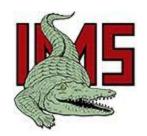# Islander Middle School
School Improvement Plan - Year 3
Grading 4 Equity
2022/2023

Goals: What are the student and staff goals for the year?

Student Goal:

By the end of the 22/23 school year, Islander Middle School will increase opportunities for student voice and participation in developing, implementing, evaluating, and reflecting on school wide initiatives. In providing more voice for students, it puts students more in the center of their learning and gives them more agency and sense of belonging in their school community.

We will gather student voice in two ways: a student voice survey administered at three points during the school year (quantitative growth measure), and a student focus group convened at 3 points during the school year (qualitative measure). Students will be given an opportunity to provide feedback and influence our school-wide initiatives including:
- Grading 4 Equity
- Inclusive Practices
- Social Emotional Learning Opportunities
- Family/Parent/Student communication

Staff Goal:

Because we believe in upholding the humanity and dignity of all of our students, Islander Middle School will work to build a community of inclusion where we seek to provide an equitable learning environment for all students. Because of the focus on equity and inclusion by the adults at IMS, all students will take a more active role in the learning process, understanding what success looks like, make better decisions around their learning progression and take ownership in their learning that will serve them both in the short- and long-term.

Of primary focus this year will be
- All staff reflect on student learning and monitor learning with the Standards Based Gradebook.
- All staff utilize Mindset 2 (proficiency scales and essential standards) to drive their assessment using a 4 point scale.
- All staff prioritize communication with our students, our families and our PLC Teams about where students are in the learning process.
- All staff live into the *4 mindset practices with an emphasis on leveraging UDL principles and removing barriers.

- IMS teams collaborate with MIHS staff around 8th to 9th grade transitions and the impact of grading, academic behaviors, and SEL.
- Examine and reduce barriers for students who need academic challenge and/or additional support.

Leadership: Three groups will enact, monitor, and amend of our G4E goals.

Student Goal:

IMS will utilize a distributive leadership model to collect student voice and implement the necessary adjustments to school-wide initiatives. The Administrative team will create an initial draft of a student voice survey, which will be reviewed and refined by the Principal's Cabinet. Principal's Cabinet will be the primary body responsible for ongoing collection and review of student voice survey data.

To gather qualitative data through student focus groups, the administrative team will work with the IMS Counseling team, Leadership, WEB (Where Everybody Belongs) Advisors, Justice and Understanding Support Team Advisor, and club/activity advisors to ensure that the focus group is both inclusive and reflective of our diverse student community.

Staff Goal:

The first group is the G4E Support Team. This team consists of admin, coaches and teachers. They meet weekly to analyze best practices around G4E, develop professional development opportunities for staff, examine progress and barriers to progress and determine next steps in the work.

The second group who is leading this work is our IMS Principal's Cabinet. Our Content Team Leaders, who serve on the Principal's Cabinet, are facilitating their content Professional Learning Community. This year, PLC teams will continue to work on reflecting on and refining essential standards, proficiency and recording/reporting within the move to Skyward SBG (Questions 1 & 2 for PLCs). However, the foundation for our PLC work this year is digging deeper into PLC questions 3 & 4. Question 3 focuses on what happens when students don't learn. Question 4 focuses on what happens if students have already learned. Through dialogue and data conversations, PLC teams will continue to utilize Tier 1 interventions in the classroom as well create and implement Tier 2 interventions to remediate and/or enrich learning for students during Gator Time. This PLC work serves as the foundation for the G4E process.

Alignment to MISD district priorities and goals:

Student Goal:

Student inclusion in the decision making process aligns with our values of increasing student Belonging as well as Broadcasting student voice. As our primary constituents, students should have an amplified voice in the initiatives and instructional practices that make up their learning experience. The collection of student voice, both quantitative and qualitative, also aligns with the district's values of "creating inclusive and equitable learning settings." By collecting and broadcasting student voice in relation to instructional initiatives, we believe that students will feel more included in the educational process.

Having a voice in the development, implementation, and reflection of school-wide initiatives requires self-awareness and encourages responsible decision making as students are asked to (and provided support in) seeing the big picture and thinking critically on behalf of the whole school community. Additionally, ensuring that student voice opportunities are inclusive and reflective of our diverse community models for students the ideas of inclusiveness and respect for all voices. Increasing opportunities for student participation in the school-wide learning process also aligns to student-centered Fundamentals 3 (Self-awareness), 4 (Analytical

and critical thinking) and 5 (Foster and embrace diversity).

Staff Goal:
The IMS School Improvement Plan aligns with several key constructs:
1. District Improvement Plan
2. MISD's Values, Vision and Mission
- *Values:* Students are the priority. We believe in:
  - Supporting the whole child
  - Creating inclusive and equitable learning settings
  - Ensuring our school communities are safe and supportive
  - Providing rigorous and challenging learning
- *Vision:* Inspiring our students to be lifelong learners as they create their futures.
- *Mission*: The District will foster learning by engaging students in thinking critically, solving problems creatively, and working collaboratively.
3.School Board Fundamental 1 (Personalization), 2 (Maintain high standard) and 5 (Foster and embrace diversity).
4. The WASA Inclusionary Practice overarching vision In order to increase achievement for all students, eliminate inequities & barriers, promote safe and supportive learning environments, and provide challenging learning opportunities, Mercer Island School District will implement a multi-tiered system of support built on a foundation of Universal Design for Learning, that is inclusive of equity and access for all students, engagement with families and community, academic support, behavioral systems, and social-emotional learning.
5. Dr. Rundle's 4 Bs (The Scholars First-Dr. Tammy Campbell)
- Belonging - every student feeling connected and capable,
- Belief - limitless potential of every student,
- Barriers - breaking down traditional mindsets of teaching and learning and having the willingness to embrace change, research, and professional voice,
- Broadcasting - Giving students an authentic voice and role in the learning process

Results IMS will use to determine the effectiveness and impact on students:

Student Goal:
As opportunities for student voice and Broadcasting increase, IMS will see tangible results in reports of student belonging as well as student articulation of school wide initiatives. Specifically, IMS will see:
- An increase in students reporting that school leadership "listens to students" on the EES survey.
- An increase of students reporting a "supportive learning environment" on the EES survey.
- An increase in the number of students reporting that they understand grading policies and practices.
- An increase in the number of students able to articulate their learning progress, including access to level 4 thinking.
- Explicit connection between student voice and adjustments to school-wide initiatives.

Staff Goal:

- All staff will use a standards based gradebook as a means to communicate learning.
- All IMS staff will use the PLC process and Gator Time to implement Tier 2 intervention opportunities for students.

- An increase in communication to students and families about grading practices and learning.
- Increase in the number of reports (qualitative & quantitative) stating students are becoming independent learners because the feedback loop has improved, students see the learning progression, and the students are setting goals and taking action to improve their learning experiences.
- An increase in the numbers of students who are accessing appropriate levels of academic stretch.
- Increase in the numbers of students being supported in general education through inclusionary practices.
- As standards are more aligned, an increase in Spring SBAC scores should be a result as we are more clear on what students should know and be able to do in each course. When examining our current 6th graders' Spring SBA scores to their 5th grade SBA scores, there will be clear evidence that students have made progress by closing their achievement gap or maintaining their academic growth.
- Analysis of whether G4E grading practices and resulting student grades align with achievement on standardized tests such as the SBAC.
- The dependent variable is High School grading, the independent variable is middle school grading. We will investigate how successfully the students transition to MIHS.

Resources needed to realize the IMS goals:

- Book Study Material costs
- Professional Development time during District Directed days, Staff meetings, Gator Time PLC time and other learning improvement opportunities
- Release Time for alignment and data conversations
- Professional development opportunities outside of the workday including conferences and institutes.

Addendum: What is G4E?

*4 Mindset Practices:
1) Student behavior is ungraded,
2) The "veil" is lifted for students so they know the steps involved to progress to high-levels of learning,
3) Students have flexible means to engage in learning, and
4) Students will have multiple opportunities to show evidence of understanding because learning never ends.

(Belief, Barriers) <u>What is it?</u> Grading 4 Equity is an approach that combines a Standards-Based mindset with a Universal Design for Learning Framework to ensure that students and families have specific information on what a student knows and can do while eliminating factors that can distort the final grade mark. In addition, Grading 4 Equity practices better articulate student strengths and areas of growth in the learning process. The ultimate goal is to communicate a grade mark that is the best representation of how well a student knows the content while ensuring equity and access for each student.

(Barriers, Broadcasting) <u>What are the outcomes</u>? Grading 4 Equity measures the mastery of the essential standards, or how well students understand the important content and skills in class after giving students a variety of ways to enter into, practice and engage with the content (Universal Design for Learning). Grading 4 Equity aligns standards (specify what all students should know and be able to do by the end of the school year) with proficiency scales (a detailed learning progression for students). A Grading 4 Equity approach allows teachers, students and families to understand more clearly what is expected of our learners and how to help them be successful. It gives students multiple ways to enter into the learning, lots of choice, as well as multiple ways to demonstrate learning. Ultimately, at IMS we believe learning is never done!

(Belief, Belonging, Broadcasting)<u>What is the purpose of Grading 4 Equity?</u>
The purpose of Grading 4 Equity is to improve student learning by focusing on students. We believe that by planning multiple pathways for students to enter into the learning and interact with the concepts and ideas they will better engage in the learning process and be able to access higher levels of learning. We believe that when instruction, curriculum and assessment are aligned with essential standards and proficiency scales, it provides an accurate measurement and reporting process on students' proficiency in meeting those standards. We also believe that it is essential to actively involve students in the whole process. The intention of Grading 4 Equity is to provide better communication to students, parents, teachers and administrators on the students' academic abilities and to shift the conversation away from grades and points and instead emphasize student learning and progress within the content.

(Barriers, Belief) <u>Why is IMS emphasizing Grading 4 Equity rather than simply calling it standards-based grading?</u> In order for us to successfully implement Universal Design for Learning, we must have firm goals aligned to a learning progression that lifts the veil for students to become the expert learners they need to be to keep doors open for them in the future. Standards Based Grading alone doesn't ensure we are designing high-levels of learning throughout the unit, nor does it ensure that students have the flexibility they need to

engage in learning that works for them. A typical Standards Based Grading mindset makes the level 4 on a proficiency scale almost unattainable for students. It describes it as students being able to address content not taught in class, or purports that students are able to cover content at the next grade level. We believe that all students need to be given ongoing opportunities to work at a level 4. We want level 4 to be clear and attainable, with lots of opportunities to practice, even if this isn't a place all students can live. We want level 4 to be the "now what" do I do with this learning, the "so what" connections to real life, and "that's what" connections to issues of equity and social justice. Answers to these questions bring the rigor, depth and complexity in thinking and doing that we'd like all students to practice. Additionally, with our MISD emphasis on UDL, we saw an opportunity to expand our practices (mindset 3 and mindset 4) to offer a variety of opportunities for all students to engage and access high quality content/skills and thinking opportunities, as well as multiple means for students to share what they've learned. The UDL concept of creating multiple access points for students and giving them voice and choice in their learning is another layer of G4E that focuses on equity for ALL learners. These alterations to a typical SBG model are what changed it in our perspective from simply calling our work Standards Based Grading to creating the Grading 4 Equity concept.

(Broadcasting, Belief, Barriers) <u>How does Grading 4 Equity differ from traditional letter grades?</u>
Grading 4 Equity informs us what students have learned and know. It measures a student's knowledge of grade level content over time by reporting the most recent, consistent level of performance. For example, a student might struggle in the beginning of a grading period with new content but then demonstrate proficiency by the end of the grading period. In traditional grading, the student's performance for the whole grading period would be averaged, and early assessment scores that were low would be averaged together with proficient assessment scores. The result of the scores averaged would be a lower grade. When a percentage system is applied, it can be misleading. In Grading 4 Equity, a student who reaches proficiency would be reported proficient, and the grade would reflect current performance levels.

(Belief, Broadcasting) <u>Why Change?</u>
Traditional grading often measures many different factors such as homework, extra credit, attendance, behavior etc. and sometimes compares how well students do in relation to their classmates. Grading 4 Equity measures how well an individual student is doing in relation to each grade-level standard or skill against a proficiency scale of 4, 3, 2 or 1. Grading 4 Equity gives students and parents specific information on what the student knows and what the student can do. It eliminates many of the factors that can distort the final traditional grade as a true indicator of mastery. It clears up the uncertainty about what the grade means. The goal is to do all we can to make sure that a grade is the best representation of how well a student knows the content and to transform the classroom to be a place where learning is the focus, not competition and points.