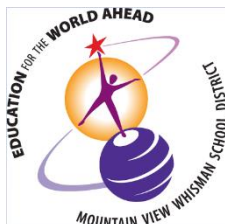


School Quality Review Report

Mountain View Whisman School District

Graham Middle School

October, 2015



School Quality Review Report

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Issue and revision record

Revision	Date	Originator	Checker	Approver	Description	Standard
0	09/09/2015	Doug Heineke			Report Template	
1	10/19/2015	Melissa Lara	Doug Heineke		Draft 1	
2	10/27/2015		Doug Heineke	Beverly Parkinson	QAR1	
3	10/28/2015	Melissa Lara	Doug Heineke		Draft 2	
4	10/29/2015		Doug Heineke	Trevor Yates	QAR2	
5	10/22/2015			Doug Heineke	Fact Check	
6	11/11/2015	Melissa Lara	K. Thompson (MV)	Doug Heineke	Final Report	

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1 The School Context

1.1 Introduction

On July 1st 2015 Dr. Ayinde Rudolph officially began his post as Mountain View Whisman School District's Superintendent. As part of his 100-day superintendent plan for MVWSD, Dr. Rudolph requested that Cambridge Education deliver a district-wide, comprehensive Quality Review (QR) program that will set a benchmark for improvement. The QR program includes the following:

- a School Quality Review (SQR) orientation for principals
- SQR training for up to 20 district personnel
- a two-day SQR for each school in the district (8 elementary and 2 middle schools)
- a meta-analysis report of the school findings
- focused improvement planning for all 10 schools
- a District Quality Review (DQR)

The SQR was completed over two days by a team of two Cambridge Education Reviewers at each school. The resultant report contained herein was prepared by the Lead Reviewer based on the evidence collected and the assessment made by both reviewers. 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

Graham Middle School is located in Mountain View, California. It serves approximately 781 students in grades 6-8. Students are drawn to the school primarily for the Performing Arts program. The school boasts a daily school TV news program that is completely operated by the students. On the day of the SQR, the school received a surprise donation from Samsung for \$10,000 to further enhance their media program. The music program includes boys and girls choirs, string instruments and general band. The principal has been in post at the school for several years and the new assistant principal is the former instructional coach for the school.

The school is also undergoing significant construction to accommodate growth and provide a more modern space for the performing arts. The new classrooms will allow the school to expand an additional 6 classrooms as well as the new multi-purpose room, providing a space where groups can gather to perform or meet.

The school grounds include a track and gym that is provided and maintained by the town of Mountain View. By sharing the space, both Graham students and the general public have access to the facilities. This relationship is a very effective way to share resources.

1.3 School demographic and performance data

	Academic Year 2013-14	Academic Year 2014-15
Grades:	6, 7,8	6,7,8
Number of students enrolled:	806	781
Number of general education students:	713	684
Percentage of special education students:	11.54%	12.42%
Percentage of English language learner students:	23.2%	17.67%
In School suspensions:	21	19
Out of school suspensions:	64	37
Percentage of students that are Title 1 eligible:	NA	NA
Latest attendance percentage:	96.99%	96.99%
Ethnic make-up of the students (percentages):	Hispanic - 41.1%; Am Indian/Alaskan Nat - 0.3%; Asian - 15.8%; Black/African Am - 0.9%; Nat Hawaiian/Other Pac Islander - 0.1%; White - 32.1%; Multiple - 8.2%; Declined to State - 1.5%	

CAASPP Test Results 2014-2015 - ELA

	Standard Not Met	Standard Nearly Met	Standard Met	Standard Exceeded
All	16	21	33	31
EO	5	13	37	45
EL	66	29	5	0
SED	34	36	25	5
Non- SEDs	6	13	37	44
SWD	65	25	9	1
White	3	10	37	50
Asian	8	12	32	48
Hispanic/Latino	31	35	28	6

CAASPP Test Results 2014-2015 – Math

	Standard Not Met	Standard Nearly Met	Standard Met	Standard Exceeded
All	22	20	19	39
EO	10	14	24	52
EL	68	27	2	4
SED	45	31	14	10
Non- SEDs	10	15	22	54
SWD	72	19	3	6
White	5	13	21	61
Asian	6	14	19	60
Hispanic/Latino	44	30	17	10

2 Main Findings

In this section of the report, the SQR team has identified the factors that are most significantly supporting and limiting effective student learning. *Recommendations* to address these high impact areas are included below.

2.1 Factors that support effective student learning:

- i. The principal has developed positive and supportive relationships with parents, staff, students and the community. These relationships serve as a foundation that creates a culture and climate that is conducive to learning and teaching.
- ii. The staff is supportive and collegial with each other. They share resources and instructional strategies in an effort to support student learning.
- iii. The school is orderly and welcoming, and students feel safe. Students are generally well behaved and compliant during lessons.
- iv. The after school program provides students with a safe place to do homework and socialize. Teachers work with students during lunch and after school to provide additional support for struggling students.
- v. The school begins each year with Welcome Week. During the week students across grade levels are grouped into teams. As a result, students build strong bonds and relationships across the grade levels. Parents, students and staff recognize Welcome Week as a significantly impactful piece of building a sense of community in the school.
- vi. Most teachers provide students with opportunities to think, pair, and share about the topic of the lesson.

2.2 Factors that limit effective student learning:

- i. English language development (ELD) students and students with disabilities (SWD) do not have access to a well-rounded curriculum. Most ELD and SWD students are tracked into double math classes, ELD or resource classes that keep them from having opportunities to participate in elective classes such as band, music, or art. As a result, those students do not have opportunities to explore potential career interests or engage in classes that reflect their strengths or personal interests.
- ii. Teachers do not analyze individual student data, formative and summative, deeply enough to make instructional decisions and plan lessons that are appropriately differentiated. As a result, the level of rigor is not challenging enough for most students, and gaps in learning are not always addressed.
- iii. Teachers do not receive regular and specific feedback of how to improve their practice. As a result, teachers depend on occasional informal feedback from peers but have no clear path of how to improve their instruction in ways that will have the most impact on student learning.

2.3 Recommendations:

- i. Ensure that all students have access to a well-rounded curriculum that includes opportunities for students to participate in music, art, band or other classes that are beyond the core content. Achieve this by working with district office personnel or research how other middle schools are creative in their scheduling so that all students have access to a wide range of classes.
- ii. Improve the focus and understanding of data for making instructional decisions. Implement data meetings that focus on analyzing individual, classroom and grade/content level data to inform daily lesson planning so that instruction is differentiated to meet the needs of all students and provides appropriate levels of challenge.
- iii. Administrators should create a system of conducting regular informal classroom observations and providing specific feedback to teachers so they will know how to improve their instructional practice. Monitor the implementation of feedback and provide targeted support to teachers as needed.

3 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*. Recommendations are included to address those areas of need.

3.1 Domain 1: Quality of Learning & Teaching

The Quality of Learning & Teaching Requires Support in Targeted Areas

Factors that support effective student learning:

- i. Some lessons are structured so that students have the opportunity to discuss topics in pairs. In lessons where this occurs in an effective and strategic way, students are actively engaged in learning and are able to share and expand their understanding of the subject. However, the quality of paired or group work is inconsistent across the school.
- ii. Most students are well behaved in classes. Most teachers approach classroom management in a positive way so that disruptions to instruction are limited and quickly dealt with by teachers.
- iii. Most teachers use technology as a teaching tool or as a tutoring tool. Many teachers feel comfortable using technology while others wish they had additional support to effectively implement more strategies with technology, because students respond better and are more engaged when technology is effectively used.
- iv. Some teachers are able to guide students learning with good questioning and discussion techniques. When this occurs, students think more deeply about the content and internalize the information, making it more likely to be remembered and applied in other content areas.

Factors that limit effective student learning:

- i. Teachers do not consistently make use of a wide range of assessment data to plan or inform their instructional decisions. As a result, lessons are not always sufficiently planned for to address the learning needs of students at all ability levels, or to motivate students to learn.
- ii. Lesson objectives and success criteria are not consistently posted or shared during lessons. As a result, students are not always sure of what they should be learning, why they are learning it or how they will know if they have learned it well enough.
- iii. Most lessons are not differentiated or challenging enough to ensure students become independent learners, critical thinkers or problem solvers. Most lessons require all students to do the same activities with little opportunities for students to think deeply about the skill or content. Therefore, students access new information at low levels rather than being challenged to apply the information for deeper meaning.
- iv. Rubrics and exemplars of high quality work are not used consistently across the grades or content areas. Without the use of rubrics and exemplars, students are not able to assess the quality of their own work or have a definitive way of knowing what their work should look like in order to achieve at their highest possible level.

- v. Most lessons are not planned for in a way that takes into account the different learning styles of students. Many lessons are predominately teacher talk, limiting students' opportunities to actively engage in their learning.
- vi. Students do not receive consistent feedback on the quality of their work beyond numerical grades. Most students are not sure how they can improve. Few students have set goals for academic or social improvement and do not believe they are working to their fullest potential.

Recommendations:

- i. Organize a data review team that will regularly meet across grade and content areas to review learning objectives and create formative assessments that align with state standards. Establish structures or protocols for teachers to review current data during planning sessions to evaluate the levels of understanding that students have and make revisions to lesson plans to reflect the needs of all students.
- ii. Establish expectations that clear and challenging lesson objectives are posted and referred to during each lesson. Provide clear success criteria that are measurable so that students will be able to monitor their own learning.
- iii. Teachers should plan lessons that provide students with opportunities to work together to solve higher level and more complex problems in which they must apply their new skills or knowledge to real world situations.
- iv. Teachers should work together to develop some common rubrics and identify exemplars of student work so that the quality of work can be monitored and the standards are more consistent. Rubrics will also help develop students' skills in assessing their own work.
- v. Teachers should plan lessons that provide students with multiple ways to access the curriculum through different learning styles. Administrators should monitor lessons closely to ensure teachers are planning effectively and then delivering lessons that are differentiated to meet the learning styles and needs of all students.
- vi. Provide students with specific written and verbal feedback on a more consistent basis so that students know what and how to improve as well as understanding what they are doing well. Initial steps could include one "glow" and one "grow" for assignments.

3.2 Domain 2: Curriculum & Assessment

Curriculum & Assessment Requires Support in Targeted Areas

Factors that support effective student learning:

- i. The after school program is a partnership between the school and the city. The program provides a structured environment where students can receive help with homework as well as participate in extra-curricular activities such as sports or games. Students and parents appreciate the safe haven for after school.
- ii. The curriculum offers some students the opportunity to participate in classes in the performing arts and art classes. Students who participate in those classes enjoy the lessons and are able to experience a more well-rounded education.
- iii. Some teachers develop occasional projects that require in-depth work from students, such that students apply new and old skills in different ways or across content areas. By doing so, students gain a better understanding of the content and learn how to use it in real world situations.

Factors that limit effective student learning:

- i. Special education and English Language Development students are often assigned double content area (math or ELA) classes or other required classes rather than opportunities to participate in electives such as music or art. As a result, students are limited in their access to a full curriculum and additional activities that accompany those elective classes, such as field trips.
- ii. Common assessments aligned to state standards have not been developed to gauge how well students are learning each unit of study. Common data points are not determined as a way to compare and identify students' learning needs so that lessons that meet the needs of all students can be planned and delivered.

Recommendations:

- i. Administrators at the school and district level should work together to develop a schedule that allows all students access to electives classes or similar classes that will interest students and provide them with broader learning opportunities.
- ii. Provide teachers with professional development on how to create and use common assessments as a data point for monitoring student progress, identifying skills that students have mastered or need additional support in learning and then plan differentiated lessons to address those needs.
- iii. Expand the expectation that teachers work across content areas to integrate lessons so that students work on projects that require deeper thinking and understanding of the content and can apply it to real world situations.

3.3 Domain 3: Leadership, Management and Accountability

Leadership, Management and Accountability Requires Support in Targeted Areas

Factors that support effective student learning:

- i. School administrators promote and model high expectations that all students are valued and cared for at Graham Middle School.
- ii. There are some systems in place to address school wide behavior management. The administrators, the At-Risk Coordinator and the Family and Community Engagement Coordinator work with students to address behavior concerns by seeking out and addressing the root causes. Office staff often step in to fill in gaps and provide additional support to students, families and staff so that the school runs smoothly.
- iii. The principal is being selective in the hiring of highly qualified personnel to serve the students in the school. Her hiring philosophy centers on getting the right people in the right places. For the last three years, there has been a teacher turnaround of, on average, eight teachers per year. The principal is confident that the right people are now in place.
- iv. Teachers feel responsible for their students' success. However, there are no structures in place to hold staff accountable for the success of students.
- v. Students enjoy coming to school and parents value and support the school. Student attendance rates are good and maintained, ensuring students are present for learning and teaching.

Factors that limit effective student learning:

- i. The school is in the process of revising the school improvement plan. The results of the SQR will provide some additional guidance on what the school needs to focus on in order to improve student outcomes.
- ii. Teachers do not receive regular feedback on the quality of their practice. They receive observations as required by law but very little additional feedback. As a result, teachers do not know how to improve their practice, or if they are aligned to the expectations of the administration.
- iii. School leaders collect a limited amount of data about student achievement and abilities. By limiting the data and not sufficiently analyzing the data, instruction and expectations are not as detailed and clear as they could be to improve student learning.
- iv. The school has a recently formed leadership team. This is a good first step, however, teachers on the team are not sure what their roles and responsibilities are, nor are they sure how they will be able to contribute to decision making in the school.

Recommendations:

- i. Use current data, SQR results and other relevant information to determine the goals for the school. Use the Focused Improvement Planning professional development as an opportunity to create a strategic plan that identifies the key leveraging points to improve student learning, the individual responsible for each action, and benchmarks. Monitor closely and adjust as needed.

- ii. School administrators should establish a schedule of conducting classroom observations and providing feedback for informal observations. Provide teachers with immediate feedback that will help them to grow. Monitor and provide support to teachers to ensure expectations are met.
- iii. Administrators should meet with teachers on a regular basis to discuss each student's success or challenges, and assist with resolving ways to help improve student outcomes and celebrate teacher and student success. Hold teachers accountable for student success but also provide the support needed for each teacher to become more proficient in their practice.
- iv. Work with district level personnel to identify the data needed, and how to access and analyze it to best inform instructional and school-wide decisions.
- v. Collaboratively develop a clear list of "roles and responsibilities" or "duties" of the school leadership team. By empowering the leadership team, the administrators can free up some of their time and responsibilities so that they can focus on being instructional leaders.

3.4 Domain 4: The Culture of Learning

The Culture of Learning is Established

Factors that support effective student learning:

- i. The administrators work diligently to ensure the school is a safe and place of respect. For example, Welcome Week develops the culture of respect and community among students and teachers from the very beginning of the school year. This is proving to be highly effective in developing a sense of community at all levels.
- ii. The principal continues to build strong relationships with all members of the school community. She is highly respected and valued by parents, staff and students. It is clear to all members that she is dedicated to each student and genuinely cares about each child's social and academic progress.
- iii. Staff members take their cue from the principal in valuing each student. Teachers demonstrate respect and genuine interest in students. Many teachers coach and provide additional support for students during and after school.

Factors that limit effective student learning:

- i. There are no factors that limit student learning in this domain.

Recommendations:

- i. Continue to expand and develop Welcome Week so that it may function as a role model for other schools.

3.5 Domain 5: Partnerships with Families and the Community

Partnerships with Families and the Community are Established

Factors that support effective student learning:

- i. Most parents feel well informed of their children's progress. Parents receive communication via a student grade portal, newsletters, emails and phone calls. School-wide information is communicated in English and Spanish.
- ii. The principal does a very good job of creating collaborative partnerships with community organizations. Through these partnerships, students benefit with high tech equipment for the daily news broadcast, partnerships with the city for use of community space, and overall support of learning.
- iii. Parents are involved in committees such as the English Learner Advisory Committee (ELAC) and the PTA. These organizations have functioned well in the past. However, the parent committees are starting to collaborate more and share in the responsibility of supporting the school.
- iv. Parents are involved in some decision making through the various committees that they serve on. Each year their responsibilities grow and their ability to participate in decisions becomes more evident.

Factors that limit effective student learning:

- i. Some teachers do not frequently update the student grades portal. Students with disabilities are especially affected by this since they are required to complete a weekly update to their parents. Several students are frustrated that some teachers do not respond to their emails about grades in the required 24 hours and are not keeping grades accurate.

Recommendations:

- i. Continue to build upon the eagerness of the parent groups to connect and work collaboratively to improve the learning opportunities of all students.
- ii. Teachers should update the student portal weekly to ensure students' grades are accurate. By doing so parents and students are more likely to respond appropriately and will have a better understanding of students' progress. If teachers are assigning so much work that it can't be graded and inputted within the same week, then administrators should meet with those teachers to discuss more effective strategies.