Canyon Creek Elementary School

Cherry Creek School District

School Background

Canyon Creek Elementary School has a diverse population of minority students (*N* = 234, 37%), English learners (*N* = 61, 10%), students with disabilities (*N* = 94, 15%), and students experiencing poverty (*N* = 137, 22%).

Exemplary Practices

- Co-Teaching Model to Serve English Learners
- Relationship Development
- Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)
- Supports Provided to Teachers and Thereby to Students

Table 1. School Demographics

2013-14 Student Population								
Total Enrollment: 635								
Grades Enrolled: K -5								
	American Indian	Asian	Black or African American	Hispanic or Latino	White	Native Hawaiian	Two or More Races	Total Minority
Number:	4	49	54	97	401	1	29	234
Percent of Total:	0.6%	7.7%	8.5%	15.3%	63.1%	0.2%	4.6%	36.9%

	IEP	FRL	EL				
			Total*	NEP	LEP	FEP M1	FEP M2
Number:	94	137	61	3	39	13	6
Percent of Total:	14.8%	21.6%	9.6%	0.5%	6.1%	2.0%	0.9%

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

The principal at the school has been a part of the leadership team for 7 years (2 years as assistant principal and 5 years as principal). A stable staff of 33 general education and 4 special education teachers works collaboratively to serve all students in the school. Only 16% of the staff has been teaching for 5 years or less. The school has one EL Coordinator who co-teaches with several of the general education teachers.

Table 2. Staff Statistics

Staff Statistics			
	0 to 5 years	6 to 15 years	16+ years
Prior years teaching experience in 2013-14	16.2%	48.6%	35.1%
	General	Special Ed.	Both (General/SPED)
Distribution of teachers in 2013-14	33	4	0

Selection Data

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

For reading and math, the percent of minority students that were proficient or advanced on TCAP during those three years was consistently around 80 percent (range of 76 to 84 percent).

The percent of students eligible for free and reduced lunch demonstrating proficiency on reading TCAP was consistent during those three years (68 to 69 percent). A higher percentage (range of 78 to 83 percent) of this disaggregated group was proficient or advanced on math TCAP.

The percent of students with disabilities that were proficient or advanced on reading TCAP ranged from 40 percent (in 2013) to 43 percent (in 2012). Over half of the students with disabilities were proficient on math TCAP in 2011 (56%) and 2012 (57%).

English learners at this school also demonstrated higher proficiency on the state assessment. Over half of this subgroup was proficient or advanced on reading and math TCAP. The percent of English learners that were proficient ranged from 67 to 73 percent in reading, and from 76 to 88 percent in math.

Table 3. Disaggregated Achievement Data Used in Identification of Schools

			IEP	FRL	Minority	EL				
						Total***	NEP	LEP	FEP M1	FEP M2
Reading	2011		42%	69%	77%	67%	N/A	*N* <16	*N* <16	*N* <16
	2012		43%	68%	76%	73%	N/A	*N* <16	*N* <16	*N* <16
	2013		40%	68%	84%	72%	N/A	*N* <16	*N* <16	*N* <16
			IEP	FRL	Minority	EL				
						Total***	NEP	LEP	FEP M1	FEP M2
Math	2011		56%	79%	83%	83%	N/A	*N* <16	*N* <16	*N* <16
	2012		57%	74%	78%	88%	N/A	*N* <16	*N* <16	*N* <16
	2013		42%	70%	79%	76%	N/A	*N* <16	*N* <16	*N* <16

TCAP Achievement - Percent Proficient/Advanced**

**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 also received an overall School Performance Framework (SPF) rating of Performance for the three years (2011, 2012, and 2013) used for identifying schools, as well as a "Meets" rating on the Academic Achievement indicator for those respective years.

Table 4. Performance Frameworks Data

School Performance Frameworks			
	2011	2012	2013
Official SPF Rating	Performance	Performance	Performance
Official SPF % Pts	91.7	87.8	85.7
1-Yr SPF % Pts	89.6	75.6	74.8
Official Academic Achievement Rating	Meets	Meets	Meets
1-Yr Academic Achievement Rating	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 Unified Improvement Plan, the district's ELA Plan, specials rotations schedules, the assessment schedule, the parent handbook, other schedules and school calendars, the co-teaching rubric, and a list of the curricula used at the school.

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

Canyon Creek Elementary's onsite visit consisted of 8.58 hours of interviews (N = 9), 2 hours of focus groups (N = 2), and 8.75 hours of observations (N = 12). School and district representatives were interviewed and families of English learners and students with disabilities participated in the focus groups.

Table 5. Onsite Interviews, Observations, and Focus Groups

Interviews		Focus Groups		Observations		Total	
N	Hours	*N*	Hours	*N*	Hours	*N*	Hours
9	8.58	2	2.00	12	8.75	23	19.33

Following the Onsite Visit: Surveys

Eleven staff members from Canyon Creek Elementary completed the Personnel Survey, nine (82%) of which were teachers. Five (45%) of the respondents were certified or licensed to work with special populations, and seven (64%) had fifteen or more years of experience in their current position.

Table 6. Personnel Survey Respondents

Position	Number of Respondents
Teacher	9
Non-teaching Support Staff (e.g., office support, lunchroom support)	1
Speech Language Pathologist	1

Factors Common across All Study Schools

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

Factors Unique to This School

### Co-Teaching Model to Serve English Learners - Best First Instruction[1]

The ELD Teacher/Coach chose her team of classroom teachers (1-2 per grade level, depending on numbers) who agreed to be the cluster teachers for English learners. The ELD Teacher/Coach meets with those teachers on a weekly basis to co-plan, and also co-teaches with them in their classrooms. Some of the classroom teachers have taken a district sponsored co-teaching class and/or a district sponsored ELD strategies class. There is a rubric used to measure the effectiveness of the co-teaching model and achievement of their goals.

In most observations, both teachers shared the front of the room and co-led the class. However, in some situations, whole group instruction was followed by each teacher working with a group of students. In one observation, the ELD Teacher/Coach took a supportive role. The ELD Teacher indicated a strongly collaborative approach to working with and supporting co-teachers, specifically noting attitude, community, and communication as principal values.
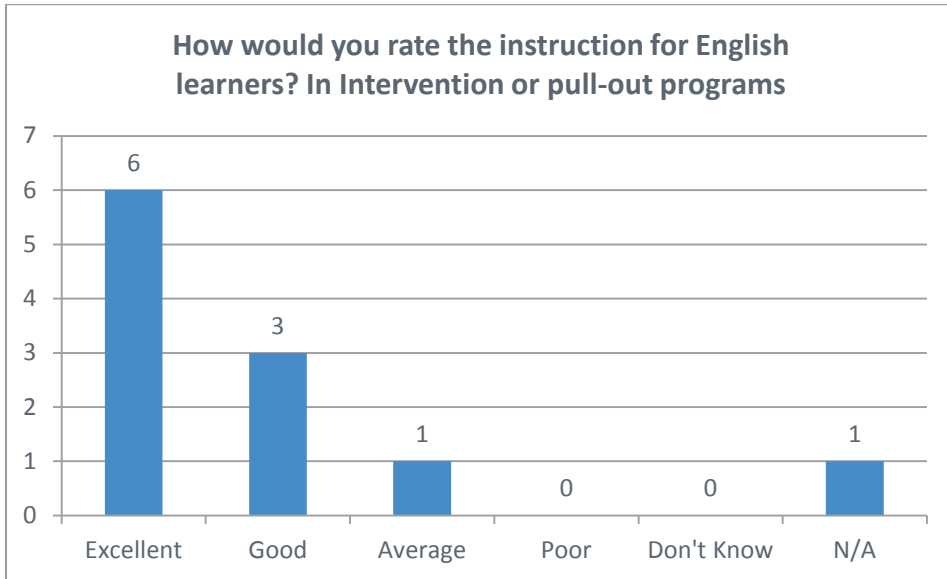
Classroom teachers rely on the ELD Teacher/Coach as the vertical lens, a resource, and the one to guide them regarding which ELD strategy to use with which lesson. The ELD Teacher/Coach sets goals for the individual classroom teachers that she works with, so she also looks at how to build teacher capacity when determining which ELD strategy to use.

Personnel Survey results indicated that instruction for English learners was rated highly, with all but one respondent saying that "instruction for English learners in general education classrooms" and in "Intervention or pull-out programs" was either good or excellent (see Graphs 1 and 2).

Graphs 1 and 2. Rating the Instruction of English Learners in General Education and in Interventions

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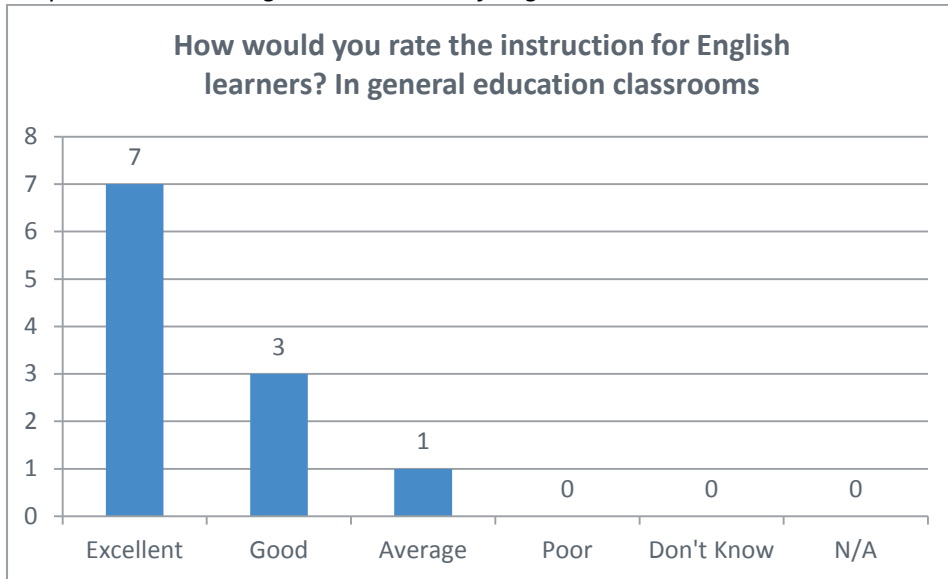
[1] In this report, the red font following the title of a subsection denotes the Standard from the Colorado Standards and Indicators for Continuous Improvement that is represented in this component.

How would you rate the instruction for English learners? In Intervention or pull-out programs

Rating	Count
Excellent	6
Good	3
Average	1
Poor	0
Don't Know	0
N/A	1

Inclusive Excellence

The district policy and expectation for ELD in schools is that it is not an intervention program, but that all students have access to all content, equitably. The district expects ELD schools to offer an inclusive model with high expectations and rigor for all students.

All students in the class benefit from the ELD strategy used, and teachers see the ELD strategies as key to building the foundation for all kids. Teachers credit this model with higher academic growth, social growth, relationship building, empowering the entire class, improved social/community level of comfort, and an improved attitude about the ELD program.

In interviews, parents of English learners stated that the school prioritizes English language development, and they gave specific examples of the progress that their children had made on language development. They spoke of the school's high expectations for their students to learn English so that they can succeed in school, and the school provided information to them as parents to help their children meet this goal. At parent-teacher conferences, teachers share knowledge and strategies on what will help the student. One parent stated that in his first year at this school, when his son did not speak any English at all, the teacher spent one hour walking him through how they could work together (parent and school) to help his son. Parents interviewed raved of the availability and accessibility of the teachers.

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.
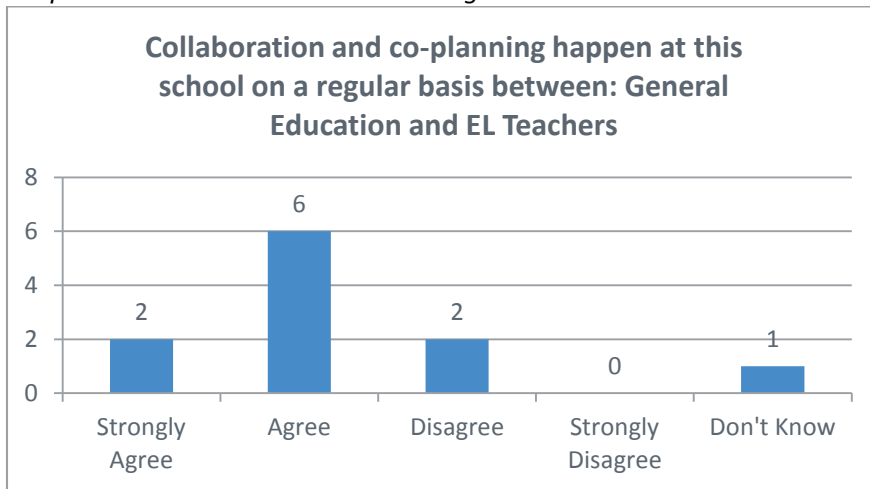
Relationship Development - Culture and Climate, Leadership

One of the keys to the success of the ELD program at Canyon Creek is the relationships among the principal, the ELD Teacher/Coach and the classroom teachers. The principal gave the ELD Teacher/Coach the freedom to choose the classroom teachers with whom she would be working. Therefore, the ELD Teacher/Coach was able to choose teachers that she had already built relationships with, who were open to co-teaching with her, and who had some prior skill or interest in working with English learners. The ELD Teacher/Coach does not dictate, but rather comes alongside them and guides them in best practices for English learners. The relationship between the ELD Teacher/Coach and the classroom
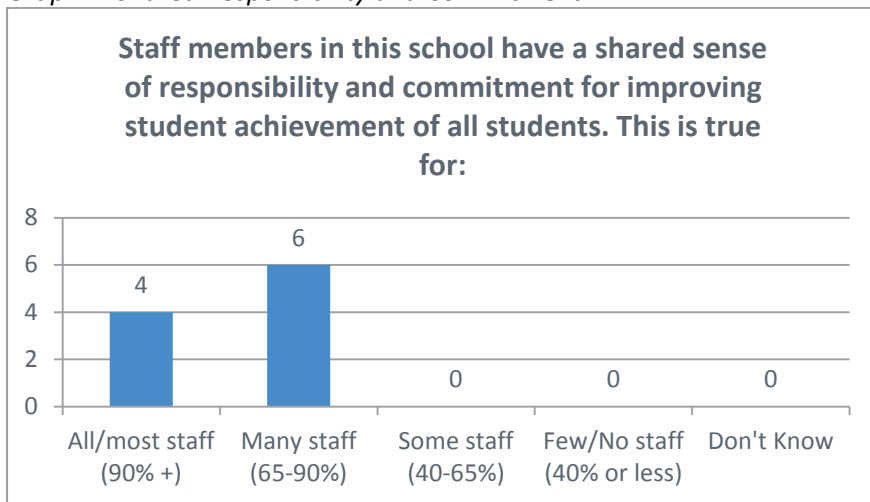
teachers was very collaborative, which the Personnel Survey supports (see Graph 3). Key themes were attitude, community, and communication.

Graph 3. Collaboration and Co-Planning

Collaboration and co-planning happen at this school on a regular basis between: General Education and EL Teachers

Response	Count
Strongly Agree	2
Agree	6
Disagree	2
Strongly Disagree	0
Don't Know	1

The relationships among staff have impacted the retention of the staff at the school. There is consistency and longevity in the staff as a result of the culture and climate of the school and among staff. There is a culture of trust and positive attitude among staff and administration. Staff members hold each other accountable, and they have a general respect for one another. The principal respects the expertise of the teachers as leaders of the classroom, and she listens to and incorporates their expertise in decisions.

Graph 4. Shared Responsibility and Commitment

Staff members in this school have a shared sense of responsibility and commitment for improving student achievement of all students. This is true for:

Response	Count
All/most staff (90% +)	4
Many staff (65-90%)	6
Some staff (40-65%)	0
Few/No staff (40% or less)	0
Don't Know	0

The principal has a very strong belief that classroom observations and evaluations are to be conducted for the benefit of teachers and improving their instructional practices. She does informal walkthroughs a couple of times per week and sends immediate electronic feedback to the teachers regarding what she observed and any recommendations she might have for improvement (see Graph 5).
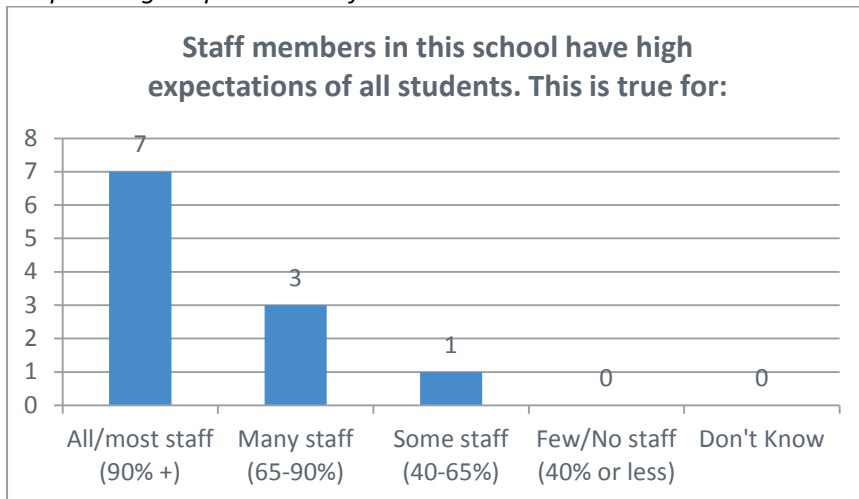
Graph 5. Classroom Visit Feedback

School leaders provide feedback and/or follow-up after classroom visits
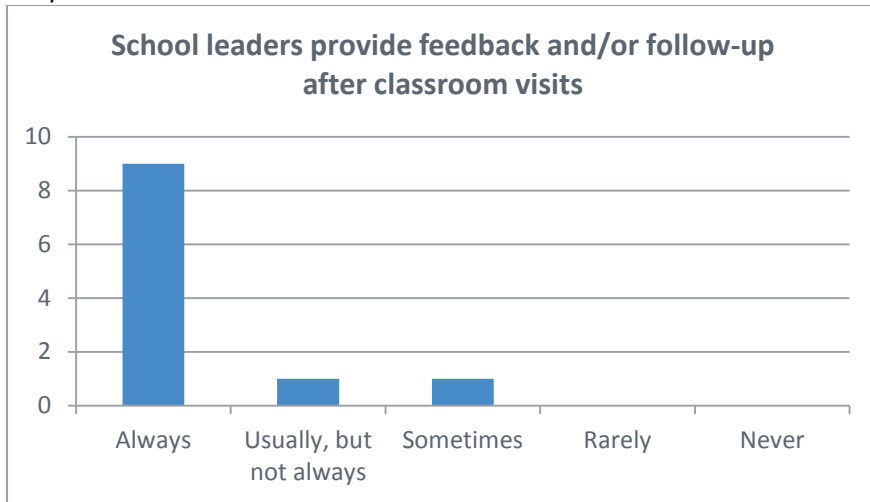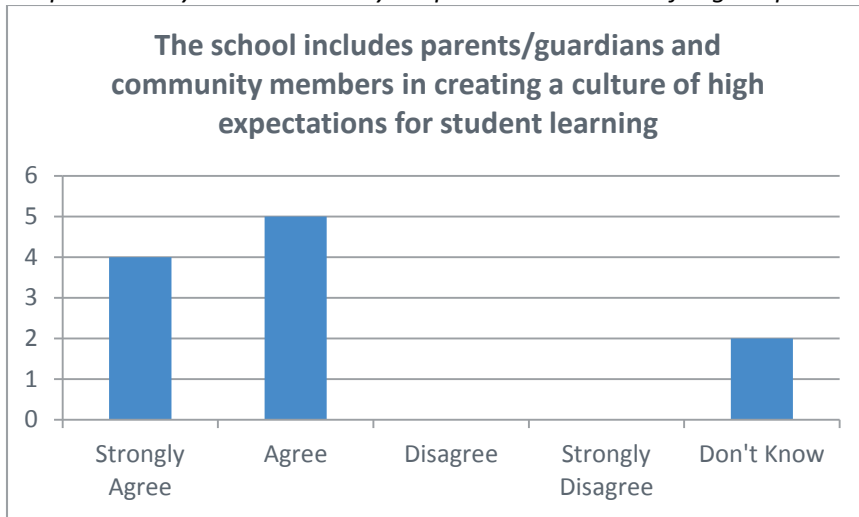

Staff members value all kids and want to support them, regardless of their needs. In interviews, parents explained that the teachers at this school are open, welcoming, nice, and polite. They take the time to get to know the students and develop relationships with them and their parents. The genuine caring of teachers was named by several parents as one of the leading factors contributing to the success of the school.

A culture of high expectations of all students is established and maintained by the school staff (see Graph 6), and families are invited to partner in establishing that culture (see Graph 7). Teachers communicate expectations for the students starting early in the year and continuously throughout the year. However, that is always accompanied with information and support for the students to meet those expectations, including what family members can do at home to help students meet those expectations.

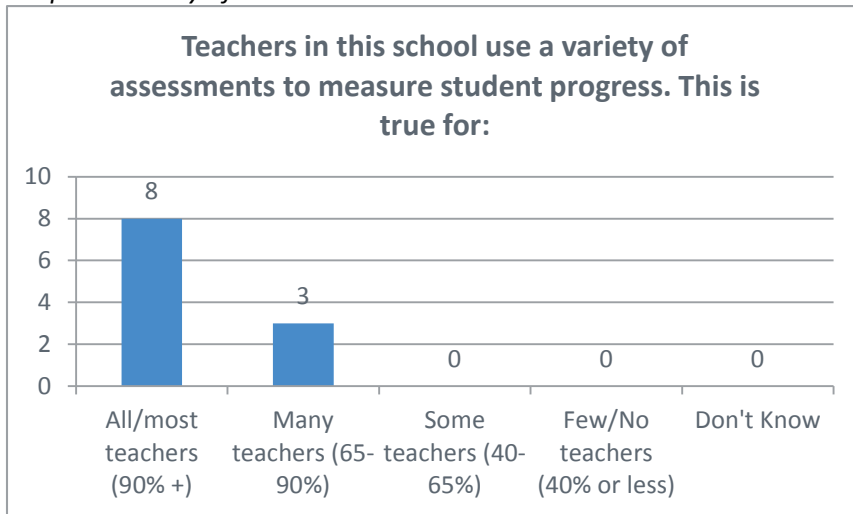*Graph 6. High Expectations of All Students*

Staff members in this school have high expectations of all students. This is true for:

Graph 7. Family and Community Help Create a Culture of High Expectations

The school includes parents/guardians and community members in creating a culture of high expectations for student learning

Bar chart:
- Strongly Agree: 4
- Agree: 5
- Disagree: 0
- Strongly Disagree: 0
- Don't Know: 2

Students are frequently assessed and progress monitored (see Graph 8). Data, coupled with the knowledge of the teachers and parents about the student, are used to identify areas of improvement for the students. Students are identified for services as early as possible and receive targeted supports based on their needs. Student assessment and progress monitoring data includes a photograph of the student so that the data is associated with the person as opposed to being perceived to be just numbers. In an interview of a parent of a student with multiple needs, she indicated that her son receives any support that he needs. His teachers do not judge him or label him; rather, they treat him and her with respect and as partners in finding the best strategies for him to succeed in school.
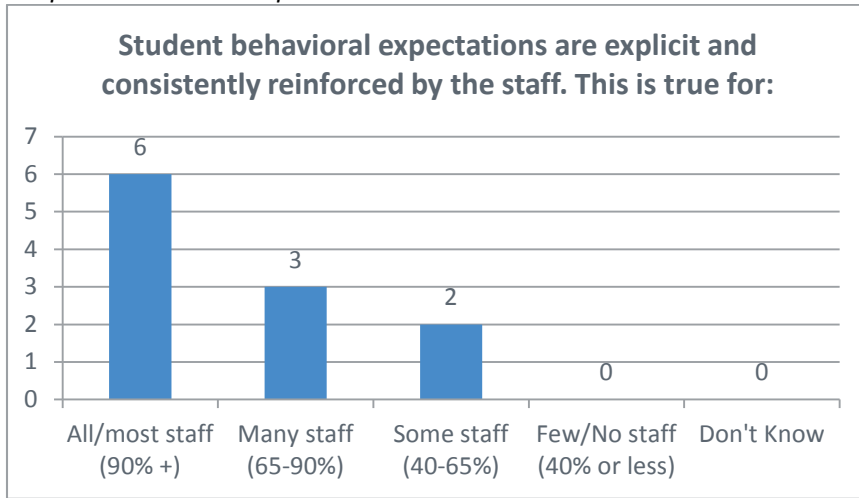
Graph 8. Variety of Assessments

Teachers in this school use a variety of assessments to measure student progress. This is true for:

Bar chart:
- All/most teachers (90% +): 8
- Many teachers (65-90%): 3
- Some teachers (40-65%): 0
- Few/No teachers (40% or less): 0
- Don't Know: 0

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) – Culture and Climate

Canyon Creek Elementary School has adopted a school-wide approach to student behavior. The use of PBIS provided a consistent set of school-wide, classroom and area specific expectations. During the course of the school observations, teachers were observed sharing consistent expectations and reinforcing positive behaviors. Any observed behavioral infractions were minor and dealt with in an appropriate and timely manner. Results of the Personnel Survey also indicated that behavioral expectations are explicit and consistently reinforced (se Graph 9).

Graph 9. Behavioral Expectations

Student behavioral expectations are explicit and consistently reinforced by the staff. This is true for:

Category	Value
All/most staff (90% +)	6
Many staff (65-90%)	3
Some staff (40-65%)	2
Few/No staff (40% or less)	0
Don't Know	0

Supports Provided to Teachers and Thereby to Students

The principal at Canyon Creek is very vigilant about protecting teachers' time, as she understands and respects the challenging and time-consuming tasks required of teachers. She is very strategic in the selection and implementation of initiatives. If an initiative is going to require time on her staff's part, it has to be aligned with other priorities and initiatives and has to be very likely to impact student achievement. If the principal does select or agree to an initiative, then she fully commits to implementing it well. She tries to minimize the time required for meetings or committees so that the teachers can focus on the students and teaching.

Nonetheless, if a strategy is in the best interest of students and will likely result in increased student engagement, she will figure out a way to fund that strategy. As a result, the school offers many before and after school programs that are beneficial to students. Teachers are paid through a district budget for supplemental pay to support student activities. The principal ensures that the school uses these funds to offer a variety of activities that allow students to get involved in school, based on their various interests. Canyon Creek provides a variety of academic and enrichment activities to support the varying interests, strengths, and needs of students, including various sports, STEM Club, Battle of the Books, Music and Art Clubs.

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