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Client name	School District of Philadelphia
School name	Harding MS
Principal name	Mary Sanchez
Address	2000 WAKELING ST.
	Philadelphia, PA 19124
Review date(s)	October 20-21, 2016
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School Quality Review Report
School District of Philadelphia

Harding Middle School

October-November 2016

Contents

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

Harding Middle School is located at 2000 Wakeling St. in Philadelphia, PA in the Frankford neighborhood. It serves approximately 750 students in grades 6-8. The principal has been in post at the school since the start of the 2015-2016 school year. The leadership team consists of two Deans who assist with discipline in the building while the principal is the only administrator who can conduct formal teacher observations. There have been significant staff changes (approximately 25) with the arrival of the new principal.

The school population is made up of approximately 58% African-American, 27% Latino, 7% White, 2% Asian and 6% Other students. Of these, 26% are identified as Special Education, 11% English language learner and 100% Economically Disadvantaged.

In the 2014-2015 school year student attendance average was 92% and teacher attendance was 94%.

The school district has provided new curriculum this year in both math and Language Arts.

1.3   School demographic and performance data

Harding MS

	Academic Year (e.g. 2014-15) Previous Year	Academic Year (e.g. 2015-16) Most updated data before QR
Grades:	6-8	6-8
Number of students enrolled:	756	783
Percentage of general education students:	72%	73.9%
Percentage of special education students:	28%	26.1%
Percentage of English language learner students:	12%	11.2%
In school suspensions:		
Out of school suspensions:	246	
Percentage of students that are Title 1 eligible:	100%	100%
Latest attendance percentage:	92.3	
Ethnic make- up of the students (percentages):	African American 58.9 White 6.9 Asian 1.5 Latino 26.8 Pacific Islander 0 American Indian 0.1 Other 5.7	

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	34	36	32	21	34	60
Math	33	27	30	8	16	39.6
Science	10	11	12	15	37	67.8
Social Studies						
Others						

*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 has developed and communicated a clear strategic vision to the teachers and support staff members of the school.

ii. The leadership team has successfully implemented a school-wide behavior management and incentive program for students. The "Scholar Dollar" program is working to decrease suspensions and off-task behaviors, while increasing student effort and on-task behaviors.

iii. School leaders and teachers have created collaborative partnerships with external agencies and community groups to support students' academic and social development. Organizations such as City Year, Town Watch, Education Works, Philly Rising and Serve Philly all support the school in some capacity.

iv. School leaders have worked diligently to build trust in the building and shift the school culture in a positive direction. As a result, there is an increase in community partnerships, an increase in teachers supporting each other in lesson planning, and an increase in parent involvement in school activities and school sponsored events.

2.2   Factors that limit effective student learning:

i.   The quality of learning and teaching is not as effective as it could be because:
   o Meaningful learning objectives are not consistently shared with students; therefore, students are unclear as to what they are learning and how they will display proficiency in the targeted skill.
   o Students are not being effectively engaged in lessons and therefore are not motivated to learn
   o Teachers have not received sufficient professional development that is in alignment with the instructional priorities of the school, resulting in inconsistent implementation.

ii. The curriculum being delivered in classrooms does not provide the appropriate levels of challenge and scaffolding to ensure that students at all levels maximize their potential. Thus, many students are not meeting the minimum levels of proficiency on state standards and high achieving students are not advancing to higher levels.

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. Teachers facilitate a wide range of assessments, including: The STAR assessment, assessments provided with the newly-introduced curricula in Math and ELA, and teacher-developed common assessments to determine the academic levels of students.
ii. The newly implemented "Scholar Dollar" incentive program is working effectively to assist teachers in improving student behaviors. The program has served as a positive incentive for students and as a strategy to help decrease off-task and disruptive student behaviors.

Factors that limit effective student learning:

i. Teachers do not consistently use assessment data to inform their instruction and develop academic grouping for targeted instruction. As a result, lessons are not differentiated enough to support the needs of struggling learners or to challenge the needs of academically proficient learners. Most classes consisted of all students receiving the same level work. A student shared: "Teachers should change the way that they teach and the speed that they move through instruction."
ii. Teachers are not effectively sharing learning objectives and success criteria with students. As a result, students are not clear as to what they are learning and how they will display proficiency in the targeted skill.
iii. Although lessons are aligned with state standards, the classroom instruction does not include activities that greatly engage students. For example, teachers are not consistently delivering lessons that address students with different learning styles. As a result, too many students are not actively engaged in the classroom instruction.
iv. Students do not receive effective feedback on the quality of their work or how to improve academically. Most students receive solely numerical grades and few students have met with teachers to set goals for academic improvement.

3.2   Domain 2: Curriculum & Assessment

Curriculum & Assessment requires support in targeted areas.

Factors that support effective student learning:

i.   The newly implemented curricula in Math and ELA are both directly aligned to state standards. These new curricula were introduced by the district in an attempt to raise the level of rigor in classroom instruction.

ii. The newly implemented curricula are accompanied by periodic common assessments that are designed to prepare students for the PSSA exams.

iii. The extended day activities, supported by City Year and Serve Philly, are working to reinforce learning that takes place during the day and provide students with supplementary academic and social support.

Factors that limit effective student learning:

i.   Several students in the focus group shared that they feel they are not being prepared for high school and college. Six out of ten students in the focus group shared that they were not challenged by the work in their classes.

ii. Teachers are just becoming familiar with the new curricula and, as a result, they have not yet implemented projects or group activities that would challenge their students' thinking and enhance their critical thinking skills.

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 leader has clearly communicated a clear strategic vison for this school year, which is small group targeted instruction, based on students' independent academic levels.

ii. The principal has successfully implemented a school-wide discipline plan and student incentive plan that is working to decrease off-task and disruptive student behaviors. Teachers and students all spoke to the ongoing success of the "Scholar Dollar" program.

iii. The school leader effectively manages resources and people in the building in order to meet the needs of the students throughout the building and meet the needs of the strategic plan.

iv. The principal and members of the attendance team have implemented measures that are working to increase the overall student attendance percentage in the building. The attendance last year was 87% and the school has averaged above 90% since the start of school this year.

v. Teachers have the opportunity to develop leadership skills in a culture of distributive leadership. The newly appointed deans and the school-based teacher leader (SBTL) are examples of this initiative.

vi. The school leader has worked diligently to build trust and shift the school culture in a positive direction. As a result, there is an increase in teachers supporting each other in lesson planning, and an increase in parent involvement in school activities and school sponsored events.

Factors that limit effective student learning:

i. The school leader does not have enough opportunities to observe instruction and provide teachers with sufficient feedback to move their practice and improve instruction. This process is inhibited because the principal is the only administrative staff member licensed to formally observe classrooms and provide feedback to teachers, thus teachers are not being sufficiently held accountable for improvement of their instruction.

ii. School leaders are not consistently collecting and analyzing data, therefore data is not efficiently used to inform instructional decisions in the school. A data meeting schedule has been developed but is not being effectively facilitated or monitored.

iii. Teachers are not provided with sufficient professional development to improve their practice. Professional development days have been mandated by the district, but the content of these are not in direct alignment with the strategic vision of the school.

3.4   Domain 4: The Culture of Learning

The Culture of Learning requires support in targeted areas

Factors that support effective student learning:
i.   The school leader and staff members have worked to provide students with an environment that is safe, respectful, and conducive to learning.
ii. Staff members are collegial and professional and serve as support systems for each other. Students and families shared that teachers and administration all work to develop positive relationships within the building.

Factors that limit effective student learning:
i.   Several students shared that their schoolwork is not consistently challenging. When asked in a student focus group, 7 out of 9 students stated that their work was "too easy".
ii. Not all staff members are modeling high expectations for students. Teachers are often late and absent for work, which prohibits students from receiving the consistency in instruction that they deserve.

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 leaders and teachers have created collaborative partnerships with external agencies and community groups to support students' academic and social development. Organizations such as City Year, Town Watch, Education Works, Philly Rising and Serve Philly all support the school in some capacity.

ii. Staff members at the school make multiple attempts to reach out to families using the traditional methods of phone calls, rob-calls and sending flyers home.

iii. Teachers routinely provide information to parents concerning the academic progress of their students. These methods include progress reports, report cards and messaging through Class Dojo.

Factors that limit effective student learning:

i.   Parents and families have not been invited to participate in the decision-making process for the school. Parents, in both focus groups, stated that they were eager to support the school in a larger way but have not been invited to do so. A parent stated: "I would love to come partner with the school and work with the school but there are no opportunities."

ii. The school is not creating opportunities to celebrate cultural diversity. A student shared: "In my class, we have a multi-cultural curriculum" but could not speak to evidence of this, nor could they speak to any multi-cultural celebrations in the school, where diversity was acknowledged.

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 three 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 community members and families shared that Principal Sanchez has been welcoming. One local church pastor shared that she has been "friendly" and that "the lines of communication are now being opened."

ii.   There are several community partnerships being developed and they are all willing to support the academic and social development of the Harding students.

4.2   Areas of Improvement for the School:

i.   Parents and community stakeholders all shared that the school is suffering from having had a negative reputation for many years. For example, adults who had graduated from the school shared that they were looked down upon when they entered high school because they had attended Harding MS.

ii.   The neighborhood surrounding the school is very dangerous, and acts of violence and theft take place frequently. Parents mentioned that they would allow their students to stay after-school for extra academic support if there was a bus that could bring them home because it was "too dangerous to walk home after school".

4.3   Stakeholders' views regarding school improvement:

i.   Stakeholders shared that the school could benefit by engaging in an active public relations campaign to change the negative reputation of the school. Local community members mentioned that they would support a school fair/barbecue on the weekend or after-school, where they could meet and greet neighbors and invite students and families to attend.

Appendices

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:
- *"Principal Sanchez has been welcoming.*
- *She has been "friendly"*
- *The lines of communication are now being opened.*

The following are typical comments made about the teachers and their support of the after school program:
- *Teachers support students in general in all aspects.*
- *Students are provided a place to go and learn; they are not roaming the streets*

The following are typical comments made about school culture:
- *The school tries hard with few resources.*
- *There are several community partnerships being developed and we are all willing to support the academic and social development of the Harding students.*
- *The school is suffering from having had a negative reputation for many years.*
- *Adults who had graduated from the school shared that they were looked down upon when they entered high school because they had attended Harding MS*

The following are typical comments made about communication:
- *We learn about school events, either from flyers put in mailbox or from students (however, Lexi (Education Works rep) was not aware of the Focus Group#2 meeting and therefore didn't attend)*
- *Communication is good - only relating to students, student referrals or meeting with parents that involves Education Work*

What does the school need to do to improve?
- *More staff; more support in class (e.g., small group learning in class; small classes; textbooks, supplies, resources so teachers can do their job)*
- *Make it a community school so students/families can come to school for needs (e.g., vision, issues that handicap student learning)*
- *Stakeholders shared that the school must engage in an active public relations campaign to change the negative reputation of the school. Local community members mentioned that they would support a school fair/barbecue on the weekend or after-school, where they could meet and greet neighbors and invite students and families to attend.*

B. Community Survey Data

The were no survey responses for Harding Middle School.

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