

Seattle Excellence Continuous School Improvement Plan (CSIP)

Skills Center

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.

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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 Seattle Skills Center of Seattle Public Schools prepares high school students for college, career, and life. We do this by providing advanced Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses that give students options to continue career-focused learning in four-year colleges, or earn post-secondary certification, or join the work force right out of high school. We provide this training through our regular school year courses and our summer program. In our school year courses, students come for half of the school day every day and engage in advanced "preparatory" CTE classes, earning 3 high school credits, and some classes offer opportunities to earn dual college credit and cross credits in ELA, math, and lab science. In summer, students engage in introductory or "exploratory" CTE classes and earn .5 high school CTE credits in one month. Our diverse student population comes from all high schools in the district, and our staff have been training in culturally responsive teaching and trauma informed practices to create safe, welcoming, and effective learning environments for our students and families.

Priorities and Measurable Goals

High School Focus Goal: 9th Grade On-Track

Priority Goal:

The Seattle Skills Center will support 9th grade on-track efforts by providing college and career awareness activities in 8th and 9th grade school year and credit earning CTE course work for students in summers between 8th and 9th grade and between 9th and 10th grade. Students completing two summer courses will

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have earned the 1.0 CTE credit graduation requirement by the time they enter their 10th grade school year. We typically serve fewer than 100 students in these grade levels in the summer. To support the goal of keeping 9th grade students on track for graduation, the Seattle Skills Center will work to increase the number of incoming 9th and 10th grade African American male students in summer courses. Priority goal statement: By July of 2021, of the total number of incoming 9th and 10th grade students in summer Skills Center courses, the percentage of African American male students will increase from 0.78 in summer, 2020, to 20% by summer 2021.

Target Goal #1:

For the 2020-21 school year, the Skills Center will increase communication and recruitment efforts at middle schools with the highest percentage of African American students. Between August, 2020 and June 2021, the Skills Center will send at least 2 direct communications (via School Messenger) and 4 indirect (via school web pages and principal or PTA newsletters) with information about the summer and school year Skills Center courses, including information about how these courses can be used to meet graduation requirements and/or as part of a graduation pathway.

Safe and Welcoming Environment Goal

Priority Goal:

Our diverse student population comes from all high schools in the district, and typically more than 70% of our students are students of color. Our staff have been training in culturally responsive teaching and trauma informed practices to create safe, welcoming, and effective learning environments for our students and families. Additionally, this spring our staff became focused on working to be an ant-racist school, so we will have focused time in our professional development this coming year to learn and work towards this goal. One measure we have used in past years to measure our safe and welcoming goal efforts is the number of students we retain throughout the year and the percentage of absences.

For the 2020-21 school year, we have the goal of ending the year on June 21, 2020 with no more than 10 fewer students than we had on the October 1 headcount. And for our attendance goal, for 2020-21, we will reduce our annual average absence rate from 14.5% to 13% by June 21, 2021.

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,

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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.

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.

Three student learning challenges that have been noted across Skills Center courses are in math, English Language Arts, and social emotional skills. Math skills (like division and converting fractions to decimals) and language arts skills (reading comprehension, accessing informational text, and responding in writing), are regularly cited by staff as areas that our students need support in. The most urgent social emotional goal our team has identified centers on emotional regulation.

Two sub-groups we have identified for additional support are students with English Language Learner (ELL) services and students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs).

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.

Our Skills Center team is committed to closing gaps, with a special focus on students furthest from educational justice. To help close these gaps, our staff have engaged in professional development in culturally responsive teaching and the use of technology to differentiate instruction for students of color furthest from

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educational justice and for our students with ELL needs and students with IEPs. Typically, the Skills Center has a higher percentage of students with IEPs than the district average, so we work with the Special Education Department and have added support staff to make sure we meet these students' needs. Our efforts to support students of color furthest from education justice, especially our African American male students is centered on culturally relevant teaching practices and on efforts to dismantle and change practices that may increase gaps for these students. Our Skills Center teachers this spring have committed to learning and working towards being an anti-racist school. Examining our teaching practices closely and improving on techniques, and the use of technology, especially for remote learning, will support the learning of those furthest from educational justice while simultaneously improving instruction for all students.

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 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.

Three research-based strategies we are focusing on to support students, with a special focus on students of color furthest from educational justice, are:

- Culturally relevant teaching strategies
- Use of effective practices for students who have experienced complex trauma
- Effective formative assessment practices

Our staff continue to engage in ongoing professional development in best practices in formative assessment, with a focus on how student self-assessment promotes student learning. This approach to student self-assessment helps our staff differentiate learning experiences for students who are challenged as well as students who need more rigor as it allows student to identify their own learning challenges and successes and provides a more complete feedback loop with which to measure student needs and growth. One measure of success on this goal will be related to our student retention goal described above.

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.

Our diverse student population comes from all high schools in the district, and typically more than 70% of our students are students of color. Our staff have been training in culturally responsive teaching and trauma informed practices to create safe, welcoming, and effective learning environments for our students and families. Additionally, this spring our staff became focused on working to be an ant-racist school, so we will have focused time in our professional development this coming year to learn and work towards this goal. One measure we have used in past years to measure our safe and welcoming goal efforts is the number of students we retain throughout the year and the percentage of absences.

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.

Family and Community Goals

Priority Goal:

For the 2020-21 school year, the Skills Center will continue to increase communication and recruitment efforts at schools with the highest percentage of African American students. Between August, 2020 and June 2021, the Skills center will send at least 3 direct communication (via School Messenger) and 4 indirect (via school web pages and principal or PTA newsletters) with information about the summer and school year Skills Center courses, including information about how these courses can be used to meet graduation requirements and/or as part of a graduation pathway.

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Plans for Family Engagement

We are increasing the use of communication to Skills Center families and are increasing our use of student/family surveys to get input and feedback to better serve our families. We have provided information to families in grades 8 through 12 regarding our courses in the top six languages of the district. Our team has engaged in two years of “Engaging Families in High School Success” professional development session and communicate with incoming 9th graders to make sure their families know about our free Skills Center summer program. We regularly participate in family nights and career fairs at our host schools and many of the district’s middle school and K-8 “8th Grade Transition Nights,” and we will continue to explore and implement ways to engage families, including a focus on our ELL families. The Skills Center has increased collaboration with the ELL Department, Special Education Department, and other departments and community partners.

For the 2020-21 school year, The Skills Center will increase two-way communication with families. Between August, 2020 and June, 2021, the Skills Center will conduct at least three surveys of families and students, translated into the top 6 languages of our district.