



## Feedback and Findings Meeting

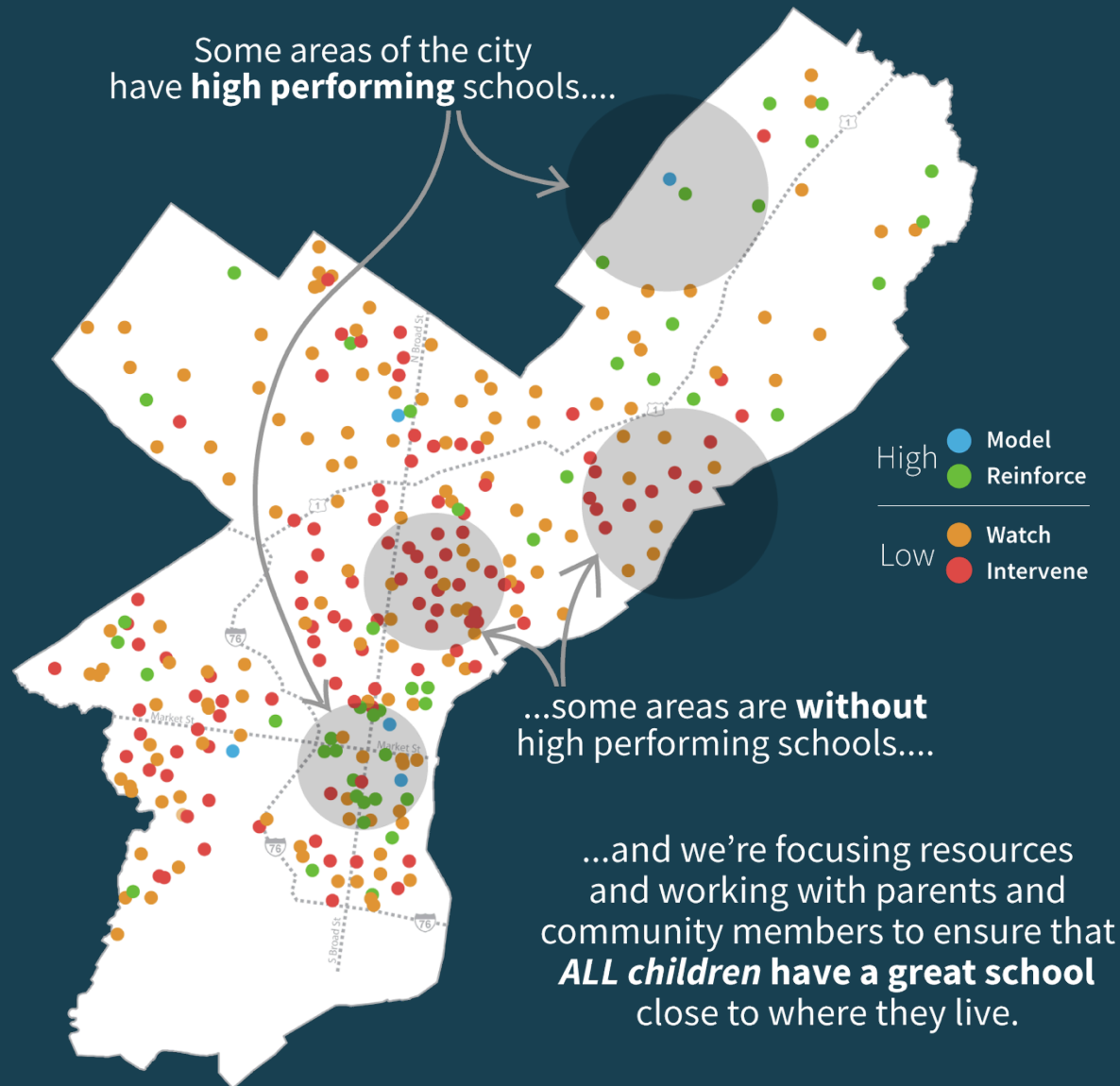
### Gideon Elementary School

*November 8, 2017*



THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF  
PHILADELPHIA

All children deserve a **great school** close to where they live.





## Agenda

- Why We're Here
- Feedback and Findings
- Questions
- Additional Ideas
- Next Steps



# Why is my school being considered?

## Gideon Elementary School

### SPR

3-year SPR trend

2013-14 2014-15 2015-16



3-year SPR average

**12.3**

### Key Data

2015-16 Performance

Reading Achievement\*

12%

Math Achievement\*

6%

Attendance^

35%

4

\* School Year 2015-16 performance for achievement equals the percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced on the English language arts and math PSSA exams. ^Attendance equals the percentage of students attending school 95% or more of school days.



## Important Notes

- Becoming a charter school is not an option in this process
- Closure is not an option in this process.



# Overview of Main Findings from School Quality Review

## Strengths

- Instruction and assessments aligned to state standards
- Lesson plan feedback
- Respectful and collaborative teacher working relationships
- Clear behavioral and academic expectations in K-3
- Communicating achievement to parents
- Staff accountability
- Staff structure into academies

## Growth Areas

- Challenging instruction
- School culture and climate
- Use of data to inform instruction and lesson planning
- Teacher turnover
- Large class sizes
- Intentional and collaborative professional development
- Administrative duties for school leaders
- Full implementation of community services

Please record feedback on the cards you were given:

- 1) Which findings and feedback matched your experience, and which ones surprised you?
- 2) What else do you think would help improve students' academic performance?
- 3) What are other ways in which the school could involve parents and the community?



## Overview of Main Findings from parents and community members

### Strengths

- Friendly, hardworking teachers, eager to collaborate with parents
- Dedicated parent volunteers

### Growth Areas

- **Safety**
- **Lack of resources (especially staff) and positive programming**
- **Poor school climate/student behavior**
- **Large class sizes**
- Parent-school relationships
- Tensions within the community
- Teacher turnover
- Shortage of challenging instruction
- Old or unclean facilities

Please record feedback on the cards you were given:

1) Which findings and feedback matched your experience, and which ones surprised you?

2) What else do you think would help improve students' academic performance?

~~3) What are other ways in which the school could involve parents and the community?~~



## School Quality Review

### Purpose:

Identify main factors that support learning or limit learning

### Process:

- 2 day site visit
- 15-20 classroom observations
- Meetings with the school leader
- Student, staff, parent focus groups
- Staff survey





## Stakeholder Feedback

### Forums and participants

*In addition to the School Quality Review focus groups led by Cambridge, Temple facilitated:*

Kickoff meeting

Community input and ideas meeting

Three parent/family focus groups

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69 Parents, students, family members

7 Staff members

35 Community members



## Feedback and Findings

Please record feedback on the cards you were given:

- 1) What did or didn't surprise you?
- 2) What else would help students?
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### Strengths: Teaching and Learning

- Teachers understand the importance of aligning the subject content of lessons to the state standards.
- Instructional coaches are supporting teachers to plan lessons and design assessments based on the state standards.
  - a. In 8 out of 10 classes, the teacher posted learning objectives in the classroom or wrote them on the assignment.
- Teachers in Kindergarten through 4<sup>th</sup> grade are using technology in their instruction.
  - a. Students used electronic pens and their fingers to circle items or move virtual objects.
  - b. Kindergarten students were called to the SMART Board to draw representations of numbers six through ten.



## Feedback and Findings

Please record feedback on the cards you were given:

- 1) What did or didn't surprise you?
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### Challenges: Teaching and Learning

- Instruction is not challenging in most classrooms and does not provide the opportunity to accelerate learning.
  - a. There is little evidence of higher-level questions, effective discussion strategies, and assignments that require students to think critically.
  - b. In most classes, teachers did not share meaningful feedback with students to advance their understanding. Students in grades 5-8 stated that, "As long as we do our work and behave in class, we will get a good grade." The students said they are not sure if they "are doing good or not."
- Teachers are struggling to manage student behavior in classrooms.
  - a. The teachers and school counselor need more support and training to meet the students' social and emotional needs.
  - b. The hallways are loud and students are out of class often resulting in loss of learning time.



## Feedback and Findings

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### Challenges: Teaching and Learning

- Student attention and interest is low in most classes due to a lack of targeted instruction and effective teaching practices
  - a. Most students were working on the same assignment except in the Kindergarten class and learning support class.
  - b. Opportunities for students to work collaboratively on engaging projects and assignments were not observed in any of the 10 classrooms visited.
- Teachers need more support to analyze data and to plan instruction at the appropriate level for their students.



## Feedback and Findings

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- 1) What did or didn't surprise you?
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### Strengths: Curriculum and Assessment

- The school leadership team works to align curriculum and assessments to state standards.
  - a. Common assessments consist of I-Ready for reading and mathematics administered 3 times a year which provides growth measures for students and individualizes instruction.
- The school offers art and music classes and extracurricular activities to broaden learning experiences.
  - a. The students also benefit from afterschool programming offered by Education Works. They currently work with 42 students in grades K-8. The program is STEAM focused, and it incorporates project-based learning and sports activities.
- The school is seeking to increase teacher collaboration and professional learning.
  - a. Teacher teams meet weekly in grade groups to receive support from the principal, counselor, and instructional coaches. In addition, upper grade teachers are developing unit plans with the Partners in School Innovation Coach.



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### Challenges: Curriculum and Assessment

- Teachers are not properly trained or proficient in giving assessments and using assessment data to inform instruction.
  - a. Staff are unsure which assessments are currently administered, when, and for what purposes.
  - b. Only 2 classes were observed where students received targeted instruction in small groups based on their assessment results.
- The curriculum does not fully prepare students for high school.
  - a. 8<sup>th</sup> grade students expressed dissatisfaction with the limited course offerings and quality of instruction.
  - b. Teachers expressed that the math curriculum has changed to such an extent that students “haven’t caught up with it”. In some cases this causes teachers to revert to the old curriculum.
- Increase in teacher turnover rates in the past two years has shifted teachers in multiple grades.
  - a. 8 out of 9 teachers discussed the challenges they face in their new positions, such as being unfamiliar with the curriculum and state standards, and having difficulty managing student behaviors.



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### Challenge: Not Enough Positive Programming

- Parents reported there is too much teacher turnover and many substitutes in classrooms.
- Parents felt there is a shortage of challenging instruction.
- Parents, especially those who have known Gideon for a long time, feel the school has lost programs and opportunities that it used to have. These include Power Hour, after-school academic support, arts, dance, sports, and other forms of enrichment.

*“Power hour was separated from after school program so whatever subject your child was struggling in and needed help, your child got tutoring every hour after school.... So this is another program that used to be here and isn't here.”-- parent*



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### Challenge: Lack of Resources

- There is a strong sense that the school has been denied resources in the form of staff (for safety and teaching) and positive programming for the students.

*"It's like they are getting the bare minimum to have them pass. Literally. I totally feel that.... It's the bare minimum."--parent*

*"This school is set up for kids to fail..."--parent*

*"You're cutting classes. You're cutting teachers. You're cutting programs."--parent*

*"There used to be a lot of stuff in this school."--parent*





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### Challenge: Not Enough Staff

For safety...

*"I don't think there's enough going on in the school yard, enough adults out there, because obviously kids are running out to the school yard, just running around instead of just staying in, so I feel like they need more adults out there during the lunch."*

*"There was a fight, and we didn't have much help, and I don't even want to say what I saw, we really need more safety and like manpower...."--parent*

For classroom support...

*"It's lack of staff, and you know one teacher just can't help each individual kid. That's why they need an assistant in the classroom."--parent*

For student support (especially Special Ed)....

*"There are children here with IEPs and stuff like that that are not being addressed...I know my son's aren't. If his IEP calls for him to have speech services and he's not getting them, no he's not being addressed."--parent*

For behavioral support...

*"[My daughter] said there were like two fights, two different fights. And then the same kids keep on coming back. The same kids are fighting. My third grade daughter has been with them since she was in kindergarten. Why are these same kids not being taken care of? Why are there not services that need to be in this school that these kids need?"--parent*



## Feedback and Findings

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### Strengths: Instructional Leadership

- The principal regularly gives teachers feedback through lesson plan reviews to improve learning and teaching.
  - a. Teachers stated that they receive written feedback on their lesson plans and formal and informal observations, as necessary.
- The Principal holds the staff accountable for their students' progress and demonstrating professional behavior.
  - a. When required, the principal conferences with staff members to improve poor performance, and submits written documentation to ensure adherence to agreements.



## Feedback and Findings

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### Challenges: Instructional Leadership

- Learning from professional development or coaching sessions is not consistently applied
  - a. Teachers expressed a need for clarity about how to use the goal-setting template, and report needing support and resources to provide targeted interventions for students.
- Classes are not observed consistently to improve learning and teaching.
  - a. Teachers seek to maintain control of their students which keeps some teachers from attempting to implement new professional learning.
  - b. School leaders and coaches are assigned multiple roles, some non-instructional; therefore, they are not conducting learning walks and classroom observations as often as initially planned.
- Although grade groups meet once a week, teams reported the agendas are created for them.



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### Strengths: Management

- The Principal redesigned the staff structure to support colleagues' professional growth.
  - a. The Scholars Academy Coordinator (Kindergarten-2<sup>nd</sup>) consistently collaborates with her team, and serves as a peer coach, when possible.



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### Challenges: Management

- School leaders are assigned multiple roles which reduces their instructional time.
  - a. During teacher focus groups, teachers shared that the guidance counselor and special education teacher are responsible for administrative duties which prevents them from servicing students.
- Many of the original team members who developed the strategic vision are no longer part of the school community.
- Staff vacancies and overcrowded classes negatively impact student learning.
  - a. The 7<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade classes are overcrowded. Teachers in these classes spend most of learning time redirecting students and filling out disciplinary pink slips.
  - b. 2 out of 3 parents expressed a concern with staff being pulled out of classrooms to support in other areas.
- Staff is unclear about the process to become leaders, and some feel unsupported to advance professionally.



## Feedback and Findings

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### **Challenge: Large Class Sizes**

Parents report that class sizes are often too large (especially in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades), which makes it hard for teachers to manage the students and respond to their needs.

*“And there’s not enough staff, because, I guess, the budgeting. There’s 30 something kids in a second grade class....31, it started out 41. And they said that they still keep getting kids from different places to keep coming into this one little second grade class. I don't think that's fair. How are all these kids going to learn with one teacher, and have 30-something students?”--parent*

*“Because the classroom is so large, there are things going on in the back of the line. The teacher's in the front, so the whole class is turned around. That's my biggest concern is how large the classrooms are.”--parent*

*“My son is in second grade. The class is too big. He's a little more advanced than other kids in there. He has to get work that is way too easy for him. He's not being challenged because she has to try to keep up with the other students that she's not trying to leave behind. I feel like that's unfair to him, but the class is only one class. She can only do what she can do.”--parent*



## Feedback and Findings

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### Strengths: Culture of Learning

- The core teacher teams have established respectful, collaborative working relationships and they have a desire to improve learning outcomes for all students.
  - a. In the Kinder through 1<sup>st</sup> grade classrooms, adults work together in clearly defined roles to serve students.
  - b. During conversations with all teachers, they discussed various ways that colleagues collaborate about learning during and outside of school.
- Students in Kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade articulated the school-wide academic and social expectations and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) goals.
- Despite concerns expressed in the 5<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade student focus group, all students reported that there was at least one adult they could go to in the building for support.



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### Challenge: Safety within school

•Parents expressed significant concerns about student behavior in classrooms and hallways. Not only does this behavior interfere with learning, it also makes the students feel unsafe. This is especially true on the third floor.

*“Sometimes [my son is] scared in his classroom because of the fights and things that goes on in his classroom. I believe on Friday, a little boy choked a girl in his class or something.”--parent*

*“You can't learn unless you're safe. You know what I mean? You have to be safe first of anything.”--parent*

*PARENT #1: “You got more kids in this school that are really behavior issues. I mean that they are so hyper and have so much anger in them...”*

*PARENT #2: “From 8:30 to 3:09 they are out of the classroom. Completely out of the classroom.”*

*PARENT #1: “Slam the doors, kick the doors.”*

*OTHER PARENTS: “They roam the school all day long. All day up and down.”*





## Feedback and Findings

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### Challenges: Culture of Learning

- There are constant interruptions to the learning environment.
  - a. Intercom announcements interrupted learning seven times during a focus group session.
  - b. In 8 out of 9 classes, teachers had to stop instruction multiple times to address student misbehavior
  - c. In 6 out of 9 classes, students said the work is “too easy” or “boring” which lowered students’ interest and increased off-task behaviors.
- Upper grade students report disrespectful student and adult behaviors that result in loss of instructional time and broken trusts.
  - a. Parents and students, primarily in grades 4<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup>, report concerns about their safety at school, and not feeling welcomed and valued by school leaders.
  - b. These students do not feel that Gideon Elementary School is preparing them for the requirements of high school, college, and career.



## Feedback and Findings

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### Challenge: School Climate and Student Behavior

- Parents report a high level of disruptive and inappropriate behavior that interferes with students' ability to learn.

*“What about kids that want to sit in front of the classroom, that want to learn, but they can't because the teacher got to keep stopping because of kids that don't want to learn? That's taking away from their learning time and what they need to learn.”--parent*

*“I've been up here a couple times and I've seen it for myself, and it's sad that teachers really have to literally scream and yell or constantly say the same thing over and over again to someone that's literally 13, or about to go to high school.”--parent*



## Feedback and Findings

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### Challenges: Culture of Learning

- Staff and students shared that low expectations regarding student behavior exist.
  - a. “There are little to no consequences...No expectations for learning...Lack of support which makes it difficult to get things done because the climate is not good.”--teacher
  - b. While observing one classroom, there were four different interruptions from Emotional Support (ES) students busting into the classroom during the teacher's lesson. The teacher reported that this is “ongoing and prevents [me] from teaching because [my] students are in a constant uproar.”
  - c. Parents report that students are put in the hallway when they misbehave. “These students run around the school disrupting others...There is no dean or in-school suspension room” to send students that need time to reflect, redirect and then continue academic work.



## Feedback and Findings

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### Challenge: Before/After School Safety

•This is an issue of major concern to parents– *“Security is the number one problem.”* Parents report seeing fights and worrying about students going in and out of the yard because they are not supervised.

*“They started fighting. Nobody was out there to control them. When the teachers come, they back up. Nobody wants to be hurt by these strong teenagers. Who's going to control the kids when they go in the yard? They're everywhere, out of control. There's nobody out there to control those kids... Even the kids that don't want to fight, that back up from the fight. They have no choice because it's a free for all when you're out there.”--parent*

*“I was there one day when a fight ensued and there was a great, big, family ... a bunch of them and they kept piling on and piling up.”--parent*

*“They don't have any type of NTA or anything for the kids in the morning and that's a safety [issue] right there. Anything could happen with those kids. Anything. You've got the older kids fighting the little kids. That's a problem.”--parent*



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### Challenge: Safety and Building Access

- Parents are very worried that entry to the school is not sufficiently monitored, allowing people to come and go without permission.

*“Anybody can get in here. One of these kids will come up missing in a blink of an eye. Or somebody can come here in a blink of an eye.”--parent*

*“I think when the kids lets out and stuff, anybody can walk into school. You can't monitor who comes in and comes out of the school. I would say that is a point of safety because my daughter's in first grade, so all the parents pick up out there. If somebody wants to walk past and go through the school and somebody could stop them and be like, "Hey, who are you?"--parent*



## Feedback and Findings

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### Strengths: Family and Community Engagement

- Families are engaged in multiple ways.
  - a. The School Quality Review team observed parents bringing in items for the bake sale, ensuring students had money to purchase bake sale items, volunteering in a Kindergarten classroom, and greeting visitors at the entrance desk.
  
- Teachers make an intentional effort to keep parents informed about students' academic and social achievements.
  - a. Families receive either verbal or written daily, weekly, interim, and quarterly progress reports.
  - b. Some teachers have strong relationships with families. For example, one parent discussed how a teacher taught her the new mathematics concept so the mother could assist her child at home.



## Feedback and Findings

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### Strengths: Family and Community Engagement

- Teachers are friendly, hardworking, and willing to collaborate with parents
  - *“I actually communicate with my children's teachers daily so I'm ... this is homework, how'd he do last night, how did he do the day before? I'm a day to day basis. I'd like to stay that way, stay on the same page.”--parent*
  - *“They have study periods with the teachers...The parents, if they see the child need that period, the teachers will work with them and say, ‘Sure. Come on in.’”--parent*
- Core group of dedicated volunteers play an important role in addressing safety and classroom management issues.



## Feedback and Findings

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### Challenges: Family and Community Engagement

- Although the school is a Community School, some of the services have not been fully implemented.
  - a. Families report receiving the healthy food baskets, and enthusiastically spoke about the work of the Community School Coordinator. However, other services that may increase student learning have not yet been initiated.
  - b. The social worker has not been hired to assist with the vast needs of the students and families.
  - c. All three of the parents stated that they do not hear about the school promoting college and career.
- There is little to no evidence of celebrating cultural diversity to enhance the learning environment and ensure all students' backgrounds are valued.
  - a. Parents indicated that celebrations are limited to days off per the district calendar.





## Feedback and Findings

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### Challenges: Family and Community Engagement

- Parents can feel unwelcomed in the school.
- Parent volunteers feel unsupported.
- Tensions within the community can be felt within the school.
- The facilities are old and unclean.



## Feedback and Findings

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### Parent Suggestions for Improvement

- Hire more staff to support the school.
  - This feels urgent. Parents say the school needs staff in classrooms, the yard, hallways, etc. Staff must be trained and responsive to children.
- Teachers need to be skilled in engaging students and managing behavior.
- Implement after school academic, arts, sports, and other enrichment programs.
- Increase collaboration between parents and school, including systems for supporting volunteers.
- Provide a cleaner yard and brighter classrooms.
- Provide GED classes and other services for parents.



# Questions

10-15 mins

## **Norms for questions:**

- 1) Ask questions that benefit the whole group (we are happy to address individual questions after the session).
- 2) Please be mindful of your talk time so that all voices can be heard.
- 3) Please be respectful of differences of opinion.



## Additional Ideas

### Other Feedback:

1. Which findings and feedback matched your experience, and which ones surprised you?
2. What else do you think would help improve students' academic performance?
3. What are other ways in which the school could involve parents and the community?

***When prompted, please move to the charts to provide your feedback using the cards that were handed out.***



## **Next Steps**

**December**

**Dr. Hite, Assistant Superintendents,  
and other District leaders review**

- 1) Stakeholder feedback
- 2) Site visit results
- 3) School input
- 4) New data (SPR)

**January -  
February**

**Recommendations for improvement  
shared with community**