

**McMurray Middle School
State of the School 2006-2008**

Goal #1: Create a school climate that promotes inclusion and student responsibility.

- McMurray students participated in the Taproot Theater presentation “Witness” promoting citizenship, Think First as well as 4 “Living Voices” performances. (The Right to Dream, Within the Silence, La Causa, and Northwest Passages) see www.livingvoices.org
- Through McMurray Challenge Day and focused community-building homeroom activities, we observed increased homeroom unity as well as a more positive school climate. Our homeroom meetings continued lessons on school climate and student-led conferences. Lessons were more unified in focusing on consistent expectations in the building. Increased student voice and input were reported on surveys
- Our ASB officers and student council were refined, creating a positive student voice and leadership by implementing a working student council with homeroom representatives.
- An intramural program as well as the themes emphasized in athletics and clubs promoted scholarship, sportsmanship and character development within our school community. Seven of eight sports teams again received either “Distinguished” (3.0 team GPA) or “Outstanding” (3.5 team GPA) awards from WIAA. Approximately 75% of students were involved in the various intramural tournaments throughout the year. Over 300 students were involved in athletics and activities throughout each year.
- A Student-Led Conferences program piloted in 2007 and continued in 2008. Lessons for the program were instituted November through March and culminated in a day of Student-Led Conferences in March. We had a 90-95 % attendance rate. The survey results are posted online.
- Student recognition took center stage through printed media (newsletter, bulletin, website, etc.) as well as through our positive discipline referrals, “Good News from the School” postcards, Students of the Week program and the M.A.S.T. (McMurray Academic Success Team) recognition program. The M.A.S.T. program recognized students who achieved a 3.5 GPA or higher as well as students who improved their GPA by at least .5 or better.
- A “Student Success Partnership” was created in conjunction with VYFS to aid families and at-risk students with coaching, parent support/training and intensive academic and social support.
- Our Success Team continued, focusing on a process for referral, documentation and communication with families with the goal of removing barriers to achievement for students. Our “D & F” list was reduced by nearly 40% reduction 2nd semester). We also observed increased communication with teachers and families regarding struggling students.
- We reviewed the Healthy Youth Survey data from 2006-07, from 6th and 8th graders and collaborated with VPIT and VYFS in developing forums to engage and inform parents and the community.
- 6th-8th grade students were exposed to “Life Skills” program in a partnership with VYFS and VHS. We also adopted the Prentice Hall Health text for 7th and 8th grade.
- A Reading Comprehension Seminar and Math Workshop were implemented to target students not reading at grade level or meeting math standard. Examination of WASL scores and other data to determine the effectiveness of the program, indicate that all students made increases in WASL performance and 5 students moved from level 2 to level 3 in both areas.
- We continued our focus on transition from 5th to 6th grade by training student mentors to serve as guides for new students to McMurray. The mentors published a guide on how to get involved and find your way around the school. A positive transition was observed for both years.
- Survey data and feedback from parents indicate a high level of interest and satisfaction with the implementation of student planners. We will continue to use planners at all three grade levels.

Goal #2: Provide appropriately challenging curriculum for all students and an expectation of excellence.

- Our departmental teams gained strength and organization with much greater collaboration and communication. A great deal of progress was made in this area and is evidenced by more consistent course outlines, instructional strategies and expectations.
- Staff analyzed the strand data from the WASL to integrate, refine and modify elements of the humanities and math curriculum. Students made significant gains in the writing WASL and the overall trend for reading continues to rise within cohorts. Target learning areas were developed in CASL groups and individual student data was reviewed so that specific interventions may be implemented.
- Common planning times were achieved in the Master Schedule for the Science Team, P.E/Health, Math Team and by grade level for the Humanities Team, allowing for increased collaborative efforts.
- Several common classroom assessments were developed and coordination in the humanities department and grade levels occurred throughout the year, including pilot civics CBAs.
- Professional development opportunities were promoted for the continued implementation of best practices toward student success, with a focus on instructional practice and strategies to differentiate instruction (See professional development report).
- A Reading Comprehension Workshop was instituted targeting students with below grade level reading skills as measured by WASL scores and focused in improving comprehension.
- Students involved in the reading and math workshop reported high levels of satisfaction and increased levels of achievement as measured by classroom based assessment and observation
- Classroom and WASL assessments show continued increases in cohort writing and reading scores and improved understanding of conventions, content, organization & style, analysis, etc.
- Our Math and Science Teams continue to collaborate effectively and share strategies toward making the Connected Mathematics curriculum more relevant and rigorous for students.
- The Math Team continued to develop and implement the district Math Guide and the Connected Mathematics program. We are implementing this new level of specificity with the curriculum and will continue to refine our pacing to reflect the needs of individuals and cohorts of students, including the adoption of CMP 2.
- Our Science Team continued to analyze WASL data and implementing WASL style “Powerful Classroom Assessments”. Focused and collaborative work began on integrating “Inquiry strands” of science into the curriculum. This process will continue to evolve as we are sending a group to the LASER institute for strategic planning in science.
- Accelerated Math supplemented the Connected Math curriculum, focused on developing computational skills and filling gaps in the number sense and algebraic sense strand. We are analyzing data related to these skills both on a strand level with common focus areas and guides for the program. Students report a high level of interest and involvement in the Accelerated Math program at all grade levels. We will continue to analyze the effectiveness of the program.
- Grade-level interventions for students not meeting standard in various areas of math were instituted. Last year, these interventions were done in consultation with the Success Team, parent involvement and tutoring sessions, utilizing a number of volunteers from the community.
- Science WASL scores remained well above state averages. Teacher observations indicated that instruction and student understanding were more in line with the expectations on the assessment.

Goal #3: Promote and enhance positive relationships with students, home and community.

- Student recognition and community-building continued in a variety of ways, i.e. The Beachcomber's Above and Beyond Student, our building Students of the Week, and positive communications home from teachers and administration via telephone, email and postcards.
- McMurray newsletters were sent home at six-eight week intervals and continued to highlight curricular and academic focus areas. Activity schedules and other important news were communicated through the use of the school website, telephone information lines, letters home, the reader board, and school newsletters. We received positive formal and informal feedback regarding these communication avenues.
- The McMurray website was enhanced through a dedicated focus on timely information, curricular focused articles and information links for parents.
- A communication process for parents, coaches, and student-athletes was achieved through a phone line and website updating ferry times and other pertinent information.
- Procedures were implemented to increase teacher-parent communication regarding student progress. The expectation of communication was instituted for both positive reports and specifically when students fell below a C grade.
- The Exploratory Week Guide was effectively communicated to parents and students through a printed guide and an online version. Pertinent documents and other helpful information were also posted on our website.
- Teachers promoted and improved their individual websites as a new "Teacherweb 2" program was established for all teachers. We will look for continued improvement in this area.
- We observed a higher level of parents and students who were aware of events and school-wide programs through these increased modes of communication.
- McMurray was consistently represented in a variety of community committees (Emergency Prep, Athletics Site Council, PIT, Strategic Plan, booster clubs, etc.)
- Our Site Council continued as a focused and active group comprised of parents, staff and students. The Site Council also served as the advisory body on the School Improvement Plan and the school discipline policy. Parents and community members advised on the school climate and Olweus bullying prevention committees.
- Efforts were made in examining and redefining Exploratory Week and were focused on making the program more clearly defined, connected to middle school curriculum, and evidence of a demonstration of learning. Parent partnership is a key element of this process.
- McMurray Site Council and the PTSA partnered toward creating the "Tech Club" a club intended to allow students to learn more about technology and become more connected with school. Twenty five to thirty students were involved in this program. Parent and community volunteers were critical to this program.
- Parents and community groups partnered with various staff to implement the Science Fair, History Day, Exploratory Week, fine art performances, Math Olympiad, and numerous other ad hoc programs. These experiences continued as meaningful and educational for our students.
- Focused utilization of parent groups in coordination with PTSA proved to be successful in increased volunteer support for students in the classroom as well as for student activities.
- Ten partnerships with the VAIS Artists in Schools program resulted in extraordinary learning and artistic opportunities for students in a variety of classrooms.
- Formal feedback and survey data indicated a high degree of satisfaction with the Exploratory Week program in 2006 and 2007. 90% of the responding parents and students reported meaningful learning experiences and overall satisfaction. Parents also were supportive of the "partnership" model and felt the program achieved success.

Goal #4: Promote effective instructional leadership and professional development with a focus toward improved student achievement.

- Last year our staff made great strides toward becoming a true professional learning community through the professional development model Collaborative Analysis of Student Learning (CASL). Five teacher leaders were trained and formed teams (humanities, math/science, PE/tech/arts). Twenty of our staff were involved in this process and protocol which centered on target learning areas, student assessment, and focused instruction.
- Our departmental teams continued to make progress in the specific analysis of data toward improving instruction and student performance.
- Technology use has expanded and been integrated into our curriculum across grade and subject. Our library and media center continues to be a hub of collaboration among teachers directed at integrating research skills and technology into their subject areas.
- McMurray continues to define its mission and philosophy with analysis of the National Middle School Association's publication "This We Believe" and the best practices noted there. Notably, we have recently focused on the concepts of middle school advocacy/advisory and the unique needs of adolescent students.
- On several occasions, staff participated in a "lesson study" protocol as a catalyst for discussing instructional practice and classroom management and environment issues, another component of a professional learning community.
- Most staff members indicate a higher degree of collegiality among staff in departmental groups and as a whole group.
- Observation indicates a higher level of coordination among staff regarding classroom and behavioral expectations compared prior years. All staff posted classroom expectations and levels of intervention.
- Staff attended a number of professional development opportunities around instructional practice goals (See professional development report)
- Our staff met a number of times to further define our philosophy and mission statement. We also discussed the elements required to provide for a consistent set of expectations in the classroom and the school.
- The process of goal-setting and discussions of best-practices in instructional and classroom management were initiated and institutionalized, formalizing a more sincere, collaborative and supportive evaluation process.
- Instructional and teaching practice classroom management and environment, and collaboration and professional development were emphasized as building-wide focus areas for goal setting and building wide meetings.
- We analyzed and made recommendations regarding the adaptation of the foreign language program. This included making Spanish a one-year program and ensuring all students have exposure to the health curriculum.
- Our staff retreat was attended both years by 24 members of our staff. We participated in our own 'Challenge Day' at Camp Sealath. The meeting time and team-building time was met with affirmative feelings. We observe a higher number of staff recognizing and understanding our shared vision and focus for the middle school.
- Our Early Release days were focused in a variety of categories from Exploratory Week development, technology, CASL Groups, WASL analysis, school-wide discipline strategies, curriculum development, assessment and grade level expectations, classroom-based assessments, and Student-led Conferences.