

NYSED/NEWBURGH ENLARGED CSD JOINT INTERVENTION TEAM REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

BEDS Code/DBN:	44-16-00-01-0003
School Name:	Heritage Middle School
School Address:	525 Union Avenue New Windsor, NY 12553
Principal:	Joseph Raiti
Restructuring Phase/Category:	Restructuring (year 2) Focused English Language Arts – Black students; Hispanic students; Students with Disabilities; and Economically Disadvantaged Students
Area(s) of Identification:	
Dates of On-site Diagnostic Review:	May 23-25, 2011

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

A. Community and School Background

Heritage Middle School (HMS) serves 702 students in grades 7 and 8. Next year, 2011-12, HMS will consist of grades 6 through 8. The school enrollment is 38 percent Hispanic, 28 percent Black and 32 percent White students. HMS has magnet status; students are bussed from all areas of the Newburgh City School District.

The administrative team consists of the Principal, a full-time Assistant Principal (AP) and a half-time AP. The current principal is leaving in June 2011 after 9 years of service in this school. The teaching staff of 57 is generally veteran, as only 1.7 percent has fewer than three years of experience, and no teachers are teaching outside their area of certification. The teacher turnover rate of 16 percent is mostly attributable to configuration changes.

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	
-	Negative trend data for one or more identified subject/areas and subgroups for the past two consecutive years, as indicated by a decrease in the percentage of students performing at or above Level 3 and/or a decrease in the Performance Index.	✓
-	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) 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).	✓
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B. School Strengths

The following precursors for school improvement appear to be present:

- The school culture and processes provide a basic structure that should allow the school to focus on issues of instruction in the future.
- A student-centered, safe and orderly environment is evident. School security staff is professional, positive and effectively deployed to support an environment conducive to learning.
- The master schedule is adequate in providing for flexible academic blocks and common planning time for core academic team members.
- Office staff and routines are highly effective in managing the day-to-day school operations. This allows the Principal to be highly visible in the building.
- Pupil Personnel Services staff are effective in supporting the needs of the students.

C. Key Findings and Recommendations

Summary of the key issues (and 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 seven JIT Indicator Categories:

I. Curriculum

Findings:

- The District uses curriculum maps as their curriculum. The curriculum maps do not make clear connections to New York State (NYS) Learning Standards that would provide teachers with a broad understanding of their work.
- The existing curriculum maps have not been regularly reviewed and updated based on student performance data and literacy priorities. They are limited and primarily used as a scope and sequence document to pace instruction.
- Special education programs generally lack evidence of consistent implementation of District grade level curriculum. Teachers report difficulty in being able to follow the pacing charts as scheduled due to the many divergent needs of students with disabilities in the same classroom.
- Vertical and horizontal alignment of the curriculum is not fully evident.
- Although instructional resources, such as Read 180 for students with disabilities and specific AIS mathematics software for all at-risk students, are selected based on alignment with NYS Standards, implementation is not fully consistent with research-based practice.

Recommendations:

- The District should work with the school on the development of curriculum in all core areas and ensure that it is clearly aligned with the current NYS Learning Standards. Curriculum should be aligned to the new NYS P-12 Common Core Learning Standards in English language arts and literacy and mathematics to prepare for implementation in school year 2012-13. All curricula

should be developed by knowledgeable and trained individuals (national, state, or local) who understand the key elements of curriculum development.

- All teachers and administrators should participate in professional development (PD) on how to plan and implement a curriculum with rigor, as well as delivery methods that are student-centered. The curriculum should be relied upon as the basis for assessing the individual student mastery and progress. Walkthroughs and formal evaluations should include how well the teacher knows and implements the curriculum for the subjects being taught.
- The school and District should implement a system to transform the curriculum maps from scope and sequence documents to 21st century frameworks with essential guiding questions of key content, instructional activities, and formative assessments in order to target specific student needs and increase student engagement and learning.
- The school should review classroom placement practices in order to narrow the variability of student need and implement grade level curriculum with fidelity to allow appropriate pacing.
- The school should use the existing mechanisms of common planning time and regular school department meetings to horizontally and vertically align the curriculum.
- All instructional programs, such as Read 180 for students with disabilities and specific AIS mathematics software for all at-risk students, should be implemented with fidelity. PD should be provided and embedded to support effective implementation.

II. Teaching and Learning

Findings:

- Although isolated examples of active learning were observed, whole group, teacher-directed instruction predominates throughout the school. Instructional strategies are not specifically matched to student learning styles or needs.
- Processes to develop and use higher order thinking skills are not evident in tasks or projects assigned to students or in the selection of questioning techniques. Students are not encouraged or required to use writing strategies as a way of exploring concepts and relationships or forming conclusions. There is limited evidence of real world application, particularly in mathematics.
- Although there is some evidence of instructional coaching, it appears to be inconsistent and not based on student performance data or the quality of instruction.
- There is little evidence of instruction in literacy or the use of instructional practices that promote literacy development across the content areas.
- Inefficient transitions between class periods, delays in starting class, poor transition between classroom activities and premature class dismissal reduce time on task.
- There is no evidence of a uniform grading policy in the school.
- Very little student work is posted in classrooms or hallways. Posted work does not include rubrics.

- There is a lack of evidence that co-teaching and team teaching strategies are conducted with both teachers fully participating in the instructional process. Although some content teachers and special education teachers informally discuss student performance and lesson plans, time is not provided for collaborative development of co-taught lessons.

Recommendations:

- Use of active learning strategies should be expanded to all content areas. Teachers’ selection and delivery of instructional strategies should be based on student assessment data and targeted to meet individual student needs.
- The overdependence on worksheets, workbook pages, whole class lessons and closed questioning techniques should be replaced with relevant and meaningful experiences that promote application, analysis and synthesis across curriculum areas.
- Instructional coaching should be expanded to a systematic process that is based on student performance data and provides formative feedback related to the quality of instruction.
- The school should develop a vision and action plan for a targeted focus on literacy development across the content areas. All school resources should be deployed for this purpose, including the library media specialist and other skilled support staff.
- Transitions and routine classroom procedures should be revised to maximize instructional time on task.
- Administrators should lead a schoolwide effort to develop and implement a school grading policy
- Student work should be posted along with rubrics demonstrating NYS proficiency requirements. These rubrics should be shared with students and parents.
- General and special education staff should receive appropriate and ongoing PD to effectively implement co-teaching. Regular opportunities should be provided for structured collaborative development and delivery of co-taught lessons.

III. School Leadership

Findings:

- Although the school is adding grade 6 in the 2011-12 school year and hiring a new principal, the school has not prepared to transition from a junior high model to a middle school model consistent with guidance on the “Essential Elements of Standards-Focused Middle-Level Schools and Programs”.
- The administration expects that the core academic teams meet to support students; however, core academic teams are not held accountable for using their meeting time to systematically monitor student achievement, improve instruction, and horizontally and vertically align the curriculum.
- Although informed decision-making exists on an adhoc basis in the school, a structured system of shared leadership does not exist. Therefore, the 2010-11 Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) was developed by District office staff.

- There is little communication or coordination between school administration and District staff. This results in confusion about leadership roles and lack of accountability for curriculum, instruction, supervision and PD.
- The formal procedure for conducting walkthroughs is not effective in providing the formative feedback teachers need to improve instruction.

Recommendations:

- As the school transitions into 2011-12, the incoming principal should provide leadership in collaborative development of the vision, mission and core beliefs of the HMS. Planning and full implementation of a middle school model should be conducted.
- Core Academic Teams should be held accountable not only for supporting students, but also for systematic monitoring of student achievement, increasing their combined capacity to improve instruction and achieving horizontal and vertical alignment of curriculum. Appropriate PD should be provided to build each core academic team's capacity to perform these activities.
- The school administration should implement formal and systematic team leadership models in order to maximize the contribution and shared ownership of all members of the school community. In particular, the Building Leadership Team (BLT) should be reconvened and charged with the responsibility for implementing and monitoring the current CEP and leading the development of subsequent plans.
- The Principal should lead the school in full participation of District initiatives.
- The District should define the responsibilities of school and District administrators in relation to the leadership of the school's curricular, instructional, supervisory and PD functions. After identifying the responsibilities, the Principal and District administrators should be held accountable for assigned areas of responsibility.
- Formative feedback should be provided regularly by school administration and curriculum supervisors to improve the quality of instruction.

IV. Infrastructure for Student Success

Findings:

- The school does not have a well-defined system for identifying at-risk students and providing appropriate staff, programs and materials to support the unique needs of students with disabilities, ELLs and all at-risk students during the school day, before and/or after school, or on Saturdays.
- The school has not developed a systematic process to involve parents and families and does not have a functioning parent-teacher association (PTA) or parents' organization (PO). There is little evidence that the school staff encourages parents to participate in decision-making on committees such as the Building Leadership Team. Parents express the need to be able to communicate problems and issues and be made aware of solutions/outcomes.

- To reduce vandalism and behavior problems, access to the bathrooms is limited. Students are required to locate security guards to unlock the doors as needed.
- The needs of the master schedule dictate the programs and services that students can receive. For example, students assigned to attend AIS for ELA will automatically be placed in AIS for mathematics.
- The District AIS Plan is outdated. The school's selection of content and the instructional strategies does not support the individualized intervention needs of students.

Recommendations:

- A well-developed system to identify at-risk students and provide appropriate interventions consistent with a three tiered intervention model should be immediately developed. A targeted continuum of services should be available for all students, including ELLs and students with disabilities.
- School staff and administration should collaborate with community and parents to identify obstacles to parent involvement/communication. An action plan should be implemented for formal and regular two-way communication, shared leadership and collaborative decision-making with parents, i.e., PTA, participation in formal teams.
- The practice of locking bathrooms to reduce vandalism and behavior problems should be revisited and amended to address security needs while providing students with the opportunity to attend to their personal needs.
- Assignment to AIS classes should be based solely on the individual needs of students.
- The District should develop the AIS Plan to meet the individualized needs of all students, including the selection of content and instructional strategies. The school should implement the AIS plan with fidelity to support unique intervention needs of all struggling students.

V. Collection, Analysis, and Utilization of Data

Findings:

- Although the District implemented a systemic District-wide data initiative for the 2010-11 year, the HMS data team was convened only three days prior to the Joint Intervention Team (JIT) visit.
- Although the guidance department reviews student performance and coordinates intervention on a case-by-case basis, trend data is not regularly analyzed at school, department, subject, grade and individual levels in order to evaluate the effectiveness of current educational programs or design and implement systemic interventions.
- Benchmark and formative classroom assessments were only observed in isolated cases. Performance data from the benchmark assessments, including the Scholastic Reading Inventory, Scholastic Mathematics Inventory and Read 180, is not used to adjust instruction or address gaps in student learning in core content areas or in AIS classes.

Recommendations:

- The Principal should convey a vision and formulate an action plan for implementing a data rich environment for teaching and learning throughout the school. The incoming Principal should support the full participation of the school's data team in the District-wide initiative.
- School and District leaders should work with teachers to understand the expectations and build their capacity to analyze trend data at school, department, grade, subject and individual levels in order to evaluate the effectiveness of current educational programs or design and implement systemic interventions.
- School and District leaders should work with teachers to develop and use a rich array of formative assessments that includes the use of rubrics to monitor student progress and adjust instruction as indicated in the CEP.

VI. Professional Development

Findings:

- PD to meet the needs of ELLs, students with disabilities and at-risk students is insufficient.
- There is little evidence that general education and specialist teachers have implemented effective co-teaching strategies in the classroom.
- Teachers do not have a deep understanding of the connection between curriculum, instruction and assessment or how to meet the individual needs of students through differentiated instruction.
- Although a team, department and faculty structure exists, there is little evidence of effective implementation of Professional Learning Community strategies, including: conducting regular meetings; establishing outcome-based agendas; widely sharing minutes; sharing and reporting activities; engaging in personal and collective reflection; continually reviewing and analyzing data for progress monitoring purposes; celebrating student and school progress; and maintaining transparency and accountability.
- The District does not currently have a required District PD plan. PD efforts at the school are led by the Principal with occasional additional training provided by the District.

Recommendations:

- Embedded and targeted PD should be provided to support the teachers of general education, ELLs and students with disabilities in order to meet the specific needs of at-risk students. This includes implementation of effective co-teaching strategies.
- School leaders should monitor the degree to which teachers are incorporating effective co-teaching strategies learned in PD into their daily teaching.
- All teachers and administrators should participate in PD on how to plan and implement a curriculum with rigor, as well as delivery methods that are student-centered. The curriculum should provide the basis for assessing individual student mastery and progress. Walkthroughs and formal evaluations should include how well the teacher knows and implements the curriculum.

- The Principal should use the team, department and faculty meeting framework as well as systemic PD to lead the school in development of research based and data driven Professional Learning Communities i.e., supportive and shared leadership, collective creativity, shared values and vision, supportive conditions and shared personal practice.
- The District should adopt a consistent and clear definition of PD. This should guide the efforts of the newly formed PD committee.
 - The PD efforts for the next two to three years should be focused on the findings of the JIT report.
 - The District should build the capacity of school administrators to lead the building-level PD program and then hold school leaders accountable for carrying out this responsibility.

VII. District Support

Findings:

- The school is preparing for a transition to a new school principal.
- HMS is tentative and inconsistent in accepting assistance and guidance from Curriculum and Instruction Office staff.
- The special education continuum that exists in the school is inconsistent and incomplete in meeting the needs of students with disabilities.
- There is little evidence that the different houses employ their magnet themes to improve student engagement.
- A high percentage of students enter HMS several grade levels below benchmarks in reading and mathematics.
- The District developed the 2010-11 CEP in alignment with the District restructuring approach.
- The visibility of the District's curricular and instructional leadership staff in HMS is limited.

Recommendations:

- District officials should be active and creative in recruiting administrators with instructional expertise and then provide mentoring and support in order to stabilize the new leadership team of HMS. Members of the District office should actively engage the school faculty and support the new principal to guide the school improvement efforts and recommendations in this JIT report.
- The District should review the responsibilities of school and District administrator positions in relation to the leadership of the school's curricular, instructional, supervisory and PD functions.
- A formal definition and description should be developed for each continuum option and specialized program for students with disabilities that is offered at the school. This continuum should be driven by the Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals of students.
- The magnet theme houses should be adequately resourced in order to fully implement the themes and improve student engagement.

- District leadership should adopt an accelerated focus on literacy beginning at the elementary level.
- The District should work to strengthen the capacity of the BLT to fulfill their role at HMS so that it will have the will and ability to help guide future school improvement efforts.
- The District should provide visible and ongoing support in implementing the recommendations of the JIT.

PART 3: JOINT INTERVENTION TEAM OVERALL FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

A. Overall Finding

Reference	Review Team Finding for Restructuring (year 1) Schools	✓
(c)	The school has not made sufficient progress in identified areas, and is unlikely to make AYP under the current structure and organization.	✓

B. Overall Recommendations

Reference	Review Team Recommendation	✓
(c)	Develop and implement a School Restructuring Plan that includes significant <u>changes in staff, organizational structure, leadership and/or configuration</u> to address issues that continue to negatively impact student academic performance in identified areas.	✓

C. Additional Information to Support the District in determining how the above recommendation should be accomplished

The new Restructuring Plan should include:

- With the coming of a new principal and in the face of significant changes recommended in this report, it is essential that the faculty participate fully in District initiatives with other District schools and embrace a concept of teacher leadership that will assist the new principal in his or her successful entry into the school.
- The BLT should be charged with the responsibility to build and monitor the CEP, including action plans with accountability benchmarks to guide school improvement. This team should also lead the school’s effort to regularly analyze student performance data and differentiate instruction for all students, particularly students with disabilities, ELLs, and those requiring AIS.
- Job embedded PD should be regularly provided to support mentoring of the BLT to fulfill their role in guiding HMS in school improvement.
- Leadership for the improvement of instruction and student engagement should be the priority of the administration and shared leadership teams.
- The District and school should prioritize the completion of vertical and horizontal alignment of the curriculum as well as rich integration of literacy development strategies across all curricular areas. Accountability for implementation of the aligned written curriculum should be provided by school and District leadership on a formative and summative basis.

- Time, staff and space should be provided for a full continuum of student intervention and support programs to meet individual student needs, i.e., special education, related services, AIS, ELLs. Additional intensive supports for teachers and administrators to implement effective strategies to support at-risk populations should be provided.
- All staff should be trained and held accountable for regularly analyzing multiple measures of data to inform and improve their instruction.
- Instructional staff and school administration should be provided with regular targeted PD over a series of years to improve their capacity to implement improved instructional strategies as described in this JIT report.