



College of Education  
TEMPLE UNIVERSITY®

**System of Great Schools  
School District of Philadelphia  
Robert E. Lamberton School  
Parent, Family & Community Input Report  
December 2018**

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## Introduction

In the fall of 2018, the Philadelphia School District in partnership with Temple University embarked on a school review process. Temple University Urban Education faculty and graduate students took the lead in the development, data collection, and analysis of parent and community experiences with the three target schools. This report represents a synopsis of the major themes from the focus groups conducted at Robert E. Lamberton School.

## Data Collection and Analysis

Between October 10th and November 15th, the research team visited Lamberton for seven events: four school-based focus groups, two community-based focus groups, and a Feedback and Findings meeting. According to the District's Family and Community Engagement (FACE) team, there were 63 attendees across all of the events who participated in the feedback process with 23 of those being parents and other family members and caretakers of Lamberton students. On each occasion the same interview protocol was used (see Appendix A). In response to insights that an after-dinner start time for the focus groups might be better from some community members who work, and at the request of community members, our team scheduled the two community focus group meetings at a local church with a 7:00 pm start time. Those groups were made up primarily of people who live in the vicinity of the school but do not currently have students attending Lamberton, with the exception of three Lamberton parents who were also in attendance. It is the case for many of the community members that either they or their children attended Lamberton in the past. It is also the case that many of them have worked in schools in Philadelphia and elsewhere either presently or in the past. Many of the community members have kept up their ties with what is going on at the school through civic associations they belong to, such as: Overbrook Park Civic Association, Haverford Avenue Business Association, Overbrook Town watch and the Overbrook Park Free Library branch.

The goal in conducting the focus groups was to understand how parents and community members experienced Lamberton, what they saw as its strengths and challenges, and what suggestions they had for its improvement. In addition to discussing academics, climate, leadership, and parental involvement, the team also spoke to parents and community members about additional issues that they raised that were important to them. Lori Shorr attended every event as lead facilitator and was assisted by Temple graduate students and on one occasion by Temple faculty member Will Jordan. The conversation at each meeting was recorded and transcribed by a professional transcription service.

Analysis involved multiple steps. First, after conducting the focus groups, the team then read the transcripts, making notes about key themes and important issues. Next the team created a coding system, which included such codes as "Academics," "General Climate," "School Safety," "Leadership," etc. 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 the school 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 appear in the feedback and findings presentation and, in greater depth, in this report.

In this report, the team lays out findings, summarizes data across key issues and uses quotes from parents to illustrate the points. Each topic discussed here surfaced at multiple sessions and was voiced by several parents. For each, the team assessed the extent to which parents and community members generally agreed on the issue or whether or not there were opposition perspectives. The examples that appear in this report are not the only instances of parents or community members speaking on a particular topic. Rather, they were chosen because they are especially clear, best represent parents' perspectives, or raise issues for further analysis.

The importance of this work is that policy-makers are able to hear the voices of many parents and community members, recognizing that they have important knowledge to add to the discussion of how to make this school better for the students. In essence, we asked them in many different ways, what is and what is not working in the school. For that reason, this report is, in essence, a collection of curated quotes that represent the most often cited insights on those questions with only limited context -setting and aggregating comments by the researchers. All quotes are from parents unless otherwise indicated.

## Summary of Findings

### **Major Areas of Strength:**

- New leadership
- Informed and eager community groups

### **Major Areas of Concern:**

- Student safety due to chaotic climate
- High staff turnover in the leadership and teaching staff
- Lack of responsiveness by school staff
- Lack of community and parent communication regarding school-based programs

### **Suggestions for Improvement:**

- More extra curricular programming
- Clean and renovate school facilities and basic supplies
- Increase partnerships

## Major Areas of Strength

During the focus groups parents spoke passionately about both the strengths and weaknesses in their school. There were various moments in which the parents highlighted some of the strengths at Lamberton School. The following represent some of those comments in order of how often they were mentioned:

### 1. New Leadership

**Parents most often cited the quality of the new leadership at Lamberton as one of its greatest strengths**

*“The one strength I do see is the new principal.”*

*“She came, she introduced herself and I spoke with her, talked to her and she seemed nice. She's pretty nice. She's really interested in the children and their progress and everything. She says she hopefully be able to make a change at Lamberton so she was real positive. She was in the yard and it wasn't like, just scattered. The kids weren't scattered everywhere. She had them lined up and so it was a change from last year, not much but it's a change.”*

*“The new principal was more willing and made herself available to the community more than the past three principals we've had in four years roughly, which is not good anyway, but it was close to impossible to get in touch with them as much as we tried to. This new principal got hired, came to a community meeting, and then availed herself to us for questions and comments. So I think that's a good thing.*

*“I see the principal in the yard every morning. And more and more kids are coming on time. They're in line. It looks more organized. When I come in the building, okay, there's not a bunch of people running around. There's people in their classrooms. The teachers are coming out and they're grabbing their kids. Changing the environment of the school is hard. It's hard. It's very, very hard. But they're trying.”*

*“Still limited time here this year, this school year, so I don't see the running and the chaos that I saw the latter part of last year. I already know the principal from the meetings and when she spoke and I have not spoken to her one on one so far so good. And I understand that she takes time with the students and every day to talk about behavior and that sort of thing.”*

*“I met the principal because there was a problem. But it was right away I was contacted. It didn't prolong.”*

*“She's putting her foot in his behind and trying to make sure that he gets where he needs to be. So I thought that was good.”*

*“It seems like this year [she] has the children's interest. So that's I think is an improvement from what I experienced last year.”*

*“Leadership-I would say um, I wasn’t here last year but that the way they lined up in the morning, and how quiet they were, and how kids are there on time. Everyone was quiet, everyone was in line, she doesn’t even need a bull horn. You can just talk to her in a regular just outside voice, and its quiet. Everybody is attentive.”*

## **2. Strong Community Commitment**

**In addition to parents, there are some strong neighborhood community groups that are committed to helping the school improve.**

**Community members indicated, via the transcripts and by showing up for the focus groups, that they are an asset when considering school improvement. Local community members, as well as parents, often bring up the fact that Lambertton was, at one time, “one of the best schools in Philly” and that people purchased homes in the catchment area to access this school. Their interest in the school seems to be, in many ways, anchored in this memory and the belief that it could be such a school again:**

*“I have seen so many principals come and go, you know, so I make sure at least we’ve got your back, the community, we’ve got you. You can feel comfortable, you know what I mean?” - community member*

*“We’re parents and stakeholders around the table with the principal in helping make those good decisions because we can make better decisions because these are our children for one, you know, their first teachers, the parents. And they’re in our community. So we know what our children need. So it’s like that is being heard, but they’re not taking it seriously.” - community member*

*“So I have some experience in the education arena. And I understand Lambertton is in a lot of need, so I’m just here to try and help.” - community member*

*“I’m here to do whatever I can to help out, as a neighbor. I don’t know what I can do, because work during the day, but anything on the weekends, I would be more than willing to help out with any kids.” - community member*

*“Cause we have grandchildren and there may be an opportunity or a time that they may need to come and stay with grandparents and go to school. And that would be one of the places that I would love to send them because it’s within walking distance from where we live.” - community member*

*“But you still have people here, so it’s spread through the community that we needed some people here to talk about the school. So it’s not all on the parents. It’s on all of us.” - community member*

*“I actually met with the principal... I came in through a community meeting and I gave an idea about bringing a STEM program to the school, so then I had some subsequent meetings with her, and we were supposed to be gearing up, and I, and then she just*

*became non-responsive. And then I learned that she retired and never communicated it. And then I tried to follow up with who was going to be the new principal, and the administration was, from my view, just dysfunctional. And so you know, I just stepped away from it and we later was able to form a relationship so now we're doing a program at the library. But it could have worked out where we were doing, we were doing that program inside of Lamberton.” - community member*

## **Major Areas of Concern**

Parents had some concerns they wanted the administration to know and understand. These are listed in order of how often they were mentioned:

### **1. Student safety due to chaotic school climate**

**Parents see a chaotic climate in the school and believe this is a major factor in producing an unsafe environment where their children are being bullied and in too many cases physically injured:**

**Here is what they had to say about what they believe to be a chaotic environment in the school;**

*“No real structure. The children knew the teachers didn't have the support.”*

*“Kids always in the hallway, kids slamming doors, teachers walking out, instability of the teachers.”*

*“And that's why I'm here to try and help with maybe getting more security or something because it's just, at times it can be a hostile environment.” - community member*

*“I thought the kids were just out in the hallway because it was the end of the school year, parents were like, ‘No, they were doing that all year.’ So that's my main concern is the safety.”*

*“Lunchtime, it gets crazy down in the lunchroom. And even from what I see after school, it's fights everywhere in the school yard. I'm talking to the teacher just last week, two little boys were fighting, one's stomping on the other, I'm leaving the parking lot and they're coming out the side and they're fighting.”*

*“There's not enough resources that being used to make sure the place is safe. Climate, they're .. It's like they're using the minimum resources and the minimum level of professionals to handle the climate they built in and this is a big problem.”*

*“There's so much drama, fighting all the time and not only does it affect the children's ability to learn, it also affects the adults ability, the culture you see, you'll see that teacher's have got a problem with the principal, teacher's got a problem with these teachers over here, it's just a complete mess. It's a complete mess.”*

**Here is a longer back and forth between three parents and a community member on how they see the climate in the school:**

Speaker 1: *I think, well from our son's perspective, it's a little out of control. He explains that there's times like in the classroom where he feels bad for the teacher because of how bad the kids are being. And the same thing with lunch too, right?*

Speaker 2: *Lunch, recess, lack of...*

Speaker 1: *Like a madhouse.*

Speaker 3: *Are there adults in the lunchroom?*

Speaker 4: *I think there's one, maybe sometimes. Like, I find the climate very frustrating for me as an adult, I can't imagine being a student in there trying to learn.*

Speaker 2: *I think that the teachers though, like I said, we like the teachers. So I think that the teachers are dedicated, you know they're...*

Speaker 1: *They're trying I think.*

Speaker 2: *Oh yeah, they're trying.*

Speaker 1: *I agree, it's just too much for one teacher. There's, there used to be learning, there used to be aides in the classrooms, and they took those aides out. Since then, I've seen the environment change. You know my daughter started kindergarten there was aides in kindergarten and the first grade, and it was beautiful, wonderful. And then they took them out, and it just went downhill, it really did.*

Speaker 2: *I think the school district had some cuts and they took one of the nurses out, the aides out, and that affected a lot of the environment there. Absolutely. "*

**Parents and community members also see a lack of monitoring adults who come in to the building and children leaving the building unattended as an urgent safety issue.**

*"I walked in the school one day to get my coat, I had been in a meeting in the auditorium. I walked right in. There was no one at the front door, and I worked in school with irate parents that came in to attack the teacher or pull a kid out, so until something happens nobody sees the need of just a person to sit there or be there. Security." - community member*



*“Okay. Well, I've been over at Lamberton quite a few times. And just what this lady just said, as far as security, there's none. You can walk in. As far as certain doors, even though you might have just the main door, you're supposed to get buzzed in. But if a student can open up the door, and you can walk right on in, there's no one right there, once you come inside the school. Also, I think it's one, two, three, about six different entrances you can come in from the school. And I think a lot of it has to do with the school is short staffed. You have a lot of the teachers there that're not permanent. You have a lot of substitute teachers there. They finally just got a principal there that's kind of concerned, that's trying to make a change. So this been going on since about 2007, and now we're in 2018.” - community member*

*“One young lady told me that her autistic son, she said that her son was left out of the school. He walked from there to McDonald's. A little six year old, nonverbal. He crossed that intersection up there. The people at McDonald's were asking, 'What's your name?' He's nonverbal, he's not going to speak. I was petrified. See what I do, I wait, I'll make sure I don't care if the teacher standing there or not. I make sure my grandson gets inside the school, I'm peeping, he's already in the classroom he's supposed to go. I check all that to make sure he's safe.”*

*“Kids go in the hall, running out of classrooms, Even running off campus, making their way back home during the school day.”*

*“When I pull up to pick up my kids and say it's like two o'clock, I'm waiting, it's kids outside. Playing in the school yard, running out the door. There's kids on this side, running out the door.”*

*“Last year, apparently he got in some trouble in the classroom, the teacher told him to go to another classroom and another teacher. He claimed the teacher wasn't there. I don't know if that was true or not, but he wined up outside with the other kids, you know, another group who were out for recess. There was a fight. It just so happened I took off of work that day, I was home. And somehow he said he got stepped on, got on the ground and he got stepped on the head and he came home. He left during school hours and came home.”*

*“I sat there for a whole week at the front and said 'listen, we've got to have somebody at the front door. We cannot have people in and out of the building, the kids are coming in, right up the stairs, and then you see them come right back down.’” - community member*

**The following quotes all are parents talking about the importance of safety and the physical harm that has come to their children in the school:**

*“And third grade was a horrible year. I was here at least six times a week because people were putting their hands on my child.”*

*“Within a week, he's coming home and every day he's getting kicked. And there is no consequences to these kids.”*

*“There's issues on the playground, there's issues in the hallway, in the classroom. He's been punched in the stomach just waiting in line in the cafeteria. The abuse is constant. And obviously, there's always name-calling and stuff like that. But it's the touching with the hand that's the real issue.”*

*“I think a negative is, right now, my top negative is the safety, safety and security. I, you know, my daughter got in a big fight in the common area, she's not that type of kid. She's very to herself, and you know, her and a girl are pulling hair, fighting, punching, and I was like, ‘Whoa!’, there's nobody around and school had just let out. You know, it's a lack of safety and security and she, you know, she's scared.”*

*“I spoke to a couple of other parents and they had issues with the same bullying. I dropped them off every morning. I don't want to drop them off and that's what I'm dropping them off into. I need to know that they're safe at the least because I will homeschool them. Just to keep them safe.”*

## **2. High Levels of Staff Turnover**

High rates of teacher and leadership turnover is referenced repeatedly as one of the underlying issues to be addressed in the school:

*“Half of the teachers that are here this year, I don't even know who they are. The principal's new. The vice principal, he's new as well, right? The counselor's new. So there's been a major turnover.”*

*“I think there's a lot of changing in, we've had so many changes in principals over the last few years that, especially my children, I'll ask them who's the principal, and they're like ‘mmmhmm’, and that's frustrating to me because I'm like, I always knew my principal, I always, and that creates a lack of trust, and the principal should be at the top. And when the kids don't feel that trust coming all the way down, I think it creates this negative energy, and I certainly, I mean I feel it when I go in the building. The kids are just running a muck and I'm like oh man, banging into lockers, and it's been all kinds of chaos every time I go there.”*

*“Half the time the kids come in and, well, at least last school year, most of them had no teacher, for multiple grades, for multiple courses, all school year.”*

*“These kids have not had stable teachers since school started in August.”*

*“My first grader didn't have that much academics last year. He didn't have a teacher at all. So right now he is stuck between kindergarten and second grade. He's trying to catch up.”*

*“Seventh and eighth grade had two teachers out, pretty much all year they had subs. “*

*“My sixth grader last year didn't have a teacher for the last half a year.”*

*“Substitute, no homework, but like, from I think December until to June, like no homework.”*

*“My daughter's had six teachers already this year. So, she, the original two teachers in her classroom left out, her original reading teacher left, she got replacement, it's just been, it's frustrating for them because a teacher has a specific teaching style, and then when they're uprooted, the new teacher comes in with their new style and that child that has to rearrange everything. New supply, I'm like what, I just got all this. It's very confusing for the parent, and the children, and that also goes back to that trust. They're not, this person really is a stranger to them. We say you know, don't trust strangers, and they're changing these people around in a position of authority and our children don't trust them, and that's a hard environment to learn in.”*

**One staff person, in the front office, who has been at the school continuously for many years, was a stand out in relationship to all of this staff and leadership turnover:**

Parent #1: *She tells it like it is, but she's very good at her job and I appreciate that, I appreciate her assistance, I appreciate how she does her job. She's very professional, she follows the rules. Even though she knows who I am, she looks at my ID every time, I'm not offended, I respect that. Because I don't want somebody else picking up my kid that might look like me. She's good at her job, she's, even though there's been principal, principal, principal, she stayed there. When a lot of people had left, and she's been consistent. And the kids love her, even though she can be hard on them when they're misbehaving, she, they love her for it, and I appreciate, she creates, when she's around there's a good vibe.*

Interviewer: *She she's really an asset, not just for you, but an asset for the kids as well.*

Parent #1: *Oh yeah, absolutely.*

Interviewer: *Have either of you had any experiences with her, right?*

Parent #2: *Just that she's awesome.*

### **3. Lack of responsiveness to parental concerns**

Parents would like to see more responsiveness to their concerns from the staff and leadership:

Interviewer: *“Did you talk to anybody above the teacher's level at any point about your son being bullied?”*

Parent: *“Last year. That was like talking to a brick wall. It was no help. Let's just say, at the end of last year, was no way that anybody was gonna get me to send my kids back here, at all.”*

*“They asked us to use this ClassDojo if you want to reach out to the teacher, it's falling on deaf ears. I'm emailing, I don't get no response back.”*

*“I wanted him to get tested. I put in the paperwork in January last year. To this day no one's responded to me. To this day. And you know, and it's just ... I just find it ... I'm frustrated.”*

*“And I still find that I don't get the communication I want to have here with my grandson.”*

*“There's a real disconnect with the communication process.”*

*“That was one of the reasons I left for private school, I got communication. The teachers spoke to me. The teachers would respond to my concerns. Never, you know, it falls on deaf ears. They are lacking professionalism coming in the office trying to talk to somebody. It's ridiculous.”*

**Some parents do see ClassDojo as a positive new initiative around parent/school communication issues, but not all teachers are using it:**

*“Whatever is going on in the school, they send text messages. If they are absent, I know right away. Because it comes through a text message, email-type of thing. After school curricular activities, that comes through. A meeting comes through. Anything that the school has going on, I know before they even walk in the door to tell me.”*

*“That was on the ClassDojo, this was on the ClassDojo for the focus group. So I mean certain teachers put up certain things.”*

*“There's ClassDojo ... Only one of my grandson's teachers are using it.”*

#### **4. Lack of communication on new school-based programs**

Some decisions made outside of the school itself regarding moving new programs into the school and canceling contracts for school-based services came up quite often in regards to the chaotic nature of the school climate. Parents sometimes used particular names of programs which indicated their level of awareness of this issue. Here are a couple of quotes on this issue:

*“Her [last year's principal] climate staff was ... there was an outside company that was hired to do climate staff in here. In August, that contract was canceled by the school district or whoever. So September 1, a brand new principal walked in here with not one climate staff. And that decision was made in August.”*

*“Who's responsible for climate in the district? Who's responsible for sending all ES... They overflow this building with ES children, not anything against ES children, but there's a process.”*

*“And another concern outside of the school, which the community didn't know. We found out through this conversation there was another program housed on the second floor of the building last year that the community didn't know a thing about.”*

## **Suggestions from Parents and Family Members**

The parents provided some suggestions on how to improve Lamberton. The following quotes provide a sense of what parents and community members think would improve the school:

### **1. More afterschool programming and extra-curricular activities.**

**People believe that there are not enough extra-curricular activities, sports, clubs etc and that developing those would help the school as the students would be more engaged in the school and have more pride in their school and its climate. This report does not verify if these quotes accurately represent the state of extra-curricular offerings at the school, but the parents' and communities' understanding of what there is.**

Community member #1: *So there's no after school programs at all?*

Parent #1: *Nothing.*

Parent #2: *Nothing.*

Community member #1: *No extra services like homework?*

Parent #1: *You can pay for a service. You can always go to a paid service.*

Community member #2: *You can go down to the library, but not in the school.*

Parent #1: *There's nothing in the school, the school doesn't offer anything. Once that bell rings, that's it.*

*“They don't have that sort of thing, [chess club] you know, something that will keep him occupied. He's the type ... And he will pick up something quickly, so I've talked last year, give him more work, give him more work. Never happened. You know, instead he goes and gets in trouble.”*

*“But with the kids, when they hear that they gotta go to school, they're excited. [speaking about how she would like things to be] And it's not just about the learning aspect of it. Make them excited like, ‘Oh yeah, I want to go to school tomorrow. Oh well this is coming up. Oh our school, at the end of the month we're gonna have a beach party. Oh mom, if I bring a dollar, we get to dress down.’ And maybe that dollar would go to something rewarding to other kids or their class or something in the school.”*

*“My oldest was on track last year, but they barely had track meets. They barely had practice.”*

*“I get a feeling that I almost think that if the kids had more positive things to do, they'll want to learn. You gotta put enjoyment into learning.”*

*“There are basically only two after school programs. But there is no sports”*

*“We don't have any teams.”*

*“So we have no school programs of any type other than extracurricular activities. That's one of the major problems right there, first of all if you look around the district there's no school pride here.”*

*“Anybody else know of other extracurriculars that your kids are involved in here? I didn't even know they had any.”*

*“Stuff like the mock trial, dances and all the fun stuff the kids want to be in and help them be responsible. Even video games, my son said he wants to build video games. That's great for me. Okay, you're showing interest, but these are things that not only in the house but he could be done in school as well.”*

Interviewer: *We were talking about the dance class a little bit, any others that come to mind for your son? Meaning he looks forward to a subject, a teacher, projects?*

Parent #1: *Not at this time.*

Interviewer: *I was hoping you would say some things.*

Parent #1: *I'm sorry*

Interviewer: *No no no.*

Parent #1: *They could have a science fair, he'd love that but nope.*

Parent #2: *The book orders don't even happen anymore. You know those little things, the Scholastic things, they, the last time I turned the money in and never got the books, it's just always a let down.*

Community member #1: *Do they still have a functioning library?*

Parent #3: *No they go to a public library occasionally, if the teacher takes them down. It's been a few years since my daughter went. My son went once last year and they've been...*

Interviewer: *It's not regular. Sharon did you want to add something?*

Community member #2: *No, I just go right back to that same, what did they think was going to happen when they took all of that stuff away for the children to do but decline, and that's exactly what's happening."*

*"What I was going to say, it just sounds like there needs to be an informational meeting where different programs in the schools, in the surrounding community are spelled out to the parents. Because people don't know and we're pretty well into the school year now and folks need to know. Again, it would have to be at a time when parents will come. You might have to do it twice, earlier and later, but the information and colorful flyers really need to be better." - community member*

## **2. Increased investment in the school.**

**Parents would like to see improvements in the facilities and more basic resources like textbooks, paper and playground equipment:**

*"It was periods where, literally, it [the school] was unkempt."*

*"She [my daughter] said roaches in the classroom when they go to get their stuff, so they move their books."*

*"The bathrooms have to be cleaned."*

*"The bathrooms are horrible, the soap dispensers do not work."*

*Compilation of quotes on lack of books: "What books?.... They come home with pages.....My seventh grader comes home with little pages.....There are no books. Lack of books completely....Or it's like three kids sharing one textbook"*

*"I'm at the point where I'm at work printing out papers for my daughter to learn because I'm not going to sit here and not teach her."*

*"She has one book. One year they claimed accountable for summer reading but seems like the last couple of years I don't know if the kids read it or not. If you go over in the schoolhouse, the classrooms are decorated nice, there's posters everywhere, it's really*

*kid-friendly. And when you come in these classrooms, it's like a little jail. We have to make the classrooms appealing for the kids."*

*"We don't have anything here for these kids. We don't even have a playground in the school yard for the kids. It's just ... But do you wonder why these kids get in so much trouble?"*

*"They don't have even gym equipment, they have no gym equipment, they don't have a gym. They don't have art supplies, they don't have basic things."*

*"So those things were actually depleted from the budget, what did they expect Lambertton to do but decline? If they've taken everything away from the students to even excel, to try to do anything outside."*

### **3. Increased Partnerships with the Community**

**Both parents and community members think that increased partnerships between parents and with community members and community organizations can help provide at least some of the needed resources.**

*"I'll say this. When school starts, there's always the form to fill out. Do you want to volunteer? So I think there should be more emphasis on that."*

*"But my suggestion was starting September 1, get a form. Every child in the school needs to have someone over the age of 18 who is going to commit to three hours a month. Every child needs to have someone that they can relate to, whether it's a grandparent, a guardian, a parent, whoever, who is committed to that."*

*"There are parents that come in there, I've volunteered in there myself, there's other parents that come in and volunteer, I think there's about ten of them, at different times, that are just going there they said, let me give some time because I know it needs help, but it just hasn't been enough."*

*"Like she said they need somebody if some of the kids have detention. You know, those are options. Have a parent or a grandparent, somebody to volunteer or pay them, whatever, to have them just to be here and be their monitor." - community member*

*"Home and School would really be a benefit. Because Home and School is the only one that is allowed to raise funds for the kids."*

*"More investment in the family community engagement work on the property, there's a lot of money and investment downtown, we need that money here." - community member."*

*"So not really getting a good quality education, we're not even really drawing on those simpler resources that are maybe available like community members that could come."*



#### **4. Increased rigor and academic expectations**

**Parents would like to see increased academic expectations for their children as well as more staff to provide a better academic program.**

*“You know, my younger son was in the little school house and because he was quiet and sat still, they kept giving him A’s but he wasn’t learning to read. I wound up ... I wound up, they used to have a tutoring thing over there in that shopping center, I wound up paying them to teach him that year. He did not learn it here and that was one of the reasons they were pulled out.”*

*“That was the frustration when my children were here and even now. Do not talk down to ... You know, like you said, teach them such a low level. If you challenge them, these children can learn. Just like going across city avenue to the suburbs, they can learn just as well. And that’s the attitude of some of these teachers, well, oh you poor little things, you can’t learn. No.”*

*“No resources to help my child. There was nobody in the building that she [the teacher] could go to and say, ‘Well, this is a kid who needs some reading help.’”*

*“They need reading assistance here. They should start with phonics if you’re gonna teach people to read.”*

*“I think the central theme, with the climate, in the classroom, academics, it’s the same thing. You need more teachers. And you need reduced class sizes.”*

# Appendix A - Interview Protocol

## FOCUS GROUP QUESTION PROTOCOL

1. Introductions: first names only, connection with school, child's age/grade?
2. What do you see as the strengths of this school? What aspects do you and your child like most?
3. What do kids at this school need?
4. ABOUT THE SCHOOL (CLIMATE): Let's start with the school in general. I'm interested in your thoughts on how the school feels to you, how people treat each other, how the kids behave, and how the school handles it. What are your thoughts about these things?
  - a. *Do you think your child feels respected in this school?*
  - b. *Do you feel respected?*
  - c. *How would you describe students' behavior here?*
  - d. *Do you think discipline here is fair and effective?*
  - e. *Why do you think the school has been identified as needing improvement? What are the biggest problems?*
  - f. *Any thoughts on the school building and what could make it better?*
5. ABOUT CLASSROOMS: Now let's talk about what happens in the classroom. In general, would you say your child is getting a good education here? Why or why not?
  - a. *What would you say have been some of your child's best learning experiences? [probe for subjects, projects, teachers, etc.]*
  - b. *Thinking about the work that your child receives, how challenging is it for your child? Does it require much writing, creativity, or complex thinking? Is your child assigned projects to complete? If so, what kind?*
  - c. *What about some of the worst learning experiences? [careful about probing here] What made these difficult experiences?*
  - d. *Besides report cards, how do you know how your child is doing in school? Does this information help you?*
  - e. *What kinds of support does your child receive if they are struggling? For example, does the school offer tutoring or one-to-one help?*
  - f. *How do you feel about your child's relationship with his or her teacher(s)?*
  - g. *How is your relationship with your child's teacher(s)?*
  - h. *What do you think could make teaching and learning for your child stronger?*
6. ABOUT LEADERSHIP: School leaders (principals, assistant principals, and others) are really important to how effective a school is. What would you say are the biggest strengths and weakness of this school's leadership team?
7. PARENT & COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT: How would you describe parent and community involvement in the school? What suggestions do you have for making it better?
  - a. *What kinds of events does the school invite families to? Do a lot of families attend?*
  - b. *How does the school keep in touch and keep you updated? Do you like this? Why or why not?*

8. CATCH ALL: What else is important to say about the school and your child's experiences I have not asked about?
  - a. *What are your hopes and fear for this process?*
  - b. *Final things you really want the district to know about this school?*