

NYSED/UTICA CSD JOINT INTERVENTION TEAM REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

BEDS Code:	412300010022
School Name:	John F. Kennedy Middle School
School Address:	500 Deerfield Drive East Utica, NY 13502
Principal:	Dolores Chainey
Restructuring Phase/Category:	Restructuring (year 1)- Focused
Area of Identification:	English Language Arts – Asian Students; Students With Disabilities; English Language Learners; and Economically Disadvantaged Students
Dates of On-site Diagnostic Review:	December 5-8, 2011

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

Community and School Background

The John F. Kennedy Middle School serves 715 students in grades 7 and 8. The school enrollment is 23 percent Black students, 17 percent Hispanic students, 11 percent Asian students and 49 percent White students. Of these students, 14 percent are students with disabilities and 12 percent are English language learners (ELLs). The city of Utica has become one of the largest Federal Relocation Centers for immigrants coming to the United States. The District has absorbed in excess of 1,000 students over the past three years. Recently, Utica has seen a large influx of refugees from camps in Thailand and Somalia. This increase has led to a diverse and growing student enrollment.

The administrative team consists of the Principal and two Assistant Principals (APs). The Principal has served the school for five years. One AP will have completed five years in June 2012 and the other in January 2013. There are 71 teachers, two guidance counselors, one psychologist, 1.5 social workers and one media specialist. In addition, there are 47 support staff positions, including secretaries, clerks, security, nurse, cafeteria staff, parent liaisons and teaching assistants.

There are nine teachers with one to three years of experience and 62 teachers with more than three years of experience. All instructional staff are highly qualified. Each content area is supported by a team leader or AP. Their role is to provide leadership in the areas of curriculum and data analysis.

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	
-	Negative trend data for one or more identified subject/areas and subgroups for the past two consecutive years, as indicated by a decrease in the percentage of	✓

_Positive or Negative Indicator (+/-)	School Performance Indicators	✓
	students performing at or above Level 3 and/or a decrease in the Performance Index.	
-	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.	✓
-	Performance data for the school on NYSED Accountability Overview Reports (AOR) for the past two consecutive years show an increase in the number of subgroups that did not make Adequate Yearly progress (AYP) in identified area(s). Significant increase in number of subgroups that did not make AYP in Math.	✓
-	Performance data for the school on NYSED Accountability Overview Reports (AOR) for the past two consecutive years indicate an increase in the achievement gap between identified subgroups and the <i>All Students</i> subgroup in one or more identified subject/area(s).	✓

B. School Strengths

- The school has a safe and orderly environment.
- The Young Scholars Program, a mentoring program for at-risk students that partners with Utica College of Syracuse University, supports and compliments the schools efforts.

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:

- Although the school staff have worked during the summer to align the written English language arts (ELA) curriculum with the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), it was reported that there is no written curriculum for Writing Labs.
- Curriculum programs do not foster rigorous and engaging instruction. In the lessons observed, the team saw insufficient application of higher order thinking skills, problem-solving and project-based learning to stimulate and engage the students.

Recommendations:

- Curriculum for the Academic Intervention Services (AIS) Writing Labs should be developed and aligned closely with ELA curriculum. Expectations should be articulated with all staff and students.
- A wide range of instructional strategies should be used to promote student higher order thinking, problem-solving and research skills in all content areas to improve and increase the rigor of curriculum outcomes. Professional development (PD) should be provided as necessary and monitored by school leadership.

II. Teaching and Learning

Findings:

- In classrooms observed by the team, students sat in rows, worksheets were used and teachers provided direct instruction, with little variety of instructional strategies to meet the diverse learning needs of students.
- There was limited evidence of the development of higher order thinking skills in instructional practices. Questioning skills varied greatly among teachers, with a majority of questions requiring factual recall and one word answers.
- Although rubrics were visible, displayed student work did not include specific and concise feedback and did not clearly indicate what each student needed to do to improve or reach the next level.
- There was limited student engagement in meaningful instructional activities. Many lessons lacked challenge and did little to attract the interest of students. Opportunities to interact or work collaboratively were not available to students; students were not active participants in the learning process.
- In many classrooms technology, including SMART Boards and laptops, was underutilized and not effectively integrated into instruction.
- The co-teaching model is not effectively and skillfully implemented in all integrated classrooms. For the majority of the instructional time, one teacher is primarily responsible for the delivery of instruction and the other teacher plays a much less significant role. Students are not fully benefiting from having two certified teachers in the classroom. Teachers are not effectively distributing their time or attention to provide additional support to students or to work with small skill-based groups. Co-teachers are not consistently planning together, which negatively impacts the effectiveness of the co-teaching model.

Recommendations:

- Instructional staff should consistently implement research-based instructional practices in all content areas.
 - Instructional practices should include, but not be limited to, differentiated instruction; use of rubrics; higher order thinking skills; problem-solving; scaffolding; and writing across the content. The implementation of these instructional practices should be regularly monitored by the District and school leadership. Teachers, including teachers of ELLs and teachers of students with disabilities, should meet regularly to share and plan effective research-based strategies during department meetings and common planning time and discuss these strategies as they apply to their specific teaching units.
 - Differentiated instruction should be based on data and student need. Embedded PD should be provided in differentiated instruction strategies, such as inquiry-based learning, project-based learning, and cooperative learning. Teachers should regularly monitor and analyze student progress to identify and provide the necessary interventions and modifications.
- PD should be provided to support teachers in developing a variety of questioning techniques aimed at critical thinking and using problem-solving skills appropriate to student development. These skills would specifically support teacher effectiveness with students with disabilities and ELLs with

Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). School leadership should make questioning techniques a focus for observation.

- Rubrics should be used as an integral tool in planning and assessing 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 student work and evaluate the quality of feedback that is provided to ensure that it helps students improve and move to the next level.
- Teachers should ensure that all student work is appropriately challenging and demanding. Teachers should provide regular opportunities for students to work cooperatively and to discuss issues so that they become more proactive learners. School leadership should carry out regular observations/instructional walks to monitor that this is consistently occurring.
- School leaders should ensure that technology is routinely integrated into teaching and learning. Training should be available for teachers to appropriately use these resources.
- The school should provide on-site training for the full implementation of co-teaching strategies. Scheduled common planning time should be provided so that co-teachers can equally share in the planning and delivery of effective instruction. School leaders should monitor the implementation through the formal and informal teacher observation process and ensure that best practices are shared across the school. Where teachers are not effective, further PD should be provided.

III. School Leadership

Findings:

- The mission and vision for school development and improvement has not been clearly articulated to all staff. Strategies are not adequately defined to achieve the school's goals.
- School leadership is not visible throughout the building. Students indicated that they did not know the school principal.
- Although a formal Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) process exists, there are limited informal instructional walkthroughs as reported by staff, administrators, and students.
- The school master schedule does not effectively use staff, space and time. The team observed classes with as few as two students and two adults and up to 28 students in a sheltered classroom. Section load reports indicated that several students were on a waiting list for classes even though all sections were not full.
- Teachers on the School Leadership Team (SLT) have limited knowledge and understanding of the goals of the Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) and do not participate fully in the creation of school improvement goals. The CEP is rarely discussed at meetings of the SLT.

Recommendations:

- School leadership and the District should modify the CEP to create an effective schoolwide plan to improve achievement. The school leaders and staff should articulate a clear vision and strategic plan that drives the school towards high student expectations and achievement and clearly outlines the responsibilities of staff and leaders. The plan should include goals, action plans, PD, and should

use all available District resources. The implementation of the plan should be monitored carefully and its impact on student achievement measured.

- School leadership should be visible to both students and staff. School leaders should regularly attend and participate in department meetings, conduct frequent instructional walkthroughs, provide feedback to staff, and have ongoing communication with staff regarding student achievement.
- School leadership should develop a plan for regular informal walkthroughs that result in data to drive improvements to instructional practices. School leaders should use the observation process to ensure that teachers are held accountable for incorporating learned skills into their instructional practice.
- School leadership, in consultation with staff, should analyze the present master schedule and revise it as necessary to best meet the needs of students and effectively use all staff. School leaders should receive training on building a master schedule and receive support from the District Office in this area.
- The CEP should be a regular item on the agenda for SLT meetings so that all members of the team are fully aware of school goals and the progress being made to achieve those goals. The CEP should be revised annually based on data.

IV. Infrastructure for Student Success

Findings:

- Although the District has an Academic Intervention Services (AIS) plan, all teachers are not aware of the requirements of AIS. The program is not differentiated to meet the needs of the identified subgroups.
- The AIS program is disconnected from regular classroom instruction.
- The Library Media Center is under-utilized by staff and students. It lacks adequate resource materials for addressing cultural diversity.
- The school recognizes the importance of involving parents in their children's education; however, parent involvement is limited.
- Some classroom environments are not conducive to learning. Some teachers do not organize their classrooms to promote effective collaborative learning or student participation.
- There is a lack of programs that recognize positive student behavior, performance or cultural diversity.
- There is no formal Response to Intervention (RtI) process for identification of student needs.

Recommendations:

- The school leader should ensure that all teachers providing AIS and other intervention services are trained and provided with the materials and supervision necessary to positively impact student

achievement. School leaders should monitor AIS implementation through observations and walkthroughs.

- The school leader should review the structure of the AIS program to increase rigor and include data-driven content and student-centered differentiation strategies that are aligned with the CCLS.
- A plan that includes PD should be developed for the Library Media Specialist to support literacy across the content. The plan should include the use of technology to support instruction. The Library Media Specialist should be used as a resource for students and teachers at all grade levels, paying particular attention to identified subgroups.
- The school should develop a plan to involve parents in decision-making roles and other schoolwide initiatives. The school should create surveys for parents on topics related to school improvement and the education of their children. The District and school should maintain current information on the District and school websites for the school community.
- The school leader should monitor the management and design of classroom environments and placement to ensure that classrooms are conducive to learning and allow for a variety of instructional strategies to be used, including students working in groups, in pairs, or as a whole class when appropriate.
- The school should develop a program to support positive behaviors and to address cultural diversity and character education.
- An Rtl plan should be developed that includes behavior policies with positive behavior supports, interventions, and progress monitoring.

V. Collection, Analysis and Utilization of Data

Findings:

- Data analysis is not consistently used as a tool for driving forward school improvement. The data that the school collects is not being analyzed in a rigorous manner to identify precisely what aspects of the ELA curriculum need to be the specific focus for improvement. The analysis of data is not focused sharply enough to identify the key changes required in program and delivery to bring about improvement in student performance.
- The school has neither created nor implemented a strategic plan based on data to identify or address the causes of underperformance.
- Teachers do not use data to inform their instructional planning or modify the curriculum regardless of the need of the students.

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 monitoring. The school, with the support of the District, should provide PD for teachers in how to use data to improve instruction. This should include the variety of methods that can be employed within the classroom to meet the individual learning needs of

students. School leaders should identify this as a focus for observation. A school Data Analysis Team should be established and regularly meet. The team should:

- identify areas impacting student achievement;
 - assist in the development of the CEP to address these issues; and
 - establish benchmarks and record progress towards goals.
- Staff should conduct a thorough item analysis and subgroup analysis to determine the causes of underperformance and create a strategic instructional plan based on data. The data should be reviewed from year-to-year across cohorts with instruction adjusted accordingly.
 - Teachers should use student performance data, both summative and formative and interim to create instructional groups, design skill-based activities for small groups of students with similar needs, and adjust the planned curriculum, with a special focus on at-risk students and identified subgroups.

VI. Professional Development

Findings:

- Teacher common planning time is not always used as a PD opportunity to improve instructional practice.
- The allocated time for PD is sufficient; however, it is not used efficiently because it is not part of a strategic school improvement plan.
- The District's major PD plan focuses on Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). However, current PLCs objectives do not always align with and support CEP goals. The school leader is not part of the process of selecting the PLCs' PD topics.
- Teachers are not held accountable for incorporating PD practices into their instruction. There is no mention of the PD found in the observation reports. School leaders do not check for implementation of initiatives learned through PD during classroom observations or instructional walkthroughs.

Recommendations:

- School leaders should observe common planning meetings and ensure that strategies discussed have the potential for improving student achievement and are implemented consistently in classrooms.
- The school should create PD to provide teaching and learning strategies that support the school's CEP. The school leader should schedule dedicated planning time for each department. Teachers should share best practices and collaboratively assess student work.
- School specific goals should drive the agenda for PLCs. School leadership should be included in the PLCs.
- School leadership should conduct follow-up observations and/or instructional walkthroughs after PD sessions to ensure that teachers incorporate the strategies learned into instruction and that the strategies have an impact on improving student achievement. The school leaders should develop

detailed recommendations and specific next steps in their observation reports and focus on these in their next observation and/or classroom visit.

VII. District Support

Findings:

- Support in data collection and analysis is available through the District, but this has not been effectively used by the school to influence school or teacher planning.
- There was evidence that the school CEP is not regularly monitored by school or District level staff.
- District staff is not often in the school to assess the effectiveness of programs, funding and school improvement efforts.
- Some teachers expressed concerns with the current policy that allows students to retake a unit/major exam until they pass it with a score of 70 or higher.

Recommendations:

- The school should use support available through the District to disaggregate and analyze data to inform school CEP goal setting and teacher planning.
- A plan to regularly monitor the implementation of the school CEP and make modifications as necessary should be developed by the school and District. The CEP should be developed with input from all stakeholders and communicated to all staff.
- District staff who have oversight of the programs and resources should conduct regular visits to the school to meet with school leadership, review student performance results and monitor the implementation of the CEP.
- The District should obtain feedback from staff, students and parents regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the policy (S-28) and revise it as necessary.

PART 3: JOINT INTERVENTION TEAM OVERALL FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

A. Overall Finding

Reference	Review Team Finding	
(c)	The school has not made sufficient progress in identified areas, and is unlikely to make AYP under the current structure and organization.	✓

B. Overall Recommendation

Reference	Review Team Recommendation	
(c)	Develop and implement a School Restructuring Plan that includes significant <u>changes in staff, organizational structure, leadership and/or configuration</u> to address issues that continue to negatively impact student academic performance in identified areas. The School Restructuring Plan must also include one of the restructuring options required under NCLB.	✓

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

- Restructure the school day to add time for such strategies as advisory periods that build relationships between students and faculty and other school staff.
- Consider the implementation of Smaller Learning Communities (SLCs).
- Develop a system to use student performance data to drive instruction.
- Implement a schoolwide RtI model.
- Conduct periodic reviews to ensure that the curriculum is implemented with fidelity, having the intended impact on student achievement, and modified if ineffective.
- Provide additional intensive supports and PD for teachers and school leaders in order to implement effective strategies to support at-risk students.
- Use and integrate technology-based supports and interventions as part of the instructional program.
- Implement a system of positive behavioral supports to improve school climate and discipline.
- Provide ongoing mechanisms for family and community engagement.