

Seattle Public Schools District Improvement Plan, 2005 - 2007

Seattle Public Schools' District Improvement Plan became required when the district was identified in the fall of 2005 as a district in improvement under No Child Left Behind.

This District Improvement Plan is a blueprint for implementation of specific systemic changes needed to bring about improvements in achievement for all student groups in all of our buildings. Changes in organizational behavior and operations (e.g., communication and collaboration, decision-making protocols, resource allocation) are needed to support the interdisciplinary and interdepartmental work at all levels of the system that is essential to powerful and systemic improvement in the academic achievement of all students including students who are not yet performing at standard, students who are English language learners and students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). There is a need to deepen and broaden the professional knowledge base of all staff in what is required to provide highly effective and culturally relevant/responsive educational experiences to students in urban settings, and a need to adopt system-wide approaches in curriculum, assessment, instruction, and personalized learning practices. These changes will help ensure:

- We are operating in ways that promote system-wide reliability in the delivery of powerful educational experiences to all students that are reflective of students' learning needs and styles and support their on-going academic development. Implementation of district-wide systems in curriculum, assessment, instruction, and personalized learning practices is core to providing equitable access to educational opportunities at all schools.
- We identify the roles and responsibilities that all staff have for student academic achievement. We frequently monitor our progress, as a system, toward improvements in student achievement through the adoption of a performance-based system. In this performance-based system, all decisions will be databased, with student performance data driving distribution of resources (e.g., time, people, information, dollars, organizational energy) and the setting of district initiatives and priorities. We will implement an accountability system across all levels of the system that holds all staff accountable for improved student achievement. These changes will be made while concurrently achieving the goals and intent of the collective bargaining agreements with Seattle Education Association and the Principals Association of Seattle Schools;
- We meet the State goals for student performance; and
- We meet the intent, mandates, and goals of the No Child Left Behind Act.

The District Improvement Plan (DIP) is based on the vision of the district that "Every student – regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, or socioeconomic background – will graduate and be fully prepared to lead a successful life" and the mission of Seattle Public Schools "To provide every student with effective, high-quality teaching and learning experiences, relevant curriculum and support services, in a safe and healthy environment." The DIP is aligned with the Five Year Plan. The goals of the Five Year Plan are to:

- 1) Improve the effectiveness and relevance of instructional and support services for all students
- 2) Eliminate the achievement gap
- 3) Eliminate all systemic barriers to student achievement
- 4) Build leadership capacity for accountability, inclusivity, and effectiveness
- 5) Manage resources and set priorities using principles of equity and sustainability

The DIP specifically targets student academic achievement in reading and mathematics, the areas in which Seattle Public Schools failed to meet adequate yearly progress under No Child Left Behind. As a result, the DIP builds upon the work of Goals 1, 2 and 3 identified in the Five Year Plan. Additionally the DIP addresses graduation rates and attendance, again aligning with the Five Year Plan, this time with the work of Goals 1, 2, 3, and 4.

Statement of Problem

Seattle Public Schools has failed for two consecutive years to meet state standards for adequate yearly progress (AYP) in 10th grade reading and 10th grade mathematics for students who are African American and students identified by the state as low income. The District also has failed to meet the state target for graduation rates. Seattle Public Schools continues to experience a significant achievement gap.

The gap is clearly shown using WASL results from 2004 where the gap between White and African American students averaged 40 percentage points. Scores for students on free and reduced lunch averaged 35 percentage points below students who are not on free and reduced lunch. Scores for ESL and special education students averaged 30 to 40 points below those who are not on ESL or special education students. (Appendix A)

We view these gaps as major shortcomings of our education efforts and that these gaps require us to make, as a system, dramatic and meaningful improvements in (a) the curriculum identified as essential learnings for students, (b) the ways we assess student learning and use that information to make instructional decisions, (c) the instructional strategies we use, and (d) how we personalize learning to address the social/emotional development of students and how we ensure their, and their families' active involvement in learning experiences.

Additionally, the unexcused absence rate for elementary and middle school accountability was very close to the AYP targeted goal. Though Seattle met AYP in this area, (Appendix A) a focus on continuing to meet the goal and increase student's involvement in their learning is needed.

Goals for District Improvement

- 1) Seattle Public School District will meet the AYP targets in reading and mathematics each year for all categories and grade levels that are assessed by the WASL. In the case where the AYP target is not met, the minimum goal is to achieve the "safe harbor" provisions (10% reduction in the number of students not meeting the standard).
- 2) Seattle Public School District will continue to achieve AYP unexcused absence targets for schools with grades one to eight.
- 3) Seattle Public School District will achieve AYP graduation rate targets for schools with grades nine to twelve.

Theory of Action

Through the adoption of a performance-based system supported through the development of professional learning communities, we, as a district, will focus on the implementation of district-wide curriculum, assessment, and instructional systems and individualized student learning plans. By focusing efforts on these strategies, we will strategically address the individual learning needs of all students, and reduce and then eliminate the achievement gap in the entire system.

Strategies

Curriculum. The curriculum strategy is to implement system-wide improvements in curricula provided students that result in (a) clearly defined district curricula in reading, writing, and mathematics that are aligned with EALRs, GLEs, ELDS, and EALR Extensions and (b) rigorous and culturally relevant curricula for all students, preK through grade 12, including those who are English language learners, students who have Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), and students who do not yet perform at standard.

Washington State's standards system of EALRs, GLEs, in reading, mathematics and writing will become the explicit curriculum for Seattle Public Schools. English Language Development Standards (ELDS) and EALR Extensions for students with the most significant disabilities will also be core elements of this curriculum.

The rationale for selecting this curricula strategy as a DIP priority is that the implementation of system-wide curricula will result in increased student performance levels because:

- 1) EALRs, GLEs, ELDS, and EARL Extensions clearly define what all students are to know and be able to do as a result of instruction, including curricular goals for students who are English language learners and students with IEPs. The identification of what should be taught and what students are to learn would be specified in these curricular targets used by all teachers in the district as the roadmap for planning instruction.
- 2) Teachers, students, and families need opportunities to become familiar with the EALRs, GLEs, ELDS, and EARL Extensions in order to have curricula that are truly vertically and horizontally aligned and responsive to the learning needs of our heterogeneous groups of students.
- 3) Emphasis on the expanded standards system will result in a common language and understanding among staff, students, and families of not only what students are to know and be able to do, but also the interconnectedness among learning goals established for general education students, students who are English language learners and students with IEPs.

Assessment. The second strategy is assessment because assessment is key to student achievement. The adoption of a district-wide assessment system will transform our system because student performance data will be used as the basis of decision-making.

The rationale for selecting this assessment strategy as a DIP priority is that the implementation of this assessment system will increase student performance levels because:

1. The system will provide easily accessible tools and a systematic process for identifying what students have learned as a result of instruction.
2. Analysis of student performance on assessments will identify what the student has learned, and what remains to be learned, in order to demonstrate proficiency in a GLE, ELD, or EALR Extension.

- a. Formative assessments provide a frequent lens into student learning that informs staff when an instructional change needs to be made.
 - b. Summative assessments provide information not only on individual student skill development, but allow for group analysis as well (e.g., analysis of the performance of students in a reading group, analysis of the performance of students per grade level across the district, analysis of the performance of students at a particular high school) following the completion of instructional units, courses, a year of teaching.
3. Emphasis on this assessment system will (a) result in common assessment language and improved understandings among staff, students, and families (e.g., what is meant by formative assessment, how to interpret a standard score) and (b) assist teachers working in professional learning communities to develop deeper understandings of curricula targets, different levels of performance, and rationale for differentiating instruction and curricular targets for students.

Instruction. The third strategy is instruction. The selection of instructional strategies that will bring about desired learning, will be responsive to different learning styles and learning pace, and will actively engage students in learning will result in improved student achievement.

The rationale for selecting this instruction strategy as a DIP priority is that improvements in instructional practices will increase student performance levels because:

- 1) Instructional practices selected for inclusion in the district's "bank" of strategies will be aligned with EALRs, GLEs, ELDS, and EALR Extensions, as well as with the assessment system, thus providing a cohesive systematic approach for addressing student learning needs.
- 2) Instructional practices selected for inclusion in the "bank" of strategies will be research-based and shown as being reliable and effective in bringing about student learning in specific curricular targets.
- 3) Instructional practices selected for inclusion in the "bank" of strategies will be culturally responsive, and challenge teachers and staff to reflect on the interplay between instructional approaches used in the classroom and student learning styles and learning needs based on prior experience, cultural lenses, and readiness for the curricula being presented.
- 4) Focusing on these strategies through professional development experiences and in the work of professional learning communities will (a) result in a common language associated with instructional practices among staff, students, and families (e.g., what is meant by reciprocal teaching, guided reading, differentiated instruction), (b) provide professional learning communities with common strategies to focus on and support student learning, and (c) assist teachers working in professional learning communities to develop deeper understandings of curricula targets, different levels of student performance, and the rationale for differentiating instructional practices to meet the needs of individual and groups of students.

Individualized Student Learning Plans. Individualized student learning plans are a required component of three differing pieces of state legislation. Washington Administrative Code 180-51-061 requires a High School and Beyond Plan for all high school students beginning with the class of 2008. The Certificate of Academic Achievement (3ESHB 2195) requires a student learning plan for students who did not meet one or more standards on the WASL and the Learning Assistance Program Plan (ESSB 5877) specifies an accelerated learning plan for any student benefiting from the LAP program.

The District Improvement Plan utilizes these requirements to identify a targeted student population. Plans will provide specific academic, social-emotional interventions that are developed in coordination with teacher, school, and family.

Individualized Student Learning Plans address:

1. Specific academic goals related to students' areas of deficit (emphasis on reading and mathematics);
2. Social emotional needs of students that are considered barriers to success (e.g., attendance, mental health, physical health, and homelessness);
3. Identification of parent, student, teacher, and school roles and responsibilities in the design and implementation of the plan (e.g., homework monitoring, progress reports, and scheduling);
4. Clarification of how and when progress will be measured and how it will be communicated (e.g., telephone calls, regularly scheduled progress reports, conferences, and report cards).

Learning Strands

Professional development will be provided to staff in four strands that directly correlate with the four strategies described above. Professional development will be focused (i.e., based on the needs of those involved in the professional development effort and be site-based), embedded (i.e., directly connected to the issues those participating in the professional development effort are facing) and continuous (e.g., workshop sessions combined with follow-up on-site coaching and related activities). Professional development will follow an inquiry model and provide opportunities for staff to engage in meaningful discussions and activities focused around their work with students and the development of skills and knowledge for successfully addressing the instructional challenges they face in their classrooms.

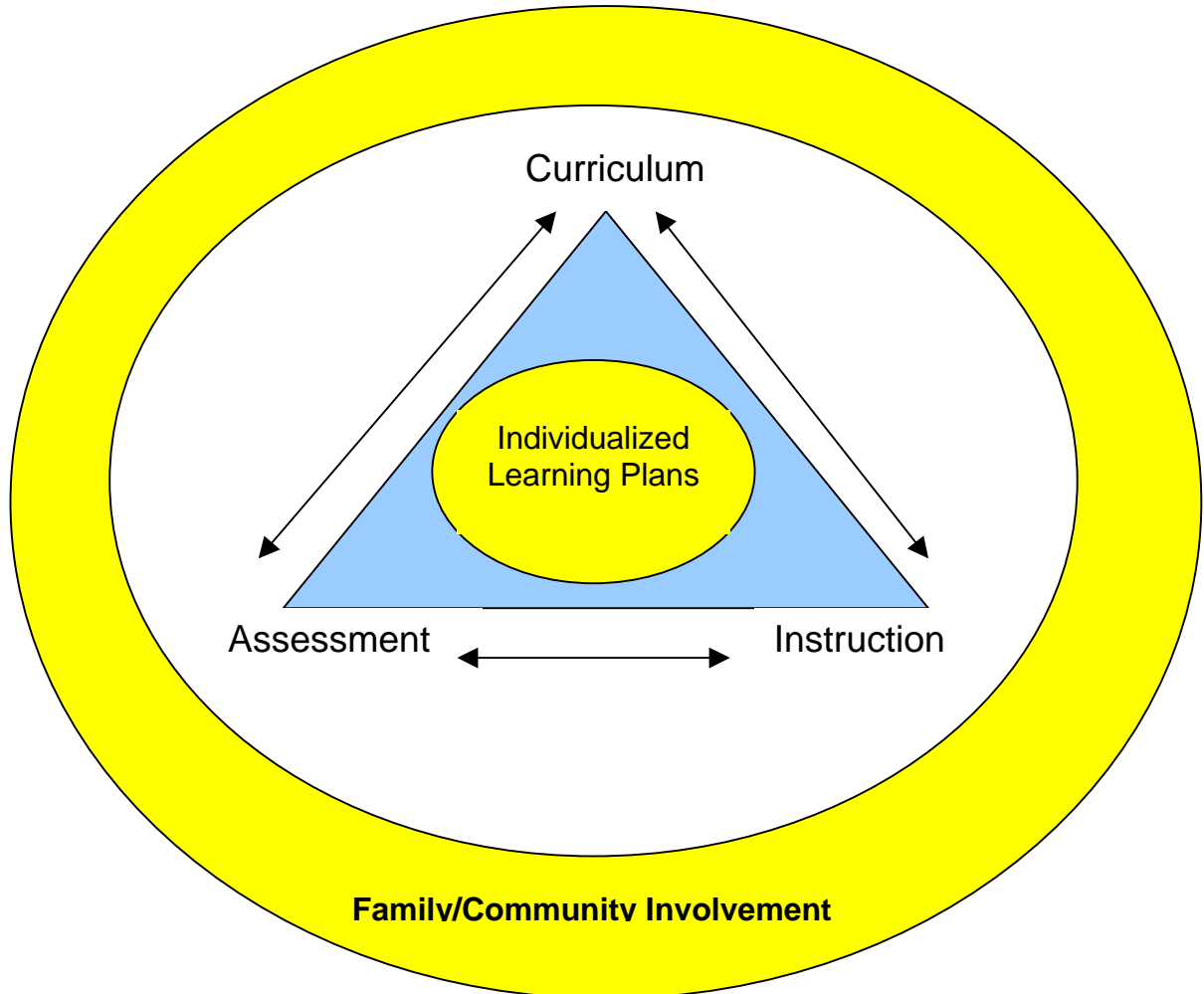
Needs assessments will be conducted with central and building staff in terms of their understandings and skills in each learning strand. It is expected that staff will have differing professional needs in each literacy area, resulting in in-depth training provided over time or sessions that are brief and focused on review of core skills, leaving time for development of skills and understandings in new areas.

Learning Strand	Skill Focus	Potential Hours of Training*
Curriculum	a) Understanding how the standards system works b) Selection and use of rigorous, culturally relevant instructional materials aligned with standards	1-6 hours
Assessment	a) Analyzing student work b) Understanding different types of scores and categories of assessments c) Interpretation of data for instructional planning d) Development of skills in the administration and interpretation of district-identified tools and understanding of student performance standards	15-24 hours
Instruction	a) Learning about research-based and culturally-responsive approaches b) Learning about instructional strategies used within selected district approved curricular instructional materials and/or programs	15-24 hours
Individualized Student Learning Plans	a) Development, implementation and monitoring of individualized learning plans	1-3 hours

**Decision model to be determined collaboratively with Seattle Education Association*

There is a continual interplay between the four strategies we have identified as priorities for change. This continual cycle of curriculum, assessment, and instruction, all framed by family and community involvement, with individualized learning plans at the center, is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Continual Cycle of Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction



Family and Community Involvement

The work of professional learning communities and the adoption of a performance-based system is greatly strengthened through family and community involvement in student learning. Families are students' first educators and are deeply committed to student academic achievement. Families may be viewed as "expert generalists" concerned with their child's social, psychological, health, recreation, and education whereas school personnel may be viewed as "expert generalists" who provide services and advice (Sergiovanni, 1990). Community members, organizations and agencies are part of a student's everyday life, and should be considered partners in the education of students.

A growing volume of research highlights the value of schools, families, and communities working together to strengthen learning supports for student achievement (Adelman & Taylor, 2004). Studies have found that family involvement in student learning contributes to student achievement (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). After school programs are linked to increase educational success (Miller, 2003). The Seattle Social Development Project found that teacher training (classroom management and instruction), parent education (behavior management, academic support, and drug prevention), and student social emotional skill development resulted in improvements in several areas including academic success (Hawkins, Catalano, Hill, Kosterman, Abbott, 2005). Other efforts such as student led family conferences have also been found effective. In addition, social emotional learning programs (SEL) have increased student attendance, decreased the dropout rate, and improve student academic performance (Ragozzino, Resnik, Utne-O'Brien, Weissberg, 2003). To be successful, family involvement must be viewed as a two-way process. The school and district will have information to disseminate to the families, while in turn, families will have information they want shared with the school district. Families would need opportunities to ask questions, for developing understanding of the new systems, and strategies for what they can do at home to support their students' learning. Whenever possible, information should be provided in their native language and families should have an opportunity to provide feedback about the effectiveness of this plan. These activities must be supported through systematic gathering of data regarding perceptions of families and community members, and those data used to inform school improvement efforts.

Goals for family/community involvement include the following:

- 1) Providing friendly, welcoming environments for all families at every school and school facility, increasing personal contact between teachers/school staff and families, including off-site visits, and developing and implementing a school-family plan
- 2) Providing accessible, ongoing, improved communication to families and communities including increases in the use of native language publications
- 3) Providing leadership and decision-making opportunities with relevant education for families
- 4) Expanding partnership with community organizations and families

In a performance-based system, family involvement could potentially include the activities described above, but would add the element of data collection on how these activities impacted student achievement. For example, attendance at meetings that addressed the topics listed above would be one indicator of family involvement, but it would be nearly impossible to link attendance at an information meeting with improved student achievement. There is a significant difference between an activity and putting into a place actions that result in enhanced student achievement. In a performance-based system, programs, actions, and strategies will include how effects of family involvement will be measured in terms of their impact on student achievement. For example, in a building in which family members are volunteer tutors, charting of student performance in reading skills for students involved/not involved in the program, or charting student performance prior to program participation,

throughout participation, and at the end of the program, provide data that can be analyzed to begin to understand the impact of the volunteer effort on reading achievement. For schools that provide family workshops in the topics listed above, the data piece may be follow-up questionnaires querying family application of strategies and their level of understanding and the providing of ongoing support paired with the monitoring of student completion of homework or whatever learning target was identified (e.g., reading books, practicing sight words). As reported by Knapp and Shields (1995), preparing families for working with their child on academic tasks supports student achievement and is one powerful way for bridging family and school.

Community involvement includes formation of partnerships, development of internship and apprenticeship opportunities, and garnering additional resources. Community business and agencies have an investment in students' education because they are the community adults and leaders of the future. Again, in a performance-based decision, the purpose of the partnership, what is to be accomplished through the partnership, and means for assessing the outcome (not just that the partnership was formed) are what drive the formation of the partnership and the investment of community and staff time and talent.

Performance Support and Management Model

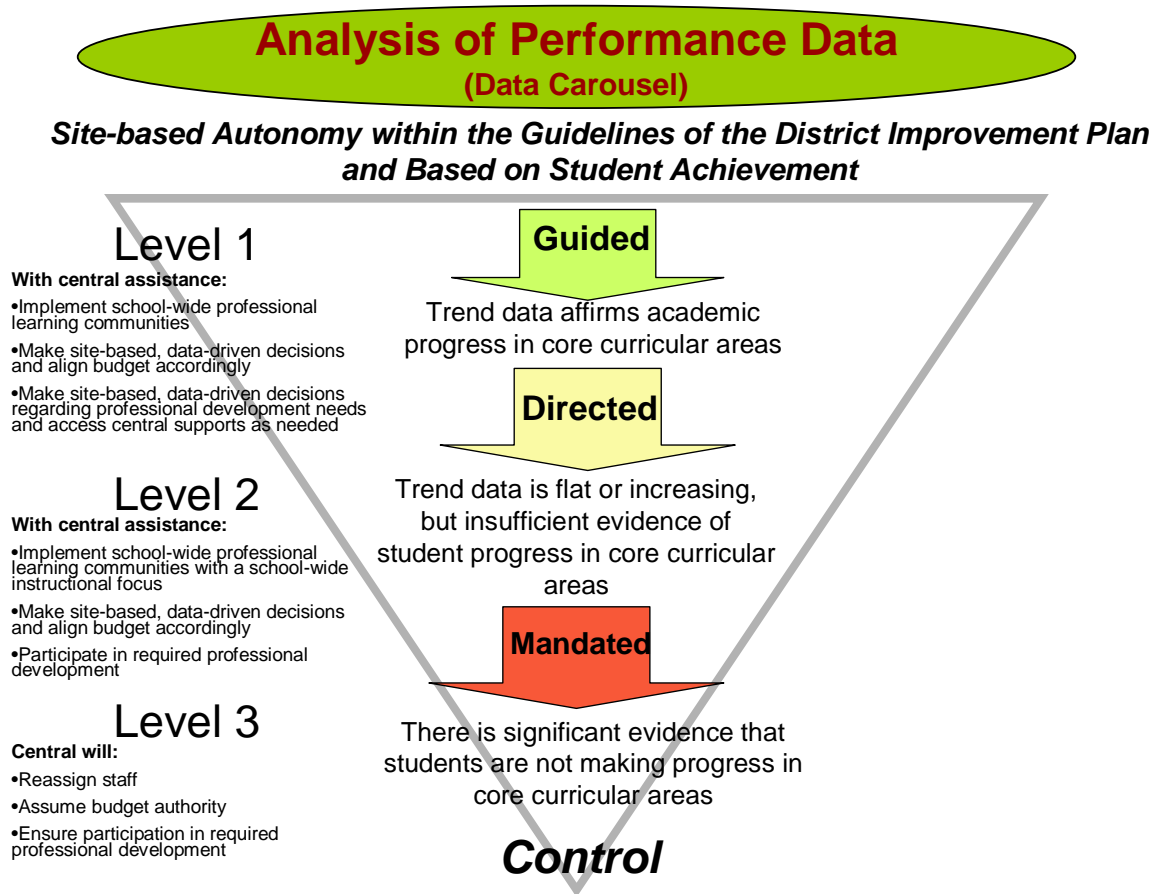
The DIP, in this performance-based system, bases school/program and staff evaluations on data collection and analysis, and holds individuals accountable for results while also providing them responsibility for involvement in decision making. The system is presented in Figure 2.

Implementation of this accountability system begins with three primary activities:

- 1) Data carousel of student achievement data at district and school levels by an interdisciplinary team composed of central administrative staff who identifies schools as being in accountability Level 1, 2 or 3;
- 2) Development and deployment of interdisciplinary teams to work with school staff of potential Level 2 and 3 schools to gather and analyze school data that go beyond what was considered during the data carousel activity. Upon analysis of this additional data, final levels of accountability will be identified for each school.
- 3) Interdisciplinary teams will work with Level 2 and 3 schools to develop action plans for addressing curricular, assessment, instruction, or personalized instructional areas in need of improvement.

Figure 2: Performance Support and Management Model

Performance Support and Management Model



Appendix A**A. Data Summary for District Improvement Plan**

This section summarized key statistics that describe the academic performance of Seattle Public Schools students in reading and math in 2003 and 2004 as measured by WASL. In addition it reports on unexcused absence rates and graduation rates that are used as other indicators in the determination of Adequately Yearly Progress. The information presented in this section describes the overall performance of the District in its efforts to bring all students to State standards.

All data displayed in this report related to the accomplishment of stated measurable objectives (academic achievement in Reading and Mathematics, percent of students with unexcused absences, and percent of cohort students graduating on time) was published on the Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction's web site at:

<http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/reports/ayp.aspx?schoolid=100&reportLevel=District&orgLinkId=100>

The adjusted percent meeting standard is the percent used by the State to determine if the school or district met the AYP target. It is the upper limit of the margin of error, or confidence band of the estimated percent meeting standard.

A.1 Academic Achievement in Reading

A.1.1 District-Wide WASL Results: 2003 and 2004 Percent Meeting Standard

Reading	2003	2004	Gain 2003-2004
Grade 4	64.0%	72.0%	+8.0%
Grade 7	47.9%	55.1%	+7.2%
Grade 10	53.1%	55.1%	+2.0%

These results are reported for all students including those that were not continuously enrolled and do not reflect any adjustment for margin of error.

When students who are not continuously enrolled are excluded and the margin of error is recognized, the above percents are higher. In considering the "All" category, all three grades met the State AYP target in reading.

A.2 Academic Achievement in Mathematics

A.2.1 District-Wide WASL Results: 2003 and 2004 Percent Meeting Standard

Mathematics	2003	2004	Gain 2003-2004
Grade 4	53.1%	59.6%	+6.5%
Grade 7	33.9%	43.6%	+9.7%
Grade 10	34.9%	38.6%	+3.7%

These results are reported for all students including those that were not continuously enrolled and do not reflect any adjustment for margin of error.

When students who are not continuously enrolled are excluded and the margin of error is recognized, the above percents are higher. In considering the "All" category, all three grades met the State AYP target in mathematics.

A.3.1 **Grade 4** Percent of Students Meeting AYP State Targets Adjusted Percent Meeting State Standard

Grade 4 Ethnic Group	% Meeting Target 2003 – Reading	% Meeting Target 2004 – Reading	% Meeting Target 2003 – Math	% Meeting Target 2004 - Math
African American	50.7	60.3	34.0	41.6
Asian	63.9	76.6	57.4	67.6
Caucasian	84.7	89.2	74.7	80.5
Latino	50.1	N<Req	41.1	N<Req
Native American	64.4	N<Req	56.7	N<Req
State Target	56.2	52.2	35.6	29.7

Summary (N<Req is considered to have met State standard)

Attainment of State Standard: Reading

2002-2003 3 out of 5 ethnic groups (Asian, Caucasian, Native American)
 2003-2004 5 out of 5 ethnic groups

Attainment of State Standard: Mathematics

2002-2003 4 out of 5 ethnic groups (Asian, Caucasian, Latino, Native American)
 2003-2004 5 out of 5 ethnic groups

Observation: **All ethnic groups (with a sufficient number of students – N) made or exceeded State standards for 2003-2004.**

A.3.2 **Grade 7** Percent of Students Meeting AYP State Targets
 Adjusted Percent Meeting State Standard

Grade 7 Ethnic Group	% Meeting Target 2003 – Reading	% Meeting Target 2004 – Reading	% Meeting Target 2003 – Math	% Meeting Target 2004 - Math
African American	24.8	36.2	9.7	20.2
Asian	51.8	60.6	43.1	50.3
Caucasian	68.6	76.0	52.7	67.3
Latino	39.7	N<Req	23.0	N<Req
Native American	50.9	N<Req	30.9	N<Req
State Target	35.9	30.1	24.2	17.3

Summary (N<Req is considered to have met State standard)

Attainment of State Standard: Reading

2002-2003 4 out of 5 ethnic groups (Asian, Caucasian, Latino, Native American)
 2003-2004 5 out of 5 ethnic groups

Attainment of State Standard: Mathematics

2002-2003 3 out of 5 ethnic groups (Asian, Caucasian, Native American)
 2003-2004 5 out of 5 ethnic groups

Observation: **All ethnic groups made or exceeded State standards for 2003-2004.**

A.3.3 **Grade 10** Percent of Students Meeting AYP State Targets
 Adjusted Percent Meeting State Standard

Grade 10 Ethnic Group	% Meeting Target 2003 – Reading	% Meeting Target 2004 – Reading	% Meeting Target 2003 – Math	% Meeting Target 2004 - Math
African American	27.3	36.4	9.0	14.8
Asian	59.6	60.6	41.9	45.1
Caucasian	75.7	79.4	55.7	63.6
Latino	44.4	N<Req	27.3	N<Req
Native American	69.0	N<Req	48.2	N<Req
State Target	52.9	48.6	31.1	24.8

Summary (N<Req is considered to have met State standard)

Attainment of State Standard: Reading

2002-2003 4 out of 5 ethnic groups (Asian, Caucasian, Latino, Native American)
 2003-2004 4 out of 5 ethnic groups (Asian, Caucasian, Latino, Native American)

Attainment of State Standard: Mathematics

2002-2003 3 out of 5 ethnic groups (Asian, Caucasian, Native American)
 2003-2004 4 out of 5 ethnic groups (Asian, Caucasian, Latino, Native American)

Observation: **African-American students were the only ethnic group that did not make or exceed State standards for both Reading and Mathematics for both 2002-2003 and 2003-2004.**

A.4 Reduction in the Achievement Gap in Reading and Mathematics

Reduction in achievement gap from 2003 to 2004 measured by change in percent of students meeting standard on WASL

A.4.1 Reading

The gap reduction is measured by the amount (in percentage points) by which gains from 2003 to 2004 for each ethnic group exceeded Caucasian gains.

	African American	Asian	Latino	Native American
4 th Grade	5.1	8.2	NA	NA
7 th Grade	4.0	1.4	NA	NA
10 th Grade	15.4	7.3	NA	NA

[Note: Negative numbers indicate Caucasian gains from 2003 to 2004 exceed gain for ethnic group. If number is negative, the gap widened from 2003 to 2004. If the number is 0 or positive, the gap narrowed from 2003 to 2004.]

Summary

Asian and African-American students all showed reductions in the gap in achievement in Reading for all three grade levels (Grades 4, 7 and 10).

Number of instances where the achievement gap in Reading has decreased: 6 out of 6.

A.4.2 Mathematics

The gap reduction is measured by the amount (in percentage points) by which gains each ethnic group exceed Caucasian gains.

	African American	Asian	Latino	Native American
4 th Grade	1.8	4.4	NA	NA
7 th Grade	-4.1	-7.4	NA	NA

10 th Grade	-2.1	-4.7	NA	NA
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Summary

The achievement gap has increased for African American and Asian students in grades 7 and 10, and decreased in grade 4.

Number of instances where the achievement gap in Mathematics has decreased 2 out of 6.

African American 1 (Grade 4)
 Asian 1 (Grade 4)

Unexcused Absence Rate -- Grades 1 to 8

The unexcused absence rate for all schools with grade 4 and schools with grade 7 is shown below. {For schools with grade 4 the absence rate is based on absences for grades 1 to 5 and for schools with grade 7, the absence rate is based on grades 6 to 8.]

Unexcused Absence Rate

	2003	2004
Grade 4	0.80	0.39
Grade 7	0.80	1.07

For grade 4, the AYP target was met in both 2003 and 2004. For grade 7, the AYP target was met in 2003, and, based on an appeal, met in 2004 even though the rate exceeded 1.0.

On-time Graduation Rate -- High Schools

On-time graduation rates were computed for all schools with grades 9 to 12. The graduation rate is estimated based on data submitted to OSPI in the P-210 report showing high school enrollment and withdrawals in school years 2002-2003 and 2003-2004.

Graduation Rate

	2003	2004
All High Schools	53.2	50.15

In both years the AYP target of 66% was not met

Research Base

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