

NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Office of Accountability

Differentiated Accountability - School Quality Review (SQR)

SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW REPORT

BEDS Code:	661401030002
District Name:	Ossining Union Free School District
School Name:	Claremont Elementary School
	2 Claremont Road, Ossining, NY 10562
Principal:	Felix Flores
Accountability Phase/Category:	Improvement (year- 1) - Focused
Area of Identification:	English Language Arts - Students with Disabilities; English Language Learners and Economically Disadvantaged Students
Dates of On-site Review:	March 21, 2012 - March 22, 2012

PART 1: MISSION STATEMENT

“The mission statement of the Claremont School is the mission of the Ossining Union Free School District. It includes the following elements:

- recognizes the value and importance of family-school-community partnerships in educating all students;
- places emphasis on high standards, quality instruction, and significant pupil achievement, because all children can and will learn;
- holds high expectations for each individual student;
- educates each child to his/her potential recognizing individual student needs;
- provides equal educational opportunities expecting equitable outcomes for all;
- fosters respect for and appreciation of both individual differences and cultural diversity; and
- prepares students for informed and active participation as responsible citizens in our American democracy.”

PART 2: SCHOOL STRENGTHS

- The school is a welcoming and safe learning community where student diversity is celebrated.
- The school building is bright and clean. Classrooms and the building in general are accessible and well-organized.
- The staff are dedicated to providing individualized instruction and engaging in on-going professional development (PD) to learn and maintain current practice.

- The school has a well-developed and inclusive enrichment program.
- The school participates in a county-wide network to provide resources and community-based supports to students and families.

PART 3: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND UTILIZATION OF DATA

FINDINGS:

- The team observed minimal evidence of data collection to inform instruction. The staff and school leadership indicate that there is an increased focus on PD on formative assessment this school year, but the application of formative assessment is not evident in the classrooms.
- There is some evidence that data is being collected on a regular basis, but the analysis and use of that data is not evident. There is evidence provided of a detailed Response to Intervention (RtI) Plan that outlines both the process for collecting, analyzing and using data as well as the rubrics associated with the decision tree for using data to drive programmatic decisions. Documents reviewed indicate that there has been PD on this topic, but staff interviewed indicated that while they collect a wide variety of data points, they are unclear as to how to “use” that information to adapt instruction.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school leadership should provide additional PD on formative assessment. PD should include job-embedded coaching to ensure application and generalization. Job-embedded coaching should involve a combination of whole group presentation and classroom coaching to facilitate carry over and fidelity of implementation.
- The school leadership should provide PD on the explicit application of data collection, analysis and usage to inform classroom instructional practices.

II. TEACHING AND LEARNING

FINDINGS:

- The team observed structures of the various frameworks that have been introduced in the school, e.g., Balanced Literacy, RtI, Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) and Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS); however, there is inconsistent evidence of substantial implementation of the frameworks. Several staff reported feeling overwhelmed by the rate and volume of initiatives being presented and the need to master one framework before adding another.
- Although the documentation available demonstrated evidence of English Language Arts (ELA) curricula, interviews with students and staff highlighted the need for establishing horizontal and vertical curricula for the monolingual and bilingual population. A few students stated that some of the materials that

were being taught were learned in the previous grade level. The school's Native Language Arts (NLA) scope and sequence for the Dual Language (DL) program was not available for review.

- The team did not observe evidence of higher-order questioning and responding nor is there consistent evidence of educational rigor during classroom instruction.
- Exploration of the New York State (NYS) P-12 Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) is evident through staff interviews and review of evidence binders. While there are teachers who are beginning to implement the standards, it is not building-wide and many staff members are unable to articulate a plan to ensure that all staff members are prepared to implement the CCLS in September 2012.
- While small group instruction was observed, it was unclear as to how the groups were formed or how the groupings enhanced student achievement. Groups tended to be homogeneous, based on subgroup identification.
- There was little writing instruction observed in the classrooms. Writing activities observed and reviewed through student response journals focused on creating Thinking Maps and writing about reading. The majority of the literacy block time was dedicated to reading in groups and engaging in comprehension and test preparation activities. The team found that only in social studies was there evidence of higher level writing activities that meet the CCLS.
- During the interviews, staff reported a disconnect between classroom instruction, data collection and differentiated instruction and the Tier II and Tier III interventions, data collection and progress monitoring. The staff also indicated that students who require intensive interventions are often pulled-out of the classroom during content instruction, which impacts student progress and overall continuity of the instructional process.
- Although student work in social studies is displayed throughout the hallways, student work in ELA and other subjects was not observed in most classrooms. .

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school leadership should provide on-going, in-depth training on the various frameworks being implemented in the school. PD should include job-embedded coaching as well as explicit discussions surrounding the connections between the various frameworks to make the initiatives less fragmented.
- The school leadership should ensure the implementation of horizontal and vertical curricula across all content areas and grades for the monolingual and bilingual population. The NLA curricula being used for the DL program should be easily accessible for all. .
- School leadership should provide on-going PD concerning student engagement and higher-ordering questioning to meet the needs of all students in the learning process.
- School leadership should develop and implement a targeted PD program on CCLS and a plan to implement the CCLS.

- The school leadership should ensure that teachers are using student learning data to form instructional groups that are based on student skill levels. This would also allow teachers to increase their usage of student engagement strategies.
- The school leadership should provide staff with PD on writing strategies to increase the sophistication and variety of writing opportunities for students.
- The school leadership should review the service delivery model to ensure the overall continuity of the instructional process.
- The school leadership and staff should display student work samples from all subject areas throughout the building and the classrooms. Exemplar work pieces should be displayed so that students are able to model examples of high quality work.

III. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

FINDINGS:

- Although staff and parents reported that the school leaders are accessible and open, and there is some evidence of shared accountability in the building, the majority of the accountability in all areas falls on the Principal and Assistant Principal (AP) as evidenced by the Balanced Scorecard. In addition, the existing mission statement is that of the District, but it has not been adapted for the school. The District mission statement is not visibly present in the building.
- Although school leaders engage in regular Learning Walks with observations and questions noted in a weekly memo, there is little evidence of on-going and specific feedback being provided to staff regarding implementation of instructional methodology.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school leadership should share accountability and responsibility for student achievement with all stakeholders. The School Leadership Team (SLT) should be empowered to make decisions and share outcomes as an accountability-sharing body. The SLT should create a mission statement that reflects the unique culture of the school building as well as the District mission.
- The school leadership should ensure that initiatives are implemented with fidelity. The school leadership should function as instructional leaders who are present in classrooms and provide on-going and direct support to teachers in their efforts to improve instruction and student outcomes.

IV. INFRASTRUCTURE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

FINDINGS:

- Teachers reported some confusion regarding the process for confirming the language spoken at home when a teacher suspects that the language indicated on the Home Language Questionnaire may not be accurate.
- Teachers and parents reported that District-wide consistency with respect to academic and behavioral programs is a challenge. The District structure is a Princeton model, which results in students transitioning to a new school every two years.
- There is evidence of a schoolwide behavior system, Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS), as observed in classrooms and described by staff. All classrooms visited had behavioral expectations posted; however, the expectations were referenced or reinforced in only a few classrooms. There is inconsistent evidence of data being reviewed to adjust behavioral programs.
- While the District appears to be forward-thinking and continuously seeking-out ways to improve instruction, some staff expressed concern during interviews that there are too many initiatives being implemented without the necessary on-going support to ensure fidelity of implementation.
- Although parents reported that school leaders and staff are available to them, both parents and teachers reported challenges with respect to regular communication regarding individual student progress.
- Communication with parents is provided in English and Spanish and is primarily electronic; however, some parents expressed concerns that not all families have access to electronic devices.
- As reported by parents, there is an active Parent Teacher Association, but not all parents are able to participate in meetings, committees or activities due to family and work commitments.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The District should refine the process for identification of home language if teachers indicate that the Home Language Questionnaire may not be accurate.
- The District should continue to work to ensure more consistency among buildings with respect to program fidelity.
- The PBIS team should engage in an assessment process to identify areas of programmatic strengths and areas in need of development. An action plan should be developed based on the outcomes of the assessment to further refine the schoolwide program.
- The District should ensure that the District goals are being implemented by school leaders. The District's long-term educational plan reflects the broad expectations put forth by the Board of Education as it pertains to program and staff.

- Teachers should communicate regularly with parents regarding individual student progress and suggestions for home support.
- School leaders and staff should ensure that parents who did not elect to participate in electronic communication are receiving paper communication in their native language.
- The school leadership and SLT should research alternative methods of engaging parents in their children’s education, including a comprehensive needs assessment with the parents to determine how best to engage them.

V. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FINDING:

Teachers indicated that PD has been vast, but not necessarily in-depth with respect to classroom application. There was little incorporation of PD that was observed in the classrooms that were reviewed.

RECOMMENDATION:

The school leadership should streamline the initiatives and identify a focused PD plan that includes job-embedded coaching. Specific topics should include formative assessment and SIOP. School leaders should monitor the incorporation of PD into teacher practice through walkthroughs and observations and provide timely feedback to teachers.

VI. FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

FINDINGS:

- Each classroom is equipped with a teacher computer and a SMART Board. There is also a computer lab that can be accessed on a weekly basis by each class, with the teacher leading the computer instruction. Students indicated that they are able to borrow laptops. Observations, however, indicated that the manner in which technology is used varied widely between classrooms and content areas.
- The building is reportedly participating in a grant program to integrate iPads into the classroom, but evidence of this was not observed during the on-site review.
- The library is open all day for the students. There are books in both English and Spanish, and students are able to use the technology in the library. Interviews indicated that the library’s resources are not being maximized to their potential to enhance lessons, instruction and research projects.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school leadership should ensure that all classes use the available technology as appropriate.

- The District technology committee should ensure that the technology recommendations are being implemented, including ensuring that the iPads are being used.
- Teachers should use the library and library media specialist as an instructional support and resource to enhance instruction and research projects.

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 2012-2013. 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.