

Sisters Middle School Special Issue

October 2008



School Improvement Goals

Volume 9 Issue

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Our special edition newsletter is intended to give our parents and community members important information about our instructional program, student academic performance and school improvement goals for 2008-2009. In the following, you will find our mission, vision and core values statements, a narrative report outlining important improvements and programs, state assessment data, the Sisters School District Improvement Goals and the Middle School Improvement Goals. In the insert, you will find our state report card published by the Oregon Department of Education.

Our Mission

We will provide high levels of learning and meaningful experiences for all students.

Our Vision

A strong community that fosters:

- Belonging,
- Self-discovery
- A love of learning for each student

Core Values

Sisters Middle School is a safe, caring environment that

- Encourages respect, service, accountability, trustworthiness, a healthy lifestyle and a community spirit.
- Fosters critical thinking and excellence in academic performance
- Inspires creativity and individual expression
- Develops inquisitive, self-directed learners

Narrative Report

Academic Improvement:

Overall, the 2007-2008 school year was one of academic progress for Sisters Middle School.

Reading and math scores climbed in 2007-08. I would like to credit the middle school teachers for their collaborative work last year in their grade level and content group professional learning communities (PLC's) during Late Start Wednesdays. Teachers identified essential learning objectives, aligned curriculum grade-to-grade, and developed formative assessments to guide instruction.

Writing scores jumped 21% in 2006-2007. In 2007-2008 we held that higher score another year which tells me that the jump in scores can be attributed to instructional strategies. Scores, however, did not continue to climb. Language arts teachers believe this is due to a weakness in writing conventions (grammar and spelling), which is double-weighted in scoring. Teachers this year will outline a safety net of writing conventions that each student must know at each grade level.

High School freshmen math class placements were smooth this fall thanks to the collaborative work among the middle and high school math teachers who developed a math assessment to assist in placement decisions for high school math classes. Math teachers also worked to match Algebra I curriculum at the middle and high schools which made it possible for 8th grade Algebra I students last year to earn high school credit.

Our new 8th grade language arts teacher and 6th grade language arts teacher helped to make our language arts department even stronger. This is evidenced in daily quality instruction and improved enthusiasm for writing.

We hired a 6th grade science teacher last year who developed quality 6th grade science curriculum. High school science teachers are excited that incoming high school students in the future will have a solid introduction to physical science.

To insure that all middle school students can read at grade level, this fall, we developed a new literacy lab for 6th grade students and a parent volunteer one-on-one reading fluency program for 5th grade students. We are anxious to monitor the anticipated reading improvement of students in our new reading programs.

Last year we identified the needs of incoming students and began to develop a new life skills program to serve students joining our school community. Our high quality special education teachers and paraprofessionals have reorganized this year. We are proud to open our new life skills center.

I would like to credit the 2006-2008 site council team members who challenged us to become a better place for all students.

I would also like to recognize School Board members and superintendent for their intensive focus and support in our efforts to close the achievement gap, particularly between economically disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students.

We believe math achievement and test scores will improve if we group students in math classes based on proficiency in skills rather than by grade level for 6th through 8th grades. However, we will have to wait until the math textbook adoption next year, and purchase texts which allow for this flexibility.

Aside from improved state assessment scores, the following programs and areas were improved:

Last year we experienced significant improvement in student behavior with the Positive Behavior Support (PBS) program. Changes in how we encourage, teach and monitor positive behaviors- safety, respect and responsibility- had a tremendous impact. Our new SWIS data system assisted us in tracking and monitoring behavior in order to better plan supervision needs and social skills instruction.

Career-related learning standards were integrated into the software applications class for 8th grade students via the Career Information System (CIS) last year. As a result, all 8th graders transitioned to the HS with a “dream” for the future and specific goals for the high school. Dream posters were available for parents to view at the 8th grade promotion ceremony.

339 students completed the spring 2008 student survey. Notable data include: 33% of students do not have compatible software at home, 52% believe their grades adequately represent what they learning in school. 50% feel their teachers use the same standards in grading work. 59% of students cannot afford to buy the \$28 yearbook. In response, teachers this year will work collaboratively to align grading practices. We will help students learn how to store and retrieve files saved within differing software and make yearbooks more affordable.

Physical Fitness and Health

District health and PE teachers worked last year with the Oregon Department of Education in aligning health curriculum, K-12. As a result, health instruction will be expanded in 2008-2009 at the middle school to include all of the state health standards for 5th through 8th grade. Software Applications class was updated to include health standards for 8th grade students.

Middle School Sports

Middle school sports has returned to middle school management this year. Staff members from the middle and high schools and SOAR will work together to develop an aligned K-12 athletic education philosophy and coordinate district programs.

Outdoor Education

Because we live in such a beautiful environment, outdoor education remains an emphasis at SMS. Sixth grade Outdoor School was again last year was a highly successful experience for kids.

The three 8th grade retreats were improved last year with the addition of language arts themes and career-related learning standards. Students studied pertinent novels and topics in their language arts classes in preparation for the retreat team building, challenge and wilderness activities.

District Improvement Goals

1. Sisters School District will increase the percentage of students, disaggregated by subgroups by subgroups including TAG, meeting or exceeding state and district academic proficiency standards and growth trends by 5% and will decrease the achievement gap between subgroups by 5% (target date of June 2008).
2. Sisters School district will increase the use of technology within the district and the schools to implement and monitor data-based decision making strategies, school-to-home communication, utilization of technology in the classroom (record keeping and analysis, curriculum/instructional enhancement, student self-tracking) and district and school-wide data collection and analysis (target date: January, 2008).
3. Sisters School District will decrease the number and percent of discipline incidents disaggregated by type; the percentage of decrease will be determined by school and incident type. The Positive Behavior Support System will be used district wide to implement this goal.
4. Sisters School District will increase the number and percentage of students enrolling in post-secondary education and/or students gainfully employed after high school through development of vocational/technical/transition programs at the high school, personal education plans, and credit by proficiency opportunities (target date: June, 2008).

2007-2008 State Assessment Scores

State Assessment Data, % met or exceeded

Grade	Mathematics	Reading	Writing	Science
5 th	89.1%	91.3%	N/A	90.2%
6 th	80.2%	90.6%	N/A	N/A
7 th	84.8	88.4%	63.4%	N/A
8 th	82.9	81.4%	N/A	80.5%

*N/A=not given in grade level

Sub Group Data, 2007-08 State Assessments:

Reading

Special Ed 51.76%
 Economically Disadvantaged 70.37%
 English language learners 55.56%

Math

Special Ed 45.35%
 Economically Disadvantaged 70.37%
 English language learners 44.44%

Middle School Improvement Goals for 2008-2009

(specific strategies & evaluation methods are not listed)

Increase academic proficiency for all students.

- Increase the percentage of students in meeting and exceeding state standards in reading, math, writing and science by 5%.
- Increase the number of special education and low SES (socio-economic status) students meeting math and reading standards.
- Improve reading skills of students who are barely meeting state standards.
- Decrease the achievement gap by 5% (10% total reduction in gap).
- Assist students to improve their skills as self-directed learners.
- Work to increase parent involvement in student academic progress.
- Students will monitor their own academic goals in a student-led conference in the spring.

Use and improve technology to support student academic, social and behavioral growth.

- Students will practice digital citizenship- safe, legal and responsible use of information and technology.
- Teachers will enhance and improve instruction through the use of technology
- Students in 8th grade will explore their interests and aptitudes and set goals for high school using the CIS (Career Information System).
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Maintain a safe and positive learning environment

- Each student will have a strong sense of belonging and connectedness.
- We will teach and encourage students to make safe, responsible and respectful behavior choices.
- Students will explore their interests and aptitudes as they begin to consider post-secondary educational options.

	Pilot Butte	Westside	Skyview	La Pine	Elton	Cascade	High Desert	Obsidian	Culver	SMS	State Avg.	Ash-	Lake O -1 Jr. High
6 th													
reading	76.6	92.0	83.9	78.7	75.5	86.7	71.5	67.5	51.0	90.6	73.3	91.0	>95
math	73.3	88	73.0	64.7	77.7	85.9	66.3	67.9	59.2	80.2	70.3	89.1	>95
7th													
reading	74.0	92.3	84.1	76.5	78.2	87.8	80.8	74.7	78.3	88.4	73.8	94.3	91.9
writing	43.1	38.5	55.9	28.7	53.6	69.8	48.5	58.8	26.7	63.4	49.2	64.9	78.2
math	71.2	76.9	74.1	67.6	79.7	83.8	74.1	77.5	80.4	84.8	74.2	94.3	93.5
8 th													
Reading	68.5	78.3	71.6	53.8	55.4	82.3	66.2	57.7	66.7	81.4	65.3	90.8	86.4
Science	80.8	87.0	81.0	60.8	71.5	89.5	68.4	72.0	68.4	79.8	69.1	90.9	89.5
Math	64.4	82.6	71.4	55.4	71.8	83.3	62.2	64.4	82.5	82.9	68.7	89.0	90.5

Above numbers are percentages of student who met or exceeded standards on the 2007-2008 State Assessments.

This is a comparative Analysis of regional middle schools, grades 6 through 8: Obsidian, and Elton Gregory in Redmond; Pilot Butte, Sky View, Cascade, and, La Pine Middle School. For comparison, Ashland Middle School scores are included as well as the scores of one junior high school in Lake Oswego (grade 7 & 8). All Lake Oswego 6th grades are in elementary schools and all have scores of greater than 95%. These schools are included to give the reader a point of comparison to highly regarded schools in the state. In terms of size and socio-economic status, Ashland may be more closely matched with Sisters.

The average state wide scores are listed. Tumalo Community School and Terrebonne Community School in Redmond and Three Rivers in Bend are not listed because they are K-8 schools and have too few middle school students enrolled to accurately compare data. Westside Village, is also a small K-8, is listed.

Limitations of the data:

The data should be viewed in light of the following limitations. The number of times students take the state assessments varies among schools. Redmond middle schools routinely test students three times per year. Sisters Middle School, for the first time last year, tested students twice. 8th grade science students took the assessment only once due to computer lab limitations.

Sisters Middle School

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