

NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Office of Accountability

Differentiated Accountability - School Quality Review (SQR)

SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW REPORT

BEDS Code:	441600010012
District Name:	Newburgh City School District
School Name:	Vails Gate High Tech Magnet School
School Address:	400 Old Forge Hill Road, Newburgh, NY 12550
Principal:	Lillian Torres
Accountability Phase/Category:	Improvement (year 1) - Focused
Area of Identification:	English Language Arts – African American Students; Students with Disabilities; and English Language Learners
Dates of On-site Review:	November 15 and December 23, 2011

PART 1: MISSION STATEMENT

“Think! Ask! Discover!”

PART 2: SCHOOL STRENGTHS

- The school is participating in all Race to the Top activities.
- Special education teachers are delivering specially designed instruction.

PART 3: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND UTILIZATION OF DATA

FINDINGS:

- Multiple sources of data are readily available. However, a systematic approach to the analysis of data is not evident.
- Data are collected through District generated reports, but the review team saw no evidence of data disaggregation at the school level.
- School leaders provide data to teachers for instructional decision-making purposes. Teacher-created or developed data were not observed by the review team.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The District should provide clear expectations for the use of multiple sources of data to inform decisions.
- School leaders should attend professional development (PD) sessions offered by the District on practical uses of data.
- The school should create a learning community that presents the District required data components at sessions on practical uses of data.

II. TEACHING AND LEARNING

FINDINGS:

- In special education classrooms:
 - Teachers modeled and demonstrated skills and strategies throughout the lesson.
 - Teachers each provided guided practices before allowing students to begin to work.
 - At the beginning of literacy lessons, teachers explained the focus.
 - The lessons observed by the review team consisted of more than one strategy to meet many different learning styles.
 - The classrooms were well-organized and prepared for presenting different forms of literacy.
 - When applicable, teaching assistants were present and fulfilling teacher and student needs.
 - Some student work was displayed in the hallways and in the classrooms.
 - Students seemed to behave and follow the teacher's or teaching assistant's directions.
- There is a Response to Intervention (RtI) schedule for intervention and instructional coaching. Classroom teachers have a daily RtI time. In grades one to five, additional staff push in to classrooms, twice a day on a six day cycle, for 35-40 minutes.
- Grouping for instruction within the classroom and across grade levels was evident to the review team.
- Teachers are using the intervention period to assist at risk students.
- Students with disabilities and teachers of students with disabilities are included in the intervention/instructional period. Co-teaching practices and team-teaching strategies are conducted with multiple teachers participating fully in the instructional process.

- When the review team observed two adults in the classroom, one conducted small group instruction while the other moved around the room to assist students. During one observation by the review team, there were three adults in the classroom, with two conducting small group instruction while one moved around the room to assist students.
- During Academic Intervention Services (AIS)/ Response to Intervention (RtI):
 - Students were actively engaged in meaningful instructional activities that promoted learning.
 - Students worked independently on activities including cloze procedure, letter formation, sight word matching, vowel games, a story/listening center, mathematics number stories, mathematics fact fluency user timers, and creation of number books.
 - There were examples of small groups creating two, three, and four letter words with letter tiles, compound word pyramids, rhyme/rhyme puzzles, distinguishing short/long 'o' comprehension, writing with story starters, nonfiction writing, and mathematics fact flash cards.
 - Students were observed by the review team working with the SMART Board during an independent center focused on vocabulary clues.
 - The review team saw evidence of the use of bingo games in small group instruction and independent groups, e.g., rhyming bingo, digraph bingo, word family bingo, short 'u' bingo.
 - The review team found that classroom routines and procedures were clear and are understood by the students.
- Varied activities were employed during the literacy block, including reading, writing, singing, vocabulary exercises, spelling practice, puzzles and games.
- Teaching assistants, where available, were well integrated into the lessons observed by the review team.
- Classroom management was consistently strong, and the review team observed a pleasant, positive learning environment in each grade.
- Content area materials, including those in social studies and culture, geography, and science, were often incorporated into the literacy block.
- Print resources were widely available in classrooms.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- For special education:
 - Teaching assistants should be used more often to assist small groups of students.
 - Literacy experiences should be relevant to student interests, related to everyday life, and/or linked to important current events.

- Students should be provided repeated exposure to new words in multiple contexts, and students should have sufficient practice sessions in vocabulary instruction.
- When beginning to teach a given strategy, teachers should carefully select texts to maximize the instructional impact.
- More student work should be displayed, with rubrics attached for student and peer understanding.
- PD should be provided in the areas of cooperative learning, peer tutoring, and adaptive curriculum.
- Integrated service delivery should be present in the classroom.
- For AIS/RtI:
 - Assessment results should be used to identify student groupings and to support flexible groupings. This will allow for differentiation, potentially identifying students who need intervention and others who need enrichment opportunities.
 - Teachers should model think-aloud strategies and develop questioning strategies to support student higher-order thinking skills.
 - When students are working to build skill fluency, they should have access to answer keys and graphs to document their results and progress. Rubrics and assessment criteria should be provided for students to evaluate their own work as well.
 - Teachers should use a variety of instructional strategies and resources to address the needs of students and to provide intense instruction.
 - Independent small groups should be provided opportunities to apply a new skill or build fluency in a new skill. There should be careful selection and structuring of independent student activities for new or reinforced learning.
- For English language arts (ELA)/literacy:
 - The focus on literacy activities should be maintained throughout the block and other activities, e.g., calendars and counting should not encroach on that time.
 - The P-12 Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), CReating Independence through Student-owned Strategies (CRISS), and 6 + 1 Writing Traits materials should be posted in more classrooms.
 - Lesson aims/objectives should be clearly communicated to students and posted in classes.
 - Students in centers not conducted by the teacher should receive more supervision to ensure time is used productively.

III. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

FINDINGS:

- The school leader relies on the expertise of the Assistant Principal and instructional coach to support classroom teachers.
- The school leader conducts walkthroughs in all classrooms.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Learning communities should continue to be expanded in the school.
- Teacher data analysis and implementation of research-based practices should be encouraged.

IV. INFRASTRUCTURE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

FINDINGS:

- The school is implementing a 90-minute literacy block.
- Teaching assistants are highly engaged in the delivery of instruction.
- Technology is generally available, but not consistently used in classrooms even when the resource is available.
- The review team found little to no evidence of technology used in presenting lessons.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The RtI intervention block should be expanded.
- AIS teachers should be provided time to collaborate with core content teachers.
- Students should be allowed and encouraged to interact with classroom technology. Teachers should be provided with technology that engages students in reading and writing.
- Technology, especially SMART Boards, should be used in place of chart paper or chalk and white boards.

V. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FINDINGS:

- The school maximizes time throughout the day to deliver PD, including at Data Team staff meetings.

- The school supports classroom teachers with classroom-embedded PD.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) should be modified and updated as PD is completed.

VI. FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

FINDING:

Technology is generally available in classrooms.

RECOMMENDATION:

The school leaders and District should consider purchasing more 1:1 technology for students.

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.