



## SESSION 2 REPORT – SCHOOL PLAN PRIORITIES

**NAME OF SCHOOL:** HARTE MIDDLE SCHOOL

**DATE OF SESSION 2:** 10/23/12

**NAME OF ORGANIZATION/REPORTING:** Building Skills Partnership

**NAME OF INDIVIDUAL REPORTING IN BEHALF OF THE ORGANIZATION:** JUAN CARLOS VENEGAS

**DATE THIS REPORT IS COMPLETED AND SUBMITTED:** 10/23/12

### • INTERPRETING DATA AS A STEP TO BUILD HIGH PERFORMING COMMUNITIES OF LEARNING

#### I. Student Performance: Where is the School Now?

Participants reviewed data from the LAUSD School Report Card. Participants were divided into 10 groups and reviewed the following areas of the School Report Card:

1. Student Groups
2. Learning Environment
3. Progress
4. Readiness

There were two overall main themes of student safety/conduct (bullying) in the school and the need of more focused support for academics (Math and English). Parents in small groups felt in agreement that the school was safe for their children. They also noticed that only 84% of parents responded to the School Experience Survey. Several parents felt the need to express that the school needed to bring in expertise to tackle the issue of bullying. The parents also felt a strong need to express that the school needs to provide more support towards the academic achievement of its students. Some of the parents specifically identified the need to ensure that Math and English are a priority. Narrative quotes and written feedback from the small group discussions and presentations were as follows:

- Bring an expert to talk about bullying such as a policeman or expert.
- More parent involvement
- Better trained teachers and professional development
- We need to develop more respect from students towards teachers, staff and their classmates.
- We need to improve the science proficiency level.
- African American students need more support in Math and English
- We need more school days, tutoring, and professional development of teachers.
- We need to focus more on English and math. We need help.
- My son feel does not feel safe in the school.
- We are victims; our children are being beaten (physically).
- More parent participation and engagement from those who are not participating.
- The proficiency is very low. We need to focus on raising the proficiency levels of all students and as parents we need to get closer to the school, teachers and school principal.
- We need to make/create plans during the meetings we have with the school principal and be responsible to give/have an opinion and help so that progress happens at a faster pace. Only we can fight for our children. This is our obligation to encourage them with anything that relates to their academics because it is their future.



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- The substitutes do not give students the same attention/instruction as regular teachers. They do not assign any work for the students.

### II. School Plan Priorities Brainstorm

Participants conducted this exercise in small groups by writing their ideas in a “cloud” as part of a brainstorm. There were several themes that emerged from this brainstorm and they were Safety and Security, Teacher Efficiency, and Parent Involvement.

Safety and security was the main theme. There was a great concern about bullying, use of drugs, and overall care for the safety of the children inside and outside of the school. Parents also wanted the school to create solutions that changes the climate and culture of the school. The brainstorm included the following written feedback:

- We need a solution for kids that are late or misbehaving
- We need more security for the kids at the front of the school and in the playground/yard starting at 8:00 AM.
- We need more security because the students leave the school through the back patio and then roam the streets to get drugged and drunk. We need to put closer attention to this issue.
- The bathrooms are being used to smoke and do drugs. They also tack other kids and force them to do the same things they are doing (smoke and drugs).
- We need to observe who are the kids bullying their peers and take measures against these kids.
- We need to check backpacks for drugs.
- There is a group of students who provoke fights during recess. To prevent this we need to focus our attention on these small groups of kids.
- Invite LAPD or the Sheriff Department to motivate them, give kids mentoring and counseling.
- Security cameras.
- We need an expert to come and to talk about bullying and its consequences.
- We need more vigilance inside the school so they don't join gangs. We also need to make sure we hear and talk to those kids that share their fears and problems.
- Let the parents know of the students that are truant.
- Give the students a sense of leadership. Let them show that they want to have a safe environment. Hall monitors, classroom involvement such as helpers.
- Award the kids that achieve high grades. The school principal should honor them so they can be motivated.
- We need to make sure that the kids have respect for the teachers.

Teacher efficiency was also a theme that included the need to build capacity of teachers and to ensure that they are effective in their communication with students and parents.

- Teachers need to be up to date by having capacity building workshops
- We need consequences for the teachers that do not fulfill their assigned responsibilities.
- We need to seek options to improve the subject that are presenting problems for the kids. We need to find solutions for this academic year.
- 1 on 1 tutoring by teachers.
- Teachers should help the kids after school.
- Teachers should motivate the students.
- More communication between teachers and parents.
- We want the teachers to spend more time explaining math to the students.
- We should not have substitute teachers; this type of change greatly affects the kids.



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- We need to work a lot more with the teachers, and talk to them about our kids' progress.
- We need to get rid of all teachers who are not motivated to teach.
- More capacity building for teachers in all subjects.

One more theme was the need for more parent involvement through strategies such as developing more volunteer opportunities, having better communication between the school and parents, and building capacity of parents.

- We need to create parent groups to work in collaboration with the school and also to work outside of the school. We can collaborate and see what the kids are doing outside of school.
- Make sure the parents are motivating the kids.
- Volunteers.
- We need to motivate parents to be more active with the kids in the school.
- Create a group of parents that can come to the school to read to kids 1 or 2 times a week.
- Parents need more capacity building in academics.

There were other comments that did not fall into a particular theme but expressed other concerns and recommendations from the participants. These were as follows:

- We need to make sure that the money is used towards children's education.
- More training at school and make sure the kids are studying at home.
- More support for the students so they become more proficient.
- Develop community service program/opportunities for the students.
- Do not allow kids to bring any distractions, such as cellular phones, iPods, bracelets, earrings, and perfume.
- Have more time where students become familiar and aware of their peers. Meet and have discussions about what they want from their learning experience.
- Celebrate their achievements by parties, tickets, certificates, prizes. Make them feel more responsible for their progress.
- More school days and longer days.
- More reading and math.
- I would like to ask for the kids not to be allowed to get out of the school until their dad or mother picks them up.
- We need the cleaning crew to make sure they do a good job cleaning.
- We need an interpreter.
- You should not sit the kids in the sun for too long. They need more financial support.
- More nutritious food and more order in the eating area.

### III. **School Priorities that Lead to a High Performing Community of Learning**

Participants were highly engaged into examining academic data and inquiring into solutions as to how students at Harte Middle School can achieve with greater success. Once again the main concern of the parents was the safety and security of students at the school. The prevalent comments made through the small group sharing reflected a need to address the issues of bullying, drug use, and overall lack of security inside the school. The priorities per each of the School Report Card segments shared by the participants were as follows:



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1. Under Progress the priority was: **More parent involvement.**
2. Under Learning Environment the priority was: **Children need to have more respect towards teachers and peers.**
3. Under Readiness the priority was: **a) Teachers need more training/capacity building in all subjects/areas, and b) we need to raise our science level. Improve proficiency.**
4. Under Student Groups the priority was: **Bring a trained person to explain/train us on the issue of bullying. Someone like a policeman.**



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## Session 2 Report – Dialogues with Planning Teams

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### Dialogue One – Dialogue between Bret Harte Middle School Team and participants

Planning Team One Name: Bret Harte Middle School

Team members included:

Principal Luz Cortez

Mrs. Hong - Assistant Principal

Mrs. Byrd - Assistant Principal

Mrs. Montgomery - Science Chair

Mrs. Vasquez - Bilingual Coordinator

Mrs. Thomas - Title 3 Chair

The team presented their priority for the school which was captured by the following points:

1. Algebra with a goal of 10% increase in proficiency (Provision of intervention, Double Block and tutoring)
2. ELA with a goal of 10% increase in proficiency (Double Block, 3-tiered approach, and tutorial labs)
3. Targeting Low Proficient Students and Special Ed (with a focus on African American special ed students)

Other points shared by the team:

- The team also added school culture as an area of priority. They envisioned more involvement of students, families and teachers.
- Push for more collaboration between teachers.
- The new bell schedule would allow students more electives and an extension of lessons by having extended periods.

### Questions & Answers for Team One:

**Question:** Are you involving yourself more in the issue of safety? Where is the safety area for the students in the school?

**Answer:** We are targeting academics. Once the students are in class we can keep them safe, they are excited in class, and they are in class learning.

**Comment:** Do you know that at least 2 fights happen per week? A student can be a good student and still not be safe. My daughter was beaten. My daughter is hurt. My daughter and I are psychologically hurt. It is not dignified that the teachers just stood and watched. My daughter does not want to be in this school. My daughter was beaten and there is a video. What does it matter if my daughter is a good student if she is not safe?

**Comment:** Teachers should use the time to teach.



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**Question:** In the school, are the teachers focusing on the kids using drugs inside the classroom? Are teachers being trained to detect/catch drug use? In the plan will there be something in regards to drug prevention?

**Answer:** Yes, there are certain mandates that require training on drugs and other health issues. Also we have random searches. The students get upset about the searches by it is a deterrent.

**Comment:** Last year when we went over the plan Mrs. Cortez said: "This is my plan, if you don't appreciate it then volunteer". If more parents volunteer there would be fewer fights. We need more volunteers and we need a volunteer plan.

**Comment:** A substitute went to my daughter's class; he was only there to watch over the class. The class time was lost. With the substitutes there is a lack of guidance and they don't teach.

**Answer:** We are writing all your questions down so we address them in the plan.

**Question:** How do you plan to stop this violent behavior and culture (bullying)?

**Answer:** We are very active. Our counseling staff has mandatory training. There is a zero tolerance policy (for bullying). We are looking to have better relations with the students amongst the student body; this would stop the behavior and retaliations.

**Comment:** There are also parents who have problems (fighting, alcoholism). Parents need to volunteer. Parents come to the school to also fight and complain. We need more volunteers.



## Dialogue Two – Dialogue between Sankofa STEAM Academy Team and participants

Planning Team Two Name: Sankofa STEAM Academy

Team members included: Dr. Carol Cobb

The team presented their priority for the school which was captured by the following points:

1. A strong academic literacy program.
2. Meaningful professional learning opportunities for staff and administration.
3. Creating multiple programs and opportunities for parents to be more engaged.
4. A safe and healthy learning environment.

The presenter also shared some other points:

- Don't talk about students in terms of subgroups because they are cohorts.
- There is either or in the issue of academic performance versus safety. We need a holistic approach. We need to make sure that what the students and community need really happens.
- The more you are present and welcomed on campus the better the environment.
- We can implement a "Character Counts" Program, parent university, peer programs, junior achievement and mentoring programs with feeder high schools.
- We need to teach children how to think which will make them better writers, test takers and prepare them for college.
- Create a school that is academic, social and community-minded.

### Questions & Answers for Team Two:

**Question:** Why not have a plan that selects all the low-achieving children that are low in algebra?

**Answer:** I am not presently part of the school. When we extend the day we build intervention into the school day. Parent University will also help deal with this issue. The professional development of the teachers will tap into the students' needs.

**Comment:** We had a series of math workshops for parents but not too many parents attended.

**Answer:** I would first try to understand why parents did not attend. It could be a timing issue; we need to find a convenient time for parents to attend.

**Comment:** They put it in the calendar and it would be more convenient to send a flyer. People don't get reminders, we don't get flyers and there is a lack of communication.

**Answer:** The priority is to have multiple programs and opportunities for parents. We need a parent committee to tell us the best day to reach the parents. Is it through email, flyers, connect Ed calls? There is a distance between the school and home, we don't need that.

**Comment:** I have a 6<sup>th</sup> grader who looks different; he is not a bully but he could be. We need to find a way to get the kids to come together and relate with each other. This will teach them to respect one another. We all need to put our egos to the side and create a better school environment.

**Answer:** Priority four of the plan offers opportunity for kids to learn how to learn. This is something that interests kids. This will also create a better school environment and bring people together. We would also bring in Harte Alumni that have succeeded and show them that there are people that look like them and come from the same place they are from and have succeeded. We plan to create a caring environment and teach children that they are valuable.