

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

**Differentiated Accountability - School Quality Review (SQR)**

**SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW REPORT**

<b>BEDS Code:</b>	412300010018
<b>District Name:</b>	Utica City School District
<b>School Name:</b>	Kernan Elementary School
<b>School Address:</b>	929 York Street, Utica NY 13502
<b>Principal:</b>	Henry Frasca
<b>Accountability Phase/Category:</b>	Improvement (year 1) - Comprehensive
<b>Area of Identification:</b>	English Language Arts - All Students; African American Students; Students with Disabilities and Economically Disadvantaged Students
<b>Dates of On-site Review:</b>	January 9, 2012

**PART 1: MISSION STATEMENT**

“Kernan Elementary School will ensure high academic achievement by providing equal and excellent opportunities in a comfortable and flexible learning environment. All students will development the knowledge, skills and attitudes to enable them to function as lifelong learners, and responsible citizens in a changing society.”

**PART 2: SCHOOL STRENGTHS**

- Technology resources that the District has purchased are being used for instructional support. SMART Boards and laptops are available and used in classrooms.
- Frequent communication between English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers and classroom teachers supports instructional planning.
- Grade level and congruence meetings are held weekly.
- Classrooms are clean, orderly, and inviting.
- Students are supervised in halls; rules and expectations are visible throughout the school.
- Parents feel welcome in the school.

## **PART 3: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **I. COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND UTILIZATION OF DATA**

#### **FINDINGS:**

- There is systematic administration of assessments to monitor student progress. The school adheres to the District plan for using progress monitoring aligned to the District English language arts (ELA) curriculum.
- An analysis of State assessments and Terra Novas is used to create AIS groups.
- Teachers have a peripheral role in the data analysis process.
- The school leadership analyzes multiple data sources. However, data is not disaggregated by racial/ethnic subgroup performance.
- There is only limited evidence of progress monitoring for students with disabilities through the use of Behavioral Intervention Plans (BIP).
- English language learners (ELLs) regardless of their English proficiency level are scheduled with their English proficient classmates for Academic Intervention Services (AIS), SuccessMaker Enterprise (SME), and FastForward.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- An analysis of data for the African American, students with disabilities and economically disadvantaged subgroups should be conducted.
- A strategic plan that includes creating interventions to address achievement gaps should be developed.
- African American students, students with disabilities and economically disadvantaged students should be provided interventions specific to their needs.
- Teachers, rather than school leaders, should analyze and prioritize data collected from formative and summative assessments. The school leadership should facilitate, but not conduct, this process. School leaders should structure grade level meetings to ensure data are used to improve academic instruction for all students.
- The District and school level leadership should support the implementation of Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) training and BIP training and monitor student progress on BIPs by using office discipline referral data.
- English as a second language (ESL) and classroom teachers should collaboratively analyze ELLs assessment data to identify specific academic needs and collaboratively plan interventions to address those needs.

- ELLs should be provided with ESL interventions specific to their second language acquisition needs.

## II. TEACHING AND LEARNING

### FINDINGS:

- The District has designed a coherent instructional programmatic roadmap using the Scott Foresman reading series. The school uses evidence-based strategies provided by the series and the Early Reading Intervention (ERI) kits.
- The school has implemented the District ELA curriculum with fidelity.
- There is time established for all students who need AIS to receive it.
- There is a uniform grading policy.
- All members of the school staff are given the opportunity to participate in all teaching and learning initiatives.
- Classroom teachers are not consistently adapting instruction appropriately for ELLs.
- ELA instruction focuses on test-taking strategies. Student experiences in building comprehension and writing strategies and developing student ownership of learning is limited because of a focus on past test passages. There is limited evidence of rigor and relevance because of the focus on test preparation.
- Instruction is focused on test-taking strategies rather than on building student conceptual understanding; developing comprehension and writing processes; and teacher use of instructional strategies such as developing an anticipatory set, modeling, and scaffolding instruction.
- A limited understanding of how to differentiate instruction, assignments, and interventions was observed across grade levels.
- Overall, staff awareness and implementation of evidence-based instructional strategies was inconsistent; although this varied across and between grade levels.
- There was an overall lack of urgency in instruction, resulting in low expectations of students by teachers. An instructional action plan for Response to Intervention (RtI) was not provided.
- There is no evidence of the alignment of curriculum with the New York State (NYS) P-12 Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS).
- Special education classrooms include a mix of significant differences in student needs. For example, students with classifications of intellectual disability are in classes with students with emotional disturbances and multiple disabilities.

- Special education classrooms for students with intense management needs do not receive the supports necessary to ensure student and staff safety.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- All staff should intensively focus on high quality lesson planning and classroom instructional strategies, working collaboratively to increase rigor and student engagement by including learning activities that involve the consistent application of higher-order thinking skills and facilitate higher outcomes for all students.
- Staff should increase use of research-based instructional strategies that are focused on the needs of identified subgroups.
- School leaders should monitor instructional practice and rigor in classrooms.
- School leaders should set specific expectations for instruction and monitor these expectations with frequent instructional walkthroughs and feedback.
- Students with disabilities should be scheduled into classrooms based on the level of support needed. Special education classrooms should be composed of students with disabilities having similar needs. They should be grouped according to their levels of academic or educational achievement and learning characteristics, the levels of physical and social development, and the management needs of the students in the classroom.
- District AIS facilitators should work closely with teachers to support the effective use of instructional strategies that include active student participation and are culturally responsive. Instructional strategies that enhance the achievement of subgroups, including African-American students, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students should be researched and implemented.
- The RtI process should be implemented in this school.
- Curriculum should be aligned with the CCLS.
- All special education staff should be trained in a program such as Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI).

### **III. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP**

#### **FINDINGS:**

- The school leader has an acute focus on test results, as evidenced by a consistent emphasis on test preparation observed at all grade levels.
- There has been a large turnover of staff, resulting in only nine veteran staff members remaining in the school. Even with a mentoring program in place for new teachers, mentors in this school are assigned up to three mentees.

- The review team observed staff members speaking disparagingly to students.
- Special education staff, although included in staff meetings, have no regularly scheduled meetings with the school leader to focus on academic and behavioral needs of students with disabilities.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- All school staff should receive intensive training in a program that can transform this school into a place where trust, respect, and a caring culture flourish so that high performance standards and results can be achieved.
- The school leader should conduct frequent instructional walkthroughs that focus on specific areas in need of improvement, including classroom management strategies, cultural responsiveness, student engagement, and instructional rigor to support continued student improvement.
- The school leader, with District support, should monitor school culture. There should be intensive PD with staff to increase positive interactions with students and colleagues, and particularly to promote positive and effective communication with students.
- The school leader should implement regularly scheduled meetings with special education staff to focus on academic and behavioral needs and monitor student progress.

#### **IV. INFRASTRUCTURE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS**

##### **FINDINGS:**

- AIS is scheduled for every student, using past assessment questions to practice test taking for 30-minutes daily.
- Students with disabilities with intense management needs and severe emotional needs have counseling listed on their Individualized Education Program (IEP) for one 30-minute period once a month.
- Most teachers have regular planning times, though there is variation in number and format of these meetings.
- Ineffective classroom management and inappropriate behavior by both students and staff were observed by the review team. These behaviors negatively impact the teaching and learning process.
- Based on interviews that were conducted by the review team with parents and the school leader, parent involvement and engagement is limited.

##### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- The school leader should develop procedures for grade level meetings, including reporting policies and developing plans for schoolwide professional development (PD).
- The school and District leaders should support the school in developing strategies to improve the school culture. An action plan should be developed with input from parents and the community to address the issue.
- The District should collaborate with the school staff, parents, and other school partners to develop strategies and program activities to increase parent engagement and involvement.
- The frequency and scheduling of social work and counseling services to address needs of special education students should be increased.
- District and school leadership should review AIS and Rtl rules and regulations and work with the staff to create an action plan for meeting the regulations.
- District and school leadership should review rules and regulations regarding teacher mentoring and create an action plan for meeting the needs of both mentors and mentees.

## **V. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **FINDINGS:**

- Sufficient planning time for instructional staff is regularly scheduled in order for teachers to build skills and plan collaboratively.
- At the time of the visit, staff was unaware of the pending CCLS or its impact on teaching and learning over the next few years.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- The District should work with the school to develop and implement a strong PD program to promote a positive social-emotional support system, including the development of a school culture of high expectations for all students and academic rigor, student mentoring, strategies for building strong relationships with students, and positive classroom management strategies.
- The District leadership should research best practices that are focused on the varying needs of the subgroups, and then provide focused PD to staff. District and school leaders should monitor the implementation and effectiveness of this PD.
- The District should review the configuration of the mentoring program at this school.
- The school leaders, with District support, should provide PD focused on implementation of curriculum aligned to the CCLS.

- School leaders should ensure that PD for classroom teachers on the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) methodology for ELLs is continued and expanded.

## **VI. FACILITIES AND RESOURCES**

### **FINDINGS:**

- Computers are available and used by teachers for ELA interventions such as FastForward and iReady.
- The review team observed that a number of books are available in classrooms.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

School leaders should review the school technology plan and work closely with the District to continue building essential resources.

## **PART 3: 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 for teacher effectiveness.