

# Aki Kurose Middle School

## Seattle Excellence Continuous School Improvement Plan (CSIP)

### Purpose

The Continuous School Improvement Plan provides an overview of the school, student outcome goals and a brief narrative description on how the school plans to collaboratively meet these goals over time. It is intended to offer families and community audiences an overview of improvement work aligned to the strategic plan and written in language that is accessible by a diverse audience.

### Introduction

WHEN WE FOCUS on ensuring racial equity in our educational system, unapologetically address the needs of students of color who are furthest from educational justice, and work to undo the legacies of racism in our educational system by doing the following:

- Allocating resources strategically through a racial equity framework
- Delivering high-quality, standards-aligned instruction across all abilities and a continuum of services for learners
- Creating healthy, supportive, culturally responsive environments from the classroom to central office
- Directly and consistently working in partnership with families and communities who represent students of color who are furthest from educational justice; and
- Making clear commitments and delivering on them

THEN we will eliminate opportunity and achievement gaps and every student will receive a high-quality, world-class education.

## Seattle Public Schools Foundational Beliefs for Supporting Student Learning

In Seattle Public Schools, we understand that a shared vision of practice is essential to fostering the learning communities that each of our students and adults needs to thrive. This shared vision enables educators to work in concert to build their practice with a focus on student learning.

As such, we believe:

- 1) **Teaching is intellectually complex**, difficult and demanding work, and the development of skillful teaching requires deep collaboration and non-defensive self-examination of practice in relation to student results.
- 2) **By collaborating with families in authentic partnerships**, we create a path for students to reach their highest potential, engaging with families as the first and lifelong teachers of students.
- 3) **"Intelligence" is not a fixed, inborn trait**. All children come to school with cultural capital and intelligence, and all have the raw material to learn rigorous academic material at high standards. Therefore, our work is to **build students' academic mindset**
- 4) **By recognizing and cultivating the gifts and strengths of every student**, we can get each student to believe in themselves and deconstruct any of their own internalized stereotypes.
- 5) **Racism in our society exerts a downward force on the experiences and achievement of students of color that must be met with active countermeasures.**

Our commitment to these beliefs is the route to institutionalizing racial equity and fostering a context where each child receives what they need to develop to their full academic and social potential, and we make educational equity and justice the cornerstone of our system.

## School Profile

The students at Aki Kurose Middle School (Aki) have limitless potential and deserve to pursue their dreams. However, the public education system was not designed with our students in mind and therefore we must provide the necessary supports and resources for them to access, engage in, and own their education. Our community represents a wide range of experiences of families in our city and we all benefit from our depth of cultural and linguistic diversity as well as the diversity of lived experiences.

Over 90% of our students identify as people of Color, our students report their race/ethnicity as follows: 32.3% Asian, 31% Black/African American, 17.7% Hispanic/Latino, 9.8% Two or More Races, 6.4% White, 2.2% Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, and 0.4% American Indian/Alaskan Native. Over 22% of students receive English Language Learner services, with more than 25 home languages represented.

We recognize that our city and school system are steeped in policies and structures that systematically prioritize some communities and marginalize others, creating educational gaps and thereby maintaining a socio-economic hierarchy. The gaps we see in middle school are systematic and we recognize that we will

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automatically perpetuate them unless we actively disrupt them. Our students deserve a transformational school community that defies the system. Rather than a one size fits all approach, we aspire to deliver whatever is demanded by our students' needs. We attempt to exhaust every opportunity for our students' success.

## Priorities and Measurable Goals

### Middle School Focus Goal: 7th Grade Mathematics

#### **Priority Goal:**

At least 39% of 7<sup>th</sup> grade students of color furthest from educational justice will meet standards or higher on the Math Smarter Balanced Assessment.

#### **Target Goal #1:**

At least 39% of Black male students will meet standards or higher on the Math Smarter Balanced Assessment.

### Safe and Welcoming Environment Goal

#### **Priority Goal:**

We have developed a theory of action specifically for implementing restorative practices: If we create a structure (i.e. a safe space with a trained facilitator) and system (i.e. online demographic referral system) to address conflicts between students and between students and staff through intentionally developing social and emotional knowledge and skills, such as the ability to listen to others, empathize with their emotions, and establish, maintain, and repair relationships, and the ability to reflect on and change the way our bias influences our perception and reaction to situations, then students and staff will have the social and emotional knowledge and skills to create and maintain positive relationships and effectively deal with stress and conflict, which will collectively foster a willingness to build community and a culture of trust.

The Aki community is committed to reducing our suspension rates, particularly for our historically marginalized scholars, because we recognize that suspensions reduce access to instructional time and also directly reinforce racial inequity in our school building. We understand that new programs take time to build, and plan to first pilot new programs on a smaller scale first so that we can first gain a strong of understanding of what strategies are most successful. Our ABC data will guide this practice.

By June 2021, Students of Color Farthest from Educational Justice in grades 6-8 will improve attendance rates of 90+% from 76% to 80% as reflected in March 2020.

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## **Supplementary Goals**

### **ELA**

Black Students have been historically underserved and need to be accelerated in English Language Arts, specifically through reading skills. In addition to workshop-based core reading and writing instruction, independent reading and the readerly life cycle will include specific strategy-based reading instruction connected to students' current reading levels. Black Students will grow minimally grow 1-2 performance levels based on Lexile scores, unit-based reading assessments, and independent reading conferring records.

### **Math**

Black Students have been historically underserved and need to be accelerated in math skills, specifically complex problems at higher DOK levels. Students will also note that they are feeling supported and positive about their relationship with their math teacher. Black Students will show growth in MTSS levels as shown through multiple assessments.

### **Whole School**

Teachers will develop positive relationships with students by recognizing student currencies and practicing cultural humility. Teachers will learn more about:

- Trauma informed reflection & pedagogy
- Race & Equity
- De-escalation strategies
- Restorative Practices
- Student & family partnerships

This will be measure through the climate survey and staff reflection surveys

## **High Quality Learning Experiences**

**Educate the whole child through high-quality instruction and learning experiences that accelerate growth for students of color who are furthest from educational justice, with an intentional focus on African American males.**

*To achieve educational justice*, Seattle Public Schools (SPS) strives to provide safe learning environments, curriculum that incorporates a student's life experiences and culture, and instruction delivered by high-quality, culturally responsive educators. Unfortunately, many students from certain ethnicities have not historically experienced equitable opportunities for all or part of their educational journey (including African and African American, Asian Pacific Islander and Pacific Islander, LatinX, and Native American students). These students are our priority – with an intentional focus on African American males.

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## School-wide Systems and Structures (MTSS)

MTSS offers the potential to create the alignment of systems necessary for all students' academic, behavioral, and social success. In addition, MTSS promotes needed systematic change through intentional design and redesign of services and supports that quickly identify and match the needs of all students. MTSS is an integrated, comprehensive framework that focuses on CCSS, core instruction, differentiated learning, student-centered learning, individualized student needs.

Focus: MTSS team and student support plans (SSPs): Grade level teams review student data to identify students who are off track in one or more of the ABCs and may refer students to the MTSS team for a student support plan (SSP). The MTSS team includes grade level team leads, counselors, administration, specialists such as a SpEd or an ELL case manager, and clinicians. The team reviews referrals weekly and selects students for an SSP. Each SSP has a designed point person, who meets with the student to include them in the design and tracking of their SSP. The plans feed back to the grade level team meetings so that teachers can support the students in the SSP, including tracking progress through an online form. The data is collected and reviewed by the MTSS team and shared with the student and family to include them in monitoring progress.

## Gap Closing Practices and Special Services

**Seattle Public Schools is committed to eliminating opportunity gaps to ensure access and provide excellence in education for every student.**

Delivering high-quality, standards-aligned instruction across all abilities and a continuum of services for learners is a core element of Seattle Excellence. Our Theory of Action is guided by the principles of "Targeted Universalism." Our universal goal is every Seattle Public Schools' student receives a high-quality, world-class education and graduates prepared for college, career, and community. Targeted Universalism holds that targeted and differentiated efforts are required to meet the needs of specific student populations, so every student meets the universal goal.

By focusing on students of color who are furthest from educational justice, especially African American males, we will make the greatest progress toward our collective vision. We believe that an intentional focus on African American males will ultimately benefit every student.

To meet the needs of every student, especially students with unique needs, we offer rigorous learning opportunities in every subject through careful data analysis of students Attendance, Behavior, Coursework, Currency, and Connection. We use standards-based curriculum/lesson planning that is responsive to student need based on assessment data. Through emphasizing high quality Tier 1 instruction we will reach 80% of our students, thereby allowing us to plan interventions and support plans for the inclusion of Tier 2 and Tier

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3 students. We have student specific instruction/instructional models and programs that meet the needs of our all learners, advance learners, highly capable students, special education, English language learners, and gap closing groups through an inclusion focused model. In our two-period Reading/Writing block classes we use a teaching approach called Reader's/Writer's Workshop. As a partner school with Columbia University in New York, Aki teachers receive intensive training and support to implement this model with fidelity. All students in our classes are reading and writing at their own levels, allowing for natural differentiation and challenge, while teachers teach skills embedded in the text-level appropriate for each scholar. In addition, we offer honors reading/writing classes. In math, we offer accelerated learning opportunities at every grade level. Students are challenged with advanced level math in Honors classes and given additional supports, including extra teaching time during the day, and after school. Students can complete Algebra (9th grade math) and Geometry (10th grade math) while at Aki. Aki's instructional strategies are focused on, but no limited to:

- \*Standards Based Instruction, Data Based Instructional planning - all students
- \* Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) Process - all students
- \*Student Service Support Meeting (SSSM) - all students
- \* Student Success Plan (SSP)s- all students
- \* Community Partnerships - all students
- \* Community in Schools (CIS)- all students
- \* Diplomas Now (DN) - all students
- \* City Year (CY) - all students
- \* Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Small Groups - special education
- \* English Language Learners (ELL) Content Area Classes - English language learners
- \* Curriculum for language acquisition and development - all students
- \* Access -special education
- \* Co-teaching - all students
- \* I Can Learn- all students
- \* Achieve 3000 – Level Set - all students
- \* Achieve 3000 – Small Group Reading Instruction - all students
- \* envision Math- all students
- \* ELA, Math, Geometry, Algebra – all students, including highly capable

## Practices and Strategies

**We will recognize and serve the academic, social, cultural, emotional, and behavioral strengths and needs of students, providing high-quality, culturally responsive instruction, curriculum, and social-emotional learning supports delivered by educators who set high expectations, so students graduate ready for college, career, and community.**

Whole child education goes beyond a focus on academic achievement. When educators focus on educating the whole child, students are healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged. In Seattle Public Schools, this means

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that we appreciate and serve the academic, social, emotional, and behavioral strengths and needs of students, which we believe comprise the needs of the "whole child."

High-quality instruction is focused on student-centered learning and achievement, intentional about student engagement, and aligned to standards with consistent and appropriate feedback.

At its foundation, culturally responsive education means that students are in an environment where they have the individual safety and comfort to learn within a classroom that has a common culture that is respectful of all backgrounds.

Core strategies and interventions include: collaborative planning time for teachers, additional math and literacy instructional time in the school day, additional math and literacy support in after school extended day, academic enrichment camps over all breaks, attendance challenges, trades week, college visits, and in-class tutoring support provided by City Year corps members. We have continuously improved ABC outcomes as a result of targeted interventions that are strategically aligned and implemented.

Additionally, we recognize the complexities of racism that exist within our society and disproportionately impact our Black/African American males. We recognize the role of social identities, particularly race, in our students' experiences with school. For the past three school years in our professional learning communities, we have set explicit goals for our Black/African American male students, utilized data inquiry cycles to identify problems of practice, and collaborated on interventions. We developed our own data trackers, customized to include additional assessment points, student strengths, relational connections, and self-perceptions.

## Safe and Welcoming Environment

**Students thrive in healthy, safe, engaging, supported, and challenging environments in which they can learn to their full potential. Instruction must be high-quality, culturally responsive, focused, and aligned to standards for students to develop as independent learners.**

Student voice should be evident, and students must be seen and celebrated for their authentic selves. Significant increases in academic outcomes for students furthest from educational justice are possible when social, cultural, emotional, and behavioral needs of students are met by educators that share an unconditional belief in the potential of every student they serve.

### Culturally specific gathering spaces

From developing and refining family engagement strategies each year, we realized the power of culturally specific spaces. Additionally, we realized that our family advocacy is amplified when we designate a time and space for conversation about their unique experiences. Family cultural group summits are multi-lingual, occurring in a mix of English and other family home languages. For example, we launched a Family

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Ambassador program and our Ambassadors host language-specific breakout rooms at every schoolwide event. This structure centers the unique experiences shared by the group that may be dismissed or viewed as exceptions in a large group setting and it eliminates a dependency on translators, allowing for a more inclusive conversation in which everyone feels they can participate. As fellow parents, our ambassadors are trusted and credible partners for families and they are often able to quickly engage our families, capture honest feedback, and identify trends in a community. These spaces are critical as our staff members' identities and experiences do not represent the wide diversity of identities and experiences of our students and families and therefore, we may be blind to issues that may be uniquely impacting them. For example, our African and Muslim families initiated a conversation on student prayer during Ramadan. Our school's instinct was to accommodate student prayer time, but we learned that many families did not want their students to miss instructional time for prayer. We were able to engage with our families to learn about their cultural practices and discuss the impact of lost instructional time. Through the conversation, we determined we needed to give all parents an opportunity to make the decision for their individual student and as a result, we initiated a communication campaign with letters and phone calls. This experience reinforced that we need to listen to our families, never assume we understand their needs, and solicit their feedback on their individual students' education. Additionally, the conversations with our families throughout this process demonstrated that we were responsive to religious practices and built trust with our families for the future. We intend to continue investing resources in the development of culturally specific services to provide our Black and Latino students with space to build and strengthen relationships with other students and adults who share their cultural identity, thus expanding their network of supports and connecting them to positive role models. Given our experience with levy implementation, we know that the most success with meeting levy goals comes from building capacity over time and creating sustainable programs. We will begin by leveraging our established programs that already have momentum and build on those programs to meet our new levy goals in the short term. At Aki, we believe that a culture of trust in our community is paramount.

## Inclusive and Authentic Engagement

**Partner with students, families, and communities who are furthest from educational justice by conducting inclusive and authentic engagement.**

We will proactively and consistently work in partnership *with* students, families, and communities to identify needs, determine solutions, and support the implementation of the initiatives that will best meet the needs of students of color who are furthest from educational justice. We will use culturally responsive ways to engage so we build trusting relationships and empower the voices of those who can help us meet these needs.

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## Family and Community Goals

### **Priority Goal:**

We will proactively and consistently work in partnership with students, families, and communities to identify needs, determine solutions, and support the implementation of the initiatives that will best meet the needs of students of color who are furthest from educational justice. We will use culturally responsive ways to engage so we build trusting relationships and empower the voices of those who can help us meet these needs.

### **Plans for Family Engagement**

Event attendance is critically important for family engagement and we constantly reflect on how to increase our outreach regarding events. For example, rather than using empty sign-in sheets at family events, we started pre-populating sign-in sheets with all student names. This increased our ability to reliably track which families were represented at events and highlighted which families were not engaged. We are able to record the data and look for trends by grade level, cultural identity, and home language to adjust our strategies. Additionally, we are able to individually reach out to families personally to initiate conversation and learn about any barriers to participation that we may address. In order to increase the number of opportunities to engage directly with families and build trust, we learned that we need to not only ask families to come to us, but we need to also go to our families and have a presence in community spaces that are central and important to them. Another example is our home visits program. Leading up to the start of the school year, we offer home visits to all families, prioritizing any students new to our school. We assemble a team administrators, teachers, bilingual instructional assistants, and community partners to reach out to families and offer to meet at their home, at school, or in a community location they desire. We do not build a structured agenda or attempt to facilitate the time. Instead, we invest in relationship building conversations and listen to learn their hopes and dreams for their student and what supports they need. These are often an hour long and often our richest conversations with families. Our staff logs key information in a shared tool for all teachers to read as they are learning about their new students.