

NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Office of Accountability

Differentiated Accountability - School Quality Review (SQR)

SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW REPORT

BEDS Code:	010100010043
District Name:	City School District of Albany
School Name:	Philip Schuyler Achievement Academy
School Address:	76 Clinton Avenue, Albany, NY 12206
Principal:	Anthony I. Clement
Accountability Phase/Category:	Improvement (year 1) - Comprehensive
Area of Identification:	English Language Arts - All Students; African American Students and Economically Disadvantaged Students
Dates of On-site Review:	October 6, December 6, December 21, 2011

PART 1: MISSION STATEMENT

“The mission of the City School District of Albany is to educate and nurture all students to be responsible citizens, critical thinkers and lifelong learners to successfully compete in the global community by providing an academically rigorous and safe environment in partnership with parents, students and the community.”

PART 2: SCHOOL STRENGTHS:

- The school offers a wide range of services with many community partners that include St. Peter’s Hospital, Ronald McDonald House, Whitney M. Young Jr. Health Service, mental health, other wellness services and afterschool YMCA child care.
- There has been little teaching staff turnover and no staff requests for transfers from the building in recent history; staff is deeply committed to the well-being and success of their students.
- The school provides a safe, disciplined learning environment. The Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) system has widespread buy-in from staff and is consistently applied. Students are taught socially appropriate behaviors in the school setting.
- The Principal is new to the building, and his distributive leadership style and practices foster strong teacher leaders who have embraced the School Quality Review (SQR) process as an opportunity to seek solutions to their students’ academic challenges. The school’s self-assessments were accurate and insightful. Staff demonstrate a deep understanding of their strengths and challenges and identified key steps needed for school improvement and an eagerness to undertake them.

PART 3: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND USE OF DATA

FINDINGS:

- The use of data for instructional improvement is inconsistent – the sources, frequencies and use differ among teachers and across grades. There are far more data available for English language arts (ELA) than for mathematics. The primary grades are making a smooth transition and alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) at this point in time.
- A major concern in this school where over ninety percent of the students are economically disadvantaged and the majority of students (71-84 percent) are struggling readers is how to respond to the data to get the students on track towards proficiency.
- Disaggregation by subgroup has not occurred.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Utilize both ELA and mathematics assessments that are capable of identifying proximal instructional readiness across the standards that will allow teachers to group and regroup for instruction.
- Provide focused professional development (PD) to better understand and consistently make modifications in both ELA and mathematics in response to diagnostic, formative, interim and summative data.
- Standardize assessments and use them consistently to enable teachers to communicate with one another and to monitor student progress.

II. TEACHING AND LEARNING

FINDINGS:

- There are schoolwide incentives for desired behaviors e.g., the Parsons Child and Family Center provides social interaction lunch groups. The Building Intervention Team meets regularly to support students not responding to the schoolwide Positive Behavioral Intervention Strategies (PBIS) Program.
- There are many extended day/year activities e.g., Literacy Links summer program, before and after school tutoring, and newly introduced supplemental education services. In addition community, higher education, human and health services providers are also available.
- ELA instruction has not yet been aligned with the CCLS, although mathematics instruction has aligned maps at K-2 and is aligned with the NYS standards at grades 3-5.
- There have been a number of scientifically-based strategies adopted e.g., Teach Like A Champion, National Urban Alliance, Wilson Reading, Foundations, Braidy the Story Braid, Readers to Leaders,

Thinking Maps, MegaMath, but other than National Urban Alliance these have not become part of the fabric of the school as many initiatives have “come and gone.”

- Teachers attempt to differentiate instruction, but have no agreed upon protocols for why, when or how to regroup students, the grounds for restructuring, or an operational definition of what it means to “differentiate” product, content or how students present their competence. Teachers are working hard but inconsistently.
- The District recently developed a grading policy with District rubrics for use in completing report cards. This is still a work in progress and staff feel that it provides greater opportunity to link student performance to rigor and the rubrics are useful beyond simply informing a grade.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Ensure that the alignment of the ELA curriculum to the CCLS is a priority. The District should work with the school on the development of curriculum in all core areas and ensure that it is clearly aligned with the current New York State Learning Standards. The curriculum must be aligned to the new P-12 Common Core Learning Standards in English language arts and literacy and mathematics to prepare for implementation in school year 2012-13. All curricula should be developed by knowledgeable and trained individuals (national, State or local) who understand the key elements of curriculum development.

All teachers and administrators should participate in PD on how to plan and implement a curriculum with rigor, as well as on delivery methods that are student-centered. The curriculum should be relied upon as the basis for assessing individual student mastery and progress. Walkthroughs and formal evaluations should include how well the teacher knows and implements the curriculum for the subjects being taught.

- Resolve and communicate what it means to differentiate instruction. This is essential for consistency.
- Assign the newly formed Inquiry Team to have responsibility for coordinating these activities. Differentiation of instruction should be informed by the agreed upon assessments noted in this report.

III. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

FINDINGS:

- The school complied with all required school improvement notifications.
- The Principal is in his first year at the school. He has instituted classroom walkthroughs twice daily and is trained and certified in the new Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR). A goal for him has been to build a sense of ownership and faculty empowerment in the classroom, and he states that he is only a member of committees led by staff and serves as a resource to his faculty.
- Monthly teacher and Principal directed PD happens with regularity and the staff have undertaken a book study.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Track, monitor and adjust practices so consistent implementation can be assured, and changes made, or practices abandoned as examination dictates.
- Consider the use of the plan-do-study-act cycle for the Inquiry Team to become expert in using measurable goals and objectives.

IV. INFRASTRUCTURE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

FINDING:

In part because of the strong network of community supports for health, social and emotional well-being of students and families, time out of the classroom is a concern for teachers.

RECOMMENDATION:

Try to balance the instructional/academic needs of students with the many other resources required for their well-being.

V. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FINDINGS:

- Much of the PD is coordinated at the District level.
- Determination of PD at the building level has not been established by documentation of student learning needs. While there are District literacy coaches, dissemination of PD practices has not been widely achieved.
- There is a sense that many people are “doing their own thing,” and that there has not been planned, consistent and sustained collaborative team learning to improve educational outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Develop a PD Plan that follows from the careful, documented analysis of student learning needs.
- Maintain a sustained focus on a reduced number of priorities to form the essential PD for the upcoming months.

VI. FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

FINDINGS:

- There are adequate texts and resource materials and an increase in leveled reading books (1,800 copies).
- Maintenance staff and teachers take pride in the appearance of their school, and the environment is safe, orderly and clean.
- The building is not wireless, and the technology is stationary.
- There is no science lab in the school; however, students use kits for science.

RECOMMENDATION:

- Add to the leveled readers available as a shared resource through the library media center.
- As resources allow provide wireless capacity and equip the school with a science lab.

PART 4: CONCLUDING STATEMENT

Key priorities that should be supported by ongoing PD include: alignment of ELA to the CCLS; use of consistent assessments to determine students' proximal level of instruction; definition of differentiated instruction as it relates to remediation of struggling learners; the definition of 'proficiency' and 'rigor'; and facility with and consistent use of the plan-do-study-act method of continuous improvement of educational practices. These key actions are aimed at reducing inconsistencies in assessments, definitions and practices; increasing the use of data informed instructional decision-making; increasing the consistent application of differentiated instruction; sustaining a small number of critical programs that are deeply understood and widely practiced, and bringing the curriculum into alignment with the CCLS, particularly where it lags in ELA.

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 2012-13. 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.