



DATE: November 27, 2017

TO: Andrea Tucker, Principal
Lyn Knoll Elementary School Governing Board
Lyn Knoll Elementary School Staff

CC: Pilot Schools Joint Steering Committee
Rico Munn, Superintendent
Board of Education

FROM: School Quality Review Team Members from Joint Steering Committee

SUBJECT: Lyn Knoll Elementary School Pilot School Quality Review

Background

In October 2007, both the Aurora Education Association and the Aurora Public Schools Board of Education approved the plan to create a Pilot School Program in APS and created a Memorandum of Understanding to guide the implementation. In 2011, through negotiations between the Board of Education and AEA, Article 44 was created to support and direct the ongoing development of Pilot Schools. After three full years of operations, a Pilot school is required to participate in a School Quality Review (SQR). Lyn Knoll Elementary School began operating as a Pilot School in the 2013-2014 school year and is in its fifth year of operating as a Pilot School.

The SQR process requires a team to review the school and the schools' self-study in order to develop a report that outlines areas of success and recommendations in the areas of:

- School vision and mission
- Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment
- Professional Development
- Family and Community Engagement
- Student Support and Outcomes
- Leadership and Governance

Prominent benchmarks in every SQR should be (1) having in place a strong system of assessment of student learning and achievement that demonstrates the school has met or exceed district averages when compared to schools with similar demographics, (2) progress in attaining high performance in multiple indicators of student engagement (e.g., transfers, suspensions, attendance) and achievement (e.g., end-of-year assessments, and graduation and college-going rates, course grades), and (3) how well the Governing Board and leadership function, support and communicate the school's vision and goals on student engagement and achievement to staff, students, parents, and community.

The following steps outline the School Quality Review Process:

- The School submits a self-study to the Joint Steering Committee (JSC).
- A visitation team from the Joint Steering Committee completes the School Quality Review and provides input for the SQR report with recommendations for improvement and Pilot status.
- The completed SQR report is submitted to school.
- The School *may* submit a response to the SQR report to the JSC.
- JSC reviews SQR report at its meeting, any response from the school and, if necessary, develops response/feedback to school.
- JSC makes a recommendation to the Board of Education as to whether the Pilot status should be continued and provides the SQR report.
- If the school has not met its targets, the JSC will recommend the Board of Education review and determine if the school should have its Pilot status revoked (or extended conditionally pending a future review) at a subsequent board meeting.
- If the JSC recommendation for continuation of Pilot status is approved, the school must include JSC feedback from the report into its action plans for the next school year.

A review team from the Joint Steering Committee conducted a School Quality Review at Lyn Knoll Elementary School on November 2nd, 2017, from 9:00-3:00. The information for this SQR report was gathered during the site visit from classroom observations; climate and perception survey information; Lyn Knoll's annual assessment outcomes; the school's Unified Improvement Plan; as well as interviews and discussions with, the school's principal, school staff, governing board members, and Lyn Knoll students.

Overview of Review Team's Visit with the Governing Board

The SQR review team had the opportunity to hear from three members of the Governing Board: two teachers—one academic and one elective—and the school's principal. The review team met with the teachers, respectively, and the principal, in two separate conversations.

The teachers from the Governing Board both indicated that the small community feel of the school is what keeps students, families, and teachers coming back to the Lyn Knoll family year after year. The families that have left, according to the Governing Board,

have had to move out of the area due to rising costs of living and housing in the Lyn Knoll neighborhood.

The Governing Board members reflected on the impact of The Leader in Me, a 21st Century skills and leadership program for kids based on the work of Franklin Covey and Stephen Covey's 7 Habits of Highly Effective People that supports students, teachers, and families with a framework of common language and approaches around social-emotional behavior and leadership potential. Based on defined traits of successful scholarship and engagement, students are able to articulate the influence and impact of the habits in their daily interactions at school. Teachers stated that the common language has knit a strong fabric of community in the school, and that students are conscientious in ways they were not prior to launching the program. The Leader in Me has been in place at Lyn Knoll for four years. The Leader in Me is known as a "whole school transformation" tool, and is rooted in the belief that every child has leadership potential.

Members of the Governing Board also mentioned that having APS Pilot status as a school has afforded them the flexibility to staff the building in such a way that they could maintain multiple every-day specials or electives for students, especially physical education. Movement is a significant aspect of Lyn Knoll's programming; every student has PE every day at Lyn Knoll, and students can often be observed engaging in physical activity designed to promote memory and cognition while in their academic classes. The Governing Board indicated, as well, that flexibility afforded by Pilot status has allowed Lyn Knoll to create a calendar that makes more sense for Lyn Knoll families, and has allowed the school to design a professional development framework that can be responsive and needs-based depending on the year-to-year needs of teachers at the school.

Both teacher Governing Board members have been at Lyn Knoll for nine years and twenty years, respectively; the principal at Lyn Knoll is currently in her eighth year of leadership at the school. All Governing Board members state that the Governing Board truly does serve as the primary governing body of the school, and is involved in all decision-making that impacts the school from an operational perspective. The Governing Board function at Lyn Knoll is a relative strength of the Pilot structure.

School Ratings

The visitation team, comprised of six members of the Joint Steering Committee, reviewed information gathered from the site visit, RMC audit and Accountability Evaluation report to score the school in six targeted areas utilizing the following rubric:

- 4 – Sustainable – the school demonstrates evidence of creating a high performing school
- 3 – Moving toward Sustainability – the school demonstrates evidence of creating a high performance school, but more evidence is needed
- 2 – Initial Steps toward Sustainability – the school demonstrates beginning steps toward creating a high performing school

- 1 – Area of Concern – the school demonstrates insufficient evidence of creating a high performing school
- U – Unable to determine

School Vision/Mission – RATING: 2.5

VISION:

We develop every child as a leader every day so they are successful in school, their community and their career.

MISSION:

At Lyn Knoll, we will:

- Provide child-centered, safe environments
- Use the standards-based teaching/learning cycle
- Create differentiated lessons for students
- Keep the whole child in mind as we plan our day
- Involve parents in their child's learning
- Prepare our students for the 21st century using higher order thinking skills
- Model open-minded behavior/thinking by encouraging different perspectives, values and ways of learning and thinking
- Address the needs and concerns of our families and community in a timely manner
- Model the 7 Habits to students, parents and our community

Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment – RATING: 1.5

Review team members had the opportunity, following an introduction by the school's principal to expound upon aspects of the self-study, to visit eight classrooms as individuals, or in groups of two or three observers. Observers noticed a high degree of behavioral and affective engagement during the classroom visits, and, in some classrooms, a relatively high degree of cognitive engagement. Observers made note of inconsistencies across classrooms in terms of what percentage of the cognitive load students were bearing; according to observation notes, while students were behaviorally appropriate, there was not a high degree of confidence that students were being challenged cognitively on a consistent and predictable basis.

Lyn Knoll would benefit greatly from a defined process and structure for evaluating the implementation of academic initiatives throughout the school to ensure consistency in instructional practice and the expectations outlined to support them.

The team also noted that there have been significant swings in student achievement over the past several years, with a spike in growth in 2015-2016 in both math and literacy, and a sharp decline in both math and literacy in 2016-2017. Student growth

and achievement have not consistently met the expectations for academic outcomes set forth in the Pilot Schools Manual. Governing Board members stated that the focus, academically, last year was on the students demonstrating the lowest growth and achievement; in retrospect, the team indicated that they should have focused on students “on the bubble” and strategized to increase their growth to avoid the drastic decline in overall outcomes for 2016-2017.

The principal noted during the opening conversation with the review team that the Governing Board and instructional leadership team at the school made a conscious decision not to review PARCC and CMAS outcomes in detail with teachers at the outset of the school year; the decision not to do so was based on the belief that the data yielded from these assessments is no longer relevant, as it is not as current as short-cycle assessments teachers utilize during the school year at Lyn Knoll. Teachers, instead, are focusing on the interim assessment iReady, as it seems to be a much more accurate portrayal of where students are today with respect to their math and literacy skills.

Data teams and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are emerging at Lyn Knoll, but continue to be challenging based on the size of the teaching staff at the school; finding time during teachers’ contract time to conduct these important meetings on a weekly basis is not possible with the current schedule. A total of 12 staff members were reduced during budget realignment at the end of the 2016-2017 school year, which has left a single grade-level teacher at each grade. A bright spot with the current staffing model is the full-time instructional coach who is able to meet with each teacher to plan collaboratively for instruction on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. Currently, there is no intervention program in place for students for support in mathematics. Lyn Knoll has the 95% Group in place for students requiring support in literacy.

STEP (Supporting Teachers with the Enrich Program) didn’t work last year, according to the principal. Co-teaching and co-planning (with two teachers in nearly every classroom) didn’t produce expected results, either. The classroom teacher who sits on the Governing Board indicated that, while teachers do know each student well and can intervene early and intentionally, there is not a specific structure to get support with students or a defined structure for intervention. In the 2016-017 school year, members of the Governing Board reported only being able to meet with the instructional TOSA for “kid talk” about once each month.

Additionally, each student continues to have physical education on a daily basis; the physical education teacher is a renowned brain theory expert with a focus on neuroplasticity and the impact of movement on brain function. Students and staff alike benefit on a daily basis from this teacher’s multifaceted expertise in this field.

In summary, according to the review team, consistent structures for instructional planning and implementation of curriculum are lacking in the current Lyn Knoll construct. A drastically sharpened focus on assessment practices and responses, as well as a framework for and support of data-driven instruction strategies would raise teachers’ level of awareness of and planning for more rigorous and appropriate grade-level academic rigor for students at every level.

Professional Development – 1.5

Members of the Governing Board, including the school's principal, indicated that professional development was not as much of a focus as it could have been to enhance teachers' understanding of appropriate grade level standards and the importance of identifying standards that are most likely to appear on state standardized assessments. Without a consistent way of examining and responding to student work in data team meetings, recognizing patterns of error in student work in an effort to map both small group instruction and the re-teaching of concepts students have not yet mastered is difficult.

The Lyn Knoll team mentioned utilizing iReady assessment data intentionally this year to guide planning; also, members of the Governing Board indicated that instructional coaches and members of the community support team are supporting the Lyn Knoll team to plan and deliver professional development for teachers that is more streamlined and focused on data.

The Lyn Knoll instructional leadership team would benefit from creating dedicated time in the late spring to utilize whatever assessment data is available to plan ahead for the following year, with a focus on the design of structures that allow for the level of collaborative planning current academic outcomes require.

Professional development must be intentionally aligned with student needs, and must be led, or at a minimum co-facilitated, by instructional leaders at the school site. The principal should work closely with her Learning Community Director to plan professional development experiences for teachers each month that support the data team and Professional Learning Community work that should be happening on a weekly or bi-weekly basis at Lyn Knoll.

The Joint Steering Committee has requested the opportunity to review the current professional development plan for the remainder of the school year, to the degree that a high-level overview can be provided.

Family Community Engagement – 1.0

Each member of the Governing Board indicated that Family and Community Engagement is a relative gap at Lyn Knoll. The principal shared that parents have not historically been comfortable in classrooms, in part due to the existing language gap for many parents and guardians. The principal also shared an anecdote about a rift that occurred that resulted in a trust and integrity breach between a former employee at Lyn

Knoll and the parent community that has yet to fully heal; according to the school leader, this event from several years ago caused a chasm between staff and families.

Parents do come to the school for certain events that occur each year, however, such as Leader in Me leadership events and the positive attendance celebration. Parents have not been well-represented on the Governing Board, and do not typically have a voice in decision-making regarding curriculum or other operational functions at the school.

The review team recognized Family and Community Engagement to be a significant concern for Lyn Knoll moving forward as a school with APS Pilot status.

Student Support and Outcomes – 2.0

According to the Pilot School Manual (2014), Pilot schools must sustain growth through years one and two and meet or exceed district averages when compared to schools with similar demographics in the fall following year three. If a Pilot school has not met agreed upon achievement goals after three years, the district will work with the school to transition out of Pilot school status during year four (pg. 45).

Please see attached data report for historical academic growth and achievement outcomes at Lyn Knoll.

Leadership and Governance – 2.5

Leadership and Governance, based on the criteria outlined in the Pilot School Manual, is a strength for Lyn Knoll. Each staff member with whom the review team connected revealed that the Governing Board, as well as the school's principal, adhere strictly to the notion that a Pilot school's leadership stems from the Governing Board. Members of the Board, as well as other teachers, indicated feeling incredibly and consistently involved in all decision-making processes that occur at Lyn Knoll. This category was clearly Lyn Knoll's strength from the perspective of the review team.

The direction from the review team, as well as the Joint Steering Committee, is for the Governing Board at Lyn Knoll, under the auspices of the Pilot School Manual, to take a more active and directive role in supporting the principal and the rest of the Lyn Knoll staff to create a plan to improve both academic and technical structures and practices in the other categories outlined in this report as a part of the School Quality Review. The Joint Steering Committee is prepared to support this organization and effort at every level.

Overall School Level – 1.8

Final Recommendation

Based on the historical progress that Lyn Knoll Elementary School has demonstrated over the course of the last four years as an APS Pilot school, and in alignment with feedback from the School Quality Review team, the Joint Steering Committee recommends that Pilot status be continued for the remainder of the 2017-2018 school year and the 2018-2019 school year. The Joint Steering Committee suggests three specific actions in order to support this recommendation:

1. A JSC School Quality Review team will conduct a half-day visit in April of 2018 to check on progress related to guidance stemming from the November 2017 SQR walk-through.
2. A JSC School Quality Review team will conduct a full-day visit in the first academic quarter of 2018 to check on progress related to guidance from the November 2017 and April 2018 SQR walk-through experiences; the review team, in conjunction with the Joint Steering Committee, will make a recommendation at that time as to whether to support Lyn Knoll's ongoing Pilot status.
3. Lyn Knoll's building principal and members of the Governing Board will attend a Joint Steering Committee meeting in January, 2018, to provide an update on current state at Lyn Knoll, and to request any support the school needs to continue making adequate progress as an APS Pilot school.

Respectfully Submitted,

The APS Joint Steering Committee