



# SREB

## Establishing Benchmarks and Measuring Progress at *MMGW* Sites

*MAKING MIDDLE  
GRADES WORK*

2010

Southern  
Regional  
Education  
Board

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SCHOOL

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COMMITTEE COMPLETING DOCUMENT

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## Vision

Schools that join the *Making Middle Grades Work* (MMGW) network are expected to show progress in changing school and classroom practices in ways that improve student achievement and readiness for high school. Schools are expected to focus on practices that have proven most effective in advancing 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 will result in steady progress in student achievement. By focusing on research-based indicators to close gaps in school and classroom practices, schools also can close achievement gaps for all groups of students, so more students meet high school readiness goals. **States and SREB expect MMGW sites to show consistent progress until the comprehensive school improvement framework is fully implemented and 85 percent of students meet the MMGW performance goals in reading, mathematics and science, with increasing percentages of students performing at the Proficient and Advanced levels.**

## Actions Making Middle Grades Work Sites Agree to Take

Schools and school systems participating in MMGW agree to take the following actions to implement the MMGW school improvement design:

1. Have site leaders — superintendents, school board members, the principal and a core group of teachers — examine the MMGW Goals and Key Practices to decide: if MMGW is viable for the school and the community; if they are committed to at least a three-year implementation effort; and if they will implement a rigorous, upgraded academic core curriculum.
2. Appoint a district- and school-level staff member to coordinate MMGW action planning (e.g., examine policy and curriculum decisions, staff development and technical assistance; coordinate data collection; monitor progress; foster communication; integrate the MMGW Goals and Key Practices with other school improvement efforts).
3. Lead faculty during the first year to establish the need for change, orient them to the MMGW Goals and Key Practices, and invite broad participation in the planning and implementation process.
4. Support teachers with staff development, materials and time to work together to implement the Key Practices.
5. Organize a school leadership team composed of key academic and related arts teachers; administrators; guidance counselors; and representatives of business, industry and postsecondary education.
6. Establish individual focus teams to address priority school improvement goals such as curriculum and instruction, guidance, evaluation, staff development and transitions.
7. Prepare an action plan for implementing the Key Practices and a site-specific staff development plan to help teachers carry out the action steps.
8. Participate in the biennial Middle Grades Assessment to obtain baseline data and to measure progress in raising student achievement.
9. Host a Technical Assistance Visit involving a team led by SREB or the state to review progress and the challenges to be addressed to raise student achievement.
10. Participate in district leadership activities, state staff development activities and the annual HSTW Staff Development Conference.
11. Become an active member of a state network for sharing information and ideas.
12. Designate staff members to coach all teachers to use reading, writing and numeracy strategies across the curriculum to improve achievement in all content areas.
13. Promote a vision of high achievement for all students among faculty and staff, parents, students and community members.

## Assessment Guidelines

All schools must follow SREB's guidelines when administering the Middle Grades Assessment to eighth-grade students. Schools should use one of the following options for selecting students to participate in the assessment:

- Test a random sample of 60 or more eighth-grade students.
- Test all eighth-grade students.

In selecting students, schools must follow these guidelines:

- Use the sample instructions provided by SREB to select a random sample.
- Include special-needs and English language learners in the assessment, including relevant accommodations, under the conditions stated in their individualized educational plans (IEPs) regarding participation in state assessments.

Ensure all students complete all four components: the student survey and subject tests in reading, mathematics and science.

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

The indicators used for the comprehensive *MMGW* framework are strongly associated with improving academic achievement. They come from *MMGW*'s 10 Key Practices and five Key Conditions.

### *Making Middle Grades Work* Key Practices for Improving Student Achievement

School and classroom practices are more likely to impact student achievement if they are aligned to a framework of key practices and conditions that facilitate and encourage comprehensive school improvement. The *MMGW* Key Practices provide direction and meaning to comprehensive improvement for increased student achievement.

- **Aligned academic core** — Provide rigorous content in all middle grades academic core classes, and align core classes with performance standards that clearly state what students must know, understand and be able to do to succeed in college-preparatory English, mathematics and science courses in high school. Enroll middle grades students in core curricula that accelerate their learning, challenge them and appeal to their interests.
  - In mathematics, students develop a deep understanding of and use algebra concepts to reason and solve authentic problems and complete Algebra I with acceptable performance or demonstrate proficiency in pre-algebra and readiness for Algebra I.
  - In science, students have opportunities to engage in developing scientifically oriented questions and designing investigations to gather evidence in response to those questions. Students prioritize, organize and analyze evidence and data; formulate conclusions; and justify their proposed conclusions through written reports and oral presentations.
  - The language arts curriculum requires that students use language correctly and effectively to find, organize and report on information through reading, writing, speaking and listening before exiting eighth grade.
  - The social studies curriculum requires that, before students can exit eighth grade, they describe their heritage, their government, their world and economic principles through key issues of the past, present and future.
  - Fine arts, technology and exploratory courses are designed to enable students to use academic knowledge and skills to explore their interest and talents in several broad fields.
- **Engaging classroom practices** — Design classroom practices and instructional strategies to engage students intellectually, emotionally, behaviorally and socially in learning rigorous academic content. Young adolescents need varied learning activities linked to challenging academic content and opportunities to use newly acquired skills and concepts in hands-on, real-world applications so that they can understand and explain their interests, talents and aspirations.
- **Literacy across the curriculum** — Embed reading and writing standards and strategies for learning into all courses to advance academic and reading achievement and to help students become independent learners. Provide reading instruction in all academic curricula through grade eight and utilize research-based literacy strategies across content areas.

- **High expectations and a system of extra help and time** — Hold students to grade-level standards aligned to readiness standards for high school, college and careers. Organize time and resources to ensure students receive the extra help needed to meet high standards and expectations. Middle grades students learn in different ways and at different rates, and some will need more time and help to meet more grade-level standards. The complete middle grades curriculum should be focused on accelerating achievement for *all* students using several strategies:
  - Provide a structured system of instruction and extra help.
  - Give all students opportunities to acquire and practice habits of successful learning — effective study and literacy skills, time management and learning with others.
  - Provide students with opportunities to meet and exceed course standards and advance with their peers.
  - Define what is required for A-level and B-level work.
  - Support teachers in forming nurturing relationships with students to improve students' academic work and achievement.
- **Intervention program for at-risk students** — Identify at-risk students in grades six, seven and eight who need accelerated instruction in mathematics, language arts and reading to be prepared for college-preparatory high school course work, and implement strategies and programs that target their needs.
- **Comprehensive system of guidance and advisement that involves parents** — Engage teachers, students and parents in a comprehensive guidance and advisement system — including academic advisement, career exploration and educational planning — that leads to a successful transition to high school. Involve parents in the school improvement process by informing them of the school's mission and assisting them to understand the higher standards of performance now required of middle grades students and to support students to make greater effort and work hard.
- **Teachers working together** — Provide teams of teachers with time and support to work together — within and across disciplines — to integrate mathematics and literacy concepts across the curriculum, analyze teacher assignments and student work, and help students succeed in challenging academic and exploratory studies. All teachers need time to work together to complete a variety of planning activities:
  - Align core academic courses, instructional units, classroom assignments and assessments to high school readiness standards.
  - Determine proficiency levels of course standards.
  - Develop and coordinate learning activities.
  - Examine assignments, assessments and students work.
  - Reach a common understanding of proficient-level student work.
  - Discuss students' strengths and challenges.
- **Quality professional development to support teachers** — Provide teachers with extensive, ongoing professional development on research-based instructional practices aligned with the school's mission and school improvement plan. Today's teachers must acknowledge that student failure is no longer acceptable and that they need extensive content knowledge coupled with effective, research-based teaching strategies to incorporate rigorous, engaging assignments and activities, and formative and summative assessments into their instruction.
- **Use of technology for learning** — Middle grades classrooms in all subject areas should view technology as a tool for learning. Schools can support teachers to plan units of instruction that allow students to conduct research, write papers, communicate globally, prepare presentations using electronic tools and resources, and explore the use of technology to address an array of contemporary problems and projects linked to a range of broad career areas.
- **Continuous improvement through strong leadership** — Develop strong instructional leaders who take an active role in engaging teachers in continuous improvement of school and classroom practices. Middle grades schools need effective principals who encourage, support and actively participate with teachers in planning and implementing research-based school improvement strategies. Schools must continuously gather and use data on student, school and teacher performance to review and revise school and classroom practices as needed.

## **Making Middle Grades Work Key Conditions for Accelerating Student Achievement**

*MMGW* believes that everyone in the educational hierarchy — teachers, school leaders, district leaders, and local and state leaders — must work together to align policies, resources, initiatives and accountability efforts to support middle grades schools as they adopt and implement a comprehensive school improvement design. A clear, functional mission statement defines the purpose of the middle grades school: to prepare students for rigorous, college-preparatory courses in high school. A basic set of conditions to guide the implementation of the *MMGW* school improvement framework includes the following:

- **Commitment** — State partners, the school board, district leaders and the community are committed to fully implementing the comprehensive *MMGW* improvement framework.
- **Planning for continuous improvement** — District and school leaders create an organizational structure and process that ensures continuous involvement with the 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 that aligns all curricula to state, national and international standards. As a result, performance standards define 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 as they develop the capacity to implement teaching practices.
- **Teacher preparation** — The local school board helps teachers without a major in their subject area upgrade their content knowledge through planned and approved learning experiences. The school board strives to hire 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.

The school improvement leadership team should assign the evaluation leadership team ultimate responsibility for the completion and use of this document containing indicators for the comprehensive *MMGW* framework. This document should be used to assist in verifying if student achievement has improved and if goals have been met. The evaluation leadership team should begin by compiling baseline data for this report. This team then should 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 then 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 evaluate the school's progress and modify goals as necessary.

While the majority of the following indicators are based on information presented in the Middle Grades Assessment Report, additional data will come from school records (school-based data). Some indicators appear more than once. For each occurrence, schools should focus their analysis on how that indicator relates to the key practice being studied.



## Setting Interim Benchmarks in an Effort to Meet a Six-Year Goal

To achieve a six-year goal, schools should establish interim benchmarks on key indicators regarding changes to be made in school and classroom practices. The important point is not only to set goals, but also to determine actions school leaders and teachers must take to meet those target goals. To determine interim benchmarks:

- Subtract your school’s baseline percentage from the six-year goal.
- Divide that total by three to get the change needed during each two-year interval.
- 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.<sup>1</sup>

The following example uses 2010 as the baseline year with 2016 as the six-year goal.

Example					
High Expectations	Data Source	Baseline	+2 Years	+4 Years	Six-Year Goal
Students reported that their teachers <b>often</b> set high standards for them and were willing to help them meet them.	MGA IV	55%	65%	75%	85%

  

■ Difference between Baseline (2010) and Six-Year Goal (2016):		85% - 55% = 30%
■ Change needed every two years:		30% ÷ 3 = 10%
■ Benchmark for 2012:	(Baseline % + Growth %)	55% + 10% = 65%
■ Benchmark for 2014:	(Baseline % + Growth %)	65% + 10% = 75%
■ Benchmark for 2016:	(Baseline % + Growth %)	75% + 10% = 85%

<sup>1</sup> For a few indicators, the goal is to decrease the percentage of students or teachers experiencing the indicator. For such indicators, schools should set progressively decreasing targets to meet the goal.

## Indicators for the Comprehensive *MMGW* Framework

### Meeting *MMGW* Performance Goals

- Raise the reading, mathematics and science achievement of more students to meet readiness standards for high school.

Indicators — Meeting <i>MMGW</i> Performance Goals	Data Source <sup>2</sup>	Baseline	+2 Years	+4 Years	Six-Year Goal
1. The percentage of students <b>meeting</b> the reading performance goal of 160	MGA I				85%
2. The percentage of students <b>meeting</b> the mathematics performance goal of 160	MGA I				85%
3. The percentage of students <b>meeting</b> the science performance goal of 161	MGA I				85%

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

### Performance Gap Analysis

- Compare the percentage of various groups of students meeting the performance goal with the goal of 85 percent to identify performance gaps.
- Set goals to reduce performance gaps by at least 10 percentage points each year until all groups of students meet the *MMGW* performance goal.
- Performance goals: Reading = 160, Mathematics = 160, Science = 161

<sup>2</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,” beginning on page 2 of the Middle Grades Assessment report. SBD refers to school-based data (data collected by the school).

Reading					
Indicators — Reading Performance Gap Analysis I	Data Source	Baseline	+2 Years	+4 Years	Six-Year Goal
Total Group	MGA II				85%
Male Students	MGA II				85%
Female Students	MGA II				85%
American Indian/Alaska 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%

Reading		
Indicators — Reading Performance Gap Analysis II	Observed Gap	Goal for +2 Years
Difference between <b>male students</b> and the goal (85%)		
Difference between <b>female students</b> and the goal (85%)		
Difference between <b>minority students</b> and the goal (85%)		
Difference between <b>majority students</b> and the goal (85%)		
Difference between <b>highest-performing group</b> and the goal (85%)		
Difference between <b>lowest-performing group</b> and the goal (85%)		

Mathematics					
Indicators — Mathematics Performance Gap Analysis I	Data Source	Baseline	+2 Years	+4 Years	Six-Year Goal
Total Group	MGA II				85%
Male Students	MGA II				85%
Female Students	MGA II				85%
American Indian/Alaska 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%

Mathematics		
Indicators — Mathematics Performance Gap Analysis II	Observed Gap	Goal for +2 Years
Difference between <b>male students</b> and the goal (85%)		
Difference between <b>female students</b> and the goal (85%)		
Difference between <b>minority students</b> and the goal (85%)		
Difference between <b>majority students</b> and the goal (85%)		
Difference between <b>highest-performing group</b> and the goal (85%)		
Difference between <b>lowest-performing group</b> and the goal (85%)		

Science					
Indicators — Science Performance Gap Analysis I	Data Source	Baseline	+2 Years	+4 Years	Six-Year Goal
Total Group	MGA II				85%
Male Students	MGA II				85%
Female Students	MGA II				85%
American Indian/Alaska 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%

Science		
Indicators — Science Performance Gap Analysis II	Observed Gap	Goal for +2 Years
Difference between <b>male students</b> and the goal (85%)		
Difference between <b>female students</b> and the goal (85%)		
Difference between <b>minority students</b> and the goal (85%)		
Difference between <b>majority students</b> and the goal (85%)		
Difference between <b>highest-performing group</b> and the goal (85%)		
Difference between <b>lowest-performing group</b> and the goal (85%)		

**Getting the Mission Right in the Middle Grades**

- The school sends a consistent message about the school’s mission, values and beliefs to students, families and the community regarding what is expected of students, teachers and administrators.

Indicators — Clear Mission and Vision for Success	Data Source	Baseline	+2 Years	+4 Years	Six-Year Goal
10. Teachers reported that preparing almost all students with the academic knowledge and skills needed in college- preparatory English/language arts, mathematics and science courses in high school is a <b>very important goal</b> .	MGA TS I				70%
11. Teachers reported that they <b>strongly agree</b> that making sure all students leave the eighth grade with the knowledge and skills to be successful without remediation in a college-preparatory curriculum in the ninth grade is the primary mission for their school.	MGA TS I				70%
12. Teachers reported that they <b>strongly agree</b> the goals and priorities for their school are clear.	MGA TS I				85%
13. Teachers reported that they inform parents and students about the student’s readiness to do challenging high school studies <b>at least once a semester</b> .	MGA TS I				85%
14. Teachers reported that they <b>strongly agree</b> that the surrounding community actively supports the school’s instructional goals.	MGA TS V				85%
15. Teachers reported that they <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 an Aligned Academic Core

- All students in the middle grades have content that accelerates their learning, challenges them and appeals to their interests.
- Course standards are aligned to state, national and high school readiness standards.

Indicators — Rigorous English/Language Arts Curriculum	Data Source	Baseline	+2 Years	+4 Years	Six-Year Goal
16. 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 indicators)	Indices				85%
17. Students reported that they wrote a major research paper (with footnotes and works cited/bibliography) on a subject they chose <b>once a year or once a semester</b> .	MGA II				85%
18. Students reported that they completed short writing assignments of one to three pages and received a grade in English classes <b>at least monthly</b> .	MGA II				85%
19. Students reported that they read <b>11 or more</b> books this year both in and out of school.	MGA II				85%
20. Students reported that they discussed or debated topics with other students about what they had read in English/language arts classes <b>at least monthly</b> .*	MGA II				85%

\* This item is not included in the Selected Indices of Curriculum and Instructional Practices Associated with Student Achievement as reported in 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.

Indicators — Rigorous Mathematics Curriculum	Data Source	Baseline	+2 Years	+4 Years	Six-Year Goal
21. The percentage of students who reported 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%

Indicators — Rigorous Science Curriculum	Data Source	Baseline	+2 Years	+4 Years	Six-Year Goal
22. 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 indicators)	Indices				85%
23. Students reported that they completed hands-on activities or projects with living things in science.	MGA II				85%
24. Students reported that they completed hands-on activities or projects with chemistry in science.	MGA II				85%
25. Students reported that they completed hands-on activities or projects with simple machines in science.	MGA II				85%
26. Students reported that they completed hands-on activities or projects with the environment in science.	MGA II				85%
27. Students reported that they used mathematics skills to solve problems in science <b>at least monthly</b> .	MGA II				85%
28. Students reported that for laboratory investigations in science, they chose a topic for investigation <b>once a semester or once a year</b> .	MGA II				85%
29. Students reported 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%
30. Students reported 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%
31. Students reported 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%
32. Students reported that they took integrated science this year.	MGA II				85%



Indicators — Curriculum Content Aligned to State and National Standards	Data Source	Baseline	+2 Years	+4 Years	Six-Year Goal
33. Students reported that their courses <b>never or rarely</b> repeated things they had already learned.	MGA VII				85%
34. Teachers reported that their school or district has set specific content standards for each grade (6-12) and course level for all the courses they teach.	MGA TS III				85%
35. Teachers reported that their school or district has set specific performance standards for each grade (6-12) and course level for all the courses they teach.	MGA TS III				85%
36. Teachers reported that their school or district has set specific guidelines for what constitutes A-, B- and C-level work.	MGA TS III				85%
37. Teachers reported that they required students to take a test that is predominantly essay <b>at least monthly</b> .	MGA TS III				85%
38. Teachers reported that they required students to paraphrase grade-level material using strategies such as re-writing statements or changing direct to indirect quotations <b>at least weekly</b> .	MGA TS IV				85%
39. Teachers reported that they required students to summarize grade-level materials using strategies such as note card summaries or summarization pyramids <b>at least weekly</b> .	MGA TS IV				85%
40. Teachers reported that they required students to categorize grade-level materials using strategies such as graphic organizers or outlines <b>at least weekly</b> .	MGA TS IV				85%

**Emphasis on Setting and Helping Students Meet High Expectations**

- All students participate in challenging classes.
- The school expects high-quality work from all students, requiring them to redo work and retake tests that do not meet specified, high school readiness standards.
- The school uses a systematic approach to identify struggling students and provides extra help and assistance in multiple ways.

Indicators — High Expectations	Data Source	Baseline	+2 Years	+4 Years	Six-Year Goal
41. The percentage of student responses on eight indicators that suggest the school has an <b>intensive</b> emphasis on high expectations (six to eight indicators)	Indices				85%
42. Students reported that most of their teachers <b>often</b> encouraged them to do well in school.	MGA IV				85%
43. Students reported that their teachers <b>often</b> set high standards for them and were willing to help them meet them.	MGA IV				85%
44. Students reported that their teachers <b>often</b> clearly indicated the amount and quality of work that were necessary to earn a grade of A or B at the beginning of a project or unit.	MGA IV				85%
45. Students reported that they <b>often</b> revised their essays or other written work several times to improve their quality.	MGA IV				85%
46. Students reported that they <b>often</b> worked hard to meet high standards on assignments.	MGA IV				85%
47. Students reported that they usually spent <b>one or more hours</b> on homework each day.	MGA IV				85%
48. Students reported that school and classroom rules <b>often</b> were defined and clear.	MGA VII				85%
49. Students reported that they <b>never or rarely</b> failed to complete or turn in their assignments.	MGA III				85%
50. Students reported that they believe it is <b>very important</b> to study hard to get good grades.*	MGA VII				85%
51. Students reported that in their classes, they <b>often</b> were required to redo work that did not meet standards.*	MGA IV				85%
52. Teachers reported that as a result of their staff development experiences, they now have their students redo work until it meets grade-level standards, a great deal.*	MGA TS VII				85%

Indicators — Extra Help	Data Source	Baseline	+2 Years	+4 Years	Six-Year Goal
53. The percentage of student responses on five indicators that suggest the school has an <b>intensive</b> emphasis on extra help (five indicators)	Indices				85%
54. Students reported that their teachers <b>often</b> cared about them enough that they would not let them get by without doing the work.	MGA IV				85%
55. Students reported that they <b>often</b> were able to get extra help from their teachers when they needed it without much difficulty.	MGA V				85%
56. Students reported that their teachers and other adults at school were available before, during or after school to help them with their studies <b>a few times a week</b> .	MGA V				85%
57. Students reported that the extra help they received at school <b>sometimes or often</b> helped them to understand their schoolwork better.	MGA V				85%
58. Students reported that they <b>sometimes or often</b> tried harder on schoolwork after receiving extra help.	MGA V				85%

### Emphasis on Classroom Practices That Engage All Students

- Teachers employ varied instructional strategies that engage students intellectually, emotionally, socially and behaviorally.
- Students experience frequent opportunities to apply skills and concepts to solve real-world problems.
- Technology is used to deepen students' understanding and engage them in active learning.

Indicators — Engaging Instructional Strategies	Data Source	Baseline	+2 Years	+4 Years	Six-Year Goal
59. Students reported that their courses <b>often</b> were exciting and challenging.	MGA III				85%
60. Students reported that this school year, they <b>often</b> found their classes interesting.	MGA III				85%
61. Students reported that they believe it is <b>very important</b> to participate actively in class.	MGA VII				85%
62. Students reported that they believe it is <b>very important</b> to graduate from high school.	MGA VII				100%
63. Teachers reported that they required students to work on open-ended problems for which there was no immediately obvious method of solution <b>at least weekly</b> .	MGA TS IV				70%

Indicators — Engaging Instructional Strategies (continued)	Data Source	Baseline	+2 Years	+4 Years	Six-Year Goal
64. Teachers reported that they required students to work in cooperative groups to deepen understanding of content <b>at least weekly</b> .	MGA TS V				60%
65. Teachers reported that they required students to work on an extended, major project that lasted a week or more <b>at least once or twice a semester</b> .	MGA TS III				60%
66. Teachers reported that they required students to participate in a class discussion about content studied <b>at least weekly</b> .	MGA TS IV				85%
67. Teachers reported that they <b>strongly agree</b> that students should make choices about learning activities (e.g., select topics for research, select books to read).	MGA TS IV				85%
68. Teachers reported that they included the following forms of assessment in students' course grades: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Teacher-made, open-ended tests</li> <li>■ Projects or practical/laboratory exercises</li> <li>■ Portfolio of student's work</li> <li>■ End-of-course exam in their content area that is used schoolwide</li> </ul>	MGA TS IV				100% 100% 100% 100%
69. Teachers reported that they <b>strongly agree</b> that in their school they are encouraged to experiment with their instructional strategies.	MGA TS VII				85%

Indicators — Engaging Technology Experiences	Data Source	Baseline	+2 Years	+4 Years	Six-Year Goal
70. Students reported that they used a graphing calculator to complete mathematics assignments <b>at least weekly</b> .	MGA II				85%
71. Students reported that they used computers or technology to do science activities <b>at least monthly</b> .	MGA II				85%
72. Teachers reported that they required students to complete computer-assisted research/assignments <b>at least monthly</b> .	MGA TS IV				60%
73. Teachers reported that they required students to use word processing to complete assignments <b>at least weekly</b> .	MGA TS V				85%

Indicators — Engaging Science Experiences	Data Source	Baseline	+2 Years	+4 Years	Six-Year Goal
74. 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 indicators)	Indices				85%
75. Students reported that they did science projects in school that took a week or more.	MGA II				85%
76. Students reported that they completed written laboratory reports on scientific investigations <b>once a semester or monthly</b> .	MGA II				85%
77. Students reported that they worked with other students in their class on a challenging science assignment <b>once a semester or monthly</b> .	MGA II				85%
78. Students reported that they used equipment to do activities in a science laboratory with tables and sinks <b>once a semester or monthly</b> .	MGA II				85%
79. Students reported that they <b>often</b> used word-processing software to complete an assignment or project.	MGA III				85%
80. Students reported that they completed short writing assignments of one to three pages and received a grade in science classes <b>once a semester</b> .	MGA II				85%
81. Students reported that when doing science experiments or investigations in school, they used a laptop computer, a lab book or notebook to keep records, logs and comments.	MGA II				85%
82. Students reported that they wrote long answers to questions on tests in science <b>monthly</b> .	MGA II				85%
83. Students reported that their teachers <b>often</b> knew their subject and could make it interesting and useful.	MGA III				85%
84. Students reported that their teachers <b>sometimes or often</b> encouraged students to help each other and learn from each other.	MGA III				85%
85. Students reported that they <b>often</b> had to develop and analyze tables, charts and/or graphs in their schoolwork.	MGA III				85%
86. Students reported that they <b>often</b> had to use the Internet to find information for completing assignments.	MGA III				85%

Indicators — Engaging Science Experiences ( <i>continued</i> )	Data Source	Baseline	+2 Years	+4 Years	Six-Year Goal
87. Students reported that they read an assigned book (besides the textbook) or article dealing with science <b>at least monthly</b> .*	MGA II				85%
88. Students reported that they completed a lab assignment in which they used science to address a problem found outside of school <b>at least once a semester</b> .*	MGA II				85%
89. Students reported that they participated in a classroom discussion relating science to everyday life <b>at least monthly</b> .*	MGA II				85%

Indicators — Engaging Numeracy Practices Across the Curriculum	Data Source	Baseline	+2 Years	+4 Years	Six-Year Goal
90. 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 indicators)	Indices				85%
91. Students reported that they <b>often</b> developed and analyzed tables, charts and/or graphs in their schoolwork.	MGA III				85%
92. Students reported that they used a scientific calculator to complete mathematics assignments <b>at least weekly</b> .	MGA II				85%
93. Students reported that they solved mathematics problems other than from textbooks <b>at least weekly</b> .	MGA II				85%
94. Students reported that they worked with other students in their class on a challenging mathematics assignment <b>at least monthly</b> .	MGA II				85%
95. Students reported that they worked in groups to brainstorm how to solve a mathematics problem <b>at least monthly</b> .	MGA II				85%
96. Students reported that they explained to the class how they solved a mathematics problem <b>at least monthly</b> .	MGA II				85%
97. Students reported that they wrote a few sentences about how they solved a mathematics problem <b>at least monthly</b> .	MGA II				85%
98. Students reported that they explained different ways for solving mathematics problems <b>at least monthly</b> .	MGA II				85%
99. Students reported that they used their math skills to solve problems in other classes <b>at least monthly</b> .	MGA II				85%

Indicators — Engaging Numeracy Practices Across the Curriculum ( <i>continued</i> )	Data Source	Baseline	+2 Years	+4 Years	Six-Year Goal
100. Students reported that their mathematics teachers showed them how math can be used to solve problems in real life.	MGA II				85%
101. Students reported that their teachers <b>often</b> knew their subject and could make it interesting and useful.	MGA III				85%
102. Students reported that their teachers <b>sometimes or often</b> encouraged students to help each other and learn from each other.	MGA III				85%
103. Students reported that they <b>often</b> used the Internet to find information for completing assignments.	MGA III				85%
104. Students reported that they <b>often</b> used word-processing software to complete an assignment or project.	MGA III				85%

### Emphasis on Literacy Across the Curriculum

- Students experience frequent opportunities to apply reading, writing and presentation skills in the context of the field.

Indicators — Literacy Across the Curriculum	Data Source	Baseline	+2 Years	+4 Years	Six-Year Goal
105. The percentage of student responses on eight indicators that suggest the school has an <b>intensive</b> emphasis on literacy across the curriculum (five to eight indicators)	Indices				85%
106. Students reported that they stood before the class and made an oral presentation on a project or assignment to meet specific quality requirements in English/language arts classes <b>once a semester or monthly</b> .	MGA II				85%
107. Students reported that they spent <b>one hour or more</b> reading outside of school in a typical day.	MGA II				85%
108. Students reported that they read <b>11 or more</b> books this year both in and out of school.	MGA II				85%
109. Students reported that they used word-processing or presentation software to complete assignments in English/language arts classes <b>at least monthly</b> .	MGA II				85%
110. Students reported that they <b>often</b> have had to develop and analyze tables, charts and/or graphs in their schoolwork.	MGA III				85%

Indicators — Literacy Across the Curriculum <i>(continued)</i>	Data Source	Baseline	+2 Years	+4 Years	Six-Year Goal
111. Students reported that they <b>often</b> have used the Internet to find information for completing assignments.	MGA III				85%
112. Students reported that they were given samples of high-quality work to use as models for their own work <b>at least monthly</b> .	MGA II				85%
113. Students reported that they used a computer at school for schoolwork <b>monthly or weekly</b> .	MGA III				85%
114. Students reported that they completed short writing assignments of one to three pages and received a grade in English/language arts classes <b>at least monthly</b> .*	MGA II				85%
115. Students reported that they completed short writing assignments of one to three pages and received a grade in social studies classes <b>at least monthly</b> .*	MGA IV				85%
116. Students reported that they read an assigned book outside class and demonstrated that they understood the main ideas <b>at least monthly</b> .*	MGA II				85%



### Emphasis on Interventions for At-Risk Students

- An intervention plan targets to incoming students who are below grade level to provide them with additional support and time, accelerate achievement in reading and mathematics, and ensure they can stay on track with their peers.
- An intervention plan targets eighth-grade students who will have difficulty succeeding in rigorous, college-preparatory high school courses and provides them with an accelerated curriculum that moves student learning through the equivalent of two grade levels in one year. The plan uses research-based instructional practices that ensure students are engaged in meaningful, real-world applications of key course concepts in lieu of a worksheet approach to teaching and learning.

Indicators — Interventions for At-Risk Students	Data Source	Baseline	+2 Years	+4 Years	Six-Year Goal
117. Students reported that they missed <b>no</b> days of school last month.	MGA I				85%
118. Students reported that they <b>never or rarely</b> found schoolwork too hard to understand.	MGA III				85%
119. Students reported that they <b>never or rarely</b> failed to complete or turn in their assignments.	MGA III				85%
120. Students reported that their teachers <b>often</b> cared about them enough that they would not let them get by without doing the work.	MGA IV				85%
121. Students reported that they <b>sometimes or often</b> tried harder on schoolwork after receiving extra help.	MGA V				85%
122. Students reported that they received the extra help they needed in reading from a reading specialist or other adults at their school <b>at least once a week</b> .	MGA V				85%
123. Students reported that they <b>often</b> practiced reading in a separate reading class.	MGA V				85%
124. Students reported that they received the extra help they needed in mathematics from teachers or other adults at their school <b>at least once a week</b> .	MGA V				85%
125. Students reported that teachers and other adults at school were available before, during or after school to help them with their studies <b>a few times a week</b> .	MGA V				85%
126. Students reported that they <b>often</b> received better grades after receiving extra help.	MGA V				85%
127. Students reported that school and classroom rules were <b>often</b> enforced fairly.	MGA VII				85%
128. Teachers <b>agree</b> that in the classes they teach, students' success or failure in school is due largely to factors beyond them.	MGA TS II				Less than 10%

Indicators — Interventions for At-Risk Students (continued)	Data Source	Baseline	+2 Years	+4 Years	Six-Year Goal
129. Teachers think that <b>20 percent or more</b> of their students need extra help with the subject(s) they teach.	MGA TS II				Less than 10%
130. Teachers reported that they require students to receive extra help if they are not performing at a C level or above <b>at least weekly</b> .	MGA TS II				85%
131. Teachers reported that their school provides extra help and extra time for every seventh-grader performing below grade level, outside of the regular school day.	MGA TS VI				85%
132. Teachers reported that their school provides extra help and extra time for every eighth-grader performing below grade level, outside of the regular school day.	MGA TS VI				85%
133. Teachers reported that that their school assigns a caring adult to mentor each student in grades six through eight.	MGA TS VI				85%
134. Teachers report that their school provides a summer bridge program in reading and mathematics to prepare selected eighth-graders for high school	MGA TS VI				85%
135. Teachers reported that their school provides an introduction course on college and career opportunities.	MGA TS VI				85%
136. The school uses research-based indicators (absenteeism, behavioral issues, course failures) to identify sixth- and seventh-grade students at risk of not graduating from high school.	SBD				Yes
137. The school develops a personalized plan for each at-risk student that provides an accelerated curriculum (two years of real-world content into one year of study) and targeted assistance.	SBD				Yes

### Emphasis on a Comprehensive System of Guidance and Advisement

- Caring teachers work with students and their parents to identify social, emotional, behavioral and intellectual problems and work with them to find effective solutions.
- The school provides career exploration, academic advisement and educational planning for all students through a structured approach that connects adult advisers and students.
- School-student-family connections occur through regularly scheduled conferences and frequent communication.
- The school helps students and parents understand high school graduation requirements and the knowledge and skills needed for success in postsecondary education or employment.
- Parents play a significant role in assisting students to develop their six-year academic plan for high school and two years of postsecondary education and careers.

Indicators — Guidance and Advisement	Data Source	Baseline	+2 Years	+4 Years	Six-Year Goal
138. The percentage of student responses on six indicators that suggest the school has an <b>intensive</b> emphasis on providing guidance (four to six indicators)	Indices				85%
139. Students reported that they were encouraged by a counselor or teacher to take Algebra in 7th or 8th grade.	MGA II				85%
140. Students reported that they had a written plan for the courses they will take in high school.	MGA VI				85%
141. Students reported that their parents and someone at school helped them write their plan for courses they will take in high school.	MGA VI				85%
142. Students reported that they expect to take notes from a lecture in ninth-grade English <b>at least weekly</b> .	MGA VI				85%
143. Students reported that they expect to use mathematics to solve real-world problems in ninth-grade mathematics <b>at least weekly</b> .	MGA VI				85%
144. Students reported that they have talked with teachers or other adults at school about what they need to know and be able to do in ninth grade.	MGA VI				85%
145. Students reported that their parents or guardians and they met with a counselor, teacher or other school representative to plan their high school program of study.*	MGA VI				85%
146. Students reported that they took part in a parent-teacher-student conference about their schoolwork <b>at least once a year</b> .*	MGA VI				85%
147. Students reported that they expect to defend the results of a scientific investigation orally or in writing in ninth-grade science <b>at least once a semester</b> .*	MGA VI				85%

Indicators — Guidance and Advisement ( <i>continued</i> )	Data Source	Baseline	+2 Years	+4 Years	Six-Year Goal
148. Teachers reported that helping students complete an educational and career plan for high school and beyond is the most important goal for all students.*	MGA TS I				85%
149. Teachers reported being part of a structured guidance/ advisory program in their school. *	MGA TS V				85%
150. Teachers reported they assist students and their parents in developing a plan of study for the middle grades and high school. *	MGA TS V				85%
151. Teachers reported they have a core group of students whom they advise. *	MGA TS V				85%
152. Teachers reported they work with parents and students to explore education and career options <b>at least once a semester.</b> *	MGA TS V				85%

Indicators — Transitions	Data Source	Baseline	+2 Years	+4 Years	Six-Year Goal
153. Teachers reported that they met with teachers from feeder elementary schools to discuss expectations, content knowledge and performance standards for students entering their middle grades school <b>at least annually.</b>	MGA TS VI				85%
154. Teachers reported that they met with teachers from high schools to which their school send students to discuss expectations, content knowledge and performance standards for students leaving their middle grades school <b>at least annually.</b>	MGA TS VI				85%
155. Eighth-grade teachers reported that they think <b>more than 60 percent</b> of students will enter ninth grade ready to do well in college-preparatory academic courses.	MGA TS VI				85%
156. Teachers reported that they were <b>very familiar</b> with the content and specific goals of the courses taught in the high school(s) that students from their school attend.	MGA TS VI				85%
157. Teachers reported that their school requires a parent-student-school conference to plan a high school program of study for every student leaving eighth grade.	MGA TS VI				85%
158. Teachers reported that their school uses a summer bridge program in reading and mathematics to prepare selected eighth-graders for high school.	MGA TS VI				85%

Indicators — Transitions <i>(continued)</i>	Data Source	Baseline	+2 Years	+4 Years	Six-Year Goal
159. Curricula are aligned to specific performance standards indication readiness for college-preparatory work in all content areas.	SBD				Yes
160. The percentage of students who fail one or more courses in the ninth grade decreases by 10 percent each year.	SBD				Yes
161. The percentage of students who need remediation in the ninth grade decreases by 10 percent each year through earlier intervention efforts.	SBD				Yes
162. Schools share information on student performance and graduation requirements with each other and with families by using communication technology.	SBD				Yes

Indicators — Support from Parents	Data Source	Baseline	+2 Years	+4 Years	Six-Year Goal
163. Students reported that they think they will complete at least some education after high school (career/technical, trade or business school program; two-year degree; four- or five-year degree; graduate degree).	MGA I				95%
164. Students reported that they missed <b>no</b> days of school last month.	MGA I				85%
165. Students reported that they usually spent <b>one or more hours</b> on homework each day.	MGA IV				85%
166. Students reported that their parents and someone at school helped them write their plan for the courses they will take in high school.	MGA VI				85%
167. Students reported that their parents or guardians and they met with a counselor, teacher or other school representative to plan their high school program of study.	MGA VI				85%
168. Students reported that they talked with the their parents/step-parents/other adults with whom they live about what classes they will take in high school.	MGA VI				85%
169. Students reported that they took part in a parent-teacher-student conference about their schoolwork <b>at least once a year</b> .	MGA VI				85%

Indicators — Support from Parents <i>(continued)</i>	Data Source	Baseline	+2 Years	+4 Years	Six-Year Goal
170. Students reported that on an average school day they spent <b>two or fewer hours</b> watching television and videos or playing computer or video games before or after school.	MGA VII				85%
171. Teachers reported that they assist students and their parents in developing a plan of study for the middle grades and high school.	MGA TS V				85%
172. Teachers reported that they work with parents and students on ways to address gaps in academic achievement <b>at least once a semester</b> .	MGA TS V				85%
173. Teachers reported that they work with parents and students to explore educational and career options <b>at least once a semester</b> .	MGA TS V				85%
174. Teachers reported that they <b>strongly agree</b> that the surrounding community actively supports the school's instructional goals.	MGA TS V				85%

### Teachers Working Together

- Teachers are part of a focus team approach to improving student achievement, recognize master teacher practices and work collaboratively to design and review assignments, assessments and student work.

Indicators — Teachers Working Together	Data Source	Baseline	+2 Years	+4 Years	Six-Year Goal
175. Teachers reported that they met as a member of a team of academic and fine/related arts teachers to plan joint instructional activities and to take collective responsibility for student learning <b>at least monthly</b> .	MGA TS VII				85%
176. Teachers reported participating in staff development activities during the past three years on working with other teachers who are successful in having students master high-level content.	MGA TS VIII				85%
177. Teachers <b>strongly agree</b> that they teachers and school administrators work as a team to improve the achievement of students in this school.	MGA TS X				85%

### Focusing on Continuous Improvement and Strong Leadership

- Effective administrators encourage teachers and actively participate with them in planning and delivering improvements in school and classroom practices.
- Schools use data on student performance continuously to improve practices.
- Teachers utilize classroom data regularly to determine the needs of their students and, in this way, act as the leaders of their school in affecting the outcomes of student learning.

Indicators — Teachers' Perceptions of Continuous School Improvement	Data Source	Baseline	+2 Years	+4 Years	Six-Year Goal
178. 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 indicators)	MGA TS X				85%
179. Teachers reported that they <b>strongly agree</b> that teachers in their school are always learning and seeking new ideas on how to improve students' achievement.	MGA TS X				85%
180. Teachers reported that they <b>strongly agree</b> that the staff use data to continuously evaluate the school's academic and technical program and activities.	MGA TS X				85%
181. Teachers reported that they <b>strongly agree</b> that the teachers and school administrators work as a team to improve the achievement of students in their school.	MGA TS X				85%
182. Teachers reported that they <b>strongly agree</b> that goals and priorities for their school are clear.	MGA TS X				85%
183. Teachers reported that they <b>strongly agree</b> that teachers in their school maintain a demanding yet supportive environment that pushes students to do their best.	MGA TS X				85%

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

### Supporting Teachers with Quality 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.

Indicators — Professional Development	Data Source	Baseline	+2 Years	+4 Years	Six-Year Goal
190. Teachers reported that they participated 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 from other educators</li> <li>■ Working with other teachers who are successful in having students master high-level content</li> </ul>	MGA TS VIII				75% 75% 75% 75%
191. Teachers reported that staff development programs are sustained over time, with ample follow-up activities that include an observation of their teaching that gives them ideas for refining instruction to get higher achievement from their students, <b>to some extent or a great deal.</b>	MGA TS VIII				75%



Indicators — Professional Development ( <i>continued</i> )	Data Source	Baseline	+2 Years	+4 Years	Six-Year Goal
192. Teachers reported that they are expected to reflect on what they can learn in staff development programs and apply it in the classroom <b>to some extent or a great deal</b> .	MGA TS VIII				85%
193. All teachers use common planning time to examine student work and improve instruction.	SBD				100%
194. All staff has access to technology training and equipment.	SBD				100%
195. Teachers hold content majors or minors in their subjects.	SBD				100%
<b>Teachers reported receiving more than 40 hours of staff development during the past three years on:</b>					
196. Additional study to gain greater depth in content areas	MGA TS VIII				75%
197. Teaching content through real-world applications	MGA TS VIII				75%
198. Using reading and writing for learning in the content area and across the curriculum	MGA TS VIII				75%
199. Raising expectations for student achievement	MGA TS VIII				75%
200. Working with a group of students as a mentor or adviser through the eighth grade	MGA TS VIII				75%
201. Getting at-risk students to master complex content	MGA TS VIII				75%
202. Using project-based learning to deepen understanding of content	MGA TS VIII				75%
203. Using performance assessment (e.g., presentations, writing and projects)	MGA TS VIII				75%
204. Having students design and conduct research investigations	MGA TS VIII				75%

## Setting Additional Benchmarks

In addition to the *Making Middle Grades Work* Benchmarks, schools should collect, analyze and develop goals and establish benchmarks for school- and state-specific data. Schools can create their own charts to monitor progress. Schools should monitor:

- State assessment scores
- Ninth-grade failure rates and course failure rates
- Attendance rates
- Retention rates
- Disciplinary actions
- Career/technical offerings and participation
- Course and extracurricular offerings





