

NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Office of Accountability

Differentiated Accountability - School Quality Review (SQR)

SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW REPORT

BEDS Code/DBN:	131601060000
District Name:	Arlington Central School District
School Name:	Arlington Middle School
School Address:	601 Dutchess Turnpike, Poughkeepsie, NY 12603
Principal:	Richard Carroll
Accountability Phase/Category:	Improvement (year- 1) - Focused
Areas of Identification:	English Language Arts - Students with Disabilities Mathematics - African American Students; Students with Disabilities and Economically Disadvantaged Students
Dates of On-site Review:	February 14-16, 2012

PART 1: MISSION STATEMENT

“At Arlington Middle School, we provide a secure, healthy environment that fosters intellectual, emotional, physical, and social growth. We encourage a variety of experiences, opportunities, and services in a supportive, structured community. We are committed to excelling while remaining flexible in responding to our dynamic society.”

PART 2: SCHOOL STRENGTHS

The school has a safe, respectful and supportive environment conducive to learning.

PART 3: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND UTILIZATION OF DATA

FINDINGS:

- The data that the school is collecting is not being analyzed in a rigorous manner to identify precisely what aspects and skills of English language arts (ELA) and mathematics should be the specific focus for improvement. The analysis of data is not focused sharply enough to identify the key changes required in programs and delivery to bring about urgent improvement in student performance, specifically for students with disabilities.

- Although some use of formative assessment was evident, there is limited and inconsistent use of common assessment tools to inform instruction. Few teachers analyze formative data to plan their instruction, address the specific needs of individuals or groups of students, or identify strengths and weaknesses.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school leaders should develop a system to use data to drive instruction. Professional development (PD) should be provided to support the essential skills needed to implement a more rigorous and systematic analysis of data. Data should be used to identify which aspects of ELA and mathematics are causing the greatest concern for the identified subgroups and develop plans to address these issues, with a focus on teaching and learning. School leaders should articulate expectations for the use of data at team meetings and in lesson planning and regularly monitor instruction.
- The school leaders should develop a common definition of formative and interim assessments and use, both summative and formative student performance data to create instructional groups, design skill-based activities for small groups of students with similar needs and adjust the planned curriculum with a special focus on at-risk students and identified subgroups. The current data and formative assessments should be used to differentiate instruction for groups of students and individual needs. Data should continue to be used for Rtl and other forms of progress monitoring.

II. TEACHING AND LEARNING

FINDINGS:

- Many lessons observed were teacher-directed and did not use a range of strategies to accommodate the diverse learning needs of students. Students were not actively engaged in meaningful and challenging activities. Although evidence of rigor and relevance was observed in some classrooms, many of the lessons did not demonstrate high expectations and student engagement, especially for students with disabilities. There was little evidence that students were provided with explicit strategies needed to become independent learners, i.e., metacognitive strategies and independent learning skills.
- Although units of study have been developed for ELA and are aligned to the New York State (NYS) P-12 Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), there is limited evidence that the units are being used. There was limited use of non-fiction texts. In mathematics classrooms observed, the units of study in mathematics were being utilized. The pacing of lessons in all subjects did not maximize learning opportunities.
- The co-teaching model was not effectively implemented in all classrooms. One-to-one aides and teaching assistants were not active participants in student learning.
- There was limited evidence of the development of higher order thinking skills in instructional practices. Questioning skills varied greatly between teachers, with a majority of questions requiring factual recall and one-word answers.
- In many classrooms observed, teachers did not address learning outcomes, and students were often unclear about what they were learning. Learning objectives were not routinely referred to or assessed at the beginning, middle or end of lessons.

- There is no standardized approach across the school for the assessment of student work. Little evidence was provided to indicate that teachers provided their students with high quality feedback that made it clear to students what they needed to do to improve.
- The school offers several types of intervention services; however, little differentiation was evident during observations. There appears to be confusion on the definition and purpose of each level of the continuum and what is defined as Academic Intervention Services (AIS).

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School leaders 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. Teachers should ensure that all student work 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.
- School leaders and teachers should continue alignment of the curriculum to the CCLS and provide opportunity for teachers to develop and implement rigorous units. The process of alignment, both vertically and horizontally in grades K-12 should be continued. A scope and sequence should be developed and non-fiction and literacy should be used across the content. Teachers should ensure that lessons are engaging and rigorous and based on the standards. School leaders should visit classrooms frequently to ensure the curriculum is implemented with fidelity. The NYS website, <http://engageny.org/> can be used as a resource.
- 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. All co-teachers should be given scheduled collaborative planning time to ensure best practices in co-teaching instruction in order to support students with disabilities. Teachers should be given the opportunity to choose their co-teaching partners, as much as possible. Teaching assistants and one-to-one aides should support instruction and be active participants in the lesson. The school leaders should closely monitor co-teaching classroom practices and provide constructive feedback to teachers on a regular basis.
- PD should be provided to teachers in developing a variety of questioning techniques aimed at critical thinking and use of problem solving skills appropriate to student development. These skills should specifically support teacher effectiveness with student with disabilities. Teachers should ensure that strategies identified in training are implemented in their daily instruction. School leaders should make questioning techniques a focus for observation.
- Teachers should ensure that lesson objectives are shared with students so that they have a good understanding of what it is they are learning. Lessons should include explicit teaching points and provide practice sessions for independent work to assess student learning before teachers proceed to the next teaching point. Teachers should make sure that teaching points are related within the same lesson and should be standards based. School leaders should ensure through the observation process that this practice is uniform.

- Rubrics should be used as an integral tool in planning and assessing student work. Teachers should participate in PD activities that model the use of rubrics to provide teacher feedback, peer feedback and student self assessment. Teachers should be trained in how to provide high quality feedback regarding student work and then quickly ensure that this becomes embedded in instructional practice. School leaders should regularly review student work that is displayed in hallways and classrooms to ensure that high quality feedback is the norm.
- District and school leaders should review the current level of services available to all students in ELA and mathematics. The purpose of each intervention and the criteria for entrance and exit, as well as the assessments used for progress monitoring should be clearly defined and articulated. School leaders should ensure that students with disabilities have equal access to the curriculum and AIS. School leaders should monitor AIS and all other services for differentiation of instruction and the use of best practices. Data on the effectiveness of each program should be collected and the program revised as needed to best meet the needs of the students.

III. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

FINDINGS:

- Although there is a building mission statement, it was developed by the prior school leaders.
- Although school leaders are visible throughout the school and classrooms, there is no formal walkthrough tool or feedback process to collect data and inform school improvement initiatives. Lesson plans are not regularly collected and reviewed to ensure alignment to the CCLS or use of best practices

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School leaders should engage all staff in creating a common vision and mission that supports a culture of high expectations for all students. The school mission and vision need to be woven through each new initiative in a purposeful and meaningful way.
- School leaders should closely monitor the delivery of instruction by frequently reviewing lesson plans, providing feedback and conducting informal and formal observations with written feedback that includes recommendations for improvement. School leaders should conduct follow-up observations in a timely manner to ensure that these recommendations are being implemented. School leaders should ensure that teachers are held accountable for incorporating strategies to address identified areas for improvement.

IV. INFRASTRUCTURE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

FINDINGS:

- The Positive Behavioral Interventions and Strategies (PBIS) program has been introduced and all teachers are expected to positively reward students for good behavior. Not all teachers have implemented this expectation with fidelity. There was limited evidence of character education in the halls or classrooms.

- The current AIS classes were not differentiated. Data is not collected to ensure AIS skills are being transferred into ELA and mathematics classes.
- Although there is common planning time and Professional Learning Communities (PLC), expectations for use of this time and scheduling are inconsistent across teams. Special education teachers, AIS teachers and teaching assistants are not always included in planning times.
- Although after school and summer school programs exist, opportunities are limited. Students reported an interest in having access to more programs.
- Although there is an active Parent Teacher Organization (PTO), outreach to parents is minimal, as indicated through parent and staff interviews.
- The school's master schedule does not effectively use staff, space and time. The size of classes greatly varied.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School leaders should continue to provide PD to staff on expectations for implementation, celebrate successes, cultural diversity and good behavior and consider using purchased or student made posters demonstrating character education to help students take pride in their school. Quality student work should be posted to recognize and celebrate student achievement.
- AIS should be made available to all students according to the District criteria. The current plan should be revised to include entrance and exit criteria and identification based on multiple measures. The AIS program should be rigorous, differentiated and based on data. School leaders should articulate the importance of AIS to students and parents and monitor AIS programs for successful implementation.
- School leaders should continue to create a flexible common planning schedule in which all teachers can meet across grade levels and establish protocols and expectations for the use of this time. The school leaders should review the current PLC schedule and, as much as possible, ensure that teaching assistants are not being pulled from their primary instructional duties to cover PLCs. Agendas should support the schools goals for student achievement.
- School and District leaders should review their current after school and summer school offerings. Data and surveys from students should be used to modify the current programs to meet the needs and interests of the students, as funding allows.
- School leaders should increase parent communication and involvement in the school improvement initiatives. Action steps for increased parent participation should be developed. Whenever necessary, translate communications in the primary language of families represented.
- School leadership, in consultation with staff, should analyze the present master schedule and revise as necessary to best meet the needs of students and effectively use all staff. School leaders should receive training and support from Central Office in this area.

V. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FINDING:

The District has a PD Plan, however, it lacks a process for feedback and expectations for implementation of learned skills in classroom practice. Staff expressed a need for more PD on the following topics: co-teaching, balanced literacy, formative assessment and the use of data to inform instruction, Rtl, Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) and differentiation.

RECOMMENDATION:

District leadership should revise the current PD plan to include feedback mechanisms and expectations for incorporating PD into daily practice to meet the learning needs of students. The PD plan should be aligned with the school's Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) and take into account the differentiated needs of the staff and students, as identified above. Clear expectations and exemplars should be provided to staff on all new initiatives. Teachers should use team time to share best practices and collaboratively assess student work. School and District leaders should monitor teaching and learning to ensure that strategies learned in PD offerings have an impact on improving student achievement.

VI. FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

FINDING:

The available technology in many classrooms, including SMART Boards and laptops, was underutilized and was not effectively integrated into instruction.

RECOMMENDATION:

The school leadership should provide training and support to targeted teachers to ensure that they have the skills and competencies to effectively use technology, including laptop computers and SMART Boards in instruction. 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.

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 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.