

NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Office of Accountability

Differentiated Accountability - School Quality Review (SQR)

SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW REPORT

BEDS Code:	662300010044
District Name:	Yonkers City Public Schools
School Name:	Yonkers Montessori Academy (Pre-K – 10)
School Address:	160 Woodlawn Avenue, Yonkers, NY 10704
Principal:	Eileen E. Rivera
Accountability Phase/Category:	Improvement (year-1) - Comprehensive
Areas of Identification:	English Language Arts (Elementary/Middle Level) - African American Students; Hispanic Students; Students with Disabilities; English Language Learners and Economically Disadvantaged Students Mathematics - (Elementary/Middle Level) - All Students; African American Students; Hispanic Students; Students with Disabilities; English Language Learners and Economically Disadvantaged Students
Dates of On-site Review:	January 17-18, 2012

PART 1: MISSION STATEMENT

“The mission of the Yonkers Montessori Academy is “To inspire and empower tomorrow’s heroes and leaders.

VISION STATEMENT:

The Montessori Academy is a collaborative learning community. Rooted in Montessori philosophy, the learning community strives to inspire independent thinking and an individual’s natural desire for learning. We empower all stakeholders to be knowledgeable, responsible and passionate contributors to our learning community, the local community and the global community.”

PART 2: SCHOOL STRENGTHS

Yonkers Montessori Academy is a Pre-Kindergarten through grade 10 school, with an enrollment of approximately 1,250 students. The Montessori approach allows for individualized and small group instruction and a project-based learning mode. The following are some of the strengths of this school:

- There are many multi-graded classrooms with developmental appropriate materials for Pre-K to grade 6 students.
- Copies of students Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) are available in each teacher's classroom.

- Students are given opportunities to enrich their schooling experiences by taking part in “Virtual Courses” trips to Little Italy and Puerto Rico, as well as chemistry and earth science trips.
- All teachers and school leaders are fully trained in the Montessori program.
- There is a full-time trained teacher aide in every classroom.
- At the secondary level, students are involved in “project based learning.”
- Parents are involved in their children’s learning and are given frequent updates of student progress by teachers.
- Online courses are provided for parent use.

PART 3: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND UTILIZATION OF DATA

FINDINGS:

- Although the Montessori program emphasizes the use of formative and summative data, the benchmark assessments are teacher created and are not as rigorous as they should be for all students, especially in the upper grades.
- There is little evidence that student data is used to address the academic needs of all students.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School leaders should revisit the methods of assessment used by teachers, including State assessments, District benchmarks, interim assessments and classroom tests and ensure that they are sufficient to enable teachers to get a clear picture about where the student achievement gaps are occurring. Professional development (PD) should be provided to enable teachers to construction more rigorous benchmark or interim assessments.
- The school should provide Professional Development (PD) for the staff in the analysis of the data collected to focus more closely on student-by-student and subgroup deficiencies in addition to the whole school and grade monitoring. 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. This treatment of data has to be merged with the Montessori program to foster meaningful academic progress for all subgroups.

II. TEACHING AND LEARNING

FINDINGS:

- It was reported that there are 241 students with IEPs. The review team observed that approximately two-thirds of these students were having problems with answering higher-order questions, making inferences and applying information.
- Few examples of differentiated instruction were observed in classrooms. There was limited evidence that students were managing their own learning.
- Unit vocabulary words are not consistently being identified and taught in real-life situations within lessons.
- Although teachers have been introduced to the New York State P-12 Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), not all teachers fully understand how the new standards will be affecting teaching and learning in the future.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Students with disabilities should be fully part of the Montessori program, with the understanding that they may need additional supports in learning new concepts such as generalization, evaluative, inferential and abstract applications. Whenever possible these students should be paired with students who are in general education programs. Teachers should be provided with PD that will enable them to build a wider range of effective questioning strategies so that students become more active participants in the learning process. School leaders should regularly conduct walkthroughs and observations of lessons to monitor that this is consistently occurring.
- School leaders should ensure that PD is provided for teachers in the area of differentiating instruction and that the appropriate pacing and sequencing of instructional materials is taking place. Students should clearly understand expectations and be self-directed and personally accountable for their learning as outlined in the Montessori philosophy.
- Staff should ensure that unit vocabulary words are consistently being identified for students and being taught in real-life situations within lessons.
- District leaders should ensure that all school leaders and teachers are fully trained in implementing curriculum for English language arts, literacy and mathematics that is clearly aligned with the CCLS to prepare for implementation in 2012-23. .

III. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

FINDINGS:

- PD does not always focus on the issues that will make the greatest difference in raising student achievement. Teachers reported that not all teachers attend planned PD sessions.

- The expectations for ensuring that teachers implement strategies learned in PD are low, and there is no formal follow-up to monitor implementation in the classroom. This contributes to the slow improvement rate in the quality of teaching and learning in some classrooms.
- There is a need for school leaders to be trained in the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) regulations.
- Although some teachers are using rubrics for different subjects and this procedure is encouraged by school leaders, there is a need for the Leadership Team to develop a whole school model rubric that would measure and direct the expectations for ELA/literacy (reading and writing) for all students.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school leadership should ensure that all PD is relevant, fully reflects needs identified to achieve school goals, take place as agreed, and is monitored to assure its effectiveness.
- The school leaders should use the observational process to ensure that teachers are held accountable for incorporating all the skills developed within PD activities into their instructional delivery. Timely feedback should be provided to teachers, including clear targets for improvement.
- School leaders should be trained to implement the new APPR.
- School leaders and the Leadership Team should develop a rubric that would guide the level of rigor needed for success of the CCLS in English languages arts/literacy. 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.

IV. INFRASTRUCTURE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

FINDINGS:

- Although there is ample training for teachers in the Montessori philosophy, there is not enough time set aside for teachers to be immersed in many other programs that would further enhance teaching and learning opportunities for students of diverse backgrounds.
- Although there are some plans in place that would articulate a pathway for students' success and a base for horizontal classroom planning, the vertical planning for higher standards, increased rigor and the addition of grades within the school are not clear.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Without compromising the Montessori philosophy, school leaders should provide time for teachers to learn more about the CCLS, differentiated instruction, data driven instruction, etc., that would enhance teaching and learning opportunities and further personalize learning for all students.
- The school planning team, including school and District leadership, should consider the infrastructural needs for additional grades ahead of time. With the school enrolling students through grade 10 in this school year,

science labs, self-correcting manipulatives for students with disabilities and advanced transitional courses should be in the hands of students and their parents. Middle and high school students should be made aware of and plan for school-to-career options, early-college, partnerships with businesses and higher education.

V. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FINDINGS:

- PD activities are generally Montessori initiative-driven training, and sometimes are not aligned with the needs of individual student groups.
- Although PD workshops are taking place around the CCLS, there is a need for all teachers to be fully trained and able to practice lessons that are aligned to the standards.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School leaders should develop and implement a PD plan that is driven by student data collected by teachers and is designed to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers should participate in substantial PD in order meet the learning needs of students without moving away from the Montessori philosophy. The PD plan should be aligned with the school's goals and take into account the differentiated needs of the staff and students.
- Since the Montessori methods are so closely aligned to the CCLS, school leaders should seek ways of increasing the rigor and relevance of subjects taught. Focus should be on finding best practices and adapting some of these practices that are relevant to the needs of all students.

VI. FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

FINDING:

There is a need to update the technology, hardware as well as software, to accommodate the changing learning needs of student and teachers.

RECOMMENDATION:

As funding allows, acquire new technology and update the present computers and software to support the instruction of all students, with particular attention to adaptive technologies supportive of students with disabilities and ELLs. PD support should be provided as necessary.

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 Comprehensive Educational Plan (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 CCLS, Data Driven Instruction and the Annual Professional Performance Reviews for teacher effectiveness.