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<b>Review date(s)</b>	November 2-3, 2016
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# School Quality Review Report School District of Philadelphia

Ben Franklin High School

October-November 2016

# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>The School Context</b>	<b>2</b>
1.1	Introduction	2
1.2	Background information about the School	2
1.3	School demographic and performance data	3
<b>2</b>	<b>SQR Main Findings</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1	Factors that support effective student learning:	4
2.2	Factors that limit effective student learning:	4
<b>3</b>	<b>Individual Domains</b>	<b>5</b>
3.1	Domain 1: Quality of Learning & Teaching	5
3.2	Domain 2: Curriculum & Assessment	6
3.3	Domain 3: Leadership, Management and Accountability	7
3.4	Domain 4: The Culture of Learning	8
3.5	Domain 5: Family and Community Engagement	9
<b>4</b>	<b>Community Engagement and Feedback Focus</b>	<b>10</b>
4.1	Areas of Strength for the School:	10
4.2	Areas of Improvement for the School:	10
4.3	Stakeholders' views regarding school improvement:	10
	<b>Appendices</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>A.</b>	<b>Community Stakeholders' Input</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>B.</b>	<b>Survey Data</b>	<b>13</b>

# 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 school; 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; Canvassing 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

Benjamin Franklin High School is a public high school located north of Center City at 550 North Broad St. Philadelphia, PA. Benjamin Franklin serves sections of North Philadelphia and Center City, including the Fairmount, Spring Garden, the section of Northern Liberties south of Poplar Street, and portions of Center City, including Chinatown, Old City, Rittenhouse Square, Logan Square, and Society Hill areas.

The principal joined the school in February of 2016 but formally took over as principal in September 2016. The former principal assisted with transition of leadership and was still on-site until October 21, 2016.

There are currently 547 students enrolled and the ethnic breakdown is: 84% African-American, 7.6% Hispanic and 5% Asian or Pacific Islander.

### 1.3 School demographic and performance data

#### Ben Franklin 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:	713	643
Percentage of general education students:	75%	70.4%
Percentage of special education students:	25%	29.6%
Percentage of English language learner students:	14%	11.4%
In school suspensions:		
Out of school suspensions:	142	
Percentage of students that are Title 1 eligible:	100%	100%
Latest attendance percentage:	83.5	
Ethnic make- up of the students (percentages):	African American	84.1
	White	1.6
	Asian	5
	Latino	7.6
	Pacific Islander	0
	American Indian	0.2
	Other	1.6

#### 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	19				42	60
Math	16				26	39.6
Science	2				20	67.8
Social Studies						
Others						
Algebra I		12	13	10.4	38	
Literature		25	17	14.9	49	
Biology		4	3	5.2	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 school-wide curricula and accompanying periodic common assessments are directly aligned to state and district standards.
- ii. Students are exposed to a wide range of learning experiences, including JROTC, culinary arts, welding, mechatronics, precision machining, engineering, renewable energy, electronics and CADD (computer aided drafting and design).
- iii. The school leaders promote high expectations for both staff and students and they consistently challenge poor performance and non-compliance. All instructional staff members are held accountable for the academic performance of their students.
- iv. School leaders collect and analyze a wide range of data to assess the impact of learning and teaching in the building. The leadership team has put strategic measures in place to ensure the academic progress of students, and are committed to closing achievement gaps.

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

- i. The quality of learning and teaching is not as strong as it could be because:
  - o Teachers are not consistently delivering instruction that meets students on their independent academic levels.
  - o Lessons are not consistently engaging and do not address various learning styles.
  - o Students are not consistently engaged in group projects or collaborative work; therefore, they are not pushed to enhance their critical thinking and problem solving skills.
- ii. Students do not receive consistent meaningful feedback about the quality of their work. As a result, students are not sure how to improve the overall quality of their work.

## 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 support in targeted areas**

**Factors that support effective student learning:**

- i. Teachers and administrators use a wide range of assessment data from multiple sources to inform instructional decisions. Teachers are charged with creating weekly common assessments that will provide greater academic data about students that can be used for instructional decision making.
- ii. Teachers in most classes are providing students with learning objectives that are measurable and understood by students.
- iii. Teachers are able to manage students' behavior effectively, contributing to an environment that is conducive to learning.

**Factors that limit effective student learning:**

- i. Teachers are not consistently delivering instruction that meets students on their individual academic levels. Students in most classes receive the same work, which does not support the struggling learner or challenge the proficient learner. In only one class was a student provided with a supplementary math worksheet when she had completed the required classwork. One student shared "I don't feel like I'm challenged in this school. Teachers should not talk the whole time."
- ii. Lessons are not consistently engaging and do not address various learning styles. Students are not given many opportunities to work in groups, thus, students are not greatly engaged. In most classes students were working on completing worksheets; only in art and Spanish classes were students engaged in projects and/or group work.
- iii. Students do not consistently receive meaningful feedback about their work that will assist them in improving the overall quality of their work. Although students are allowed to make up work, teachers are not providing them with strategies on how to improve.

### 3.2 Domain 2: Curriculum & Assessment

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

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

- i. The school-wide curricula and accompanying periodic common assessments are directly aligned to state and district standards.
- ii. Students are exposed to a wide range of learning experiences, including JROTC, culinary arts, welding, mechatronics, precision machining, engineering, renewable energy, electronics and Computer aided Drafting and Design (CADD). Teachers, parents and community members all shared that this was a draw for students to attend.
- iii. School leaders have implemented a new initiative for teachers to create weekly common assessments for students. This initiative is designed to get a more frequent assessment of students' academic needs, in order to prepare better informed academic interventions.

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

- i. The curriculum/instruction does not provide many opportunities for students to work on in-depth projects. Thus, students are not developing their problem solving and critical thinking skills.
- ii. The Career and Technical Education (CTE) classes help prepare students for work; however, students are not well prepared for college. The school's "path to college" rating is currently 44 out of 100%. Parents of a former graduate shared, "When our daughter graduated, she wasn't ready to go to college."
- iii. Extended day activities are not sufficiently supporting students, socially or academically. Although there is an auxiliary High School, credit-recovery program going on after school, there is no formal after-school program to support students.

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

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

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

- i. School leaders promote high expectations for both staff and students and consistently challenge poor performance and non-compliance. They hold instructional staff accountable for the academic performance of their students. Teachers are charged with creating weekly grade level common assessments and updating a weekly on-line grade book to keep students and families aware of their progress.
- ii. The leadership team collects and analyzes a wide range of data to assess the impact of learning and teaching in the building. They have put strategic measures in place to ensure the academic progress of students, and are committed to closing achievement gaps. The leadership team can very clearly articulate data concerning student academic progress, teacher ratings, attendance, and suspensions.
- iii. There has been a decrease in off-task behavior since the new behavior management system was implemented. Students who demonstrate appropriate behavior earn their place in the “Green Zone”, which allows them to attend school trips and activities.

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

- i. The frequency and quality of the feedback that teachers receive after classroom observations is inconsistent. For example, one teacher has been visited three times since the start of school and she received constructive feedback after each visit. Other teachers have been visited once since the start of school and state that “there is minimal feedback.”
- ii. The school leaders have developed a clear, strategic vision for school improvement but it has been inconsistently communicated to staff members. Leadership team members spoke very clearly about the plans for collection and use of data but staff members were not as fluent in their responses to data use. A staff member shared “Collected data is the buzz-word.” Another teacher shared, “We can use data sometimes but we have not been specifically trained.”
- iii. Although there are strategies being developed to grow teacher leaders, several staff members feel overwhelmed in the process, as the leadership team has not effectively communicated a structured action plan.

### 3.4 Domain 4: The Culture of Learning

#### **The Culture of Learning is established.**

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

- i. School leaders and staff members show respect towards each other and work to develop positive relationships with other members of the school community. Teachers in both focus groups stated that they work diligently to support each other, across grade levels, throughout the building.
- ii. Community members and parents express that most adults in the building are caring and professional in their interactions with them. Students who attended their programs outside of the school are described as polite and professional.
- iii. Relationships between teachers and students are generally respectful and interactions are positive. Some students have close relationships with teachers and they have made strong connections with other staff members.

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

- i. Parts of the school are not as safe as they could be. Although violent student behavior has decreased, fights occasionally occur in places where cameras can't see and supervision is limited, particularly in the stairwells during transitions.
- ii. School work is not as challenging as it could be. Several students do not feel challenged in their classes and that, as a result, they are not being adequately prepared for college and future career.

### 3.5 Domain 5: Family and Community Engagement

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

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

- i. Teachers routinely provide academic updates to students and parents. Students and parents have access to the School Net online portal that teachers are required to update weekly. Parents and students frequently check this portal for academic updates.
- ii. School leaders and staff place a high priority on communicating with families with academic and social/behavioral updates. A Community Outreach Liaison has been hired this year and it is her job to make home visits and reach out to local businesses and community members to develop partnerships with the school. She is beginning to make contact with representatives from local businesses.
- iii. The school is working to develop collaborative partnerships with multiple outside agencies. A representative from Gear-Up is housed in the building and she has worked to garner partnerships with Urban League of Philadelphia, Drexel University, Temple University, Philadelphia Blue Cross Blue Shield, Texas Instruments, and several others. These groups have provided professional development for teachers, provided resources to the school, supported a Summer Bridge Program for 9th graders and facilitated trips and college visits for students.

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

- i. Parents do not feel that they are part of the decision-making processes of the school. The focus group was the first time they had been asked to share their thoughts about the school. A parent shared that, although she would like to volunteer in the building, she hasn't been told how she could support the school.
- ii. There are no clearly defined cultural or diversity themed celebrations in the school. Although students enjoy the Green Zone trips, they feel that their cultures and academic accomplishments are not celebrated enough.

## 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. The teachers are very supportive and really care for the students.
- ii. Teachers have very close relationships with students.
- iii. The leadership is well-spoken and always prepared.
- iv. The school has multiple programs to meet the needs of students (CTE programs; culinary, ROTC, machine work, etc.)

### 4.2 Areas of Improvement for the School:

- i. Parents being open minded and involved in the school's effort to promote healthy behaviors of children.
- ii. Bring in more outside companies to support the school, such as banks and outside job related fields, which may be of interest to the students.
- iii. Students are disappointed that there are no AP or Honors classes to help prepare them for college level classes.

### 4.3 Stakeholders' views regarding school improvement:

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

- i. Restore school supports that have been taken away.
- ii. The school needs a full-time librarian, so students can take out books.
- iii. Connect with more community organizations and smaller businesses to provide support to the school.
- iv. Promote the school publicly to change the negative reputation. Go out to the community and make more personal connections, so that people don't think the school is so bad.
- v. Provide AP and Honors level classes to students.

# Appendices

A.	Community Stakeholders' Input	12
B.	Survey Data	13

## 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 is...) always readily available when I have questions and or need support*

The following are typical comments made about the teachers:

- *They are very supportive and there are teachers here who really care for the students.*
- *The teachers work to make connections with the students*
- *Some teachers help us get ready to move toward our future goals, but not as a school as a whole.*
- *We don't have AP or Honors classes.*
- *Teachers don't give us our test back, so I don't know what I need to study. How am I supposed to know how to get better?*

The following are typical comments made about school culture:

- *Very open, inviting and knowledgeable.*
- *I feel safe as long as I'm not alone.*
- *Some teachers are respectful and others look at us like we are stupid.*
- *I joined JROTC so I could surround myself with good and focused people.*

The following are typical comments made about communication:

- *The Parent/Community Liaison works to reach out to parents and connect with local community organizations*

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

- *Bring in more outside companies to support school such as banks and outside job related fields which may be of interest to the students.*
- *Restore school supports that have been taken away.*
- *The school needs a full-time librarian, so students can take out books.*
- *Connect with more community organizations and smaller businesses to provide support to the school.*
- *Promote the school publicly to change the negative reputation. Go out to the community and make more personal connections, so that people don't think the school is so bad.*

## **B. Survey Data**

There were no survey responses for Ben Franklin High School.



