SchoolWorks
School Quality Review
Report

Marion Sterling K-8 School
November 29-December 1, 2016

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CLEVELAND METROPOLITAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

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About the SchoolWorks School Quality Review Process

The Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD) envisions 21st Century Schools of Choice in which students will be challenged with a rigorous curriculum that considers the individual learning styles, program preferences, and academic capabilities of each student, while engaging the highest quality professional educators, administrators, and support staff available. As part of Cleveland's Plan for Transforming Schools, CMSD has adopted a portfolio district strategy that includes: growing the number of high quality district and charter schools, and closing or replacing failing schools; focusing the district's central office on its role in school support and governance, while transferring authority and resources to schools; investing and phasing in high leverage school reforms across all levels; and increased accountability for all schools in the district through the creation of the Cleveland Transformation Alliance (CTA). CMSD has partnered with stakeholders to create a school performance framework that will be used to provide a comprehensive assessment of the quality of each school in the district. The comprehensive assessment will be an evidence-based process that includes data and information gathered on academic programs and performance, school climate, finance, operations, governance, and stakeholder satisfaction, among other sources.

CMSD has engaged SchoolWorks as a partner in implementing a school quality review (SQR) process aligned to CMSD initiatives and the school performance framework. The SQRs are used as one component of a comprehensive assessment of the quality of each school in the district; they are used to provide formative feedback to schools. Reviews include an action planning process in which the team and the school work together to identify prioritized areas for improvement.

The School Quality Review (SQR) protocol and review process provides a third-party perspective on current school quality for all students. The process will include two days of collecting evidence on site through interviews, classroom visits, and document review. While on site, the team meets to discuss, sort, and analyze evidence it is collecting. The site visit team uses evidence collected through these events to determine ratings in relation to the protocol's criteria and indicators. In addition, the review will include a half-day prioritization session on the third day to assist the school in identifying root causes of opportunities for improvement and identifying which opportunities for improvement are of the highest priority and most likely to impact student achievement. The outcome of the action planning process is a prioritized plan of next steps, including strategies, resources, and timelines to accomplish goals.

The report documents the team's ratings for key questions within each of the four domains identified in the SQR protocol: *Instruction, Students' Opportunities to Learn, Educators' Opportunities to Learn,* and *Governance and Leadership* The final page of the report is used to record the discussion and action plan developed by the team and the school during the prioritization process.

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Domains and Key Questions

Based on trends found in the collected evidence, the site visit team assigns a rating to each key question.

Domains	Rating			
	Level 1: Intensive Support Required	Level 2: Targeted Support Required	Level 3: Established	Level 4: Exemplary

Domain 1: Instruction	
1. *Classroom interactions and organization ensure a classroom climate conducive to learning.*	**Level 2: Targeted Support Required**
2. *Classroom instruction is intentional, engaging, and challenging for all students.*	**Level 1: Intensive Support Required**
3. *Teachers regularly assess students' progress toward mastery of key skills and concepts, and use assessment data to make adjustments to instruction and to provide feedback to students during the lesson.*	**Level 1: Intensive Support Required**
Domain 2: Students' Opportunities to Learn	
4. *The school identifies and supports special education students, English language learners, and students who are struggling or at risk.*	**Level 2: Targeted Support Required**
5. *The school's culture reflects a safe, supportive learning environment that reflects high expectations.*	**Level 2: Targeted Support Required**
Domain 3: Educators' Opportunities to Learn	
6. *The school designs professional development and collaborative support systems to sustain a focus on instructional improvement.*	**Level 2: Targeted Support Required**
7. *The school's culture indicates high levels of collective responsibility, trust, and efficacy.*	**Level 1: Intensive Support Required**
Domain 4: Governance and Leadership	
8. *School leaders guide and participate with instructional staff in the central processes of improving teaching and learning.*	**Level 2: Targeted Support Required**
9. *School leaders effectively orchestrate the school's operations.*	**Level 3: Established**

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Domain 1: Instruction

1. *Classroom interactions and organization ensure a classroom climate conducive to learning.*	**Level 2: Targeted Support Required**

Behavioral Expectations			
Ineffective	Partially Effective		Effective[1]
1	2	3	4
9%	0%	45%	45%

- **Behavioral expectations are clear and understood by students.** Teachers at the Marion Sterling K-8 School (Marion Sterling) explained that they use an online platform called Kickboard to record their delivery of positive reinforcement and consequences for student behavior relative to classroom rules and expectations. Teachers and students reported that students can earn "bulldog bucks" (which they can redeem at a school store or as admission to special events) that teachers record using the Kickboard application on tablets that they carry with them throughout the school day. In addition, teachers and school leaders explained that, over the past two years, the school has adopted a leadership development program – Leader in Me – that is incorporated in almost all aspects of educational programming at the school. Teachers explained that student investment in this program has a positive impact on behavior management in their classrooms. It has contributed to drastic improvement in student conduct since the arrival of the current principal who implemented the program. The site visit team observed the effective implementation of behavioral expectations in 45% (n=11) of classrooms. In these classrooms, students demonstrated that they had internalized behavioral expectations and consistently followed class rules. For example, in one classroom, the expectations for group work were posted on the wall and all students behaved according to those expectations while working in pairs as the teacher focused his/her attention on a group of students at the teacher table. During another observation, the teacher verbally reminded all students about classroom rules occasionally throughout the lesson; however, the students behaved so well that no specific redirection was necessary. The site visit team observed the partially effective implementation of behavioral expectations in 45% of classrooms. During these observations, teachers observed off-task behavior; however, it was generally so rare or exhibited by so few students that it did not disrupt the lesson. For example, in one class, the teacher effectively addressed minor off-task behaviors as they arose throughout the lesson, effectively redirecting students to the learning activity. During another class, a couple of students attempted to engage in conversations unrelated to the lesson content, while the clear majority of students were consistently well behaved throughout the observation.

Structured Learning Environment			
Ineffective	Partially Effective		Effective
1	2	3	4
18%	36%	27%	18%

- **While the learning environment is well-structured, learning time is not consistently maximized.** Teachers and school leaders explained that administrators very clearly expect each teacher to prepare and maintain specific aspects of their classroom in order to establish consistency in the

[1] Due to rounding, the percentages for a particular indicator may not appear to total to 100%.

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structure of the learning environment. The site visit team reviewed a document entitled School Environment Non-negotiable Checklist that teachers and school leaders reported is distributed to instructional staff on a regular basis prior to administrators reviewing how well each classroom aligns to expectations. This document includes the following expectations: classrooms are "neat, orderly, print-rich environments" in which lesson plans are accessible at all times; class schedules are visibly posted; and instructional plans for substitute teachers are maintained. The site visit team observed the effective establishment of structured learning environments in 18% of classrooms. In these classes, teachers were typically well-prepared, students understood the expectations for the activities and tasks in which they were engaged, and very little instructional time was wasted. For example, in one classroom, the teacher had all materials prepared for students for an interactive activity, including a PowerPoint presentation; student transitions between tasks were smooth and quick. However, in the majority (63%) of classes, the site visit team observed the partially effective establishment of structured learning environments. During these classes, teachers were not always well prepared and did not consistently maximize learning time. For example, during a class in which a video was being shown, students had to wait while the teacher set up the video. During another observation, there was no posted agenda of lesson activities. When students had completed one of their tasks, most just sat idly; instead of being provided an additional task or more challenging work while they waited for the rest of the class to finish. Finally, the site visit team observed the ineffective establishment of structured learning environments in 18% of classrooms. For example, during one class, not all students were provided with the correct reading material for the lesson activity. Also, the teacher prepared the students to transition out of class too early; therefore, students returned to their seats and repeated the process shortly thereafter.

2. *Classroom instruction is intentional, engaging, and challenging for all students.*	**Level 1: Intensive Support Required**

Focused Instruction			
Ineffective	Partially Effective		Effective
1	2	3	4
27%	45%	9%	18%

- **Teachers do not consistently provide students with clear learning goals and focused, purposeful instruction.** The site visit team observed the effective delivery of focused instruction in 18% of classrooms. These classes were generally characterized by the use of clear learning objectives, high expectations for students, and the effective communication of academic content. For example, during a math class, the teacher posted clear learning objectives, lesson activities were aligned to, and driven by, those learning objectives, and students and the teacher worked in small groups and independently throughout the lesson to achieve those objectives. However, in the majority of classrooms (54%), the site visit team observed partially effective or ineffective delivery of focused instruction. In these lessons, learning objectives were not always clear or aligned to student tasks and high expectations for students' academic achievement. For example, during one lesson, the learning objective matched the tasks in which students were engaged; however, only one student was asked to extend his/her thinking during the lesson. In addition, the site visit team observed a math class in which the activities did not match the posted learning objective and, when students made mistakes, the teacher did not

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attempt to correct them or address their misunderstandings. The site visit team observed the ineffective delivery of focused instruction in 27% of classrooms. These lessons were generally characterized by low academic expectations and vague learning objectives. For example, during one observation: students had limited opportunities to engage with content (mainly by watching a video or reading from a screen); the teacher did not scaffold instruction for students who struggled with the topic; and the learning objective was not specific to the content of the lesson.

Instructional Strategies			
Ineffective	Partially Effective		Effective
1	2	3	4
36%	18%	18%	27%

- **Learning tasks do not consistently include a variety of instructional strategies and materials to support student needs.** The site visit team found that the diversity of instructional strategies employed during lessons varied greatly across classrooms. While some teachers chose multiple activities that engaged more than one learning modality, others relied heavily on a single method of accessing academic content. The site visit team observed the effective use of varied instructional strategies and materials in 27% of classes. These classes typically included multi-sensory materials and learning experiences and/or varied groupings of students. For example, the site visit team observed one class in which the teacher used call-and-response techniques, as well as kinesthetic activities that complemented worksheet assignments. The site visit team found the partially effective implementation of varied instructional strategies in 36% of classrooms. For example, during one lesson, students watched videotapes, used markers to record answers to questions, and a few students managed lesson timing for the teacher. In another class, while the teacher did engage students in songs about academic content that included coordinated hand gestures, students spent most of the time watching and listening to the teacher or a few students who were chosen to share answers with the whole class. The site visit team observed the ineffective use of varied instructional strategies and materials in 36% of classes. For example, during one class, most students spent all of the observed instructional time in their seats working on worksheets; only a few students were called to the board to share their work. In another lesson, the students spent the duration of the observation sitting and listening to lecture-based instruction from the teacher.

3	*Teachers regularly assess students' progress toward mastery of key skills and concepts, and use assessment data to make adjustments to instruction and to provide feedback to students during the lesson.*	**Level 1: Intensive Support Required**

Assessment Strategies			
Ineffective	Partially Effective		Effective
1	2	3	4
36%	27%	36%	0%

- **In-class assessment strategies infrequently reveal students' thinking about learning goals.** Teachers stated that individual teachers have assessment strategies they favor in their practice, such as thumb tools, numeric scales, or general questioning of the class following guided instruction. The site visit team did not observe the effective use of in-class assessment strategies in any classes. In the majority (63%) of classrooms, the site visit team observed the partially effective use of these strategies. These classes typically included some formative assessment. However, these assessments were limited in

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the quality of information reflected by these techniques or the implementation of these techniques. For example, during one class, the teacher facilitated the use of thumb tools for students to indicate their comprehension of lesson content during multiple points in the lesson. During another class, the teacher had students tally their correct and incorrect answers for him/her to view while circulating. In addition, this teacher used thumb tools. However, this technique was used for students to indicate the completion of tasks, rather than comprehension of content. In another class, the teacher included an exit ticket in the packet of tasks on which students worked during the lesson. Some students progressed through their work more quickly than others and were allowed to begin work on the exit ticket, but not all students were observed completing this assessment. The site visit team observed the ineffective use of in-class assessment strategies in 36% of classes. Typically, these observations did not reveal the use of any formative assessments or included assessment techniques that produced little information to the teacher regarding students' progress toward learning goals. For example, in one class, the site visit team observed a teacher circulating among students while they worked and asked probing questions to a few students. However, the understanding of less than half of the students was assessed using these techniques.

Feedback			
Ineffective	Partially Effective		Effective
1	2	3	4
36%	45%	18%	0%

- **Timely, frequent, specific feedback is not provided to most students throughout the learning process to inform improvement efforts.** The site visit team did not observe the effective delivery of high-quality, content-based feedback to all students in any classrooms. However, the site visit team observed the partially effective delivery of such feedback in 63% of classes. During these lessons, only some students received feedback and/or the feedback did not specifically relate to student comprehension or progress toward learning goals. For example, during one class, the teacher circulated among students as they worked, giving reminders about their spelling or checking their answers; however, not all students received this feedback. During another lesson, the teacher narrated positive behaviors and complimented some students on their responses to questions from the lesson activities, but many students did not receive content-based feedback. Further, during another observation, all students received feedback from the teacher on the procedures for the learning tasks, but only a few were given guidance related to their understanding of the topics of the lesson. The site visit team also observed the ineffective delivery of high-quality, content-based feedback in 36% of classrooms. These lessons were characterized by few instances in which teachers gave feedback to students that related to their understanding of lesson concepts. For example, during one class, the teacher circulated as students worked in pairs, but asked only lightly probing questions about the learning objective to a few students. During another class, the teacher circulated to all groups of students working at different activity stations. However, the teacher's interactions with the students were focused on clarifying the instructions for each activity, rather than their understanding of the content they were to apply to each task.

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Domain 2: Students' Opportunities to Learn

4. The school identifies and supports special education students, English language learners, and students who are struggling or at risk.	**Level 2: Targeted Support Required**

- **The school has a process for identifying struggling and at-risk students and monitors individual students' progress.** Teachers and school leaders explained that the school has a student support team (SST) that collaborates to identify students in need of targeted academic and/or behavioral supports and interventions. Teachers explained that instructional staff document persistent academic, emotional, or behavioral concerns, using a referral form that also indicates the interventions that the teacher has already employed. A review of blank SST referral forms by site visit team members revealed that teachers are required to cite supporting documents (such as report cards, testing results), the reason for the referral, student strengths and areas of concern, and check boxes for content or skills for which support is needed. In addition, these documents contain checklists to document each stage of the SST process – for example, SST meeting date and names of people invited, SST meeting results, and check-in date with completed interventions. Teachers and school leaders stated that meetings of the SST are convened in response to the number of referrals received. These meetings take place on Monday or Thursday mornings during staff professional development time. School leaders explained that, at the meeting, team members brainstorm further interventions to address the needs of the student. These practices are implemented and their impact is documented by classroom teachers, followed by a subsequent SST meeting in which the team determines if the student's needs have been met, or if further supports are needed. Teachers reported that the SST includes special education staff, the assistant principal, the school psychologist, the planning center coordinator, and grade-level and content teachers who work with the student being referred. In addition, teachers explained that members of the SST contact the families of referred students to involve them in implementing interventions that the team proposes. In addition, school leaders described efforts to ensure that the SST process is transparent and understood by all members of the school staff. School leaders stated that the school has an SST committee that includes teachers and administrators who recently participated in professional development around effective practices at every stage of the SST process and authentically including parents in helping to implement interventions. School leaders also explained that members of the SST committee facilitated training for the entire faculty to ensure clarity among the staff on the school's specific expectations at each stage of the process.
- **The school implements appropriate supports for most struggling and at-risk students.** Teachers and support staff explained that the school has dedicated space, known as the planning center, where students can be sent if they are not able to respond appropriately to teacher redirection, if they need a separate setting for self-reflection, or to de-escalate from a specific situation. Teachers explained that there is a full-time staff member designated to manage the planning center who communicates with teachers, works with students who are sent to the planning center, and also maintains student referral data that is shared with instructional staff during SST meetings. Teachers also noted that the amount of time a specific student spends in the planning center is determined by the principal, the assistant principal, and the planning center coordinator; also, it is differentiated based on the specific needs of each student. In addition, students reported (and a review of school programming documents confirmed) that there is a program, known as Success Within, for at-risk male students that focuses on mentoring, conflict resolution, and character development. It is conducted by a former

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athletic coach who maintains a presence in the school during recess times and develops good relationships with students. In addition, students explained that there also has been an after-school group for middle school girls that included field trips and activities for peer mentoring and crisis prevention. School leaders noted, however, that due to recent funding changes, the staff member running the program now meets with specific female students on a one-on-one basis. Teachers and school leaders also described academic supports available to struggling students. For example, school leaders explained that the school uses an adaptive online instructional platform, called iReady, to support teachers' frequent use of activity centers. Teachers and school leaders explained that iReady assesses students, compiles data on their achievement levels, and develops appropriate tasks and lessons for each student. School leaders explained that teachers use these lessons in activity centers, as remediation tools, or to preview content with students based on individual needs. Members of the site visit team observed students engaged in iReady tasks during activity centers in multiple classrooms. In addition, multiple stakeholder groups explained (and a descriptive list of school support programs confirmed) that there is an after-school program run by the YMCA that provides tutoring to support effective homework completion. However, teachers explained that this program is not available to 7th or 8th grade students. Further, teachers confirmed that no programs currently exist to tutor 7th or 8th grade students. The school has had difficulty identifying partner organizations willing to provide academic supports to students of middle school age.

5. *The school's culture reflects a safe, supportive learning environment that reflects high expectations.*	**Level 2: Targeted Support Required**

- **The school provides a safe environment to support students' learning.** A review of results of the conditions for learning (CFL) survey revealed that 73% of 2nd-through-4th grade students and 88% of 5th-through-8th grade students feel their school has a "safe and respectful climate" (compared to 66% and 68% of students district-wide, respectively). In addition, teachers and students reported that they consistently feel safe at school. Teachers reported that prior to the arrival of the current principal, the school was a chaotic environment in which physical fighting occurred on a daily basis. Teachers reported that the policies and practices established by the current principal stabilized the school climate and established a safe environment for learning. For example, school leaders reported that there was no prior policy governing the presence of parents in the building. Parents and other adults freely entered the building at all times of the day and congregated in unused spaces. Also, conflicts between students subsequently involved parents who, at times, entered the school and threatened students. School leaders explained (and parents confirmed) that there is a new policy. Parents must make appointments to meet with teachers, register as volunteers if they wish to maintain a presence in the school, and follow a protocol when they observe classroom instruction. Site visit team members observed the clearly outlined expectations of this visitor policy posted by the school's entrance. School leaders and teachers reported that most threats to student safety occur outside the building, before and after school. School leaders described efforts to ensure the safety of students outside of school, including organizing coordinated groups of students to walk to and from school together, utilizing relationships with local officers from the Cleveland Police Department, and monitoring social media to identify brewing conflicts before they manifest themselves in school. School leaders also explained that the school has a security officer who uses a metal detector to screen all students and visitors who enter the school – a practice observed by site visit team members.
- **The school is beginning to take steps to engage families in support of student learning.** Teachers explained that they are required to send newsletters home to the families of students in their classes

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on a biweekly basis. Site visit team members reviewed sample newsletters from 1st-through-8th grade classes and found them to contain information on current topics of study, upcoming events, classroom rules, shout-outs to specific students, and reminders to parents. School leaders and teachers reported that the school has a family and community engagement (FACE) committee that includes teachers and administrators who plan events throughout the year; their goal is to have 85% of families attend at least one event each year. Teachers explained that the FACE committee plans two events per month – a science night, a winter ball, graduation celebrations, and a Black history museum event. In addition, school leaders explained there is a student/parent organization (SPO) that meets monthly to discuss to academics, attendance, and other issues and initiatives related to student well-being and achievement. Teachers explained that the SPO has recruited speakers and initiated programming to engage families – for example, on topics such as supporting single parents. Attendance at SPO meetings has been increasing over the last few years. School leaders reported that they have altered the times of SPO meetings in response to parent survey results. Teachers and school leaders also reported that instructional staff are expected to make regular calls to their students' families (including positive reinforcement and the communication of concerns) and document evidence of these calls. However, school leaders acknowledged that parents identified some teachers who did not make calls to families and that, in general, calls to convey good news about students do not happen as regularly as they should. In addition, although school leaders reported that members of the SPO helped implement new policies around parents' presence in the building, some parents reported that as a result of the change in policy, they do not feel welcome at the school. Further, some parents stated that they feel some staff members are not equipped to understand their children or be empathetic to the circumstances of their home lives.

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Domain 3: Educators' Opportunities to Learn

6. *The school designs professional development and collaborative support systems to sustain a focus on instructional improvement.*	**Level 2: Targeted Support Required**

- **Professional development is designed to address school priorities and is active; however, it is not fully responsive to building needs.** Teachers explained that, during the school year, school-wide professional development takes place for one hour in the morning, four days per week. School leaders reported that they collaborate with the academic progress team (APT) to design professional development that meets the needs of teachers and is aligned to school goals around students' academic achievement, leadership development, and attendance. For example, teachers explained they have participated in professional development in the implementation of iReady, Kickboard, and the Leader in Me leadership development program. In addition, teachers and school leaders reported that the school recently contracted for support on curriculum design and instruction from an organization known as Twin Towers, which specializes in creating professional development aligned with school priorities and individual teacher's needs. Teachers explained that, this year, Twin Towers has assisted teachers in diagnosing the needs of struggling readers, implementing guided reading and activity centers in English language arts (ELA), as well as helping students learn to navigate online testing portals. However, teachers reported that professional development activities feel fragmented and that they do not always understand why the school makes decisions to retain or discontinue certain professional development initiatives. School leaders explained that Marion Sterling endured significant teacher turnover from the Spring of 2016 to the start of the 2016-2017 school year. They acknowledged that the professional development that occurred at the beginning of the school year did not appropriately meet the needs of the staff. For example, school leaders stated that many new staff were not aware of the school's corrective action plan (CAP) that serves as the rationale for increased programmatic and professional expectations. A review of professional development calendars by site visit team members revealed that pre-service professional development for the entire staff was dedicated to stand-alone sessions on programs like iReady, Kickboard, and Leader in Me, rather than those designed to provide context for new staff on district intervention relative to student achievement and its impacts on academic programming.
- **Educators have begun to collaborate regularly to learn about effective instruction and students progress.** Teachers explained that there are three teacher-based teams (TBTs) at Marion Sterling – one for K-through-2nd grade teachers, one for 3rd-through-5th grade teachers, and one for 6th-through-8th grade teachers. TBTs meet weekly on Wednesday mornings to gather data on student achievement and use the data to inform instructional remediation. Teachers explained that each team collaborates to select a standard that can be assessed in all content-area classes. Each teacher from different grade levels on the team administers a pre-test assessing that standard. The team then brings data from those assessments to a subsequent meeting in which the team develops interventions and teaching techniques to address the needs of students reflected in the pre-test data. Teachers also stated that each member of the TBT implements those interventions while re-teaching the agreed-upon standard. They then administer a post-assessment to determine how much growth was achieved though the re-teaching process. Teachers reported that the common goal for most TBTs is that 85% of students demonstrate mastery of the agreed-upon standard on the post-assessment. Site visit team members completed a review of sample TBT meeting documentation, which revealed that different teams appear to be in different stages of the TBT process. For example, documentation from some

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teams was more complete than those from other teams. It appears that different TBTs complete the data analysis process described above on differing schedules. Teachers and school leaders also explained that teachers collaborate informally on a regular basis, using each other for professional support and guidance, when needed. However, teachers explained that while informal collaboration within grade band teams is a helpful, robust practice, it rarely extends to teachers from different grade band teams. School leaders acknowledged that isolated pockets of staff collaboration is a concern that they wish to address in the future.

7. *The school's culture indicates high levels of collective responsibility, trust, and efficacy.*	**Level 1: Intensive Support Required**

- **Educators' mindsets and beliefs do not reflect shared commitments to students' learning.** While teachers clearly understand the school's vision and values (academics, attitude, and attendance), staff did not convey a shared commitment to the pursuit of this vision. For example, some teachers reported that they focus their energy only on what occurs in their classroom; others stated that they have supportive relationships with a few members of their grade band team. However, they do not rely on the assistance of many of their peers beyond their team. In addition, while some teachers reported that they welcome the high expectations established by administrators and understand why they are held accountable to them, others described being firmly resistant to this type of professional management. For example, teachers demonstrated different responses to a list of non-negotiable elements of the classroom environment, which the principal routinely uses to assess the physical condition of each classroom. While some teachers stated that they understand the expectations and work to bring their classroom into compliance, others explained that they believe these expectations put an undue burden on their practice. Classroom observations confirmed this. Site visit team members noted that some classrooms contained elements from the list (e.g., posted SMART goals, student work, and the 7 habits emphasized by the Leader in Me program), while others did not contain these elements. Further, when asked to describe the main obstacles to student achievement, teachers identified external factors unrelated to their own practice – staff turnover, lack of parent engagement, and requirements to attend frequent professional development sessions (resulting in losses of instructional time).
- **The school does not reflect a safe, trustworthy, and growth-oriented professional climate.** Teachers' descriptions of the professional climate at Marion Sterling varied greatly, reflecting deep tensions in the staff. While some teachers reported that the adult culture at the school is loving, helpful, and very supportive, others stated that they feel on edge and stressed out and that the school environment is not welcoming at all. In addition, some teachers reported that they feel safe to take professional risks and experiment to improve their practice, such as working with other staff members to try different student groupings or teaching different content at certain times of the day. However, other teachers' descriptions of their feelings of professional safety were almost the opposite. Some reported that staff members are afraid to ask for support because they feel they will receive only critical feedback in return. Others stated that teachers who need support do not receive it, contributing to already significant staff turnover. Further, while some teachers described administrators as caring, supportive, and responsive to staff input and feedback, others reported that they do not feel safe asking administrators for help. Some teachers explained that they feel that administrators are overly critical of, and not supportive of, certain teachers, and complained of administrators frequently interrupting instruction when they conduct classroom observations.

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Domain 4: Governance and Leadership

8. School leaders guide and participate with instructional staff in the central processes of improving teaching and learning.	**Level 2: Targeted Support Required**

- **The principal has articulated a vision and clear goals for the school and is working to promote continuous progress toward the goals.** Teachers, students, parents, and school leaders explained that the school's vision is focused around academics, attendance, and attitude. Teachers and school leaders also explained the goals associated with each area of the school's vision: that 85% of students reach proficiency on Ohio state math and reading assessments (academics); that the student body maintain a 95% daily attendance rate; and that school-wide CFL survey results demonstrate that 95% of students feel safe at Marion Sterling (attitude). In addition, school leaders stated (and a review of the school's academic achievement plan [AAP] confirmed) that differentiation via the implementation of activity centers is a central aspect of the school's efforts to improve student achievement. Teachers explained that progress toward school goals is monitored in a variety of ways. For example, teachers explained (and site visit team members observed) teachers and students recording attendance during morning classes; aggregate attendance data is clearly presented on the walls of the school near the entryway. In addition, teachers explained that students' performance on interim assessments from the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA), along with data analysis that occurs during TBT meetings, are used to monitor students' academic progress throughout the year. Further, teachers, students, and school leaders reported that each student in the school compiles personal and academic goals, assessment results, and notable achievements in a leadership binder that students maintain and update throughout the school year with guidance from teachers. While students were able to explain the purpose of their leadership binders and provide some examples of its content, a review of sample binders provided by the school revealed significant inconsistencies in their contents. For example, while all binders contained five sections (academics, attitude, attendance, goals, and victories), one did not contain any assessment data, some did not contain any evidence of academic or personal goals, and tracking sheets did not consistently contain attendance data from all past months of the school year.
- **School leaders do not fully provide conditions that support a school-wide data culture.** While team members observed evidence of the use of student-based data posted in classrooms and common areas throughout the school, and students were able to recite their test scores and quantitative goals for the future, school stakeholders did not describe the collection or dissemination of school-wide data about instructional practices or progress toward specific goals or clearly communicated professional expectations. School leaders explained that they use quantitative data from assessments, as well as qualitative data from classroom observations, to develop individualized supports for teachers, such as additional classroom observations, assistance with lesson planning, or help preparing class materials. However, teachers reported that they do not know why some teachers are designated to receive certain supports. They question the motives of administrators who deliver these supports. This mistrust contributes to staff tensions and furthers the potential for continued staff turnover. While interviews with school stakeholders, the review of school documents, and the observation of classroom instruction reveal that school staff frequently utilize data based on student performance, school leaders acknowledged that they do not share data with the staff around school-wide trends in instructional practice or celebrate accomplishments related to the implementation of school priorities by teachers. Further, school leaders reported that they have identified this as an area

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of concern and have begun developing plans to implement peer observations in order to share data around school-wide instructional practices with the whole staff.

9. *School leaders effectively orchestrate the school's operations.*	**Level 3: Established**

- **School leaders ensure inclusive, transparent decision making across the organization.** School leaders and teachers explained that every teacher is a member of one of the school's leadership teams or committees. School leaders reported that there is one teacher from each grade band team on the school's building leadership team (BLT) and academic progress team (APT) who participate in team decisions and disseminate information about the activity of each team to their peers. In addition, teachers explained that the school has a committee that is dedicated to ensuring further progress toward each of the school's goals around attendance, attitude, academics, and family engagement. For example, teachers reported that the attendance committee analyzes student attendance data and designs incentives for each month to generate excitement among students and reduce absenteeism. School leaders explained that these committees used to have teachers as members and were facilitated by administrators, which they felt inhibited the development of teacher leadership in the committees. School leaders stated that administrators now have stepped away from leading the committee and have provided teachers with tools to guide their work. Teachers have begun assuming leadership roles in each of the committees, including teachers who seemed reluctant to take on such a responsibility. School leaders also explained that the APT developed a structure for each committee to report to the entire staff via email on a regular basis. In addition, school leaders explained that they monitor the work of the teacher-led committees through sign-in sheets and meeting documentation that is submitted to administrators following each meeting. School leaders also stated that the initiatives that are developed in these committees usually require administrative approval, and that fielding requests for such approval is another means by which they are able to monitor their work.
- **The principal allocates resources and manages school operations in order to ensure a safe and productive learning environment.** School leaders described an array of practices and decisions dedicated to managing the human resources available to students. School leaders explained that they had to fill 12 teaching positions for the 2016-2017 school year. To do so, they utilized a hiring team that included administrators and teachers. School leaders stated that the hiring process included job fairs, full-day interviews, and visits to the school. While school leaders acknowledged that they have many young teachers who are just starting their careers, they earned positions at Marion Sterling by demonstrating alignment with the school's vision and being willing to work hard. In addition, school leaders explained that they have managed human resources in order to support student achievement in math, creating a position for a new math teacher to be hired to replace substitute teachers who were covering the classroom of a teacher on long-term medical leave. School leaders also explained that they decided to implement a departmentalized instructional system in 3rd-through-8th grade in order protect science and social studies instruction and allow teachers to focus on one content area. School leaders further reported that they made strategic decisions to discontinue participation in Achievement Network (ANet) assessments and professional development in the CT3 teacher-coaching model, due to concerns that these programs did not properly address the needs of students or teachers at Marion Sterling. In addition, school leaders explained that Marion Sterling is a wraparound school that receives outside support services individualized to meet the needs of the school and its students from its wraparound partner, Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C). Teachers explained that Tri-C has provided space and production support for student performances, such as a recent pageant for girls in the 5th grade. In addition to Tri-C, teachers reported that students have access to tutoring

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services from John Carroll University, Greater Cleveland Volunteers, and the Urban League. Teachers receive coaching services from an organization called Ideastream. Also, counseling services are provided to students by Beechbrook – a local mental health agency.

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Prioritization Process

The site visit team met with the Marion Sterling K-8 School's leadership team to review its findings, discuss the school's areas of strengths and areas for improvement, prioritize areas for improvement, and discuss ways to address the identified areas for improvement.

School leaders and the site visit team agreed that there are significant strengths present in the school. Areas of strength the team discussed included behavioral expectations and the school's safe environment to support student learning. The site visit team also noted the following areas for growth: structured learning environment, focused instruction, instructional strategies, in-class assessments, and feedback.

The group identified Instruction as the area for growth to prioritize. The group identified the following priority within this Key Question as having the most potential impact on the success of the school as a whole: Classroom instruction is intentional, engaging, and challenging for all students.

The team then developed the following goal, success measure, and action plan:

Goal: Learning tasks do consistently include a variety of instructional strategies and materials to support student needs.

Success Measure: By May 2017, 80% of teachers would be effective in the use of varied instructional strategies (via the use of differentiated center activities) according to the SchoolWorks classroom visit rubric.

Actions	Target Dates	Champions
Define professional development on differentiated instruction including on what it looks, sounds, and feels like in different content areas and class types	12/13	3-5 Sci -SS Teacher/CIS
Determine steps to establish staff buy-in; access district partners for CMSD schools to visit to observe model differentiation in practice.	12/13	Principal/Kindergarten teacher
Develop a survey of teachers and staff to figure out where to begin and how to differentiate professional development.	12/7	Reading Recovery Teacher/Kindergarten teacher
Design ways to celebrate staff progress	1/15	Art teacher, 3-5th IS teacher, Principal
Student survey about their preferred modality(ies); support ongoing coaching on instruction that meets these needs	1/17	Reading Recovery Teacher/Kindergarten teacher
Define what support, intervention, and ongoing support looks like for teachers and school leaders	1/17	IS teacher
Determine a format for professional development that is transparent and cohesive	1/17	Principal

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Conduct a professional development on data and how to use it	1/17	IS teacher
Conduct peer observations to see/experience variety of differentiated instruction experiences	1/17	IS teacher
Create a series of professional development, sessions, coaching support and lesson planning support for grouping students in high/medium/low. Determine how teachers could use peer tutoring in class as well.	1/17	IS teacher
Provide regular opportunities for staff collaboration around instructional practices (through department teams)	2/1	3-5th IS teacher/Assistant Principal
Implement learning walks or peer walks	2/1	Art teacher/IS teacher

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Appendix A: Site Visit Team Members

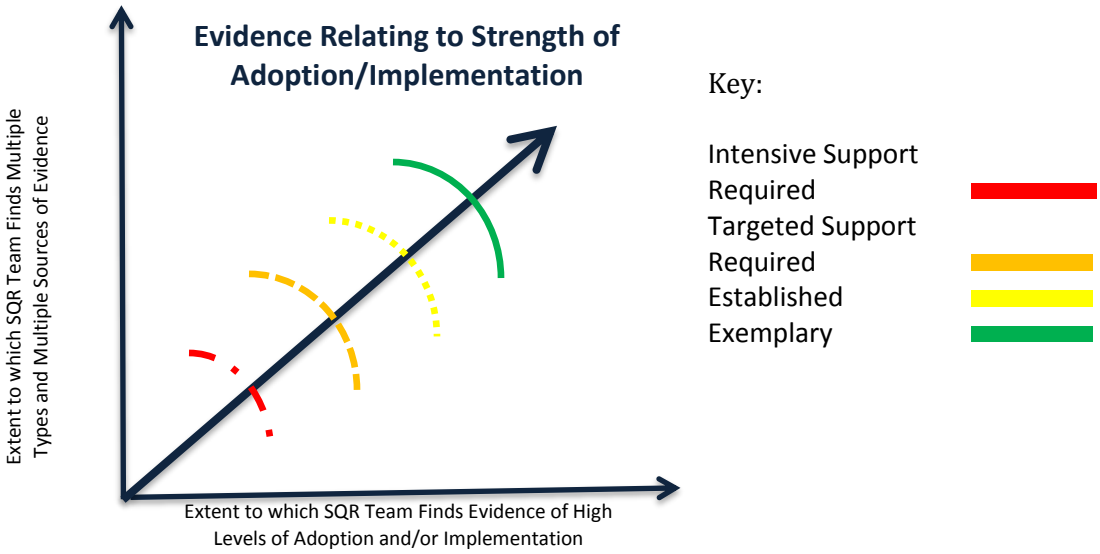
The school quality review visit to the Marion Sterling K-8 school was conducted on November 29-December 1, 2016 by a team of educators from the Cleveland Metropolitan School District and SchoolWorks, LLC.

Kara Dunn, Team Leader	SchoolWorks, LLC
Nick Thompson, Team Writer	SchoolWorks, LLC
Jill McCabe, Team Member	Cleveland Metropolitan School District

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Appendix B: Implementation Rubric

The site visit team will use the following guidance to select a performance level for each key question. Note that the quality standard for each implementation level is based on the extent to which the site visit team finds multiple types[2] and multiple sources[3] of evidence related to the adoption and/or implementation of a practice or system and the extent to which the site visit team finds evidence of high levels of adoption and/or implementation of a practice or system.



Rating	Implementation Level	Quality Standard
1	**Intensive Support Required**	Evidence indicates that the key question is not a practice or system that has been adopted and/or implemented at the school, or that the level of adoption/implementation does not improve the school's effectiveness.
2	**Targeted Support Required**	Evidence indicates that the key question is a practice or system that is developing at the school, but that it has not yet been implemented at a level that has begun to improve the school's effectiveness, OR that the impact of the key action on the effectiveness of the school cannot yet be determined.
3	**Established**	Evidence indicates that the key question is a practice or system that has been adopted at the school, and is implemented at a level that has begun to improve the school's effectiveness.
4	**Exemplary**	Evidence indicates that the key question is a practice or system that has been fully adopted at the school, and is implemented at a level that has had a demonstrably positive impact on the school's effectiveness.

[2] "Multiple types of evidence" is defined as evidence collected from two or more of the following: document review, stakeholder focus groups and/or interviews; and classroom observations.
[3] "Multiple sources of evidence" is defined as evidence collected from three or more stakeholder focus groups and/or interviews; two or more documents; and/or evidence that a descriptor was documented in 75% or more of lessons observed at the time of the visit.

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Appendix C: Summary of Classroom Observation Data

During the site visit, the team conducted 11 observations, representing a range of grade levels and subject areas. The following table presents the compiled data from those observations. *Note: Due to rounding, the percentages for a particular indicator may not appear to total to 100%.*

	Indicator	Distribution of Scores (%)			
		Ineffective	*Partially Effective*		*Effective*
		1	**2**	**3**	**4**
Common Core Alignment	**1a. Common Core Literacy Alignment (for all classes other than math)** Alignment to content standards Alignment to instructional shifts N = 7	29%	57%	14%	0%
	1b. Common Core Math Alignment (for math classes only) Alignment to content standards Alignment to instructional shifts Alignment to standards for mathematical practice N = 4	50%	0%	25%	25%
Classroom Climate	**2. Behavioral Expectations** Student behavior Clear expectations Consistent rewards and/or consequences Anticipation and redirection of misbehavior	9%	0%	45%	45%
	3. Structured Learning Environment Teacher preparation Clear agenda Learning time maximized	18%	36%	27%	18%
	4. Supportive Learning Environment Caring relationships Teacher responsiveness to students' needs	17%	33%	33%	17%
Purposeful Teaching	**5. Focused Instruction** Learning objectives High expectations Effective communication of academic content	27%	45%	9%	18%
	6. Instructional Strategies Multi-sensory modalities and materials Varied groupings Student choice and leadership	38%	18%	18%	27%
	7. Cognitive Engagement Active student participation Perseverance	9%	18%	36%	36%
	8. Higher-order Thinking Challenging tasks Application to new problems and situations Student questions Metacognition	45%	38%	18%	0%
In-Class Assessment & Adjustment	**9. Assessment Strategies** Use of formative assessments	36%	27%	36%	0%
	10. Adjustments to Instruction Adjustment of instructional Strategies Adjustment of content Adjustment of organization of students	91%	0%	9%	0%
	11. Feedback Feedback to students Student use of feedback	36%	45%	18%	0%

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