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School name	Heston ES
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Review date(s)	October 18-19, 2016
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School Quality Review Report School District of Philadelphia

Heston Elementary 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

Edward Heston School is located in the Overbrook section of West Philadelphia. It is the only remaining public school in the neighborhood due to the increase of charter schools now available in the area. The school serves approximately 530 students in grades K-8. Due to local school closings, the enrollment at Heston has increased by over 50 students in the last few years. As a result of this influx, the first grade classes are overcrowded with approximately 37 students in each, which is over the state maximum of 30 students. The student population is constantly changing due to a high level of transience in the local community.

The principal is in her fourth year of leadership at Heston and there is no assistant principal to share leadership responsibilities. The physical condition of the building reflects a lack of maintenance and cleanliness.

The district has recently adopted new reading and math programs. Teachers just recently received training on the new materials.

1.3   School demographic and performance data

Heston ES

	Academic Year (e.g. 2014-15) Previous Year	Academic Year (e.g. 2015-16) Most updated data before QR
Grades:	K-8	K-8
Number of students enrolled:	481	475
Percentage of general education students:	90%	89.3%
Percentage of special education students:	10%	10.7%
Percentage of English language learner students:		0
In school suspensions:		
Out of school suspensions:	137	
Percentage of students that are Title 1 eligible:	100%	100%
Latest attendance percentage:	93.3	

Ethnic make- up of the students (percentages):	African American	94.1
	White	0.6
	Asian	0
	Latino	1.1
	Pacific Islander	0
	American Indian	0.4
	Other	3.8

State Test Results - Percentage of students at or above proficient (grade 3-8)

Subject Area	School 2012	School 2013	School 2014	School 2015	District 2015	State 2015
English Language Arts	36	27	25	18	32	60
Math	39	33	34	4	17	39.6
Science	20	27	21	26	37	67.7
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.   Teachers provide a network of professional support for each other, through which they share instructional strategies and materials, and provide moral support for one another, resulting in a culture of comradery among the teachers.

ii. The principal recognized some of the barriers to focusing on instruction were time spent on student discipline incidents and addressing social and emotional needs of students. In response to that need, she allocated resources to hire a full-time climate manager and school counselor this school year. Although it is too early to measure the full impact, the principal now has more time to dedicate to instructional leadership.

iii. Processes and procedures are in place for efficient hallway transitions and end-of-day dismissal.

iv. An agenda, including the lesson objective and the "in order to" (IOT), is clearly posted for math and reading classes. Instruction is aligned to the listed lesson objectives.

v.   Although there is low student participation, the after-school programs offer students homework support and additional learning opportunities, such as Girls Inc. and the Robotics program.

2.2   Factors that limit effective student learning:

i.   A vision of how to improve the outcomes for all students is not clearly understood by most stakeholders. They understand the need to improve scores on the state assessments, but not how the school will achieve this and what their specific roles are in moving the school forward.

ii. Data is not used as effectively as it could be, and, as a result:
     o   Lessons are not sufficiently differentiated to ensure that all students are being challenged at the appropriate levels and that instruction matches the needs of students.
     o   Most lessons are whole group and teacher centered rather than skill based small groups.
     o   Math lessons are heavily workbook driven rather than focused on students' needs.

iii. The principal follows the required district and state lesson observation protocols. However, teachers do not feel well supported in their professional growth based on the feedback they receive and the quality of some of the professional development provided to them.

iv. Family and community engagement is very low. Structures are not established to encourage or facilitate the parent voice in the decision-making process. Parents who could advocate for and work in collaboration with school leaders and staff to bridge the gap between the school and the community have not been strategically mobilized.

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.   Learning objectives are clearly posted for reading and math in most classes.
ii. Lesson objectives are aligned to the district and state standards.
iii. Most teachers have clearly established behavior management expectations, processes, and procedures. As a result, most lessons and hallway transitions are manageable.
iv. Some classrooms are well organized and post relevant anchor charts to support student learning.
v.   In lessons where students are actively engaged in the learning, there are fewer disruptions.

Factors that limit effective student learning:

i.   Teachers collect a wide range of data that could be used to inform instruction; however, some teachers struggle with data analysis and how to most effectively use the information. As a result, data is not used as effectively as it could be to differentiate instruction, challenge students at the appropriate levels, or to strategically group students for instruction.
ii. Most instruction is whole group and teacher led, which limits students' opportunities to work collaboratively, engage in a range of learning styles, develop critical thinking and problem solving skills, and become independent learners.
iii. Most questions posed to students are at a low cognitive level and do not foster discussion or promote student thinking.
iv. Students receive numerical grades on their work. Students receive little specific feedback of what they are doing well and how to improve the work. Exemplars are not frequently used to serve as models of high quality work. As a result, students do not have a clear understanding of what excellence looks like or how to improve their own work.
v.   Despite best efforts of the teachers to manage mainstream student behaviors, teachers do not have the capacity or support to address the needs of the high needs students who sometimes create a great deal of distractions during instruction.

3.2 Domain 2: Curriculum & Assessment

Curriculum & Assessment requires support in targeted areas

Factors that support effective student learning:

i. Teachers use the district-provided scope and sequence to ensure the curriculum is aligned to state and district standards.
ii. The curriculum provides students with regular access to art and physical education so they can broaden their experience beyond the core subjects.
iii. Benchmark assessments that are aligned to the PSSA are given to students on quarterly basis. Several other assessments are administered in between the benchmarks, which provide teachers with information about where students need further support.
iv. Homework is aligned to the lessons being taught during the week. There are a few afterschool programs that extend and/or enhance student learning such as Robotics and Girls Inc.

Factors that limit effective student learning:

i. The curriculum is not delivered with sufficient rigor to challenge and interest students at all levels of learning to ensure all students are career and college ready.
ii. The school collects a wide range of data from benchmarks and other assessments. Often, the administration of the multiple assessments is time consuming and infringes upon instructional time. Some teachers do not fully understand how to analyze the data and then use it to inform instruction.
iii. Students do not have frequent opportunities to work in depth on projects and problems so that they develop a wide range of skills, understand complex concepts, and solve difficult problems.

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 follows the lesson observation requirements established by the district and state.
ii. The principal has implemented processes and procedures for transitions in hallways. As a result, dismissal time inside the school is orderly.
iii. The principal allocated funds this year to hire a climate manager and full time school counselor. By doing so the principal now has more time available to focus on instruction.
iv. The school is making some efforts to raise student attendance and reduce tardiness.

Factors that limit effective student learning:

i.   A clear strategic vision has not been effectively communicated to stakeholders. As a result, most do not know how school leaders and staff will raise student achievement and the role they play in supporting school improvement.
ii. Teachers receive feedback about their lesson observations, primarily electronically. This is often perceived as impersonal and not as effective as personal conversations or other methods of coaching, in which positive comments can be highlighted as well as areas for growth. Student work is not regularly analyzed as part of the observation and feedback process. Professional development is district-driven with few opportunities for the school to select training that is most relevant to their needs.
iii. The principal collects a wide range of data to assess the impact of learning and teaching on student outcomes. However, productive data conversations with teachers about individuals, groups of students and strategies for how to raise their level of achievement are inconsistent. As a result, only some teachers have a clear understanding of how to support students based on the data.
iv. Teachers serve on school committees; however, there is no plan or effort to intentionally develop teacher leaders and encourage staff to develop leadership skills.
v.   The principal depends on the district to provide a pool of potential teacher candidates rather than actively recruiting new teachers. There is not a plan in place to retain and promote high quality staff.

3.4   Domain 4: The Culture of Learning

The Culture of Learning requires support in targeted areas

Factors that support effective student learning:

i.   Some staff members work diligently to promote and foster positive relationships with members of the school community.
ii. Some school staff members model the types of positive behaviors they expect from students and adults. Where staff model expected behaviors (such as speaking in appropriate voice volume/tone and respectful interactions), students generally respond appropriately.
iii. Most students feel safe at school.

Factors that limit effective student learning:

i.   Overall the school building presents a sense of disorganization and lack of proper care and maintenance. Walls are scuffed and in need of painting. Ceiling tiles are falling; however, this is in the process of being repaired. Most classrooms have walls that are urgently in need of cleaning and fresh paint. The stage is used as an open storage area, revealing an unorganized clutter of materials. Auditorium seats and curtains are old and very dirty. Hallways have outdated flyers and little student work to showcase their work. As a result, the physical environment does not promote school pride or enhance learning.

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 sends home the required report cards to inform parents of their children's progress. Some teachers do a good job keeping parents informed.
ii. The recently hired school counselor and climate manager see improving parent and community engagement as goals they hope to achieve.
iii. The school has some collaborative partnerships with external agencies to support academic and social development of students. Examples of these partnerships include, Gear Up, Girls Inc., Project Peace, and Big Brothers & Big Sisters.
iv. The school recognizes and celebrates student achievement, progress, and attendance.

Factors that limit effective student learning:

i. School leaders and staff use robo-calls and flyers to inform parents of upcoming events and other relevant information. However, two-way communication between parents and the school is not as well developed, limiting the ability to build collaborative relationships and engaging parents as partners in their children's school life.
ii. Parents have very little role in the decision-making process. There is no Home and School Association, although there are eager and capable parents who could take on that leadership responsibility if directly approached and engaged by the principal or staff.
iii. Families and community members have not been deliberately sought after to engage in opportunities to volunteer, mentor or support the learning and development of students.

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.   Most students feel safe at school because they know everyone must have clearances to enter the school.
ii.   Many parents are connected to the school because they or family members attended the school. Parents like having a neighborhood school for their children rather than sending their children to other areas.
iii.   Some parents are eager to form a parent group but not sure how to do so.
iv.   Some parents receive communication from individual teachers. The school informs parents about important information through robo-calls, letters, and flyers.
v.   The afterschool program is more welcoming than the regular school office.

4.2   Areas of Improvement for the School:

i.   Parents are not always sure how to help their children with homework and find it difficult to get support.
ii.   All stakeholders recognize the low parent engagement at school events and minimal responses to communication sent home by some teachers.
iii.   The building is neglected and in need of significant repair. The bathrooms are often a mess or have plumbing problems. Other areas of the school need maintenance or repair, such as the ceiling and light fixtures, and the walls are dirty, dingy and scuffed.
iv.   Parents have not been asked to contribute to the school. There is no Home and School Organization to involve parents or provide parents with a platform to voice concerns or have a part in decision making in the school.
v.   Students who excel are not placed into the Gifted program or provided enrichment activities.
vi.   Some stakeholders do not feel the school demonstrates compassion for some students.
vii.   Parents are not kept well informed about student academic process, but are quickly notified about negative behavior.

4.3   Stakeholders' views regarding school improvement:

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

i.   Parents wish it was easier to contact the principal, who they wish would be more visible in and around the school.

ii. Parents would like the school to look more closely at how the classrooms are allocated (for example, K-2, 3-5 and 6-8) so that the students feel they are moving-up through the school.

iii. Parents would like more opportunities for parent education workshops so they can help their children with homework.

iv. The school could sponsor activities with students such as mother/daughter breakfast to encourage parents to attend.

v. Create a Home and School Organization with a core group as a start to improve parent engagement with the school and contribute to the decision-making process.

vi. The school should be completely overhauled, physically.

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:
- *Students get a good education here.*
- *We don't feel supported.*
- *Decisions are made unilaterally.*
- *She visits our classes sometimes.*

The following are typical comments made about the teachers:
- *My teacher helps me learn.*
- *My teacher motivates me to do better. He pushes me forward to do better.*
- *My teachers is absent a lot.*
- *The staff works collaboratively to support each other.*

The following are typical comments made about school culture:
- *I feel like it is family oriented. My whole family went here.*
- *PBIS works for some students.*
- *Students deserve a decent place to come to learn.*
- *My son shuts down in here. The school has not been here for my son.*

The following are typical comments made about communication:
- *I don't know why my child is failing.*
- *I get robo-calls; some teachers send notes home.*

The following are typical comments made about engaging families and community members:
- *I don't want my child to be a statistic. I will do whatever it takes to make sure he gets what he needs to survive.*
- *Everyone should have an investment.*

B. Community Survey Data

The were no survey responses for Heston Elementary School.

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