

**NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Office of Accountability**

Differentiated Accountability - School Quality Review (SQR)

SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW REPORT

BEDS Code:	66-09-00-01-0022
District Name:	Mount Vernon Central School District
School Name:	A.B.Davis Middle School
School Address:	350 Gramatan Ave., Mt. Vernon, N.Y. 10550
Principal:	Murdisia Orr
Accountability Phase/Category:	Improvement (year- 1) – Comprehensive
Area of Identification:	English Language Arts – All Students; African American Students; Students with Disabilities; English Language Learners and Economically Disadvantaged Students
Dates of On-site Review:	January 17, 19 - 20, 2012

PART 1: MISSION STATEMENT

“The mission of the Mount Vernon Middle Schools is to recognize and meet the unique and diverse academic, social, physical and emotional needs of all adolescents. We will ensure that all our students meet and exceed state and local performance standards. We will inspire them to become lifelong learners and achievers in a safe and nurturing environment.”

PART 2: SCHOOL STRENGTHS

- There is a sense of hope among groups interviewed. All students interviewed by the review team have plans for higher education. Parents want the best for their children, and the professional staff is confident they will see improvement.
- The school leadership team has high expectations of the staff. The school leadership team is working well together, and all members have strengths that add to the teams functioning. Teachers have a positive rapport with colleagues and are supportive of each other.
- Curriculum documents identify both the content and the expected pace of instruction.
- Parents are welcomed to discuss student needs and progress. Attendance information is forwarded to parents via text messages to increase communication.

PART 3: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND UTILIZATION OF DATA

FINDINGS:

- Data is collected and disaggregated from New York State (NYS) Assessments. This has led to the identification of students who are close to achieving the next performance level, and staff have focused on moving them to the next level.
- Data collected from the NYS Assessments influence the Academic Intervention Services (AIS) program.
- The District Common Assessments are designed to gather information for AIS and aligned to NYS Standards and Assessments.
- Limited data are collected during the closure of a lesson and, therefore, are not used to inform future lessons.
- Data collection for students with disabilities and for English language learners (ELLs) is limited.
- There is little or no technology to support teachers or school leaders. Most technology is outdated, and its use is limited to data collection and analysis.
- Teachers are not aware of the new Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) process and the role that data will play in teacher observations and evaluations.
- There was no evidence that regular analysis of classroom data was becoming part of instructional process.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- A comprehensive system for data collection and analysis that will impact teaching and learning should be developed. This will allow the school staff to adjust instruction to meet the needs of students.
- Teachers should collect data during the closure of the lesson to analyze learning, adapt lessons, re-teach, and provide enrichment to students.
- Data from Mount Vernon Common Assessments should be used to evaluate AIS program effectiveness and student progress.
- Data driven student profiles should be developed. Profiles should include grades, NYS Assessments, District Common Assessments, classroom work, homework, projects, and other data that will provide an accurate picture of student progress.
- Data on students with disabilities should be collected to supply information for the Individualized

Education Program (IEP) and indicate the level of rigor needed for students to make progress.

- Data on ELLs should be collected and analyzed to monitor accurately the development of ELA reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills.
- Professional development (PD) in analyzing data to enhance instruction, remediation and curriculum planning should be provided.

II. TEACHING AND LEARNING

FINDINGS:

- Curriculum maps, lesson guides, and pacing documents are available to guide instruction and are aligned to NYS Standards.
- AIS are available for students, and there is data that helps focus the interventions.
- All teachers are available to help students after school, and some teachers assist students before school and at lunch.
- There are some teachers with exceptional skills who make student success a priority.
- Student performance data on State and District assessments is available to staff for instructional decisions and used to analyze instructional needs.
- The review team observed a great variation in teaching styles, techniques, and results.
- Female students are scoring better than male students on State exams.
- Students are entering middle school below grade level in reading and with many social and emotional needs. This is especially true for students with disabilities and ELLs.
- There is limited literacy support for high need students.
- Teams have changed significantly in the past year, with fewer support staff scheduled to assist multiple teams.
- Class size is approximately 30 students, and the ability of teachers to provide students with individual attention and manage classrooms has been impacted.
- Attendance is poor in first period classes. This impacts performance.
- In special education co-teaching classes, the special education teachers are in the classroom every other day. Planning is challenging because teachers do not share common planning time.

- Classrooms observed by the review team vary significantly regarding rigor, expectations, time management, classroom management, teaching styles, writing in the curriculum, differentiation and instructional strategies.
- Textbooks and materials are limited, and not all students can take texts home.
- The percentage of classified students is high at approximately 21 percent (180 classified students in a total population of 877).
- The current schedule limits teams and does not provide common planning time for teachers to discuss student progress with support staff.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Interdisciplinary teams that include instructional support staff should be created, and common planning time should be scheduled to establish goals and plans for shared students and address student learning needs.
- The co-teaching model should be revised to assure appropriately trained staffing and shared planning time to differentiate lessons is provided. Professional development to develop staff skills should be provided.
- The general instructional model should be enhanced with differentiated instructional opportunities consistent with best practices, including questioning techniques, problem solving, self-assessing using rubrics or exemplars, and closure that gathers data to enable teachers to adapt future lessons and correct learning errors. This should be prioritized and supported with professional development (PD) and follow-up in the classroom.
- Teacher expertise should be capitalized on by promoting visitations to classrooms and professional discussions that result in planned next steps to improve results.
- The school staff should focus on a few selected targets that will improve instruction and student achievement results. Questioning techniques at higher levels, and wait time, self-assessment by students, “learning buddies,” and closure with data collection and analysis, are all possibilities. Both short-term and long-term planning should be coordinated in the Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP).
- The English as a Second Language (ESL) program staff should analyze the needs of ELLs and provide for extended time for student learning.
- ESL staff should establish an individual student plan for the language development of ELLs and involvement of parents.
- Clear goals and priorities should be established to transform the curriculum and align it to the New York State (NYS) P-12 Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS).
- Policies and procedures related to behavior management, attendance, and support for students with

social and emotional needs should be adopted.

- Technology that can support ELLs and provide a management system that can supply data on progress should be secured. In addition, the use of adaptive technology and alternative learning environments should be addressed in the CEP.
- The Professional Learning Community (PLC) approach should be adopted to establish common instructional goals for all staff to align the learning to the CCLS for all student subgroups.

Topical reviews should be built into the curriculum maps to ensure review of critical concepts.

III. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

FINDINGS:

- The school leadership team has common goals and a shared vision.
- Excellence in teaching is recognized, and staff is supported to improve and grow professionally.
- To address attendance issues, a program was established that uses technology to notify parents when their child gets to school. The program is designed to improve on-time attendance, enhance communication with parents, and provide a safety net for students and families.
- Learning-walks are common and focus on instruction and learning.
- Assistant Principals in their roles as coordinators of departments and instructional programs are educational leaders.
- School leaders are aware of external factors that impact performance and safety. Drugs, gangs, homelessness and poverty are some critical factors.
- Data is considered in most decisions, and school leaders are aware of instructional needs and what the staff needs for success.
- The school leadership's focus is on making the school safe and student academic success. Leadership manages the operation of the school and spends a significant part of their day and energy maintaining a safe and productive learning environment.
- Special education is a very large program that requires large amounts of support; however, support staff is limited in number. School leaders are involved in all aspects of the program.
- The lack of computers, Internet, functional web pages, intercoms and targeted PD were viewed as interfering with effective support of leadership skills.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School leaders and support staff should be provided with the technology necessary to do their work effectively.
- The district should work with the school leader to assign support staff in the areas of special education, guidance, and social work as needed to match student numbers and needs.
- The school leader should develop and implement processes to systematically observe all classrooms and discuss with staff how to improve instruction.
- The school leader should increase visibility, which will lower discipline issues and provide more time for positive interactions with students, staff, and parents.
- The school team should adopt new approaches to enhance communication with parents and set high standards of behavior for students.
- The school leader should develop a climate and culture of excellence by having staff share expertise, recognizing students for positive behavior, rewarding academic excellence, and involving parents in these activities.
- The school leader should investigate systems to enhance communication with parents that involve staff. The school is a stable and positive force in the community that should be developed.

IV. INFRASTRUCTURE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

FINDINGS:

- The schedule does not allow for common planning time for teams, for those who co-teach or for those who provide enhanced ESL instruction.
- The number of counselors, social workers, and psychologists are low; staff stated they feel other schools in the District receive more supports.
- The number of floors in the school slows the timely movement of students to classes. Lateness is an issue.
- The Academic Intervention Services (AIS) program does not always use data efficiently and effectively to support student needs.
- There is a schoolwide website, but it is not used or updated.
- There is a Parent Center in a dedicated room in the school that is manned by volunteers to support parent needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The schedule should be adjusted to provide for common planning time, interdisciplinary team meetings and co-teaching. Teams should assist with parent communication to improve family and school relationships.
- Smaller and more intense AIS classes that target instructional needs of students on State assessments should be provided.
- School leaders should make scheduling decisions best suited to the student population.
- The student release time should be changed to limit contact with alternative school students.
- A yearly schedule that fosters more parent contact and visits to the school should be developed.
- Technology should be provided to assist with parent communication and help students meet their learning goals for writing and remedial reading. Students with disabilities and ELLs should be especially targeted.
- Student interventions that are intense and in-depth to engage students and build lasting connections to school should be provided.
- Programs for students should be provided to address bullying, gang membership, and developing self-esteem.

V. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FINDINGS:

- PD for staff and school leaders is lacking in such areas as questioning techniques, closure procedures, and student self-assessment. Active engagement and directed objectives are infrequently observed.
- Little data is collected on PD effectiveness.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- PD should be provided in data collection and analysis of data.
- The PD plan should target and prioritize staff needs, including the development of knowledge and skills to use new instructional techniques and strategies effectively to improve student performance.
- PD opportunities should provide staff in-depth training related to select topics rather than limited exposure to multiple topics.
- CCLS, differentiation, student engagement, literacy in content areas, self-assessment, data collection and closure are all-important areas and should be considered for PD.

- In-house experts should be developed to share critical knowledge and provide support throughout the District and in individual schools.
- Partnerships for PD activities with local universities to provide PD should be developed.

VI. FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

FINDINGS:

- The school is clean, including halls and stairwells.
- Classrooms have meaningful and appropriate messages regarding instruction and behavior expectations.
- Labs are available, and there is an auditorium.
- The attendance system is modern, and when students enter school, parents are notified with text messages.
- The library is professionally staffed and available to students during lunch time to support learning, but lacks functioning technology.
- External factors, such as poverty, drug usage, gangs, violence and homelessness, are significant and the school's budget has limited resources to support students. Class size is one example; it is common to have classes (including AIS and Co-teaching) of about 30 students
- There are no computer systems that serve students in their academic work.
- The school is not easy to monitor due to the number of floors, stairwells and lines of sight. This requires a great deal of adult supervision; cameras are helpful, but not sufficient.
- Interviews conducted by the review team indicated some of the following as possible areas of concern, i.e., leaking roof, a heating system that is hard to regulate and the lack of a fully functioning Public Address (PA) system.
- A school webpage is available, but teachers are not using this technology due to the lack of functioning computers.
- The condition of the school and the lack of technology and textbooks was mentioned by parents, students and staff. They openly talked about this in the interviews and feel they have less than the other middle school.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The District Technology Plan should be integrated with the school CEP.

- Technology to facilitate learning should be acquired and used. A multi-year approach should be required due to the lack of functioning and outdated hardware.
- The students with disabilities and ELLs should have technology with management systems that provide alternative opportunities to practice and review for writing and reading support.
- The library media center should have technology for Internet access for research as a support system for instruction and learning.
- The school should be targeted in the District Facility Plan for Technology to ensure safe and productive classrooms. The heating system, roof leaks and PA system are critical areas that should be included.
- Instructional materials should be readily available for all students.
- Technology, e.g., SMART Boards and computers, should be provided for teachers as classroom supports that increase opportunities to strengthen instruction and improve learning. The use of technology should be supported with PD and professional sharing to maximize its impact on student learning.

PART 4: CONCLUDING STATEMENT

The findings and recommendations noted in the report are intended to guide the school's inquiry, planning and the development of the Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) for school year 2012-2013. The school should also continue its efforts in the implementation of the following Regents Reform Agenda initiatives: P-12 CCLS, Data Driven Instruction and the Annual Professional Performance Reviews for teacher effectiveness.