



College of Education
TEMPLE UNIVERSITY®

**System of Great Schools
School District of Philadelphia
Penn Treaty School
Parent, Family & Community Input Report
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INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 2017, the School District of Philadelphia, in partnership with Temple University, embarked on a school review process. Temple's faculty and graduate students took the lead in the development, data collection, and analysis of parent and community experiences with the six target schools. This report summarizes findings from public engagement data at Penn Treaty.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Data for this report was drawn from conversations with various stakeholders interested in the success of Penn Treaty. Between September and November 2017 a research team from Temple, led by Professor Will Jordan, gathered data at four events held at Penn Treaty: a community kick-off meeting, two parent focus groups, and a community input and ideas meeting. Because of scant attendance at the second scheduled focus group, a third focus group session was conducted in which 12 parents participated, each with students currently attending Penn Treaty. At each event, we held multiple open discussions with parents and community members in small to mid-sized groups, typically between 10 – 20 persons. These conversations were all audiotaped with permission of the audience, and professionally transcribed. According to the Family & Community Engagement (FACE) office a total of 178 participated in exchanges at Penn Treaty: 80 parents, students, and family members; 31 staff members; and 67 community members. While the conversations included a range of topics about the school, the focus of this report is on examining the collective perceptions of parents (or caregivers) about their children's experiences. However, students' voices are also included, as parents and facilitators gave students in attendance space to discuss their lived experiences at school. It is also worth noting that many of the parents who participated had more than one child currently or previously attending Penn Treaty, thus giving richer data about the school. There were also a number of grandparents and aunts caring for students, and advocating on their behalf. Additionally, a handful of parents were alumni who attended Penn Treaty decades ago and remained in the neighborhood.

The goal of this project was on public engagement – specifically to understand how parents experienced Penn Treaty, what they saw as its strengths and challenges, and what suggestions they had for its improvement. Moreover, the Temple team wanted to present parents' hopes, fears and desires in their own words. Facilitators developed a questionnaire protocol designed to address specific issues such as academics, climate, leadership, and parental involvement, but the team was also open to topics that parents felt were important to them. Will Jordan attended every event as lead facilitator and was assisted by Temple graduate students.

The analysis of the data involved multiple steps. First, after conducting two rounds of meetings (the kick-off meeting and first focus group) and debriefing about the conversations, the facilitating team revised the protocol for the community input and ideas meetings to allow the team to dig more deeply into key topics and test emerging theories about parents' perspectives. The Temple team then read through transcripts again, making notes about key emergent themes and important issues. Next, the team created a coding system, which included such codes as "Academics," "General Climate," "School Safety," "Leadership," etc. A coding book, with definitions for each code, facilitated consistency across coders. Each transcript was coded, with all data related to a particular topic highlighted and put into a new document. Coders also included comments aimed at summarizing and interpreting the quotes. Then the lead researcher for Penn Treaty re-read the coded data to further examine themes and patterns, compare parents' comments, identify points of agreement and disagreement, and prioritize areas of concern to the parents. The results of this analysis initially appeared in the feedback and findings presentation and, in greater depth, in this report.

In this report, the team discusses findings, summarizes data across key issues, and highlights quotes from participants to illustrate the points. It is important to stress that each topic discussed here surfaced at multiple sessions and was voiced by several parents. For each, the team assessed the extent to which parents generally agreed on the issue or whether or not there were opposition perspectives. The examples below in the report are not the only instances of parents speaking on a particular topic. Rather, in most cases, they were chosen because they represent parents' common perspectives with the most clarity, or they summarize complex issues in ways that were nicely put.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

At Penn Treaty, the Temple team documented considerable energy and concern about the health of the school from parents and community members. Information sessions and data collection events were well attended and participants were eager to share ideas about strengths and limitations they observed in the quality of education for students. Though there was general agreement that academic achievement has stagnated over the past three years, participants identified many positive aspects of the school. As elaborated in the sections below, the major strengths of the school emerging from the data were:

- 1) strong and caring school leadership;
- 2) positive school climate;
- 3) communications with parents about student progress; and
- 4) support for students with special needs.

Conversely, the major limitation or areas of concern were:

- 1) safety to and from school;
- 2) persistent student misbehavior;

- 3) inconsistent academic challenge; and
- 4) lack of parent involvement.

The findings presented below rely on the voices of the participants to explain why and how perceptions of these strengths and limitations of the school emerged.

MAJOR AREAS OF STRENGTH

Data collection for this public engagement project yielded well over 100 pages of transcriptions. The finding presented in this section on the school's strengths as well as the sections below on growth areas and suggestions were generated after iterative coding of the data, as described above. Parent and community members' perceived major strengths of Penn Treaty emerged were: strong, caring leadership; positive school climate; communications with parents about student progress; and support for special needs students. Below the team discusses the top three findings, highlighting evidence from the focus group data which support them.

Strong and caring school leadership

Even without prompting, many participants did not hesitate to give the school's leadership a strong vote of confidence. There is large amount of data explicating how school leaders at Penn Treaty clearly have the respect and admiration of all of the various constituencies we talked with, including parents, staff, students, and community members. Sam Howell, as principal of the school, was often perceived as the embodiment of the effective leadership. Many participants singled him out by name and praised his work. One parent said:

"Mr. Howell was the best principal. I knew Mr. Howell maybe 15 years, awesome. He lives in the neighborhood, knows most of the things that are going on. Takes care of whatever he can."

A community member who works with a company providing support services for the school added the following:

"My interaction with the teachers, Mr. Howell especially, has been nothing but amazing. But every time I step foot in the building, people recognize us, they know us by name, and they're nothing but amazing. And they say hey, have you met this student yet? Hey, have you met this student yet? And they're just so excited about Penn Treaty. Part of why I'm here tonight is not because my company asked me to, but because there is absolutely a passion when you step foot in this building that you don't get at other schools. That's why I'm even here, not because of my company, but because Penn Treaty is just uniquely special in that way and a lot of it has to do with the teachers."

Many parents told stories of personal interactions the principal had with them or their children. Most of the stories depicted the ways in which the principal gave of his time or pushed a child to succeed. His personal regard for others and willingness to extend a helping hand was felt by many. For example, the parent above went on to say of Mr. Howell:

“He doesn't see color, he sees person, you know? He sees you're struggling, I got you. You excelling, yeah, you're excelling, I got you... I'm going to help you. Stick with me, I'll help you.”

Another parent added simply:

“I love Mr. Howell. I could call him any time. He might not pick up right away, but he'll call me back and he'll address the situation. But he's one person. If he [doesn't] have what he needs, he can't do it all – he's not superman.”

Teachers at the school had equally positive praise for the principal. Many worked shoulder to shoulder with him for years and have come to admire his commitment to the school. Such staff saw the current crisis of low performance, not as a leadership issue, but instead, as a matter of adequate resources. One teacher expressed the following thought about the principal:

“If he was given the resources, if he was given the chance, he would improve the school. I really think so, because I've seen good principals, I've seen bad principals, and he is one of the better ones. In the school district, they're a lot of principals who simply go, do their job, get paid, and go home. But he will stay until 5:00 or 6:00, he will go walk students down to make sure they're safe, he would do all these things, but they're going to simply say: the numbers say this. Well, we can't always look at the numbers, the numbers only tell so much.”

A counselor at the school spoke about problematic student misbehavior she is sometimes confronted with and the principal's ability to de-escalate potential trouble. After agreeing with other participants on the principal's effective leadership ability, she added:

“I think one of the reasons I most support the principal of this school is the way he handles those situations. I've seen kids completely out of control. I've seen other principals make choices to just wipe kids out of the school real quick, at the detriment of that child. I've seen this guy really try hard to work with kids and get them on the right footing.”

Another teacher added:

“Mr. Howell... knows every single child, every single family, everyone’s brother, sister, mom, their whole history, where they live, how they get home. Mr. Howell himself knows that at a school with 600, 500 students whatever, and building that strong leadership team takes time. He didn't have an AP for the first two, three years of the school even being a high school as well. So now he's actually getting the opportunity to build that team with the climate manager and the other staff, and that takes time to actually see the results of that.”

Positive school climate

Many parents went on and on, glowingly, about a positive climate at the school. Overall, Penn Treaty was described as a warm school, like a family. This perspective manifested in several ways, mostly having to do with personal interactions between parents and staff and the degree to which they are made to feel welcome. Although omitted for the purposes of this report, several parents raved about specific teachers by name and told stories of how such teachers helped students to succeed. Other parents spoke of the absence of trouble in the school as a good sign. For example, one parent observed:

“Me personally, my son's never had a problem here. He's been here four years; never any issues. I've heard rumors of different things in the school, but personally I've never seen anything. And, I've never had any problems with the staff or anything. Always welcoming and here for whatever I need them for.”

Another parent added:

“Same here; she's (her daughter) 10th grade, her brother's 11th grade. They never personally had any serious problems.”

Still, another parent agreed, adding:

“I've got two kids here. Right from the first day that I brought the other one here last year, I've had nothing but good experiences. If there was a question I had, you made a phone call and you got it. I've had an issue I got it- squared away. If had a problem with the others, I got that squared away. Everybody in this school really seems to think that – this is your kid – your kid's going to do good. And, it's great for us.”

Other parents agreed with this sentiment, stating about the staff: *“It is true, they (staff) love the kids, they really do.”* And, another parent summed up the segment by saying, *“It is a good school, it’s a very good school. And, the teachers are fantastic.”*

Communications with parents about student progress

One of the reasons why many parents felt they had positive experiences with Penn Treaty is because communications between home and school were positive and frequent. This point was made on numerous occasions by different parents. In addition to statements made about communications, the research team observed expressions of personal regard between parents and teachers and open sharing during the public engagement events. These exchanges were often cordial and seemed genuine. Additionally, both teachers and parents talked of the various lines of communications that are open between them, such as email, text messages, and telephone calls – for both positive news as well as requests for help. Some staff talked about how they pay attention to the ratio of positive communications to negative ones, and always strive to have the former exceed the latter. On this topic, one grandmother said, *“They do keep in contact with parents. I’ve gotten many, many, many calls about my grandson, many, many, many calls.”*

Support for students with special needs

Although staff and parents the team talked with both discussed the significant number of special needs students attending Penn Treaty and the need for additional resources, an overwhelming number comments reflected on the special education program as a major strength. In fact, several parents discussed how they eagerly moved their children to Penn Treaty because they perceived the quality of education to be much higher here. The experience of the parent below was not uncommon among the participants we spoke with. Here, she explained about her son’s experiences:

“(My son has) an IEP, so it’s specific to his abilities but he’s great.... He started here in sixth grade; he’s in 10th now. He’s definitely become on grade level with a lot of his work. Before he attended Penn Treaty he went to some of the best schools in the Northeast. He really didn’t do well there. He’s a morning announcement guy here now. He’s made strides here. He likes computers.”

MAJOR AREAS OF CONCERN

The parents and community participants the team spoke with were able to identify what they perceived to be clear strengths of Penn Treaty. In fact, proportionately, the team heard more about what was good about the school than what needed improvement. Still, the following are areas of growth emerging from the analysis were: safety and transportation to and from school; persistent student misbehavior, mostly in middle grade; inconsistent academic challenge; and lack of parent involvement. In the section below, we take these issues in turn.

Safety to and from school

When asked about the issues of school safety and student misbehavior, the focus of the discussion gravitated towards problems taking place outside of school. Several of the participants perceived mischief caused by Penn Treaty students after dismissal as well as students from other schools targeting Penn Treaty students as they commute to and from school. Some commented on incidents they heard about, rather than witnessing events first hand. One parent stated:

"It's actually after school; the kids going home. Kids walking from here to go wherever, wrecking people's plants, stealing people's packages off their steps, and cursing neighbors out. Never personally seen it, but it's what I hear."

Other parents felt this rumor somewhat was over-blown. Still, no one in this focus group recounted actual incidents which involved their children or students they know personally. Additionally, there was consensus in the room that Penn Treaty should not be accountable for student conduct in the streets before and after school. According to another parent,

"I'd like to say it's mostly a small group of children who I would call problematic. They probably do some of the things that these people are saying that they do ... ripping out their plant or stealing their packages. I don't necessarily think Penn Treaty's at fault for that."

Still, there was a salient perception that trouble occurs in the community, mostly after school. Another parent added:

"I would say things have transpired here. But not as much, I would say, as once they leave. It could be a block over here. Two blocks from here. I had to consider whether I was going to send my sixth grader here, and I live in the Northeast."

There was some recognition and debate, however, about whether there is always a bright line between neighborhood and school altercations between students. Both parents and students discussed ongoing animosity between Penn Treaty students and students at other schools. In some cases, groups of students have long histories with the opposing parties and the troubles stem from friendships or interactions gone awry. On the topic of the outside/inside school dynamic, one parent suggested:

"Like outside, like different neighborhoods, stuff like that escalates outside the schools. But every problem that had occurred with the girls, we've gotten phone calls. They addressed it in the school but stuff happens outside of school. So, that's it, that's what's going on."

The same parent went on to say:

“We had a problem on the bus. But being the parent who I am, I'm going to push and I'm going keep on pushing and we got the situation solved before it escalated any more than what it was.”

In this situation, the problem was among students who all attended Penn Treaty. The parent actively and successfully intervened on behalf of her child. Although the problems were taking place along the route to and from school and not in the school itself, administrators at Penn Treaty were able to work with the family and the other parties to end conflicts between the students. However, students in the focus groups, the daughter of the parent above among them, didn't perceive a permanent end conflicts such as this. They also pointed to persistent challenges in acclimating new students to the school culture. The daughter, a 10th grade student said,

“So the more fights, if you see kids walking like where my mama was saying, you have to wait for your parent to come because you can't walk a certain way because kids will be waiting for you. They're all new kids, they don't understand that we all stick together and they just come not caring...”

This student went on to say:

“I feel like the school will get the most fights happen when new people [arrive]... I feel like they're treating you actually like a family. And everybody goes to everybody for everything. And you hear something it goes straight to the principal because everybody's comfortable with everybody. But, the more fights happen are always with the new teachers, new kids who come. They don't know each other, how the old kids who've been here know each other.”

Her classmate, and friend, seated next to her added:

“The only problem that I have with kids is the same girls. I think it got better because they kicked those kids out. But the only reason why it was still a problem was because those kids came back. Not back to the school but waiting outside. And, they had never had a problem with me, but they had a problem with my friends. And my friends stopped coming because they was in danger, they couldn't walk in their own neighborhood because they knew that they were being watched and waited for outside.”

Persistent student misbehavior

There were a wide range of parental perceptions of student misbehavior at Penn Treaty. Some participants appreciated how well discipline is handled by staff, suggesting misbehaving

students are treated respectfully and benefit from second chances. The leadership was both chided and praised for their patience in working with misbehaving students and setting them on the right track. One grandmother recounted:

“My grandson got out of line. Ms. X said, ‘I’ve got to talk to you.’ She goes, he was out of line, and pray to God that’s the last time, but you know...Any other school it’s possible that that kid would have just gotten away with what he did.”

Others felt similarly that school staff had a handle on student conduct and largely maintained an orderly school environment. The same grandmother went on to suggest:

“Anything can happen to anybody at any time, but there’s enough staff around here and there’s enough school officers, there’s enough other people walking through the hallway ...And my one grandson, I know for a fact, he had no trouble...None of that has happened, not one bit of it, so as far as I’m concerned I think it’s fantastic.”

As mentioned at the outset, several of the focus group included parent-students pairs. There was a consensus among students that, while school climate is generally positive, the middle school faced the toughest challenges. Drilling down even further, middle school boys were depicted as being responsible for a disproportionate amount of mischief. Even middle school boys in the discussions did not dispute such claims. However, this does not mean that girls were not involved in misbehavior; instead, boys were more often viewed as culprits. One female high school student who volunteers as a peer mediator asserted: *“when the girls fight, it is the darkest thing you’ll ever see. When the girls argue, I don’t know what to do.”* This student later said:

“I walked into that gym when the middle school was in there and it looked like a zoo. You had kids playing basketball minding their business, you had girls back here you can hear them talking... There’s boys fighting over here, there’s girl arguing over here, there’s them playing football, them playing dodgeball.”

Another high school student recounted an incident involving middle school kids she heard about:

“One kid took his book bag and threw it down the hallway. Now that kid could say all right, he’s been picking on me so we got to take care of this situation. That’s when it progressed outside the school, like stuff happens here. Oh you snitched on me, you know? That can progress.”

Inconsistent academic challenge

Parents' perceptions of the academic rigor at Penn Treaty were also mixed, as was their students. The participants the team interviewed discussed variability in instruction between teachers and programs. For example, students and parents spoke favorably of Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) classes. (AVID is a nonprofit national college preparatory program in the upper school). As mentioned above, several parents also praised special education teachers for exemplary work. However, there was a pervasive belief that, generally, students were not pressed hard enough academically and overall rigor was lacking. There was also controversy surrounding AVID because some parents and students believed the curriculum was being watered down as enrollment in the program increased. The sentiment was that many of the newly accepted students are not as ready or interested in doing high-content college-preparatory work.

In the focus groups, the team homed in on parental academic expectations and the degree to which Penn Treaty was meeting them. This discussion did not emerge organically, as some of the above conversations, and parents reluctantly shared their concerns about rigor. An aunt, who's the caretaker of two students, stated:

"My nephew's in 11th grade; my niece is in 10th. I love Penn Treaty; I used to work here years ago. I was also a student here. However, I do not think they're getting them ready for the outside world, for their future... Definitely not getting them ready for the outside world for when they graduate and leave Penn Treaty. They're leaving that on us. It's on us for them to decide on what they can do or want to do."

Teachers themselves were also concerned about students' opportunities to learn college preparatory material. However, some viewed this as a systemic problem of urban schools and not unique to Penn Treaty. According to one teacher:

"So there's not a math class offered past algebra 2 at many high schools in the district, because that's the max math requirement. So it's algebra 1, geometry, algebra 2, and that's the math that's required.... But I'm not even asking for necessarily calculus class, but students should have a strong math and English foundation before they leave, especially if they're interested in going into things like healthcare, which a lot of students are."

Another teacher added:

"I've seen students that probably could score college benchmark level but there hasn't been reinforcement in the classroom. And, they haven't learned study skills because they haven't been required to study because they're not being challenged. There's no incentive to do well or go above and beyond if you're getting A's without trying."

Students' views about academics were not unlike teachers' and parents' perceptions. However, most of the students who participated in the focus groups self-identified as "good" students, and this likely influenced their take on perspectives about academic rigor. Still, they commented on how they believe different teachers have different standards and styles in the classroom. The two students below were both in the AVID program in the upper grades. On the topic of academic rigor, the first student replied:

"The teachers you know that want to learn, they want to teach you the right way. They're learning with you. So, Mr. B, I feel like I benefit from him a lot. I can learn, he learns with us when he's teaching. And Ms. K, it's all worth it. We complain, and we cry about it, but it's worth it."

This student further discussed her other classes as well, stating:

"I feel like the kids know what classes you have to behave in. Ms. W in our first period, for being in the morning classes they are up, they learn, she makes sure it's like that. But then, well in our health class, they think it's the end of the day, it's time to play. But then, in our last period, it's Mr. K, our history teacher. We're right back to being serious and doing the work."

This student's classmate, a 10th grade girl, sat alongside her and added:

"We never liked getting a new AVID teacher... But last year we had to get a new teacher. We never had her before. We were all thinking she wasn't going to know what to do her job was. Turned out she was like one of the head instructors of AVID."

Lack of parent involvement

Perceptions about parental involvement were mixed. Part of the challenge was defining parental involvement in a meaningful way. Many participants believed parents who seldom volunteer or come to the school, nevertheless love their children and want them to succeed. Many parents were seen as willing to work with their children at home. But there was a consensus that parental involvement in a conventional sense was lacking at Penn Treaty. However, much of the conversation centered on framing and situating the problem, rather than addressing it. One parent explained:

"You can't force parents ... You contacted me about my child's behavior, it's not a one way street. It's also my job to contact you if I feel something is off. You can't make parents be involved, if you did all these kids would have perfect behavior here. I know that numerous times parents are invited, meetings, things like that. I think parents who

care are here at all the meetings... We're dedicated to making sure Penn Treaty gets what it needs and doesn't have anything else taken away."

Other participants suggested that parents have deep-seeded challenges at home which make it difficult to fully engage in their child's schooling: According to one parent:

"I think some people have it tough. Some people really have to work their butts off; maybe numerous jobs, to support their families. Maybe they aren't there enough, at home enough to really get a grip on what's actually happening. Sometimes parents think their kids are little angels and couldn't possibly do the things that they're doing. Maybe if they could take off work? I think to be a parent you have to prioritize."

The same parent went on to say:

"You got a lot of parents themselves that failed at school, and they do everything that they can do. But there's a lot of families that are just overwhelmed. You know? I'm sure that's a reason for a lot of them not being able to do what they'd like to do. You've got aunts and uncles that are raising other people in a family. It's a lot."

The parent below told an emotional story of her experiences with her special needs child. She believes there were differences in the way in which special needs students are treated and this influences parental involvement. Her story was as follows:

"They wanted the parents to be on a committee. I was invited to something that they had for students that tested high in school. And, then even though he (her son) was in the special needs program, I guess he excelled. So they wanted us to come in and they started saying 'well, we're going develop this parent-teacher thing and we need you to volunteer.' So when after a while I said, 'okay well, I'm willing to volunteer.' When I threw out he's in special needs, how is this going to benefit him? It was like I got pushed to the back burner. Now I don't even want to do it because if it's not going to help my child, why should I take my time and do it? Even though I'm an advocate for other kids too, but it has to at least involve my child. I felt it was like when it comes to the special needs program, we don't get enough information. And we're pushed to the back burner."

SUGGESTIONS FROM PARENTS AND FAMILY MEMBERS

The focus group participants gave several suggestions for improving Penn Treaty. Recommendations the team recorded ranged in their thoughtfulness. Generally, staff members thought hard about what was missing and sought program and policy responses. For example, one teacher suggested:

“One thing I wanted to mention is I heard at some point, maybe a year or two ago during the summer, there was a lot of money spent and put towards PD (professional development) around restorative practices. I don't know that, truthfully, that's enacted all of the time. Or if it can be enacted all of the time, because it takes a lot of time and planning, and sometimes when there's an incident you don't have that time before you have to deal with something. So I think that's something that Penn Treaty could probably improve. Again, that's definitely, that's district wide. That's something that everyone's simply implementing, but you don't always see it. But I know for the most part I've seen things like discipline handled pretty fairly. Students are given some chances. They're always spoken to. Things don't just happen to them without their knowledge. They're involved in that process. They know the repercussions, and I think that is something that is strong at Penn Treaty. They're talked to about what's going on.”

Another teacher added:

“I think that the important thing that I want to make sure is on the record is I think the absolute worst thing that could happen to Penn Treaty is a significant staff or administration shake up because that takes time to cement the ... You know? Things that are going well, keep them going. It takes time to build that team dynamic, and everyone being on the same page. They say that it takes seven years of the same people working towards the same goals to actually start to see the effects, and Penn Treaty hasn't remotely been given that chance.”

Parents' suggestions echoed teacher's cautions about staffing. They also recommended extending the curriculum in various ways. For example, one parent stated:

“Bring back some of the classes. Like, my son, three years in a row, has had gym. Where's his music? Where's his art? Where's something where he can self-express. When I was in school we had workshops and home economics. There's none of that now. We are expecting these children to figure out what they want to do with their lives without any hands-on training and just throwing them out there to figure it out. When I was in middle school it was way different. We had all kinds of shops, all kind of programs, all kinds of extra-curriculars other than sports and gym. We're kind of sick of gym class.”

Another parent agreed:

“They have no extracurricular activities, not one, they don't have music, they don't have art, they don't have ... what do they have? They don't have nothing.”

Finally, a few parents recommended changes to the cell phone line and lateness policies. This policy was explained in different ways by parents and students. One parent summarized in the following way:

“There's a situation, for instance, in the morning, children stand on the line at the phone drop off. If she's late one minute, that door is closed. She has to wait, how long? She's been outside 35 minutes. I have a problem with that! If she weren't the child that she is ... she would have spun off and did something. I would have thought she's in school. But I don't have that worry with her. I think that's an issue.”

Her daughter seated beside her added:

“I will say can I sit in here? It's cold, it's raining. I want to sit in here. You can't come in until the scanner's set off already. I called my mom. I don't want to be – I'm not waiting outside 30 minutes to walk into a classroom to where I have to get a detention because I was late. And, I had to wait outside. If that scanner closed at 8:15, that one should be open by 8:20, not 8:40.”

The facilitator followed up, *“What happens in February, when it's really cold?”*

Student: *“You wait outside.”*

Facilitator: *“In February?”*

Student: *“Yeah, you wait outside, unless they feel like opening the door.”*

As mentioned at the outset, there was significant energy and concern about the health and future of Penn Treaty from parents and community members who participated in public engagement activities during fall 2017. Events at the school were well attended and participants were eager to share ideas about strengths and limitations of the school with us. Not many people disputed the idea that academic achievement has stagnated over the past three years. Still, participants identified many positive aspects of the school. In fact, many of the comments can be interpreted as a vote of confidence for school leadership and staff. This report has highlighted major strengths of Penn Treaty emerging from the data, along with perceptions of areas of concern. It also contains participants' perceptions and dreams of ways to make it better.