

Burlington Elementary School

St. Vrain Valley School District

School Background

Burlington Elementary School has a diverse population of minority students ($N = 155$, 37%), English learners ($N = 72$, 17%), students with disabilities ($N = 75$, 18%), and students who qualify for free or reduced lunch ($N = 188$, 45%).

Table 1. School Demographics

2013-14 Student Population								
Total Enrollment:	419							
Grades Enrolled:	PK -5							
	American Indian	Asian	Black or African American	Hispanic or Latino	White	Native Hawaiian	Two or More Races	Total Minority
Number:	0	13	1	130	264	1	10	155
Percent of Total:	0.0%	3.1%	0.2%	31.0%	63.0%	0.2%	2.4%	37.0%
	IEP	FRL	EL					
			Total*	NEP	LEP	FEP M1	FEP M2	
Number:	75	188	72	13	51	4	4	
Percent of Total:	17.9%	44.9%	17.2%	3.1%	12.2%	1.0%	1.0%	

* Total EL population includes NEP, LEP, FEP monitor year 1, and FEP monitor year 2.

The principal has been with the school for 19 years. The majority (over 71%) of the staff has more than 5 years of teaching experience. The staff of 18 general education teachers, 1 special education teacher, and 2 teachers identified as serving both general education and special education work collaboratively to serve all students in the school.

Table 2. Staff Statistics

Staff Statistics			
	0 to 5 years	6 to 15 years	16+ years
Prior years teaching experience in 2013-14	28.6%	57.1%	14.3%
	General	Special Ed.	Both (General/SPED)
Distribution of teachers in 2013-14	18	1	2

Exemplary Practices

- Relationships and Establishing Trust
- Collaboration
- Community and Family Partners
- Behavior Management
- Honoring Students' Strengths and Challenges



Selection Data

This school was identified based on the academic performance of four disaggregated groups, specifically, English learners, students with disabilities, minority students, and students eligible for free or reduced lunch.

The academic performance of minority students, English learners, and students eligible for free and reduced lunch at Burlington Elementary School has increased from 2011 to 2013 in both content areas (reading and math). The percent of minority students who were proficient or advanced increased from 56 to 77 percent on reading TCAP and 60 to 71 percent on math TCAP. Similarly, the percent of English learners who were proficient or advanced increased from 46 to 76 in reading and from 54 to 65 percent in math. The percent of students eligible for free and reduced lunch demonstrating proficiency increased from 54 to 72 percent in reading and from 60 to 69 percent in math.

The percent of students with disabilities demonstrating proficiency on TCAP remained relatively consistent from 2011 to 2013. In 2011, 33% and 47% of students with disabilities were proficient or advanced on reading and math TCAP, respectively, compared to 35% and 43% in 2013.

Table 3. Disaggregated Achievement Data Used in Identification of Schools

TCAP Achievement - Percent Proficient/Advanced**									
		IEP	FRL	Minority	EL				
					Total***	NEP	LEP	FEP M1	FEP M2
Reading	2011	33%	54%	56%	46%	N < 16	47%	N < 16	N < 16
	2012	37%	56%	61%	54%	N < 16	33%	N < 16	N/A
	2013	35%	72%	77%	76%	N < 16	69%	N/A	N < 16
		IEP	FRL	Minority	EL				
					Total***	NEP	LEP	FEP M1	FEP M2
Math	2011	47%	60%	60%	54%	N < 16	59%	N < 16	N < 16
	2012	37%	56%	61%	51%	N < 16	25%	N < 16	N/A
	2013	43%	69%	71%	65%	N < 16	58%	N/A	N < 16
**TCAP achievement excludes duplicate SASIDs, students with missing SASIDs, students with invalidation codes of "Taking alternate assessment" or "Withdrew," and students that are October new to school. TCAP only includes tests administered in English.									
***Total EL population for TCAP includes all NEP, LEP, and FEP students.									

This school received an overall School Performance Framework (SPF) rating of Improvement in 2011, and increased to a Performance rating in 2012 and 2013. This school earned a "Meets" rating on the Academic Achievement indicator for all three years.

Table 4. Performance Frameworks Data

School Performance Frameworks			
	2011	2012	2013
Official SPF Rating	Improvement	Performance	Performance
Official SPF % Pts	58.9	73.9	78.2
1-Yr SPF % Pts	58.9	73.9	78.2
Official Academic Achievement	Meets	Meets	Meets
1-Yr Academic Achievement	Meets	Meets	Meets

Study Methodology

Prior to the Onsite Visit: Documents Reviewed

A variety of documents were reviewed prior to the visit to the school, including team collaboration meeting notes, staff development plans, grade and specials schedules, school improvement goals, and the Unified Improvement Plan for the school.

During the Onsite Visit: Interviews, Observations, and Focus Groups

Burlington Elementary's onsite visit consisted of 7.00 hours of interviews ($N = 9$), 5.75 hours of focus groups ($N = 7$), and 29.75 hours of observations ($N = 35$).

Table 5. Onsite Interviews, Observations, and Focus Groups

Interviews		Focus Groups		Observations		Total	
<i>N</i>	Hours	<i>N</i>	Hours	<i>N</i>	Hours	<i>N</i>	Hours
9	7.00	7	5.75	35	29.75	51	42.50

Following the Onsite Visit: Surveys

Twenty-nine staff members from Burlington Elementary completed the Personnel Survey. The majority of respondents were teachers ($N = 19$; 66%). Eight of the respondents (28%) were certified or licensed to work with special populations, and 17 (59%) had been in their position at Burlington Elementary for 5 or more years.

Table 6. Personnel Survey Respondents

Position	Number of Respondents
Teacher	19
Administrator	2
Administrative Support Staff	2
Classroom Support Staff (e.g., paraprofessional, aide)	3
Instructional Staff (e.g., interventionist, tutor)	1
Specials Teacher (e.g., PE, Art, Library/Media)	1
Counselor/MTSS Coordinator	1
Total	29

Twenty-six people responded to the Parent, Family, and Community Survey with 18 (69%) of them having 1 child at the school and 15 (58%) having had a child or children at the school for 3 or more years.

Table 7. Parent Survey Respondents

Years have had a child or children at Burlington Elementary	Number of Respondents
Less than 1 year (new to school this year)	1
1 year	7
2 years	3
3 or more years	15
Total	26



Factors Unique to This School: Math, Engineering, and Science Achievement (MESA)

In addition to the traits and characteristics common across the schools studied (for details see the synthesis report), Burlington Elementary School implements a before and after school program designed to increase historically underrepresented students' interest and achievement in math and science. The program is described as follows on the district's website.

The Math, Engineering, and Science Achievement (MESA) program has been the premier science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education program in the St. Vrain Valley School District since 2000.

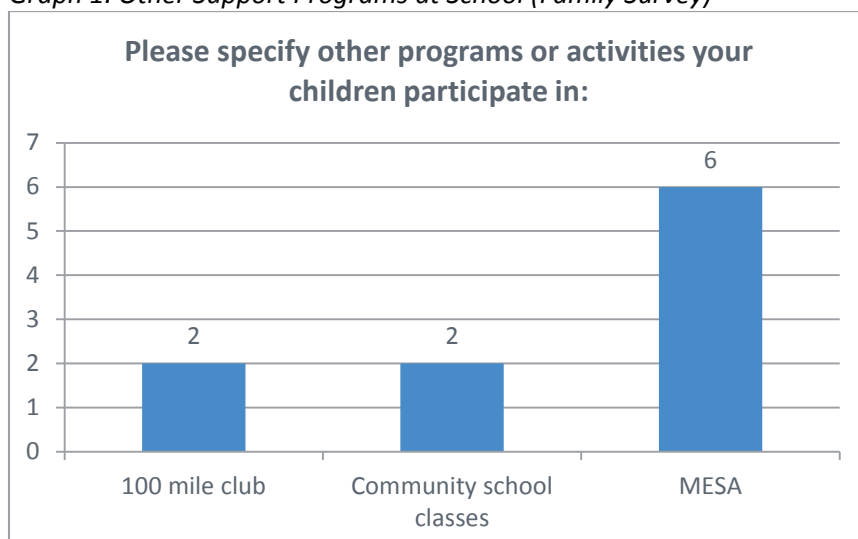
MESA's unique mission is to encourage, motivate, support and prepare students for success in the pursuit of undergraduate degrees and careers in STEM.

MESA serves all District students but has a particular interest and focus on students from groups that are historically underrepresented in science, engineering, and other math based careers. MESA students in elementary, middle and high schools prepare for and explore these professions through collaborative projects focused on building math, science, technology, and communication skills.

The vision of MESA is to support the national science and mathematics educational agenda by ensuring that MESA students develop a high level of literacy in mathematics, science, and technology so they can play a leading role within an increasingly technology-based world.

Six (23%) of the Parent Survey respondents specifically named MESA as a support program in which their child or children participate (see Graph 1).

Graph 1. Other Support Programs at School (Family Survey)



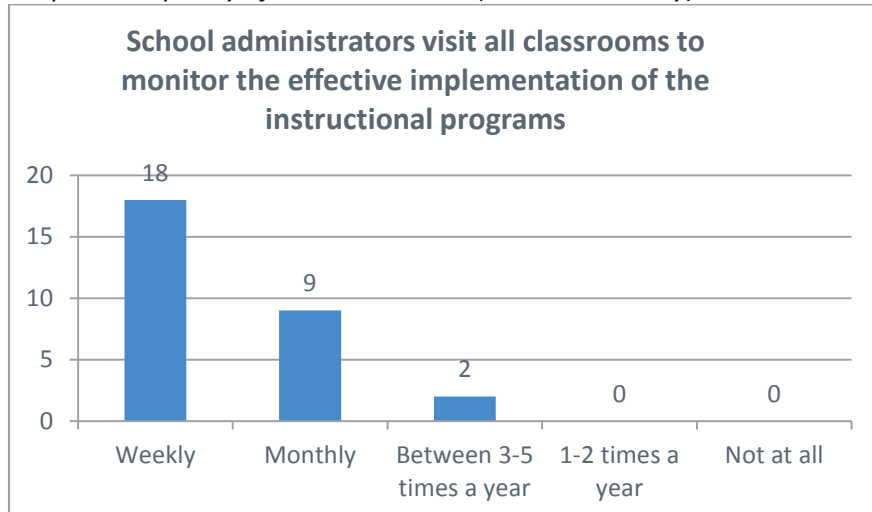
Exemplary Practices

The practices that were common across the five schools in the study are described in detail in the synthesis report. This school's practices are a good example of the following described in this report.

Relationships and Trust - **Culture and Climate, Leadership¹**

Burlington Elementary School has a very involved principal who knows every child in the school, as well as the children's families. She writes a personal note on each child's report card specific to his or her achievement before it is sent home. She visits classrooms across the school building daily and gives informal feedback to teachers regarding what is working well and what needs improvement (see Graph 2). She actively participates in grade level meetings, contributing to the discussions of each child and engaging in decision-making. During an observation of a data meeting, it was noted that not only does the principal attend each team's data meeting, but she also actively contributes to the data dialogue based on her knowledge and understanding of the students' data, strengths, and challenges.

Graph 2. Frequency of Classroom Visits (Personnel Survey)



The entire staff participates in as many school and community events as they can in order to get to know and interact with families and community members. The principal and school staff also attends students' afterschool events, such as sports games.

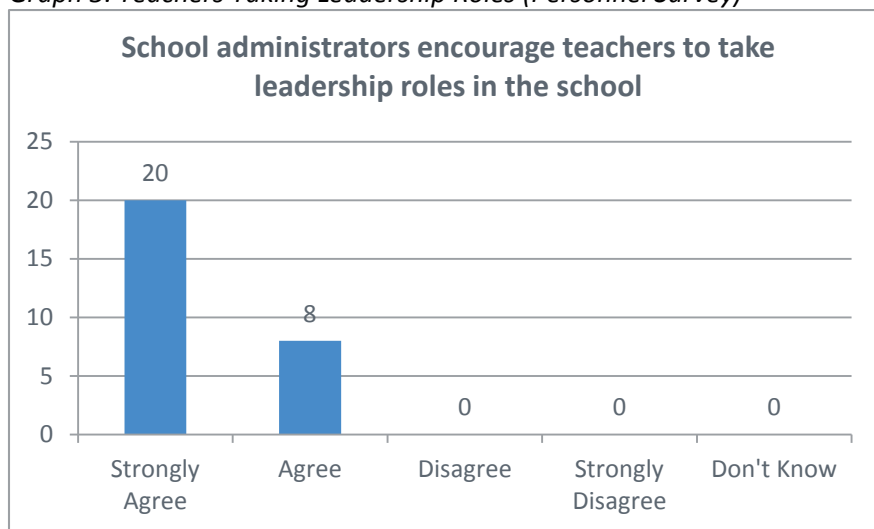
Not only does the principal know each child, his/her learning style, level of engagement, challenges, and strengths, but the entire staff also focuses on getting to know the whole child. Each child is discussed individually at collaboration meetings. At the beginning of each year, teachers study the students' data and information from earlier grades. Parent Teacher Conferences at the beginning of the year are focused on the end of year goals for each student and what that student should strive for during the current year in order to succeed in this grade. During that time, teachers ask for input from the family members regarding the goals set for students.

The principal only asks staff to do things that she herself would do – she does not ask the staff to do anything she would not do herself. For example, she personally knows the name of each student in the school and helps greet them each morning. School staff members hold themselves to the same standard as the principal. The Personnel Survey

¹ In this report, the red font following the title of a subsection denotes the Standard from the Colorado Standards and Indicators for Continuous Improvement that is represented in this component.

demonstrates this well, as no one disagreed that administrators encourage teachers to take on roles similar to those of leadership (see Graph 3). With her background in special education, the principal was observed meeting the special needs of students whenever necessary. For example, during the two day onsite visit, she was observed providing behavior management support to special education teachers.

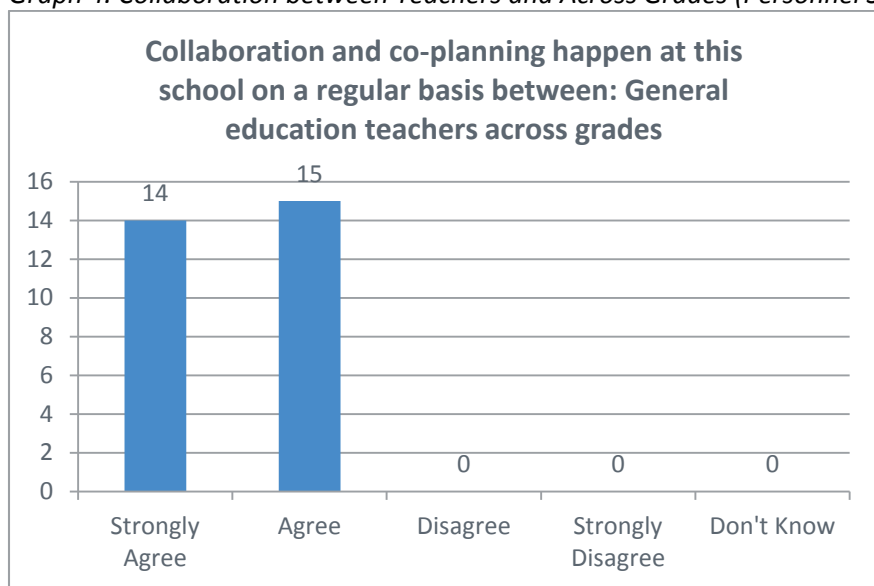
Graph 3. Teachers Taking Leadership Roles (Personnel Survey)



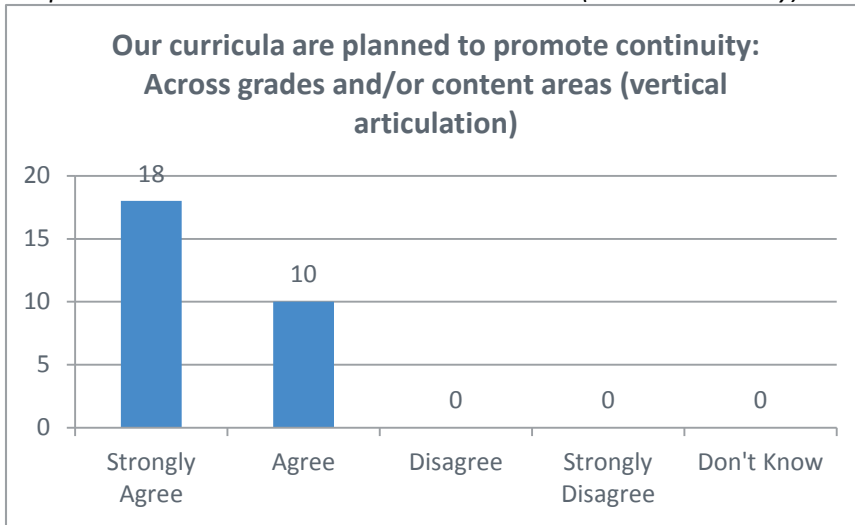
Collaboration - Leadership, Climate and Culture

The school leadership protects the structured collaboration time, both in vertically and horizontally aligned teams. All respondents to the Personnel Survey agreed that collaboration occurs regularly between teachers across all grades (see Graph 4). The Personnel Survey also demonstrates that the curricula support collaboration both vertically and horizontally (see Graphs 5 & 6).

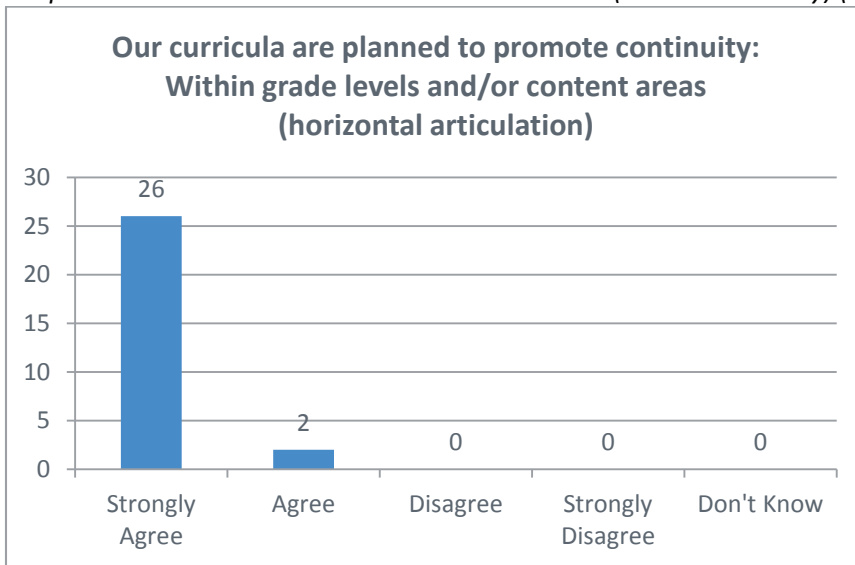
Graph 4. Collaboration between Teachers and Across Grades (Personnel Survey)



Graph 5. Curricula Promote Vertical Articulation (Personnel Survey)

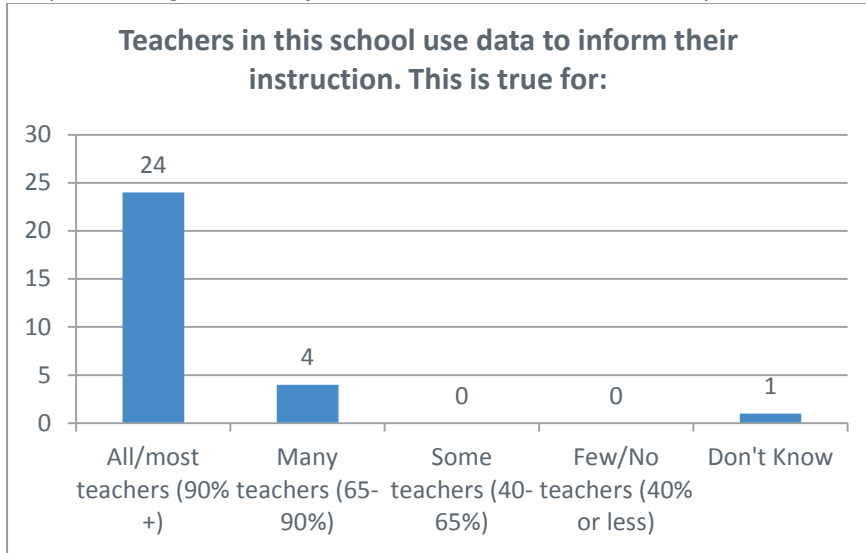


Graph 6. Curricula Promote Horizontal Articulation (Personnel Survey) (Personnel Survey)



Team collaboration meetings are held every 6 days with formal collaboration exchanging student data and work samples every 6 weeks. Time is built into all team collaboration meetings for communication among general education, special education, and English language development staff. The school has a collaborative and collective ownership of data, which they use to help inform instruction, as indicated in the Personnel Survey (see Graph 7).

Graph 7. Using Data to Inform Instruction (Personnel Survey)

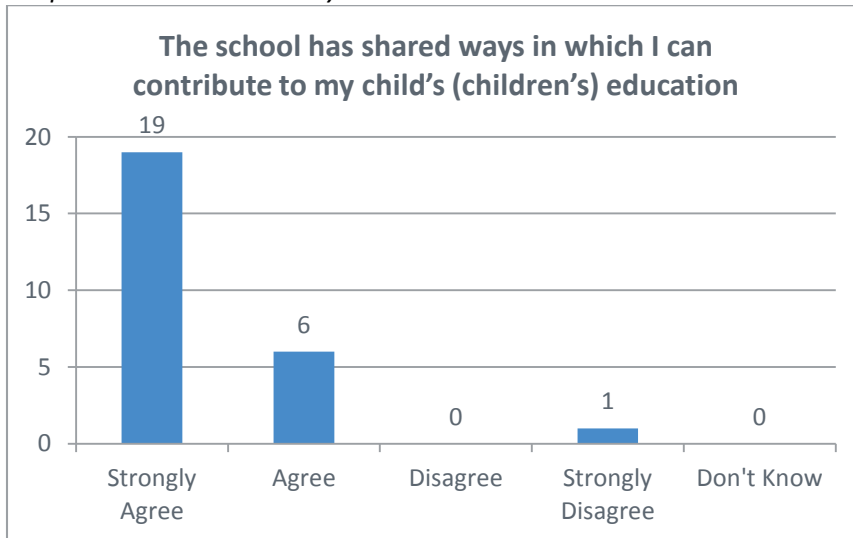


The School Leadership Team was key in decision making and sharing information to the entire staff.

Community and Family Partners - Leadership

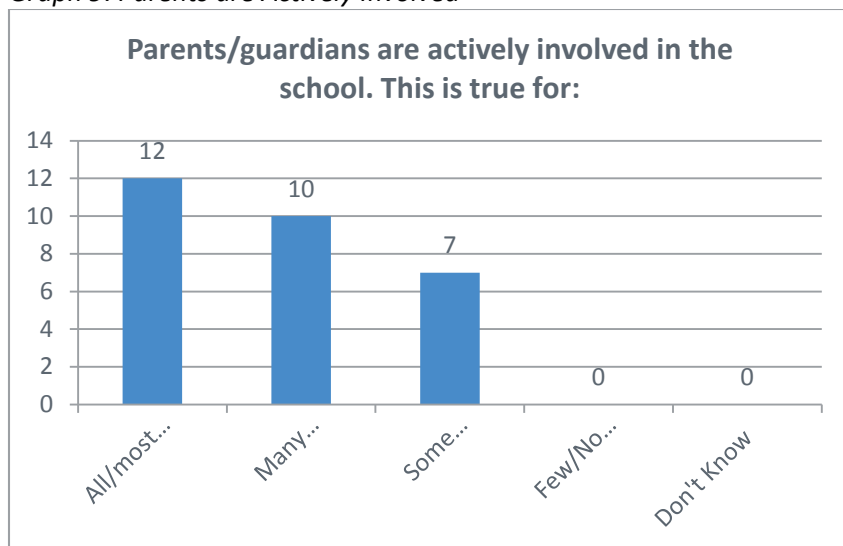
Burlington staff and leaders work very hard to develop and maintain partnerships with family and community members. They partner with the City of Longmont, Boulder County, local restaurants, and other businesses to fundraise for the school. The school and staff value parent volunteers and search for new and engaging ways that family partners can contribute to the school. Respondents to the Parent Survey indicated that the school values their participation in their child or children's education, with over 96% agreeing that the school has shared ways they can contribute (see Graph 8).

Graph 8. School Shares Ways to Contribute



Furthermore, the Personnel Survey supports this claim as all respondents indicate that at least 40% or more of parents/guardians are actively involved at the school (see Graph 9).

Graph 9. Parents are Actively Involved



A few years ago, parents approached the school wanting to implement the “Power of Three” program. In this program, parents are asked to commit to volunteering 3 hours over the course of the school year. The school was receptive to this idea, and according to the parents interviewed, is also receptive to other ideas that the parents have put forth, in addition to supporting the implementation of such programs through a joint effort or partnership. According to the parents, things have come a long way since the Power of Three started. Parents commented on the efforts to assign at least one volunteer with each student. Parents also spoke highly of the receptivity to new ideas and approachability of the school’s staff. One parent that has two children in two different schools reflected upon the differences between Burlington and the other school. She explained that at Burlington, parents know the school staff by name and the school staff knows the parents by name. She intimated that the staff at Burlington is supportive and welcoming of parents’ ideas, suggestions, and involvement in the classroom. Parents reported feeling that their opinions are valued and respected because they are asked how they feel about school matters and invited to provide suggestions for making things better. Parents are treated as the first authority on the students and asked to give input on what is best for the students. Another parent interviewed said that the principal knows all of the kids’ names and their stories. Parents stated that when you have so many parents in the school, they know each other, and it helps socialize the kids across social groups. Parents very much feel a part of the school. They noted that they received emails and phone calls from the school before school even started.

The school offers many math and reading websites and resources, in addition to resources to help the students over the summer. Burlington also offers reasonably priced summer camps in which all students can participate in outdoor activities and crafts. Parents interviewed said that the teachers know what resources are out there. They likened the school to a living organism due to the communication between parents and teachers. “It’s like I have my own crew of people helping me with my daughter. They don’t see it as a bad thing. It’s amazing. You’re not starting at zero here. The teachers are always conversing with students on how to do things better.”

Behavior Management - Culture and Climate

There is a focus on routines and structure for the classroom, the school, and the playground. All students are held to the same expectations, with teachers following consistent rules and consequences. It is clear that the school has an established PBIS program and clear behavioral expectations (see Graph 10). In a focus group of 4th and 5th graders, students indicated an understanding of the behavioral expectations and the consequences of not meeting them.

Graph 10. Students' Behavioral Expectations (Personnel Survey)



Honoring Students' Strengths and Challenges

A number of the parents interviewed said that they came to Burlington, stay at Burlington, or are pleased with the school because of the Gifted and Talented (GT) program. Many of the parents interviewed have a child who is twice exceptional. One parent said that while most other schools didn't even want to hear "twice exceptional," she was referred to Burlington specifically for that reason. "This staff has it together, I'm not sure if it's the experience, the training. Here we walked in the door and everything just fell into place. I drive out of my way here, and have no qualms about my daughter being here. I pass 4 other elementary schools on my way here." Parents noted that the GT teacher knows the children's strengths and gives the children choices of different ways to complete a task. The parents said that the biggest difference at Burlington is that the staff cares. "They care about your kid almost as much as you do."

One parent shared that she was terrified of the Individual Education Plan (IEP) process after reading horror stories, but that the process went smoothly at Burlington. "A lot of schools don't want to accept students as special needs because it's more work. Here, they always ask 'what can we do to help, how can we help?'" Parents noted that it is not a stigma to have an IEP or 504; rather, it's an identifiable way to help the children, and that even the principal is involved in the IEP or 504 process. Parents are grateful that the school can provide the support needed. One parent whose child is identified "twice exceptional" noted, "Kids are not pigeon-holed here." In reference to her child's strengths and weaknesses, one mom commented that children are not just identified by their weaknesses. She noted the school's philosophy is that "All kids have potential." Another parent whose child has an eating disorder noted that the principal personally sits with her daughter during lunch and supervises her group that has eating issues, after which she calls parents with any updates. "They care about the whole kid. We're all on the same team. We all want what's best for the kids." Parents praised the school for not ignoring students wrestling with hard behavior issues, noting that learning continues, but the school deals with the issues. "They don't just talk to the parent about it. They talk to your kid, on their level, making a plan to fix it." They tell the students that "tomorrow is a new day," and they make sure that the students can echo back the plan. "Everyone is on the same page. It's not a shameful thing."

Parents also praised the school for not relying solely on formal assessments for understanding the strengths and needs of their students. They talk to students and listen to them in order to understand how they can help address the weaker areas. One parent interviewed commented, "I'm always surprised at how well my teacher knows my child. They are very in tune with students." Another parent, whose child is on a 504 plan, commented that the child is able to use technology on his/her assessments. Parents commented that standardized tests scores are not what is driving this



school. “That’s not the goal. They want kids to learn it (the academic content), however they have to do that.” Students are presented with the content in the manner that they need and in a way that they can access it, with whatever accommodations they need in order to be able to show their knowledge. As one parent noted, “There’s more to the school than just that test.”

Where can I learn more?

For information about the study, contact Nazanin Mohajeri-Nelson

- Mohajeri-nelson_n@cde.state.co.us
- (303) 866-6205

For information about the High Fliers Network, contact Lynn Bamberry

- Bamberry_l@cde.state.co.us
- (303) 866-6813

Report Authors

- Nazanin Mohajeri-Nelson
- Lynn Bamberry
- Wendy Dunaway
- Ellen Hunter
- Jeff Klein
- Courtney Kuntz
- Tina Negley
- Robin Singer
- Rebekah Ottenbreit
- Eric Young