

NYSED/SYRACUSE CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT JOINT INTERVENTION TEAM REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

BEDS Code:	421800010020
School Name:	Danforth Magnet School
School Address:	309 W. Brighton Ave. Syracuse, New York 13205
Principal:	Patricia J. Clark
Restructuring Phase/Category:	Corrective Action (year 1) Comprehensive**
Area(s) of Identification:	English Language Arts- All students; Black students; Students with Disabilities; and Economically Disadvantaged
Dates of On-site Diagnostic Review:	January 19-21, 2011

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

A. Community and School Background

Danforth Magnet School serves 497 students in grade 6 through 8. The student enrollment is 81 percent Black, nine percent Hispanic, eight percent White and two percent Asian students. Approximately 20 percent of the students have Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). In the past three years, the number of students receiving English as a second language (ESL) services has grown to 44 students (nine percent of the enrollment).

The administrative team includes the Principal, who is in her fifth year as principal at Danforth, an Assistant Principal (AP) and an administrative assistant. There are 56 teachers, of which 46 are classroom teachers and ten are instructional support teachers. There are six staff members new to the school, but not new to teaching. The teacher turnover rate is approximately five percent. All teachers are highly qualified.

PART 2: ASSESSMENT OF THE SCHOOL'S EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

A. Performance on Key Indicators of Student Achievement Trends and School Progress

Positive or Negative Indicator (+/-)	School Performance Indicators	
	NYSED Quantitative Performance Measures	
-	School is ten or more points away from meeting its Effective Annual Measurable Objective (EAMO) for one or more identified subgroups in subject/area(s) of identification.	✓
-	Performance data for the school on NYSED Accountability Overview Reports (AOR) for the past two consecutive years show an increase in the number of subgroups that did not make Adequate Yearly progress (AYP) in identified area(s).	✓
-	Performance data for the school on NYSED Accountability Overview Reports (AOR)	

** Commissioner's Regulations Part 100.2 requires an External School Curriculum Audit (ESCA) for schools identified as Corrective Action (year 1) in school year 2010-11. In lieu of an ESCA, Syracuse CSD petitioned SED via an approved CR 100.2 Variance Request to conduct a Joint Intervention Team (JIT) Review at the Danforth Magnet School in 2010-11.

Positive or Negative Indicator (+/-)	School Performance Indicators	✓
	for the past two consecutive years indicate an increase in the achievement gap between identified subgroups and the <i>All Students</i> subgroup in one or more identified subject/area(s).	✓

B. School Strengths

- The school learning environment is safe and positive, and the building is clean and well- maintained. There is a belief system in the building that all students can succeed, even to the point that staff voluntarily works after school and on weekends to support the students and school community in which they work
- The library media center (LMC) is used extensively by teachers to support classroom instruction. The library media specialist works with groups of teachers and students individually during instructional periods.
- The staff in the Positive Alternative to School Suspension (PASS) program maintains high expectations for student performance and behavior. There was no apparent difference between this class and a general program class. Instruction was differentiated for students based on their needs, and students were engaged in all tasks in the classroom.
- The positive, respectful, and collaborative leadership of the principal in this building was noted by teaching staff, parents and students.

C. Key Findings and Recommendations

Summary of the key issues (causal factors), and other areas of concern, identified during the on-site diagnostic review that are negatively impacting student achievement in identified areas, as well as recommendations, as related to the 7 JIT Indicator Categories:

I. Curriculum

Findings:

- Although the District has created pre-kindergarten through grade 12 curricula and promotes planning, pacing, differentiated instruction and student evaluation, the alignment of learning goals and lesson plans around curricula is uneven at the school.
- Lesson formats with identified criteria and language that translates the curricula into instruction were not present in many classrooms.
- The school staff does not work collaboratively in observing each other's classrooms or jointly planning and evaluating lessons.

Recommendations:

- The taught curricula should reflect, in every instance, conformity with the written curricula. Teachers should be held accountable by the administrative team for implementing the adopted District curriculum, including pacing calendars.
- The School Leadership Team (SLT), in conjunction with the Principal, should adopt a uniform lesson plan format that articulates goals, criteria for assessment, and a common language and vocabulary. The adopted lesson plan format should incorporate the elements of effective instruction, including the alignment of District curricula, instructional resources and student assessment. The administrative team should monitor the implementation of this plan structure.
- Instructional resources should be shared and classroom intervisitations promoted to ensure effective use of materials related to common instructional objectives. Teachers should use common planning time to plan and collect evidence of student work, monitor effectiveness of instructional strategies and implement the Collaborative Coaching and Learning (CCL) Model for classroom visitation.

II. Teaching and Learning

Findings:

- Although varied instructional strategies were observed, teacher talk and whole class grouping were the dominant methods of delivery.
- Special education teachers were not effectively used in co-teaching and modifying instruction.
- There was inconsistent evidence of the posting of learning objectives, referencing the objectives, and checking for understanding of the objectives by teachers.
- Although meaningful learning that was relevant to the curriculum was evident in many classrooms, learning activities that promoted rigorous learning was less evident.
- Questioning was primarily limited to checking for recall and understanding and did not always include opportunities to move thinking skills to higher levels.
- In some classrooms, teachers used large group instruction as the primary approach to grouping, but because they used manipulatives, they believed that they were using different grouping techniques.
- Student work was displayed in most classrooms. It represented a range of student work. However, some teacher expectations were not high enough for the specific grade level, and criteria for the project/product/outcome were not included.
- A grading system designed around a set of criteria common to each subject area has not been implemented.
- There was limited availability of technology, although teachers used the available technology as often as possible

- Effective use of instructional resources was inconsistent, with some teachers using many resources available at the school, while other teachers, especially the special education teachers, presented lessons without readily available resources.

Recommendations:

- Staff development should focus on the development of a range of effective, evidence based instructional strategies, with follow up modeling and support.
- The co-teaching model should be understood, practiced, and adopted by teams throughout the school. Its effective use should be included in the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR), and District administrative staff with responsibility for special education should regularly provide modeling of instructional delivery for teachers of students with disabilities.

Staff development in co-teaching should be implemented with an emphasis on developing techniques that encourage collaboration between classroom teachers and special education teachers.

- Delivery of instruction should always include an explanation of the lesson objectives and a check for understanding of the objectives. Rubrics should be defined within the learning community. Consistent use and fidelity to these objective rubrics should be supported through peer coaching, administrative feedback, formal and informal reviews, and frequent checks for student understanding of the rubrics.
- Mentoring programs that pair experienced, knowledgeable teachers with colleagues who are less experienced in providing rigorous instruction should be implemented. The school has a number of highly competent, creative teachers whose instruction epitomizes quality.
- Bloom's Taxonomy and Costa's Levels of Questioning should be used in the construction of questions. Use of these should be taught, practiced, and evaluated. Teachers should regularly self-assess to ensure that this dimension is included in every lesson. Higher order questions should be written into lesson plans.
- Differentiated instruction should be present in terms of student groupings, varied questions and assignments, and use of modified material when appropriate. Staff development and feedback are key to improvement in this area.
- The school should raise the level of teacher expectation and effectively model desired levels of achievement through use of exemplars.
- The school should address grading through written rubrics that are uniformly implemented.
- The school should work with the District to identify the technology that will most improve instruction, the funding to be allocated and the teacher training to be provided.
- Teachers should have specific PD on the use of instructional resources, including demonstrations and hands-on work with manipulatives and other teaching materials so that they are able to use them to differentiate instruction and build conceptual understanding.

III. School Leadership

Findings:

Although the school provided evidence that it reaches out to parents and other adults in the community to design programs that meet the needs of students, its implementation is not systemic, and community members expressed a concern that many families do not have the supports needed to assist their children.

Recommendations:

The school should approach parent/community involvement systemically, bringing together active parents and community members who can develop a strong plan to support the Danforth community.

IV. Infrastructure for Student Success

Findings:

- High expectations for students were not observed in a majority of classrooms.
- Although students receive information regarding their academic status through report cards, interim reports, parent-teacher conferences and interactions with teachers and guidance counselors, these initiatives are inadequate in meeting student needs. The students do not have an opportunity to ask questions and understand the implications of the reports.
- Guidance and career planning is the primary responsibility of guidance counselors. These services are only provided informally in grades 6 and 7 and formally in only grade 8.
- Although the school reaches out to parents and guardians in a number of ways: report cards, interim reports, frequent telephone calls from administrators and teachers, and the internet, there is no process in place for face-to-face contact in the home.

Recommendations:

- Staff members who demonstrate high expectations for their students should serve as models for those who do not. Student demographic and performance data should be analyzed with the entire faculty to confirm the positive effect that high expectations have on student performance. This is also a potential area for PD.
- The school should continue to support and strengthen those initiatives that promote parent involvement. Teachers and administration should develop and pilot strategies (with student feedback) that include regular, individual teacher/student discussions about progress, next steps, and goals.
- Guidance personnel should take a more active role at earlier grade levels in meeting with and providing plans and supports for students who may need more academic or emotional guidance for success.

- The school should consider using funds available through District/ community collaborations to establish a home visitation program and programs that support parents in becoming involved with their children's education.

V. Collection, Analysis and Utilization of Data

Findings:

- There was a high degree of awareness of the use of data, and teachers frequently referred to data meetings in which schoolwide and grade level data were reviewed. However, the effective use of data to inform instruction was limited and unevenly used.
- Consistent use of standardized sources of information to create a common understanding of student achievement for both individuals and groups was not observed.
- Although parents are provided with access to classroom achievement and standardized test results, they are not clearly informed about their children progress.
- There was little evidence that students receiving assistance in the four-tiered intervention system have their achievement regularly monitored and communicated to classroom teachers.
- Although the Principal encourages the use of a variety of assessment strategies including the use of rubrics for grading purposes, classroom tests and teacher review of student work, these strategies were not universally observed.
- Formative evaluation is not consistently used throughout the school. Evaluation processes varied, and did not always produce useful information. Comprehensive monitoring of student achievement is not evident.
- Data does not appear to influence intermediate and long-term planning at the school level. There is no formal process for progress monitoring of student achievement for students receiving intervention services.

Recommendations:

- The school leadership team should establish a comprehensive system of assessment that provides quantifiable information and communicates individual and collective student achievement to all appropriate staff.
- The system should be capable of informing instruction and should be capable of assisting teachers to differentiate instruction, support students and plan lessons.
- The system of assessment should include a communication component that conveys an understanding of student achievement to parents and other adults. Parent communication should

also include a parent-friendly description of the strengths and weaknesses of each child and should prescribe strategies that parents can use at help to address these weaknesses.

- The leadership team should work to ensure that all members of the school are actively participating in the district's 4-tier analysis of student needs, and that student interventions are based on careful analysis and use of the 4-tier model.
- The administration should work closely with the SLT and instructional coaches to develop and implement a plan that uses the district's 4-tier initiative and ensures that all teachers are trained in and use on-going assessment strategies, both formative and summative, to track student progress and plan next steps in working with each student.
- The SLT should work closely with the administration to ensure implementation of focused, evidence-based data analysis that supports increased student achievement and success. The analyses should include a broad range of data, such as attendance and behavior issues; classroom and school procedures; results of walkthroughs; and perceptual surveys, in addition to assessment data.
- A formal, uniform monitoring system for students receiving interventions should be adopted and implemented by teachers providing these services, e.g., *Fast ForWord*, a reading intervention program for struggling readers, as well as class-based formative assessments. The results of program effectiveness should be used in planning activities.

VI. Professional Development

Findings:

- The school PD plan is not individualized to strengthen specific teacher needs, but rather, addresses the perceived needs of the faculty.
- PD is provided throughout the school year, but is not driven by analysis of data.
- The school has two scheduled team meetings per week with grade level teams, one for instructional conversations and one to discuss interventions and student support. At these meetings, the administrative team and the instructional coaches are able to support PD by allowing teachers time to discuss current research articles around particular topics, share and discuss instructional strategies, reflect on current practice and brainstorm next steps. However, these meetings are not supported by analysis of appropriate student achievement data.
- The school has implemented Job-Embedded Instructional Coaching. In addition to the PD described above, the majority of the instructional coaches' time is spent supporting teachers with instruction. This is primarily in the form of classroom observations followed by debriefing sessions and planning meetings during teacher planning times. However, this process does not always include co-planning as follow-up.
- The School Leadership Team (SLT) reviews student assessment data as well as attendance and behavioral data to determine school priorities in terms of PD, instruction, and student support. The team develops a school improvement plan/Comprehensive Educational Plan. Based on that plan, the PD Committee comes together to develop the year long PD plan and calendar. This PD

plan does not meet individual teacher needs, but, as mentioned above, is generalized to the entire school.

- There is a lack of training in Question/Answer Relationship (QAR).

Recommendations:

- PD options should be based on in-depth analysis of teacher and student needs. Staff development in the use of varied instructional approaches should be implemented at the school level, describing the elements of each strategy. The administrative team should monitor the implementation, providing feedback to the teachers on the effective use of strategies. Teachers should be given PD regarding the most effective use of heterogeneous, homogeneous, and large group instruction to best meet instructional targets.
- The PD Plan should drill down into student performance data to identify needs and prescribe differentiated PD for individual teachers.
- The instructional coach should model the lesson, co-plan with the teacher and conduct a follow-up meeting to determine next steps.
- Staff development should be designed to meet teacher needs and to help them understand and implement a comprehensive assessment system and to use the system to inform instruction and create effective planning at the classroom and school level. School leaders should plan and provide PD on long-range planning, higher order questioning, use of formative assessments, and other strategies to monitor student achievement at the classroom levels.
- The school should offer training to teams in the use of QAR in an effort to increase higher level questioning and thinking.

VII. District Support

Findings:

As a result of the financial condition of the school District, resource needs at Danforth are not being adequately met.

Recommendations:

- To the extent possible within budget restraints, the staffing at Danforth should be maintained at current levels. Since the school will be expanding to a K-8 building next year, the District should provide two instructional/literacy coaches in the building. They should provide the necessary PD and coaching, especially given the need to begin PD work with the new Common Core State Standards for ELA and mathematics.
- Given the accountability status of the school, the District should make every attempt to reallocate resources to assist the school in raising student performance. This may require additional student support service staff, coaches, and PD.
- The District should provide support in implementing the recommendations of the Joint Intervention Team (JIT).

PART 3: JOINT INTERVENTION TEAM OVERALL FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

A. Overall Finding

Reference	Review Team Finding for Restructuring (year 1) Schools	✓
(b)	The school has made some progress in identified areas, and may make AYP with the implementation of additional focused interventions to accelerate improved student achievement.	✓

B. Overall Recommendation

Reference	Review Team Recommendation	✓
(b)	Develop and implement a School Restructuring Plan that clearly identifies root causes and/or contributing factors for low student performance in identified areas, and incorporates focused interventions to address identified issues and accelerate improved student achievement. The School Restructuring Plan must include one of the restructuring options required under NCLB and further defined by the District.	✓

C. In the space below, include specific information to support the District in determining how the above recommendation should be implemented.

- The District should provide the school support in developing and implementing a comprehensive system of monitoring student achievement.
- The comprehensive monitoring system should be designed to provide immediate and in-depth feedback to teachers and administrators regarding the areas within middle school mathematics and ELA.