

CDE School Support Team Reports

PHILIPS PREPARATORY SCHOOL Denver Public Schools

February 2, 2009 -- February 6, 2009

**Included:
Executive Summary
Landscape report
Detailed Report**

The School Support Team Report

The School Support Team report is an evidence-based report that is written around nine standards or key areas of school functions:

Academic Performance

1. Curriculum
2. Assessment / Evaluation
3. Instruction

Learning Environment

4. School culture
5. Student, family, and community support
6. Professional development and evaluation

Organizational Effectiveness

7. Leadership
8. Organizational structure and resources
9. Comprehensive and effective planning

Each Support Team uses an extensive rubric that identifies indicators for each standard and describes four performance levels. The information gathered from the school review (documents and artifacts, interviews, and observations) is used to complete the report according to the SST rubric.

There are three sections to the School Support Team report.

Section 1 of the SST report is the Executive Summary. This section includes logistical information about the school review, a listing of the nine standards around which the report is written, commendations / areas of note, themes and recommendations, and questions to consider as the school considers how it will follow up on the report.

Section 2, the Detailed Report, describes the team's findings on the indicators for each standard, the sources of evidence used to substantiate the findings, and comments written by the team to clarify their findings. The numbers listed in the performance level column rate the school's overall performance on each indicator of each standard in the rubric.

Section 3 of the report, the Landscape section, provides a "summary at a glance" of the rating results for each indicator. The Performance Level numbers in the Detailed Report are color coded on the Landscape report and indicate the following:

Level 1: Little or no development and implementation (Red on the Landscape section)

Level 2: Limited development or partial implementation (Black on the Landscape section)

Level 3: Fully functioning and operational level of development and implementation (Blue on the Landscape section)

Level 4: Exemplary level of development and implementation (Green on the Landscape section)

**CDE SCHOOL SUPPORT TEAM REPORT
PHILIPS PREPARATORY SCHOOL
SECTION 1 – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
February 2-6, 2009**

INTRODUCTION:

The school support team conducted a scholastic review of **Phillips Preparatory School** during the period of February 1 to February 6, 2009. In order to prepare an evidence-based report, the school support team activities included a review of the documents collected for the school portfolio and profile;

Interviews* with

- School administrator (1)
- District administrators (1)
- District specialists (2)
- Classroom teachers (24)
- Counselor (0)
- Instructional and content coaches (2)
- Nurse, psychologist, social worker, OT/PT (9)
- Community partnership coordinators (1)
- Paraprofessionals and tutors (15)
- Secretaries, clerks, records, data (2)
- Food services, custodial staff, bus drivers (4)
- Parents (9)
- Student teachers, Teachers in Residence, substitutes (0)
- Students (87); and
- Classroom walkthroughs and observations* (104)

***Number may represent the number of observations or interviews, not the number of teachers in the school, for example.**

STANDARDS FOR THE SCHOOL SUPPORT TEAM REPORT

Academic Performance:

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

Standard 1: The school implements a 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 development and personnel 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 development needs of students.

Standard 6: The school/district provides research-based 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) organizational structure and 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 the 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.

AREAS OF RECOGNITION: The School Support team would like to recognize and commend the following:

- Teachers use rubrics to evaluate student work.
- Students know what rubrics are and how they are used.
- Students have an adult in the building that they feel comfortable going to when troubled.
- Students know the school behavior expectations and rules.
- Use of the traffic light system in classrooms is consistent across the school.

- Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) expectations are posted in all classrooms and throughout the building.
- PBS process is being implemented at a rapid pace.
- Curriculum and state standards are aligned.
- Teachers have SMART goals.
- The principal is knowledgeable of the content of lesson plans and lesson plans identify standards.
- The principal is visible in classrooms daily.
- Teachers receive good feedback after formal evaluations.
- Many teachers integrate reading and mathematics into other content.
- The building is clean and orderly.
- Teachers volunteer after school.
- Behavior in the building is improving.
- AIMSweb is used for frequent progress monitoring.
- The Response to Intervention (RtI) model is emerging.

RECOMMENDED STRATEGIC ACTIONS – MAJOR THEMES

Note: It will be up to the Philips Preparatory School community to determine which, how many, and in what order the recommendations within these themes will be addressed.

Definitions of Themes:

Instruction: The theme of instruction includes curriculum, assessment, classroom teaching, organization and structure of the instructional day, and systems that support classroom instruction.

Parent and Community Engagement: Parent engagement includes parent involvement in their child’s academic learning, participation at school, activities that support academic learning at home, activities that support the school programs, and two-way communications with instructional staff. Community engagement includes creating links with community agencies, creating a presence in the neighborhood, and involvement of community members in support of the school mission.

Collaborative Learning Community: The theme of a collaborative learning community includes development of professional practices where colleagues work together to align their efforts to foster greater student achievement. A collaborative learning community is one that grows its ability to effectively engage in the craft and profession of teaching, supports the efforts of each other in their professional growth, sustains focus on student achievement, and builds organizational capacity for effectiveness.

INTRODUCTION:

Philips Preparatory School has the potential for growing student achievement through practices that enhance instruction, engage parents and create a collaborative learning community. Past events and traditions appear to have encumbered attainable levels of student academic growth and achievement that must and can be overcome. The organization of the school year and day can enhance effectiveness by using instructional time efficiently. Engaging in “best first instruction,” provision of interventions and extended learning opportunities, sustaining students enrollment, growing a collaborative school culture and fostering teacher leadership are all strategic actions which will enhance the over all effectiveness of the school. Parent engagement in their children’s learning and school are likely to result in sustained student enrollment, growing student achievement, parent support for the efforts of school staff, and greater confidence in their children’s school. Creation of a collaborative learning community can build the individual skills of teachers and create a synergistic impact on the overall effectiveness of the school as a whole. Schools with a collaborative culture retain staff and build capacity over time.

Theme 1: Instruction

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

The single most influential component of an effective school is the individual teacher within the classroom (Marzano, 2007). The priority of classroom teachers must be best first instruction. Effective instruction is what causes students to learn. Using assessment data to guide instruction and to plan using backward design helps determine where you want students to be and how to get there. A structure that makes goals and expectations clear for students is necessary. The 5 research-based components of reading and Marzano’s research-based strategies in the book, “Classroom Instruction that Works” are essential to good instruction.

Five components of reading include:

1. Phonemic Awareness
2. Phonics
3. Vocabulary
4. Comprehension
5. Fluency

Marzano’s research-based strategies include:

1. Identifying similarities and differences
2. Summarizing and note taking
3. Reinforcing effort and providing recognition
4. Homework and practice
5. Linguistic and Nonlinguistic representations
6. Cooperative learning
7. Setting objectives and providing feedback
8. Generating and testing hypothesis
9. Questions, cues, and advance organizers

The type of instruction students receive is the most important finding of the research on highly effective schools. In high performing schools teachers have high expectations and use explicit instruction to teach students. Instruction is individualized, differentiated, and scaffold resulting in positive academic gains (Baker, Gersten & Lee, 2002). Students need multiple opportunities to learn, clearly defined academic skills, intermediate targets, and examples of mastery Teachers must commit to student growth of more than one year in a year's time. It is up to the teacher to use effective instructional strategies to get students where they need to be. In addition, multiple assessments inform instruction by telling teachers where to go next. (A road map to learning)

What can be done to ensure that the most powerful, effective, engaging, and successful teaching is happening everyday in each classroom?

Recommendations:

- Consult curriculum guides for examples of universal interventions used during first instruction.
- Implement school-wide instructional strategies based on the five components of reading and Marzano's research.
- Consider a phonemic awareness/phonics program for early level readers as a universal intervention K-1 (e.g. *Zoo Phonics, Reading Mastery, Saxon Phonics*).
- Expand professional development opportunities to help teachers focus on scaffolding strategies and differentiation within first instruction.
- Conduct an in-depth look at data to improve student achievement and guide explicit instruction.
- Develop a process for monitoring staff data collection.
- Consider the best use of resources to enhance instruction for underperforming students.
- Increase the integrated use of technology in classroom instruction.
- Research funding sources for technology.
- Institute a fully standards-based system including the deep and thorough analysis of data, alignment of learning targets with standards, assessment, and instruction.
- Institute a school-wide homework policy.
- Match staff assignments to personal strengths of staff based on age and needs of students.
- Create a zero hour from 8-9 a.m. for providing extended learning time interventions.
- Create uninterrupted whole school literacy blocks and cross age grouping.
- Engage in the practice of "Flooding" where specialist teachers and paraprofessionals provide 30 minute interventions during the literacy blocks.
- Post standards and lesson objectives in student friendly language that inform students of what they will be expected to know and do.
- Examine and implement ways to efficiently use instructional time and increase student engagement in learning.

Questions to Consider:

- How can leadership guide and monitor the use of effective research-based instructional strategies in every classroom?

- Are standards and objectives posted in every classroom consistently?
- How do we ensure that our instruction is challenging to all students?
- How can we promote more engagement in learning?
- How can we increase students' proficiency levels?
- Are our teachers trained to use technological resources to improve instruction?
- How can we use the data that we have to guide instruction and ensure flexible grouping?
- How can we assist students in analyzing and scoring their own work using rubrics?
- In what ways can we improve students' understanding of standards and expectations?
- How can we expand opportunities for students to demonstrate learning based on individual styles and higher order thinking skills?
- How can leadership guide instruction in the area of Marzano's research-based strategies?
- How can teachers become more informed about the five components of reading?
- How will teachers implement the five components of reading and Marzano's research-based strategies into instructional practice?
- How can ESL strategies become integrated into each teacher's repertoire of instructional strategies?
- How can we increase student engagement in learning?
- How can we maximize the use of instructional time?

Theme 2: Parent and Community Engagement

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Vision this scenario: It is a dreary November day; however, for the Philips Preparatory School community, it couldn't be brighter. The Colorado Department of Education School Accountability Reports are released and Philips is designated as a high achieving school. Everyone is overjoyed that their vision, hard work and dedication paid off.

What distinguishes Philips Preparatory School? Student achievement brings the school closer to attaining Adequate Yearly Progress goals and enrollment is nearing capacity due to renewed parent enthusiasm about the Philips programs for children. Philips Preparatory is becoming a true neighborhood school, focusing on the whole child. The community, school, and home are engaged in supporting academics, good health, and social services. The school is becoming a vibrant nucleus for growing the future of the community. Parent and community involvement play an important part in school governance, school activities, and school achievement. Property values are soaring, mobility is decreasing, and the families connect in a safe and supportive commitment to children.

“Youngsters will respond if only the adults in the village will bestir themselves to inspire them.”(Price, 2008)

Recommendations:

- Use the Thursday Folder to include school and classroom information including:
 - School newsletter and information
 - Student work and classroom newsletter. (Include honoring student achievements, acknowledging volunteers, update of classroom events, and what content has been covered that week.)
- Find ways to engage parents in homework and Thursday Folders by including “must see” materials e.g. signed reading log, back and forth comment sheet, and permission slips.
- Develop a Parent Handbook that includes information on PBS, RtI, Bullying. Consider a FAQ section.
- Consider more parent workshops regarding curriculum and school programs led by students. **Let the students tell the story.**
- Establish a morning coffee or afternoon tea for parents and care-givers. On a regular basis, have a different staff member available for greeting, meeting, inviting, and answering questions.
- Invite community dignitaries to attend staff professional development, classroom walk-throughs and other school activities.
- Consider how student music and art can be visible in the community, i.e. art at the bank, choral performances for seniors and/or community organizations.
- Find ways to have regular exposure in the Park Hill community paper.
- Make sure website is updated monthly with all support links active.
- Send the school newsletter electronically to community and civic leaders and business owners.
- Extraordinary Communications
 - Send each child a birthday card.
 - Schedule a special grandparents’ day lunch.
 - Muffins with Mom on the Friday before Mothers’ Day
 - Donuts with Dad
 - Positive notes and phone calls should occur for each child throughout the year.

Questions To Consider:

- As a staff, how do we want Philips Preparatory to be perceived by parents and community?
- What can you, as a teacher or staff member, do to involve parents in helping their children at home with core academics?
- What can be done to enhance communication through the Thursday Folder both at the classroom and school level?
- In what ways can staff support the principal in developing a Parent Handbook?
- How can the school provide casual opportunities for parents and/or caregivers to gather, meet staff, and see their children engaged in the school environment with a minimum amount of cost and effort?
- What efforts can be made to promote the school and its students in the community?

Theme 3: Collaborative Learning Community

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS: Establishing a community of teacher learners is a priority for raising student achievement. A collective focus on student learning through collaboration and reflective dialogue typically defines a professional community which is focused on student achievement. In developing learning communities that target high student achievement, professional development and collaboration are key components. Teachers look at research-based practices that result in high achievement. Teachers with high expectations and rigorous instruction have students who work up to their potential. Practices such as differentiation, giving explicit feedback and using research-based strategies move students more quickly to high achievement. Professional development needs to be standards based with the expectation that students obtain high levels of proficiency. Teachers need ample opportunities to improve their repertoire of skills in creating and delivering effective instruction to all students. In addition, schools that establish a culture of collaboration fosters teacher and student retention, thus reducing turnover.

Reeves (2006) asserts that time for teachers to collaborate is essential for improving educational outcomes. According to Fullan (2002) without exception, effective schools engage in collaborative learning processes, and Schmoker (2006) asserts that collaboration is the surest and fastest path to instructional improvement.

Purposeful vertical and horizontal collaboration enhances the quality of instructional practice. Teachers need professional development to understand collaborative practices (Marzano, R., Pickering, D., and Pollock, J., 2001).

Receiving feedback in the collaborative model is critical to ensuring that staff delivers effective research-based instruction. They interact with one another, share expertise, observe teacher models that exhibit excellent practice, and provide feedback to each other. A recent study of high- and low-performing schools, researchers found more collaboration among teachers in schools with higher achievement (Bruner & Greenlee, 2000). Collaboration includes engaging in embedded professional development where teachers work with instructional specialists (e.g. ELL, Special Education), coaches (facilitators in DPS), and mentors. Teachers and their peer coaches analyze data, reflect on instruction, provide feedback, and plan instruction jointly.

Effective school organizations practice distributed leadership (Elmore, 2000), and they work collaboratively with support services. Building teacher leadership is a step in the direction of overall improvement in a school that works as a collaborative unit. Blending the efforts of support services (e.g. social work, counseling, psychologist, behavior specialist, library/media) also fosters greater collaboration and effectiveness in the school community.

Teachers working in collaborative teams diligently address both instructional and learning issues (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; O'Shea, 2004) by engaging in the following activities:

- Aligning instruction and assessments with state and local standards.
- Creating common classroom assessments and common scoring rubrics

- Jointly examining and evaluating student work.
- Identifying, creating, and supporting interventions for struggling students.
- Analyzing and reflecting on assessment data.
- Reflecting on instructional practices.
- Jointly engaging in lesson study.
- Observing and giving feedback on each other's teaching.
- Supporting and advising new members to the team and profession.

Recommendations:

- Design a master schedule that allows for common planning time for grade level and cross grade level teams. Establish clear, common expectations for how this time is to be used.
- Study the concepts and work of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) and expand the function of data teams to engage in the collaborative work of PLCs that includes data analysis, creating common assessments, implementing interventions, lesson study, and the examination of student work. (DuFour, DuFour and Eaker, 2004; 2006).
- Familiarize teachers with the collaborative process and protocols to look effectively and efficiently at student work (O'Shea, 2005).
- Create an intentional plan for developing teacher leadership that includes encouraging leadership, professional development for leadership, and delegation of leadership responsibilities. Further, provide staff development to strengthen the process of collaborative use of data and leading data driven decision making.
- Develop routines and practices for celebrating and recognizing the steps toward progress and major accomplishments of individuals, teams, and the whole school (Schmoker, 2006, Peters, 1998).

Questions to consider:

- How can the school schedule be built to allow for collaborative teams to meet at regular and frequent intervals?
- What kind of team building can the school staff engage in to foster collegiality and collaboration?
- How can we learn about the procedures and practices of high performing schools that have established professional learning communities?
- How can we grow our data team process into full professional learning communities over the next 3-5 years?
- How can we learn about effective collaborative processes and protocols that will focus work toward improving instruction?
- How can we establish the habits and practice of reflecting on instruction and learning?
- In what ways can teacher leadership be fostered and supported at Philips Preparatory School?
- In what ways can teacher leaders acquire facilitation skills to lead the work of collaborative learning teams?
- How can we develop routines and practices for celebrating steps toward progress and major achievements?

Additional Considerations: The School Support Team recommends that the Philips community also consider the following matters that are not included in the three themes identified in the report.

- Continue to implement the RtI model to include more students by:
 - ✓ Adding extended learning time opportunities e.g. before and after school tutoring, summer school.
 - ✓ Providing math and writing interventions
 - ✓ Experiences outside the school day e.g. field trips
- Provide experiences for students to build vocabulary
- Enhance use of peer assisted learning strategies e.g. book buddies, cross age tutors, etc.
- Collaboratively work to improve student engagement and maximum use of instructional time.
- Consider reducing visual stimulation in classroom to promote focus on the most salient information being taught.
- Increasing student participation in after school activities.

IN CONCLUSION: Schools that intend to continue with the school improvement grant process will use prioritized findings in this report as a basis for developing their plans and grant proposals. The School Support Team sincerely hopes that this report assists the Philips Preparatory School community in the goal of raising academic achievement for all students.

More resources about the nine standards used in this report are available at the Professional Development and School Support website: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/FedPrograms/PDSSP/index.asp>

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