

**NYSED/ROCHESTER CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT JOINT INTERVENTION TEAM REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

<b>BEDS Code:</b>	2616000010085
<b>School Name:</b>	Dr. Freddie Thomas High School
<b>School Address:</b>	625 Scio Street, Rochester, New York 14605
<b>Principal:</b>	Sandra Jordan
<b>Restructuring Phase/Category:</b>	Persistently Lowest Achieving / School Under Registration Review (PLA/SURR)
<b>Area(s) of Identification:</b>	Graduation Rate
<b>Dates of On-site Diagnostic Review:</b>	February 7 – 11, 2011

**PART 1: INTRODUCTION**

**A. Community and School Background**

Dr. Freddie Thomas High School (FTHS) serves 1,044 students. The school was originally designed to be a middle school, grades 6 through 8. The design was changed to grade 7 through 12, and since 2008 has graduated three classes. The enrollment is 66 percent Black; 26 percent Hispanic; six percent White and one percent Asian students. Approximately 18 percent of the students receive special education services and four percent are English Language Learners (ELLs). The most current attendance rate is 88 percent.

The administrative team consists of the Principal and five Assistant Principals (APs). Two of the APs work directly with teachers on the improvement of teaching and learning in grades 9 through 12. Of the two, one has been with the school for three years and the other joined the staff in August 2010. One AP supervises all aspects of grades 7 and 8 and has been at the school for five years. The two remaining APs supervise the operations and security of the entire school and have been at the school for over four years. The Principal has served the school for seven years.

There are 83 teachers. Seven percent of staff has been teaching fewer than three years. Twenty percent of the staff have advanced degrees and 87 percent are highly qualified. The most recent turnover rate for teachers is 10 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	
	<b>NYSED Quantitative Performance Measures</b>	
-	For 2010-11, the school was identified as a <b><u>Persistently Lowest- Achieving school.</u></b>	✓
-	Total Cohort Graduation rate is below performance index (for high schools)	✓

## **B. School Strengths**

- There appears to be a sense of family and belonging that has a positive impact on behavior in the school. Over the past three years, the suspension rate has declined from 20 percent in 2006-2007 to three percent in 2009-2010, as the District policy on out of school suspensions has changed.
- Each cohort of students is assigned a school counselor who remains with the cohort until graduation. Counselors advocate for students and are liaisons to parents and the community. Counselors work to support students in meeting graduation requirements. This is one step the school has taken to address attendance and graduation rates.

## **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:**

- New York State (NYS) Standards were not observed posted in most classrooms, nor was there clear evidence of consistent implementation of the Standards across subject areas.
- Although there is a District curriculum aligned with State Standards, it is not used consistently in every classroom.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Post the NYS Standards and use them to plan and implement instruction. Use common planning time for collaboration across grade levels and content areas. Review lesson plans to ensure implementation.
- Use the District curricula consistently in all classrooms and subject areas for planning to increase the rigor of teaching and learning.

### **II. Teaching and Learning**

#### **Findings:**

- Although there is some evidence of differentiated instruction within classrooms, teacher-centered classrooms with whole group instruction were frequently observed.
- There was limited evidence of modeling, practice and transfer of literacy skills or collaborative instructional strategies across disciplines. Most students in English language arts (ELA) classrooms were not engaged in authentic reading and writing activities.

- In content area subjects, there were limited opportunities for students to develop content specific vocabulary skills and read content area texts or supplementary materials.
- While there is some evidence of instructional rigor, more emphasis needs to be placed on higher order thinking skills. School report cards for 2008-09 and 2009-10 at the middle level indicate a decrease in the percentage of Level 3 and Level 4 students in grades 7 and 8 who are proficient in ELA, mathematics and science.
- Some co-teaching models were observed that were more effective than others. In several co-teaching classrooms, one teacher was monitoring students, rather than teaching.
- There is little evidence of quality student work displayed with rubrics that use the language of the Standards to provide specific feedback for students.

**Recommendations:**

- Implement research-based strategies for the differentiation of instructional process, product, and content across all classrooms to assure that teachers plan and implement lessons that meet student needs.
- Engage students in authentic learning to increase in-class opportunities for students to construct their own knowledge.
- Develop a process to integrate critical reading and writing strategies. Increase sustained reading in academic content that includes systems for the teaching of academic vocabulary within content areas. Minimize the use of worksheets as the main product of student output.
- Focus on creating lesson plans, unit plans, and teacher questioning that builds concepts through the application of higher order thinking skills such as analyzing, evaluating, and creating (Bloom's Taxonomy).
- Use the Common Core Standards for literacy in science and social studies to serve as the basis for team teaching and co-planning. Use the professional development (PD) blocks to enable teachers engaged in co-teaching to observe other co-teaching models within the building and to align their respective curricula to define common concepts, as well as interdisciplinary literacy skills.
- Post student work, rubrics, and teacher feedback so students can reflect on and revise their own work.

**III. School Leadership**

**Findings:**

- There is inconsistent evidence that daily lesson planning is aligned with NYS Standards and the District curriculum. Written lesson plans were not observed in most classrooms.
- Parents voiced a concern that communication could be timelier regarding academic progress, course requirements and homework expectations.

**Recommendations:**

- Set an expectation that lesson plans be completed weekly and available for review by an administrator before they are used. Administrators should monitor the implementation of these plans and ensure that they are based on the NYS Standards and the District curriculum.
- Provide timely communication to parents regarding academic performance and completion of homework between marking periods. Work to improve parent involvement.

**IV. Infrastructure for Student Success****Findings:**

- Decisions regarding student placement in grades 7 through 9 are based upon the NYS assessment results in ELA and mathematics. Students are homogeneously grouped for the entire school day for all subjects. Research indicates that using this type of “tracking” may not be in the best interest of high needs students.
- Two hundred-twenty five members of the 2005 Cohort were students who were placed at FTTHS from another school that was closed by the District due to poor performance. FTTHS was not prepared to meet the needs of this influx of at-risk students. This may have contributed to the 35 percent graduation rate.
- School resources were focused on grades 7 and 8 when the school became a high school. This continues to be true for some technology resources.
- The 2005 Cohort dropout rate was 42 percent. This was a major contributor to the 35 percent graduation rate, resulting in FTTHS being identified as PLA/SURR. Academic Intervention Services (AIS) and other supplemental services for students scoring at Levels 1 and 2 on the NYS assessments were limited, especially for grades 9 through 12.

**Recommendations:**

- Change the practice of grouping students homogeneously for the entire day. Provide differentiated instruction to eliminate the need to group students homogeneously, with flexible grouping for ELA and mathematics.
- Plan and implement researched-based strategies for meeting the needs of all students, such as extending the school day to accommodate students who need to earn more than four credits per semester to get back on track to graduation.
- Distribute technology and other resources equitably for grades 7 through 12 to support student learning at every grade level.
- Improve first instruction for students based on researched- based strategies in order to create a foundation for student success that should result in improving graduation rates. Provide additional AIS for all students scoring at Levels 1 and 2 on NYS assessments, as well as students identified by teachers as at-risk of not meeting State Standards.

Expand the number of student supports, such as the *Hillside Work Scholarship Program* that works to keep students in school by providing student mentoring, tutoring, goal setting and counseling, in addition to providing school-to-work and school-to-college connections.

## V. Collection, Analysis, and Utilization of Data

### Findings:

- Although data regarding benchmarks and the NYS Report Cards is shared with ELA and mathematics teams through AYP meetings and grade-specific team meetings, the data was not consistently used to inform instruction beyond homogeneous grouping.
- There was limited evidence that formative or informal assessments are used consistently to monitor student progress.
- It is unclear whether content area teachers and subgroup teachers have access to student ELA and mathematics data.
- There is evidence that some students set learning goals and monitor their own progress.

### Recommendations:

- Use formative assessments during the year that are similar in rigor and format to State assessments. Use these assessment results to inform instruction.
- Use formative and informal assessments for progress monitoring to inform differentiated instruction.
- Include social studies and science teachers when sharing AYP and benchmark data to build capacity for increased student achievement across academic grade-level teams.
- Expand the use of students accessing their own progress data and monitoring their personal learning goals.

## VI. Professional Development

### Findings:

- The school master schedule allows for job-embedded ongoing PD for all staff members during the school day; the school offers PD led by staff members. However, participation in external PD offerings is limited.
- There is a need for sustained PD in such areas as:
  - design and implementation of student supports to improve graduation rates;
  - planning and implementation of effective co-teaching models;
  - differentiated instruction;
  - progress monitoring; and

- writing in response to literature and embedding literacy supports in content area classes.

**Recommendations:**

- Increase staff participation in external PD opportunities, including District provided PD offerings that are sustained and provide follow-up. The application of acquired strategies should be monitored for implementation by administrative walkthroughs, with timely feedback to teachers regarding the implementation of newly acquired strategies.
- Identify an area for improvement within the revised Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) plan and form collegial circles to address the CEP action plan using the embedded PD time. Research, plan and implement effective student supports for improving graduation rates, and include these in the CEP plan.

**VII. District Support**

**Finding:**

A small number of classrooms (primarily grades 7 and 8) were equipped with technology that supports teaching and learning, e.g., SMART Boards. Some classrooms lacked computers.

**Recommendations:**

- Work with the school to equip as many classrooms as possible with up-to-date technology.
- Support the school in implementing the Joint Intervention Team (JIT) recommendations.

**PART 3: 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 new plan that could include <u>significant changes in staff, organizational structure, leadership and/or configuration</u> , to address issues that continue to negatively impact student academic performance in identified areas.	✓

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

**Note:**

***As per a Rochester City School District Board Resolution dated January 27, 2011, Dr. Freddie Thomas High School will be converted to a K through grade 8 school as of September 2011. During this transition, the students in grades 10 through 12 will remain at the school and will graduate from FTHS; no new grade 9 students are scheduled to enter FTHS in September 2011. A new Principal will lead the school.***

For the duration of the phase-out of FTHS grades 10 through 12:

- the new leadership selected should have proven capabilities to address the issues identified and be provided support in educating all students at a high level;
- the District should closely monitor to ensure students are receiving the quality education that they deserve;
- teachers should be provided the specific PD in areas recommended; and
- the entire school community should be kept informed of the phase-out process.