

**NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Office of Accountability**

Differentiated Accountability - School Quality Review (SQR)

SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW REPORT

BEDS Code:	121901040003
District Name:	Walton Central School District
School Name:	Dr. George F. Mack Middle School
School Address:	47-49 Stockton Ave, Walton NY 13856
Principal:	Mike MacDonald
Accountability Phase/Category:	Improvement (year - 1) – Focused English Language Arts – Students with Disabilities and Economically Disadvantaged Students
Area of Identification:	
Dates of On-site Review:	November 14-15, 2011

PART 1: MISSION STATEMENT

“Teaching, Learning, Caring, and Growing...Together”

PART 2: SCHOOL STRENGTHS

- The school is clearly driven by its mission.
- Interviews by the review team with school leaders, teachers, parents and students revealed a focus on and commitment to working together for student success.
- There is a solid infrastructure for student success that includes additional learning times for students during and after the school day.

PART 3: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND UTILIZATION OF DATA

FINDINGS:

- Assessment is primarily at the classroom and State level.
- The Compass Learning Odyssey assessment module is being implemented in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics.

- The school is exploring the purchase of an assessment system, i.e., Acuity, and acknowledges that Data Driven Instruction (DDI) is an opportunity for increasing student performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school leader and staff should explore what data is available via Compass Learning and investigate how it is used.
- Differentiated instruction should be implemented after effective whole group direct instruction is mastered.

II. TEACHING AND LEARNING

FINDINGS:

- Expectations are the same for all students.
- Interviews indicated students are grouped according to grade level and are supported to remain in the general education curriculum and classroom.
- The school currently uses Compass Learning.
- Text is made available via audio for students.
- Resource room support was based on classroom work. Students report that resource room is an opportunity to get help and to get work done.
- Skills Lab provides students additional time to complete reading.
- Explicit instruction regarding predictions was observed during reading, including how to fix problems.
- Fiction text had multiple themes, and the activity packet appeared to address at least one of the themes.
- Journal writing was graded and paragraph structure was communicated.
- Frameworks and content area maps are not concept or skill-based.
- No learning objectives were posted. No reference was made to the previous lesson.
- The same text and activity packet was used by all students. Classroom texts are not differentiated, and the skills being taught via that text are not explicit.
- Neither direct instruction nor review of literacy skills that students were expected to use to complete the assignment was observed by the review team. Clear expectations for paragraph writing were reviewed, but there was no modeling, guided practice, exemplars, or rubric provided.

- Strategy instruction was observed infrequently by the review team.
- A great deal of classroom time was spent doing independent work, resulting in students finishing at different times. Students who finished early waited for the “next step,” while students not yet finished had more work added.
- The review of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) by the review team indicated that students were to be provided appropriate level texts.
- Students were not allowed to partner read. Students reported few opportunities to work in groups.
- Checks for understanding were limited, and students individually approached the teacher for assistance.
- No active note taking to gauge student understanding of the reading was observed by the review team.
- The review team observed no evidence that students self-monitored.
- Vocabulary instruction consisted of pronunciation and use of words in context to the story.
- Behavior expectations were neither consistently posted nor referenced. Students were not able to communicate clear behavior expectations and rules. In some classrooms, off task behavior, i.e., talking, and laughing, was not addressed by the teacher; in others when an inappropriate comment was made, it was immediately addressed.
- The grading policy is not uniform.
- Changes to instruction due to assessment are not evident at this time.
- Grade six teams planned to use time independently, but the teams did come together to discuss student progress, i.e., attendance or missing work. Clear roles or responsibilities for team members i.e., facilitator, note taker for minutes, and timekeeper, were not evident.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school leader and staff should develop clearly written curriculum documents aligned to the New York State (NYS) P-12 Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and outline learning objectives that are clearly tied to instruction and assessment.
- The school leader and teachers should ensure that scientifically based research with evidence-based strategies is implemented. The school leader and staff should also address academic rigor and relevance, differentiated instruction, and intervention strategies.
- The school leader and staff should ensure assessment occurs at regular intervals and facilitates timely re-teaching.

- The school leader and teachers should investigate the use of scaffolding instruction that progresses from the teacher modeling skills and knowledge through shared and guided experiences to sustained independent practice by students.
- The school leader and staff should establish explicit connection to standards and skills within the standards. This can be accomplished via curriculum documents, data driven instruction (DDI), interim assessments and/or lesson plans.
- Staff should explore student use of technology and/or peers as an opportunity to engage all students in learning.
- Staff and school leaders should ensure that expectations are aligned to CCLS and that all students are supported in reaching standards. Specifically, differentiation of texts and assignments should occur. Instruction should provide both direct instruction and guided practice. Skills classes and the resource room would then be able to provide additional supports for mastering skills. Students with special needs should be able to remain in the general education classroom setting once learning outcomes and differentiations are established.
- Teachers should establish explicitly the purpose of the reading prior to the student doing the reading if students are expected to ask questions, answer questions, and/or write based on reading.
- Staff should provide more explicit instruction on the skills that students are using for literature circles, i.e., text-to-text, text-to-self, and text-to-world.
- The school leader and staff should explore alternate models to extend vocabulary instruction. Vocabulary instruction should be connected to the text, e.g., vocabulary words from the text are connected to skills being taught.
- The school should consider text selections based on a review of Appendix A of the CCLS with regard to qualitative factors, quantitative factors, and reader and task factors for text complexity.
- Staff should select texts of high complexity and ensure students are supported by such strategies as explicit direct instruction, modeling, guided practice, frequent checks for understanding, and independent work at the student's level. Based on the level of text complexity and student level of readiness, multiple texts within a classroom may be needed. If a single text is selected, then staff should ensure students are supported in their learning.
- Staff should identify explicit learning outcomes for all students. Once learning outcomes are explicit and articulated, then instruction (classroom, skills, and resource room) and resources can be differentiated.
- Staff should communicate expectations for journal writing. This may be accomplished using a shared writing rubric.
- Staff should ensure that resource room instruction is skills based and anchored in well-written, challenging, and measurable IEPs.

- The school leaders and staff should ensure that clear behavior expectations are posted, articulated, taught, modeled, and supported in all classrooms.
- The Mandatory Help program should be continued.
- Staff should ensure that any collaborative time focuses on and provides evidence of student learning, such as use of DDI, interim assessment, data analysis, instructional planning and learning outcomes.

III. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

FINDINGS:

- The mission statement is posted in a variety of locations and is known by many.
- The mentor program (TAP) is steered by a committee of teachers and school leaders. There are explicit expectations for what and how time is used.
- Teachers report that monitoring, supervising, and supporting instruction is the top priority of the school leaders.
- While there was no evidence of formal walkthroughs, observations have been completed.
- There is a good line of communication between general education teachers, special education teachers, and guidance staff.
- Department goals are based on the LINKS plan – the Walton Central School District’s Annual School Improvement Plan, which asks, “How are you going to contribute to ensuring that every student is successful?”
- While staff received no formal training on New York State Teaching Standards, documents have been shared and reviewed by school leaders and shared with teachers.
- A DDI culture is not in place. The Site Based Improvement Team (SBIT) will be the delivery mechanism for this.
- Instructional and administrative leadership is team based and communicates well.
- Conference days are based on the LINKS plan. The LINKS team meets semi-annually. LINKS is a driving force along with IEPs and State assessments.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school leaders and staff should use the District mission statement as a foundation, rationale, and driving force for implementing change.
- School and instructional leaders should reevaluate the use of time in order to incorporate walkthroughs.

- The school should maintain its commitment to DDI as a method of establishing interim assessments.
- The school leaders and staff should explore the data available through Compass Learning to determine how it can be embedded more systematically into instruction.
- District and school leaders should ensure the LINKS plan is aligned with CCLS, DDI and the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) work.
- District and school leaders should ensure recommendations from the CCLS and DDI are implemented and embedded into the school's culture. This work should be reflected in teacher evaluations. Network Team APPR training may assist, but District APPR classroom observation forms should be amended to be evidence based.

IV. INFRASTRUCTURE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

FINDINGS:

- There is reinforcement and pre-teaching of learning, high standards for all students, and shared responsibility for student learning.
- Students have a variety of opportunities for additional support that include Skills Lab, 15:1 instruction as needed, resource room, and after school programs.
- There is a Career Fair, Guidance Direct-digital portfolios, student video, a transition program for fifth to sixth grade, transition programs for eleventh and twelfth graders, and explicit transition goals for students with disabilities.
- Parents reported that their children do well academically. Parents reported the value of after school programs, i.e., Mandatory Help, homework hotline, and enjoy the structured recreation of Activity Night. Parents reported that the school is meeting their expectations. Students reported they are able to complete homework during the Mandatory Help program. One student reported enjoying Activity Night as well.
- Some parents reported that progress is regularly reported, i.e., every two weeks.
- One parent reported that their child's communication journal is not being used.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school should establish common learning objectives so that student learning time is maximized.
- School leaders should conduct an analysis of instructional time vs. support time (how much time is used for activity, advisory, study lab, resource room, etc.)

- The school should continue to offer a wide variety of services that prepare students for post-secondary education and/or careers.
- School leaders should ensure that communication tools are being consistently used.

V. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FINDINGS:

- Professional development (PD) is provided based on the LINKS plan.
- The instructional leadership team sets a calendar based on the LINKS plan.

RECOMMENDATION:

School and instructional leaders should conduct walkthroughs in order to monitor and support instruction and provide feedback.

VI. FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

FINDINGS:

- Teachers, students and parents report that adequate resources are available. Teachers report that requests are filled.
- Ample technology is available.

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 APPR for teacher effectiveness.