



THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK / ALBANY, NY 12234
Office of Elementary, Middle, Secondary and Continuing Education

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April 20, 2011

Mr. Daniel G. Lowengard
Superintendent
Syracuse City School District
1025 Erie Blvd. West
Syracuse, N.Y. 13204

Dear Superintendent Lowengard:

Commissioner's Regulations Part 100.2 requires a Joint Intervention Team (JIT) review for schools identified as Restructuring in school year 2010-11. The JIT consisted of an intensive two or three day on-site review of teaching and learning in areas that caused the school to be designated as Restructuring. Records, interviews and classroom observations focused on the school's educational program as it relates to the identified accountability measures, i.e., English language arts, mathematics and/or graduation rate.

The JIT Report with recommendations to improve student achievement is enclosed for the **Huntington K-8 School**. The findings and recommendations must be addressed by the school in the implementation of the Restructuring Plan for 2011- 2012.

Thank you for your cooperation. If you have any questions or need clarification, please contact Sandra Norfleet, Regional Education Coordinator at 718-722-2647.

Sincerely,

Ira Schwartz

Enclosure

cc: John B. King
Christine Vogelsang
Sandra Norfleet
Jackie Bumbalo
Pedro Ruiz
Jeanne Post

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

BEDS Code:	421800010015
School Name:	Huntington K-8 School
School Address:	400 Sunnycrest Road Syracuse, New York 13206
Principal:	Marc Parrillo
Restructuring Phase/Category:	Restructuring Advanced Comprehensive English Language Arts – All students; Black students; Students with Disabilities; and Economically Disadvantaged students
Area(s) of Identification:	
Dates of On-site Diagnostic Review:	February 8 - 10, 2011

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

A. Community and School Background

The Huntington School serves 906 students in pre-kindergarten through grade 8. Student enrollment is 51 percent White, 38 percent Black, seven percent Hispanic, one percent American Indian, one percent Asian, and two percent multiracial students. The English language learner program (ELL) began in the school during the current school year. The ELL program includes 43 students (31 elementary, 12 middle school) who are served by one full-time teacher and one half-time teacher. The special education program includes 170 students (105 elementary, 65 middle school). Included in the special education program and services provided at the school are inclusion classrooms, resource room and related services.

Approximately half of the students live within the boundaries of the school catchment area. The remaining half travel by bus mainly from the north and south sides of the City of Syracuse. A small percentage of students on the west side of the City and those enrolled under the District voluntary transfer program or from alternative programs also travel by bus.

The school administrative team consists of the Principal, a Vice-Principal and an administrative intern. The Vice-Principal and administrative intern each have assigned programs and responsibilities. Faculty includes 72 teachers, two guidance personnel, three social workers, and 19 teaching assistants. There are seven probationary teachers and four teachers in their final year of their probationary period. All teachers are highly qualified. There is little teacher turnover at this school.

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 indicate an increase in the achievement gap between identified subgroups and the <u>All Students</u> subgroup in one or more identified subject/area(s).	✓

B. School Strengths

- School attendance has improved over the past three years, from 94 percent to 95.6 percent, versus a District wide rate of 91 percent.
- The school has a well developed system of graduated discipline interventions that includes teacher intervention/de-escalation “reflections” in which the student meets with another teacher and reflects on the incident; detention during lunch or after school, in-school suspension (usually for one period); and out of school suspension (during which instruction is available from 3:00 to 5:00) in the Positive Alternatives to School Suspension (PASS) program.
- The school also has a partnership with Syracuse University (SU). Numerous organizations from SU provide tutoring and mentoring services to the students. The school also participates in the Say Yes to Education program.

C. Key Findings and Recommendations

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

I. Curriculum

Finding:

The curricula adopted by the District for use across all schools are followed in most, but not all, classrooms. Most teachers have lesson plans developed on a weekly basis. Content and quality vary from teacher-to-teacher. The school has a “suggested” lesson plan template that is not used by all teachers.

Recommendation:

School leadership should monitor the implementation of the District curricula during classroom visits. A common lesson planning template should be established and used by all teachers as a means to ensure that District curricula are implemented and to improve instruction, teacher-to-teacher coordination, and the establishment of common school improvement nomenclature.

II. Teaching and Learning**Findings:**

- There is evidence of some teachers having excellent teaching skills, including teachers in the special education and the ELL programs. There are other teachers who do not appear to effectively present content and engage students. In many classrooms observed, there are limited rigor and differentiation and ineffective approaches to ensure student understanding of content. There is excessive use of worksheets.
- Some students and parents report that substantial homework is regularly assigned; others report that students are assigned modest amounts of homework, given their grade level. Approximately 80 percent of students indicate that they complete homework assignments, and homework appears to provide reinforcement for class instruction and reading. In some cases, the materials that students are permitted to take home for homework are restricted by their school/teacher, or students/ parents are required to sign out books for homework.
- The Say Yes After-School Program is in its first year of implementation. The school set a participation goal of 200 students and achieved 177 participants. There are three separate after-school programs: the Say Yes After-School Program for students in kindergarten through grade 3; a second after-school program for students in grades 4 and 5; and the Liberty Partnership Program, for students in grades 6 through 8. Transportation (busing) is only available to students up to grade 3 and, therefore, participation in afterschool programs is more difficult for students in grades 4 through 8.
- Educational technology is insufficient. Computers are in limited supply and those available in classrooms and the library are obsolete and/or slow and negatively impact instruction. For example, the *Earobics* program, a computer-based literacy intervention, cannot be accessed in all classes in which it is needed. Equipment, such as SMART Boards, is inconsistently available from classroom to classroom and, where available, is not always used to best effect due to lack of staff familiarity with how the equipment functions and strategies for effectively using the equipment.
- The school is in its third year of implementing a special education co-teaching model using an inclusionary program approach. Additional support is needed in order to capitalize upon the expertise of both the general education and special education teacher teams, including using present levels of student performance to set student Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals and to determine appropriate programs, services and supports.
- Teacher assistants (TA) sometimes attend PD with other TAs, and sometimes with the teachers they support.

- ELLs receive the required amount of services, but instructional groupings/sizes are not always appropriate. Students are not always grouped according to similar educational need, i.e., beginner, intermediate, advanced, and class sizes range from 5 to 20 students per teacher.
- In some general education classes, there is an imbalance in the proportion of students with disabilities and ELL students to general education students. In one general education class, more than 70 percent of students were either students with disabilities or ELLs.
- The school library is underutilized by students, with some students indicating that they prefer to stay in the classroom rather than go to the library, and the library media specialist is underutilized as a member of the instructional team.
- There is teacher to teacher inconsistency in student grading procedures. Especially significant is the weighting allocated by some teachers for effort as opposed to performance/proficiency. This practice invalidates comparisons of report card data and renders it useless for determinations regarding mastery of academic content and needed additional academic assistance, e.g., Academic Intervention Services (AIS).
- Teachers and students indicate that they feel safe at school. However, some students indicate that they have been victims of bullying or that they have witnessed or participated in bullying. They also report that such bullying occurs among age mates, and that bullying of younger students by older students is not an issue. All students reported that school personnel treat bullying seriously but feel that more needs to be done. No instances of bullying were observed during the school review. The school is generally orderly, but student rambunctiousness was noted for some lunchroom student groupings.
- Data indicate that in-school and out-of-school suspension consequences are more frequently levied for middle level students. In 2009-10, five percent of 565 elementary level students and 16 percent of 344 middle level students were suspended in-school, and 68 elementary students and 234 middle school students were suspended out of school. SED data indicate that the incidence of out of school has increased from 16 to 18 percent from 2007-08 to 2008-09.

Recommendations:

- Grade level and other team planning times should include regular periods spent developing effective instructional strategies focused on ensuring rigorous, engaging instruction and active student participation in learning. Teacher-to-teacher consultation, such as Collaborative Coaching and Learning (CCL) opportunities, should be made available to teachers on a targeted basis.
- All teachers should assign appropriate amounts and types of homework to students, and homework should be checked for completion. School and classroom procedures should be reviewed and revised if necessary so that students are able to take home books and other materials (including accessing the reading program on the web) needed to complete homework assignments.

- After school transportation opportunities should be made available to students in grades 4 through 8 who do not reside in close proximity to the school so that they are afforded equitable opportunities to participate in the afterschool academic programs and activities.
- An educational technology plan should be developed to enhance technology resources and replace obsolete equipment. Such a plan should include the targeted provision of PD to ensure that such equipment is effectively used.
- The special education co-teaching model should continue, and instructional personnel should receive additional PD in co-teaching strategies/approaches. Consideration should be given to the proper balance and types of PD in which teachers and teacher assistants participate together.
- More of the PD for TAs should be provided with the teachers with whom the TA partners so they will be better able to effectively complement and supplement each other.
- ELL schedules should be developed first for 2011-12, just as the school did for students with disabilities during the current school year. This will ensure appropriate student groupings and student-to-teacher ratios for ELL instruction and an appropriate balance of special and general education students for general education instruction. In addition, the school schedule should be reviewed and modified for 2011-12 to reduce time unnecessarily allocated for non-academic activities, e.g., free time from 2:00 to 2:30, in order to provide additional time for teacher-to-teacher consultation and planning.
- The school librarian should be brought into planning sessions and actively involved in the improvement initiatives for the school. The library media center should become an integral aspect of student projects. If necessary, the District should assign the librarian a mentor to support active involvement in the school improvement initiatives.
- The school should adopt uniform grading procedures that appropriately emphasize student performance/proficiency and serve as a valid barometer of student and program progress and performance.
- A more overt, aggressive strategy should be developed and implemented to address bullying. The School Leadership Team should be involved in identifying an “if you hear or see something - say something” approach. As the school implements the District-adopted PBIS initiative, they can also strengthen proactive strategies for developing compassion and respect for others. The New York State Center for School Safety may also be accessed for guidance and consultation. Consideration should be given to providing students with something “to do” during lunch time such as games, books, music, television, etc.
- Teacher disciplinary referrals should be reviewed to determine the need for PD targeted for particular teachers who would benefit from behavior management techniques to de-escalate sensitive situations. The SLT might also be asked to recommend appropriate interventions and consequences that keep students in class. School procedures should be reviewed to identify strategies that promote the participation of students suspended out of

school on a regular basis in the PASS program. Transportation possibilities, such as bus tokens, may be helpful. Alternatively, the school should consider whether out of school suspension as currently implemented is a strategic intervention in balancing behavior and academic impacts, or whether PASS services would be more effective if provided during the school day.

III. School Leadership

Findings:

- Approximately 75 percent of school personnel acknowledge receiving the current year's Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) and are aware of its contents. Although school leadership indicates that the CEP was provided to all personnel electronically, approximately 25 percent are not aware of the plan or its contents. The plan is not being implemented with fidelity.

There is inconsistency in the school's record of "staying the course" regarding implementation of initiatives and plans. For example, implementation of the Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS) began in 2009-10 but was not effectively monitored or implemented; the school is now in the process of re-establishing the program. Conversely, the school recently implemented a new policy banning the use of cell phones in class that was implemented with full fidelity and is now in place.

- School leadership conducts Annual Professional Performance Reviews (APPRs) for all teachers and paraprofessionals annually. The Principal, however, has received formal evaluations every other year.
- School leadership conducts classroom visits beyond those necessary for the completion of APPRs. However, such visits are not regular. Teachers indicate that they usually receive feedback following such visits, and school leadership reports that such visits are periodically discussed by the leadership team. Only one member of the leadership team maintains a journal of classroom observations/visits.

Recommendations:

- The Plan to be developed for 2011-12 should be broadly disseminated and appropriate action must be taken to ensure that its contents are understood by all faculty members and implemented with fidelity and that initiatives are incorporated into the school culture and evaluated on an ongoing basis. The School Principal, the District Director of School Reform, and the SLT should participate in rolling out the plan and tracking its implementation. A no excuses approach should be adopted for full implementation of all school initiatives.
- It is important that Principals receive APPRs on an annual basis, even if tenured, as a tool to build Districtwide cohesiveness, to set goals and targets for the individuals and the schools they lead, and to recognize accomplishments and plan to address obstacles.
- The SLT should review the class visit walkthrough schedule and the extent to which it is implemented. Classroom visits should be conducted daily, and all school leaders should

maintain a log/journal of such visits to ensure that all classes are visited over time and that important information is documented and discussed. Such information will also be important in planning PD for the school and for supporting specific school personnel.

IV. Infrastructure for Student Success

Findings:

- The school has an active Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) that is supportive of the school, both financially and programmatically. It appears that the majority of active PTO members reside in the community immediately surrounding the school and that there is limited involvement by parents who reside beyond the immediate neighborhood.
- Students report that academic help is available from the school when needed, but only upon request. Procedures are not currently in place to proactively identify all at-risk students across all grade levels and subjects and to develop an individual plan to meet each student's needs. School staff is currently planning to develop student progress checklists for individual students with strategic and intensive needs. They are currently developing data driven procedures to identify, track and serve students who are at academic risk in kindergarten through grade 5 in reading, but no other tracking is being developed.
- There is one full-time AIS teacher assigned to the school with AIS services focused primarily on ELA. The teacher attends grade level meetings to help ensure that student instructional services are coordinated. A Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) coach works in the school on alternating weeks and is focused at the middle school grades.
- The school has a partnership with Syracuse University (SU), and university students are well-regarded by the school faculty. However, such support by university students is not available to all classes or for the full time for which such support is needed.

Recommendations:

- The school should implement outreach efforts to draw in and involve the parents of all students who attend the school. The parent liaison and three social workers assigned to the school should reach out to and engage parents by facilitating links between the home and classroom. Information should be obtained from students' teachers regarding academic performance to be shared with parents prior to contacts and visits to students' homes, with follow-up contact regarding improvement.
- The school should develop and maintain a list of all students who are at-risk across all grade levels and subject areas. The school should continue to expand the development of data driven analysis in promptly identifying students at-risk, determining the supports needed by each student, tracking progress and revising services as appropriate, at all grade levels.
- Additional support, similar to that currently being provided by the literacy coach, should be made available for grades 6 through 8, and additional AIS staff should be assigned to the school.

- The school should work with SU to plan expanded and strategic involvement of university students in supporting students and teachers. If university students are not available to the full extent needed, support should be directed to the classes and grade levels most in need of such support. The SLT should be a part of recommending priority classes and grade levels to receive such support.

V Collection, Analysis, and Utilization of Data

Findings:

- Analysis of State and local level data is facilitated by the literacy coach, for the elementary grades through grade 5, to build schoolwide capacity and a common language/approach to school improvement. The school is beginning to establish data-driven approaches to providing services at the classroom level and for individual students, resulting in increased student participation in computerized intervention programs. *Fast Forward* increased from 78 to 127 students, *Wilson Reading* from 81 to 125 students, *Earobics* from 68 to 110 students, *Read Naturally* from 70 to 125 students, and *Read 180* from 30 to 54 students. In January 2011, student performance in these programs was reviewed and adjustments made to student programs based on data.
- For ELA, the subject area for which the school is in Restructuring Advanced accountability status, the performance of students in grades 7 and 8 is lower than student performance in grades 3 through 6 (24 and 33 percent performing at level three, respectively); the percentage of students scoring at the proficient level was the highest (39 percent) for grade six students.
- The Principal maintains data regarding the performance of students after they transition to high school. Such data indicate that 33 percent subsequently drop out.
- School personnel have an overall understanding of State accountability data but make limited use of data to deliver and differentiate instruction or to form instructional groupings.

Recommendations:

- The school should continue implementation of elementary grade level meetings with the literacy coach. Additional and similar support should be provided for grades 6 through 8. The SLT should play a central role in tracking student performance on a schoolwide basis.
- The school should review student test scores, including State assessments and other evidence of student achievement, looking for evidence of both student strengths and specific needs. Part of the analysis should be to identify patterns and/or groups of students who need additional interventions, in order to provide necessary support. Programmatic patterns of student difficulties should be identified in order to remediate possible class or programmatic reasons for clusters of students with lower achievement.
- The school should continue to receive quantitative and qualitative data regarding student performance at the high school level in order to identify opportunities for improvement, including possible strategies to reduce the dropout rate.

- Individual and small group support and guidance should be provided to instructional personnel regarding the analysis and instructional application of student data. Additionally, locally determined cut points/benchmarks should be established to better track performance trends and denote the extent of progress.

VI. Professional Development

Findings:

- General education teachers indicate the need for additional PD in strategies and approaches to meet the needs of students with disabilities and ELLs.
- Teachers report limited opportunities to focus on specific areas of PD that might be of value only to them or to a small group of teachers.
- All teachers also report that there is limited opportunity within the current school schedule for horizontal planning across grade levels and programs. There is little or no opportunity for vertical planning (grade to grade, elementary school to middle school).

Recommendations:

- The school literacy coach is a certified Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) trainer, and such training should be provided to teachers and paraprofessionals on a targeted basis.
- The types of PD completed and the types of PD needed should be tracked for each member of the faculty. PD needs and opportunities should be discussed with teachers during their annual professional performance reviews. Based on those discussions and JIT review observations/interviews, the following types of PD should be considered for school personnel on a targeted basis:
 - Differentiated Instruction
 - Higher Order Questioning Techniques
 - Strategies to Check for Student Understanding/Comprehension
 - Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS)
 - Effective Use of Educational Technology
 - Standardized Lesson Planning and School Improvement Lexicon
 - Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP)
 - Special Education Co-teaching Strategies
- The administration and SLT should ensure that both daily common planning time and half-day PD opportunities provide time for staff to meet and plan, both horizontally and vertically.

VII. District Support

Findings:

- Due to District budget cuts, the school was forced to lay off personnel for the current year. A severe budget deficit is projected for 2011-12, which is expected to result in the loss of approximately 500 personnel District-wide.
- Three District personnel are active in the school in reviewing building programs and visiting classrooms. The Special Education Liaison meets with special education personnel and conducts classroom visits. The school District Directors of Elementary Education and Curriculum Instruction also conduct walkthroughs and meet with the Principal monthly to discuss observations and improvement opportunities.
- Science laboratory space for middle level students is limited and high quality, appropriate equipment is lacking.

Recommendations:

- To the extent practicable, non-instructional reductions should be implemented in lieu of instructional personnel. Therefore, school costs for the maintenance and operation of the school swimming pool and any other non-instructional programs should be analyzed. If there is an opportunity to re-allocate funds for the support of personnel, the school swimming pool should be temporarily closed to minimize staff reductions.
- District level representatives assigned to the school should be augmented by the Director of School Reform. Timely feedback to the Principal should be provided, recognizing accomplishments, identifying opportunities for improvement, and providing recommendations.
- Science laboratory space and equipment should be enhanced, especially for the middle level grades.

PART 3: OVERALL FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

A. Overall Finding

Reference	JIT Finding for Restructuring Advanced Schools	✓
(b)	The school has made some progress in identified areas, and may make AYP with further modification to the Restructuring Plan.	✓

B. Overall Recommendation

Reference	Recommendation by the JIT for Restructuring Advanced Schools	✓
(b)	Continue implementation of the current Restructuring Plan with <u>modifications</u> recommended as a result of the review.	✓

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

The three key areas of focus for the school are:

- Provide District support in implementing the recommendations of the Joint Intervention Team (JIT).
- Work with staff to develop consistent criteria for student grading policies.
- Increase the roles and responsibilities of the SLT so they are key in the school's efforts to improve student performance. These responsibilities should include:
 - Focusing on effective collection and analysis of data by all staff and its use in improving student achievement, including development of an overall list of at-risk students, their needs, and plans for interventions; and
 - Using data from classroom walkthroughs, including patterns observed, as a basis for developing PD options.