

**NYSED/NYCDOE JOINT INTERVENTION TEAM REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

<b>DBN:</b>	14K477
<b>School Name:</b>	High School for Legal Studies
<b>School Address:</b>	850 Grand Street Brooklyn, NY 11211
<b>Principal:</b>	Monica Ortiz
<b>Restructuring Phase/Category:</b>	Restructuring (Year 1) Comprehensive
<b>Area of Identification:</b>	English Language Arts – All Students; Hispanic Students and Educationally Disadvantaged Students
<b>Dates of On-site Diagnostic Review:</b>	November 29-30, 2011

**PART 1: INTRODUCTION**

**Community and School Background**

The High School for Legal Studies serves 775 students in grades 9 through 12. The school enrollment is one percent Asian, 40 percent Hispanic, 57 percent Black and two percent White students. Of these students six percent are English language learners (ELLs) and approximately 13 percent are students with disabilities.

The administrative team consists of the Principal and four Assistant Principals (APs). The Principal has served the school for two years, and the APs have served between two to six years. There are 46 teachers on staff; 18 percent have been at the school for less than one year and 18 percent for fewer than three years. Ninety-eight percent of teachers are highly qualified. The rate of teacher turnover is nine percent.

**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>	
+	Positive trend data for all identified subject/areas and subgroups for the past two consecutive years, as demonstrated by an increase in the percentage of students performing at or above Level 3 and/or a Performance Index increase of five or more points.	✓
+	School is within five points of meeting its Effective Annual Measurable Objective (EAMO) for ALL identified subgroups in ALL subject/area(s) of identification.	✓
+	The school’s most recent Total Cohort 4 year graduation rate shows a 20 percent gap reduction from the school’s previous Total Cohort 4 year graduation rate and State’s 80 percent graduation rate benchmark.	✓
-	Performance data for the school on NYSED Accountability Overview Reports (AOR) for the past two consecutive years indicate an increase in the achievement gap between identified subgroups and the <b><u>All Students</u></b> subgroup in one or more identified subject/area(s).	✓
	<b>NYCDOE Quantitative and Qualitative Performance Measures</b>	

Positive or Negative Indicator (+/-)	School Performance Indicators	✓
-	Most recent NYC Progress Report Grade of D or F (or C for 3 consecutive years)	✓
+	NYC Quality Review Score of Proficient	✓

**B. School Strengths**

- The organizational structure of the school is well established and managed and promotes an orderly environment.
- Student support services are broad, varied and available for all students.

**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 seven JIT Indicator Categories:

**I. Curriculum**

**Findings:**

- While teachers have access to a coherent written curriculum aligned to New York State (NYS) Learning Standards with copies of scope and sequence documents and pacing calendars, the pacing of the majority of teaching is slow and ineffective. Teachers’ interpretation of the curriculum in an overwhelming number of lessons is weak, and student learning is slow.

**Recommendations:**

- The school leaders and teachers, with support from the Network, should implement a scope and sequence for English Language Arts (ELA) that details topics, skills and genres throughout the year on a specific calendar with consistency in content and an appropriate timeframe for teaching and learning. School leaders should monitor the use of this calendar during the routine classroom observation process. Regular informal walkthroughs, as well as lesson plan reviews by administrators, should be used to ensure that teachers are following the suggested plans and pacing charts and incorporating the standards-based curriculum.

**II. Teaching and Learning**

**Findings:**

- Most teachers plan their lesson with specific aims, but show no signs of taking into account different student groups or methodologies. No evidence was seen of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) being used and, therefore, lessons lacked differentiation to meet student-specific needs. Some teachers use only a “question/answer” instructional strategy that most often does not engage the students.
- There is almost no evidence of differentiation of instruction. Teaching is mainly whole class, with few exceptions. Students with disabilities are not experiencing differentiated tasks to match their IEPs. Ineffective strategies were often used for English as a second language (ESL) teaching. No lesson scaffolding was seen, except in a few Advanced Placement classes.

- In most classes all students are not appropriately grouped. Typically, students face the front of the class in single chairs and, where there are tables that allow grouping, it is not used to promote team work. There were no examples of cooperative learning, individual tutoring or small group instruction during any of the lessons observed.
- The posted aims of lessons rarely indicate that students should be engaged in higher order thinking, and teachers rarely organized classes in ways that would promote such thinking. Most often teachers dominate the lesson and students simply sit and listen.
- Academic work is displayed in most classrooms and in hallways. However, there are no rubrics on display in most classrooms, although teachers indicated that they have them and students use them. Even in classrooms where rubrics were posted, they were not being used.
- Classroom management in some classes was not effective. Many students arrive late, these students are rarely disruptive on entering class, but show little motivation for learning. There are many lessons where students are behaviorally compliant but are neither engaged in learning nor challenged to do so.
- Few lessons were well-paced. Students were passive for most of the lesson and, therefore, had very little opportunity to try tasks for themselves, discuss issues with peers or become involved participants in their own learning.
- The topics taught are meaningful and invariably teachers post logical learning objectives. However, in most lessons students simply listened or remained quiet and allowed the teacher to talk. In such circumstances students were not challenged and teachers never checked for understanding.
- A small number of lessons involved the use of technology, but this was not the norm. In most lessons no technology was integrated into instruction.
- There was little evidence of teachers having used students' IEPs in their planning and delivery of lessons. Self-contained ESL classes were chaotic, with little learning in evidence.
- Co-teaching was observed in a few lessons, but the quality of the interaction between teachers and students varied widely from little interaction to a small number of lessons with two co-teachers working closely in targeting students learning needs.
- In most classes, students were unable to demonstrate understanding of the NYS Standards or learning goals that are based on NYS Standards. Students could not articulate what they are learning and why except knowing that they have to pass the Regents exams.
- There are grading policies, but no evidence of their use in the classrooms. Students indicate that they can access their grades online and these are frequently updated. There is no modification for students with disabilities as evidenced through classroom teaching.

### **Recommendations:**

- School leaders should provide professional development (PD) to introduce teachers to a wider range of instructional strategies that can be used in the classroom to promote greater student participation in the learning process. Teachers should be expected to implement these strategies, and school leaders should monitor the effectiveness and provide additional PD for teachers when necessary.
- The school leader should provide PD opportunities for teachers on a variety of instructional strategies to promote differentiation of instruction. The focus of the PD should be on the use of data to drive lesson planning and instruction. Strategies should focus on ensuring that tasks match the academic needs of identified subgroups. School leaders should regularly monitor teacher planning and instructional practice in the classroom to check that differentiated activities are in place throughout the school. Ongoing PD should be provided for teachers who continue to struggle with using data to match work to the individual needs of students.
- School leaders should provide PD on the implementation of flexible grouping based on formative and summative data. All students should be provided with tasks and activities that address their specific learning needs in all lessons. School leaders should monitor teacher planning and instruction to ensure that the use of data to group students becomes common practice in all classrooms. Ongoing PD should be provided for teachers when necessary.
- PD should be provided in supporting teachers in developing a variety of questioning techniques aimed at critical thinking and using problem-solving skills appropriate to student development. These skills would specifically support teacher effectiveness with students with disabilities and ELLs with IEPs. Teachers should ensure that strategies identified in training are implemented in their daily instruction. Administrators should make questioning techniques a focus for observation.
- Rubrics should be used as an integral tool in planning and assessing assignments. Teachers should participate in PD activities that model the use of rubrics to provide teacher feedback, peer feedback and student self-assessment. School leaders should monitor student work on display and evaluate the quality of feedback that is provided to ensure that it helps students improve and move to the next level.
- Teachers should develop procedures to challenge persistent latecomers. Strategies should be used to engage and motivate highly passive students. Classroom rules and consequences should be discussed and posted.
- Teachers should post appropriate pacing and sequencing of instruction and the flow of the lesson with times. The students should clearly understand these expectations, be self-directed and personally accountable. Teachers should plan effective lesson closures so that students can summarize the day's learning; the teacher is able to assess the degree to which students mastered the day's content; and students are able to efficiently transition to the next class.
- The school leadership, with Network support, should provide opportunities for collaboration during common planning time and PD opportunities to ensure teachers plan work for all students that is appropriately challenging and demanding. Teachers should provide regular opportunities for students to work cooperatively and to discuss issues so that they become more proactive learners. The administrative team should regularly observe lessons to monitor this.

- The school leadership with Network support should provide training and support teachers to ensure that they have the skills and competencies to effectively use technology in instruction, including laptop computers and SMART Boards. School leaders should ensure that strategies learned in PD are fully implemented in the classroom so that technology is routinely integrated into teaching and learning.
- Teachers should use students' IEPs when preparing lessons to ensure that work is targeted correctly to maximize student learning.
- Teachers should be provided with support, guidance and where appropriate, PD to implement a more effective co-teaching model. Teachers should be given opportunities to visit successful co-teaching classrooms. The co-teachers should be given scheduled collaborative planning time to ensure best practices to support students with disabilities. The administration should closely monitor co-teaching classroom practices and provide constructive feedback to teachers.
- School leaders should ensure, by observations and walkthroughs, that standards are displayed in every classroom. Learning objectives should be displayed and discussed with students at the beginning, during and at the end of lessons. The practice should be quickly embedded and follow-up visits by school leadership should be made to classes to ensure implementation. The school leaders should regularly and robustly monitor and evaluate outcomes until high standards of learning and teaching are reached.
- The school leaders and teachers should review and revise the school's grading policy across all grades. Each department should then develop a policy that is consistent with these guidelines. These policies should be known to students and parents and posted in each classroom. Supervisors should monitor that these policies are consistently implemented.

### III. School Leadership

#### Findings:

- Although the Principal is clear in her desire for school improvement, interviews indicated an inconsistent approach to instructional change to raise achievement. There is no sharp understanding of student performance at interim points during the school year. Therefore, no subjectwide performance data are used to determine whether the school is on course to make AYP. There appears to be no link between the Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) goals, PD goals and the priorities for raising the effectiveness of student learning.
- Instructional change is not a top priority because most time and energy has been focused on getting the organizational systems in place to promote an orderly environment. There are too few classroom observations to make a difference to the quality of teaching and effectiveness of student learning. To date all teachers have received walkthroughs, but only 11 formal observation reports have been made by the Principal and four APs this school year.
- The evaluation of teaching is carried out through observation of instruction by school leaders. Priority is given to teachers with the greatest needs. However, there is minimal impact of such procedures/systems on the overall quality of teaching, and there is no direct evaluation of teachers' performance in relation to student outcomes. In addition, Teachers' Individual Improvement Plans (TIPS), although valued by staff, are having little impact on their practice of

instruction. Individual one-to-one mentoring occurs between an AP/ELA and some ELA teachers but changes to classroom practices are insignificant.

- Frequent formal common planning time is not built into the school day for teachers by grade and/or by subject/department to allow time to meet together to discuss student work. The Principal has allocated eight faculty meetings to allow for monthly after school subject team meetings throughout the year. In addition Inquiry Team groups who meet after school have just started. These groups are based on grades with a focus on socio-behavioral issues of a small group of students and lack a clear focus on teaching and learning.
- The Principal ensures that staff has opportunities for PD. Some take these opportunities and value them, others do not attend. PD is suitably arranged by need and request. Teachers feel supported, but it is less support than required to effect significant change in instructional practices that promotes effective learning. Teachers believe that while such PD and also conversations with their subject AP are useful, there is an overwhelming desire to meet in teams more frequently and share knowledge, experiences, successes and challenges.
- The School Leadership Team (SLT) is dysfunctional, with many attendees being absent from meetings or inconsistently attending them. The team has little understanding of the purpose of the SLT. Agenda items are provided by the Principal. The SLT members are not involved in developing the CEP or responding to drafts of the CEP. Neither are they involved in discussing school needs, goal setting as a consequence of need, or evaluation of student performance.
- Parent involvement is weak. There is no functioning Parent Association (PA). Currently, there is an insufficient number of parents to form a school PA. The Principal has not made this a priority. Teachers are expected to make contact with parents, but student absence and lateness is so high that teachers cannot cope with the scale of the problem. About 50 percent of parents attend parent-teacher conferences. Other meetings for parents are poorly attended. The Youth Development Support Team is working hard to draw parents into the life of the school through social events, but so far with little success. Academic events are poorly attended. No open houses are scheduled for prospective students

**Recommendations:**

- The Principal should engage all the staff in creating a common mission and vision in working collaboratively to raise student achievement.
- The administration should ensure that raising student achievement in ELA is a top priority for the school, matched by a sense of urgency among staff. All teachers should have PD to help them develop students' literacy skills alongside those teachers of ELA.
- School leaders should use the observational process to ensure teachers are held accountable for incorporating all the skills developed within PD activities and within their individual improvement plans into their instructional practice.
- School leaders should create a flexible common planning schedule in which teachers can meet across grade levels and content levels and establish protocols and expectations for the use of this time.
- School leaders with the support of the Network should design a comprehensive PD plan to address the needs of teachers to improve their delivery of instruction. Additionally, flexible

common planning schedules should be established for teachers to meet across grade levels and content levels. Protocols and expectations should be established for the use of this time. School leaders should closely monitor teaching by reviewing lesson plans and adjusting PD plans to meet teachers' needs. School leaders should conduct timely follow-up observations to ensure that any recommendations made are being implemented.

- The school should seek Network support in working with the SLT to develop members' understanding of their responsibility for setting goals for the CEP. The CEP should be a regular item on the agenda for SLT meetings so that all members of the team are fully aware of school goals and the progress being made towards them.
- The school leader should request assistance from the Network to work with the parent coordinator in the development of an action plan to involve more parents in the processes that impact their child's education. The action plan should include formal and regular two-way communication, shared leadership and collaborative decision-making with stakeholders.

#### **IV. Infrastructure for Student Success**

##### **Findings:**

- The school is not reaching a significant group of students due to high levels of absenteeism. The Academic Intervention Services (AIS) in ELA are not in place. Specific classes to support students who are not proficient have just started this fall, with students only having met twice. There is no Saturday school or other additional aids for them to catch-up and succeed. The Principal indicates that the school waits until the Regents are taken in January to see who is still failing before instituting further support.
- There are too few computers in the campus library and media center for the students requesting such technology. The book collection is satisfactory, but data on book borrowing shows this is an underused facility.
- While lessons generally start on time, many students are tardy, with the subsequent loss of instructional time. The aides encouraging students to be on time are not sufficiently effective to ensure that students move more quickly and purposefully to their next lesson.

##### **Recommendations:**

- The school leader should ensure that additional funds are allocated for AIS and other service needs to provide better support for at-risk subgroups. School leaders should evaluate routinely the quality of these services.
- The school leader should seek support of the Network in finding grants and supplemental funding to obtain library resources to further develop student independence as learners through activities that promote academic rigor and study habits. Class teachers should promote the value of using the media center.
- The school leader should immediately convene a core group of student support staff, administrators and teachers to develop a plan and related policies and procedures to improve student punctuality. These policies and procedures should be clearly outlined in the student Code of Conduct and annually distributed to parents and students.

## V. Collection, Analysis and Utilization of Data

### Findings:

- The core members of the Inquiry Team use schoolwide data and the assigned APs analyze the data by grade cohort. Schoolwide priorities are being identified, but there is no link between these goals, the CEP goals or the identified students who are not proficient. This information is used by cohort teams to discuss ways of supporting students at-risk in raising their academic performance, but few intervention strategies are in place, absence rates remain high, and instruction remains largely, “one size fits all.” There is no monitoring of interim student performance data to see if students are on course for successfully achieving their Regents credits and hence the school making AYP.
- The school does know where its critical weaknesses lie. However, there is no urgency in producing either a long-term strategic plan or a series of short-term action plans to overcome these weaknesses. The CEP and the staff PD programs do not match and do not address the ELA subgroups identified.
- Staff use Acuity data and data from mock Regents exams but few other forms of information gathered from formative assessments. In all lessons observed, there were no indications of formative assessment or exit slips to allow teachers to ascertain levels of student understanding. Consequently, teachers are unaware whether learning was effective or not. There is evidence in some classrooms of student work that has been graded and commented upon. However, there is no clear ongoing use of data to inform planning.
- Teachers do not have assessment binders. The collection of formative data is inconsistent, and while a few teachers collect information about student achievement and progress, most do not.
- There are few formal meetings among staff groups. School administrators meet in groups to discuss student progress, but there are no formal, frequent and regular cabinet meetings. School leaders take into account the data from the January Regents examinations, but no other interim monitoring by school leaders occurs through the school year. The core Inquiry Team meet early in the school year to discuss data and identify students at-risk, but the groups designated by grade have only had one meeting this school year. The school faculty meets twice yearly, and some other meetings occur after school.
- Guidance personnel review student data and identify students at-risk as well as dealing with students recommended by teachers. However, this information neither influences instructional practice, nor leads to students being systematically placed in specific intervention classes.
- Individual student performance and progress data is not shared with support staff. Students have no goals other than to pass the Regents exams, but in no subject are there any individualized next steps for improvement to guide higher achievement. Students and parents have direct access to student grades, and some parents are aware of this, but most are not.
- Student performance data is not used to gauge teacher effectiveness. There are no conversations between school leaders and teachers holding them accountable for the progress and performance of their students based on examination outcomes. Only the outcomes of teacher observations leads to useful conversations between school leaders and teachers about weaknesses in instruction and what sort of PD is necessary to improve instruction.

**Recommendations:**

- The Principal should request PD support from the Network in developing the essential teacher skills needed to implement a more rigorous and systematic analysis of data. The school should hone these skills to identify precisely the aspects of ELA that are causing greatest concern. Plans should then be put in place to address these issues on either a school, grade or class level and to ensure that these areas are a focus for teaching and learning. The school administration should monitor classroom practice and hold staff accountable to ensure that improvements are made.
- The school should revisit the current system for data disaggregation and analysis to focus more closely on student-by-student, class-by-class and subgroup-by-subgroup deficiencies in addition to the whole school and grade monitoring. An improvement plan should be created to ensure that all teachers incorporate item skills analysis of Acuity and predictive results to inform their instruction in all testing grades. Particular attention should be given to monitoring the development of student skills as they move from grade to grade to check for vertical curriculum alignment of programs in each content area.
- The school with the support of the Network should provide PD for teachers in how to use data to improve instruction. This should include the variety of methods that can be employed within the classroom to meet the individual learning needs of students. School leaders should identify this as a focus for observation.
- The school leaders should ensure that all teachers have data binders to keep accurate assessment data and to use the data to plan and guide instruction. Observation of lessons should include a review of how the outcomes of data analysis are used by teachers to inform instructional delivery and differentiated practice.
- The school should develop a system to use data to drive instruction. In developing this system, the school should consider the following:
  - redefining inquiry focused teacher teams and the benchmarked deliverables for each team;
  - dedicating time in teacher schedules for regular team meetings;
  - developing an interim assessment calendar; and
  - completing an interim assessment analysis worksheet outlining the error and distractor analyses of the assessment data.
- School leaders should investigate and identify resources on how to effectively use information assessments to inform teachers on how to tailor their teaching to meet the specific needs of each student or the class. PD should be provided schoolwide to help teachers to implement this practice in their effort to improve student performance. Research has shown that students of teachers who systematically applied formative assessment techniques outperformed similar students who did not receive such treatment and that the gain was greatest for low-performing students.

- The school leader should expand parent-teacher contact opportunities by sharing student next step goals and high and low inference data analysis of student work and providing monthly opportunities for teachers to share learning goals with parents. Student progress data should also be shared with support staff.
- The school leaders should use interim student performance data, initially with those teachers instructing the identified groups, as one measure to gauge teacher effectiveness when discussing with teachers.

## **VI. Professional Development**

### **Findings:**

- The PD plan is not aligned with the CEP goals. The PD program is based on Citywide priorities and individual teacher needs identified by teacher evaluation of the TIPS program and lesson observations. All teachers and administrators have access to PD, but attendance is often voluntary. There is no plan to ensure that all teachers recognize their responsibility for promoting students' English language development.
- Special education teachers frequently collaborate, but they and general education teachers rarely use data to drive their instruction.
- There is an inconsistent approach by school leaders to hold teachers accountable for applying strategies learned through PD. There is some evidence that issues identified in one observation visit are subsequently reviewed and discussed in the next.
- There are opportunities for teachers of ELLs to attend PD. However, there is no specific PD for all teachers to address the needs of ELLs or students with disabilities in their classes to enhance their knowledge, understanding and practices. There was no evidence that teachers differentiated instruction to meet the needs of ELLs, students with disabilities or struggling students.

### **Recommendations:**

- The school should develop a comprehensive PD program that is aligned with school goals and uses the data available in the school. School leaders should seek support for PD from the District/Network and other outside specialists to help them develop a detailed plan that focuses on improving teaching and learning to better meet the needs of students and teachers.
- Special and general education teachers need opportunities to frequently collaborate on the use of data-driven techniques to identify and raise the achievement of students in the identified subgroups.
- The school leader should conduct follow-up observations after PD sessions to ensure that teachers infuse the strategies learned into their instruction. The administration should consistently provide detailed recommendations and specific next steps in their observation reports and focus on these in the next observation.
- With the support of the Network, school leaders should review the PD program and include sessions on how teachers can more effectively meet the specific learning needs of students with disabilities and ELLs. The AP with responsibility for special education should monitor and

evaluate the teaching and learning of classes with ELLs and students with disabilities. Clear guidelines for all teachers of these groups of students should be developed.

## **VII. District Support**

### **Findings:**

- The school is in a new Network with a new Network leader as a result of the former Network being disbanded. The Network has provided facilitators to provide PD on the Common Core, Danielson Framework, IEP regulations, and ELL strategies, all of which has been well received. However, the PD has not had translated into any significant impact on practice. The school part-time coach does not attend Network PD for coaches and mentors.
- The relationship between the school and the Network is undeveloped. Consequently, there is little dialogue about priorities for academic improvement and no support or monitoring of the progress the school is making in achieving its development priorities.
- The Network has not provided feedback on the CEP because the school has not submitted the draft plan to the district. The Network has not been involved in developing the plan.

### **Recommendations:**

- The Network should work in tandem with school leaders in observing instruction, developing strategies and identifying PD opportunities to bring about sustained improvements in teaching and learning.
- The Network and school leaders should collaboratively develop a plan working to improve the quality of education for all students.
- A mechanism should be established to obtain feedback on the CEP with school staff, parents and students. The Network should provide additional training to the administration and the SLT concerning CEP development and implementation. A schedule for follow-up sessions and ongoing consultations should be developed to carefully evaluate the plan's effectiveness and progress towards achieving AYP goals.
- The Network should provide support in implementing the recommendations of the Joint Intervention Team (JIT).

**PART 3: JOINT INTERVENTION TEAM 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 under the current structure and organization.	✓

**B. Overall Recommendation**

Reference	Review Team Recommendation	
(c)	Develop and implement a School Restructuring Plan that includes significant <u>changes in staff, organizational structure, leadership and/or configuration</u> to address issues that continue to negatively impact student academic performance in identified areas. The School Restructuring Plan must also include one of the restructuring options required under NCLB and further defined by the DOE.	✓

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

- Raise the sense of urgency among the school leaders and teachers over significant numbers of students who are not becoming proficient. In doing so, all teachers should improve the quality of their teaching to differentiate and engage all students in their own learning.
- Develop an action plan for different groups of teachers outlining their responsibilities and accountabilities in the teaching of literacy.
- Ensure that teachers meet weekly during school time for subject/department meetings to discuss lesson planning, student needs, differentiation and best practices. Grade level meetings should ensure that class work and other assigned work by students of different abilities are shared to compare outcomes between subjects.
- Devise strategies to improve attendance, which has remained at approximately 80 percent for many years.
- Eliminate excessive tardiness that manifests itself in lateness to school and lateness to lessons during the school day.
- Improve the level of parental support for the school, not only through their membership of various committees, but also social events, especially those directly related to the message that school matters.
- Focus schoolwide attention on PSAT/SAT/ACT results to increase college readiness.