

Advanced Learning Pilot Site Report

Educators Initiating Changes

The district is changing the way they provide advanced learning services to support the brilliance of every student and consider the needs of the whole child at various levels of academic learning, particularly those furthest from educational justice.

Last year, a group of educators from Thurgood Marshall reached out to the Advanced Learning office and shared their passion for improving their students' access for advanced learning. They became the first group to join a pilot study of Advanced Learning New Service Delivery through Schoolwide Enrichment model.

What is Schoolwide Enrichment Clusters?

Enrichment clusters provide experiences for our students to pursue their interests and give them opportunities to develop their talents. Enrichment clusters are designed for authentic learning which includes applying relevant knowledge, thinking skills, and interpersonal skills to the creation of a product or service. What is the difference between traditional learning vs. authentic learning?

[Enrichment clusters Info from University of Connecticut](#)

Here are some examples:

Traditional learning	Authentic learning
What students need to learn is predetermined by the curriculum (e.g. even if a student is interested in history, what and which history they learn is predetermined by their grade and curriculum adaption).	Students select a topic of their interests and set goals based on a product or service of a chosen professional field (e.g. if a student is interested in journalism, then they will publish an article in school or district newsletter as a product).
Tests and grades determine students' progress.	The quality of the product or service as viewed through the eyes of an authentic audience.



Enrichment Clusters bring advanced learning opportunities to every student

Discovering, training, and investigating; that's what students at Thurgood Marshall Elementary experience every week in their enrichment clusters. For an hour on Wednesdays, most students in grades three through five gather in cluster groups to expand their learning beyond typical classroom assignments.

Enrichment clusters are just one of the ways that Seattle Public Schools is changing how we deliver Advanced Learning services. The new model supports the brilliance of every student – particularly Black, Brown, and Indigenous students who have been traditionally furthest from educational justice – and considers the needs of the whole child at various levels of academic learning.

“Enrichment clusters are about getting out there and exploring,” said fifth grade teacher Sam Egelhoff. “Students are getting to do things that they might not have time for anywhere else. It's their turn to follow their own lead.”

Enrichment clusters – which were introduced to Thurgood Marshall by the SPS Advanced Learning Department in 2021 – are designed to help students develop and apply higher order thinking skills, including creative problem solving, negotiation and communication. The intent is to support every child's development according to their talents, strengths and needs.

Enrichment clusters were implemented, in part, to provide equitable learning opportunities to every student. They're helping to eliminate racial disproportionality in advanced learning by giving every student access to learning services that help them thrive.

“As a school, everyone has access to the same things,” Egelhoff said. “The [Thurgood Marshall] staff is really passionate about social justice. This is one way that we make that happen – it's benefitting everybody.”

Students Interests Survey

This year, students took interests survey online. Educators studied what their students shared, and each classroom came up a few cluster options for students to explore.

Family Experts

Our families expressed the importance of their engagement while educators are gathering information about their students' interests. During parent-teacher conference week, educators shared what they learned about their students to their families.

Our families also said that they want to be involved in this process. Families advocated for opportunities to talk about their student's interests at home and discussing their child's strengths, hopes, and dreams (thank you to our parent partner: Black family advocacy group leaders at Thurgood Marshall for your involvement!)

Covid Year Restriction

The year 2021-22 started with a quite few health and safety guidelines to follow due to Covid. We were not able to mix different classrooms or bring experts to share their talents to our students in person.

During the pandemic, clusters have stayed primarily in their assigned classrooms, but hope next year students will be able to collaborate with peers in other classes so they can explore shared interest areas together.

This Year's Clusters

Here are some examples of clusters our students are engaged in!

- Investing in the stock market
- Coding
- Punk Rock
- Japanese culture
- Baking
- Isopods
- Crafting
- Make your own coloring book

Community Partners/resources we embraced:

- Parents as experts
- Advanced Learning Department

We are grateful for our local partners for their support to bring authentic learning opportunities possible for our students!

Teacher Reflection

"It would be great if one day these students had careers based on a topic they explored in elementary school enrichment clusters,"

"Maybe they wouldn't have had the chance to learn about that topic in another setting but because of enrichment clusters, it became their life's passion."

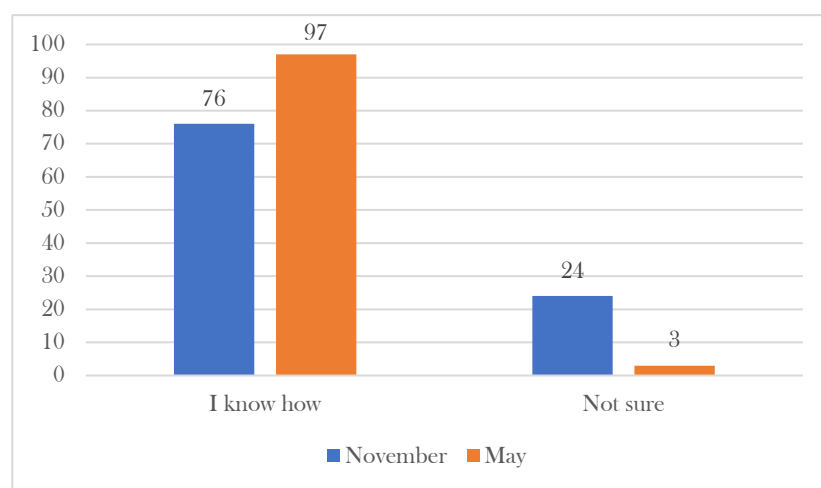
Student Voices

Learning outcomes

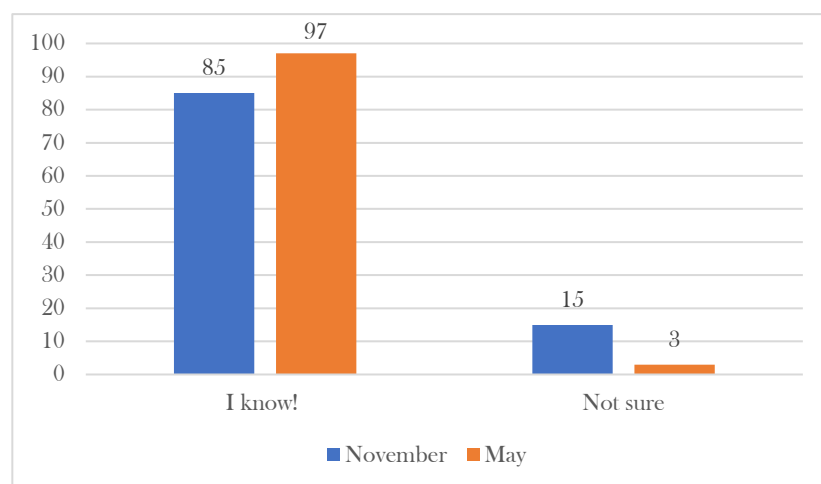
We asked our students what they think about this new learning and how they connect this experience to furthering their interests and support their community.

Here are some highlights of what our students said:

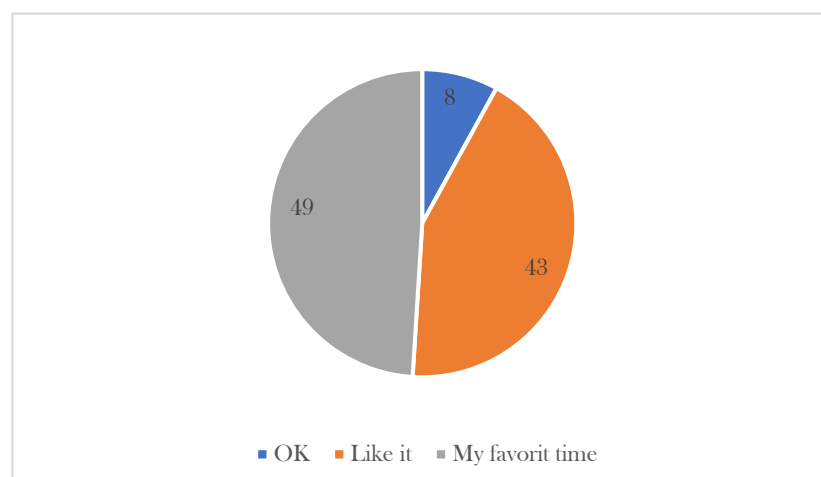
Students "unsure" of how to use their interests/talents to help their community:



Students has ideas or strong interests in what they want to pursue as a career



Are you excited for enrichment time?



"I would love to learn more about "Omar Mohamed (A book writer), Kehinde Wiley (A painter), Abiy Ahmed (Prime Minister of Ethiopia)."

Our students have wide range of interests and some of the reoccurring themes are arts, science, and social action.

Students believe they can make an impact on their community!

"it will take a long time, but I want to be a doctor. I can help sick people!"

"I am interested in zoology and particularly snow leopard. If I help save snow leopards other people can have inspiration and help save other animals."

"I want to be an artist (Asian culture). Make my community recognize and get inspired by Asian culture"

Students expressed they learned more than content associated with their chosen career.

"I learned that teamwork is important."

"How to work in a group and be creative."

"What a joy it is to give to others."