



THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF
PHILADELPHIA

Feedback and Findings Meeting Avery D. Harrington School

November 27, 2018

SYSTEM OF GREAT SCHOOLS
creating great schools close to where all children live



Agenda

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



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

- Some schools need more support so that children can have the learning opportunities they deserve.
- Harrington has been prioritized for additional funding and support to quickly create better learning opportunities.
- Your feedback and school data help us understand school strengths, challenges, and ways to improve.



As we work to improve student outcomes, we believe...

- All students can learn and achieve.
- There is a need for support and room for improvement.
- Improvement is possible.
- All stakeholders have a perspective that needs to be respected.
- The work of school improvement is urgent and is a shared responsibility.



What are the recommendation options for additional funding and support?

Enter into the Acceleration Network

- ✓ Defined improvement model
- ✓ Summer planning time
- ✓ Common network supports
- ✓ Keep and hire best staff

Develop Academic Improvement Plan

- ✓ Customized improvement model
- ✓ Commitment to deeper planning in spring
- ✓ Self-selected school supports
- ✓ Strong leader and leadership team

Note: School closure and becoming a charter school are NOT options



Where are we in the process?



Aug-Sept

Sept-Nov

Dec-mid Jan

late Jan-early Feb

Feb-Mar

SGS focus schools
selected and
announced

Data gathering

Data analysis

School
recommendations
announced
(after new SPR
release)

Planning and
budgeting

Selection based on:

- 3-year SPR trend
- Current interventions

- Focus group feedback
- School quality review
- Feedback and findings meetings conclude data gathering phase

- School teams and central office review data

Two options:

- Acceleration Network
- Academic Improvement Plan

- Supports for Academic Improvement Plan begin
- Principal and teacher hiring process begins for Acceleration Network
- Allocate funding for SY19-20



What data did we gather?

Focus group feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● 4 focus group meetings● 64 attendees● 29 family members
School Quality Review (SQR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● 2 day whole school review● Visited every classroom for average of 25 minutes● Principal, teacher, and student interviews● Reviewed student work
School level data	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Attendance, suspensions, district-wide survey● PSSA, reading levels, grades, benchmarks



How did we organize the information?

1) Instruction

2) School culture, climate

3) Leadership and systems



Findings: Instruction

Practices that Support Student Learning

- Structures are in place in classrooms and around the school to post objectives, agendas, standards and learning goals.
- Timing is clear and tight for all instructional blocks.
- Leadership acknowledges the need to prioritize a focus on instruction going forward and that students are ready for more rigorous instruction.
- There is a core group of teachers and support staff that have deep historical knowledge of students and the community.

Practices that Limit Student Learning

- There were limited demonstrations of students understanding the targeted learning goals.
- Strategies to differentiate learning were used inconsistently in classrooms.
- Not all instruction was aligned to grade level expectations.
- The Academic vision is currently too broad.



Family Feedback: Instruction - Strengths

“So I know that one of my favorite projects that I got to do when I was in middle school was ... to make cells out of candy, and then that was pretty cool.” --Student

“As far as the teachers, they focus more on teaching the children subjects. I see that even when my daughter has a problem, the current teacher, math teacher that she has now...he does take the time to actually teach the work. He's very good at his job.” --Harrington Parent

“Unfortunately my daughter suffered that fate last year, because they could not keep a seventh grade teacher. So, the eighth grade teachers that we have now, are outstanding. They're playing catch up, pretty much doing seventh and eighth grade...” --Harrington Parent

“For the autistic support children and teachers, it's a positive that they work together. My grandson had the same teacher for three years and they go by age but his former teacher is still involved. I don't know if that's a policy or on her own but she stays involved, and they do a lot of things together.” --Harrington Grandparent

“...[She] could not read three years ago. Now, she's reading, she's more engaging, she comes home, she wants to do her homework, she wants to impress her teacher, and I'm just loving it.” --Harrington Parent



Family Feedback: Instruction - Challenges

“That’s my biggest complaint. I just feel like, he should be able to get more. I feel like we should be able to do more. I know it’s hard but that’s my dilemma or our dilemma.” --Harrington Parent

“... my daughter, she always been on honor roll from kindergarten all the way up until now. Her PSSA is in math (was low) because they did not have a math teacher. In sixth grade, the math teacher left in January. So they kind of really fell off. And she struggled. So she went below basic, and that’s never been a problem.” --Harrington Parent

“... my daughter like I said she goes here, she’s a fifth grader. She’s been struggling a lot, and I think it’s because of the atmosphere of how the school was last year.” --Harrington Parent

“I kid you not. Everybody is failing for iReady because their grading system doesn’t make any sense. I go back, I pass a lesson, and they make me have to pass more... it’s like they don’t want me to win, and that’s just messing up my grade completely.” --Student

“I know counselors feel really overwhelmed with very urgent issues that students are facing in terms of emotional support, or things that are going on in their lives and so ... It almost seems like you kind of need a dedicated person to like manage all of that stuff. The application stuff.” --Harrington Parent



Findings: School Climate, Culture

Practices that Support Student Learning

- Students believe that adults provide a physically safe space for learning.
- A core group of teachers and support staff have important historical knowledge of students and the community.
- Students are aware of behavioral expectations for the school and understand the class Dojo system.
- Students and staff were able to clearly talk about the need for everyone to feel accepted and respected in the school.

Practices that Limit Student Learning

- Physical safety is in place in the building, but there is room for improvement to make all students feel welcomed and cared for in order to maximize their learning.
- There is not a fully built system for rewards/consequences that is implemented consistently schoolwide.
- Students and staff do not always feel they can suggest changes or take risks that would positively affect themselves and the school.



Family Feedback: School Culture - Strengths

“I went through a lot of bullying and I believe that ever since Mr. Dixon came, he's taught the teachers to pay more attention to things that happen in the classroom instead of just having them half teach or doing whatever they would do. I'm paid more attention to and stuff like that, and I feel as though I'm respected.” --Student

“They (students) have a lot of warnings. Because sometimes people just act out. You don't know what they're going through at home, and this might be their only outlet. So I might say the wrong thing to someone at the wrong time, they don't mean to, but they might lash out. But it's not like, ‘Okay, you did this, you're suspended.’” --Harrington Parent

“... drama happens when it happens, but it gets nipped in the bud right away here. And this school is more of a family home.” --Student

“You have to prepare these kids for a job... I'm a vet technician. But, usually I'm in scrubs and you have to learn to be in uniform. You dress up nicely to go a job and can't be in ripped jeans and this is hangin' out... That's why I'm so glad my oldest daughter started uniforms.” --Harrington Parent



Family Feedback: School Culture - Challenges

“There was even a time where she was scared to go to the bathroom in here because you had girls looking over the stalls on top.” --Harrington Parent

“... I feel as though if you go to other schools and you walk through them you see art, it's not just plain wall and marble all over it. That's how it is here. It was though, if we had paintings or some sort of color, it would brighten up the students and have them actually excited to see what they're going to see when they come to school.” --Student

“Air conditioning and better lunches. Sorry, I'm beatin' that thing like a dead horse... With the Title I money, we needed to have school assemblies to teach these kids as far as like stranger danger, stop bullying, be aware of your surroundings.” --Harrington Parent

“The crossing guard...has taken home several children because they were not allowed in the school because they did not have uniforms on... Just absurd.” --Harrington Parent

“...This lady came flyin' around the corner. Next thing I see the parent flippin' up in the air. I'm surprised she didn't get the kid too. But then the guy, he laid stomach, got up, and then she took him and put him in his car and took him to the hospital. I was like, 'are you kidding me right now?'" --Harrington Parent



Family Feedback: Family and Community - Strengths

“We have our SAC meetings and stuff like that. We put it on robo-call. Even the meeting for today, this room should be packed...” --Harrington Parent

“I'm a committee person here in this area also. So, it's a conversation that we can also have at our board meetings. To try to get the committee people and the block captains to say, look, you got a child at Harrington, here's when the next meeting is.” --Community Member



Family Feedback: Family and Community - Challenges

“The school had been unfriendly to the neighborhood... We're not even on the same page in terms of our collective consciousness.” --Harrington Parent

“But once they (parents) see things that we're asking for are not getting done, they're like, ‘what's the point? I'm not coming back tomorrow.’” --Harrington Parent

“The community can do some things, outside the community, but, when we're talking about getting parents involved. It has to start in the school. If you have one teacher identify one parent in the classroom that they have a good relationship with, and you have 23 classrooms in that school. That's 23 parents that you can start with.” --Harrington Parent

“I'm a single mother... You don't have that much time from the time they get in to the time they got to eat. Thank God I just have one; I have my daughter. It is time consuming. Trying to get my daughter to enjoy it and to want to do it because after school she's like, ‘I'm exhausted, I don't know if I could do this.’”-- Harrington Parent



Findings: Leadership and systems

Practices that Support Student Learning

- Some systems are in place for various meetings – leadership team, teacher teams meetings, and opportunities for collaboration.
- Clear schedule and structure for movement between classrooms and other transitions.
- Students and staff understand what is expected of them in terms of culture/climate.

Practices that Limit Student Learning

- Systems are not yet fully integrated throughout the school.
- Classroom, hallway transitions, and bathroom breaks are lengthy and eat up instructional time.
- Few students and staff identified that they receive feedback and recognition for meeting expectations.
- Not all staff could communicate school-wide goals and areas of focus.



Family Feedback: Leadership - Strengths

“Now that Mr. Dixon is here. He's made the school a better place.” --Student

“I think with the new Principal that's there now, he did a lot of shaking up, and it was like, if you're not going to teach, then you're not going to be here. We did lose some good ones that probably just could not take some of the rules that he was setting”
--Harrington Parent

“Mr. Dixon's more stern, in a good way. Instead of being lenient, you know, like, ‘take your hoodies off when you come in the door. You're supposed to be in uniforms,’ stuff like that, which was so lenient before. It drove me crazy.” --Harrington Parent

“Every time I tried to get the other principal to do something she thought, “Oh, we can't do this. Parents are not going to want to do that... And now... this principal is like the sky has opened up finally. I can see the daylight.” --Harrington Parent

“Mr. Dixon came. It was difficult, and I saw him battle, but he got it done. He insisted that this became a place of learning, and he stood his ground. I was really pleased with that, and I'm still pleased with it.” -- Harrington Parent

“Well I can say everyone is pretty much a leader. He does have leaders here. Whereas before you'll find someone wanting to hide behind the curtain, or blend in the crowd with the kids, and that's how I think a lot of things became chaotic here. I think some of the teachers wanted to be invisible.” --Harrington Parent



Family Feedback: Leadership - Challenges

There was considerable discussion about the effectiveness of Harrington's leadership team in each of the focus groups. The overwhelming consensus was Principal Dixon represented an overall positive change for the school. Without prompting, participants stressed the various ways he has made a difference. Parents, students, and community members made it clear there was a difference between life before and after Mr. Dixon's arrival. There was optimism and hope for continual improvement.

The main challenge was the leadership team's ability to balance the need for order and schoolwide structure with forgiveness and second chances for students who need them.



What are the next steps?



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Our children's potential is limitless.

- Each school has unique strengths and challenges.
- The goal for all children and all schools is the same:

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