

Effective Practices School Profile: South Central High

Introduction

The central objective of Title I, Part A is to ensure that all children reach challenging standards. The program provides supplemental resources to those schools and students who have farthest to go in achieving these standards. Over the years, many researchers have analyzed the effectiveness of Title IA on improving student academic performance. The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) has been conducting its own evaluation of Title I programs in the state. As part of this evaluation, CDE has identified a number of Title I schools in Colorado that are achieving high growth with their students. Schools that had been Title I for at least 4 years were ranked based on catch-up median growth percentiles (MGP) on reading and math. The top 34 schools with the highest MGP were compared to each other on their CELA, CBLA, reading and math achievement data, as well as AYP, SPF rating and growth gaps rating to identify the top 11 performing schools. Demographic data were reviewed to ensure that the identified schools represented diverse school demographics.

After identifying these high growth Title I schools, CDE conducted a project to ascertain some of the key practices that are contributing to each school's success. Selected schools were provided the opportunity to participate in an Effective School Practices (ESP) review, an external, objective review of the school based on nine standards: (1) Curriculum; (2) Classroom Evaluation/Assessment; (3) Instruction; (4) School Culture; (5) Professional Growth, Development, and Evaluation; (6) Student, Family, and Community Support; (7) Leadership; (8) Organizational Structure and Resources; and (9) Comprehensive and Effective Planning. Nine schools participated in the study. The ESP review followed the same protocols and structure as a School Support Team (SST) review conducted in a Title I school identified for Improvement. However, in the ESP reviews, the team specifically focused on those practices responsible for the high achievement and growth of students. The intent of this report is to share some of the highly effective practices identified through the ESP.

School Profile

South Central High School was the only Title I high school in the state selected to be part of the ESP project. Although the high school was identified for this project, it is difficult to isolate the effective practices to only the high school. Generally, the nine teachers assigned to high school students teach the junior high students as well. South Central currently has 75 students in grades 9-12 with an entire school population (Pre-K - 12) of 243. The student population is primarily of Hispanic descent with fewer than 20 students in any other ethnic group.

Demographics		Performance				
IA Program	SW	Growth Data (3 years)			Accountability Data	
Enrollment	88	Catch Up MGP	R = 66.5	M = 68.5	SPF – Growth Gaps Rating	Meets
F/R Lunch	82.93%	F/R Lunch MGP	R = 66	M = 68	SPF – Growth Gaps Reading	Exceeds
ELLs	6.82%	ELL MGP	R = 66	M = 65	SPF – Growth Gaps Math	Meets
Hispanic	89.77%	CELA (% Making at least 1 yr of PL growth)	40.74%		AYP – Overall 08	No
Non-White	90.91%	CELA MGP 08, 09, 10	**		AYP – Overall 09	Yes
PPA	\$495.50	CBLA (% Making Progress)	N/A		AYP – Overall 10	Yes
IA Allocation	\$27,748	** Number in group is not large enough (less than 20) to report growth data				

The district was the only small rural district in Colorado to be selected by The Colorado Legacy Foundation to participate in a three-year project designed to significantly improve the number and rate of students who graduate from Colorado high schools ready for college or work. The commitment of the school and community is paying off: last year, 32 students graduated and 31 of them went on to college.

Figure 1 below compares South Central’s 3-year growth percentiles to the state in the areas of catch-up reading, catch-up math, free-reduced reading, free-reduced math, ELL reading, and ELL math.

The observed growth for students has almost doubled in reading and writing and more than doubled in math since 2007. While these data demonstrate considerable growth for the students of South Central High School, the achievement levels for students are still below state expectations. Figure 2 shows the school’s achievement results from 2007 to 2011.

Figure 1

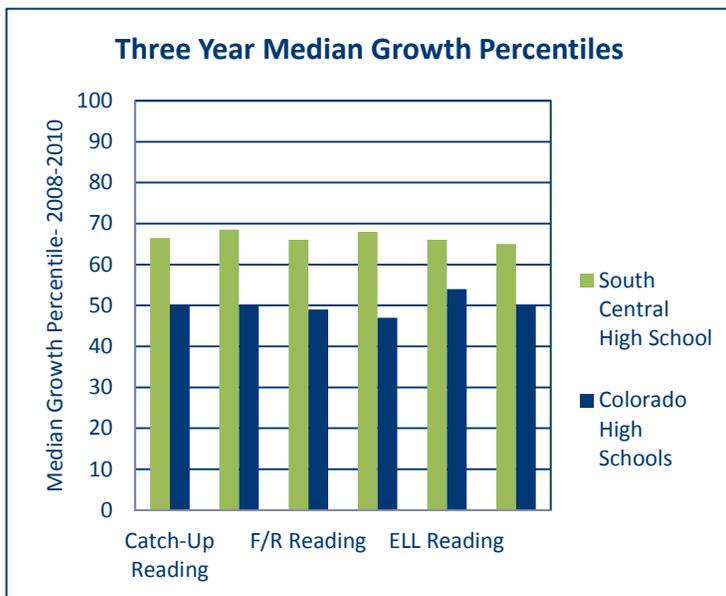
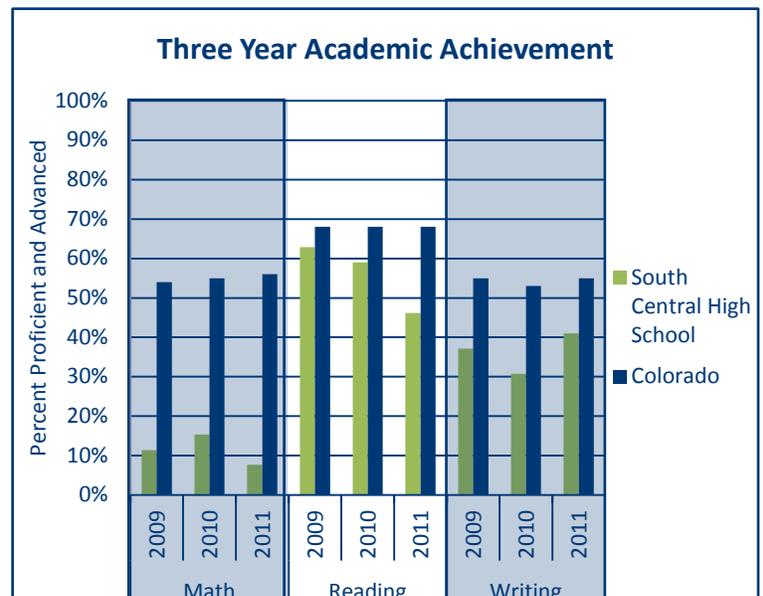


Figure 2



Several key areas of effective practices stand out among the many efforts that are contributing to South Central High School’s success but chief among them are a positive school culture and climate and a focus on high expectations. More detail on the specific practices is outlined below.

Culture and Climate

There is strong collaboration between the school and community members which has resulted in a growing culture of trust between the school and the community. Building on this relationship, the community was able to pass a bond issue to provide funds for the building of a new school. In partnership with the Building Excellent Schools Today (BEST) grant provided through CDE, the new school building was completed with students and staff moving to the new facility in January of 2011. The time, energy and disruption during this process had little negative impact on the high school system, and the pride that students, parents, teachers and community have in the school is noteworthy.

There has been a conscious shift in the focus of the school over the past several years to a strong emphasis on student achievement. Community members and parents are able to articulate this shift in priorities. In fact, some parents who previously enrolled their children out of district are choosing to return to South Central School.

Teachers and administrators voice a belief that all students can learn and teachers demonstrate this belief as they endeavor to find a way to help each student achieve academic success, no matter where they are currently performing. Faculty members accept responsibility for guiding students to develop a belief in themselves and their ability to accomplish challenging goals. Teachers and administrators have taken ownership of student achievement data. Data team meetings are regularly scheduled and teachers express pride in student accomplishments. Teachers are committed to teach and re-teach concepts until they are mastered.

Faculty members clearly state a belief that all students can learn at high levels.

Teachers capitalize on the trusting relationships they form with students and inspire, assist, and prod students to achieve at higher academic levels. This may mean doing a late homework assignment during lunch or staying after school to allow a student to retake a test on which he/she wishes to improve performance. Teachers are available to students and parents both during and outside of school time. They provide home phone numbers and email addresses to parents and accept phone calls in the evening, on weekends and during school vacations. Many teachers maintain personal websites where students and parents can view lesson plans and assignments and communicate with teachers.

Students are expected to take responsibility for their own achievement. Individual achievement data are shared with each student and his/her parents at scheduled meetings, and students are encouraged to set their own goals. If parents are not able to attend these meetings, staff members make a home visit to communicate the information. In addition, student achievement data from neighboring districts are shared with students with the message that “this is one thing we can do to prove to the outside world the great things that are happening in this school.” The school uses the Go.edustar student information system to manage student data. Parents and students have access to this system to view grades, attendance, and lesson plans. Reports indicate that a large percentage of parents regularly access this system.

South Central High School recently shifted from using a punitive discipline system to a more proactive approach, and faculty and administration collaborated in the decision to implement Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS). Teachers are encouraged to make at least two positive parent contacts a week, log those contacts and submit the log to the principal quarterly. Parents report and students corroborate that they feel safe in this learning environment.

High Expectations

Over the past several years, South Central High School engaged in a re-visioning of its mission to focus on raising student achievement to high levels so that students can successfully access postsecondary opportunities. The growing emphasis on student achievement at the school is reflected in a focus on developing high expectations for all students. Similarly, higher expectations for teacher performance are emerging. Staff members indicate that greater student growth has begun to emerge.

In her former role as PreK-12 Principal, the current Superintendent made it a point to make a positive connection with each high school student each month of the school year. She continues this effort now, and students indicate that this happens. This focus is intended to reinforce the students' sense of belonging and his/her understanding of being known and valued in the life of the school.

South Central High School teachers are empowered to become risk-takers and teacher leaders. Through the Building Leadership Team, identified teachers meet together monthly to collaborate and problem-solve emerging school issues and staff concerns. Advance agendas are posted on Google Docs and staff is invited to make additions.

Staff members are accountable for professional practices that include: submitting weekly lesson plans using the school template, posting objectives in classrooms, logging two positive parent contacts each week, and providing bell-to-bell instruction.

There is a strong focus on meeting the needs of all students and an emphasis on ensuring that students master the essentials. Teachers regularly adapt, re-teach, and modify instruction to meet student needs. Students are given multiple opportunities to learn.

Three years ago, faculty began work on identifying Power Standards through the analysis of CSAP data and the use of item maps in collaboration with CDE. The result was an increasingly challenging academic core. The district has now adopted the Focal Point Curriculum Maps which are expected to be the basis of lesson planning and delivery of instruction.

Teachers are learning to use the objectives to plan instruction and some teachers are sharing the maps with students. Learning objectives are posted in most classrooms and reviewed with students. Teachers are expected to submit weekly lesson plans identifying the learning objectives they will share with students. They are also expected to identify Demonstration of Learning objectives to help students understand how they will be assessed on the objective and how they will know when they have learned it.

"We will provide the best education for all students utilizing a variety of research-based curricula and cultural resources; effective communication among parents, community and staff; and collaboration to create a safe learning environment that provides opportunities to our students for success in a global society."

*~ South Central High School
Mission Statement*