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# School Quality Review Report School District of Philadelphia

Bartram High School

October-November 2016

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# 1 The School Context

## 1.1 Introduction

In September 2016 Cambridge Education was awarded a contract against RFP-499 to provide School Quality Reviews (SQRs) to eleven School District of Philadelphia (SDP) schools. The scope of these Reviews is greater than a standard SQR, in that each SQR has a “Community Engagement and Feedback Focus”, which involves collecting input from as many school community stakeholders as possible. The SQR program includes the following:

- a School Quality Review (SQR) orientation for principals
- a two-day SQR for each school (5 elementary; 1 middle; 5 high)
- The equivalent of a third day, during which an SQR team member collects additional stakeholder feedback via small group meetings, one-on-one interviews; phone calls, etc.
- Three community “town hall style” focus groups
- A Community Stakeholder Survey
- A meta-analysis report of the school findings

The SQR report contained herein was prepared by the Lead Reviewer based on the evidence collected and the assessment made by the full SQR team (Lead Reviewer, Team Member Reviewer; Canvasing Lead). Evidence was collected via classroom observations; interviews with the administration; and focus groups with students, teachers, parents and other stakeholders.

## 1.2 Background information about the School

Bartram High School is a comprehensive high school serving students in grades 9-12 in network neighborhood 2, within the school district of Philadelphia. The school has an enrollment of approximately 600 students, which represents a huge decline from previous years. The school is not ethnically diverse. 91.7% of the students are African American, 3% Latino, 2.8% Asian, and 1.7% other. Approximately 28.7% of the student population is classified as students with disabilities, and 8.2% of the students are English Language Learners. 100% of the students are economically disadvantaged.

The school has undergone many leadership challenges within recent years. The current principal, who started at the beginning of this school year, is the sixth in four years.

The school has received a multi-million-dollar school improvement grant and the principal anticipates that that capital investment will make a difference for the school. The principal has already purchased 400 Chromebooks as a means of enhancing the learning experience of the students through technology.

### 1.3 School demographic and performance data

#### John Bartram HS

	Academic Year (e.g. 2014-15) Previous Year	Academic Year (e.g. 2015-16) Most updated data before QR
Grades:	9-12	9-12
Number of students enrolled:	892	710
Percentage of general education students:	75%	73.6%
Percentage of special education students:	25%	26.4%
Percentage of English language learner students:		6.8%
In school suspensions:		
Out of school suspensions:	222	
Percentage of students that are Title 1 eligible:	99%	100%
Latest attendance percentage:	83	
Ethnic make- up of the students (percentages):	African American	93
	White	1.1
	Asian	2.7
	Latino	2.1
	Pacific Islander	0
	American Indian	0
	Other	1.1

#### State Test Results - Percentage of students at or above proficient

Subject Area	School 2012	School 2013	School 2014	School 2015	District 2015	State 2015
English Language Arts	18				42	60
Math	11				26	39.6
Science	2				20	67.8
Social Studies						
Others						
Algebra I		10	8	5	38	
Literature		22	20	8	49	
Biology		1	3	1	29	

\*The Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) is an annual assessment administered in commonwealth classrooms in grades 3 through 8, and in English Language Arts and Mathematics. Science scores are usually from grade 4 and 8 for Elementary and Middle school.

Only grade 11 scores are included for High school (school, district, and state)

The Keystone Exams are one component of Pennsylvania's new system of high school graduation requirements. (data available for grade 11 in Algebra I, Literature, and Biology)

## 2 SQR Main Findings

**In this section of the report, the SQR team has identified the factors that are most significantly supporting and limiting effective student learning.**

### **2.1 Factors that support effective student learning:**

- i. The principal and his leadership team have been successful in substantially improving the climate and culture of the school. Though still a work in progress, all stakeholders recognize this as a marked improvement.
- ii. The principal communicates a vision of education for liberation that is embraced by the various stakeholders of the school. This vision includes a focus on a culturally relevant pedagogy, and preparation for life beyond secondary education.
- iii. Teachers, parents, and students describe the school environment as being relatively safe, respectful, and welcoming. Students shared that in previous years "the school was wild" and that "now they have a school."
- iv. The leadership team recognizes that the next step in improving the school is to focus on learning and teaching. One of the assistant principals commented that "We've gotten the students into the classroom, now we have to ensure that it is a place they would want to stay."

### **2.2 Factors that limit effective student learning:**

- i. Learning objectives are not consistently communicated in ways that allow all students to understand what they are learning, why it's important, and how it connects to past and future learning. Additionally, the objectives are not revisited during and at the end of lessons.
- ii. Teachers' planning and instructional routines are not yet of a quality that demonstrates adequate use of assessment data, deep understanding of and alignment to the PA Core Standards, and knowledge of the learning needs of individual and groups of students. As a result, not all students are able to make the progress that they are capable of making.
- iii. The opportunity for students to work collaboratively and build ownership of their learning is not adequately embedded in classroom experiences. Students do not discuss what they are learning, utilize rubrics to assess their work and that of their peers, nor engage in discussion and debate about each other's ideas. Collaborative learning occurs very infrequently, and students are not developing skills for cooperation and collaboration.

## 3 Individual Domains

In the sections below, each domain received a rating based on the evidence collected during the SQR. The judgments have been broken down into *Factors that Support Effective Student Learning* and *Factors that Limit Effective Student Learning*.

### 3.1 Domain 1: Quality of Learning & Teaching

**The Quality of Learning & Teaching requires intensive school-wide support**

**Factors that support effective student learning:**

- i. Some teachers plan lessons that are aligned with state standards and engage students in ways that motivate them to learn.
- ii. Some teachers manage student behavior effectively and form positive relationships with them that help to support them socially and emotionally. Students indicate that they value the positive relationships they have with some teachers.

**Factors that limit effective student learning:**

- i. Many teachers hold low academic expectations for students due to the fact that that many students enter the school significantly behind academically. As a result, students are not exposed to learning experiences that challenge them, build their critical thinking or help them to overcome their shortfalls.
- ii. Teachers do not effectively use a variety of assessments to guide the planning and execution of lessons that accommodate the different needs of students. Learners, regardless of their levels of understanding, are exposed to the same instruction and tasks. Students reported that the work is too easy and that they are not being challenged enough.
- iii. Lesson plans and classroom observations revealed that learning objectives are not always aligned to the rigor of the PA Core Standards, nor are they communicated in ways that allow all students to understand what they are learning, why it is important, and how it connects to past and future learning.
- iv. Learning experiences do not adequately promote student collaboration and discussion, nor do teachers employ effective questioning techniques to develop critical thinking skills. Teachers most often lecture or speak back and forth to one student at a time, and students rarely engage with one another about what they are learning.
- v. Teachers need time and assistance to develop greater understanding of the curriculum standards and resources, and how to design lessons that embrace the pedagogy and instructional routines to meet the needs of their students who possess substantial knowledge and skill deficits. Teachers as well as administrators agreed that more teacher training and professional development are needed.
- vi. Teachers do not consistently engage students in the assessment of their work and that of their peers. The use of rubrics was not observed and students questioned were unable to discuss what they need to do to improve their work.

### 3.2 Domain 2: Curriculum & Assessment

#### Curriculum & Assessment requires support in targeted areas

##### Factors that support effective student learning:

- i. The school utilizes the district recommended curricula, which are aligned to the PA Core Standards. In addition to the core subjects, students have the opportunity to take classes in physical education, music, art and the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corp (JROTC).
- ii. The Principal recognizes the needs of students who are academically behind, and the low expectations that teachers have for their students, and is developing plans to implement project-based learning as a way to motivate and engage students in learning that will build their critical thinking and academic skills.

##### Factors that limit effective student learning:

- i. Apart from district benchmarks, teachers do not yet produce and administer common assessments to determine how students are progressing through the curriculum. As a result, lessons are not sufficiently responsive to the emerging needs of students.
- ii. Students do not yet benefit from work on projects and problems that engage them in deep consideration of concepts or in finding solutions to complex problems. This is related to the low expectations that teachers hold for students' academic performance.
- iii. The curriculum and the learning experiences that students are exposed to do not currently prepare them for college and careers – a fact alluded to by the principal, students and parents, and observed in eleven lessons.

### 3.3 Domain 3: Leadership, Management and Accountability

#### Leadership, Management and Accountability requires support in targeted areas

##### Factors that support effective student learning:

- i. The principal communicates a vision of education that is supported by school leaders, and embraced by various stakeholders. This vision is posted in all classrooms throughout the school and includes a focus on cultural relevance and the attainment of social as well as academic success during and beyond secondary education.
- ii. The principal, assistant principals, deans, climate managers and security personnel have effectively worked together to transform the school climate to the point where it is now conducive to learning. Students are in attendance in classrooms following transitions, while fights and other acts of violence, as well as other inappropriate behaviors, have been greatly reduced. Students now regard their school as a “regular school”.
- iii. The principal and his leadership team promote and model high expectations for all staff and students. This has resulted in a marked improvement in the climate and culture of the building.
- iv. The school leadership team has created and implemented practices for managing school-wide behavior. These common practices, as well as consequences consistently enforced for non-compliance, enable the school to run more smoothly.
- v. The school leadership has identified teachers who demonstrate some measure of effectiveness in meeting the needs of students, as well as those who don't. The principal is beginning to put plans in place for supporting and retaining the effective teachers.

##### Factors that limit effective student learning:

- i. Although the principal and assistant principals monitor lesson plans and visit classrooms, this has not yet resulted in rigorous lesson plans that challenge students to think critically and build deep understanding of concepts. Additionally, feedback after lesson observations has not resulted in improved learning experiences for students.
- ii. The leadership team has begun to look at class failure rate and are communicating this to teachers. Teachers whose class failure rate is above 10% are required to implement instructional action steps which are communicated to them by school leaders after informal observations. This process is in its early stages and has not yet resulted in teachers taking responsibility for the performance of their students. Many teachers highlight the underperformance of students, but do not ensure that all students make consistent progress to close learning gaps.
- iii. School leaders have begun to collect exit tickets and students' performance data from teacher created bi-weekly assessments. This data is used to determine students' mastery of lessons taught. However, this has not yet resulted in data driven instruction within classrooms. Differentiated learning activities are not yet a feature of classrooms and the individual needs of students are not addressed.

### 3.4 Domain 4: The Culture of Learning

#### The Culture of Learning requires support in targeted areas

##### Factors that support effective student learning:

- i. All stakeholders of the school acknowledge the marked improvement in the climate and culture of the school. They attribute this to the leadership of the new administration, and describe the environment as much safer, more respectful, and now conducive to learning.
- ii. Students and parents express that most adults in the building show care and respect for them. Relationships between teachers and students and between teachers and other community members are generally respectful, and interactions are positive.

##### Factors that limit effective student learning:

- i. Not all staff members reinforce expectations of appropriate behaviors. Non-compliant behaviors regarding cell phone usage, and non-participation in lessons were observed in some classes, which were not addressed by the adults in the classrooms.
- ii. Aspects of the culture for learning related to academic challenge for students needs improvement. Diagnostic testing reveal that many students come to the school several years behind grade level, and this has resulted in misplaced expectations for students. Many students are unchallenged, while others become frustrated due to undifferentiated tasks without the appropriate scaffolds.
- iii. The school has not yet created sufficient opportunities for students to articulate their voice in the improvement process. Students in focus groups indicate their willingness to become involved and to contribute to the development of the school in more meaningful ways. Apart from Bartram Revolution, a body of students led by the dean, there is no formal student government in which students actively engage in the school improvement process.

### 3.5 Domain 5: Family and Community Engagement

#### Family and Community Engagement requires support in targeted areas

##### Factors that support effective student learning:

- i. The school and its students benefit from positive relationships with several community partners that provide supports for students' academic and social development both during and after school. Among the many partners are the Philadelphia Health Management Corporation, Men of Bartram Alumni Association, College Access, and Dunbar Services. These all serve to extend students' learning beyond the classroom.
- ii. The school provides a few opportunities to celebrate its cultural diversity. For example, students can dress in their ethnic attire on Fridays and the school hosts a cultural day once per year.

##### Factors that limit effective student learning:

- i. Communication between the school and home is sporadic and inconsistent. Parents and students indicate that not all teachers make efforts to communicate on a regular basis with parents about the academic and behavioral achievements of students.
- ii. Parental participation in the operations of the school remains low and opportunities for parental voice is underdeveloped. The school does not have a functioning parent-teacher association.

## 4 Community Engagement and Feedback Focus

This section of the report pertains to the wider Community Engagement and Feedback Focus component of the SQR process. These activities included two community focus groups, small group meetings, one-on-one interviews, as well as a community stakeholder survey. Community members and stakeholders provide valuable contributions to the improvement of schools, and they supplied a significant amount of meaningful feedback that enhanced the overall SQR process.

### 4.1 Areas of Strength for the School:

- i. All constituents of the school – students, parents, teachers, community partners and the state liaison, recognize the marked improvement in the climate and culture of the school. They attribute the change to the new principal and his administration.
- ii. The various partners that support the school are regarded as valuable to the school. They support students academically, such as with tutoring and credit recovery classes, in addition to social supports and preparation for college.
- iii. The alumni association is very active in the school and is working with the principal to develop a plan to restore the school to its former glory. They currently operate a chess club and there are plans to start up a drone club.
- iv. The principal attended the school and has a personal stake in its success. He is engaging and mobilizing the community to support the school.

### 4.2 Areas of Improvement for the School:

- i. Stakeholders perceive that class sizes are too large, although official student enrollment does not reflect large classes. Many students who hung out in the hallways are now in the classrooms and teachers need support to deal with them.
- ii. The curriculum needs further diversification to include vocational and Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses for students who may not want to go to college.
- iii. The guidance and counseling of students needs improvement. The two guidance counselors cannot adequately service all the students.
- iv. The school needs help with interventions for students who come in with reading and mathematics skills on the third-grade level.
- v. The school needs to implement student-centered classrooms with lessons that are culturally relevant.

### 4.3 Stakeholders' views regarding school improvement:

*Stakeholders made the following suggestions of how to improve the school:*

- i. The school is now on a path to be transformed under the leadership of the current principal.
- ii. Students need help to navigate their social realities. They don't currently have the benefit of social workers or enough counselors.
- iii. Resources are needed for students as well as for parents, particularly for English language learners and special education.
- iv. The school needs to devise a plan to mobilize the community.
- v. The school leaders need to work to change the negative perception of the school in the community by marketing the good things going on at the school.
- vi. Ensure age-appropriate furniture and fix the restrooms.

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## A. Community Stakeholders' Input

**Families, community members/partners, staff and students shared their perspectives on a range of topics. The following are quotes collected during the School Quality Review and FACE Canvassing activities.**

The following are typical of the comments made about the principal:

- *The principal has made a great difference at the school – he is changing the school.*
- *The principal is invested in the school and is bringing the community together*
- *The principal talks to us and he respects us. He is like one of us. He went to school here*
- *The principal comes to our football games. He used to be a football coach here. He still tries to coach us on the side*
- *The principal can improve the school*

The following are typical comments made about the teachers:

- *Some teachers care and have a respectful relationship with the students. Some don't*
- *Some teachers make learning fun for students*
- *Some teachers stay after school to help students with their work*
- *Some teachers do not challenge us*
- *One of our teachers goes beyond to get jobs for us, he has us plant a garden and helps us in many ways. He really cares about us*

The following are typical comments made about school culture:

- *The school is much better now*
- *The culture is so much improved. I used to be afraid to walk in the stepwells (teacher)*
- *Students feel safe*
- *There is order in the school*

The following are typical comments made about communication:

- *The principal listens*
- *The principal is open to new ideas*
- *Some teachers communicate with parents on a regular basis. Others don't*
- *The school provides progress reports*

The following are typical comments made about engaging families and community members:

- *The principal is working to mobilize the community*
- *The school does not involve the parents enough*
- *The school welcomes the community partners*
- *We (the community) are invested in the success of the school*
- *The alumni association is very supportive of the school. They want to partner with the school to have it regain its former glory*

## **B. Survey Data**

There were no survey responses for Bartram High School.



