



Imagine what you can learn!

Dear Legislators:

Launched in 2008, the Design II Strategic Plan for Vancouver Public Schools (VPS) has led to improvements in instructional quality across the system, expansion of educational program choices in grades K-12, structured and focused time for teacher collaboration, new applications of technology to increase student learning and engagement, and partnerships that mobilize resources and remove barriers to learning. The VPS learning community has put a laser-like focus on increasing student achievement and preparing all of our young people for college, careers and life. Progress is evident in many areas:

- The number of schools identified by the State Board of Education Accountability Index as “struggling” has decreased from six schools to two since 2008-09. During the same period, the number of schools identified in the top three tiers (exemplary, very good, and good) has increased from five schools to 18.
- Ninety percent of our recent graduates met the state high school proficiency standard in math. Nearly 100 percent of our recent seniors met the high school proficiency standard in reading and writing.
- The number of middle school Challenge and Honors section registrations has increased from 1,152 in 2008-09 to 2,432 in 2012-13.
- The percentage of high school students enrolled in Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses increased from six percent to 46 percent in the past decade. These are the most rigorous courses offered in American high schools.
- If we add other dual credit programs, nearly 55 percent of recent graduates were eligible for college credit while in high school. This is great value for the students, families and taxpayers of our state.
- High school and middle school core course failure rates have been cut by nearly 40 percent since 2006-07.
- The on-time graduation rate increased by nearly 10 percentage points in the past two years. That means 150 more graduates crossed the finish line.
- Enrollment in AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination), which is connected to the College Board and designed to prepare first-generation college-bound students for college, has grown from one pilot site in 2008-09 to nearly 1,000 students at 11 sites in 2012-13.
- Our kindergarten readiness indicator for all students has improved by 15 percentage points since 2007-08. That’s 250 more kindergartners ready for school on day one.

(continued)

Vancouver Public Schools

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- The Learning First Alliance (www.learningfirst.org), a national partnership of 16 education associations with more than 10 million members, featured Vancouver's Opportunity Zone in its *Public School Success Stories*. In 2010 VPS identified an "Opportunity Zone" with 14 elementary, middle and high schools serving large concentrations of students affected by poverty and mobility. Additional district and community resources were channeled to the Opportunity Zone schools to help remove barriers to learning. Those schools have realized significant gains in student achievement as result of the district's targeted effort.
- From 2008-09 through 2010-11, all grade levels in Discovery and Jason Lee (designated Tier II persistently low achieving schools according to federal rules) showed increases in the percent of students meeting state standard in both reading and math. As examples, the percentage of Jason Lee 8th graders meeting standard in reading increased from 56.7 percent to 69.9 percent (13.2 percentage point increase), while the number of 8th graders meeting standard in math increased from 33.3 percent to 46.7 percent (13.4 percentage point increase). At Discovery, the percentage of 6th graders meeting standard in math increased from 28.5 percent to 57.4 percent (28.9 percentage point increase), while the percentage of 7th graders meeting standard in math increased from 30.6 percent to 48.1 percent (17.5 percentage point increase). Today, no Vancouver school is on the federal low performing list.

VPS has made all of these gains while facing significant challenges related to a changing student population and diminishing financial resources. Our district has been required to implement more than \$20 million in budget reductions over the past five years. Since 2004-05, the number of students eligible for free or reduced-price meals has increased from 39 percent to 54 percent. That equates to 3,300 more students in poverty over the past seven years. A toxic combination of poverty and mobility has impacted some schools where the number of students qualifying for free or reduced-price meals exceeds 90 percent and the mobility rate is more than 40 percent. Additionally, the number of homeless students enrolled in our district has risen from 95 to 650 over the past six years. Our community also has become more culturally diverse. Approximately 20 percent of VPS students come from homes where a language other than English is primary. The district has served students with more than 80 native languages.

We have a lot more work to do, but our school system is making tremendous progress. To learn more about VPS, I invite you to visit the following webpage: http://www.vansd.org/Recent_Achievements.

Sincerely,



Steven T. Webb, Ed.D.
Superintendent