

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

BEDS Code:	14060010037
School Name:	PS 37 Futures Academy
School Address:	298 Carlton Street Buffalo, NY 14204
Principal:	Deana Stevenson
Restructuring Phase/Category:	Persistently Lowest-Achieving/School Under Registration Review (PLA/SURR)
Area(s) of Identification:	English Language Arts and Mathematics
Dates of On-site Diagnostic Review:	February 1-3, 2011

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

A. Community and School Background

PS 37 Futures Academy serves 568 students in pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The student enrollment is 84 percent Black, four percent Hispanic, nine percent White, and one percent Multiracial. Twenty-three percent are students with disabilities. Most of the students do not live near the school but are bussed or dropped off by their parents or guardians.

The school leadership team includes the Principal, an Assistant Principal (AP), the English language arts (ELA) and mathematics coaches, and one representative from each grade level. The Principal is in her fourth year at the school, and the AP is in her third year. There are 64 teachers on staff at the school. Fewer than one percent of the teachers are new to the school, and only two teachers have been on staff for fewer than one year. Four teachers have been on staff fewer than three years. Ninety-five percent of the teachers are highly qualified. The school does not have a history of high administrative or teacher turnover.

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	
-	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).	✓
-	For 2010-11, the school was identified as a <u>Persistently Lowest- Achieving school</u>	✓

B. School Strengths

- The school is well-maintained, and students and teachers indicated that they feel safe in the school.
- Parents are supportive of teachers and the administration. They feel comfortable when at the school and believe that the school is a safe environment for their children.

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:

- A review of curriculum documents indicates that although the District's written curriculum is aligned with New York State (NYS) Standards, there is a disconnect between the written curriculum and the taught curriculum.
- Scope and sequence documents and pacing calendars for each core academic subject are available for staff and aligned with the curriculum and the NYS standards; however, many teachers do not extend their instructional practice beyond the prescribed curriculum.

Recommendations:

- The Principal, with assistance from District Office Curriculum Supervisors, should monitor lesson plans and curricular initiatives more closely to ensure that teachers are making the transition from the written to the taught curriculum in their daily instructional practice. Principal feedback should be timely and consistent to ensure fidelity to the written standards-based curriculum.
- Administrators should monitor lesson plans and curricular initiatives and provide timely feedback to ensure that all teachers are using the scope and sequence documents and pacing calendars. More in-service training should be provided to staff in teaching higher order thinking skills and other best instructional practices, such as scaffolding and differentiation of instruction.

II. Teaching and Learning

Findings:

- Although the District and Principal have provided PD opportunities for staff to understand and implement differentiation of instruction, a large percentage of the observed classes, particularly grades 7 and 8, were still employing whole group instruction. In the elementary classrooms, some small group instruction was observed, but not on a consistent basis. Neither modeling, scaffolding nor instruction in content-area literacy (reading/writing) nor the use of higher order thinking skills and processes were observed. There was a wide range observed in teacher use of best instructional practices.

- White the District requires teachers to have clear objectives for each lesson; students often did not understand the purpose of the lesson.
- The school has adopted the Positive Behavioral Intervention Supports (PBIS) model to address behavioral issues; however classroom visits revealed that many teachers were not following the procedures associated with the model. While all teachers were familiar with the District code of conduct, there is inconsistency in application. Such inconsistency has led to varying expectations on the part of both students and teachers relative to what consequences are to be applied for infractions. Numerous teachers have their own class rules resulting in students experiencing inconsistency from class to class.

Recommendations:

- The Principal and leadership team should clearly outline expectations and conduct more focused walkthroughs with an eye towards observing differentiation, scaffolding, and content rich instruction. The administrative staff should develop a plan for ensuring that teachers increase instructional differentiation and use of proven techniques such as cooperative learning, pair and share, triads and conferencing. Support should be provided for grade level meetings and teachers who are not meeting expectations.
- Teachers should clearly state the purpose of each lesson and check for student understanding. The Principal should ensure this is incorporated into lesson plans and conduct follow-up classroom visits.
- The Principal and AP should hold teachers and students accountable for implementing the PBIS model with fidelity. Teachers should be held accountable for managing their classrooms, rather than making referrals to the administration before first seeking to address the needs of their students in the classroom. Parents should be made aware of these expectations on a regular basis and provided updates.

III. School Leadership

Findings:

- An examination of the school schedule reveals that a minimum of 10-15 minutes of instructional time is lost each school day due to its current configuration. Valuable instructional time is also lost because a number of teachers do not have routines that enable students to be seated immediately so that class begins as soon as they arrive. This was more prevalent in the upper grades.
- Although the Principal and coaches use data to plan grade level meetings (GLM), there is little evidence in the GLM minutes of clear action steps that teachers are to implement in their classrooms or of follow-up action steps for the next GLM. Student support staff do not participate in GLM; therefore, they cannot assist the teachers, except by individual requests, with social and developmental problems that may be impacting learning.
- Common planning time is rare for subject area teachers. The inability of teachers to plan together to ascertain the student skills that need to be addressed is a major problem.

Recommendations:

- The school administration should be proactive in re-examining the school schedule to maximize instructional time and to ensure that there is time scheduled for common planning. Further, the administrators should develop routines for monitoring classroom instruction so that maximum time is used for teaching and learning in the classroom.
- GLM should include clear action steps closely aligned to the data discussion for teachers to implement in their classrooms. The Principal should require teachers to bring data from the action step implementation to the next GLM. Student support staff should be involved in GLM to share options with teachers on how to handle social and developmental problems that may be impacting learning and to become aware of the needs of specific students.
- The school should investigate revising the schedule to provide for co-planning opportunities. Monthly faculty meetings could also allow time for such collaborations.

IV. Infrastructure for Student Success

Findings:

- Not all teachers have high expectations for the lowest performing students and students with special needs.
- Although there is a Code of Conduct and Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) in its first year of implementation, transitions to the next activity in many classrooms and hallways were not orderly, smooth and seamless. In many cases there was a loss of instructional time, with noise, teasing and pushing among students. In a number of grade 7 and grade 8 classrooms, this went on for a few minutes before the teacher gave the situation attention. Several instances were noted where students called teachers by their last name with no salutation (Mr., etc.). This is apparently a long-standing pattern, since the teachers did not correct the students.

Recommendations:

- A thorough examination of the lack of high expectations for all students should be undertaken by the administrative team, followed by a series of training activities to address this issue. All staff should be required to participate.
- The administrative team should monitor the hallways to ensure that students move quietly and orderly during class transitions. Administrators and teachers should articulate their expectation and monitor transitions within the classroom, thus reducing the loss of instructional time. Expectations for class behavior for grade 7 and 8 should be clearly articulated and monitored by the Principal and AP. A climate/culture of respect should be maintained to ensure that students can transfer these skills into the real world.

V. Collection, Analysis and Utilization of Data

Findings:

- Teachers have been trained in the use of data to plan instruction; however, there is little evidence of the use of data in implementing instructional practice. The Principal encourages staff to use available data in developing their lesson objectives; however, it is not consistently used.

- Although there is evidence of some use of data, the school Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) does not contain any comprehensive action plan for the use of data for identifying the effectiveness of current educational programs or for identifying schoolwide priorities for improving student achievement.
- Although the Principal makes every effort to encourage students to attend school regularly through incentives programs and by using the limited personnel available, attendance is problematic. The current attendance rate is 87.89 percent. Absenteeism is higher in winter because of the weather, i.e., the average rate in September was 92 percent, in December it dropped to 83 percent and in January it was at 85 percent.

Recommendations:

- Teachers should focus on one or two best practices that require the use of data and then have those results published for the faculty. Another strategy to consider is the creation of a data turnkey trainer (teacher) who could assist the Principal in working with teachers on a continuous basis in promoting the use and evaluation of data. This could be accomplished by giving that teacher a release period in lieu of a duty.
- The District assessment personnel should develop a review of the use of data in effective planning for administrators. The CEP should describe specific action plans/activities for using data with a definitive timeline for implementing the tasks and a review of their effectiveness. Knowledge gained should be shared with all staff.
- Staff should continue to work with families to emphasize the importance of good attendance. Grant funding to increase the District's ability to address this ongoing situation should be sought.

VI. Professional Development

Findings:

- A comprehensive staff development plan has been implemented by the District for all staff. Despite these in-service offerings, many teachers do not take advantage of the opportunities to enhance their professional growth.
- The District has provided substantial resources in supporting the efforts of Principals toward developing more effective teaching and learning. The Principal is supportive of PD opportunities for her staff. However, much more needs to be done in ensuring that the PD is translated into instructional changes in the classrooms that improve student achievement.
- PD in using benchmark data has been provided to staff through Professional Learning Opportunities (PLO) and at many grade level meetings; however, a substantial number of teachers do not integrate these strategies into actual practice.

Recommendations:

- The administrative team should create individualized plans for all staff to follow relative to improving the lessons provided to all students. Special emphasis should be given to staff responsible for teaching students in the identified subgroups.

- There needs to be ongoing discussions among teachers regarding PD and its impact on instruction. The Principal should continue to encourage teachers to participate in PD sessions and foster teacher interest in gaining additional skills that can impact instruction in all content areas.
- The existing PD plan should be re-evaluated and a detailed approach that facilitates the use of data to drive instruction should be developed. School leadership should consider identifying teachers with best practices in using data as turnkey trainers on each grade. Periodic reviews of these practices should be required by the District curriculum supervisors and building administrators. The model used currently to ensure that required concepts and skills are taught (the pacing calendars) could be used to monitor the incorporation of data from benchmark and summative assessments into teacher practice.

VII. District Support

Findings:

- Although the District provides the school with support for numerous programs and initiatives, the impact on the delivery of instruction is not often demonstrated in the classroom.
- The District has implemented an infrastructure to support the prescribed curriculum with associated PD to ensure its integrity. However, the teaching staff do not avail themselves to a great extent to the after school PD.
- Interviews with school staff indicated a recurring concern that the frequency of new and different District-driven initiatives allows little time to fully implement or integrate one initiative before another is mandated.

Recommendations:

- The Principal and AP should develop a plan for monitoring teachers and providing timely feedback to ensure skillful delivery of instruction based on District programs and initiatives.
- The Principal and AP should more closely monitor teacher adherence to the prescribed curriculum, examine teacher prepared assessments and ensure that staff is taking advantage of PD opportunities. The Principal should evaluate effectiveness and share outcomes and follow-up with staff and supervisors in a timely manner.
- The District should prioritize the implementation of initiatives to ensure that the foundation for one initiative is fully developed prior to another being required.
- The District should support the school in the implementation of the Joint Intervention Team’s (JIT) recommendations.

PART 3: JOINT INTERVENTION TEAM 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.	
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B. Overall Recommendation

Reference	Review Team Recommendations	
(c)	Develop and implement a 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.

- While there is substantive leadership at this school, there is a need for more PD for the administrative staff in observing teaching staff and recognizing best practices. Time management and the setting of priorities by the administrative staff in the daily management of the school and the implementation of District initiatives should also be addressed.
- Administrative staff should be trained in using data from both formative and summative assessments to impact the instruction of those staff members who are responsible for teaching students in the identified subgroups. This in-service should be focused on such factors as observing the instructional practices of teachers, examining assessments for patterns and sharing results with staff, and providing research proven strategies for quality instruction to identified subgroups.
- The present school schedule does not allow for optimum use of instructional time. Forty-five minutes a day could be gained by reconfiguring the schedule by eliminating homeroom and reducing the preparation time for dismissal and transition time between the breakfast period and the first class period.
- Substantial reviews of the curriculum should be periodically conducted by the school administrative staff and District curriculum and assessment personnel to ensure that it is having the intended effect on student achievement, especially for those students in the identified subgroups and that it is modified when ineffective.
- Embedded coaching of classroom teachers is needed in enabling them to present interesting lessons that involve the students. Teachers providing intervention services should also be receiving coaching services to improve their skills and to foster success for the identified subgroups.
- Providing more services to the school in addressing truancy and absenteeism would ensure that students gain the knowledge and skills that are necessary for student success.
- A comprehensive review of the skill sets of staff that are responsible for teaching mathematics, reading, and English/language arts, and the success of their classes is warranted. Results of this review may warrant replacing ineffective staff with teachers who have strong academic skills.