

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

Differentiated Accountability – School Quality Review

SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW REPORT

BEDS Code:	400800010034
District Name:	Niagara Falls City School District
School Name:	Niagara Falls High School
School Address:	4455 Porter Road, Niagara Falls, NY 14305
Principal:	James R. Spanbauer
Accountability Phase/Category:	Improvement (year - 1)- Focused
Areas of Identification:	English Language Arts - African American Students
	Mathematics - Students with Disabilities
Dates of On-site Review:	January 4 and January 20, 2012

PART 1: MISSION STATEMENT

“The mission of the Niagara Falls Board of Education is to guarantee educational excellence by creating strategic goals which we will monitor, analyze, assess, and evaluate utilizing the quality process and ensuring customer satisfaction.”

PART 2: SCHOOL STRENGTHS

- There is a clean, modern, well-equipped, and safe school environment.
- Relationships are strong and respectful between special education and general education staff.
- The Principal and his team have the respect of the staff and have worked diligently to establish a culture of mutual trust and support.
- Staff is empathetic to student needs.
- Classroom space is abundant and spacious. Each room is equipped with SMART Boards and Red Cat audio system.
- The staff is hard working, dedicated and eager to succeed.
- A respect and good working understanding of diversity is evident in the school.
- There is evidence of many programmatic resources.

PART 3: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND UTILIZATION OF DATA

FINDINGS:

- There is evidence of student data to which the staff has access. The process of disaggregating data and analyzing assessment results to inform instruction on a more formative basis is limited to subgroup rather than individual performance.
- The school is piloting Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) in mathematics.
- The grade 9 staff are provided with common planning time.
- S.T.A.R.T. (Student Teacher Action Response Team) teams have recently been established to look at individual students based on academic performance, attendance, and discipline issues.
- There is a lack of skills-based, common formative assessments that are aligned to the English language arts (ELA) and mathematics State assessments.
- Academic Intervention Services (AIS) are only provided to grade 9 students.
- There was little evidence of transition planning from high school to college and/or career.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Common planning time for all staff should be allocated for disaggregating data and assessment results to inform instruction. School leaders should continue to use building substitutes and other staff resources to allow staff planning time for analysis of individual student performance.
- Frequent formative and interim assessments that are aligned to the State assessments should be used, individual item analysis should be reviewed, and appropriate strategies used with students in the identified subgroups.
- Individual item analyses of assessments should be reviewed and appropriate strategies used with students in the identified subgroups.
- General education and special education professional staff should be included on the S.T.A.R.T. Team. Building based substitutes can be scheduled to accommodate these meetings.
- School leaders should evaluate the appropriateness of students with disabilities in the identified subgroups taking the regular State assessments versus the Alternative Assessment.
- Multiple sources of data should be “triangulated” for all students in identified subgroups:
 - ELA and mathematics performance levels
 - Item analysis by Performance Indicators
 - Suspension data
 - Office referrals

➤ Attendance

- School leaders should increase transition planning opportunities for students from preparatory to high school.
- School leadership should review the District and school plans for AIS and ensure that students at-risk are provided with additional support.

II. TEACHING and LEARNING

FINDINGS:

- The school uses the Niagara Choice Workshop Model [Pearson], Achieve 3000, Kid Biz, READ 180, and Castle Learning.
- Review team walkthroughs noted the following occur infrequently:
 - the objective of the work being restated by teacher either verbally or visually; and
 - the teacher explicitly connecting prior and upcoming lessons.
- Positively stated behavioral expectations are not posted in hallways.
- There was limited evidence of comprehensive lesson planning.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- AIS delivery should be individualized beyond grade 9.
- School leadership should consider the reallocation of staff resources, i.e., teaching assistants, paraprofessionals and the substitutes on special assignment (SOSA) to deliver focused support for the individuals in the identified subgroups and support common planning time.
- Time for general education teachers, special education teachers, and related service providers to meet and plan should be established
- Individualized Education Program goals should be written in S.M.A.R.T. format (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-based) and progress monitored.
- Positive behavioral expectations should be posted in the hallways, e.g., appropriate language and mutual respect.
- School leaders should review and require comprehensive lesson planning.

III. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

FINDINGS:

- School leaders provide a safe and educationally conducive environment, with a focus on student performance and success.
- There is evidence of a culture of collaboration and support.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school leadership, in conjunction with District staff and the Committee on Special Education (CSE), should review the continuum of special education services in the school and determine the appropriateness of students being assessed by the regular State assessment.
- Administrators should ensure that teachers are held accountable for using formative assessment data to plan and adjust lessons, content, and curriculum to meet individual students' needs.
- School leaders should begin to correlate suspension data, discipline referrals, and attendance to identify patterns that may be inhibiting student success.

IV. INFRASTRUCTURE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

FINDINGS:

- The school leadership has established a number of community partnerships.
- All students are required to take four years of mathematics and science.
- There is parent involvement in specific areas of student interest, i.e., sports boosters, music, art; however, there seems to be limited parent involvement in academic issues.
- There was an interest expressed for a two-year program for integrated Algebra.
- Approximately 100 seniors are required to remain in school to maintain the 6.5 required credits.
- Staff expressed concerns about core attendance, particularly among the most at risk students.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School leaders should set goals and implement a plan to improve parent participation.
- Providing a two-year integrated Algebra sequence class for students in identified subgroups would provide a consistent instructional program and stronger accountability for the teacher and should be

considered.

- The Board of Education has responded to the attendance concern with the appointment of an attendance/truancy official. The attendance program should be carefully monitored to determine effectiveness.

V. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FINDINGS:

- The District provides extensive opportunities for professional development (PD) in its annual calendar, including early dismissals and use of half days for meetings.
- Transition towards teaching from RCT to all Regents is currently occurring.
- PD should be provided in analyzing and using data to inform instruction on an individual student basis
- Having students take the Regents exams at the earliest possible time helps inform instruction.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School leaders should allow staff time to coordinate work on student assessment issues.
- PD should be provided to the self-contained teachers in the content areas of ELA, social studies, mathematics and science.
- School leaders should ensure staff is adequately trained in use and analysis of data to effectively differentiate instruction and improve student learning.

VI. FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

FINDINGS:

- The school building is safe, inviting, and well-maintained. Students and staff were both friendly and respectful.
- Twenty-first century technology can be found in every classroom and throughout the building.
- Students have limited access to text in alternate formats, i.e., digital.

RECOMMENDATION:

The school should create a plan to ensure that all instructional materials are available in usable formats for students with disabilities.

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 Common Core Learning Standards, Data Driven Instruction and the Annual Professional Performance Reviews for teacher effectiveness.