

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

Differentiated Accountability - School Quality Review (SQR)

SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW REPORT

BEDS Code:	27-01-00-01-0009
District Name:	Amsterdam City School District
School Name:	Wilbur H. Lynch Literacy Academy
School Address:	Brant Road, Amsterdam, NY 12010
Principal:	John Penman
Accountability Phase/Category:	Improvement (year 1) – Focused English Language Arts - Hispanic Students; Students with Disabilities and Economically Disadvantaged Students
Area of Identification:	
Dates of On-site Review:	November 3, 2011

PART 1: MISSION STATEMENT

"The Wilbur H. Lynch Literacy Academy's mission is to prepare students by fostering fundamental skills required for the challenges of the future. Our school will:

- promote literacy;
- provide a structured, supportive, safe learning environment;
- recognize and accept individual needs and strengths of all;
- instill the desire for personal growth;
- promote and model positive social attitudes;
- support and recognize student achievement;
- support and promote extracurricular activities;
- encourage social responsibility within the school community;
- build and appreciate parental partnership and participation;
- work to instill an understanding and respect for our diverse society; and
- foster trust through open communication."

PART 2: SCHOOL STRENGTHS

- The school has a full-time literacy coach, who is knowledgeable about research-based literacy strategies and focuses on school improvement efforts.
- A consultant is providing embedded professional development (PD) to the staff in differentiation and best practices.
- Most classrooms were warm and inviting, with student work and posters on the walls. All classrooms had word walls displayed with common "task words."

- This inclusionary model for students with disabilities is in the start-up phase. The school has moved to a model where most students with disabilities are placed in consultant-teaching classes. The primary instruction is delivered by content area teachers in partnership with special education teachers.

PART 3: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND UTILIZATION OF DATA

FINDINGS:

- There is evidence that the school collects and analyzes student data using New York State (NYS) assessment results and other sources to determine patterns of student strengths and needs in English language arts (ELA).
- The *Scholastic Reading Inventory* is used for all students; *Read 180* data is used in the Academic Intervention Services (AIS) program for a targeted group of at-risk students, and the *Fountas and Pinnell* reading assessment is used for students with disabilities and English language learners (ELLs). The school action plan acknowledges these areas of need and identifies programming and professional development (PD) to address the above areas.
- The results of State testing have been explained to all teachers by the literacy coach.
- Data analysis has been used for CEP planning. Subgroup performance has been analyzed at the District level and reviewed with the CEP committee.
- The teaching teams, established to implement evidence-based intervention strategies to address low student performance, have limited time for problem-solving.
- Hispanic students, students with disabilities and economically disadvantaged students score significantly lower in ELA on all assessments than any other subgroups. There is significant duplication of students among the subgroups.
- Interviews conducted by the review team indicated that there is concern about the student registration process. The form, as currently designed, may lead parents to misidentify their children as to their race or ethnicity. This affects the size of subgroups.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The staff should develop and implement regularly scheduled, interim benchmark assessments to monitor student progress in ELA to improve student achievement. The results of these benchmark assessments should be disaggregated for the identified subgroups, i.e., Hispanic students, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students. These assessments should be linked to the curriculum maps.
- PD should be provided so that the teachers can analyze the results of formative assessments to monitor student progress and accordingly adjust instruction. The use of formative, interim, and summative data to assess program effectiveness and to guide classroom instruction should be increased.

- A systematic schoolwide approach should be developed so that staff understands and implements interim and formative assessments.
- Staff should establish teams to collaborate regularly during the school year in analyzing student performance in ELA and planning instructional interventions to increase student achievement.
- Formative assessments should be used to plan instruction for the Academic Intervention Program (AIS) program and for students with disabilities in order to set long and short-term goals.

II. TEACHING AND LEARNING

FINDINGS:

- A schoolwide action plan is currently being developed to increase achievement in ELA.
- Ongoing curriculum mapping is taking place. This process includes curriculum alignment with the New York State (NYS) P-12 Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS).
- The school literacy coach has been working to promote the use of evidence-based literacy strategies in ELA, special education, and content-area classes. There was some evidence these strategies are being used in an emergent fashion by a number of teachers.
- ELLs receive the required amount of time for English as a second language (ESL) instruction.
- Classroom observations by the review team revealed that expectations for student learning and the levels of difficulty in content instruction vary from class to class. Many instructional topics, strategies and activities lacked rigor and alignment to the new York State (NYS) P-12 Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). This is especially the case for the special education and AIS classes.
- Much instruction lacks rigor and reflects low expectations for students.
- In most classes observed by the review team, lessons were teacher-centered and whole-group instruction was used. There was little evidence of student interaction. Students were often passive listeners.
- Time-on-task was often not maximized. Specifically, time spent in engaging students in reading and writing was limited.
- Teachers are aware of students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Consultant teachers assist classroom teachers in the implementation of the IEPs. In most classes observed by the review team, however, there was little evidence of differentiation of instruction.
- Classroom and individual behavior plans were not evident to support behavioral expectations for students with disabilities.

- Consultant-teachers did not play an active role in instruction in classes reviewed by the team. Instead, teachers sat near their students or circulated throughout the room, occasionally stopping to offer a comment to a student. Consultant teachers prepare students for their classes beforehand or debrief them afterwards. Consultant teachers follow the direction of the classroom teacher and work on specific topics with students.
- Schoolwide grading practices vary from class to class and may contribute to a decrease in student motivation.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The roles of the consultant teacher and the resource room teacher should be defined so that these aspects of the school program more effectively support student achievement.
- Teachers should regularly incorporate into their lessons small group work, differentiated instruction, and cooperative learning to meet the needs of all students.

III. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP**FINDINGS:**

- The school leader is committed to the process of raising student achievement and knowledgeable about best practices. He works closely and collaboratively with the school staff and District leaders to affect school change.
- School and District leaders initiated and have supported the implementation of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS).
- The school leaders and planning teams expressed the importance of instructional leadership.
- School leadership is involved with school planning and the Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) team. Although the school staff has developed a climate for enhancing school improvement and has an active CEP team that shows an openness to change, the school has not yet fully implemented a "plan-assess-adjust" cycle.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School leaders should maintain and enhance high expectations for all students.
- School leaders should enhance instructional rigor by monitoring classroom practices, providing timely feedback to teachers, and reviewing student work and benchmark assessments.

IV. INFRASTRUCTURE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

FINDINGS:

- The school schedule has been adjusted to allow for more instructional time for the most at-risk students.
- The grade five and high school staff are represented on the CEP committee.
- The school ESL coordinator helps with translation of letters that are sent home to Hispanic families.
- Afterschool tutoring has been increased. Transportation for students was made available to increase attendance.
- Interviews indicated that the school has lost staff due to budget cuts. As a consequence, there were 16 students in one AIS class.
- Resource allocation is determined on an as-needed basis. There is some evidence of long-term planning.
- Interviews revealed that the staff is concerned about the low ELA student achievement for those students who leave the elementary school and enter grade six as well as the articulation of students . There is a concern about curriculum alignment with the elementary schools.
- Although the school has recently acquired a new reading series and lower level reading materials, resources at the lower reading levels to meet the needs of ELLs are limited.
- Centro Civico has been a partner with the school in the past for designated projects. The school has recently reconnected with that organization to increase communication with the Hispanic community. Interviews indicated that there is limited school involvement with community-based organizations and parents.
- There is limited evidence of home-school cooperation with the parents of students in the identified subgroups. Interviews revealed that the school's Open Houses are not well attended.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school leaders and staff should enhance efforts to increase school involvement by the community and the families of the students.
- School leaders should translate signage in the school and add explanations in Spanish to the website to promote involvement of Hispanic families in the life of the school.

V. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FINDINGS:

- There is some evidence of a program of standards-based PD that addresses the instructional needs of the school. School staff expressed appreciation for the work of the coaches who work in the classrooms.
- The school has recently implemented an online tool to assist with communication and the managing of PD.
- Interviews by the review team indicated that PD offered during the summer does not reach all teachers.
- Teachers interviewed by the review team revealed that there is general agreement that intensive PD is needed regarding evidence-based strategies for literacy, the instruction of ELLs in general education classes, the role and function of the consultant-teacher in meeting the needs of students with disabilities, and using assessment data to drive instruction .

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Student achievement should be used as a measure of the effectiveness of PD.
- Teachers should be accountable for incorporating strategies learned in PD into instructional practice.
- The school leaders, with District support, should provide additional PD in the areas of evidence-based strategies in ELA, the instruction of ELLs in general education classes, the consultant teacher model, data driven instruction and cooperative learning.

VI. FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

FINDINGS:

- All classes observed by the review team were orderly.
- There has been an infusion of technology resources for teaching and learning. Technology resources are available in the school and are frequently used.
- A leveled-book library has recently been created for use by AIS, special education, and ELL teachers and students.
- The facility is bright and cheerful; however, the hallways are still under construction.
- Spanish/English textbooks are needed in all content areas. Additional native language materials are needed to provide transitional support for ELLs who participate in general education content area classes.

- Alternative format materials are needed for students with disabilities.

RECOMMENDATION:

Resources should be developed or purchased to support the ELLs and students with disabilities in the acquisition of content area knowledge.

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 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.