

January, 2008

To: Seattle Public Schools Families

From: Chief Academic Officer Carla Santorno

Dear Families:

In an effort to keep parents and community members informed of important issues affecting our school district, this letter reviews student achievement as reflected by the Washington State Assessment of Student Learning (WASL), and explains Seattle School District's status with regard to state and federal requirements for Adequate Yearly Progress in achievement.

During the 2007-2008 school year, the district has continued or started a number of programs that support achievement for all students. Our goal is to challenge all students – at whatever level of proficiency they have attained – to expand their knowledge and skills. For students who have not yet met standards, we provide additional interventions to assist them to master what they need to learn. These programs are based on national best practices and proven research that shows their impact. Some of the key programs include:

Literacy

K-2 classroom libraries and independent reading in every elementary school  
Readers and Writer's workshops – middle school and expanding to elementary  
"Read a Million Words, Seattle!" – an initiative to encourage reading

Math

District wide adoption of "Everyday Math" and "Singapore Math" – elementary  
CMP2 for grades 6-8

Literacy and Math

Project EXCEL (extended day programs elementary and middle)  
Pathways (High School)

Comprehensive Programs

Flight School Initiative (Southeast and Southwest Seattle)  
Southeast Education Initiative

Student achievement in our district continues to climb. WASL scores released in August 2007 indicate that gains made in 2006 in the percentage of Seattle Public Schools students meeting standard were sustained or increased in most areas in 2007. The exceptions to this trend were results for tenth grade (all subjects) and for eighth grade in reading.

Seattle continues to do well compared with state performance. Specifically, Seattle results were greater than, or within one point, of the state average in 13 out of 20 of the

areas tested. In addition, the gains made by Seattle students exceeded state gains in 16 out of 20 areas tested. These results are notable. Across the nation, it is typical that the performance of large urban school districts is below state averages.

- In reading at fourth grade, students sustained the milestone achieved last year – with more than 80 percent meeting or exceeding standard.
- Reading achievement at seventh grade jumped by 8.2 points and at sixth grade by 4.6 points
- Math achievement is up at Grades 3 through 8, with the greatest gains at fifth grade (6.1 points), seventh grade (5.7 points) and third grade (4.8 points).
- For the first time at any grade level, math achievement topped 70 percent – at third grade, 72.1 percent of students met or exceeded standards.
- In writing, gains were made at fourth grade (2.7 points) and seventh grade (2.0 points).
- Science scores increased 2.7 points at fifth grade and 4.8 points at eighth grade.
- The achievement level for eighth grade reading dropped by 4.1 points and echoes the drop in state results, which were down by 5.3 points.

Significant gains have been made over the past several years in narrowing the achievement gap between white students and students of color in reading and writing; but the gap has widened in math for nearly all levels and groups tested. The gap continues to narrow in reading, with substantial gains in some areas.

These gaps are unacceptable, and we are working on additional strategies to accelerate the pace at which achievement gaps are closed. Additional information on 2007 WASL results is available on the district Website at [http://www.seattleschools.org/area/news/0708/WASL\\_Release\\_August\\_2007.pdf](http://www.seattleschools.org/area/news/0708/WASL_Release_August_2007.pdf)

Because achievement gaps still exist, the district has not met Adequately Yearly Progress as defined by federal and state standards. In August 2007, all districts in Washington State were notified of their status in relation to federal legislation known as “No Child Left Behind Act of 2001” (NCLB). This status, called “Adequate Yearly Progress” (AYP), is a key part of NCLB. AYP is an annual determination of whether schools, districts, and states have made progress toward the goal of having all students meet or exceed state standards in reading and math as well as meet targets for test participation, unexcused absences and graduation rates. Washington’s statewide assessment, the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) serves as a major factor in calculating AYP in Washington State.

Seattle Public Schools did not make Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) as a district for the 2006-7 school year because the district did not meet its AYP targets in 18 of 87 required areas. The table below identifies the 18 areas by level and content area and additional detail can be found in the appendix attached to this letter.

**Table 1: Areas where AYP targets were not met**

Level	Reading Proficiency	Math Proficiency	Other Indicator
Elementary School Combined Grades (Grades 3-5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Black</li> <li>• Limited English</li> <li>• Special Education</li> <li>• Low Income</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Black</li> <li>• Limited English</li> <li>• Special Education</li> </ul>	
Middle School Combined Grades (Grades 6-8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Black</li> <li>• Limited English</li> <li>• Special Education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Black</li> <li>• Hispanic</li> <li>• Limited English</li> <li>• Special Education</li> <li>• Low Income</li> </ul>	
High School (Grade 10)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Black</li> <li>• Low Income</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District Graduation Rate</li> </ul>

Because of these results, we are required to revise our district improvement plan within 90 days after identification; administrators, teachers, parents, and other representatives will be collaboratively involved as we develop the plan. Additionally, the district must reserve at least ten percent (10%) of its annual Title I allocation to provide focused, professional development for teachers and administrators in the areas where we have not met the target.

Parents and guardians are vital partners in improving schools, and we welcome you to actively participate in the revision and update of the district improvement plan. There are many ways you can be involved to support students in reaching the annual targets.

Parents/guardians of students in grades 3-8 and high school who participated in the 2007 WASL received individual WASL results in the month of September 2007. Programs and opportunities for additional instruction and guided practice are available during the school day as well as after school for students who have not yet met standard. Please contact your student's school for specific information about these services.

We are committed to the success of each student in our district and are focused on raising each student's academic performance. We are optimistic about the future, and we hope that you will join us this important work. We encourage you to contact your student's school or the district office for any questions that you may have or for additional information.

Sincerely yours, Carla Santorno, Chief Academic Officer

