NYSED/GEORGE JR. REPUBLIC UFSD JOINT INTERVENTION TEAM REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BEDS Code:</th>
<th>61-03-27-02-0002</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District:</td>
<td>George Junior Republic Union Free School District</td>
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<tr>
<td>School Name:</td>
<td>George Junior Republic School</td>
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<tr>
<td>School Address:</td>
<td>24 McDonald Road</td>
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<tr>
<td>Principal:</td>
<td>Sonia Apker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restructuring Phase/Category:</td>
<td>Persistently Lowest- Achieving (PLA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Areas of Identification:</td>
<td>English Language Arts and Mathematics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dates of On-site Diagnostic Review:</td>
<td>April 12-14, 2011</td>
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PART 1: INTRODUCTION

A. Community and School Background

George Junior Republic Union Free School District is designated as a Special Act School District, established by the NYS Legislature and located on the grounds of a voluntary child care agency licensed by the Office of Children and Family Services. George Junior Republic Union Free School District serves approximately 193 male students in grades 7 through 12. These students are placed by Committees on Special Education (CSE) or courts and counties. Students come from 44 counties in New York State. The average length of stay at the school is approximately 15 months. The District is impacted by the constantly changing enrollment.

The administrative team includes the Superintendent, Principal, crisis intervention specialist, Vocational Coordinator, Curriculum Coordinator, Business Coordinator/District Clerk, Director of Human Services, and Information Technology Coordinator. The Principal has served the school for 19 years. The District employs approximately 43 teachers. Five percent of the teachers have fewer than three years of experience. In 2009-10, 19 percent of the classes were taught by teachers without appropriate certification. The teacher turnover rate is two percent.

PART 2: ASSESSMENT OF THE SCHOOL’S EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive or Negative Indicator (+/-)</th>
<th>School Performance Indicators</th>
<th>✓</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>NYSED Quantitative Performance Measures</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>There is 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).</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>The 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.</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive or Negative Indicator (+/-)</td>
<td>School Performance Indicators</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>-------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>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).</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For 2009-10, the school was identified as a <strong>Persistently Lowest-Achieving School</strong>.</td>
<td>✓</td>
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**B. School Strengths**

- The District effectively manages the supervision and movement of students between buildings (multiple classroom facilities, gym, and cafeteria).

- The students have access to a library media center, science lab, and computer labs.

**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:**

- There are no content specialists or department chairs.

- The written curriculum lacks assessment components and standard rubrics.

- There is the need for curriculum that focuses on the literacy needs of students who are not at grade level, particularly for writing, as identified by the District.

- Lesson plan and unit designs lack rigor; tasks are often below grade level and expectations for student work are below grade level.

**Recommendations:**

- The District should consider identifying and training staff to serve as content specialists for literacy and mathematics.

- The District should conduct a comprehensive revision of its curriculum, ensuring alignment with the Common Core, particularly in the areas of reading and writing.

- The revised curriculum should include common local measures to assess student learning.

- The District should regularly monitor lesson plans to ensure alignment, rigor, and relevance with the Common Core.
II. Teaching and Learning

Findings:
- Students and teachers reported concerns about classroom organization when multiple grades were taught simultaneously.
- Instruction was teacher-directed. The use of manipulatives, small group discussions, project based learning, or cooperative learning was not observed.
- The use of technology was not observed in classrooms that were visited.
- Teachers did not use questioning skills that promoted higher order thinking.
- There was no evidence of common rubrics that were consistently used among teachers. Teachers describe creating individual rubrics to meet the unique needs of students, but there was little evidence of use of data to inform or differentiate instruction.

Recommendations:
- The District should review staffing models, scheduling and the ways in which students are grouped and organized in classrooms to ensure efficient, effective use of staff to best meet the needs of students.
- Professional development (PD) and regular monitoring for quality implementation should be provided to ensure that teachers have strategies for implementing best practices of instruction to meet the special needs of this population.
- Student-centered, meaningful activities should be created that include the use of technology to enhance instruction.
- Lessons using well defined questions ranging from factual knowledge to higher order thinking skills should be created.
- PD and regular monitoring for quality implementation in effective use of rubrics and analysis of data to improve student achievement should be provided.

III. School Leadership

Findings:
- There was minimal evidence of parental engagement, particularly involving outreach to parents of non-residential “day” students.
- There was little evidence that the school leader provided feedback about instruction and curricular.
- There was little evidence that the administration was ensuring that teacher planning time was used for the improvement of student learning.
Recommendations:
- The District should develop strategies for communicating with parents about the academic progress of their students. This communication should be in addition to services provided by the child care agency. The District should investigate the use of a data based program to provide access to student academic reports and attendance information.
- The District should ensure that the administration is trained and qualified to provide high quality feedback about curriculum and instruction and should monitor that such feedback is provided.
- The District should ensure that school leaders are monitoring planning time to maximize opportunities for teachers to share successful instructional practices.

IV. Infrastructure for School Success

Findings:
- There was minimal evidence that resource rooms were used to provide academic support. Resource rooms were used as study halls and not for instructional support.
- There was minimal evidence that students in resource rooms were provided with instruction and/or services aligned with students’ Individual Education Programs (IEPs).
- Teachers and staff reported the need for greater communication between the residential facility staff and school staff.
- Teachers reported that they often leave the classroom for long periods of time during the day to address behavior issues with students in counseling rooms. Classrooms are covered by teaching aides during this time. Specific data was not available about how much instructional time was lost when a teacher accompanied a student to the counseling rooms.
- Teachers of non-residential “day” students reported significant concerns about attendance of students. There were inconsistencies in reported data about attendance between administration and teacher attendance records. The District reported minimal attendance problems. Teachers paper attendance records showed students missing significant numbers of days of class.
- The academic day provides minimal time for instruction (4 hours and 8 minutes). Required hours of instruction are not being met. Required instruction for technology, home and career skill, health education, visual arts, music, and languages other than English was not evident or available for all students.

Recommendations:
- Thoroughly review the use and definition of resource rooms, ensuring IEP requirements are being met.
- Review the “best practices” identified by staff in the District, the field and in research for communication between school-based educators and support staff and the cottage/Agency support teams. Develop a plan for implementation of these “best practices” across all school teams.
• Consider creating a process for the use of the counseling room, similar to Response to Intervention (RtI). Ensure IEP requirements are being met and that classes are covered by certified teaching assistants. Create a data collection system so that time in the counseling room is monitored and limit the loss of instructional time.

• Thoroughly review attendance data for day students. Review current procedures for notification of local Districts, parents, and support services when day students are absent. Implement a plan for improving the attendance of day students. The District should consider hiring a home/school liaison.

• Evaluate the master schedule to ensure that the required hours of instructional time is provided for all students.

V. Collection, Analysis, and Utilization of Data

Findings:
• The District reported that they do not systematically use State data, including student response data and error/distractor analysis data to inform curricula. Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) assessment data was reportedly used to determine a students’ grade level equivalent and to identify their access to the tiered curriculum. Consistent use of STAR data to inform curricular or instructional decisions was not observed.

• The use of common local assessments was not observed. Use of common rubrics and uniform grading practices was not evident.

• There was little evidence that administration used student performance data on State tests and local assessment when making decisions about teacher performance, student grouping, changes in curriculum, or changes in scheduling.

Recommendations:
• The District should provide resources to support the effective use of teams for improvement of student learning. Work aligned with “school based inquiry teams” for “Race To the Top” would be useful for the District. These teams should be analyzing student performances on State and local assessment and identify curricular implications based on this data. Administrators should participate and monitor team progress.

• The District should identify common local assessments, ensuring compliance with State Education Department requirements for teacher evaluation.

• Grading practices should be reviewed and research conducted to balance the intended and necessary practice of recognition of student effort, participation, and completion with quality of performance that is “benchmark” against an external standard. The District should define a common and uniform grading policy.
VI. Professional Development

Findings:

• The District lacks a comprehensive PD plan for improving instruction and curriculum. There is little evidence of PD for school leaders to increase their understanding of effective instruction, the new common core standards, the use of data and the use of technology.

• The District provides minimal support for improving instruction. There was no evidence of modeling for teachers, coaching, and analysis of evidence and data to demonstrate progress.

• There is little monitoring of the impact of PD for the improvement of teaching/learning.

• There is little evidence of PD for aides as it relates to their role in the classroom.

Recommendations:

• The District should develop a comprehensive PD plan for teachers and school leaders. The plan should include on-going training, follow-up, and evaluation methods. Content should include:
  
  ➢ effective “good first teaching” practices, including higher order thinking, and making learning meaningful by connecting to life;
  
  ➢ effective use of technology, understanding challenges of this unique population;
  
  ➢ effective use of aides in the classroom; and
  
  ➢ effective use of data to inform curriculum and instruction.

• The District should develop practices for monitoring the implementation of PD.

• The District should provide school leaders with PD on observing and coaching teachers, including walkthrough supervision.

• The District should use the resources of the Regional Special Education Technical Assistance Support Centers (RSE-TASC) to support District PD objectives.

VII. District Support

Findings:

• There was little evidence that the District made the improvement of student performance a priority for the staff.

• Teacher aides (TAs) are being asked to perform instructional duties (52 aides - four TA certified, five teacher certified, 43 others not certified as TAs).

• The facilities were generally in good condition and repair; however, the clocks were not operable and occasional problems with water/plumbing were reported. There was no evidence of the use of security badges or other technical solutions to building and classroom access.
Recommendations:

- The District should develop a strategic plan for the improvement of student performance. This plan should include performance targets, strategies for improving performance and an evaluation of the plan.

- The District should hire certified teaching assistants and ensure that aides do not provide direct instruction.

- The District should consider in their review of the facilities plan a strategy for addressing water problems, clocks not working and general security systems.

- The District should provide support in implementing the recommendations of the Joint Intervention Team (JIT).

Other Concerns:

- The District expressed significant concern over the State Education rate setting unit and the timing delays in setting rates. Their concern is that the rates have not kept pace with the increases in costs and, therefore, are insufficient and often delayed. The Superintendent has made this concern known but has asked for the assistance of the BOCES District Superintendent to continue looking for ways to improve.

- The District also expressed a concern regarding their facilities and the need to continue facility improvements and upgrades. The current campus has several separate buildings that require student transition from building to building and results in significant loss in instructional time.

PART 3: OVERALL FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

A. Overall Finding

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<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Review Team Finding</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(c)</td>
<td>The school has not made sufficient progress in identified areas, and is unlikely to make AYP under the current structure and organization.</td>
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B. Overall Recommendation

<table>
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<th>Reference</th>
<th>Review Team Recommendation</th>
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<tr>
<td>(c)</td>
<td>Develop and implement a new plan that could include significant changes in staff, organizational structure, leadership and/or configuration, to address issues that continue to negatively impact student academic performance in identified areas.</td>
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</table>
• Implement a schoolwide RtI to address the academic needs of this special population.

• Conduct periodic reviews to ensure that the curriculum is being implemented with fidelity, is having the intended impact on student achievement, and is modified if ineffective.

• Provide additional intensive supports and PD for teachers and the Principal in order to implement effective instructional strategies to support at risk populations.

• Consistently and systematically use integrated technology-based supports and interventions as part of the instructional program.

• Establish an early-warning system to identify students who may be at risk of failing to achieve to high standards.

• Provide ongoing mechanisms for family and community engagement.

• Implement a focused academic intervention to address the needs of students who have not met State standards.

• Commit to providing additional support to the school that will ensure that the school has:
  
  ➢ sufficient number of experienced supervisory/administrative staff to oversee the school improvement efforts; and

  ➢ enough teaching staff to provide for common planning time and/or permanent substitutes to allow for quality PD.