

NYSED/MASSENA CSD JOINT INTERVENTION TEAM REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

BEDS Code:	512001060009
School Name:	J. William Leary Junior High School
School Address:	1 School Street Massena, NY 13662
Principal:	Jesse Coburn
Restructuring Phase/Category:	Restructuring (year 1) - Focused
Area of Identification:	English Language Arts - Students with Disabilities
Dates of On-site Diagnostic Review:	February 27- 29; March 1, 2012

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

Community and School Background

J. William Leary Junior High School serves 444 students in grades 7 and 8. The school enrollment is 17 percent American Indian, one percent Hispanic, one percent Asian and 81 percent White students. Of these students one percent is English language learners (ELLs) and approximately 12 percent are students with disabilities.

The administrative team consists of the Principal and one dean of students. The Principal has served the school for four years, and the dean has served two years. There are 40 teachers on staff; one percent has been at the school for less than one year and 47 percent for three or fewer years. Ninety-six percent of teachers are highly qualified. The rate of teacher turnover is 17 percent.

PART 2: ASSESSMENT OF THE SCHOOL’S EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

A. Performance on Key Indicators of Student Achievement Trends and School Progress

Positive or Negative Indicator (+/-)	School Performance Indicators	✓
	NYSED Quantitative Performance Measures	
-	School is ten or more points away from meeting its Effective Annual Measurable Objective (EAMO) for one or more identified subgroups in subject/area(s) of identification.	✓

B. School Strengths

- Time is provided within the daily schedule for collaboration of staff through team meetings and to work with newly hired data coaches on interpretation of data.
- The Principal is highly visible in the school, and staff expressed confidence in his commitment and leadership.

- Technology is readily available as an instructional tool and used in classrooms throughout the school as evidenced in classrooms observed. Professional development (PD) on use of technology has been provided to staff.

C. Key Findings and Recommendations

Summary of the key issues (and causal factors), and other areas of concern, identified during the on-site diagnostic review that are negatively impacting student achievement in identified areas, as well as recommendations, as related to the seven JIT Indicator Categories:

I. Curriculum

Findings:

- A written curriculum for each core subject is in place. However, the format differs from subject to subject and the framework does not include, although in process, explicit alignment to the New York State P-12 Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS).
- Pacing calendars were not available for all curricula.
- Grade 7-8 curriculum is aligned with the K-6 curriculum and the 9-12 curriculum; however, teachers who participated in the focus groups were not knowledgeable of this alignment and expressed concern with regard to transitions from the elementary schools to the high school.
- In the lessons observed by the review team, there was insufficient application of higher order thinking skills, problem solving and project-based learning to stimulate and engage the students.

Recommendations:

- The District should work with the school on the development of curriculum in all core areas and ensure that it is clearly aligned with the current New York State Learning Standards. The curriculum must be aligned to the new P-12 Common Core Learning Standards in English language arts, literacy and mathematics to prepare for implementation in school year 2012-13. All curricula should be developed by knowledgeable and trained individuals (national, State or local) who understand the key elements of curriculum development.
- The District should work with the school to develop pacing calendars for all curricular areas and develop a system to ensure that gaps in the delivery of curriculum do not occur.
- The District should work with the principals and teachers at all three levels (elementary-junior high-high school) to ensure articulation of curriculum K-12 to design and implement formal transition plans from elementary (K-6) to junior high (7-8) to high school (9-12).
- A wide range of instructional strategies should be used to promote student higher order thinking, problem solving and research skills in all content areas for all students, including students with disabilities to improve/increase the rigor of curriculum outcomes.

II. Teaching and Learning

Findings:

- Student grouping practices that were observed in classrooms were based on random selection by teachers and student choice, rather than on individual learning needs identified through analysis of data.
- Minimal examples of differentiated instruction were evident in the classes observed.
- Coordination of regular education and special education services was not highly evident in some of the classrooms observed. Teachers expressed concern that time for such collaboration is not provided within the daily or weekly schedule.
- Questioning strategies tended to focus on lower level cognitive skills in classrooms observed.
- While some student work was displayed in classrooms, the rubrics used to evaluate student work were not displayed.
- District policy limits the amount of homework that teachers can assign each night. Teachers and parents expressed concern that homework is not being effectively used to assist in the instructional process. Assignment of homework varied greatly from nightly, occasionally or seldom as reported by parents. Some students expressed concern over having too much homework.

Recommendations:

- The District should work with school leaders to provide PD on the implementation of flexible grouping based on formative, interim, and summative data to ensure that students are provided with tasks and activities that address their specific learning needs in all lessons. School leaders should monitor teacher planning and instruction to ensure that flexible grouping is employed as an instructional strategy in all classrooms. Grouping strategies for students with disabilities should be a focus of this work.
- The District should work with the school to provide PD on a variety of instructional strategies to promote differentiated instruction, with a focus on providing tasks and activities that address the specific learning needs of all students, including students with disabilities. School leaders should develop a system to monitor the implementation of differentiated instruction as a regular and ongoing practice by all teachers.
- The District should work with the school to provide common planning time for special education and regular education teachers to better facilitate coordination of effort and to enhance their teaching effectiveness, with a focus on meeting the individual needs of students with disabilities.
- The District should work with the school to provide PD to support teachers in developing a variety of questioning techniques aimed at higher order thinking skills. Teachers should design "essential questions" for lessons that require students to analyze and synthesize relevant information and draw conclusions that they can defend. Teachers should employ random selection and avoid calling exclusively on willing students. School leaders should make questioning techniques a focus for observation.

- Examples of student work along with rubrics used to evaluate student work should be prominently displayed in all classrooms and common areas throughout the school.
- Teams should coordinate the assignment of homework. The District should clarify the understanding among teachers and parents regarding the amount of allowable nightly homework time that can be assigned and discuss the pros and cons of possible expansion of existing time frames with teachers.

III. School Leadership

Findings:

- A new Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) for teachers is currently under discussion. Lack of finalizing the specific APPR details has hampered the school leader's ability to complete classroom observations in a timely manner.
- The Building Leadership Team (BLT) does not currently monitor the implementation of the Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP). No formal system is currently in place to monitor the achievement of CEP goals for continuous improvement. The CEP is not aligned formally with a District-wide strategic plan.

Recommendations:

- The District should work to complete the APPR adoption process pursuant to Commissioner's Regulations.
- The District should work with the school to develop a formal list of responsibilities for the BLT, including monitoring the implementation of the goals for school improvement outlined in the CEP as well as monitoring the implementation of recommendations included within this report. The BLT should regularly collect and analyze data, information and feedback from stakeholders regarding achievement on goals and report their findings to teachers, parents and the Board of Education. The school improvement goals of the CEP should be part of a District-wide plan for continuous improvement focused on instructional excellence supported by strong school and District-level leadership. School leaders, District leaders and data coaches should actively and regularly participate in team meetings with teachers to facilitate discussion, analyze data, and monitor progress on CEP goals.

IV. Infrastructure for Student Success

Findings:

- Despite numerous attempts by the school to form a parent group, there is no active parent organization for the school. Parents who participated in the focus group acknowledged that the school responds to individual needs and provides information through newsletters and electronic avenues; however, they expressed an interest in greater involvement and representation. It was noted that no parent participated in development of the CEP.
- Much time, effort and expense has been spent in the implementation of the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) model; however, clear and common schoolwide expectations for student behavior were not displayed in classrooms and/or common areas. Variations in

expectations for student behavior were evident in classrooms observed. Parents and students who participated in the focus group expressed concern regarding bullying.

Recommendations:

- The school should reach out to parents to determine the best ways to have them become more active partners in the education of their children. Parents of students with disabilities should be encouraged to become actively involved as school partners.
- The school should determine whether or not to continue with the PBIS program based on an assessment of its impact. Expectations for student behaviors should be prominently displayed and consistently implemented.

V. Collection, Analysis and Utilization of Data

Finding:

The analysis of data is not consistently used as a tool for driving forward school improvement.

Recommendation:

The school should develop a system to use data to drive instruction. In developing this system the school should consider the following:

- establish and/or redefine inquiry focused teacher teams and the benchmarked deliverables for each team;
- use team meeting time to interpret data, align interim assessments, and infuse the P-12 CCLS into lessons;
- use data to inform instructional practice; and
- develop, implement and monitor action plans aligned to the goals in the school CEP.

VI. Professional Development

Finding:

PD on topics other than CCLS is limited due to time and fiscal restraints.

Recommendation:

Emphasis on the shift to the CCLS, differentiated instruction, flexible grouping, and questioning techniques to encourage the development of higher order thinking skills should be PD priorities.

VII. District Support

Findings:

- District planning does not explicitly incorporate goals and improvement initiatives included in the school's CEP.
- While District support for implementation of the school's CEP is evident, there is not a clear, formal description or set of expectations regarding the specific nature of the support.

Recommendations:

- A comprehensive District plan for continuous improvement should be developed, including specific and measurable goals from each school focused on implementation of research-based best practice.
- A District office liaison should be appointed to serve on the BLT. District support for follow-through on the recommendations included in this report should be clearly identified and communicated to the faculty and staff to assist in establishing a sense of collaboration and team work.
- The District should support the implementation of the Joint Intervention Team (JIT) recommendations.

PART 3: JOINT INTERVENTION TEAM OVERALL FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

A. Overall Finding

Reference	Review Team Finding	✓
(b)	The school has made some progress in identified areas, and may make AYP with the implementation of additional focused interventions to accelerate improved student achievement.	✓

B. Overall Recommendation

Reference	Review Team Recommendation	✓
(b)	Develop and implement a School Restructuring Plan that clearly identifies root causes and/or contributing factors for low student performance in identified areas, and incorporates focused interventions to address identified issues and accelerate improved student achievement. The School Restructuring Plan must include one of the restructuring options required under NCLB and further defined by the District.	✓

C. In the space below, include specific information to support the District in determining how the above JIT recommendation should be implemented.

- As resources permit, extend or restructure the educational day and summer programs to add time to address individual student learning needs, especially for students with disabilities. Current additional periods of instruction have been implemented, some of which are outside the school day, as optional opportunities that may or may not be available for students based on individual circumstances.
- Revise the school’s curriculum to address the recommendations in this report.
- Conduct ongoing monitoring to ensure implementation of curriculum with fidelity to the CCLS.
- Provide PD in the areas recommended in this report with in-class modeling of effective instructional strategies combined with coaching for teachers. Provide immediate and specific feedback to teachers to ensure skill development and mastery.

- Promote the development of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to provide time for discussion and reflection among teachers facilitated by teacher leaders, school leaders and District-level leaders.
- Translate the recommendations of this report into the school CEP goals and charge the BLT with the responsibility to monitor the progress of these goals and regularly report their findings to the staff, parents, community, and Board of Education.