James H. Harrison Elementary School Case Study

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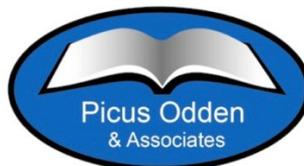
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Executive Summary

James H. Harrison Elementary School is an example of the third category of schools – significantly improving achievement for subgroups of students.

James H. Harrison Elementary School is nestled in the middle of an apartment complex in the Laurel area of Prince George's County Public Schools. The school enrolls a diverse population of 330 students – 32 percent are Hispanic, 52 percent are African-American, 9 percent are Asian, and 6 percent are white. Seventy percent of students are eligible for free and reduced-price meals (FRPM).

Between 2007 and 2012, Harrison saw consistent gains in student achievement on the Maryland State Assessment (MSA). In particular, the MSA scores of all students increased by 34 percentage points between 2007 and 2012, from 46 to 80 percent. The test score gains of FRPM students rose from 47 to 77 percent proficient and advanced. The test score gains for special education students (52 percentage points) and limited English proficient (LEP) students (52 percentage points) were larger. These statistics are notable given the persistently large academic achievement gaps often seen for these subgroups.

Interviews with staff members and the principal point to four factors that have contributed to these increases in student achievement:

1. Data-driven decision making. The principal and teachers use data from a myriad of student assessments to undertake focused instructional practices. Teachers use data from assessments to inform instruction in three primary ways: to group students, to identify students in need of intervention or referral, and to determine concepts that require re-teaching.

2. Multiple interventions. Multiple interventions have been implemented at Harrison to support students who are struggling academically. These include commercial programs such as iReady, iStation, Fasst Math, First in Math, and Study Island. LEP students receive tutoring after-school. Harrison has two programs for special education students – the Comprehensive Special Education Program (CSEP) is a self-contained model of small classrooms, and the Community Referenced Instruction (CRI) program, which is for students with severe cognitive disabilities and is focused on developing functional life skills. These programs enroll students from across the district. Response to Intervention (RTI) is also used to provide research-based and targeted interventions (such as small group instruction) to support students with learning or behavioral challenges.

3. Use of elective teachers and specialists to support classroom instruction. The principal leverages the school's elective teachers (physical education and music) to supplement classroom instruction. They have "specific responsibilities around the school-wide goals" such as teaching basic math facts. These teachers "can't monitor work [but can] drill students and give them [Tiger] paws," rewards that can be used in the school store.

Moreover, elective teachers provide push-in support in the classroom via twice weekly 30-minute small group sessions focused on boosting student performance in math and also provide support outside of the classroom.

4. School leadership. The principal has been purposeful in communicating her expectations to staff and providing support and guidance on their deliberate and intentional instructional practices that makes a positive impact as evidenced by student data. She sends a weekly "Week at a Glance" email that includes strategies for aligning instructional practices with particular areas of focus, such as the new Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessments. The principal uses resources strategically to benefit students – such as pulling in elective teachers to supplement classroom instruction.

Introduction

James H. Harrison Elementary School is located in the City of Laurel in the Prince George's County Public Schools district. The school is located in the middle of an apartment complex. In spring 2015, Harrison enrolled 330 students in prekindergarten through grade six. There are two half-day prekindergarten classes and one classroom per grade-level. Overall, core class sizes averaged 24 students, with average class sizes by grade-level displayed in Table 1. Class size estimates include students from the Comprehensive Special Education Program (CSEP), described below.

Table 1
James H. Harrison Elementary School Class Sizes

Grade-Level	Class Size
Prekindergarten	12
Kindergarten	25
Grade One	25
Grade Two	25
Grade Three	25
Grade Four	30
Grade Five	30
Grade Six	25

Harrison is a small school that serves three populations of students. It has a general education program that enrolls 220 students from the neighborhood. In addition, Harrison has two specialized special education programs that enroll a total of 110 students from across the district.

The CSEP is a self-contained model with small class sizes (10-12 students) that has elements of inclusion. For example, students in the CSEP program at Harrison attend elective classes, such as physical education and music, with students in the general education program, as well as receive instruction as per their individualized education program (IEP) in the general education classroom with support. The Community Referenced Instruction (CRI) program enrolls students with severe cognitive disabilities and focuses on developing functional life skills. One-third of the school's students are enrolled in either the CSEP or CRI program.

The school serves a diverse student population: 52 percent African-American, 32 percent Hispanic, 9 percent Asian, and 6 percent white. The school used to be predominantly African-American but the Hispanic population has been on the rise since 2011.

The student population is "very transient" due in part to special education students who are newly placed into the programs or who test out of special education and go back to their neighborhood schools. Additionally, the school sits "in the middle of an apartment complex" that

houses a transient population. The school's enrollment "fluctuate[s] between 305 and 330 all year long," according to the principal.

Seventy percent of students qualify for FRPM, which is the same as the district's average. Sixteen percent of students are LEP, which is lower than the district's average of 21 percent.[1] Harrison has a much higher rate of student's receiving special education services (32 percent) than the district's average (10 percent) due to the CSEP and CRI programs.

The number of students attending Harrison by student subgroup is shown in Table 2.

Table 2
James H. Harrison Elementary School Student Characteristics

Student Characteristics	Percentage of Harrison Student Population
Race/Ethnicity	
American Indian/Alaska Native	-
Asian	9
Black/African American	52
Hispanic/Latino	32
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	-
White	6
Two or more races	-
Eligible for free or reduce-priced meals (FRPM)	70
Limited English Proficient (LEP) students	16
Special education students	32

*A "-" indicates either no students or the number of students was suppressed due to too few students in the category.

Since 2007, Harrison Elementary has demonstrated consistent improvement in student achievement across the entire school population and for subgroups. This case investigates how Harrison achieved the observed growth in student achievement. The report has 11 sections: (1) school performance, (2) school staffing, (3) goals, (4) school schedule and collaborative teams, (5) curriculum and instructional program, (6) assessments, (7) interventions and supports, (8) professional development, (9) school culture and leadership, (10) summary, and (11) degree of

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[1] The district rates presented are for elementary schools only.

alignment between the school's strategies and the school improvement strategies embedded in the EB funding model.

School Performance

Table 3 shows the composite data used to select Harrison as a case study site. The percentage of students who are proficient or advanced across all subjects (reading and math in grades three through five, and science in grade five) was averaged to produce a number – percent proficient/advanced – for each year from 2007 to 2012. For 2013 and 2014, only the "All Students" scores were available. During this latter two-year time period, the state's curriculum standards changed, but the test did not. Statewide test score results dropped over these two years. Schools that had a drop of less than one standard deviation were given preference for selection as a case study. Harrison's composite test scores did drop in 2013 to 67 percent, but increased to 70 percent in 2014.

Table 3
James H. Harrison Elementary School Performance, Maryland School Assessment (MSA), 2007-2014

Average School-Wide Percent Scoring Proficient/Advanced in Reading, Math and Science								
Performance Level	MSA 2007	MSA 2008	MSA 2009	MSA 2010	MSA 2011	MSA 2012	MSA* 2013	MSA* 2014
All Students	46	63	60	69	78	80	67	70
Free and Reduce-priced Meals (FRPM) Students	47	63	53	66	78	77	NA	NA
LEP Students	22	53	-	55	67	75	NA	NA
Special Education Students	18	30	32	44	60	70	NA	NA
Non-White/ Non-Asian Students	47	66	60	68	77	79	NA	NA

A "-" indicates either no students or the number of students was suppressed due to too few students in the category.

*Assessment data by student subgroup for 2013 and 2014 were not available at the time this report was written.

As shown in Table 3, the percentage of all students scoring proficient or advanced on the MSA increased by 24 percentage points between 2007 and 2012. The test score gains of special education students (52 percentage points) and LEP students (53 percentage points) were larger; and minority students scores increased by 32 percentage points. These statistics are notable given the persistently large academic achievement gaps often seen for these subgroups.

This case tells the story of how Harrison produced these improvements in student performance. It draws on interviews with the school principal and classroom teachers. Documents, such as the school schedule and school improvement plan were provided by the principal and supplemented with materials available on the Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) and Maryland State Report Card websites.

School Staffing
The principal has been leading the school since 2010. During her first two years at Harrison, teacher turnover was high as many teachers departed to work at the former principal's new school. The last two years have been more stable and only two or three teachers have left the school.

PGCPS manages the hiring process centrally. Teachers are recruited at PGCPS job fairs – the interviews take place here too. However, PGCPS has a student based budgeting (SBB) funding model that allows principals some discretion in selecting positions they would like staffed in their schools. There are certain positions that are required by the district, such as the school principal or prekindergarten positions, which means that all schools must staff these positions. There are other positions that are discretionary, such as assistant principals, and reading specialists, which means that principals have autonomy to decide whether or not to staff these positions. Principal autonomy is constrained by their SBB budget allocation and principals must make strategic decisions about which positions will best leverage and support the school's goals and related initiatives.

Harrison is a small school; its initial SBB allocation for fiscal year 2015 was $1.08 million. The district placed an assistant principal [at no cost to the school's budget] in the school during the 2014-15 school year to provide additional administrative support – a position that the principal characterized as "essential to monitor the instructional practices" of teachers in the building. The assistant principal conducts the observations required for teacher evaluations, but does not provide teachers with direct coaching. In the coming school year, this position will likely come out of the school's budget.

Table 4 shows the school's staff by full-time equivalent (FTE) positions. Harrison's administration includes a principal, an assistant principal, and a CSEP Coordinator. The school has a small clerical staff consisting of a records secretary, principal's secretary, and special education clerk typist.

Table 4
Staffing in James H. Harrison Elementary School

Category	FTE
Administration	
Principal	1.0
Assistant Principal	1.0
CSEP Coordinator	1.0
Clerical/Support Staff	
School Secretaries	3.0
Building Maintenance	3.0
Parent Outreach Coordinator	1.0
Main Program	
Core Teachers	11.0
Specials Teachers (Music, Art, PE)	2.2
Instructional Lead Teacher	1.0
Special Education (CSEP Program)	7.0
Special Education (CRI Program)	3.0
Special Education Resource	2.0
LEP Teachers	1.0
Media Specialist	0.5
Reading Specialist	1.0
Crisis Intervention Resource Teacher	1.0
Educational Assistants	
Paraprofessional	2.0
Special Education Paraprofessional	10.0
Itinerant Special Education Assistant	2.0
LEP Paraprofessional	1.0
Pupil Support	
Licensed	
Counselors	1.0
School Psychologist	1.0
Nurse	1.0
Speech Pathologist	1.3
Occupational Therapist	1.0
Motor Teacher	0.5
Non-licensed	
Lunchroom Staff: Manager, Workers and Aide	3.0

The staffing arrangement highlights not only the core teaching positions, but illustrates the role that specialists and paraprofessionals play in supporting student learning, in particular for CSEP and CRI students.

First, as Table 4 shows, the school has 11 core teacher positions for the 220 (out of a total school enrollment of 330) students in prekindergarten through grade six general education program, which translates into an average class size of 20. That is smaller than estimated earlier in this report), which included CSEP students who attend classes offered in the mainstream program. The general education program has two paraprofessionals – one provides assistance with the school's transition to the new PARCC assessment and the other provides instructional support in the school's larger classes.

The CSEP program has one class per grade for a total of seven classrooms. There is one special education teacher for each classroom. The CRI program has three classrooms that are mixed grades (kindergarten and grade one, grades two and three, and grades four through six); there is one teacher for each classroom. All special education classes have a dedicated paraprofessional. Additionally, the school employs two Itinerant special education assistants who provide personal care, learning and behavioral support to special education students. Specialists such as occupational therapists, a speech pathologist, and a motor skills teacher are also on staff to support students in this program. Assuming a six-period day with teachers providing instruction for five of those periods, a standard formula for determining the number of elective teachers is to have the number of elective teachers equal to 20 percent of the number of core teachers, which would equal 2.2 positions for this school (0.2 x 11). The total at Harrison is 2.2 FTE.

Harrison has one instructional lead teacher (ILT) who provides coaching and professional development to teachers. She is available to answer questions about the curriculum and classroom instruction. The principal described the ILT as "the go-between between administrators and teachers to facilitate the execution of teacher practice." However, since the school's funding allocation does not provide money for both an assistant principal and instructional lead teacher, the principal indicated that she would have to decide which position to retain for the 2015-16 school year.

The crisis intervention resource teacher is charged with helping staff members and school administrators manage behavior of special education students. This includes developing behavior intervention plans and providing teachers with professional development on behavior intervention strategies. The school counselor also provides support to students who "are having behavioral difficulties" and helps teachers "diffuse behavioral issues in the classroom." Since he speaks Spanish, the counselor also works with Spanish-speaking parents to "apprise them of the intricacies of the school house" including how to navigate parent/teacher conferences and become involved in school activities.

A parent outreach coordinator facilitates school and community partnerships and identifies resources in the community that address student needs. For example, the Rotary Club donated dictionaries to the school and local churches donated school supplies. Moreover, the parent outreach coordinator coordinates food drives, clothing drives and parent activities at the school, such as parent coffees to discuss the PARCC and student academic success.

School Goals

Harrison's school improvement plan (SIP) specifies four goals:

1. To ensure mastery of the content taught at each grade to include reading/language arts, mathematics, and science (kindergarten through grade six).
2. To ensure proficiency with basic math facts in alignment with the expectations of Common Core for each grade-level (kindergarten through grade six).
3. To increase parental involvement and community partnerships in an effort to maximize student achievement.
4. To assess student progress constantly and consistently so that opportunities for interventions are sought out and implemented with fidelity.

Additionally, the SIP outlines strategies to increase student achievement in each of the content areas (math, English/language arts, science, and social studies), improve parent engagement and community involvement, prepare students for college and careers, increase graduation and promotion rates, and improve school climate and culture.

The specified strategies include interventions (such as Response to Intervention), use of small groups and flexible student groupings, access to computer-based interventions (First in Math, Study Island), targeted professional development, use of inquiry based projects and having students develop personal education plans to identify their college and career goals.

School goals are developed through a data-driven process and led by the school leadership team.[2] As one staff member said, "We identify the problem and together we come up with a plan to close those gaps. If we've done assessments and realize that half of the Hispanic [students] are struggling in the area of reading, our responsibility as a team is to build that area up."

However, the principal was clear that multiple factors impact student achievement and that "the goals help, but they aren't necessarily what made the difference…the goals have been established to give a starting point to help students with mastering content." So what has made the difference?

First, to help student's master basic math facts, the principal utilizes the school's elective teachers to provide students with extra opportunities to practice math; these same teachers also provide push-in instruction in the classroom for students needing extra help. For example, the

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[2] The school leadership team includes: principal, CSEP coordinator, instructional lead teacher, testing/technology coordinator, reading specialist, math teacher (grade two), reading teacher (grade two), science teacher, parent outreach coordinator, and school counselor.

physical education teacher will drill students in basic math facts as they walk to and from physical education class, or students will do skip counting as they jump rope. He also works in the grade five classroom twice a week for 30 minutes to support math instruction.

Second, to support student's mastery of content across the curriculum, the principal has focused on literacy. One initiative that has been implemented is the "word of the week." Students are assigned a word and given the task of presenting the definition of the word to the entire school during morning announcements. The principal highlights student writing through an initiative called "Writer of the Week." One student from each class is selected each week and an example of their writing is displayed outside of their classroom. Every Monday the principal draws a student's name from a hat and has her talk about her writing with the whole school during the school's morning television announcements.

Third, a reward system has been put in place to motivate students. The principal created a school store, which is stocked by donations from the teachers and other staff members. Each staff member buys five items from the dollar store that students would appreciate, such as Rubik's Cubes. Students receive "Tiger Paws" as rewards for positive behavior and academic accomplishments. For example, when a student answers a math fact correctly, she earns a Tiger Paw that can be used to buy items from the school store.

Fourth, the district adopted student learning objectives (SLOs) to help schools set goals for individual students. Harrison teachers use assessment data to set SLOs. This process allows teachers to "focus on 10-15 kids who are right on the border of being proficient" and push them a little harder to attain proficiency. In other words, data are used not only to set school goals but to monitor progress in meeting them and to drive instructional practices. SLO data are also 50 percent of individual teacher and administrator evaluations.

Finally, the principal expects that "everything is focused on instruction," including the use of resources. The school utilizes several computer programs to support instruction, but the principal emphasizes that they must be not be used haphazardly, "I asked teachers how does that [computer program] impact that child's learning? And if they can't answer me, I say stop using it. Did you provide data to support its use?"

The principal communicates her expectations to the staff through "Week at a Glance" emails. For example, in January these weekly updates included PARCC sample questions for the staff to answer. The principal said: "If teachers don't engage in the questions, how are they going to teach children to engage in the questions? How are you connecting what you're teaching to problems like this? How are you aligning your instruction to mirror this?" The principal discusses these topics during Tuesday's collaborative planning sessions and may use videos to show, for example, a teacher engaging in asking higher order thinking questions in the classroom.

School Schedule and Collaborative Teams

The school day begins at 7:35 a.m. and ends at 1:55 p.m. Students eat breakfast when they arrive at school. The instructional day runs for five hours and 45 minutes, beginning at 8 a.m. and ending at 1:45 p.m. The length of the lunch/recess period is 45 minutes on average.[3] All in all, students receive five hours of instruction daily.

Harrison's kindergarten through grade two students have a daily 135-minute reading block and 75-minute math block. The school's grades three, four, and five have a daily 105-minute reading block and a 90-minute math block. Grade six students have an 80-minute reading block and a 75-minute math block. All students have one 45-minute electives class every day (physical education, music, guidance, computer lab and media). Science and social studies are held on alternating days and range from 40- to- 60 minutes depending on the grade-level.

Teachers have 45 minutes during the school day for planning while their students are in specials and an additional 45 minutes after-school (from 2-2:45 p.m.). Tuesday's planning time is set aside each week for grade-level teams to meet with the principal and review and analyze student data as well as plan lessons.

The school's schedule facilitates collaborative planning across grades. For example, first and second grades have identical schedules, as do grades three and four, and grades five and six. However, teachers indicated that they often do not have sufficient time to plan together. After-school staff meetings are allocated for professional development, school leadership team, all staff and school-wide planning, and management team meetings. Moreover, planning time during school can be spent on *either* individual or collaborative planning four days a week.

Curriculum and Instructional Program

In the 2014-15 school year, the district froze Harrison's discretionary budget, which meant that the principal could no longer access those funds. In the words of the principal, "If we need paper, we have to request to purchase it." Her focus on using resources wisely is not simply a matter of what is best for instruction – it is pragmatic. When staff were asked what resources they need to do their job the majority listed materials and supplies necessary to support the instructional program. For example, the principal said they needed more technology, "…[T]ablets, printers, classroom computers… 1:1 that's what most schools are shifting to. Updates could be used with the things that we do have." She also expressed a desire for "supplemental instructional materials for the classroom – can't just do it with the textbooks." Teachers reported that they often spend their own money to enhance their classrooms and existing resources are not distributed evenly across the grade-levels.

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[3] Grade six students get 30 minutes for lunch and do not have recess.

Despite these concerns, the school appears to have access to several commercial programs to supplement and enhance the reading and math curriculum.

Curriculum: Reading

Harrison's teachers rely on the curriculum framework created by the PGCPS central office as a guide, but it's not the sole component of instruction. Several commercial programs are used to supplement the district curriculum including Reading Street Common Core (Pearson) in grade two, Reading Wonders (McGraw Hill) in kindergarten, Writing Fundamentals (School wide Inc.) in kindergarten through grade six, and iReady (Curriculum Associates) in select kindergarten through grade six classrooms.

Reading Street is aligned to the State's College and Career-Ready standards and provides teachers with lesson plans to teach concepts such as phonics and vocabulary, and build student's content knowledge. The program has an online component with videos that help students practice grammar and also includes level readers for students to practice reading.

Reading Wonders is a new program used in kindergarten that comes with multiple components, including leveled readers and unit assessments. The program is aligned to the State's standards and focuses on helping students learn how to access complex text, find evidence, and develop the skills necessary to become a proficient reader (such as phonics and vocabulary).

Writing Fundamentals focuses on teaching students about different styles of writing – in other words, the different forms and purposes that writing can take. For example, kindergartners are taught about "how to" writing, which the program's website[4] describes as text "written to teach readers how to do some activity or understand some process about which the writer is an expert."

iReady is an online program that is also aligned to the State's standards. The program provides teachers with specific assignments and tasks on each of the standards for students to complete. iReady has an assessment component that allows teachers to monitor student progress and mastery of skills in reading comprehension, phonics, and vocabulary.

Curriculum: Math

The math curriculum used at Harrison is based on frameworks developed by PGCPS and supplemented with several commercial programs.

My Math (McGraw Hill), used in all grades, is a program aligned with the State's standards and designed to build student's conceptual understanding, application and procedural skills, and fluency. Teachers are provided with lessons designed around an activity introducing the concept, a direct instruction component, practice and application tasks, and a homework assignment. The

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[4] www.schoolwide.com/writing

program materials for teachers include suggestions for differentiated instruction, including for English language learners.

iReady is also used for math. Similar to the reading program, the math component provides teachers with specific assignments and tasks on each of the standards for students to complete. iReady has an assessment component that allows teachers to monitor student progress and mastery of skills in areas such as numbers and operations.

Elective teachers help ensure students master basic math facts by integrating math activities into their classes. For example, the physical education teacher will drill students in basic math facts as they walk to and from PE class or students will do skip counting as they jump rope. He also works in the grade five classroom twice a week for 30 minutes to support math instruction.

Curriculum: Science

PGCPS does not develop its own science curriculum. Harrison uses Discovery Education Science Techbooks. These are digital textbooks that are aligned to the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), which PGCPS is beginning to implement. Teachers are also encouraged to embed science content within English/language arts instruction.

Advanced Instruction

Students identified as gifted and talented participate in a weekly pull-out program that provides differentiated instruction targeted to meet their "accelerated academic level."

Assessments

Harrison's teachers use multiple assessments to monitor student progress and learning. First, several diagnostic assessments are given throughout the year. The Diagnostic Reading Assessment (DRA) is given to all students in grades kindergarten through two and to students at risk of academic failure (i.e. reading below grade-level) in grades three through six. The DRA measures comprehension and fluency skills and is administered three times per year. The Scholastic Reading Index (SRI) is a paper/pencil test (although the school piloted an online version of the SRI in 2014-15) administered in grades two through six three times per year to assess students' reading level.

 The iReady program comes with built in diagnostic assessments to track student progress towards achieving end of year targets.

Formative assessments used in grades two through six include the Scholastic Math Index (SMI), which is a computer-based assessment that provides information on students' math understanding and achievement. The school administered this assessment for the first time during the 2014-15 school year; however, the district discontinued the use of the SMI midway through the year.

PGCPS mandates that the school administer quarterly benchmark assessments in the areas of reading and math. These assessments are developed by the district and used to determine whether a student has mastered specified concepts at the end of each quarter. For example, grade one students are expected to be able to use additions within 20 to solve word problems, add and subtract within 20, and show fluency involving facts to 10 by the end of the first quarter of the school year.

Students also take common grade-level unit assessments in reading and math. The math department develops its own unit assessments via EduSoft, an assessment management system that allows teachers to collect and analyze student performance data. The reading unit assessments are pulled directly from the Reading Wonders program.

Finally, teachers observe students individually and in small groups to gauge student understanding of concepts being taught. They use exit tickets to identify students struggling with a specific concept. One teacher commented that these exit tickets often consist of asking students to complete a simple program and serve as a "mini-quiz or assessment." The results are used to "pull the kids that struggled" and re-teach them.

Teachers use data from all of these assessments to inform instruction in three ways. The first is to group students by ability level. As one teacher noted, "We group [students based on DRA score] looking at those that haven't mastered all the letters [and] work in small groups."

The second is to identify students in need of intervention or a referral to an RTI intervention or to be evaluated for special education services, "[I] look for a child's strengths and weaknesses and see who [I] need to pull. Do they need a referral? Do they need to be tested for something additional?"

Finally, these data are used to determine concepts that require re-teaching. Data are also used to push the advanced students to ensure they are receiving rigorous instruction as well. As another teacher shared, "[There are] different ways of pulling up the data to see where [students] are lacking and you get a sense of the percentage of students that don't get a particular topic and you realize you have to do more on that."

Interventions and Supports
Harrison has implemented many different interventions to support students who are at risk of academic failure. Many of these are commercially available interventions. Interventions are largely concentrated on the school's tested grades or subgroups including LEP or special education students. The school has one extended day program targeted at LEP students.

The school relies on several commercial interventions programs such as iReady, First in Math, Wild Cats, iStation, Study Island and FASST Math:

- iReady is used in reading and math in select kindergarten through grade six classrooms. This computer program provides differentiated instruction for students and a variety of diagnostic assessments to monitor student progress;
- iStation is a computer program for grades two through five that provides supplemental math instruction. Importantly, iStation is a resource used to support the school's RTI program;
- First in Math (grades three through six) is a computer program that provides students with opportunities to practice basic math facts and collect points and stickers. One teacher noted that the points and stickers serve as incentives to keep students going through the program;
- Wild Cats is a reading intervention that is book-based. The books have themes and feature different text structures (informational, narrative, story, poem) and activities;
- Study Island (grades three through six) is another computer-based program that is used to help the development of students' reading comprehension, fluency, and accuracy; and
- FASST Math (Scholastic) is a program designed to build student's math fluency. The program is adaptive and so it provides support aligned to meet students' individual needs and levels of performance

A few staff members noted that interventions generally target students in tested grades. For example, kindergarten has very few formal interventions. One staff member said, "The teachers are the interventions" – although the school's parent coordinator (who is a former teacher) came in at the beginning of the year and ran an intervention with students who were having difficulty with letters. According to another teacher, "Once testing hits, everyone pushes into the tested grades."

There is an intervention specialist who comes twice a week and provides push-in and pull-out services for students. The position is not part of the school's staffing; rather it is provided by the district. The intervention specialist works with teachers to identify students who would benefit from small group instruction. These determinations are made based on student data. For example, when we visited, the intervention specialist was working with a group of grade two students on improving their reading skills.

The LEP program provides both push-in and pull-out instruction. LEP students are pulled out during their reading periods and work on the same content but in a small group setting. This arrangement means that classroom teachers and LEP teachers must engage in collaborative planning to ensure students learn similar content. LEP students also have access to an after-school LEP program that is paid for by the district. The district also supports an LEP after-school tutoring program that enrolls 22 students and meets two times a week from late September to May.

The school has two special education programs. The Comprehensive Special Education Program (CSEP) is a self-contained model of small class sizes (10-12 students) that has elements of

inclusion. For example, students in the CSEP program at Harrison attend elective classes with students in the general education program. The Community Referenced Instruction (CRI) program is for students with severe cognitive disabilities and focuses on developing functional life skills. These programs have two major advantages: class sizes are small and there is a generous student-to-teacher ratio. These classrooms enroll about 12 students and have both a teacher and paraprofessional. Additionally, some of the students have a dedicated aide to provide them with additional support.

Harrison does not offer summer school on a regular basis. To offer a summer school program, the principal must put in a request to the district to be a summer school site. If the district agrees, letters are sent to all students at risk of academic failure inviting them to receive intervention over the summer. During the summer of 2014, the school offered a summer school that included a rising grade two program targeted at grade one students from different schools.

The school has one extended day program that is targeted at LEP students. Additionally, there is a program for parents of kindergarten through grade two called Great Start that consists of informational sessions on how parents can work with their children and support their learning at home. Another program offered for parents is Side by Side, which includes parent workshops and family dinners.

Finally, the school uses Response to Intervention (RTI), which is a tiered intervention system. The model uses research-based interventions designed to help students identified as being at risk of developing learning or behavioral problems. Tier I interventions take place in the general education classroom and include differentiated instruction and flexible grouping. Tier II interventions target students who do not show progress under Tier I interventions alone and include small group instruction multiple times per week with frequent progress monitoring. Tier III interventions include small group and/or individualized instruction four or five times per week that may take the form of a double block of instruction in a specific content area.

Professional Development
Professional development is offered to teachers once a month after-school (2-3:45 p.m.). Professional development is aligned with strategies or content that are the "focus of that month," for example, higher order thinking questions skills. The principal usually leads the sessions, but occasionally teachers or someone from outside of the school will provide professional development. Additionally, professional development is sometimes differentiated based on the needs of the teachers and the content of the training. Teachers also receive one student-free day for professional development per quarter offered by the district.

The instructional lead teacher (ILT) provides teachers with coaching and professional development around specific content. She is available to answer teachers' questions about the curriculum and classroom instruction. The ILT also creates resources such as documents and videos to help teachers learn new pedagogical methods.

School Culture and Leadership

One common theme surfaced when discussing school culture – a lack of parent involvement. The principal shared that "Parents are not very involved…I remember coming to a PTA meeting where there were more teachers than parents…I don't think parents don't care…. but the way they are able to show their support is different…[they] help with homework but never come to school functions."

School staff had mixed feelings about what it was like to work at Harrison. One teacher said, "It's a nice school. Very friendly teachers. There's a sense we're all in the same boat. We all feel like we have each other and we're all expected to do the same. We're all just trying to survive." While another commented, "…[I]t's not one of my favorite places. [There's] just not enough…there's not anything fun to do here…the staff is so small and burned out, anything extra seems like it's work." The same teacher bemoaned the lack of after-school activities for students. However, students are recognized for making the honor roll, for perfect attendance or as the student of the month.

The principal has a very hands-on leadership style characterized by frequent and consistent communication with staff members about her expectations and strategies for aligning instructional practices with needed areas of focus (such as the PARCC) through her "Week at a Glance" emails. She works with her school leadership team to develop content to present to teachers during staff meetings. For example, the leadership team created plans for instructing teachers on the "Data Wise Process," which included a review of all the assessments the school uses and why they use them.

The principal emphasizes factors that she and the staff can control: "We can't do anything about lack of resources…we consistently work on parent engagement. So [we] don't spend time talking about what we can't control." What they can control is instruction, "[I]…look at the actual student data and present that to the staff…these students are suffering in these areas. [I look at] whole data to see what could possibly be the problem with instruction at the school. Everything is focused on instruction…"

Finally, she ensures that the school's resources are used strategically and maximized for the benefit of students. The use of elective teachers to help support classroom instruction is one example of how the principal stretches staffing resources. Since the school cannot afford to have paraprofessionals in every classroom, elective teachers (physical education and music) help provide small group instruction and even integrate math content into their classes.

Summary
Between 2007 and 2012, Harrison saw consistent gains in student achievement on the MSA. Interviews with staff members and the principal point to several factors that have contributed to these increases:

1. Data-driven decision making: The principal and teachers use data from a myriad of student assessments to undertake focused instructional practices. Teachers use data from assessments to inform instruction in three primary ways: to group students, to identify students in need of intervention or referral, and to determine concepts that require re-teaching.

2. Multiple interventions: Multiple interventions have been implemented at Harrison to support students who are struggling academically. These include commercial programs such as iReady, iStation, Fasst Math, First in Math and Study Island. English language learners receive tutoring after-school. Harrison has two programs for special education students – the Comprehensive Special Education Program (CSEP) is a self-contained model of small classrooms, and the Community Referenced Instruction (CRI) program is for students with severe cognitive disabilities and focused on developing functional life skills. RTI is also used to provide research-based and targeted interventions, such as small group instruction, to support students with learning or behavioral challenges.

3. Use of elective teachers and specialists to support classroom instruction: The principal leverages the school's elective teachers (physical education, music) to supplement classroom instruction. They have "specific responsibilities around the school-wide goals" such as teaching basic math facts. These teachers "can't monitor work [but can] drill students and give them [Tiger] paws" that can be used in the school store. Moreover, elective teachers provide push-in support in the classroom via twice weekly 30-minute small group sessions focused on boosting student performance in math and also provide support outside of the classroom.

4. School leadership: The principal has been purposeful in communicating her expectations to staff and providing support and guidance on their deliberate and intentional instructional practices that makes a positive impact as evidenced by student data. She sends a weekly "Week at a Glance" email that includes strategies for aligning instructional practices with particular areas of focus (such as the PARCC). The principal uses resources strategically to benefit students – such as pulling in elective teachers to supplement classroom instruction.

Alignment with the Evidence-Based Model

Many of the strategies implemented by James H. Harrison Elementary School to boost student performance are aligned with the EB model. First, the school's instructional leadership team and teachers engage in data-based decision making. In previous years, scores on the MSA were used to set goals and identify strategies for increasing student achievement. Other data sources, such as diagnostic and formative class assessments, are used to identify concepts that require re-teaching. Student placement in intervention is also determined by assessment data.

The school has an instructional lead teacher who provides coaching, support, and answers teachers' questions about the curriculum or anything related to classroom instruction. The

principal also supports instructional improvement by sharing strategies and ideas through her "Week at a Glance" emails and weekly grade-level team meetings. She pushes teachers to consider whether they are implementing "focused instructional practices every day" and to align the teachers' instruction with the content area focus (English/language arts, math) and standards. These practices, together with the frequent use of student data to inform instruction, ensure that class time is used efficiently.

Multiple interventions have been implemented to support students at risk of academic failure. Harrison uses the RTI model, a three-tiered system of research-based interventions and supports. The interventions become increasingly intensive as a student moves through the tiers. For example, Tier I interventions are delivered in the classroom and include strategies such as flexible grouping and differentiated instruction. Tier III interventions provide students with intensive supports such as individual or small group instruction. Students are also provided additional practice and individualized instruction via the use of several commercial programs such as iReady, iStation, Fasst Math and Study Island.

Harrison is resourced beyond what the EB model would provide for a school its size. For example, the school has many more pupil support staff – including a speech pathologist and crisis intervention teacher – than would be expected. However, the large number of student support staff may be due to the school's CSEP and CRI programs. In addition, the school administers multiple, overlapping assessments and does not have a core reading program. Instead of one reading program, the school uses commercial programs that differ at each grade-levels. Some of these resources could be reallocated to address other perceived needs in the school and reduce the work burden felt by teachers.

Additionally, there are elements of the EB model that were found lacking at Harrison. The principal commented that she "Need[ed] money for professional development…to call in experts to teach the teachers how to teach that math" and that one of the challenges she faces is "building teacher capacity to get the job done." In other words, she is rarely able to leverage external expertise to help improve instructional practices within the school. Additionally, the school's class sizes are larger than the EB model recommends. This may be due to the fact that Harrison is a small school and enrollment is not high enough to warrant having multiple classrooms for each grade-level.

Taken together, Harrison has implemented several strategies to boost student achievement but has experienced challenges in allocating resources in ways that the principal and staff believe would be beneficial for instruction and student learning.