

**NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Office of Accountability**

Differentiated Accountability

SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW REPORT

BEDS Code/DBN:	421800010006
District Name:	Syracuse City School District
School Name:	Dr. John Van Duyn Elementary School
School Address:	401 Loomis Ave. Syracuse, NY 13207
Principal:	Claudia Stockard
Accountability Phase/Category:	Improvement (year 1) Comprehensive English Language Arts- All Students; Black Students; Students with Disabilities, and Economically Disadvantaged
Area of Identification:	Disadvantaged
Dates of On-site Review:	April 11-14, 2011

PART 1: MISSION STATEMENT

“The mission of Dr. John Van Duyn School is to ensure that all students acquire the necessary skills, exhibit respect for themselves and appreciate diversity as they become lifelong learners and contributing members of society; this will be accomplished through excellence in teaching and learning and continuous home, school and community partnership.”

PART 2: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND UTILIZATION OF DATA

FINDINGS:

- The current Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) does not provide adequate guidance for improving student achievement. The School Leadership Team (SLT) had not conducted an in-depth data analysis to make accurate decisions for improving student achievement. The plan that was made available consists of a variety of pages from different sections of the CEP; and the Action Plan did not include all of the findings.
- The SLT does not understand its responsibility for overall improvement of student achievement, including data analysis and developing and monitoring the implementation of the CEP Action Plan. There are no standing agenda items, such as analyzing data, discussing how student achievement can be improved, and/or evaluating improvements in school processes. Teachers stated that SLT members informed staff of the meetings but only at a basic informational level.
- Teachers reported that the amount of English language arts (ELA) assessment data is excessive and that they cannot effectively synthesize it for actual planning. For example, all teachers have data notebooks with results of student assessments on several ELA assessments, including the District’s

new reading series, *Treasures*, unit assessments. Primary level teachers have additional diagnostic tests for ELA, including Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIEBELS), Fox in a Box, and Acuity, and grades 4 and 5 use the Scholastic Reading Inventory.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The SLT and school administrators should provide in-depth training in planning for improvement. The training should be provided by a facilitator to guide the development of the 2011-12 CEP. Training in the effective use of data to determine the root causes of the lack of student achievement and linking the causes with action steps is needed. The entire staff should also receive basic PD in the effective use of data. The District should monitor the school's implementation of the CEP.
- SLT meetings should have standing agenda items that include a review and evaluation of CEP action steps and next steps; grade level reviews of data-driven decisions; feedback on patterns observed in walkthroughs; and data that impact student social and emotional growth.
- The administration should work with the instructional coach to review all ELA assessment data to identify repetitive components and select the sections that are most valuable for staff to use in tracking student progress.

II. TEACHING AND LEARNING

FINDINGS:

- There were variations in the effectiveness of instruction both within grades and especially between grades. For example, short periods of direct instruction, alternating with small group and center work was observed at the primary level, while intermediate level classes, with one exception, were teacher-directed whole group lecture format with questions relegated to simple factual responses.
- The length of time primary level students were required to sit for testing was much longer than students should be expected to work effectively. This can lead to invalid test results.
- Van Duyn's inclusion program was implemented three-years ago before the school had the necessary structures and professional development (PD) in place for effective instruction. As a result, the school has been adjusting the program for more effective program delivery. Currently, an effective co-teaching model exists in grade 3; however, in the other grades, the special education teacher was often not used for instruction.
- Round Robin reading was observed in intermediate grade classes despite the fact that the District has disallowed the use of this approach. Similar inappropriate instruction, such as having students practice reading nonsense words was observed. Overall, staff awareness/implementation of evidence-based instructional strategies was inconsistent, with instruction at the intermediate grades especially problematic. Staff received PD in instructional strategies but there has been little follow up to ensure implementation.
- Staff is using the District's new reading program, *Treasures*, for the first time. The program has a wealth of resources. The first year of implementation has been overwhelming and staff reported that they have not had time to analyze and evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of the program.
- ELA instruction at the primary level is strong on skills, but not as strong on building comprehension and writing strategies or on developing student ownership of learning.

- There is variation in differentiation and interventions across the primary level. Some teachers have begun using formative assessment strategies to evaluate student progress and to keep records of observations. K-1 teachers use several computer-based intervention programs and move students as needed. Second grade teachers try to fit students into existing interventions while in the third grade there is a greater focus on student specific needs as a beginning point.
- High quality first instruction varied significantly within the school, with the quality decreasing from early to intermediate grades. Specifically:
 - Academic rigor and efforts to engage students varied markedly across classrooms. The use of rubrics, self-evaluation and formative assessments were not evident in the majority of classrooms.
 - Little differentiation in instruction was observed. Most center work was one-size-fits all, with initial instruction in grades 4 and 5 almost completely conducted in lecture format, with limited student engagement.
 - Modeling and scaffolding of instruction was observed in some classrooms, particularly at the primary level, but was not uniformly implemented in the school.
 - While instructional objectives were posted in the majority of classrooms, only a few at the primary level were written in student-friendly language and were actually used to orient students to the day's instruction.
- The school lacks an effective plan and master schedule to ensure that at-risk students receive timely and focused support. There is no specific time set aside for the required Academic Intervention Services (AIS).
- There was an overall lack of urgency in instruction, which resulted in low expectations for students by teachers.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Instructional coaches should work closely with intermediate level teachers to support the effective use of instructional strategies that support active student participation. Expansion of Cognitive Coaching and Learning (CCL) into the intermediate grades should be encouraged, and the school administration should carefully monitor improvement in those grades.
- The school should develop standard test-taking practices schoolwide.
- Building administrators should work with special education staff to identify the academic and behavioral needs of students. Students should be scheduled into all classrooms at each grade level based on the level of support needed. The special education staff should actively support and co-teach. The master schedule should be changed to accommodate this. Other support staff should also be used for counseling (social workers and psychologist), and the resource room program should be examined for effectiveness. School leaders should ensure that an effective co-teaching model is consistently applied across grades and its effectiveness is carefully reviewed. School leaders should ensure that teachers use common planning time to develop well-planned lessons. Co-teachers should have equal roles and responsibilities in enhancing and accelerating student learning.

- The District, along with the Principal and the SLT, should ensure that staff implements allowable District strategies identified in the CEP. Vertical and horizontal common planning time, half-day PD and CCL should focus on improving instruction, including lesson/unit planning. The administration should set very specific expectations for instruction and follow through with frequent, focused walkthroughs and follow-up with feedback.
- Time should be set aside (afterschool, summer, etc.) to evaluate the first year of *Treasures* implementation and its impact on student performance. Staff should identify strategies to meet specific student needs.
- Primary level staff, while maintaining a strong ELA skills program, should use District and State performance indicators for comprehension and writing, as well as reading research (Snow, Fontas and Pinnell, etc.) to develop a comprehensive ELA program that transitions from learning to read to reading to learn.
- The school should implement and monitor on-going vertical and embedded PD/CCL focused on formative assessments, differentiation and effective interventions to ensure consistent understanding and use of strategies across all classrooms. The skills and strategies that are necessary to identify student needs to develop appropriate interventions should be required of all teachers.
- The administration and instructional coach should schedule students into the appropriate interventions as soon as possible to ensure that students begin receiving inservices at the beginning of the school year. Additionally, the master schedule should be adjusted to accommodate the delivery of AIS and other interventions.
- All staff should intensively focus on high quality first instruction, working collaboratively to increase rigor and student engagement. Both school and District administration should monitor instructional practice and rigor in classrooms. Lesson plans should be regularly evaluated and daily walkthroughs should occur. Both the instructional coaches and the CCL initiative should also focus teachers on improving instruction.

III. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

FINDINGS:

- There has been a new administrative team for Van Duyn Elementary School nearly every year for the past five years, with the current Principal beginning this academic year. Although systems and rules are in place (such as requiring lesson plan review, parents reporting to the office, etc.), some are often ignored by parents and teachers. For example, teachers report that parents bypass the office and appear at their classroom door, expecting them to stop instruction and meet with them immediately in the hall.
- In a few observed classrooms, the level of professionalism exhibited by teachers was lacking. Some teachers were observed attending to personal business during instructional periods, leaving students to work on their own. At the intermediate level, some teachers routinely criticized student ability to succeed. The administration is working with the District to resolve these problems, but there has been a significant impact on students in some classrooms.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The SLT and school administrators should review school procedures and develop protocols to monitor and ensure that established policies and rules are routinely followed and are being implemented.
- School and district administration should continue to work in collaboration to resolve problems associated with the lack of professionalism and low expectations of students, especially as they impact student learning. District and school administrators should schedule frequent walkthroughs that focus on specific areas in need of improvement, including classroom management strategies, student engagement and instructional rigor to support continued student improvement.

IV. INFRASTRUCTURE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

FINDINGS:

- Common planning time is scheduled each day, but the length of time in the morning (approximately 20 minutes) is too brief for any significant work and the half hour in the afternoon, from 2:00-2:30, has been co-opted by the afterschool program. Teachers are expected to provide snacks and supervise students remaining after school until 2:30 during their planning time. Most teachers meet at grade level teams once or twice a week, though there is marked variation in number and format of these meetings.
- The school has not implemented the District's 4-Tiered intervention initiative for either academic or behavioral evaluation and/or for scheduling students for interventions. This initiative, which ties in with Response to Intervention (RTI), provides a means for identifying which interventions are appropriate for specific students.
- Ineffective classroom management and inappropriate behavior by both students and some staff were observed and negatively impact the teaching and learning process. Inappropriate behavior is a serious problem at the school. In some classrooms, name calling and bullying was ignored until it escalated into a more serious problem. Both students and parents reported that there is a lack of a safe, disciplined learning school environment.
- Students, parents and administrators reported that teachers, especially at the intermediate level, frequently yell at students, speak disparagingly to them and ignore student requests for help when students do not understand. Observations confirmed this behavior.
- Teachers reported that students were unruly and inattentive in class, especially in the intermediate grades. Several students have been barred from the afterschool program for fights on the bus.
- Although the school has a Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) program, it is seldom used and is not central to staff interventions.
- There are many support staff, including teaching assistants, a psychologist, a school nurse, a speech therapist, two social workers, Say Yes managers and others. The administration does not always know where support staff are or what they are doing. For example, the social worker records student attendance, a task typically done by an attendance secretary or a school nurse in other buildings. The social worker does not work as frequently with students or make home visits as often as would be expected. Given the needs of the school community, this is not an effective use of the social worker.

- The Say Yes program is operational for the entire school, with two assigned staff supervisors, one full time and one half-time, who manage the program, including the supervision of social workers, parent meetings, the afterschool program and summer camp. The afterschool program has an enrollment of approximately 240 students. The program starts at 2:30 p.m. and provides additional support in ELA and mathematics, with enrichment courses such as cooking class and gym-based classes. Currently, teachers are providing supervision from 2:30 to 3:00, but this time is contractually their daily planning time.
- Based on interviews with parents, parent involvement and engagement is limited.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The master schedule should be modified to provide staff with a minimum of a half hour of planning time daily, with set expectations for content and format. The SLT and administrators should work with the staff to develop procedures for grade level meetings, including reporting policies, and developing plans for use of the schoolwide time for PD. The half hour at the end of the school day as students transition to the after school programming should be supervised by the Say Yes afterschool program.
- School administrators and the SLT should ensure that action steps to implement the 4-Tiered intervention initiative are incorporated into the 2011-12 CEP and that both grade level and schoolwide planning time is provided to enable staff to implement the initiative. A system should also be in place to monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the intervention.
- The school and district administrators should support the school in developing a solution to behavior-related problems. The SLT and the administration should investigate and identify the most critical aspects of behavior problems – including inappropriate adult behaviors – and develop a plan to resolve the problems. Parents and community members should be involved and kept informed of planned activities in problem solving.
- The District should monitor behavior problems and support the school in problem solving and implementing solutions. The District should also work with school staff to develop and implement a strong PBIS program in the school.
- The District and school administrators should hold staff accountable for the implementation and follow-through of positive behavior management strategies and effective teaching. There should be intensive work with staff to ensure positive interactions with students and an understanding that effective discipline does not include yelling and disparaging remarks. Students should also be held accountable for appropriate behavior at school.
- The roles and responsibilities of assigned support staff should be reviewed, and protocols should be jointly developed to ensure that the specific responsibilities of support staff are responsive to the needs of the students and the overall school community. Administrators should meet with the support staff at least monthly and require them to provide schedules and updates.
- The Principal and the Say Yes staff/program should review available resources, including the use of volunteers to find a solution to provide coverage for the 30-minute period (between school closure and the beginning of the afterschool program) that is both safe and supportive for students.
- The school staff should collaborate with the District, parents and other school partners to develop strategies and program activities to increase parent engagement and parent involvement.

V. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FINDINGS:

- At the time of the visit, staff was unaware of the impending Common Core State Standards or their impact on teaching and learning over the next few years.
- CCL began this year with a few teachers, but is still in the beginning stages. Participating teachers are enthusiastic about the benefits of CCL.
- The school has a wide range of behavioral problems exacerbated by the lack of a strong, positive social-emotional support system and negative staff remarks to students
- Delivery of quality first time instruction is inconsistent, especially in the areas of building conceptual understanding, developing comprehension and writing processes, and instructional strategies such as developing anticipatory set, modeling and scaffolding instruction.
- Teachers currently do not have sufficient daily blocks of planning time to work together to plan collaboratively or to build skills.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school staff, with District support, should begin PD focused on understanding the Common Core State Standards and begin to incorporate them into their planning, as 2011-12 is the transition year.
- The SLT should build additional CCL opportunities into the program, and administrators at both the building and District levels should support and encourage all staff to participate.
- The District should work with the school to develop and implement a strong PD program for a positive social-emotional support system, including the development of a school culture of high expectations for students and academic rigor, student mentoring, strategies for building strong relationships with students and positive classroom management strategies.
- The SLT should work with teachers and administrators to develop and implement PD that focuses on effective first time instruction, using available half-day PD, CCL and support from the school's instructional coaches.
- Planning time should be of sufficient length so that teachers can collaboratively engage in in-depth planning, with a focus on developing and sharing effective units of instruction.

VI. FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

FINDINGS:

- The school has limited technology, i.e., an insufficient number of old computers, a few SMART Boards shared across teacher teams, and a few ELMOs to support classroom instruction. The cluster of computers in the library are so old that they are no longer supported by the District, and there are few computers in the classrooms. Computers that are available are used by teachers primarily for ELA interventions such as *Fast Forward*, *Earobics* and *Read Naturally*. A few classrooms have document cameras and white boards.

- A number of books that were purchased with Reading First funding are stored away rather than being used to supplement classroom libraries.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School administration should review the school's Technology Plan and work closely with the District to continue building essential resources. Some technology, including computers and SMART Boards, has been ordered using Title I School Improvement Grant funds. Staff should carefully determine the most effective placement for these additional resources to support approved activities as outlined in the grant.
- Staff should inventory available books that might be used as classroom sets and determine how they might be distributed.

PART 3: CONCLUDING STATEMENT

As a newly identified Improvement (year 1) Comprehensive school, there are issues that need to be immediately addressed if the school is to improve student achievement. The school lacks a consistent, student-centered approach to learning and interventions in K-5, with significantly fewer positive teacher-student interactions at the upper grades. The issues the school should address include:

- Developing a consistent, positive climate in the school by fostering and promoting student/teacher relationships and creating a culture of high expectations and mutual respect among students and staff;
- Developing and implementing a positive system of behavioral expectations that build students' responsibility for their own behavior and learning;
- Focusing on quality first time instruction that engages students, sets high expectations for student learning and provides targeted, student-specific interventions; and
- Ensuring consistent expectations for responsibility and professionalism for all staff.