



Client name	School District of Philadelphia
School name	James Rhoads Elementary School
Principal name	Kelly Parker
Review date(s)	October 5 th & 6 th
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Team reviewer(s)	Mark Clarke

School Quality Review Report School District of Philadelphia

James Rhoads School

November 3, 2017

Contents

1	The School Context	1
1.1	Introduction	1
1.2	Background information about the School	1
1.3	School demographic and performance data	3
2	SQR Process and Details	4
2.1	Background on the SQR process	4
3	SQR Main Findings	5
3.1	Factors that support effective student learning:	5
3.2	Factors that limit effective student learning:	5
4	Individual Domains	7
4.1	Domain 1: Quality of Learning & Teaching	7
4.2	Domain 2: Curriculum & Assessment	9
4.3	Domain 3: Leadership, Management and Accountability	10
4.4	Domain 4: The Culture of Learning	12
4.5	Domain 5: Family and Community Engagement	12
5	Community Engagement and Feedback Focus	15
5.1	Background on Community Engagement	15
5.2	Other sections to be revised via Temple protocol	15

1 The School Context

1.1 Introduction

In October 2017, Cambridge Education was awarded a contract against RFP-499 to provide School Quality Reviews (SQRs) to six School District of Philadelphia (SDP) schools. The SQR program includes the following:

- a School Quality Review (SQR) orientation for principals
- a two-day SQR for each school
- 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). 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

School performance

2015-2016 School Progress Report for James Rhoads

Overall: 14% Intervene (increase from 4% in 2013-2014, but decrease from 15% in 2014-2015); City Rank-117th out of 138; Peer Rank-14th out of 20

Achievement: 6% Intervene (slight decrease from 9% in 2013-2014, but an increase from 3% in 2014-2015); City Rank-98th out of 138; Peer Rank-7th out of 23

The Achievement domain measures performance on standardized assessments, including PSSA, Keystone Exams, ACCESS for ELLs, and reading assessments.

Progress: 24% Intervene (increase from 0% in 2013-2014, but down from 36% in 2014-2015); City Rank-94th out of 132; Peer Rank-12th out of 19

The Progress domain measures growth on standardized assessments and progress towards graduation (for high schools only).

Climate: 12% Intervene (increase from 5% in 2013-2014 and 3% in 2014-2015); City Rank-120th out of 140; Peer Rank-12th out of 21

The Climate domain measures school climate and student and parent/guardian engagement.

Comprehensive plan

The principal shared that his instructional foci this year included; increasing the reading levels of all students in the building, increasing the use of technology in the classroom and using data to inform instruction. Teachers have recently been trained in the AIMSweb reading program, they are using DRA scores to create leveled reading groups, and the SuccessMaker program is being used to support students in improving their math skills.

Other contextual factors

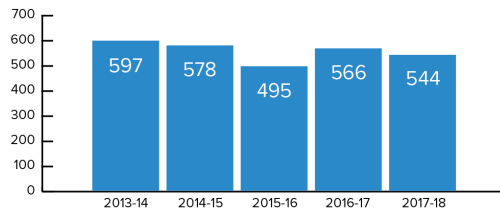
The immediate neighborhood surrounding the school is largely residential, and community members reported high crime in the area. The findings in multiple focus groups revealed that parents felt unsafe leaving their children in the playground in the morning as they waited for the breakfast program to begin. The school leader is working with staff, parents, and community members to create a safer environment around the building during morning entry and after-school dismissal.

The principal is in his first year of leadership at James Rhoads and an Assistant Principal was recently appointed to the school to share leadership responsibilities.

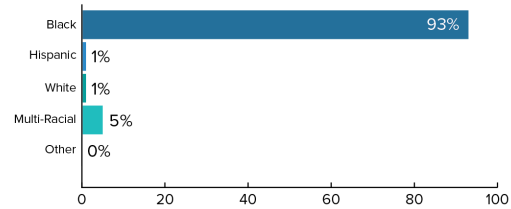
1.3 School demographic and performance data

James Rhoads Elementary At a glance

Enrollment



Race/Ethnicity Breakdown



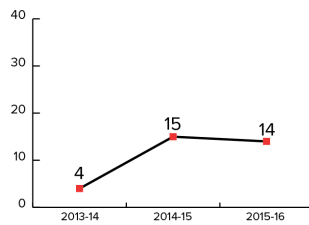
Students living in this catchment area choose to go to:

- James Rhoads (49%)
- Martha Washington (4%)
- Global Leadership Academy (4%)
- Discovery Charter School (3%)

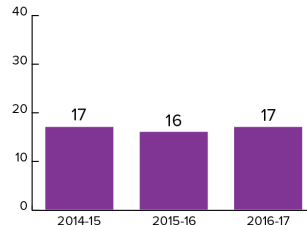
Students attending this school come from the following catchments:

- James Rhoads (73%)
- Universal @ Daroff (14%)
- Locke (2%)
- Universal @ Bluford (1%)

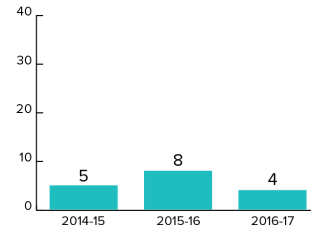
3-Year SPR Trend



ELA Achievement



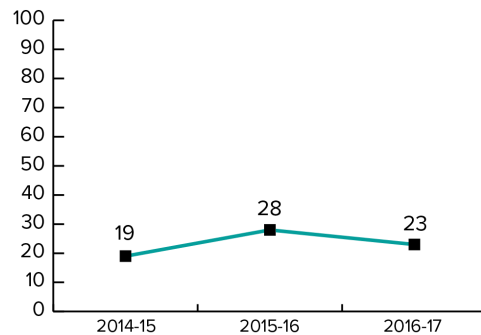
Math Achievement



% students scoring proficient or advanced on state tests (PSSA and/or Keystone)

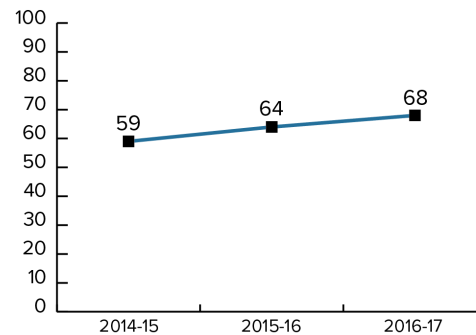
Attendance

% of students attending 95% or more of school days



Suspensions

% of students receiving zero suspensions



2 SQR Process and Details

2.1 Background on the SQR process

Meeting with the Principal

The SQR team consisted of two members – Chris Finn, Lead Reviewer and Mark Clarke, Team Reviewer. The SQR team began the process with a 1.5-hour meeting with the school principal. The principal provided background information on the school's strengths, instructional capacity, relationships with staff and families, action plan, culture, and climate.

The principal shared that his goals were linked to the district's anchor goals. One of his main goals is to increase the reading levels of all students in the building. He also shared that teachers have been trained in the AIMSweb reading program, that teachers are using DRA scores to create leveled reading groups, and that the SuccessMaker program is being used to support students in improving their math skills.

Additionally, the Principal mentioned that a strength of the school is that there is a dedicated, hard-working staff, who often come into the building on days off to plan and work together. He also stated that there is a great deal of technology used throughout the building.

Classroom visits

The SQR team visited 21 classrooms over two days. The average classroom visit was 17 minutes in duration, with a maximum of 40 minutes, and a minimum of four minutes. Four of the 21 visits were less than 15 minutes due to several factors. In one instance, a teacher interrupted the lesson to correct student misbehaviors, so the review team remained in the class for only four minutes. In another instance, the Lead Reviewer left the class and pulled the team reviewer out after seven minutes to prepare for a teacher focus group. In the third instance, the lesson concluded after 10 minutes, and in the last instance, there was a class transition after 13 minutes. The team observed lessons in English language arts, math, social studies, science, special education, and art. The team visited classrooms in every grade level.

Classrooms visited had an average of 18 students, with a maximum of 25 students and minimum of 14 students, not including the special education classes.

Focus groups

The team conducted two student focus groups, two staff focus groups, and one parent focus group. The student focus groups had eight students in each. All the students were selected to participate by the principal. The staff focus group consisted of six Kindergarten to fifth-grade teachers, two math teachers, and one elementary special education teacher. All participating staff members were chosen to participate in the focus groups by the principal.

The parent focus group included seven parents that had students in first grade, second grade, fourth grade, and fifth grade. All the parents were invited to be a part of the focus group through flyers, emails, and robocalls.

3 SQR Main Findings

(see the individual domains on the pages that follow for specific details and evidence)

3.1 Factors that support effective student learning:

- i. The school leader has developed positive relationships and open and honest communication with students, families, and staff members. Students report that the principal is kind and helpful and tries to talk to students before giving them consequences. Parents stated that he is approachable, always available, and “a good fit for the school.” Teachers state that he is “willing to listen” and that “his decisions have been in the best interest of children.” (*Domain 4, P.11*)
- ii. Teachers’ communication with families has increased since the start of the school year using an application called Class Dojo. Parents and students receive regular updates concerning their school work and behavior through the Class Dojo application. This program serves as part of their PBIS (Positive Behavior In Schools) initiative, as it allows teachers to electronically reward points to students who exhibit appropriate behaviors. When these points are accumulated, they determine if students can attend school-wide incentive trips. The program also includes an application that allows teachers to send communications to parents concerning academic supports, class updates, and behavioral concerns. (*Domain 1, P. 6*)
- iii. The administrative team and staff members engender a positive and collegial tone that works to model social expectations for students in the building. Staff members refer to themselves as a “strong community” and a “family.” The teachers support one another with instruction and school culture initiatives. (*Domain 5, P. 10*)
- iv. School leaders maintain partnerships to support student learning in the building. Groups such as University of Pennsylvania, CLI (Children’s Literacy Initiative) and OGAP (The Ongoing Assessment Project) support the academic and social development of students and teachers. University of Pennsylvania provides tutors who work with individual students, CLI works to support teachers in literacy coaching, and OGAP provides tools for teachers to assess student reading levels. (*Domain 5, P. 12*)
- v. Teachers across grade levels use technology to enhance instruction. Teachers in 17 of the 21 classrooms observed were utilizing technology in their instruction to increase the levels of student engagement in the classroom.

3.2 Factors that limit effective student learning:

- i. There is a lack of rigor in instruction throughout the building, as evidenced by low-level questioning in 17 out of 21 classrooms visited. In these classes, students were not observed being asked to explain, describe, or apply their learning throughout the great majority of class.
- ii. Instruction was not designed to meet students at their individual challenge level and, as a result, students are not receiving the instruction they need to reach their maximum academic potential. (*Domain 1, P. 6-7*)
- iii. Data is not used to for grouping students. In 5 of 21 classes, there was no evidence of DRA reading level data or AIMS web assessment data being used to form the groups. When students in two classrooms were asked; “Why are you in this group?”, one stated; “We switch groups every day” and the other responded; “I don’t know.” (*Domain 1, P. 7 & Domain 3, P.10*) (It’s important to note that our SQR walkthrough took place on October 5th and 6th, which was the 20th and 21st days of SY17-18; Consequently, the school was still in the process of administering assessments and collecting student data (i.e. DRA, AIMS Web, Gates Macginitie, Success Maker). Initially,

- student groups were created mainly by teacher observation and monitoring of student performance in the regular classroom. Currently, all pertinent assessments and collection of student baseline data is complete and can now be used for grouping of students.)
- iv. There is little evidence of formative assessment data being collected daily. In 18 out of 21 classrooms visited, there was no evidence that formative assessments (exit tickets) were used to identify concepts, identify students that required re-teaching, identify students that needed additional support to master the content, or to ensure that all students met the stated objective, as observed in the lesson plans we reviewed. (*Domain 1, P. 7*)
 - v. School leadership is not providing sufficient feedback on lesson plans. Out of 21 teachers observed, only 3 shared printed lesson plans. (It's important to note that for the month of October 2017, 27 out of 27 teachers submitted lesson plans on time. 26 out of 27 of these plans were submitted electronically. Throughout the school day, teachers access and refer to plans through the use of electronic devices (i.e. laptops, iPads, etc.). Although there were learning objectives posted in 17 out of 21 classrooms, there were just four classrooms where the learning objective was in alignment with the actual lesson being taught.
 - vi. Although the principal is performing the required number of classroom observations per day, teachers are not receiving the frequent, effective feedback needed to improve instruction and increase student learning. (*Domain 3, P. 9*)
 - vii. Teaching in mathematics is not effective, as evidenced by the lack of rigor in instruction witnessed during classroom observations. Students struggled with basic math computation in eight of the nine math classes observed, and seven out of eight students in the focus groups stated that math is "too difficult." (*Domain 2, P. 7*)

4 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.

4.1 Domain 1: Quality of Learning & Teaching

The Quality of Learning and Teaching requires intensive school-wide support

Factors that support effective student learning:

- i. Teachers manage student behavior effectively and support the social and emotional needs of students. Out of the 21 classes observed, there were only two incidents involving students that interrupted the learning process.
 - a) Teachers in 10 of 21 classes were observed using Class Dojo to address student behavior by adding or subtracting points.
 - b) Seven out of eight students in the first focus group were looking forward to the first incentive trip. Students pledged to maintain positive behavior to earn enough Class Dojo points to attend the trip.
 - c) Seven out of ten hallway transitions observed were quiet and respectful.

The implementation of Class Dojo is working to curb and re-direct disruptive student behavior. Continued use of this program could support the increase of positive behaviors displayed throughout the building. The school could continue to develop a tiered set of incentives that could encourage long-term rewards for improved grades, improved attendance and the exhibition of positive behaviors over extended periods of time.

- ii. Teachers incorporate digital technology into their lessons and they are developing technology skills to increase student engagement.
 - a) In 17 out of 21 classrooms observed, teachers were using technology to enhance their instruction by providing audio and video to support their lessons. For example, one teacher displayed a video that required students to listen carefully for directions and watch the colors on the screen change to signify a specific answer.
 - b) In the 17 classes mentioned above, teachers were observed using technology to display PowerPoints, model writing, show videos, and allow students to solve problems in front of the class. Students were eager to take their turn at the Smart Board solving problems and when asked for the opportunity to come to the board all hands were raised.

Teachers could continue to attend training sessions that would increase their technology skills to better serve their students. The school could continue to investigate intuitive technology programs that focus on math skills and allow students to use these programs after-school to increase their math skills.

Factors that limit effective student learning:

- i. There is low-level questioning utilized in most classroom instruction.
 - a) There was a heavy reliance on low level questioning, which was observed in 17 of 21 classrooms. Teachers were predominantly using recall questions, such as:
 - 1) "What is the character's name? "
 - 2) "What number goes in the front? "
 - 3) "Can you find 81? "

4) "Who can read the definition of Taino?"

In these classes, there was no evidence of students being asked to use critical thinking or problem-solving skills. In one class, the teacher solved math problems on the Smart Board while students corrected their work independently from their seats. There was no opportunity for students to ask the teacher or a partner clarifying questions about the corrections made to the math problems. In another class, the teacher played an audiobook and showed the pictures to the students. The teacher never paused to ask any questions.

The school could invest in training to build teacher's capacity to infuse more higher order thinking questions into their instruction and utilize discussion strategies to enhance the depth of classroom instruction.

ii. There is a lack of differentiation in instruction.

- a) Whole-group instruction was witnessed in 16 of 21 classes observed, with the teacher taking the lead. All students in these classes received the same work. Reviewers saw grouping in five out of 21 classes, but there was no evidence that these groups were created based on data. Two teachers shared that their groupings change randomly every day and students in different groups were working on the exact same work. Although the principal shared that using data to form instructional groups is an initiative this year, this practice was not witnessed.

Teachers could benefit from training on differentiating their instruction in the general education classroom. Providing students with instruction on their individual academic level will increase their chances to improve academically. If students were consistently grouped by academic level, teachers could better tailor instruction to meet their needs.

iii. There was little evidence of formative assessment data being used to increase student learning and enhance instruction.

- a) Although teachers are collecting data from the district-wide interim assessments, there was little evidence of daily, formative assessments.
- b) Three of 21 teachers used measurable, standards-based, exit tickets in their classes.

Coaches in the building could use common planning time to support teachers to create exit tickets that are directly aligned to their learning objectives. This would provide teachers with daily student proficiency data as they would know which students mastered the skills taught that day. This data could be used to tailor instruction for the next day, and target the students who still require further support.

iv. Evidence suggests that teachers do not consistently prepare and submit lesson plans, or refer to them during instruction.

- a) Of the 21 teachers observed, only three could readily share lesson plans.
- b) Although there were learning objectives posted in 18 out of 21 classrooms, nine of these learning objectives were not consistent with the instruction taking place.

For lessons to reach the needs of all students, they must be carefully planned and have clear objectives. Most teachers at Rhoads do not show evidence of having developed thoughtful, objective-driven lesson plans. As a result, in most classrooms, the instruction being observed does not match the stated objective.

As a next step, the school may consider workshops on enhancing lesson plans. The SBTL could lead a workshop on breaking down standards, creating standards-based learning objectives, and measurable exit tickets for each lesson.

v. Mathematics teaching requires intensive school support, as evidenced by:

- a) The school achieved 4% proficiency on the PSSA in 2017.

- b) The lack of rigor witnessed during classroom observations (see prior comments).
- c) All parents in the focus group reported that they have a great deal of difficulty supporting their children to complete math homework.
- d) Staff members responsible for professional development for teachers in mathematics reported a wide variation in their understanding of math content. While some teachers are very knowledgeable about mathematics, others suggested that their ability to effectively support instruction in this area is low.

The school could benefit from an increased investment in math instruction. Some of the primary teacher support providers in mathematics do not have the depth of content knowledge to provide effective support and feedback for colleagues. Instruction has not yet enabled students to develop the level of conceptual understanding or procedural fluency they will need to be successful on state exams or in future coursework. Further professional development in math could help math teachers across all grade levels increase their math knowledge and ability to create rigorous lessons with daily assessments. A focused and data-driven after-school math program could also support students in increasing their conceptual knowledge of the math content. Using multiple measures for math assessment could provide teachers with greater data that can be used to group students on their independent academic level.

4.2 Domain 2: Curriculum & Assessment

Curriculum & Assessment requires support in targeted areas

Factors that support effective student learning:

- i. Teachers use the district-provided scope and sequence to ensure the curriculum is aligned to state and district standards.
 - a) Teachers in both focus groups stated that they are using the district-wide curriculum with fidelity, but results are still not improving.
 - b) Reviewers observed students using the texts for Envision Math and Ready Generation reading in 14 of 21 classrooms.
 - c) Although teachers use the district-mandated curriculum, one teacher stated, “We’ve done a great deal for reading support but not enough for math.” Another teacher said, “We don’t get enough training [on the curriculum] from the district. I have to teach myself and then teach the students.”
 - d) Four parents conveyed that they struggle to support their children with the math homework, and they would like to attend workshops where parents can learn how to effectively help the children at home.

Teachers could benefit from additional support to better prepare them to provide effective instruction, particularly in math. A district coach could come to the school and provide further support during the school day or after-school. A teacher leader who attends this PD along with the SBTL could turn-key this information to staff and support their learning on a continual basis.

- ii. The district benchmark assessments are given to students on a quarterly basis.
 - a) All teachers in focus groups shared that they are administering the district-wide benchmark assessment to students.

The school’s use of the district assessments provides data on student learning at all grade levels in math, science, and English language arts. This data shows the areas where students excel and the areas where students struggle. Implementing daily formative assessments would further promote understanding of student need between district mandated assessments.

Factors that limit effective student learning:

- i. Although teachers use the district mandated curriculum, the instruction delivered does not contain the appropriate level of rigor to sufficiently increase student learning.
 - a) There were many observed lessons where opportunities to engage students in a dialogue about the task were unrealized.
 - b) Students have limited opportunities to complete projects that require synthesis of information or application of knowledge. Only two out of the 16 students interviewed reported that they completed projects in class this year.
 - c) Eight of the 16 students interviewed reported that they do not feel like they are being prepared for high school.

Teachers could benefit from deeper training in project-based learning or developing lessons that require engagement in long-term activities such as science investigations, research papers, or group projects. These activities, along with deeper questioning and academic differentiation, could work to increase the levels of rigor across all grade levels.

4.3 Domain 3: Leadership, Management and Accountability

Instructional Leadership requires support in targeted areas

Factors that support effective student learning:

- i. The principal has established an observation and feedback schedule that permits him to observe at least one teacher per day, and he has communicated his schedule to staff.
 - a) The principal communicated his observation schedule, and teachers reported that they are aware of the schedule.
 - b) Even though school had only begun just over a month earlier, three of the nine teachers interviewed in focus groups reported they had been observed and received feedback from Principal Parker.

The principal has established a schedule for observation and feedback, and has remained committed to following through on his scheduled observations. However, this may not be sufficient to gather essential information about the quality of learning that will allow plans to be created to improve teacher practice and enhance student progress. As a next step, the leader should consider exploring methods and processes that will allow him (or other school leaders) to significantly increase the frequency of observations and feedback sessions.

Factors that limit effective student learning:

- i. The school leadership team is not monitoring or providing effective feedback on lesson plans. Just two of the nine teachers interviewed shared that they received meaningful feedback on their lesson plans.

The school leadership team should review lesson plans on a weekly basis. When monitoring lesson plans, the school leaders could ensure that teachers are using data to create leveled grouping for instruction. As a next step, the school could consider creating a process and set of expectations for lesson plans to be routinely reviewed, with written feedback, and monitored for implementation with fidelity in the classrooms.

- ii. The school leadership team is not effectively monitoring the implementation of data-driven instruction throughout the building.
 - a) Four of the nine teachers interviewed remarked that they need more support to use data to drive instruction.
 - b) The principal shared, "This is another one of my goals for this year - getting teachers to use the data to guide their instruction."
 - c) Although reviewers saw student groups in five of the 21 classes observed, there was no

evidence of data being used to form the groups. When one student in a 5th grade class was asked, "Why are you in this group?" he replied, "I don't know."

Although data is being collected, instructional staff are not effectively using data to inform their classroom instruction. The school leader could also collect daily assessment data to get a closer look at what skills students have mastered and what areas need further support. If the school leadership models and monitors this process for staff, teachers could enhance their understanding and use of this process.

Management and Accountability requires support in targeted areas

Factors that support effective student learning:

- i. The principal communicates a clear, strategic vision for the school. The vision is that the school needs to improve math scores and all students should be reading on grade level by third grade.
 - a) The principal described the roles and responsibilities of the leadership team and how the assistant principal, SBTL, and coaches support instruction. They are all charged with formally and informally observing instruction and providing teachers with constructive feedback to improve their pedagogy.
 - b) Teachers in both focus groups relayed their understanding of the academic expectations for this school year and stated that they must improve math scores and support all students in reading on grade level by the third grade.

The principal has communicated the academic expectations to school staff and is currently developing methods to share this information with parents on a continuous basis. The principal could communicate this plan to parents and community stakeholders by holding a meeting where he clearly outlines his academic plan for success. He could also enlist these groups as partners in the mission to increase learning for all students.

- ii. The principal models high expectations for the staff and families of the students he serves.
 - a) The principal established positive relationships with students, staff members, and parents. His interactions with all stakeholders exhibit a commitment to academic excellence and exemplary behavior for all. He shares openly with students, parents, and staff his wanting the best for all students and models a strong work ethic that he believes will lead the school to academic success,
 - b) Teachers shared that the principal sets high expectations by staying consistently visible in the schoolyard and hallways, coming into the school to work on off days, and clearly communicating with students and parents.

Teachers, parents, and students all related their personal interactions with Principal Parker, and shared that he wants the best outcomes for all stakeholders. The principal could show his continued commitment to academic excellence by prominently displaying school data throughout the school and regularly reporting this data to students, staff, and parents. He could also include data and benchmark goals in his continuous conversations with teachers and the leadership team.

Factors that limit effective student learning:

- i. A rigorous plan to address the deficiencies in math instruction has not yet been developed.
 - a) From observing lessons, we see that the building staff does not currently have sufficient content knowledge and pedagogical skill to prepare upper-grade students for high school.
 - b) The newly appointed math lead is skilled, but has a teaching schedule that limits opportunities to support teachers in the building.
 - c) There is currently only one online support system for math. This provides teachers with only one additional math data point outside of the district-wide assessment to use to inform their instruction.

To better support math instruction, the school could invest in more online math intervention programs or develop an after-school math tutoring program that focuses solely on math support. The school programming could be adjusted to allow the math lead to have time to teach model lessons, plan with teachers, and provide greater on-site coaching support during the school day. The district could also provide a math coach to visit the school and support teachers on a regular basis.

4.4 Domain 4: The Culture of Learning

The Culture of Learning is Established

Factors that support effective student learning:

- i. The principal, teachers, and staff members promote and foster positive relationships with members of the school community.
 - a) Parents in the focus group report that the school staff members are caring, and they work hard to support the academic and social needs of their children. One parent stated, “The teachers are awesome here. They definitely care about our kids.” Another parent reported, “My daughter’s teacher is very kind. She reaches out to me almost every day.”
 - b) Students in both focus groups described positive relationships with teachers. All students stated that they had an adult in the building that they can go to if they need support with personal issues. One student said, “My teacher is nice. If we earn enough points, our class will earn a party.”
 - c) Two staff members were posted at the front door of the school on both days of the on-site visit. They welcomed parents and visitors in the building in a friendly manner.

Positive relationships are a hallmark of the school, and all stakeholders believe that there is a positive culture. School staff members can continue to build relationships with students, families, and community stakeholders to ensure a welcoming environment for all.

Factors that limit effective student learning:

- i. Some of the parents and students interviewed said that they did not always feel safe around the building, particularly in the morning during student drop-off.
 - a) Five out of eight students in a focus group said that they do not always feel safe around the school, especially in the morning. One student said, “There are shootings in this neighborhood and this area is not always safe.”
 - b) Some parents in the focus group mentioned that they did not feel safe leaving their children in the playground in the morning. Two parents shared that they are often late for work because they don’t feel comfortable leaving their children outside until they see the principal or a teacher that they know. One parent related, “This neighborhood has gangs.”
 - c) Two students in focus groups said they would feel safer with more security. When parents were asked what they would change about the school, two parents replied that they would appreciate more security around the school, especially in the morning.

The school could provide more adults on the playground in the morning as students arrive. For example, a few building aides could report an hour earlier and leave an hour earlier to ensure that there are adults to monitor the students as they arrive. This could alleviate the safety concerns of the students and parents.

4.5 Domain 5: Family and Community Engagement

Family and Community Engagement is Established

Factors that support effective student learning:

i. School leaders and staff regularly communicate with families to build collaborative relationships.

- a) One parent shared that the parent communication is, "Awesome." Another parent said that her child's teacher, "...reaches out to me through the Class Dojo." This parent pulled out her phone and showed this reviewer a communication she had with this teacher. One parent of a 4th grade student shared, "My child's teacher reaches out to me, daily."
- b) Four parents in the focus group mentioned that flyers and phone calls keep parents informed of student attendance, behavior, and other important academic progress.

All parents in the focus group believe that the level of communication between them and the school has improved since the new principal joined the school. This level of communication enhances the school community. The school could continue to keep parents informed of academic needs so they can better assist the students at home.

ii. The recently-hired Principal has developed positive relationships with parents.

- a) All parents in the focus group shared that they have a positive rapport with the new principal. One stated, "He talks to parents." Another parent reported, "He is very approachable and always available," while another said, "He is often out in the school yard with the kids." Another stated, "He's a good fit for this school," and, "He reaches out to parents and asks them what they think."
- b) Parents in the focus group unanimously agreed that the new principal was a great addition to the school. Several parents stated they were pleased with the way that he addresses issues and listens to their concerns. One parent stated, "The last principal would never listen to me. He avoided me when I would come to his office. (The new principal) takes the time to listen when I have a concern."

The principal could enhance his communication with parents by creating a monthly forum, where he shares academic concerns. He could communicate benchmark goals for the school as far as attendance and academic achievement are concerned. This would make parents better aware of the school-wide expectations and the part that they play in helping to achieve them.

iii. The school has developed some collaborative partnerships with external agencies to support academic and social development of students. Examples of these partnerships include University of Pennsylvania, CLI (Children's Literacy Initiative), Penn Tutors (Penn students come to the building to tutor students), Art Well (a grant used to support art and poetry in the school), and OGAP (The Ongoing Assessment Project).

- a) Teachers interviewed discussed using resources from CLI to support them in their instruction.
- b) Three students in a focus group mentioned that they planned to go to the Penn Mobile Dental Van for a dentist visit the following week.

The partnerships mentioned above support teachers' instructional capacity and the health and welfare of the students in the building, thus contributing to a positive and caring school environment. The school could seek out and acquire greater support with math instruction and look to the local high schools and colleges to provide more math tutoring for students.

Factors that limit effective student learning:

i. School leaders are not collaborating with parents to help make decisions in the school. Parents shared that there is no functioning SAC (school advisory council) that could serve as a venue to voice their opinions on school decisions. With no SAC, parents feel that they have no voice.

- a) Two parents reported that they are willing to join a SAC and help organize events with the school, but they do not know if an organization like this exists.

The parents interviewed in the focus group expressed a willingness to provide greater support to the school if the opportunities are available. They seek further guidance to create these formal systems of support. The school could re-visit the SAC group in the school and provide them with space to hold their meetings. This group could serve as the voice of the parents and a representative could bring parent concerns to the school leadership in a formal manner.

