

NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Office of Accountability

Differentiated Accountability - School Quality Review (SQR)

SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW REPORT

DBN:	28Q008
District Name:	District 28
School Name:	Richard S. Grossley – The New Preparatory Middle School
School Address:	108-35 167 th Street, Queens, New York 11433
Principal:	Angela Green
Accountability Phase/Category:	Improvement (year 1) - Comprehensive English Language Arts- All Students; Black Students; Hispanic Students; Economically Disadvantaged Students and Students with Disabilities Mathematics- All Students; Black Students; Hispanic Students; Economically Disadvantaged Students; Students with Disabilities and Limited English Proficient Students
Area(s) of Identification:	
Date(s) of On-site Review:	March 27 – 28, 2012

PART 1: MISSION STATEMENT

“Our mission is for the young people at Middle School 8 to learn and apply real life concepts through an interdisciplinary curriculum. The interdisciplinary curriculum is the common thread that will connect all subject classrooms and provide a deep understanding of teaching and learning. Students will become critical thinkers, ambassadors of their own learning and develop an awareness and appreciation of their community and the world abroad.”

PART 2: SCHOOL STRENGTHS

- The school has a well-resourced teacher workroom equipped with a professional library with computers available for teachers.
- Positive student and teacher relationships provide a productive academic environment and a strong sense of community within the school.

- The bulletin boards in the school’s hallways have attractive displays of student work along with task descriptions aligned with core content standards, scoring rubrics, and teacher feedback tailored to help students improve upon future assignments.
- The school staff plan and host special events to display student talents that are well attended by parents and community members.

PART 3: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND UTILIZATION OF DATA

FINDINGS:

- A review of documentation and interviews conducted by the review team indicate that multiple data sources, such as the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) and Acuity scores, are collected and analyzed. However, there is limited evidence that interpretations of trend data are sufficient to provide insights into the steps needed to close achievement gaps or that data analysis is used as a tool for driving forward school improvement.
- The school has a data team that meets regularly to analyze data by grade level and work with colleagues to present skills analysis summaries. However, there is limited evidence from interviews and classroom observations led by the review team that individual student data is used by all teachers to plan lessons and organize materials by instructional levels in order to differentiate instruction for all students, including students in the identified subgroups.
- School leaders collect data on students’ performance levels, as well as the support services students receive. However, the review team found that there is limited evidence that the school has a strategic plan to analyze this data to determine correlations between students’ performance and the support services students receive. Therefore, there is limited evidence that student data is used effectively to plan for and evaluate student support services.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school should revisit the current system for data disaggregation and analysis to focus more closely on student-by-student, class-by-class, and subgroup-by-subgroup deficiencies in addition to the whole school and grade level monitoring. An improvement plan should be created to ensure that all teachers incorporate item skills analysis to inform their instruction. Particular attention should be given to monitoring the development of student skills as they move from grade to grade to check for vertical alignment in curriculum programs in each content area.
- School leaders should monitor the work of the data team to ensure that trend data for at least three years are collected and analyzed to monitor individual student achievement and to determine proficiency levels and progress from year-to-year. A structure should be put in place to assure that the data trend analysis work of the data team is effectively shared with all teachers. Professional development (PD) should also be provided to teachers to ensure that data is used consistently to inform instruction in order to meet the needs of all students, including the identified subgroups.

- The school staff should collect, analyze, and interpret data on the various programs and support services that supplement student learning, including afterschool activities, to determine the impact of these programs and services on participating students' academic performance. School leaders should then adjust program design and service delivery for participating students.

II. TEACHING AND LEARNING

FINDINGS:

- Interviews and document reviews by the review team indicate that the school identified the improvement of differentiated instruction as one of its school wide goals for the 2011-12 academic year. However, based on a review of lesson plans for mathematics and English language arts (ELA) instruction and lesson observations, the review team found that teachers primarily use multiple worksheets or problem sets for differentiation. This approach does not provide the best match of methodology for skill building for English language learners (ELLs) because it lacks multiple entry points and the needed scaffolding to support learning. In addition, many lessons observed by the review team presented limited evidence of student engagement, critical thinking skills development, and rigorous task assignments that address students' varied learning styles and academic needs.
- During classroom observations, the review team found limited evidence that teachers consistently provide students with opportunities to engage in collaborative problem solving tasks and interactive discussion. In most lessons observed by the review team, teachers asked low level, close-ended questions that required factual recall answers and often accepted one word or short phrase responses from student volunteers. As a result, teachers' questioning strategies limited the flow and depth of class discussions.
- Classroom observations conducted by the review team found that there is little evidence that data are used to group students or to match instructional tasks and assignments to the differing ability levels of the students. In some lessons observed by the review team, student grouping was based on random selection by teachers or student choice, rather than on individual student learning strengths and needs, as identified through data analysis.
- Observations by the review team indicated that most posted student work in hallways and on classroom walls is assessed against rubric standards. Teachers provide students with constructive feedback and next-step instructions on notes affixed to these displays of student work. However, most mathematics and ELA teachers do not provide this same quality of feedback on the student work products in portfolios or on student journal writing. As a result, ELA and mathematics students do not receive consistent feedback on how to improve work products in portfolios and journals.
- There is limited evidence that teachers consistently implement all of the elements of balanced literacy instruction. Classroom observations conducted by the review team found limited implementation of some of the key components of this approach, and the pacing of some of these components was inconsistent across classrooms. As a result, some students struggled to complete guided and independent practice tasks within the instructional period. This was especially true for students with disabilities and ELLs who needed scaffolding support for their learning.

- A review of school documents provided evidence to the review team that the school has a written Language Allocation Policy (LAP) describing the instructional program for ELLs. However, based on classroom observations, the review team found limited evidence that instruction was consistently based on strategies outlined in the LAP. For example, some teachers were not using strategies and resources that would promote English language acquisition. In addition, some students who spoke little or no English were not consistently involved in lessons, and there was limited evidence of native language materials to support their learning.
- Review Team classroom observations found limited evidence that teachers used audiovisual equipment, learning centers, or manipulatives consistently and effectively in lessons for students with disabilities and ELLs. As a result, the review team found that there was a limited ability by teachers to use effective and varied instructional strategies to address the specialized needs of students in these subgroups.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school leaders and the instructional coach should provide PD opportunities for teachers on a variety of instructional strategies to promote differentiation of instruction. A key area of the PD should be the use of data to drive lesson planning and instruction. Strategies should focus on ensuring that tasks match the academic needs of identified subgroups, especially ELLs. Student engagement strategies, critical thinking skills development, and rigorous task assignments that address students' varied learning styles and academic needs should be developed among all staff. School leaders should regularly monitor teachers' planning and instructional practice in classrooms to check that differentiated strategies and activities are in place throughout the school. Ongoing PD should be provided for teachers who need additional support with using data to match work to the individual needs of students.
- School leaders should provide guidance and training to ensure that classroom instruction shifts from teacher posed questions that require one-word answers or are recall and comprehension based to questions that require students to support answers by citing text, elaborating on the answers of other students, and summarizing and rephrasing new information. Teachers' lesson plans should include pre-designed questions that require critical thinking and discussion. To engage students that tend to opt-out of class discussions, teachers should use wait time and random selection and avoid calling exclusively on student volunteers.
- School leaders should provide PD on the implementation of flexible grouping based on formative, interim, and summative data. All students should be provided with tasks and activities that address their specific learning strengths and needs. School leaders should monitor teacher planning and instruction to ensure that the use of data to group students becomes common practice in all classrooms. Ongoing PD should be provided for teachers as needed.
- School leaders should consistently monitor student portfolios and journals during walkthroughs to ensure consistency in the quality of teacher feedback provided to students on all work products. PD should be provided to teachers who need to improve their skills in providing this student quality assessment and guidance.
- School leaders should provide ongoing PD focusing on the expectations for the implementation of all of the elements needed for balanced literacy instruction, including how to support struggling students

within this approach. School leaders should monitor implementation through formal and informal observations to ensure that the elements of a balanced literacy approach are part of class instruction and targeted reading strategies, adaptations, and modifications are provided for students with disabilities and ELLs.

- School leaders should review with teachers the instructional strategies contained in the LAP. School leaders should follow up by conducting formal and informal observations to monitor class instruction to ensure that teachers implement an ESL program that promotes language acquisition through content area instruction that consistently supports academic comprehension and mastery. School leaders should also monitor that teachers provide for ELLs multiple activities that include native language instruction to scaffold language acquisition.
- School leaders should ensure that teachers use audiovisual equipment, learning centers, manipulatives, and libraries with books of appropriate readability levels to engage students, make vocabulary development more meaningful and make language more accessible to students with disabilities and ELLs. Through frequent walkthroughs, school leaders should formally and informally monitor the use of these teaching strategies and provide PD as needed.

III. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

FINDINGS:

- Lesson observations by the review team confirm that the school leader has established and communicated a clear set of initiatives for building students' vocabulary and increasing exposure to informational text. However, there is limited evidence that school leaders have clearly defined instructional strategies to achieve the school's goals of making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in ELA and mathematics for students in the identified subgroups. As a result, teachers are not consistently implementing a defined set of strategies that will accelerate student learning and yield significant student progress towards well defined and measurable AYP goals.
- The review team's analysis of observation feedback provided by the School leader to teachers found limited evidence that there are structures in place to ensure that teachers implement strategies learned in PD sessions. Document reviews conducted by the review team found limited evidence of a formal follow-up process to monitor classroom implementation. This contributes to the slow improvement rate in the quality of teaching and learning.
- Based on documentation review and interviews with school leaders, the review team found limited evidence that teachers use assessment data for instructional planning and delivery.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school leader, with the support of the school leadership team, should develop and implement a structure for articulating schoolwide and specific instructional strategies based on the school's Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) to improve achievement in ELA and mathematics for the identified subgroups. The school leaders should articulate a clear vision for this plan that drives the school towards high student achievement and clearly outlines the responsibilities of staff and leaders.

The plan should include goals, action plans, and necessary PD and use all resources available. The implementation of the plan should be monitored carefully and its impact on student achievement measured.

- School leaders should use the observational process to provide targeted and actionable feedback to teachers and ensure teachers incorporate the skills developed within PD activities into their instructional delivery. Procedures should be put in place for following and providing identified teachers with targeted PD and coaching.
- School leaders should identify the analysis and use of data for instructional planning as a regular focus for their classroom observations and teacher feedback. The school should provide PD on an ongoing basis for teachers who may need additional support on how to use data based on assessments to improve instruction. This training and support should include the variety of methods that can be used within the classroom to meet the individual learning needs of students.

IV. INFRASTRUCTURE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

FINDINGS:

- Based on data review and classroom visits, the review team found limited evidence that the organization of the ESL program meets the instructional needs of all ELL students. For example, students of mixed proficiency levels and mixed grade levels are scheduled for the same instructional periods using a pullout model. As a result, grade appropriate instruction and academic language development of ELLs is hampered.
- Classroom teachers provide students with instructional assignments to complete while they are suspended in house. However, the review team found that the Safe School against Violence in Education (SAVE) classroom lacks grade appropriate instructional materials and resources (including technology) for suspended students to access and use to ensure continuity in their learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School leadership, together with the ESL teachers, should assess and reorganize the schedules of ELLs and ESL teachers to facilitate the delivery of grade appropriate, quality instruction that supports the acquisition of English language skills and increases the proficiency levels of ELLs. A comprehensive review of the instructional approaches and models being used should also be implemented in order to assess their effectiveness and make adjustments accordingly.
- The school leader, in collaboration with the instructional and support services team, should ensure that sufficient resource materials and technology are available in the SAVE room to support continued learning for all assigned students. The appropriateness and effectiveness of these materials should be assessed regularly.

V.

VI. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FINDINGS:

- Based on review of documents and interviews, the review team found limited evidence that the school has developed and implemented a written comprehensive PD plan that is aligned with the stated goals of the CEP and that is informed by the school's formative and summative assessment data. Additionally, document review, interviews, and classroom visits provided the review team limited evidence that the PD plan expands and strengthens teachers' consistent use of explicit instructional strategies to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of students who are not at desired grade or proficiency levels.
- The review team observed that some teachers have not demonstrated the consistent use of instructional strategies provided at PD. While teachers meet together regularly, based on interviews, classroom observations and documentation, the review team found limited evidence that these collaborations are sufficiently structured to provide opportunities for teachers to share best practices and deepen their own learning.
- A review of documentation and interviews with school leaders conducted by the review team reveal limited evidence that the PD provided was part of a strategic plan to improve achievement for students in the identified subgroups and included specific specialized sessions for teachers and staff who work with students with disabilities and ELLs. As a result, teachers have had limited targeted PD regarding teaching strategies for raising the achievement of students in these subgroups.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School leaders should create and implement a structured and detailed comprehensive PD plan that is aligned with the school's CEP goals and takes into account the differentiated needs of the staff and the students. The plan should be reviewed and evaluated regularly to ensure that it is leading to improvements in student performance and the quality of instruction and learning across the school.
- School leaders should ensure that staff is provided with staff development on effective instructional design, delivery, and assessment strategies. Teachers should share best practices across grade levels through lesson tuning, common assessment design, peer coaching, and learning walks. This information should inform and help design ongoing PD.
- School leaders should provide opportunities for teachers to participate in tailored PD offered by specialized providers, such as the New York City Department of Education's Office of English Language Learners, as part of a strategic PD plan focused on improving instruction for students with disabilities and ELL students. School leadership should ensure that teachers participate in focused PD that reflects strategies for addressing specific student needs, especially for students in the identified subgroups, and monitor regularly the effectiveness of this PD in changing instructional practice and supporting student achievement in classrooms.

VII. FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

FINDING:

- Lesson observations conducted by the review team provided limited evidence that native language and multicultural instructional literary materials were consistently available in the classrooms or the school library to support quality instruction for ELLs. In addition, the number of books in classroom libraries with appropriate readability levels for ELLs and student with disabilities was limited. As a result, students with disabilities and ELLs have limited access to resources that could support their learning.
- Classroom observations conducted by the review team found limited evidence that students are provided with adequate facilities for hands-on inquiry-based science experiences. As a result, students are unable to participate in experiences to delve deeper into science and develop a better understanding of the content.
- The review team found that the library collection consists of minimal resources available for general education students as well as students with disabilities and ELLs. The school does not have a full-time librarian, and a classroom teacher currently staffs the library. As a result, students and teachers have limited access to books, reference materials, and technology for advancing instruction and learning.
- Many classrooms did not have access to a SMARTBoard or computers. Review team classroom observations revealed that access to technology to support instruction is inconsistent as is the working condition of available equipment. Consequently, the review team observed that students do not have access to working technology to support their learning and development of 21st century skills. Lesson observations by the review team found that where SMARTBoards are present in classrooms, teachers use them mostly as projection screens. There was also limited evidence that technology is consistently integrated into and used to support instruction. As a result, students and their teachers have limited abilities to conduct research using computers or to use technology to apply skills and concepts taught during lessons.

RECOMMENDATION:

- School leadership should ensure that all classrooms and the school's library are equipped with adequate native language and multilingual instructional resources to support quality instruction for ELLs. Teachers should be provided with PD focusing on incorporating these materials and resources into daily lessons.
- The school should identify resources and funding to designate a permanent room for science instruction that has the appropriate facilities for the implementation of hands-on inquiry-based science, with enough supplies and safety equipment for all students.
- The school leader should seek grants and supplemental funding to evaluate and upgrade the collection of resources in the library, including technology to better support the learning needs of all students. The school leader should seek to hire a librarian/library media specialist with the expertise to encourage and reinforce reading and research for all students.
- The school leader should investigate outside sources of funding and review budget allocations to provide additional resources designed to improve accessibility and maintenance of technology equipment in

order to support the academic needs of all students. The school leadership should provide training and support to targeted teachers to ensure that they have the skills and competencies to use technology, including laptop computers and SMARTBoards, in class instruction. School leaders should monitor that strategies learned in PD are fully implemented in the classroom so that technology is routinely integrated into teaching and learning.

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 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.