

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

Differentiated Accountability - School Quality Review (SQR)

SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW REPORT

BEDS Code:	660803020003
District Name:	Hawthorne Cedar Knolls Union Free School District
School Name:	Linden Hill School
School Address:	226 Linda Ave., Hawthorne, NY 10532
Principal:	Robert Worden
Accountability Phase/Category:	Improvement (year - 1) - Comprehensive
Area of Identification:	Mathematics - All Students; Students with Disabilities; and Economically Disadvantaged Students
Dates of On-site Review:	December 6, 14 and 19, 2011

PART 1: MISSION STATEMENT

"The mission of the Linden Hill School is to provide a safe and nurturing learning environment that meets the diverse social, emotional, and educational needs of all students by providing high quality, engaging instruction. Motto: Be REAL!"

PART 2: SCHOOL STRENGTHS

- There is a positive school atmosphere throughout the well-organized school.
- Proactive and reactive progressive disciplining is administered by all staff members and security staff.
- Interviews conducted by the review team revealed that parents are well-informed about their children's behavior and academic achievement and are pleased with the education that is being provided.
- Interviews conducted by the review team showed that the students are pleased with the quality of their education and feel a true sense of connection to teachers, school leaders, and support staff.
- The school leaders take an active role in the educational process. The school leader functions as an instructional leader who holds weekly meetings with teachers to ensure alignment of lesson planning, curriculum development, and assessments.
- All teachers have equal professional development (PD) opportunities, and there is evidence that all teachers have attended at least one P-12 Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) curriculum development workshop in mathematics and/or English language arts (ELA). The teachers are committed to providing thoughtful lessons based on student achievement data.

- Behavior modification initiatives (BMIs) are supported by a trained behavioral specialist. This program assists students with cognitive behavioral strategies to manage their behavior.

I. COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND UTILIZATION OF DATA FINDINGS:

FINDINGS:

- There is evidence that the District has purchased and uses a variety of software programs to make data available in addition to the State student achievement data reports.
- Most students enroll at the school functioning more than three years below their grade level due to limited school attendance prior to coming to Linden Hill. Multiple hospitalizations and home instruction add to the issues related to the disabilities of the students. There is evidence that the response from the teachers has been to gather data from continuous formative assessments in class, using "exit tickets" and "Do Now" assignments to keep track of the students' ongoing and immediate progress. Teachers collect this data in binders and keep informal portfolios.
- The State assessment data provides limited information because of the transient nature of the special education population. Half of the scores of the day students are sent back to the home District and Linden Hill does not have access to this data. The resident students do not stay multiple years; therefore, this data only gives the teacher information about the item analysis regarding the successful learning of certain instructional content.
- The students use the *Successmaker*, *READ 180*, and *STAR*testing programs that provide data on performance and opportunities for students to "catch up" in basic academic skills. There is evidence that the teachers use the testing data from the programs and supplement it with their own class-based formative and summative assessments. However, teachers reported that they remain challenged by the range of academic ability and the transient nature of the special education population.

RECOMMENDATION:

PD should be provided to ensure that teachers are fully aware of and know how to use the existing data to inform instruction; specifically they should know how to use data to group students to provide targeted instruction at the appropriate level.

II. TEACHING AND LEARNING

FINDINGS:

- There is evidence of an extensive PBIS program and behavior management system. The District has been using the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Strategies (PBIS) program for over seven years. Interviews were conducted by the review team with teachers, clinicians, and support staff, who continually train staff and students in the language and process of behavior management. There is evidence that the implementation of this system has resulted in a reduction in students being out of class

and in fewer class disruptions. The PBIS program provides a leveled and comprehensive system of progressive discipline. The school has a proactive approach to resolving conflict that provides support to students, teachers, school leaders, and other staff. All the students in the school have been classified as having emotional and behavioral problems. There is data available that provides information about individual student behavior, incident trends, and the times and locations of these incidents during the day. This helps the staff prevent problems. The behavior trends in certain classes are analyzed, and teachers are provided with support that allows them to spend more time on instruction and less on behavior management.

- There is evidence of rubrics in every classroom and hallway explaining the meaning of the school motto, "BE REAL."
- Observations revealed that the five teachers visited by the review team had established a supportive and open classroom environment.
- Observations by the review team revealed that open-ended, higher-order questions and problem solving strategies are being used in instruction.
- In four out of the five classes observed by the review team specially designed classroom instruction was being implemented.
- Out of the five classes observed by the review team, , only two teachers used strategies such as self-monitoring or "think aloud."
- In two out of the five classes, there was weakness in the teaching of self-regulation through social stories or scripting.
- In two out of four classes, there was little evidence of teachers reinforcing previously taught strategies.
- In two out of the five classes, teachers did not decrease the prompting of students based on accurate responding.
- Observations by the review team revealed that instruction could be improved by staff acquiring skills in the use of differentiated instruction and intervention strategies.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Student-centered classes should be established in order to engage students and implement on-line research as well as cooperative and project-based instruction.
- Teachers should be required to observe student-centered classrooms.
- PD should be provided in project-based learning and cooperative instruction.
- PD should be provided to improve instructional strategies, e.g., weaning students from prompts when they show competence.

- Self-sufficiency of students with disabilities should be increased.
- Specific training in teaching mathematics strategies for students with disabilities should be provided.

III. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

FINDINGS:

- The School District Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, and school leader have been trained in the new State required Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) evaluations.
- The school leader meets with teachers both in groups and individually after walkthroughs and to review lesson plans.
- There was evidence of an on-line lesson planner "e-chalk" that enables all school leaders to regularly review, comment on, and approve lesson plans.
- There is evidence of frequent school leadership meetings with District staff. The office of the Assistant Superintendent is located in this school, which adds additional ongoing supervision and administrative resources.
- There was evidence of emails, meeting notes, agendas, and interviews regarding ongoing PD and supervision.
- There is one full-time and one part-time Assistant Principal assigned to this school.

RECOMMENDATION:

In order to support other recommendations made regarding technology, the school leaders should contact the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) to enhance teacher skills and determine PD needs. http://www.iste.org/standards/nets-for_administrators/

IV. INFRASTRUCTURE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

FINDINGS:

- There is an effort to integrate extracurricular activities into the school day. This included students visiting and volunteering at Mont Pleasant-Blythedale Union Free School District; working at a food pantry; participating in dog training for therapeutic dogs; and participating in an animation program, "PEERS" video, "Narrative Medicine," and Drama Therapy.
- An additional period of structured remediation was scheduled to support core instruction in both mathematics and ELA to address the school's accountability status.
- There was evidence of District success in obtaining grants from the International Business Machine

Corporation (IBM) and the New York State Council on the Arts to supplement limited District resources.

- Parents interviewed by the review team reported that their children made progress. Parents were satisfied that the school provides an effective program. They reported frequent contact with staff members by phone. In addition, Parents pointed to the willingness of their children to commute from Brooklyn by school bus as proof that the children feel that the program meets their needs.
- Student interviews conducted by the review team revealed a level of satisfaction with the school. They reported feeling safe and academically challenged. They discussed being actively engaged in student government and other school programs. These students reported being future-focused and are thinking about their transition to post-secondary education.
- Although there is a sports program offered after school, there is evidence that students have limited opportunities to participate in these activities because of issues related to the busing of day students and the needs of the residential program.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The linkage to residential personnel to provide additional educational support after school at the school should be improved.
- A parent/school orientation should be provided similar to a public school "Open House" to enhance communication and parental involvement.

V. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FINDINGS:

- There was evidence that teachers have had PD regarding the implementation of the CCLS and differentiated instruction.
- There was evidence that the mathematics teachers spent six full days during the summer meeting and rewriting curriculum with a regional expert and author of mathematics textbooks.
- There is evidence that a consultant is spending 20 days in the District this school year meeting with mathematics teachers in groups and individually, modeling instruction in the classroom, and aligning the curriculum to the CCLS.
- Interviews conducted by the review team revealed that teachers are seeking PD in technology and teaching strategies for students with diverse learning needs.
- Teacher interviews conducted by the review team revealed that teachers still struggle with specific instructional strategies that would assist students with disabilities to be more successful academically.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Time should be provided for teachers to interact in the guided "Professional Learning Community" format, both online and in real time.
- Due to the unique educational structure and issues found at Linden Hill, collaborative activities should be encouraged with other facilities around the country that serve similar populations. This can be accomplished online using collaborative software. Topics that should be covered include those noted in Section II of this report.
- Mathematics PD should be designed to focus on specific teaching strategies for students with disabilities.
- Teachers should use the ISTE National Education Technology Standards national standards rubric to rate their technology skills so that PD can be individualized and provided to those who need specific skills and strategies. <http://www.iste.org/standards/nets-for-teachers.aspx>

VI. FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

FINDINGS:

- The School is clean, attractive, and well-maintained.
- The classrooms have examples of student work on display. The hallways are adorned with colorful art work, student achievement information, and pictures of students at school events.
- A variety of books, supplies, and materials is available in the classrooms.
- The District has just purchased a new ELA series aligned to the CCLS that offers on-line tools for teachers to support the texts.
- The District hired two mathematics consultants to address mathematics instruction. The mathematics teachers also received additional hands-on mathematics supplies and training.
- Although there were SMART boards in every classroom, they were not used interactively with students; they were mostly used as projectors with a teacher-directed approach.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The use of laptops should be increased to enable cooperative learning.
- Technology should be used to provide teachers with immediate feedback utilizing a student response device (clickers).
- Existing technology resources should be used to create 21st century classrooms. The technology is already available, but should be used better. The use of the SMART boards should be enhanced to foster more student interaction.

- Access to on-line libraries and resources should be increased.

PART 4: CONCLUDING STATEMENT

The Linden Hill School is part of a Special Act District that was established to serve students placed in the residential agency on campus. The students' average length of stay is 121 days, and students enter and exit throughout the school year. This provides a challenge to teachers, since the students they have in April, for example, are different from the students who are enrolled in September.

The issue of curriculum being sequential and building on prior knowledge cannot be minimized. Students entering at the end of a unit of study and needing to be brought up to speed disrupts instruction. These students cannot instantly acquire the learning that the rest of the class has worked on for weeks. Adding to the challenge, The Linden Hill School serves a diverse group of students with severe emotional and behavioral issues. Most of the students are residentially placed on campus in a psychiatric hospital setting when they are not in school. Some students are day students referred by local District committees on special education because they require a specialized program.

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.