

# Nikola Tesla STEM High School

## School Improvement Plan

### Annual Update: 2025-26

*This school improvement plan meets the requirements of WAC 180-16-220 and WAC 180-105-020.<sup>1</sup>*

#### SCHOOL OVERVIEW

**Description:** Nikola Tesla STEM High School is a science, technology, engineering, and mathematics high school that uses problem-based learning to prepare students for future STEM professions. Students conduct research in STEM Lab Concentrations, investigate real world problems, and bring research and debate into the equation while working towards viable resolutions. Students enroll in, on average, six science courses and four math courses for the duration of their high school years. Engineering and Technology are integrated into all grade level classes throughout a student's four years at Tesla STEM. During the first two years of a student's experience at STEM, students are immersed in an integrated Science, Engineering, and Humanities sequence where the focus is on the students' development of multiple skills, including conducting authentic research, working with primary source documents, developing scientific investigations, understanding and applying the engineering design process, collaboratively working in the Problem-Based Learning environment, developing digital literacy, and expanding critical thinking skills. As a critical component in STEM education, students work in a STEM Lab Concentration and/or STEM Pathway in their junior and senior years, conducting inquiry and research, exploring questions of their own, and championing their own ideas to the level of publication and/or production. The STEM Lab Concentrations and STEM Pathways continue to address the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals to support a bright and sustainable future on a global scale.

**Mission Statement:**

Tesla STEM is a small, close-knit community. We embrace constructive struggle, push each other to innovate, and address the world's most compelling and crucial problems.

We develop curiosity, resilience, and perseverance by: pursuing rigor, discovering the questions that have not already been asked, advocating for ourselves and for those who need our support, collaborating across disciplines and grade levels, fostering relationships that inspire emotional and intellectual fulfillment, and building communication through dynamic presentation and supportive critique, and embracing failure as part of the learning process.

Nicola Tesla STEM High School nurtures students' adaptability, intellectual resolve, and curiosity to inspire positive change from personal growth to global impact. Our students leave with the tools to excel in college and beyond.

Inspire. Educate. Innovate.

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<sup>1</sup> LWSD School Board Approval on <insert date>

**2025-26 PRIORITIES AT A GLANCE**

<b>Priority</b>	<b>Priority Area</b>	<b>Focus Grade Level(s) and/or Student Group(s)</b>	<b>Desired Outcome</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>9th Grade Credits</b> ( <i>accrue 6+ credits</i> )	9 <sup>th</sup> grade students	Increase 9 <sup>th</sup> grade success of earning all credits by 2% from the 2024-25 to 2025-26 school year.
<b>2</b>	<b>All LWSD Students Graduate</b> ( <i>focus on subgroup that is not graduating at high rate</i> )	Focus group includes students not on track to graduate	Students supported with an IEP or a 504 will graduate at the same rate as students without; target is 100% on-time graduation.
<b>3</b>	<b>Social Emotional Learning; Attendance and Belonging</b>	3a. Attendance  3b. Belonging	3a. All students will show an increase in regular attendance (students attending 90% or more of school days). 3b. All students will show an increase in sense of belonging from 60% to 64% in Panorama data on the question, "When you're at school, how much do you feel like you belong?"

**CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PRIORITIES**

Our target is that all students and student groups are improving, with all gaps closing each year. The following priorities have been set to guide us in achieving this.

<b>Priority #1</b>							
<b>Priority Area</b>	<b>9th Grade Credits</b> ( <i>accrue 6+ credits</i> )						
<b>Focus Grade Level(s) and/or Student Group(s)</b>	9 <sup>th</sup> grade students will earn all six credits during their 9 <sup>th</sup> grade year.						
<b>Focus Area</b>	Our focus group includes 9 <sup>th</sup> grade students who either have not completed Algebra 1 or show academic evidence of need in the first quarter.						
<b>Desired Outcome</b>	Increase the percentage of 9 <sup>th</sup> students earning all credits from baseline of 91.14% in 2024-25 to 93% in 2025-26.						
<b>Current Data Supporting Focus Area</b>	Data from previous years for students who start at Tesla STEM, but who have not successfully completed Algebra 1, show evidence of ongoing academic struggle. Academic data from 1 <sup>st</sup> quarter grades, specifically grades below 70% (D+, D and N grades) will be reviewed and used to track ongoing achievement.						
<b>Strategy to Address Priority</b>	<table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 50%;"><b>Action</b></th> <th style="width: 50%;"><b>Measure of Fidelity of Implementation</b></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Inform all teachers of which students have not yet completed Algebra 1 and make individual support plans for each student.</td> <td>Monthly academic checks for students in the focus area.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Administrators will analyze academic success data at each Skyward grade update period to identify any students who are falling below target.</td> <td>Ensure that every student who is falling below passing scores has been brought forward on a student of concern conference or receives a Tier 2 support.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Measure of Fidelity of Implementation</b>	Inform all teachers of which students have not yet completed Algebra 1 and make individual support plans for each student.	Monthly academic checks for students in the focus area.	Administrators will analyze academic success data at each Skyward grade update period to identify any students who are falling below target.	Ensure that every student who is falling below passing scores has been brought forward on a student of concern conference or receives a Tier 2 support.
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Administrators will analyze academic success data at each Skyward grade update period to identify any students who are falling below target.	Ensure that every student who is falling below passing scores has been brought forward on a student of concern conference or receives a Tier 2 support.						
<b>Strategy to Engage Students, Families, Parents and Community Members</b>	Tier 1: Administrators will communicate with all 9 <sup>th</sup> grade families of the importance of successfully earning all credits and the specific impacts of the move from a 7-period to a 6-period day. Tier 2: Counselors will engage in family meetings at the quarter if a student is not independently showing a trajectory of successfully earning all credits, including establishing an expected schedule to attend teacher office hours.						
<b>Timeline for Focus</b>	8 times a year (mid-quarter, quarter) review student achievement and respond according to the Tiered support plan.						
<b>Method(s) to Monitor Progress</b>	Grade checks, attendance at office hours, end of semester 1 and 2 grades. If any student is credit deficient, create a written recovery plan.						

<b>Priority #2a – Increase Graduation Rates</b>									
<b>Priority Area</b>	<b>All LWS D Students Graduate</b> ( <i>focus on subgroup that is not graduating at high rate</i> )								
<b>Focus Grade Level(s) and/or Student Group(s)</b>	Students who are receiving special education or 504 support.								
<b>Focus Area</b>	Increase 4-year graduation rates as appropriate for students receiving special education services or 504 support.								
<b>Desired Outcome</b>	Students who receive special education or 504 supports will graduate at the same rate as their peers.								
<b>Current Data Supporting Focus Area</b>	The 2025 4-year graduation rate for all students was 97%. The number of students in the target group is suppressed for privacy. However, in 2025, there was a discrepancy between students with disabilities and students without on 4-year graduation rates.								
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Engage with students and families through the IEP process to ensure the IEP fully supports the students' needs.	Ensure that every IEP is compliant and complete.								
<b>Strategy to Engage Students, Families, Parents and Community Members</b>	Include graduation and credit discussion in IEP and 504 annual meetings to ensure that students and families are aware of credit status. Co-create and document the recovery plan.								
<b>Timeline for Focus</b>	2025-26 school year								
<b>Method(s) to Monitor Progress</b>	End of semester grades for juniors and seniors, followed by meeting with families to document the recovery plan.								

<b>Priority #2b – English Language Arts</b>		
<b>Priority Area</b>	<b>All LWS D Students Graduate</b> <i>(focus on subgroup that is not graduating at high rate)</i>	
<b>Focus Grade Level(s) and/or Student Group(s)</b>	English Language Arts	
<b>Focus Area</b>	Students in grades 9 – 11 will synthesize from multiple texts to improve their synthesis writing.	
<b>Desired Outcome</b>	By the end of the 2025-26 school year, 11 <sup>th</sup> grade students will earn a mean score of 4.3 or higher on the AP exam Synthesis Essay. This ELA skill supports STEM courses and is a requirement for achieving STEM literacy.	
<b>Current Data Supporting Focus Area</b>	Student achievement on the AP Synthesis essay in 2025 was 4.24, representing a consistent participation of over 90% of 11 <sup>th</sup> grade students participating in the AP Language and Composition exam.	
<b>Strategy to Address Priority</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Measure of Fidelity of Implementation</b>
	Synthesis is taught several times in all ELA classes, building on skills from previous years.	Teacher alignment with expectations and common scoring of the synthesis essays to ensure fidelity across teachers.
	Teachers will deliver explicit teaching on synthesis using exemplar essays.	Teacher pairs will intentionally and consistently deliver explicit teaching on synthesis; student achievement will show growth in their writing throughout the year.
	Students will complete 5 practice essays in 11 <sup>th</sup> grade.	In addition to teacher feedback, students will self-assess their writing through the portfolio review.
<b>Strategy to Engage Students, Families, Parents and Community Members</b>	Through the new learning management system, Canvas, families can see student progress and achievement, including teacher feedback on individual essays. Tier 2 strategy is to engage families directly when students are below the expected achievement, through teacher, counselor or administrator meetings.	
<b>Timeline for Focus</b>	2025-26 school year	
<b>Method(s) to Monitor Progress</b>	AP scores on the synthesis essay will help assess how effectively students learned to synthesize diverse sources into a coherent, articulate argument that addresses a given prompt	

**Priority #2c - Mathematics**

<b>Priority Area</b>	<b>All LWS D Students Graduate</b> <i>(focus on subgroup that is not graduating at high rate)</i>	
<b>Focus Grade Level(s)</b>	Grades 9 - 12	
<b>Focus Area</b>	Increase student skills in mathematical practice of justification, increasing students' use of explaining mathematical reasoning, and justifying claims with evidence.	
<b>Desired Outcome</b>	By the end of the 2025-26 school year, our students will earn a mean score of 4 or higher on AP style free response and multiple-choice justification problems. Approximately 50% of all students are currently registered for an AP mathematics exam.	
<b>Current Data Supporting Focus Area</b>	Student scores from 2024-25 AP mathematics exams and classroom assessments indicate that students will benefit from focused instruction in justification and communicating mathematical thinking with evidence. In 2025, the AP math scores in free response questions were 59% and the Justification scores were 69%.	
<b>Strategy to Address Priority</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Measure of Fidelity of Implementation</b>
	Scoring free response questions with rubric	Each teacher will consistently include class discussions about the distinctions between different levels of proficiency when communicating reasoning and giving students opportunities to score their own and other student responses.
	Formative assessments	Increase opportunities for students to solve problems requiring justification and receive feedback, both from their teacher and peers, on the accuracy and completeness of their justification.
	Teacher alignment of grading criteria	Teachers will work through their PLC meetings to align grading standards and address areas of need.
<b>Strategy to Engage Students, Families, Parents and Community Members</b>	Communication with students and families using our new learning management system, Canvas. Initiate quarterly updates to students and families including current and future class activities.	
<b>Timeline for Focus</b>	2025-26 school year	
<b>Method(s) to Monitor Progress</b>	Ongoing feedback to students on AP style free-response questions on justification and explaining reasoning with evidence, scored against the AP rubric. This skill will be practiced in all math classes.	

**Priority #3a**

<b>Priority Area</b>	<b>Social Emotional Learning - Attendance</b>	
<b>Focus Grade Level(s)</b>	Grades 11 and 12	
<b>Focus Area</b>	Increase regular attendance	
<b>Desired Outcome</b>	Regular attendance will increase for all students by 2% and will increase for the target group by 3% in the 2025-26 school year.	
<b>Current Data Supporting Focus Area</b>	Tesla STEM students show strong attendance at 9 <sup>th</sup> and 10 <sup>th</sup> grades, with declining attendance at 11 <sup>th</sup> and 12 <sup>th</sup> grades. 2024-25 regular attendance for all students was 89.39%, with a measurable decline in grades 11 and 12. The current year's attendance data shows an indication of a similar pattern.	
<b>Strategy to Address Priority</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Measure of Fidelity of Implementation</b>
	Tier 1: Initiate consistent messages to students and families about the importance of regular attendance each quarter	Evaluate view rate of messages sent through Parent Square, text, and direct email.
	Solicit student input on ideas about how to communicate the importance of regular attendance, implement 1-3 ideas generated from students	Student meetings, focus group feedback.
	Teachers Share importance of regular attendance in their classes	During the first semester, all teachers will deliver a message about the importance of regular attendance in their class within a school-wide two-week window.
	Tier 2: Ensure that attendance is considered as a function of social emotional wellness during student of concern meetings	Students of concern meeting notes will include consideration of attendance as a function of social-emotional wellness.
<b>Strategy to Engage Students, Families, Parents and Community Members</b>	Seek root cause analysis of declining attendance from 9 <sup>th</sup> to 12 <sup>th</sup> grade with students and families through focus groups and direct feedback. Communicate regular attendance expectations through the handbook talks and individual student and family meetings.	
<b>Timeline for Focus</b>	Monthly review of attendance data	
<b>Method(s) to Monitor Progress</b>	Analysis of monthly attendance reports through administration and student of concern meetings, follow district and state guidelines supporting regular attendance.	

**Priority #3b**

<b>Priority Area</b>	<b>Social Emotional Learning – Sense of Belonging</b>	
<b>Focus Grade Level(s)</b>	Grades 9-12	
<b>Focus Area</b>	Increase a sense of belonging for all students.	
<b>Desired Outcome</b>	Increase students' sense of belonging as reported on the Panorama survey by 3% at each grade level using the question, “When you are at school, how often do you feel you belong?” Spring 2025 data shows that 60% of students responded positively to this question.	
<b>Current Data Supporting Focus Area</b>	Panorama data, current and historic, on this question is consistent across gender, grade and race, indicating that it is an area of focus for our students. Additional data has been collected via focus groups to solicit student information on how students experience belonging while at school.	
<b>Strategy to Address Priority</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Measure of Fidelity of Implementation</b>
	Continue focus group work into 2025-26 to examine lived experiences of current students.	Structured information to teachers from the focus group of students.
	Engage our Equity Team, made up of students from all grades, teachers, administrators, and parents to explore the root cause of a lagging feeling of belonging, and generate student perceptions of ways to implement strategies that increase sense of belonging for all students.	Identify patterns of exclusion and name these lived experiences for teachers. Generate ways that adults can interrupt these patterns.
<b>Strategy to Engage Students, Families, Parents and Community Members</b>	Vested partners, including students and families on the Equity Team and students in the focus groups will be crucial members of leading this work.	
<b>Timeline for Focus</b>	2025-2026 school years	
<b>Method(s) to Monitor Progress</b>	Panorama data, Fall 2025 and Spring 2026, ongoing and regular equity and focus group meetings with students, resulting in qualitative data about the impact of the actions.	

## STATE ASSESSMENT PARTICIPATION

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires that all schools meet at least a 95% participation rate for state assessments for all students as well as each subgroup. Schools that fall below this threshold in any group must include goals and actions the school will take to ensure 95% of students participate.

Strategies the school is using to meet participation requirements include:

- Common language on the importance of state testing is used by all schools in the district.
- Staff receive training on the administration of state assessments, including the use of supports and accommodations to ensure all students have an equal opportunity to demonstrate learning.
- Make-up testing is provided for students that miss the school's date.
- Test completion lists are monitored by both school testing coordinators and district personnel.
- The district is using the recommended refusal procedures and form developed by the Washington Educational Research Association.