

NYSED/WHITE PLAINS CSD JOINT INTERVENTION TEAM REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

BEDS Code:	662200010011
School Name:	White Plains High School
School Address:	550 North Street
Principal:	Diana Knight
Restructuring Phase/Category:	Restructuring (year 1) - Focused
Area of Identification:	English Language Arts - Students with Disabilities
Dates of On-site Diagnostic Review:	March 5-9, 2012

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

Community and School Background

The White Plains Senior High School serves 2,179 students in grades 9 through 12 at two campuses, i.e., the main campus and an alternative campus, called the Community School that serves general and special education students in a smaller learning environment. The total school enrollment is two percent Asian, 48 percent Hispanic, 18 percent Black and 32 percent White students. Of these students, nine percent are English language learners (ELLs) and 11.6 percent are students with disabilities.

The administrative team consists of the Interim Principal, two Assistant Principals (APs) and four house administrators. The Principal has served the school for 1.5 years and the APs have served from 1.5 to 6.5 years and one program director at the Community School campus for five years. There are a total of 193 teachers on staff; three percent have been at the school for less than one year and six percent for fewer than three years. All teachers are highly qualified. The rate of teacher turnover is 0.75 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	
-	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 students performing at or above Level 3 and/or a decrease in the Performance Index.	✓

B. School Strengths

- The Interim Principal is committed to instructional improvement as evident by the resources made available to teachers and students and the variety of professional development (PD) opportunities offered.
- The facility is physically safe, clean and well-equipped.

- The school climate is positive and welcoming. Teachers and school staff demonstrate a warm, caring, and respectful relationship with their students.

C. Key Findings and Recommendations

Summary of the key issues (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:

- The District has made significant progress toward implementing an English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum aligned to the New York State (NYS) Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) for grade nine. At this time, the high school has not developed a CCLS aligned curriculum for grades ten through twelve.
- Learning objectives were posted in all classrooms visited. However, lesson plan objectives were inconsistently aligned to CCLS and did not challenge and engage students to higher order thinking. The use of learning objectives was not evident in classroom visits.

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 NYS Learning Standards. The curriculum should be aligned to the P-12 CCLS in English language arts and literacy and mathematics to prepare for implementation in school year 2012-13 for grades 10-12. All curricula should be developed by knowledgeable and trained individuals (national, State or local) who understand the key elements of curriculum development.
- All teachers and administrators should participate in professional development (PD) on how to plan and implement a curriculum with rigor, as well as on delivery methods that are student-centered. The curriculum should be relied upon as the basis for assessing individual student mastery and progress. Walkthroughs and formal evaluations should include how well the teacher knows and implements the curriculum for the subjects being taught. To support full implementation, the District should provide resources for all teachers. The principles of problem-solving and questioning that were evident in most mathematics classes should also be applied in the preparation of English Language Arts (ELA) units/lessons.
- Through PD, the District should ensure that teachers create objectives that promote higher order thinking and critical thinking processes. In doing so, teachers can more consistently provide students with opportunities for critical thinking, problem solving and analysis and demonstrating application of elements taught. When objectives are used, they provide more opportunities for teachers to verify what students know, perceive, or can do. Students with disabilities and ELLs will have a better sense of what it is they are responsible for learning.

II. Teaching and Learning

Findings:

- The team observed calm and orderly learning environments that promoted student-teacher rapport and respect and the use of consistent routines. In most classrooms, relevant resources

were made available for all students. Planning was intentional and included opportunities for student practice via daily homework. Although teachers demonstrated strong content knowledge, students were not consistently asked to apply higher order thinking skills.

- The team's interviews with students revealed that learning is an expectation in the school. Students mentioned feeling that teachers cared about them and their learning. However, students stated that content was not consistently presented in an engaging way. Most teaching was whole-class with students seated in rows.
- Classroom instruction was primarily teacher-directed, and there was little evidence of student-driven learning activities, such as project-based or performance-based tasks. Direct teaching guided by question and answer was observed in the majority of classrooms. Low-level questions were asked that elicited simple recall of facts or answers that simply demanded one word or phrase responses.
- Although teachers provided individualized attention to students, the team did not observe in classroom visits intentional pre-planning by teachers for varied student needs. Lessons were presented using visuals and auditory approaches. Electronic whiteboards were most often used as projectors and not as hands-on, interactive instructional tools for students. As a result, instruction was not sufficiently differentiated to meet the diverse learning needs of all students.
- Although classroom environments were well-equipped and attractive, there was limited evidence of student work posted that was tied to State Standards. Most classroom spaces did not include unit-specific resources, i.e., posters, rubrics, charts, maps.
- There was no consistent evidence that teachers use a variety of ways to provide feedback to students, set appropriate expectations, or help students to assess their own progress in meaningful ways.

Recommendations:

- Activities that involve higher order thinking skills should be regularly incorporated into classroom instruction. Teachers should provide students with multiple pathways and opportunities for critical thinking, problem solving, analysis, evaluation, application of skills/knowledge, student-inquiry and text-based response.
- Teachers should move from whole-group instruction to more interactive, student-centered instruction in all content-area classes. Regular opportunities for students to work cooperatively with the information presented, such as partnerships, pair share, turn and talks, reading clubs, collaborative research-based projects, and debating will enable students to become more active participants in the learning process. Teachers should encourage student-to-student interactions and structured sharing of student work with built-in accountability measures. Accountable-talk should be a key component of the learning. Teachers should use varied formative assessment methods to check for understanding and ensure that each student is accountable and engaged throughout the lesson. The school leaders should conduct regular observations to monitor that classrooms are more consistently student-centered.
- Lessons should consistently demonstrate a balance between direct teaching, modeling, and student application of skills/knowledge taught. In addition, visual, auditory and tactile supports should be incorporated into instructional activities, based on identified student needs in order to enhance student understanding and ensure mastery of the learning objective. Teacher lesson plans should include pre-planned questions that require critical thinking, as well as pre-generated

discussion questions. Teachers should move from teacher-posed questions that are simply recall, to questions that require students to support their answers by citing specifically from the text, elaborating on answers provided by other students, and summarizing or rephrasing new information.

- Lesson planning should reflect the anticipation of the varied needs of students. For example, checking for understanding; pre-teaching unfamiliar vocabulary; and addressing possible misconceptions/misunderstandings that may arise during the lesson due to lack of prior knowledge is critical for students with disabilities and ELLs. Students with disabilities should be provided with differentiated tasks and activities that are tailored to student needs.
- Charts, maps, graphic representations, word walls, as well as other teacher and student-generated resources should be visible on classroom walls or the interactive whiteboard. These charts and displays, along with teacher modeling of explicit strategies for learning, should be incorporated into lessons to help students understand and meet the teacher expectations.
- The school leadership should support teachers on how to develop rubrics aligned to NYS Standards and CCLS and use them to provide appropriate, specific, and high-level feedback to the students, including strengths in their work, areas to improve, and next steps. The rubrics should be presented to students in advance in order to clearly articulate expectations for achievement. Teachers should provide students with feedback to guide one-on-one conferencing and student-teacher goal-setting.

III. School Leadership

Findings:

- The Interim Principal is retiring at the end of the 2011-2012 school year, and a new principal will be appointed. The Interim Principal fosters a culture of excellence and commitment to improved teaching and learning, and there is an expressed need for continuity to ensure that the various instructional initiatives that have been implemented over the past 19 months will continue next year and beyond.
- Although there is planning for classroom instruction, there are limited opportunities for common planning between special educators, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teachers and general content area teachers.
- The school leadership expressed concerns about the effectiveness of the Passages program at the main campus serving students with emotional disabilities.

Recommendations:

- It is essential that the next principal build upon the initiatives started by the Interim Principal and school leadership. The District should ensure that the new principal review the evidence documents and data prepared by the school for this JIT Review and implement the recommendations made in the report.
- School leaders should complete a comprehensive review of the master schedule to maximize opportunities for special educators and ESOL teachers to meet with general education content area teachers. School leaders should not only attempt to create flexible common planning time but also establish protocols and expectations for the use of this time by teachers.

- The school leadership should redesign the Passages program at the main campus for 2012-2013 to better address the needs of the students with emotional disabilities.

IV. Infrastructure for Student Success

Findings:

- Based on a review of attendance records of students with disabilities, as well as interviews with staff, students and school leaders, the team found that there are inconsistent records of daily student attendance and class-specific, period-by-period attendance.
- Although graduation requirements are communicated to the general population and students with disabilities, the school's communication to students and parents regarding the graduation requirements for ELLs, especially older ELLs, is inconsistent.
- Although students with disabilities have study skill goals identified on their Individualized Education Program (IEP), the services and accommodations to meet these needs are not sufficiently addressed in the daily instructional settings.

Recommendations:

- School leaders should work with school support staff and counselors to develop and implement protocols and procedures to better address school absenteeism and class cutting by students with disabilities. Specifically, these systems should include:
 - the establishment of attendance criteria to refer students for an attendance intervention;
 - a clear procedure for teachers to refer students who are excessively absent or regularly cut classes;
 - timely notification to parents;
 - a written plan to work with the student and family to resolve the attendance issue; and
 - a process to monitor the attendance of the targeted students over the course of the school year.
- School leaders should identify procedures to ensure that ELLs and their families are aware of graduation requirements and then monitor whether students are on track to meet those requirements in a timely manner. This is especially important for older ELLs entering school after age 16.
- The services provided to students with disabilities during classroom instruction should address the study skill goals (e.g., organizational skills, note-taking, identified on their IEPs). These goals can be addressed in multiple ways by re-designing pull-out support (SAL program), or integrating the goals into the classroom instruction and/or summer school programs. The school leadership should also ensure that ELL students and students with disabilities are placed in the appropriate classes.

V. Collection, Analysis and Utilization of Data

Findings:

- Mathematics and ELA common formative assessments, as well as computer-based programs, provide data for teachers and students that impact instructional planning. District generated data (Lexiles, DRAs, NYS ELA and mathematics scores, etc.) and teacher recommendations are also used

to evaluate student performance and make placement decisions. However, the analysis of data is not consistently used as a tool for effective planning and delivery of instruction in the classroom.

- Although there are “Need Statements” in the *Present Levels of Performance* section of the IEP, the needs identified in academic areas are not consistently detailed in an explicit manner that would lead to well-informed, relevant, and individualized instructional annual goals.

Recommendations:

- The school should develop a system that enables teachers to use data more effectively in their classroom instructional planning. This system may include:
 - establishing and/or redefining inquiry focused teacher teams and the benchmarked deliverables for each team;
 - dedicating time in teacher schedules for regular team meetings and common planning time and developing an interim assessment calendar;
 - completing an interim assessment analysis worksheet delineating the error and distraction analyses of the assessment data; and
 - creating forms to monitor student progress and classroom instruction using data, i.e., to identify student learning strengths/deficits and progress, as well as targeted classroom instruction to address student needs.
- Further training is needed in developing the “Need Statements” in academic areas in the *Present Levels of Performance* section of IEPs and identifying detailed instructional needs that lead to well-informed, relevant, and individualized instructional annual goals.

VI. Professional Development

Finding:

Although the District has initiated a wide range of PD activities over the past few years, e.g., walkthroughs, lesson planning templates and designs, as well as a number of other ongoing PD efforts to improve teaching and learning, there are a number of priority areas identified as a result of this JIT Review that need to be targeted.

Recommendation:

To support the recommendations made in this report, the following priorities should be targeted as part of the District’s comprehensive PD plan for White Plains High School:

- the provision of resources and staff training for the full implementation of a grade 10-12 English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum, aligned to the CCLS;
- the re-training of teachers in the learning objectives, with a special emphasis on the use of objectives that lead to higher order thinking skills in classroom lessons;
- a focus on improving differentiated instruction including, the use of ongoing interim and formative assessments, the use of flexible groupings, and the incorporation of multiple pathways to teaching and student self assessment;
- a focus on “student-centered” learning and student engagement, e.g., project-based learning, pair-share and other student-to-student engagement, cooperative learning groups, etc.;

- the training of teachers in using attendance criteria and intervention protocols to ensure that students who are regularly absent or cut classes are identified and addressed in a timely fashion;
- the training of teachers who work with students with disabilities in focusing on the development of explicit and relevant “Needs Statements” in the *Present Levels of Performance* section of the IEPs;
- the effective use of data to inform day-to-day instructional planning, including the use of focused teacher groups and/or Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to maximize collaboration and teamwork; and
- the provision of targeted PD for those teachers identified with Teacher Improvement Plans (TIPS).

VII. District Support

Finding:

Based on interviews and meetings with staff and building leadership, the review of PD offerings, faculty and department meeting agendas, etc., the team concludes that the District offers strong leadership in many areas related to the improvement of teaching and learning. Nevertheless, the high school, including the alternative school, needs targeted assistance in the areas identified in this report.

Recommendations:

- The District should ensure that the PD offerings necessary to address the issues raised in this report are targeted to the high school. PD efforts should be specifically targeted to high school teachers of all students, including those enrolled at the alternative school.
- The District should support the school in 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.

- The attendance and performance of students with disabilities and ELLs should be closely monitored to ensure that students falling below attendance targets and academic expectations are identified and monitored. Targeted student interventions should be designed using this data.
- The monitoring of lesson plans should be continued by the new school leadership, with an emphasis on holding teachers accountable for the use of learning objectives, increasing student-centered instruction and differentiating instruction.
- The use of early release days (alternating Wednesdays) and other PD days, as well as PLCs should be used to address the recommendations identified in this report.
- Programs serving students with disabilities, specifically the Passages program at the main campus of the high school that serves severely emotional disabled students, should be redesigned to ensure that these students' needs are more appropriately addressed.
- Existing summer school services should be reviewed to maximize support for students with disabilities and ELLs over the summer months.
- The school leadership should ensure that all students with disabilities and ELLs receive all testing accommodations as identified in their IEPs or 504 Plans. The school leadership should ensure that students with disabilities are placed in the appropriate academic classes and programs as determined by their IEPs.
- The District should use this report as a blueprint for school improvement as the new Principal addresses the needs of students with disabilities and ELLs.