

Seattle Excellence Continuous School Improvement Plan (CSIP)

Nova High School

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

Nova is a liberatory learning environment where students, staff, families, and our community partners work collaboratively to move through cycles of growth which include healing, celebration, scholarship, reflection, creation, and action. Through these cycles, we deconstruct systems of power and privilege and rebuild ourselves, our school, and our communities with different ways of being. By decentering whiteness, patriarchy, hetero- and cis-normativity, and able bodies, and by embracing neurodiversity, we are revisioning educational communities as spaces where students' needs are met, growth is the metric that matters, and behavior is understood as a form of communication. We are creating a space where bodies, minds, and spirits are treated with compassion and consent and where systemic harm is transformed into healing, creation, and action.

Nova's innovative teaching and learning approach provides inquiry-, project-, and problem-based instruction where students apply their learning through application, performance, and portfolio-based assessment. Nova is a non-graded competency-based program with a long history of successfully transitioning students into their post high school college and career goals. Our coordinating system provides a robust and individualized advisor and mentor for every student. Students share decision making and learn individual and social responsibility in a personalized and safe environment. Nova operates with a growth mindset where we build into our curriculum and our committee and advisory systems academic, social, and emotional development.

Grading System

Nova does not assign grades to students, nor do we rank students. Instead, all courses are competency-based. Students earn credit by demonstrating all course competencies. Students who do not demonstrate competency in a course's content do not receive credit for that course until significant growth in all the course competencies have been demonstrated. The closest equivalent of our grading system would be A level work in a standards-based grading system. Our course competencies are rigorous, requiring IB/AP-level demonstration of learning and achievement. It has been our experience that the competency-based system of credit fosters a challenging, highly creative, and intrinsically motivating learning environment that develops college-ready skills for all graduates.

Priorities and Measurable Goals

High School Focus Goal: 9th Grade On-Track

Priority Goal:

For the 2022-23 school year, 9th grade students of color furthest from educational justice will accumulate the same average number of competency-based credits as white students. We will also be measuring a baseline to compare core content competency growth for future goal setting as we move to a more robust competency growth tracking system.

Nova for 10 continuous years, has shown there has been no disparity in credits earned by 9th grade students, between white students and students of color. In our non-graded, competency-based system, students earn credit based on meeting and/or exceeding the course competencies through showing and applying their learning. The equivalent grade in a standards-based program would be an A. The minimum grade point average for all students earning credit would be 4.0. Nova is moving farther away from competency being directly tied to classes and credit and will be using a competency-based transcript to track student growth. Credits will be earned when specific benchmarks are demonstrated. We are building a method to continue to measure growth and credit earned to ensure there continues to be no disparity between white students, students of color and specifically students farthest from educational justice. This data is a progress monitoring tool to ensure that this new system of competency tracking is not reproducing historic inequities.

We know historically that 2.0 or more credit earning in the first semester at Nova strongly predicts on time graduation. As a competency-based school, students gain credit earning momentum as they fill in gaps in their previous learning and learn our school's unique system. Our average credit earning isn't to its pre-pandemic total, but most students moved into this graduation target. This is due to some intentional work to focus teacher capacity on students who needed more support and to not create unlimited learning opportunities for the most capable and resourced students. The average was falsely elevated by some students earning lots of credit. Historically, we let students take as many classes and independents as they want but we shifted to encouraged students with capacity to do more to hold learning and community spaces for other students and to engage in more community service instead of signing up for extra classes. We have been doing this during the pandemic to ensure smaller class size

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and more competency recovery and support for students who needed the most individualized teacher time. The result speaks to a valuable lesson learned to move forward after the pandemic. Because we increased the number of students moving into the credit earning target and decreased the range of credits earned. Our data shows that we are maintaining our historic trend of not seeing credit earning gaps between students of color and white students and students with IEPs and students without IEPs, despite the major school disruptions and challenges associated with the pandemic for our 9th grade students.

A significant piece of data that will impact our graduation rate is the number of students who were not able to meet level 3 on the Math SBAC exam or the cut score for the SAT or have earned enough credit for a CTE pathway. The graduating class of 2022 was the first time ever that we had students not pass the ELA SBAC or meet SAT cut scores. Although it is only 4 seniors, this is up from zero seniors for every other year. The continuing and compounding impacts of the pandemic are creating an exponentially increasing number of students who require extra supports, additional courses, and additional pathways to graduate. For the graduating class of 2022 there was a sharp increase of students needing to access world language waivers and the emergency waivers to meet their graduation credit requirements.

Action Steps to address the current concerns we are facing related to 4-year graduation rate

- Individual plan for each senior to meet the requirements -deeper collaboration between coordinators (advisors) and admin to develop plans and respond to changing information.
- College in the high school mathematics course and increased CTE options for the CTE waiver
- Competency support options for all core subject areas
- 9th grade individual support plans after fall semester credits are posted
- Grant writing to increase partnerships in Art and CTE options
- Advocacy for funding for small schools, specifically ALE schools, to fund our robust case management and increase class offerings and reduce class size in core content classes

Safe and Welcoming Environment Goal

Priority Goal:

All students will be involved in their school community, specifically students furthest away from educational justice will be involved in their school community and participating in the democratic running of our school. During 2018-19, we were able to enroll all students in committees/school service projects and 67% earned full competency credit for governing committees. We witnessed a decrease in academic distracting behaviors through their involvement in school committees. Our goal moving forward was that

80% of all students will attend and engage in governing committees and earn full competency credit and our students farthest from educational justice will equal or exceed the credit earned by white students. We prioritized ways to engage students in school decision making and community service creatively during remote and hybrid learning times and then worked to reengage them in the process in the 2022-2023 school year when we returned to full in-person. For example, during remote students participated with architects and Country Doctor digitally to collaborate on the opening of our school-based LGBTQ+ Wellness Center and then when they returned, they have been able to help grow and shape the full implementation of the Nova Wellness Center. We are now recommitted to our original goal and have changed, and expanded committee options based on our current needs and the current student initiatives that came out of our reengagement. We are now back to our pre-pandemic expectation for involvement in governing committees and working toward this goal. This will be monitored through collecting and comparing data on attendance and credit earned for governing committees, and monitoring academically distracting behaviors (drama, drugs and alcohol use, student conflicts, class skipping etc.)

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.

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.

Our system of student supports is explained in the section on Gap Closing Measures and Special Services and provides some context for our MTSS focus. Due to the intersectional barriers and needs that a majority of our student population faces, our student supports are robust, individualized and in many cases wrap around supports.

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Our current focus for this work is improving our data collection through the development and use of a Nova personalized tracking system that will provide more complete information to our NET (network of student supports) team to respond more quickly to student support needs and will assist in tracking patterns of needs. In addition to developing and using this tool for data collection our two main areas of focus will be:

- 1) Using student support circles to center students in the development of their own support plans for all students who are not making progress (as determined by ALE), and any student, coordinator or family who request more support. The student and coordinator will work together to determine the size of the team and members of the team.
- 2) Continuing to improve recovery supports, education and counseling for students who are struggling with drugs and alcohol and increasing access to group and individual counseling behavioral health supports for students with a variety of behavior health needs. Specifically, in response to the requests from students of color, we are working to create behavioral health supports that are culturally competent and understand and can support racialized trauma and students with intersectional identities.

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.

Nova is a trauma-informed school with a growth mindset toward academics, discipline, social emotional development, democratic participation and community engagement. Nova is also an ALE school which means every student has an individual written learning plan and must demonstrate progress in each of these domains. Our universal model of supports includes the following:

- A teacher advisor who creates a learning plan with personal and academic goals and modifies the plan as needed throughout the year, a weekly meeting with that teacher in a group advisory, at least one monthly individual meeting with their teacher advisor, and at least one yearly family meeting with their teacher advisor and facilitated by the student.
- Teachers provide a monthly status report on all classes, teacher advisors share this information about class status and increase interventions and supports if needed, and students have a graduation

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worksheet that charts their progress toward graduation as they finish credits. Additionally, students with IEPs have at least two support adults, students have choice over their schedule, what committees to participate in, how they will meet their service requirements and how they will demonstrate competencies.

- The student's teacher advisor is their advocate and social emotional educator when conflicts with other students or staff members occur and if any school norms or district rules are broken. Our discipline policy is based on transformative and redemptive justice principles and embraces a needs assessment and growth mindset when enacted; mediation and restorative circles are always available to resolve conflict between any of our students and members our community and the greater community.
- Nova students have access to basic needs support such as clothing, food, hygiene needs, and school supplies in our building and we connect students to necessary resources in and out of the building for mental health supports, medical necessities, gender health, drug and alcohol evaluations and counseling.

When thinking about whether a student is making progress, we consider the following domains of growth:

- Are they making progress academically (going to class – turning in work – earning credit)?
- Are they making progress in guiding their own education (going to their advisory group, meeting with their teacher advisor, knowing where they are and what steps they can implement within their academic progression, beginning to plan their post-high school transition)?
- Are they making progress in participating in our participatory democratic structures (i.e. signed up for a committee, going to committee, discussing school issues in advisory group)?
- Are they making progress in participating in our community (not causing harm, positive contributions, supporting others, making progress to complete their school and community service requirements)?

If a student is not making progress, we consider the following before moving to additional supports:

- Are the universal supports being provided fully?
- Is the student accessing those supports?
- What are the barriers to accessing those supports?
- How can we remove those barriers?
- What kind of accountability can the teacher advisor, student and family add to increase the student's willingness to access those supports?

When we determine that additional supports are needed, we have a two-pronged approach depending on if the student needs more accountability or more support. For the former we create an ALE intervention plan; for the later we refer the student to a SIT team meeting.

Additional supports include increasing the frequency of teacher advisor and individual and/or family meeting(s); an increase in communication between teachers, student, and family and teacher advisor; increasing clarity of expectations and healthy boundaries; support to improve organizational systems (such as a tracker); regular quick planner checks with their teacher advisor and/or family; phone supports for remembering meetings/appointments and assignments; teacher advisor helping the student talk to teachers and getting back on track with academics; peer/staff tutoring, assisting in breaking down large assignments

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into doable tasks; drug and alcohol evaluation; deeper assessment of needs and connection to resources, which may include more directed mental health or academic supports; SIT team meetings; and students required to complete community service hours for skipping committees/advisory group meetings. If a student is still not making progress, we engage in a highly individualized pathway where a larger team of supporters meets regularly with the student to determine if Nova can work better for this student. The additional supports include increasing any of the aforementioned supports or highly specific supports related to these students' immediate needs, creating a wrap team which could include counselors and community advocates, peers, other teachers and coordinators, administrators, and other supports as needed.

During the past two school year, we have increased our capacity and resources through including restorative and community-based circles and conflict resolution circles as an additional form of support and/or intervention. All our staff have been trained in how to provide and facilitate circles and we have begun expanding this training to include learning to become circle keepers and developing a student-driven process for requesting circles for support and/or conflict resolution. We will continue to deepen this work in the upcoming school years.

At our bi-weekly MTSS meetings we use our internal database to collect data for our 9th grade students to develop early intervention plans to support students early in the Fall semester. We refer students who need additional supports to SIT teams, or we provide supports to meet basic needs, when identified. WE are better able to identify homeless Nova students who are McKinney-Vento eligible, and these students would not have been identified as quickly without SIT team and MTSS supports. We have strengthened the McKinney-Vento school district supports with an onsite designated McKinney-Vento staff member. McKinney-Vento eligible students have received a variety of supports, including transportation, assistance in obtaining eyeglasses, and food and holiday supports.

Additionally, through the MTSS process we collected data that confirmed a correlation between students not making adequate progress and not participating in a committee which supported committee participation as a graduation requirement. The data collected highlighted which students had not made strong community connections to Nova. This group of students fell into two categories: students with drug and alcohol issues and a lack of belonging related to past trauma. The former were referred for drug and alcohol evaluation and the latter were referred to community building restorative circles. After identifying that some students, particularly those who qualify for a 504, often required more explicit instruction in study skills or emotional intelligence skills, we created emotional intelligence committees with our community partners and in the next three years we will be building study skills and social skills classes, supports, and spaces for general education students, increasing group and individual support for recovery.

Through our NET Team (MTSS) work we have found that students and families of color are sometimes reticent to participate in IEP or 504 supports because of the history of racism and exclusion, unethically perpetuate under the umbrella of disability supports. We also know that behavioral and physical health care systems have been used to perpetuate racism and cause extreme harm to people of color. We use this knowledge to build our systems of support to disconnect supports from labels and funding barriers so that all students can access the supports they need, and

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we build in feedback pathways to hold intentional expectations with all service providers. We also intentionally work exclusively with partner agencies who have historic commitments to anti-racist work and relationships with communities of color and a proven commitment to the recruitment and support of racial diversity in providers.

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.

Based on our analysis of student feedback from students of color at Nova we have made the following commitments: Students of color will increase their feelings of belonging and ownership of our school. Students of color can fully engage our personalized education system. Students of color will have greater opportunities provided for additional academic and social emotional supports. Students and staff of color will continue to grow the Nova People of Color Committee and its work within Nova. All students will develop a critical race/anti-racist lens as part of their Nova education.

In service of these commitments, we are working to develop school-wide racial justice community competencies—ones that inform our teaching and learning program, graduating seniors' culminating inquiry projects, and decision making, communication and community norms. We work to build on our trauma-informed, social-emotional supports/and MTSS for all students, and then to especially put in place additional supports/interventions as needed for our students of color and/or those furthest from educational justice, e.g. POC study hall and/or tutoring, via examining data re: POC students' progress in meeting competencies/earning credit in our classes on a monthly basis. We also place great importance on teaching white students that they too are racialized persons in American society and encourage their/all students' learning about whiteness/how white supremacy is deeply entrenched in U.S. history and structural oppression and ways to disrupt unjust treatment and/or systems and policies. Staff and students are working to develop a school-specific racial equity lens for our school's classes, committees, advisory groups, and staff meetings.

All three of our teacher leaders are working on racial justice with three separate foci. TL for Racial Justice

with and Academic Focus, TL for Racial Justice with a Recruitment and Support for Students and Staff of Color Focus, and TL for Racial Justice with an Authentic Engagement of Families of Color Focus.

Our TL for Racial Justice with an Academic Focus is working to support staff by providing learning opportunities for staff to continue/deepen our ongoing work to provide anti-racist classroom-based instruction (and whole-school community competencies) focused on racial justice across curricula. Major themes of our staff professional development are: teaching and learning focused on uncovering critical narratives and interrogating dominant narratives (across content areas)—and implementing common language around big concepts relevant to racial equity that we all use in working with students, centering the work and experiences of people of color, de-centering whiteness in our classrooms/teaching/relationships with students and colleagues, and deepening our work on understanding/inclusion of intersectional perspectives. Another major focus of our professional development is on the crucial internal work of reflecting on our own practices as aspiring anti-racist educators and human beings to sustain and grow our Ethnic Studies program and graduation requirement, and our school community's capacities to anchor our work in constant reflection and action in all aspects of our lives for greater racial equity.

Our TL for Racial Justice with a Recruitment and Support for Students and Staff of Color Focus has continued to focus on working with the recruitment committee at Nova. Nova is democratically run in student committees with student and staff facilitators. Recruitment committee does much of the work of outreach to bring new students in and hosting new students. This recruitment work, by students and staff, is working to develop and use racial justice community competencies and lenses. Specifically, by increasing our students of color at Nova from the Seattle area, our model of education can be accessible to students of color, empowering them and improving racial equity. One of the biggest struggles our students of color report about attending Nova and feeling a sense of belonging has to do with there not being more students of color enrolled. We are currently using recruitment efforts to share our community's commitment to liberatory anti-racist education and the many unique opportunities and supports for students of color at Nova.

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.

Essential Practice 1: Positive Climate: Relationships and Connections (PBIS Big 5)

Essential Practice 2: Social Emotional Learning Skills and Practices (SEL Framework)

An example of how we use these practices comes from Our TL for Racial Justice with a Recruitment and Support for Students and Staff of Color Focus work focus on working with the recruitment committee at

Nova and there are examples from every committee that runs different aspects of the school but this one is included because it directly highlights one of the biggest struggles our students of color report about attending Nova and feeling a sense of belonging has to do with there not being more students of color enrolled. We are currently using recruitment efforts to share our community's commitment to liberatory anti-racist education and the many unique opportunities and supports for students of color at Nova. We collect narrative lived experience data from our students of color regularly and use this data to inform our improvement levels in every area of our program. Nova is democratically run by student committees with student and staff facilitators. Recruitment committee does much of the work of outreach to bring new students in and to host new students as they transition into the school. This process sets the tone for inclusion and connection. It is essential that this student run process be grounded in anti-racism and that the students develop strong social emotional skills as part of their training for doing this work. The recruitment committee, of students and staff, is working to develop and use racial justice community competencies and lenses. Specifically, by increasing our students of color at Nova from the Seattle area, our model of education can be accessible to students of color, empowering them and improving racial equity.

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:

Nova will increase our 90% participation rate of families participating in student led family conferences at least once a year. These meetings allow us to work as a team in service of each student's goals and needs, and to individually clarify information and create learning and support plans for each student as a school-home team.

Nova will increase opportunities for families of color to participate in school events that are focused on families of color, intergenerational learning, and post high school transition resources.

Plans for Family Engagement

Essential Practice 1:

Explicit prioritization and implementation of the practices found in the Dual Capacity Building Framework encompassing the Four Pillars of Family Engagement.

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Implementation Strategies: Embed professional development learning and practice outcomes in annual PD Plan for all staff

We have been highly successful at engaging families of color in individual meetings but have been less successful at engaging families of color in events that are mostly hosted by Nova Roots (parent and alumni group). Families of color and students of color reported through surveys that they were less interested in coming to fundraisers or parent led social events and more interested in attending events created by staff and students that focus on career and college resources and intergenerational learning opportunities. The surveys also showed that Saturdays are an easier time to attend than weekday evenings for many families but were highly preferred by families of color. This year we launched a POC family college and career night and barely kicked off Old School Saturdays before closures. Old School Saturdays includes intergenerational opportunities to explore social justice topics and arts and practical life skills co-facilitated by students, staff, families, and community partners. There were positive responses to both events, which we will be growing and continuing as we are safely allowed. We want to create times throughout the year for listening and collaboration with families and color and school staff. Every year we give a family survey during the student led conferences, which are highly attended. We get comprehensive feedback that we immediately use to course correct and plan new initiatives. We record consistent increases in engagement when we make changes based on these feedback surveys.

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Educate. Engage. Empower.