

NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Office of Accountability

Differentiated Accountability - School Quality Review (SQR)

SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW REPORT

BEDS Code:	660407060005
District Name:	Greenburgh Central School District
School Name:	Woodlands Middle School
School Address:	475 West Hartsdale Avenue, Hartsdale, NY 10607
Principal:	Michael Chambless
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 5 and 12, 2011

PART 1: MISSION STATEMENT

DISTRICT MISSION

"The goal of the District is to provide a model learning center where students will grow from one stage to another and to develop those skills and talents which permit the individual to succeed in the pursuit of his/her goals and ambitions in an ever changing society."

PART 2: SCHOOL STRENGTHS

- Woodlands Middle School is a small community school with a safe and overall atmosphere that is conducive to teaching and learning.
- School leaders provide an "open door" policy for students, staff, and parents.
- There is a collaborative relationship among staff and school leaders.
- All staff takes active roles in the implementation of a responsive approach to classroom management.
- Interviews with parents by the review team indicated that parents are well-informed.
- School leadership conducts a regular review of lesson planning and classroom instruction.
- Instructional leadership holds regular faculty meetings to provide guidance in instructional planning and assessment analysis that is driven by student achievement data.

PART 3: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

I. COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND UTILIZATION OF DATA

FINDINGS:

- The collection of data is focused on two areas of concern:
 - the identification of student deficiencies in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics based upon the analysis of formative and State assessments; and
 - the development of appropriate classroom teaching strategies informed by the analysis of student achievement data.
- Few special education teachers had current student data available.
- All student data reports are disseminated to the teachers by the guidance counselor. However, there is little evidence of a structured process for the analysis of student achievement data.
- Special education teachers do not have regular access to student achievement data or training in data-driven instructional practices.
- Classroom visits by the review team revealed that many teachers use different methods to obtain student achievement data and were using the student data in an ad-hoc manner to drive instruction.
- Interviews conducted by the review team indicated that there is limited support for curriculum and assessment. This is attributed to the decrease in staff throughout the District.
- Although there are regular meetings between school leadership and the teachers, due to time constraints, curriculum and assessment review is compromised.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- A comprehensive data collection and distribution system should be developed to provide current student achievement data to all stakeholders, i.e., classroom teachers, the guidance counselor and school leadership.
- All teachers should participate in professional development (PD) activities regarding data-driven instruction to increase their capacity to develop formative assessments and classroom strategies for students with disabilities.
- A student information system should be established to provide teachers with current student data in support of the development of individual instruction for students with disabilities to address content area deficiencies.

II. TEACHING AND LEARNING

FINDINGS:

- There is evidence that students in self-contained special education classes do not receive instruction taught by certified content-area teachers, specifically in mathematics and ELA.
- There was little evidence of authentic co-teaching and group learning activities noted during classroom visits by the review team. Co-teachers were observed functioning in the role of teaching assistants. Special education teachers walked around the room and assisted students in staying on-task, but special co-teachers had limited interaction with their content area co-teacher and special education co-teachers apparently had little input into the lesson and/or activities.
- There was little use of technology, e.g., computers or other adaptive devices, by students with disabilities or any other students.
- The review team found that classrooms were, for the most part, arranged in a traditional "row" seating style, and lessons were teacher-centered with very little evidence of group learning.
- Most teachers' lesson plans were thoughtfully and purposely developed and reviewed by the school leadership; however, many teachers worked "off-task" from lesson plans.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- All students with disabilities should receive instruction in mathematics and ELA from teachers with content-area expertise.
- Students with disabilities should have access to technology and software to support mathematics and ELA project-based instruction and individual learning activities.
- Classroom seating should be arranged to promote group learning opportunities for students with disabilities and to support student-centered lessons.
- The number of trained co-teaching teams that are composed of a content-area and a special education teacher should be increased.
- Expertise, e.g., a lead-teacher, should be assigned to support curriculum and assessment development for special education teachers.
- Improved teacher-generated assessment and curriculum development should be included in the mathematics program.
- The purchase of mathematics programs should be evaluated with consideration focused on the improvement of mathematics performance of students with disabilities.
- The school should implement a Professional Learning Community (PLC) Model for curriculum support.

III. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

FINDINGS:

- The school leadership style is collaborative. The instructional leader meets regularly with the school's 36 teachers and one guidance counselor.
- Interviews conducted by the review team revealed that, due to District budget cuts, a school leadership position was eliminated. The guidance counselor assists school leadership in the completion of administrative tasks as well as with school management for the 227 students, of whom 50 are students with disabilities.
- There are frequent, regularly scheduled meetings held with teachers, the guidance counselor, and school leadership regarding lesson planning, curriculum, and PD needs.
- Review team visits to special education classes revealed that the lessons as planned did not always correlate with the lessons as taught.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Instructional leadership should be provided with ongoing PD regarding curriculum and assessment development as well as differentiated instructional methods and practices.
- If funding is available, a position should be established for a curriculum coordinator/lead-teacher to focus on meeting the instructional needs of students with disabilities in mathematics and ELA.

IV. INFRASTRUCTURE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

FINDINGS:

- Many of the middle school students visit the Greenburgh Library to use its computers and other technology, borrow books, and attend remediation study groups.
- Staff interviewed by the review team indicated that, due to budget cuts, there is no "late bus" to take the students home. This limits access for some, particularly economically disadvantaged students, to participate in after-school programs, where they can receive additional instructional support as well as the opportunity to participate in sports or other activities.
- The school is located on the third floor of a high school and the students share a common lunchroom. The main entrance is crowded with high school students at the beginning of the day and during hallway passing.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School and teachers' schedules should be adjusted to provide opportunities for remediation and other

student supports, preferably on-site and during the school day.

- In order to help those students who do not have transportation after school, the school should continue to plan and collaborate with local agencies, e.g., the Greenburgh Public Library, the local YMCA and other agencies, so that instructional support as well as sports and other activities can be provided throughout the community.
- To reduce the amount of time that middle school students spend on the crowded main floor of the school, the school should establish an early-morning advisory class, e.g., in Activities of Daily Living (ADL), that can be facilitated by a teacher, social worker, or guidance counselor.

V. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FINDINGS:

- Classroom visits and interviews by the review team revealed little evidence that teachers have a firm understanding of how to integrate the new P-12 Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) into the curriculum, assessments, and daily lessons.
- Co-teaching success is teacher-specific. Staff Interviews conducted by the review team revealed an instance where a teacher was assigned from the high school to a co-teaching position in the middle school, but was not prepared to support middle school classroom instruction.
- Most teachers interviewed by the review team use the online "My Learning Plan" to select and register for PD, with little or no input from school leadership as to what type of workshop is appropriate and how the PD would benefit the teachers' pedagogical growth and/or student achievement.
- The review team was told that special education teachers were not selected to attend PD workshops regarding the CCLS, although some did take the initiative over the summer to attend CCLS training.
- There is no process whereby teachers can participate in PD regarding the development of curriculum and formative assessments based on the CCLS.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- A process should be implemented whereby all teachers are given access to PD opportunities pertaining to school and District initiatives, e.g., CCLS training.
- A PD plan should be developed with a focus on teacher participation in PD workshops that are aligned with school instructional strategic planning initiatives, such as data-driven instruction, the CCLS, and co-teaching strategies to increase the achievement of students with disabilities in ELA and mathematics.
- All co-teachers should be trained in best co-teaching methods and practices. PD opportunities for both general and special education teachers should include a focus on the mandated State assessments and enable teachers to provide students with disabilities with additional support in ELA and mathematics.

VI. FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

FINDINGS:

- Classrooms are equipped with outdated or non-functioning laptops and computers. Internet-wireless connections are not consistent from area to area in the school.
- The computer lab room has been reassigned to the high school.
- The textbooks being used are outdated and worn.
- It is difficult to discern the difference between the high school and middle school hallways. There is a lack of identity for the middle school.
- All public announcements for the high school are heard throughout the day in the middle school classrooms, causing numerous instructional disruptions as well as a lack of identity for the middle school students and faculty.
- One special education classroom is located in the basement of the school and is isolated, small, and cluttered.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The current instructional technology plan should be reviewed, updated, and implemented to provide adequate technology software and hardware to support classroom instruction and provide equal access to technology for middle school students in the building.
- The Internet-wireless connection should be improved to ensure equal access to the Internet throughout the school.
- Collaboration with the Greenburgh Library should continue to provide updated software as well as media and computer/Internet access for students with disabilities in order to augment internet access at the school. Additional resources should be sought, e.g., by including technology initiatives in grant applications and school budgets and provide students with disabilities with computer/Internet access to as well as adaptive materials and equipment.
- All classroom materials, including books and workbooks, should be reviewed for relevance and alignment with the CCLS. Interactive software and other online materials should be purchased to ensure that students with disabilities have current instructional materials that are geared to the best instructional strategies for these students.
- A unique identity for the students and staff of the middle school should be created to distinguish it from the high school, e.g., specific colors and visuals should be used to identify the focus and mission of the middle school.
- Students with disabilities should be well-integrated into the middle school. Classrooms that house

students with disabilities should be well-appointed with student work; in addition, the location of the special education classrooms should be reviewed to maximize the integration of the special education program into the mainstream setting.

- The classroom for students with disabilities should be clear of clutter and the seating should be arranged to allow for project-based instruction, group learning, and easier access for the teacher to monitor student skills development as well as to minimize student distraction.

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.