

**NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Office of Accountability**

Differentiated Accountability - School Quality Review (SQR)

SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW REPORT

DBN:	18K635
District Name:	District 18
School Name:	Olympus Academy
School Address:	755 East 100 Street, Brooklyn, New York 11236
Principal:	Seth Schoenfeld
Accountability Phase/Category:	Improvement (year 1) Comprehensive
Area 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:	March 20-21, 2012

PART 1: MISSION STATEMENT

“We support students in becoming self-directed and responsible citizens who have mastered skills for lifelong learning. They leave us prepared to participate in post-secondary education, meaningful work and health relationships. Our school acts as a second home to our students, staff and community as we all grow together. “

PART 2: SCHOOL STRENGTHS

- The school is a welcoming and nurturing environment and provides students with a second opportunity to complete their education.
- Through the iZone initiative, the school has acquired a wide range of current technology that is assisting both students and teachers to become 21st Century learners.
- The school has established a strong collaboration with the New York Center for Interpersonal Development that provides human and material resources to support students and their families.

PART 3: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND UTILIZATION OF DATA

FINDINGS:

- Based on a review of data binders, the review team determined that the school collects an array of data that includes course specific pre-assessments, bi-weekly student reports, Regents exam results, credit accumulation data and student attendance data. However, there was inconsistent evidence that there is effective use of such data to inform planning and implementation of instruction. As a result, data is not always used to inform instructional decisions to ensure students' learning needs are being addressed.
- There is evidence in data notebooks and through review team interviews, that students receive an initial academic assessment in reading, writing and mathematics upon admission. However, review team classroom observations and interviews revealed that the results of assessments administered to students upon entry have not been consistently utilized to identify and address student's academic needs. As a result, students' targeted academic needs are not consistently identified to ensure they receive the appropriate support.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school leaders should develop a comprehensive system to analyze student data to monitor the progression of academic achievement and inform and adjust classroom instruction. This is particularly relevant in the identified areas of English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. Professional development (PD) should also be offered for all teachers who need additional support to integrate these strategies.
- The school leaders should review the current initial academic assessments procedures that are in place and ensure there is consistent and effective implementation of this process by all teachers. Additionally, a comprehensive assessment in ELA and mathematics that identifies students' academic needs should be researched and added to the current system. This data should be used when programming incoming students in order to ensure that students' academic needs are being met.

II. TEACHING AND LEARNING

FINDINGS:

- Each ELA teacher writes their own individual curriculum, which include curriculum maps, topics of discussion, and pacing calendars linked to the New York State P-12 Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). However, the document review and interviews conducted by the review team revealed an inconsistency in teaching practices across ELA classrooms. Most review team classroom observations found little evidence of a consistent and coherent instructional approach.
- There is evidence from lesson observations and interviews conducted by the review team to demonstrate that the mathematics content and curriculum are in alignment with the New York State (NYS) Learning Standards. However, there is limited evidence that the mathematics curriculum includes continued opportunities for students to utilize previously learned knowledge and skills.

- Students indicate that working online at their own pace is beneficial to their learning. This practice allows them to complete assignments and projects for each class. However, this form of differentiation does not always allow for assignments and tasks to have different entry points to meet the individual needs of all students.
- In some of the classes observed by the review team, teachers are able to plan and implement lessons that incorporate small group skill development and targeted student discussion. However, this is not yet a schoolwide practice. As a result, students are not consistently working collaboratively to build content knowledge and understanding or team-building skills.
- Student interviews conducted by the review team revealed that some students are aware of the current credit accumulation and grading policy. However, there is some ambiguity relating to individual teacher requirements.
- The review team's classroom observations revealed that there was a limited display of high quality student work and rubrics that provided students with feedback and suggestions for improvement.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school leaders and ELA staff should revisit the school's current practice of each teacher developing their own ELA curriculum and develop a schoolwide ELA curriculum that is comprehensive and coherent. The curriculum should demonstrate a progression of knowledge and skills aligned to the CCLS. The curriculum should include benchmarks and interim measures to evaluate students' performance and progress as they move from grade to grade.
- The school leaders, in collaboration with the mathematics department, should seek new ways to supplement the mathematics curriculum to ensure that tasks and activities provide a constant review of previously learned skills. This practice should enable students to retain knowledge and understanding throughout the course, which can then be demonstrated on summative assessments. PD should also be provided on effective practices that can be implemented to reinforce prior learning.
- The school leaders should provide additional support for teachers in creating and developing tiered online assignments and tasks for all content areas. These assignments should be aligned with CCLS to meet the diverse learning needs of all students. The current online system, which takes advantage of technology to promote project based learning, should be reviewed and supplemented with components that allow for different entry points for assignments and tasks. This practice should ensure that all assignments are more individualized and consistently designed to meet student needs.
- School leaders should schedule classroom inter-visitations for teachers to observe instructional best practices. These lessons should include effective practices that incorporate small group skill development and targeted student discussion. Additionally, common planning time and PD opportunities should be systematically used to provide teachers with support in order to incorporate these effective practices into their own lessons as part of a comprehensive schoolwide

plan to improve instruction. School leaders should then monitor the implementation of these pedagogical practices through formal and informal classroom observations.

- The school leaders should revisit and clarify the current credit accumulation and grading policy to ensure that all teachers are following uniform requirements across each of the content areas. Procedures should also be put into place to ensure the dissemination of this information to all parents and students through assemblies; academic information meetings; and an effective collaboration among all instructional, guidance and support staff.
- School leaders should set expectations for all classrooms that include the display of high quality work and rubrics that demonstrate the necessary steps students need to take in order to improve. Teachers who need PD in order to implement this policy should be provided with support on an as needed basis. The implementation of this practice should be monitored by the school leaders through formal and informal classroom observations and a review of student work.

III. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

FINDING:

The school leader has overseen the transition from a traditional instructional model to a blended model that consists of a combination of face-to-face and online instruction within the New York City Department of Education's (NYCDOE) iZone online learning initiative. However, the consistent implementation and impact of this new initiative upon student achievement and closing the school's achievement gap has yet to be systematically measured utilizing formative, interim and summative assessment tools.

RECOMMENDATION:

The school leader should reassess and monitor all current teaching practices to ensure that all teachers are effectively implementing blended learning strategies of face-to-face and online instruction to positively impact student achievement. Additionally, school leaders should collaborate with iZone online learning initiative resources to develop formative, interim and summative measurements that can provide teachers with benchmarks and tools to gauge overall student progress towards achieving the school's improvement and Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) goals.

IV. INFRASTRUCTURE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

FINDING:

There is evidence that student attendance fluctuates throughout the day. The review team observed at particular times of the day class attendance is low. Therefore, students are not consistently engaged in learning.

RECOMMENDATION:

The school leaders should review the current scheduling arrangements and consider a rotating class schedule. School leaders should consider seeking guidance from NYCDOE's Office of Youth and Family

Services for strategies for improving attendance that have been proven to be successful in similar schools. Daily attendance data should also be analyzed in detail to determine if there are patterns or factors that can be identified that negatively impact student attendance.

V. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FINDING:

There is evidence from the minutes of teachers' team meetings and the instructional coach's binder to demonstrate that a variety of PD offerings in ELA and mathematics take place within the school. However, limited evidence was found that indicates that the PD offered is systematically focused upon specific teacher needs. Additionally, there was limited evidence of a systematic methodology to determine if teachers make effective use of specific PD strategies as part of daily instruction and if there is any measurable correlation between teacher training and increased student achievement.

RECOMMENDATION:

The school leaders should provide teachers with differentiated and targeted PD opportunities based on current student data and teacher needs assessments. Additionally, the school leadership should develop a methodology to assess the efficacy of the PD plan. Based on this data, adjustments can be made to the PD plan to enable teachers to refine strategies and skills necessary for the delivery of high quality instruction and provide teachers with additional support when needed.

VI. FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

FINDING:

Classroom observations by the review team indicated that some classrooms did not reflect an environment conducive to maximizing learning and promoting student engagement. Some classrooms lacked instructional displays and supplementary instructional resources designed to inform and motivate students.

RECOMMENDATION:

School leaders should articulate to staff the expectations for a classroom environment that further enhances student learning. Inter-visitations to model classrooms that contain student focused displays and that utilize enrichment resources to motivate and inform students should be organized and promoted on an ongoing basis. The school leaders should also conduct student and teacher surveys to determine how classroom environments can be enhanced and then use this information to provide teachers with resources and guidelines that promote effective and motivational classroom environments.

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.