NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Office of Accountability

Differentiated Accountability - School Quality Review (SQR)

SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW REPORT

BEDS Code:	261600010039
District Name:	Rochester City School District
School Name:	Andrew J. Townson School No. 39
School Address:	145 Midland Ave., Rochester, NY 14621
Principal:	Jason Lewis
Accountability Phase/Category:	Improvement (year 1) -Comprehensive
Area of Identification:	English Language Arts – All Students; African American Students; Students with Disabilities and Economically Disadvantaged Students
Dates of On-site Review:	April 3-5, 2012

PART 1: MISSION STATEMENT

"To empower students to believe in a successful future and provide the tools necessary to achieve it. Believe It, Achieve It!"

PART 2: SCHOOL STRENGTHS

- School leadership has substantial knowledge of age and developmentally appropriate assessments to support student growth in literacy and mathematics and ensures those assessments are conducted and reviewed for their implications for instruction in kindergarten through grade two.

- The school uses data and content specialist coaches to support teachers and address student needs. Four of these coaches also teach part-time in classrooms.

- School leadership provides time during the day on a monthly basis for teams and teachers on the same grade levels to receive professional development (PD), review assessment results and plan together.

- School leadership has set up a Response to Intervention (Rita) Model that provides students daily targeted intervention at their learning level in mathematics.

- Several classrooms are model classrooms for developmentally appropriate and standards based instruction, organization, and differentiation. School leadership recognizes those classrooms as outstanding.

- School leadership and a majority of teachers have implemented the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program. There was evidence of this in every grade.

- **School leadership recognizes the value of art and music, and programs are available for students.**

PART 3: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND UTILIZATION OF DATA

FINDINGS:

- With the exception of two classes, the review team saw no evidence that teachers used the collected assessment data in grades three through six to inform instruction.

- The school sends report cards to parents as required. The school does not have a universal format for this information. Information sent to parents regarding student progress is engaging and informative in kindergarten through grade 2, but in grades three through six the format presented to parents is technical and does not promote parent involvement.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Teachers for grades three through six should use student performance data, summative, formative and interim, as well as any other data that have an impact on student performance, such as attendance and suspensions to create instructional groups, design skill-based activities for small groups of students with similar needs and adjust the planned curriculum with a special focus on at-risk students and identified subgroups.

- The school leader should expand parent-teacher contact opportunities by providing monthly opportunities for teachers to share learning goals and classroom activities with parents through parent bulletins or phone calls. School leaders should work with a parent-outreach coordinator to plan and implement this work.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

FINDINGS:

- The co-teaching model was not effectively implemented in most classrooms that were visited by the review team.

- In the majority of lessons in grades three through six, teachers did not routinely refer to learning objectives or check that students had achieved them. Students were often unclear about what they were learning and found it difficult to complete assigned tasks. The pacing of instruction did not enable students to effectively process information.

- There was a lack of rigor in questioning strategies; teaching of higher order thinking and problem solving skills to students is almost absent from the school. Students are asked to recall facts and details. There was little evidence of students being challenged to analyze, evaluate or synthesize information.

- Much of the instruction was whole-group and teacher directed. The review team saw little evidence that data was used to group students in order to provide different tasks or to match tasks to the differing ability levels or interests of students.

- Teachers did not provide students with high quality feedback that clarified what they needed to do to improve their skills and strategies.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Teachers should be provided with support, guidance, and, where appropriate, PD to implement an effective co-teaching model. The co-teachers should be provided with daily collaborative planning time to ensure best practices in co-teaching instruction to support students with disabilities. The school leaders should closely monitor co-teaching classroom practices and provide constructive feedback to teachers.

- Learning objectives should be displayed and discussed with students at the beginning, during and at the end of lessons. Lessons should include explicit teaching points and provide practice sessions for independent work to assess student learning before teachers proceed to the next teaching point. Teachers should ensure that teaching points are related within the same lesson and are standards based. School leaders should monitor effective implementation through regular walkthroughs and provide feedback as needed.

- School leaders should make teacher questioning techniques a focus for observations. PD should be provided that moves teachers from teacher-posed questions that require one word answers or are recall and comprehension-based to questions that require students to support answers by citing text, elaborating on the answers of other students, and summarizing and rephrasing new information.

- School leaders should provide PD to introduce teachers to a wider range of instructional strategies that can be used in the classroom to differentiate instruction based on student data and promote greater student participation in the learning process. Teachers should be expected to incorporate these strategies into practice. School leaders should monitor effectiveness and provide additional PD for teachers when necessary.

- Teachers should be provided PD in delivering high quality feedback regarding student work and then embed this activity into instructional practice.

II. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

FINDINGS:

- Much of the school PD is voluntary. Despite the need for PD, there is not an instructionally based PD plan that ensures all teachers will receive necessary training.

- School leaders need support in managing and balancing immediate day-to-day activities with long-term improvement efforts.

- Although a formal Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) process exists, school leaders only manage limited informal instructional walkthroughs.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School leaders, with support from the District, should review and revise the Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) to incorporate a rigorous PD plan based on teacher and student needs.

- Mentoring and support from experienced and knowledgeable school leaders would be helpful in supporting the school leadership team with prioritization and problem solving.

- School leaders should develop a plan for regular informal walkthroughs that focus on specific teaching skills and strategies that result in data to drive instructional practices. Teachers should be held accountable for incorporating all the skills developed within PD activities into their instruction.

III. INFRASTRUCTURE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

FINDINGS:

- Some classroom environments are not conducive to learning. Teachers do not always organize their classrooms effectively to promote collaborative learning or student participation.

- School staff have low expectations for the academic achievement of students and cite external factors as the root cause for the school accountability status, i.e., student apathy, disinterest and lack of parental involvement.

- The school has not developed a systematic process to involve parents and families. The school parent coordinator reports that some teachers avoid communication with parents. All of the parents who were interviewed by the review team expressed frustration about a lack of opportunity to volunteer and be involved in grades three through six classrooms. The school was unable to provide evidence of attempts to obtain parental feedback on school activities, assess parent needs or obtain parents' views and opinions.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School leaders should monitor the management and design of classroom environments to ensure that classrooms are conducive to allowing a variety of instructional strategies to be used, e.g., students working in groups, in pairs or as a whole class when appropriate.

- PD should be provided to staff to enable successful implementation of clear behavioral and academic expectations for all staff and students. All staff should cease citing external factors as excuses for underperformance and focus on improving the school's effectiveness for all students.

- The school leaders should work with the parent coordinator to canvas the needs of parents and then develop an action plan to involve more parents in the processes that impact their child's education including stronger home-school communication and collaborative decision-making where possible.

IV. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FINDING:

The school's PD plan is not comprehensive and specific enough, nor is it aligned with school goals and student performance. Although there is a great deal of data in the school, there was little evidence indicating that it is used to inform the CEP, especially in grades 3-6. As a result, the PD offered to teachers is not directly linked to teacher and student need.

RECOMMENDATION:

Using the data that is available, the school leadership should develop a comprehensive PD plan that is aligned with the school CEP goals. School leaders should use the observation and walkthrough process to provide timely feedback to teachers and ensure that teachers incorporate all the skills developed within PD activities into their instructional delivery.

V. FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

FINDING:

The entry way and office space of the school is not clearly marked and cannot accommodate traffic normal for the attendance and principal's office.

RECOMMENDATION:

The team agrees with the District plan for redefining, designing and changing the structure of the offices in the entry area.

PART 4: CONCLUDING STATEMENT

The findings and recommendations noted in the report are intended to guide the school's inquiry, planning, and the development of the CEP for school year 2012-13. The school should also continue its efforts in the implementation of the following Regents Reform Agenda initiatives: P-12 Common Core Learning Standards, Data Driven Instruction and the Annual Professional Performance Reviews for teacher effectiveness.