

High Achieving Schools Study

Factors That Have Contributed to This School's Success



COLORADO
Department of Education

School Report

Tavelli Elementary School

Poudre School District

School Background

Tavelli Elementary School has a diverse population of minority students ($N = 182$, 31%), English learners ($N = 38$, 7%), students with disabilities ($N = 50$, 9%), and students experiencing poverty ($N = 275$, 47%).

Table 1. School Demographics

2013-14 Student Population								
Total Enrollment:	581							
Grades Enrolled:	PK -5							
	American Indian	Asian	Black or African American	Hispanic or Latino	White	Native Hawaiian	Two or More Races	Total Minority
Number:	7	2	10	141	399	2	20	182
Percent of Total:	1.2%	0.3%	1.7%	24.3%	68.7%	0.3%	3.4%	31.3%
	IEP	FRL	EL					
			Total*	NEP	LEP	FEP M1	FEP M2	
Number:	50	275	38	7	27	3	1	
Percent of Total:	8.6%	47.3%	6.5%	1.2%	4.6%	0.5%	0.2%	

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

This school has a staff of 32 general education and 2 special education teachers working together to serve all students in the school. Most of the teachers (65%) have six or more years of teaching experience.

Table 2. Staff Statistics

Staff Statistics			
	0 to 5 years	6 to 15 years	16+ years
Prior years teaching experience in 2013-14	35.3%	44.1%	20.6%
	General	Special Ed.	Both (General/SPED)
Distribution of teachers in 2013-14	32	2	0

Exemplary Practices

- Data Notebooks and Performance Monitoring
- Paraprofessional Program
- STEAM School
- Interviewing and Hiring Practices
- Data Use
- Inclusiveness
- Authenticity
- Parent and Family Partnerships
- Distributed Leadership and Coaching



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 on TCAP 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 58 to 68 percent on reading TCAP and from 55 to 67 percent on math TCAP. Similarly, the percent of students eligible for free and reduced lunch who were proficient or advanced increased from 58 to 65 percent in reading and from 53 to 65 percent in math. Increases in proficiency from 2011 to 2013 were most evident for English learners. The percent of English learners demonstrating proficiency increased from 32 to 64 percent in reading and from 36 to 73 percent in math.

The percent of students with disabilities who were proficient or advanced has remained relatively consistent across all three years (2011, 2012, and 2013) for reading (18 to 23%), but has increased steadily for math, from 18 percent in 2011 to 30 percent 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	18%	58%	58%	32%	N < 16	17%	N < 16	N < 16
	2012	23%	51%	55%	52%	N < 16	N < 16	N/A	N < 16
	2013	20%	65%	68%	64%	N < 16	N < 16	N < 16	N/A
		IEP	FRL	Minority	EL				
					Total***	NEP	LEP	FEP M1	FEP M2
Math	2011	18%	53%	55%	36%	N < 16	28%	N < 16	N < 16
	2012	19%	50%	51%	48%	N < 16	N < 16	N/A	N < 16
	2013	30%	65%	67%	73%	N < 16	N < 16	N < 16	N/A

**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.

The school has received an overall School Performance Framework (SPF) rating of Performance for the prior three years (2011, 2012, and 2013), as well as a "Meets" rating on the Academic Achievement indicator for those years.

Table 4. Performance Frameworks Data

School Performance Frameworks			
	2011	2012	2013
Official SPF Rating	Performance	Performance	Performance
Official SPF % Pts	63.9	68.8	80.7
1-Yr SPF % Pts	58.4	68.8	80.7
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 the school calendar, curriculum maps, block schedules and rotations, EL coaching goals, mission, and tools, teacher evaluation rubrics, sample meeting agendas and notes, the parent handbook, school improvement goals, and the Unified Improvement Plan for the school.

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

Tavelli Elementary's onsite visit consisted of 12.33 hours of interviews ($N = 14$), 10.42 hours of focus groups ($N = 14$), and 18.30 hours of observations ($N = 26$).

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
14	12.33	14	10.42	26	18.30	54	41.05

Eight staff members from Tavelli Elementary completed the Personnel Survey. Half of the respondents were teachers ($N = 4$; 50%). Two of the respondents (25%) were certified or licensed to work with special populations, and 5 (83%) had been in their position at Tavelli Elementary for 3 or more years.

Table 6. Personnel Survey Respondents

Position	Number of Respondents
Teacher	4
Administrator	1
Instructional Staff (e.g., interventionist, tutor)	1
Parent	2

Forty-seven people responded to the Parent, Family, and Community Survey with 34 (72%) of them having one child at the school and 40 (85%) 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 Tavelli Elementary	Number of Respondents
Less than 1 year (new to school this year)	3
1 year	2
2 years	2
3 or more years	40

Factors Common across All Study Schools

See report called "High Achieving Schools Study: Common Practices and Procedures across Schools."

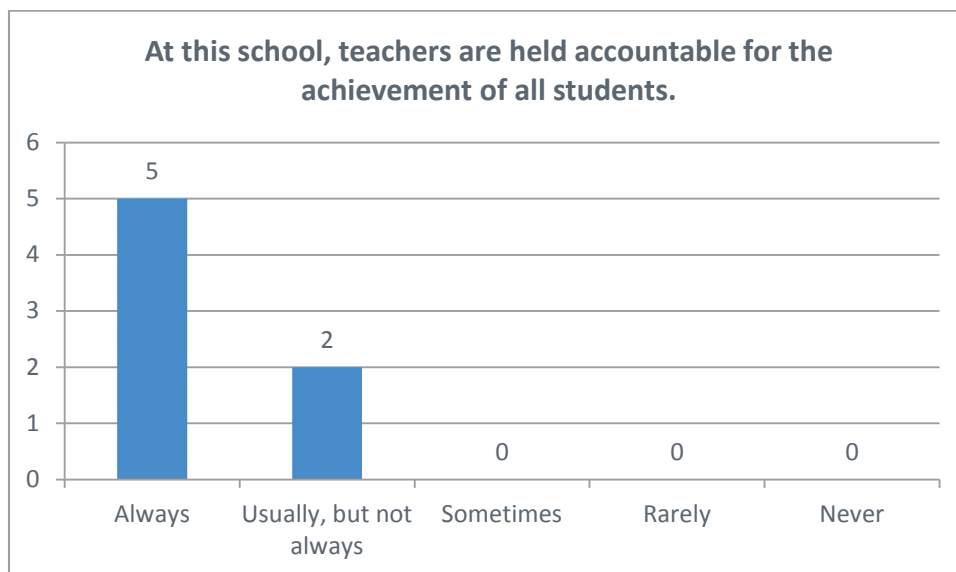
Factors Unique to This School

Historical Context

Approximately six years ago, Tavelli Elementary School was not making Adequate Yearly Progress on state assessments and was identified as a school on improvement. The current principal was hired specifically for the mission of turning the school around. Shortly after her arrival, the school participated in a comprehensive review conducted by Colorado Department of Education (called School Support Team). The intent of the review was to identify strengths and areas of improvement for the school, based on the standards for continuous improvement. The findings gave the school leverage points for school reform.

The results of the review provided the school detailed information about the changes that were necessary in order to turn the school around. The principal studied the results and capitalized on the opportunity to implement reform. She shared the review results with her staff and worked collaboratively with them to take ownership of the results in a non-judgmental way. She created working groups, strategically placing teachers who embraced the need for reform, so that they could help prepare others for change and provide support to them in the process. Personnel whose philosophy did not align with the rest of the team in embracing the need for reform either self-selected to leave the school or worked with the district to find a another school that was a better fit for them. This sense of holding teachers accountable is reflected in responses to the Personnel Survey in which 88 percent of respondents felt that teachers are usually, if not always, held accountable for student achievement (see Graph 1).

Graph 1. Teachers are Held Accountable for Student Achievement (Personnel Survey)

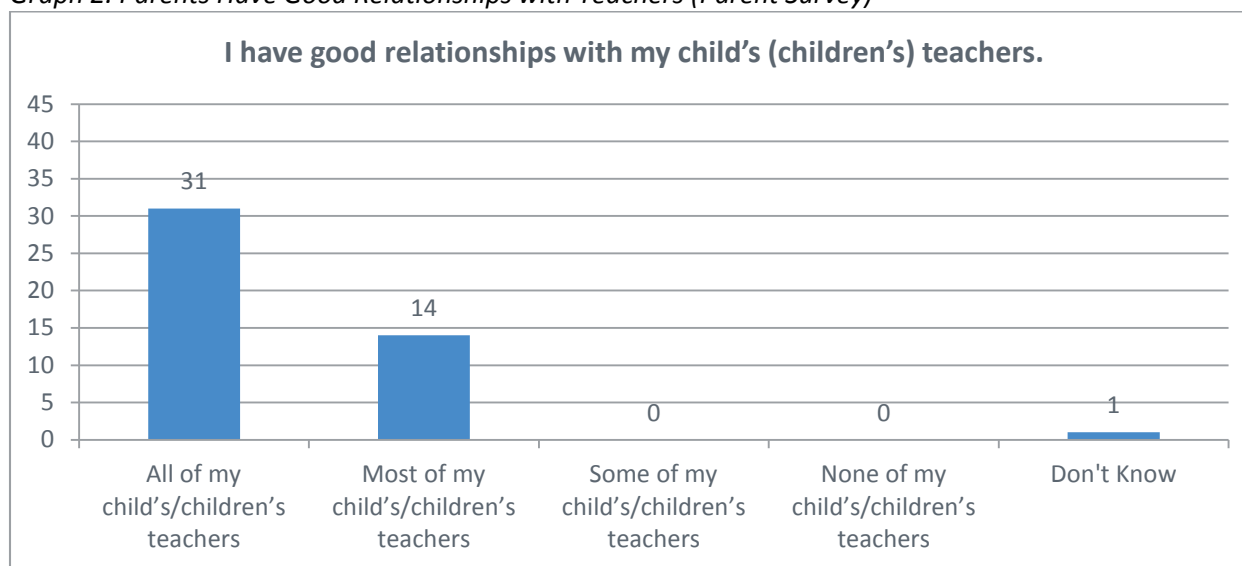


Caveat: These results should be interpreted with caution due to the small number of respondents.

During her first year of tenure at Tavelli, the principal felt a sense of urgency to implement change. She noted that the school was implementing numerous initiatives that were neither well-organized nor directed at increasing achievement. She was forced to make some tough decisions regarding which initiatives to eliminate. Some of her decisions were met with resistance. However, in order for the school to accomplish the goals set out for them and for the students to achieve at a higher rate, they had to minimize the number of initiatives, while at the same time increasing the time and focus on more urgent matters and on the strategies that would lead to the needed changes. Over the next four years, she gradually reintroduced the former initiatives when the school was better prepared and positioned to implement them with fidelity.

Parents credit the principal with causing a positive shift in school culture. Some of the first changes parents noticed were new carpet, pictures, and chairs. Other changes included a change in school boundaries and the school adopting the STEAM program. New traditions began. Whereas before, parents felt unwelcome at the school and that the school environment was negative, parents describe the school staff now as more stable and unified, like a team. Parents and staff alike have commented that the school feels like a family. Ninety-six percent of Parent Survey respondents felt that they have a good relationship with at least most of their child's/children's teachers (see Graph 2).

Graph 2. Parents Have Good Relationships with Teachers (Parent Survey)



Data Notebooks and Performance Monitoring - **Assessment of and for Learning and Tiered Support¹**

Another noteworthy practice at this school is the use of and reliance upon data notebooks. Everyone in the building, including students and families, understood and could articulate the intent and contents of the data notebooks.

Individual student data notebooks

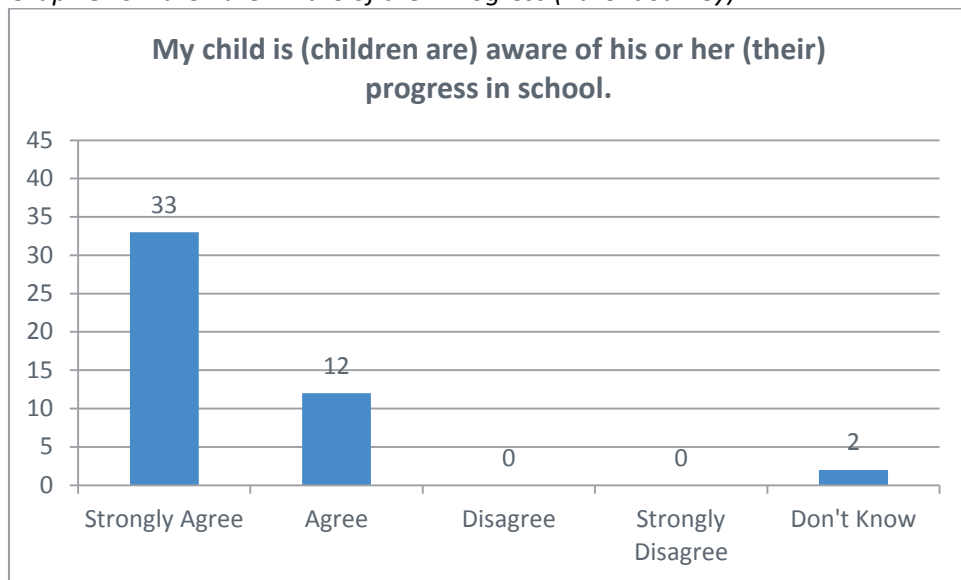
Teachers use student created data notebooks across all grade levels as a way for students to take ownership of their own academic achievement and progress. The notebooks are used to track scores on assessments and are charted in graphs in a way that students understand. Students are confident in their ability to manage their data notebooks and have a positive view of them. Students monitor their own performance. For lower achieving students, it allows them to see where they need to grow; for higher achieving students, they are able to push even further to reach higher goals. Students strive to meet the higher challenges. It also provides a mechanism for continuous feedback and not having to wait until the end of the quarter for students to see where they are.

Teachers use the data to discuss each student's performance and growth individually. Teachers indicate that they work together as a team to help these students grow not just in their grade level, but also with interventions, with the goal to drive instruction that is specialized to student needs. They view students holistically and try to build a body of evidence for each student; they do not just look at one data point. The school encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning through the use of the data notebook and graphing their own progress. Compared to the other High

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.

Achieving Schools that were surveyed, Tavelli scores highest on the corresponding Parent Survey item. No respondents disagreed that their child (or children) is aware of his or her (their) progress in school (See Graph 3).

Graph 3. Children are Aware of their Progress (Parent Survey)

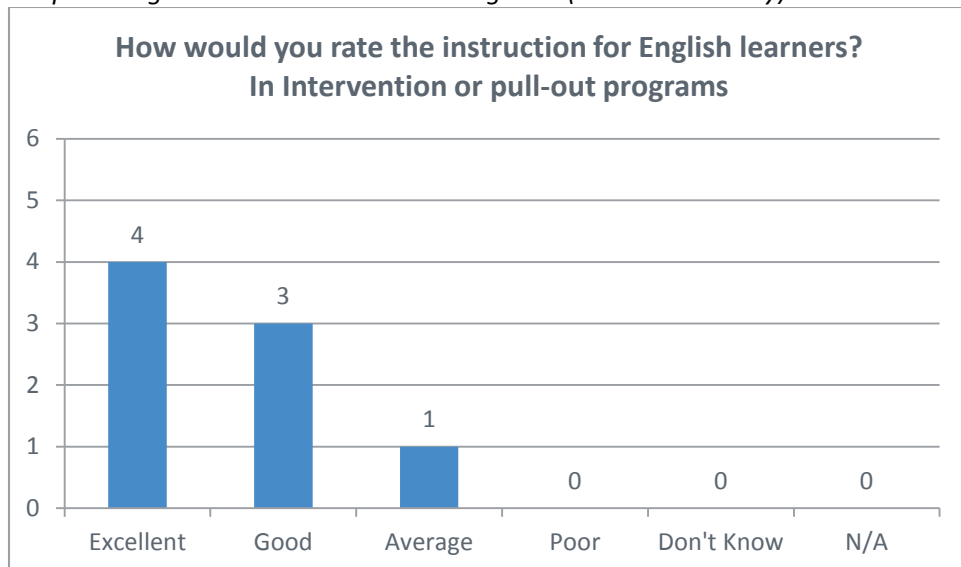


Another critical component of data use that contributes to the success of Tavelli is engaging students in “student talk,” a process wherein students explain the “why” behind data points or responses to questions. Students listen to each other present the justification for their responses and how they reached a conclusion. This allows students to listen critically and engage in deep conversations. The process also allows teachers to listen for the areas in which students are struggling to articulate conceptual and applied learning, giving the teachers an opportunity to scaffold student thinking and learning.

Progress Monitoring English Language Development

The ELD Teacher/Coach uses both the WIDA Model and a self-created progress monitoring tool for English Language Development to monitor student progress in language between the annual ACCESS assessments. The benefit of using WIDA’s Model is that it aligns with the W-APT, used for initial identification and program placement, and the annual ACCESS assessment. The self-created tool entails the student using pictures to tell a story, and it is scored using a combination of Linda Mood Bell’s Visualizing and Verbalizing and the ACCESS speaking rubric. The ELD Teacher/Coach begins the self-created assessment by reminding the student of his/her goal and then records the student’s response. The ELD Teacher/Coach and the student then listen to the recording and co-score the student’s response together, counting the number of Visualizing and Verbalizing terms used and then using the ACCESS speaking rubric to give an overall rating to the student’s level of speaking. The ELD Teacher/Coach then talks to the student about how to do better next time. The benefits of this assessment are that it is quick to give, the student is practicing self-assessment, the classroom teacher and the ELD Teacher/Coach can go over the recording together at another time, it can be given as often as necessary, and the student receives feedback and coaching on how to improve. All of this adds up to what 88 percent of respondents of the Personnel Survey would consider above average instruction for English learners in intervention or pull-out programs (see Graph 4).

Graph 4. English Learners in Pull-out Programs (Personnel Survey)



Caveat: These results should be interpreted with caution due to the small number of respondents.

Paraprofessional Program - Standards and Instructional Planning

The scheduling of the paraprofessionals is well-structured to help support teachers. Paraprofessionals are a valued part of the instructional team and participate in data meetings to give input. They are invited and welcome to attend staff meetings; however, staff meeting attendance is not mandatory for them. It is up to the paraprofessional to decide which meetings are the best use of time and most helpful to him or her.

Paraprofessionals receive trainings (mostly district-provided trainings) depending on which teams they participate in and the skills needed to work with the students to which they are assigned. The school leadership team values and appreciates the paraprofessionals and their contributions, and the principal even invited all paraprofessionals to her house to celebrate their contributions to the school.

STEAM School - Culture and Climate

Several years ago, the school went through a number of changes including shifted school boundaries, changes in curriculum, and adopting STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math). There was a lot of parent involvement to help choose this style, and parents reported that they were eager to learn about different styles of education, as well as pleased to be part of the selection process. STEAM has focused the staff and provides a lot of repetition, and the integration of arts across content areas draws students to this school. Kids are able to make connections between classes and the greater world, and parents commented that the STEAM program provides richer opportunities for discussions at home.

Exemplary Practices

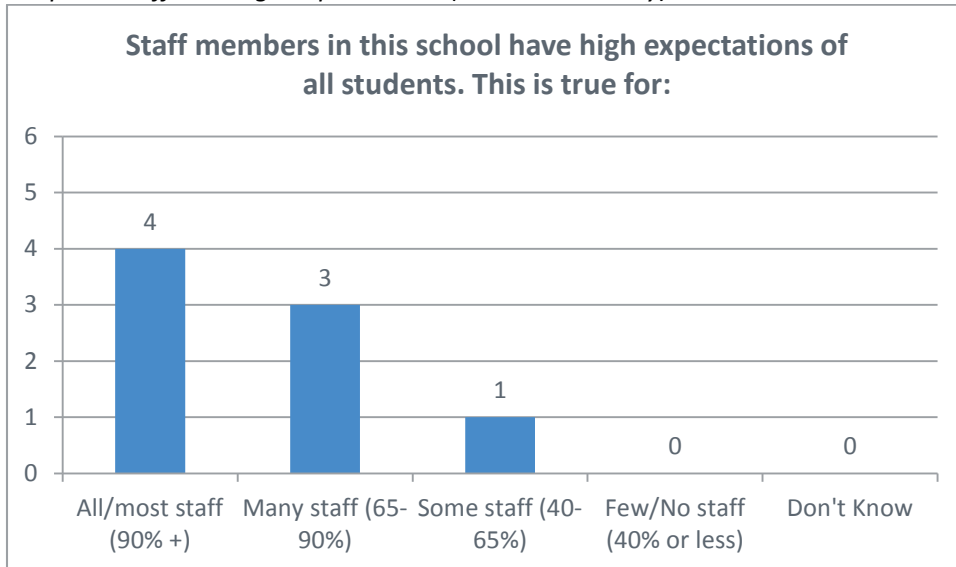
Interviewing and Hiring Practices - Leadership and Educator Effectiveness

One of the defining qualities of this school's success has been the hiring practices utilized to employ teachers and staff who have a strong passion for teaching all students as well as the prior experience to be able to lead reform. During interviews of potential staff, the principal asks questions about the candidates' teaching and learning philosophies and theories and how those are best implemented, to ensure that they align with her mission and vision for the school. She evaluates candidates' passion for teaching, their vision for students, their beliefs about how students learn, and how well the candidates will fit with the rest of the team at the school. She strives to hire candidates that manifest the ability

to be flexible and take risks. Although she hires team players, she also tries to ensure that new hires will complement and supplement the skills of existing teams.

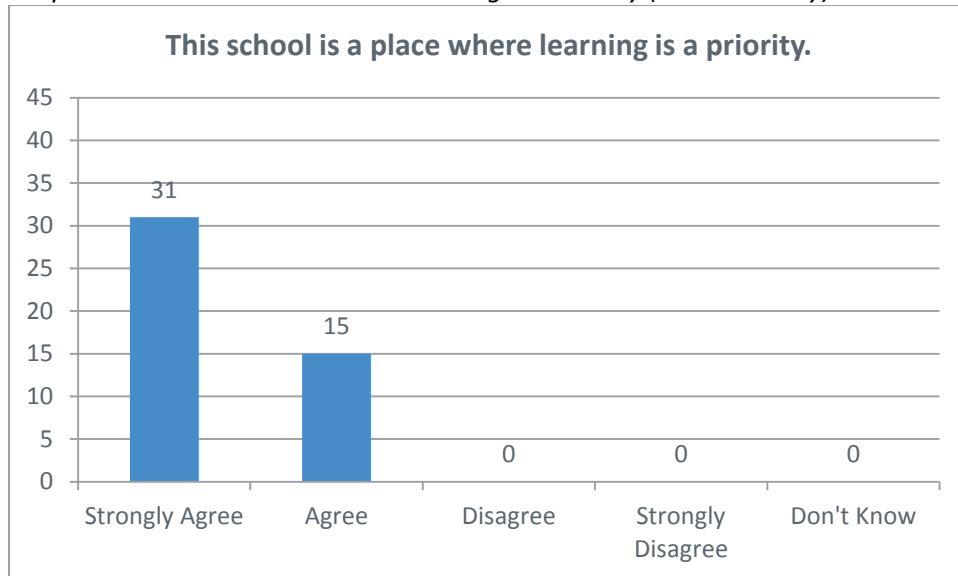
She also seeks out educators that embrace diversity. A non-negotiable is that all personnel must believe that all students can learn and that school personnel's primary responsibility is to increase the likelihood of each student's success. They have to know and care about the whole child and be flexible and nimble enough to do whatever it takes to remove learning obstacles and barriers for all students. For example, teachers are so committed to removing obstacles for students and doing what is best for them, that at one point they discussed and offered to provide tutoring at the nearby apartment complex for students who might not have access to before/after school transportation other than school buses. Although the offer was made, it was not necessary to provide the tutoring at the apartment complex because once tutoring was started, families found ways to bring students to the school for services. Possessing these beliefs and passion for student success and willingness to do what it takes to help students succeed are requirements for continued employment at the school. The Personnel Survey demonstrates the commitment of Tavelli's staff to student success with 88 percent of respondents indicating that many, if not all, of the staff members have high expectations of all students (see Graph 5). Furthermore, 98 percent of the Parent Survey respondents agree that learning is a priority at Tavelli (see Graph 6).

Graph 5. Staff Has High Expectations (Personnel Survey)



Caveat: These results should be interpreted with caution due to the small number of respondents.

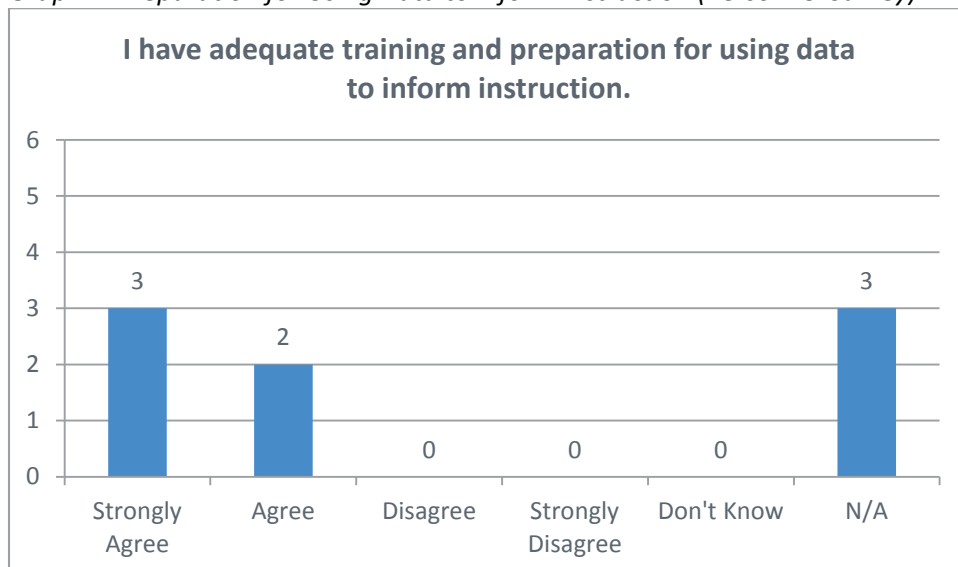
Graph 6. School is a Place where Learning is a Priority (Parent Survey)



Data Use - Assessment of and for Learning

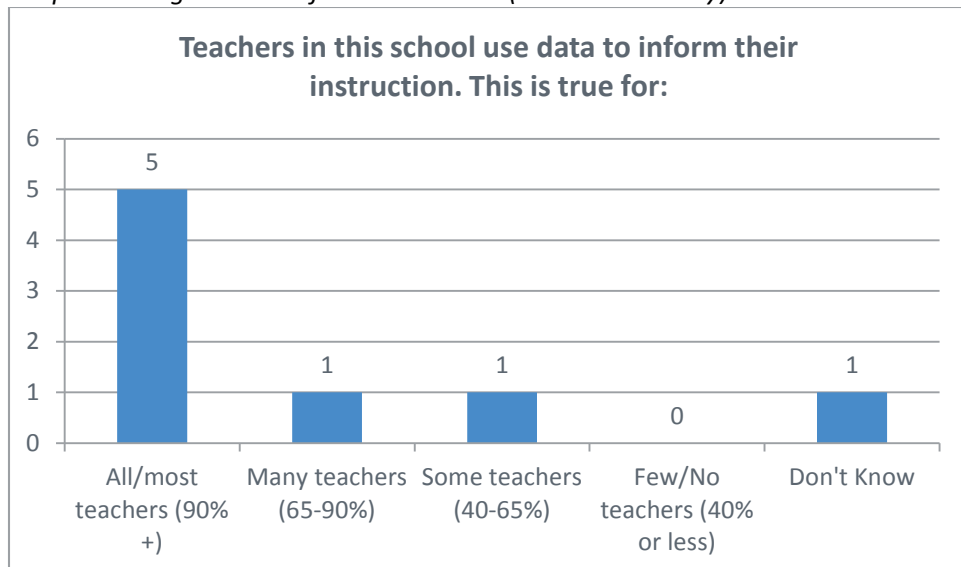
There is a strong culture of using data to direct instruction and meet the needs of all students. One of the highest rated items on the Personnel Survey addresses training and preparation for using data to inform instruction. One hundred percent of applicable respondents agreed that they are prepared to use data to inform instruction. Additionally, 86 percent of applicable respondents indicated that many, if not all, teachers use data to inform their instruction (see Graphs 7 and 8). Use of student data notebooks ensures that data is used to track progress of individual students. There is an emphasis on using age appropriate visuals and tools to help students actively participate in monitoring their own success and setting their own goals.

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



Caveat: These results should be interpreted with caution due to the small number of respondents.

Graph 8. Using Data to Inform Instruction (Personnel Survey)



Caveat: These results should be interpreted with caution due to the small number of respondents.

A body of evidence is used to identify needs, provide supports, and monitor progress for both students and adults in the school. For example, Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) are set using multiple data points, including attendance data. Teachers use multiple data points to identify when they need help, support, or training.

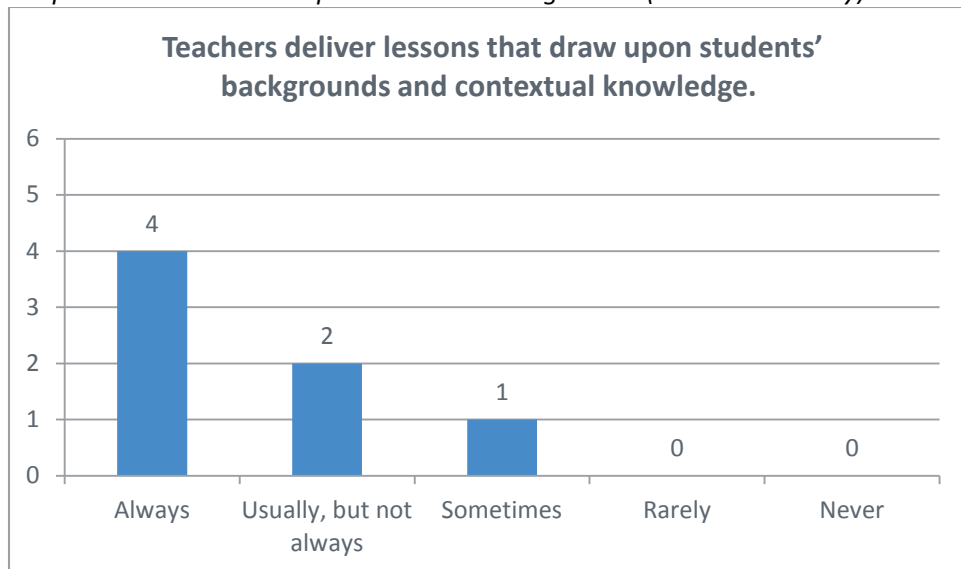
Data is used to identify learning and teaching opportunities, as well as to prioritize and focus the mission and vision of the school and the work being conducted at all levels. For example, if another teacher's data indicates that the teacher is more successful in implementing a lesson, then the more skilled teacher will be asked to model for a teacher who might be struggling with that lesson. Coaches in the school also use data to identify when a teacher might need a lesson modeled. All lesson modeling is followed with monitoring of the teacher to see if he or she is now implementing the lesson more successfully.

Grade level data is used to strengthen the sense of shared responsibility. By diving into grade-level data together as a team and using the data to progress monitor performance, teams hold themselves accountable for the performance of all students in that grade.

Inclusiveness - Culture and Climate

Through the data collection and the PLC process, teams focus on the needs of specific students, regardless of whether they are in special or general education. Teams demonstrate a shared responsibility for the success of all students. Seventy-five percent of respondents to the Personnel Survey indicate that teachers usually, if not always, draw upon students' backgrounds and contextual knowledge when delivering lessons (see Graph 9). However, these results should be interpreted with caution due to the small number of respondents (only seven personnel responded). There are a number of interventionists available to work with students, and small group instruction for students who would benefit from more academic challenge is available. The school environment appeared consistent with the staff belief that all students can learn regardless of individual circumstances and/or disabilities. Parent comments were consistent with this observation; parents voiced their appreciation that all students are treated equally in this school, stating that the shedding of labels has minimized special needs kids thinking of themselves as special needs and advanced students thinking of themselves as advanced.

Graph 9. Teachers Draw upon Students' Backgrounds (Personnel Survey)



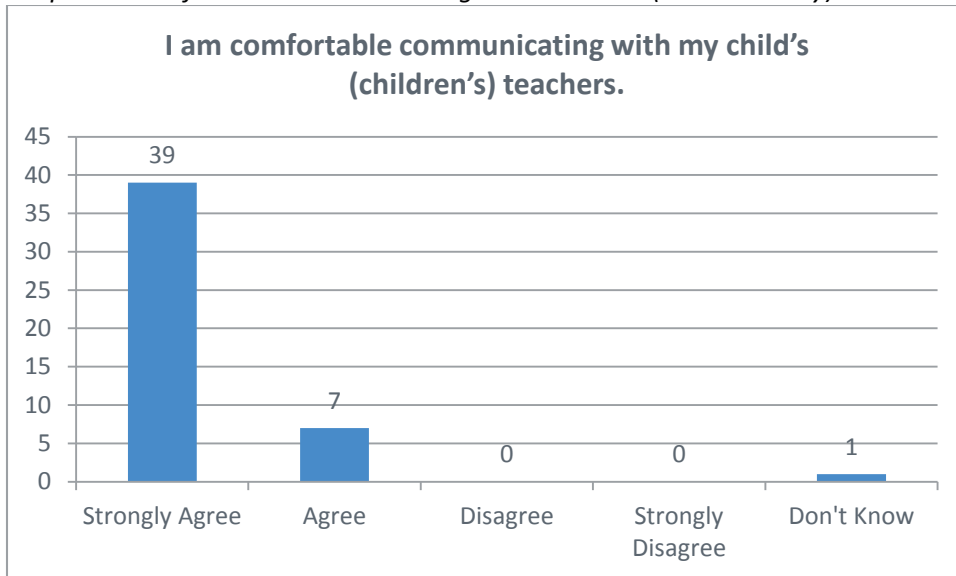
Caveat: These results should be interpreted with caution due to the small number of respondents.

The school's motto is "Do your best; do what's right; and treat others how you want to be treated." There is an expectation that all students are treated equally by teachers, staff, families, and students. The expectation to treat each other with respect and in accordance with the school motto is communicated early in the year and frequently throughout the rest of the year. A boot camp kicks off the year with discussions and trainings on the behavioral expectations at the school. Communications to families include frequent reminders of these expectations.

Authenticity - Culture and Climate and Leadership

While strong relationships and rapport have been key to the success of every school in this study, the level of genuineness at Tavelli was noteworthy. From the moment people walk in the door, they feel right at home. Parents who had been at the school for years credited the principal and her staff with creating this authentic culture of caring. None of the Parent Survey respondents disagreed that they are comfortable communicating with Tavelli's teachers (see Graph 10). Everyone knows the children's names, paraprofessionals are seen as instructional staff who are equal to teachers, and the inclusive model of instruction means that students are unaware of labels they may carry, such as SPED or ESL. Students and teachers feel truly cared for, and kids learn because of the positive environment. Staff members reported feeling that the principal has their well-being and professional success at heart and is willing to support them in any way she can. Multiple teachers commented that if they asked for materials or resources, the principal always finds the money somewhere to make it happen.

Graph 10. Comfortable Communicating with Teachers (Parent Survey)



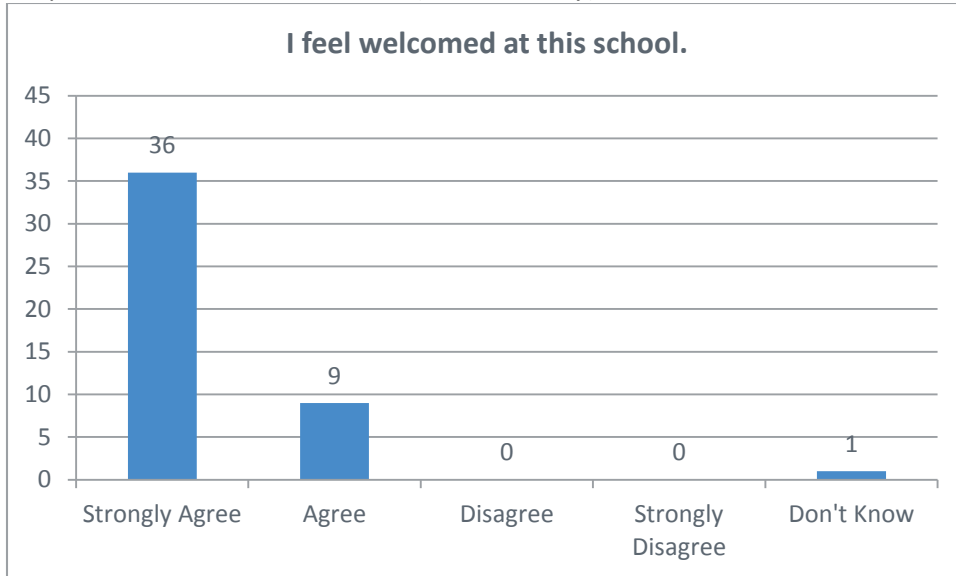
The principal and assistant principal exude a sense of passion and caring for every individual in their building, including visitors. They believe that academic achievement is a top priority and that it is their job to remove any obstacles or barriers limiting the success of their staff in educating all students in the school. Examples were provided of the principal finding substitutes for teachers who needed time to regroup or refocus, the principal driving staff members to the hospital when needed, providing rewards as often as possible for successes achieved (e.g., bringing in a popcorn machine for all to enjoy, treating grades 3-5 students to a movie at the theater when TCAP was successfully administered, and going to the home of truant students and driving them to school to improve their attendance).

Parent and Community Partnerships - Culture and Climate

The school maintains strong and effective family and community partnerships, including partnerships with local hospitals, the Healthy Kids Club, and Colorado State University. There is a strong emphasis on student and staff wellness and participation in Healthy Kids Club events like the Duathlon, Walkathon, and Schools on the Move Challenge. Fuel for Fun is working with fourth grade students to foster connections between school cooking staff, Fuel for Fun staff, and students to promote awareness of healthy foods.

The welcoming and collaborative nature of the staff and school leaders has contributed to increased family partnership and engagement. The Parent Survey validates this, as no respondents disagreed that the school is welcoming (see Graph 11). The school has a very active parent group that serve as advocates for the school. The School Accountability Committee includes parents that use data to support and advocate for changes at the school. School leaders are very communicative with both organizations and are receptive/welcoming of their input. Transparency and open communication have increased the long-term commitment of the groups.

Graph 11. Parents Feel Welcomed (Parent Survey)



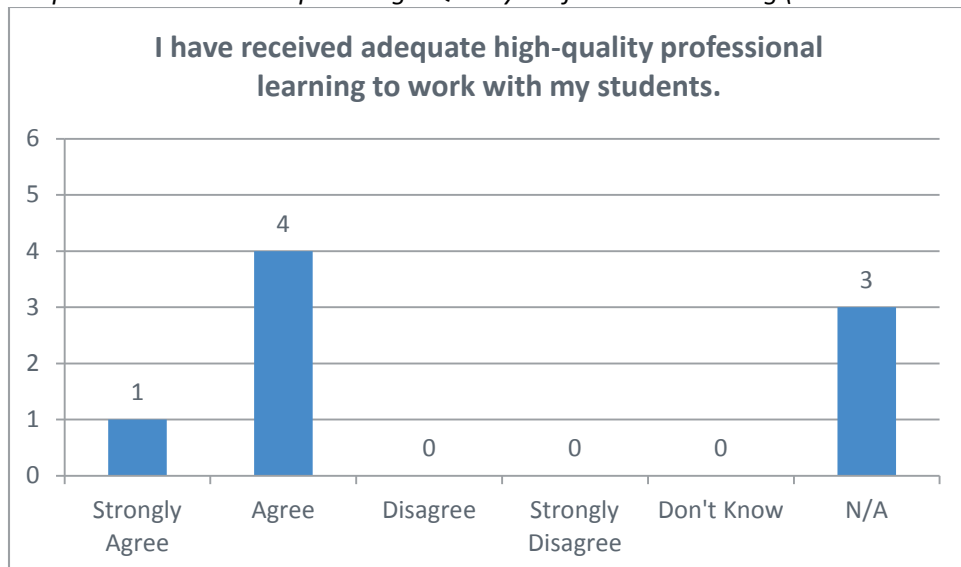
Capitalizing on Available Resources - Culture and Climate and Leadership

Poudre School District has numerous district-developed resources available to its schools, such as trainings, professional learning opportunities, orientations, data tools, and curriculum resources. The principal and assistant principal at Tavelli are very knowledgeable of and take full advantage of the resources available to them from the district, when those resources are likely to lead to increased student achievement. For example, they ensure that all new staff participates in the district's orientation to the 5 Dimensions of Learning (the district's standards-based teaching and learning frameworks). The district also provides data tools and growth calculations specific to each school. Tavelli school leaders and personnel utilize these available resources as often as possible.

The district also provides opportunities to participate in various committees, such as a districtwide literacy team. Again, participation is encouraged and time is allotted for participation, if and when participation is likely to contribute to increased student achievement.

Decisions regarding trainings needed are left up to the individual staff members. The principal believes that if someone has requested a training or support, she trusts that it is because they need it. She does everything in her power to fund the requested item, with a clear expectation that if school funds are being used to pay for a training, it is to be used and implemented with fidelity. She follows up to ensure that is the case. One hundred percent of applicable respondents of the Personnel Survey agreed that they receive adequate high-quality professional learning (see Graph 12). However, as noted previously, these results should be interpreted with caution due to the small number of respondents (only eight personnel responded).

Graph 12. Received Adequate High-Quality Professional Learning (Personnel Survey)



Caveat: These results should be interpreted with caution due to the small number of respondents.

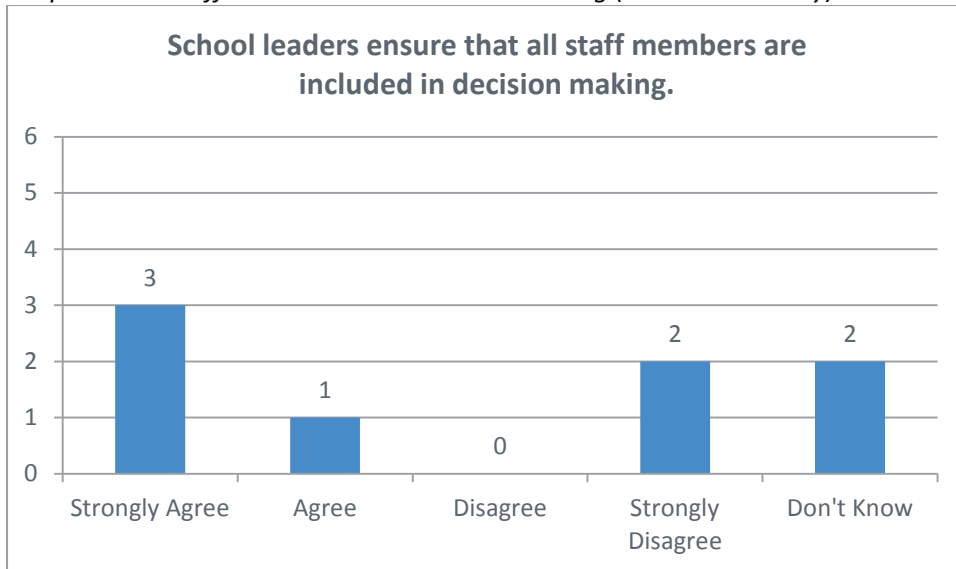
Other resources, such as the district’s rubrics on the 5 Dimensions of Learning and the Unified Improvement Planning tools provided by CDE, are used as ongoing tools for maintaining focus. These are both treated as “living documents” that are updated throughout the school year and referenced during implementation of the school’s mission, vision, and decision-making.

Distributed Leadership and Coaching - Culture and Climate

Leadership responsibilities are distributed between the principal, assistant principal, a leadership committee, instructional coaches, and several teams (e.g., the Integrated Services Team). Clearly defined and articulated roles and responsibilities allow for distributed decision-making and providing support to instructional staff. For example, the various teams are responsible for making their own schedules, with the expectation that decisions are based on what is best for students, relies on data, and includes a way to monitor the impact of the schedule.

The leadership members are very reflective (especially the principal) and devote time to deliberating what is working, what needs improvement, who needs extra support, and who is ready for more/change. A tremendous amount of time is devoted to figuring out what is working for students and how they know what is working. However, responses are divided on the Personnel Survey as to whether or not all staff members are included in the decision making process (see Graph 13). Again, however, these results should be interpreted with caution due to the small number of respondents (only eight personnel responded).

Graph 13. All Staff are Included in Decision Making (Personnel Survey)



Caveat: These results should be interpreted with caution due to the small number of respondents.

The leadership team believes in leading by example and modeling what is expected. The principal does not ask of her staff anything that she is not willing to do herself. The leadership team, especially the instructional coaches, will teach a class to model an effective teaching practice, followed by frequent observations and feedback, to ensure that the effective practices were learned and are being successfully implemented.



Where can I learn more?

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