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# Comprehensive Support and Improvement Audit Report

Fayette County Public Schools

February 14, 2019



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# 1 The School Context

## 1.1 Introduction

In 2018 Cambridge Education was awarded a contract in response to RFP KRS 160.346(6) to provide Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) Audits to five Fayette County Public Schools. The purpose of the CSI Audit is to determine:

1. factors that limit student learning with an emphasis on underperforming subgroups of students and corresponding critical resource inequities; and
2. factors that support and enhance student learning.

Based on the CSI Audit team's findings, recommendations will be made of how-to best address factors that limit student learning.

The CSI Audit report contained herein was prepared by the Lead Auditor based on the evidence collected and the assessment made by the full CSI Audit team (Lead Auditor and two Team Member Auditors). Evidence was collected via classroom observations; interviews with the administration; stakeholder perception surveys and focus groups with students, teachers, parents and other stakeholders; and review of relevant data sources.

## 1.2 Background information about the School

Mary Todd Elementary School is a community school that serves approximately 515 students in grades pre-kindergarten through fifth at 551 Parkside Drive in Lexington, Kentucky. Mary Todd Elementary School is one of the older elementary schools in the Fayette County Public Schools. The school opened its doors in 1958 and was totally renovated in 1986. Mary Todd Elementary School is a Title 1 school with over 87 percent of its students qualifying for free and reduced lunch. Mary Todd Elementary School has a Healthy School Clinic where students and their families receive both physical and mental health services. The school also has several community partners that support the Food Backpack Program and provides for enrichment and extension opportunities for Mary Todd Elementary School's students. Mary Todd Elementary School is in its first year under the new accountability system and has been identified as a school that needs comprehensive support and improvement (CSI). The school has well-rounded curriculum offerings to include arts and humanities, library, physical education, technology lab, and stem lab. In addition, students have clubs and experiences such as the Academic Team, Read to Succeed, Robotics, Lincoln Ladies, and Men of Mary Todd Elementary School.

### 1.2.1 Student enrollment and attendance

School Demographic, Attendance, Suspension Information

	School Year 2015-2016	School Year 2016-2017	School Year 2017-2018	Current as of CSI Audit
Grade Span	PK-5	PK-5	PK-5	Pk-5
Total Student Enrollment	481	486	473	515
Percentage General Education Students and Total	84.65% (407)	83% (403)	82.76% (391)	82.34% (424)
Percentage of Special Education Students and Total	15.4% (74)	16.9% (82)	17.24% (82)	17.66% (91))
Percentage of English Language Learners and Total	26.8% (129)	24.8% (121)	23.49% (111)	26.2% (135)
Percentage of Ethnicity of student population and Total	White 25.5% (123) Hispanic 33.8% (163) Black 34.9% (168)	White 25% (122) Hispanic 34.9% (170) Black 32.5% (158)	White 27% (136) Hispanic 42.3% (200) Black 34.9% (165)	White 24.5% (126) Hispanic 36.5% (188) Black 34.9% (180)
Number of Out of School Suspensions	47	51	6	2
Number of In School Suspensions	79	87	35	41
Percentage of Average Daily Attendance	95%	95%	95%	95%

As the chart demonstrates, Mary Todd Elementary School has a large enrollment. Except for the 2017-2018 school-year, the enrollment has grown steadily. In addition, the percentage of special education students has grown. The ELL population decreased from the school year 2015-2016 for two years but climbed back to the 2015-2016 levels at the time of the audit. The school population is transient with 45 students enrolling since in the month of January and 13 students leaving to attend other schools during this same month. Out of school suspensions have dropped from ten percent of the population in school-year 2015-2016 to less than one percent (two students) as of this audit. In-school suspensions have dropped from sixteen percent to eight percent as of this audit. Student attendance at Mary Todd Elementary School has consistently been at 95 percent.

### 1.2.2 Administrators, teachers, and staff

The instructional staff consists of one Pre-K teacher, three Kindergarten teachers, three first-grade teachers, four second-grade teachers, four third-grade teachers, four fourth-grade teachers, and five fifth-grade teachers. In addition, the instructional staff includes one gifted and talented teacher, five special education teachers, four English Language Learners (ELL) teachers, seven interventionists, one arts and humanity teacher, one librarian, one PE teacher, one technology teacher, and one science teacher. The

guidance counselor, social worker, and psychologist provide instructional and social and emotional support for students. Mary Todd Elementary School also employs one full-time Accountability and Compliance (ACC) and one part-time psychologist to monitor the special education program.

The principal has 30 years of experience and the Professional Growth Effective Coach (PGE) has 20 years of experience. The district-based School Based Instructional Support (SBIS) has 17 years of experience. These three individuals along with one interventionist makes up the administrative leadership team. Of the certified staff, there are fourteen with up to five years of experience, twelve with six to ten years of experience, five with 11-15 years of experience, nine with 16-20 years of experience, and ten with 21+ years of experience. The teacher leadership team is composed of teachers and staff from every grade level and department who are chosen by their peers.

There are two Pre-K paraprofessionals, three Kindergarten paraprofessionals, seven special education paraprofessionals, and one paraprofessional that supports the in-school suspension program. Of the paraprofessionals, five have five to ten years of experience, three have six to ten years of experience, one has 11-15 years of experience and four have 16-20 years of experience. A long-term substitute provided by the district is also included among the paraprofessional staff.

### 1.2.3 District initiatives and support resources

Support for Mary Todd Elementary School from the district has been extensive. The school was given a School-based Instructional Specialist (SBIS) to work with the teachers on planning for instruction, data, and best practices. Mary Todd Elementary School also received an additional interventionist after reaching CSI status. Each month, a team of district personnel visit the classes at Mary Todd Elementary School and give feedback to the Administrative Leadership Team in all areas surrounding effective instruction to include the use of data, planning, social and emotional learning components, and assessments.

The district purchased Wonders in 2016-2017 as a curriculum for instruction for reading and language arts in grades Kindergarten through fifth. The district later purchased Investigations and Envision for the math curriculum in 2017-2018

### 1.2.4 School performance data- 2017-2018 Proficiency Dashboard

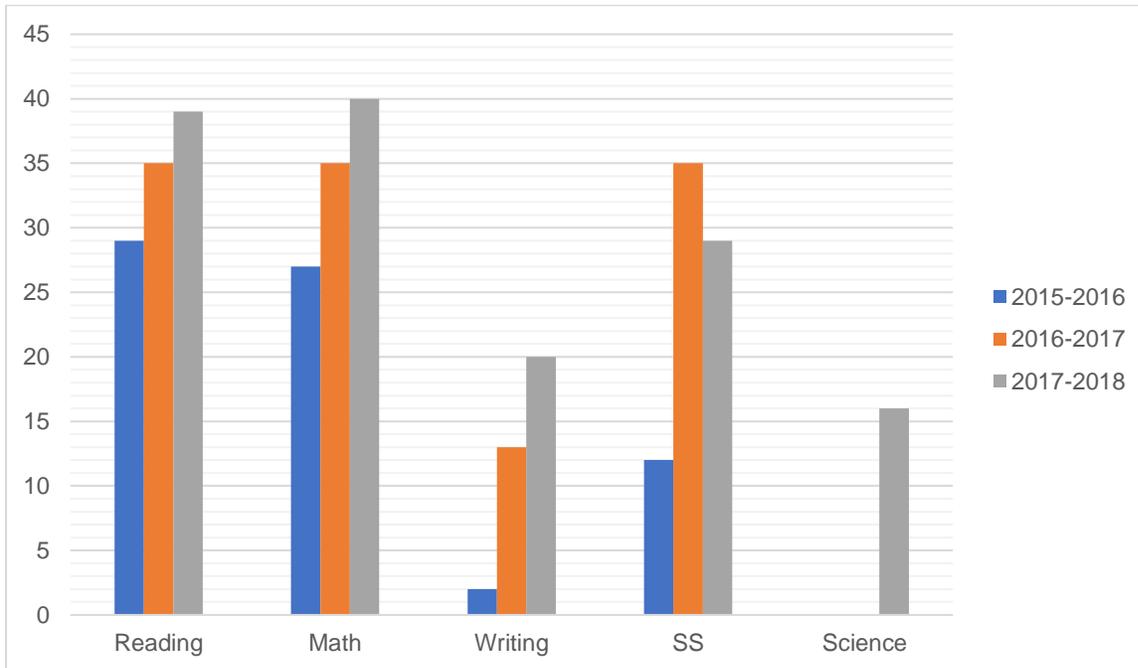
**Mary Todd Elementary School Elementary-Fayette School Division  
 Percentage of Students Meeting Proficiency**

Subject	Mary Todd Elementary School	District	State
Reading	37.9	54.0	54.6
Math	39.7	52.4	48.8
Writing	19.7	41.3	40.5
Social Studies	29.6	53.2	53.0
Science	16.5	30.3	30.8

*Information obtained from the Kentucky Department of Education website*

Students in third through fifth grades are administered the Kentucky Performance Rating for Educational Process (KPREP) assessments in both reading and math. Students in grade four take the KPREP science assessment and students in grade five are administered the KPREP social studies assessment. In the year 2017-2018, the KPREP science assessment became part of the formula to determine student and school success.

### Mary Todd Elementary School KPREP Data 2015-2018



A review of Mary Todd Elementary School's KPREP data shows improvement in reading from 29-39 percent, math from 27 percent to 40 percent, and writing from two percent to 20 percent from the school-years 2015-2018. In Social Studies, there was a significant gain in school-year 2015-2016 to 35 percent, and a slight drop in school-year 2017-2018 to 29 percent. Science was added as an indicator in school-year 2017-2018 of which Mary Todd Elementary School's students passed at a low percentage rate of 16 percent. Although overall, Mary Todd Elementary School students showed growth over the past three years, the rate of growth and percentages of students that are proficient (at grade level) or distinguished (above grade level) is below the threshold of success as indicated by the Kentucky Board of Education.

## 2 CSI Audit Process and Details

### 2.1 Background on the CSI Audit process

#### 2.1.1 Meeting with the principal

The first two meetings with the principal lasted two hours, less her time to begin the school day. She invited her school leadership team that consisted of the principal, PGE Coach, and the SBIS. The auditors met with the principal three additional times. The principal identified the culture of the school, incentives for students, appropriate teaching materials for teachers, the establishment of Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), the development of an Instructional Leadership Team and an Academic Leadership Team as her greatest achievements. Her greatest challenges include supporting teachers to use high-yield strategies, in her words “Bring it” as they should for children and improve Tier I instruction. Also, emphasis on lesson planning and learning objectives has been an ongoing focus for her and all members of the administrative leadership team.

#### 2.1.2 Classroom visits

The audit team conducted 22 observations in two days in pre-Kindergarten through fifth-grade classrooms. The principal accompanied one member of the team and the PGE accompanied the other member of the audit team. Auditors observed classes in Kindergarten through fifth-grade in language arts and math across the school. One related arts class was also observed by a member of the leadership team with one of the auditors. Observations ranged from 15 to 20 minutes in each class. The after-school program was not held on the days of the audit, so the audit team was unable to complete any observations in this area but was able to review materials used in this program. The average number of students in a class ranged from 16-21 students. In many of the classrooms were paraprofessionals as well as other certified teachers in the areas of special education and ELL.

The audit team conducted two student focus groups, one parent focus group, one classified focus group, and one community focus group. The school administrative team selected the students, parents, and classified staff that would participate in the focus groups. All the focus groups were representative of the school population. The community focus group was chosen by the principal along with the Family Resource Coordinator. The focus groups lasted between 30 minutes and an hour.

## 3 CSI Audit Main Findings

**In this section of the report, the CSI Audit team has identified the factors that are most significantly supporting and limiting effective student learning. (Please see the sections that follow for more details).**

### 3.1 Factors that support effective student learning:

School leaders and staff ensure that the school provides a safe, respectful, and welcoming environment. Parents, students, and community leaders indicate in focus groups that they feel welcome in Mary Todd Elementary School. According to staff surveys, 91 percent of staff responded that the school is orderly and supports learning; 92 percent of the parents agreed that they felt safe in the school and staff are very invested in the children and their families. This welcoming climate makes students feel valued, respected, and more confident in the classroom and school environment. Positive relationships between staff and students were readily observed and it was clear that students understood the expectations and standards of the school.

School leaders and staff place a high priority on regularly communicating with families to build collaborative relationships and to engage them as partners in the learning of their children. School leaders and staff ensure that families feel they are partners in their education and have two-way communication systems to include flyers and newsletters distributed in their native language. Staff also regularly uses the communication hotline, Facebook, Class Dojo, e-mail, phone calls, and will make home visits if necessary. Providing such communication ensures that families are partners and will be involved and have a positive impact on the progress and success of their children.

A review of student work showed that most teachers provided frequent and specific feedback to students. In those classes, students had clarity on how to improve their work and they could correct errors and improve their learning. Some teachers used rubrics and checklists to guide students' learning and allowed children to assess their own work. Many teachers provided meaningful praise to encourage and motivate students.

The curriculum is balanced and provides all students with access to a full range of interesting and relevant learning experiences, including the arts and physical education. Students at Mary Todd Elementary School have tiered supports for struggling and under-performing students. Students receive support at their level in small groups from their teacher, interventionist, ELL teacher or special education teacher. Students are also supported by paraprofessionals that work with them in the classroom. All students attend classes which include arts and humanities, physical education, STEM lab, library, and technology lab. In addition, students can participate in clubs that further provide experiences such as Academic Challenge, Gardening Club, Art Club, and Robotics. By providing instruction at students' appropriate learning levels and ensuring that all students have varied learning experiences, students are more apt to buy-in to their learning in all areas. In addition, varied learning experiences allow students to use their senses, muscles, and intellect to improve and enhance all aspects of their learning.

### 3.2 Factors that limit student learning:

Although some teachers used rubrics and checklists, students who participated in the focus group as well as those questioned during observations were unable to tell how they could improve their learning. Use of different modalities for learning, such as the use of manipulatives and strategies for culturally relevant teaching, were largely absent during observations. The lack of variety in pedagogy and lack of clear success criteria caused many students to struggle with learning activities.

For example, the fifth-grade learning target posted required students to use characters, actions, and events in a story to determine the theme. The Common Core standard, however, requires that students determine a theme, including how characters in a story respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic. Therefore, the lesson was not aligned to the standard nor was it appropriately rigorous. Lessons like this one inadequately prepare students to be successful on grade level assessments, benchmark assessments, MAP assessments, and ultimately, KPREP assessments.

### **3.3 Recommendations:**

School leaders and staff must place an unrelenting focus on learning and teaching. Lesson plans and teaching with fidelity to lesson plans must be monitored closely.

Targeted professional development on deconstructing and unpacking standards should be provided to all teachers and instructional leadership staff. This professional development should also review learning objectives, success criteria, exit tickets, and creating classroom assessments to determine if they meet the rigor of the standard. Professional learning should help teachers to develop an understanding of the level of rigor required for standards mastery and developing and sharing success criteria.

Teachers should receive targeted professional development that will address mastery by checking for student understanding. This professional development should center around effective questioning and strategies to check for understanding and more effective ways to use rubrics and checklists to enable students to take more ownership of their learning. When teachers challenge their students' thinking, it creates personal meaning for students, thus enabling them to interact with the learning longer and at a higher level.

School leadership should arrange opportunities for peer observations for teachers to observe good instructional practice. Mary Todd Elementary School has teachers who are proficient in different areas of instruction and management. Staff who struggle could benefit from having the opportunity to observe successful instruction and best practice.

School leaders should work with all the staff to establish a shared commitment to high standards. Leadership should monitor and address areas where some staff are not exhibiting the agreed instructional and behavioral practices.

## 4 Individual Domains

In the sections below, each domain received a rating based on the evidence collected during the CSI Audit. The judgments have been broken down into *Factors that Support Effective Student Learning* and *Factors that Limit Effective Student Learning*.

### 4.1 Domain 1: Quality of Learning & Teaching

The quality of learning and teaching requires support or action in targeted areas.

#### 4.1.1 Factors that support effective student learning:

Student behavior was managed effectively in classrooms during the onsite observations. Discipline data shows that the number of infractions has dramatically decreased in the last three years. According to the staff survey, 91 percent of staff enforce behavior expectations consistently. Students also indicated that they are expected to behave in every area of the school.

PLCs review classroom assessments, benchmark assessments, and MAP assessments semi-monthly. During the fifth grade PLC, teachers discussed how long an assessment would take for students to complete and what skills may be difficult for the students to grasp. The teachers then planned backward to ensure that they would teach each standard to the rigor that was expected. Student results were also discussed, and student data was displayed on a data wall.

Extended day programs support the math and reading skills that children need. District officials, along with school leaders, have designed this program to support students whose achievement is below grade level. Children are assessed at the beginning of the extended day programs to determine gaps and skills that are mastered. Children receive computer instruction along with small group instruction from the after-school teacher to fill gaps and to increase their learning. Students work on the skill until the computer programs indicates that they have mastered it. Parents and students in the focus groups reported that the after-school program has helped close learning gaps. By students having the opportunity to attend extended day programs, more individual attention and more opportunities to practice increase their learning and have the potential to close gaps.

During classroom observations, most students employed digital technology in small groups. These technologies were used to remediate, support, and enrich student learning.

According to school discipline data, the number of in-school and out of school suspensions decreased over the last three years. The leadership team, parents, teachers, and students attribute the drop in serious infractions and the improved learning experience to the Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS) program.

#### 4.1.2 Factors that limit effective student learning:

Multiple objectives were often posted in classrooms. In conversation with the administrative leadership team, it was discussed that more support is needed to help teachers use objectives and standards to guide instruction. The teachers and administrative team shared that posting “*I can*” statements is non-negotiable. Some teachers believe posting learning objectives is a compliance task rather than something that helps to focus and align learning.

Although teachers in the focus group agreed that standards drive instruction and pacing in the classroom, observations indicated that students did not always learn the standard effectively because the learning tasks are not adequately matched to the standard and the learning needs of the students.

### **4.1.3 Recommendations:**

Classroom teachers could benefit from professional learning on checking for understanding through the effective use of questioning. By doing so, teachers would better assess understanding during lessons. In addition, professional learning in how to unpack state standards and develop and effectively use specific learning objectives and success criteria would enable teachers to see these as tools to support learning rather than compliance measures.

Although teachers work to ensure all standards are taught with the math and reading programs, more work is needed to understand the level of rigor required by each standard. This work will ensure that the lessons are aligned to the Common Core Standards of Kentucky. More knowledge in this area will reduce the teacher dependence on curriculum programs.

## **4.2 Domain 2: Curriculum & Assessment**

The quality of learning and teaching requires support or action in targeted areas.

### **4.2.1 Factors that support effective student learning:**

The school offers students varied opportunities through a related arts program. All students attend art and humanities, physical education, stem lab, technology lab, and library. Students are not pulled from these classes to receive additional tutorials or receive special services. Therefore, every student can have a well-rounded school experience.

A review of lesson plans and conversations with teachers and students show that career and college exploration is an integral part of the curriculum for children at Mary Todd Elementary School. Some examples include second grade students exploring what they want to be when they grow up, students attending a career fair, and guest speakers presenting information about their careers.

A data wall was observed by the auditors in the main office conference room, which is used to monitor the progress of each student on unit assessments and MAP testing. This data wall is used to identify where intervention is needed. Students are tracked the entire year and the intervention is monitored for effectiveness after every MAP assessment.

### **4.2.2 Factors that limit effective student learning:**

A review of learning objectives posted in the classrooms reveal that they are only loosely aligned to the learning standards and more closely aligned with the reading and math programs. By aligning the lessons to the program rather than to the state standards, some standards are being missed. This was discussed by teachers in their focus group and evidenced by the low scores on the KPREP reading and math assessments.

PLCs are highly structured and follow a set agenda for lesson planning and the use of data. The auditors reviewed agendas and notes from data, math, and reading PLCs, and spoke with the PGE and the SBIS coaches. Evidence supported the fact that that teachers are now more focused on Kentucky standards. They acknowledge that they are continuing to fine-tune the meeting agenda and process to best utilize the time. The coaches acknowledge that some grade levels were more prepared and more invested in the PLC process, therefore the impact on student achievement was inconsistent across teams.

The audit team was present at a PLC meeting where unit test results were discussed. These assessments, teachers reported, may not be well-aligned with the state standards, nor do they necessarily meet the rigor of the state standards. Therefore, teachers shared that preparing for the unit assessments are not preparing the students for state summative assessments.

Staff, including teachers and paraprofessionals, indicated that more professional development is needed in Social Emotional Learning (SEL). Leaders and teachers indicated that many students that they serve have experienced trauma and SEL training will provide teachers with more strategies to effectively support these children.

#### **4.2.3 Recommendation:**

School leaders should monitor and evaluate the enacted curriculum in the classrooms to ensure that Kentucky Common Core Standards are taught. Supplemental materials should be readily available for teachers to teach the standards with the rigor required. In PLCs, the emphasis should be around analysis of student work and assessment results to drive instruction, identifying learning goals and aligning them to the standards, higher-order thinking, checking for understanding, providing appropriate feedback for students, and for pacing that meets the needs of all students. By having these productive discussions with teachers, school leaders can better support and guide teachers to ensure they are teaching the appropriate standards at the rigor that is required for success on the KPREP.

School leaders should make teachers accountable for acting on feedback and conduct follow-up observations to observe changes in practice. Developing and implementing a process for monitoring how teachers integrate administrative feedback will ensure that teachers take feedback and use it effectively to improve student learning.

Teachers need further support to unpack the standards and understand the rigor required for mastery. During the summer, teachers could review grade level math and reading standards with school leadership, the turnaround team, and content specialists from the district. During this professional learning, teachers can have meaningful discussions around teaching all standards, with special emphasis on “power standards” and share strategies that have had proven successful with their students. Appropriate assessments should be developed, or unit assessments should be augmented, to ensure that they assess the student’s knowledge of the state standards.

### **4.3 Domain 3: Instructional Leadership, Management, and Accountability**

Instructional leadership requires support or action in targeted areas.

#### **4.3.1 Factors that support effective student learning:**

A conversation with teachers revealed that they were aware of the priorities of refining Tier I instruction, effective lesson planning, and the use of more high-yield strategies. The principal reported that teachers are paying more attention to the first tier of instruction and that all teachers are posting learning objectives. The principal has seen more collaboration, turn and talk, and other strategies to engage students in their learning. She is also seeing teachers begin with the assessment in mind and backward-plan to ensure that they teach what students need to know.

School leaders effectively communicate a clear strategic plan and vision for the school. Although staff had limited involvement in developing the plan, the principal has worked hard to ensure that staff is aware of the plan and its goals. She has provided opportunities during staff meetings for teachers to review the plan and ask questions on features of the plan. All participants in parents, community, teachers, and student focus groups understand why math and reading are included in the plan. In the PLCs and focus groups, staff shared that they have a collective purpose in trying to do their part to teach children and to close achievement gap.

School leaders give teachers feedback monthly, and sometimes semi-monthly, from the Effective Learning Environment Observation Tool (ELEOTS). This was confirmed by teachers and observed on two sample ELEOT documents. Teachers receive specific feedback from the principal, PGE Coach, and the SBIS.

School leaders provide opportunities for teachers to participate in decision making and to address school concerns. The teacher leadership team worked with the SBIS to develop the protocol for PLC meetings. When teachers have a voice in school decisions, they are more likely to buy-in and be vested into the process of making the school better.

The principal monitors the activities of the PGE, SBIS, and grade level lead teachers who are assigned to assist teachers with improving instruction. The Principal and her team have identified the teaching staff that need support. She attends PLC meetings to ensure that the protocols for lesson planning and data review are correctly enacted, and that effective teaching strategies are incorporated into lesson plans. Through the analysis of benchmark assessments, KPREP, and teacher made assessments, the principal and her team understand that improvement is needed in all areas of teaching and learning to meet the required goals to exit CSI status.

#### **4.3.2 Factors that limit effective student learning:**

Observations in class during the audit confirm that the teaching is ineffective. Performance data shows that their students are not meeting standards. Teachers are provided with coaching, but this measure is not enough to ensure that children receive effective instruction.

School leaders and teachers are analyzing data, but the protocol does not result in targeted supports or intervention for students. This was confirmed during observation of a PLC meetin.

#### **4.3.3 Recommendations:**

Urgent action must be taken to improve learning in classrooms where teachers are not delivering effective instruction. The school should target additional resources (human and otherwise), interventions, and supports for students in these classes so that they are able to achieve despite the ineffective instruction. The tenured teacher who needs corrective action should be placed on a plan.

More monitoring and support should be provided on using strategies that will close the gap of novice and apprentice students. A review of KPREP data shows that many students fall into these categories which puts them significantly below grade level. The principal should focus on providing staff with targeted PD in the areas of applying proven strategies such as higher-order thinking, high-yield pedagogical strategies, culturally relevant teaching strategies, and Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) strategies.

The principal should work with her leadership staff and district staff to develop a plan to ensure that all teachers have the skills and confidence to deliver engaging and challenging lessons. Those teachers whose practice does not improve in response to this support should be placed on appropriate corrective action plans.

School leaders and teachers would benefit from professional learning in which they identify the power standards that should be threaded throughout the curriculum and revisited frequently. Teachers, with the support of their instructional coaches and leadership, should create a list of priority standards to be taught each marking period, accompanied by rubrics and checklists for students as well as the methods that will be used to check for understanding and assessments. Teachers can discuss in PLCs how to ensure that all students meet these targets and teachers should meet and frequently discuss with students how learning can improve in these areas. Data should be collected on each student in these areas so that teachers are aware of where to place their efforts in small groups, after school programs, and remediation and review.

### **4.4 Domain 4: The Culture of Learning**

The culture of learning is established.

#### **4.4.1 Factors that support effective student learning:**

All students in the K-2 focus group and the 3-5 focus group report feeling safe in their school. They were aware of PBIS and the expectations for their behavior. All students were able to tell the auditors about the “Bulldog Bash” and the Paws they receive for good behavior. Teachers and parents also spoke with pride about school incentives and recognitions for students to include the above recognitions as well as quarterly award ceremonies.

Staff have pride in their school and effectively communicate with parents. The principal and Family Resource Coordinator indicated that approximately 80 percent of parents attend parent conferences where interpreters are provided. Staff communicate with parents by using Class Dojo, interpretation line, home visits, impromptu and planned conferences. One teacher in the focus group indicated that “The staff here always makes time for parents.” Parents in the focus groups all agreed that staff communicated effectively with them. According to the parent survey, 89 percent of parents agreed that, “When I share concerns with my child’s teacher, he/she listens.” The audit team also reviewed newsletters, announcements, and other school communication that is sent home in both English and Spanish.

During the two-day audit, the school was clean, and classrooms are well organized. When students, staff, and guests arrived at the school, the grounds were free from trash. The Mary Todd marquee provides some visual interest to the front of the building. It was clear that the teachers took pride in maintaining classrooms that were free from clutter. According to surveys, 84 percent of parents feel that the school is safe for their child and 97 percent of staff feel that the school is safe for children.

#### **4.4.2 Factors that limit effective student learning:**

Students were often waiting for the teacher to get individual assistance and were unable to solve their own problems.

Although Hispanic students represent more than one third of the school population, no Hispanic parents attended the parent focus group. The principal reported that Hispanic parents were invited but she was not sure why none attended.

#### **4.4.3 Recommendations:**

A process or protocol for reviewing student work by teachers and instructional leaders during PLCs should give teachers a chance to discuss essential learning for all students. This protocol should be developed cooperatively with the SBIS and the grade-level teachers. Required time is also needed to examine student work to teacher practice.

More engaging activities to include turn and talk, pair share, collaborative groupings, informal summarizing, and projects will engage students in the learning and make more real-life connections. Culturally relevant teaching strategies and resources from the district’s adoption of Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) should be incorporated into the lesson to ensure effective instruction for every student.

### **4.5 Domain 5: Family and Community Engagement**

Family and community engagement requires support or action in targeted areas.

#### **4.5.1 Factors that support effective student learning:**

The principal places a priority on communicating with parents. Communications, such as newsletters and flyers, are sent home in both English and Spanish. The school has a growing population that speaks Swahili and is actively seeking ways to better communicate with these parents. School leaders and teachers use the communication line to communicate with all parents in their native language. Some teachers in the building use Class Dojo which translates into other languages as stated by teachers, parents, and students

as a communication tool to let parents know how their child is doing. This communication between the home and school keeps family connected and lets the children know that both home and school work together for their academic and SEL welfare.

The school has several community partnerships that support the physical and social needs of students. Many of these partners provide food, clothing, and other necessities for families to ensure that their children come to school prepared to learn. Partners such as the United Way provide materials for the Born Learning program which targets age appropriate activities from birth to school. The school has two reading programs that provide one on one reading support for children who are below grade level. One of the reading programs also has a mentor component for children. These partners provide financial support as well as academic support and experiences for students at Mary Todd.

According to the parent survey, 92 percent of parents believe that they are given opportunities to discuss their child's progress at school and that same percentage indicated that they are encouraged to collaborate with their child's teachers about their learning. The parents value the accessibility of the staff and the principal who is very approachable and is responsive to concerns they may have.

#### **4.5.2 Factors that limit effective student learning:**

The parent focus group was the smallest of all the focus groups and only consisted of six parents. The Hispanic parents who were invited did not attend. There was one African-American parent present who works at the school. It has proven difficult for the school to recruit a representative set of parents to participate in the advisory council. During the focus groups, parents discussed the need to get more parents involved, with emphasis on their Hispanic and other non-English speaking parents. Three parents in the group felt they had a part in decisions that are made in the school, while the other three did not feel that they had a voice in school decisions. Every member of the community focus group also indicated that they had no voice in school decisions and only communicated with the school's Family Resource Coordinator. By not engaging all parents and community members in decision-making opportunities, a chance for real collaboration that would benefit students is missed.

Although there are a small group of parent volunteers, the school has not established a program to recruit and train parent volunteers. The Parent Teacher Association (PTA) has fewer than ten parents who are active. The PTA is not seen as an integral part of the Mary Todd Elementary School community according to the principal, parents, and teachers.

#### **4.5.3 Recommendations:**

School leaders may need to personally invite a diverse group of parents to participate in the advisory council and PTA. The PTA should be more of a feature of the school and should be used as a way for parents to be involved in the school through volunteering and shared decision-making.

While Mary Todd Elementary School has 16 partners, only two of the partners provide support for academics, field trips, and cultural experiences. Only one of these two partners provide mentoring for students. Field trips and cultural experiences are tools that can provide every student with real life experiences. Likewise, a good mentor empowers the mentee to develop their own strengths, beliefs, and personal attributes. Work with current and new partners to provide these opportunities.

