

NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Office of Accountability

Differentiated Accountability - School Quality Review (SQR)

SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW REPORT

BEDS Code:	421800010008
District Name:	Syracuse City School District
School Name:	Edward Smith K-8 School
School Address:	1106 Lancaster Avenue, Syracuse NY 13210
Principal:	Daryl Hall
Accountability Phase/Category:	Improvement (year- 1) - Focused
Area of Identification:	English Language Arts - African American Students; Students with Disabilities and Economically Disadvantaged Students
Dates of On-site Review:	February 7-9, 2012

PART 1: MISSION STATEMENT

The school's mission statement is not available, as staff and parents are currently updating it to support inclusion, using technology effectively, and preparing students for the future.

PART 2: SCHOOL STRENGTHS

The school is well-maintained, with a positive school climate, generally well-behaved students, strong parental support with effective two-way communication and many experienced teachers.

PART 3: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND UTILIZATION OF DATA

FINDING:

There is little evidence that formative, interim and summative data are used to plan for and/or monitor student outcomes.

RECOMMENDATION:

All relevant data should be analyzed consistently across K-8, with professional development (PD) provided on data analysis and the effective use of data to inform instruction and intervention strategies. A dedicated

data room with charts and materials to monitor student progress would support the creation, implementation, and assessment of these interventions.

II. TEACHING AND LEARNING

FINDINGS:

- There is a lack of systematic efforts to create, monitor and evaluate structures and protocols that would enhance student learning. School leaders, for example, have not defined a set of research-based instructional strategies to use consistently throughout the school, nor have they ensured that teachers implement required District instructional strategies. While a detailed Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) exists, it does not reflect an analysis of the critical data that school leaders should have used to build an effective action plan. School leaders do not regularly collect evidence of its effectiveness and/or monitor its implementation.
- Teachers do not consistently provide differentiated learning activities for identified subgroups. Most teachers in grades 3-8 rely heavily on whole class instruction and lesson plans did not provide differentiated learning activities. While the teachers of students with disabilities provide accommodations to address small group/student needs, other teachers do not address individual student needs by developing, implementing and monitoring specific interventions based on an analysis of subgroup assessments.
- Lesson plan components were inconsistent from teacher to teacher and from grade to grade. Not all teachers develop and use lesson plans with strong student-focused learning objectives that describe specific student learning outcomes. There is little evidence that planning is used systematically to lead to effective learning. Teachers do not consistently employ effective research-based strategies for instruction throughout the school. Rigorous lessons emphasizing in-depth conceptual understanding and higher-level thinking skills are only sporadically employed.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School leaders, the School Leadership Team (SLT), and teachers should work with the District to ensure that all staff know and implement District protocols and procedures and create school level systems to monitor, evaluate, and modify the CEP and initiatives to improve teaching and learning. PD support and immediate, meaningful feedback should be used to create and sustain a cycle of continuous improvement. All PD activities should be monitored and assessed for their impact on teaching and student progress through a variety of evaluative processes, including regular walkthroughs with feedback to enable teachers to improve instructional practice.
- PD should be provided to ensure teachers are capable of planning instruction that provides challenging learning opportunities for all student subgroups, including a wide range of strategies that support individual student growth. PD should focus on developing structures and protocols for ensuring that the learning outcomes of the New York State (NYS) P-12 Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) are central to instruction. Staff should identify a rigorous lesson plan template so that lesson plans meet consistent standards. There should be consistent monitoring and feedback for lesson plans and instruction through walkthroughs and formal and informal observations. Regular review of lesson plans with feedback should be implemented.

- Teachers should receive PD in developing instruction that emphasizes problem solving, in-depth conceptual understanding and higher-level thinking skills, all objectives that are central to the CCLS.

III. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

FINDINGS:

- There is little evidence of shared leadership in guiding the school's improvement efforts and in implementing the CEP.
- There is no system of shared accountability for student learning, assessed through measurable goals and objectives.
- There is no teacher induction process, including mentoring, at the school level for new and transfer teachers.
- Teachers feel that they do not receive clear, consistent and timely information from the District.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The School Leadership Team (SLT) should be empowered to address school level issues and serve as a solutions-oriented team.
- Schoolwide measurable student learning targets for both individual students and for identified subgroups should be established. School leaders, SLT, teachers, students and parents should all know and be able to articulate these targets. Data should be examined regularly during collaborative planning at grade and school level and used to identify and implement schoolwide instructional strategies that increase learning and achievement.
- A teacher induction process for new and transfer teachers should be designed and implemented. A PD plan should be designed for each teacher or staff member based on their individual needs, i.e., classroom management, rigor or cultural relevance.
- An effective process to promptly communicate program information, decisions, and requirements from the District to the staff should be developed.

IV. INFRASTRUCTURE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

FINDINGS:

- During school interviews, several staff members raised concerns about the scheduling of staff, asserting that teaching assistants and other staff are not always assigned where they are most needed to fully support effective implementation of the instructional program.

- The objectives and goals of the school’s *grade 7 Writing and Literacy* and *Math and Literacy* classes are not clearly articulated and shared with the staff. Staff interviewed indicated that expectations for these classes are not clear, and teachers make individual decisions about how to use the time during these classes. Some teachers use the time to strengthen student learning and skills, while others use it as general “help” session with no formal planning or learning objectives.
- The school shares a number of special area teachers (foreign language, music, art, technology) with other middle level schools. These teachers are only in the building part-time. Some have classroom management issues and because they are assigned to multiple buildings, often lack a personal investment in an individual school. The scheduling of these teachers’ classes also impacts other class schedules. Some teachers claim that access to accelerated classes is impacted, so not all students who could benefit from advanced classes are able to participate.
- Teachers and students express dissatisfaction with a lack of consistency in providing systematic assistance for students. Students are not assigned to help sessions by need, so not all students benefit.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Staff scheduling should be reviewed and assignments made based on the how best student needs can be met so that all students receive the instructional supports they need.
- The goals and objectives of the *grade 7 Writing & Literacy* and *Math Literacy* classes should be clarified and standardized across the school so that instruction is effectively planned and student instructional needs are met. These classes should be used to provide targeted instruction based on student identified needs.
- School leaders should analyze all scheduling options to ensure that special area teachers are effectively deployed at the middle level. School leaders should also work with District leaders to adjust the teaching assignments of middle level teachers, including special area teachers assigned to multiple schools, to better meet student instructional needs.
- School leaders, the SLT and teachers should use on-going data analyses to develop individualized instructional plans that are focused on providing specific interventions to students in all subgroups.

V. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FINDINGS:

- Teachers indicate that while common planning time is scheduled, it is often not used effectively to enhance instruction and promote the learning of all students, including identified subgroups. The school lacks protocols and standard expectations, such as planned agendas, reporting out, and evaluation of implementation that would provide for purposeful collaborative planning.
- The school does not use data analysis to determine the PD needs of teachers, assess these activities, and modify them with the goal of strengthening the instructional program.

- There is little evidence of professional learning communities and internal professional accountability. The school has not established effective ways to motivate students and adults towards higher standards and continuous improvement in academic and non-academic dimensions.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Protocols for purposeful collaborative planning should be developed based on established school goals and student performance. School leaders should establish requirements for common planning times by using established protocols, agendas and meeting minutes. School leaders should participate as necessary. Collaborative planning time should focus on meeting the needs of all student subgroups.
- The school should establish a process for determining the PD needs of teachers, based on analysis of relevant data, in order to improve instruction and ensure more students reach proficiency. Further, the SLT should develop a process to evaluate and continuously modify the PD activities.
- School leaders, the SLT and the teaching staff should work together to establish a professional learning community and internal accountability for professional growth. School leaders should also focus on improving morale throughout the school by creating more strategies for motivating students and adults to reach for higher standards and continuous improvement in both academic and non-academic areas.

VI. FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

FINDINGS:

- While the school is clean and well-maintained, there are infrastructure issues, such as a new personal computer (PC) lab with 30 computers and one SMART Board, but limited technology in the classrooms to support teaching and learning. The science laboratories are inadequate to support the delivery of the instructional content of the middle level science courses, particularly the Regents Living Environment class. Only one of the two laboratories has a sink, and neither has sufficient electrical outlets to support required experiments.
- Student work is only posted in a few classrooms and almost always only the best work is displayed. Grading rubrics and descriptive feedback rarely accompany this work.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The District should allocate adequate funding for infrastructure improvements to enhance the school's instructional program, including technology upgrades and improved science laboratories. The SLT should investigate grant opportunities to improve technology in the school and consider creating a grant writing committee.
- A wide range of student work should be displayed in all classrooms. Grading rubrics and descriptive feedback should be attached. This work should provide a springboard for informal discussions about what constitutes "good" work, self-evaluation, and how to identify excellence.

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.