NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Office of Accountability

Differentiated Accountability - School Quality Review (SQR)

SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW REPORT

BEDS Code:	261600010030
District Name:	Rochester CSD
School Name:	General Elwell S. Otis School No. 30
School Address:	36 Otis Street, Rochester, NY 14606
Principal:	Petrina Johnson
Accountability Phase/Category:	Improvement (year- 1) - Comprehensive
Area of Identification:	English Language Arts - All Students; African American Students; Hispanic Students; White Students and Economically Disadvantaged Students
Dates of On-site Review:	November 14-16, 2011

PART 1: MISSION STATEMENT

"Our Mission includes meeting the comprehensive needs of learners through:

- Accountability
- Communication
- Collaboration"

PART 2: SCHOOL STRENGTHS

- The school supports several community activities such as Boy and Girl Scouts, and an after school program that provide many physical activities such as zumba, karate and dance.

- The school has a full-time parent liaison working with families. Parents identified the school-home communication as a positive aspect of the school.

PART 3: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND UTILIZATION OF DATA

FINDINGS:

- Data analysis is not consistently used as a tool for supporting school improvement in English language arts (ELA). The data that the school collects is not rigorously analyzed to identify precisely what aspects of ELA should be the focus for improvement.

- There is a lack of evidence that data is being used effectively to address the academic barriers that impact student achievement. There is limited evidence that classroom teachers use formative assessments such as running records and student-teacher conferences, to determine student progress and to appropriately adjust instructional planning.

- There is limited evidence of a data gathering/analysis team that includes teachers. Lesson plans seldom showed evidence of flexible grouping or of any use of data to ensure differentiation of instruction based on data analysis. This was especially evident in ELA instruction.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school should revise their current system for data disaggregation and analysis to focus on student-by-student, class-by-class and subgroup-by-subgroup analyses, in addition to whole school and grade-level monitoring. The school improvement plan should ensure that all teachers include item analysis of Rochester Benchmark Assessments and predictive results to inform instruction. Particular attention should be given to monitoring the development of student skills as they move from grade to grade, checking for vertical alignment in curriculum programs in each content area.

- The school leader should request professional development (PD) support from the District to develop the essential teacher skills needed to implement a more rigorous and systematic analysis of data. The school leaders should also participate fully in data PD so they have the expertise to evaluate staff. The school should hone these skills in order to identify the precise aspects of ELA that are causing the greatest difficulty. The school should then address these issues on the school, grade and class level and to ensure they are a focus for teaching and learning. The school leaders should monitor implementation down to classroom level and hold staff accountable to ensure continuous improvement.

- School leadership should set clear expectations for teachers regarding the collecting, recording and analyzing of data from formative assessments such as examples of student work. The school staff should analyze a range of formative assessment data, such as notes from student-teacher conferences, running records, and notebook assessments. The ongoing assessments and records should be systematically organized for easy access . Teachers should be trained in using formative and interim assessments to differentiate instruction. Lesson plans should incorporate the implementation of flexible grouping based on the results of the assessments in order to differentiate instruction. School leaders should regularly meet with teachers to review student performance and set goals for student progress. Informal and formal observations by school leaders should include feedback for teachers on the effectiveness of their use of data to inform instruction.

II. TEACHING AND LEARNING

FINDINGS:

- Quality lesson planning is not in place throughout the school. The Rochester Instructional Framework (RIF) and other curriculum documents include examples of model lesson plans, but there is no evidence from the lessons observed by the review team that teachers are following the District's mandates, especially in creating the workshop model for ELA.

- Classroom observations and a review of teacher planning documents revealed that there is a lack of content, rigor and student engagement and little use of higher order thinking skills in lessons, especially in ELA.

- Classroom resources were not standards based. Activities and tasks observed were low level. Leveled books were not sufficiently differentiated to meet the needs of both higher achievers and struggling students. There were too few books in some of the classroom libraries.

- Much of the instruction for all students is teacher directed, with little variety of instructional strategies. Students have few opportunities to engage in discussions or collaborative work around learning tasks topics through working in pairs or with different groups of students.

- The co-teaching model is not effective. Teachers and leaders report that for the majority of the instructional time, one teacher is primarily responsible for the delivery of instruction and the other teacher plays a much less significant role of teacher assistant. Students are not fully benefiting from having two certified teachers in the classroom. Co-teachers are not consistently planning together, so teachers do not effectively develop plans that distribute their time and attention. They do not provide additional support to students or work with small skill-based groups, thus negatively impacting the effectiveness of the co-teaching model.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School and District leaders should ensure that the model lesson plans that are available and used by teachers as a basis for lesson and unit development are aligned with the New York State (NYS) P-12 Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). School leaders should regularly monitor teacher planning process and lesson plans to ensure that all teachers follow District expectations.

- School leaders should facilitate PD that will equip teachers with the skills and expertise to plan and deliver lessons that meet the requirements of CCLS, including specific learning expectations, a range of thoughtfully developed tasks that stimulate and engage students in developing higher order thinking skills, direct instruction, effective instructional strategies including collaborative group work and checks for understanding.

- The school leader, with District support, should identify and use existing or redirected funds to ensure that all classes have a sufficient number of books at various instructional levels to form classroom libraries by genres. In addition, sets of books should be purchased for guided reading groups to enhance student learning.

- School leaders should provide PD to ensure that teachers understand and can use a wide range of instructional strategies in the classroom to promote greater student learning and participation in the learning process. Teachers should be expected to incorporate these strategies into instruction, and school leaders should monitor the effectiveness and provide additional PD for teachers when necessary.

- School leaders should provide on-site training focused on full implementation of co-teaching model strategies. Regularly scheduled common planning time should be provided and structured so that co-teachers equally share in the planning and delivery of effective instruction. School leaders should monitor the implementation of effective co-teaching strategies through formal and informal teacher observations and ensure that best practices are shared throughout the school. If teachers are not effective, further PD should be provided. Monthly department meetings should be used to review lesson plans to ensure incorporation of the CCLS and to ensure that learning goals are aligned with planned instruction. School leaders should regularly monitor the inclusion of learning goals in direct instruction and should highlight effective practices by sharing learning goals as the focus of an inter-visitation schedule.

III. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

FINDINGS:

- The school leadership does not effectively communicate to staff the mission and vision for school development and improvement. Strategies are not adequately defined to achieve school goals.

- The school has not established an effective and functioning School Leadership Team (SLT) and the current members are not chosen based on an equitable process. The school leader has not provided the team with the appropriate training, necessary information, and leadership for the team to produce an effective Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP).

- School leaders do not ensure that PD is planned and effectively used to bring about improvement in student achievement. Few teachers participated in District PD workshops.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school leader should engage all staff in creating an effective, working common mission and vision that will support the school in working collaboratively to improve student achievement.

- Equitable membership requirements for the SLT should be established and members should be provided with training and necessary information and materials needed to effectively guide school improvement efforts.

- School leaders, with support from the District, should design a comprehensive PD plan to address the needs of teachers to improve delivery of instruction. School leaders should closely monitor the delivery of instruction by regularly reviewing lesson plans and providing feedback, and conducting formal and informal observations, with written feedback that includes recommendations for improvement. School leaders should conduct regularly scheduled follow-up observations to ensure recommendations are being implemented.

IV. INFRASTRUCTURE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

FINDING:

Students in most classrooms visited were seated in rows. Very few locations existed for group work and for student interaction.

RECOMMENDATION:

The school leader should ensure that teachers are provided with PD in the effective use of instructional strategies that build collaborative and active learning strategies, as well as strategies for effective management and classroom design that support students working in groups, in pairs or as a whole class. The leader should also monitor classroom environments to ensure incorporation of PD strategies.

V. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FINDINGS:

- The school PD plan is neither comprehensive nor aligned with school needs or goals and has had little impact on improving student performance. Although there is a great deal of data in the school, there is little evidence indicating that it is used to inform the plan.

- The establishment of inquiry teams and subject content teams has had only a superficial effect on teacher development and instruction.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school should develop a comprehensive PD program that is aligned with school needs and goals by analyzing the data available in the school. School leaders should seek support for PD from the District and other outside specialists to help them develop a detailed plan that focuses on improving teaching and learning to better meet the needs of students and teachers.

- The work of the inquiry team should be assessed to ensure they are effectively using time. All staff committees should include school leadership members to ensure consistency in planning and implementation across all groups. School leaders should ensure that the work of the inquiry team filters into the classroom and positively impacts on student learning and achievement.

VI. FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

FINDING:

The morning cafeteria session was not structured in an efficient or effective fashion to facilitate breakfast and clean-up. Some staff members spoke in a punitive tone with children over minor issues.

RECOMMENDATION:

School leadership should review the morning session in the cafeteria and make adjustments to ensure the program is effectively organized so that the time is positive for all students and staff.

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.