

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

Differentiated Accountability - School Quality Review (SQR)

SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW REPORT

BEDS Code:	66-04-09-02-0002
District Name:	Elmsford Union Free School District
School Name:	Alice Grady Elementary School
School Address:	45 Cobb Lane, Elmsford, N.Y. 10523
Principal:	Elsa Kortright-Torres
Accountability Phase/Category:	Improvement (year-1) - Focused
Area of Identification:	English Language Arts – Students with Disabilities
Dates of On-site Review:	December 1 -2, 2011

PART 1: MISSION STATEMENT

Mission Statement:

“The mission of the Elmsford Union Free School District is to enhance the teaching and learning process and to raise achievement for all students while developing mutual respect in our diverse community.”

Vision Statement:

“We believe that the most promising strategy for achieving the mission of the Elmsford Union Free School District is to develop our capacity to function as a professional learning community. We envision schools in which staff:

- Unite to articulate a common mission and identify clear goals;
- Work together in collaborative teams to achieve those goals;
- Seek and implement best practices and research-based strategies for improving student achievement on a continuing basis;
- Monitor each student's progress; and
- Demonstrate a personal commitment to the academic success, talents, well-being, and social development of all students.”

Values Statement:

"To achieve the vision of a district that functions as a professional learning community, the Elmsford Union Free School District staff makes the following collective commitments:

Values:

- Collect and analyze student achievement data, systematically, regularly, and effectively to provide timely, relevant information to direct teaching and learning in targeted instructional areas;
- Align the taught curriculum with the New York State Standards and district curriculum maps;
- Develop and administer a common local assessment program using state testing standards;

- Provide high quality resources, strategies, information, and support for parents to help their children succeed academically while promoting communication between home and school;
- Develop a Professional Development Plan (PDP) targeting specific instructional areas identified by analysis of all students' achievement data as measured by national, state, and local assessments;
- Determine the effectiveness of district-supported professional development while continuing to seek out and participate in professional development based on grade level, department, school, and district goals;
- Evaluate the effectiveness of existing support programs serving at-risk students;
- Collaboratively identify and utilize a variety of identified best practices to promote student learning; and
- Promote student interest, participation, and achievement in the visual and performing arts, athletics, and co-curricular activities.”

PART 2: SCHOOL STRENGTHS

- Teachers and school leaders believe the school has great students.
- Teachers have good relationships with each other and with the students.
- Students are well-behaved; discipline is not an issue.
- Routines are in place, and students understand their roles.
- Teachers acknowledge the need to change and have expressed a desire for professional development (PD). They are willing and desire to embrace changes because they feel it would be good for students. There is a sense of urgency regarding the need to change.
- The number of adults working in classrooms is significant.
- There are SMART Boards available in almost every classroom.

PART 3: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND UTILIZATION OF DATA

FINDINGS:

- Although there is evidence of multiple data sources available to school personnel and some evidence that teachers are beginning to use formative and summative assessment data, data should be more effectively used.
- Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) and other reading assessment data are used to group students and develop instruction.
- Recently acquired programs, such as AIMSWEB, will be providing teachers with additional data regarding student achievement; however, teachers require more skill to use data to inform their instruction.

- Parents, students and teachers articulated a strong need for consistent and varied modes of communication in order for everyone to understand school and District initiatives and to build a strong relationship to support the education of the students.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Instructional resources purchased in the future should provide comprehensive formative and summative opportunities for evaluation on multiple levels that reflect the New P-12 Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS).
- The school should investigate the most effective forms of communication for parents and teachers in order to increase awareness of school and District programs and initiatives.
- The method and rationale for student class placements, specifically for English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities to support student achievement should be evaluated. In addition, the continuum of services for students with disabilities should be reviewed and reevaluated to improve delivery of services in order to improve student achievement.

II. TEACHING AND LEARNING

FINDINGS:

- Curriculum is inconsistently implemented due to lack of comprehensive written curriculum and knowledge of the standards.
- PD for teachers is necessary in the area of differentiation of instruction, among other topics.
- Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) do not include all essential staff due to challenging issues with scheduling. Scheduling is complicated by the various and overlapping needs of students and the necessity to share staff between the Primary and Elementary Schools.
- Vertical and horizontal articulation and planning are absent from curriculum development and implementation.
- There is minimal transitional planning and articulation from the three schools in the District, Carl L. Dixon (Grades Pre K -1) to Alice E. Grady (Grades 2 -6) and to Alexander Hamilton MS/HS (grades 7 - 12).
- Teachers have access to technology, but technology usage is not incorporated into the work of students. Students want and need more hands-on experience using technology.
- The school does not deliver a consistent, effective and comprehensive literacy program.
- A common and consistent Standards-based report card system is not in place.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Curriculum maps and implementation of curriculum should reflect a comprehensive knowledge of and adherence to the CCLS.
- All teachers should receive PD in the following areas:
 - use of data in relation to current programs;
 - use of data to inform instruction;
 - comprehensive literacy instruction;
 - differentiated instruction;
 - integration of the use of technology into instruction; and
 - CCLS.
- Job-embedded and sustained PD should be designed and implemented.
- School leaders and staff should create a curriculum/instructional partnership for greater accountability and transparency that include the following opportunities: planned learning walks, e.g., inter-intra-building; informal and formal observations; peer observations; shared lessons; lesson templates; lesson planning; and mapping.
- PLCs should be restructured to include all stakeholders.
- Articulation should be improved in the following areas:
 - Principal's meetings with grade level team leaders;
 - team leaders meeting with Dixson and Hamilton representatives to further their understanding of goals and expectations for students and to identify any gaps in curriculum and instruction;
 - departmentalized Grady teachers (Grade 5-6) joining their respective departments at Hamilton to improve transitions and to create a stronger bond for curriculum development and instruction; and
 - teachers of English as a Second Language, special education teachers and "specials" instructors included in PLCs to strengthen curricular connections that will ultimately increase student achievement.
- A schoolwide comprehensive literacy program to address the various learning needs of all students, including ELLs and students with disabilities should be developed and implemented.
- A consistent and standardized report card system should be selected and implemented.
- The technology plan should clearly articulate the expectations for student achievement in technology usage at every grade level. The technology plan should be made available and explained to teachers; teachers should be provided with PD to enable them to embed technology usage throughout their instruction and ensure that students are using the technology.
- Teams and leaders should be chosen to work in conjunction with school leaders on Districtwide decision-making efforts.

III. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

FINDINGS:

- The mission statement is clear and drives the behavior of the school community.
- Several school leaders are either new, relatively new and/or in different positions. The school leaders are cognizant of the need to be present in classrooms as instructional leaders and to have a presence in the school. However, time and many obligations make this a challenging goal.
- District and school leaders recognize the value of fostering strong teacher-leaders within the school and serving as instructional leaders themselves.

RECOMMENDATION:

School leaders should be provided with the resources and PD that will assist them to support teaching and learning.

IV. INFRASTRUCTURE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

FINDINGS:

- Grades Pre-K and 1 are in the Dixon School while grades 2 through 6 are in the Alice E. Grady School. The schools are several blocks apart and there is one Principal and one Assistant Principal (AP) that serve both schools. Given the different school schedules and demands at Alice E. Grady, the Principal has little time to spend at Dixon. As a result, the Principal and the AP have minimal time to communicate during the course of the school day.
- Due to the school's diminished resources and growing needs, it is essential to establish relationships with community-based organizations to provide support programs for students and families in order to increase student achievement.
- Students have an hour for recess and lunch daily. Internal and external classroom transitions seem to be time-consuming.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- There is a great need to establish relationships with the community. Programs that build relationships and offer services for parents and teachers are needed, e.g., parent-teacher coffee hours, ESL courses for parents, Spanish courses for staff and workshops for parents regarding the support of their child's education.
- Before school, summer enrichment, reading and ESL programs should be reinstated. Working with outside organizations such as BOCES, local agencies, universities, etc. should be explored to provide tuition-free opportunities for all students.

- The one-hour lunch period provided for students should be evaluated. A typical lunch and recess for students is 40 minutes per day. The school would recoup an hour and forty minutes weekly of instructional time by shortening this period.

V. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FINDING:

Teachers and school leaders have requested PD in many areas and have identified the structure of PLCs as being a comfortable format in which they can work, learn, and grow professionally.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The availability of PLCs for teachers and school leaders should be expanded. Goals for the PLCs directly related to student needs identified during this review should be developed.
- School leaders should identify resources and practices that will maximize their time in the classroom in order to increase their capacity to be instructional leaders, i.e., include using Excel for data organization, specific programs for data analysis and Tablets for observations. At the same time, school leaders should reduce time spent on managerial duties.

VI. FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

FINDINGS:

- Current materials reflect the 2005 NYS Standards but do not yet reflect the P-12 CCLS.
- While a technology plan exists, there is little evidence that technology is being used by teachers and students.
- There are a few laptop carts available, but they are not effectively used.
- A visible lack of classroom and teaching space was observed in the school.
- Several classroom environments were overcrowded, with 28 students per room, and therefore not conducive to learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Redevelop technology curriculum plans to reflect updated requirements and best practices. Staff should be trained in technology as needed.
- Increase access to technology for students to support their learning and to develop their skills in the use of technology for many purposes, i.e. research, data collection and graphic representation.

- Explore solutions for space issues to alleviate classroom over-crowding.
- Implement a schoolwide literacy program and provide the appropriate PD for teachers and all support staff.
- Align future text selections and PD/curriculum planning based upon CCLS.
- Increase communication with parents regarding the transition from school to school and assist them to help their children understand the process and the expectations that will be required of them as new students.

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 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.