

**NYSED/ BUFFALO CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT JOINT INTERVENTION TEAM REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

<b>BEDS Code:</b>	104600010119
<b>School Name:</b>	PS 95 Waterfront Elementary School
<b>School Address:</b>	95 Fourth Street Buffalo, New York 14202
<b>Principal:</b>	Linda Brancatella
<b>Restructuring Phase/Category:</b>	Persistently Lowest- Achieving/School Under Registration Review ( PLA/SURR)
<b>Area(s) of Identification:</b>	English Language Arts and Mathematics
<b>Dates of On-site Diagnostic Review:</b>	February 9-11, 2011

**PART 1: INTRODUCTION**

**A. Community and School Background**

PS 95, the Waterfront Elementary School, serves 950 students in Pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The student enrollment is 51 percent Black, 15 percent Asian, 17 percent Hispanic, 14 percent White, and two percent Multiracial. These students include 24 percent English language learners (ELLs) and 14 percent students with disabilities. The percentage of ELLs has risen from ten percent in school year (SY) 2008-2009 to 24 percent in October 2010. This represents students speaking fifteen different languages. PS 95 is a parent choice school with preference given to siblings of current students and students who live within the attendance boundary of the school. One percent of the students walk to school and 90 percent are bussed or dropped off and picked up by their parents or guardians.

The school leadership team includes the Principal, two Assistant Principals (APs), the literacy coach, the building mathematics teacher, guidance counselor and other grade level representatives. The Principal has served three and one-half years in her current position and was previously an AP for one and one-half years. One of the APs has served for five years, and the other AP has served for three years.

The school faculty consists of 60 full-time teachers and 11 part-time teachers. Twenty percent of the teachers are new to the school, and 13 percent of the teachers have been at the school fewer than three years. All teachers are highly qualified. Thirteen percent of the teaching staff transferred in the 2008-09 school year due to involuntary assignment, desire to work at a different grade level or desire to work with a particular administrator.

**PART 2: ASSESSMENT OF THE SCHOOL’S EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM**

**A. Performance on Key Indicators of Student Achievement Trends and School Progress**

Positive or Negative Indicator (+/-)	School Performance Indicators	
	<b>NYSED Quantitative Performance Measures</b>	
-	Performance data for the school on NYSED Accountability Overview Reports (AOR) for the past two consecutive years show an increase in the number of subgroups that did not make Adequate Yearly progress (AYP) in identified area(s).	✓
-	Performance data for the school on NYSED Accountability Overview Reports (AOR) for the past two consecutive years indicate an increase in the achievement gap	✓

Positive or Negative Indicator (+/-)	<b>School Performance Indicators</b>	✓
	between identified subgroups and the <b><i>All Students</i></b> subgroup in one or more identified subject/area(s).	
-	For 2010-11, the school was identified as a <b><u>Persistently Lowest- Achieving school.</u></b>	✓

## B. School Strengths

- The administrative team and the school staff have high expectations for the students and are caring in their approach to students, as evidenced by interviews. Further evidence for this finding was found in the reports from classroom visitations and other observations.
- Parents indicated that the Principal and teachers maintain regular communication with them. The Principal addresses parent concerns in a professional and caring manner. Parents also indicated that they believed the school administration and staff provided a safe learning environment for their children.

## C. Key Findings and Recommendations

**Summary of the key issues (causal factors), and other areas of concern, identified during the on-site diagnostic review that are negatively impacting student achievement in identified areas, as well as recommendations, as related to the 7 JIT Indicator Categories**

### I. Curriculum

#### Findings:

- Although there is alignment between the New York State (NYS) Standards and the District written curriculum, there are gaps between the State curriculum and the “taught” curriculum.
- The curriculum is prescriptive. Teachers indicated that vertical alignment is difficult to address because there is no scheduled common planning where they can meet to review curriculum alignment and modify, if necessary, the content being taught and instructional practice.
- Pacing calendars and scope and sequence documents are in place and are used by staff. It was observed in these documents however, that many teachers offer little enrichment instruction beyond what is in the standard required lesson.

#### Recommendations:

- Teacher practice should be monitored in English language arts (ELA), English as a Second Language (ESL) and mathematics classrooms so that in lesson presentations the learning objectives, i.e., what students need to know and/or be able to do to succeed are not replaced with learning activities, e.g., keeping a journal, book reading circle, writing an essay. Objectives that set the purpose for learning should be clearly stated in a language meaningful to students. Further, the literacy coach and the building mathematics teacher, who is the leader for mathematics instruction, should provide effective strategies for teachers to address areas on State assessments where students do not perform well.
- The Principal should adjust the agendas at grade level and staff meetings so that implementation of the curriculum is addressed through pacing calendars. Use of the pacing calendars should be

one of the topics discussed at such meetings and an action plan should be developed and implemented to ensure that all curriculum topics are being addressed

- The Principal should examine the manner in which teachers are using the pacing calendars and the degree to which they are following the scope and sequence documents. The introduction of curricular maps for the targeted areas would facilitate more articulation across grade levels for identified subjects and subgroups. Once the curriculum mapping is in place, the Principal should review lesson plans to determine the status of units as outlined in lesson plans and make provisions for professional (PD) in the appropriate use of this strategy.

## II. Teaching and Learning

### Findings:

- Overall, differentiated instruction including the use of specific instructional strategies, materials and groupings were not evident in most of the classrooms visited.
- Instruction for ELLs is inconsistent and lacks differentiation. Most of the instruction observed was whole group with few opportunities presented that involved modeling, scaffolding or think-a-louds. In some English as Second Language (ESL) classes where the push-in model was used, teachers were providing content instruction, not language development, which is the purpose of having a push-in teacher for this subgroup of students. Additionally, one of the ESL teachers is often absent for long periods of time.
- Instructional time is lost in grades 7 and 8 classes when transitions take place. Students in these grades do not always proceed to class in an orderly manner. There is no sense of urgency on the part of students to arrive at class on time.

### Recommendations:

- The Principal should instruct staff to use differentiated instructional strategies based on the results of State assessments. This technique should be one of the strategies employed to provide intervention for struggling students; assessment data should be used to group students with similar needs and to modify lessons for identified subgroups as well as those students who are not at-risk. An evaluation of this instructional strategy should be done by the Principal, and the instructional coaches should address these results in grade level meetings and develop a plan of corrective action for teachers to implement.
- The Principal and APs, in their walkthroughs and during the formal required observations, should look for evidence of effective instructional techniques that are focused on language development and implicit questioning that promotes higher order thinking and problem solving skills. Because of the large ESL population, the Principal should consult with the District staff responsible for this area to seek more in-service training in examining the test results of the ESL cohort in order to provide appropriate instructional practices for these students. The Principal should also review lesson plans and monitor the ESL “push-in” program to ensure that it is being used appropriately and require that staff adhere to its intended purposes.
- The Principal, the APs and the grades 7 and 8 teachers should be visible in the corridors during transition periods to ensure that students are moving quickly to their classrooms. The administrative staff should hold teachers and students accountable for their actions during transition and apply consistent consequences as necessary.

### III. School Leadership

#### Findings:

- The school Principal and the APs plan grade level meetings to discuss instruction and student achievement; however, there appears to be no systematic comprehensive plan intended to address the many needs of the identified population.
- There is no evidence that the majority of teachers have incorporated strategies from the scope and sequence documents into their lesson planning. Teachers complain about the prescriptive curriculum; however, observations of classroom practice suggest that many teachers are not implementing the curriculum. The lack of fidelity is clearly noticeable in many classrooms and confirms the earlier reference to a disconnect between the “written” and “taught” curriculum.

#### Recommendations:

- The administrators should develop and implement a structured organizational plan that contains long and short term goals, clear objectives and achievable activities that will impact the identified subgroups. A number of actions are outlined in the Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP); however, they do not clearly speak to timelines for all of the identified students in a systemic manner. The actions noted in the CEP can serve as a starting point, but much more detail is needed.
- The Principal and AP should look for more rigorous instruction in their walkthroughs and observations. Teachers should be reminded constantly to adjust their practices to meet the needs and learning styles of the struggling students who have been identified by either their performance on the State assessments or District provided measures of accountability. Improving educational practices of staff should be the Principal’s number one priority.

### IV. Infrastructure for Student Success

#### Findings:

- Students with disabilities and ELLs remain at-risk and continue to under perform on State assessments. These students often have other issues that cause them to remain identified and frequently struggle to get to the mastery level in ELA and mathematics.
- The suspension rate is high; there was an increase from 101 in 2007-08 to 1,023 in 2008-09. Also, in the 2008-09 school year, 244 students were suspended for five or more days.
- A section of the facility is designed as an open-space teaching area. Observations indicated that a suitable learning environment was not in place. Noise is a major factor, and the presence of it impacts teacher ability to provide acceptable instruction.

#### Recommendations:

- The Principal and the staff should implement strategies for students at risk, not only to address the skills and concepts that are lacking as evidenced by their test scores but also to offer them opportunities to become a community where their academic as well as their social needs are met. Results of State assessments should be carefully analyzed and instructional plans should be developed that directly address the deficiencies of at risk students. Further, teachers and

administration can help to diminish the stigma attached to these students by providing them with rich cultural experiences, programs and materials designed to meet their unique needs

- The results of the implementation of the Positive Behavioral Intervention Supports (PBI) model should be examined to determine its effectiveness. The Principal and APs should be proactive in addressing the causes of disruptive behavior among all students. Teachers should be accountable for providing the consistent application of school rules in their classrooms. The Principal and APs should aggressively monitor staff efforts toward implementing the PBIS model. Data associated with the use of the model should be shared at grade level and faculty meetings. Teachers should have high expectations for students, and teachers should consistently work toward improving their classroom management skills. Occasionally there should be small group assemblies for grade 7 and 8 students to remind them about their responsibility to follow school rules. Also, the Principal should develop a focused plan for increasing parental support with the goal of seeking parental reinforcement of school efforts to decrease the number of suspensions.
- The Principal and APs should be more visible in the open space teaching area. The open space should be reconfigured or divided with moveable partitions. Teachers assigned to this area should receive in-service training regarding effective techniques for teaching in this type of space as well as managing behavior in this learning environment. Research should be conducted by the Principal to determine if the learning environment is appropriate for the learning styles of the identified subgroups. This research should be shared with faculty, with the goal of improving teaching and learning for students who are assigned to this area.

## **V. Collection, Analysis and Utilization of Data**

### **Findings:**

- Most teachers do not use results of data in the construction of lesson plans or consistently in classroom practice.
- There was little evidence that the data analysis results are specifically targeted to students with disabilities and ELLs or the other identified subgroups. Teachers reported that they are bombarded with data, but they have difficulty applying the data to instructional practice.

### **Recommendations:**

- Data gleaned from formative and summative measures of accountability should be a primary focus for the administration in planning for successful instructional practice. Consideration should be given to further training staff at grade level and faculty meetings on the appropriate use of data. The Principal should lead this process and consider requesting assistance from the District directors to explain its relevance for planning effective instruction. The administration should set the expectation that the teachers include in their instructional practices strategies for using data. The administration should monitor the use of data when observing teachers, both formally and informally.
- The Principal should choose at least one specific strategy that involves data from the State assessment results for ELLs and students with disabilities, and develop, in conjunction with the literacy and mathematics building teacher, model lessons on the relevance of data and its use in the planning and instruction of classroom lessons. These mini-workshops can be held during grade level meetings, faculty meetings and on early release days. After a number of strategies have been tried, the Principal should evaluate this process and share the results with staff. If the strategies

prove effective, they should be continued by teachers and the administration should regularly monitor their use.

## **VI. Professional Development**

### **Findings:**

- Although PD is supported by the Principal, who encourages teachers to take advantage of the numerous opportunities offered by the District and provides for in-house staff development by the literacy coach and the building mathematics teacher, much remains to be done in this area.
- Classroom observations and review of the teacher evaluations indicated that staff who are responsible for instructing students with poor performance on NYS assessments and who do not exhibit specific skills needed to promote student academic achievement are not required to participate in targeted PD.
- PD that focuses on action research, peer review, and mentoring was not evident.

### **Recommendations:**

- The administrative staff should use the grade level meetings to engage teachers in conversations about the performance of ELLs and students with disabilities on State assessments and develop a plan whereby teachers can collaborate and focus on improving student performance. Staff should develop a focused plan (to be incorporated into the CEP) that includes specific methodologies and strategies to be implemented. The plan should have an evaluative process for determining what works and what does not and should be modified if the process is not meeting its goals and objectives.
- The administration should require that teachers receive targeted PD in the areas in which they do not exhibit competency. This should be reflected on teacher evaluations and monitored by the administration to assure the long term use of the PD strategies in the classroom.
- The administration should explore PD that focuses on action research, peer review, and mentoring. One of the APs should then work with a small group in developing teacher capacity for implementing one of the elements of staff development. The other AP should monitor the group's progress and provide feedback that should lead to the beginning of a continuous improvement cycle.

## **VII. District Support**

### **Findings:**

- There is a need for additional ESL resources because of the increasing number of new students arriving who have varying degrees of familiarity with English.
- Twenty-four percent of the students are ELLs, with fifteen different languages being spoken by the students. There are many children who have little or no formal education.

### **Recommendations:**

- Although the District assigned additional staff to this school to meet compliance requirements, there is still a need for additional support for the ESL program. More ESL staff should be assigned

to this school to address the ever increasing number of students who arrive with little knowledge of the English language.

- Contracted translation services for the dominate languages at this school would be beneficial since many of the ESL students currently receive Academic Intervention Services(AIS) and yet do not perform well on State assessments. It appears that the issue may be language acquisition rather than academic intervention.
- The District should support the school in the implementation of the Joint Intervention Team (JIT) recommendations.

### PART 3: OVERALL FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

#### A. Overall Finding

Reference	Review Team Finding	✓
(c)	The school has not made sufficient progress in identified areas, and is unlikely to make AYP without further significant change.	✓

#### B. Overall Recommendation

Reference	Review Team Recommendation	✓
(c)	Develop and implement a new plan that could include <u>significant changes in staff, organizational structure, leadership and/or configuration</u> , to address issues that continue to negatively impact student academic performance in identified areas.	✓

#### C. In the space below, include specific information to support the District in determining how the above recommendation should be accomplished.

- Examination of the ESL program is warranted. Although the school is in compliance in regard to staffing, the doubling of this population over the last two years has taxed the school administration and staff ability to provide appropriate intervention services. These students for the most part do not perform well on State assessments and additional resources should give them a chance to improve their literacy skills.
- A clinic, similar to ones contracted out at other District schools, would alleviate some of the referral work now done by the Pupil Personnel Services staff. This would assist the administration in dealing with a myriad of family and home related issues that have an impact on student emotional and social development.
- Twenty percent of this school faculty of 60 full-time teachers and 11 part-time teachers are new to the school. A formal mentoring program would be helpful in providing coaching services to this group, many of whom are teaching the ELA and mathematics to ELLs and students with disabilities. An ongoing program of embedded coaching in these disciplines while targeting the subgroups would strengthen new teacher instructional practice during their first year.
- A review of the current curricular offerings evaluated against the present series of texts/programs used should be undertaken to ascertain if there is misalignment that is a contributing cause of students not making satisfactory progress on the State assessments. This review of the curricular offerings, current

programs and instructional materials may indicate that curricular changes or use of different instructional materials should be used.

- A thorough study of the efficacy of the “open-spaced” teaching area should be completed. The present configuration is not a conducive learning environment because of the noise level. The possibility of sound deadening six-foot sliding partitions should be considered as this refinement would allow for a better learning environment.