

Special Visit Report for

Vicente S.A. Benavente Middle School

**288 West Santa Monica Avenue
Dededo, Guam 96929
Mr. Dexter Fullo, Principal**

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Introduction/Background:

What follows is a school/community profile of Vicente S.A. Benavente Middle School provided by the Visit Team for a WASC mid-term visit on March 17, 2010:

Vicente S. A. Benavente Middle School, the home of the Roadrunners, was created in 1966 and was formerly known as Dededo Junior High School and Dededo Middle School. It is located in Dededo, the largest village on the island of Guam. Benavente Middle School or BMS as it is commonly referred to by the island community, is one of the largest public middle schools in the Guam Department of Education school system and is located in the Lagu school district.

BMS currently serves 1,153 students in grades 6 to 8 – 43% are Filipino, 40% are Chamorro, 11% are Chuukese and various other Pacific Islanders comprise the remaining 6% of the school's school population. BMS participates in the Federal Lunch Program – 56% of the student body qualify for free and reduced price meals. Other federally funded programs include the English as a Second Language (ESL) Program (55% of the students receive services in sheltered classes or on a consultative basis) and the special education program (5% of the students qualify for services).

Other services or programs that support BMS students are: Parent Family Community Outreach Program, the Gifted and Talented Education Program, the services of a truant officer, and the services of the J.P. Torres alternative School.

Discipline data provided by the SWIS system for the period between August 2009 and January 2010 indicated 216 discipline referrals of which 25% was labeled "skipping". 22% was labeled "defiance/disrespect/insubordination" and 16% was labeled "fighting/physical aggression", and 18% labeled "other behavior".

There are a total of 109 locally and federally funded faculty/staff (113 total positions- 76 are teachers) and 3 administrators for the SY2009-10. The faculty/staff is organized into 3 academic teams per grade level. Each teacher has a team preparation period and a subject area preparation period. The team preparation periods are used to discuss student performance, plan team activities, to meet with students or parents, and to follow up on support programs for the students. Subject area preparation periods provide teachers the opportunity to prepare lessons, make contact with parents individually, to meet with other colleagues in the same department to plan schoolwide activities for students and to discuss student achievement in a specific subject. The academic teams and departments serve as the FOL Home Groups.

Direct Instruction was implemented at BMS beginning the SY 2003-04 focusing on students who perform below grade level in reading, language arts and math. During the 2007 self-study, BMS was in the third year of the program's implementation in the areas of reading and language arts. For SY 2009-2010, the Math department returned to the standards based curriculum with the implementation of Pre-Algebra at the 7th grade level, Algebra at the 8th grade level, and the reinstatement of the remedial math classes per team with an additional remedial math class at the 8th grade level. The Reading and Language Arts Departments continued with the Direct Instruction program after the 2007 self-study but agreed with the faculty vote to infuse the program into the regular reading and language arts classes the following school year. The change in the curriculum

structure resulted in a change to class scheduling. During the 2007 self-study, BMS had a block schedule of blue and gold Day classes with classes meeting two or three times a week and two 45-minute blocks of Direct Instruction reading classes taught by all faculty in the morning. With the infusion of the Direct Instruction program into the reading and language arts classes, BMS returned to a schedule that had all classes meeting every day. By the end of SY 2008-2009, the faculty voted to completely remove the program from the reading and language arts classes and is transitioning to a standards-based curriculum, instruction and assessment system.

BMS uses the Nelson, WRAT and SAT 10 pre- and post- scores to place students into classes by ability. The Nelson (reading levels) scores for SY 2009-10 indicated 74% of students entering 6th grade are reading below grade level, 73% of entering 7th graders are reading below grade level; 79% of entering 8th graders are reading below grade level. The WRAT (math levels) results indicate that more than 95% of students entering all grade levels are scoring below grade level. SAT 10 scores for SY 08-09 in reading, math, and language arts indicate 80%-90% of 6th, 7th, and 8th graders are scoring at the basic and below basic levels.

In terms of report card grades, a student who passes a grade level, based on district requirements for middle school, has an overall grade point average of 60% or higher. In SY 2008-2009, the passing rate for BMS was 87%.

Benavente students participate in numerous co-curricular and extra-curricular clubs and activities sponsored by BMS and the GPSS. Students who represent Benavente do well in various competitions.

Significant Changes Since Midterm Visit:

The school reports the following significant changes since the mid-term visit of March 17, 2010:

- A continuous cycle of improvement by establishing smart goals, using data, implementing evidence based strategies, and frequently re-examining the date to ensure the SMART goals are working.
- The elimination of the home base schedule for team leaders. A new schedule has been implemented that allow teams leaders to meet at least biweekly. In addition, the teams meet at least monthly to examine data-primarily referral data and personalization surveys.
- The Dufour's model of professional learning communities is now being used.
- The faculty completed curriculum maps for all core content areas.
- Administrators are conducting walkthroughs.
- Joined the 2nd cohort of the National Staff Development Council/Learning Forward's Learning School Alliance.
- The school enrollment has decreased from 1,536 in 2007 to 1,153 in 2010.
- All the administrators at the school are new to the school. The Principal, Mr. Dexter Fullo had been an assistant principal several years ago and came back as principal starting in July 2010.
- A new accreditation specialist has been assigned to the school in July 2010.

Progress Report on Additional Recommendations:

During the mid-term visit of March 17, 2010, the Visiting Committee made six additional recommendations. The recommendations were:

1. Systematically analyze and use data to inform instructional and school level decisions.
2. Develop and implement a monitoring system to regularly revisit and revise the SIP and RAPP using student data.
3. Ensure that all role groups know and have a common understanding of the ESLR, the ESLR indicators and assessments of the ESLRs.
4. Continue to develop a process that sets goals and accountability that will monitor students' AYP.
5. Finalize and implement a Parent Involvement Plan.
6. Develop and implement a professional development plan to support teachers in the transition from DI to a standards-based curriculum, instruction, and assessment system.

The following report summarizes the progress the stakeholders of Vicente S.A. Benavente Middle School made by the time of this special visit, one year later (March 10, 2011):

This report will review and comment on the progress of made on the six additional recommendations:

1. Systematically analyze and use data to inform instructional and school level decisions.

The schools stakeholders have analyzed and use data to make decisions concerning student discipline and academic performance. In the area of student discipline, the monthly discipline data was made available to teachers and students. A goal of 30 or less referrals per grade level per month and 20 or less suspensions per month was established to improve student behavior. The school implemented a Positive Behavior Intervention Supports model that awarded students with a dress-down day if the monthly goals were met. The school reports that they have met the suspension goal for the months just before their report was written. During this special visit, the school experienced one month that the goal was not met.

After the first quarter, teachers analyzed the marks for each content area. They determined that the teachers' curricula was fragmented and individualized. The teachers are currently working on common curriculum content for the grade levels. The teachers also used SAT10 Item Analysis to determine the set of skills necessary in each content area. The teachers are using SMART goals in content area by grade level to complete curriculum maps that is more cohesive and challenging.

The school understands that the use of common assessments to measure student growth is still needed. The math and English departments have already started using common

assessments, and the Math Department has met to analyze their data and modified their instruction to re-teach as needed. Most departments will begin this task in the week of March 27, 2011, after the curriculum content has been established.

2. Develop and implement a monitoring system to regularly revisit and revise the SIP and RAPP using student data.

A new Roadrunner Academic Progress Plan has been designed to be a synthesis of both the School Improvement Plan (SIP) and the original Roadrunner Academic Progress Plan. As such each interdisciplinary team created two SMART goals to address student behavior and academics performance. After some initial resistance by some teachers, the following goals were established:

- Increase of at least 5% on the SAT10 in levels 3 and 4 in Language, Reading, and Math.
- At least 85% of the students will have a passing rate of 60% or better in the areas of Language, Reading, and Math.
- BMS will have no more than 188 suspensions for the 2010-2011 school year.

3. Ensure that all role groups know and have a common understanding of the ESLRs, the ESLRs indicator, and assessment of the ESLRs.

At the beginning of the school year, the students were able to cite the ESLRs but the school recognized that there was a lack of understanding as to what the ESLRs meant and what meeting an ESLR "looked like." The Leadership Team solicited input regarding the ESLRs and the indicators. The school is now starting to devise surveys to assess the level of attainment of the non-academic ESLRs. Interdisciplinary teams have created activities that would support the "ESLR of the month." One of the most notable of these activities was the Peace march.

4. Continue to develop a process that sets goals and accountability that will monitor students' AYP.

To address Recommendation #4, the administrative team introduced the PBIS triangle model to help in addressing those students who need additional assistance. Teachers also met in professional learning communities within their content areas.

Teachers have become familiar with the Positive Intervention Supports (PBIS) and are with the use of data able to identify the students within the tiers. The teachers now need to consistently provide PBIS strategies which leads to changed student behavior.

Currently, BMS is working on its RTI plan to focus on those students who are in the red and yellow zones. Interventions will assist students academically and behaviorally while addressing the district and school goals.

The SAT10 yearly assessment continues to be one of the primary means of assessing students' progress and monitoring AYP. Teachers are in the process of creating common assessments within their content areas as described in the addressing of Recommendation #1.

BMS, as of February this year, have begun several strategies designed to assist students:

- Study Hall to support Language Arts, Reading and Math with an adult monitor for those periods. Teachers will have strict criteria for student placement in the Study Hall.
- Students from the National Junior Honor Society and the Future Educators Club have offered time and services to tutor students. They will be available in the mornings, during lunch and after school.
- The Saturday Scholars Program which provides volunteer teachers and student tutors to work with identified students in Language Arts, Reading and Math

5. Finalize and implement a Parent Involvement Plan

The school does not have a written Parent Involvement Plan as of the Visit. They have identified a number of strategies to be included in the Plan and have implemented a number of activities. The most notable of those activities are:

One of the most prominent changes is the start of a Parent Teacher Organization. There have been a significant number of parent attendees. The high turnout rate is attributed to the recognition of honor roll recipients at the meetings.

This school year, Honor Roll students were invited to the PTO meetings. At these meeting they received recognition for their successes. This increases the number of parents involved in the PTO meeting.

Quarterly midterm progress reports, quarterly newsletters, and communication logs have been provided to parents to connect them to the school community. The BMS administration also sends monthly letters home, detailing the activities and events slated for the month ahead.

As part of the Response to Intervention Plan parents will be able to work alongside the teachers to help prevent poor behavior. To further involve parents and hold them accountable in the education of their child, identified students will be required to attend tutoring sessions assigned by their team teachers and administration.

As an alternative to suspension, parents encouraged to participate in conferences and/or shadow their child in situations where nonviolent offenses were committed.

BMS is working on creating a school website that will allow parents access to information regarding school expectations, policies and activities. Having online accessibility's will also provide an additional level of communication to bridge the school home gap.

6. Develop and implement a professional development plan to support teachers in the transition from DI to a standards-based curriculum, instruction, and assessment system.

Prior to the 2010 midterm visit, teachers had been working in isolation trying to transition from a Direct Instruction model to a standards-based model. Teachers have shared that little to no support was given in the transition. Beginning this school year, the administrative team has worked to unify the teachers and their curricula to the content area level. The Principal meets with the content area representatives at least once a month, who in turn meet with their respective content area teachers on developing common assessments, curriculum mapping, align the essential skills on the SAT10 to the course standards.

Since the start of this school year, teachers have participated in discussion about essential skills that are to be taught and have worked to align those skills in a cohesive curriculum map. Currently, teachers are working towards creating and utilizing common assessments. To accomplish this, the PD Leadership Team has agreed to utilize Learning Forward's Standards of Professional Development, which is job-embedded and occurs at least biweekly.

As of February 2011, teachers have started dialoguing about differentiated instruction. The Principal has met with content representatives about implementing differentiated instruction as a means to reach all students regardless of ability level. Most recently, all content areas participated in professional learning community focused on differentiated instruction.