NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Office of Accountability

Differentiated Accountability - School Quality Review (SQR)

SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW REPORT

BEDS Code	131601060014
District Name:	Arlington Central School District
School Name:	Vail Farm Elementary School
School Address:	1569 East Noxon Road, Lagrangeville, NY 12540
Principal:	Dorothy Pariot
Accountability Phase/Category:	Improvement (year 1) - Focused
Area of Identification:	English Language Arts - Students with Disabilities and Economically Disadvantaged Students
Dates of On-site Review:	February 13-14, 2012

PART 1: MISSION STATEMENT

The school does not have a Mission Statement**.**

PART 2: SCHOOL STRENGTHS

- The school is a new facility with a school environment that is safe, supportive and conducive to learning. The hallways and classrooms are print-rich.
- The school has active parent involvement.

PART 3: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND UTILIZATION OF DATA

FINDINGS:

- The data that the school collects is not being analyzed in a rigorous manner to identify precisely what aspects of English Language Arts (ELA) need to 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, it was not consistently used by all teachers. Few teachers analyze formative data to plan their instruction, address the specific needs of individuals or groups of students, or to identify strengths and weaknesses. Not all teachers were aware of and use the database for reading and writing benchmarks and Tier 2 interventions from Response to Intervention (RtI).

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 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.

- The school leader should develop a common definition of formative and interim assessments and use student performance data, both summative and formative, 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 RtI and other forms of progress monitoring. The school leader should provide time for staff to review data.

II. TEACHING AND LEARNING

FINDINGS:

- Many lessons observed were entirely 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 was observed in some classrooms, many of the lessons did not demonstrate high expectations and student engagement. There was little evidence that students were provided with explicit strategies needed to become independent learners, i.e., metacognitive strategies and independent learning skills.

- There are no District-wide English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum maps or units of study. Pacing of lessons 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 among teachers, with a majority of questions requiring factual recall and one-word answers.

- In many classrooms observed, teachers did not include learning outcomes, and students were often unclear about what they were learning. Learning objectives were not routinely referred to 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 that indicated that teachers provided their students with high quality feedback that made it clear to students what they needed to do to improve.

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 begin alignment of the curriculum to the New York State (NYS) P-12 Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and provide opportunity for teachers to develop rigorous units. The process of aligning the ELA curriculum with the CCLS, both vertically and horizontally should be continued. A scope and sequence should be developed and non-fiction and literacy across the content should be used. Teachers should ensure that lessons are engaging and rigorous and based on the standards. School leaders should continue to visit classrooms frequently to ensure the curriculum is implemented with fidelity.

- 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 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 regularly provide constructive feedback to teachers.

- PD should be provided in supporting teachers to develop a variety of questioning techniques aimed at critical thinking and use problem solving skills appropriate to student development. These skills should specifically support teacher effectiveness with students 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 ensure 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 incorporated into 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.

III. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

FINDINGS:

- Although the District mission statement is referenced, a school mission statement has not been developed.
- Although the school leader is 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 collected and regularly reviewed to ensure alignment to the CCLS or the use of best practices.
- The school leader is new to the building.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School leaders should engage all staff in creating a common vision and mission that supports high expectations for all students.
- The school leader should closely monitor the delivery of instruction by frequently reviewing lesson plans, providing feedback on lesson plans 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. The school leadership team should rigorously monitor classroom instructional practices and give on-going quality feedback to teachers. School leaders should ensure that teachers are held accountable for implementing strategies to address identified areas for improvement. School leaders should ensure that teachers implement differentiation strategies, learned through PD, into their classroom practice.
- The District should continue to provide ongoing PD and mentoring for the new school leader on all District policies and procedures. The role of all leaders, both school and District, should be clearly articulated.

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.
- Students with disabilities have limited access to Academic Intervention Services (AIS). The current AIS classes were not differentiated. Data is not collected to ensure AIS skills are being transferred into ELA 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. Special education teachers expressed a need to have their own PLC. There was also a concern that teaching assistants are pulled from their classroom assignments to cover PLCs.

- Although after school and summer school programs exist, opportunities are limited. Students reported wanting more programs. The current homework program only has 12 students enrolled.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School leaders should continue to provide PD for staff on the expectations for implementation of PBIS. Successes, cultural diversity and good behavior should be celebrated. .

- AIS should be made available to all students using the District AIS criteria. The school leader should revise the current plan to include entrance and exit criteria, based on multiple measures. School leaders should articulate the importance of AIS to students and parents and monitor AIS programs for successful implementation. The AIS program should be rigorous, differentiated and based on data.

- School leaders should continue to create a flexible common planning schedule in which all teachers can meet across grade levels and should establish protocols and expectations for the use of this time. The current PLC schedule should be reviewed and as much as possible, teaching assistants should not be pulled from their primary instructional duties to cover PLCs. Agendas should support schools goals for student achievement.

- School and District leaders should review their current after school and summer school offerings, including Homework Club. 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.

V. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FINDINGS:

- 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, RtI, Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) and differentiation.

- Teachers expressed a concern with the scheduling of time for new teachers to meet with their mentors and the clarity of expectations for those meetings.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- District leaders 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 Educational 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.

- As much as possible, school leadership should provide common planning time for new teachers and mentors, set clear expectations for use of this time specific to school improvement goals, and monitor for accountability.

VI. FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

FINDING:

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.