Introduction

College View Elementary School, a Title I school in Denver Public Schools, serves approximately 300 ECE – 5th grade students. On May 9, 2023, a cross-departmental Data Collection Team (DCT) from the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) visited College View to gain a deeper understanding of and establish a baseline for practices in place at the school.

Prior to CDE's visit, College View personnel, parents, and students were invited to participate anonymously in surveys about current practices and procedures. CDE received and analyzed responses from 22 parents and 31 personnel: 14 (45%) teachers and 17 (55%) instructional staff, leaders, and support staff. In total, 105 students participated in the survey, representing mostly 3rd - 5th graders. Additionally, the DCT conducted nine interviews and seven focus groups with administrators, teachers, specialized staff, support staff, and student groups, and five classroom observations.

Data collected during the site visit were used to identify College View's strengths and opportunities to apply lessons learned from Colorado's High Achieving Schools (HAS) study (http://www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms/dper/evalrpts#has). The findings are aligned to West Ed's Four Domains for Rapid School Improvement framework, which consist of (1) Leadership for Rapid Improvement, (2) Talent Management, (3) Instructional Transformation, and (4) Culture and Climate Shift. CDE has adopted and modified WestEd's Four Domains for Rapid School Improvement to create Colorado's Framework for Rapid School Improvement (https://www.cde.state.co.us/fourdomains). The recommendations (depicted in ***bold italicized*** font) delineated in this report are based on the strategies and practices implemented by the HAS that align with College View's strengths and areas of improvement noted by the DCT.

A team from College View will visit one of the HAS to learn more about its implementation of strategies highlighted in the HAS study and identify those best aligned with and suited to College View's needs. The following recommendations, along with lessons learned from the HAS study, the visit to one of the HAS, and needs assessment tied to College View's Title I schoolwide plan and/or Unified Improvement Plan (UIP) should be used to develop the implementation plan for the Connect for Success (CFS) grant. One of the strengths noted among the HAS is that each school prioritizes two to three key initiatives per year. ***Therefore, it is recommended that College View select one or two recommendations in this report that best align with its mission, vision, and current priorities to develop the CFS implementation plan. By narrowing the focus, College View will be able to ensure strong and consistent implementation of the selected initiatives.***

> ### *School Strengths that Will Contribute to Successful Implementation of HAS Strategies*
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> - Staff feels positive and supported.
> - Students feel accepted and appreciated for who they are.
> - Leadership has established opportunities for staff to take on leadership roles.
> - Grade-level teams meet regularly with grade level bands.
> - "What I Need Time" (WIN) is designated for students to receive targeted support.
> - School has partnered with some key external partners.

School Strengths and Opportunities to Implement Strategies Learned from HAS

Relationships are Valued

The importance and value College View places on relationships, community, collaboration, and teamwork were commonly highlighted as key to its success. Staff appreciate College View's strong leaders and their "open door" philosophy. Staff feel seen, valued, and appreciated, and that they can authentically be themselves and are celebrated for who they are. Parents discussed the welcoming nature of College View, as well as various programs such as the farmers market, carnivals, coffee with the principal, and multicultural events. Student surveys and interviews noted their strong relationships with teachers and staff. The vast majority of 132 students surveyed (94%) feel adults in the school care about them.

While staff overall appreciates and values the strong sense of collaboration and community, particularly between grade-level teams and bands, they would appreciate

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Recommendations

- Expand and protect time to build relationships among all staff across grades.
- Reestablish College View's mission, vision, and goals, with all stakeholders playing a significant role in development.
- Build on current systems to ensure staff capacity to maintain high instructional expectations.
- Expand current processes to uphold consistently high behavioral expectations for all students.
- Include paraprofessionals and other instructional support staff in professional learning opportunities, to ensure effective implementation of behavioral and instructional strategies.

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additional opportunities to collaborate vertically, across specialties and roles. Four-fifths (80%) of 30 staff agree that collaboration and co-planning happen regularly between general education teachers across grades. College View staff are excited about the significant number of staff returning in 2023-24 and opportunities to continue to build relationships. In particular, novice teachers and teachers new to the school look forward to benefiting from more intentional opportunities to engage with and learn from veteran College View staff.

HAS value and prioritize relationships among school leaders, teachers, paraprofessionals, other staff, families, and students. Time and effort are devoted to building and maintaining strong relationships by getting to know one another on a personal level that includes cultural background. HAS leaders ensure that all staff (new teachers, paraprofessionals, etc.) have opportunities to observe and learn from strong role models and the support needed to succeed in their roles. HAS also spend time developing relationships, bridging established teams to foster a sense of community throughout the entire building. ***The DCT recommends that College View continue its emphasis on developing strong relationships. Continue to build on staff strengths and allow classroom visits to showcase areas of expertise and foster trusted relationships across the building.***

Use Common Language for Consistent Message Regarding Schoolwide Vision and Prioritized Goals

College View staff clearly demonstrate a shared commitment to students and their families. The majority (95%) of 22 parents surveyed agree that learning is a priority at College View. Staff interviews and focus groups articulated a shared commitment to address the learning needs of all students effectively. Similarly, 94 percent of 31 staff agree that "many" or "all/most" staff share a sense of responsibility for and commitment to improving achievement of all students, and 97 percent agree that "many" or "all/most" staff have high expectations of students.

The DCT heard clear academic goals and intentional acquisition of resources (i.e., grants, partnerships) to accomplish those goals from leadership. However, observations and interviews indicate a need to clarify and solidify staff expectations around implementing multiple grants and other school and district initiatives. Different expectations have created confusion regarding what to do and how to implement. Only three-fourths (77%) of 26 staff agree that "many" or "all/most" teachers routinely use common rubrics, exemplars, and checklists. While 87 percent of 30 staff surveyed say that school leaders ensure that all staff members are included in decision-making, the DCT heard that

staff needs to be included more explicitly in decision-making to ensure consistency of messaging expectations across various initiatives. This includes messaging related to how grants and partnerships support cohesive efforts toward agreed-upon priorities.

Successful implementation hinges on consistent monitoring and feedback of shared expectations and common tools to ensure consistent implementation. Regarding how often administrators visit all classrooms to monitor effective implementation of instructional programs, half (52%) of 31 staff say "weekly," one-fourth (26%) say "monthly," 19 percent say "3-5 times per year," and three percent say "1-2 times per year." Additionally, 87 percent of 31 staff agree that professional learning is "always" (17, 55%) or "usually" (10, 32%) selected, monitored, and evaluated to ensure it supports identified objectives and improves teacher effectiveness; few say "sometimes" (3) or "rarely" (1).

HAS have established a clear vision and expectations, and frequently and explicitly communicate them to all stakeholders (students, families, teachers, staff, and school leaders). *With most staff returning next year, College View has a great opportunity to continue to build staff capacity, clarify roles and responsibilities, and clearly monitor implementation of prioritized goals. The DCT recommends College View leaders collaborate with all staff to reestablish and communicate common priorities and goals, then develop a plan to ensure their quality implementation. This clarification will be particularly valuable as leadership ensures that grants and partnerships are not in competition, but clearly support school needs and goals.*

Build on Current Systems to Ensure High Instructional Expectations for All Students

College View has dedicated significant time and resources to implementing an improved instructional program. The DCT noted that learning spaces were purposefully designed, with relevant educational resources posted and materials easily accessible. Overall, instructor feedback was non-judgmental, and staff appear to have good rapport with students. DCT classroom observations revealed direct instruction with on-topic instructional language. Staff interviews highlighted several instructional successes, in particular implementation of an Early Literacy Grant (ELG) and the support of academic coaches in ensuring that student needs are identified and met.

While staff are very proud and excited about this instructional growth, there was consensus that some areas need more focus. The majority of 30 staff agree "many" or "all/most" teachers use a variety of instructional strategies to address the needs of individual students (90%) and teachers are held accountable for the achievement of all students and instruction provided ensures students master skills (both 83%). However, only three-fourths of 103 students agree that teachers regularly motivate them to do their best work (78%) or make learning and classroom lessons interesting (75%). Only 39 percent of students report they regularly find out how they did on tests or other assessments. When considering students with additional needs, only half (58%) of 31 staff feel that instruction for students with disabilities in general education classrooms is "good" or "excellent." Based on interviews and observations, the DCT is uncertain if College View is adequately preparing EL students for their next educational level with explicit instruction leading to English proficiency.

Although staff interviews highlighted the level of collaboration, as mentioned above, staff expressed wanting additional opportunities to strengthen relationships and continue to build trust, as well as strengthen consistent implementation of strategies that positively impact students across grade levels and content areas. In addition to data in the *Relationships are Valued* section above, 72 percent of 29 staff respondents report that teachers are provided adequate time to co-plan units/lessons with grade-level or content colleagues.

HAS practices include having and using common instructional language and techniques. The HAS have aligned practices across content areas and grade levels to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of classroom and instructional time. *The DCT recommends that College View staff come to schoolwide agreement on the instructional practices and language to be implemented. Provide ample time for staff to collaborate with grade-level teams, vertically and with specialists, to ensure that instruction is consistent, engaging, relevant, challenging, and meets students' needs. Frequent classroom observations and walkthroughs will help ensure consistent implementation and assist in developing next steps.*

Consistently Uphold High Behavioral Expectations

Interviews, focus groups, and observations informed the DCT that several systems exist to support student behavior and mental health. Several staff discussed the "HUB" as a helpful tool and resource for important school information, including the behavior referral form. Staff also mentioned there is support for teachers during undesirable student behavior events. Staff discussed that established systems for addressing behavior are not consistently followed. Reasons for inconsistent implementation are not clear, but some suggest depth of teaching experience, unawareness of resources, and ideological differences. Only three-fourths (74%) of 31 personnel agree "many" or "all/most" staff explicitly and consistently reinforce student behavioral expectations. Interviews also indicated a lack of clear consequences for students, which sends mixed messages and frustrates staff. Students also reflected on how behavior impacts the community; of 74 student respondents (31 did not answer), two-thirds (68%) feel physically safe at school "often" or "all the time," and half (52%) of 103 feel emotionally safe at school "often" or "all the time."

Behavioral expectations are prominently displayed throughout the HAS and all teachers follow the same behavioral rules/regulations and consequences. HAS teachers explained that in earlier grades, the first couple of weeks of each school year are devoted to establishing classroom routines and reviewing expectations. Because they are consistent across grades, returning students are already aware of classroom routines and expectations and help teach new students. *The DCT recommends building on existing behavior structures and revisiting/redefining behavior protocols. Include clear expectations for students and specific staff duties for responding to student behavior. Through creation and consistent implementation of behavior protocols through the school year, teachers will know how to respond, who to contact, and how to follow through with agreed-upon consequences. Additionally, students will recognize behavior expectations and be held to the same high expectations in every space they visit.*

Strengthen Use of Instructional Support Staff

The DCT learned that College View has established and values a "grow your own" model, in which several staff members participate. This mindset, respecting each contributor as a valuable part of the education of all students, is a strength. Additionally, para-educators desire to grow their skills in delivering educational interventions and behavior management. This was mentioned more than once across various interviews. It does not appear that instructional support staff has access to professional development and observation opportunities as teachers do, although collaboration seems to happen occasionally. According to survey data, of 29 staff (2 "did not know"), 83 percent feel that collaboration and co-planning between teachers and instructional support staff happens on a regular basis. Of 30 staff (1 "did not know"), 73 percent agree instruction for students with disabilities in intervention or pull-out programs is "good" or "excellent." It was unclear how much pull-out instructional intervention and behavior management is provided by paraprofessionals. Because support staff spend a significant amount of time with students, it is essential to ensure they are fully equipped to provide academic interventions and appropriate behavioral support. Common language and intervention strategies are as critical a part of their repertoire as they are for teachers.

HAS are intentional about recruitment, retention, and training of paraprofessionals. Paraprofessionals work regularly with principals and teacher leaders to build their capacity, and their practices are monitored throughout the year. They are provided training on the interventions they implement, often receiving the same training as the teachers and additional coaching as needed. They valued as professional members of the team, contributing equally to the school's mission. *It is recommended that College View invest in the recruitment, retention, training, monitoring, and coaching of paraeducators to ensure all students are receiving a rigorous education with consistent implementation of effective behavioral and instructional strategies.*

Next Steps

Over the course of the CFS grant, College View will have several opportunities to engage with the HAS to learn more about their implementation of strategies highlighted in the HAS study and identify the practices that best align with and are suited to College View's needs. Using the findings of its Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA), recommendations from this report, and lessons learned from connecting with the HAS in monthly meetings facilitated by CDE, College View must identify one or two priorities, develop goals, and submit an implementation plan for the CFS Grant, which should be used to strengthen its Title I Schoolwide Plan and/or UIP. It is expected that a copy of this report/summary of recommendations will be shared with school personnel, school board members, district partners, the CFS Implementation Coach, and families/parents to gain support for developing the implementation plan.

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