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NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Office of Accountability

Differentiated Accountability - School Quality Review (SQR)

SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW REPORT

BEDS Code:	081501040001
District Name:	Oxford Academy And Central Schools
School Name:	Oxford Middle School
School Address:	12 Fort Hill Park, PO Box 192, Oxford, NY 13830
Principal:	Kathleen Hansen
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:	December 12 and 13, 2011

PART 1: MISSION STATEMENT

"To develop self-directed learners who are able to make intelligent choices and contribute positively to society."

PART 2: SCHOOL STRENGTHS

- A common and shared knowledge of the mission statement is held by teachers and students.
- The school has established grade level team meetings, department meetings, monthly faculty meetings and PLP time that follow a published calendar of activities.
- There are multiple measures of student learning that include Acuity, Fountas and Pinnell, and quarterly assessments.
- Parents and students repeatedly stated their satisfaction with school communication and extended day/year activities.

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PART 3: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND UTILIZATION OF DATA

FINDINGS:

- Fountas and Pinnell are administered in grades 5 and 6, three times per year, more if students are at risk. It is also administered in grades 7 and 8 as needed.
- Teachers reported that they use Acuity five times per year.
- AIMS Web is only used for students with disabilities.
- It was reported that Comprehensive District Education Plan (CDEP) quarterly data reports are used to guide instruction.
- Teachers report that SBIT and the Acuity data are used to conduct data analysis, instructional planning and systemic re-teaching.
- Acuity, Fountas and Pinnell, and NYS assessments are used to determine which students receive Academic Intervention Services (AIS).
- Quarterly benchmarks are used. However, quarterly assessment data are not disaggregated for students with disabilities and/or economically disadvantaged students.
- HATCH data is not differentiated.
- Quarterly assessments are not aligned with the New York State (NYS) P-12 Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) in terms of rigor or what Standards are addressed. Benchmark or quarterly assessments are not aligned vertically throughout the grade levels in terms of the Standards or skills they assess.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The CDEP quarterly reports should be focused on specific areas of need for students, classrooms, and grade levels as determined by SBIT and the CDEP.
- Data analysis should inform instruction.
- Data and data analysis should be shared with teachers along with the intervention plans.
- Standards for literacy should be defined and assessed regularly across grade levels to determine student need and instructional priorities.

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II. TEACHING AND LEARNING

FINDINGS:

- Students are satisfied with their school experience.
- Parents report great efforts are made by the school; they like the community feeling of the school.
- Parents report that transfer students receive a mentor.
- Parents report that the school has a resource room and small class sizes. Students ask for and receive extra help. There is good communication with parents and multiple adults in a classroom.
- Parents report the need for more student intensive instructional support.
- Differentiation of instruction based on data analysis and/or student need was not observed in classrooms.
- Instructional strategies:
  - Vocabulary was explicitly taught in 33 percent of classrooms. However, the vocabulary words were disconnected from reading and writing.
  - The team observed some evidence of checking for understanding, i.e., purposeful movement around the classroom and use of individual student white boards.
  - Direct instruction was the primary mode of teaching.
  - Modeling and guided practice was evident in grade 8 English language arts (ELA).
  - Students reported working primarily by themselves.
  - Students report groups being selected by the teacher.
  - Students were able to highlight, underline and code text based evidence.
  - Checking for understanding was not consistent, and at times it was only verbal.
  - Guided reading, whole group instruction, and independent reading did not appear to have any connections to each other. Each of these components was taught independently without a common learning objective.
  - Learning objectives or goals were posted in 50 percent of the classrooms, but assessed for student mastery in only nine percent of the classrooms. An explanation of the purpose of the learning objective was not explicitly stated and explained to learners.
  - A reading or writing skill was not explicitly taught in all classrooms visited. A reading or writing strategy was explicitly taught in 56 percent of classes observed.

- Round robin reading, in which students were expected to read for information, was observed in the majority of classrooms. This practice is not one that builds comprehension, decoding skills, or content knowledge.

- Placement in resource room/AIS is based on student schedules.

- Students were reading independently to highlight words they did not know. The teacher then defined the words.

- Student reading instruction was primarily phonics instruction.

- Comprehension strategies were not taught.

- Students were provided graphic organizers, but explicit instruction was not provided.

- The resource room teacher was not aware of class assignments.

- Phonics was being taught to students; however, the Individualized Educational Program (IEP) goal was comprehension.

- Standards Alignment:
  - Students with disabilities engaged in structured activities designed to allow for processing, e.g., I-time, think-pair-share, numbered heads, elbow partners, think-jot, was observed in 13 percent of classrooms visited.

  - Students with disabilities were observed working in groups of various sizes in 38 percent of the classrooms visited. Re-teaching was not observed in classroom settings.

  - Text was not available in alternate formats for students with disabilities.

- Rigor And Relevance:
  - Students sometimes found the work confusing.

  - Students sometimes found the work hard.

  - Differentiated instructional and intervention strategies were not in place.

  - Some teachers are involved in assessments of students in AIMSWeb and Fountas and Pinnell.

  - A random sampling of ten IEPs in the area of reading showed that 30 percent contained IEP goals that targeted attainment of specific Fountas and Pinnell reading levels. In addition, 60 percent contained IEP goals that targeted specific fluency rates.

  - Although mastery at higher levels of the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System would demonstrate growth in reading fluency and comprehension, the specific skills students need to master to attain these levels are not clearly defined. Similarly, an increase in reading fluency in terms of words read per minute could also denote a reading skill increase; however, the reading behaviors

that contribute to increased fluency are not defined. This leads to confusion around what explicit instruction needs to occur to move students toward greater reading mastery. Assessing student proficiency becomes the instructional objective rather than mastery of specific skills.

- Safe, Discipline Learning Environment:
  - Students reported some school behavior rules: "pay attention," "keep hands to yourself," "no pushing," and "no bad language."
  - Students reported that the rules are consistent throughout the building.
  - Most students reported feeling safe.
  - Parents reported being aware of the school discipline policy/Code of Conduct.
  - Parents reported being welcomed in the school.
  - Teachers gave verbal cues to students.
  - Behavior expectations were posted, although they were not referred to and were difficult to read.
  - Review team walkthroughs of classrooms with students with disabilities indicated that staff reminders of posted expectations occurred in 22 percent of classrooms, staff acknowledgement of student demonstration of those expectations occurred in 11 percent of classrooms, and staff modeling the act of making positive statements about students occurred in 33 percent of the classrooms
  - Fifty percent of the Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs) indicate strategies to avoid problem behaviors that include modifications to the learning environment and teacher strategy. In half of the BIPs, desired behaviors to be taught were defined; however, they were to be taught during counseling and were not an integral part of the child's instructional program.
  - One student with disabilities did not have a BIP attached to their IEP.
  - One student with disabilities did not have any modifications to their learning environment noted.
- Extended Day/Year Activities:
  - Students report sports, dances and the HATCH program [H (homework) A (assistance) and T (tutorial) C (class work) and H (help)] that holds students accountable for completing assignments on a daily basis (homework or class work). Students are disciplined in punitive ways for not bringing homework to class (unprepared), failure to complete assignments during HATCH time (insubordination), and non- attendance to HATCH period. HATCH documents reveal that students do not receive full credit if they complete an assignment late, and that "the goal is to have the student complete the assignment." HATCH data reflect a decrease in the number of students failing two or more subjects from the 2008-09 to the 2009-10 school year; 38 total students failed at the 30 week marking period in 2008-09 and 14 total students failed at the 30 week marking period in 2009-10. HATCH data is not disaggregated by student with disabilities and economically disadvantaged students
  - Parents are pleased with the HATCH program.

- Parents noted resources beyond academics, i.e., band.

- Grading Policies:
  Independent work appeared to be assessed on criteria unrelated to the Standards, i.e., completion, length, creativity, artistic ability or responsibility.

- Schoolwide Collaborative Teams:
  The SBIT team uses LINKS/CDEP measurable goals to look at data and share identified gaps with teachers.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- A coherent instructional/programmatic roadmap should be created.

- A common curriculum aligned with the CCLS should be developed.

- Lesson plans should be shared to ensure differentiated strategies are identified and used.

- Scientifically-Based Research/Evidence-Based Strategies:
  - Spelling and vocabulary words should be connected to the reading and writing students are asked to do. There should be a connection between spelling or vocabulary words assessed and the texts students are asked to read or the assignments they write.

  - Students should have an understanding of the learning objective. Understanding the learning objective builds motivated, self-regulated, and intentional learners.

  - Skill instruction in reading and writing are essential components of literacy programming and are explicitly outlined in CCLS. Without explicit skill instruction, students are left to maneuver assignments independent of any criteria for mastery and rely exclusively on feedback post completion. This can lead to student frustration and lack of task persistence, academic apathy, and lack of motivation.

  - Additional reading skills/strategy instruction is needed, i.e., decoding to include context clues, word/phrase chunks, prefix/suffix, and variety of comprehension questions that require text dependent answers.

  - All ELA programming and support should be aligned. Classroom curriculum, AIS, resource room support, etc. should target the same knowledge and skills.

  - AIS and resource room instruction should target specific skill deficits.

- Standards Alignment:
  - Curriculum and instruction should align with the CCSLS.

  - The systemic and consistent use of processing activities should be expanded as they are essential to build conceptual understanding and metacognition. These activities also give students an

opportunity to share their thinking and correct inaccurate or faulty ideology prior to independent practice.

- Grouping students for learning based on formative, interim, or summative assessment data is a necessary differentiation strategy. Grouping students provides a venue for re-teaching based on specific student needs.

- Rigor And Relevance:
  Teachers should collaboratively align curriculum and lessons to the rigor of the CCLS.

- Differentiated Instructional and Intervention Strategies:
  - Data, analysis, and intervention plans should be shared with all staff.

  - The Fountas and Pinnell Continuum of Literacy Learning should be used as a tool to select and clearly define the instructional goals that will improve student reading behaviors and understandings. The specific reading behaviors should be defined that contribute to fluency, i.e., momentum, phrasing, appropriate pausing, intonation, and stress. These reading behaviors should be used to write annual goals and determine progress toward these goals on student IEPs.

  - All staff members should be involved in curriculum design, assessment development, data collection and analysis.

- Safe, Disciplined Learning Environment:
  Research regarding behavior indicates that lagging social skills should be explicitly taught and supported in all instructional settings.

- Grading Policies:
  Grades and assessments should reflect the learning Standards and be a measure of whether or not students have mastered the skills they need to be proficient in ELA. Grading or assessing on criteria not related to learning Standards creates or contributes to student apathy, lack of interest, and provides an unclear picture of student learning.

- Schoolwide Collaborative Teams:
  Teacher collaborative time should be formalized, with clear expectations for curriculum development, assessment development, data collection and analysis, and sharing of intervention plans.

III. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

FINDINGS:

- Clear Shared Values, Mission and Vision:
  - The school mission was posted in most classrooms. Teachers report that the mission is what they do, "individual guidance and teaching for all."

  - One teacher reported that the mission is the first assignment of the school year, i.e., how to be a self-directed learner. Another teacher reported the focus as becoming a self-directed learner.

- Students report being taught how to be a self-directed learner, e.g., when and how to seek extra help, moving seat to better see. These activities were observed by the review team.

- Match Between Teacher Skills/Experience and Student Learning Needs:
  - Teacher assignments are based on certification and teachers are part of the Principal/teacher conversation.
  - Mentoring is provided to new teachers.
  - There is a mentoring plan with clear expectations, e.g., monthly meetings, monthly meeting with principals, PD at BOCES, monthly faculty meetings..
  - Instructional leadership is important to the school's leaders.
  - Teachers report that PLP time is not consistent.
  - Tenured teachers have the option of an observation or professional growth plan.
  - Teachers report that observations provide valuable feedback.
  - Teachers report that the Principal is accessible.
  - Teacher reports the desire for content specific coaching to further increase their knowledge and expertise.
  - Teachers report the desire for a curriculum coordinator and/or reading coordinator.
  - Teachers report assignments are based on scheduling and overall need of the program and not necessarily on individual student needs.
  - Teachers report that they are well versed in specially designed instruction, but that knowledge and practice is not consistent with all teachers.
  - Teachers are assigned to AIS based on schedule rather than need.
  - Acuity, Fountas and Pinnell, and NYS assessments are used to determine which students receive AIS.
  - It was unclear which school leader holds primary responsibility for supervising special education staff.

- Acquity and Fountas and Pinnell data do not drive instruction. No students with disabilities (0/14) were reading on the recommended F and P level at the end of year. The average growth was 1.4 F and P levels.

- Leadership-For-Development:
  - LINKS/CDEP is at the school level.

- Teachers report CDEP quarterly reports are data that is used to guide instruction. These quarterly reports are used to provide feedback during observation conversations.

- Quarterly reports are used as data during conversations with non-tenured staff.

- Leadership-For-Results/Accountability:
  One teacher reported that the SBIT team uses LINKS/CDEP measurable goals to look at data and share identified gaps with teachers.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Teacher understanding regarding Fountas and Pinnell should be clarified. It is not meant to predict student success on NYS assessments but provide information on students' reading.

- The plan-assess-adjust cycle should become the norm in all classrooms.

- Teachers should identify a learning objective, teach to that learning objective, and formatively assess the learning of that objective.

- Quarterly reports should align to SBIT and CDEP focus areas.

- How SBIT and LINKS/CDEP are to be used should be widely communicated and known by all staff, particularly staff who are not part of the SBIT and/or LINKS/CDEP team.

IV. INFRASTRUCTURE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

FINDINGS:

- "Safety Nets" For Students And Families:
  Students report that they are able to talk with teachers or the Principal.

- Conscious Use Of Time:
  - Teachers report that there is time for teacher collaboration and meeting student needs as well as accountability for that time, e.g., Principal at conferences, team meetings, SST, counseling groups, parent meeting.

  - Teachers report that HATCH is invaluable to ensure that students are doing work and also working at an acceptable level.

- Organization Of School:
  - Students reported that teachers and the school leader are a resource and an example of home-school partnerships.

  - Parents reported that the school communicates with them immediately via phone and/or email.

V. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FINDINGS:

- Professional development Needs, Continuous Professional Learning:
  - Teachers report that PLP is geared toward PD.
  - PD is aligned to CDEP goals.
- Communities Of Quality Collaborative Practice:
  - The SBIT team uses LINKS/CDEP measurable goals to look at data and share identified gaps with teachers.
  - Monthly faculty meetings are in place.
  - PLP time is scheduled.
  - The school has a culture of sharing internal professional accountability data.
  - The majority of teachers expressed their responsibility for student learning.
  - Although there is time for grade level and department level faculty meetings, and PLP, the use/accountability for this time is not consistent.

RECOMMENDATION:

Teacher collaborative time should be formalized with clear expectations for curriculum development, assessment development, data collection and analysis, and sharing of intervention plans.

VI. FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

FINDINGS:

- Teachers report that resources are adequate.
- Students have access to computer net books.

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 CCLS, Data Driven Instruction and the Annual Professional Performance Reviews for teacher effectiveness.