



# SREB

*MAKING  
MIDDLE GRADES  
WORK*

## Establishing Benchmarks of Progress for Middle Grades Sites

**Updated in  
2005–2006**

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Education  
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SREB's school improvement initiatives are supported by state consortia, the U.S. Department of Education, the Mott Foundation and Middle Grades Consortium.

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## VISION

Schools that become part of the *Making Middle Grades Work* network are expected to use the middle grades comprehensive improvement framework to show progress in changing school and classroom practices in ways that advance student achievement.

True school reform is not a quick process. It is a continuous effort to make purposeful and planned changes in school and classroom practices that result in a steady rise in student achievement. States and SREB expect all schools to show consistent progress until the comprehensive improvement framework is fully implemented with all students performing at the Basic level and with increasing percentages of students performing at the Proficient and Advanced levels in reading, mathematics and science.

## Expectations of *Making Middle Grades Work* Sites

- 1 Get faculty agreement to use the middle grades framework to accelerate student achievement.
- 2 Organize a school improvement committee composed of key academic and fine/related arts teachers, administrators, guidance counselors, parents and community representatives. Name subcommittees to address curriculum, instruction, guidance, evaluation, professional development and transitions.
- 3 Appoint a site coordinator to support continuous planning, professional development and technical assistance; coordinate data collection; monitor progress; foster communication; and integrate other school improvement efforts with the middle grades comprehensive improvement framework. The site coordinator should have sufficient time to carry out these duties.
- 4 Develop a three- to five-year improvement plan that includes specific actions that can be taken in year one. Submit the plan to SREB and the state coordinator for review 120 days after the site development workshop. SREB and states will review plans and make recommendations for adjustments as needed. This plan should be part of the overall school improvement plan and should include professional development.
- 5 Receive a Technical Assistance Visit every three years.
- 6 Participate in the biennial Middle Grades Assessment (student assessment and survey, teacher survey, principal survey and school data summary).
- 7 Submit annual progress reports to the state and to SREB.
- 8 Show significant progress toward fully implementing the middle grades comprehensive improvement framework.
- 9 Show evidence that the middle grades school is
  - improving student achievement on the Middle Grades Assessment and state assessments;
  - increasing the number of students completing algebra by the end of eighth grade;
  - increasing the number of students entering and passing college-preparatory-level classes in grade nine; and
  - reducing the number of students failing one or more classes in grade nine.
- 10 Become an active member of the middle grades network for sharing information and ideas.

## Understanding the Indicators for the *MMGW* Comprehensive Improvement Framework

The primary mission of *MMGW* is to create a culture of high expectations and continuous improvement that prepares middle grades students for challenging high school studies. There is room for improvement. On the 2005 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) eighth-grade assessment, 29 percent of students scored below Basic in reading; 32 percent scored below Basic in mathematics — these students are not prepared for challenging high school studies. To achieve its mission, *MMGW* has several goals. These include the following:

- Increase to 85 percent the percentages of students who meet the *MMGW* reading, mathematics and science performance goals on the Middle Grades Assessment, a NAEP-referenced exam.
- Increase the percentages of all students who perform at the Proficient level to at least 50 percent in reading, mathematics and science, as measured by the Middle Grades Assessment.
- Increase annually the percentages of middle grades students entering high school prepared to succeed in college-preparatory courses.
- Increase to 90 percent the percentages of middle grades students who transition into grade nine and complete high school four years later.
- Reduce the failure rate in grade nine by ensuring middle grades students receive the preparation they need to succeed in high school courses such as Algebra I and higher and college-preparatory English 9.
- Advance state and local policies and leadership initiatives that sustain a continuous school improvement effort.

*MMGW* believes middle grades schools will achieve these goals if they base their efforts on a comprehensive improvement framework of Key Practices and Key Conditions.

### *MMGW* Key Practices for Improving Student Achievement

School and classroom practices and student performance are more likely to change if they are aligned to a framework that facilitates and encourages comprehensive school improvement. The following are the *MMGW* Key Practices that provide direction and meaning to comprehensive improvement and to raising student achievement:

**An academic core that is aligned to what students must know, understand and be able to do to succeed in mathematics, science, college-preparatory English and social studies** — All students in the middle grades need an academic core curriculum that accelerates learning, challenges them and appeals to their interests.

- In *mathematics*, all students satisfactorily complete Algebra I or pass a pre-algebra test of proficiency and use algebra concepts to reason and solve problems.
- In *science*, all students use laboratory and technology experiences to learn fundamental concepts in the physical, life and earth/space sciences.
- *Reading* instruction is incorporated into all content areas in the academic core curriculum through grade eight.
- The *language arts curriculum* requires students to use language correctly and effectively; to find, organize and communicate information; to read the equivalent of 10 to 12 books of various types, raising the bar annually over the next two years to reach the 25-book level; and to write one or more major research papers.
- The *social studies curriculum* engages students to learn about their heritage, their government, their world and economic principles through key issues of the past, present and future.

**A belief that all students matter** — Ensure each student develops a personal relationship with a continuous mentor — an adult who takes an interest in his or her successful learning, goal-setting, course selection, educational planning, review of progress and personal growth. This individual, typically a teacher adviser, works with the student and his or her parents through the middle grades within a structured guidance and advisement system at the school. The guidance and advisement system ensures students complete accelerated programs of study.

**High expectations and a system of extra help and time** — Students learn in different ways and at different rates. Schools invest the time and extra help middle grades students require to meet the rigorous, consistent standards of high expectations. Schools provide a structured system of instruction and extra help that

- supports all students to become self-directed learners by building into their learning experiences opportunities to practice habits of successful learners — effective study and literacy skills, time management and learning with others;
- gives students easy access to opportunities to meet and exceed course standards and advance with their peers;
- ensures students know what is required for A- and B-level work;<sup>1</sup>
- supports teachers in forming nurturing academic relationships with students to improve students' work and achievement; and
- supports teachers and school leaders in planning catch-up learning experiences for seventh- and eighth-graders identified as not being on course to be prepared for college-preparatory high school courses.

**Classroom practices that engage students** — Young adolescents need varied learning activities linked to challenging academic content and opportunities to use new skills and concepts in real-world applications. Further, middle grades teachers need to integrate reading, writing and speaking as strategies for learning into all parts of the curriculum. Academic and related arts teachers can engage students regularly by having them read books and articles, write, make presentations, and use high-level reasoning and thinking skills.

**Teachers working together** — Provide teams of teachers from several core disciplines time and support to work together to help students succeed in challenging academic and related arts studies.

Middle grades teachers need time to work together to

- align core academic courses to high school readiness standards, and align standards and classroom assignments, student work and assessments;
- integrate mathematics and literacy concepts and skills into assignments across the curriculum;
- examine student work; and
- develop and/or implement gear-up programs during the school year and summer for seventh- and eighth-graders needing accelerated instruction in mathematics, language arts and reading to be prepared for college-preparatory high school course work.

**Support from parents** — Parents must clearly understand and support higher standards for performance in the middle grades. Develop efforts to educate middle grades parents, school and teacher leaders, and students about the achievement level needed for challenging high school studies. Teacher advisers play a critical role in keeping parents engaged by arranging multiple conferences with students and their parents. Through these conferences:

- students and parents set clear goals that motivate students and enable them to see the relationships between their middle grades studies, high school studies and beyond;
- both the school and students' families know what will be necessary to assist students in taking challenging courses; and
- faculty, teacher advisers, students and parents can track progress and make changes as required.

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<sup>1</sup> Students earning an A demonstrate mastery over the subject matter and perform above grade level. These students are able to apply content and show competence in the analysis, synthesis and evaluation of content at grade-level standards. Students performing B-level work are at grade level and can apply content and occasionally synthesize and evaluate content.

**Qualified teachers** — Middle grades teachers must know academic content and how to teach middle grades students. To ensure that they do, teachers must be highly qualified.

- Middle grades teachers must have in-depth knowledge of their subject areas and of teaching strategies appropriate to challenge and engage them.
- Middle grades teachers lacking majors in their subject areas are supported by the district to acquire content expertise.
- The school and district employ teachers who have depth in their teaching fields and support them in learning how to teach well.

**Use of data** — States, districts and schools must continuously use data on student, school and teacher performance to review and revise school and classroom practices. A primary tool for assessing student achievement in the middle grades is the Middle Grades Assessment, which is referenced to NAEP proficiency standards in reading, mathematics and science and administered to eighth-graders. The Middle Grades Assessment also includes data from a survey of students, teachers and school personnel. These surveys provide information on the perceptions of these groups concerning school and classroom practices. Schools are expected to use data from their state assessments, end-of-course assessments and end-of-year assessments.

**Use of technology for learning** — Provide opportunities for middle grades students and teachers to explore and use technology for improving knowledge and skills in English/language arts, reading, mathematics, science, social studies and exploratory courses through the use of research-based instructional practices.

**Strong leadership** — Middle grades schools need strong, effective principals who encourage teachers and participate with them in planning and implementing research-based improvements, including aligning and benchmarking curricula to high school standards. Each school should have a leadership team consisting of the principal, assistant principal and teacher leaders.

## ***MMGW* Key Conditions for Accelerating Student Achievement**

*MMGW* believes that everyone — teachers, school leaders, district leaders, local and state leaders — in the educational hierarchy must work together to align policies, resources, initiatives and accountability efforts to support middle grades schools as they adopt and implement comprehensive school improvement designs.

A clear, functional mission statement defines the purpose of the middle grades school: to prepare students for challenging high school studies. A basic set of conditions guides the implementation of this mission statement. The set of *MMGW* Key Conditions includes the following:

- **Commitment:** State partners, the local school board, district leaders and the community commit to implement fully the comprehensive *MMGW* improvement framework.
- **Planning for continuous improvement:** District and school leaders create an organizational structure and process that ensures continuous involvement with faculty on what to teach; how to teach it; what students are expected to learn; how to assess what they have learned; and how district and school leaders support each other, the students, students' parents and the community.
- **Curriculum:** District leaders support and encourage a curriculum review and alignment that compares all curricula to state, national and international standards. As a result, a set of conditions and performance standards defines the quantity and quality of work expected at each grade level throughout the system.
- **Support for professional development:** District and school leaders provide leadership and financial support for professional development directly connected to academic standards and student achievement. Professional development includes support for teachers in the classroom as they implement teaching practices with demonstrated effectiveness.
- **Teacher preparation:** The local school board helps teachers without majors in their subject areas to upgrade their content knowledge through academic courses and hires new teachers with subject area majors that match their teaching assignments.

## HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

Schools should begin by developing leadership teams as outlined in the SREB site development guide publication *Developing Effective Leadership Teams — Implementing the High Schools That Work Improvement Design*. Refer to this document for more information on developing leadership teams. One overall leadership team, the School Improvement Leadership team, coordinates the site action plan and the activities of the individual leadership teams: curriculum, instruction, guidance, evaluation, professional development and transitions.

The School Improvement Leadership Team should assign the Evaluation Leadership Team ultimate responsibility for the completion and use of the following challenge containing indicators for the comprehensive *MMGW* framework. This document should be used to assist in documenting if student achievement has been improved and if goals have been met. The Evaluation Leadership Team should begin by compiling baseline data for this report. This team should then involve other school improvement teams in establishing benchmark goals for each two-year interval based on their area of concentration. The teams should work together to update the school improvement plan for accomplishing those goals and share the results with the whole faculty. The Evaluation Leadership Team will continually update this document and initiate review processes in which the other school improvement teams review the school's progress and evaluate and modify goals as necessary.

Indicators are based on items in the Middle Grades Assessment, Teacher Survey and school data. The source of data that can be used to establish goals and benchmarks of progress for each indicator is in the column labeled "data source."

## Determining Benchmarks of Progress

The goal for the SREB-State Middle Grades Consortium is for all students to perform at the Basic level with increasing percentages of students at the Proficient and Advanced levels of performance in reading, mathematics and science as defined by the Middle Grades Assessment. In 2002, SREB states adopted the following middle grades goal in *Goals for Education: Challenge to Lead*.

**SREB Goal: Achievement in the middle grades for all groups of students exceeds national averages and performance gaps are closed.**

Progress toward the goal is to be measured by four indicators:

- Achievement gaps in reading, mathematics and science are closed for all groups of middle grades students.
- Percentages of eighth-grade students who read 25 books or more across the curriculum increase annually.
- Percentages of all groups of students who successfully complete Algebra I by the end of the eighth grade increase annually.
- Percentages of students who complete written laboratory reports weekly on scientific investigations increase annually.

The *No Child Left Behind* Act of 2001 also sets a goal: All students must be proficient in reading, mathematics and science by 2014. Thus, to meet all three sets of goals for subject area performance, schools must use a continuous improvement process to set benchmarks between baseline values and short- and long-term goals. A realistic goal for subject area improvement is at least a 10 percent increase each year.

Schools will use a similar process to set goals for indicators found in the Middle Grades Assessment. Schools will set benchmarks of progress that represent roughly one-third of the difference between their baseline value and the recommended consortium goal for their fourth round of assessment (found in the column labeled "goal").

## Determining Interim Benchmarks in Your Effort to Meet the Six-year Goal

To achieve the six-year goal, schools should establish benchmarks on key indicators regarding changes to be made in school and classroom practices in even years. It is important to not only set goals but to also determine what actions must be taken by school leaders and teachers to meet those target goals. To determine certain benchmarks:

- Subtract your school’s baseline percentage from the six-year goal.
- Divide that total by three to get the change needed each year.
- Determine the goal for your next assessment year by adding one-third of the difference between the baseline and the target six-year goal.
- Repeat the process for the remaining intermediate years.

The following example uses 2004 as the baseline year with 2010 as the six-year goal.

*Example:*

Indicators	Data Source	Baseline	+ 2 Years	+ 4 Years	Six-year Goal
Students report that they <b>often</b> receive extra help when they need it without much difficulty.	MGA I	55%	65%	75%	85%

- Difference between Baseline (2004) and Six-year (2010) Goal:  $85\% - 55\% = 30\%$
- Change needed every two years  $30\% \div 3 = 10\%$
- Benchmark for 2006: (Baseline % + Growth %)  $55\% + 10\% = 65\%$
- Benchmark for 2008: (2006 Benchmark % + Growth %)  $65\% + 10\% = 75\%$
- Benchmark for 2010: (2008 Benchmark % + Growth %)  $75\% + 10\% = 85\%$

## Indicators for the Comprehensive *MMGW* Framework

### Meeting *MMGW* Performance Goals

- All students should perform at the Basic level with an increasing percentage of students performing at the Proficient and Advanced levels in reading, mathematics and science on the Middle Grades Assessment.

### Meeting *MMGW* Performance Goals

Source: Middle Grades Assessment Report

Indicators	Data Source <sup>1</sup>	Baseline	+ 2 Years	+ 4 Years	Six-year Goal
1. The percentage of students <b>meeting</b> the reading goal of 160.	MGA I				85%
2. The percentage of students <b>meeting</b> the mathematics goal of 160.	MGA I				85%
3. The percentage of students <b>meeting</b> the science goal of 161.	MGA I				85%

### Reaching *MMGW* Proficiency Levels

Source: Middle Grades Assessment Report

Indicators	Data Source	Baseline	+ 2 Years	+ 4 Years	Six-year Goal
4. The percentage of students <b>at or above the Basic level</b> in reading.	MGA I				100%
5. The percentage of students <b>at or above the Basic level</b> in mathematics.	MGA I				100%
6. The percentage of students <b>at or above the Basic level</b> in science.	MGA I				100%
7. The percentage of students <b>at or above the Proficient level</b> in reading.	MGA I				70%
8. The percentage of students <b>at or above the Proficient level</b> in mathematics.	MGA I				70%
9. The percentage of students <b>at or above the Proficient level</b> in science.	MGA I				70%

<sup>1</sup> MGA refers to the Student Survey section of the Middle Grades Assessment Report. MGA TS refers to the Teacher Survey section of the Middle Grades Assessment Report. The Roman numeral following these two sources refers to the report section that contains data for the listed indicator. Indices refer to the “Selected Clusters of Curriculum and Instructional Practices Associated with Student Achievement” that begins on page two of the Middle Grades Assessment Report. School Data refers to data collected within the school.

### Performance Gap Analysis: Reading

- Compare the percentage of students meeting the performance goal in various groups in the school to the goal of 85 percent to determine where performance gaps exist.
- Set goals to reduce gaps in performance by at least 10 percent each year until all groups of students meet the *MMGW* performance goal.
- Reading Performance Goal: 160

Indicators	Data Source	Baseline	+ 2 Years	+ 4 Years	Six-year Goal
Total Group	MGA II				85%
Males	MGA II				85%
Females	MGA II				85%
American Indian/Alaskan Native Students	MGA II				85%
Asian Students	MGA II				85%
Black/African-American Students	MGA II				85%
Latino/Hispanic Students	MGA II				85%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Students	MGA II				85%
White Students	MGA II				85%
Multiracial Students	MGA II				85%

Indicators	Observed Gap	Room for Improvement
Difference between male students and the goal of 85 percent		
Difference between female students and the goal of 85 percent		
Difference between minority students and the goal of 85 percent		
Difference between majority students and the goal of 85 percent		
Difference between highest performing group and the goal of 85 percent		
Difference between lowest performing group and the goal of 85 percent		

### Performance Gap Analysis: Mathematics

- Compare the percentage of students meeting the performance goal in various groups in the school to the goal of 85 percent to determine where performance gaps exist.
- Set goals to reduce gaps in performance by at least 10 percent each year until all groups of students meet the *MMGW* performance goal.
- Mathematics Performance Goal: 160

Indicators	Data Source	Baseline	+ 2 Years	+ 4 Years	Six-year Goal
Total Group	MGA II				85%
Males	MGA II				85%
Females	MGA II				85%
American Indian/Alaskan Native Students	MGA II				85%
Asian Students	MGA II				85%
Black/African-American Students	MGA II				85%
Latino/Hispanic Students	MGA II				85%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Students	MGA II				85%
White Students	MGA II				85%
Multiracial Students	MGA II				85%

Indicators	Observed Gap	Room for Improvement
Difference between male students and the goal of 85 percent		
Difference between female students and the goal of 85 percent		
Difference between minority students and the goal of 85 percent		
Difference between majority students and the goal of 85 percent		
Difference between highest performing group and the goal of 85 percent		
Difference between lowest performing group and the goal of 85 percent		

### Performance Gap Analysis: Science

- Compare the percentage of students meeting the performance goal in various groups in the school to the goal of 85 percent to determine where performance gaps exist.
- Set goals to reduce gaps in performance by at least 10 percent each year until all groups of students meet the *MMGW* performance goal.
- Science Performance Goal: 161

Indicators	Data Source	Baseline	+ 2 Years	+ 4 Years	Six-year Goal
Total Group	MGA II				85%
Males	MGA II				85%
Females	MGA II				85%
American Indian/Alaskan Native Students	MGA II				85%
Asian Students	MGA II				85%
Black/African-American Students	MGA II				85%
Latino/Hispanic Students	MGA II				85%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Students	MGA II				85%
White Students	MGA II				85%
Multiracial Students	MGA II				85%

Indicators	Observed Gap	Room for Improvement
Difference between male students and the goal of 85 percent		
Difference between female students and the goal of 85 percent		
Difference between minority students and the goal of 85 percent		
Difference between majority students and the goal of 85 percent		
Difference between highest performing group and the goal of 85 percent		
Difference between lowest performing group and the goal of 85 percent		

### Setting a Clear Mission and Vision of Success

- The school sends a consistent message to students, families and the community about what is expected of students, teachers and administrators.

#### Setting a Clear Mission and Vision of Success

Source: Middle Grades Assessment Report

Indicators	Data Source	Baseline	+ 2 Years	+ 4 Years	Six-year Goal
10. Teachers report that preparing almost all students with the academic knowledge and skills needed in college-preparatory English, mathematics and science courses in high school is a <b>very important goal</b> .	MGA TS I				70%
11. Teachers report making sure all students leave the eighth grade with the knowledge and skills necessary to be successful without remediation in a college-preparatory curriculum in the ninth grade is the <b>primary</b> mission for their school.	MGA TS I				70%
12. Teachers <b>strongly agree</b> the goals and priorities for their school are clear.	MGA TS I				85%
13. Teachers report they inform parents and students about the student's readiness to do challenging high school studies at least <b>once a semester</b> .	MGA TS I				85%
14. Teachers <b>strongly agree</b> that the surrounding community actively supports the school's instructional goals.	MGA TS V				60%
15. Teachers <b>strongly agree</b> that teachers in their school maintain a demanding yet supportive environment that pushes students to do their best.	MGA TS II				85%

## Emphasis on High Expectations and Extra Help

- The school expects high-quality work from all students and all students participate in challenging classes.
- The school uses a systematic approach to identify struggling students and provides extra help and assistance in multiple ways.

### High Expectations

Source: Middle Grades Assessment Report

Indicators	Data Source	Baseline	+ 2 Years	+ 4 Years	Six-year Goal
16. The percentage of student responses on eight indicators that suggest the school has an <b>intensive</b> emphasis on high expectations. (six to eight items)	Indices				85%
17. Students report that most of their teachers encourage them to do well in school <b>often</b> .	MGA IV				85%
18. Students report that their teachers set high standards for them and are willing to help them meet them <b>often</b> .	MGA IV				85%
19. Students report that teachers clearly indicate the amount and quality of work necessary to earn a grade of A or B at the beginning of a project or unit <b>often</b> .	MGA IV				85%
20. Students report that they revise their essays or other written work several times to improve their quality <b>often</b> .	MGA IV				85%
21. Students report that they work hard to meet high standards on assignments <b>often</b> .	MGA IV				85%
22. Students report that they spend <b>one hour or more</b> on homework each day.	MGA IV				85%
23. Students report that school and classroom rules are defined and clear <b>often</b> .	MGA VII				85%
24. Students report that they failed to complete or turn in assignments <b>never or rarely</b> .	MGA III				85%
25. Students report that they think it is important to study hard to get good grades.*	MGA VII				85%
26. Students report that they think it is important to participate actively in class.*	MGA VII				85%
27. Students report that their courses <b>seldom or never</b> repeat things that they have already learned.*	MGA VII				85%

\* This item is not included in the Selected Indices of Curriculum and Instructional Practices Associated with Student Achievement as reported beginning on page two of the Middle Grades Assessment Report but has been included here as it adds value to documenting school improvement efforts. This symbol will be used throughout this document to indicate such items.

**Extra Help**

Source: Middle Grades Assessment Report

Indicators	Data Source	Baseline	+ 2 Years	+ 4 Years	Six-year Goal
28. The percentage of student responses on five indicators that suggest the school has an <b>intensive</b> emphasis on providing quality extra help. (five items)	Indices				85%
29. Students report that their teachers care about them enough that they will not let them get by without doing the work <b>often</b> .	MGA IV				85%
30. Students report that they are able to get extra help from their teachers when they need it without much difficulty <b>often</b> .	MGA V				85%
31. Students report that their teachers and other adults at school are available before, during or after school to help them with their studies <b>a few times a week</b> .	MGA V				85%
32. Students report that the extra help they received at school helped them to understand their schoolwork better <b>sometimes or often</b> .	MGA V				85%
33. Students report that they tried harder on their schoolwork after receiving extra help <b>sometimes or often</b> .	MGA V				85%

## Emphasis on Rigorous and Challenging Academic Content

- All students in the middle grades should have content that accelerates their learning, challenges them and appeals to their interests.
- Improving reading and writing skills accelerates learning in all subject areas.

### Rigorous English/Language Arts Curriculum

Source: Middle Grades Assessment Report

Indicators	Data Source	Baseline	+ 2 Years	+ 4 Years	Six-year Goal
34. The percentage of student responses on four indicators that suggest the school has an <b>intensive</b> emphasis on a rigorous English/language arts curriculum. (three to four items)	Indices				85%
35. Students report taking advanced English/language arts classes.	MGA II				85%
36. Students report writing a major research paper (with footnotes and bibliography) on a subject they chose <b>once a semester or once a year</b> .	MGA II				85%
37. Students report completing short writing assignments of one to three pages for a grade in English classes <b>monthly or weekly</b> .	MGA II				85%
38. Students report reading <b>11 or more</b> books this year both in and out of school.	MGA II				85%

### Rigorous Mathematics Curriculum

Source: Middle Grades Assessment Report

Indicators	Data Source	Baseline	+ 2 Years	+ 4 Years	Six-year Goal
39. The percentage of students who report taking Algebra I or higher during the eighth grade. This indicator suggests the school has an <b>intensive</b> emphasis on a rigorous mathematics curriculum.	Indices				75%

**Rigorous Science Curriculum**  
**Source: Middle Grades Assessment Report**

Indicators	Data Source	Baseline	+ 2 Years	+ 4 Years	Six-year Goal
40. The percentage of student responses on 10 indicators that suggest the school has an <b>intensive</b> emphasis on a rigorous science curriculum. (eight to 10 items)	Indices				85%
41. Students report completing hands-on projects with living things in science.	MGA II				85%
42. Students report completing hands-on projects with chemistry in science.	MGA II				85%
43. Students report completing hands-on projects with simple machines in science.	MGA II				85%
44. Students report completing hands-on projects with the environment in science.	MGA II				85%
45. Students report using mathematics skills to solve problems in science <b>monthly or weekly</b> .	MGA II				85%
46. Students report that for laboratory investigations in science, they chose a topic for investigation <b>once a semester or once a year</b> .	MGA II				85%
47. Students report that for laboratory investigations in science, they designed an experiment about that topic <b>once a semester or once a year</b> .	MGA II				85%
48. Students report that for laboratory investigations in science, they prepared a written report of the lab results <b>once a semester or once a year</b> .	MGA II				85%
49. Students report that for laboratory investigations in science, they talked to the class about the lab results <b>once a semester or once a year</b> .	MGA II				85%
50. Students report taking integrated science this year.	MGA II				85%

## Emphasis on Engaging Students in Completing Challenging Content

- Teachers employ varied instructional strategies that engage students in challenging, complex assignments.
- Students experience frequent opportunities to apply skills and concepts to solve real-world problems.
- Exploring and using technology to deepen understanding engages students in active learning.

### Literacy Across Curriculum

Source: Middle Grades Assessment Report

Indicators	Data Source	Baseline	+ 2 Years	+ 4 Years	Six-year Goal
51. The percentage of student responses on eight indicators that suggest the school emphasizes literacy across the curriculum. (five to eight items)	Indices				85%
52. Students report making an oral presentation in English/language arts classes <b>once a semester or monthly</b> .	MGA II				85%
53. Students report spending <b>one hour or more</b> reading outside of school on a typical day.	MGA II				85%
54. Students report reading <b>11 or more</b> books this year both in and out of school.	MGA II				85%
55. Students report using word processing or presentation software to complete English assignments <b>monthly or weekly</b> .	MGA II				85%
56. Students report developing and analyzing tables, charts and/or graphs in school work <b>often</b> .	MGA III				85%
57. Students report using the Internet for completing assignments <b>often</b> .	MGA III				85%
58. Students report receiving samples of high-quality work to use as models <b>monthly or weekly</b> .	MGA II				85%
59. Students report using a computer at school for schoolwork <b>monthly or weekly</b> .	MGA III				85%
60. Students report completing short writing assignments of one to three pages for which they received a grade in their English classes <b>monthly or weekly</b> .*	MGA II				85%
61. Students report completing short writing assignments of one to three pages for which they received a grade in their science classes <b>monthly or weekly</b> .*	MGA II				85%
62. Students report completing short writing assignments of one to three pages for which they received a grade in their social studies classes <b>monthly or weekly</b> .*	MGA III				85%
63. Students report reading an assigned book outside of English class and demonstrating understanding of the main ideas <b>at least monthly</b> .*	MGA II				85%

**Numeracy Across Curriculum**  
**Source: Middle Grades Assessment Report**

Indicators	Data Source	Baseline	+ 2 Years	+ 4 Years	Six-year Goal
64. The percentage of student responses on 14 indicators that suggest the school has an <b>intensive</b> emphasis on numeracy across the curriculum. (11 to 14 items)	Indices				85%
65. Students report developing and analyzing tables, charts and/or graphs in their schoolwork <b>often</b> .	MGA III				85%
66. Students report using a scientific calculator to complete mathematics assignments <b>at least weekly</b> .	MGA II				85%
67. Students report solving mathematics problems other than from textbooks <b>at least weekly</b> .	MGA II				85%
68. Students report working with one or more students in their class on a challenging mathematics assignment <b>monthly or weekly</b> .	MGA II				85%
69. Students report working in groups to brainstorm how to solve a mathematics problem <b>monthly or weekly</b> .	MGA II				85%
70. Students report explaining to the class how they solved a mathematics problem <b>monthly or weekly</b> .	MGA II				85%
71. Students report explaining different ways for solving mathematics problems <b>monthly or weekly</b> .	MGA II				85%
72. Students report writing a few sentences about how they solved a mathematics problem <b>monthly or weekly</b> .	MGA II				85%
73. Students report using their mathematics skills to solve problems in other classes <b>monthly or weekly</b> .	MGA II				85%
74. Students report that their mathematics teachers showed them how mathematics can be used to solve problems in real life.	MGA II				85%
75. Students report that their teachers know their subject and can make it interesting and useful <b>often</b> .	MGA III				85%
76. Students report that their teachers encourage students to help each other and learn from each other <b>sometimes or often</b> .	MGA III				85%
77. Students report using the Internet to find information for completing assignments <b>often</b> .	MGA III				85%
78. Students report using word processing software to complete an assignment or project <b>often</b> .	MGA III				85%

## Engaging Science Experiences

## Source: Middle Grades Assessment Report

Indicators	Data Source	Baseline	+ 2 Years	+ 4 Years	Six-year Goal
79. The percentage of student responses on 12 indicators that suggest the school has an <b>intensive</b> emphasis on providing engaging science experiences. (eight to 12 items)	Indices				85%
80. Students report doing science projects that take a week or more.	MGA II				85%
81. Students report completing written lab reports on scientific investigations <b>once a semester or monthly</b> .	MGA II				85%
82. Students report working with one or more students in their class on a challenging science assignment <b>once a semester or monthly</b> .	MGA II				85%
83. Students report using equipment to do activities in a science laboratory with tables and sinks <b>once a semester or monthly</b> .	MGA II				85%
84. Students report using word processing software to complete an assignment or project <b>often</b> .	MGA III				85%
85. Students report completing short writing assignments of one to three pages for a grade in science classes <b>once a semester</b> .	MGA II				85%
86. Students report, when doing science experiments or investigations in school, using a laptop computer, a lab book or notebook to keep records, logs and comments.	MGA II				85%
87. Students report writing long answers to questions on tests in science <b>monthly</b> .	MGA II				85%
88. Students report that teachers know their subject and can make it interesting and useful <b>often</b> .	MGA III				85%
89. Students report that teachers encourage students to help each other and learn from each other <b>sometimes or often</b> .	MGA III				85%
90. Students report developing and analyzing tables, charts and/or graphs in their schoolwork <b>often</b> .	MGA III				85%
91. Students report using the Internet to find information for completing assignments <b>often</b> .	MGA III				85%
92. Students report reading an assigned book (besides the textbook) or article dealing with science <b>at least monthly</b> .*	MGA II				85%

**Engaging Strategies for All Students**  
**Source: Middle Grades Assessment Report**

Indicators	Data Source	Baseline	+ 2 Years	+ 4 Years	Six-year Goal
93. Teachers require students to work on open-ended problems for which there is no immediately obvious method of solution <b>weekly</b> .	MGA TS IV				70%
94. Teachers require students to work in cooperative groups to deepen understanding of content <b>weekly</b> .	MGA TS IV				60%
95. Teachers require students to work on an extended, major project that lasts a week or more at least <b>once or twice a semester</b> .	MGA TS III				60%
96. Teachers require students to do computer-assisted research/assignments <b>monthly</b> .	MGA TS IV				60%
97. Teachers require students to participate in a class discussion about content studied <b>weekly</b> .	MGA TS IV				85%
98. Teachers require students to use word processing to complete assignments <b>weekly</b> .	MGA TS IV				85%
99. Teachers report including the following forms of assessment in students' final course grades: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Teacher-made, open-ended tests</li> <li>■ Projects or practical/laboratory exercises</li> <li>■ Portfolios of students' work</li> <li>■ End-of-course exam in their content area that is used schoolwide</li> </ul>	MGA TS IV				100% 100% 100% 100%

## Emphasis on Guidance and Support

- The school provides career exploration, academic advisement and educational planning for all students through a structured approach that connects adult advisers and students.
- The school helps students and parents understand high school graduation requirements and knowledge and skills needed for success in postsecondary education or employment.

### Guidance

Source: Middle Grades Assessment Report

Indicators	Data Source	Baseline	+ 2 Years	+ 4 Years	Six-year Goal
100. The percentage of student responses on six indicators that suggest the school has an <b>intensive</b> emphasis on providing guidance. (four to six items)	Indices				85%
101. Students report being encouraged by a counselor or teacher to take algebra in seventh or eighth grade.	MGA II				85%
102. Students report having a written plan for courses they plan to take in high school.	MGA VI				85%
103. Students report their parents and someone at school helped them write their plan for courses they will take in high school.	MGA VI				85%
104. Students report they expect to take notes from a lecture <b>weekly</b> in ninth-grade English.	MGA VI				85%
105. Students report they expect to use mathematics to solve real-world problems <b>weekly</b> in ninth-grade mathematics.	MGA VI				85%
106. Students report they have talked with teachers or other adults at school about what they will need to know and be able to do in ninth grade.	MGA VI				85%
107. Students report being encouraged by a counselor or teacher to take pre-algebra in sixth, seventh or eighth grade.*	MGA VI				85%
108. Students report taking part in a parent-teacher-student conference about their schoolwork <b>at least once a year</b> .*	MGA VI				85%
109. Students report they expect to defend the results of a scientific investigation orally or in writing <b>at least once a semester</b> in ninth-grade science.*	MGA VI				85%
110. Students report that they think it is important to graduate from high school.*	MGA VII				85%

### Emphasis on Transitions

- Increase the percentage of ninth-graders who have the knowledge and skills necessary for success in an academically rigorous high school curriculum.
- School-student-family connections occur through regularly scheduled conferences and frequent communication.

#### Transitions

Source: Middle Grades Assessment Report, School Data

Indicators	Data Source	Baseline	+ 2 Years	+ 4 Years	Six-year Goal
111. Teachers report meeting with teachers from sending elementary schools to discuss expectations, content knowledge and performance standards for students entering the middle grades <b>at least annually</b> .	MGA TS VI				85%
112. Teachers report meeting with teachers from high schools to which they send students to discuss expectations, content knowledge and performance standards for students entering high school <b>at least annually</b> .	MGA TS VI				85%
113. Eighth-grade teachers report believing that over 60 percent of students will enter ninth grade ready to do well in college-preparatory academic courses.	MGA TS VI				85%
114. Teachers report they are <b>very familiar</b> with the content and specific goals of courses taught in the high school(s) that students from their school attend.	MGA TS VI				85%
115. The school requires parent-student-school conferences to develop plans for the high school program of study for every student leaving eighth grade.	MGA TS VI				85%
116. Curricula are aligned to specific performance standards indicating readiness for college-preparatory work in all content areas.	School Data				Yes
117. The percentage of students who fail one or more courses in the ninth grade decreases by 10 percent each year.	School Data				Yes
118. The percentage of students who need remediation in the ninth grade decreases by 10 percent each year through earlier intervention efforts.	School Data				Yes
119. Schools share information on student performance and graduation requirements with each other and with families by using communication technology.	School Data				Yes

## Focusing on Continuous Improvement and Demonstrating Strong Leadership

- Effective administrators encourage teachers and actively participate with them in planning and delivering improvements in school and classroom practices.
- Successful schools use data on student performance to improve practices continuously.

### Continuous School Improvement

Source: Middle Grades Assessment Report, School Data

Indicators	Data Source	Baseline	+ 2 Years	+ 4 Years	Six-year Goal
120. The percentage of teacher responses on five indicators that suggest the school has an <b>intensive</b> emphasis on continuous school improvement. (four to five items)	Indices				85%
121. Teachers <b>strongly agree</b> that teachers in this school are always learning and seeking new ideas on how to improve student achievement.	MGA TS X				85%
122. Teachers <b>strongly agree</b> that staff use data reports to continuously evaluate the school's academic and technical program and activities.	MGA TS X				85%
123. Teachers <b>strongly agree</b> that the teachers and administrators in this school work as a team to improve the achievement of students in this school.	MGA TS X				85%
124. Teachers <b>strongly agree</b> that goals and priorities for this school are clear.	MGA TS X				85%
125. Teachers <b>strongly agree</b> that teachers in this school maintain a demanding yet supportive environment that pushes students to do their best.	MGA TS X				85%

**Strong Leadership**

Source: Middle Grades Assessment Report, School Data

Indicators	Data Source	Baseline	+ 2 Years	+ 4 Years	Six-year Goal
126. Teachers <b>strongly agree</b> that the principal consults with staff members before making decisions that affect them.	MGA TS VIII				85%
127. The school's structure for improvement involves a number of committees with representatives from the school and the community.	School Data				Yes
128. School improvement teams are aligned with and address all elements of <i>MMGW's</i> comprehensive improvement framework.	School Data				Yes
129. Improvement actions are based on evidence supplied by multiple data sources.	School Data				Yes
130. An action plan is reviewed annually by all partners in improvement and includes interim assessments of progress.	School Data				Yes
131. The school uses multiple strategies to share student achievement data with the community at large.	School Data				Yes

## Supporting the Staff with Professional Development

- There is a clear link between student achievement and teachers who have time to work together to plan effective curriculum and instruction.
- Professional development helps teachers improve their content and teaching knowledge and is aligned with students' needs and the school's improvement plan.

### Staff Development Provided

Source: Middle Grades Assessment Report, School Data

Indicators	Data Source	Baseline	+ 2 Years	+ 4 Years	Six-year Goal
132. Teachers report meeting <b>monthly</b> as teams to plan joint instructional activities and take collective responsibility for student learning.	MGA TS VII				70%
133. Teachers report that <b>a great deal</b> of their staff development has resulted in holding students to current national standards.	MGA TS VIII				85%
134. Teachers report participating in the following types of staff development during the last three years: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Workshops with regular follow-ups;</li> <li>■ Reading professional literature and viewing professional videotapes with a study group;</li> <li>■ Being observed and receiving feedback; and</li> <li>■ Working with teachers who are successful in having students master high-level content.</li> </ul>	MGA TS VIII				75% 75% 75% 75%
135. Teachers report professional development programs are sustained over time, with ample follow-up, <b>a great deal or somewhat</b> .	MGA TS VIII				75%
136. All teachers use common planning time to examine student work and improve instruction.	School Data				100%
137. All staff has access to technology training and equipment.	School Data				Yes
138. Teachers hold content majors or minors in their subjects.	School Data				100%
<b>Teachers reported receiving more than 40 hours of staff development during the past three years on</b>					
139. Additional study to gain greater depth in content areas.	MGA TS VIII				75%
140. Using reading and writing for learning in the content area and across the curriculum.	MGA TS VIII				75%
141. Raising expectations for student achievement.	MGA TS VIII				75%
142. Using project-based learning to deepen understanding of content.	MGA TS VIII				75%
143. Using performance assessment (e.g. presentations, writing and projects).	MGA TS VIII				75%