PLC CHARTER SCHOOLS

Performance Management Plan Narrative

April 26th, 2012

Introduction

PLC Charter Schools, an Arizona non-profit corporation, currently operates Arts Academy at Estrella Mountain (AAEM) located at 2504 S. 91st Avenue in Tolleson, Arizona. AAEM is a K-8th grade elementary school which serves approximately 880 students.

Its vision is to instill a desire in students to become life-long learners, empowered with the ability to have a positive effect on the global community. The primary mission is to establish a Student-Family-Teacher-Civic relationship that develops and sustains a professional learning community in which arts and technology combined with academics and real life-skills educate and enrich the whole individual.

AAEM is committed to providing a learning environment rich in the arts, where students achieve academic and social excellence while solving real-life problems in a cooperative manner. It is our belief every student has the ability and right to learn. This takes place best when educators, parents, and students share a common set of educational goals and values. Teachers provide students with educational experiences in a variety of academic areas such as social studies, language arts, math and science. Additionally, enrichment activities are offered such as music, art, dance performing arts, and physical education.

Integration of Arizona Academic Standards into Instruction

AAEM has strived to maintain high scholastic principles and rigor. Teachers have been required to integrate the academic standards into lesson plans set forth by the Arizona Department of Education. During the same academic school year, the curriculum coordinator introduced and trained the faculty on developing scope and sequence maps, which is a snapshot of the depth and breadth of the information a teacher plans to teach within a specific curriculum area. Creating a scope and sequence for each subject area is beneficial to the teacher and serves as a guideline to ensure the teacher stays on track throughout each semester. Each teacher completed a scope and sequence map for their particular grade level which integrated the Arizona Academic Standards and was posted in the classroom. These scope and sequence maps served as the curriculum framework for the entire school with academic skills listed throughout the year for each particular grade level. The scope and sequence maps thus laid the foundation for the development of curriculum maps, a process for collecting and recording curriculum-related data which identifies core skills and content taught and instructional processes and assessments used for each subject area and grade level. Administration required teachers in FY 2008 to develop curriculum maps with the Arizona State Standards identified for their particular grade level and core subject. The purpose was, and still is, that curriculum maps are tools that help teachers keep track of what State standards have been taught and what still needs to be covered. Administration continually reviews teachers' lesson plans, scope and sequence maps, and curriculum maps. Constructive feedback is provided to teachers through informal meetings, observations, and evaluations as to whether the Arizona Academic Standards are being addressed and to ensure curriculum collaboration between grade levels. This standard teacher assessment practice has continued from FY 2008 through 2012. Teachers and administration have analyzed AIMS data at faculty meetings to identify if students have gained proficiency of the State's academic standards to determine areas of weakness and strength.

Monitoring and Documenting Student Proficiency

AAEM acknowledges the only way teachers and administration can identify which students can demonstrate proficiency on State academic standards is if students are continuously assessed and monitored as part of the classroom instruction. AAEM has made continual improvement in monitoring and documenting student reading and math proficiency. In FY 2008, teachers implemented benchmark tests for students. DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) benchmark assessments were given to K-5th grade student three times a year (beginning, midyear, end of year) to establish a baseline of student reading proficiency level and to track student growth. Students who were not testing at their grade level were progress monitored every three weeks by the Reading Interventionist. This data was shared with parents and the regular classroom teacher so reading interventions could be instituted to provide support for the child's reading success. DIBELS has been used since its implementation to monitor and document student reading ability levels.

In FY 2009, A+ Testing was implemented and utilized as a benchmark assessment for grades second through eighth to track student progress in both reading and math. After numerous faculty meetings and the review of A+ Testing, administration decided to discontinue use of A+ Testing and adopted Acuity in FY 2011 for both math and reading. This decision was made due to Acuity's user friendliness and real time data acquisition. The Acuity benchmark test was administered three times during the FY 2012 for grades third through eighth to get a snapshot of how the students might perform on AIMS. Acuity results were disseminated and evaluated by teachers and administration to target specific areas students were still struggling in. Lesson plans were adjusted to meet the instructional needs of the students.

Buckle Down Math, a series concentrated on essential grade-specific math skills to help students master critical concepts to succeed on AIMS, was purchased as supplemental material in FY 2010. Buckle Down Math has remained in place as a good indicator of monitoring and documenting student proficiency for AIMS. In FY 2012, Buckle Down Reading, Math and Science assessments were given to second through eighth grade students to gather more evidence on students' proficiency levels towards performance on AIMS.

Starfall, a common core aligned language arts and reading curriculum, was adopted by kindergarten in FY 2010 for benchmark assessment while first grade continued to use teacher created grade level tests. Since FY 2008, second grade teachers utilized Stanford 10 data to document their students' language arts proficiency levels. Third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers used IDEAL to create tests based on the Essential Math Concepts where the goal was for 80% student mastery. Other methods AAEM teachers have utilized to monitor and document students' progress include:

- Understanding and articulating in advance of teaching the achievement targets that their students are to hit.
- Informing their students of learning goals, in terms students understand, at the very beginning of the teaching and learning process.
- Becoming assessment literate and thus able to transform their expectations into assessment exercises and scoring procedures that accurately reflect student achievement.

- Translating classroom assessment results into frequent descriptive feedback (versus judgmental feedback) for students, providing them with specific insights as to how to improve.
- Continuously adjusting instruction based on the results of classroom assessments.
- Engaging students in regular self-assessment, with standards held constant so that students can watch themselves grow over time and thus feel in charge of their own success.
- Actively involving students in communicating with their teacher and their families about their achievement status and improvement.

Professional Development

AAEM professional development standards are intended to guide efforts to improve professional development for all teachers. These standards acknowledge that teacher professional development encompasses a wide variety of learning activities. The list includes, but is not limited to, teacher study groups, coaching and mentoring relationships, teacher networks, participation on school improvement teams and committees that develop curricula and assessments, workshops, and college and university courses. These standards can help improve the quality of professional development by:

- Providing a clear vision of high-quality professional development that recognizes needs, priorities, and resources.
- Guiding planning, designing, implementing, and evaluating high-quality professional development.
- Supporting alignment of professional development with goals for improving student learning.
- Informing allocation of resources for professional development.
- Defining accountability for ensuring that professional development is of the highest quality and readily accessible.

Another valuable resource such as teacher-to-teacher training has also been provided to teachers. Teachers are allowed to observe their colleagues during instruction and they have found it impactful on their instructing methodologies. Examples of professional development teachers have attended are:

- Response to Intervention
- Acuity Benchmark Assessment
- Differentiated Instruction
- Master Teacher
- Charter School Law & Applications
- ADE Trainings – ELL, SPED, Common Core, OELAS, NCLB, ALEAT
- Open Court
- Easy Grammar Systems
- Fred Jones Classroom Management

- DIBELS Measurement
- Curriculum Mapping
- Socratic Circles
- Reading & Writing Effectiveness
- Six Traits Writing Workshop
- Technology Across the Curriculum
- Step Up to Writing

Reading

Curriculum Development

Over the past five years, the reading curriculum at AAEM has evolved due to the academic needs of the students and resources available. In FY 2008, Open Court, a basal reading program developed by SRA/McGraw-Hill, was purchased and implemented as the reading curriculum for K-5th grade. The program is designed to systematically teach decoding, comprehension, inquiry and investigation, and writing in a logical progression. The decision to move to Open Court basal reading program was made by the administration at that time. In addition to Open Court, teachers supplemented their reading program with outside sources such as ABC Teach, EdHelper, and Superteacher. Grades sixth through eighth utilized Prentice Hall as their reading curriculum. Open Court was used as the reading program at AAEM until FY 2010. Study Island Reading, a leading provider of standards-based assessment, instruction, and test preparation software programs for K-12 students, was purchased in FY 2011for 2nd -8th grade to augment the language arts curriculum at AAEM. To further enhance the language arts curriculum, fourth and fifth grade teachers piloted Easy Grammar Systems by Dr. Wanda C. Phillips to improve students' skills in writing and grammar. The pilot of Easy Grammar Systems was proven successful by an increase in student test scores. As a result, Easy Grammar Systems will be adopted for 2nd – 8th grade in FY 2013. Lastly, fifth grade also instituted the Excellence in Writing program in FY 2012 to study its effectiveness in improving students writing process skills.

Math

Curriculum Development

The mathematics program at AAEM has adjusted during the past five years. In FY 2008, K-6th grade teachers chose to pilot Harcourt Math, a curriculum based on scientific research that focuses on effective learning processes and instructional strategies. It included intervention strategies that diagnosed students' difficulties with mathematics concepts, skills, and problem solving, and provided intervention resources to ensure success for all learners. The Saxon Math program was selected for grades seventh and eighth because it systematically distributed instruction, practice, and assessment throughout the academic year. Due to a successful implementation of Harcourt Math, K-5th grade teachers continued to use this program until FY 2011. In FY 2009, 6th – 8th grade switched to Holt Math because it provided teachers with strategies for different learning styles and to accommodate students below grade level as well as those students who needed to be

challenged. With the integration of Common Core standards, administration chose to replace Harcourt Math with Math In Focus (Singapore Math) in FY 2012. This new math program will be rolled out in K-3rd grade in FY 2013, grades 4th-6th FY 2014, and grades 7th–8th in FY 2015. The Holt Math program for 6th–8th grades has remained in place in lieu of the change. Study Island, First in Math, and IXL (computer based and internet programs) were purchased in FY 2012 to supplement 1st–8th grade mathematics programs and to reinforce students' math skills over summer months.

Reading & Math Data Analysis

Students' AIMS scores from the prior school year were given to teachers to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses. These Data Day faculty meetings have occurred at the onset each academic school year since 2008 to gather baseline data of their students and align the curriculum to meet their students' academic needs. In FY 2012, Acuity benchmark assessments were used to predict 3rd-8th grade student performance on AIMS. Implementation of Essential Math Concepts (EMC's), instructional interventions, IXL, and Study Island provided additional support in reinforcing the Arizona Academic Standards and resources.

DIBELS data is analyzed to modify instruction in order to meet the academic needs of students in reading. K-5th grade students are progress monitored to track student growth and proficiency. In addition, DIBELS benchmark assessments were administered three times (beginning, mid, end of year) during the school year.

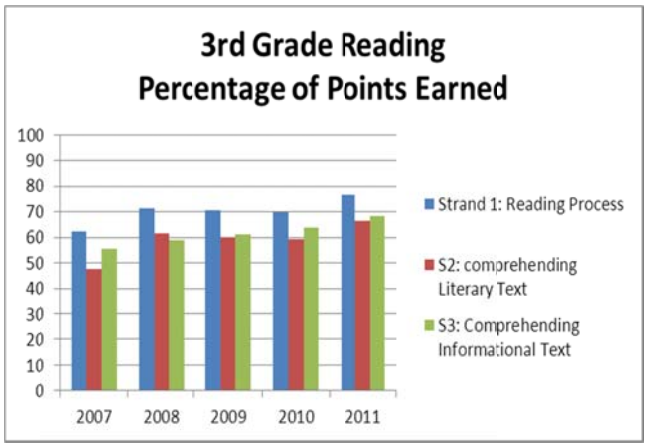
4th–8th grade teachers have adjusted curriculum and instruction based upon the previous year's AIMS results. Starfall progress monitoring was utilized twice a year by kindergarten teachers. Reading intervention groups were created based upon DIBELS and Acuity benchmark data. AZELLA determined which students were in English Language Development (ELD) classes. AAEM administration has collected student assessment data from the following resources:

- AIMS
- DIBELS
- Study Island
- A+ Testing
- Acuity
- AZELLA
- Starfall
- First in Math
- Teacher Created Benchmarks

Areas of Growth & Decline Based on AIMS Data (2007-2011)

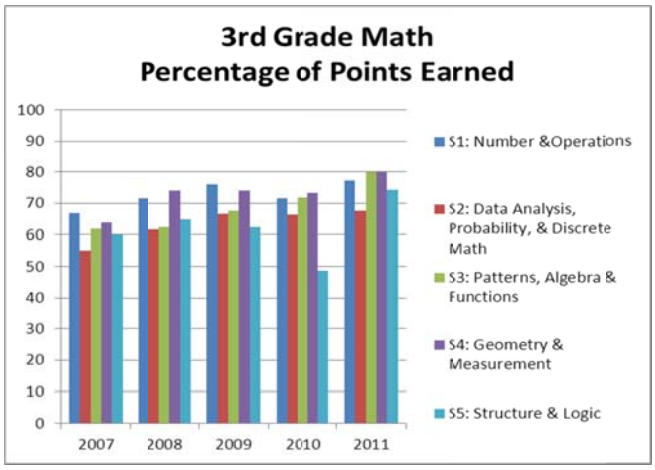
Standards referenced below can be cross referenced with the Arizona Academic Standards.
3rd Grade Reading

- Reading Process (S1) has had steady growth of about 15% since 2007.
- Comprehending Literary Text (S2) has had steady growth of almost 20% since 2007.
- Comprehending Informational Text (S3) has had overall growth of 20% since 2007.



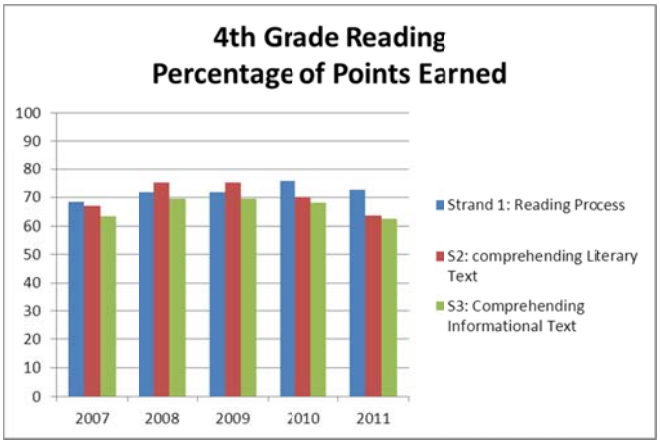
3rd Grade Math

- Overall Growth: In 2010, there was a decline due to a change in academic standards. With implementation of EMC's, First in Math, and Study Island in 2011, there was a rise in scores.
- Number and Operations (S1) has seen an overall growth of 10% since 2007.
- Patterns, Algebra, and Functions (S3) has steadily grown by 20% since 2007.
- Geometry, Measurement (S4) has steadily grown by 20% since 2007.
- Structure and Logic (S5) has seen an overall growth of about 15% since 2007.



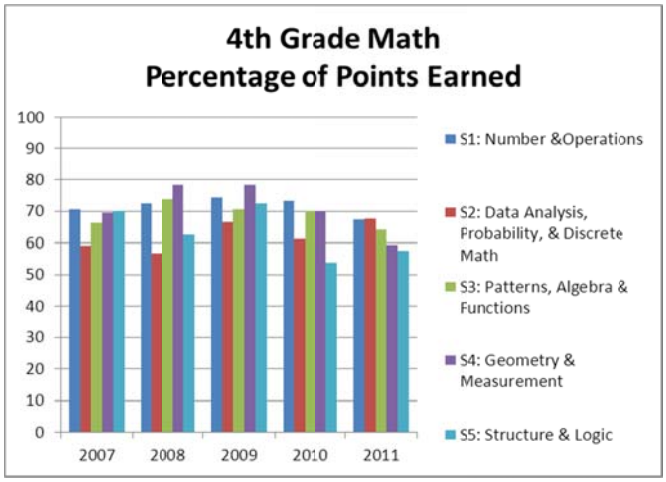
4th Grade Reading

- Reading Process (S1) has grown every year except for 2011 when there was a 3% drop.
- There has been an 8% decline specifically in expository text comprehension since 2009.
- Literary and Information Text (S2, S3) have declined nearly 10% since 2009. While reviewing the specific AIMS scores, the negative shift is due primarily to the significantly lower 4/5th English Language. Development combo class scores and one other 4th grade class. It is clear that the 4/5th combo class needs to have a strong, experienced teacher along with an aide.



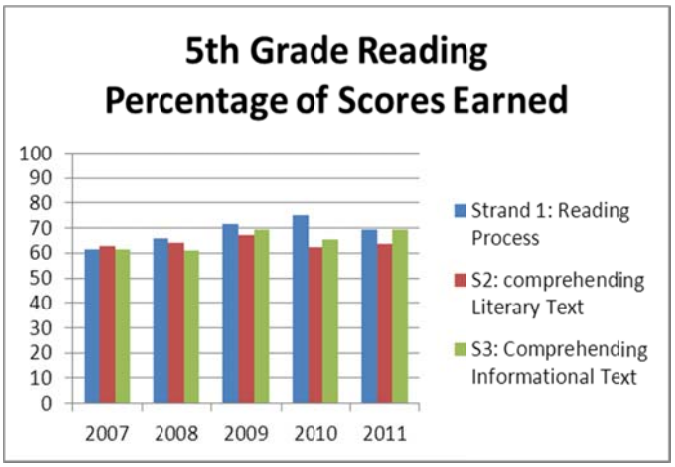
4th Grade Math

- Number and Operations (S1) had a 5% decline since 2009, of which most occurred from 2010 to 2011. When reviewing the scores this was due to a 4/5th grade ELD class and another 4th grade class.
- Data Analysis (S2) indicates a dip in 2010 due to standards change, but there was growth of 10%.
- Geometry, Measurement (S4) has seen a decline of nearly 20% since 2009.
- Structure and Logic (S5) has declined near 14% since 2009.



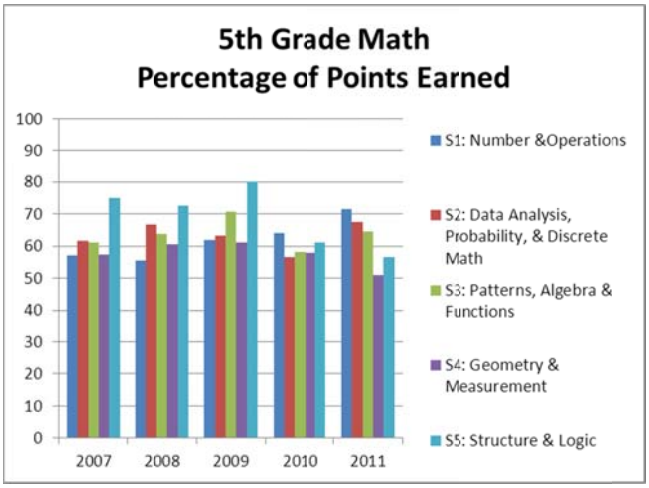
5th Grade Reading

- Reading Process (S1) has shown growth of about 12 % until 2011 when there was a drop of about 3% due to the significantly lower scores from the 4th/5th grade ELD class.
- Comprehending Literary Text (S2) shows a 4% increase from 2007 to 2009 which was followed by a decline of almost 5% in 2010 due to the 5th grade ELD class scores.
- Informational Text (S3) shows an overall gain of 5% since 2007.



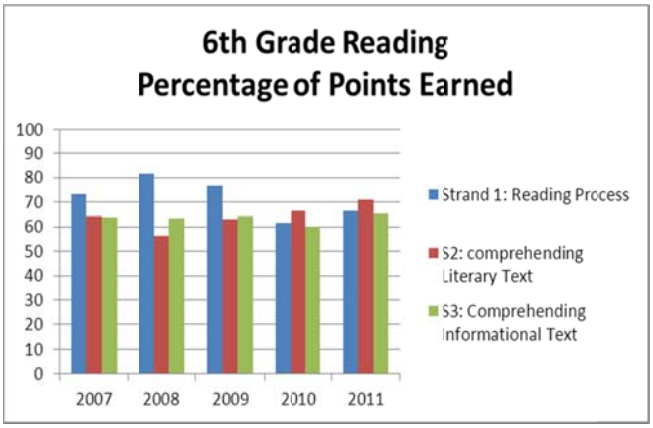
5th Grade Math

- Number Sense (S1) has improved by 14% from 2007 to 2011. The fifth grade teachers are data driven and many changes have been made due to the needs of the students. They implemented Essential Math Concepts in 2010 and focused on basic skills (Mountain Math) which signals to the absence of a dip in 2010 scores which was seen in all other grades.
- Data Analysis, Probability, and Discrete Math (S2): There was an almost 7% decrease in 2010 but the scores recovered in 2011 with an 11% increase.



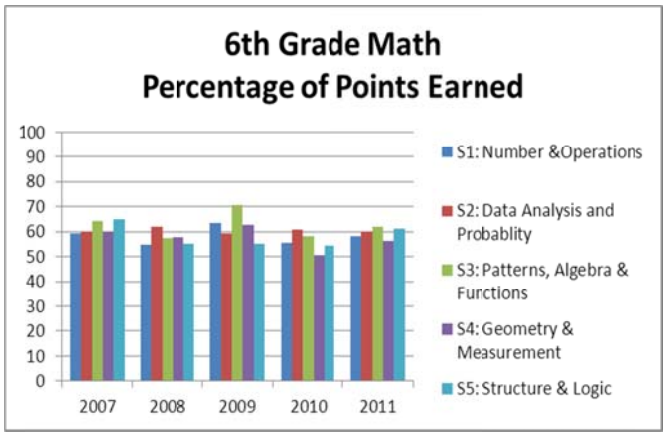
6th Grade Reading

- Reading Process (S1) there was nearly a 15% decline from 2009 to 2010 and a 4% increase in 2011 however the overall decline is about 10% from 2007. In 2011, students were leveled according to AIMS.
- In 2010, there was a large increase in the number of new students who were significantly below grade level.
- Comprehending Literary Text (S2) increased nearly 10% from 2009 to 2011.
- Comprehending Informational Text (S3) also increased nearly 9% from 2009 to 2011.



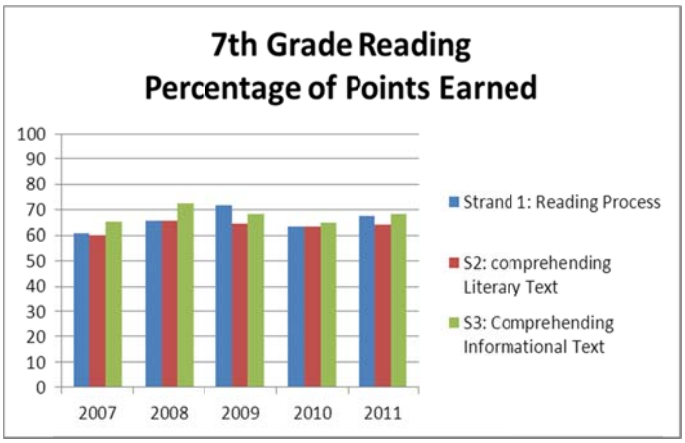
6th Grade Math

- Number and Operations (S1) There has been an overall decrease of 5% since 2009 which includes a slight recovery from the 2010 decline; there was an increase in Number Sense of over 9% from 2007 to 2011.
- Data Analysis (S2) had no significant change since 2007, and there was an almost 20% increase in systematic listing and vertex edge graphs. However, there was a 12% decrease in all other areas.
- Geometry, Measurement (S4) there was a 10% decrease in 2010 and 3% increase in 2011, but overall decrease since 2009. This may be due to the significant changes in the math standards for this strand.
- Structure and Logic (S5) there was a 10% decrease in 2009, decrease in 2010, but gain of 7% in 2011.



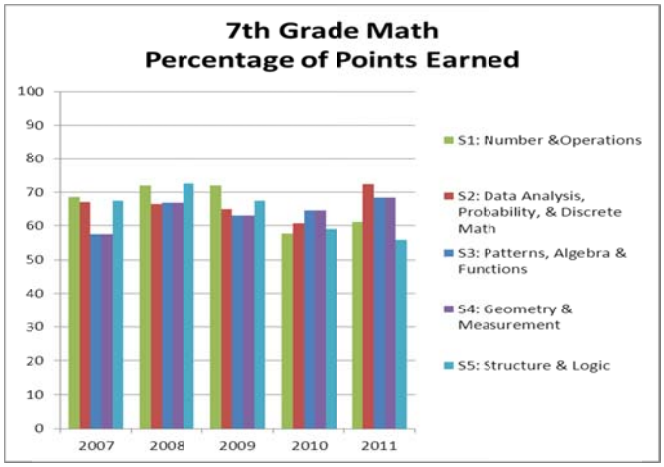
7th Grade Reading

- C3 persuasive text is the only area of improvement; all other areas have declined or remained the same.
- Reading Process (S1) there was a gain of more than 11% from 2007 to 2009 which was lost in 2010 because of an 8% decline. In 2011 there was a 4% increase, but overall there has been a 7% increase since 2009.
- Comprehending Literary Text (S2) there was a gain of 4% from 2007 to 2009, but very little change since 2009.
- Comprehending Informational Text (S3) there has been increase of 3% since 2007. Overall there has been little to no growth in all other areas except in Persuasive text which had a 4% increase. There has been a consistent decline in Functional Text since 2009 of almost 9%.



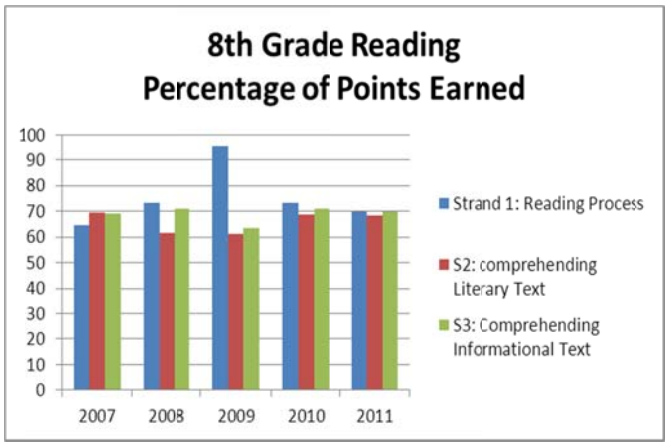
7th Grade Math

- S1, S2 and S3 were significantly better in 2011 than any other year, while S3 is steady, S4 have had no ready growth, S5 has declined 10% from 2009 to 2011.
- Number and Operations (S1) declined 10% since 2009 to 2011, although Estimation has increased about 7% from 2007-2011.
- Data Analysis (S2) steady decline since 2007 until 2011 when there was a 12% increase.
- Patterns, Algebra, and Functions (S3) has seen a steady increase of nearly 10% since 2007.



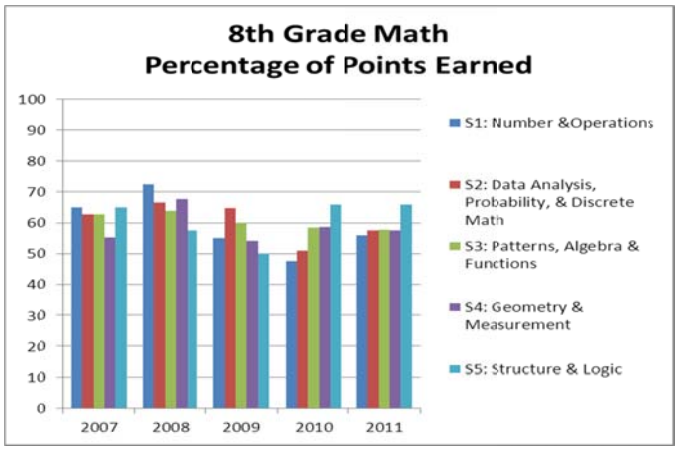
8th Grade Reading

- Reading Process (S1) has declined by 26% from 2009 to 2011.
- Comprehending Literary Text (S2) has increased 7% from 2009 to 2011.
- Comprehending Informational Text (S3) has increased by 8% although expository text has remained low since 2009 when there was an 8% decrease.



8th Grade Math

- Number and Operations (S1) has decreased 9% since 2007.
- Data Analysis (S2) has a decrease of 15% in 2010, with an 8% increase 2011 but an overall decrease of 5%. Probability had a 23% decrease in 2010 and stayed the same in 2011.
- Patterns, Algebra, and Functions (S3) has consistently declined every year for an overall decrease of about 5%.
- Geometry, Measurement (S4) has shown overall growth of about 2% since 2007.
- Structure and Logic (S5) showed a 15% increase from 2009 to 2010, then no growth.



Reasons for Decline

- An increase of student to teacher ratio from 25/1 to 30/1 in 2009/2010. This may have contributed to a deterioration in scores seen across all grade levels on 2010 AIMS results.
- In 2010, there was a large influx of new students who were significantly below grade level across all grades, but especially in grades 6th-8th . This has had a ***significant*** impact on school performance.
- Reading process has been in gradual decline along with comprehension of literary and expository text that correlates with a decline in Math S5: Logic and Reasoning. This makes sense as logic and reasoning problems are heavy in reading and if a student struggles to read, then these are the problems that they will miss due to lack of reading comprehension rather than lack of math comprehension.
- Teacher turnover in fifth through eighth grades has led to a lack of consistency in instructional standards. The fourth/fifth grade ELD class has not performed well. It is clear that the 4th/5th grade ELD class needs to have a strong, experienced teacher along with an Instructional Aide**.**

Potential Solutions

- AAEM will develop Essential Concepts for all core subjects similar to the Essential Math Concepts so they are aligned from grade level to grade level.
- AAEM will utilize *Crosswalks* for all grade levels to aide in transferring to Common Core Standards.
- AAEM will make real time data adjustments throughout the year after benchmark assessments to better accommodate students and provide interventions.

Areas of Strength

- AAEM students are more proficient in reading based on our language arts academic reports.
- AAEM is in process of improving the math curriculum with implementing Math in Focus (Singapore Math), which is aligned to Common Core Standards.
- Teacher lesson plans are aligned to Arizona Academic Standards.
- AAEM replaced the previous 4th/5th grade ELD teacher and hired an additional instructional aide to meet the students' reading and math academic needs.
- Additional instructional aides were hired to assist teachers in the classroom.

Resources that Contribute to Strengths

Resources that have contributed to these strengths include the use of the Essential Math Concepts in grades third through fifth. Use of supplemental materials like IXL, First in Math, Study Island, and Title I interventions has provided students with academic gains.

Conclusion

In summary, AAEM has had a positive impact on the Tolleson community and continually seeks innovative ways to provide an education with an emphasis in performing arts. Utilizing resources such as high quality curriculum embedded with Common Core Standards, research-based professional development, and grade level articulation will foster high academic principles. Based on the narrative analysis findings, AAEM recognizes the need for continual intervention for English Language Learners and increased math instructional support for all students. The Performance Management Plan details the short term goals to best address the academic needs of AAEM. Financial planning through fiscal year 2014 will ensure that the Performance Management Plan will be sustainable. Arts Academy at Estrella Mountain is committed to providing a rich learning environment and will continue the mission that every student has the ability and right to learn.