

**Colorado Department of Education School Support Team Report
May 6-8, 2013**

The STEM School contracted for a comprehensive review at the conclusion of our second year of operation. Students, teachers, parents, staff, leadership and board members were interviewed. Essential documents were reviewed including board materials and minutes, student/parent handbook, staff handbook, units of study, instructional models, RTI, surveys, and other artifacts. Classrooms were observed.

The rubric used was the Colorado Standards and Indicators for School Improvement. There are ten standards. On each standard, the school was rated from 1-5, from little to no evidence to exemplary level.

Our school was commended for the following:

- Teachers, administrators and staff care about the students and the school.
- The staff, teachers and administrators believe in the STEM programming.
- STEM School has a friendly, welcoming front office.
- The school benefits from strong parental support.
- Teachers regularly cultivate students' higher order thinking and problem solving skills.
- The school has a large multifaceted afterschool program—STEM Academy—where students can pursue their interests.
- Students express strong positive feelings toward their school.
- Administration is working hard to formalize processes and protocols.
- STEM School provides students with an environment where it is safe to be smart and to work hard at school.

Areas of strength included:

1. High value for student individuality and we consistently encourage students to demonstrate mastery through multiple domains,
2. Academic program alignment in how our curriculum is coordinated across services and programs,
3. Flexible resource allocation in how we allocate time, materials and personnel to student attainment of learning goals,
4. Tiered supports for students to access and master the curriculum,
5. Defined interventions for students who need intense remediation
6. Collaborative support for student success
7. Collaborative partnerships with families and the community to emphasize shared responsibility for student success
8. Active family partnerships are encouraged

9. Multiple opportunities for families to feel involved including following the student's schedule, curriculum nights, parent meetings around topics of interest, LMS selected to increase academic communication, and other scheduled events,
10. Communication to families regarding additional resources in the community,
11. Clear expectations for academic and behavior excellence,
12. Well managed school with clear school-wide expectations and procedures,
13. Distributed leadership to teacher teams, department heads and data teams
14. Well established professional external networks for leadership and staff,
15. School, community and family partnerships are developed and fostered,
16. High value for diversity and resources are allocated to supporting recipient groups,
17. High expectations for student problem solving and use of restorative justice,
18. Learner-focused instruction,
19. Exemplary student work is showcased,
20. Welcoming school environment,
21. Leadership and staff work regularly with families and are readily available
22. All students are expected to meet grade level objectives,
23. Staff and leadership celebrate diverse cultural background,
24. The school is clean and safe,
25. Students receive positive reinforcement,
26. Well established trusting relationships between students, adults and families and this is a clear school priority,
27. Student, staff and school celebrates success publically,
28. Staff collaborates with leadership to define annual growth goals to improve performance,
29. Professional development is grounded in peer-reviewed research,
30. Communication regarding mission and vision is clearly communicated
31. The number of priorities set by school administrators is manageable
32. The school uses appropriate current research to develop the Unified Improvement Plan.

Areas in need of improvement are

1. Communication with students and families- inconsistent from teacher to teacher,
2. Refinement of the instructional model and staff evaluations,
3. Tiered professional development of teachers that is job embedded,
4. Indicators of mastery defined for students and teachers,
5. Horizontal grade level planning,
6. Vertical planning across content areas
7. Defined graduation competencies,
8. Teacher accountability for unit plans,

9. Defined performance expectations for students,
10. Bell to bell instruction,
11. Gradual release of responsibility to students
12. Demonstration and modeling,
13. Skillful questioning,
14. English language learner support in the classroom,
15. Student goal setting,
16. Student persistence with challenging tasks,
17. Student-led conferences,
18. Protocols for data teams,
19. Monitored use of high quality assessments,
20. Analysis of assessment data to inform instruction,
21. Whole-school standards discussions,
22. Clarity around decision making,
23. Positive motivation and encouragement,
24. Clear conflict resolution procedures,
25. Well-trained teacher mentors,
26. Lack of instructional coaches,
27. Differentiation of professional development,
28. Collaboration on the development of mission and vision for the school.

Progress was noted in financial transparency and financial best practices, defined operational procedures for a growing school, and goal setting for overall school improvement. Checks and balances are of the highest standard.

Internet challenges were a common theme from various stakeholders and an area for targeted improvement.

Increase in grant seeking was encouraged. More collaboration among stakeholders, especially teachers, was encouraged for the annual budget and financial goals.

Overall, STEM School and Academy has made enormous progress over two tumultuous years. School leadership and board membership changed. Stability is required to grow a strong community school.

Although this evaluation was challenging and rigorous, our organization maintains a constant improvement process and the report will significantly help our teams focus on strategic areas for improvement over the next few years.

The full report can be read in the STEM office.

STEM School Board of Directors and Executive Director

P.J. Eucker PhD
September 2013