

NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Office of Accountability

Differentiated Accountability

SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW REPORT

BEDS Code/DBN:	140600010053
School District	Buffalo City School District
School Name:	PS 53 Community School
School Address:	329 Roehrer Ave., Buffalo, NY 14208
Principal:	June M. Clark
Accountability Phase/Category:	Improvement (year 1) Comprehensive
Areas of Identification:	English Language Arts, Mathematics and Students with Disabilities
Dates of On-site Review:	January 25 – 26, 2011

PART 1: MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of PS 53 Community School is:

- To ensure that every student will have the confidence, knowledge, thinking skills, character and hope to assume responsibility for her/his life and contribute to the lives of others;
- To champion excellence and innovative learning experiences in partnership with family and community; and
- To hold everyone accountable for educating our students and for working to energize all members of the community to actively participate in accomplishing [the] mission.

PART 2: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND UTILIZATION OF DATA

FINDINGS:

- PS 53 Community School has begun to use data sources such as the New York State Assessment Program results for English language arts (ELA), mathematics and science to create graphs that highlight trends in student achievement. The school is able to compare different measures in each class and among all subgroups, such as students with disabilities.
- Although the school recognizes the importance of formative and summative data collection, there is little evidence that all teachers are using data to track, support and improve student learning and to differentiate instruction for subgroups.
- Data that is available during the school year is not shared with teachers of students enrolled in summer programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Professional development (PD) should be provided to enable all teachers to become knowledgeable about the use of data to drive instruction. The use of data should be ongoing, drive instruction, and incorporated into lesson plans. The school should establish a data analysis team to assist in formulating plans to address issues that may arise, establish progress charts, and monitor professional and academic accountability.
- School administrators should develop a plan to monitor the use of data in all classes.
- Student data that is generated during the school year should be available to teachers teaching during the summer. Teachers can use the data to plan for and better meet the needs of students and provide the link to better performance at the next grade level.

II. TEACHING AND LEARNING

FINDINGS:

- Approximately 25 classrooms were visited. In some of these classes, the lack of planning to address the various learning needs of students was evident. Although some teachers demonstrated some awareness of student prior knowledge, such knowledge was not linked to the topic or concept being taught.
- There is a disconnect between what is taught in mathematics and the State Standards in grades one through six. Teachers did not consistently use rubrics that model the standards.
- There is a lack of effective instructional practice in many of the classes visited by the SQR team. In most of the classes, instruction was teacher directed and provided little interaction from students. The 2009-10 New York State Report Card reported that 61 percent of students scored at or below level two and only ten percent scored at level three in English language arts.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The purpose of teacher planning is to be able to deliver a clear, logical and concise lesson to students. Teachers should be prepared to anticipate questions from students, as well as anticipate most sequences of events. Teachers should be prepared to incorporate students' prior knowledge into lessons. School administrators should ensure that appropriate professional development (PD) is provided to teachers.
- With the support of school administrators and the Central Office, teachers should receive PD on the pacing and alignment of lessons, using the current mathematics textbooks. Lessons should be aligned with the State Standards and based on student needs.
- Provide training for teachers on differentiated instruction to enable them to incorporate these principles into their instruction. Teaching to the middle of the class is not enough, but rather lessons must be structured to address all levels of student abilities.

III. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

FINDINGS:

- A new teacher evaluation document is in development and will soon be in use. The current evaluation rubric does not adequately assist administrators in the evaluation process.
- Teachers are required to turn in lesson plans every two weeks to the administrators. These lessons plans may follow the script given by the textbook companies. However, there is little evidence of teachers incorporating students' prior knowledge as a prerequisite into discussion that leads to a formal lesson.
- There is a lack of consistent and effective instructional practice throughout the school as evidenced by classroom observations and staff interviews.
- The School leadership should strengthen the monitoring of data usage and analysis to ensure effective delivery of instruction to all students.
- Evidence of the school's outreach efforts and activities was provided. However, parental involvement is limited. The District provides parent engagement activities for all parents, but with minimal results.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Instructional leaders should visit classrooms and be trained in the use of the new teacher evaluation tool.
- Professional development should be provided to teachers in how to use students' prior knowledge to facilitate their learning new materials.
- The Principal should develop a comprehensive instructional plan that addresses individual student academic needs and encompasses the differentiated instructional model. Clear expectations regarding high expectations and academic outcomes should be establish for all students.
- PD should be provided to teachers on the effective use of data and the use of data in planning daily lessons. All observations should include feedback on the use of data to group students and differentiate by content, process and product.
- Although the district is trying to recruit and encourage parents to join a Parent and Teacher Organization (PTO), the school needs to reach out to parents to ensure that they are involved in their children's education. School administrators should continue to recruit parents, using flex time, off hours, off school site meeting places, etc., to ensure that parents get involved with the education of their child.

IV. INFRASTRUCTURE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

FINDINGS:

- PS 53 Community School faces many challenges that range from scheduling conflicts due to the late arrival of refugee students from Burma, Haiti and Somalia, to the high level of student need.
- There is evidence of some community resources available in the school. There is a need to increase student exposure to career options.
- The school reaches out to high schools through the High School Ahead initiative. However, there could be better articulation between this school and the high schools in the city.
- Literacy and math coaches are needed to assist and support ELA and math teachers.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The Principal in collaboration with Central Office staff should review established enrollment policies and protocols to ensure appropriate and timely placement of students and the availability of additional resources.
- The school should review the upper grade schedule to ensure that eighth grade students have exposure to career education.
- Time should be set-aside within the district for teachers from middle and high schools to meet, collaborate and plan a well-articulated pathway for students at the next level of schooling. The school administrative team and the Central Office should revisit the school's transition process to ensure effective planning and collaboration.
- The school should consider hiring a literacy and a math coach specifically for the upper grades.

V. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FINDINGS:

- The District and the school staff devote time and resources to professional development and updating curriculum materials.
- Based on the data presented, grade level meetings, Superintendent days and early release days could be better utilized if a specific area of PD focus was carefully monitored and assessed before moving on to new PD topics.

- The teachers using the co-teaching instructional model are in need of additional PD to maximize their efforts. In classes that were visited, one teacher taught the class while the other teacher assisted. As currently implemented, the model is not consistent with the tenets of the co-teaching instructional model and does not address the unique needs of individual students.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school should continue to support staff through professional development that is based on students needs and continue to work with the Central Office in the facilitation and targeting of PD. Additionally, the school leaders should continue to support and encourage staff to attend external professional development opportunities that are aligned to students’ social/emotional and academic needs.
- The school leaders should develop structures to focus PD on areas that are relevant to the current needs of students before moving on to new topics. Common prep time, grade level meetings, early release days, etc. could be strategically used to enhance best practices towards student achievement.
- The school/district staff should plan for additional professional development time for teachers involved in co-teaching to develop their skills and improve the effectiveness of their instructional practice for all students. Additionally, school leadership should provide on-going PD for the ELA and mathematics teachers to maximize their skills, especially in meeting the needs of students with disabilities, new arrivals and students at-risk.

VI. FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

FINDINGS:

- Plans are currently in place to renovate the school facility, as part of the District’s initiative for classroom space and technology additions. There are presently shortfalls that will be remedied once the renovations are completed, e.g., science labs, Smart Boards and classroom computers.
- In classes that were visited, the classroom environment was clean and orderly. However, there is not enough student work displayed that demonstrates mastery of New York State Learning Standards and performance indicators in all subject areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Technology and available software applications should be used to enrich classes and engage learners in mathematics, science and ELA. The use and effectiveness of instructional software for different student populations should be monitored, particularly for the special education subgroup.
- The administrative team and teachers should ensure that high quality student work linked to the standards is displayed in classrooms and hallways.

PART 3: CONCLUDING STATEMENT

PS 53 Community School is designated as a school in the Superintendent's District, This designation provides extra resources (human and material), extended day and year program opportunities, and supports a reduction in class size. The SQR team recognized that there is a need to provide staff with time and opportunities to analyze student data in order for staff to use it to drive instruction and to make informed decisions. The school leadership should identify key staff members who will play an integral part in making the recommendations in this report a reality. The central office staff should ensure that the extra resources are utilized effectively to achieve the goals set by the district for PS 53 Community School.

The findings and recommendations resulting in this SQR Report should be infused into the discussion, planning, development and implementation of the Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) for the 2011-12 school year. This plan should also form an overall framework for the many initiatives that are currently in place to promote greater coordination between programs and to ensure that the intended results are achieved.