

South Lakewood Elementary School

Jefferson County School District

School Background

South Lakewood Elementary School has a diverse population of minority students ($N = 225$, 45%), English learners ($N = 48$, 10%), students with disabilities ($N = 60$, 12%), and students experiencing poverty ($N = 259$, 52%).

Table 1. School Demographics

2013-14 Student Population								
Total Enrollment:	499							
Grades Enrolled:	K-6							
	American Indian	Asian	Black or African American	Hispanic or Latino	White	Native Hawaiian	Two or More Races	Total Minority
Number:	6	11	9	178	274	3	18	225
Percent of Total:	1.2%	2.2%	1.8%	35.7%	54.9%	0.6%	3.6%	45.1%
	IEP	FRL	EL					
			Total*	NEP	LEP	FEP M1	FEP M2	
Number:	60	259	48	10	34	0	4	
Percent of Total:	12.0%	51.9%	9.6%	2.0%	6.8%	0.0%	0.8%	

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

Exemplary Practices

- Instructional Rounds
- Instructional Coaching and Distributed Leadership
- Onsite Tiered Supports
- Culture, Climate, and Leadership
- Collaboration
- Evaluation and Feedback Processes
- Special Education Services
- English Language Development Strategies

The school has a staff of 29 general education and 4 special education teachers working together to serve all students. Only 24 percent of the staff have five years or less 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	24.2%	51.5%	24.2%
	General	Special Ed.	Both (General/SPED)
Distribution of teachers in 2013-14	29	4	0

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 all disaggregated groups has increased from 2011 to 2013 in both content areas (reading and math).

The percent of English learners demonstrating proficiency increased from 50 to 74 percent on reading TCAP and from 59 to 74 percent on math TCAP. Similarly, the percent of minority students who were proficient or advanced increased 10 percent from 2011 to 2013 on both reading (66 to 76 percent) and math (60 to 70 percent) TCAP. The percent of minority students demonstrating proficiency on writing TCAP also increased, although by a lesser degree, from 52 percent in 2011 to 55 percent in 2013.

The performance of students with disabilities and students eligible for free and reduced lunch also increased over 10 percentage points on reading (21 to 37 percent and 62 to 73 percent, respectively) and math (17 to 43 and 56 to 70 percent, respectively) TCAP. The percent of students eligible for free and reduced lunch who were proficient or advanced on writing TCAP increased about 3 percent from 2011 to 2013 (46 to 49 percent).

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	21%	62%	66%	50%	N < 16	N < 16	N < 16	N/A
	2012	18%	69%	69%	54%	N < 16	48%	N < 16	N < 16
	2013	37%	73%	76%	74%	N < 16	60%	N < 16	N < 16
Math	2011	17%	56%	60%	59%	N < 16	N < 16	N < 16	N/A
	2012	24%	54%	57%	59%	N < 16	38%	N < 16	N < 16
	2013	43%	70%	70%	74%	N < 16	55%	N < 16	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 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 respective years.

Table 4. Performance Frameworks Data

School Performance Frameworks			
	2011	2012	2013
Official SPF Rating	Performance	Performance	Performance
Official SPF % Pts	82.8	72	78.2
1-Yr SPF % Pts	82.8	72	77.3
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 daily schedules, the staff handbook, the comprehensive discipline plan, a summary of the root cause analyses, school improvement goals, and the Unified Improvement Plan for the school.

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

South Lakewood Elementary School's onsite visit consisted of 15.75 hours of interviews ($N = 15$), 8.00 hours of focus groups ($N = 8$), and 21.17 hours of observations ($N = 24$).

Table 5. Onsite Interviews, Observations, and Focus Groups

Interviews		Focus Groups		Observations		Total	
N	Hours	N	Hours	N	Hours	N	Hours
15	15.75	8	8.00	24	21.17	47	44.92

Following the Onsite Visit: Surveys

Twenty staff members from South Lakewood Elementary completed the Personnel Survey. The majority of respondents were teachers ($N = 12$; 60%). Eight of the respondents (40%) are certified or licensed to work with special populations, and 10 (50%) have been in their position at South Lakewood Elementary for 5 or more years.

Table 6. Personnel Survey Respondents

Position	Number of Respondents
Teacher	12
Administrative Support Staff	1
Classroom Support Staff (e.g., paraprofessional, aide)	3
Instructional Leader or Trainer (e.g., teaching coach, mentor)	1
Specials Teacher (e.g., PE, Art, Library/Media)	1
Non-teaching Support Staff (e.g., office support, lunchroom support)	1
Mental Health	1

Forty people responded to the Parent, Family, and Community Survey with 20 (50%) of them having one child at the school and 27 (68%) 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 South Lakewood Elementary	Number of Respondents
Less than 1 year (new to school this year)	3
1 year	5
2 years	5
3 or more years	27

Factors Common across All Study Schools

See report called "High Achieving Schools Study Overall Findings Report: Common Practices and Procedures Across Schools."

Factors Unique to This School

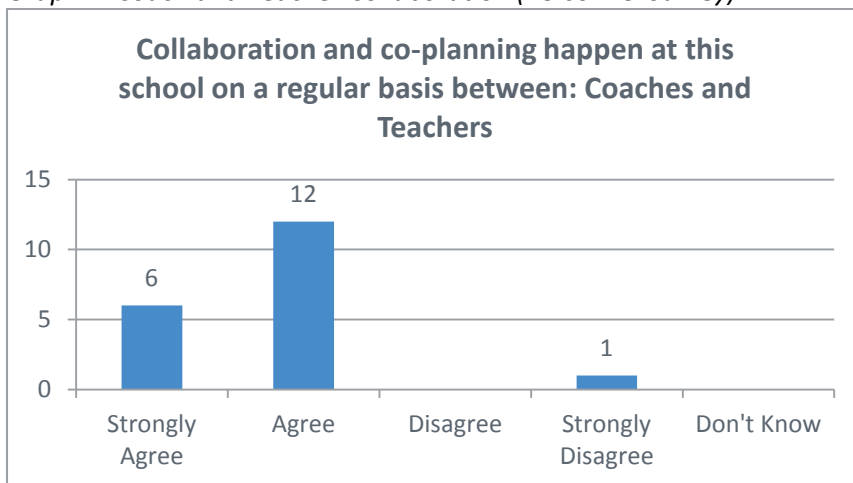
Instructional Rounds - **Educator Effectiveness**¹

South Lakewood participates in the district’s instructional rounds, which are designed to increase accountability, collaboration, and support among staff, the district, and other schools. The district’s Achievement Director, who supervises the principal at this school in addition to 11 other principals, participates in the instructional rounds and gives immediate feedback on the process. This process encourages teacher collaboration and constructive feedback, enhancing further the level of trust across the school.

Instructional Coaching and Distributed Leadership - **Leadership, Best First Instruction, Educator Effectiveness**

In addition to the effective leadership style and skills of the principal, South Lakewood Elementary School also employs an instructional coach who is part of the school’s leadership team and works collaboratively with the principal. She participates in the instructional rounds and provides regular, ongoing feedback to teachers to improve their instructional practices. The instructional coach was identified as an instructional leader by her colleagues, and her effectiveness was noted as a contributing factor to the school’s success in increasing student achievement. Only one (5%) Personnel Survey respondent disagreed that the instructional coach and teachers collaborate and co-plan on a regular basis (see Graph 1).

Graph 1. Coach and Teacher Collaboration (Personnel Survey)



Shared administrative duties allow for a greater sense of distributed leadership in the building. The primary role of the instructional coach at South Lakewood is to mentor and provide guidance to educators to improve their teaching practices. The principal’s role is more as an evaluator and supervisor. By allowing the instructional coach to share leadership responsibilities and focus on mentoring teachers’ instructional practices, the principal can direct his attention and focus on school management (e.g., resource allocation, scheduling, and assignment decisions); staff supervision; and culture, relationship, and morale development and maintenance.

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.



Numerous schools have instructional coaches in place. Merely having an “instructional coach” role or title, however, will not, in and of itself, advance teacher practices or student achievement. The collaborative relationship that the South Lakewood instructional coach and principal have developed is a huge contributing factor to the success of that role in this school. The principal and instructional coach have complementary strengths and skills. They know each other’s strengths and trust each other to carry out their respective roles. The instructional coach at South Lakewood has exceptional coaching skills according to the principal, district personnel, and teachers interviewed. Therefore, hiring the right instructional coach, pairing that coach with a supportive and collaborative principal who trusts her coaching knowledge, skills, and judgment, and providing a system that allows for sufficient time to plan and coordinate with teachers, are critical components of the success achieved with this instructional coaching model.

The coach has been described in the same way, approachable, by many interviewees, but she also expects a lot. The coach always solicits feedback that she provides on professional development and adjusts future professional development accordingly. Teachers feel that their relationships with the principal and the coach are real and that leadership honestly wants to help them be better teachers. While teachers feel safe to approach leadership, there is also a form that can be submitted anonymously to voice concerns.

Joint leadership has grown out of this culture of trust, and there are multiple opportunities for leadership. One teacher per grade level is on a team that works with parents, and another teacher per grade level is voted onto the Leadership Team, which focuses more on school decisions. Teachers rotate who is on each team every couple of years. The Leadership Team “is true representation,” as one teacher put it. Each grade level representative goes to his or her team with the issues that are being discussed. Teachers know in advance the type of input that the principal is soliciting, such as whether he is consulting with them or will let them vote on the decision. Grade level representatives solicit feedback from their grade level team and bring it back to the leadership team. Time is taken before decisions are made so that decisions are not made in haste. One time when the leadership team could not come to an agreement, the principal met with each team individually and, in the end, decided to let each grade level team do it its own way.

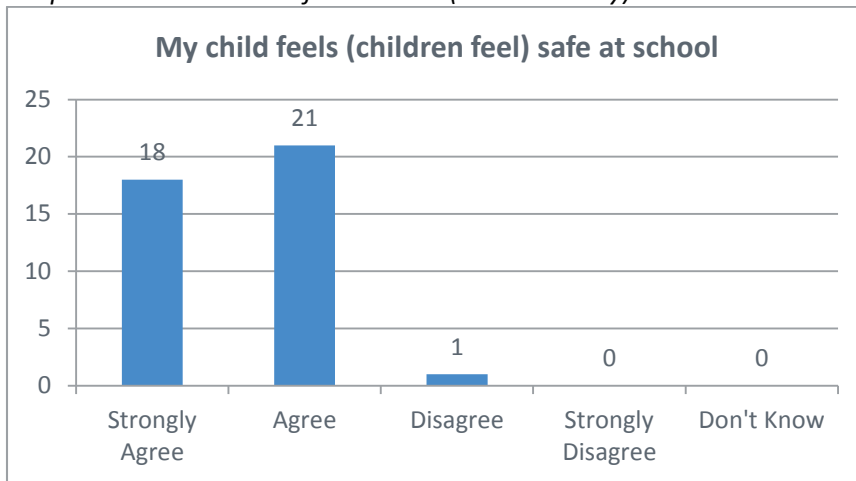
Onsite Supports - Tiered Support

South Lakewood had some onsite supports that were not noted in the other schools studied. It is evident that these contributed to the school’s success with disaggregated groups.

Onsite Social Worker

The social worker described an effective plan for dealing with student academic and non-academic needs. Teachers, parents, and the social worker communicate and work together to build a positive culture, make students feel comfortable and safe at school, and intervene when needs are identified. The social worker works on developing social skills, reducing bullying, and providing students a safe place to seek emotional support. According to the Parent Survey, this work has been successful, as only one parent reported that his or her child did not feel safe at school (see Graph 2). The social worker also works with teachers to identify learning needs and ensure that proper supports and interventions are implemented. In an interview, she described a collaborative culture in the building where the staff is encouraged and allowed to share information, act on new ideas, and express themselves. Although this is the social worker’s first year at Lakewood Elementary, she was already preparing a professional development session for an upcoming staff meeting.

Graph 2. Children Feel Safe at School (Parent Survey)



Special Education/ASD Lab

South Lakewood Elementary has a center-based program for students identified with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD lab). Over time, this program has grown to include two classrooms or lab areas. Special education staff (teachers and instructional paraprofessionals) are specifically trained in working with children with ASD. The program also has a full time speech language pathologist. In the ASD lab, there were two teachers and four instructional aides each working individually with a student, and instructional and behavioral targets are individually developed and addressed. The classroom space was well designed to meet the individualized needs of students (e.g., noise level, sensory needs, and personal space). Instructional staff utilized visual schedules, checklists, tracking forms, and contracts. Several respondents to the Parent Survey specifically praised the special education program, while another indicated a need for improved communication.

Exemplary Practices

Culture, Climate, and Leadership

Staff has credited the principal, a district-offered class called Adaptive Schools, and the book *Seven Norms of Collaboration* with drastically changing the culture of the school from a culture of teachers working in fear and isolation to a culture of open communication in a safe place. As a result of the class on Adaptive Schools, school staff confronted the issues of lack of trust and inconsistencies in communication. They used *Seven Norms of Collaboration* and created building specific norms for how business would be conducted. These norms are reviewed before every meeting and used very consistently. The entire staff agreed on working together to build a positive environment, and over time, staff that could not embrace the cultural changes of the school self-selected to leave. After a two year process, the school climate is now a positive environment where teachers, coaches, administration, and staff hold themselves and each other accountable. Teachers note that now they can focus on teaching, rather than being distracted by disunity.

Teachers have noted that the principal's support through the change has been key to the successful cultural shift. He praises his teachers for their strengths and encourages them in their weaknesses. One example of this is with a teacher who had set a goal for herself to be more assertive. The principal encouraged her to run for the leadership team, and she did. As a result, she now considers herself to be not only more assertive, but also an advocate for English learners. The principal not only encourages teachers in their goals, but he also knows how to match people up so that one teacher can improve in his or her area of weakness by observing another teacher in his or her strength. He stops by, asks how the person is doing, sends positive e-mails, and is supportive and encouraging. He puts himself in the teacher's shoes,

and even when there are areas that one needs to improve upon, he notes what the teacher is doing well and explains that it is a learning process. He supports the teachers with the parents, asks teachers about the types of professional development they feel they need, and solicits their opinions on where to direct funds. Teachers have commented that he gives them the gift of time to plan and to work with kids. Time is not wasted on unnecessary meetings. Teachers feel like they can trust him and talk to him, yet they know that he has high expectations.

The climate of the school is one of high expectations for all students. As evidenced by the Personnel Survey (see Graph 3), 100% of the staff surveyed agreed that student behavioral expectations are made explicit and consistently applied by many to almost all of the staff.

Graph 3. Students' Behavioral Expectations (Personnel Survey)



Various supports are in place to help students meet and exceed expectations.

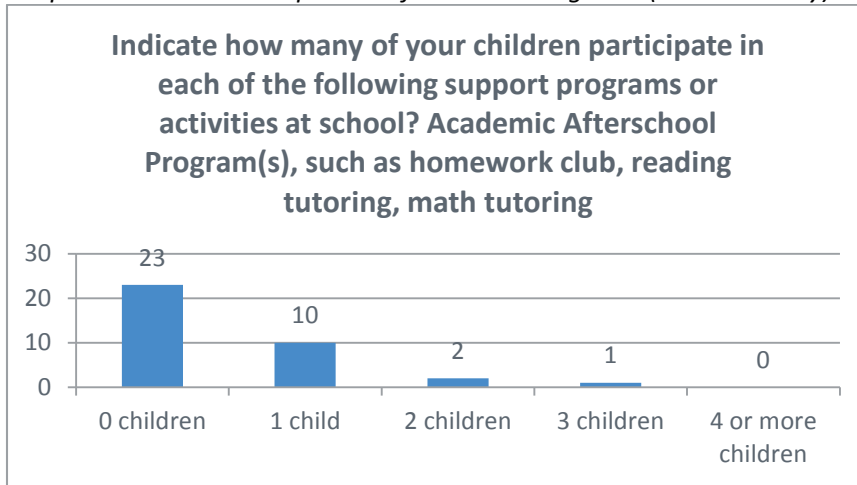
Homework Support

South Lakewood Elementary offers additional afterschool support in the form of a homework club. The general, ELD, and special education teachers assist students before and after school as needed.

Chess Club

Chess Club, held before school, allows for family partnership and parent participation in learning, encouraging students to work across grade levels while developing leadership and mentoring skills. The Parent Survey indicates that a good number of students take advantage of these kinds of afterschool programs (see Graph 4).

Graph 4. Children Participate in Afterschool Programs (Parent Survey)



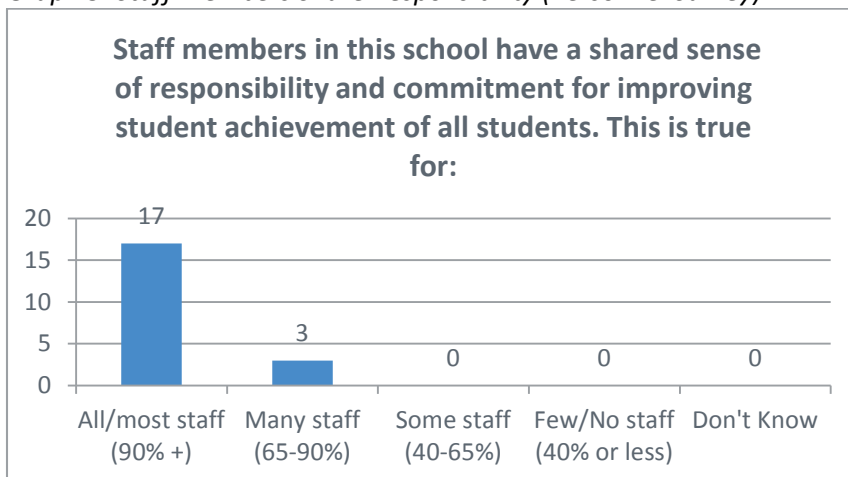
Collaboration

Collaboration in General

In addition to the high expectations for the staff from the leadership team, the staff has high expectations for themselves and hold themselves accountable for their responsibilities (see Graph 5). They collaborate to ensure that they are all providing effective instruction. For example, a physical education teacher who demonstrated effective instructional practices, incorporated literacy and math into his class, and aligned instruction and activities to standards, volunteered to use some of his planning time to sub for other teachers so they could participate in a specific project.

As a school, the staff has chosen to focus on the instructional strategy of “gradual release of responsibility” as a topic for professional development and book study for the academic year.

Graph 5. Staff Members Share Responsibility (Personnel Survey)

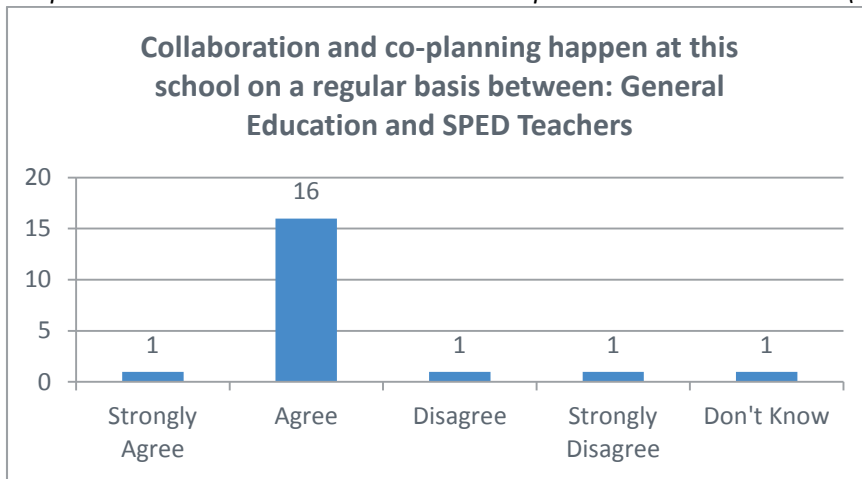


Between Special Education Staff and Classroom Teachers

South Lakewood Elementary was a good example of a school that has chosen to include a number of students with significant support needs within their student body. They recognize the importance of working collaboratively with families and have procedures in place for daily home to school communication. They have organized their master schedule in a way that includes these students within the larger student population as appropriate. This school has a

significant number of paraprofessionals trained to provide academic and behavioral support. Instructional paraprofessionals receive specialized training (e.g., use of accommodations, understanding extended evidence outcomes, behavior management). Of specific note was the inclusion of students with disabilities in physical education programs and music instruction. Personnel Survey results indicate that the instructional support staff generally collaborates well with special education teachers (see Graph 6).

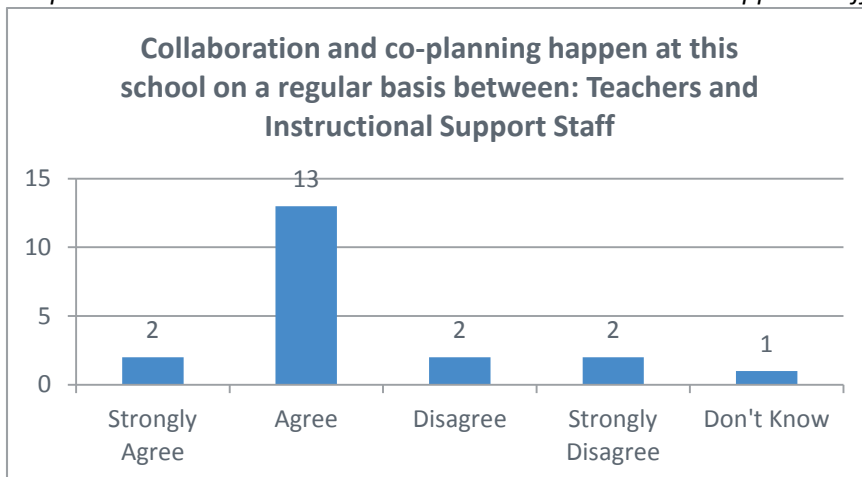
Graph 6. Collaboration between General & Special Education Teachers (Personnel Survey)



Between the ELD Teacher/Coach and Classroom Teachers

In addition to the collaborative approach taken with students in special education programs, South Lakewood takes a collaborative approach to working with English learners. The ELD teacher/coach co-plans and either co-teaches with the classroom teacher or takes on a supportive role, working with English learners in the classroom to support them in accessing the content. There are structures in place and leadership support for this type of collaboration. The results of the Personnel Survey indicate that the majority of the staff agrees that collaboration and co-planning occur (see Graph 7).

Graph 7. Collaboration between Teachers and Instructional Support Staff (Personnel Survey)



Partnership and Communication with Families

South Lakewood has a very supportive and collaborative community. The school personnel have established a strong rapport with community members and encourage family involvement. Several of the before and afterschool programs

are implemented by or with the support of family members (e.g., the Chess Club). The school has such a welcoming and comfortable environment that one community member, whose own children attended the school decades ago, continues to volunteer at the school even to this date. Parents and family members are encouraged to volunteer at the school as part of the school’s goals to increase the number of adults in each classroom.

The welcoming atmosphere starts with the friendly greeting that occurs at the front door as students enter the school each morning. Numerous family members were observed walking their children to class and greeting others as they walked through. The principal and school personnel walk through the halls greeting and welcoming visitors.

Communication with families is frequent and provided in numerous modalities. The school year starts with a “Curriculum Night” wherein families are invited to the school to learn about the year’s plans, curricula being used, and targets for students. Weekly folders are sent home to provide updates to families on student progress on meeting expectations. Emails are also sent regularly to continuously update families.

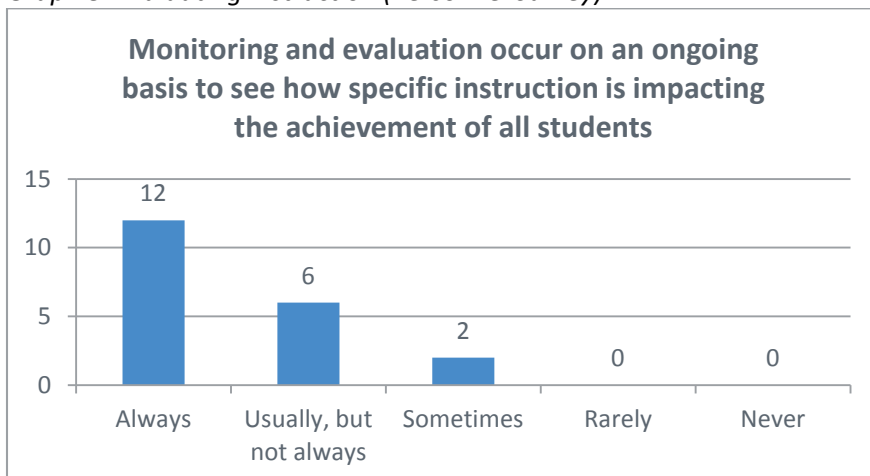
The school’s newsletter is translated for families that do not speak English. District translators are used to translate communications when necessary.

Each school team (grade level, etc.) makes one presentation a year to the school’s PTA to provide an update on that team’s progress on meeting the year’s goals and initiatives.

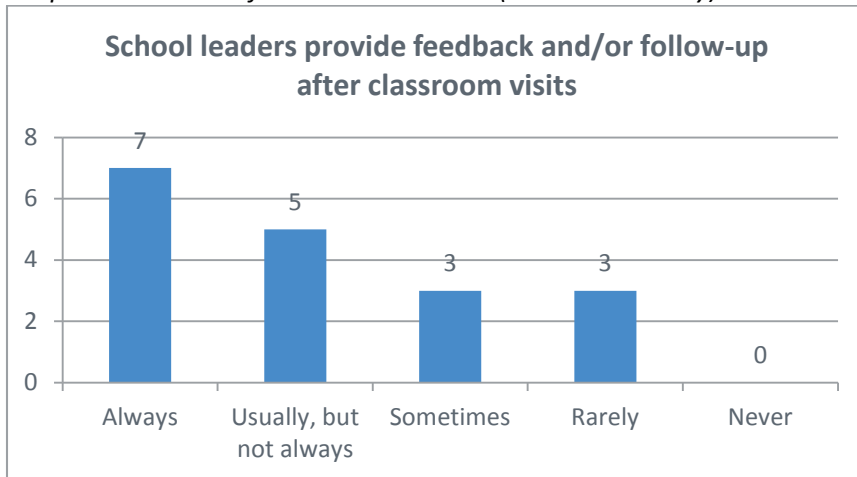
Evaluation Processes and Feedback - Educator Effectiveness, Leadership

The teacher evaluation model is tied to the implementation of the Instructional Rounds process. Generally, and according to the Personnel Survey, there are frequent classroom visits and ongoing feedback given to teachers (see Graph 8), and classroom visit follow-up feedback is provided, though not after every visit (see Graph 9). Teacher evaluation is connected to salary increases now, using a rubric.

Graph 8. Evaluating Instruction (Personnel Survey)



Graph 9. Feedback after Classroom Visits (Personnel Survey)



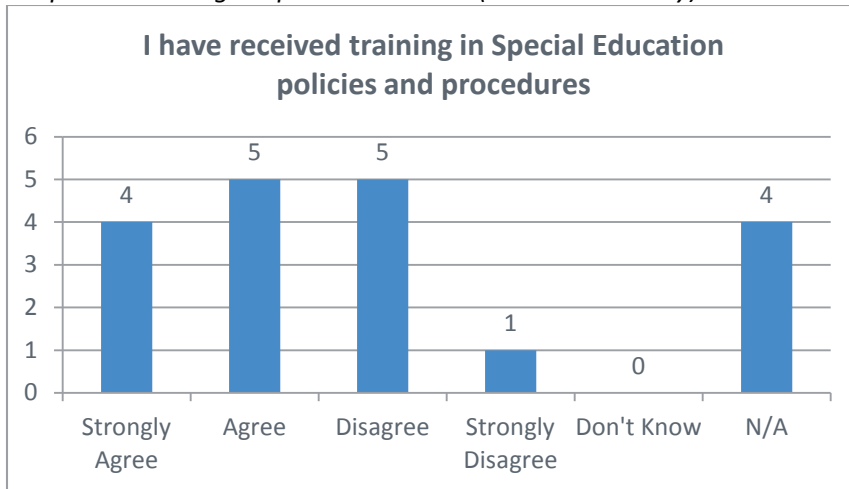
Special Education Services - Tiered Support

South Lakewood Elementary offers a range of special education services. Students with significant support needs receive their primary instruction in the center-based ASD lab program. As appropriate, these students are included in grade level general education classrooms. Instructional targets and interventions are planned by specially trained special education teachers and a speech language pathologist.

A student with a significant physical disability was provided with a full time instructional paraprofessional, which allowed him to be fully included within general education. Student schedules are designed to assure access to multiple interventions and appropriately distributed practice.

Students within the more mild to moderate categories of special education, including those with learning disabilities, participated in pull-out and push-in special education services depending on individually identified needs. Specially designed literacy instruction was observed. Students were seen in small skill-matched groups led by special education resource teachers. Literacy instruction was direct and explicit, utilizing an instructional approach specifically designed for struggling readers. Teachers showed clear evidence of appropriate training in the use of these specific instructional programs. The Personnel Survey supports this, as over half of those who deemed Special Education training as applicable to their work indicated that they have had such training (see Graph 10). Technology was utilized to support classroom instruction. The same resource teachers also provided instructional support to students who have Individualized Learning Plans within the general education classrooms.

Graph 10. Training in Special Education (Personnel Survey)



ELD Strategies - Tiered Support, Best First Instruction

Surveys indicate ELD instruction is good in general education classes and the results are in terms of ELD instruction in intervention or pull-out programs. Some observed ELD strategies include choral response, turn and talk, thumbs up/down, ask a friend, manipulates, anchor charts, graphic organizers, and individual white boards. Teachers model good use of language, and classrooms have vocabulary walls with content-specific vocabulary.

Classrooms also have sentence stems posted. The students know how to politely defend their answers, ask for clarification, or disagree with a peer. When students communicate, they can be heard using the posted vocabulary and sentences, and teachers praise students for using that language (for example, teachers were heard using statements such as, “Thanks for using the language of mathematics.”).



Where can I learn more?

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