



School Quality Review Report

School Name	Alain Locke School
Principal	Katherine McKellar-Carter
Grades	K-8
Dates of Review	November 1-2, 2018
Reviewer(s)	Rahshene Davis-Bowie; Assistant Superintendent, Learning Network II Melissa Gude, Professional Learning Specialist, Learning Network II Jo Ann Berkley, Office of Planning and Evidence Based Supports Megan Conley, Office of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Lisa Mesj, Office of Leadership Development and Evaluation Estelle Acquah, Office of Leadership Development and Evaluation

Content

[The School Quality Review Report](#)

[SQR Process](#)

[School Background and Context](#)

[SQR Findings](#)

[Unwavering Focus on Academic Success](#)

[School Culture and Climate](#)

[Leadership and Systems](#)

The School Quality Review Report

The School Quality Review (SQR) is a process that assesses how well schools are organized to support student learning and teacher practice. The SQR provides a comprehensive picture of a school’s strengths and areas needing improvement. The SQR occurs over two days, wherein the SQR team gathers information that will be used to determine further structural supports or recommendations for the school. During the review, the review team visits classrooms, talks students, teachers, and school leaders and uses the quality review rubric to assess how well the school is organized to support student achievement. The rubric outlines three key categories for the school review, as outlined below.

Unwavering Focus on Academic Success	School Culture, Climate, and infrastructure that support personalization and academic success	Leadership and systems that supports high achievement for students and schools
<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Quality classroom instructiona. Forming a professional teaching and learning culture and professional developmentb. Data based decision making to guide and personalize instruction and intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Respectful, responsive, safe environment that maximizes learning timeb. Personalized environment for all students and staffc. Collaborative parent and community engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. School-based leadership focused on instructional improvementb. Strategic alignment and management of resources (time, people, and money)c. Shared leadership with staff, family, and community with clear goals of supporting academic success

This report presents written findings, impact, and site-specific supporting evidence for school practices that support and limit student learning.

Findings

Findings reflect the school as experienced during the review and accentuate the practices that support or limit student learning and achievement at the school.

Impact

Impact is a mid-inference statement that connects to rubric language and describes the effect on instruction/academics, culture/climate, and leadership/systems.

Supporting Evidence

There is a summary of site-based evidence of practice that clearly support the findings and the impact. Each bullet includes a mid-inference statement, evidence reflecting the experience of the review, or carefully selected quotes or data.

SQR Process

The SQR team consisted of six team members representing multiple offices in the School District of Philadelphia central office. During the two day review, the SQR team visited classrooms, reviewed student work, and interview the school leadership team, students, teachers, and support staff.

SQR Item/Stakeholder	Description
Classroom Visits	Reviewers gather evidence on instruction and engagement, student work, and assessment of learning. Visits are followed by an exchange between review team and principal about what was heard and observed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● every instructional and speciality (e.g., physical education, art, dance) classroom, for an average of 25 minutes ● lunch room ● hallway transitions
Student work	For each grade level, the SQR team reviewed three samples of student work for the same assignment differentiated by tiers - high performing, medium performing, lower performing. Additionally, the SQR team assessed how well the assignment aligned to the standard provided or any rubric used to grade student work.
Principal/School leadership Team	Discussion about school practices in place and the impact of those practices on teaching and learning.

Teachers	Discussion about school practices in place and the impact of those practices on teaching and learning.
Teacher Team or Grade Group Meeting	Reviewers observes teachers engaged in a process that addresses the connection between student work and/or data and resulting teacher actions.
Students	Reviewers discuss with students specific pieces of their work, their experiences as learners, and overall school culture.

The SQR team also reviewed the school self-assessment, provided by the school leadership team. The self-assessment provides an overview of school practices, aligned to the key domains of the SQR rubric, and the impact of those practices. It is an entry point to understanding key practices, decisions, goals, and impact prior to the school quality review.

School Background and Context

Alain Locke Elementary school serves students in grades K-8. Information about this school, including enrollment, attendance, student demographics, and data regarding academic performance, can be found [here](#). The school leadership team provided the following additional context for the school:

- Class sizes average approximately 20 students per class.
- The school has a transient student population, where a sizable portion of students attend the from school five shelters in the larger community.
- The school’s population of students that speak english as a second language is approximately 17%, of which the largest subset of these students speak Bengali as their first language.
- The school has a large special education population (25%).
- The leadership team is most proud of the schools’ accomplishments in improving school-wide culture and climate (via the use of ClassDojo with Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports and presence of a climate manager and liaison), and providing multiple levers for family engagement (e.g., family fun night, chaperoned trips).
- The leadership team noted that teachers need support around implementing data-driven instructional strategies.

SQR Findings

Unwavering Focus on Academic Success

Practices that Support Student Learning

Finding

There are structures in place in classrooms and around the school to show student work, learning objectives, and standards.

Impact

The teachers' purposes of lessons or units are available for students to observe. Teachers have the opportunity to provide learning goals, ensure or check that students understand, and provide feedback to each student to help them understand where they are in their learning and what to do to improve.

Supporting Evidence

- Almost all classrooms had anchor charts and standards posted to reinforce learning.
 - In several K-5 classrooms there were objectives posted for ELA and writing.
 - In almost all math blocks, there were a variety of anchor charts posted indicating: rounding, force/motion, partial products, pronoun, verbs.
 - Upper grade classrooms had anchor charts on decimals: comparing decimals, rounding decimals, mental math strategies, identifying and comparing characters. Classrooms also had objectives posted for reading, math, science, and social studies.
 - In a lower grade classroom, the teacher kept referencing the students' IEP goals.
- Some students articulated that they receive high level feedback on their work. Several students knew and articulated their reading level.

Finding

Students have strong relationships with teachers and adults in the building.

Impact

Creates the foundation for an appropriate and safe classroom learning environment that supports student learning and interaction. Classroom interactions are polite and respectful. Most students feel free to share their ideas or opinions and take risks in learning. Teachers know their students (e.g. greet, call them by name, use humor). Standards of conduct are clear to all students. Some students use routines with minimal direction from the teacher.

Supporting Evidence

- Students reported feeling as if they have at least one person in the school with whom they can go to for help and guidance. Several students reported feeling motivated by their teachers' care for them, moving them to "want to do great work". Students referenced that multiple teachers provide them with chances to improve their student work, and continuously provide feedback - demonstrating their care for student learning.
- In one 1st grade classroom, there were clear routines, procedures, and systems in place, with outlined roles and responsibilities for the adults and students. Students were engaged in the room, working on 1:1 correspondence for guided reading. Students were able to answer the teacher's questions after the teacher modeled for them. The teacher afforded several opportunities for students to turn-and-talk in response to low-level questions.

- In another 1st grade and a 2nd grade classroom, positive narration was used to consistently reinforce appropriate student behavior. The teacher and classroom assistants were actively engaged with students and supporting on task behavior for each of the learning centers.
- In several classrooms, teachers modeled using the SmartBoard for students and included prompts to make connections between vocabulary words contained in the story and picture cues. Students were attentive and following directions. Teachers were actively taking time to connect with students.
- In an 8th grade classroom, the teacher provided individualized feedback to students while they are working on their high school summaries. The teacher also used encouraging and motivating language with students (e.g., “You want to accomplish a lot in high school so use more than two sentences to describe that. . .”).

Practices that Limit Student Learning

Findings

- Not all students are being challenged and pushed towards deeper learning.
- There were few examples of students engaged in classroom lessons and mastering what was being taught in classrooms.

Impact

As a result of inconsistent teaching practices, students are not always exposed to tasks that provide opportunities for them to engage in discussions and higher-order thinking activities; this leads to varying levels of quality student work products and classroom engagement. Most classrooms provide little to moderately challenging tasks (e.g., students summarize, apply formulas). Tasks are loosely differentiated and aligned with grade-level standards. Tasks give students some opportunities to respond verbally or in writing. In most classrooms, students have limited opportunities to participate in dialogue. Many students are not invited to participate in discussion or have few opportunities to respond to questions (e.g., questions may be open-ended i.e. “What do you think?” but without enough wait time). There are missed opportunities for student-to-student discourse and for students to take ownership of their learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Lack of rigor and scaffolding were present in most classrooms. Teachers tended to rely too heavily on curricular resources vs. making decisions based on the rigor outlined in the standard. The lesson structures did not allow for clear linking back to the learning agenda at the end of class. There were notable disconnects between the classroom instructional objective, student tasks and their recall of those tasks. Across the the majority of 3-8 classrooms, the tasks were not aligned to standards and lesson objectives, nor were students able to clearly articulate the intended learning. Students were also often unable to articulate being academically challenged by any adults or having adults hold them to high expectations. When a student was asked what

they were learning, they responded: “it’s not sticking”. The following student actions were observed across several classrooms:

- sleeping or heads down.
- seated at a table at the back of the room waiting for directions/instruction.
- engaged in other conversations that were not aligned to the instructional tasks.
- on laptops instead of working on editing activity.
- During the literary block in a lower grade reading class, the purpose for learning was not clear with guided reading group or student centers. For example, the teacher did not name a teaching point with readers in her group. It was not clear what specifically they were being asked to do better as writers, beyond completing the essay. Some classrooms had schedules posted in the reading block, but the teachers were not necessarily following it.
- In ESL and SPED classrooms, there was little evidence of modeling or direct instruction from the teacher that was connected to the independent work that students were supposed to do. Teacher feedback often led students toward answers and did not provide students the opportunity to do the thinking. Students were unable to answer the teacher’s questions and were stuck even after the teacher modeled for them. Most questions asked were recall and low level, which only a few select students were able to respond to with much teacher prompting.
- In a middle school classroom, there were unclear expectations for student involvement and engagement in the small group with the teacher, and with the groups working away from the teacher. The majority of work in the small group was led by the teacher. Some students had a book open and were writing; the teacher wrote problems on a white board and when she asked questions, the only response method involved a few students calling out answers. Other students never wrote/spoke during the small group. Two students working on a handout articulated that they did not know how to find order of operations and had no problems completed on the paper.

School Culture and Climate

Practices that Support Student Learning

Findings

- There are incredibly strong relationships throughout the school.
 - Students consistently talk about the trust and care they receive from teachers and staff.
 - Adult interactions overall show care for students.
 - Staff demonstrate respect and work well with each other.
- There is school-wide excitement and energy around positive behavior strategies.

Impact

Students and adults experience some personalization (e.g., clear behavioral expectations are defined and expected, adults and students address one another by name). Most students have access to adult support (e.g., most students are known by at least one adult). School staff attempt provide some support structures to address socio-economic needs of students. There some opportunities for parents

to be involved in their children's learning. The school uses some standard forms of communication. Most families have access to updated student information.

Supporting Evidence

- The school is in its second year of using PBIS framework to create a positive culture, encourage positive behaviors and providing a framework for evidence-based interventions. The leadership team held a student assembly to support the initial rollout of the PBIS system. Teachers use ClassDojo to implement PBIS school-wide, and cite that it has mostly been an effective tool for parent communication.
- Teachers were observed providing and posting Dojo points and attempting to explain the consequences of negative behaviors.
- Some teachers had systems for hallways transitions where they would see to it that every child was adhering to behavioral expectations.
- A group of middle school students cited that they liked the Dojo system. Additionally they used iReady to access their work and grades, which is then positively reinforced using Dojo.

Practices that Limit Student Learning

Findings

- Students are not consistently held accountable to high behavioral expectations at all times.
- Students share a general sense of not always feeling safe, especially in lunchrooms, hallways, and recess.
- Adults are not consistently holding each other accountable to improving the school culture.

Impact

Staff mostly demonstrates polite but sometimes distant interactions with one another and visitors. There is some disorder on grounds (e.g., students shouting, running) or lack of clear expectations, as well as some interruptions in classrooms that interfere with instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- The use of PBIS and ClassDojo is named as a successful strategy but the consistent and repeated implementation of language and strategies is not reflected in all classrooms and school spaces. Successful classroom management strategies did not always translate into other areas of the school (e.g, lunchroom, hallways.) Teachers did not consistently use ClassDojo to reinforce behaviors that were misaligned to school values. Teachers and staff were not consistently addressing when students were using cell phones, wearing hoodies, or listening on earphones. In several classrooms, teachers were observed giving Dojo points but students could not clearly articulate why they were or were not getting points. Staff cited that the school did not have effectively strategies to address behavior issues for students who were not benefiting from PBIS. According to students in the lower grades, they feel particularly unsafe during lunch and recess where there student arguments tend to occur the most.

- Although some teachers had strong hallways transition systems, this was not consistent throughout the school. Overall, there were varying expectations school wide of how children are supposed to purposely move in hallways. Across the school, there are signs in the hallways that underscore the school's core values for behavior; however, teachers were not consistently observed reinforcing this verbally. Although there were some teachers in lower grade classrooms modeling good behavior, there was limited shared accountability amongst all students and all teachers for student hallways behaviors.
- The leadership team cited that some of the biggest issues stem from transition to and from lunch. Multiple teachers and support staff cited the need even more climate staff support in the lunchrooms and during recess, and particularly in the lower grades.

Leadership and Systems

Practices that supports student learning

Findings

- Systems are in place for meetings and opportunities for collaboration and communication (e.g., leadership team, teacher teams meetings).
- The school has prioritized resources to make sure personnel are present to support students in multiple areas (e.g., hallways, transitions, arrival and dismissal, classroom aides).

Impact

Leadership team communicates goals and expectations to staff throughout the school. The Leadership team offers some ongoing teacher learning and leadership opportunities. Leadership team sets expectations for school culture of respect and trust.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers have the option to use common prep and common lunch times to collaborate. In these instances, the teachers create an agenda and submit it to the principal. Fourth grade teachers used to their planning time to plan common lessons.
- The principal conducts grade group meetings, where the majority of the meeting is focused on looking at student data and assessments. For example, teachers will spend time refining the types of tests and exit tickets provided in order to make them more rigorous enough to address instructional standard.
- The principal conducted a leadership team meeting; topics addressed included: report card/benchmarks; math shifts; comprehensive school plan monitoring; attendance; issues with hallways transitions in for upper grades.
- There is a clear system for kindergarten dismissal, where-in an adult has to sign that they are picking a particular student up.
- Multiple classrooms throughout the school utilized classroom aides for additional learning and behavioral support.

- Climate staff were posted throughout the school during key transitions times and in the lunchroom.

Practices that Limit Student Learning

Findings

- Given the numerous initiatives, programs, and focus areas throughout the school, there is a lack of clarity around how the tasks are distributed throughout the leadership team, and the feasibility of continuous and sustained prioritization and monitoring of items discussed at leadership team meetings.
- There is a lack of clarity around how each staff member's responsibilities align to school priorities and goals.

Impact

Leadership team articulates general goals for student learning, vague direction and policies in some but not all key areas of school's function. Leadership team navigates available resources with uneven success, and may not consistently align resources with school goals. Opportunities for teacher learning and leadership are available based on interest rather than need or skill. Principal entrusts a small group of leaders but may not provide all the necessary supports they need to carry out their duties.

Supporting Evidence

- During dismissal, there were little to no staff moving students out of the school yard; students were often lingering.
- According to the principal, most members of the leadership team are new. The leadership team meeting agenda consisted of over six items. During the leadership team meeting, the principal did the majority of the talking. Follow-up and action steps are not clearly laid out and teacher and leadership accountability seemed to be lacking. There was no observable distributive leadership model around who owns specific topics. Principal has to model high expectations/provide training around rigor in classrooms and how grade group should function.
- Teachers cited the need for more professional development on how to conduct classroom visits to observe best practices in other classes. For example, one lower grade classroom has strong routines, procedures, and systems in place with really clearly outlined roles and responsibilities for the adults in the room. Students were engaged in learning. Teachers did not cite having structured opportunities to view best practices such as that.
- Teachers do not have consistent practices or areas of focus across common planning time.
- The leadership team employs time and resources on school wide initiatives and activities, however, it was not consistently clear how these aligned to the schools' goals and vision.