



2023-26 Continuous School Improvement Plan (C-SIP) Thornton Creek Elementary School

Purpose

The Continuous School Improvement Plan (C-SIP) is a product of collaborative inquiry around a comprehensive needs assessment led by school leaders and school staff in collaboration with district staff. The C-SIP provides an overview of district and school priority areas, student outcome goals, measures, strategies, activities and connected resource allocations.

School Data and Building Leadership Team Members and Partners

Current School Year: 2023-24

School Name: Thornton Creek Elementary School

Principal: Gerrit Kischner

Members of the Building Leadership Team and Parent/Guardian Partners: Jen Sclafani, Kristina Voss, Jennifer Lowe, Mark Fung, Mim Turnbull, David Swanson, Melissa Johnson, Leila Morro (parent), Theresa Horstman (parent), Brandee Spencer (AP) and Gerrit Kischner (Principal)

Community Partners (Community Based Organizations): Thornton Creek Parent Group, Thornton Creek PTA, KidsTime



[Thornton Creek Elementary School Report](#)

[Thornton Creek Elementary School Climate Survey](#)

School Overview

Thornton Creek is a pre-K to 5th grade Option School. The school was founded almost fifty years ago by teachers in close collaboration with families. TC school pedagogy is based on Expeditionary Learning (ELeducation.org) which emphasizes learning by doing, with a focus on character growth, teamwork, reflection and literacy. Teachers connect high-quality academic learning using SPS-adopted core curriculum to in-depth study, service, and character development through interdisciplinary, project-based learning expeditions.

As an option school with a population of students with diverse needs, Thornton Creek has extensive experience in serving and meeting the needs of our diverse student body through intentional engagement with students, families and our community. We also have a long history of providing a full continuum of Special Education services through four well-established programs: SPP+, Resource Room, Extended Resource and Distinct.

Our approach to school improvement centers on learning and growing as a community. If we, as educators, are accountable to implement a cohesive plan for shared, intentional work on valuing identity, universal design for learning, restorative and anti-racist practice, mastery of knowledge and skills, high-quality student work, and character, we will build a learning community that is nurturing and inclusive for all students and families.

Seattle Excellence – Culture of Equity and Educational Justice

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

[2019-24 SPS Strategic Plan](#)

Student Outcomes Focused Governance

The district has established Goals and Guardrails aligned to Seattle Excellence that provide a framework for Student Outcomes Focused Governance.

[Student Outcomes Focused Governance](#)

Priority Area: Learning Environments – Joyful, Safe, Anti-Racist

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.

Our [Foundational Beliefs for Supporting Students Learning](#) include recognizing and cultivating the gifts and strengths of every student and ensuring that we become culturally responsive and anti-racist practitioners. Students deserve learning environments that are welcoming, joyful and safe. *

*[African American Male Achievement 2021 Community Engagement Report](#)

Learning Environments Measures and Targets

Three-year Goal:

Based on our student climate survey taken in spring of 2023, 93% of our 3rd-5th graders say there are adults who care about them at school. Our goal is to continue to increase this percentage steadily each year, giving special attention to the responses from our multi-lingual and Black

student. By 2026, we want 100% of students to say there is an adult at school who knows and cares about them.

One-year Goal:

Based on our Student Climate Survey, at least 95% of our 3-5th graders will say there are adults at school who care about them by the end of the 23-24 school year.

Student Outcome Focused Governance

School staff will implement the following Guardrail to create conditions for students to meet the focus Learning Environments Goal.

Guardrail 5. The Superintendent will not allow any district department, school building, or classrooms to not provide welcoming environments.

Evidence of alignment to student outcome focused governance:

Our work around identity helps welcome and engage students and families from diverse cultures by recognizing the assets every student and family brings to our community. EL provides the framework for students to learn about, share and celebrate many aspects of their own identity and the identities of others. Teachers encourage families to share cultural traditions in the classroom and explore holidays and celebratory foods with the class. Three identity projects per grade level are collected in a portfolio which students present at the end of fifth grade. In 2023, we launched a school-wide Artifact Day when students shared an artifact that was meaningful to them and their family with their peers and with our "elder-in-residence," Dr. Donald Felder.

Families are welcomed to inclusive and engaging events throughout the year such as back to school/curriculum night, student-led conferencing, Harvest Festival, Dragonfly Bazaar, and an array of accessible family social events. These events align closely with our EL approach including a focus on student-centered outcomes, equitable family engagement and having fun. We use weekly school-wide and classroom newsletters, monthly community meetings, and TalkingPoints messages to keep families apprised of what is happening at school. This is one way we ensure that families receive school communications in their home languages. Teachers' weekly letters to families serve to update them on daily activities, expedition progress, and other projects.

In order for our students to feel as if adults care for them we need to facilitate a school that has a warm and welcoming environment. For our multi-language learners, we will continue to celebrate students' home languages and cultures in the classrooms and public areas of the school. We will continue to host family events throughout the school year where we connect families with each other and with school staff, such as monthly coffees for families with disabilities. We will continue to work to ensure that our staff reflects the diverse students we serve.

Learning Environments Strategies

Our school completed a comprehensive needs assessment and examined data to identify strategies, processes, procedures, and professional development that will lead to student outcomes aligned to our goals in this priority area. The needs assessment is available upon request from the principal.

Culturally responsive strategies, processes, or procedures staff will implement to meet the Three-Year Learning Environments Goal:

During the 2023-2024 school year several teachers will take professional trainings in Responsive Classroom (restorative practices). The staff who go to trainings will then come back on our Tri-days to share their learning with staff and continue to train staff during the school year. By doing this training the staff at TC will then begin building school-wide expectations that all staff will adhere to. By 2026 all staff will be trained in Responsive Classroom and have built common building expectations and come up with ways in class to communicate these expectations to all students.

During the 2023-2024 school year the staff will focus on restorative practices by building a cohesive, developmentally appropriate plan for understanding logical consequences and fostering student reflection and responsibility.

Professional learning plan that will support implementation of the culturally responsive strategies, processes, or procedures:

By implementing a school wide Responsive Classroom model and having a clear discipline flow chart we will focus on making the school a culturally responsive space where we are dismantling inequities by enforcing the same expectations for all students.

Components of Multiple Tiered System of Support (MTSS) that reflect Inclusive Practices and create the conditions for students who receive student support services to be successful in the general education setting:

Our MTSS process continues to evolve and over the next few years we will implement more check-ins for students who are multi-lingual and furthest from educational justice. As our process evolves, we will start focusing on both satellite and street data. Over the years of 2023-2026 we will focus on building stronger tier 1 supports in classrooms as well as Tier 2 supports that will take place in classrooms.

Components of Multiple Tiered System of Support (MTSS) that meet the social-emotional and behavioral needs of students:

Our MTSS process identifies students with needs and takes action to address them. Teachers and staff use both data and classroom observations to continuously assess' students and families' needs. Once a concern has risen to the level of needing MTSS support, families are engaged and involved in the process going forward. Next, we organize supports such as observational data, targeted academic support, school-home coordination, and any other relevant supports a student would benefit from. We offer academic interventionist supports (reading, writing, math) and social-emotional supports. These interventions and supports are led by certificated teachers who are able to collaborate fully with classroom teachers to ensure that their supplemental elements are fully integrated with students' in-class learning. Monthly grade level meetings facilitated by MTSS leads, Learning Plan meetings which focus on one student and create a plan for support and Tier 1, and SST meetings provide multiple levels of support to teachers as they follow their plan, do, study, act cycle to achieve targeted results.

Priority Area: Classroom Instruction and Academic Success—3rd Grade English Language Arts

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.

Our [Foundational Beliefs for Supporting Students Learning](#) include recognizing that Teaching is intellectually complex, difficult and demanding work, and requires collaborative inquiry – educators working together to examine practice through a cycle of planning, teaching, reflecting and applying to build students' academic mindset since "Intelligence" is not a fixed, inborn trait.

Classroom Instruction and Academic Success Measures and Targets

Three-year Goal:

By 2026, 90 percent of third graders at Thornton Creek will meet or exceed grade level standard in reading as shown on the Smarter Balanced Assessment.

One-year Goal:

By 2024, 79 percent of third graders at Thornton Creek will meet or exceed grade level standard in reading as shown on the Smarter Balanced Assessment.

Use of formative assessments and data to improve instruction and continuous improvement aligned to the three-year and one-year goals:

We will need to see final data for this to know the area where students struggled. My feelings now are that we will need to focus on writing using assessments.

Student Outcome Focused Governance

School staff will implement the following Guardrail to create conditions for students to meet the priority Classroom Instruction and Academic Success Goal.

Guardrail 3. The Superintendent will not allow adult behaviors in central office, school buildings, or classrooms that are misaligned with district-wide vision, values, and anti-racism initiatives.

Evidence of alignment to student outcome focused governance:

In K-2 we will implement science of reading strategies to help our younger learners reach benchmark before they enter third grade. Teachers will be trained on how to implement more phonics and phonemic awareness lessons in class along with using formative assessments to keep track of student progress. We will use DIBELS in K-2 to help us determine if students are meeting standards. This will be done in general ed classes, extended resource, Distinct and resource room so we are all aligned.

Classroom Instruction and Academics Strategies

Our school completed a comprehensive needs assessment and examined data to identify strategies, processes, procedures, and professional development that will lead to student outcomes aligned to our goals in this priority area. The needs assessment is available upon request from the principal.

Culturally responsive strategies, processes, or procedures staff will implement to meet the Three-Year Classroom Instruction and Academic Success Goal:

- Choose books and writing that are based on student interest.
- Provide reading materials from multiple perspectives.
- Improve our academic discourse from just turn and talk to more robust conversations.

Professional learning that will support implementation of culturally responsive strategies, process, or procedures:

- Use anchor texts for adults to improve our academic discourse
- Use UDL model to find different formats and let students choose the formats in which they learn best.
- Use UDL model to find ways for students to demonstrate what they know.
- Provide professional development in the area of UDL to help teachers- UDL also will support the expeditionary approach we use at TC.

Components of Multiple Tiered System of Support (MTSS) that reflect Inclusive Practices and create the conditions for students who receive student support services to be successful in the general education setting:

Our MTSS process continues to evolve and over the next few years we will implement more check-ins for students who are multi-lingual and furthest from educational justice. As our process evolves, we will start focusing on both satellite and street data. Over the years of 2023-2026 we will focus on building stronger tier 1 supports in classrooms as well as Tier 2 supports that will take place in classrooms.

Components of Multiple Tiered System of Support (MTSS) that meet the academic needs of students:

Our MTSS process identifies students with needs and takes action to address them. Teachers and staff use both data and classroom observations to continuously assess students and families' needs. Once a concern has risen to the level of needing MTSS support, families are engaged and involved in the process going forward. Next, we organize supports such as observational data, targeted academic support, school-home coordination, and any other relevant supports a student would benefit from. We offer academic interventionist supports (reading, writing, math) and social-emotional supports. These interventions and supports are led by certificated teachers who are able to collaborate fully with classroom teachers to ensure that their supplemental elements are fully integrated with students' in-class learning. Monthly grade level meetings facilitated by MTSS leads, Learning Plan meetings which focus on one student and create a plan for support and Tier 1, and SST meetings provide multiple levels of support to teachers as they follow their plan, do, study, act cycle to achieve targeted results.

Advanced Learning and Highly Capable Services:

At Thornton Creek, we provide advanced learning services within the Neighborhood School Model for students identified as HC or AL in the district-wide Universal Screening process and for any other students, identified by educators, in need of Advanced Learning services. Students identified as HC/AL typically are performing (or are capable of performing) above standard in reading and/or math.

As an option school with an "expeditionary learning" approach, Thornton Creek teachers are highly experienced at creating authentic learning experiences that is motivating for advanced learners. The "expeditions" at each grade level, are integrated learning experiences that allow learners to investigate topics deeply, follow their talents and passions, as well as experiment collaboratively. We call this "extending instruction." Extending instruction is the mirror image of scaffolding: It allows students who learn quickly and/or who have well-developed background knowledge to move through the instruction in a way that respects their advancement.

Our expeditionary learning approach is also rooted in pedagogy of "deeper learning." We believe that this approach helps all children prepare to thrive in our rapidly changing world, enabling them to understand academic content deeply, think critically, solve complex and authentic problems, communicate effectively, work collaboratively, and learn how to learn continuously." We also want students to make connections within and between the academic environment to the real world; we want students to know their own selves, identities, and cultures, and to empathize with other people. We want to empower our students to know themselves as learners and to build on their gifts to overcome their challenges.

For our students in need of advanced learning services, this approach forms the basis for differentiated instruction by utilizing strategies like flexible grouping, project-based learning, small group instruction, enhancement to grade level curriculum and acceleration in depth and complexity, based on the needs of each student.

Students who are achieving well above grade level standards are identified under MTSS for Tier 2 services. In reading and math, these programs are accessible to all educators on the AL Hub and Professional Development is provided on the district PD system, LEARN.

By the 2024-25 school year, the MTSS Tier 3 process will be in place for students with complex needs that can't be addressed in Tier 1 and Tier 2 supports. The Tier 3, MTSS process will result in an individual student plan, in collaboration with the AL Department.

Through the MTSS process, planning for supports and services is done systematically for all students who receive services in ML, SPED, Title/LAP, and AL/HC. Similarly, student growth is reviewed at various points throughout the school year in PLCs and educators plan for the needs of all students in their classrooms. Strategies in content areas are based in UDL and differentiation for ALL students, including those receiving services for ML, SPED, Title/LAP and AL/HC.

Expanded Learning opportunities for students through afterschool or summer programs:

- Refer students to SPS Summer Programs

Homework Policy:

At Thornton Creek, we expect all students to read for a minimum of ten to thirty minutes (depending on grade level) outside of school at least five nights a week. This reading can be done independently, with an adult, or with another child. Sometimes, students in older grades may have assigned reading. (Policy in process)

In addition, the following guidelines will be used by teachers for assigning additional skills practice:

- Fourth and Fifth Grade: (30 minute maximum/nightly)
- Math skills practice (i.e. related to daily lesson) (15 mins)
- Writing, assigned reading, responding and reflecting (15 mins)
- Long-term projects
- Planner use for weekly and long-term planning

We strongly recommend nightly routines of "homework," especially reading high-interest texts, and emphasizing:

- That regular practice is the best way to increase one's reading skills
- That having the discipline to follow nightly routines promotes a range of character traits (grit, self-control, long-term planning, stamina);
- When families can read in the same room together on a regular basis, this helps to promote reading as a habit.

Priority Area: Family and Community Engagement

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.

Our [Foundational Beliefs for Supporting Students Learning](#) include the belief that 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.

Family and Community Engagement Measures and Targets

Three-year Goal:

We will have 95% family participation in school run family events. This includes but not limited to, curriculum nights, conferences, any curriculum night, and any school sponsored event.

One-year Goal:

Thornton Creek will develop and implement at least two new family events oriented around student and family identity, per our Racial Equity Action Plan; these events will give students and families an opportunity to share their family cultures with each other.

Student Outcome Focused Governance

School staff will implement the following Guardrail to create conditions for students to meet the priority Family and Community Engagement Goal.

Guardrail 1: The Superintendent will not allow school and district initiatives to go forth without engaging students of color furthers from educational justice and their families, following stakeholder engagement principles that are utilizing current adopted best practices.

Evidence of alignment to student outcome focused governance: In Progress

Family and Community Engagement Strategies

Our school completed a comprehensive needs assessment and examined data to identify strategies, processes, procedures, and professional development that will lead to student outcomes aligned to our goals in this priority area. The needs assessment is available upon request from the principal.

Professional learning plan that will support implementation of educator development about the power of parents in transforming and improving teacher-parent communication and opportunities for dialogue and understanding: In Progress

Culturally responsive strategies, processes, and/or procedures that support sharing power with families to support new structures of parent leadership and centering families' voices are various levels:

Teachers encourage families to share cultural traditions in the classroom and explore holidays and celebratory foods with the class. Three identity projects per grade level are collected in a portfolio which students present at the end of fifth grade. In 2023, we launched a school-wide Artifact Day when students shared an artifact that was meaningful to them and their family with their peers and with our "elder-in-residence," Dr. Donald Felder.

Families are welcomed to inclusive and engaging events throughout the year such as back to school/curriculum night, student-led conferencing, Harvest Festival, Dragonfly Bazaar, and an array of accessible family social events.

These events align closely with our EL approach including a focus on student-centered outcomes, equitable family engagement and having fun. We use weekly school-wide and classroom newsletters, monthly community meetings, and TalkingPoints messages to keep families apprised of what is happening at school. This is one way we ensure that families receive school communications in their home languages. Teachers' weekly letters to families serve to update them on daily activities, expedition progress, and other projects.

Priority Area: Culturally Responsive Workforce

Our [Foundational Beliefs for Supporting Students Learning](#) include ensuring that we become culturally responsive and anti-racist practitioners.

Student Outcome Focused Governance

School staff will implement the following Guardrail to create conditions for students to meet the priority Culturally Responsive Workforce Goal.

Guardrail 3. The Superintendent will not allow adult behaviors in central office, school buildings, or classrooms that are misaligned with district-wide vision, values, and anti-racism initiatives.

Evidence of alignment to student outcome focused governance:

Our approach to school improvement centers on learning and growing as a community. If we, as educators, are accountable to implement a cohesive plan for shared, intentional work on valuing identity, universal design for learning, restorative and anti-racist practice, mastery of knowledge and skills, high-quality student work, and character, we will build a learning community that is nurturing and inclusive for all students and families.

Culturally Responsive Workforce Strategies

Our school completed a comprehensive needs assessment and examined data to identify strategies, processes, procedures, and professional development that will lead to student outcomes aligned to our goals in this priority area. The needs assessment is available upon request from the principal.

Culturally responsive strategies, processes, and/or procedures that support Belonging and Relationships: In Progress

Culturally responsive strategies, processes, and/or procedures that support a culturally responsive and anti-racist work environment: In Progress

Culturally responsive strategies, processes, and/or procedures that support leadership opportunities: In Progress

Budget Allocations to Support Continuous Improvement

The following describes how the school allocates funds to support and improve student learning.

Academic Year: 2023-2024

Funding Type: LAP

Funding Source: State

Amount: 0.3 FTE

How will funds improve student learning? Our reading specialist will help teachers implement a full phonics program in all K-2 classrooms and provide Tier 3 intervention for small-groups as needed.