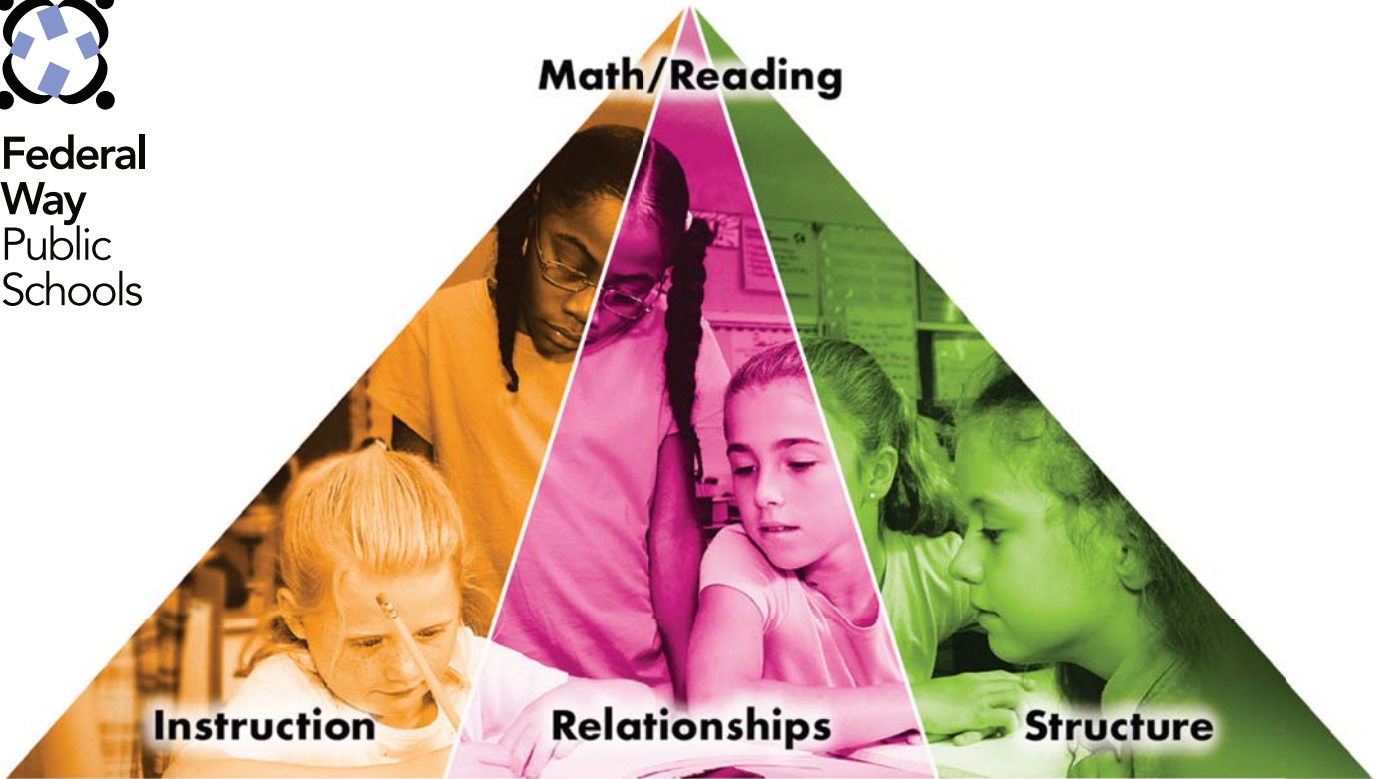




Federal
Way
Public
Schools



Federal Way Public Schools: Re-creating education to serve today's students

Like schools nationwide, Federal Way Public Schools began exploring school reform in the late 1990s as a means to improve student achievement.

In 1999, the school board approved graduation requirements that exceeded the state's standards. While the state's minimum number of high school credits is 19, to receive a diploma in Federal Way, a student must have 23.5 graduation credits (completed with at least a C-). Additionally, we exceed the state's standards in

English, Math (including one credit in Algebra), Science, Social Studies, and Health and Fitness.

In subsequent years, under Superintendent Thomas R. Murphy's leadership, the district has launched a rigorous, comprehensive and systemic set of improvements around structure, relationships and instruction, with a focus on math and reading. These improvements are built on a foundation of equity and achievement for all students.



FWPS AT A GLANCE:

Enrollment: 22,187

Staff: 3,048
Regular Employees: 2,619
Substitutes: 429

Schools: 37
Elementary Schools 23
Middle Schools 7
High Schools 5
The Public Academy (grades 6-10)
Internet Academy (grades K-12)

Service Area:
Federal Way and parts of Auburn, Kent, Des Moines and unincorporated King County.

THE CHALLENGE:

- More than 42 percent of Federal Way students qualify for free and reduced lunches.
- Nearly half, 48.5 percent of our students are non-white.
- 86 different languages are spoken by students and their families.
- Over 10 percent of our students are English Language Learners.
- More than 12 percent qualify for Special Education.
- Out of 27 Puget Sound area districts, although we are third highest in total enrollment, in terms of state funding per pupil, we rank 19th.

THE RESULTS:

Against the odds, on the 2006 WASL:

- 86 percent of the district's fourth-grade students met or exceeded the state's reading standard
- 75 percent of the district's seventh-grade students met or exceeded the state's reading standard
- Nearly 90% of this year's 10th grade students met or exceeded the state standard in reading and writing.

TRANSFORMING A SCHOOL DISTRICT FROM THE INSIDE OUT.

A description of the improvement initiated in each category follows:

I. EQUITY AND ACHIEVEMENT

The Board of Directors established specific goals for closing the achievement gaps between white and non-white students, with programs and policies designed to make real and effective change in the schools and the community. The mission of our equity and achievement programs is to make academic success a reality for all students.

In 2001, a board of directors and superintendent-appointed community task force examined disparities in students' achievement along demographic groups and developed recommendations for change. The Board of Directors established an Office of Equity & Achievement to lead initiatives to "close the gap" that today are having a tremendous impact on students, white and non-white, including:

- **Cultural competence.** District staff members attend discussion sessions in cultural competency and are encouraged to review their beliefs about multiculturalism. In addition, all district employees are learning effective strategies for working with students of poverty.
- **Summer Bridge/Summer PASS Programs.** These free programs provide targeted help for students who are not quite meeting the reading or math standard required for promotion to the next grade level, or who did not pass the 10th grade WASL. Bus transportation is provided and breakfast and lunch are served for eligible student. Students are nominated for the program by school staff, and the cost is paid through I-728 funding.
- **8th and 9th grade ALP (Accelerated Learning Program).** Eighth grade students who did not meet state standards on any portion of the 7th grade WASL or meet grade level expectations in the 8th grade either take a summer class and/or an accelerated learning class in either math or reading in 9th grade.
- **English Language Learner (ELL) Program.** ELL teachers work in close collaboration with the student's classroom teachers and are familiar with the latest research and instructional methodologies.
- **Latino Night School.** In partnership with Highline Community College, the state's Office of Secondary Education for Migrant Youth, and the South King County Multi-Service

Center, we provide a convenient way for Latino students and their families to connect with school and community resources. High school aged students can take “retrieval credits” and earn a high school diploma or GED. There are English Language Learners English classes for both students and parents.

- **All-Day Kindergarten.** The district implemented a free all-day kindergarten program for students who qualify based on their free and reduced lunch status.

- **AVID (Advancement via Individual Determination).** This program is offered at six secondary schools and is based on national model designed to encourage and prepare those students “in the academic middle” who might be the first in their families to attend college. These students have potential for success but do not always enroll in rigorous, college-preparatory classes in high school.

- **GEAR-UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs).** Last spring, Totem Middle School was awarded a \$150,000 grant to establish a GEAR-UP Scholars Project to guide students and parents in creating and following a college plan.

- **Multi-Age GATE.** Full-time Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) services are offered in every elementary school and serve grades 3, 4 and 5 in a multi-age “looping” classroom. Students are nominated based on 3rd grade assessments, student portfolios, and the Developmentally Accelerated Skills Inventory, a tool for evaluating giftedness in multiple areas. Teachers are specially trained in multi-age classroom methods and culturally competent teaching strategies.

- **Pre-AP (Advanced Placement) and Pre-IB (International Baccalaureate) Enrollment.** In grades 6-10, secondary students can enroll in pre-AP and pre-IB courses. Open to everyone, this self-select program replaces honors classes.

- **AP Enrollment.** This self-select program serves grades 11-12 in math, language arts, science and social studies.

II. INSTRUCTION

We have implemented a variety of programs and policies that improve the instruction process and climate for both students and teachers. These include:

- **Staff Excellence.** Helping school staff members fulfill their potential by increasing their capacity understand and use data on student performance when making decisions about program effectiveness and instructional improvement. We have brought in speakers such as Lorraine Monroe, Jeffery Canada, Gary Howard, and Dr. Geneva Gay, and used instructional material such as Ruby Paine’s Culture of Poverty.

- **Career and Technical Education.** These classes offer practical, hands-on career training in a variety of fields as part of high school academics. Courses are wide-ranging and include fields from construction, to horticulture, to computer

chip manufacturing.

- **Puget Sound Early College.** This is an 11th and 12th grade program partnership with Highline Community College, allowing juniors and seniors to take advanced academic classes toward an Associate of Arts college degree as they complete their high school diploma. An emphasis on social justice provides students with an exciting topic for critical exploration.

- **Graduation Requirements/13th Year Plan.** Beginning in 2008, state graduation standards will require each senior to have a “high school and beyond” education plan. In Federal Way, monitored by their advisors, each student creates a detailed plan for getting to graduation and preparing for post-high school life—employment, college or other training.

- **Standards-Based Curriculum.** With standards-based learning, students are asked to show that they have mastered certain concepts and skills based on the state’s Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EARLs). We use rubrics to give students a scale for determining how close they are to meeting learning standards.

- **Elementary and Secondary Math.** The Scott Foresman Mathematics text for kindergarten through 5th grade, and its associated curriculum, focuses on teaching math for understanding. It is closely aligned with our state’s EARLs, and teachers are receiving special training in math teaching techniques as well. The secondary math curriculum has been reviewed for alignment with EARLs. Current instructional innovations include the accelerated Math system, which generates individualized lessons, provides immediate feedback, and lets teachers know if learning objectives are being met.

- **WASL Preparation.** The district’s focus is on helping all children learn the skills and knowledge they need to pass the WASL. This includes providing teachers, families and students with complete knowledge of the WASL opportunities and support available to them.

- **Promotion Policy.** The district’s promotion policy has been standardized to ensure students’ academic growth is aligned with the WASL requirements. Students are promoted to the next highest grade level only when they have shown they are prepared to be successful at that level.

III. RELATIONSHIPS

These initiatives involve integrating school, parent and community resources that support to enhance the academic success of students. These types of programs are especially critical in a district such as ours, with multiple ethnic, racial and religious groups whereby cultural differences might otherwise inhibit interactions between families and educators.

- **AmeriCorps.** This federally funded program is a direct result of a renewed service movement in America. More than 50 AmeriCorps volunteers focus their work on tutoring children who do not meet the WASL standards, with a particular emphasis on AVID Program tutoring.

■ **Family Partnership Advocate.** The Office of Family Partnership works to implement a variety of activities to encourage parent involvement. The Family Partnership Advocate helps families learn to navigate the school system and advocate effectively for their students. For parents who themselves were not successful in school, and for those who are new to the public school system, this is a significant issue.

■ **Student-Led Conferences.** All schools use standards-based portfolios as a tool to engage students and parents in understanding the learning goals of the classroom. Students present their portfolios and describe their academic goals and successes to their parents at student-led conferences.

IV. STRUCTURE

We maximize each student's growth by meeting each where he or she is, and helping the student to progress. This involves offering several different learning experiences in response to students' varied needs. In recent years we have evaluated and restructured our learning environments, following best practices of other school districts around the nation, to ensure the classroom and school structures are built for maximum student achievement. Our programs have included:

■ **Elementary School Design.** A work group was commissioned to develop recommendations regarding school structure, instruction and school relationships in elementary school.

■ **Middle School/High School Design Implementation.** Federal Way Public Schools transitioned to 6th through 8th grade middle schools and four-year high schools in 2003. Along with grade restructuring, a great deal of work was done to revamp the schools instructionally and structurally.

■ **Small Group Advisory.** Each teacher works with a small group of students to ease transition fears, enhance academic, social and personal development skills, and to make schools smaller and more welcoming places.

■ **Standards Based Classrooms.** The EALRs are a uniform set of expectations that pinpoint specific knowledge and skills that each student should know at each grade level. The EALRs provide a clear road map for curriculum choices. Our standards-based classrooms support those EALRs and incorporate tools to ensure students know the expectations and how they are doing in meeting them.

■ **Standards Based Report Cards.** In 2005 we converted to standards-based report cards for all elementary schools, formatted to cover the subject areas that are on the WASL and worded with WASL-like terms to convey which skills a student is struggling with, is close to mastering or has mastered. All middle and high schools are standard-based report, helping ensure all students are graded on the same content and by the same criteria.

■ **Building Capacity/Infrastructure.** The last project under a 1999 bond measure—construction of a new math/science middle school—was completed/will be completed in 2005.

MORE RESULTS.

The Board of Directors' focus on educational equality and continual innovation has led to a dramatic transformation in one of the state's largest school districts. And despite being one of the lowest funded school districts with more students per teacher than virtually every other Puget Sound school district, Federal Way has been identified as one of the highest performing districts in the state of Washington, according to the Washington School Research Center at Seattle Pacific University.

Three Federal Way High Schools were recognized by Standard & Poor's for narrowing the 'achievement gap.' Federal Way, Thomas Jefferson and Todd Beamer High Schools are among 51 Washington schools recognized for narrowing the achievement gap, Standard & Poor's School Evaluation Services announced July 11.

Not only was Federal Way the only district in the state with more than one high school on the Standard and Poor's list, two of them—Federal Way High School and Thomas Jefferson High School—achieved the greatest reductions of all the South Sound schools.

THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP IS CLOSING.

In 2001 the achievement gap between African American and Caucasian students in 4th grade reading was 25 points. In 2006, the gap has been reduced by more than half to 12 points, while at the same time the overall achievement has increased from 66 percent of all students meeting standard to 90 percent of all students meeting standard. In seventh grade, the achievement gap has narrowed from 28 points to 14 points. Overall achievement increased from 41 percent to 66 percent, improving from a 29-point difference to only a 9-point difference, and overall achievement increasing from 66 percent to 87 percent. And now, on to math!

This summer, three of our elementary schools were among 155 schools statewide to receive OSPI's Academic Achievement Award. To receive the award, schools must make "adequate yearly progress" (AYP) in at least two of the previous three years. Additionally, based on scores from the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL), schools need to have substantial reductions in the achievement gap or scored higher than the statewide average in reading, writing or mathematics over a specific period of time in one or more of the ethnic minority groups.

In a separate award, Wildwood Elementary received one of ten Apple Awards presented by OSPI for increases in fourth grade WASL scores. Wildwood's school-wide WASL scores increased substantially in all subjects in 2006.

■ The number of 4th graders passing the reading section of the WASL rose from 61 percent in 2004 to 90 percent this past spring.

■ Students passing the math section rose from 39 to 75 percent last spring, and those passing the writing section increased from 51 percent to 71 percent.