



Client name	School District of Philadelphia
School name	Overbrook HS
Principal name	Yvette Jackson
Address	5898 LANCASTER AVE. Philadelphia, PA 19131
Review date(s)	October 27-28, 2016
Lead reviewer	Hayden Lyons
Team reviewer(s)	Roberta Walker
Canvassing Lead	Mei Mei Kwong

School Quality Review Report School District of Philadelphia

Overbrook HS

October-November 2016

Contents

1	The School Context	2
1.1	Introduction	2
1.2	Background information about the School	2
1.3	School demographic and performance data	3
2	SQR Main Findings	4
2.1	Factors that support effective student learning:	4
2.2	Factors that limit effective student learning:	4
3	Individual Domains	5
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
4	Community Engagement and Feedback Focus	10
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:	11
	Appendices	12
A.	Community Stakeholders' Input	13
B.	Community Survey Data	14

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

Overbrook High School is a comprehensive high school in Network Neighborhood 2, within the Philadelphia School District. It serves approximately 580 students in Grades 9-12. The student population is 96.7% African-American, with 25.6% of the students being identified as having a disability.

The school has had much instability within the last few years, with the current principal being the third in three years. The principal, teachers, students and community members all vehemently express that the school has been transformed from chaos to calm under the current leadership. Students describe the two years prior to this principal as the “Wild, Wild West” with fights occurring daily, which was symptomatic of a significantly unsafe environment. They indicate that now they have a school, and are ready to learn.

Transforming the chaos and unsafe nature of the building to establish a positive climate has been the focus of the current principal in her first year, which she has quite successfully achieved. The school has a calm feel to it. Transitions are relatively smooth; students are in classrooms and ready to learn; and a culture for learning is being established. The current challenge for the principal, in her second year, is to enhance the learning experience for students. Assessment data from STAR assessments (computerized adaptive assessments in reading and math) reveal that many students entering the school perform at third through sixth grade levels. They therefore enter the school with much knowledge and skill deficit, and the quality of instruction, and system of interventions and monitoring are not yet developed to accelerate student achievement to the extent needed. Many students progress through the school and maintain their deficits.

1.3 School demographic and performance data

Overbrook 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:	774	646
Percentage of general education students:	76%	76%
Percentage of special education students:	24%	24%
Percentage of English language learner students:		1.1%
In school suspensions:		
Out of school suspensions:	306	
Percentage of students that are Title 1 eligible:	100%	100%
Latest attendance percentage:	81.6	
Ethnic make-up of the students (percentages):	African American	96.7
	White	0
	Asian	0.2
	Latino	1.5
	Pacific Islander	0
	American Indian	0
	Other	1.5

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	17				42	60
Math	11				26	39.6
Science	0				20	67.8
Social Studies						
Others						
Algebra I		11	14	10	38	
Literature		33	27	24	49	
Biology		2	5	6	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 has done a tremendous job of dramatically improving the climate and culture within the building. All constituents of the school acknowledge and attribute this transformation to the skillful leadership of the principal.
- ii. A system of tiered leadership is being developed by the principal that creates opportunities for middle leaders to adopt shared responsibility for improving the school.
- iii. The culture for learning has significantly improved, as evidenced by reduced absenteeism and suspensions, smoother and much calmer hallway transitions, and students' readiness for learning. Students, parents, teachers, and community members all report this as a marked improvement at the school.
- iv. School leadership has successfully established meaningful partnerships with diverse community entities. These partnerships effectively extend students' learning experiences beyond the classroom and provide various opportunities for college and career exploration.

2.2 Factors that limit effective student learning:

- i. Teaching and learning is not yet of a sufficiently high quality to accelerate student learning to the extent needed for their academic success.
- ii. Professional development initiatives, within the constraints of 45 minutes per week, have not resulted in changes in teacher practice, nor in improved learning experiences for students.
- iii. Teachers' use of questioning, the design of differentiated activities, the use of cognitively demanding tasks that present productive struggle for students, and infusion of scaffolds to support student learning are not yet developed. Students are therefore not developing the critical thinking skills and depth of understanding of concepts that would allow them to overcome many of their knowledge deficits.
- iv. The level of planning and preparation for instruction is not adequately based on data and individual needs of students. This hinders the progress of some students.
- v. The learning experience of students within many classrooms is largely solitary. Students do not adequately benefit from opportunities for collaborative work that would allow for:
 - o peer tutoring and learning from peers
 - o consensus building and justification of ideas as students come to agreement on the correctness of answers, and
 - o the development of social skills that would accrue from group dynamics

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 have administered STAR assessments to determine students' needs in reading and mathematics. The data collected from these assessments are being utilized to develop instructional groups to provide targeted interventions for students.
- ii. Teachers manage students' behavior appropriately. The interactions during classes between adults and students and among students are positive.

Factors that limit effective student learning:

- i. Learning objectives are not always aligned to the rigor and content 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. Additionally, the objectives are not revisited during and at the end of lessons.
- ii. Teachers do not yet effectively use a variety of assessments to provide lessons that accommodate the different needs of students. Planning for differentiation was not observed in lesson plans, nor observed in classrooms. Students, regardless of their levels of understanding, are exposed to the same instruction, routines, and tasks.
- iii. Students do not yet benefit from collaborative learning. All lessons observed required students to work alone on independent activities. This situation does not allow students to adequately learn from each other or to cultivate the dispositions for cooperation and collaboration needed for success at higher grades and college.
- iv. The opportunities for students to 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.
- v. Planned learning experiences do not yet expose students to the levels of questioning and cognitively demanding tasks that would allow them to develop the critical thinking and problem-solving skills that would prepare them for success in college and careers. The level of questioning observed in most classrooms is low level and the tasks do not engage students in complex thinking and problem solving.

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 curriculum, which is aligned to the PA Core. In addition to core academic subjects, students have opportunities within the school day to engage in the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC), Job Corps, Promise Corps, art, physical education, Spanish, and woodwork.
- ii. Many community partners provide extended-day activities that extend learning beyond the classroom. Examples of programs offered include: Education Works, Upward Bound Mathematics, Upward Bound Science, Upward Bound Classic, and Talent Search. These programs effectively supplement students' academic learning and provide opportunities for college and career exploration.

Factors that limit effective student learning:

- i. Although the school administered STAR diagnostic assessments, and utilizes the district benchmark assessments, teachers do not yet employ periodic common assessments to determine how students are progressing through the curriculum. The level of data utilization to drive instruction is not yet at a level to meet the needs of all students. The principal recognizes this need and is working to support teachers.
- ii. Opportunities for students to work collaboratively on class assignments and projects, solve complex problems, and critically think about and discuss issues are not regular features of the school. Students are mainly engaged in basic, independent learning tasks.
- iii. Teachers are not yet comfortable with the new curriculum and more training is needed to help them employ the curricular resources more effectively to meet the needs of students.
- iv. The school does not have a policy on homework, which is assigned sporadically. Additionally, although the school provides numerous after school activities, only a small percentage of students participate in those opportunities. As a result, extension of learning opportunities beyond the classroom is not as effective as it can be.

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 leaders of the school share a vision of academic and social success for students, and are working towards achieving that goal. The academic and keystone coaches, as well as the assistant principal, work to support student academic success. The climate managers support the climate and students' social success. The principal effectively provides effective oversight and leadership for all initiatives.
- ii. The principal and her 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.
- iii. The school runs smoothly and the climate is conducive to learning. Students are in classes and ready to learn. This has been established through the policies and practices of the principal and her team within the last school year.
- iv. There has been great improvement in attendance and a reduction in truancy and tardiness. Students in focus groups declare that the school is now a place they want to be, where the climate is safer and more welcoming.

Factors that limit effective student learning:

- i. The climate has vastly improved, but there isn't a clearly articulated strategic plan to improve other aspects of the school, especially the instructional capacity of teachers. This is a requirement if the school is to progress beyond the improvements it has thus far secured.
- ii. There is need for the development of a system for holding teachers accountable for the academic achievement of students in their care. Many teachers highlight the deficits of students, but do not ensure that students progress beyond their knowledge and skills deficits.
- iii. Rigorous monitoring of learning and teaching is not yet established. Review of planning has not yet resulted in teachers' generation of plans for learning that accommodate the learning needs of students, nor have lesson observations resulted in improved learning experiences for students. Routine analysis of student work is not yet established. The principal recognizes these as next steps in the improvement initiative.
- iv. School leaders do not yet consistently engage teachers in setting performance goals, or monitor their progress towards meeting those goals. Professional development has also not yielded changes in teacher practices to the extent needed.

3.4 Domain 4: The Culture of Learning

The Culture of Learning is established

Factors that support effective student learning:

- i. All constituents of the school acknowledge and laud the principal and her leadership team for having transformed the school environment. Parents, teachers, and students explain that prior to this principal, the school was unsafe and chaotic, but now it is a place that is welcoming, safe and a suitable for learning.
- ii. Students and parents alike feel generally respected by school leaders and staff, who maintain positive relationships with them. Students in focus groups indicate that there are multiple people in the building to whom they can go in confidence if they have a problem.
- iii. Interactions between adults are collegial and those between adults and students are mutually respectful. This allows classrooms to operate calmly and in support of student learning. Students feel the leadership team cares for and listens to them and they particularly like town hall meetings conducted by the principal.
- iv. Members of the school community, school alumni, and parents feel equally respected and welcomed at the school. They all agree that the new and improved school environment is mutually supportive; members of the school community treat each other with respect, equity and dignity; and communication is much more open and effective.
- v. School leaders make concerted attempts to unite and celebrate the students and teachers. A major event in this regard is the upcoming "Turkey Bowl" wherein teachers and students compete against one another as a homecoming activity.

Factors that limit effective student learning:

- i. Aspects of the culture for learning related to academic challenge for students need improvement. Diagnostic testing reveals that many students come to the school with huge gaps in knowledge and skill acquisition, 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.
- ii. Students are now in classes rather than lingering in the halls; however, the school currently lacks a comprehensive discipline system based on positive behavior elements. A tiered system for managing behavior has not yet been developed, and the result is that students are referred to the office for various reasons, including those which teachers can manage within the classroom.
- iii. The school has not created opportunities for students to contribute 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. Currently there is no student government or other organized structure for students to engage in the school improvement process and they remain an untapped resource for improving the school.

3.5 Domain 5: Family and Community Engagement

Family and Community Engagement requires support in targeted areas

Factors that support effective student learning:

- i. School leaders and some teachers make concerted efforts to regularly communicate with parents to build collaborative relationships and to engage them as partners. However, this has not yet resulted in the level of parental engagement the school needs.
- ii. The school makes student academic information available on the parent portal for review by parents. Additionally, parents in a focus group remarked that teachers communicate with them about the social and academic progress of their children.
- iii. 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 University of Pennsylvania's Upward Bound programs in math and science and its Talent Search program; Education Works; West Chester University; Overbrook Alumni; Promise Corps; Women of Tomorrow; Gear Up; West Philadelphia Community Change Coalition; and Teen Outreach Program.

Factors that limit effective student learning:

- i. The school has not yet developed a system for involving parents in its day-to-day operations. There is no organized system for parent volunteers to support the school, nor a system for the expression of parental voice and advocacy for their children.
- ii. Although the school has created many partnerships with community entities who support various aspects of student experiences, only a small percentage of the student body participate in these programs. This remains a challenge for the school.

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 community (students, parents, teachers, community partners, and the State academic liaison) recognize the drastic transformation of the school. With unison and resounding affirmation, they all describe the transformation as night to day. They describe the years before this principal as chaotic and unsafe, akin to the wild, wild West. They describe the school as being now a place in which students can learn. They attribute this transformation to the skillful leadership of the principal.
- ii. The various partnerships that support students academically and socially are seen as valuable components of the school that extend learning for students, prepare them for college and careers, and aid their social development.
- iii. The two climate managers have worked well to support the climate of the school and build relationships with students.
- iv. Students are generally respected and feel supported by adults.
- v. All stakeholders have great respect and admiration for the principal, who is regarded as having the ability to improve the school further.

4.2 Areas of Improvement for the School:

- i. Communication with parents is not ideal. Parents who typically visit the school regularly are kept informed, but those who don't are not always kept informed.
- 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 school needs more counselors to service the student body. The one counselor is overwhelmed and cannot effectively meet the needs of all students.
- iv. The lack of resources hinders students' learning and frustrates teachers. These include: approved programs and social workers to deal with students that have severe socio-economic or mental health issues, and counselors to support students in applying and preparing for college and careers.
- v. Students and parents feel that the level of instruction is not adequately challenging for students and thereby does not prepare them for college.
- vi. The school needs to find ways to engage and involve more parents in its development.
- vii. Students do not receive consistent and constructive feedback from most teachers so that they can better prepare for tests and understand how they can improve in their work.
- viii. Some students do not feel they have a voice in the school and that only a select group are allowed to contribute to any decisions that represent the student body.

4.3 Stakeholders' views regarding school improvement:

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

- i. The lack of resources noted above constrains the improvement of the school.
- ii. The principal has done a tremendous job of transforming the school. She needs more resources to continue the improvement she began.
- iii. Many of the resources within the alumni remain untapped. The school needs to develop systems to access those resources.
- iv. The school has had an illustrious history and a great legacy. Over the recent years it has developed a negative perception in the community. The reality of the school is, however, changing and this needs to be communicated to the wider community to counteract the negative perception and regain its past grandeur.
- v. Improvement must not include closure, or transforming the school into a charter school. It must include more support to the current administration.
- vi. Students would like classes to be differentiated so that students at all levels are able to learn at the pace that is most appropriate for them.

Appendices

A.	Community Stakeholders' Input	13
B.	Community Survey Data	14

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 awesome – she has changed the school.*
- *We love Ms. Jackson. She gives us tough love and we need it.*
- *The principal talks to us and she respects us. She wants the best for us.*
- *The principal comes to our football games.*

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*

The following are typical comments made about school culture:

- *Rules are enforced*
- *Students feel safe*
- *There is order in the school*
- *Some students are given guidance in preparing them for college and visit colleges, both in state and out of state*
- *Only some students have a voice in what happens.... the top 10%.*

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*
- *Parents and students are not kept well informed of events and other important information*

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

- *There is engagement with the community - Students do community projects*
- *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 stands ready to support the improvement of the school.*

B. Community Survey Data

There were no survey responses for Overbrook High School.

