



PARIS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

INSTRUCTIONAL AUDIT

PREPARED FOR:
AURORA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
15751 E. 1ST AVENUE
AURORA, CO 80011

MARCH 2015



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PREPARED BY:

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INTRODUCTION

Paris Elementary School serves approximately 486 students in preschool through Grade 5. Its student population is diverse: approximately 2.6% are White; 17.6% are Black or African American; 74% are Hispanic; 1.3% are of Asian descent; 1.1% Native American, Middle Eastern, or Pacific Island descent and 2.4% are two or more races. About 96% of students qualify for free or reduced price lunch and 69% qualify as English language learners. Over 10% are qualified for special education services and 1% qualify for gifted and talented services.

Paris Elementary has 20 P-5 classroom teachers on staff, along with the principal, assistant principal, one school-based reading coach, four reading interventionists, three special education teachers, five specials teachers, two community liaisons, one family liaison, four para-educators and an educational assistant, Playworks staff, office staff, nurse, social worker, and cafeteria and custodial workers. Forty-six adults work in the building.

The school was identified as a priority improvement school entering Year 3 on July 1, 2014. Paris Elementary School is required to adopt and implement an improvement and turnaround plan that calls for urgent change for all students and for particular subgroups of students. For the 2013-2014 school year, the school scored “Does Not Meet” for its overall academic achievement, academic growth, and academic growth gap performance. Using 3-year averages, the school did not meet academic achievement targets but scored “approaching” for academic growth and growth gaps. During the past school year, only 20% of students scored proficient or advanced in reading; 30% scored proficient or advanced in mathematics; and 18% in writing. Median growth percentiles were 46 in reading; 36 in mathematics; 38 in writing; and 33 in English language proficiency. The latter, measured by ACCESS, was considered adequate growth by the state. Subpopulations performed slightly better than the school overall, with several categories of students (free or reduced price lunch eligible; minority; and English learners) approaching the median growth percentile in reading. However, none of the groups met the targets in mathematics or writing.

Over the past year, substantial changes were made at the school. A new principal and assistant principal were hired and started in July. Nearly two thirds of the teachers are new to the school, most of whom are relatively new to the profession. Nearly all of the professional development and instructional policies from the past were discontinued under the new leadership, and many of the climate issues that plagued the past were addressed and eliminated. Most of the staff is united in their support of the new leaders and nearly all expressed the desire to stay at the school and help turn around the poor academic performance of the students. The group is working on behavior management issues, tackling issues around consistency in instruction, and working together to increase parent involvement, student engagement, and other needs. While the look of the school has not changed, the “feel” is dramatically different, with renewed energy and commitment of staff members and a strong willingness to collaborate and work together to improve the lives and opportunities available for the children being served. Individuals generally feel appreciated for their contributions and believe that within a few years, they will be able to turn the school around.

There are still a number of issues that linger from the past. Parents are not well-engaged and some feel unwelcome at the school; students display multiple behavioral challenges and many do not feel safe

with their peers; and many students are off task during instruction. Class sizes are very large, meaning that many students cannot receive the individualized attention they need. Novice teachers are still learning effective classroom management and instructional techniques. Professional development is not yet at the depth needed and is not yet differentiated.

To assist Paris Elementary School improve its student achievement, the Aurora Public Schools (APS) contracted with RMC Research Corporation to conduct an instructional audit. The audit provides staff with information on the alignment of instructional and school support practices with practices identified in the research literature as being associated with high academic performance and achievement gap closure. This review includes 28 indicators, which are rated on a series of approximately three rubrics each. In all, the school is rated on 81 elements. The external review is expected to help leaders and staff focus in on changing those practices with high effect sizes.

The instructional review is designed to provide a snapshot of school practices illuminating patterns across the school. The review does not reflect the specific practices of any given individual. However, the data are well-triangulated. Researchers observe every classroom for approximately 30 to 40 minutes. In-depth interviews are conducted with the principal, assistant principal, and teacher partner who serves as an instructional coach in the building. All other adults in the building, including all teachers and staff, are interviewed as well, though their interviews are shorter. Focus groups are held with teachers, paraprofessionals, students, and parents (selected by the school). Data are compared and any inconsistencies are discussed and resolved. This report provides a summary of key themes that emerged during the site visit, followed by a summary of rubric scores and a detailed presentation of evidence for the ratings.

KEY THEMES

STRENGTHS:

- Instructional staff promote a school culture that is characterized by collaboration and shared responsibility for student learning.
- Instructional staff know and understand the content of the subject taught and are willing to learn and adopt effective practices in reading, writing, and mathematics.
- Nearly all instructional staff communicate clearly and accurately in the learning environment.
- All instructional staff align their instruction to the Colorado State Standards and use aligned materials.
- All instructional staff administer a variety of formative assessments or progress monitoring tools and use results for instructional improvement.
- School leadership provides teachers with clear feedback on their instructional strengths and challenges, based on multiple sources of data.
- School leadership ensures the effective use of instructional time.
- School leadership ensures that all professional development is focused on improving student achievement.
- Many staff help students develop responsibility for their own learning by providing gradual release, moving from modeling to guided and independent practice.
- Instructional staff routinely engage in grade-level communities of practice, most of which deeply analyze standards, data, and instructional strategies that work and are less effective.
- School leadership focuses the entire school community on school improvement.

- School leadership focuses on improving and supporting effective instruction.
- School leadership allocates the resources necessary to increase student achievement.

CHALLENGES:

- The school has too few strategies associated with the creation of a college-going culture. Staff do not do enough to increase student aspirations and help them view themselves as scholars. For the most part, staff do not teach students skills associated with success, such as time management, self-regulation, and note-taking. All staff should strongly focus on helping students to persist or persevere in difficult academic situations and teach the value of tenacity and grit.
- Few instructional staff have created a culturally responsive environment in the classroom.
- Too few staff are routinely differentiating their instruction particularly in mathematics, science, and social studies. Many lack the time and skill to do differentiate, and as a result, many accelerated students do not receive stretch assignments and some struggling students are not able to master material.
- Some classrooms are slow-paced and have too few academically engaging activities. Technology is not being used effectively for engagement and students often opt out of instruction since some teachers do not consistently use techniques that require all students to respond.
- Several classrooms are not well managed and teachers are not making efficient use of instructional time.
- Some instructional staff do not appear to have high academic expectations for students.
- Too few instructional staff provide specialized instruction to support individual student growth.
- Too few staff are providing instruction designed to help students apply their learning outside the classroom.
- Too few staff provide specific, timely, and constructive feedback to students to help them understand how to improve.
- The school has a bullying problem and needs to address the challenge more aggressively, reinstating anti-bullying procedures and programs, and immediately providing consequences for negative behaviors.
- School leaders have not been effective enough at developing and communicating a clear, shared vision and mission. Some instructional staff are concerned that the wrong decisions for improvement are being made and/or that the focus for improvement is in the wrong place.
- Teachers do not consistently state or post learning targets in student-friendly language to help students understand expectations and form mental models of proficiency.
- There is little vertical articulation and some teachers are not familiar with standards at adjacent grade levels.
- Instructional staff do not use interim/benchmark and summative assessment results to plan and guide instruction.
- The school leadership team, teachers, and other instructional staff should do more to actively engage families and the community as partners in the school and classrooms.
- Administrators, most teachers, and other instructional staff provide parents with easy and regular access to information about the school and their children's progress and achievement, though parents would like to receive more information on how they can help their children to improve.
- School leadership needs to differentiate teacher professional development.

The research literature and experience of other high-poverty schools can be used to identify multiple effective strategies for addressing these challenges. The literature suggests that leadership needs to

take a different approach to become more effective at change management. Stronger instructional engagement activities, implementation of no-opt out techniques, and stronger interventions for struggling and accelerated students will have the highest yield in terms of improving instruction. In addition, a few of the smaller initiatives need to be revisited and more focus is needed to reach the desired depth of knowledge and changes in practice. The school has done many things right, especially in focusing on instruction improvement and singularly emphasizing school improvement. Everyone at the school is dedicated to making the effort and from the audit, it is clear that the school has the will and skill needed to make improvements. At this point, the school needs to revisit relationships between administrators and teachers again, and agree to have a more cohesive and focused approach to drive changes in instructional practices and accelerate improvement in academic outcomes.

RUBRIC SUMMARY

PARIS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
MARCH 16-17, 2015

INSTRUCTION	NOT EVIDENT	DEVELOPING	PROFICIENT	EXEMPLARY
I-1. Instructional staff know and understand the content of the subject taught.			X	
I-2. Instructional staff clearly communicate content standards, essential questions, and/or lesson objectives to students in student-friendly language to help them understand specific learning goals and expectations for demonstrating proficiency.		X		
I-3. Instructional staff communicate clearly and accurately in the learning environment.			X	
I-4. Instructional staff use effective classroom management strategies to make efficient use of instructional time and to promote students' active engagement in learning.		X		
I-5. Instructional staff create a culturally responsive learning community in the classroom.	X			
I-6. Instructional staff routinely implement elements of differentiated instruction to meet the learning needs of all students.	X			
I-7. Instructional staff have high academic expectations for all students.		X		
I-8. Instructional staff provide instruction designed to help students apply their learning outside the classroom.		X		
I-9. Instructional staff provide specialized instruction to support individual growth for all students.		X		
I-10. Instructional staff engage in horizontal articulation within grade/subject configurations.				Approaching

INSTRUCTION	NOT EVIDENT	DEVELOPING	PROFICIENT	EXEMPLARY
I-11. Instructional staff engage in vertical articulation for adjacent grade levels or course sequences.		X		
I-12. Instructional staff align instruction to the Colorado Academic Standards and use aligned materials.			X	
I-13. Instructional staff promote a school culture characterized by collaboration and shared responsibility for student learning.				Approaching
I-14. Instructional staff use interim/benchmark and summative assessment results to plan and guide instruction.		X		
I-15. Instructional staff administer a variety of formative assessments or progress monitoring tools and use results to guide instruction.			X	
I-16. Instructional staff actively promote college-and/or career-readiness.	X			
I-17. Instructional staff provide specific and timely feedback to students on an ongoing basis and help students use the feedback to improve their performance.		X		
1-18. Instructional staff help students develop responsibility for their own learning by providing gradual release, moving from modeling and structured practice to guided and independent practice.			Approaching	

SUPPORT FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING		NOT EVIDENT	DEVELOPING	PROFICIENT	EXEMPLARY
S-1.	School leadership develops and communicates a clear, shared vision and mission.		X		
S-2.	School leadership focuses the entire school community on school improvement.			Approaching	
S-3.	School leadership focuses on improving and supporting effective instruction.			Approaching	
S-4.	School leadership provides teachers with clear feedback on their instructional strengths and challenges, based on multiple sources of data.			X	
S-5.	School leadership allocates the resources necessary to increase student achievement.			Approaching	
S-6.	School leadership ensures the effective use of instructional time.			X	
S-7.	School leadership ensures that all professional development is focused on improving student achievement.			X	
S-8.	The school leadership team, teachers, and other instructional staff actively engage families as partners in the school and classrooms.		X		
S-9.	Administrators, teachers, and other instructional staff provide parents with easy and regular access to information about the school and their children’s achievement and progress and provide suggestions for how to help their children increase their achievement.		X		
S-10.	Instructional staff actively promote safety and security in the school.		X		

RUBRIC RATINGS, EVIDENCE, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

INSTRUCTION

I-1. Instructional staff know and understand the content of the subject taught.

Rating: Proficient

Content vocabulary. Nearly all teachers appeared to know their subject matter well. Most observed teachers used academic vocabulary appropriate to the content being taught. However, content vocabulary was not taught in a way that leads to retention. Rather, teachers typically provided a description, explanation, or example of the use of a new term, though they did not consistently check for understanding. In nearly all cases, students were not asked to use the vocabulary in any way other than to repeat the word. They were not asked to restate the description in their own words nor were they asked to construct a picture, symbol, or graphic representation of the term or phrase. They did not discuss terms with each other and were not provided with opportunities to expand their acquisition of new vocabulary on their own.

Accuracy. All teachers were observed to be accurate in the content they taught. Facts were correct and no careless errors were detected. However, students were not provided with opportunities to check and ensure their own accuracy through the use of additional resources. This skill is critical for those conducting Internet research, for example, since some sources of research are not accurate and students need to learn how to tell fact from fiction.

To increase ratings in this area to exemplary, teachers should ask students to restate the definitions for new vocabulary in their own words and engage in activities to scaffold vocabulary better. Activities could include constructing a picture, symbol, or graphic representing the term or phrase; asking students to discuss the term with one another; engaging students in games using the terms; and/or helping students to use vocabulary notebooks in constructing answers to questions that encourage higher order thinking.

I-2. Instructional staff clearly communicate content standards, essential questions, and/or lesson objectives to students in student-friendly language to help them understand specific learning goals and expectations for demonstrating proficiency.

Rating: Developing

Content standard, essential question, and/or lesson objective. While Paris Elementary School professional development has stressed the need to list content standards, essential questions, and/or “I can” statements for all content areas being taught, observers noted that only about two thirds of teachers did so. Only a third of the teachers were observed starting a lesson by referring to the targets and even fewer mentioned the standards or statements during the class or as a summary for the lesson. When asked about how they introduce lessons, some teachers mentioned objectives, but most did not. Students were not familiar with standards or learning targets but instead reported that teachers start

the day and/or lesson by referring to the schedule, starting with a “do now” activity, or simply telling them to take out specific materials.

Student understanding of expectations for demonstrating proficiency. Most teachers were observed telling students what they needed to do to demonstrate proficiency or mastery of the lesson. This most often occurred when an assignment was given during the “we do” or independent work portion of the lesson. In focus groups, students reported that they mostly understood what they were being asked to do, though they tended to say that proficiency meant that the student got all of the answers right. In the area of writing, some students reported that some teachers provided exemplary student work for them to review, but they did not do so consistently. Some teachers posted student work on bulletin boards next to their classrooms. Students reported that some upper level teachers ask them to help write rubrics to be used for rating writing assignments. Most teachers demonstrated how to solve various mathematics problems. Many teachers used sentence frames, rubrics, and checklists to help students understand expectations. Very few teachers asked students to work toward specific goals such as how reading levels they want to reach or improvement in their mathematics performance.

To increase this rating, all teachers should post learning objectives, standards, or “I can” statements, and refer to the written learning targets both during instruction and when summarizing the lesson. Teachers should ensure that students understand how to demonstrate that they have met the requirements for the lesson objectives. In writing, all teachers should provide examples of advanced student work and anchors should be shown and reviewed with the students. Teachers should also help students to set goals for demonstrating their progress.

I-3. Instructional staff communicate clearly and accurately in the learning environment.

Rating: Proficient

Oral communications. Nearly all instructional staff’s spoken language was grammatically correct and expressive. However, verbal communications did not always address the needs of diverse students in the class. Some teachers did not check to ensure their instructions were understood. Most teachers did not explain information in more than one way or ensure that instructions were both written and verbal. This practice is particularly important given that so many of the students in the school are English language learners.

Written communications. Nearly all instructional staff wrote clearly and legibly so that students could see and understand their writing. Written communication was verbalized in some, but not all, classrooms. In a few cases, written communication was too small to be seen easily by students in the back of the class. Once again, some teachers did not check to ensure their written instructions were understood.

Developmentally appropriate language. Nearly all teachers used developmentally appropriate language, though some simplified instructions to the point that students were not being exposed to appropriate vocabulary for instruction. For example, when teachers wanted students to summarize what they read or heard, they did not use the word “summarize” but rather just asked them to write what they heard. This may limit the students’ knowledge of words that commonly appear on tests.

The school will increase its ratings in this area when all teachers ensure that spoken and written language is understood. Teachers should check for understanding and ensure they address the needs of

diverse students. In addition, teachers should be consistent in their use of developmentally appropriate language, especially those verbs that are likely to appear on assessments.

I-4. *Instructional staff use effective classroom management strategies to make efficient use of instructional time and to promote students' active engagement in learning.*

Rating: *Developing*

Behavioral expectations. Nearly all classes posted classroom rules, and the RISE rules were observed in several hallways. By most accounts, even though Positive Behavioral Intervention Support (PBIS) was adopted for the building, there is not a school-wide approach to behavior and only some teachers use the “Peace Place” approach. Students reported that some teachers allowed the students to develop the rules but that most teachers simply told them what the classroom behavioral rules were. As part of the PBIS, incentives can be earned by those students who follow the rules. However, the use of incentives was sporadic and teachers were more often observed using consequences rather than positive reinforcement. When teachers reminded students of the rules, many students did not comply right away. Many minutes of classroom time were wasted on waiting for students to sit properly or leave their neighbors alone. Observations showed that in two thirds of the classrooms many students were off task more than a third of the time during the observation. While some respondents reported that just a few students are responsible for most of the issues, students did not agree and said that there were behavioral issues in all classrooms. Some teachers called students “impulsive” and pointed to the need for more mental health services. Others thought there was not a good sense of community among the students and suggested more strategies for community building. Most did not believe that the “Peace Place” approach was working very well: rather, they thought that students were taking advantage of the initiative to leave class without consequence.

Behavioral procedures. All teachers had established behavioral procedures in their classrooms for tasks such as sharpening pencils and using the restroom. Procedures were consistently followed in some classrooms but rarely followed in others. Observers noted that some classrooms were very well-managed while others were not. Students who were off task sometimes were called out using positive cueing but again, some students did not respond to positive cues and continued their off-task behavior without consequence. Most experienced teachers reported that they tend to classroom management and disciplinary tasks on their own without calling administrators for help. Some newer teachers said they refer unruly students to the front office. Some use a “walk and talk” approach wherein students are allowed to walk to the office and talk to an adult if they feel they cannot focus. Observers noted that students who were sent to the office typically conversed with the assistant principal or principal about appropriate behavior and were sent back to class. This “kind” approach appeared to be effective with the younger students but several older students appeared to continue to misbehave when they returned to the class. Students and parents did not believe the approach was effective, though some respondents thought it was. Most agreed that the approach was much more respectful than the approaches used in the past. However, older students were observed using inappropriate language and in a few cases, displaying physically aggressive behavior toward each other (tripping each other, hitting each other), sometimes without consequence, so it is unclear whether this approach is successful at stemming misbehavior.

Behavioral transitions. All teachers had established behavioral transitions in their classrooms. Classroom start-ups were mostly efficient and effective, with many teachers using a warm-up activity that either reinforced or scaffolded learning. Most of the time, the transitions between activities were

smooth, with students moving reasonably quickly to the next instructional activity or lining up to go to the cafeteria, recess, or specials. However, hallway behavior was not consistently good and there were many observed instances where a significant amount of time was spent in transitions to specials, the lunch room or recess. A lot of time was spent in managing students upon their return from the playground. In addition, there were several instances where teaching ended much earlier than necessary, with students engaging in no instructional activity before they were dismissed. Students reported that the playground was where many students were physically accosted and that it was easy to “get away” with misbehavior. Many students also reported that while they appreciated “not being yelled at by the principal” (which was apparently the case in the past), they thought that the approach to punishing (or not punishing) misbehaved students was not working. Several staff also expressed this sentiment.

Cueing. As mentioned, some teachers used positive cues to redirect and maintain student behavior based on previously established expectations. Common cues included count-downs, clapping, and other forms of refocusing the students. Few teachers used physical presence as a positive cue, choosing instead to stay at the front of the room. Once again, only some students responded to teacher positive cues and only some responded to negative cues. Some teachers spent a large amount of time in classroom control, losing valuable time in instruction. This is an area where some novice teachers struggle. Students said that they sometimes act out because they are “bored” since they had “already learned what was being taught” or because the pace of the class is too slow.

This rating will increase when all instructional staff consistently develop and enforce classroom rules and when common school rules are consistently enforced. Teachers should use positive cueing to redirect students and should consider the use of timers, high-interest activities, and other devices to pick up the pace and keep the students engaged in their work since some of the management appeared to be linked to a lack of student engagement.

I-5. Instructional staff create a culturally responsive learning community in the classroom.

Rating: Not Evident

Cultural understanding. Paris Elementary School has a very diverse student population, with the majority of students having a Hispanic background and many students who are first generation Americans or immigrants themselves. Adults in the building are culturally respectful and value the diversity of the school. However, there are few specific instructional practices that take cultural understanding into account, even though the faculty has been exposed to professional development from an equity point of view. (Individuals reported that this professional development helped them with rigor and engagement, but not necessarily with cultural responsiveness). Teachers discussed bringing up student backgrounds during morning meetings, but not particularly during other classroom activities, though some noted that they use books with culturally diverse characters. Many teachers are unclear as to what culturally responsive instruction entails.

Multiple perspectives. Observations showed that very few teachers ask students to analyze issues from multiple perspectives. Teachers reported that multiple perspectives were sometimes part of a standard but they do not specifically or intentionally call for multiple perspectives in their instruction.

Strategies for English language learners (as applicable). Only a few instructional staff were observed using strategies known for their effectiveness with English language learners. A few teachers used choral

repetition, visuals, vocabulary front loading, picture books, and/or buddy talks. Some used sentence frames and some used small group time to have students help instruct each other. However, the practice was not routine or consistent across teachers. Some reported that the Community Corps members were specifically working in this area to help students talk with each other and become more fluent in English. Several respondents reported that the English language development (ELD) block was not as effective as it should be. Some respondents reported that English language fluency is not a focus of the school and too little time is devoted to helping students with fluency. Students and parents also reported that more English language instruction is needed since some students entered the school speaking no English at all. By most accounts, this is an area strongly in need of a new focus.

Ratings in this area will increase when instructional staff consistently demonstrate understanding of cultural influences on students' behavioral and academic success and regularly incorporate that knowledge into the design of classroom strategies. Instructional staff should consistently embed multiple perspectives, including cultural and ethnic perspectives, into lessons and engage students in analyzing issues from multiple perspectives. Instructional staff should embed strategies for teaching English language learners such as explicitly teaching academic vocabulary into their daily instruction. The school should consider revamping the ELD approach being used.

I-6. *Instructional staff routinely implement elements of differentiated instruction to meet the learning needs of all students.*

Rating: Not Evident

Flexible grouping. Teachers reported they try to differentiate instruction during reading blocks where students are often grouped by reading level. They reported that they sometimes differentiate instruction in mathematics and occasionally in writing. However, only a few teachers were observed in real differentiated instruction. While some teachers divided their students into groups, all of the groups were observed to have the same assignments. Much of instructional time was spent in whole class direct instruction and whole class activities. When teachers used centers, all of the students were observed to have the same activities in the centers. Students in the focus groups reported that students almost always had the same assignments even though some groups were quicker than others. Most grouping was not flexible: rather, students tended to remain in the same groups for long periods of time unless there were behavioral issues with the groupings.

Content. A few instructional staff were observed adjusting content to students' academic needs by varying the pace, intensity, and time for instruction. However, the pace in many classes was relatively slow. Many teachers appeared not to be skilled in adjusting pace and intensity: they often waited for the slowest student, which meant that there was virtually no instruction for students who were ready to move on. Teachers routinely provided additional time to complete tasks even though it appeared as though the time was not really needed since so many students were inefficient in using their time. There were a few clear exceptions, though, where the pace was brisk and students were very efficient in getting their work done and moving to the next task.

Differentiated assignments. A few teachers provided differentiated assignments in their classrooms, particularly during literacy instruction. As mentioned, most gave the same assignment to all students even during centers' time. Differentiation in assignment occurred most often when students were pulled to work with the teacher or paraprofessional. Teachers reported that they understood the need for

differentiation but were overwhelmed with lesson planning and other areas of foci and had little time to work specifically on differentiated assignments.

Ratings on these indicators will increase when all teachers routinely group and regroup students by academic level, interest, or social need and vary grouping during the academic day and year to meet student needs. Nearly all students should demonstrate active participation and self-direction during flexible grouping activities. All instructional staff should employ relatively brisk pacing, and vary pacing by slowing down only when nearly all students are confused. Otherwise, differentiation or heterogeneous groups, buddy talks, or other techniques should be used for reteaching. All instructional staff should adjust their student assignments to academic need based on ongoing formative assessment.

I-7. Instructional staff have high academic expectations for all students.

Rating: Developing

High academic expectations. Some teachers introduced their lessons on grade level, apparently using the pacing guide to determine the content of the work. Some teachers introduced the overall activities on grade level, but then lowered the cognitive demand as they provided instruction. Many teachers were observed and reported giving assignments that reflected below-grade level academic expectations. They believed they needed to adjust the level of the assignments to what they perceived to be appropriate for skills that the students had. Observers noted a lot of “teacher talk” and too little student expression and dialogue: this meant that at least some teachers could not unpack student thinking to determine the appropriate level for instruction. While many students appeared to have difficulty accessing content due to language constraints, it was not clear that they were incapable of doing the work, given the right explanations. Higher grade-level students were often provided with instruction well below grade level.

Cognitive demand. Most teachers did not pose questions that required advanced thinking skills. In fact, more than 90% of the time, teachers were observed asking questions or providing directions that were on level one of Webb’s Depths of Knowledge. A few teachers provided more prompts on levels two and three. In interviews, some teachers reported that they were comfortable understanding rigor in the classroom while others were not.

Extension of learning. According to respondents, some students who are ahead of the rest of the class are allowed to work assignments to extend their learning. Some were asked to get books at the next level and some were given challenge questions. Some students and parents, though, believe that there are too few opportunities for accelerated learners to have their needs met.

Ratings in this area will increase when all instructional staff implement classroom practices that demonstrate high expectations for all children. All instructional staff should consistently deliver instruction that reflects the cognitive demand indicated in the standards and primarily pose questions on Webb’s Depth of Knowledge levels two and three. All instructional staff should routinely assign and help individual students to extend their learning.

I-8. *Instructional staff provide instruction designed to help students apply their learning outside the classroom.*

Rating: *Developing*

Relevance. Several teachers were adept at providing “real-world” illustrations or problems in their classrooms, reporting the importance of doing so to help students scaffold their knowledge and deepen their understandings. During interviews, most of the examples provided addressed social studies topics. Most teachers were not observed providing these types of illustrations or examples but reported that they occasionally or routinely did so. When teachers were observed using relevant examples, they most often did so in discussing a story or providing an example for a writing assignment. Students reported that their teachers occasionally give them “real-life” examples of mathematics being used (such as in the grocery store) or stimulate background knowledge from their lives for writing assignments, but that the use of real-life examples was not provided every day.

Application. Several teachers were observed providing opportunities to students to apply their learning outside the classroom environment. Most of these assignments were in mathematics, social studies, or science where students were asked to measure something in the class, discuss how they could use mathematics to determine average scores per player in basketball tournaments, or whether the same type of conflict resolution being used in a country could be used to solve interpersonal problems with their friends. Students were only mildly responsive to these prompts and many teachers did not specifically probe for more applications of ideas. Some teachers reported they gave homework assignments that helped students apply their knowledge, but students could not name any assignments of this sort.

To increase scores in this area, all instructional staff should routinely provide real-world problems and experiences in their content areas and provide multiple opportunities for students to apply their learning outside the classroom environment.

I-9. *Instructional staff provide specialized instruction to support individual growth for all students.*

Rating: *Developing*

Identification of students using the MTSS. Students are identified for interventions based on teacher identification of student challenges. Some teachers use READ Act data; some use Quick PALs; some use running records; and some use Lexia data. Nearly all respondents reported that MTSS is in flux this year. Meetings are held twice a month: once a month to discuss students with academic challenges and once a month to discuss students with behavioral challenges. A staff member is dedicated to helping develop an effective intervention system and to determine the types of support students need. Some teachers are frustrated with the system since the data for some students served in the past have been lost. Others believe the system creation is going in the right direction, but the staff needs time and better guidance from the district to become more effective. Teachers noted that the approach to MTSS has improved over the course of the school year, and that they do focus on individual students and the types of interventions they may need to overcome challenges.

Intervention for struggling students. Many students are receiving specialized interventions in reading, either through READ Act approaches using reading interventionists or through teacher support. Some

students use the Lexia software for up to 20 minutes a day to help them catch up. Most Tier II interventions are either pull-out into the common area or happen in class. Tier III interventions tend to be pull-out groups of five students or so. About 15 students are served for 30 minutes daily per reading interventionist. Few if any interventions are offered in mathematics. Some after-school programming is available. Multiple respondents reported that first best instruction needs to be improved and that the school is beginning to work on this issue. They are also addressing the behavioral issues for specific students, though many respondents said they believe some students have moderate to severe mental health challenges that require interventions by specialists. More generally, teachers have mixed feelings about the effectiveness of current interventions but are not sure that they have any better ideas than those that are being implemented.

Services for students with IEPs. Paris Elementary School has three special education teachers, two of whom are new to the school. A social worker is also available to the students. Students are pulled from class for special education services. Most students receive academic services, though a few are identified as behavior problems. Most respondents were unclear about how students were identified for special education services. Most also thought that while special education teachers work well together, there was not enough communication between special education and general education teachers and that the new special education model adopted by the district feels disjointed. Some suggested that additional progress monitoring for the students is needed. Once again, many teachers expressed a need for more mental health services and wraparound services for the students.

Ratings in this area will increase when the school is able to serve all of the students identified as struggling or low performing in each content area at all grade levels. More paraprofessionals and/or interventionists are needed, and specialized services may need to be designed for English language learners. This is an area that should be addressed immediately so that students that are several grade levels behind can accelerate their progress. The school should consider increasing the use of technology, offering more tutoring, and more aggressively pursuing Tier II and III instruction. The school should also consider revising its special education approach, ensuring better communication with general education teachers. Finally, the school should provide more interventions in mathematics.

I-10. Instructional staff engage in horizontal articulation within grade/subject configurations.

Rating: Approaching Proficient

Coordination. Paris Elementary School implements a community of practice approach where grade-level teams convene once or twice a week at their discretion to discuss instruction and data. Some teams meet daily. Most teachers are new and believe that this type of coordination is essential to help them understand effective teaching and learning practices. Some of the grade-level teams spent time discussing *Teach Like A Champion* (focus of a voluntary book club) and some co-plan units such as fairy tales and St. Patrick's Day activities. In most grade levels, instruction is coordinated.

Planning. Teachers often co-plan lessons or units and then set aside specific "data days." Different teams focus in different areas. For example, some have discussed the development of "do now" activities while others have co-developed exit tickets. Some have co-planned integrated units of instruction. Coaches work with the groups. The coaches often bring resources for the teachers, including articles, running records, and information on how to differentiate. Some discuss thinking strategies; others discuss struggling students. By most accounts, the communities of practice are helpful and lead to effective grade-level planning. Teachers like the customized approach for each grade level. Some

respondents pointed out that some of the grade levels are more productive and effective than others. Many teachers would like more information on how to operate an effective professional learning community.

Support for literacy and mathematics. Specials teachers meet together once a week and sometimes discuss how to support literacy and mathematics. The standards they address, however, are very different from those of the teachers so they are often unsure as to how much literacy or mathematics support they could or should offer.

To increase ratings in this area, all instructional staff should receive more professional development on effective professional learning communities. They should consistently review data and discuss what is working and what is not working well when teaching a particular content area. Specials teachers should have opportunities to coordinate with classroom teachers to reinforce reading, writing, and mathematics concepts. All coordination activities should be evaluated for effectiveness and refined as needed.

I-11. Instructional staff engage in vertical articulation for adjacent grade levels or course sequences.

Rating: Developing

Vertical articulation. According to respondents, there is no formal opportunity for engaging in vertical articulation for academic content, though the faculty do convene to discuss common approaches to building positive community, to ensure safety and a welcoming environment, and to improve achievement through implementing greater instructional rigor and engagement. Some teachers are familiar with what is being taught in adjacent grades, but no systematic sharing of instructional strategies or student needs based on the data has occurred.

Planning. Collaboration time is generally not used to review current levels of achievement for students in adjacent grade levels or course sequences for instructional purposes. As mentioned, several school-wide initiatives have been addressed during faculty meetings.

Transitions within and between schools. Respondents were not aware of many practices in place to help students transition within and between schools except for those that help preschool students become prepared for kindergarten. Middle school students visit fifth-grade classrooms toward the end of the school year to discuss what it is like to be in middle school.

To increase ratings in this area, all instructional staff should be able to articulate learning expectations in adjacent grades so that they can be more effective at differentiating instruction. To the extent possible, staff should reach out to sixth-grade teachers to ensure that transitions are systematically addressed and especially to let them know about specific student needs. Assigned instructional staff in transitional grade levels should collaborate within feeder networks to review current levels of achievement and share information. Additional supports such as a buddy system and discussion about middle school expectations should be put into place to support rising students.

I-12. *Instructional staff align instruction to the Colorado Academic Standards and use aligned materials.*

Rating: *Proficient*

Alignment with standards. Observations showed that most teachers aligned their instruction to the Colorado Academic Standards though not all were fully aligned to the demands of the Common Core. Respondents reported that all lesson plans listed the standards that were being addressed. Most respondents noted they used the district pacing guide as the foundation for their lessons and that the guide was standards-based. A few experienced teachers thought that the instructional materials given by the district were not consistently well-aligned to the Colorado Academic Standards so they supplemented the materials with others they downloaded from the Internet or had developed over the years.

Utilization of appropriate resources. Most teachers use the pacing guide as the source for initial planning and use the resources provided by the district as the foundation for instruction. Many closely follow the curriculum associated with the Lucy Calkins writing approach and the Kathy Richardson mathematics approach. Nearly all use leveled books and Mondo or Okapi for structuring their reading lessons. Some students use Chromebooks, laptops, or other technology to conduct activities such as research, independent reading, and finding information to use as the basis for writing assignments or to use the Lexia software for reading practice. The use of technology varies by teachers, with some using technology every day for instruction while others use the technology “occasionally.” Promethean boards were used appropriately in some classrooms and as screens for document cameras in others.

To improve this rating, all teachers should ensure that their instruction is strictly aligned to the Colorado Academic Standards and should use technology extensively for interventions and instruction. Teachers should maximize the effective use of Promethean boards. This will help engage students and provide customized instruction. All teachers should supplement the material in the pacing guide as needed to ensure mastery of standards.

I-13. *Instructional staff promote a school culture characterized by collaboration and shared responsibility for student learning.*

Rating: *Approaching Exemplary*

Collaboration. Paris Elementary School has new leaders and a majority of new staff this year, and by all accounts, the school climate and culture is markedly improved from the past. Nearly all staff collaborate well with each other and with administrators. Most staff express satisfaction with the school and are happy to be part of the faculty. A few more experienced individuals are not as satisfied with the changes as others, though even these individuals are pleasant and professional.

Shared responsibility. Leaders and staff are working hard to develop collective responsibility for all students. Teachers discuss problematic students in their collaboration meetings, and some teachers send students to others at their grade levels for intervention or for a “cooling off” period. Specific behavioral challenges are discussed, with many teachers offering ideas and support. Teachers and leaders have begun to explicitly address staff retention and culture-building. Nearly everyone is frank about the challenges they face, but most have a strong “can do” attitude and intend to work together to turn the school around.

This rating will become exemplary when all staff resolve conflicts constructively and support decisions made collectively, even when they disagree.

I-14. Instructional staff use interim/benchmark and summative assessment results to plan and guide instruction.

Rating: Developing

Analysis of interim/benchmarks assessments. The staff administered Measures of Academic Progress (MAPS) for the first time this year and have not received the data to analyze.

Adjustment of instruction using interim/benchmarks assessments. Since MAPS data were not available, no adjustment to instruction could be based on the data. Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA2) data are used to determine reading groups. According to respondents, interim assessments are not as useful as formative assessments for adjusting instruction, though all of the data are reviewed for trends.

Adjustment of instruction using summative assessments. Transition Colorado Assessment Program (TCAP) data are reviewed at the beginning of the year. The staff reviewed 3 years of data for trends. The staff do not feel they learned a lot by examining trends since there are so many new teachers in the building and because the high-stakes test is changing to PARCC.

Ratings in this area will improve when all instructional staff analyze interim/benchmark results to determine patterns of proficiency for the classroom and content area and when results are used to reteach and/or extend any concepts that are not understood by the students. Teachers should conduct deep data dives to understand misconceptions and error patterns. Teachers should collaborate to understand what types of teaching practices are most closely associated with effectiveness and share strategies. Teachers should ensure that interventions are designed to address any skill area of deficiency for individual students. All staff should analyze summative data longitudinally to examine trends for the school and each grade level. Staff should monitor the effects of changes in instruction to ensure that the modifications have produced anticipated outcomes. Students should also be encouraged to track their performance on the tests and set personal goals.

I-15. Instructional staff administer a variety of formative assessments or progress monitoring tools and use results to guide instruction.

Rating: Proficient

Routine use. Nearly all teachers in the school routinely administer formative assessments and use progress monitoring tools. Most teachers check for understanding after each lesson and many use exit tickets, take running records, and examine short cycle assessments. Teachers examine student work during their weekly meetings and sometimes examine the standards related to report cards. The use of formative assessments is somewhat less typical in mathematics, science, and social studies than in reading and writing, though teachers mention that in mathematics, they monitor by checking students' homework or classwork. Staff do not consistently review assessments at the misconception level. Students confirm that they are routinely assessed, with unit tests often once a week.

Instructional guidance. Teachers reported that they often check for understanding and adjust their instruction accordingly. They also sometimes use data from Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) or Lexia to adjust instruction. Some teachers reported that they do not know how often to go back to reteach since they believe they must align their instruction to the pacing guides.

Variety of additional assessments. Some instructional staff routinely administer a variety of formative assessments to address different learning modalities. For example, some use exit tickets, unit tests, rubrics for writing, and simple thumbs up for understanding. The practice is not universal, though, with some of the newer teachers still working on the best ways to assess students and use the data for instructional improvement.

To increase this rating, all instructional staff should use the results of formative assessments or progress monitoring to guide instruction. Common errors and reasons for misconceptions should be analyzed deeply in all content areas and used to improve instruction.

I-16. Instructional staff actively promote college- and/or career-readiness.

Rating: Not Evident

Promotion of college- and career aspirations. By nearly all accounts, college and career readiness has not been a focus at Paris Elementary School and little is proactively being done to promote readiness in the school. Some teachers discuss college and careers with students informally and some have their college degrees or banners posted in their classrooms.

Perseverance. During morning meetings and events, teachers and staff focus on social-emotional learning, especially topics related to resiliency. The Playworks staff and specials teachers also occasionally address this issue. However, few instructional staff were observed to actively promote student perseverance and a sense of responsibility to help them develop a “can-do” attitude. Students could not recall any teacher providing language around tenacity, grit, determination, or other efforts to promote perseverance, although they did report that teachers tell them to “try hard” to do well.

Productivity and teamwork skills. There has been no specific emphasis on productivity and teamwork among the students though nearly every teacher groups students and has them work together on at least some tasks. Students confirmed that they often work together, but no student could recall instruction about teamwork skills and observers saw no explicit teaching of note-taking, organization skills, time management, or leadership skills.

To increase this rating, instructional staff should systematically and intentionally promote aspirations for college/career and provide information about multiple career pathways for students as young as preschool. The school should help parents to understand what they can do to promote aspirations. All instructional staff should help students develop persistence and a “can-do” attitude toward solving problems or overcoming barriers to learning. Teachers should help students to become resourceful, figuring out where to go when they do not know what to do. Finally, all instructional staff should explicitly help students acquire time management, organization skills, note-taking, and other skills associated with productivity and teamwork.

I-17. Instructional staff provide specific and timely feedback to students on an ongoing basis and help students use the feedback to improve their performance.

Rating: Developing

Specific and timely feedback. According to teachers and students, most teachers provide feedback from assessments in a timely manner, generally right after an assessment or assignment is given or within a week of a written assignment. Observations showed that teachers were inconsistent in their provision of student feedback during guided and independent practice. Some teachers provided positive and specific feedback, with teachers providing constructive comments to help the students learn how to improve their work or learn how to solve specific problems. Other teachers provided feedback that was less specific or constructive (e.g., pointing out that the work had errors but not taking the time to discuss the flaws in logic or areas where the thinking had gone awry). Observations showed that teachers were not consistently able to check on each student, though many tried to do so. Checking was least prevalent during independent reading time, when some teachers did not check on students at all, except for those with whom they were working. During this time, many students were off task.

Help students use feedback. Teachers were inconsistent in helping students use feedback. Some teachers used questioning techniques and approximations as teachable moments. Others provided some feedback and then did not check to see if students used the feedback. Students validated this during focus groups where they noted that some teachers help them, some teachers provide little or no feedback, and some teachers provide feedback that students did not understand and did not clarify when asked.

Consistency of grading. Grading in the school is relatively consistent within some grade levels and content areas but not in others. The district requires standards-based grading, but many teachers are confused about how to determine overall grades in the standards. Most teachers use the same rubrics and anchor papers for writing, but many have differences in the ways they grade literacy and mathematics. Some grade levels and/or teachers take effort and other factors besides standards mastery into account. By all accounts, there is not common grading across grade levels.

To increase this rating, all instructional staff should provide specific and constructive feedback to each student after each assignment or task, bringing them up to the desk to discuss. Teachers in the same content area/grade level should use the same definitions of high quality work in all content areas. All instructional staff should help students use feedback to improve their work. All teachers should base grades on common definitions of proficiency established for each grade level/content area. In addition, teachers should check to ensure that proficiency in grades is correlated with scores on summative state assessments and other accountability measures.

I-18. Instructional staff help students develop responsibility for their own learning by providing gradual release, moving from modeling and structured practice to guided and independent practice.

Rating: Approaching Proficient

Modeling. All teachers reported they use the gradual release model, giving students increasing responsibilities for their learning as the lesson proceeds. Some teachers talked about using the six “Ts” from the research by Allington, which emphasizes more time for reading; text at the students’

appropriate reading levels; explicit teaching of reading strategies; opportunities for students to talk to each other; extended tasks; and tests/assessments aligned with what was taught. Observations showed that some teachers implemented these steps during the site visit. In particular, many teachers were observed modeling and giving at least one example of the task for the content area being observed. Most students were engaged in reading at various reading levels. Extended time was provided for reading. Students and coaches confirmed that modeling was prevalent throughout the school.

Skillful questioning. Teachers were observed providing multiple questions to students. However, about 90% of the questions were on level one of Webb’s Depths of Knowledge. Only a few teachers were observed providing open-ended questions and most questions were directed to asking students to summarize, recall information, or respond to factual questions. In a few cases, however, teachers were very adept at prompting deeper thinking or looking for multiple ways to solve a problem, predict the plot, or ask for character analysis. Some used white boards so that all students were responding to the question, though this was not a prevalent practice. Several, though, used sticks to draw students’ names so that random students were called upon.

Structured/guided practice. All teachers provided time for guided and independent reading. Most also provided time for guided mathematics. However, observations showed that in some classes, too much time was allocated to some of these activities, with most students having completed their work and engaged in quiet or noisy off-task talk with each other while waiting for everyone to finish. Many of those late to finish were slow because they did not start their tasks on time and felt no urgency for completion.

To improve ratings in this area, all instructional staff should pose skillful and purposeful questions to help students deepen and revise their thinking. They should ask more level two and three questions from the Webb’s Depth of Knowledge wheel. In addition, teachers should increase the pace of the time being used for independent practice and find additional ways to engage all students in responding to teacher questions.

SUPPORT FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

S-1. School leadership develops and communicates a clear, shared vision and mission.

Rating: Developing

Communication. Because leaders came to the school over the summer and wanted to listen and learn before developing a systematic vision, the vision for the school is a bit ambiguous. Everyone in the school knows and believes that their main goal is to increase student achievement. They are learning about several strategies, such as engagement and rigor, communication of expectations, and involving all students in learning activities, from their professional development. However, very few have any sense of the “big picture” for vision and mission yet. There are plans to revise the mission and vision before the upcoming school year.

Implementation. The goal of improving achievement drives activities in the school. Educators and parents are not clear exactly how the goal is to be achieved other than collaborating closely together and, as mentioned, implementing what was learned in professional development sessions. Most respondents believe that implementation will come along as teachers get more experience, but right now, everyone is on a steep learning curve just to know what to teach on a daily basis.

Revision. The vision and mission were revised by former administrators, but are not operative right now. The basic mission of achievement is known and was discussed in professional development, but formal revision has not taken place.

To improve ratings in this area, leadership should ensure that the school’s mission and vision are shared, including the strategies to be used to achieve the mission and vision. The mission and vision should be updated and used to help staff envision what they need to do in the future and the theory of action for improving achievement. Administrators should use the mission/vision as a systematic litmus test for effectiveness of decisions and ensure that internal and external stakeholders have a say in developing and evaluating the effectiveness of the mission and vision.

S-2. School leadership focuses the entire school community on school improvement.

Rating: Approaching Proficient

Leadership. Leaders in the building are well-respected as leaders and generally liked by the staff. Teachers recognize that the school is a tough one to lead and that multiple changes are needed, so are giving the principal time to understand the issues and devise a more systematic plan for moving ahead. All staff are clear that improved school achievement is the goal, and that increasing instructional rigor and student engagement are key parts of an action plan to serve this purpose. They know they are not to blame students or parents for the lack of achievement and that they need to be effective and control what they can. They know they are expected to address school safety and focus on creating a positive community for both adults and children. However, individuals feel they are at a saturation point and that sometimes there appears to be a clashing philosophy of change between the various professional development consultants and initiatives. Some also worry about the lack of attention to mathematics since so much time and effort is being placed on literacy. The principal and assistant principal rely heavily on input from the instructional leadership team (ILT) and discuss nearly all of the major initiatives with them before making any decisions. The ILT has goals and norms for their team meetings. Each of the ideas is discussed by the ILT with their peers. Input from all staff is brought back to the ILT meetings and discussed. For this reason, staff feel they are being heard and that the decisions being made are taking all perceptions into account. Nearly everyone is on board with leaders and those who are not will likely leave the staff at the end of the school year.

Planning. The school “inherited” the Unified Improvement Plan (UIP) from last year and chose not to make many formal changes to the content of the plan, even though implementation has varied from the activities cited in the plan. Although most are new, everyone is clear that the expectation is for instructional rigor, student engagement, greater emphasis on thinking skills, and accelerated learning in literacy. Once again, since so many educators and leaders in the building were new, time was spent in establishing a foundation for change and engaging in basic professional development rather than developing a plan. The Paris Playbook does serve as a way to inform all staff, and most individuals feel well-informed about leadership and other activities in the school. Many are currently providing feedback for a plan for next year.

Implementation and monitoring. Teachers are making a strong effort to implement what they have learned in professional development, though some say there were too many strategies covered and not enough depth of knowledge to help them do a good job implementing the strategies. There is some monitoring of the implementation of the rigor and engagement processes, some of the *Teach Like A*

Champion activities, and other strategies being promoted in professional development, though by most accounts, monitoring is not systematic. Feedback tends to be informal and serves as helpful guidance rather than as a formal monitoring process. Some of the strategies being used under the READ Act are monitored more closely. Many wish the principal was more visible in the classrooms and hallways.

Sustained support. Respondents reported that training in the school is plentiful and sometimes overabundant with too little time to implement what was learned. Most teachers wished there was more mentoring support since they felt that one-on-one demonstrations and feedback would be more useful at this time than more professional development.

Recognition. Students are often called out in classrooms for good behavior. The school has a student of the month approach where all teachers may nominate a student for recognition. The students have lunch with an administrator as their reward. Students may also receive RISE tickets for good behavior and use the tickets to buy small items in the school store. Teachers are recognized in school newsletters (the Paris Playbook) and sometimes during faculty meetings. Respondents were not clear as to the criteria that are used to recognize students and teachers, but feel the recognition has added to a positive climate in the school.

To improve ratings in this area, leadership needs to formalize the mission and vision and reflect them in the UIP. The UIP should be based on a needs assessment and the research on what works in turnaround schools. The UIP should be routinely assessed for its effectiveness. The plan may need to be focused more precisely so that improvement strategies can be mastered and appropriate time developed to reach the depth of knowledge that the strategies require. The staff motivation is present, but a tighter, more comprehensive plan that addresses both literacy and mathematics is needed.

S-3. School leadership focuses on improving and supporting effective instruction.

Rating: Approaching Proficient

Expectations. School leaders clearly emphasize improving and supporting effective instruction as shown by the focus of the professional development sessions (rigor, engagement, thinking strategies) and conversations during professional learning time. Teachers have also been repeatedly exposed to the notion of equitable practices and helping students acquire strong literacy skills. Teachers also recognize that they are expected to implement Allington’s six T approach. Teachers are also expected to have “do now” activities at the beginning of their lessons, use gradual release techniques, and check for understanding. While these expectations are clear, not all teachers know how to operationalize the expectations and/or struggle with them in the context of classroom management issues. Teachers are asked to turn in lesson plans, but they do not often receive feedback on their plans. Many teachers feel there is support available but the quality of the support varies depending upon the coach. Several pointed out that there is virtually no mathematics coaching at all (just a district person once a week who mostly helps teachers understand data) and much is needed.

Policies and procedures. School policies and procedures are being revised as the leadership and staff coalesces. Several new initiatives were put into place this year, including the equity approach, the expectations for effective teaching, teacher collaboration processes, optional professional development, and behavioral management approaches such as PBIS and Peace Place. All of the initiatives are being reviewed to determine their effectiveness. Some teachers think there are too many initiatives: others simply would like to have a better idea of the big picture. Most are on board with school policies and

procedures. Some think there are too many meetings. Several mentioned that meetings are too often cancelled and rescheduled.

Assignment. During the past year, 18 new teachers were hired and placed by the former principal into their assignments. The current principal hired the assistant principal and the teacher partner but came to the school during the summer so mostly inherited the staff positions. The principal will make determinations of assignments for next year during the spring.

To improve ratings in this area, the school should evaluate its school improvement initiatives to ensure each is effective. Some staff believe there are too many initiatives so this belief should be investigated and addressed. Some practices, such as the number of meetings, the Peace Place approach, and PBIS, need to be evaluated for effectiveness and potentially revised based on feedback. This process will also help to build trust in the idea that feedback is heard and valued.

S-4. School leadership provides teachers with clear feedback on their instructional strengths and challenges, based on multiple sources of data.

Rating: Proficient

Expectations. The principal and assistant principal use a walkthrough tool called “Learning Walk Feedback.” The tool lists learning goals, “things I saw,” “feedback for best practices,” and “reflection question/I wonder . . .” and lists techniques appropriate for students’ proficiency levels; opportunities for student interaction; affective environment with an emphasis on comfort level for English language learners; assessment; comprehensible instruction; higher order thinking and study skills; and non-fiction writing across content/disciplines. Leaders do not currently expect teachers to use the techniques listed, but rather to see them as a guide for effective instruction. In the future, these strategies may be more formally observed and expected, but since so many teachers are new, leaders felt it would be premature to have such high expectations. In addition to the learning walks, teachers are formally and informally evaluated using the educator evaluation tools. Most teachers feel that the number of expectations are overwhelming and that there simply is not enough time for administrators to observe all of the practices listed on the educator evaluation tools.

Feedback. Feedback on instructional practices is provided to teachers immediately after informal and formal observations. Teachers often receive “bite-sized” feedback after informal observations and teachers are expected to respond either formally or informally stating how they will use the feedback they received. Teachers were generally appreciative of the feedback they received and often invited coaches and leaders to observe them and offer more feedback since the reviews were considered constructive and helpful. Many teachers wished for more feedback. As previously mentioned, many would like mentors or coaches to guide them to become effective. Nearly all respondents reported that ineffective teachers receive a lot of warning and a lot of support.

Fair and accurate. Most teachers felt that the evaluations they receive are fair and accurate. A few questioned the fairness given the perceived lack of content area expertise of their evaluators.

Ratings in this area will improve when more feedback is available to all teachers and when teachers consistently perceive their evaluations are fair and accurate.

S-5. School leadership allocates the resources necessary to increase student achievement.

Rating: *Approaching Proficient*

Budget development. The budget for the school was developed before the current principal assumed her job. For next year, the principal has already involved teachers and staff in identifying needs and priorities. Teachers feel they have multiple opportunities to express their opinions. Parents, however, feel that they have not been consulted enough and are not sure they agree with the decisions being made.

Resource allocation. The current allocation was based on a previous leader's focus areas and thus does not reflect the types of allocation that may best suit the new staff. The current principal and assistant principal are working on this issue: they know that much more individualized support is needed for teachers and that different resources may be warranted to help students with behavioral needs. Decision makers are very aware of emerging needs around use of time, materials, supplies, and support mechanisms and are working hard to determine the best strategies for allocating available resources and securing more resources to fund strategies for increased achievement.

Resource acquisition. Some effort has been expended to procure additional funds, such as Differentiated Support and READ Act funds. The school also intends to apply for state level improvement funds. Some funds have been secured for technology.

Ratings in this area are based on last year's approach and will increase as school leadership continues to use its comprehensive budgeting process that includes staff and parents or community members in the allocation of resource. A formal process should be put into place to ensure that resource allocation decisions align with student achievement goals for all students and subgroups.

S-6. School leadership ensures the effective use of instructional time.

Rating: *Proficient*

Protection of instructional time. Instructional time is blocked and all teachers post agendas. Announcements are clustered at the beginning and end of the day. Some teachers think that the announcements at the end of the day telling people where they are assigned to be are unnecessary since all of the adults already know their assignments. Teachers are expected to teach bell-to-bell, though some were observed ending instructional activities early. As previously mentioned, pacing is an issue for some as is behavioral management. Both of these issues result in lost instructional time.

Monitoring. Instructional time is monitored by asking teachers to submit lesson plans and have them available for any observer. The Paris Playbook reminds teachers to teach bell-to-bell and reminds parents about the importance of time on task and keeping their children in school all day.

Improvement in this area will be realized when teachers pace their instruction faster and spend less time on behavior management (which in turn will improve with more engaging activities); and when all teachers teach bell-to-bell with crisp transitions between activities.

S-7. School leadership ensures that all professional development is focused on improving student achievement.

Rating: Proficient

Focus. The focus for professional development this year has been on improving instruction. Teachers have received training on equity, engagement, rigor, Teach Like A Champion, and the six Ts. Many respondents reported that professional development is good but does not have the necessary depth for them to master strategies. They also believe that some of the content is inconsistent.

Differentiated. Paris Elementary School does not provide differentiated professional development except for new teachers who receive PBEC instruction. Experienced teachers reported that more differentiated training would be helpful since they already know much of what is being presented and could benefit from more advanced training.

Varied opportunities. Teachers and leaders are provided with multiple opportunities to engage in professional development, including staff meetings, district professional development, book study, and feedback from coaches. Professional development activities are not often evaluated.

Additional supports. Coaching support is offered in literacy. Coaching support has not been formally evaluated. Some believe that the quality of coaching support varies widely.

Practice in this area will improve when professional development is more highly differentiated based on teacher needs, student achievement data, and educator evaluation data. Professional development should be routinely evaluated for effectiveness in terms of its impact on teacher practice and student achievement.

S-8. The school leadership team, teachers, and other instructional staff actively engage families as partners in the school and classrooms.

Rating: Developing

Removal of barriers. Paris Elementary School is a neighborhood school, so there are no barriers around transportation. The receptionist speaks Spanish and knows many of the families at the school and by all accounts, she tries hard to make families feel welcome at the school. Parents whose first language is not Spanish or English, though, have more difficulty with interpretation, though translators are available at parent-teacher conferences. Parents in focus groups, though, complain about barriers to participation. They reported they have had little to no opportunity to get to know the principal and reported that they have to make an appointment sometimes a week in advance. They noted the principal is not often there to greet them in the morning or afternoon. Parents reported that they are not familiar with the new teachers and that communication between the school and community is poor. They said there was no privacy when they did come in since the family liaison did not have an office. The school has a family liaison, but she is not in full agreement with the school's direction this year and by most accounts, she has not been as effective in engaging families this year as she has been in the past.

Parent volunteers. The school has very few volunteers, though those who come do so very frequently. Parents reported that they do not volunteer either because they were not asked or because they do not feel welcome (see below).

Parents feel welcome. Parents in the focus group were very critical of the school and most reported that they and other parents do not feel welcome at the school. They feel they are not consulted on important educational decisions and that communication with the school has been poor. It is not clear whether the parents in the focus group are representative of the entire school's population and instead, may be those who are most critical. Teachers have made some outreach to parents and welcome them when they come to the school, but the outreach has not been systematic or comprehensive. Some teachers report very good relationships with parents and others say that the relationships are cordial.

To improve ratings in this area, the school should continue to work on removing barriers to parent involvement particularly in terms of language and access to the principal, increase the numbers of parents who are involved as volunteers in the school, and ensure that all parents feel welcome.

S-9. Administrators, teachers, and other instructional staff provide parents with easy and regular access to information about the school and their children's achievement and progress and provide suggestions for how to help their children increase achievement.

Rating: Developing

Access to information. The school provides parents with monthly newsletters available in English and Spanish. The school has a website that has parent information and signage outside that advertises events. Many teachers send student work home every week. Teachers are available to speak with parents as needed, though parents said it was hard to access the teachers. Once again, parents reported that it was difficult to get an appointment to talk with the principal since she was often too busy. They also said they do not receive any information on how to help their children to improve, other than to finish their homework. They would like to receive more individualized strategies being sent home.

Reports. Parents in the focus groups were dissatisfied with the amount of communication they received from teachers and from the school with regard to student progress. Many did not understand whether their children were doing well or not: they struggled with interpreting the report cards. Parents reported that they can call teachers if they need more information but few of them called. Some parents said that parent workshops have been useful in helping them to understand how to help their children to improve academic performance.

Ratings in this area will improve when parents feel better informed about the school and when all instructional staff let parents know how they can specifically help their children become more successful. Communication should occur in multiple languages.

S-10. Instructional staff actively promote safety and security in the school.

Rating: Developing

Social-emotional supports. The school has implemented morning meetings, assemblies, PBIS, Playworks activities, and Peace Place as forms of positive social-emotional support. Administrators and the counselors also strive to help students feel respected and supported. However, by most accounts, much stronger and deeper social-emotional supports are needed given the backgrounds of some of the students. Many think that the school should have full-time mental health professionals since many students appear to have behavioral issues that go beyond what a teacher can address. As previously mentioned, the walk and talk and Peace Place approaches are not viewed by all staff as being effective.

Respondents have concerns about school-wide discipline. Stronger programs may be needed to address conflict resolution, suicide prevention, and self-regulation.

Anti-bullying. Respondents reported that there is widespread bullying at the school. Playworks has been instituted on the playground to address some of the playground issues and during morning meetings, some teachers address classroom culture and mutual respect. Some parents expressed deep concerns about bullying, reporting that their children have been physically or verbally abused and that they were not notified about the issue in a timely fashion. Both students and teachers believe this is an area that needs attention and programming.

Abide by safety procedures and rules. The school is vigilant about safety and security procedures, ensuring that visitors sign in and are identified; keeping outside doors locked; and practicing a variety of drills. However, students run up and down the stairways during passing periods and at the beginning and end of the school day and as mentioned, most do not believe the playground is a safe place.

To improve in this area, all staff should promote and reinforce school-wide behavioral expectations and provide positive corrective feedback for students who display negative behavior. Students should be encouraged to model positive behaviors for their peers. More social-emotional supports should be put into place, particularly in the areas of conflict management, bullying, and self-regulation. The school should consider adopting and immediately implementing an anti-bullying curriculum. Hallways and stairways should be monitored to control student running during passing periods and at the beginning and end of the day.