



THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF
PHILADELPHIA

Feedback and Findings Meeting

James J. Sullivan School

December 10, 2019



Agenda

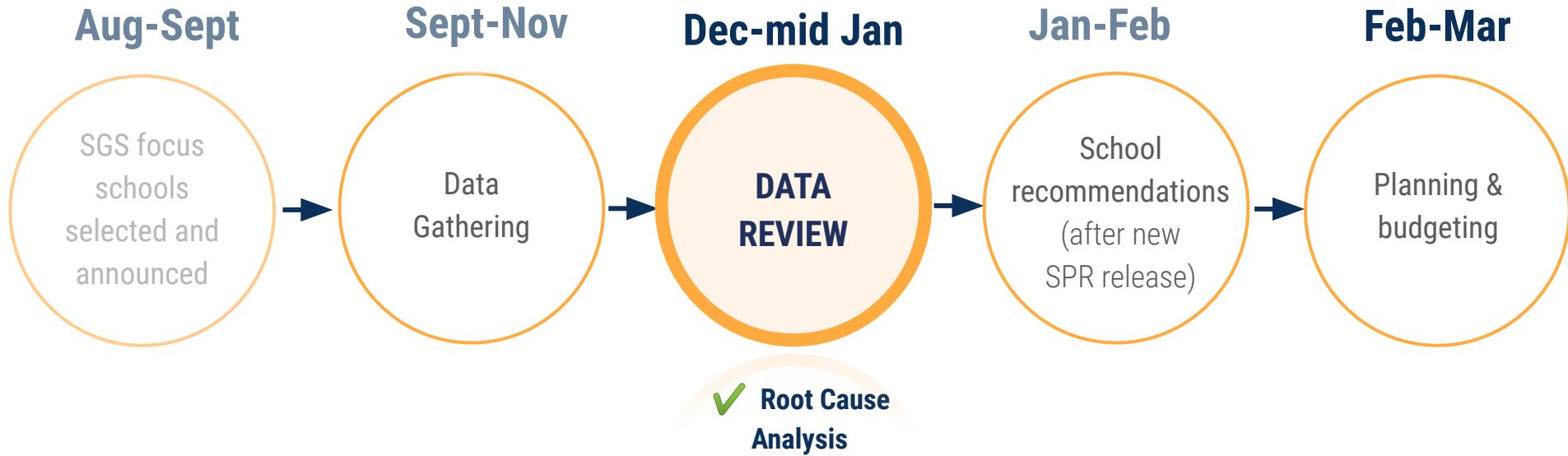
- Why We're Here
- Where We Are in the Process
- Feedback and Findings
- Next Steps
- Questions

Vision: All children have a great public school close to home

- Some schools need more support so that children can have the learning opportunities they deserve
- **Sullivan** has been identified for additional funding to support the school in meeting its goals
- We gathered your feedback on school strengths, challenges, and ways to improve **Sullivan**



Where are we in the process?



What data did we gather?

■ Parent/Family Feedback:

- **17** focus group participants from two focus groups
- **38** one-on-one family interviews that occurred during Academic Parent Teacher Team Night and report card conferences
- Feedback was recorded, transcribed and then coded to find trends
- **151** pages of interview transcripts

What data did we gather?

- School Quality Review (SQR):
 - 2 day whole school review
 - Visited every classroom for average of 15 minutes
 - Teacher and student interviews
 - Teacher survey

How did we organize the information?

- Instruction
- School Culture, Climate
- Family & Community
- Leadership and Systems

Findings: Instruction



Practices that Support Student Learning

- Select teachers readily demonstrate or show potential for quality instructional practices
 - Grades 2 and 3: teachers were observed directly supporting students in writing activity, using anchor charts to support learning, and building literacy based knowledge with students while incorporating high quality questioning
 - It was evident that the kindergarten teachers plan together. All four classrooms that were observed across two days were doing very similar activities and were in the same place with regards to Saxon's scope and sequence.

Findings: Instruction



Practices that Limit Student Learning

- Across most classrooms, the work that students are asked to do is below their grade level and not aligned to the learning standard and objective that is posted.
- In classrooms across the same grade level, the schedule, instructional practices, content were all different.
 - In grades 1-3, there were varied instructional activities and/or objectives across the classrooms in the same grade
- In many classrooms, teachers cannot always get through all the learning objectives because of timing and pacing issues, and deprioritizing instruction to address other issues.
 - Across several classrooms, instruction did not start until 15-30 min into the period (students were transitioning or had no activity to engage in; some teachers seemed underprepared for the lesson)

Family Feedback: Instruction - Strengths



Positive Teacher-Student Relationships

- “I think the teachers are very good here, every teacher that my kid had. She’s been here since kindergarten.”
- “The teachers are involved. They... try to keep it together for the kids.”
- “We even have her [the teacher’s] phone number. Whenever there’s a problem for homework or whatever you can talk to her, so that’s good.”



Providing Extra Help

- “He [my son] kind of struggled last year. The teacher he had put everything into trying to help him.”
- “This school year, it definitely has gotten better. He [my son] hasn’t had any problems so far, thank God. He had problems in the beginning... but when I talked to the teacher, she took care of it.”
- “Unfortunately, he [my son] had to be held back a year. But she [his teacher] kept him on, and she’s been doing everything possible to help him out.”



Enlivened Curriculum

- “They got a solid curriculum. They’re both [my children] learning pretty good.”
- “As far as academics, they’re pretty good... they’re getting it and their teachers are pretty good.”
- “She [my daughter] improved a lot in reading, so one of the strengths is that they helped her to improve in reading.”

Family Feedback: Instruction - Challenges



Lack of Academic Press

- “The work is not challenging. The work seems to cater to children. For example, my fourth grader receives maybe probably second grade instruction.”
- “There are not many academic challenges for them [my children]. She’s above her level, and she’s right at her level...”
- “It’s different levels. It’s very challenging for the younger one, and not as challenging for the older one. She’s a little more academically inclined.”



Improve Instructional Quality

- “They need teachers who know how to teach... it’s not okay. These kids need to be taught and they need to be taught correctly.”
- “We should be supplementing what they teach, not coming up with our own whole lessons for children, because they’re not getting it here.”



Need Adequate Instructional Resources

- “Children should be able to bring home textbooks... the suburban kids get them. Why can’t we, why aren’t they allowed to bring home tangible things that they can see? Not little package of highlight and copy paper that you can barely make out the print, because the toner is running out.”
- “... before, they used to have some assistants in the classrooms. My thing is, they still need it.”
- “My daughter tells me she sat at a table and she has to figure the work out. There’s no instruction, sometimes the teacher has to go off and deal with another student. And she’ll be there and stuck on that subject that she can’t teach her class.”

Findings: School Climate, Culture



Practices that Support Student Learning

- There are promising climate practices in place and some teachers demonstrate positive relationships with students.
- Select teachers across the school were observed:
 - Providing positive praise to students,
 - Using rewards (e.g., pom poms, tokens) to incentive positive behavior,
 - Leveraging morning meeting time to check -in with each student, prompting them to share about their previous night and feelings before the day begins.
 - In interviews, 8 out of 29 teachers described the biggest strength of the school as being the support teachers give to each other and that the students are some of the “best kids ever.”
- Special Education student records (IEPs and progress monitoring) are 100% in compliance and there are no outstanding evaluations.

Findings: School Climate, Culture



Practices that Limit Student Learning

- There is no evidence of school-wide norms and expectations being taught, reinforced, and/or celebrated consistently through the school; or systematic/school-wide Tier I or II program or supports established.
 - Teachers expressed that various initiatives have been in place - Leader in Me, Power of 3, PBIS - but nothing consistent across the whole school.
 - Instances of teacher redirection consisting of calling students' names or raising their voices at students rather than stating desired behaviors or acknowledgement of the appropriate behavior
 - Lack of structures and routines observed in the cafeteria, often leading to altercations between students
 - Teachers and staff interviewed explained that individual classrooms develop their own incentives and use their own systems for encouraging positive behavior. These systems varied by classroom.
- Staff indicates that there are little systematic supports for special education programming and staff development.

Family Feedback: School Climate, Culture - Strengths



A Family-Like Atmosphere

- “There is a family dynamic in the school. Some of the staff members treat me like I am a part of the family, or they are a part of my family, and they do have the best interests of my children.”
- “My son actually loves this school. He doesn’t want to leave. We’re in the process of moving, but he doesn’t want to leave this school. So, I’m going to let him stay.
- “The teachers here seem ... like they care about their students.”



Steadily Improving Climate

- “I know it has changed, like last year, he used to get bullied a lot. I mean, last year was probably one of his worst years. But this year has gotten way better.”
- “The strengths I see are some of the teachers that do try and try hard to obtain the composure and deal with misbehaved kids... because it’s hard.”

Family Feedback: School Climate, Culture - Strengths



School-Home Communications

- "I like that they [the school] communicate with the parents. If there's problems, the teacher will contact you personally. If you don't get back to them, they'll contact you again... they get really interactive with the parents. I like that."

Family Feedback: School Climate, Culture - Challenges

Safety and Security

- “I feel like the security is a bigger thing. Like yesterday I picked up my son... and he just walked up and walked out the door with me. I feel like that’s a little bit of a problem because if some random person decides to come up, being as we’ve had a lot of abductions in this area, and take my son out the door.”
- “That’s my main concern making sure they’re safe and they able to learn something and they have a good teacher that’s willing to go above and beyond.”
- “I would just want to make sure that at any given moment that I’m sure that my child is going to be safe at school. That would be my only really concern. I mean, I don’t really see a lot of security here.”

Student Misbehavior

- “The weakness of the school is the other children that distract the children that want to get their education because they have things that’s bothering them that they can’t talk, but they act it out.”
- “There’s a lot of bullying sometimes going on and it need to be resolved. But there has to be a little bit more discipline.”
- “I feel that some of these children don’t get enough discipline. My daughter, she’s an honor roll student, and last year my daughter came home with bruises on her face. They jumped her inside the school, and it was children that come to this school.

Family Feedback: School Climate, Culture - Challenges

School Yard Activities

- “I was driving by for recess, or it was gym, I’m not even sure, and they had the kids sitting on the ground. That kinda bothered me... They’re outside and it’s kind of cool. There are little girls with skirts, you know, they could get cut, hurt, there’s glass outside. So that was a big concern.”
- “In the rain, snow, sleet, they don’t care, they let them stand out there. It’s like I said, some kids, they don’t barely have coats on... So, it’s like they don’t care in this school, they don’t.
- “I feel like I don’t even want my son to come here because what I experienced last year. He was the only in kindergarten right and he was missing. I dropped him off at school. I come to get four of my kids and there’s only three. You’re telling me you don’t know where my son’s at? Yeah, the crossing guard crossed him over Harbison Avenue, by himself. So, then the police brought him back to the school.”

Findings: Family & Community



Practices that Support Student Learning

- City Year is a valuable partnership for the school.



Practices that Limit Student Learning

- Family engagement and involvement continues to be a challenge
 - Leadership and staff identified this as an ongoing issue

Family Feedback: Family & Community - Strengths



Ongoing Efforts to Involve Parents

- “I feel like they try a lot to get the parents involved, and I feel like they really try to give us as much information as we need... I think that’s one of their strong points, they really tried to get us involved.”
- “There is a lot of community, a lot of parent involvement in this building. I can’t compare it to any other buildings because I don’t know. But there is a lot of parents here.”
- “They always have something going on and, you know, be like “the parents can come.”
- “They do have a lot of programs, but I don’t know if the parents really attend them. I would say the parents who are most motivated are going to go.”

Family Feedback: Family & Community - Challenges

Parents lead Complicated Lives

- “I feel as though there’s a lot of parents that’s just caught up in their life and not very concerned about the wellbeing of their child’s education.”
- “I feel like the parents try to be involved but it depends on people’s schedule. People work a lot of times... I feel like they want to be here... but we can’t always be here.”

Supporting Parents in Constructive Engagement

- “Parents are involved in the school, but they are also very aggressive. They fight each other, they argue with the teachers, but you also have those certain parents that want to go on field trips with the kids. They want to go to parent-teacher meetings and stuff like that. It’s like fifty-fifty.”
- “I was just writing this on social media for the parents. We need to come together as a voice for our children because my daughter right now, she’s 12 years old, loving, quiet, humble, loves to do her work... and she is being bullied. They make fun of her big feet, as she says the kids say this to her, ‘oh you got a big brain because you got a big head.’ Stuff like that. And she does not want to go to school...sometimes you have to work through that and just block what people are saying.”

Findings: Leadership and Systems



Practices that Support Student Learning

- Leadership has established structures/meetings for teachers to collaborate around their instructional practice, including
 - Intellectual prep
 - Grade group meetings



Practices that Limit Student Learning

- No evidence of structures or systems to support school-wide positive school climate.
- Instructional leadership and systems for professional development are not readily translating into improved practices for teaching and learning.
- Adults in the building do not have consistently positive or supportive relationships; there are elements of compliance and fear that permeates staff culture.
 - Varying staff opinions of their level of support and trust for each other and for leadership.

Family Feedback: Leadership & Systems - Strengths



Effective Communication

- “The communication, overall, I feel was good.”
- “I think she [the principal] is way different than the one that we had last year. I feel she’s more responsible and I feel like there’s more communication, [and] more contact with the students... I feel like she wants the students to be more excited about learning. I like that.”



Cultivating Positive Relationships with Parents

- “[The leadership team] is very patient about the children, about teaching and learning... trying to keep the children safe in order to teach them.”
- “For me, the main strength of the school is the assistant principal. I think that she’s the heart of this school, and she’s been here for a very long time. She knows the community and she understand what ... what we need.”
- “I love the vice principal.... There’s no shade on anybody else. It’s just because she gets it, she’s what the school needs to be successful.”

Family Feedback: Leadership & Systems - Challenges

△ Need for Greater Communications

- “I would say communication with the parents. It’s some stuff that will go on, and I won’t even know about it until my child either comes home, or if I get a call from one of the caring staff. I would not hear about it... When you come to talk to them, sometimes it’s just a little too aggressive for my liking. I don’t care for it.”

△ General Operations

- “I think that it could be tightened up more. I think the principal herself is professional.”
- “I don’t have an issue with the principal. I don’t really have an issue with the staff. They are just unorganized. There are a lot of schools that are unorganized, so it’s not just Sullivan.”
- “One time, with my kid, I felt as though a situation I had wasn’t handled correctly. They should have handled it better... But the way when I spoke to the office, the way they handled it, I wasn’t like, I didn’t like the way they handled it.”

Next Steps

- Comprehensive reports will be available to all staff and families
- Root Cause Analysis to better understand challenges through January
- School recommendation after SPR release in early February

OUR CHILDREN'S POTENTIAL IS LIMITLESS

Each school has unique strengths and challenges

The goal for all children and all schools is the same:

to ensure that all children are able to learn and to succeed



Agenda

- Why We're Here
- Where We Are in the Process
- Feedback and Findings
- Next Steps
- Questions