NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Office of Accountability

Differentiated Accountability – School Quality Review (SQR)

SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW REPORT

BEDS Code:	421800010012
District Name:	Syracuse City School District
School Name:	LeMoyne Elementary School
School Address:	1528 LeMoyne Ave. Syracuse, NY
Principal:	Lynne Kelley
Accountability Phase/Category:	Improvement (year- 1) - Comprehensive
Area of Identification:	English Language Arts – All Students; African American Students; Students with Disabilities and Economically Disadvantaged Students
Dates of On-site Review:	January 23-25, 2012

PART 1: MISSION STATEMENT

"The mission of LeMoyne Elementary School is to ensure that all students will:

- Access knowledge
- Utilize skills
- Develop character
- Understand and embrace diversity
- Be accountable, productive, contributing citizens and lifelong learners

This will be accomplished by:

- Using LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines
- Following the Wellness Policy
- Participating in experiential learning, technology enriched learning and child-centered education
- Establishing a safe and secure learning environment
- Excellence in teaching
- Partnership among staff, families and the community."

PART 2: SCHOOL STRENGTHS

- The school reflects Lemoyne's mission statement and their focus on a child-centered environment. The steps of each stairway are hand-painted with LIFESKILLS tenets: Caring, Common Sense, Curiosity,

Flexibility, Integrity, Problem Solving, Sense of Humor, etc. Classrooms and the library are inviting for children, providing a wide range of hands on materials.

- The school has a collaborative culture as evidenced by:
  - dedicated, hard-working staff that support each other and students;
  - caring, respectful, and inclusive community fostered through their School of Promise philosophy;
  - active parent and community participation, including adult Grandparent volunteers who work regularly with students (one of whom has been volunteering for more than 18 years); and
  - regular grade level collaborative meetings.
- The school has an effective after school *Say Yes* program focused on providing academic curricular content in science.
- Through on-going collaboration, teachers link special area instruction to the core academic areas.
- The school has multiple service learning projects through collaborations with the community and area colleges, including a school garden and a multi-year energy conservation project. Upper intermediate level students audited the school's air quality and energy conservation efforts. The school manages its own garden and has an informal donation process, with any excess produce available for anyone to take. The also have a successful pilot attendance improvement project where identified students from grades 4 and 5 who improved their attendance work as mentors with primary students with attendance issues.

PART 3: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND UTILIZATION OF DATA

FINDINGS:

- Data provided on Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) detailing specific interventions are not regularly followed.
- Although Academic Intervention Services (AIS) are provided, specific interventions are not planned based on detailed assessment results and/or student evaluations.
- Although staff members use overall assessments of student achievement in planning, an analysis of identified student subgroups has not been completed or used in planning.
- The data that the school collects is not focused sharply enough to identify the key changes required in programs and delivery to bring about sufficient improvement in student performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The School Leadership Team (SLT) should create specific protocols to ensure regular planning of

implementation strategies for student IEPS during both schoolwide and grade level meetings. If necessary, school leaders should also provide specific professional development (PD) on analysis and implementation of IEPs, and the school leader should ensure implementation during walkthroughs.

- AIS should be based on individual analyses of multiple assessments for each student to ensure that the services focus specifically on student needs. Summative, interim and formative assessment data should be collected, including records of student responses to interventions, running records, and assessments of student work samples. Teacher records should include plans for modifying instruction and next steps for developing more rigorous curriculum to meet student needs. School leaders should regularly meet with teachers to review student performance and set goals for student progress.

- The District Information Technology Office should provide subgroup data in a user-friendly format for the school. With guidance from the SLT, all staff should interpret data, including an analysis of across subgroups, and develop a plan to ensure the success of all identified subgroups.

- The school should develop and implement schoolwide norms on establishing Data Meetings, including the following:

  - development of school-wide protocols with guiding questions to ensure high quality meetings that focus on selection of data, analysis of results and creation of action plans;

  - identification of specific strategies that will help teams look at data in multiple ways, i.e., by individual student and subgroups, identifying growth, determining what might need re-teaching, identifying especially effective strategies, etc.

  - provision of professional development(PD) in data analysis for all staff; and

  - regular evaluation of the effectiveness of agenda, meeting notes, and action plans to ensure that the process is implemented with fidelity. Ongoing support/coaching via instructional leaders should be provided.

II. TEACHING AND LEARNING

FINDINGS:

- The majority of students with disabilities are integrated into general education classrooms, with only two self-contained classrooms (one for ages 5-7 and one for ages 8-10) in the building. While most classrooms provide effective supports for students with disabilities, there remains room for improvement, especially in the self-contained classrooms where the review team noted the following:

  - Proactive classroom management was not observed consistently in the two self-contained classrooms. Teachers did not always acknowledge student use of appropriate behavior or use strategies such as proximity control to maintain control.
  - Regular collection of data regarding student performance was not observed in these classrooms.

  - Teachers did not regularly check for understanding, including:

- the ability to independently use effective nonverbal communication or organizational strategies;

- student understanding of lesson objectives or links between lessons, or if students understood directions; and

- during independent practice time whether, students understood a task well enough to complete it independently, or whether students stayed on task. Also, teachers occasionally provided answers rather than teaching a student how to find it independently.

- More effective instruction was observed in the general education/consultant-teaching classrooms, with only a few areas identified as needing improvement:

  - Many teacher questioning strategies did not include adequate wait time and did not encourage students to discuss possible responses in-depth or to ask follow-up questions. There was also little evidence of alternate questioning strategies such as the use of white boards or partner discussion that would involve multiple students in considering a possible response. Students with disabilities were especially disadvantaged in instances when higher-order questions were asked as there was little scaffolding, prompting or other accommodations that could have enabled them to participate more successfully.

  - There was no routine follow up with students with disabilities to determine whether a new strategy was actually mastered to the level where it was understood and could be used effectively.

- The quality of lesson planning and actual written plans is inconsistent throughout the school, with some plans rated as highly effective and others lacking essential elements. The School Leadership Team (SLT) identifies in the school's Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) the selection and use of a single lesson plan template but this has not yet been accomplished. There is a significant, observable correlation between the quality of lesson plans and the quality of instruction observed.

- The review team observed some classrooms where student engagement in meaningful instructional activities was limited. In these lessons students were not active participants in the learning process. Student engagement in meaningful instructional activities was limited and instructional activities lacked challenge and did little to interest students. These same lessons did not provide students with opportunities to interact or work collaboratively, and students were not active participants in the learning process. This deprives students of the opportunity to do their own processing, analysis and problem solving.

- The level of rigor and relevance during instruction varied markedly from a number of classes that were strong to others where low level questions and worksheets were common and students had little access to challenging learning opportunities.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Specific supports, including coaching and other PD as well as District support from the Office of Special Education should be provided as needed for teachers of self-contained classrooms.

  - School leaders should identify concerns and regularly monitor the self-contained classrooms

through walkthroughs to ensure students have opportunities to develop academic and behavioral strengths.

- Special education teachers should be expected to maintain data logs for each student. The data should be reviewed regularly with school leaders and plans altered as needed.

- The Instructional Support Teacher (IST), perhaps with a special education coach, should work with teachers in the self-contained classes to introduce and support implementation of appropriate monitoring strategies that ensure students understand learning goals and directions and learn to self-monitor.

- Specific support in co-teaching classrooms should include:

  - Teachers should investigate a wide range of research on effective questioning strategies and begin to practice and evaluate them. As some teachers already participate in Cognitive Coaching and Learning (CCL) they might consider using that approach, as the collaborative process would enable them to build and evaluate a core of common strategies.

  - During regular data and planning meetings, grade level teams should discuss how best to build in a regular evaluation of student' understanding of how to use a strategy and whether_it is actually understood. While the review team noted this was a problem for students with disabilities, the grade level teams might consider checks of other students, as well.

- Consistent, high-quality instructional preparation, planning, and delivery should be provided by:

  - following through on the CEP plan's intent to develop and implement a specific lesson template;

  - ensuring that lesson planning and preparation encompasses, but is not limited to, the following:

    - strong, objectives based on the New York State (NYS) P-12 Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) written as statements of what students will learn during instruction;

    - pre-identification of questions that promote higher order learning , as well as ongoing practice in using a wide range of effective questioning strategies, i.e., (wait time, reaching consensus, probing and encouraging prediction;

    - high expectations (rigor) for all students;

    - active learning tasks with opportunities for students to plan, think critically and actively problem solve;

    - supporting students as they become active problem-solvers and learn to monitor/assess their own learning; and

    - developing a wide range of formative and summative assessments, including rubrics.

  - Observe classroom teachers, provide feedback on execution of plans through walkthroughs, peer observations and CCL and work to build consistent implementation in every classroom.

- During CCLS unit development teachers should be provided with additional guidance and embedded coaching. Teacher lessons should be jointly reviewed using a vetted rubric so that both the teacher – and a second objective reviewer – can evaluate the work. NYS Education Department's website, Engage New York, provides an official rating rubric, the Tri-State Quality Review Rubric and Rating Process that would be appropriate. (http://engageny.org/resource/tri-state-quality-review-rubric-and-rating-process/) In addition, these teachers should receive embedded coaching as they begin implementing the CCLS units and school leaders should evaluate their progress during regular walkthroughs.

- As teachers transition to CCLS instructional units, there should be a thoughtful effort to ensure that all teachers are able to transition to instruction that is both rigorous and relevant. Since there is a core of teachers already, we recommend strategies such as the Collaborative Coaching and Learning Model and embedded coaching for those who need additional support. Teachers are ready to work collaboratively, and support each other in continuous improvement, focusing on:

  - collaborative unit development, including cross-content area collaboration;
  - strong student-focused learning objectives that describe specific student learning;
  - pre-planned higher-order questions;,
  - research-based questioning strategies that require in-depth student thinking;
  - assessments linked to learning objectives and continuous formative monitoring of student progress;
  - an emphasis on in-depth conceptual understanding as opposed to surface level skill mastery;
  - direct instruction in "learning to learn" strategies that develop students' ability to problem solve and develop ownership of their own learning; and
  - urgency in the use of time.

III. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

FINDING:

Team consensus is that both teacher leaders and the school leaders meet high expectations for leadership.

RECOMMENDATION:

School leaders and teachers should continue their current efforts in promoting a strong, engaging learning environment for students and in working collaboratively with their community. They should focus ongoing improvement efforts on ensuring that every teacher has the skills and any supports needed to maximize student growth for every student.

IV. INFRASTRUCTURE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

FINDINGS:

- The Academic Intervention Services (AIS) classes observed by the review team were focused on providing additional support for English Language Arts (ELA) rather than for all required content areas.

- A lack of urgency in the use of time for instruction was observed by the review team in some classrooms.

- Allocation of human capital seemed inequitable, with up to four adults in some classes of 12-14 at the primary level and other classes, usually at the intermediate level, with only a single adult. Volunteer "grandparents" worked primarily in grades K-2 and class sizes ranges from 12 to 29, not including self-contained classrooms.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school should work with the District to merge AIS with the tiered Response to Intervention (RtI) model, using the RtI model to determine appropriate interventions and to track student specific progress. In addition, mathematics, science and social studies support should be available. Although the CCLS Literacy Across the Content Areas is designated for grades 6-12, much of what is presented there can be a guide to the requisite skills even younger students need.

- Teachers should consider how best to use instructional time as a part of planning the entire day, considering pacing and the most effective use of transitions and of small units of time just as they plan time within a class period. Planning for times when students are arriving and are preparing to leave, as well as during transitions could add a significant amount of time for high-quality practice or even for brief periods of instruction.

- While some of the differences in teacher-student ratios may reflect the greater needs of some students, we encourage school leaders to review teacher allocation and maximize how staff and volunteers are used to support all students equitably.

V. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FINDINGS:

- Although the teachers meet regularly during common planning times, school leaders expressed a need for longer planning periods for both vertical and grade level teaming, as well as to meet in cross-content areas. Currently, the length for most planning times is a half-hour, and other than grade level teams often do not have the same periods available to meet.

- School staff has begun several hands-on projects that show promise of engaging students in community work and which could lead to units that could support students in exploring career and technology education (CTE). The programs could also lead to solid service learning projects if planning time was provided.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School leaders should explore ways to build in longer planning times. Especially at this time, as the CCLS are being implemented and as the school's scores have decreased, teachers have critical work that requires longer units of time, with all staff free, in order to maximize growth.

- Building the school's current Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Service Learning projects into school program would provide a wide range of engaging opportunities for students, as well as enriching links to the community and providing students with opportunities to explore real-life opportunities. Since many students go on to Lincoln Middle School, students would be better prepared to participate in that school's Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) club. We also encourage school leaders to investigate service learning grant opportunities available through NYSED (http://www.highered.nysed.gov/kiap/LEARNANDSERVE/).

VI. FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

FINDING:

Access to technology is minimal. The server is slow, and many of the computers are out-dated. Although there is a new computer lab, it is used full time for providing intervention services for students. Classrooms have a few older computers with internet capability, but they are no longer serviced by the District. There are a few laptop carts that are eight years old and chronically need repairs. The newest technology includes four SMART Boards and a few document cameras and projectors for each grade.

RECOMMENDATION:

The school could profitably make use of an additional computer lab – possibly in or near the library - as well as new computers for classrooms so that students could regularly access to enrich instruction. Similarly, teachers and students could benefit from an opportunity to build additional SMART Boards and other technology into the school's instruction. The team is aware that lack of technology in classrooms is a District-wide problem, and the District is encouraged to support a plan to provide Syracuse students equitable opportunities for access.

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.