NOMINEE APPLICATION

A. To what do you attribute your continued success in “Closing the Achievement Gap?” Please reference specific gains in disaggregated student data and the methods, techniques, or strategies responsible for these gains in both your reading and math programs. If one program has been more successful than another, please address that.

Metzger has made significant student achievement gains over the last four years with the sharpest increase coming in 2007-08. We attribute this success to the following:

1) Our teachers’ additional years of experience/expertise implementing SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observational Protocol) which has improved learning because it gives ALL Metzger students—especially ELL--greater access to the curriculum.

2) Our focus on individual student RIT score gains rather than just upon school-wide “meets or exceeds” test score data which means Metzger’s staff is continually examining data to improve instruction.

3) Expanding EBIS (Effective Behavior and Instruction Support), beyond reading, behavior and attendance to include math and writing. This means that the lowest 20% of students in ALL of those subject areas is identified and receives individualized interventions planned by a team that includes their classroom teacher, specialists and the principal.

Also making a difference are: Full-day kindergarten which was piloted four years ago and whose first participants—last year’s third graders—outperformed their non full-day K peers;

Metzger’s Reading Program that starts in kindergarten with Fast Track Phonics and continues with a 90-minute uninterrupted block of reading instruction for all students as well as cross grade level ability groups that are constantly changing as students are assessed and move from group to group;

Spanish native language instruction in reading--combined with El Camino, the Spanish reading intervention developed at Metzger—which has provided the extra help needed for our Spanish speaking students to become stronger readers.

This work has resulted in OAKS summary scores that were high enough to earn Metzger’s first “exceptional” rating on this year’s State Report Card.

Our overall RIT Score gains were: 5.34 in 3rd to 4th grade reading, 9.06 in 3rd to 4th grade math, 2.64 in 4th to 5th grade reading and 7.41 in 4th to 5th grade math--but we are most proud of the significant RIT score gains made by our subgroups of students who, in most cases, outperformed their peers.

2007-08 subgroup gains are:

3rd to 4th grade RIT point gains:
- Special Education –Reading/Lit 9.88, Math 12.38
- English Language Learners – Reading/Lit 12.16, Math 12.47
- Hispanic – Reading/Lit 7.78, Math 9.7
- Asian/Pacific Islanders – Reading/Lit 11.38, Math 12.38

4th to 5th grade RIT gains:
- Special Education –Reading/Lit 4.3, Math 12.0
- English Language Learners – Reading/Lit 7.11, Math 12.78
- Hispanic – Reading/Lit 5.2, Math 7.65
- Asian/Pacific Islanders – Reading/Lit 3.14, Math 5.14

B. How has the process of closing the gap in your school/district changed over the years? Have the programs you put in place continued to show gains? Have demographics changed influenced your strategies? Have you learned new techniques or strategies?

We have both refined and expanded our implementation of strategies found to be successful. Programs such as SIOP and full-day kindergarten that were piloted with small groups of teachers and students have been expanded school-wide. EBIS, the data-driven team approach originally used for reading and behavioral interventions, has been expanded successfully to math and writing. It has also become the springboard for Metzger’s Response to Intervention (RTI) approach for early identification of and support for struggling students. We are now an Oregon RTI demonstration site. We modeled our El Camino (Spanish Language) reading
intervention materials on the intervention materials used for English-speaking students. Our experience providing Native Language reading instruction helped us develop Native Language instruction in writing. Four years ago, our school-wide reading program was Success for All. Now, we use the district’s reading adoption, the Macmillan series, but the Success for All Strategies of 90-minute uninterrupted reading blocks and flexible, cross age group remain in place at Metzger and have been adopted district-wide. In depth, ongoing staff development and peer coaching have been keys to implementing these programs with fidelity. Our demographics—33% students identified as ELL, 55-60% qualified for Free or Reduced Lunch and 45% identified as minority—have not changed substantially. However, the individual students who make up these demographics change from year-to-year and even during the course of one school year. For that reason, our focus on individual student gains and providing appropriate interventions for struggling students have been powerful tools to help us improve overall student achievement at Metzger.

C. What is your strategy to ensure that every one of your students is on track to graduate from high school? What interventions do you have in place to help all of your students who are below grade level? What percentage of the students moving from your school to middle/high school/post high school are not at grade level in math 14%, reading 14%, and writing 36% when they leave?

Our goal is for every student to be at grade level or above when they leave Metzger. We have made substantial progress toward that goal with 86% of fifth graders at grade level in reading and math and 64% at grade level in writing. We are constantly collecting data and using targeted interventions to improve each student’s chance for success. In reading, we conduct assessments every 8-weeks to keep students moving at their correct rate and level. DIBELS is used to assess every student three times a year. We also use DIBELS/IDELS as well CBMs to monitor weekly progress. Based on this data, students could receive targeted interventions in fluency, comprehension, vocabulary, phonemic awareness, or phonics. Students are assessed at the beginning and at the end of each strand in math. In math, an intervention for kindergarteners might include students working on missing number or counting sequences and for fifth graders, it might involve extra help with math facts. We formally assess writing by using cross-teacher scoring during the year. A student might receive some assistance in writing fluency or extra help in conventions depending upon their need. Most interventions occur within the school day, however we also have extended day and summer programs. We ensure student success from grade level to grade level by working collaboratively and focusing on transitions. Because students are skill-grouped for instruction across subjects and grade levels, teachers are used to working together to support individual student success. As our fifth graders move to sixth grade, we meet several times with middle school staff to ensure a smooth transition. We also pass along folders developed for each student outlining every academic and behavioral intervention. It’s almost as if every student leaves Metzger with his or her own individualized plan.

D. What strategies, practices, or programs would you recommend to those looking to address achievement gap issues in their school or district? What have you found most effective for continued closure of the gap in your school?

There are three keys to Metzger’s success: The first is staff attitude. EVERY staff member believes that ALL students can learn. We work as a team with shared responsibility to make sure that every student does succeed. This attitude and commitment is as important as the programs and instructional strategies we have implemented. We are relentless. Believing that every child can and will learn brings us together as a community, guides our hard work and makes it possible to come closer each year toward closing the achievement gap.

The second is our practice of implementing with fidelity research-based strategies proven to increase student achievement. We adopted SIOP as the school-wide teaching strategy to give all students access to the curriculum. After every teacher was trained, we made sure that there was consistency from classroom to classroom. In ALL Metzger classrooms, at the beginning and the end of every lesson, teachers post or state the content and language objectives for every content area. We implemented peer coaching so that staff can give each other feedback on SIOP strategies. And, each year we try to improve our skills with additional training.

The third is our commitment to continuous improvement. Just as we are constantly testing and retesting students, we are also evaluating and refining our instructional programs. We are always looking for ways to do things better. This last year, we began “Courageous Conversations” training to address the racial achievement gap. To better serve our Spanish-speaking students, we are also exploring dual language programs. Seeking new ways to improve learning and achievement keeps us focused and growing—just like our students.