School and Classroom Practices Study

West Seattle Elementary School

Seattle Public Schools

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School and Classroom Practices Study

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Introduction

The purpose of this report is to assist Seattle School District (SSD) in identifying federal intervention model appropriate for West Seattle Elementary School (WSES) and to inform the district School Improvement Grant application. Information about district level practices and policies will be reviewed to identify potential barriers in district policy and practices that may impede the district's ability to implement an intervention. The report also includes information from a classroom observation study focusing on instructional practices within the school and a study of the alignment of school structures and practices with OSPI's *Nine Characteristics of High Performing Schools*. This report is intended to be formative in nature to assist in the ongoing implementation of improvement goals and action plans at the school and district levels.

Evaluators obtained information during a site visit on February 23, 2010. Fifty-four people, including district and building administrators, union leaders, certificated and non-certificated staff members, counselors, parents, and students participated in interviews and focus groups. In addition, evaluators conducted 15 classroom observations to determine the extent to which Powerful Teaching and Learning™ was present in the school. Finally, evaluators accessed information gathered through the Washington Improvement and Implementation Network. The additional information includes school and district improvement plans, collective bargaining agreements, salary allocation model, student achievement data, and additional school documents.

The following section includes an overview of the district findings. This is followed by a detailed review of the schools alignment to the *Nine Characteristics of High Performing Schools*. The report concludes with a summary, recommendations, and an appendix that supports the recommendation rationale.

District Level Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to assist district administrators in identifying the most suitable school improvement model: Closure, Restart, Turnaround, and Transformation. The tables in the Appendix of this report address the <u>turnaround</u> model and the <u>transformation</u> model. Due to continuing contract statutes within Washington State and the resulting limitation on replacing or rehiring tenured teachers, evaluation of the turnaround model can only occur if the district has:

(1) a commitment from the local bargaining unit to calendar sessions to negotiate an MOU or other agreements on processes for moving forward with the identified persistently lowest achieving school and the desired federal model
(2) a flexible reassignment/transfer process within its collective bargaining agreement,
(3) school staff in other schools who possess the necessary competencies for a turnaround model, and
(4) a sufficient threshold of schools and staff to allow for effective use of the reassignment/transfer process from and to the school under review.

For the human resource management aspects of the turnaround and transformation model it is important that the entire district program be considered, in that the district remains a single workforce and the leadership and staff will continue to shift over time through normal and uncontrolled movement and attrition. Addressing the same human resource management aspects across the district will provide for the immediate needs of the school(s) under review as well as a sustainable system over time and lessen the likelihood of other schools falling into the low-achieving category.

The restart model and the school closure model are not addressed, in that the factors considered for turnaround and transformation are not relevant to either model. Should the school make a grant application decision to implement either a restart model or school closure model, the school would be required to declare the administrator(s) and staff as excess and implement the reduction-in-force provisions of the existing collective bargaining agreement. All districts have reduction-in-force procedures in existence to determine the placement and/or termination of staff. It is noted, if school closure is not an option due to the absence of higher performing schools within the district for the students to attend. The "restart" model is a limited option in that specific legislative authority would be required to create a charter school. Districts, however, may consider the Education Management Organization ("EMO") model.

District Overview

Seattle School District employs approximately 3,500 teachers serving 45,700 students. Two elementary and one high school fall within the 5% criteria. The high school has a student enrollment of 728, and the elementary schools have enrollments of 282 and 324. The high school is designated to become a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) school for 2010-11. The West Seattle Elementary School principal is in the fifth year of assignment. The district has notified the principal of the district's intent to reassign. The district envisions an external recruitment to replace the principal.

Seattle is well ahead of the power curve on selecting and adapting school improvement models under the grant and on the assumption of grant approval. To give credence to this assumption and the commitment, the district, and the union are moving in partnership with the grant requirements.

The union and the district have an excellent partnership and have a shared commitment to address the needs of the three schools. To that end, the union has reached agreement with its leadership to support a transformation model. The union gave strong consideration to a turnaround model but concluded in part that teacher turnover is part of the problem with the schools and stabilizing the teaching corps was more critical. The association is supporting use of site-based candidate screening and selection processes, without strict contract rules, for the selection of new teachers to the schools. This will allow the opportunity to build more cohesive teams without being bound by seniority-based systems.

Seattle Public Schools personnel have planned a series of group meetings to share the grant requirements and strategies, receive comments, suggestions, and feedback on specific teaching and learning initiatives to introduce in the schools. Meetings will focus on teachers, community, and parent groups. These meetings will help identify the initiatives to be undertaken and the associated professional development strategies to support the initiatives. The district is

committed to a strong accountability system from the district office for monitoring and managing the turnaround process. The assignment of a turnaround director is being considered for the three schools. A turnaround director would also serve as the primary interface between the schools and the district regarding the turnaround process to assure timely and quick attention to turnaround issues. The district sees the grant requirements as an opportunity to make a great leap forward in each of these areas in cooperation with the union.

The district recognizes the level of instruction is not consistently high and there have been contractual limitations on directing teacher professional development. Performance emphasis on instruction and learning leadership for principals, and on a more modern and comprehensive teacher competency model, is in need of improvement. The district has recently created a leadership development position and is in the process of creating a leadership program. This work is in concert with the Center for Educational Leadership at the University of Washington.

The district initiated development of a new performance management process a year ago in partnership with the union. Building of the Framework for Teaching (Danielson), the team has identified a new set of competencies and is nearly in the pilot process. The model is intended to drive professional growth and development and includes a more expansive rubric for identifying where a teacher's skill level lies between undeveloped and outstanding. The schools identified in the grant provide a unique opportunity to pilot the model for eventual application district-wide.

Under the grant, the district's objective is to avoid the sustainment issue, by identifying and seeking out those professional development initiatives that will be self-sustaining. One example is creating a stronger and more directed professional learning community (PLC) environment. Currently, PLCs are not subject to a rigid protocol. Initially teachers would be compensated for additional time invested in PLCs, but would eventually embrace the practice and essence of PLCs in their normal planning activities. The district is in the developmental stages of the data warehouse and needs to move quickly to allow teachers access to the information that will inform and guide instruction and provide the basis for measuring student growth. The union supports a student growth model (utilizing the Colorado Growth Model) in which students are compared to other students who enter at the same level (e.g., students are not compared at grade-level per se, but rather at performance level and resulting growth.)

The district is one year into the development and implementation of a district-wide accountability system. The system defines what is to be accomplished, how it will be measured, what tools will be used to track progress, and the consequences of failing to make progress. Each school and each central office has a scorecard on progress, and quarterly meetings are used to review progress using a red, yellow, green rubric. The school level scorecard is used to drive differentiated support from the district. The superintendent visits schools in improvement on a monthly basis to follow-up on "to do's" from the previous month and set new "to do's" for the upcoming month.

School and Classroom Level Findings

Using data collected through the School and Classroom Practices Study, team members reached consensus on scoring decisions for 19 Indicators organized around the *Nine Characteristics of High Performing Schools*. Each Indicator was scored using a rubric along a continuum of four

levels that describe the degree to which a school is effectively implementing the Indicator. The four levels are:

4 – Leads to continuous improvement and institutionalization (meets criteria in column 3 on this indicator plus additional elements)
3 – Leads to effective implementation
2 – Initial, beginning, developing
1 – Minimal, absent, or ineffective

Indicators with a score of a 3 or above represent strengths in the school, whereas Indicators with a score of 2 or below warrant attention. Recommendations in this report do not address each Indicator, but instead focus on a few priority areas. School and district staff members should review this report and accompanying recommendations with the realization they are based on a snapshot in time, and some school improvement efforts may already be underway but were just not evident. The school plan should be developed or revised to select, to implement, and to monitor the recommendations deemed most appropriate and critical to improving student achievement.

Table 1 includes rubric scores for all the Indicators.

Table 1

Indicator Scores for the Nine Characteristics of High Performing Schools

Indicators	Rubric Score
Clear and Shared Focus	
Core Purpose – Student Learning	3
High Standards and Expectations for All Students	
Academic Focus	3
Rigorous Teaching and Learning	2
Effective School Leadership	
Attributes of Effective School Leaders	2
Capacity Building	2
Distributed Leadership	3
High Levels of Collaboration and Communication	
Collaboration	2
Communication	2
Curriculum, Assessments, and Instruction Aligned with State Standards	
Curriculum	2
Instruction	2
Assessment	3
Frequent Monitoring of Teaching and Learning	
Supporting Students in Need	2
Focused Professional Development	
Planning and Implementation	2
Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	2
Supportive Learning Environment	
Safe and Orderly Environment	2
Building Relationships	2
Personalized Learning for All Students	2
High Levels of Family and Community Involvement	
Family Communication	2
Family and Community Partnerships	3

Clear and Shared Focus

Everyone knows where they are going and why. The focus is on achieving a shared vision, and all understand their role in achieving the vision. The focus and vision are developed from common beliefs and values, creating a consistent direction for all involved.

Indicators	Rubric Score
Clear and Shared Focus	
Core Purpose – Student Learning	3

Core Purpose – Student Learning. The mission statement at West Seattle Elementary School includes a focus on student learning through rigorous curriculum, community engagement, and staff empowerment through collaborative, data driven instruction. The mission is revisited and refined every year by the Building Leadership Team (BLT). Parents and students in focus groups agreed that the school is focused on student learning. As one parent put it, "We brought [our kids] back to Seattle schools because they were more focused on the academics, especially here at West Seattle ES. It pushed my children to strive." The school improvement plan includes specific activities that support the school's mission and vision. "The vision/mission is more of a global picture and the school improvement plan puts in place specific areas of focus and steps to do that," said one staff member. Resources (including support for a full time coach in reading and math, and collaborative time for data and grade level teams) appear to be generally aligned with school improvement goals which this year includes a focus on math. "We've prioritized [math data teams] as a professional development expenditure. That was part of looking at resources to make sure we were using them to impact learning," said the principal.

High Standards and Expectations for All Students

Teachers and staff believe that all students can learn and meet high standards. While recognizing that some students must overcome significant barriers, these obstacles are not seen as insurmountable. All students are offered an ambitious and rigorous course of study.

Indicators	Rubric Score
High Standards and Expectations for All Students	
Academic Focus	3
Rigorous Teaching and Learning	2

Academic focus. Most staff members at West Seattle ES are familiar with state standards and grade level expectations and use them to plan lessons. The Spectrum program is available for high achieving students who qualify. There is also a concerted effort to focus on data in collaborative groups and use it to set academic goals for students. "There are grade level team meetings monthly and data shares three times a year where we're looking at data and setting smart goals to move the majority of students into a different tier of learning," said one teacher. Staff members work to encourage students to reach standard. Parents believe that their children are pushed to improve. "A child can get comfortable and drop a couple of levels but they make sure they're pushing forward," said one parent.

Rigorous teaching and learning. West Seattle staff members report that they struggle with rigorous teaching and learning because of the widely divergent learning levels of students in their classrooms. As one teacher explained, "Everyone has to have that conversation with themselves as to 'ok I need to focus on these lower level skills for these students and at the same time put out really challenging questions for this other group of students. I think that's something teachers battle with on a daily basis and I think that's a place where we could use some help." According to classroom observations, only 38% of classrooms at West Seattle ES showed evidence of powerful teaching and learning. According to the STAR Classroom Observation Protocol™ report, West Seattle's scores on the five essential components (scores of 3 and 4 combined) were: *Skills* (85%), *Knowledge* (62%), *Thinking* (38%), Application (23%), and Relationships (84%). Thus, while *Skills* and *Relationships* are strengths for West Seattle, *Knowledge, Thinking,* and *Application* are areas that need attention.

Effective School Leadership

Effective instructional and administrative leadership is required to implement change processes. Effective leaders are proactive and seek help that is needed. They also nurture an instructional program and school culture conducive to learning and professional growth. Effective leaders have different styles and roles. Teachers and other staff, including those in the district office, often have a leadership role.

Indicators	Rubric Score
Effective School Leadership	
Attributes of Effective School Leaders	2
Capacity Building	2
Distributed Leadership	3

Attributes of effective school leaders. The principal at West Seattle has been at the school for several years and is well liked. Staff and parents report that they feel she is accessible. She knows parents and kids by name and is visible in the hallways and before and after school. The principal monitors programs and instruction through formal observations, goal setting conversations and informal walk throughs in classrooms (although these last don't happen as often as she would like this year). She works collaboratively with the Head Teacher to monitor collaborative groups and teachers are asked to work through tasks (submit unit plans, assessments, strategies) and submit them. Staff report that there has not been consistent follow-through with some of these accountability measures. "This is a high needs school and she's focusing on a lot of things so there hasn't been that consistency partly because of that. If there was follow through, I think it could be really effective," said one person.

Capacity building. West Seattle has two full times coaches for reading and math who assist with professional development and job embedded capacity building for teachers, although the reading coach is limited contractually to working primarily with K-3rd grade teachers. Resources are allocated to support data collection and analysis and collaborative processes that help teachers build their skills. One teacher explained, "For me I feel it's very helpful, not only the trainings but also collaboration with other staff members helps me to build on what I'm lacking." While data analysis seems to be firmly in place and staff members are in the process of building their skills in that area, other elements of capacity building such as peer observations are only just being organized and will take time although the principal is focused on moving in this direction. "My next step is to help them figure out how to be in each other's classrooms and observe lessons and talk about them. I remind myself that those teams don't happen without needing to learn to do them together." Teachers are taking some responsibility for leading professional development in their grade level teams which also helps to incorporate and provide training for new staff members.

Distributed leadership. West Seattle ES uses a team based decision making model. There is a building leadership team (BLT) made up of representatives from all grades, specialists, coaches and counselors, that serves as a recommendation-making group. Staff input it sought through staff meetings and data teams and grade level bands also bring recommendations to BLT meetings for discussion. "I work to make decisions by consensus as much as possible," said the principal. Decisions about professional development tend to be made by the BLT and instructional decisions are made by data or grade level teams. A student council was formed last year and its efforts are focused on planning school wide activities and considering ways to improve student behavior.

High Levels of Collaboration and Communication

There is strong teamwork across all grades and with other staff. Everybody is involved and connected to each other, including parents and members of the community to identify problems and work on solutions.

Indicators	Rubric Score
High Levels of Collaboration and Communication	
Collaboration	2
Communication	2

Collaboration. Teachers at West Seattle ES collaborate in a variety of ways. Grade level teams meet monthly and data teams in various subject areas meet three times per year to discuss student performance and set goals. The principal has been intentional about building in staff collaboration skills that support instruction. "When I came here people really liked and supported each other but I would not call it collaborative which is about the business of teaching and instruction and how are we supporting that with each other," said the principal. Building collaboration has been made more difficult this year because approximately 50% of staff is new to the school and the principal has had to find ways to bring new teachers into the process. Several collaborative teams are working on unit curriculum maps and common assessments.

Communication. Staff members at West Seattle have ready access to student data including assessments, attendance, grades, and assignments through data teams. Parents are kept informed of their children's progress through phone calls, emails, and letters. Parents report that communications from the school have increased this year. There is a website where parents can check student grades and assignments but parents report that the site is not regularly updated and is "hit or miss." Translation services are available for parents who do not speak English.

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessments Aligned with State Standards

The planned and actual curriculums are aligned with the Essential Academic Learning Requirements and Grade level Expectations. Research-based teaching strategies and materials are used. Staff understands the role of classroom and state assessments, what the assessments measure, and how student work is evaluated.

Indicators	Rubric Score
Curriculum, Assessments, and Instruction Aligned with State Standards	
Curriculum	2
Instruction	2
Assessment	3

Curriculum. Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs), and Grade Level Expectations (GLEs) guide lesson planning and teaching at West Seattle ES. As one teacher explained, "We'll go over the standard that we should be teaching and pick the lessons. Sometimes we'll leave lessons out or spend an extra day or two if students need it. It's easier to work with standards first." This holds true for special education teachers as well as those who teach core curriculum. West Seattle uses Reading First curriculum in K-3, and Everyday Math K-5. The Walk to Read curriculum supports differentiation for all students in reading. All of these curricula are aligned to standards. The curriculum is horizontally aligned through grade level team meetings and vertically aligned although with some gaps when the curriculum changes (as between 3rd and 4th grade in reading) or when there is no curriculum (writing). Some teachers will be trained on the Writers Workshop curriculum although that has not happened yet. Of concern to many is that the school will lose its Reading First grant next year, which has supplied an extra teacher, instructional aide, and reading coach. It is unclear whether the school has made provisions for this change. In addition, while math is a specific focus for the school this year, it has not had the support of a grant funded program such as Reading First to drive improvement.

Instruction. Although staff members at West Seattle ES spend a lot of time looking at student data and setting goals for instruction, there is no shared instructional framework. There is a school wide focus on differentiation and attention to learning styles this year. Teachers report that they use grouping, leveled readers, extra one-on-one help from instructional aides and optional assignments to assist in differentiating for students' levels. They also report that differentiating in math is more difficult since there is no specific curriculum in math that groups students by ability, such as the Walk to Read program does for reading. Classroom observations show that in 46% of classrooms students experienced instructional approaches that are adapted to meet the needs of diverse learners. In addition, observers found that students were working collaboratively in 36% of classrooms, students were asked to demonstrate effective thinking processes in 46% of classrooms, and teachers were using a variety of higher level questioning skills in only 38% of classrooms.

Assessment. At some grade levels, West Seattle staff members create and administer common assessments and use this data to monitor student achievement and modify their practice. Other data collected includes the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL), Diagnostic Reading Assessment (DRA), DIBELS, district math assessment, curriculum and classroom based assessments. The school will be adding MAPS data next year to further refine their understanding of student learning. There is frequent progress monitoring, including

biweekly monitoring for students not meeting benchmark. Data teams look at all of the data to assess whether changes need to be made. “[Data teams] meet and look at the overall picture which helps us look at what we’re teaching, do we need to be focusing on certain strands, and identify students who need help,” explained one staff member.

Frequent Monitoring of Learning and Teaching

A steady cycle of different assessments identify students who need help. More support and instructional time are provided, either during the school day or outside normal school hours, to students who need more help. Teaching is adjusted based on frequent monitoring of student progress and needs. Assessment results are used to focus and improve instructional programs.

Indicators	Rubric Score
Frequent Monitoring of Teaching and Learning	
Supporting Students in Need	2

Supporting students in need. Student data analysis and monitoring are a regular and ongoing focus at West Seattle ES. Data teams, assessments, frequent progress monitoring for students who aren't reaching benchmark, Walk to Read groupings and IEPs for special education students all assure that students in need are identified and supported. After school tutoring is provided by teachers and by outside organizations. There is no intervention specialist but there is a Student Intervention Team (SIT) run by the school counselor that meets weekly to consider students who are having ongoing academic or behavior issues. Students are recommended for consideration by the SIT by teachers or another adult. Meetings involve the counselor, family support specialist, teachers, parents, the student and administrators. The SIT examines academic assessments, report cards, attendance, previous interventions, health information and family history. Translators are provided if necessary. "We'll take a look at that child's strengths and areas of growth and it might lead to certain interventions or contracts or placement in an after school program. If we need to do a follow up, we'll do that," explained an administrator. One difficulty with the SIT process noted by staff members is the ability to coordinate and follow up on decisions and actions taken by the SIT. These sometimes are not attended to because of the many other issues on everyone's plate. "The difficulty is always being able to coordinate and follow-up. I would say that's our weakest point," explained one staff member. "It would be very helpful to have an intervention specialist with their role being that follow-up piece."

Focused Professional Development

A strong emphasis is placed on training staff in areas of most need. Feedback from learning and teaching focused extensive and ongoing professional development. The support is also aligned with the school or district vision and objectives.

Indicators	Rubric Score
Focused Professional Development	
Planning and Implementation	2
Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	2

Planning and implementation. West Seattle ES staff participates in a variety of professional development workshops that are based on the curriculum they are using, including Reading First and Everyday Math workshops. In previous years the staff has also had training in Positive Discipline, the discipline program that the school has adopted to structure teacher response to student behavior. The Building Leadership Team (BLT) meets during the summer to analyze WASL and other data and determine professional development needs. Data and grade level teams also suggest professional development needs. However, there is no professional development calendar established at the beginning of the year and as a result, some staff feel that there is not a deliberate approach to professional development at West Seattle ES. "In the best case scenario BLT would like to see ourselves putting [long range planning for] professional development into place but with everything else that comes up, it doesn't turn out that way," explained one staff member.

Curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Staff members appreciate the professional development they do get and find the Reading First and Positive Discipline trainings especially useful. The trainings are relevant, and in the case of Reading First, include job embedded coaching with a full time Reading First coach for K-3rd grades. One difficulty for the school is that 4th and 5th grades cannot be coached by the Reading First coach and thus receive less assistance. The school has also hired a full time math coach who also works with teachers, particularly in data teams, and focuses on differentiation and engagement in math lessons. There has been some small success with 4th and 5th grades in group students and running different activities that support the same concept in math. Several teachers mentioned a desire for a "Walk to Math" program similar to the Walk to Read program that would provide them with a differentiated curriculum but the school as a whole is not considering that at this time. Another difficulty for the school in relation to professional development is that 50% of the teachers are new to the school and have not had the training in Reading First, Everyday Math or Positive Discipline that others have had. Most teachers feel that refresher courses in all of these trainings would be worthwhile to get all teachers on the same page. "When we started [these programs] we had a lot of training but that was a few years ago and we've continually added new staff and new children," said one person.

Supportive Learning Environment

The school has a safe, civil, healthy, and intellectually stimulating learning environment. Students feel respected and connected with the staff and are engaged in learning. Instruction is personalized and small learning environments increase student contact with teachers.

Indicators	Rubric Score
Supportive Learning Environment	
Safe and Orderly Environment	2
Building Relationships	2
Personalized Learning for All Students	2

Safe and orderly environment. West Seattle ES's physical plant is clean, orderly and kid friendly with murals on the walls and a fish tank in the hallway. With the influx of students in recent years, the building is now at capacity however. The playground is crowded and teachers report that there is no extra space. Many teachers have been trained in the Positive Discipline program that develops practices that build community and solve behavior problems. The program builds social skills and emphasizes the importance of teacher-student relationships. In addition, the school has added a program for students that focuses on respect. Each grade level focuses on an attribute of respect and student are rewarded at assemblies for showing evidence of respect. The counselor also runs sessions on Steps to Respect and Roots of Empathy that are designed to have students reflect on their behavior and develop relationships with each other and their teachers. In spite of these efforts, students reported some concerns about safety, discipline, and respect, noting that fighting among students happens not infrequently and is something they would like to see changed. "I'd like to change all the fighting and bad behavior and how the class acts when it's not a good day," said one student. Observers noted that in almost every classroom discipline issues disrupted the learning of others in spite of all of the programs in place to address these issues. Some staff members suggested that perhaps not all teachers were using the program or using it with fidelity because so many were new and had not received the training. Others noted that they themselves could use a refresher course and would like coaching to improve their ability to implement the curriculum. "I think because we do have new staff, we need to have training as a whole staff and get on board with that as a whole staff," said one teacher.

Building relationships. Most adults at West Seattle ES work to build relationships with their students. The atmosphere in the school is generally friendly although staff have noticed a slight tendency to back away from relationships with each other this year that seems uncharacteristic and may be a function of the influx of new staff and the need to reestablish relationships with each other. There are positive interactions among the different cultural groups represented at the school and special education students who are mainstreamed have been taken under students' wings and cared for. Difficulties with an unruly 5th grade class and the loss of the 5th grade teacher have caused ripples throughout the school but this situation is being addressed and both administrators believe positive change has happened in the last month in that area. "That crazy 5th grade situation was running the place in a negative way. Now that that is getting under control with the new substitute teacher, the whole feeling of the place is better," explained one staff member. Administrators maintain an open door policy although feedback systems are primarily informal apart from an annual climate survey once a year. The principal is accessible although some staff do not always feel she responds to their needs or suggestions.

Personalized learning for all students. Learning is personalized for all students at West Seattle ES. There is positive reinforcement for good behavior through classroom and school wide awards and the attention to data described throughout this report ensures that students are monitored and supported and do not fall through the cracks. There is no transition program in place.

High Level of Family and Community Involvement

There is a sense that all have a responsibility to educate students, not just the teachers and staff in schools. Families, as well as businesses, social service agencies, and community colleges/universities all play a vital role in this effort.

Indicators	Rubric Score
High Levels of Family and Community Involvement	
Family Communication	2
Family and Community Partnerships	3

Family communication. Part of West Seattle ES's mission is to increase family and community engagement with the school and staff members work hard to make this happen. There is regular communication with parents through phone calls, emails, automated announcements, and parent conferences that happen two times per year. Parents are welcome to visit the school and some parents volunteer in the classrooms. Parents in focus groups noted that the number of parent volunteers has risen this year. The school also employs a part time family partnership specialist who helps to address family issues such as housing, food, and basic needs that interfere with student attendance and learning at school. There is no PTA and the principal explained that the school is "still trying to figure out access points to reach parents," in this particular population. The school hosts Family First dinners, family math nights, curriculum nights, and offers tours of the school. Parents say they feel welcome. "I'm always comfortable walking into the office to talk to the front desk or talk to the principal," said one parent. "I feel welcome and the children feel welcome. They know they're cared for. It helps a lot when they know they're cared for," said another parent.

Family and community partnerships. West Seattle ES has several grants and ongoing partnerships with organizations in the surrounding community such as Neighborhood House which runs workshops helping student with math homework, the Community Learning Center that provides tutoring and a recreation program, and SES tutoring. Community volunteers have adopted the 5th grade class and are assisting with small group work in that class.

Summary and Recommendations

The district is committed to a turnaround or transformation model. The district also enjoys exceptionally strong union support, which has voted its preference for the **transformation model**. The district has very solid foundations in place to adopt the initiatives contemplated under the model, has sufficient size and staff to orchestrate the teacher and administrator staff changes necessary for adoption of the model, and has already made dramatic progress in moving towards model adoption on the assumption of grant approval.

West Seattle Elementary School staff members have experienced high turnover in teaching staff and a large increase in student enrollment over the past three or four years. However, there is evidence of attention to each of the *Nine Characteristics of High Performing Schools*. While most of these characteristics are currently in the "Initial, beginning, developing" stage, the staff is clearly aware of the difficulties and is laying a foundation for growth in many of these areas, and many of the intervention strategies included within the transformation model have already begun to be implemented. West Seattle ES has provided their staff with ongoing, job-embedded professional development through the use of coaches. An instructional program has been implemented to improve math and reading by paying attention to data and using it to develop targeted and differentiated lesson plans. Additionally, collaborative planning time has been put into place for all grade levels to allow teachers to share their instructional practice and learn from each other. WSES personnel are willing to work hard to improve effectiveness in their profession.

The results of this study suggest there are a few areas that would benefit from additional attention. The recommendations represent the most critical areas to move forward in with a school improvement grant:

- **Provide ongoing professional development and coaching for instructional leaders and classroom teachers in effective classroom practices.** The high staff turnover at WSES has resulted in a less cohesive staff that does not necessarily implement the school's chosen curriculum with fidelity or common intent. We recommend that staff members engage in "refresher" workshops in the curriculum and continue to focus on instruction in a manner that draws from research-based approaches and strongly emphasizes rigorous teaching and learning. A professional development calendar should be established at the beginning of every year to better align PD with the school's mission, vision, and SIP.

- **Provide training for classroom walk-through process and data collection.** The administrator currently conducts classroom walk-throughs, but this practice does not occur on a regular basis. Administrators should have time and training to conduct walk-throughs and to share the information with the staff in reflective meetings

- **Re-establish a school-wide Positive Behavior Intervention system.** Although staff members have implemented a behavior program, they have not implemented it with fidelity and the influx of new staff members have not been trained in the program's use. New staff and the counselor have implemented competing behavior and discipline programs, leading to lack of clarity of purpose, and a scattered approach to discipline.

- **Establish a school-wide Response to Intervention system.** Staff members created a Student Intervention Team to look at data and assist in determining

interventions for students. However, there has not been as much follow through on the decisions.

- **Consider ways to support the progress made through Reading First when the grant ends next year.** Reading First has had a powerful effect on student learning and teacher practice. With the grant ending next year, WSES needs to consider how it will sustain the work that has already been done without the resources of the grant and how it will built on the work already done to further strengthen the reading curriculum at all grade levels.

Appendix

Scoring of the conditions under each model as **"In Place"** or **"Able to Put in Place"** is based on:

(1) The condition for the model does not currently exist and essential pieces for implementing the condition do not exist (e.g., policies, procedures, collective bargaining language, and programs or processes are not in place). This scoring level does not mean that the condition cannot be implemented; but rather that implementation will be more demanding, require more extensive engagement of all parties, and require greater external support and assistance.

(2) Essential pieces to implement the condition exist (e.g., no significant barriers are contained in the current collective bargaining agreement, existing programs lend themselves to adaption). The condition can be implemented at an acceptable level with some support and assistance.

(3) The condition is currently in place at an acceptable level.

(4) The condition is currently in place at a high level and could be considered as an exemplar.

Note: Rows shaded in blue are conditions that are primarily dependent upon the input of the school and district as opposed to the external assessment.

"X" Required "O" Permissible

Actions				
Teachers and Leaders	**Turn Around**	**Trans-form**	**In Place or Able to Put in Place**	**Comment**
Replace the principal.	**X**	**X(O)**	**3**	The district has changed two of the three administrators in the last year within a turnaround framework and has notified the third administrator of the need to change assignments.
Use locally adopted competencies to measure effectiveness of staff who can work in a turnaround environment; use to screen existing and select new staff.	**X**		**3**	The district has gained, on the assumption of grant approval, the agreement of the association to support turnaround competencies through its site-based process in selecting teachers for the schools.
Screen all existing staff, rehiring no more than 50% of the school staff.	**X**	**O**	**2**	The district and the association have agreed to use the transformation model.
Implement such strategies as financial incentives and career ladders for recruiting, placing, and retaining effective teachers.	**X**	**X**	**2**	The district has a large base (3500 teachers) to select from, and is also open and receptive to assistance in changing the recruiting model and strategies as necessary to attract hightly qualified candidates particularly in hard-to-fill areas.
Implement rigorous, transparent, and equitable evaluation systems for teachers and principals which are developed with staff and use student growth as a significant factor.	**X**	**X**	**3**	The district still uses the minimal competency model in the RCW but has completed a year-long joint effort at developing a new model. The current intent is to apply the new model to the low achieving schools and use that effort to adjust and finalize the model for district-wide application.

Teachers and Leaders -continued-	Turn Around	Trans-form	In Place or Able to Put in Place	Comment
Identify and reward school leaders who have increased student achievement and graduation rates Identify and reward school leaders who have increased student achievement and graduation rates; Identify and remove school leaders and teachers who, after ample opportunities to improve professional practice have not done so.	**O**	**X**	**2**	There are no inhibitors in the CBA to effective accountability or to rewards for student achievement. The intent is to use "building based" gains as the means of assessment. Specific plans and details remain to be developed and agreed to.
Provide additional incentives to attract and retain staff with skills necessary to meet the needs of the students (e.g., bonus to a cohort of high-performing teachers placed in a low-achieving school).	**O**	**O**		**To be determined by district.**
Ensure school is not required to accept a teacher without mutual consent of the teacher and principal regardless of teacher's seniority.	**O**	**O**	**3**	The current collective bargaining agreement does require a site-based process for teacher screening and selection, but does not constrain the process by a rigid set of selection criteria in the collective bargaining agreement. The superintendent has already introduced grant responsive criteria for principal selection.

Instructional and Support Strategies	Turn Around	Trans-form	In Place or Able to Put in Place	Comment
Use data to select and implement an instructional program that is research-based and vertically aligned to each grade and state standards.	X	X	3	Data is systematically collected and analyzed and is being used to discuss and modify instruction.
Provide staff ongoing, high quality, job-embedded professional development aligned with the school's comprehensive instructional program and designed with school staff.	X	X	2	A systemic method of analyzing and planning for professional development across all teacher competencies would enhance professional development especially in the areas of personal and professional growth. Progress on a new evaluation model gives the district an advance start on introducing an integrated competency, evaluation and professional development and growth model.
Ensure continuous use of data (e.g., formative, interim, and summative assignments) to inform and differentiate instruction to meet the academic needs of individual students.	X	X	2	This is a distinct focus for the school and teachers. Supports for differentiation in reading are strong. Differentiation in math is still a struggle although a few grade levels are having some success.
Institute a system for measuring changes in instructional practices resulting from professional development.	O	O	1	A systemic method of evaluating the impact of professional development on classroom instruction does not currently exists and would have to be developed concurrent with introduction of a new competency based evaluation model.
Conduct periodic reviews to ensure the curriculum is implemented with fidelity, having intended impact on student achievement, and modified if ineffective.	O	O	2	The district's right to require teachers to apply district approved curriculum and instructional guidelines in not compromised in the collective bargaining agreement.

Instructional and Support Strategies – continued-	Turn Around	Trans-form	In Place or Able to Put In Place	Comment
Implement a school-wide response to intervention model.	O	O	2	With the school's focus on data, the addition of a response to intervention model should not be too great a leap.
Provide additional supports and professional development to teachers to support students with disabilities and limited English proficient students.	O	O	2	Some special education students are already mainstreamed. Teachers already work in collaborative groups with special education teachers.
Use and integrate technology-based supports and interventions as part of the instructional program.	O	O		**To be determined by the district.**
Secondary Schools: Increase graduation rates through strategies such as credit recovery programs, smaller learning communities, etc.	O	O		**N/A**
Secondary Schools: Increase rigor in coursework, offer opportunities for advanced courses, and provide supports designed to ensure low-achieving students can take advantage of these programs and coursework.	O	O		**N/A**
Secondary Schools: Improve student transition from middle to high school.	O	O		**N/A**
Secondary Schools: Establish early warning systems.	O	O		**N/A**

Learning Time and Support	Turn Around	Trans-form	In Place or Able to Put in Place	Comment
Establish schedules and strategies that provide increased learning time. Increased learning time includes longer school day, week, or year to increase total number of school hours.	**X**	**X**	**2**	Collective bargaining agreements would be required to implement increased learning time proposals and provide for associated professional development and collaboration (e.g., PLC) time to support and enhance the increased learning time. The association has stated its commitment to support the change dependent upon teacher and association continued involvement.
Provide appropriate social-emotional and community-oriented services and support for students.	**X**	**O**	**2**	Family support specialist (part time) works to provide all of these services. School would like an intervention specialist to assist with Student Intervention Team coordination and follow-up.
Provide ongoing mechanisms for family and community engagement.	**O**	**X**	**2**	Many opportunities in place. Could improve online access and address lack of interest in PTA.
Extend or restructure the school day to add time for such strategies as advisories to build relationships.	**O**	**O**	**2**	Morning and class meetings already part of current discipline program but tightly scripted and not used school wide.
Implement approaches to improve school climate and discipline.	**O**	**O**	**2**	Staff need refresher and retraining on discipline program and agreement on its use school wide.
Expand program to offer pre-kindergarten or full day kindergarten.	**O**	**O**		**N/A**

Governance	Turn Around	Trans-form	In Place or Able to Put In Place	Comment
Adopt a new governance structure to address turnaround schools; district may hire a chief turnaround officer to report directly to the superintendent.	**X**	**O**	**3**	The district has a strong site-based model, is envisioning adding a turnaround specialist, and has recently developed a comprehensive and strategic means of monitoring and managing accountability at the school and department level.
Grant sufficient operational flexibility (e.g., staffing, calendar, budget) to implement fully a comprehensive approach to substantially improve student achievement and increase high school graduation rates.	**X Principal**	**X School**	**3**	There are no significant contractual limitations to granting greater governance flexibility. A site-based process currently exists that provides the foundation for greater flexibility.
Ensure school receives intensive ongoing support from district, state, or external partners.	**O**	**X**	**4**	The district leadership has the skills to support the turnaround model and the associated human resource management responsibilities of administrators. The district staff, including the HR office, enjoys credibility with school and district office administrators and is able to influence building level programs and operations.
Allow the school to be run under a new governance agreement, such as a turnaround division within the district or state.	**O**	**O**		**To be determined by the district.**
Implement a per-pupil school based budget formula that is weighted based on student needs.	**O**	**O**		**To be determined by the district.**

School Closure Model	Yes	No	Comment
Other schools exist (with capacity).		X	The district has very little capacity to close schools.