place of reading if test scores indicate above grade-level reading proficiency. All sixth and seventh grade students have physical education every day; eighth graders have physical education each day for one semester and health for one semester. Exploratory classes for sixth and seventh graders are organized in a rotation of mini-classes that range in span from four to six weeks in length. The eighth grade exploratory classes last nine weeks. Students at all grade levels may choose a music elective in place of the exploratory rotation.

Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

For the last five years, staff has worked to gain an in-depth understanding of the Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs). Kennewick School District developed a curriculum framework that aligned curriculum at each grade level with the EALRs. This document is updated annually.

In the summer of 1999, the district sponsored a weeklong curriculum-mapping seminar called *Mapping The Big Picture: Integrating Curriculum and Assessment K-12*. Two administrators and a reading/language arts teacher from each grade

level at every school in the district attended. Building teams worked together to define what content they taught, what skills they taught, and how they assessed the content and skills. After the building teams completed this task, the reading/language arts teachers for each grade level worked together to create a common grade level curriculum map. Staff at Horse Heaven Hills recently updated and revised the maps created at that seminar.

Curriculum materials and events that staff believe have enhanced student learning and performance on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) include the schoolwide *Accelerated Reader* program, Family Math Nights, *Teaching with Love and Logic*, and *Math Counts*.

Staff Development

The district provides ongoing support for staff development related to the WASL, in spite of an ongoing shortage of substitutes to provide release time for teachers. State staff development money has been a key funding source, and the district was also awarded a *Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation* grant. The district has just completed the first year of this five-year grant. A significant portion of grant funds has been used to pay teachers for time devoted to professional development. As of March 2001, 61 percent of all staff members had engaged in professional development activities outside the normal school day. A five-year professional development plan has been created to ensure all staff members will receive the same training related to teaching strategies and best instructional practices.

All middle schools in Kennewick dismiss students early on Wednesdays to create one hour of planning time for teachers. At Horse Heaven Hills, the first Wednesday of the month is devoted to curriculum meetings; the second and fourth Wednesdays are dedicated to instructional team meetings; and the third Wednesday is used for grade level meetings.

Much of the time during curriculum meetings is devoted to a continuing effort to align the building's curriculum with the EALRs. Curriculum mapping is updated regularly in all core content areas. Teachers continue to work on deleting favorite projects and activities or lessons that aren't aligned with the Frameworks and the standards. The team structure challenges teachers who are not inclined to engage in this effort and supports those who are willing to replace unaligned lessons with something new.

Instructional Leadership

Rather than relying on lessons that are familiar or "off the shelf," teachers are working on first defining their learning objectives and then designing the assessment before developing the lesson or activity that will teach the objective. A focus of instructional leadership is to encourage teachers to study and utilize this lesson design process. Prior to regularly scheduled classroom observation/evaluations, teachers are asked to identify relevant EALRs and alignment is discussed in post-observation conferences.

Instructional leadership is shared and modeled by the principal and two assistant principals. Each member of the three-person team provides leadership for a particular grade level and moves up to the next grade level the following year. In this way they rotate supervisory and evaluation responsibilities by working with a different group of teachers each year. At the same time, they follow a group of students from grade six through eight and become knowledgeable about specific instructional needs and behavioral issues of the students.

Teacher team leaders and the school's site council also provide instructional leadership. The council, in its third year of existence, is actively engaged in sharing decisions related to curriculum and instruction. It is governed by a charter and includes classified staff and parents in addition to the school administrators and classroom teachers.

Data Driven Decision Making

Working together to look at student performance data for the purpose of improving teaching and learning is a priority at Horse Heaven Hills. Initial fears that data analysis might reveal teachers' strengths and weaknesses are being overcome through practice, collaboration and the realization that the focus is on how reviewing performance data can strengthen teachers' ability to address students' needs. As teachers become increasingly comfortable with data analysis, they see it leads to more targeted, purposeful instruction and increased learning for students.

Data guide the decision making process at Horse Heaven Hills. All schools in the district administer Functional Level Tests (FLT) in grades two through 10 in reading, math and science. The data are used in building-level curriculum meetings to focus on the skill components assessed by the FLT. Teachers use the information to analyze specific strengths and weaknesses of their students and plan instruction to address deficiencies. For example, in reading one of the components tested is literal comprehension. Data analysis revealed that many students were weak in this area, so teachers are focusing on instruction to strengthen students' ability to comprehend the literal meaning of words.

Additional examples of data-based decision making can be seen in the instruction and curricula of both math and language arts at Horse Heaven Hills. After analyzing students' fourth grade math WASL scores and annual FLT scores, the seventh grade teachers designed a math exploratory class to address weaknesses in problem-solving skills. During the 2000-2001 school year, every seventh grader took this class. The focus may change for the new school year based on test score analysis for last year's seventh graders. The language arts department also offers a class for students who need extra support to improve their reading skills. Sixth and eighth grade students who score in the bottom quartile in reading take a reading class in addition to their

regularly scheduled language arts curriculum. This class focuses on specific skill deficits identified through test score analysis.

Student Success and Caring Environment

Expectations for learning are high, and students are encouraged to meet them through various schoolwide recognition activities and events. The schoolwide *Race to Read* program requires students to make one year's growth in reading based on their FLT score; read books in 10 different genres; earn an A in reading; and read at home for at least 100 minutes a week. Students who accomplish at least three of the four goals attend a celebration at the end of the year. Students who have earned a 4.0 are honored, and all students with high grade point averages are listed on the Honor Roll or the Principal's List.

A Student Assistance Team (SAT) has been in place at Horse Heaven Hills since the school first opened. The team consists of classroom teachers, administrators, school psychologists and counselors, and an intervention specialist. Students are referred to the SAT by teacher teams when academic or behavioral concerns arise. Each Friday, the SAT meets to discuss student referrals. SAT recommendations may take many forms, but the team process is well defined and structured.

Philosophically, Horse Heaven Hills is committed to heterogeneous classroom grouping, and teachers work hard to design lessons that take into consideration students' various learning styles and multiple intelligences. Special-needs students are included in regular classrooms whenever possible and appropriate. Staff at Horse Heaven Hills recognizes that differentiating curriculum is an area of growth for them. Future plans include reading and studying *The Differentiated Classroom: Responding to the Needs of All Learners* (1999) by Carol Ann Tomlinson.

Recognizing and appreciating the unique needs and talents of adolescent students in areas other than academics is also a priority at Horse Heaven

Hills. Staff is strongly committed to the middle school concept of exploration, allowing students to discover their own strengths or interests. For instance, there is a no-cut policy for all sports, and school social events offer a variety of games and activities from which students may choose.

Parent and Community Involvement

While no formal parent-teacher organization exists, parental interest and involvement at Horse Heaven Hills are strong. There is a cadre of parents who volunteer in the office and library, and parents are willing to help when they are contacted. Attendance at open houses, sporting contests, and music programs is standing room only. Through surveys, parents indicated a high level of satisfaction with the school's programs, but were not interested in creating or joining an organized group. Staff continues to explore ways to create an active parent-teacher organization, as the school program could benefit from ongoing support and fundraising by such a group.

The Kennewick School District has strong support from the business community. While individual teachers from Horse Heaven Hills have partnered with employees from local industries to coordinate guest speakers and activities such as field trips and job shadowing, there are no formal school-business partnerships. The school does benefit from community partnerships through *Junior Achievement*.



Leota Junior High School
Northshore School District
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Quick Facts

Enrollment
705

Grades Served
7-9

Free/Reduced Price Lunch Percent
8.1

Ethnicity Percentages

Asian	5.7
American Indian	.9
Black	1.8
Hispanic	4.8
White	86.8

WASL Percent Meeting Standards

	1998	1999	2000
Math	30.6	48.2	53.5
Reading	58.1	65.5	58.3
Writing	42.3	46.8	67.6

At Leota Junior High, a comprehensive school design and time for collaboration foster and support standards-based teaching. Leota is an *Authentic Teaching, Learning, and Assessment for All Students* (ATLAS) School. Teachers meet regularly in ATLAS Pathway groups to develop clear academic and behavioral expectations for students. ATLAS pathway discussions allow staff to clearly articulate expectations to students and parents.

The school is organized along a traditional junior high model, with a six-period day divided into 55-minute classes. All seventh grade language arts and social studies classes are blocked. The principal and staff have found creative ways for teachers to meet twice a month to examine student work, discuss instructional strategies and share best practices.

Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

Leota’s curriculum is aligned with the Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs) and with district standards. Extensive staff development occurs at the district level to promote alignment and to familiarize teachers with the process for scoring the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) writing and mathematics sub-tests.

Teachers participated in an extensive study at the district level on seventh grade mathematics that led to the adoption of *Connected Mathematics*. Articulation with the elementary schools is continuing, and Leota’s teachers are familiar with *Everyday Mathematics* used at feeder elementary schools.

Much of the curriculum at Leota is project based. During seventh grade, students are required to complete a culminating project. Teachers use Literature Circles in social studies and create Essential Questions to develop their units of instruction. The librarian provides students access to rich poetry and collections of non-fiction.

Staff Development

Teachers attend district training on expository and persuasive writing as measured by the WASL. Language arts teachers are trained in *Six Trait Writing* and all teachers have been trained in both *Reading Across the Curriculum* and *Writing Across the Curriculum*.

At the building level, the principal provides staff training by specialists in various content areas. Staff development is offered in small groups by department, with an emphasis on direct classroom implementation. For instance, math teachers receive program training in *Creating a Community of Math Learners*, and language arts staff is trained in *Corrective Reading*. Teachers also form and work in study groups within their own discipline or with teachers in other subject areas (e.g., language arts and social studies).

Instructional Leadership

Leota's building principal clearly believes in her staff and her students. She is continually looking for ways to provide meaningful support and work diligently to find release time for teachers to collaborate. The school has a monthly assembly so teachers can meet in study groups to plan together and to discuss student work. Also, one staff meeting a month is dedicated to study groups. Each study group keeps a learning log to record its decisions about instructional practice.

The school's site council includes seven department heads, two certified teachers at large, and one classified staff member at large.

Data Driven Decision Making

The school uses multiple measures of student achievement. Teachers review test results and develop action plans based on data from state, district and classroom-based assessments. Reading was identified as an area of weakness, so staff wrote a long-range plan to improve reading with goals to be attained over the course of three years. Part of the plan is to dedicate staff development time to reading in all content areas. And, *Corrective Reading* was implemented for students who are not meeting standards or who are performing poorly on state, district or building-based assessments.

Student Success and Caring Environment

Changes in the district's boundaries have altered the demographics of Leota's student body. The staff continues to challenge themselves to meet the needs of all students. It is clear that this hard work is paying off as student performance on a variety of assessments continues to improve.

Teachers meet with feeder elementary schools and high schools regularly to discuss articulation of curriculum, classroom expectations and behavioral expectations. Each teacher spends 15 inservice hours in an ATLAS pathway activity devoted to creating clear and common academic and behavioral standards. All staff members have been trained in deliberate teaching of study skills such as test-taking strategies, note taking and use of planners.

Parent and Community Involvement

Partnership in Education, a private educational foundation, supports Leota teachers and students. Parent volunteers are visible in the classroom and there is an active Parent-Teacher-Student Association.



Madison Middle School
Seattle Public Schools
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Quick Facts

Enrollment
890

Grades Served
6-8

Free/Reduced Price Lunch Percent
41.3

Ethnicity Percentages

Asian	30.9
American Indian	2.6
Black	10.7
Hispanic	12.2
White	43.6

WASL Percent Meeting Standards

	1998	1999	2000
Math	11.3	19.8	29.7
Reading	22.2	37.4	34.5
Writing	33.8	34.4	43.2

Strength through diversity unites staff at Madison Middle School. Staff shares a common belief that no child has a right to fail. Developing a common language for communicating student expectations is basic to the foundation of success. Teachers feel they are accountable to their peers as well as to the principal and students.

Teachers are grouped by department schoolwide and are organized in interdisciplinary teams within each grade level. Teacher teams are arranged to reflect strengths and talents of the members, thus ensuring that students receive a balanced instructional program. Auxiliary staff members, such as counselors and paraeducators, are distributed among the teams. Special education, ESL/bilingual, and elective teachers also form their own team structures.

Students have a six-period day with a 25-minute advisory at the end of the day. Block and flexible scheduling opportunities are arranged at the discretion of the grade level teams. Schoolwide planning time for staff in addition to team planning creates continuity throughout the curriculum.

Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

Seattle Public Schools has constructed grade level standards and benchmarks that align with the Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs). Using these standards and benchmarks as a foundation, Madison structures itself as a “thinking school.” All systems are aligned to a central core of thinking skills. Every teacher uses a standardized syllabus that focuses on these skills. Using the syllabus format as a communica-

tion tool, parents and students are kept apprised of Madison's expectations and standards. A full continuum of academic offerings to meet Madison's goal as a thinking school includes *Challenge Curriculum*, an honors track that is available to students in all classes.

Staff Development

All staff development is squarely focused on student achievement and the elimination of achievement gaps among diverse student groups. This is accomplished through purposeful and collaborative work on curriculum design, development of the thinking skills curriculum, and the use of schoolwide rubrics.

A National Science Foundation grant supports training staff in constructivist, inquiry-based strategies in math through a program called *Creating a Community of Math Learners*. In reading, another grant supports staff development using literacy strategies from the National Urban Alliance. Staff has also been trained in *Six Trait Writing* and the model is utilized throughout the building. Staff development generally occurs in-house. However, if staff attend outside workshops, they are required to bring the information back to the entire staff.

The staff induction program at Madison is another example of excellence. New staff members attend a 10-hour training program that covers all aspects of school procedures, programs and expectations. In addition, teachers are assigned to teams, and the team leader is responsible for ensuring that new staff members are oriented to the school and its procedures. Spending time with new staff once a week throughout their first year provides support and ensures communication regarding school customs and expectations.

Instructional Leadership

Team leaders are a key source of instructional leadership at Madison and teacher teams are a primary resource in curriculum, instruction and

assessment development. Staff has developed schoolwide rubrics so student performance expectations are consistent. Due to this common focus, goals for student achievement are clear to everyone. The common focus and goals create the building blocks needed by each department to facilitate academic achievement.

Each teacher has a goal setting conference during fall to talk about the specific curriculum and assessments that will be used to help students work toward meeting standards. Both informal and formal teacher observations are used as opportunities to discuss course standards.

Staff uses a detailed staff handbook to answer operational questions for themselves. A schoolwide problem resolution process is also in place. These well-established processes allow for more time for team leaders to focus on instructional issues.

Data Driven Decision Making

Madison staff and administration work with the belief that data are powerful. Each building in the district receives a School Effectiveness Profile consisting of District Writing Assessment data, ITBS results and WASL results (disaggregated by ethnicity). The Profile also includes continuation rates, truancy rates, student and staff attendance rates, student and staff climate survey results, value-added gain scores, and disciplinary action rates (including a comparison between minority and white students). Each building's scores are shown in comparison to district standards. Madison also has the results from multiple classroom-based assessments, including anchor papers of scored student work to assist in tailoring student assessment.

Although it is only one component of Seattle's extensive use of data to inform instructional decision-making, WASL performance data are critical to improving student achievement. District benchmarks have been developed using the EALRs and classroom-based assessments and

end-of-course assessments of district benchmarks are similar to the WASL in format and performance demands.

Data collected by staff, such as student input on the *Challenge Curriculum*, are also used for planning purposes. The data driven emphasis upon numerous aspects of school life, particularly academic programs and improvement strategies, are affirmed by staff comments. Data collected through action research by staff also contribute greatly to decisions made at the school and to the development of school and central office goals.

Student Success and Caring Environment

Madison provides a continuum of offerings for each student, as well as differentiated assignments, projects and units in each class. Consequently, every student has an opportunity to learn in ways that best suit their abilities and learning styles. Students are placed in learning environments based on their actual performance rather than on a classification (such as “special education”). The *Challenge Curriculum* is imbedded in all courses. A student having difficulty in a given subject can still opt for the *Challenge Curriculum* in other subject areas or classes.

In keeping with its goal that no child shall fail, Madison has a Student Intervention Team (SIT) focused on readiness to learn issues. A comprehensive intervention system is in place to assist students in whatever ways are necessary to prepare them learn. Departments, grade level teams and student intervention teams meet on a regular basis to focus on students’ readiness to learn.

The 25-minute advisory at the end of the day is used for tutoring and mentoring, and to deal with any disciplinary issues that arise. Approximately 700 students participate in some after-school activity throughout the course of the year. Focus groups, peer tutoring, service learning, peer mediation, peer mentors, school-to-work activities,

and intramural sports comprise some of the choices available in after-school activities.

Student surveys indicate that cultural diversity, academic achievement and safety are perceived as areas of strength at Madison. The responses on the student survey regarding safety issues are corroborated by major decreases in violence and student disciplinary problems at the school. This is critically important because when students feel safe at school there is more time and energy available to tackle academic issues.

Parent and Community Involvement

The PTSA and site council are the primary links to parents and the community. A paid volunteer coordinator works in the building to organize the activities of parent and community volunteers. Volunteers participate in a variety of support roles, from tutoring, to playground supervision, to field trip coordination and supervision. Over 200 volunteers contributed 2239 hours of time during the 1999-2000 school year.

Mt. Baker Middle School
Auburn School District
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Strong teacher teams are central to the success of Mt. Baker. Teaming allows collaboration among professionals, the sharing of students, coordination of curriculum and instruction, and expedites meaningful contact with parents. The school is divided into interdisciplinary, grade level teams so that teachers and students can come to know one another well. There are three grade-level teacher teams, with exploratory teachers and the LAP teacher forming a fourth team. Teachers have approximately 60 minutes for individual planning and 30 minutes for team planning each day. While most classes are 60 minutes long, students have a 90-minute exploratory period each day, which provides daily planning time for teachers. The building receives a subsidy from the district in the form of extra staffing to accommodate team planning.

Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

When the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) emerged as a common indicator of school performance the staff immediately understood the importance of the exam and undertook specific actions to ensure that their students would be adequately prepared. The idea that no child shall fail translates into classroom activities that are structured, goal-oriented and aligned to attainment of the Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs).

Exemplars, a series of thought-provoking, WASL-like exercises in math and writing, have been used to support classroom instruction. Students are asked to read over directions to multi-step problems themselves. Teachers purposefully reduced the amount of time they spent helping students



Quick Facts

Enrollment
745

Grades Served
6-8

Free/Reduced Price Lunch Percent
39.8

Ethnicity Percentages

Asian	6.7
American Indian	2.1
Black	4.0
Hispanic	7.1
White	80.0

WASL Percent Meeting Standards

	1998	1999	2000
Math	27.6	32.2	39.0
Reading	42.1	55.1	47.3
Writing	27.2	39.7	58.5

interpret directions so they would become familiar with the actual testing situation. Students are asked to answer all questions fully and in complete sentences.

On WASL exam days, students who have short attention spans or who tend not to do well in testing environments are separated into small groups of six to 12 students to assure a more appropriate testing situation. Success has also resulted from the school practice of having regular teachers supervise and facilitate WASL make-up exams. Substitutes are hired to replace the teacher proctoring the exam.

Staff Development

Focal points for the staff at Mt. Baker have included curriculum alignment and improving and sharpening instructional strategies. Quite a bit of work was done in the early nineties to align curriculum with the EALRs. At that time, language arts teachers in grades six through eight determined that there were glaring gaps in writing instruction relative to what was required on the WASL. Consequently, teachers received training in *Writing Across the Curriculum* and an emphasis was placed on writing full paragraphs in language arts classes. As expository and technical writing became a focus, math teachers began to stress writing in class activities and assignments. Exploratory and PE teachers are also trained in writing techniques and include written assignments far more frequently now than they used to.

Schoolwide curriculum meetings are held on Learning Improvement Days for the subjects tested on WASL. Mt. Baker teachers also receive training, focused on improving instruction, on state-funded training days. During daily team planning meetings, staff members share ideas and plan curriculum with grade level staff. District workshops and inservice days provide additional time to meet with colleagues to align curriculum.

Despite the best of intentions, articulation between grade levels can be improved. More cross grade level meetings, especially between transition grades (e.g., five to six, and eight to nine) are planned.

Instructional Leadership

Stability in leadership has provided continuity at Mt. Baker. The current principal has been the principal since the school opened seven years ago. He was on the school's initial planning team and hired most of its staff. The principal is a strong and active instructional leader who values staff input and has an open door policy. Grade level, curriculum related and team leader groups give the administration feedback about school climate. Issues are brought out for discussion and resolution. The principal holds high expectations for staff performance, and staff is generally happy and pleased to be working at Mt. Baker. The tone of the building is positive, staff morale is high and transfer requests are infrequent.

Data Driven Decision Making

Assessment results from the WASL and ITBS are analyzed annually and curriculum and instructional practices are modified to address any gaps identified. However, Mt. Baker fully employs middle level research in established programs and practices so academic improvements and the emphasis on instruction have not compromised the overall school ideal of focusing all programs on the unique needs of early adolescents.

Student and parent opinions are shared with staff through self-study survey data and through student governance activities. This information is used for decisions such as providing students with elective offerings of interest to them. Celebrating diversity, a need identified in the results from the latest self-study, is a goal for the 2001-2002 school year.

Student Success and Caring Environment

Communication, discipline and respect are concepts shared by staff and conveyed through everyday interactions. Close student-teacher relationships are at the core of the school's philosophy.

The school has established a tradition of caring that ranges from strong discipline and consistent enforcement of school rules to high expectations for academic achievement. Teachers value their school, their students, the parents, and administration, and act in ways that will bring credit to their work. Teachers are willing to work with students and parents in a variety of ways; all designed to improve performance. Progress reports are sent home with students every two weeks and the homework hotline is updated on a weekly basis.

Recognizing success is a major component of the Mt. Baker program. Efforts to recognize positive performance include quarterly recognition assemblies held by grade level during which three students per teacher are acknowledged for their outstanding performance. Parents of students receiving rewards are invited to attend and winners have pictures posted in the hallways. In addition, exemplary WASL performances are recognized in special assemblies, and "Way to Go" awards and "Caught Doing Something Good" coupons from local merchants are handed out throughout the year. On "incentive days," held once every eight weeks, staff signs up to teach a special exploratory course. Students with 'C' or better grades are given the opportunity to sign up for the course of their choice while those with lower grades attend study hall.

After-school study groups are formed to help students with achievement and motivation problems. Summer school is also used to support students in meeting standards, but the primary responsibility for correcting deficiencies lies with the student and parent working in collaboration with the teacher.

Discipline is firm and fair. Students who are sent to the office are dealt with quickly and efficiently, with parental contact made each time. Rules set by the staff and administration are uniformly enforced. Results and resolution of disciplinary actions are e-mailed to each of the student's teachers. Halls are quiet during class time and bells are staggered so that students change classes one grade level at a time.

Staff has unusual amounts of duty time as they are assigned to hallways, bus loading and common areas for supervision. During the first and last week of the school year, all staff is on duty during class breaks and before and after school. Students are accompanied to the lunchroom, to detention and to exploratory subjects. In short, teachers are everywhere.

Parent and Community Involvement

The link between students, parents and teachers at Mt. Baker is strong, and academic achievement is valued. Mt. Baker has high levels of parent participation but no formal site council. There is a high rate of participation at parent conferences, and parent involvement in school activities is strong and consistent. School pride is evident at Mt. Baker. Visitations from other schools are a frequent event. The community is always invited to attend celebrations of success which are viewed as opportunities to let constituents know that the school operates smoothly and that students achieve at high levels.

Through self-study surveys students, parents and the community have expressed satisfaction with the school's programs and policies.



Showalter Middle School
Tukwila School District
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Quick Facts

Enrollment
635

Grades Served
6-8

Free/Reduced Price Lunch Percent
63.3

Ethnicity Percentages

Asian	15.1
American Indian	2.4
Black	22.5
Hispanic	15.6
White	44.4

WASL Percent Meeting Standards

	1998	1999	2000
Math	4.6	13.6	21.4
Reading	14.8	38.2	33.9
Writing	15.9	31.4	34.9

A nationally validated school improvement model and an appreciation for its richly diverse urban setting makes Showalter a successful example of school change.

Showalter’s teachers are organized by three interdisciplinary, grade level teams. The elective staff and science teachers form a fourth team. Each team has 82 minutes of common planning time every day. Staff has an additional 45 minutes for cross-curriculum/cross-age planning each week.

One major change at Showalter is a new schedule that recaptured 210 minutes of instructional time per week. Students attend four 82-minute blocks daily for language arts/social studies, math, health fitness and an “exploratory wheel” of electives. Electives include Spanish, technology, steel drums, art, choral music and band. The wheel alternates with the year-long science block.

Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

Not pleased with their Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) results, the Tukwila School District adopted districtwide school reform models in each of their schools. Showalter and the elementary schools selected the *Accelerated Schools Project (ASP)* which has provided Showalter a framework for managing change. The reform of the last several years has been successful, due in large part, to this comprehensive research-based model and the full-time curriculum coach that it requires.

Teaching has changed from teacher-directed, self-selected lessons and instructional strategies to interactive and student-centered, aligned units. The ASP model asks teachers to expand the thinking and overall expectations of students and expects students to produce quality work and show appropriate reasoning skills. Higher-level thinking, problem solving, and vertical stretching of the curriculum now occur as a matter of course.

Some non-academic field trips and projects have been halted, and more time is spent in the classroom on specific learning activities than previously. Changes in classroom practice include higher and more clearly articulated expectations, curriculum aligned to standards, the use of *Writing Across the Curriculum*, integration of technology, and use of performance-based assessments. The results have been gratifying for all. Teachers now create lessons that require higher-level thinking, and students are expected to show that they can apply the reasoning skills demanded by the accelerated curriculum. The percentage of students meeting Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) standards improved dramatically from year one to year two and continued to improve from year two to year three. Initial gains were used to promote the attitude and belief that “our students can” perform well on the WASL.

Literacy and math are focal points of the curriculum and instruction at Showalter. Every student receives 82 minutes of math instruction every day, and all students and staff members participate in a 20-minute daily reading and writing prompt.

Staff Development

Among the many changes that followed the adoption of ASP was the formation of four building cadres: one each in math, literature, science, and the arts. All staff members (including both classified and certificated staff) participate in cadre meetings that help clarify what is taught, how it is taught, and how students will be assessed. Parent and community representatives also participate in

the cadres. Each cadre is responsible for examining current curriculum, instructional practices, student achievement, and staff, student and parent needs. Action plans are generated based on needs identified through this “taking stock” process. For instance, all staff was trained in *Six Trait Writing* based on input from the literature cadre.

The Tukwila School District also hired a curriculum coach to model-teach, team-teach, cover classes while staff members observe each other, and lead the Showalter team in regional ASP meetings and workshops. In addition, district inservice was provided to Tukwila administrators on 15 indicators of standards, which were used as a basis for staff training.

Instructional Leadership

The School As a Whole (SAW) makes all instructional and curricular decisions. All staff members participate in team, grade level and cadre meetings. The cadre system has had the effect of focusing staff on the Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs) and the achievement of WASL goals. Staff has also met in groups to develop schoolwide instructional goals. These include a focus on WASL achievement through a testing plan, training plan, curriculum alignment, and the use of “powerful learning,” as well as specific instructional practices to raise achievement.

Improving the instructional program is clearly a goal of the administration. The principal spends every Tuesday observing classes, and meetings with staff members are designed specifically to focus upon academic and classroom matters. Ingenious use of coordinated budgets from multiple sources links resources to better serve students by creating options such as extended learning opportunities (through a lengthening of the school day and year) to provide students with more time to learn the content that will enable them to meet WASL standards.

Data Driven Decision Making

Results from a variety of assessments are used extensively in Showalter's school improvement effort. Scores are analyzed so that gaps in the curriculum can be identified and filled. For instance, the seventh grade team analyzed ITBS, Gates-MacGinnitie pre/post reading scores, and WASL scores to identify gaps in student performance.

The direction of the grade level teams and cadres is determined by the data analysis that occurs during the "taking stock" process. Assessment and student survey data are also used to determine what activities to offer, what exploratory courses to schedule and what adolescent skills should be taught in the mandatory life skills course.

Student Success and Caring Environment

The National Junior Honor Society program was recently reestablished at Showalter. In addition, recognition for success on the WASL exam is honored in a variety of ways. Any student who meets the standard in any of the four tested areas is recognized. Further, any student who performs at level four in all four sections is rewarded with a one-day trip to Disneyland! Other high scorers receive gifts donated from local businesses (who also sponsor the Disneyland trip). Academic honor assemblies have become as popular as the traditional pep rallies.

Academic assistance is available for students after school and during the summer months on campus. Through staff efforts over the past few years to identify clear learning goals and the curriculum and instructional strategies that can be used to attain them, targeted after-hours assistance for students appears to be more successful than it was in the past. An after-school study group provides help for students who are not yet meeting grade level standards.

Homework Success, a four-night-per-week study

session, is offered throughout the year. A Costco grant supports after-school pay for teachers involved in the program. In addition, the district and the community have recently received a large foundation grant to support a year-round after-school, weekend and summer community schools program, where school and city services like the library will be open for student use. Tutoring, reading help, plus sports and activities will be available for students.

Diversity is considered a strength at Showalter (29 countries and 19 languages are represented in the student body), and new students assimilate relatively easily. Inclusion of special-needs students, including ESL students, in the life of the school is a priority. The ESL program has three full-time teachers working with students who often come to the school with no English background and sometimes no prior school experience.

Parent and Community Involvement

Grants and solid support from constituents through levy approvals have enabled Showalter to use additional resources to strengthen school-community-home linkages.

By integrating and streamlining pupil services, students and families feel that they are a part of their school. Parents have a "family room" available for them to read, meet with staff or relax with other parents. Student/parent/teacher conferences are held in the fall and spring during evening hours, which has resulted in attendance four times higher than in previous years. Translators are available, and parents are able to meet with each of their children's teachers.

Many social studies and exploratory class lessons take advantage of the rich source of cultural and ethnic information and resources that are readily available in the community. An eighth grade cultural fair is an annual event of importance for the school and community alike.

In October 2000, Showalter launched an extended-day program that offers homework assistance, computer classes, social skills, and community service referrals for students and their families. The funding came through a “Community Connections” grant from the Tukwila Community Schools Collaboration – a partnership between the school district, the City of Tukwila, the Department of Social and Human Services, Educational Service District 123, and the Casey Family Program – and a Showalter grant from the Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation.

Involving parents and the community in planning, decision making and instructional support have replaced rigidity and fragmentation with flexibility and coordination. The community connections grant will provide additional resources to enhance parent involvement with the school.



Snoqualmie Middle School
Snoqualmie Valley School District
Jack McCullough, Principal
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Quick Facts

Enrollment
515

Grades Served
6-8

Free/Reduced Price Lunch Percent
15.9

Ethnicity Percentages

Asian	2.1
American Indian	2.5
Black	1.2
Hispanic	1.4
White	92.8

WASL Percent Meeting Standards

	1998	1999	2000
Math	27.8	24.1	42.2
Reading	45.5	33.1	61.8
Writing	49.4	31.9	55.5

Strong bonds among students and staff and a commitment to continuous improvement are integral to the change efforts at Snoqualmie Middle School. The school is organized around a grade-level “schools-within-a-school” model. Students at each grade level are assigned to an interdisciplinary team of teachers for core instruction. Each team has the discretion to plan instruction, including time schedules and class assignments, within the 4 1/4 hour block each day. Core teams group their students for learning in each subject area based on individual needs, and groups are ever changing.

Core teachers plan as a team for 45 minutes and individually for 45 minutes each day while students attend exploratory and health/fitness classes. The daily planning time built into the schedule is the single most important factor in the school’s success in developing a commitment to continuous improvement of professional expertise and student achievement.

Each grade level core team has one instructional assistant and a full-time specialist who provides special education services and oversees the Title I program. The instructional assistant and special education teacher are present for team meetings and valued for the quality instructional support they provide to special-needs students and students in need of remedial instruction.

Snoqualmie Middle School recently changed from a semester schedule to trimesters and increased the time devoted to core academics to 4 1/4 hours each day. Under the trimester schedule students have two classes outside the core – one less than before the change. While this results in fewer

elective choices for students, a rich, articulated exploratory program in art, music, technical education and foreign language is available. The exploratory program is especially rich due to the presence of full-time fine arts, technical education/shop and foreign language specialists.

Students may also apply for one term of video production and participate in the production of a daily news broadcast and the school's continuous video broadcast of announcements. Last year a daily 6:30 a.m. "zero hour" class time was added for choir and jazz band. The zero hour provides the only opportunity for multi-grade classes, which meets the music program's needs.

Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

At the same time the Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs) were developed, the Snoqualmie Valley School District identified a need to update all of its curriculum frameworks. The ongoing support of the curriculum department at the district level provided resources to coordinate this effort. Teachers did the actual work of rewriting the curriculum standards and through that work gained an intimate knowledge of the EALRs and the district's student achievement goals.

Teachers from the middle school worked on the middle level frameworks and then met with elementary and high school teams to articulate the student learning outcomes across grade levels. These frameworks are considered a work in progress by parents and staff members who understand they will be revised based on evaluation of student achievement.

Teachers are more focused on core curriculum than they were two years ago. There is a conscious, and continuous, process for reviewing and revising traditional units, lessons and learning goals that no longer move students toward benchmarks as defined by the new standards. Teachers have also changed how they assess student learning. In response to the Washington Assess-

ment of Student Learning (WASL), performance tasks are included along with short response, multiple choice, portfolio, and oral response forms of assessment. Seventh grade teachers give WASL-like assessments throughout the year. Student strengths and challenges are assessed and instruction is designed to help all students meet or exceed the standard in all WASL subject areas. These efforts are reflected in the single digit percentage of students in level one on the spring 2000 WASL results.

Staff Development

Staff development has emphasized teaching to district and state standards and is driven by the ongoing school improvement process. Examples of recent inservice training include two years of work with a consultant in performance-based assessment in mathematics. Middle school teachers worked together to develop problem-based performance tasks aligned to specific math learning targets. This training exposed teachers to the concept of using a rubric as an instructional strategy and for scoring assessments. Another consultant trained Snoqualmie teachers in the *Six Trait Model* for writing instruction. Administrators and lead teachers also facilitated teacher training in the use of strategies and materials in the Toolkits published by the Commission on Student Learning.

Currently, teachers from each building in the district have formed teams that are attending training provided by an assessment consultant. The district curriculum department also coordinates opportunities for K-12 staff development to improve articulation and alignment through the grades. State professional development funds provided additional time for staff to collaborate during the past two years to articulate student learning outcomes across grade levels.

The pervasive use of a train-the-trainer model has provided opportunities for teachers to spend time planning together for instruction focused on

improved student performance on the learning targets defined by the WASL.

Instructional Leadership

Communication for the purpose of improving student achievement is a daily habit of grade level teams at the school. Through the team structure a sense of teacher and team efficacy and power to make decisions regarding their students are developing more each year. Schoolwide conversations focus on a common set of learning goals and performance standards that did not exist until the last three years or so.

Snoqualmie Middle School benefits from leadership at the district, administrative, and staff levels. Teams are strong and leadership within teams has resulted in almost universal agreement that teaching must change to align with the new standards and assessments. Team leaders facilitate team meetings and attend biweekly leadership meetings. At those meetings, whole school issues are discussed and team concerns are aired. Input into decisions that affect the entire school comes from the teams to this body. Communication among teams also occurs in weekly staff meetings. The team leaders serve as teacher representatives on the school's Learning Improvement Team (LIT). The LIT, which also includes parent and community representatives, serves as the school site council.

Administrators continually reinforce the primacy of the school's academic focus. They provide resources and encourage individual teacher effectiveness as well as nurturing the development of team efficacy. They take the lead in facilitating the examination of data and foster the sense that school improvement is a continuous and evolving process. Each administrator concentrates on supporting two of the four teams and meets with those teams at least once a week. The main purpose of their presence is to join the conversation about student learning, planning for instruction and curriculum development.

Data Driven Decision Making

Continuous improvement is the culture of the district and therefore of the school. For more than 15 years, the district has used *Onward to Excellence*, a school improvement process developed by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. Snoqualmie Middle School has also used *Creating the Future*, a strategic planning process to help guide their school improvement efforts. Each year staff focuses on goals defined through data analysis that reveals the areas of greatest need. Teachers study the indicators and develop plans that include elements of instructional strategies aimed at specific learning improvement targets and specific plans for evaluation of student learning. This process inherently links curriculum, instruction and assessment.

Test score data is analyzed fully each year along with other elements of the school profile. As comprehensive, research-based implementation plans are created for each goal, staff development opportunities are planned to support goal areas. Specific instructional strategies are implemented to increase the quality of instruction and student work.

This continuous school improvement process uses data to annually update the school profile. The attention to data as information creates a healthy climate for change, which is managed through the deliberate school improvement process and the site-based decision making model of school governance.

Student Success and Caring Environment

Core team teachers come to know their students well and the family atmosphere within teams creates opportunities for informal praise on a daily basis. It is very difficult to be anonymous as a student or a staff member at Snoqualmie Middle School. The school counselor oversees a student mediation program that trains students to help their fellow classmates use empathy to solve interpersonal problems.

The school community is focused on academic achievement and on respect for others. There is a deliberate process to assure that schoolwide agreement exists in areas of manners, decorum, responsibility, and self-discipline to support a positive learning climate. The process for continuous improvement requires that programs, staff, whole school climate, and various policies and procedures are examined regularly.

A committee of teachers and parents plans schoolwide recognition, with student input. For instance, based on student input, the school dropped grade level recognition assemblies, which had been a school tradition. Students are now recognized as honor students and students-of-the-month at honor teas, to which honored students and their parents are invited. A speaker from the community gives a short address, students receive awards and refreshments are provided. The goal of this change was to structure recognition so that students will feel that being smart in school is cool.

There is an active student body organization at the middle school that helps plan special recognition events and community service projects. For instance, seventh grade students organized a creative economy program where students earned money for academic success and good citizenship. Students were able to spend the money on token prizes, candy grams sent to friends, pizza parties, and other activities.

The district funds extended learning opportunities for students who need additional academic support. The programs are designed by the academic teams and offered either during the school day (with students substituting an academic support class for an exploratory class) or after school. Teachers generously provide after-school support for students. Though parent ability to provide transportation can limit student access to this extra instruction, a grant provides limited bus transportation once a week.

A rich co-curricular program includes four seasons of full participation interscholastic sports for seventh and eighth graders and two seasons for sixth graders. In addition, newspaper staff, annual staff, drama workshop, drill team, math team, Knowledge Bowl, computer club, dance club, and other special interest groups meet after school or during early evening hours.

Snoqualmie Middle School is not an ethnically diverse school but there is a small Native American population. The school has created programs that highlight Snoqualmie Tribe heritage and culture and support the Native American students.

Parent and Community Involvement

A goal of the school is to engage parents as partners in the education of their children. Teachers devote team time to meeting with parents and students, often initiating a meeting to problem solve with a parent and student to increase that student's success. Communication with parents is enhanced with weekly recorded telephone messages from the principal and through PTSA newsletters.

Parents support staff in a number of meaningful ways including co-teaching the *Great Books* program classes with the librarian/media specialist (after receiving training), assisting the counselor with clerical tasks each week, volunteering one day a week in the library, helping the seventh grade team administer the creative economy, soliciting local businesses for token prizes for student rewards, organizing grade-level team activities such as dinners and celebrations, and awarding teachers with mini-grants. The PTSA grows in size and adds new programs each year.

Parents are represented on the Learning Improvement Team, which also includes classified and certificated staff, and a community member. This body adopts the unit budget, program/schedule design, and discipline policy, and advises the administration in hiring decisions and other administrative matters.

Vignettes

The following vignettes provide specific ideas from schools that participated in this study. For more information on the processes through which these schools have accomplished their change efforts, please contact the school principals. Contact information, school characteristics and student demographics, WASL results, and curriculum resources used in each of the schools are presented in appendices D, E and F.

Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

These schools provide examples of strategies used to align curriculum, instruction and assessment, and to integrate curricula across subject areas. The practices are student-focused, consistent and based on content standards as described in the EALRs.

Blue Heron Middle School

Port Townsend School District

Aligning the scope and sequence of the curriculum with state standards is a focus at the district level in Port Townsend. Staff members in each department at Blue Heron work together to develop instructional strategies that address the EALRs and to align their curriculum with the Frameworks. Departments hold weekly meetings, and grade level teams meet four times during the week. The focus of most department and team meetings is on ensuring that curriculum, instruction and assessments are aligned and articulated across grades. The alignment of curriculum, instruction and assessments in classrooms is also addressed in pre-observation conferences between administration and staff. State staff development money has been used to support curriculum integration work.

Brier Terrace Middle School

Edmonds School District

Brier Terrace Middle School provides a good example of a collaborative staff focused on curriculum, instruction and assessment. There are consensus and commitment among staff to raising expectations for all students. In the English/language arts classes students practice taking standardized tests, and WASL vocabulary is intentionally addressed. *Accelerated Reader* is used schoolwide in addition to a developmental reading support program. The writing program is an amalgam of what has worked over time to improve student performance in all tested subject areas. Mathematics curriculum, instruction and classroom-based assessments focus on problem-solving as well as foundational numeracy.

Cedar Heights Junior High

Kent School District

A schoolwide goal established by the leadership team is to ensure that standards are incorporated into classroom instruction in all subject areas. One of the primary ways this is accomplished is through a process developed by teaching staff that requires each teacher to maintain a "Notebook of Evidence." Notebooks contain teacher lesson plans and samples of the assignments given to students. Minimally, the lesson plans include the lesson objective, instructional strategies and methods of assessing student learning. The goal is to focus

teachers on the decisions they make in planning their instruction and to help teachers make intentional decisions about what is taught and how it relates to the EALRs.

Staff members submit their Notebooks quarterly for administrative review. Administrators then provide written feedback. The Notebooks have come to serve as a tool for administrators to know where each staff member is with regard to the implementation of schoolwide academic goals. As a result, teachers have become more intentional about what they teach, how they teach, and how they evaluate student performance.

Notebooks developed by each teacher are used to share ideas and instructional strategies with one another. These shared experiences have resulted in a common language among staff and students. The next steps are identification and development of a core curriculum for each course.

Finley Middle School

Finley School District

Finley's vision statement includes improved academic performance as its primary focus and this influences school goals and decisions. For instance, the staff as a whole has the goal that 70 percent of the student body will soon reach level three on the math, reading and writing portions of the WASL so decisions about new textbook adoptions are selected based on alignment in scope and sequence with the EALRs.

Teachers have changed their teaching styles and work in teams to align their lesson plans in order to help students develop knowledge and skills outlined in the state standards. Language arts teachers focus their curriculum on writing, and students write every day. Writing assignments follow prompts and take into account purpose, audience and genre. The language arts curriculum has been expanded to include non-fiction reading and writing. In math, students use vocabulary cards, work at workstations according to skill levels, discuss different methods of problem solving, employ and interpret graphs, and write essays. The math teacher also uses student-developed rubrics to evaluate projects and extended responses to problems.

Teachers purposely instruct in a way that ensures that students are constantly processing and using information as they learn. A number of cross-curricular projects have been developed over the years that support this objective. One in particular involves a field trip to the Columbia River. Students draw maps of the area in social studies, analyze samples from the river in science, analyze the data in math, and write up results in language arts.

Staff Development

These schools and districts provide examples of effective staff development that is ongoing, focused and embedded in daily practice. Time for teacher training, collaboration and reflection about instructional practice provides consistency among staff. Available funds are allocated to support activities aimed at improving classroom teaching and learning.

Cedar River Middle School

Tahoma School District

In the Tahoma School District, there is a commitment to long-term, ongoing staff development. For the past 10 years, staff development has focused on the classroom level for the purpose of improving instructional practices. Coordinated districtwide staff development is centered on the EALRs to help staff understand the standards through alignment of the curriculum. Teacher training has included strategies for integrating the curriculum, teaching thinking skills and using authentic assessment.

A primary vehicle for staff collaboration has been a series of district summits in reading, science, writing, math, and the performing arts. Teachers from all levels come together by discipline to work on strategies for implementing effective instructional practices. Cross discipline teams also meet to integrate curriculum across subject areas.

Royal Middle School

Royal School District

Royal Middle School is organized using the *Seven Attributes of High-Achieving Schools*, which combine best practices in schools and organizations. These include common focus, high expectations, personalized education, respect and responsibility, time to collaborate, performance-based assessment, and using technology as a learning tool. Royal devoted its Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Grant to staff development during the 2000-2001 school year. The whole staff met for one hour each week to work on aligning the curriculum and to review the *Seven Attributes* to determine how to improve academics, safety, personal responsibility, and other school priorities.

Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership does not reside in a single individual at these schools, but involves all staff resulting in collective responsibility for student achievement. School structure and organization support students and staff alike, through creation of time for thoughtful instruction and interaction.

Blue Heron Middle School

Port Townsend School District

Leadership is shared at Blue Heron with one teacher from each grade level on the leadership team with the principal. Staff and the administration works collaboratively to make decisions about instructional programs and the learning environment. Almost every one serves on some district level committee, which fosters involvement and leadership. When issues arise a task force or committee is formed to develop solutions. Interactive meetings with the whole staff are used for refinement of the solutions. Team leaders and staff members with specific expertise present information and strategies in curriculum, instruction and assessment to their peers.

Brier Terrace Middle School

Edmonds School District

A sense of clarity about goals and direction is pervasive at Brier Terrace, and there is an understanding of the importance of consistency at the middle school level. This focus fosters a resilient, positive staff culture where the whole staff shows commitment to the success of every student. This is evident through the presence of extensive peer help among staff members and the feeling of buildingwide commitment and ownership. One example of how this has advanced teaching and learning is the collaborative development of classroom assessments.

Cedar River Middle School

Tahoma School District

There is a commitment to developing leadership at all levels in the Tahoma School District. Cognitive coaching is a focus in the district and provides opportunities for staff to better understand and support good instruction. Teachers commonly become trainers and are involved in the decision making at both the building and district levels. At Cedar River a departmental structure is in place for communication and department chairs are utilized as part of the leadership team. The administrative team participates in ongoing staff development addressing supervision and instruction.

Data Based Decision Making

At these schools, data are part of a continuous school improvement loop that informs all levels of the school community. Results from a variety of state, district and classroom-based assessments are reviewed and used as a basis for instructional and programmatic decisions. School improvement plans are data driven, proactive and focused on short- and long-term goals. District support and resources, and time and training for staff to analyze information, are key components of the data driven decision making systems in these schools.

Jason Lee Middle School

Tacoma School District

The Tacoma School District provides extensive student and school-level data to staff at Jason Lee. Demographic and academic data sets include information on gender and ethnicity, percent of students receiving free and reduced price lunches, school mobility rates, suspension and expulsion rates, percent of English speaking households, student grade point averages, state and district assessment results, and *Degrees of Reading Preparation* scores. The district also monitors individual student progress relative to the district's promotion policy and provides results to each school.

School improvement goals are based on a review of student achievement indicators. This continuing self-improvement process supports collaborative decision making. Goals are set to improve test scores based on a review of assessment data. For instance, after analysis of the demographic and academic data provided by the district, Jason Lee staff was trained using materials and information designed to align their curriculum with the EALRs. Specific student training programs, including math and literacy academies, were also instituted.

Salk Middle School

Spokane School District

Every fall, the Spokane School District Educational Services department provides each building with demographic information, results of student performance on the WASL and ITBS and school environment survey results. A district leadership team then comes to Salk to present the assessment data to the building's FOCUS team. A team of teachers at Salk analyzes WASL scores and presents this information to staff. The staff as a whole then spends a day brainstorming strategies in areas that need improvement. Building improvement plan goals are derived from this discussion. Examples of goals established and decisions made through this process during 2000-2001 include: a commitment to increasing student participation in reading by having all students read for 25 minutes per day, an agreement to use restructuring dollars to adopt *Accelerated Reader* schoolwide, and an agreement among teachers across all content areas to require complete sentences from students in classroom and homework assignments.

Student Success and Caring Environment

Attention to the interaction between physical, social and emotional health, and academic success is necessary when addressing middle school students' needs. These schools pay particular attention to the developmental needs of adolescents and institute programs that address students' individual strengths and challenges. Strong bonds among adults and students help students cope with difficult social and academic issues.

Royal Middle School

Royal School District

In order to address concerns about low self-esteem and low academic motivation, Royal has established advocacy/mentoring groups for students. Each staff member, including administrators, meets with a small group of students each day. The group remains together for three years and staff members serve as advocates, mentors and advisors for the students. This program is slated to be expanded this fall to include time and attention to study skills, tutoring and homework assistance.

Desert Hills Middle School

Kennewick School District

At Desert Hills, remediation occurs without lowering classroom standards by providing alternative learning opportunities for students who are struggling. In order to create time for this program staff decided to move away from the exploratory model for students who need additional help meeting standards. Teachers make recommendation for student participation in academic "lab classes" in lieu of exploratory classes for a quarter or a semester. Parents are then contacted and the principal talks to the student.

Desert Hills also houses the district's Connections program for students that pass the fifth grade but are not ready socially, emotionally, or academically for middle school.

Jason Lee Middle School

Tacoma School District

Each student has a set of assessments and projects that must be completed at a set achievement level according to the Tacoma School District's promotion policy. Students are monitored and supported through additional instruction in order to meet the requirements of the promotion plan. Parents are included in developing improvement plans as their children move through the grades.

Teachers have engaged in training to help them develop an understanding of poverty and diversity issues in order to meet the needs of Jason Lee's lower-income and ethnically diverse student population. Professional development in these areas has included Ruby Payne's poverty training and workshops in multiple intelligences.

Salk Middle School

Salk staff provides several opportunities for additional academic support for students. Examples include after-school study tables which are open to all interested students. Additionally, after each progress report students with failing grades are assigned to a two-hour extended study session after school for 10 days. The study sessions are focused on the specific curriculum area in which the student performed poorly. Class failure rates have dropped from five percent to two percent since this program was implemented.

Spokane School District

Wapato Middle School

A promotion, placement and retention policy is in place, which is used to monitor student progress and to assist students in specific academic areas. A student's reading level, credits in core courses, attendance, and school portfolio are all considered in the decision to move to the next grade level. The intellectual, social, physical, and emotional data on students are considered when determining placement in individual classes.

Wapato School District

Parent Involvement

We have chosen not to provide vignettes on parent and community involvement. While many of the schools that participated in this study had strong and supportive parent and community connections, the information we gathered did not reveal new or innovative ways to increase parent and community involvement, beyond what was included in the school profiles. This in itself is a finding. That is, even schools that are making great strides in improving student learning have found it difficult to create meaningful ways to involve parents and the community in the education of young adolescents.

This finding supports the assertions of researchers and practitioners that involving parents and the community is often considered the most difficult aspect of building a middle level school community. Examples from our profile schools demonstrated that thinking broadly about the meaning of parent and community participation reveals many ways in which these vital stakeholders can provide support to young adolescents at a time when they are less likely to want adult supervision, but when they need support from their parents and the community nonetheless.