

NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Office of Accountability

Differentiated Accountability - School Quality Review (SQR)

SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW REPORT

BEDS Code:	140600010122
District Name:	Buffalo City School District
School Name:	Bennett Park Montessori School
School Address:	342 Clinton Street, Buffalo, NY 14204
Principal:	Pauletta Stines
Accountability Phase/Category:	Improvement (year -1) - Comprehensive
Areas of Identification:	English Language Arts - All Students; African American Students; Students with Disabilities and Economically Disadvantaged Students Mathematics - All Students; African American Students; Students with Disabilities and Economically Disadvantaged Students
Dates of On-site Review:	January 25-26, 2012

PART 1: MISSION STATEMENT

“Our mission is to empower our graduates to be creative life-long learners within the world community. Our staff, with the support of parents, provides a developmentally appropriate, non-competitive, multi-aged, child-centered curriculum, which fosters respect and celebrates our differences.”

PART 2: SCHOOL STRENGTHS

Bennett Park Montessori Center is a pre-kindergarten through grade 8 school with a non-competitive grading system. Students are developmentally grouped, students with disabilities as well as regular education students, in accordance with the Montessori philosophy that all children can learn and should have no barriers. The following are some of the other strengths of this school:

- This school has a strong partnership with the Arts community in Buffalo.
- The school adapted and implemented the Peace Curriculum.
- No public address system is used for the change of classes; students move quietly from class to class at the appropriate time.

- Parents are very involved in the Montessori Association affiliated with this school.

PART 3: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND UTILIZATION OF DATA

FINDINGS:

- The school Montessori program emphasizes the use of formative and summative data; however, the plans for improvement and the benchmark assessments are not rigorous enough to result in enhanced student performance.
- There is little evidence that student data is used to address the academic deficiencies of all students.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School leaders should revisit the methods of assessment used by teachers, including State assessments, District benchmarks, interim assessments, and classroom tests. This process will inform teachers about students and give a clearer picture about where achievement gaps are occurring. In addition, school/District leaders should train staff on how to develop Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) and rubrics that will assist teachers in the construction of more rigorous benchmarks or interim assessments.
- The school should provide professional development (PD) for teachers to be able to analyze and interpret the data collected. The analysis of data should align with the Montessori program so as not lose the effectiveness of data driven instruction.

II. TEACHING AND LEARNING

FINDINGS:

- There is little evidence that all teachers are able to differentiate instruction so that the varying age and developmental groups are being addressed. Much of the instruction for all students is teacher- directed with little variety of instructional strategies.
- Although teachers have been introduced to the New York State (NYS) P-12 Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), not all teachers fully understand how the new standards will affect teaching and learning in the future.
- There is little evidence of rigor when it comes to challenging learning opportunities for all students, especially those with learning disabilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School leaders should provide PD opportunities for teachers on a variety of instructional strategies to promote differentiation of instruction to enable teachers to build a wider range of effective questioning

strategies so that students become more active participants in the learning process. Students with disabilities should be fully integrated into the Montessori program, with the understanding that they may require modifications in learning new concepts such as generalization, evaluative, inferential and abstract applications. School leaders should carry out regular observations of lessons to monitor that this is consistently occurring.

- The District should work with the school on the development of curriculum in all core areas and ensure that it is clearly aligned with the new P-12 Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) in English language arts and literacy and mathematics for implementation in school year 2012-13. All curricula should be developed by knowledgeable and trained individuals (national, State or local) who understand the key elements of curriculum development.

All teachers and school leaders should participate in professional development (PD) on how to plan and implement a curriculum with rigor, as well as on delivery methods that are student-centered. The curriculum should be relied upon as the basis for assessing 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.

- Teachers should be provided with support, guidance, and, where appropriate, PD to raise the expectations for students' learning and provide challenging learning opportunities for all students. Teacher should move from 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. Teacher lesson plans should include pre-created questions that require critical thinking and discussion. Teachers should use wait time and not allow students to opt-out of class discussions. Teachers should use random selection and/or avoid calling exclusively on willing student volunteers. Teachers should require students to answer in complete sentences.

III. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

FINDINGS:

- There is evidence that school leaders are committed to the high standards of the Montessori philosophy, yet the rigor that would enable students to score well on State assessments is not evident.
- There is no evidence that school leaders have been trained on the new CCLS and the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) in order to evaluate staff on the new teaching standards.
- Rubrics are used by some teachers for different subjects, and this practice is encouraged by school leaders. However, there is a need for the School Leadership Team (SLT) to develop a whole school model rubric that would consistently measure and direct the expectations for English language arts/literacy for all students.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The schools leaders, with the support of the District, should implement a classroom observation schedule to monitor more closely the quality of teaching and learning across the school. Written feedback should be provided for all formal, informal, and walkthrough observations, including clear targets for improvement. Follow-up observations should be included in the schedule to monitor teacher progress. The outcomes of observations of lessons should provide a focus for the school PD plan.
- The District should ensure that curriculum in ELA/literacy and mathematics is aligned with the CCLS and all school leaders are provided training in its implementation and in the APPR requirements.
- School leaders and the leadership team should develop a rubric that would guide the level of rigor needed for success in content areas. This group should study best practices in ELA and adapt or adopt activities that are relevant for this school's population.

IV. INFRASTRUCTURE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

FINDING:

Although there are some plans that could articulate a pathway for student success and a base for horizontal classroom planning, the vertical planning for higher standards, increasing rigor, and adding grades within the school are not clear.

RECOMMENDATION:

The school planning team, including school and District leaders and community partners, should consider the infrastructural needs prior to adding grades to the school. With the school enrolling students beyond the primary grades, science labs, self-correcting manipulatives for students with disabilities, and advanced transitional courses should be available to students and their parents. Students should be made aware of and plan for school-to-career options, early-college, as well as partnerships with businesses and higher education.

V. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FINDINGS:

- There is little evidence of schoolwide PD for all teachers in the CCLS and Teacher/Principal Evaluation/Effectiveness.
- Although the Montessori methodology includes continuous assessments of individual students, and teachers are trained to evaluate students independent of grade levels, there is a need for all teachers to be trained to evaluate lessons that are aligned to the P-12 CCLS.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School and District leaders should provide PD for staff to ensure that they are fully trained to implement the curriculum aligned with the P-12 CCLS and able to construct quality Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) when necessary. In addition, PD should be provided for school leaders and teachers to become familiar with what will be expected in the new APPR regulations.
- School leaders should provide PD training for all teachers to be able to evaluate and interpret the needs of students with disabilities, use the assessment data to drive instruction, and align the Montessori instruction with the P-12 CCLS.

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 Comprehensive Educational Plan (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 CCLS, Data Driven Instruction and the Annual Professional Performance Reviews (APPR) for teacher effectiveness.