

**Effective School Practices
(ESP) Review Report**

For

South Central High School

Conducted: September 12-16, 2011

Introduction

There are a number of high-growth schools in Colorado that have, up to this point, had little opportunity to share their practices that are producing results year after year with their students. There are other under-performing schools that have yet to realize the kinds of successes these aforementioned schools have experienced. The premise for this project is that there are some highly-effective practices that must be in place for some, but not all of our Colorado schools. Therefore, the Colorado Department of Education is making available, to a select number of the schools, an opportunity to engage in a process to identify those practices through the Effective School Practices (ESP) review.

The following criteria were used to determine the selection of schools as participants in the ESP reviews:

- The school must have been a designated Title I school for at least 4 years.
- The top 34 schools were determined based on performance data including:
 - Catch-up median growth percentiles; and
 - Colorado English Language Acquisition (CELA) growth
- This narrowed the group to the top 15 schools in which additional performance data, listed below, were used:
 - Reading and Math achievement (3 year);
 - School Performance Frameworks (SPF) rating and specific "Growth Gaps" rating (3 year);
 - AYP results;
 - Colorado Basic Literacy Act (CBLA) data (for elementary schools); and
 - Graduation Rate (for high schools).
- This narrowed the list to 11 schools using the following demographics data.
 - Poverty rates;
 - Size of school based on enrollment;
 - Percent of students that are ELL and minority;
 - Location of school (rural, urban, etc.); and
 - Title I allocation and per pupil allocation.

As a result of this project, it is hoped that the highly-effective practices, identified through the ESP review process, will be revealed, triangulated with the research, and shared (in multiple ways) in order to support struggling schools in their journey to achieving high levels of student success for all.

Overview of the ESP Review Process:

Number of Interviews: 88

• Administrators:	<u>16</u>
• Instructional staff (regular and special program teachers):	<u>13</u>
• Parents/Community Members	<u>12</u>
• Classified Instructional Staff	<u>6</u>
• Students	<u>39</u>
• Other	<u>2</u>

Number of Observations:

• Classrooms	<u>63</u>
• Meetings	<u>3</u>

Purpose of the ESP Review:

The purpose of the ESP review is for an external team to gather information about an effective school's systems and processes. The information gathered will be provided to the school for both affirmation as well as possible next steps in their continuous improvement efforts. The intention of the Colorado Department of Education is to use this work to inform practitioners and other schools about the practices that are working for high-performing Title I schools in the state of Colorado.

The ESP review is conducted by assessing the school in nine areas of school effectiveness, consistently identified as research-based practices, relative to:

- Curriculum;
- Classroom Assessment and Evaluation;
- Instruction;
- School Culture;
- Student, Family and Community Support;
- Professional Growth, Development and Evaluation;
- Leadership;
- Organization and Allocation of Resources; and
- Comprehensive and Effective Planning.

STANDARDS FOR THE EFFECTIVE SCHOOL PRACTICES REVIEW

Academic Performance: The following Academic Performance Standards address (1) curriculum, (2) classroom assessment and evaluation, and (3) instruction.

- Standard 1:** The school implements an adopted curriculum that is rigorous and aligned to state and local standards.
- Standard 2:** The school uses multiple evaluation and assessment strategies to continuously inform and modify instruction to meet student needs and promote proficient student work.
- Standard 3:** Teachers engage all students by using effective, varied, and research-based practices to improve student academic performance.

Learning Environment: The following Learning Environment Standards address (4) school culture, (5) student, family, and community support, and (6) professional growth, development and evaluation.

- Standard 4:** The school/district functions as an effective learning community and supports a climate conducive to performance excellence.
- Standard 5:** The school works with families and community groups to remove barriers to learning in an effort to meet the intellectual, social, career, and developmental needs of students.
- Standard 6:** The school/district provides research-based, results-driven professional development opportunities for staff and implements performance evaluation procedures in order to improve teaching and learning.

Organizational Effectiveness: The following Organizational Effectiveness Standards address (7) leadership, (8) organization and allocation of resources, and (9) comprehensive and effective planning.

- Standard 7:** School instructional decisions focus on support for teaching and learning, organizational direction, high performance expectations, creation of a learning culture, and development of leadership capacity.
- Standard 8:** The school is organized to maximize use of all available resources to support high student and staff performance.
- Standard 9:** The school develops, implements, and evaluates a comprehensive school improvement plan that communicates a clear purpose, direction, and action plan focused on teaching and learning.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE and OVERVIEW OF THE SCHOOL

South Central High School was the only Title I high school in the state selected to be part of the Effective School Practices (ESP) project. Though the high school was identified for this project, it is difficult to isolate the effective practices to only the high school. Generally, the nine teachers assigned to high school students teach the junior high students as well. South Central currently has 75 students in grades 9-12 with an entire school population including Pre-K through 12th grade of 243. Eighty-six percent of the students qualify for free or reduced lunches. The number of students receiving free or reduced lunches is the standard used to determine poverty levels for Title I funding. The student population is primarily of Hispanic descent with fewer than 20 students in any other ethnic group.

The current superintendent became the PreK-12 South Central principal four years ago. At that time several non-negotiable practices became embedded within the culture of the entire school/district. Many of these are reflected in the findings included in the other sections of this report as they pertain to the high school. The current principal is beginning the second year here at South Central.

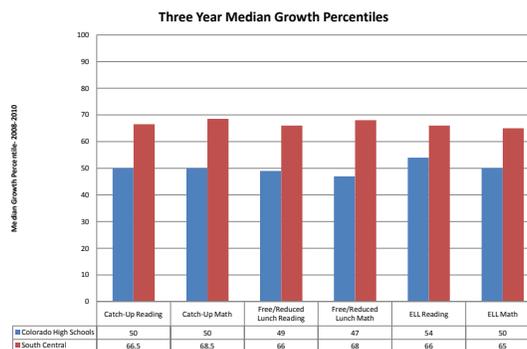
The selection criteria for determining the participation in the ESP project is found below and was determined using data that was available during the spring of 2011:

South Central HS Selection Data

PERFORMANCE			
The following variables were used in the analyses to determine the most effective Title IA schools.			
Growth Data		Accountability Data	
Catch Up MGP (3 year)	R = 66.5 M = 68.5	SPF – Growth Gaps Rating	Meets
Free/Reduced Lunch MGP (3 year)	R = 66 M = 68	SPF – Growth Gaps Reading	Exceeds
ELL MGP (3 year)	R = 66 M = 65	SPF – Growth Gaps Math	Meets
CELA 3 year (% making at least one year of PL growth)	40.75%		
CELA MGP 08	**	AYP – Overall 08	No
CELA MGP 09	**	AYP – Overall 09	Yes
CELA MGP 10	**	AYP – Overall 10	Yes
CBLA (% Making Progress)	N/A (High School)		

** Number in group is not large enough (less than 20) to report growth data

The following chart compares South Central's 3-year growth percentiles to the state in the areas of catch-up reading, catch-up math, free-reduced reading, free-reduced math, ELL reading, and ELL math:



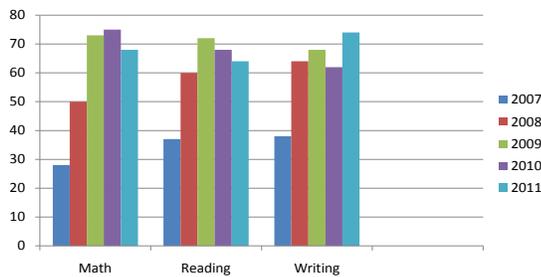
While these data demonstrate considerable growth for the students of South Central High School, it is important to note that the achievement levels for students are not where they need to be. Without fully embracing a standards-based cycle of teaching and learning, student growth will peak or decline and proficient and advanced levels of achievement will not be realized. The chart below shows the observed changes in growth from 2007 to 2011 and the comparable achievement results over the same period.

Observed growth

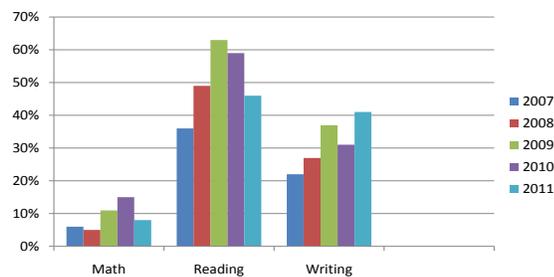
Achievement (% Proficient & Advanced)

2007	2008	2009	2010	2011		2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Math						Math				
28	50	73	75	68		6%	5%	11%	15%	8%
Reading						Reading				
37	60	72	68	64		36%	49%	63%	59%	46%
Writing						Writing				
38	64	68	62	74		22%	27%	37%	31%	41%

Observed Growth



Achievement % Proficient & Advanced



South Central High School is shaping a potentially improved future for the students. The observed growth for students has almost doubled in reading and writing and more than doubled in math since 2007. It will be incumbent upon the staff, students, families and the community to continue to strive for both growth and achievement that can be measured and celebrated. The long-term effects derived from this type of growth may have profound effects on the way the community and school are perceived both internally and across the state of Colorado. While only about two-thirds of the County's current residents are high-school graduates, this community highly values the education of their students. Notable is the fact that last year 32 students graduated and 31 of them went on to college.

Participation in the ESP project is extraordinary and the fact that the district has recently received a grant from the Legacy Foundation and was the only rural school district in Colorado to be so named is another example of recognition for the work that is now in progress in the high school and the district. The staff and community are to be commended for the school improvements underway to shape the future for the students and families.

ESP Review Narrative Report

Findings Academic Performance

The area of Academic Performance contains the following key components, as reflected in the research-based Comprehensive School Support Rubric:

- ✓ Implementation of an **adopted curriculum** that is rigorous and aligned to state and local standards and that the school provides access to a curriculum that emphasizes a challenging academic core for all students.
- ✓ The school uses **multiple evaluation and assessment strategies** to continuously inform and modify instruction to meet student needs and promote proficient student work. Assessments are frequent, rigorous, and aligned with district and state content standards. Students can articulate the academic expectations in each class and know what is required to be proficient.
- ✓ Teachers engage all students by using **effective, varied, and research-based practices** to improve student academic performance. Instructional strategies, practices, and programs are planned, delivered, and monitored to meet the changing needs of a diverse student population. Instructional services are provided to students to address individual needs and to close the learning gaps.

The following findings embrace the fine work that has been accomplished at SOUTH CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL and support the practices that result in the high student growth the school is realizing.

Curriculum: *The school implements an adopted curriculum that is rigorous and aligned to state and local standards.*

- There is a growing emphasis on student achievement at South Central High School which is reflected in a focus on developing high expectations for all students. Teachers and administrators voice a belief that all students can learn and teachers demonstrate this belief as they endeavor to find a way to help each student achieve academic success, no matter where they are currently performing. There is an emphasis on ensuring that students master the essentials. Teachers regularly adapt, reteach, and modify instruction to meet student needs. Students are given multiple opportunities to learn, although not always given choices in how they demonstrate their learning or how they are assessed. There is an expectation that all teachers will assign homework and there is a homework policy in place.
- There is also an emphasis on meeting the needs of all students. Needs of some students are identified through a Response to Intervention process, primarily based on the use of CSAP results. Math intervention for identified students is provided through the use of the Compass Learning Odyssey Math program, a computer-based math intervention program. Students are progress monitored through the program and may exit the intervention when they demonstrate proficiency. Individual Literacy Plans (ILPs) have been developed for all high school students and are shared with students and parents. There is no formal intervention program for students struggling in reading, but a voluntary after-school tutoring program is available. Some lunchtime tutoring is also provided. The school plans to begin using Accelerated Reader at the secondary level in January, 2012. There is no formal gifted and talented program at this time,

but the school is beginning the identification of gifted students and the creation of Advanced Learner Plans (ALPs) for them.

- Three years ago, the faculty began work on identifying Power Standards through the analysis of Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) data and the use of item maps in collaboration with the Colorado Department of Education. This is a necessary first step to developing a standards-based system of teaching and learning. The result was an increasingly challenging academic core. The district has now adopted the Focal Point Curriculum Maps which are expected to be the basis of lesson planning and delivery of instruction. These curriculum maps are fully aligned with the Colorado Academic Standards. Teachers are learning to use the objectives to plan instruction and some teachers are sharing the maps with students. Learning objectives are posted in most classrooms and reviewed with students. The Curriculum Maps include Evidence Outcomes which teachers could use to define proficiency/mastery and performance levels for students and parents. It is not evident that students can articulate the academic expectations in each class and what is expected of them. Teachers are expected to submit weekly lesson plans identifying the learning objectives they will share with students. They are also expected to identify Demonstration of Learning (DOL) objectives to help students understand how they will be assessed on the objective and how they will know when they have learned it.
- Teachers and administrators both report that there has been little work on vertical articulation of the curriculum across grade levels. There has been an attempt to integrate the literacy curriculum, reading and writing, into the social studies, math and science curriculums. Because this is a very small district, and in actuality a PreK-12 school, there is little focus on curriculum transition points.
- The Career and Technical Education (CTE) instruction in place at South Central High School previously included both shop and agriculture programs. Math and science skills are integrated into both programs. This year the CTE program was expanded to include shop, agriculture and business courses and a Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) program was instituted. Students also have access to college courses at various institutions of higher learning, through a program of concurrent enrollment which the school provides.
- Information literacy and technology are integrated into the content curriculum through the Educational Technology and Information Literacy (ET-IL) plan and demonstrated through the use of technology by both teachers and students. All classrooms are equipped with smart board technology and some teachers use computerized response systems for student assessment. Two mobile laptop labs are available for student use and Kindles have recently been purchased for student use. One computer lab provides access to both the math intervention program and a Rosetta Stone Spanish program; another, in the library, is available for other student work.

Classroom Assessment/Evaluation: *The school uses multiple evaluation and assessment strategies to continually inform and modify instruction to meet student needs and promote proficient student work.*

- The school has recently discontinued use of the Scantron Assessment as its interim assessment system. Teachers have had access to the Scantron results. They are now using the Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress (NWEA MAP) and have access to those

results. In addition, teachers have had access to CSAP results through Alpine Achievement. Some teachers regularly conference with parents to review student assessment results and they discuss these same results with students to help them assess their own progress and set goals for improvement. Students and teachers have been presented with data from surrounding districts to encourage a spirit of academic competition.

- It is not evident that teachers are proficient in the analysis or use of this type of assessment data to inform instruction, but they are beginning a formal process of collaborative use of data at this time. Monthly “Data Meetings” are scheduled with the objective of analyzing NWEA and CSAP data to identify student needs.

Instruction: *Teachers engage all students by using effective, varied, and research-based practices to improve student academic performance.*

- Walkthrough observations by administration have provided an avenue for accountability. In some classroom situations the manner of conduct of the walkthroughs is reported to have disrupted the instructional process. While there has not been a formal walkthrough procedure in place, walkthroughs have been conducted by various administrators with some regularity. Feedback is often provided to teachers and administrators conference with teachers when necessary. The school is beginning the implementation of the PD 360^o Observation program which will provide a more structured routine and more feedback to teachers to improve their professional practice.
- There is an emphasis on protecting classroom time. Besides morning announcements, there are no other public address interruptions during the school day, except in emergencies. Phone calls are not sent to classrooms, but are routed to voicemail. Students are rarely called to the office and then only through IM messages to teachers. There are no assemblies during literacy and math class times. Few field trips are scheduled.
- Teachers are available to students and parents both during and outside of school time. They provide home phone numbers and email addresses to parents and accept phone calls in the evening, on weekends and during school vacations. Many teachers maintain personal websites where students and parents can view lesson plans and assignments, and communicate with teachers. The school uses the Go.edustar student information system to manage student data. Parents and students have access to this system to view grades, attendance, and lesson plans. Reports indicate that a large percentage of parents regularly access this system.
- There is little evidence of the systemic use of high-impact, research-based instructional strategies. Active engagement of students is not observed in most classrooms and a variety of instructional strategies appears to be lacking.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION:
ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

South Central High School is positioned to move into a system of standards-based teaching and learning. Pieces of such a system are in place and can be rendered more powerful through intentional implementation.

“Standards-based education in Colorado is defined as an ongoing teaching/learning cycle that ensures all students learn and can demonstrate proficiency/mastery in their district’s adopted content standards and associated benchmark concepts and skills. This teaching/learning cycle frequently measures student achievement through the intentional use of defined formative assessments that inform the teacher of a student’s immediate level of learning, and ensures multiple opportunities for students to learn until they reach a proficient or advanced level of performance. *Regardless of content, course, level, identified outcomes or revisions in standards, this teaching/learning cycle remains constant.*” (*The Standards-Based Teaching/Learning Cycle*, CDE 2008) In standards-based education, we work collaboratively and collectively to answer the following questions.

- ❖ What do students need to know and be able to do? (Curriculum)
- ❖ How do we effectively teach to ensure students learn? (Instruction)
- ❖ How do we know students have learned? (Assessment)
- ❖ What do we do when students don’t learn or reach proficiency/mastery before expectation? (Intervention)

What do students need to know and be able to do? (Curriculum)

One of the first requirements for a standards-based system is a guaranteed and viable curriculum that provides each student with the opportunity to learn and the resources necessary for that learning to take place. The Focal Point Curriculum Maps, which the school has adopted, will meet this requirement and should be fully implemented in instruction. In addition, to determine what students need to know and be able to do:

- Determine proficient performance on the evidence outcomes utilizing the possible demonstrations of learning.
- Rely on lesson objectives to plan and implement instruction.
- Create descriptions of proficiency/mastery to describe the types and levels of performance expected in all content areas and at all grade levels.
- Create rubrics, scoring guides, and examples of proficient student work to describe proficiency/mastery on learning objectives.
- Ensure that students understand and can describe proficient performance for the identified concepts and skills.

How do we effectively teach to ensure students learn? (Instruction)

“The greatest impact on learning is the daily lived experience of students in classrooms, and that is determined much more by *how* teachers teach than *what* they teach.....although it has to be said that getting students engaged so that they can be taught something seems much less efficient than getting them engaged *by* teaching them something that engages them.” (Wiliam, 2011) Effective instruction requires engaging instructional strategies, focused on the student learning and driven by formative assessment results.

Provide best first instruction to:

- Ensure that learning objectives are consistently taught to mastery.

- Provide effective and timely feedback to students to allow them to know where they are in their learning and how they can improve.
- Engage in ongoing collaboration to develop lessons, units and instructional strategies focused on meeting student needs.
- Develop lessons and units using a backwards design process with the learning objective and DOL assessment identified.
- Continually inform instruction through the use of multiple formative assessments (assessment for learning).
- Provide multiple opportunities, support and interventions for those who don't learn it the first time in all standards areas. Ensure that those who learn it easily are provided extensions in their learning.
- Ensure that teachers receive ongoing training, coaching, monitoring and feedback to guarantee the fidelity and effectiveness of research-based instructional practices.
- Implement research-based instructional methods to engage students in learning and ensure that all students receive best first instruction.
- Ensure "bell-to-bell" instruction by creating a system to monitor the use of classroom time. Consider training students to assist teachers by collecting data on how time is used in the classrooms.
- Continue to support reading and writing skills in the content areas and collaboratively develop common rubrics to assess writing in all classrooms.

How do we know students have learned? (Assessment)

Using assessment to drive instruction is critical in a standards-based teaching learning cycle. Teachers must know what a student needs, where s/he currently is in her/his learning, and what proficient performance looks like if they are to plan effectively. As an assessment is completed, data must then be used by teachers to inform instructional choices and also by students to understand their own learning and to identify learning goals. Timely, efficient formative assessments, as well as benchmark and summative assessments, will provide easy-to-obtain information when they directly align with evidence outcomes. Teachers must understand the difference between summative and formative assessment. Dylan Wiliam and Paul Black have defined formative assessment "as encompassing all those activities undertaken by teachers, and/or their students, which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged." Dylan has added that "Assessment functions formatively to the extent that evidence about student achievement is elicited, interpreted, and used by teachers, learners or their peers to make decisions about the next steps in instruction that are likely to be better, or better founded, than the decisions they would have made in the absence of that evidence." (Wiliam, 2011) Quite plainly put, formative assessment may be described as simple checks for understanding that inform the teacher's immediate decisions about instruction.

Assess student learning:

- Ensure that adopted assessments effectively and accurately measure performance on evidence outcomes.
- Ensure that all educators understand the multiple purposes of assessment and the difference between formative (assessment for learning) and summative (assessment of learning).
- Explore, collaborate, and examine ways to formatively assess students to ensure they are learning every day. Use Demonstrations of Learning (DOLs) to create assessments such as exit tickets, computerized response system assessments, and whiteboard quizzes.
- Use scoring guides and rubrics to consistently and reliably measure proficient performance on evidence outcomes and share guides and rubrics with students.
- Provide students with guidance and feedback to develop understanding of their own performance on assessments in order to monitor their own learning and identify individual goals for achievement.
- Use current data management systems that are in place to track student proficiency/mastery over time.
- Collaboratively use data to determine what needs to be taught, what students already know, and what students need to know to become proficient.

**What do we do when students don't learn
or reach proficiency/mastery before expectation? (Intervention)**

Our best efforts in curriculum, instruction and assessment will still not always ensure that all students learn the first time, and many times we have students who reach proficiency/mastery well before their peers. A final piece of the standards-based, teaching and learning cycle is planning and implementation of interventions to meet the needs of those students. Developing an effective Response-to-Intervention model that creates a seamless instruction/intervention model matched to student needs and paired with ongoing progress-monitoring assessment will meet this requirement.

When students don't learn as expected:

- Continue to ensure that students who don't learn through best first instruction have multiple opportunities to learn, both in the classroom and beyond the classroom in all content areas.
- Provide instructional interventions beyond the classroom for students who are struggling to learn.
- Ensure that intervention models, programs or strategies are research-based.
- Develop a defined, systematic, school-wide system of interventions.
- Implement a formal Response-to-Intervention process to support teachers in designing individual interventions for students.

When students reach proficiency/mastery before expectation:

- Provide opportunities above and beyond the identified grade-level standards for those students who demonstrate proficiency/mastery at the beginning of instruction.
- Provide instructional interventions beyond the classroom for students who are performing above proficiency/mastery.

Learning Environment

The section on Learning Environment addresses:

- ✓ **School Culture and Climate:** The school functions as an effective learning community and supports a climate conducive to performance excellence. Factors such as a safe, orderly and equitable learning environment, an appreciation for diversity, and the belief that all children can learn at high levels is fostered by district and school leadership and staff.
- ✓ **Parent and Community Partnerships:** The school partners with families and community groups to remove barriers to learning in an effort to meet the intellectual, social, career and developmental needs of students. Communication efforts are varied and effective. The school uses multiple ways for working effectively with parents and the community.
- ✓ **Professional Development and Evaluation:** The school provides research-based, results-driven professional development for staff and implements performance evaluation procedures in order to improve teaching and learning. There is a comprehensive, collaboratively-developed professional development plan. Data are used to determine professional development priorities. Educators have professional growth plans to improve performance. Professional development efforts are evaluated for their impact on student achievement.

These components define a context for decisions affecting every other aspect of a school from curriculum and instructional programs to budget and improvement planning processes. Specific attention to the characteristics of the community, the academic needs of students and the unique developmental attributes of the age group pays dividends in higher achievement and greater organizational success.

School Culture: *The school functions as an effective learning community and supports a climate conducive to performance excellence.*

- The passage of a bond issue is an indication of a growing culture of trust that the board, administration and faculty of the school have established with the community. The new surroundings affirm the staff and students. Additional evidence of trust is the empowerment of teachers to be risk-takers in taking control of student achievement and student behavior.
- Teachers capitalize on trusting relationships they form with students and inspire, assist, and prod students to achieve at higher academic levels. This may mean doing a late homework assignment during lunch or staying after school to retake a test on which the student wishes to improve a performance, or attending tutoring sessions at scheduled after-school times. Faculty members clearly state a belief that all students can learn at high levels and accept responsibility for guiding students to develop a belief in themselves and their ability to accomplish challenging goals. Teachers and administrators have taken ownership of student achievement data as evidenced by regularly-scheduled data team meetings, pride in student accomplishments, curriculum integration initiatives, and the commitment to teach and reteach concepts until they are mastered.
- Parents report and students corroborate that they feel safe in this learning environment. South Central High School has shifted from using a punitive discipline system to a more

proactive approach. In addition, faculty and administration collaborated in the decision to implement Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) this year.

- Community members/parents are able to articulate a shift in emphasis of priorities to those regarding student achievement. Some parents who previously enrolled their children out of district are choosing to return to South Central School.
- While student achievement appears to be highly valued, there are few public celebrations of high academic achievement shared with the community or within the school except for a release to the local paper. Although some student work is displayed, scoring rubrics describing levels of performance criteria with the displays of work are not evident.
- Collaboration between administration and teachers, teachers and students, and the school and community members is evidenced by accountability meetings, sharing student-achievement data with parents and students, and conducting a door-to-door campaign to pass the recent bond issue. Time for professional learning community (PLC) problem-solving processes is limited although several teachers report such collaborative efforts take place on an informal basis. It appears the lack of collaboration time hinders the enculturation of new faculty members to the norms and agreements of staff members who have made progress toward effective achievement practices. It also appears that the lack of collaboration time may limit staff capacity to respond to the needs of students at risk.
- The contribution of all teachers to integrate language arts and math standards in their instruction may go unrecognized when achievement results increase in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own achievement. Individual achievement data are shared with each student and his/her parents at scheduled meetings where students are encouraged to set their own goals. If parents are not able to attend these meetings, staff members make a home visit to communicate the information. In addition, student achievement data from neighboring districts are shared with students with the message that “this is one thing we can do to prove to the outside world the great things that are happening in this school.”
- Communication channels between school and home are enhanced by teachers sharing their home phone numbers with students and parents. Go.edustar, a data-management system, is available for parents to check on grades, homework, etc. Teachers are encouraged to make at least two positive parent contacts a week, log those contacts and submit the log to the principal quarterly.
- Students are encouraged to take leadership roles. A few years ago students addressed such issues as public display of affection, student absences, and tardies. The students identified expectations they want to see enforced and presented these expectations to peers. One third of the student population is enrolled in a newly-formed FBLA chapter. Students take responsibility to build and update the district website.
- Students are offered incentives for perfect attendance. Additionally, the school offers an iPad to any teacher who has a perfect attendance record this year.

Student, Family and Community Support: *The school works with families and community groups to remove barriers to learning in an effort to meet the intellectual, social, career, and developmental needs of students.*

- A safety net of services for potential drop-outs is funded and supported by the school. Currently seventeen students are served in a Personalized Education Program (PEP). A credit recovery program is available for those students lacking particular high school courses. The message to students is consistent and constant: student achievement is important.
- Although the school provides a safety net for most at-risk students, strategies to educate and assist families as they support their children's achievement are not apparent.
- School personnel collaborate with local colleges to provide credit for juniors and seniors who qualify to take courses from these institutions. Additionally, the district is the only small rural district in Colorado to be selected by The Colorado Legacy Foundation (CLF), in partnership with the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) to participate in a three-year project designed to significantly improve the number and rate of students who graduate from Colorado high schools ready for college or work. Two recently enacted state education reforms provide a strong framework for the proposed work: the integration of the new Colorado Academic standards aligned instructional supports and Senate Bill 10-191, Colorado's ground-breaking legislation to establish a performance-based educator evaluation system statewide.
- The school has not recently collected survey information from parents, community members, students or staff members on relevant cultural and academic issues.
- The school has parent representation on a school accountability committee but currently does not have a parent organization for purposes of fund-raising, parent education, or booster club activities.

Professional Growth, Development and Support: *The school/district provides research-based, results-driven professional development opportunities for staff and implements performance evaluation procedures in order to improve teaching and learning.*

- Although this year the school is participating in PD 360°, a program designed to deliver individualized professional development to staff members, previous professional development efforts do not appear to have been sustained, supported with consistency, or monitored for implementation. Student achievement data has not been consistently used to inform professional development offerings. The results of personnel evaluations do not consistently appear to inform professional development choices. Not all staff members have participated in professional development that addresses the use of high-impact instructional strategies. Staff members are not required to identify professional growth goals as part of the current evaluation process.
- Although the current evaluation system complies with current state requirements, it is not generally viewed as a method of impacting individual staff growth to increase staff proficiency and instructional skills.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION:
LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

- Continue the implementation of PD 360°. This program is well-researched and offers a plethora of instructional strategies to teachers and administrators of all skill levels. Modeling, coaching, checks of implementation and walkthrough feedback are all part of the program. Collaboration, discussion, and reflection time should also be part of the implementation of this professional development implementation.
- Within the PD 360° framework offerings, use student achievement data to inform the selection of professional development offerings. Examine recent literature for research-informed instructional strategies that have a high impact on student achievement. Focus on one or two of these strategies until they become embedded in the instructional repertoire of teachers. Keep in mind this quote from Wiliam, 2011 “High-engagement classroom environments appear to have a significant impact on student achievement. . . . One teacher described his classroom as thus: *There must have been times where an outside observer would see my lessons as a small discussion group surrounded by many sleepy onlookers.*”
- Consider the use of data team meeting time or other creative times to reinstate collaborative, PLC-like processes. Take advantage of the processes a core group of instructors devised in the last few years to share agreed-upon protocols with newer faculty members. Continue curriculum integration initiatives, cross-curricular support of Colorado academic standards, and collaboration between and among the teaching staff using protocols from Professional Learning Communities (PLC) structures. As implementation of the Focal Point Curriculum Maps occurs, it will be of the utmost importance to provide time for collaboration. Although the concept of PLC’s is not new, this finding is still appropriate today: “The most promising strategy for sustained, substantive school improvement is developing the ability for school personnel to function as professional learning communities” (DuFour & Eaker, 1998).
- Consider the need for extensive, focused and sustained professional development on a standards-based teaching and learning cycle using the Focal Point Curriculum Maps as the structure for standards-based delivery of curriculum. Provide time for reflection, peer observations, coaching and monitoring of the implementation of a standards-based system.
- Continue the implementation of PBIS and the establishment of fair, consistent and positive behavior guidelines. Collect, analyze and reflect on discipline data collected as part of this implementation.
- Regularly collect perception data by surveying parents, community members, staff and students on pertinent school climate and academic issues to plan next steps.
- Use the performance-based educator evaluation system from The Colorado Legacy Foundation (CLF), in partnership with the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) as an opportunity to update the current evaluation system. The law shifts the focus of career advancement qualifications to demonstrated effectiveness based on student academic growth. With this shift, each educators’ effectiveness will be the criteria that determines hiring, promotion, professional development, probationary status, dismissal, and contract renewal.
- Continue teacher efforts to involve students in owning their own achievement and in establishing close, caring connections with each student.

- Recognize contributions of all instructional staff as student growth and student achievement evolve.

Organizational Effectiveness

Organizational Effectiveness involves the areas of improvement planning, school leadership, and the allocation and use of resources to support high performance. The organizational work of leadership needs to ensure that the school has clear direction, goals and action plans to improve student learning. Both administrative and teacher leadership are responsible to guide the work of the school (i.e. the teaching and learning processes) by providing direction and high performance expectations, by creating a learning culture, and by developing the leadership capacity of staff. Additionally, school leadership is responsible to ensure the school maximizes the use of all resources to support high student and staff performance.

This section of the report addresses the core practices of highly-effective schools in regard to the following areas:

Leadership for providing focus and support to improve student achievement, high-quality teaching, organizational direction, high expectations, the development of a school-wide learning culture, and building of leadership capacity. Both administrative and teacher leadership are responsible to guide the work of the school to fully implement the teaching and learning processes.

Clear direction, goals and action plans focused on the improvement of student learning. Collaborative processes are in place and there is intentional focus on closing achievement gaps. Efforts are evaluated for effectiveness on impacting student achievement and fidelity to implementation.

The following findings and recommendations are provided for consideration as South Central moves forward in the ongoing focus on improvement.

Leadership: *School instructional decisions focus on support for teaching and learning, organizational direction, high performance expectations, creation of a learning culture, and development of leadership capacity.*

- There has been a re-visioning for the school and its mission led by recent administrators which, as described by some staff, constitutes an agreement to raise student achievement to high levels so that students will successfully access postsecondary opportunities. The statement reads: “We will provide the best education for all students utilizing a variety of research-based curricula and cultural resources; effective communication among parents, community and staff; and collaboration to create a safe learning environment that provides opportunities to our students for success in a global society.”
- The community, by a 2-1 vote, passed a bond issue to provide funds for the building of a new school, in partnership with the Building Excellent Schools Today (BEST) grant, provided through CDE. The architecture of the new school building both symbolizes and sustains the vision of the community to honor its history in the San Luis Valley as it prepares its students for the future.
- In her former role as PreK-12 Principal the current Superintendent made it a point to make a positive connection with each high school student each month of the school year. She continues

this effort now, and many students indicate that this happens. This focus is intended to reinforce the students' sense of belonging and his/her understanding of being known and valued in the life of the school.

- The instructional staff is increasing its emphasis on higher levels of student achievement. Following supportive services provided by the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) 3 years ago, which provided help to staff learning to use achievement data, identify power standards, etc., staff members indicate that greater student growth began to emerge. Similarly, higher expectations for teacher performance are emerging. An agreed-upon standards-based cycle of teaching and learning does not appear to be in place.
- ~~At~~ South Central High School teachers are empowered to become risk-takers and teacher leaders. Through the newly created Building Leadership Team (BLT), identified teachers meet together monthly to collaborate and problem-solve emerging school issues and to hear staff concerns. Advance agendas are posted on google.docs with staff invited to make timely additions. In addition, as various school needs are identified (e.g. RtI, discipline) staff are trusted to meet together to address them.
- Licensed staff members are accountable for professional practices which may not be presently in place in all classrooms with all high school staff. Some of the desired practices include: submitting weekly lesson plans using the school template, posting objectives in classrooms, logging two positive parent contacts each week, providing bell-to-bell instruction, etc. Though lesson plans have been submitted this year, it is reported that staff have not been provided feedback that results in improved lesson planning. Walkthroughs by administrators provide another avenue of support for accountability, however it is reported that the frequency has declined, and the tenor has been occasionally disruptive to classroom instruction.
- The school demonstrates a commitment to protect instructional time by minimizing any possible classroom disruption (e.g., announcements, phone calls). The school office communicates via Instant Messaging (IM) with classroom teachers on an as-needed basis, to ensure that both teachers and students are accountable to use all instructional time to concentrate student-teacher engagement. In addition, the Go.edustar management system allows parents to access student grades and lesson plans further supporting the accountability initiative of the school.

Organization and Allocation of Resources: *The school is organized to maximize use of all available resources to support high student and staff performance.*

- The use of Title I funds to support student achievement might be described as integrating resources to maximize effectiveness. Funds are used to buy Kindles and Accelerated Reading books for the library and to support a librarian position, a Title I paraprofessional position, the Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS) initiative coach and facilitator, NWEA training and licenses for student use, and training for BLT members. Additionally portions of salaries of persons whose regular assignment includes Title I responsibilities, as well as professional development costs for Focal Point (curriculum) training outside of the regularly scheduled calendar, are included.
- The district fund balance has been restored from a negative balance to a now positive sum estimated to be in the range of \$400,000-\$500,000.

Comprehensive and Effective Planning: *The school develops, implements, and evaluates a comprehensive school improvement plan that communicates a clear purpose, direction, and action plan focused on teaching and learning.*

- The school’s Accountability Committee created the initial framework for the development of the 2010-11 Unified Improvement Plan. Subsequently the Principal and the Director of Special Programs completed the document. Teachers were contacted individually for their input as a part of the process, *but few are aware of the resulting major improvement strategies and goals of the UIP*. The Unified Improvement Plan asserts three major improvement strategies: **1.** to ensure that instruction for all students is supported by rigor, relevance, differentiation, and fidelity of implementation in every classroom by providing professional development that will result in all teachers being skilled in instructional strategies, research-informed interventions, use of data and assessments; **2.** to implement the use of technology effectively in teaching; and **3.** to implement a guaranteed and viable curriculum for all students supported by pacing guides and appropriate assessments in every classroom. While a variety of professional practices are in place, there may not be a consistently-used professional vocabulary that is shared by all staff (to facilitate clear communication about the practices). Some staff members give differing interpretations of Professional Learning Communities (PLC), Building Leadership Teams (BLT), etc.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION:
ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

“The single most important event of the school year is the time we set aside for annual improvement planning. As goes planning, so go the school’s changes for improvement that year.” –Mike Schmoker, *The Results Fieldbook: Practical Strategies from Dramatically Improved Schools*

- Review the Unified Improvement Plan with all staff to create a shared understanding of the work the school is undertaking, and the related roles and expectations for each staff member. Create clarity for staff regarding the three major improvement strategies, and how the progress of the school in meeting the goals of the UIP will be evaluated. Provide continuous feedback as implementation of the UIP moves forward.
- Consider creating a glossary of professional terms for staff reference to support clarity of understanding about the initiatives of the school and the work relative to them (e.g., PLC work/responsibilities versus BLT work/responsibilities, versus Data Team work/responsibilities etc.).

In looking at leadership structures within systems, “Shirley Hord (1992) and her staff at the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) undertook a broad review of the leadership and change facilitation literature to identify relevant research-based concepts and information that could support the development of effective facilitative leaders for school improvement projects. The literature review resulted in identifying six ...leadership functions deemed essential for making change happen. The six functions include:

- Developing, articulating, and communicating a shared vision of the intended change
- Planning and providing resources
- Investing in professional learning
- Checking on progress

- Providing continuous assistance
- Creating a context supportive of change”

The Standards and Assessment Summit, June 28-29, 2011, (Leadership and Learning Center).

- With Hord’s work in mind, collaborate with staff members to research, consider and select a standards-based cycle of teaching and learning to embed as a high-impact instructional strategy in every classroom. Lead and support the instructional staff in learning how to use the cycle until it becomes routine daily practice. Hold teachers accountable to deliver instruction through this process every day, in every class, for every student. Monitor individual teacher growth in the use of this cycle. Provide timely feedback throughout the process of implementation.
- Continue to monitor and hold staff accountable to embed all expected professional practices in the instructional program. Gather relevant data on a continuous basis and provide supports as the data indicate. At the administrative level, model for staff what is expected of them (e.g., if bell-to-bell instruction is an expected professional practice in classrooms, ensure that PD days start on time, and run until the resource of time available has been fully exploited for staff learning (bell-to-bell); if norms are expected for classroom collaboration among students, establish and expect norms for PD collaboration among staff; if protecting student-teacher time-on-task is a priority, protect staff time-on-task by placing other off topic issues that may emerge in another appropriate time and venue (BLT) so as not to diminish the intended learning for teachers; as students are held accountable to teacher-directed protocols, consider holding teachers accountable to school-initiated protocols, etc.). Bear in mind the notion that a point in every direction has the same impact as no point at all.
- Limit the number of initiatives the school undertakes. Ensure that future initiatives are selected from among those that are shown to be high-impact practices for students of poverty.

REFERENCES

- Bernhardt, Victoria L. *Using Data to Improve Student Learning in School Districts*. Larchmont, New York: Eye on Education.
- Blackburn, Barbara R. (2008). *Rigor is Not a Four-Letter Word*. Larchmont, New York: Eye on Education.
- Blankstein, Alan. M. (2004). *Failure is Not an Option*. Corwin Press, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Buckingham, Marcus (2005). *The One Thing You Need to Know*. New York: Free Press.
- Cicchinelli, Louis F. and Barley Zoe. (1999). *Evaluating for Success*. Aurora, CO: McREL.
- City, Elmore, Fiarman and Teitel. (2009). *Instructional Rounds in Education*, Harvard Education Press.
- Cotton, Kathline (1995). *Research You Can Use to Improve Results*. Alexandria, VA, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Danielson, Charlotte. (2007). *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching*. Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Drucker, P.F. (1992). *Managing For The Future*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- DuFour, Richard and Eaker, Robert. (1992). *Creating the New American School: A Principal's Guide to School Improvement*. Bloomington, Indiana: National Education Services.
- DuFour, Richard and Eaker, Robert. (1998). *Professional Learning Communities at Work*. Bloomington, Indiana: National Education Services.
- DuFour, Richard, Eaker, Robert and Karhanek, G. (2004). *Whatever It Takes: How Professional Learning Communities Respond When Kids Don't Learn*. Bloomington, Indiana: National Education Service.
- Educational Leadership. (October 2008, Vol. 66, No.2). *Expecting Excellence*. Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Educational Leadership. (November 2004, Vol. 62, No.3). *Closing Achievement Gaps*. Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Educational Leadership. (May 2011, Vol.68 No.8). *Involvement or Engagement*. Alexandria, Virginia: ASCD.

Educational Leadership. (May 2011, Vol.68 No.8). *Is Anyone Listening to Families' Dreams?*. Alexandria, Virginia: ASCD.

Farr, Steven. (2010) *Teaching as Leadership The Highly Effective Teacher's Guide to Closing the Achievement Gap*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Fisher, Douglas and Frey, Nancy. (2007). *Checking for Understanding: Formative Assessment Techniques for Your Classroom*. Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Fullan, Michael. (2011). *All Systems Go: The Change Imperative for Whole System Reform*. Thousand Oaks, CA. Corwin Press.

Guskey, Thomas. *Evaluating Professional Development*. 2000. Thousand Oaks, CA, Corwin Press, Inc.

Hassel, Emily. (1999). *Professional Development: Learning from the Best*. Oakbrook, IL: McREL.

Henderson, A.T., & Mapp, K.L. (2002). *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community on Student Achievement*. Austin TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

Jackson, Robyn R. (2011) *How to Plan Rigorous Instruction*. Washington, D.C.: Mindset, Inc.

Jacobs, Heidi Hayes. (2004). *Getting Results with Curriculum Mapping*. Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Jensen, Eric. (2009) *Teaching with Poverty in Mind*. Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Johnson, Ruth S. (2002). *Using Data to Close the Achievement Gap*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.

Lambert, L. (2003). *Leadership Capacity for Lasting School Improvement*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Lemov, Doug. (2010). *Teach like a Champion*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Lezotte, Lawrence W. and Kathleen McKee Snyder. (2011). *What Effective Schools Do: Re-Envisioning the Correlates*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.

Martin-Kniep, Giselle and Picone-Zocchia, Joanne. (2007). *Changing the Way You Teach: Improving the Way Students Learn*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Marzano, Robert J. and Pickering, Debra J. *Building Academic Vocabulary*. Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Marzano, Robert et.al. (2001). *Classroom Instruction That Works: Research-Based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement*. Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Marzano, Robert J. (2003). *What Works in Schools: Translating Research into Action*. Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Marzano, Robert J. (2007). *The Art and Science of Teaching*. Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

McCollister, Karen and Michael Sayler. "Lift the Ceiling: Increase Rigor with Critical Thinking Skills" *Gifted Child Today*. Winter 2010 • Vol 33, no 1 pp. 41-47

Moss, Connie M and Brookhart, Susan M. (2009) *Advancing Formative Assessment in Every Classroom: A Guide for Instructional Leaders*. Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Muhammad, Anthony. *Transforming School Culture: How to Overcome Staff Division*. Bloomington, IN, Solution Tree Press, 2009.

Pete, Brian M. and Fogarty, Robin J. (2005). *Close the Achievement Gap: Simple Strategies that Work*. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press, Inc.

Public Education and Business Coalition. (2006). *Thinking Strategies Institute, 2006-2007*. Denver, CO: Public Education and Business Coalition.

Rathvon, Natalie. (1999). *Effective School Interventions*. New York: Guilford Press.

Reeves, Douglas B. (2011). *Finding Your Leadership Focus: What Matters Most for Student Results*. Teachers College Press. Columbia University.

Reeves, Douglas B. (2002). *Leaders Guide to Standards*. New York, New York: Jossey-Bass.

Reeves, Douglas B. (2009). *Leading Change in Your School*. Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Reeves, Douglas B. (2006). *The Learning Leader: How to Focus School Improvement for Better Results*. Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Reeves, Douglas B. (2008). *Reframing Teacher Leadership to Improve Your School*. Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Reeves, Douglas. *Transforming Professional Development into Student Results*. 2010. Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Rothstein-Fisch & Trumbull, Elise. (2008). *Managing Diverse Classrooms*. Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Schmoker, Mike. (1999). *Results: The Key to Continuous School Improvement, 2nded.* Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Schmoker, Mike. (2006). *Results Now.* Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Schmoker, Mike. (2011). *Focus: Elevating the Essentials to Radically Improve Student Learning.* Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Tomlinson, Carol A. and McTighe, J. (2006). *Integrating: Differentiated Instruction and Understanding by Design.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Walker Tileston, Donna and Darling, Sandra K. (2008). *Why Culture Counts.* Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.

Wellman, Bruce and Lipton, Laura. (2004). *Data-Driven Dialogue: A Facilitator's Guide to Collaborative Enquiry.* Sherman, Connecticut: MiraVia, LLC.

Wiliam, Dylan. (2011). *Embedded Formative Assessment.* Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.