

NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Office of Accountability

Differentiated Accountability - School Quality Review (SQR)

SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW REPORT

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| DBN: | 01M301 |
| District Name: | District 1 |
| School Name: | The TASS School |
| School Address: | 185 1 st Avenue, New York, NY 10003 |
| Principal: | George Morgan |
| Accountability Phase/Category: | Improvement (year 1) Comprehensive |
| Area(s) of Identification: | English Language Arts - All Students; Students With Disabilities, Hispanic students, Economically Disadvantaged students |
| Dates of On-site Review: | March 27-28, 2012 |
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PART 1: VISION/MISSION STATEMENT

“We are a school where education is a collaborative process. Our teachers, administrators, students and their families work together to provide a rich, rigorous and well-rounded educational experience. We are a complete community. We value our diversity and recognize the beauty and worth of our respective cultures in order to learn about the greater world and prepare our students to take the reins of the future. We emphasize a safe community, with warm classrooms, where students can take emotional, social and academic risks in order to explore self-expression and yet still contribute to the greater social good. Our students will leave TASS with the self confidence and the academic and social skills to become productive and positive members of society.

TASS provides teachers with many opportunities to integrate arts and technology into content area classes. TASS embraces all kinds of learners. We offer all of our students a rigorous, relevant and personalized education that fosters personal growth, the attainment of skills and optimal intellectual performance. By embracing the artist, the scientist and the craftsman, the TASS student has renewed sense of self, and an expanded vision of the world.”

PART 2: SCHOOL STRENGTHS

- The school’s partnerships with Community Based Organizations (CBO) positively affect student academic and personal development by providing cultural and arts experiences, sports activities, and counseling services.
- The school’s staff is collaborative and is receptive to professional development (PD).

PART 3: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND UTILIZATION OF DATA

FINDINGS:

- Based on interviews with the school leader and the school data specialist, the review team concluded that data is collected from a variety of sources such as Acuity; Achievement Reporting and Innovation System (ARIS), which provides attendance, test scores and report card grades; Jupiter grades; and mid-term grades. However, there is limited evidence that this data is being used consistently to monitor the school's progress towards meeting its goals of closing achievement gaps for the identified subgroups.
- Classroom observations and review of documentation by the review team revealed limited evidence of teachers using data to track student progress, assist them in grouping, and adjust lessons to meet students' individual or shared needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school leader should work with the data specialist to conduct a systematic analysis of formative and summative data to identify schoolwide, grade level, classroom, and student trends. This analysis should identify areas of focus for teaching and learning and be used to track subgroup progress at designated intervals throughout the year.
- The school should provide PD for teachers in using formative and summative data to inform instruction and address the individual learning needs of students. The school leadership should monitor the implementation of the use of data in classroom practice.

II. TEACHING AND LEARNING

FINDINGS:

- Observations of Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) English language arts (ELA) classes by the review team indicated that the teachers were not effectively distributing their time or attention to provide additional support to students or to work with skill-based groups. In the classrooms the review team observed, the general education teacher was primarily responsible for the delivery of instruction and the special education teacher's role was to assist. In many cases, students were assigned the same task and had worksheets to complete that required limited responses.
- Classroom observations by the review team revealed that most of the instruction for students was in whole group settings and teacher directed. Students had few opportunities to work in pairs or engage in discussions with their peers.

- The review team’s observations of classrooms revealed minimal application of questioning techniques to promote higher-order thinking and problem solving skills. In classrooms the review team observed, some teachers answered their own questions and, when asked, students’ responses were limited to the recall of facts and details.
- Classroom observations by the review team revealed that instructional time was not maximized in many classes. Often, the time expended to complete the ‘do now’ activity limited the amount of time available for the development of the day’s lesson.
- School leaders stated to the review team that curriculum maps are in the beginning stages and the team’s review of documentation indicates there is an outline for the ELA curriculum maps, which lists topics month by month. Some maps are incomplete, while others have daily activity calendars. Rubrics are included with some units of study. The lack of completed curriculum maps results in the vertical misalignment of topics across the grades.
- Classroom observations by the review team provided limited evidence that teachers consistently differentiate instruction. There is little evidence that data is used to group students or to match tasks to the differing ability levels of the students, including students with disabilities in ELA classes.
- Classroom observations and building walkthroughs by the review team revealed that some displayed student work does not include rubrics or specific and concise feedback. There is also limited evidence that feedback provided to students clearly indicates what each student needs to do to improve.
- Although the school leader stated to the review team that teachers of ELA use the workshop model for the delivery of instruction, classroom observations by the team reveal that teachers do not consistently provide explicit strategy-based teaching.
- Interviews with students by the review team indicate that some students are not aware of their running record levels. Teachers do not consistently provide students with their reading levels or outline the skills necessary to move to the next level. There was limited evidence that teachers are tracking individual reading progress or establishing reading benchmarks for students across the year to ensure progress.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school leader should provide PD for the implementation of effective co-teaching strategies. In addition, the school leader should provide teachers with common planning time so that co-teachers can equally share in the planning and delivery of effective instruction. The school leader should monitor for implementation of these co-teaching strategies through the formal and informal observation process and ensure that best practices are shared across the school.
- The school leader should provide guidance and PD to introduce teachers to a wider range of instructional strategies that can be used in the classroom to promote greater student participation in the learning process. The school leader should monitor the teachers’ implementation of these strategies.
- School leaders should provide PD on instructional strategies that promote higher order thinking and problem solving skills. Teachers should integrate questioning strategies learned in PD into daily lesson plans. Teacher lesson plans could include pre-created questions that require critical thinking and

discussion. School leaders should monitor the use of questioning techniques through formal and informal observations.

- School leaders should provide guidance and PD on the allocation of instructional time. The school leaders should utilize school-based personnel who have ELA subject area expertise to develop model lessons that outline suggested timeframes for lesson components. These exemplar plans should be included in the curriculum. School leaders should develop a protocol for inter-visitations where staff can observe colleagues who have effectively integrated these practices.
- The school leader should utilize staff with content area expertise to develop curriculum maps for each grade. These curriculum maps should be aligned to the current NYS learning standards and the school should begin the process of integrating the new Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). The maps should be time bound and incorporate essential questions with student learning targets and tools for evaluation, including standardized criteria and assessments.
- School leaders should provide PD opportunities for teachers on a variety of instructional strategies to promote differentiation of instruction. The focus of the PD should be on using data to drive planning and instruction. Strategies should focus on ensuring that tasks match the academic needs of identified subgroups. The school leader should regularly monitor teachers' planning and instructional practice to ensure that differentiated activities are in place throughout the school.
- School leaders should ensure that rubrics are used as an integral tool in planning and assessing ELA assignments. Teachers should participate in PD activities that model the use of rubrics to provide teacher feedback, peer feedback, and student self-assessment. School leaders should monitor and evaluate the quality of feedback to identify teachers who need additional support applying these tools.
- School leaders should provide PD on the use and application of the workshop model. The school leadership should also regularly monitor the implementation of this instructional framework through regular formal and informal observations.
- The school leader should ensure that reading levels are assessed at regular intervals throughout the year. Reading assessments should be used to determine instructional and independent reading levels so teachers can target skills required to improve reading. School leaders should develop guidelines for regularly assessing student reading performance and progress as well as monitor teacher implementation of these guidelines.

III. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

FINDINGS:

- A review of the Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) by the review team indicates limited evidence that the school has developed goals that address the needs of the identified No Child Left behind (NCLB) subgroups who have not made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). In addition, there is limited evidence that the school has established interim measures to assess the school's progress towards achieving subgroup performance.

- During an interview with the school leader by the review team, the school leader stated that he has created a distributed leadership model, but there is limited evidence of sufficient training to support staff members in their assigned leadership roles.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school leader should develop a plan that includes interim benchmarks to monitor the progress of all students, including the identified subgroups. This plan-assess-adjust cycle should demonstrate progress over time and enable the school leaders to evaluate the effectiveness of the ELA program.
- The school leader should define specific responsibilities and protocols within the existing model of distributed leadership. Training should be provided to support the development of these staff members within their leadership roles.

IV. INFRASTRUCTURE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

FINDINGS:

- During interviews with the review team, students reported that they have goals that were written at the end of the marking period and are reviewed every two weeks. The goals are not clearly defined and contain limited guidance for students on how to accomplish them. Students stated that there are no benchmarks set for them across the year and students are not provided with clear expectations for learning or strategies to achieve their goals. Some students indicated that there were a minimum number of required texts to be read for the school year; other students were unaware of this expectation.
- Interviews with students and a review of classrooms and documentation by the review team revealed that student writing consists of responses to articles and essays. There is limited evidence in student folders or publications of student work within other genres.
- Based on classroom observation and documentation, the review team found that the volume and content of student work folders vary from classroom to classroom. Many folders contain few graded or annotated work samples. Teacher comments vary in quality, and many work products did not include next steps for students to improve. In classrooms visited by the review team, there was limited posted student work or exemplars.
- Interviews and observations by the review team indicate that the school is using the Wilson Reading System to provide targeted support for ten of the most at-risk students. Documents reveal that the school's Academic Intervention Services (AIS) are provided in the morning during the extended day period and are used to make up missed work or to provide homework help. The attendance rate for the extended day program is 12 percent.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Teachers should set defined goals for students and create quarterly benchmarks aligned to interim assessments. Student learning goals should be developed to ensure that students make progress or performance improvements. School leaders should monitor the development of student goals and ensure teachers revisit and revise goals with students on an ongoing basis.
- When developing units of study, school leaders, in collaboration with teachers, should identify and develop writing tasks to support other literary genres. These tasks should be developed in preparation for the implementation of the CCLS. Tasks should allow students to develop informational and explanatory writing skills using a wide array of genres, including literary analyses, scientific and historical reports, summaries, as well as functional writing such as instructions, manuals, memos, reports, applications, and résumés.
- School leaders, in collaboration with teachers, should develop criteria for student work samples that can serve as both portfolio assessments and be shared across grades. These work samples can be used by teachers in the next grade to establish initial performance benchmarks. Portfolio elements should be consistent and include assessment rubrics for each selected assignment.
- The school should review and revise the school's current AIS program in order to increase opportunities to support at risk students. At-risk students should be identified and programmed for AIS during the regular school day. Data should be tracked to evaluate the students' progress, and their schedules should be adjusted to maximize opportunities for them to receive services.

V. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FINDING:

There was limited evidence in documents reviewed by the review team that the school has developed a comprehensive professional development plan. The PD topics, such as the Danielson Teacher Effectiveness Rubric and the CCLS, were presented at faculty meetings. According to documentation reviewed by the team, few teachers participate in Network PD workshops. There is limited evidence that the PD offered is based on teacher needs derived from surveys, observations, or their teachers' professional goals.

RECOMMENDATION:

The school leader should develop and implement a PD plan that is designed to support the overall and individual needs of teachers. The PD plan should be aligned with the school's CEP goals and take into account the differentiated needs of the staff to meet the learning needs of their students. Teachers should participate in school based and Network PD offerings to improve their pedagogy and serve as turnkey trainers for others teachers who are unable to attend.

VI. FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

FINDINGS:

- A review of classroom libraries by review team members indicated that classroom libraries have been purchased, but there is limited variety of texts that appeal to the interests of students in a range of instructional levels and genres. There are limited resources to support independent reading both in school and at home.
- An interview with the school leader by the review team revealed that the students have limited access to a school library/media center.
- Based on interviews and classroom observations by the review team, the team found that the school has two laptop carts and SMARTBoard technology. However, in the classes observed, the review team saw limited evidence that teachers routinely integrate technology into their instruction.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School leaders should identify additional funding opportunities to extend the resources available in each library to include materials that are reflective of students' interests and instructional levels.
- The school leader should use the building council to collaborate with the other school leader in the building to ensure equity of access to the school library/media center.
- The school leader should develop a comprehensive technology plan that identifies methods for integrating technology into the curriculum. This plan should include provisions for on-going PD for teachers to develop their skills in using technology to support instruction and addressing the diverse learning needs of students. The school leader should monitor the use of technology through observations and walkthroughs.

PART 4: CONCLUDING STATEMENT

The principal and his staff are to be thanked for their efforts in completing the School Quality Review Quality Indicators document and for gathering and organizing supporting evidence. In addition, the review team appreciated the open approach to professional dialogue throughout the process.

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: CCLS, Data Driven Instruction and the Annual Professional Performance Reviews for teacher effectiveness.