

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

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

**SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW REPORT**

<b>BEDS Code:</b>	081200050003
<b>District Name:</b>	Norwich City School District
<b>School Name:</b>	Norwich Middle School
<b>School Address:</b>	89 Midland Drive, Norwich NY 13815
<b>Principal:</b>	Scott Ryan
<b>Accountability Phase/Category:</b>	Improvement (year -1) - Focused
<b>Areas of Identification:</b>	English Language Arts - Students with Disabilities  Mathematics - Students with Disabilities and Economically Disadvantaged Students
<b>Dates of On-site Review:</b>	November 8-10, 2011

**PART 1: MISSION STATEMENT**

“Through the use of all available resources, it shall be the Mission of the Norwich City School District to produce productive citizens who can successfully collaborate and compete in a global society... to develop and provide for each enrolled student a program of experiences, activities and services designed to ensure maximum opportunities for life-long intellectual, psycho-social, personal and physical growth. It shall further be the Mission of the District to ensure the delivery of such experiences, activities, and services within an interpersonal atmosphere marked by order, warmth and genuine concern for each individual's well-being as well as appropriate physical environments which support and contribute positively to learning.”

**PART 2: SCHOOL STRENGTHS**

- It was evident from conversations that all teachers were aware of and focus on the school mission of developing and nurturing the “whole child.”
- The commitment of the staff of Norwich Middle School was evident through their willingness to participate in interviews, welcome reviewers in classrooms during instructional times, and speak candidly of their school and students.
- A solid infrastructure is in place to support student learning in the form of a last period of the day remediation and collaborative planning time for all teachers after student dismissal.

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

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

##### **FINDINGS:**

- Every five weeks student progress is monitored against the following Early Warning System (EWS) criteria: failing one or more classes; absent ten percent or more; and GPA less than 65 percent. Based on these criteria, student level of intervention is determined: Level 1-not meeting one criterion; Level 2-not meeting two criteria and Level 3-meeting none of the criteria. These District benchmarks are used to measure student progress. This data is shared with the school's Student Assistance Team.
- Benchmark assessments are not consistently administered.
- Benchmark assessment results are not disaggregated and analyzed by teacher, standard, question, student subgroup or individual student.
- Formative assessments were observed in one-twelfth of the classrooms where students with disabilities were educated.
- Multiple school leaders indicated that student progress is often monitored based on how much work is completed "what students did," rather than mastery of learning outcomes "what students learned."

##### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- School leaders should set short term goals for each student with a disability meeting Level 2 or 3 of the EWS criteria and plan interventions to address the criteria the student is not meeting. Student progress should be regularly reviewed to assess the effectiveness of implemented interventions. Decisions to modify, continue, or discontinue these interventions should be based on new data.
- With the support of the District, school leaders should align benchmark assessments with CCLS for English (ELA), literacy and mathematics.
- School leaders should formalize collaborative planning time to include discussions around benchmark data.
- School leaders and teachers should regularly assess all students with disabilities on the same benchmarks as their grade level peers.
- School leaders should provide professional development (PD) to teachers on how to disaggregate benchmark data by question, standard, teacher, student subgroup and individual student and then adjust instruction based on disaggregated data.
- The school leaders and staff should set a goal for student performance on summative assessments in ELA and mathematics and collect data on student performance disaggregated by students with disabilities. The school should also compare formative assessment data leading up to summative assessments and actual student performance on those assessments.

## II. TEACHING AND LEARNING

### FINDINGS:

- Coherent Instructional/Programmatic Roadmap:
  - Multiple teachers noted that the District focus this year was on non-fiction text and writing.
  - PD was provided on the CCLS during the 2011-2012 school year.
  - At the middle school level, 64 percent of students with disabilities are in self-contained classrooms.
- Evidence Based Strategies:
  - Whole groups of students were frequently reading and writing uniform assignments.
  - Multiple and varied vocabulary strategies were noted in a few classrooms but were not seen consistently on a grade level or content area; explicit instruction in the use of these strategies was not observed.
  - A posted and referred to objective was observed in nine out of ten classrooms; however, the purpose or “what and why” of the content was communicated to students in only one of these classrooms.
  - A specific reading or writing skill was taught in 50 percent of the settings; a reading or writing strategy was explicitly taught in 17 percent of the classrooms visited.
  - In 83 percent of the classrooms visited, students with disabilities were unable to complete independent work without prompting and teacher support.
  - A specific mathematic skill was taught in 60 percent of the classrooms settings observed; a strategy was taught in one setting.
  - Formative assessments at the end of the lesson were observed in only 25 percent of the settings visited.
- Standards Alignment:
  - District curriculum blue prints, pacing guides, and District mathematics benchmarks were aligned with 2005 Learning Standards and work has begun on the CCLS alignment.
  - Structured activities designed to allow processing were noted in one-sixth of the classrooms observed.
  - Instruction that ensured high levels of participation by students with disabilities was observed in one-sixth of the classrooms visited.
  - Accommodations and modifications for student with disabilities were observed to be provided in one classroom.

- Individual instruction and support was observed in one classroom.
- Student adaptations were included, documented, monitored and addressed in the lesson plan and throughout the lesson in one classroom.
- Rigor And Relevance:
  - Participation and engagement was observed in three classrooms.
  - Challenging writing assignments that covered several days were observed in one classroom.
  - Staff made explicit statements that students with disabilities would successfully achieve the stated objective in three out of eleven classrooms visited.
  - Students with disabilities were responding to higher-order questions involving problem solving, generalization, evaluation, inferential thinking, or applications in two out of six classrooms observed.
- Differentiated Instructional And Intervention Strategies:
  - Two teachers provided different sets of directions.
  - Two different levels of vocabulary words were provided to students in one classroom.
  - Students were not routinely provided with needed materials; therefore, non-participation in lessons was common.
  - In most classrooms, the general education teacher seemed primarily responsible for instruction.
  - Specially designed instruction to meet the needs of students with disabilities was not observed in general education classrooms.
  - Teachers were unable to consistently identify students with disabilities in their classrooms; three teachers identified 504 students as students with disabilities, and one teacher asked for a definition of a student with a disability.
- Safe, Disciplined Learning Environment:
  - Posted behavior expectations varied from grade level to grade level, as well as classroom to classroom at the same grade level. The behavioral focus was on compliance.
  - In one self-contained classroom, students were not engaged in the lesson, i.e., reading novels, or texting during direct instruction and guided practice. The teacher did not address the behaviors or intervene to support the learning process.
  - During independent work in one self-contained classroom, students were left waiting for assistance. This resulted in students negatively interacting with each other.
  - In three out of four direct consultant teacher (DCT) classrooms, teachers taught and modeled expected behaviors, reminded students of expectations, removed students to other parts of the room, used proximity and provided consistent assistance.

- In one self-contained classroom, the teacher was visibly frustrated. When the teacher tried to correct behavior, the focus was on what not to do. There was no positive reinforcement for desired behavior.
- In Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs) for students with disabilities, it was noted that behavior strategies were clearly defined in one out of four BIPs; environment strategies were included in two out of four BIPs; monitoring and data collection were specified in two out of four BIPs; a point system or rewards system was used in two out of four BIPs; negative consequences were specified in three out of four BIPs; and target goals for student behavior were included in two out of four BIPs.
- Many students interviewed reported feeling safe, but all indicated that their peers may not feel safe because of bullying.
- Parents/guardians indicated during interviews that they felt the school was welcoming and safe and that they were aware of the code of conduct. However, one parent/guardian indicated that bullying existed in the school and caused some students to feel unsafe.
- There were rules posted but not referred to in most classrooms.
- Grading Policy:
  - The high school (HS) LINKS team received training around best practices in grading in the summer 2011.
  - The school grading policy was focused on homework completion.
  - One school leader indicated that he/she was uncertain whether teachers were grading on what students did or what students learned.
  - One school leader stated that grading policies differ among teachers in the middle school.
  - Teacher interviewed indicated that giving homework assignments was the best way to know if a student learned the topic, but homework was only graded based on completion, not accuracy.
- School Based Inquiry Teams:

School Based Inquiry Teams (SBIT) leadership and effectiveness were strongly linked to a school leader's desire to participate.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Coherent Instructional/Programmatic Roadmap:
  - The individual needs of students with disabilities should be considered when making placement decisions. Placements should be made in response to the academic achievement, functional performance and learning characteristics of the student, the social development of the student, the physical development of the student and the individual management needs of the student, rather than in response to student effort, compliance or attendance factors.
  - The school leaders should create an expectation and shift responsibility for the learning of students with disabilities from the special education teacher to the shared responsibility of the general

education teacher, special education teacher, and related service providers. Common planning time with clearly outlined protocols for data sharing and lesson planning and reporting out to other team members and the school leadership should be provided.

- The school leaders and teachers should identify the components of “quality” non-fiction writing in all content areas across grade levels. A common understanding of these components should be developed among teachers and school leaders, as well as a common rubric for assessing student non-fiction writing.
- School leaders should provide PD in the direct and explicit instruction of writing skills defined in the NYS CCLS.
- School leaders and teachers should create a schedule for the teacher completion of CCLS aligned unit plans for each content area, collaborative sharing and feedback around those units, feedback for those units, and data discussions around the resulting assessment of those units. In addition school leaders should provide access to regular discussion opportunities around the <http://engageny.org> website to empower teachers to gather, learn and plan instruction based on the CCLS.
- Evidence Based Strategies:
  - School leaders should provide PD to teachers on how to create learning outcomes that are directly aligned with the CCLS and establish protocols for the communication of these (including the what and why) to students.
  - School leaders should ensure that teachers explicitly teach content area/academic vocabulary and the vocabulary skills students need to access the general education curriculum.
  - Teachers should use scaffolding for all students.
  - School leaders should ensure that teachers provide explicit instruction in reading, writing and mathematics skills and strategies.
  - With the support of the District, school leaders should provide PD to teachers on formatively assessing learning outcomes and using formative assessment data to drive new instruction. This PD should also include how to collect formative assessment data around mastery of learning goals to drive the instructional process.
  - School leaders and teachers should provide specially designed reading instruction to all students with disabilities who struggle with reading and use data to create student groupings around similar instructional reading levels and needs.
- Standards Alignment:
  - School leaders should provide PD to all professional staff on how to plan specially designed instruction and how to incorporate accommodations and modifications a student with a disability may need to gain access to the general education curriculum.
  - School leaders should provide PD to teachers on how to include opportunities for high levels of engagement and response for all students.

- PD should include opportunities for processing and making meaning of all new content and strategies, e.g., think-pair-share, collaborative group work.
- Differentiated Instructional And Intervention Strategies:
  - School leaders should designate collaborative planning time for discussions between general education and special education teachers around the specific needs of students with disabilities – these needs should be clearly addressed in daily teacher lesson plans as a result of these collaborations.
  - School leaders should develop a protocol to define the roles and responsibilities of all teachers in implementation of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).
  - Lesson plans should include specially designed instruction to meet the needs of students with disabilities and IEP accommodations and modifications.
- Safe, Disciplined Learning Environment:
  - School leaders should provide PD to teachers on appropriate behavior management techniques for all settings. Inappropriate behaviors should be an opportunity to teach and reinforce appropriate behaviors.
  - The school leader and staff should develop, post and explicitly teach the schoolwide expectations for behaviors, specifically expectations three through five. These expectations should be positively stated and reinforced.
  - The BIPs should be written using a common format and include clearly defined problem behaviors, proactive management techniques, environmental modifications, and an explicit measurement and data collection process for undesired behaviors.
  - School leaders, with the support of the District, should provide students and staff with PD opportunities around bullying identification, prevention, and response.
- Grading Policy:
  - School leaders, with the support of the District, should conduct a study of grading practices that currently exist in the District and whether student grades align with standards by comparing grades to outcomes on State assessments.
  - School leaders and teachers should create a schoolwide grading policy based on student mastery of standards and best practices in grading.
  - School leaders, with the support of the District, should study homework at the middle school level to answer pertinent questions: What is the purpose of homework? How/why do we want to extend learning beyond the school day? What do we do to support students that struggle to complete homework?
- School Based Inquiry Teams:

School leaders should include SBIT members in grade level and content area meetings during the end of day common planning time to support teachers in identifying student needs, solving instructional problems, formulating instructional plans and using evidence to refine instruction.

### III. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

#### FINDINGS:

- Clear Shared Values, Mission and Vision:
  - Two school leaders indicated that the learning for students with disabilities is the responsibility of the special education teacher and content delivery is the responsibility of the content area teacher.
  - During an ELA classroom visit, the review team observed a lesson where the content was delivered to students with disabilities for 90 minutes, then the students returned to their self-contained classroom to complete the work that would demonstrate mastery of the outcome.
  - Four teachers indicated that there is a clear focus on improving student achievement, motivation and engagement.
  - State assessment data is the primary source that drives instructional change and accountability.
  - Most teachers indicated that their mission is to develop the character of every student academically and socially and meet their needs.
  - Students indicated that there were adults available to assist them.
- Match Between Teacher Skills/Experience And Student Learning Needs:
  - Specially designed instruction was seen by most teachers and one school leader as Differentiated Instruction (DI), i.e., multiple intelligences, knowing students, peer tutoring and a variety of assignments.
  - One school leader and one teacher indicated that students were assigned to teachers by a computer program.
  - Two teachers interviewed indicated that teacher placement was based on request. However, other teachers indicated that placement was determined by certification, needs of students, and strengths of the teacher.
- School Leaders Trained And Certified to Evaluate Staff On Teaching Standards:
  - Interviews with teachers and school leaders revealed that many confused the CCLS with the NYS Teaching Standards.
  - Three teachers indicated that there was no specific staff development around NYS Teaching Standards, just conversations at faculty and department meetings, a website housing them, and encouragement to be familiar with them.
- Plan-Assess-Adjust Cycle:
  - Common planning time was used to score benchmarks and examine frequently missed items, i.e., wording and content. These become problems of the week, “Do Now” assignments, and data to determine Academic Intervention Services. (AIS).

- One teacher indicated daily formative assessment of students work during guided reading and using this information to identify what skills are still needed. Guided reading groups and stations are planned accordingly. Another teacher indicated keeping portfolios of essays to monitor growth and areas of weakness.
- ELA benchmarks are Fountas and Pinnell benchmarks and District benchmarks.
- When interviewed, two teachers indicated that they administered benchmarks, and one shared that no one requested the results.
- During teacher interviews most teachers reported having access to test scores from State tests and benchmark scores using teacher-made benchmarks.
- Leadership For Development, Growth, And Results/Accountability:
  - The LINKS plan was shared at staff meetings and included a timeline. The connection between the LINKS and CCLS were known.
  - Multiple school leaders when interviewed indicated teacher hiring was based on criteria other than pedagogy and effectiveness.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Clear Shared Values, Mission And Vision:
  - School leaders should establish clear protocols for collaboration between special education and general education teachers that outline roles in content delivery, goal setting and progress monitoring.
  - School leaders should establish accountability measures for all teachers working with students with disabilities.
- Match Between Teacher Skills/Experience And Student Learning Needs:  
School leaders should prioritize teacher effectiveness over seniority when making teacher placement decisions. More effective teachers should provide instruction to the highest need students.
- School leaders Trained And Certified To Evaluate Staff On Teaching Standards:
  - School leaders should conduct classroom walkthroughs in administrative pairs, comparing data points and rubric ratings afterward in order to establish inter-rater reliability and a common understanding of the expected standards for what teaching “should look like.”
  - School leaders should include SBIT members in walkthroughs and comparisons to establish further inter-rater reliability.
  - A schedule for collaborative review of teachers’ observation and walkthrough data should be developed.

- Plan-Assess-Adjust Cycle:
  - School leaders and teachers should adopt a research based model of Data Driven Instruction (DDI) to guide department and grade level conversations around the use of data.
  - School leaders and teachers should create a standard protocol and timeline for looking at assessment data across grades levels and content areas.
  - The school should develop a schedule for school leaders and members of the SBIT to participate in data collection, analysis, and response meetings with teacher teams.
- Leadership For Development, Growth, And Results/Accountability:
  - School leaders should re-visit the LINKS goals with all staff to establish a common purpose and focus.
  - The LINKS data should be regularly shared with staff.
  - The school leadership should develop protocols for collecting and sharing data regarding school improvement efforts.
  - The school leaders should use District shared decision-making teams to make recommendations for teacher hiring.
  - School leader conversations with teachers should include data discussions regarding disaggregated assessment results for all identified subgroups.

#### IV. INFRASTRUCTURE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

##### FINDINGS:

- Conscious Use Of Time:  
Common planning and professional learning time has been scheduled at the end of each school day for all teachers.
- Home-School Partnerships:  
When interviewed parents/guardians indicated:
  - varied knowledge of their child's progress;
  - they would like to see more work sent home for students to do;
  - when issues/concerns arise, they were resolved; and
  - teachers and school leaders were readily accessible and accommodating.

##### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Conscious Use Of Time:
  - The school should provide a venue for teachers/departments/grade levels to report out on collaborative or team time regarding data discussions and decisions around student outcomes.
  - To maximize instruction and remediation the school should re-visit the middle school programming that places all students in study halls from 1:38 pm-2:15 pm.

- **Pathways For Student Success:**  
The school should re-examine the structure of programs for students with disabilities at the middle school level to avoid students with disabilities being scheduled according to their classification and program, i.e., ACES and BRIDGES.
- **Home-School Partnerships:**  
The school should clearly communicate to parents/guardians the learning outcomes that students are expected to master and regularly share their child's progress toward meeting those learning outcomes.

## **V. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **FINDINGS:**

- There was evidence that the LINKS plan identifies planned PD for the year; however, there was no evidence that the PD occurred and/or the results.
- Two teachers indicated that the PD calendar followed the LINKS plan explicitly and that they were created together.
- Teachers indicated during interviews that they could request PD in a focus area.
- There was evidence that the LINKS plan explicitly references the CCLS, but there was no reference to DDI or Teacher/Principal Evaluation/Effectiveness.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

The school should use the SBIT to link student outcome data to individual teacher PD needs.

## **VI. FACILITIES AND RESOURCES**

### **FINDINGS:**

- There was evidence that the school had instructional software available and used it at multiple grade levels.
- Based on student interviews and classroom observations, the review team found evidence that adequate resources were available. All classrooms had SMART Boards and projectors; however, not all teachers consistently used them.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

The school should provide opportunities for students to use and engage with technology.

**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.