

NYSED/ MOUNT PLEASANT COTTAGE UFSD JOINT INTERVENTION TEAM REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

BEDS Code:	660804020000
School Name:	Mount Pleasant Cottage School
School Address:	1075 Broadway Pleasantville, NY 10570
Principal:	Grades K-8: James Donlevy Grades 9-12: Christine Bueti
Restructuring Phase/Category:	Persistently Lowest-Achieving
Area(s) of Identification:	English Language Arts and Mathematics
Dates of On-site Diagnostic Review:	April 26 and 27, 2011

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

A. Community and School Background

The Mount Pleasant Cottage School (MPCS) is a Special Act K through 12 school in the Mount Pleasant Cottage School Union Free School District, located on the grounds of the Jewish Child Care Association's (JCCA) residential treatment center in Westchester County. The school serves 237 students in kindergarten through grade 12. The school is divided into a K through 8 elementary/middle school program and a 9 through 12 high school program. The school enrollment is 70 percent Black, 25 percent Hispanic and five percent White students. All students in the two schools have been classified for special education services due to emotional and/or developmental disability.

Typically, the students are two to six years behind their peers in core academic subjects. Most lack the social skills, linguistic skills and academic foundation needed for school success. The student population is highly transient, with an average placement in the District ranging from nine to fifteen months, making it difficult to track long-term student progress. Each year a "new" population takes the State assessments; therefore, there is little to no cohort data over time. Additionally, the resident population often has significant gaps in attendance because of temporary hospital placements, involvement in the judicial process, being "away without leave" (AWOL), and as the result of other incidents, such as suspension from school. Within the past few years, there has been an increase in the complex needs of the students.

As part of admission into the educational program, MPCS has implemented an Ease of Entry process. This process, 5 to 10 days long, assists with appropriate class placement through a review of existing data and student records; education and psychological evaluations; diagnostic assessments, and meetings with Principal, teachers, and a counselor. The structured design is also intended to assist the student with orienting to the program. Some Special Act schools, including this one, began a couple of years ago to use the Standardized Testing and Reporting System (STAR) Assessment, which is administered every 60 days (based on enrollment date) to measure student progress in early literacy, reading and mathematics.

They are two Principals in the building, one for the elementary/middle school and one for the high school. The Principal of the K-8 program has served for three years, while the Principal of the 9 through 12 program has served for nine years. There are currently 8 academic classroom teachers at the K through 8 level and 14 teachers in the 9 to 12 level. Additionally, there are two full-time physical education teachers, an art teacher, as well as teachers of technology, business computers, Spanish, and cosmetology. All of the teachers have been in the school for three or more years, and all teachers of core academic subjects 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	
-	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 <i>All Students</i> subgroup in one or more identified subject/area(s).	✓
-	For 2010-11, the school was identified as a <u>Persistently Lowest- Achieving school.</u>	✓

B. School Strengths:

- Staff cares about and enjoys working with the students and wants them to succeed.
- Students have opportunities for exposure to and participation in performing and visual arts.
- Programs are created to meet the unique needs of the changing population.

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 seven JIT Indicator Categories:

I. Curriculum

Findings:

- Teachers indicated that they align curriculum to New York State (NYS) Standards by “referencing State Standards online” and “teaching to the Regents.” Some teachers indicated that they participated in curriculum mapping last year, but there is little evidence that the maps inform instruction, and there does not appear to be systemic awareness of the curriculum mapping work.
- Laboratory science is currently only offered in the Regents level high school classes, not in the high school RCT or middle school programs. There is no scope and sequence for elementary and middle school science or social studies, and teachers cite limited resources including supporting texts, materials, and technology.

- There is a clear plan for the selection and development of SRA Reading and Saxon mathematics in K-8, but not all classrooms have all the necessary materials, including technology and manipulatives, and other classrooms are not using the materials appropriately. Additionally, not all teachers have been trained in all the components of the program and, therefore, there is no consistency in the use of protocols for the timed assessments.
- There is no clear plan for integrating literacy and writing throughout the K-8 program, and some teachers indicated that SRA is the curriculum.
- There is no written scope and sequence for internship and vocational programs. Students appear to be placed in internships without a clear, scaffolded approach to skills, job readiness, and transition opportunities.

Recommendations:

- The District should work with the schools on the development of curricula in all core areas and ensure that it is clearly aligned with the current NYS Learning Standards. Curriculum must be aligned to the new NYS K-12 Common Core Learning Standards in English language arts and literacy as well as mathematics to prepare for implementation in school year 2012-2013. All curricula should be developed by knowledgeable and trained individuals who understand the key elements of curriculum development, including the development of curriculum maps and pacing calendars.

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 District should work with the Principals and the teachers to integrate the existing science kits and materials and allocate technological resources to enhance the science curriculum. Additionally, the District should develop a scope and sequence for social studies and science K-8.
- All teachers need to have access to the resources required by SRA and Saxon mathematics, and training needs to be consistent, ongoing and embedded in daily practice.
- The K-8 Principal should lead an initiative to ensure that literacy and writing instruction are embedded throughout the curriculum. The Principal should make it clear that SRA is not an ELA curriculum.
- The District and secondary staff should work on the development of a scope and sequence for vocational programs, including the implementation of employability profiles to log skills students have mastered. Efforts should include the development of a transition program and a process for students to move to a new site once they have mastered the targeted skills of their current internship.

II. Teaching and Learning

Findings:

- Although several teachers cited that students work in small groups of one to three students, there was little evidence of small group instruction and no evidence of differentiation in instructional practice/activities. Students indicated that they either worked alone or in a whole group. Limited, if any, cooperative learning opportunities were evident.
- In many classes, students were not actively engaged in class discussions and there was little evidence of lessons/assignments reflecting rigor and an emphasis on higher order thinking skills.
- Roles and responsibilities of teaching assistants and aides vary from classroom to classroom. In most classrooms, there is an inadequate use of teaching assistants and aides, and there is evidence of a lack of clear roles and expectations for teaching assistants and aides.
- Some, but not all, classroom teachers use project-based and student-centered activities as indicated below:
 - A mathematics elementary teacher used the SMART Board to develop a lesson on estimating that actively involved students, rewarded students who participated, and used rulers and manipulatives to have students do estimation activities. There was an emphasis on active engagement.
 - In one high school vocational class, instruction was very hands-on. Students were building a house and tactual and kinesthetic activities were demonstrated during lesson. Students were sharing tools and supporting each other during the lesson.
 - In a cosmetology class, students were actively engaged in working on hair setting on mannequins.
- Although some classrooms have SMART Boards and many classrooms have computers or access through lap top carts, there has been limited PD to integrate technology into instruction.
- There are limited and inconsistent opportunities for staff to meet, and often there are no set or written agendas.

Recommendations:

- Administrators should provide PD in differentiated instruction and project-based learning, using instructional coaches to embed practices in classrooms. Administrators should then conduct walkthroughs with protocol linked to the PD to assist teachers with addressing grouping in their classrooms and incorporating differentiation strategies to accelerate student learning and improve teacher practice. Observations should routinely provide feedback to teachers on their use of the strategies targeted in professional development.
- PD should be provided on the development of rigorous lessons and assignments that engage students and emphasize critical thinking skills.
- Central administration should articulate clear, consistent expectations for the roles and responsibilities of teaching assistants and aides and provide appropriate training.
- Administrators and teachers should have access to PD to systemically develop and facilitate project-based work and a culture of student-centered learning.

- The Principals should conduct a thorough inventory of all technology resources, ensure that all staff has access to technology, and provide training to teachers on the integration of technology into instruction.
- Administrators should develop a schedule to promote a team/department structure, with common planning times and focused agendas for meetings.

III. School Leadership

Findings:

- The Principals focus on behavior and have not emphasized the development of instructional practice.
- There is no written document that specifies the specific responsibilities, expectations, and accountability of central administrators.
- The Principals do not conduct regular walkthroughs of classrooms.
- The K -12 Principals do not regularly analyze and use data and have not provided teachers with the knowledge and tools needed for using data to inform instruction.
- The K-12 Principals are not currently using a goal setting process to emphasize improving instructional practice.
- The schedule in K-8 allows for only 15 minutes a week of common planning time. The high school schedule allows for weekly meetings. Some high school teachers indicate that this time is useful, but reviewers did not find evidence of clear and consistent agendas focusing on collaborative planning or PD.
- Although central administration indicates that PD priorities are established with input from staff through surveys and other tools, several staff indicated that they were not involved in PD choices.

Recommendations:

- The District should focus on leadership development for administrators with an emphasis on instructional leadership and facilitation skills, including the *Framework for Teaching* and the Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium Standards (ISLLC) for administrators. Training should also incorporate the effective use of data and emphasize accountability for results.
- Roles and responsibilities of the central administration team should be clarified as part of the team's ongoing work on facilitative and accountable leadership.
- Walkthroughs and formal evaluations should include how well the teacher knows and implements the curriculum for the subjects being taught and include in-class support and coaching as needed.
- Principals need training in the analysis and use of data to inform instruction in order to provide guidance and leadership to teachers.

- The District should revisit its mission and vision and use this work as a lens to develop a clearly articulated path to setting goals and assessing progress through measurable benchmarks and accountability standards.
- K-12 Principals should establish purposeful meetings with clear and consistent agendas that focus on collaborative planning and/or PD.
- The PD Committee should be reconvened, and work on the development of a collaborative community should continue.

IV. Infrastructure for Student Success

Findings:

- The Ease of Entry team process is not consistently followed in order to ensure collaboration on the appropriate placement of students and adequate preparation time for staff to welcome new youngsters to the program.
- There are few examples of aligned communication between school and agency personnel in order to promote successful academic achievement of students.
- There are significant gaps in the infrastructure supporting student success. For example:
 - Students cite the lack of after-school and weekend opportunities for extra academic or homework assistance.
 - Students also indicated that sports activities provide motivation for success but all extracurricular activities are in danger of being cut from the budget.
- Although some classrooms use effective routines and rituals, including positive and ongoing feedback to students, use of non-verbal cues, and the movement of staff around the room to keep students on track, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is not yet consistently implemented in K-12.
- The guidance counselor position has not been filled due to budgetary issues, resulting in an increase in caseloads, lack of timeliness in the distribution of report cards and a reduction in positive activities, such as awards ceremonies, that motivate students and bring the staff together.
- Although students are often late to class, there is no evidence of a consistent, coherent process to address tardiness.
- Teachers value safety monitors but safety monitors cite challenges of understaffing, as well as feeling disconnected from the school and agency staff.

Recommendations:

- The Ease of Entry team process needs to be consistently followed by Principals to ensure that staff has all necessary information for collaborative decision-making on the placement of students and the formation of arrangements for welcoming and supporting students during intake.
- The school should actively seek training and information on best practices of cross systems of care (*reference Council on Children and Families*) for all school and agency staff to ensure wrap around supports for all students in a collaborative, cohesive manner focused on the success of the child.

- Structured opportunities for student participation in after school academic, extracurricular and sports activities should be increased.
- The PBIS plan should be implemented, with ongoing training to ensure that there is a robust, Districtwide behavior system, with consistent expectations and appropriate follow through.
- The position of guidance counselor for the high school should be filled by a professional with the requisite skill set and certification.
- The school and agency leadership should work on decreasing lateness. Until the lateness issue is resolved, the school should consider such strategies as rotating first period academic classes as a way of preventing students from missing the same first period class every day.
- The District should develop clear expectations and a consistent protocol for safety interventions and a team approach for all staff and safety monitors to increase collaboration, as well as to minimize out of class time for students.

V. Collection, Analysis, and Utilization of Data

Findings:

- Some teachers use the Standardized Testing and Reporting System (STAR) to ascertain growth of individual students; however, the school's Principals have not determined how to access trends in growth across groups of students.
- There are few examples of teachers effectively using data to drive instruction and limited opportunities for teams to come together to collaborate on the data and instructional practice. The departmentalized high school team uses RCT and Regents practice exams to determine readiness for State tests and conducts limited item analysis to target areas of challenge for students.
- Incident report data is collected, but there is no consistent process for analyzing and using behavioral data.
- The Ease of Entry process results in the development of specific information for teachers and counselors prior to placement of residential students in schools. However, there is inconsistency in how the Principals use the process to ensure timely information and collaboration.

Recommendations:

- The District should consider the benefit of an increased collaboration with the Lower Hudson Regional Information Center (LHRIC) and use of the next level of data warehousing to maximize access to student achievement information, as well as support and training from the LHRIC.
- The District should develop and implement a data management and data inquiry process and use the analysis of data to increase student achievement. This process should support the exploration of research-based programs to increase student outcomes and include a systemic process for reviewing instructional decisions and making adjustments accordingly.

- District and school staff should analyze incident management data related to time out of school and alternatives to suspension to optimize opportunities for student academic and behavioral growth.
- The Ease of Entry process should be clarified to ensure consistency with timelines and responsibilities of staff.

VI. Professional Development

Findings:

- Ongoing opportunities for adult learning are inadequate and inconsistent. Staff cites a series of initiatives that were abandoned over time. Currently, SMART Board and Individualized Educational Program (IEP) training are the most common offerings.
- Due to contractual constraints and different requirements for non-tenured and tenured staff, after-school PD is limited.
- While staff talked about differentiating instruction as being a priority, there was little evidence of this in practice, with most classes focused on whole group instruction. The same lesson and materials were used for all students.

Recommendations:

- The District should develop a clear, scaffolded approach to adult learning. The plan should be differentiated based on identified areas of need, aligned to goal setting, and with an emphasis on inquiry and action research to improve student learning.
- All administrators and teachers should participate in ongoing PD through common planning time meetings and in-class coaching and support, in addition to after school opportunities as per the contract.
- The PD plan should be comprehensive and sequenced developmentally in order to address the implementation of standards based differentiated instruction by teachers for all students. Principals should be responsible for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the PD.

VII. District Support

Findings:

- While mission statements are visible throughout the school, there is little evidence that the mission drives the daily work of the school.
- Due to fiscal constraints, vacated teaching assistant positions will now be filled with teacher aides; this could have the potential of limiting in-class responsibilities to behavior and clerical support.
- Counselors are supervised by Principals and not by an experienced clinician.
- The noise level in the hallways interferes with instruction.

- There is no clearly articulated and consistent process for evaluations of administrators and staff linked to accountability for student learning and/or professional growth.
- The staff indicated that PD is sporadic and does not have a consistent theme throughout the year.
- Some classrooms use rubrics to assess student work, but these are not consistent throughout the school and vary in quality.
- Students have limited opportunities to engage in activities that support ongoing academic, social, and emotional growth.

Recommendations:

- The District should develop a process that emphasizes a singular vision and focus. A common language used by school and agency staff in response to the ever changing educational landscape to support the growth of children with serious emotional and learning challenges is essential.
- The District should carefully review budgets to ensure adequate staffing to support classroom instruction and counseling support and effectiveness. This includes addition of an experienced clinician to support counselors.
- The District should consider using the expertise of an experienced clinician in order to maximize the effectiveness of counselors and ensure that they are spending their time on providing mandated counseling as well as crisis intervention.
- The District should consider engaging the facilities department in the development of a plan for addressing noise abatement, particularly in hallways, as the noise is a distracting influence from classroom activities.
- The District should redefine the evaluation process of the administration and staff to allow for greater accountability for student and professional growth.
- The District should work with the school leaders to develop a collaborative rubric for the evaluation of student work.
- The District should promote the development of student initiatives to support continued academic, social, and emotional growth.
- The District should provide support in implementing the recommendations of the Joint Intervention Team (JIT).

PART 3: OVERALL FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

A. Overall Finding

Reference	Review Team Finding	✓
(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 Recommendation

Reference	Review Team Recommendation	✓
(c)	Develop and implement a new plan that could include <u>significant 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. In the space below, include specific information to support the District in determining how the above recommendation should be accomplished.

- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of Central Administration staff to ensure an effective organizational, managerial, and supervisory structure.
- Provide leadership development for administrators, with a focus on facilitative and instructional supervision linked to clear measures of accountability.
- Accompany any staffing changes with the provision of ongoing, high-quality, job-embedded professional development that is aligned with the school’s comprehensive instructional program and within the context of existing collective bargaining agreements.
- Develop the curriculum frameworks, including pacing calendars, PD plan for staff, and an implementation timeline.
- Conduct periodic reviews to ensure that the curriculum is being implemented with fidelity and is having the intended impact on student achievement.
- Modify the curriculum if it is ineffective.