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School name	Fels High School
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Review date(s)	October 26-27, 2016
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School Quality Review Report School District of Philadelphia

Fels 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

The Samuel S. Fels High School (commonly referred to as Fels High School) is a district-run high school in Philadelphia. The school is named after Samuel Simeon Fels.

The current enrollment is 1006 students. The student population is currently 66.6% Black, 20.3% Hispanic, 8% Asian, 3.1% White and 2.1% Other. The Special Education population is currently 21.5%, the English Language Learner population is 15.6%, and the school is 78.7% economically challenged.

The Arts Program at Fels includes Choir, Band, Orchestral music, Theater Arts and Dance. The school has several plays and talent showcases throughout the year. Fels High School has a vast number of sports teams including basketball, football, soccer, volleyball, track, cross country running, swimming, and bowling. Fels is one of the few schools in the city of Philadelphia with a full television production studio. This Career and Technical Education course prepares students to work in the video production field after high school.

1.3 School demographic and performance data

Fels 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:	1101	1009
Percentage of general education students:	78%	76.7%
Percentage of special education students:	22%	23.3%
Percentage of English language learner students:	17%	15%
In school suspensions:		
Out of school suspensions:	275	
Percentage of students that are Title 1 eligible:	84%	100%
Latest attendance percentage:	87.1	
Ethnic make- up of the students (percentages):	African American	64.3
	White	3.4
	Asian	8.2
	Latino	20.8
	Pacific Islander	0.1
	American Indian	0.3
	Other	2.9

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	24				42	60
Math	14				26	39.6
Science	2				20	67.8
Social Studies						
Others						
Algebra I		12	9	13	38	
Literature		29	31	28	49	
Biology		3	4	7	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 assessments are directly aligned to state standards.
- ii. Technology is widely used throughout the school and prevalent in the lesson delivery in most classrooms.
- iii. The school-wide discipline policy has decreased off-task and disruptive behaviors, and the number of out of school suspensions has decreased over the last three school years. Staff, parents, and students all share that the school environment is less disruptive than it has been in past years.
- iv. The school-wide arts and sports programs are working to increase students' engagement in school. Parents and students expressed that this was one of the reasons they were drawn to Fels, and staff members stated that they were proud of the program.

2.2 Factors that limit effective student learning:

- i. The instruction delivered in most classrooms is not rigorous enough to meet students on their individual academic levels, in part due to inconsistent use of data to inform instruction. Students cannot consistently articulate the learning intention; therefore, they are unsure of what they are learning and how they can display proficiency in the targeted skill.
- ii. While school leaders have developed a strategic vision for the school, said vision has not been effectively communicated to school stakeholders.
- iii. Although teacher lesson plans are being monitored, they have not yet worked to improve the rigor of the instruction delivered in all classrooms.
- iv. The school has invested in multiple school resources, but these resources have not yet worked to increase student learning and meet the needs of all students in the building.
- v. School leaders' efforts to reach out to parents have not yet worked to bring parents in to the decision-making processes of the school, and there is insufficient community engagement to support the academic and social development of students.

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. Most teachers are incorporating digital technology into their lesson delivery. A Smartboard or projector was being utilized in 16 of the 19 traditional classrooms observed and, as a result, students were more engaged in their learning.
- ii. Teachers have been provided with common planning time. This gives them the opportunity to meet with colleagues and collaboratively plan lessons. Teachers document their collaborative meetings and share this information with the administration.
- iii. The school provides credit recovery classes for students who fall behind in the credits that they need to graduate from high school.

Factors that limit effective student learning:

- i. Students are unaware of exactly what they are learning and what they will need to do to display proficiency in the targeted skill. While teachers are posting learning objectives, they are not consistently sharing the learning objective with students and explicitly referring to them during instruction.
- ii. Teachers are not delivering instruction that is rigorous enough to meet all students on their individual academic levels. Students who are high achievers are not challenged enough to ensure they are reaching their maximum potential.
- iii. Although data meetings have been set up and are attended by an administrator, these meetings are not effectively impacting instruction, as teachers are not consistently using the data to make instructional decisions.
- iv. Teachers are not consistently managing student behavior. Students shared, “Some teachers can’t control their classes”, “I dropped Science because the teacher can’t control the class. She does not have strong routines and structures”.

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 assessments are directly aligned to state standards. Teachers are developing their understanding of the new curricula in math and ELA.
- ii. The new curricula are accompanied by periodic common assessments that teachers are administering to students. Teachers are confident that this will support students in improving their academic scores on standardized tests.
- iii. The school offers a diverse Arts program that includes dance, music, and choral instruction. Parents, students, and staff members all spoke to the increased level of school pride and student engagement that the Arts program has provided. The band has won numerous awards.
- iv. The school sports program has engaged many students, and several families mentioned that this was why they chose this school. The students have opportunities to engage in basketball, football, soccer, track, and swimming. Freshman students have the unique opportunity to take “Aquatics” and learn to swim in the school’s Olympic size pool.

Factors that limit effective student learning:

- i. Classroom instruction is not providing students with ample opportunities to work on in-depth projects that will enhance their critical thinking skills. Most work is completed independently.
- ii. The instruction is not appropriately preparing students for success in college and careers. Students are not being challenged in their learning. Most assignments do not require students to extend their thinking, apply their knowledge to real world problem-solving, or delve into complex projects.
- iii. Homework and extended day programs do not reinforce the instruction that takes place during the day. Students in both focus groups shared that they did not receive homework on most days. The one extended day program offers 90 slots for students to attend, however only 15 students are currently enrolled.

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 school-wide discipline policy has decreased off-task and disruptive behaviors, and the number of out of school suspensions has decreased over the last three school years. Staff, parents, and students all agreed that the school environment is less disruptive than it has been in past years.
- ii. The principal is implementing distributive leadership in the building. The instructional observations are being shared with one assistant principal while the other leads the 9th grade academy.

Factors that limit effective student learning:

- i. School leaders have not effectively communicated a clear strategic vision for the school to teachers, thus staff members are not clear as to what instructional decisions to make to increase student learning. Some responses, when asked about the school's vision, included: instructional coaching; raising Keystone scores (but unsure by what percentage); improve instruction (but not sure how); and some stakeholders were completely unaware of any vision.
- ii. School leaders are not consistently monitoring and providing constructive feedback on teachers' lesson plans. Thus, teachers are not sufficiently learning how to improve their instructional delivery.
- iii. School leaders have not effectively used school resources to meet the needs of all students. For example, Keystone practice materials have not yet been utilized by teachers; codes for Compass Learning for all students have yet to be acquired; another computer program which is expected to help students has not yet begun; and 9th grade Academy continues to wait to learn what plans have been developed for their area.

3.4 Domain 4: The Culture of Learning

The Culture of Learning requires support in targeted areas.

Factors that support effective student learning:

- i. School leaders have worked diligently to provide a safe environment for students. Students in both focus groups mentioned that they feel safer in the school than they have in the past.
- ii. School leaders are implementing measures to increase daily student attendance and decrease student tardiness. The new “late room” policy is working to decrease the number of students who do not arrive on time.
- iii. School leaders promote positive relationships amongst the staff and show respect for each other when interacting. Teachers feel supported by their peers and respected by administration. A student said, “Most teachers encourage you to do your best.”
- iv. The newly formed Student Government Association (SGA) has the potential to provide students with the opportunity to have a voice in the school.

Factors that limit effective student learning:

- i. Students do not always feel safe in the cafeteria. The cafeteria is described as noisy, disrespectful, chaotic, and inadequately monitored. Inappropriate behaviors such as throwing food and milk cartons, running, and occasionally fighting deter some students from going to the cafeteria. The administration also recognizes the cafeteria environment is “not where it should be”.
- ii. The level of rigor is not yet established to ensure students are adequately prepared for college and career.

3.5 Domain 5: Family and Community Engagement

Family and Community Engagement requires intensive school-wide support.

Factors that support effective student learning:

- i. Teachers reach out to parents when they encounter discipline issues with students. As a result, most parents are well informed when behavior issues arise with their children.
- ii. Parents, community members, and students are proud of the school's physical environment. Community members see potential opportunities to utilize the space to serve the wider community for after-school programs, local elections, community meetings, etc. The swimming pool is a point of pride for parents, students, and the community.
- iii. The school has created a partnership with Home Depot and Lowe's to donate gardening materials. As a result, the horticulture program at the school is thriving and students have the opportunity to engage in gardening in the school's greenhouse.

Factors that limit effective student learning:

- i. The school has not effectively communicated with parents to bring them in to build collaborative relationships and involve them in the decision-making processes of the school. Parents have not been invited in to the school to join in the decision-making processes of the school. One parent said, "The school decides what will happen and then we find out." Parents are not always made to feel welcomed by the school.
- ii. There is an insufficient amount of community engagement to support the academic and social development of students. Several community members reported that their offers of support had been ignored by the principal.
- iii. Although the school represents a diverse population, it does not celebrate cultural diversity. Students are disappointed in the reduction of celebrations for honor roll and perfect attendance.

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 leadership team has worked diligently to decrease the amount of violence and disruptive behavior in the building. Parents and community members stated that the school is safer now than it has been in the past.
- ii. The school has a dynamic Arts program and many students and parents are proud to participate in these opportunities.
- iii. The school building is nice looking, easily accessible, and secure.

4.2 Areas of Improvement for the School:

- i. Two-way communication between the school and outside entities, including parents and local community organizers is not highly effective.
- ii. Although disruptive behaviors are decreasing, there is still more that needs to improve.
- iii. Some students are not challenged.

4.3 Stakeholders' views regarding school improvement:

Stakeholders made the follow suggestions of how to improve the school:

- i. The school could enhance their communication with local organizations in an effort to bring more resources into the school. Community members at the meeting were willing to volunteer or develop partnerships with the school to support the academic and social development of the students.
- ii. Parents would appreciate a list of easily accessible resources to be posted on the school and/or district website - for example, how to access tutoring for their child or helpful websites that could assist students with homework problems.
- iii. Continue to work on decreasing negative behavior in and around the school building.
- iv. Encourage and motivate students and parents. Some suggested activities by parents included: invite well-known public speakers; cultural activities; community service projects; and opportunities for parents to volunteer.

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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 does his best to reach out to parents.*
- *We made requests to meet with the principal and we were ignored.*
- *I've not seen or met the principal yet.*

The following are typical comments made about the teachers:

- *Most of the teachers are committed to doing a good job and communicate with parents, but there are some weak teachers who do not serve the best interest of the students and should not be there.*
- *We have some teachers that try hard.*
- *Some honors classes expect more from us than other classes.*
- *Kids who want to learn transfer.*
- *Some teachers offer to stay after school to help me.*

The following are typical comments made about school culture:

- *There were violent incidents on the way to school (outside).*
- *A student was shot and some guns were found.*
- *There is gang affiliation and there are rival gangs in the same school.*
- *The school feeling is intimidating.*
- *This school does not have the resources that other schools have.*
- *The same kids keep disrupting class so the teachers spend their time trying to deal with them and then I don't get to learn.*
- *We have the tools in science but they are more like decorations because we don't get to use it.*

The following are typical comments made about communication:

- *Parents receive emails and phone calls.*
- *The community was informed about these meetings too late.*
- *Some teachers keep me informed but I usually have to initiate it.*

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

- *As a parent, I am able to share any concerns I have about my children's education with the administration.*
- *The school decides what will happen and then we find out.*
- *I don't always feel welcomed in the school.*
- *People (in the community) did not want the school here.*
- *Who wants 1200 kids coming into their neighborhood?*
- *We offered to volunteer in the after-school program and in the cafeteria and we were turned down.*
- *Some teachers don't keep the portal up to date. They wait until the end of the grading period and then rush to put in the grades.*

B. Community Survey Data

Please see the following pages for the School Community Survey report for Fels High School.

SCHOOL REPORT

School Community Survey
School Report



Prepared for
Fels HS

District
The School District of Philadelphia

Number of respondents (#)
7

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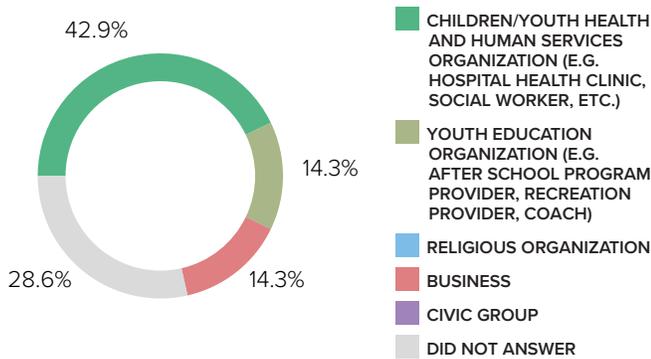
DEMOGRAPHICS

Who took the survey?

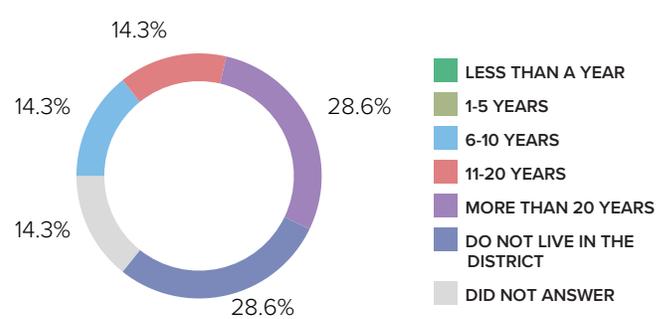
The following graphics display how those who took the survey responded to the demographic questions which were included. This page allows you to understand the attributes of the survey respondents.

7 total respondents

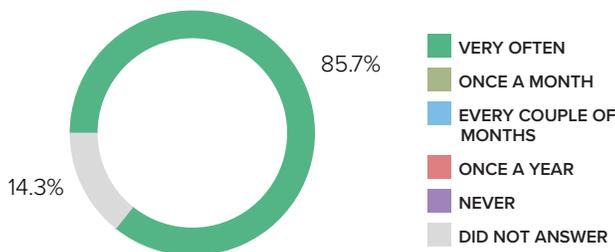
I am a member/employee of:



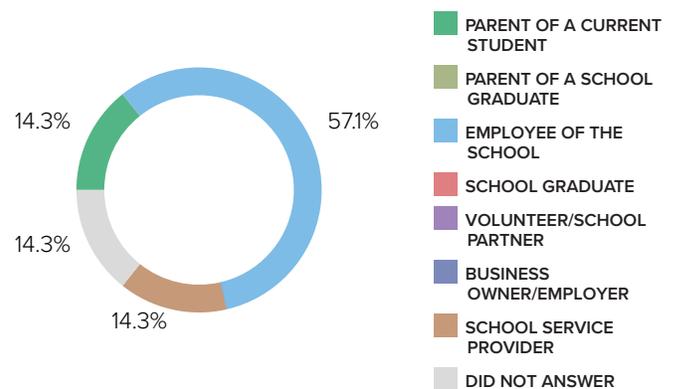
I have lived in the community:



I interact with the school:



My place in the community:

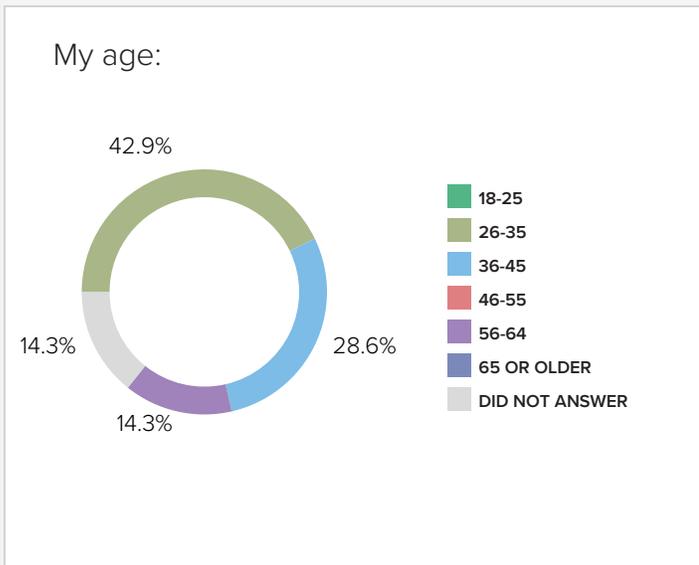


DEMOGRAPHICS

Who took the survey?

The following graphics display how those who took the survey responded to the demographic questions which were included. This page allows you to understand the attributes of the survey respondents.

7 total respondents



REPORT OVERVIEW

Your results at a glance



REPORT OVERALL AVERAGE SCORE



YOUR RESULTS

SL

School Environment, Culture and Context for Learning



HIGHEST SCORING ITEM



Q It is known in the community that students at the school feel safe and cared for, both physically and mentally.

FP

Family Understanding and Partnerships



HIGHEST SCORING ITEM



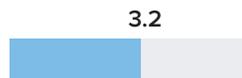
Q The school actively seeks and welcomes community members to act as partners, volunteers, or to support the...

CP

Community Understanding and Partnerships



HIGHEST SCORING ITEM



Q The school has established partnerships with public and other care-giving agencies that provide community...

L

Leadership



HIGHEST SCORING ITEM



Q The school is open and welcoming of community members and families of all backgrounds.

RESULTS

Item level results from your report



SL **School Environment, Culture and Context for Learning**

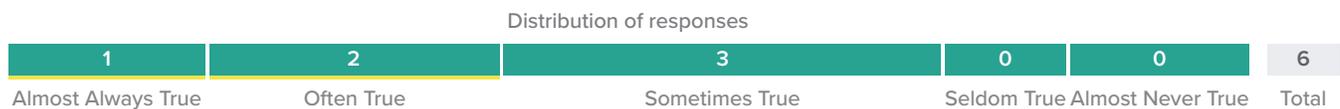
AVERAGE SCORE



Q School leaders ensure that the local community feels welcome and valued. **3.3**



Q It is known in the community that students at the school feel safe and cared for, both physically and mentally. **3.7**



Q It is known in the community that students at the school experience high levels of academic challenge and rigor. **3.2**



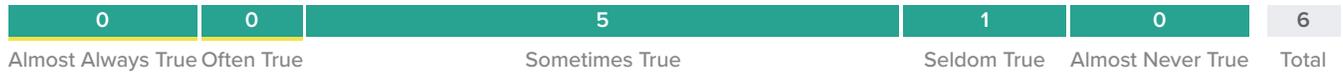
More School Environment, Culture and Context for Learning results on next page

SL School Environment, Culture and Context for Learning (cont)

Q It is known in the community that students who go to this school leave well equipped for the next steps in their learning and their careers.

2.8

Distribution of responses



RESULTS

Item level results from your report



FP Family Understanding and Partnerships

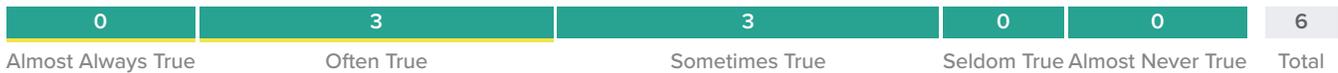
AVERAGE SCORE



Q The school has effective and consistent channels to communicate and keep the community informed.

3.5

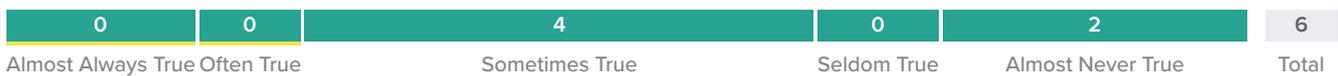
Distribution of responses



Q The voices of families and community members play a meaningful role in the decision-making processes of the school.

2.3

Distribution of responses



Q As a community member, the school treats me like an asset who can contribute positively and actively to the success of the school.

3.7

Distribution of responses



FP More Family Understanding and Partnerships results on next page

FP Family Understanding and Partnerships (cont)

Q The school actively seeks and welcomes community members to act as partners, volunteers, or to support the school in the achievement of its vision.

3.8

Distribution of responses



RESULTS

Item level results from your report



CP Community Understanding and Partnerships

AVERAGE SCORE



Q The school has established partnerships with public and other care-giving agencies that provide community members with access to services that address personal and family issues. Families in the community know how to get mental and physical health care through the school.

3.2

Distribution of responses



Q Students from the school actively participate and contribute through service programs, and are visible in the life of their communities.

2.2

Distribution of responses



Q The school has partnerships with ethnic and cultural organizations that contribute to the cultural and social life of the community.

2.0

Distribution of responses



CP More Community Understanding and Partnerships results on next page

CP Community Understanding and Partnerships (cont)

Q The school is often a place for the community to gather, celebrate, and routinely acts as a hub for local cultural, sports, and other events.

2.2

Distribution of responses



RESULTS

Item level results from your report



L Leadership

AVERAGE SCORE



Q The school is open and welcoming of community members and families of all backgrounds. 4.2

Distribution of responses



Q School leaders engage and communicate with families and the wider community and listen to their ideas and concerns. 3.4

Distribution of responses



Q The school leadership is present and visible in the community, engaging and building trust with families and the local community. 2.6

Distribution of responses



The following quotes were taken from the open-ended responses of the School Community Survey:

What are some of the strengths of the school and its relationship with the local community?

- Staff try to make contact with parents at least once a month and the school is open to communication and contact with families.
- I really feel like the school put the information out there and seeks for involvement.
- Its location, technology access. In truth the majority of our community did not want the school built in the neighborhood in the first place and do not actively participate in school events that often. This is because all sports must be played off campus, the community voted for no sporting events on school campus, so we must travel to North East High to watch our kids home games.

In what ways can the school improve its relationship with the local community?

- To host more community events and activities in the school building, like once a month.
- There seems to be a lack of motivation from the students and the community to want to get involved. Somehow, the school needs to figure out a way to make the community excited about being involved.
- I feel I receive encouraging invitations from the school yearly but show up and see only very few parent and community involvement. If the school district and community allowed for sporting events and stadiums/ball parks to be used it might create more of a local bond.

As a community member, how would you like to contribute or participate in the life of the school?

- Work with school to identify and support all the pregnant and parenting teens.
- I live out of district/not a community member.
- I would like to support after school activities and donate time to volunteer.

