



NORTHEAST REGION

July 28, 2005

Dear Codman Academy Community,

This letter and enclosed summary report present the findings of our annual Implementation Review process. The report draws on information collected at your school during spring 2004, including teacher self-assessments, school director assessments, school publications and materials, conversations with faculty members and students, and classroom observations, which took place over a two day period. Due to the limited time EL staff spent at Codman Academy this past year, this report strongly reflects the faculty's own assessment of ELOB Core Practice Implementation. The Humanities, Literacy, Math and Science teachers' assessments were included in the Learning Expedition and Active Pedagogy sections of this summary report, and all faculty members' assessments were considered in the School Culture and Character, Leadership and School Improvement, and Structures sections. The School Director's and EL School Designer's assessments were incorporated throughout this review.

The Implementation Review does not attempt to be an overall measure of the quality of your school. This process is designed to assess the level of implementation of the sixteen key aspects of the Expeditionary Learning Core Practices; these are listed on the enclosed summary report. The review has two specific purposes: to provide an informed basis for developing next year's work plan for our partnership, and to give our organization the information essential for the continuous improvement of our services to you.

OUR WORK PLAN AND GOALS FOR 2004-2005

During the spring of this past school year, the Codman faculty and ELOB staff members identified two specific focuses for our work together: improving the effectiveness of Crew structures (part of the School Structures Core Practice area), and of the Code of Conduct/discipline system (part of the School Culture and Character Core Practice area). Additionally, the faculty explored student governance structures. School Designers met with the faculty on several occasions and facilitated discussions and workshops on these two specific elements of the school.

RESULTS OF THE REVIEW PROCESS

In the area of Learning Expeditions, teachers reported that they generally implement several to all components of learning expedition benchmarks. Several to most learning expedition

benchmarks are implemented at a high level of quality. The use of experts and community resources to deepen student understanding of content and skills was a clear strength of Codman's expeditions this year. However, teachers' self-assessments of their incorporation of fieldwork, experts and service varied quite a bit in this section of review. For the indicator of compelling expedition topics, the majority of teachers felt they implemented some of these benchmarks with a high level of quality, or that they implemented many of the components of compelling topics, but with varying levels of quality. Several expeditions culminated in high level student performances, which incorporated artistic skills and expedition content. The quality of these performances and of other expedition products is largely based on the scaffolding, explicit teaching of essential skills, and backwards planning on the part of the teachers. The frequency of expeditions across the school occurred inconsistently; some teachers reported that they do not consistently use full learning expeditions to teach content, but rather create investigations and project-based learning experiences that embody some expedition characteristics. Others implemented yearlong expeditions during this past school year. Lastly, almost all teachers felt they create high quality learning experiences outside of expeditions the majority of the time.

In the area of Active Pedagogy, this review indicated that effective instructional practices are regularly used most of the time in Codman's classrooms. Teachers design daily lessons and learning experiences that impel students to be active while acquiring skills and knowledge. For example, I observed several classes that were organized as workshops; teachers introduced concepts and skills explicitly in mini-lessons, asked students to apply these concepts, and conferred with individual students. In these classes, students themselves were responsible for constructing and discovering knowledge, one of the central characteristics of truly active pedagogy. In the area of lesson design, however, some teachers reported difficulty in managing the class smoothly and monitoring student engagement during workshops. Next, the majority of teachers stated they regularly infuse literacy into their learning expeditions. Teachers' assessments of their incorporation of reading instruction in their classes were quite varied, and suggest inconsistent implementation of the reading benchmarks across the school. However, teachers reported they teach writing through their curricula on a more regular basis. Overall, Codman teachers utilize many of the instructional practices described in the Core Practice Benchmarks.

In the area of School Culture and Character, the faculty reported that, generally, the benchmark indicators mostly describe Codman Academy. Clear strengths of Codman's culture and character emerged in this review. Almost all teachers felt students have an adult in the building who knows them well and serves as their advocates. Similarly, the faculty indicated that special education students are integrated into classrooms, rather than separated. Next, Codman's family night program is one example of the unique ways in which Codman welcomes families to be part of the school community. Teachers also consistently reported that Codman's internship structure and its access to college visits, professors and college campuses set students up for successful transitions to the post-high school world. This year's senior college acceptance rate is evidence of the success of these aforementioned structures. Teachers perceived the school-wide Code of Conduct and accountability structures quite diversely; some teachers felt the Core Practice indicator regarding Code of Conduct fully describe the school, while others felt Codman had "not yet started" to articulate and utilize the

school's formal Code of Conduct. As stated in the work plan and goals section, Codman has already begun to work towards creating a more consistent and effective school-wide conduct code. As a professional learning community, Codman's educators are committed to continuing to be learners of their disciplines and of the teaching craft, as demonstrated by their active participation in professional development. However, a wide range of perception amongst the faculty emerged in regards to Codman's use of structures that allow for faculty collaboration and peer mentoring. Many felt this benchmark descriptor partially describes Codman, but others felt it fully does. Still, others felt Codman had not yet started to maintain these mentoring and teaming structures. Overall, Codman's culture reflects many of the Core Practice descriptors in this area.

In the area of Leadership and School Improvement, the faculty reported that the school director ensures a high level of participation in professional development, and participates regularly herself. Perhaps one of Codman's most notable strengths is its strong relationships with cultural and educational institutions in the community. Creating and fostering these relationships greatly enhances the educational experience of Codman students. When assessing the school on some of the other Leadership and School Improvement indicators, the faculty responded variously. For example, some felt the descriptor regarding the study of disaggregated data to inform teaching and learning barely describes the school, while others felt it fully does. The faculty's assessment of the leadership team's function was also widely varied. Many teachers also felt that the school has not begun to utilize a formal decision making model, or that the use of one is in an emergent phase. Lastly, the faculty consistently reported that Codman collects and analyzes a wide range of data to inform teaching and learning.

In the area of Structures, Codman's educators identified the internship program as a clear strength. Similarly, the majority of teachers felt Codman fully implements structures that allow for multi-year connections between adults and students. Although the vast majority of faculty members felt crew leaders ensure students have access to academic and social support, as well as information about class offerings and extra-curriculars, almost all teachers thought crew time could be used better, and that the purposes, goals and lesson plans could be designed more clearly. Regarding collaborative planning time, prep time, and faculty meeting time, Codman's educators felt these benchmark descriptors minimally to partially describe Codman's schedule. Similarly, most teachers indicated that those who share students do not have consistent, common planning time each week. Additionally, although a wide range of responses exist regarding the use of clear protocols during faculty meetings, most felt this indicator minimally to partially describes the school. Lastly, almost all faculty members felt that the schedule allows for flexible student groupings, fieldwork, and service without disrupting other classes.

SUMMARY AND GOALS FOR NEXT YEAR

This letter and accompanying data summary report clearly demonstrate Codman's consistent implementation of many benchmarks in the five Core Practice Areas. Codman's commitment to creating a personalized learning environment in which each student is known well and is

well supported is apparent in several of the Core Practice areas. Additionally, Codman's rich connections to community resources, and educational and cultural institutions, provide students with powerful learning experiences. Codman's teachers strongly employ effective instructional practices, including teaching literacy skills through content-area classes, which impel students to take responsibility for their learning. This report also shows Codman's commitment to self-improvement, as evidenced by their work on Crew and Code of Conduct structures this spring. In written feedback, one teacher commented that Codman had room for growth in all Core Practice areas, yet another sign of the faculty's willingness to be ongoing learners.

Through a process of discussion and reflection, Codman's educators and EL staff members are currently working to create goals for next year's work together. These goals will continue to include a focus on Crew and Code of Conduct, and may incorporate other areas of focus, based on the Core Practice benchmarks.

Finally, I want to recount a conversation I had with a Codman student who gave me a tour of the school on my first visit. I asked her why she would rather go to Codman than to another school in the area. She replied, "Because they give me opportunities."

Sincerely yours,

Kippy Smith
School Designer