

NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Office of Accountability

Differentiated Accountability - School Quality Review (SQR)

SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW REPORT

BEDS Code:	140600010080
District Name:	Buffalo City School District
School Name:	PS 80 Highgate Heights
School Address:	600 Highgate Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14215
Principal:	Gayle Irving-White
Accountability Phase/Category:	Improvement (year- 1-) Comprehensive
Areas of Identification:	English Language Arts - All Students; African American Students and Economically Disadvantaged Students Mathematics - All Students; African American Students and Economically Disadvantaged Students
Dates of On-site Review:	December 12-13, 2011

PART 1: MISSION STATEMENT

“Highgate Heights, School 80 is focused on developing students who are academically proficient, physically and emotionally healthy, and also who are respectful, responsible and caring individuals.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

- We believe every individual can learn. Our school culture will support student success by developing partnerships between home, school, and community to promote student learning and development.
- Each individual deserves an educational environment in which he can learn. Our school culture will support success by creating classrooms focused on learning.
- Literacy skills which include reading, writing, and speaking are the foundation for lifelong learning and economic success. Our school culture will support student success by teaching reading with fidelity to the Harcourt reading program.
- Each individual deserves to be treated with respect. Our school culture will support students in developing respect for themselves and others.
- Every individual needs to learn to exhibit socially acceptable behavior. Our school culture will support students with high expectation for academic achievement and personal behavior.”

PART 2: SCHOOL STRENGTHS

The Highgate Heights School displays a positive school climate where teachers and students are respected and respectful of one another. Parents interviewed consider the school leaders and staff to be caring and understanding of students' social and emotional needs as well as academic. Safety issues are dealt with immediately. The following are other strengths of the school:

- Many teachers are readily available for student assistance before, during, and after school.
- The school offers various afterschool and Saturday activities. The co-teaching model is working well for students involved in these classes.
- Consistency of leadership has proven to be positive and effective for school growth.
- School leaders have clearly shared the school mission with the whole school community.
- The implementation of schoolwide Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) program has shown positive results in student behavior.

PART 3: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND UTILIZATION OF DATA

FINDINGS:

- At Highgate Heights School there are multiple sources of data collected for the use of teachers; however not all teachers are using data to inform their instructional planning or to modify instruction. They implement the curriculum without regard for the need of some students for differentiated instruction.
- There is no evidence of data analysis and interpretation of subgroup performance sufficient to guide the planning of intervention strategies to meet the academic needs of all students.
- Teacher data binders were incomplete. The instruction in most classrooms did not indicate that the assessment resources were being used to inform instructional planning. For example, M-Class and end-of-unit assessments from Investigation and Connected Math were not shown as being in use in this school.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Teachers should use student performance data, both summative, interim and formative, to create instructional groups, design skill-based activities for small groups of students with similar needs and adjust instruction to meet the needs of lower performing students and identified subgroups.
- The school leadership should create a plan and a format for collecting data. All student data should be reviewed to identify all students in need of Academic Intervention Services (AIS) and the area of specific

need. School leaders should closely monitor teachers to ensure that all staff members are following the agreed upon plan.

- The school leaders should ensure that all teachers have data binders, keep accurate assessment data in the binders, and use the data to plan and guide instruction. Observation of lessons should include a review of how the outcomes of data analysis are used by teachers to inform instructional delivery and differentiated practice.

II. TEACHING AND LEARNING

FINDINGS:

- There is the beginning of work with the New York State (NYS) P-12 Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) strategies, but teachers are vague about how to implement P-12 CCLS. A trained group has been formed to turn-key CCLS to the entire staff. Teachers are not consistently following the training plan as evidenced in the notes of the trainer.
- Teachers are using supplemental resources in mathematics that are not approved by the District.
- Many teachers are working hard to get students to do well on State assessments. However, there is very little evidence of rigor and relevance in instruction that is reflective of high expectations and access to challenging learning opportunities and higher order thinking skills for students.
- There is a need to further develop the co-teaching model, with emphasis on aligning methodologies and delivery of instruction in the content areas for students with disabilities and general education students.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School leaders should closely monitor teachers to ensure that all staff members are following the agreed-upon plan for training and implementation of lessons using the Common Core Methodology.
- Supplementary resources that are used in instruction should become components of the District's approved programs and designed to respond to identified skill deficits shown in the data analysis.
- Teachers should increase the rigor of curriculum outcomes so that a wide range of instructional strategies can be used to promote student higher level thinking, problem solving and research skills in all content areas. This should also allow for peer-to peer support strategies that enlist higher performing students to work with lower performing students to determine right answers using evidence from the text. Teachers should practice less teacher talk and require students to think more about answers by rewording questions. Teachers should choose "No opt out" for students when they are struggling for answers.
- Teachers should plan for and be ready to teach students at different levels. Questions should be created at different levels of understanding, including bonus sections of challenging questions. Opportunities for general education and special education classroom teachers to communicate and collaborate should be continued to develop the scaffolding needed for students with disabilities.

III. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

FINDINGS:

- School leaders should ensure that annual goals include sufficient expectations for the performance of all students and staff. Strategic plans that clearly and specifically outline the roles of key staff were not evident in the quality indicators or interviews.
- School leaders are not trained to evaluate staff on the new teaching standards, as noted in the Quality Indicators.
- There is a need for sustained professional development (PD) in data management, as well as leadership for growth and development that will show positive results in student achievement.
- The PBIS program seems to be working for the majority of students; however, it was reported that teachers had limited resources for handling difficult students, specifically tier three students identified through Response to Intervention (RtI).

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school leader, with the support of the school's planning team should create a Comprehensive Educational Plan to improve student achievement. The school community should not only talk about improvement, but share in the responsibility for student success, continue to cultivate a culture of quality professional practices, learn more about P-12 CCLS and its effects on learning, and expect all students to achieve at a higher standard.
- School leaders should be trained on the new teaching standards, where classroom observations can be used to target key moments of re-teaching and rigor. School leaders should create an "Observation Tracker" for each teacher observed and the programs that they are implementing in each classroom (see Paul Brambrick-Santoyo, [2010] *Driven by Data*, p.90, as a useful example).
- District leadership should train all school leaders on the new evaluation system so that all they will be ready in September 2012 to implement the new evaluation system.
- The school leadership team should implement a plan for dealing with tier three students, either through PBIS or in an alternative setting/arrangement.

IV. INFRASTRUCTURE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

FINDINGS:

- There is little evidence of a well organized and articulated pathway for student success, moving up through the grades and transitioning students from elementary to middle school and from middle to high school.

- School staff expressed low expectations for the academic achievement of some students and cited external factors such as poverty and the area where they live as the root cause for the school's accountability status.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School leaders should seek the support of the District office staff to plan for better articulation between the grades and continuity from one level to the next level of schooling so that the expectations for each grade is known well in advance of the students moving on to the next academic level. The master schedules should not only reflect planning time for grade level meetings but also periodic articulation time between grades.
- PD should be provided to enable successful implementation of clear behavioral and academic expectations for all staff and students. These expectations should be a central part of school activities and be written, monitored in the classroom, and linked to action that is focused on high expectations and academic rigor.

V. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FINDINGS:

- There is a need to provide PD that will assist teachers in analyzing formative and interim data to plan instruction, address specific needs of individual or groups of students, and identify their strengths.
- Although there are ongoing introductory sessions of the CCLS being presented by the School Based Leadership Team, not all teachers are aware of how important it is for them to be knowledgeable about this methodology and how they plan to implement these standards within their classes next school year.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- PD should be provided schoolwide to help teachers analyze formative and interim data. Research has shown that students whose teachers systematically applied formative and interim assessment techniques outperformed similar students who did not receive such treatment and that the gain was greatest for low performing students.
- Consideration should be given to the creation of interim assessments that are aligned with and well-paced to the P-12 CCLS and administered every six weeks in the next school year.

VI. FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

FINDINGS:

- SMART Boards are under utilized by some teachers because of a lack of expertise.
- Parents believe that the building could be used after school for training parents to better help their

children and teach new skills to interested individuals living in this community.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School leaders should seek training for teachers to make maximum use of the SMART Boards so that they can better differentiate instruction for all students.
- School leaders should explore the possibility of this school becoming a “light house” for this community.

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 2012-13. The school should also continue its efforts in the implementation of the following Regents Reform Agenda initiatives: P-12 Common Core Learning Standards, Data Driven Instruction and the Annual Professional Performance Reviews for teacher effectiveness.

The following should be priorities for incorporation in the CEP:

- Continue to provide feedback via classroom walkthroughs and formal observations.
- Ensure that there are consistently high expectations and rigorous instruction across all grade levels and for all student groups. Establish a culture of accountability without excuses for all classes.
- Ensure that curriculum programs include specific strategies for using technological resources, such as SMARTBoards and laptops, as instructional aides for differentiated learning.
- Create flexible planning time for all teachers to meet and plan using data that are already available to them.
- Seek to involve more parents in activities within the school that would benefit all students.