

Portland Public Schools Performance Plan

A new strategic plan for the next five years 2005-2010 now shapes the focus at Portland Public Schools. Developing this plan we call “Getting Results, Sustaining Hope!” was a year-long process during which teachers, support staff, principals, students, the school board, parents, PTSA, site councils, and numerous community organizations participated. The strategic plan has five major components:

What we want for students is **The Goal** – By the end of elementary, middle and high school, every student by name meets or exceeds academic standards, and is fully prepared to make productive life decisions.

What we commit to is vision, mission and **Shared Values**:

- Trusting relationships
- Investing in each other’s success
- High standards of learning, high standards of service
- Equity of access and opportunity
- Inspired leadership
- Every person has inherent value and the ability to learn

What we know to be important are **The High-Leverage Educational Practices** that define the skills we need and will develop to accomplish our goals:

- Excellence in teaching and learning
- Leadership for results
- Excellence in operations and service
- Strong partnerships with parents and community
- Cultivating a continuous learning ethic among students and staff in every school and central office

What we do are the steps we take to implement best practices for education and we track our progress by measuring what we accomplish with **The Vital Signs of Student Progress**

1. Student attendance
2. Student responsibility for learning & successful participation in a global society
3. Student meeting or exceeding standards in core subjects
4. Student participation in the arts, cultural and extracurricular activities
5. Closing “achievement gap” while accelerating learning for all students of all backgrounds, ‘conditions’ or ‘circumstances’
6. High school graduation rate
7. Student success at the next level (successful transition from grade-to-grade and pre-K-to-elementary-to-middle-to-high school-to-postsecondary opportunities)

2004-05 marked the first year the District has been under the leadership of Dr. Vicki L. Phillips, who became Superintendent on August 1, 2005. During this year, student achievement rose significantly for Portland Public Schools students at every level. The percentage of students meeting benchmarks for reading and math showed the largest year-to-year gains since the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 took effect.

Grade Level	English/Language Arts	Math
Elementary	72.0% met standards up 4.8 percentage points	87.8% met standards up 15.3 percentage points (partially due to elimination of the problem-solving test)
Middle	59.7% met standards up 5.9 percentage points	68.7% met standards up 15.6 percentage points (partially due to elimination of the problem-solving test)
High	59.7% met standards up 5.9 percentage points	50.4% met standards up 3.0 percentage points (the problem-solving test was eliminated in 2003-04)

Other accomplishments during the year are many. A few highlights are included below.

- Another indicator of student achievement is the state report cards issued by the Oregon Department of Education. Overall, almost two-thirds of our schools that were rated achieved a “strong” or “exceptional” rating, far higher than the state average. For 2004-05, 17 schools moved up in the ratings, while 8 schools slipped a notch (some by the thinnest margins).
- Three high schools, Marshall, Roosevelt and Jefferson, successfully implemented a conversion to the small learning community model in the 2004-2005 school year. The purpose of these smaller learning communities is to know each student well in order to personalize his or her education. This approach to high school reform is based on proven research regarding smaller learning communities and achievement.
- Superintendent Phillips instituted an annual Enrollment Data Analysis process as a data-based framework for making decisions regarding updating school attendance boundaries; starting, relocating, expanding or closing an educational program; starting a new school or consolidating existing schools and closing a building; or restructuring the delivery of effective instruction. This process led to the decision to close five neighborhood elementary schools (Applegate, Edwards, Kenton, Smith, and Richmond) and one middle school (Whitaker) and expand certain schools from PK-5 to PK-6 (Beach, Chief Joseph, Faubion, Humboldt, King, Vernon, and Woodlawn). In addition, a task force of District staff and community members was formed to evaluate all the schools in the Jefferson High School Cluster.

- The Board of Education established an internal performance auditor position for the District, reporting directly to the Board to enhance accountability and ensure independence. The internal performance auditor assists the Board in its oversight responsibilities to ensure that tax dollars are effectively utilized. Internal audits focus on the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of operational and organizational performance.

Such accomplishments, and many others, are gaining us national recognition. Within the past few months PPS has been awarded two very large and significant grants.

Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Meyer Memorial Trust are making a nearly \$9 million, three-year investment in PPS to raise student achievement, dramatically expand teacher training, rework middle and high school curriculum and improve the delivery of services to schools.

First and foremost this is an investment in our teachers.

The majority of the grant, \$5.7 million, will be used to provide teachers with tools and development opportunities - helping them to create an environment of intensive learning in every middle and high school and providing the time and resources necessary to share practice and to focus on meeting every student's needs.

Specifically, this means we will be able to:

- Implement a core curriculum in math, science, literacy and social studies and provide teachers with the tools that accelerate achievement for all middle and high school students throughout their school career.
- Build assessment tools, including student portfolios, end-of-year course exams, and classroom work that measure, in a wide variety of ways, student achievement based on state and community expectations.
- Increase the time and tools teachers have to assess student learning and tailor instruction to the unique needs of their students.
- Deliver training, coaching, group discussions, and networks for teachers to use new curriculum and assessment tools to raise student achievement and to share the successes and lessons learned.
- Create leadership teams of principals and teachers to drive student achievement in their own schools.

A second focus of the grant will be on making the district more accountable, efficient, and effective. Last year, the Annenberg's Institute's report on the district's central office suggested a number of improvements to ensure every dollar we spend and every thing we do supports great teaching and learning in schools.

The Gates and Meyer grants will give us the resources to dramatically change how the school district does its business. This includes:

- Redesigning the operation, structure, services and responsibilities of the school district to be accountable, efficient, and effective. An advisory council of Portland business leaders will help guide this effort.
- Steering every dollar, product and service the district controls to support schools and classrooms toward higher student achievement.
- Creating understandable yardsticks of success and reporting on our progress to the community.

Finally, we know that building great schools in every part of this city will require the support of the entire city. The Gates and Meyer grants will also support our partners, especially with the Portland Schools Foundation, to marshal the leadership, talent, resources and involvement of the full community to create a great urban school system. This includes:

- Creating a city-wide alliance of community, business, parent, youth and political leaders to champion high achievement and close the achievement gap for all students.
- Mobilizing leaders and citizens in neighborhoods throughout Portland to plan and start creating the middle and high schools our students needs to succeed in life.
- Launching an annual summit of 1,000 Portland leaders to accelerate school, community and business efforts to make sure all young people leave high school ready for college and work.
- Recruiting and training parent leaders in every school.

These grants recognize that Portland Public Schools is on the leading edge of reform efforts across the country and support us in our aspiration to build the nation's highest performing urban public school system.

We are embarking on district wide, systemic change -- this is more than specific interventions in specific schools -- it's about creating the right portfolio of schools for each part of our city, developing the most cost effective, high value centrally provided services, and supporting the nation's most qualified, high performing educational workforce.

To get there we will need the help and input of all of the constituents in this community -- teachers, parents, students, community groups, business leaders, city leaders. We started this engagement process with our work last year and with the development of our strategic plan. This enables us to take a next big step -- putting in place the operational infrastructure and supports to drive innovation, performance and accountability top to bottom across the district.

Striving Readers Program grant was awarded to only eight school districts in the country, and PPS received \$23 million to be used over five years to provide professional developments for teachers to implement proven strategies to raise student achievement for struggling middle and high school students who currently are two or more grade levels behind their classmates.

The grant will help provide a package of services designed to boost student achievement across all content areas in nine high-need, Title I schools including four high schools (Franklin, Jefferson, Madison and Roosevelt) and five middle schools (Gregory Heights, Binnsmead, Kellogg, Portsmouth and Tubman).

The goals of the Striving Readers Program include:

- * increasing achievement for all students by improving the quality of literacy instruction across the curriculum,
- * implementing a research-based intervention program for a randomly selected group of students reading two or more years below grade level,
- * improving the school environment to support and sustain academic achievement, and;
- * contributing in a meaningful way to the body of research on adolescent reading.

The grants are targeted to specific services, primarily for teacher professional development, and cannot be used for on-going operational support for the district nor can they be used to offset the anticipated \$57 million shortfall in PPS revenue next year.

Over the next five years, the grants will provide a package of services that will help approximately 6400 students at a per student cost of only \$691 per year. All the costs are covered by the Department of Education grant which totals \$23.5 million over five years.

Conclusion

These grants evidence our commitment to carry out our promise to offer a rigorous curriculum and excellent teaching and learning to every child in every school in every neighborhood in the district, in spite of the current budget constraints. Despite an uncertain funding future, such significant investments in our students should reassure our community that Portland Public Schools is a worthy investment.