

Sacramento City Unified School District



Quality Review Report

Jedediah Smith Elementary School

**401 McClatchy Way
Sacramento, California
95818**

**Principal: Faye Sharpe
Dates of review: May 17-18, 2010
Lead Reviewer: Jose A. Salgado**

Cambridge Education (LLC)

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Part 1: The School Context

Information about the School

Jedediah Smith Elementary School is a small kindergarten through sixth grade elementary school. The school has 256 students. Fifty five percent of the students are African American, 22 percent are Hispanic; 5 percent Pacific Islander, 5 percent White, 4 percent Vietnamese, 4 percent other Asian, and 5 percent from other ethnic groups. Twenty percent of the students are English learners, and 35 percent are designated as special education students. One hundred percent of the students qualify for Title 1 services. The school has one principal, 13 teachers, one secretary, and one reading coach. The principal came four years ago. Before that the school was run by four retired principals with duties shared between them.

Part 2: Overview

What the School Does Well

- The school environment has greatly improved since the principal was appointed four years ago;
- The school has a suitable system to collect and access data from different formative and summative assessments;
- Relationships are secure and the school generally runs smoothly.

Areas for Development

- Establish clear systems for data analysis and ensure that the findings are used to inform classroom instruction.
- Develop a system for monitoring student learning and teaching, and provide teachers with meaningful feedback to transform their practice.
- Improve instruction by:
 - Implementing academic routines and guidelines for what high quality instruction looks like;
 - Sharing learning objectives to guide instruction and to help students to understand and focus on the learning that is expected;
 - Planning and delivering differentiation strategies to ensure the active participation and learning of all students;
 - Developing group work and accountable talk strategies;
 - Providing a broader range of questioning techniques especially for checking for understanding;
 - Planning and delivering a wider range of tasks and activities to promote and consolidate important literacy skills.
- Developing a program of professional development to meet the current needs of the staff and address the main issues that are challenging the school;
- Find more effective ways to involve parents and the community in the decision making process and to encourage greater participation in all school activities;
- Develop and implement a consistent school wide behavior policy;
- Develop more partnerships that have a direct impact on instruction and the social emotional development of all the students.

Part 3: Main Findings

Overall Evaluation

Jedediah Smith Elementary is a small elementary school which serves students who live close by the building. There are a significant number of students who move in and out of the school during the school year and despite the proximity of the school to students, tardiness and absenteeism are high. Four years ago, a new principal was appointed, and since that time the school has made some improvements, particularly in the culture for learning. However, academic standards continue to lag behind the district and the state level. There has been some progress in developing standardized assessments, but this progress is limited and inconsistent year to year. Instruction in the school consists predominantly of teacher-centered activities, where students are given too few opportunities to actively participate other than responding to recall questions, or copying from the board. Most students are not engaged in the learning process. Most teachers do not generally engage students in activities that are aimed at developing higher order level thinking skills. Teaching is not generally well matched to the learning needs of the students.

The school collects and analyses data, but there is not a clear and consistent understanding of how to use this data to improve classroom instruction. Teachers do not set sufficiently specific goals with their students or provide them with detailed feedback on their work; therefore many students are not aware of what they need to do to improve their overall grades. The school follows the curriculum mandated by the district, including pacing guides and various assessments. However, the curriculum requires further refinement to meet the needs of the students. Students are not given sufficient opportunities to develop long term projects that would allow them to better understand concepts or develop higher order level thinking skills. The policy on the amount and purpose of homework is not always followed consistently in all classes. Currently, the curriculum is not well enough aligned to the state standards for science and social studies. The use of technology throughout the school is limited.

Staff and parents are not sufficiently aware of the goals contained within the school improvement plan. While the principal visits classrooms, her observations are not sufficiently focused and her subsequent feedback does not provide teachers with specific goals on how to improve their practice. In addition, the professional development provided in the school is not sufficiently connected to the needs of teachers. The school climate has improved in the past few years, but there is no consistency in the application of discipline across the school. There is limited student work on walls and hallways and much of the work that is displayed is generally of low level and cannot be used as exemplars. There are very few extracurricular activities and even fewer opportunities for students to develop leadership skills in and out of the school. The school has tried several initiatives, to tackle absenteeism and tardiness but these have not had the desired impact on attendance. Parents receive letters and notices from the school on a regular basis including in native languages but few parent participate regularly in school activities.

Domain 1: Progress and Student Achievement

The students' achievement and progress requires intensive school-wide support.

The school's API figures have been well below those of the district and the state for several years and there is no sign of any significant improvement. In real terms the API went down twenty eight points overall, dropping from 687 in 2008 to 659 in 2009 and as a result did not reach its API target for the year of a 6% increase. Subsequently the school was awarded a statewide API rank of 2, placing the school in the bottom 20 percent of schools in California. The average statewide API rank for schools with similar populations is 4, so it can be clearly seen that achievement and progress in the school is exceedingly low and actually getting worse. The school is now in its fifth year of Program Improvement, a status it gained in 2003/04. The distribution of API scores between different subgroups is significantly different with African American students (617) performing worse than average. While the school has met its participation targets under the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) legislation, it has failed to ensure that the required number of students reached proficiency in either English language arts (ELA) or math.

Over the last 4 years the proportion of students at or above proficiency in ELA in Year 6 has slowly increased from 13 percent in 2006 to 33 percent in 2008, but this slipped back in 2009 when only 25 percent of students were judged to be proficient, which is well below the state average of 52 percent. There has, however, been an increase in the proportion of students gaining proficiency in ELA year on year. In 2008 only 16 percent of fifth grade students were judged as proficient in ELA, but in 2009 the proportion for that same cohort had increased 9 percent up to 25 percent. In mathematics the proportion of students judged to be proficient, or above, had also increased from 34 percent in 2008 to 42 percent in 2009. Unfortunately while the gains in ELA and math were good for this cohort other cohorts do not always fare so well and it is a very inconsistent picture between grade level, class and subject. The quality of goal setting is weak and insufficient interim benchmarks are set against which progress can be measured. The more rigorous setting of goals at class and grade level would make a significant positive impact and help the school as it seeks to further drive up student achievement.

Domain 2: Quality of Learning, Teaching and Assessment

The quality of learning, teaching, and assessment requires intensive school-wide support

The overall teaching in the school is quite poor and lacks sufficient rigor. There are no established or consistent academic routines in any of the classrooms. For instance, most teachers do not post or share objectives or an agenda with students. Many students, when asked, cannot explain what they are completing activities, or why they are doing what they are doing. Instruction in many classes consists mainly of teacher-centered activities where teachers are in front of the room, while students sit quietly and either copy notes; fill in vocabulary sheets; complete mathematical problems, read silently, or sometimes write a short paragraph in response to their reading.

Teachers do not generally have effective mechanisms to assess if students are learning. For instance, in a class where students were reading silently for more than half an hour, the teacher missed the many opportunities available to check for understanding. Most teachers rarely ask students if they understand what they are reading. The same is often true for mathematics where teachers move on to the next task without checking for understanding.

Most teachers do not use a sufficiently wide enough variety of teaching strategies such as cooperative learning activities, the Socratic method, or class discussions as part of their instruction. Students sit in rows listening to the teacher and are frequently disengaged from the learning process. In many classrooms students had their heads down, or simply were not completing any task. One student, when questioned, stated that she did not have to be smart; she just needed to be "good" to do well at school. The expectations of many of the teaching staff need to be much higher. For instance, in the few classrooms where there are writing assignments available, the level found is often several years behind

grade level. Although assignments are generally graded, with corrections noted, there are limited teacher comments to show students how to improve their skills. Teachers need to provide more constructive feedback to students so that they can see their next steps and take more responsibility for their own learning. Challenging students to undertake peer and self editing, with a scoring rubric to support this, would be a positive step in encouraging greater student engagement and responsibility. In the upper grades, students do not make sufficient use of pre-writing activities such as graphic organizers or outlines to organize writing pieces.

Teachers use only a limited range of questioning strategies. In most instances, teachers ask all the questions, which are largely recall, and select students to answer them. This limits the potential for group discussion and the development of higher order thinking skills. This type of approach also means that those students not responding sit passively and are not sufficiently engaged. Teachers do not generally plan lessons that are well enough matched to the differing needs of the students in the group. and in most lessons all of the students were doing the same exact task.

Domain 3: Curriculum

The quality of the curriculum provided and experienced requires intensive school-wide support

The school follows the district mandated curriculum and is heavily focused on ELA and mathematics. The school uses the Open Court Curriculum for reading, and the McMillan/McGraw-Hill series for math. However, the implementation of this curriculum does not allow students to develop the necessary skills to be successful at school. For example, the math curriculum focuses on algorithms rather than understanding of the mathematical concepts or their application to real life situations. As a result many students have difficulty explaining the mathematical concepts they are learning. In addition, teachers do not employ enough group activities in order for students to engage in their own learning. For instance, students spend a lot of time working on long list of problems. In some classes, students complete 45 problems on the same topic. Students must complete all of these problems regardless of their proficiency in understanding the topic. In reading, the curriculum does not adequately address the reality of the students. Equity issues are not discussed sufficiently in the school and there would be merit in introducing a coherent program to deal with these. Although the school offers good opportunities for physical education, the curriculum is more limited when it comes to the arts and music. Students do not engage in sufficient extended projects to increase engagement and aid the comprehension of complex concepts.

The school does not have a shared understanding of the purpose, amount, or expectations for homework. Some students spend several hours doing homework, while others do not get any. Most students receive either a grade or a check, but teachers provide limited feedback on their homework. In some classrooms homework is not graded at all, which is unacceptable. Science and social studies are not an important enough part of the everyday curriculum of the school. The school district has suggested to the schools to incorporate these subjects into mathematics and ELA. The school curriculum revolves around the teaching Math and ELA. However, since the CST (California Standards Test), the school has been providing students with some limited science and social studies instruction. The use of technology is rather limited. Every classroom has an overhead projector and a document reader, but teachers rarely use them as part of instruction. Some classrooms have Smart-boards, but they are most often used as regular chalk boards.

Domain 4: Leadership, Management and Accountability

The quality of leadership, management, and accountability requires support in targeted areas

The principal has a clear vision of how to move the school forward. However, this is not a shared vision and there is not sufficient agreement among the administration and the staff on the manner in which improvement is to be brought to the school. This is partly due to the fact that many of the staff changes every year. Two years ago, for example, the principal was able to hire 8 of the 13 teachers at the school,

but because of subsequent budgetary factors 7 of these 8 teachers were removed at the end of the year and replaced with teachers displaced from other schools. Even when agreement is gained some teachers also do not adhere to a common vision of improvement and do not implement these policies with sufficient consistency.

The improvement plan is not detailed enough to state what each classroom teacher must do, for groups or individual students, in order to increased achievement. Each classroom develops a chart that details the performance level of students on formative assessments, which is helpful, but not enough is then done with this information to improve student performance. While the principal visits classrooms, her monitoring does not adequately analyze how instruction is impacting each of the classrooms or each individual student. Monitoring does not include the analysis of student work and the impact that instruction has on the development of skills. The monitoring does not lead sufficiently to meaningful and specific feedback to teachers on the aspects of instruction they need to improve.

The school has a working system for collecting and analyzing data. Teachers gather as soon as the results of formative assessments are delivered, to discuss data. However, the analysis rarely translates into classroom practice that focuses on the standard and skills students need to master. Teachers require more than the two hours of professional development on how to use data to inform classroom instruction. The current schedule does not allow for common planning time across the school and staff meetings are too infrequently held with the entire staff. The administration has not established an expectation of what academic routines must occur in every classroom, making it impossible to develop a shared understanding of the elements of quality teaching, thus creating classrooms with low expectations for students and that are not conducive to learning. The school has a reading coach, but his/her work is not sufficiently targeted to supporting struggling teachers or teachers whose students are not performing well. The school generally runs smoothly on a day-by-day basis.

Domain 5: School Culture and Personal Development

The quality of the school culture and learning environment requires support in targeted areas

The school environment has greatly improved since the arrival of the principal four years ago and the number of suspensions since has significantly decreased. For the most part, students are compliant and follow school rules. There is a code of discipline, which was created a few years before the arrival of the principal and most of the teachers at the school. However the staff does not consistently apply these regulations, which results in disruptions in some classrooms although not in others. Students complain that there are several incidents in the playground that do not get addressed or resolved and the monitoring and supervision of this area needs to be improved as a matter of urgency. Some teachers do not treat the students with sufficient respect, a point remarked upon by a number of students and parents. Classrooms and hallways display very little student work and very few examples of exemplary pieces which students can aspire to. In addition, many of the classrooms are dirty and rather untidy. Steps need to be taken to make the building a more lively and stimulating environment for student learning.

Every Monday the school hosts an assembly where students get awards for attendance, good behavior, and academic achievement. The school does not commemorate cultural holidays, however which would help students to develop a better awareness of the cultural diversity within the school. The principal has tried several initiatives to increase attendance, including personal visits to students' homes, but they have not proved effective to date. Students generally have quite positive attitudes to learning and would like to do better but find the inconsistent practices difficult to understand and comply with.

Domain 6: Partnership with Parents and Guardians and the Community

The quality of involvement of parents/guardians and the community requires support in targeted areas.

Parents expressed that they enjoy having their children at the school. Specifically, they enjoy the proximity of the school to their homes and the ability to come any time and deal with any issue that may come up with their children. Parents also enjoy that teachers are approachable and provide them with information relevant to their children's academic progress. Parents are aware of their children's performance on standardized tests. They receive newsletters and phone calls from the principal and the district on a regular basis; parents receive this information in Spanish and in English. However, parent involvement in the school is rather limited. For example, parents do not know the school's goals in the improvement plan or details of the school's academic standing. The school has tried several mechanisms to involve parents in the school, but these have not proved effective. For example, the school has hosted dinner meetings, put notices in every mailbox of the parents' home, raffles, door prizes, and other entertainment activities to attract families, but attendance to school meetings is still limited to 2 or 3 parents.

The school has provided classes as a way to attract parents, but the parents only attended a few classes. In addition, the principal has gone door to door to invite parents to the meetings, but this has generated only limited positive responses. There is no Parent Teacher Association (PTA), or any other mechanism for the parents to participate in the decision making process of the school. Although the school has sent out surveys to parents, the feedback received was not as helpful as the principal anticipated. The school now needs to explore other avenues to try to promote greater parental involvement and support for student learning. The school has developed one partnership with a local church that provides several services to the school ranging from offering clothing for families in need, to bringing church volunteers into the school.

Domain 7: The Effectiveness of District Support

The principal stated that in her opinion the district has very little understanding of the challenges that exist at the school and the barriers to improvement. In the view of the staff the leadership structure prior to the current principal, was not sufficiently effective and created a lack of consistency in terms of the discipline, approach to teaching, expectations for students, and resulted in low motivation among the teaching staff, all of which has taken a long time to remediate. According to the current principal there were no visits from district administration in her first two years and only had infrequent visits since. In her view the district did not provide her with the necessary support to address some of the structural problems of the school.

The district provides the school with Data Director, an online system of data collection and analysis, where teachers and administrators log the results of standardized tests, which has proved quite useful in tracking progress. The school is appreciative of the professional development opportunities provided by the district but does not feel that what is offered is sufficiently relevant to the needs of the school. The district provides a useful template and guidance for completing the school strategic plan. The principal is concerned that the district does not do more to help schools manage key transfers between grades, segments and schools.

Part 4: Grade Summary

School Name:		1	2	3	4
Domain 1: Progress and Student Achievement		1	2	3	4
	The extent to which...				
1.1	The school's academic achievement has improved over the past three years		X		
1.2	The school's results on standardized tests compare positively with national, State and district averages	X			
1.3	The school's students of all abilities make at least expected measurable progress in each class, grade and subject during their time in the school	X			
1.4	The school addresses the specialized learning needs of students in all subgroups, including gender, ethnicity, social and economically disadvantaged, and by program designation	X			
1.5	The achievement gap between different demographic groups is being closed over time		X		
1.6	The school sets challenging goals, with interim benchmarks, to ensure that students are on course to meet or exceed them	X			
Overall outcome of Domain 1		X			
Domain 2: Quality of Learning, Teaching and Assessment		1	2	3	4
	The extent to which...				
2.1	Teachers have learning objectives that are measurable, are shared with and understood by students, and are referenced throughout the lesson	X			
2.2	Teachers effectively motivate students in their learning with students demonstrating high levels of engagement and time on task	X			
2.3	Teachers provide opportunities for students to become independent learners, critical thinkers, and thoughtful problem solvers who are prepared to take risks to learn	X			
2.4	Teachers provide students with frequent opportunities for collaborative working	X			
2.5	Teachers use effective questioning strategies to promote critical thinking and problem solving skills	X			
2.6	Teachers differentiate instruction to address multiple and varied student learning styles and to meet the needs of all students	X			
2.7	Teachers make use of assessment data from multiple sources to plan instruction, to guide student grouping, to make adjustments to teaching and to target interventions		X		
2.8	Teachers use their knowledge and understanding of core content to provide instruction that is challenging, encourages student engagement, and develops critical thinking skills	X			
2.9	Teachers involve students in the assessment of their work and in the setting of challenging and achievable goals	X			
2.10	Teachers are accountable for the learning and welfare of the students in their classes		X		
Overall outcome of Domain 2		X			
Domain 3: Curriculum		1	2	3	4
	The extent to which...				
3.1	The teachers align the core curriculum to district guidelines and State standards and develop plans, timeframes and benchmarks to support learning		X		
3.2	The curriculum is rigorous, balanced and provides a wide range of realistic learning experiences	X			
3.3	The curriculum enables students to work in depth on projects to develop a wide range of skills, to understand complex concepts, and to solve problems	X			
3.4	The curriculum is relevant and provides frequent opportunities for students to think rigorously and critically about real-world issues	X			
3.5	Homework and extended-day activities are used effectively to reinforce and extend classroom learning experiences	X			
3.6	The curriculum prepares students for multiple learning pathways, and in high school includes college readiness and career/technical education	X			
3.7	The curriculum incorporates a variety of technologies and seeks to develop twenty-first century skills in teachers and their students	X			
Overall outcome of Domain 3		X			

Domain 4: Leadership, Management and Accountability		1	2	3	4
The extent to which...					
4.1	School leaders communicate a vision of continuous improvement and high expectations		X		
4.2	School leaders monitor the school's progress in meeting its long-term goals	X			
4.3	School leaders measure the effectiveness of learning and teaching through observations of lessons, analysis of student work, and the collaborative review of planning	X			
4.4	School leaders collect and analyze data to monitor student and teacher outcomes		X		
4.5	School leaders create and implement policies and practices that enable the school to run smoothly and to provide a climate conducive to learning		X		
4.6	The school's master schedule/daily schedule is driven by data and is strategically structured to support student learning needs		X		
4.7	School leaders organize time, people and resources that are aligned to priority areas identified in the school improvement plan		X		
4.8	School leaders create opportunities for professional development in response to the needs of individual teachers and the school	X			
4.9	School leaders provide opportunities for staff to meet together to modify the curriculum in response to emerging performance data and the needs of the students	X			
4.10	School leaders develop and provide coaches and instructional experts to support staff and to maximize the learning of the students		X		
Overall outcome of Domain 4			X		

Domain 5: School Culture and Personal Development		1	2	3	4
The extent to which...					
5.1	The school provides a learning environment that is safe, friendly, and welcoming		X		
5.2	The school holds staff accountable for making teaching areas and hallways attractive and stimulating environments that foster effective student learning	X			
5.3	The school learning environment encourages high academic and personal expectations by posting rubrics and grade expectations and celebrating exemplary work	X			
5.4	The school supports mutual respect and positive relationships among the school community. Equality of opportunity, understanding of cultural diversity and an appreciation of the personal dignity of all is evident at the school		X		
5.5	The school establishes routines that are clearly defined, communicated and understood by students, teachers and parents		X		
5.6	The school encourages students to develop positive attitudes toward learning		X		
5.7	The school creates opportunities for students to work collaboratively, show initiative, take responsibility and contribute within the school and the wider community	X			
5.8	The school implements measures to promote good attendance and eliminate frequency of truancy and tardiness		X		
Overall outcome of Domain 5			X		

Domain 6: Partnership with parents and guardians and the community		1	2	3	4
The extent to which...					
6.1	The school communicates with parents and guardians in their home language as needed to build collaborative relationships and engage parents as partners		X		
6.2	Teachers routinely provide information for parents and guardians about the academic and social progress of students, the expectations of standards, areas for improvement and potential pathways to college and career		X		
6.3	The school encourages parents and guardians to advocate for their children and to contribute positively to the development of the school as a learning community		X		
6.4	The school creates opportunities to celebrate student achievements with parents and guardians and the broader community	X			
6.5	Parents, guardians and families are encouraged to participate in the decision-making processes within the school	X			
6.6	The school provides frequent opportunities to celebrate, with students and parents, the social and cultural diversity of the community	X			
6.7	The school creates collaborative partnerships with external agencies and community groups to support the academic and personal development of the students		X		
Overall outcome of Domain 6			X		

Domain 7: The Effectiveness of District Support		1	2	3	4
The extent to which...					
7.1	District leadership knows and understands the unique characteristics, the strengths and the challenges of the school	X			
7.2	The district support systems help the school stay focused on learning and provide targeted interventions where needed	X			
7.3	District leaders help the school to design, implement and monitor strategic action plans that promote student achievement through a cycle of continuous improvement	X			
7.4	District leaders support the school in disaggregating student data, and monitoring students to accelerate their progress over time		X		
7.5	The district develops and implements policies that support schools in a cycle of continuous improvement and which impact positively on student learning	X			
7.6	The district helps schools manage key transitions between grades, between segments and between schools	X			
Overall outcome of Domain 7		X			

Scoring Key	
4	Exemplary
3	Established
2	Required support in targeted areas
1	Requires intensive school-wide support