

NYSED/NYCDOE JOINT INTERVENTION TEAM REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

BEDS Code/DBN:	10X279
School Name:	PS 279 Captain Manuel Rivera, Jr.
School Address:	2100 Walton Avenue Bronx NY 10453
School Leader:	James Waslawski
Restructuring Phase/Category:	Restructuring Advanced Comprehensive English Language Arts- All Students; Black Students; Hispanic Students; Students with Disabilities; English Language learners; and Economically Disadvantaged Students
Areas of Identification:	
Dates of On-site Diagnostic Review:	April 5-6, 2011

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

A. Community and School Background

PS 279 Captain Manuel Rivera, Jr. serves 999 students in kindergarten through grade 8. The school enrollment is 15 percent Black, 79 percent Hispanic, and five percent Asian students. Of these students, 35 percent are English language learners (ELLs), and 21 percent are students with disabilities.

The administrative team includes the Principal, two Assistant Principals (APs) and one assigned Absent Teacher Reserve (ATR) AP. The school leader has served the school for six years and the two APs have been in their current assignments for four and seven years respectively. There are 72 teachers on staff, including five teachers who are new to the school this year. Eleven teachers have been at the school for fewer than three years. The school’s teacher turnover is low. Ninety-eight percent of the teachers are highly qualified.

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 2 consecutive years (2007-08 and 2008-09), as indicated by an decrease in the percentage of students performing at or above Level 3 and/or a decrease in the Performance Index.	✓
-	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.	✓

Positive or Negative Indicator (+/-)	School Performance Indicators	✓
-	Performance data for the school on NYSED Accountability Overview Reports (AOR) for 2007-08 and 2008-09 show an increase in the number of subgroups that did not make AYP in identified area(s).	✓
-	Performance data for the school on NYSED Accountability Overview Reports (AOR) for 2007-08 and 2008-09 indicate an increase in the achievement gap between identified subgroups and the All Students subgroup in one or more identified subject/area(s).	✓
NYCDOE Quantitative and Qualitative Performance Measures		
+	2008-09 NYC Progress Report Grade of B	✓
+	NYC Quality Review Score of Proficient	✓

B. School Strengths

The special education department is collegial and collaborative. Training to support the collaborative team teaching (CTT) model is increasing co-teacher effectiveness. Both teachers share equally in the instructional responsibilities. The school is making progress in adapting to the new Special Education Information System (SEIS).

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 English language arts (ELA) written curriculum is inconsistently developed and is not sufficiently contributing to increased student achievement and teacher effectiveness.
- Lesson objectives are not based on New York State (NYS) State Standards and are not consistently and explicitly incorporated into instruction. Students are not aware of lesson objectives and are not benefiting from the posting of objectives in some classrooms. Objectives are not written in student-friendly language.

Recommendations:

- The Network should work with the school on the development of curriculum in all core areas for all ELA courses and ensure that it is clearly aligned with the current NYS Learning Standards. The school's written curriculum should be aligned to the new NYS P-12 Common Core Learning Standards in ELA and literacy to prepare for implementation in school year 2012-13. 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 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.

- School leaders should communicate clear expectations to all teachers that written lesson plans contain clear and explicit objectives that are aligned to State Standards. Reference to the standards should include a descriptive text that will clearly communicate what it is the students are to master. Lesson objectives should be communicated to students in student friendly language and should drive the lesson activities. Teacher created informal assessment should be conducted at the end of each lesson so that the teacher will know if students achieved the objective. School leaders should monitor lessons and evaluate how well students know and achieve the stated learning objectives.

II. Teaching and Learning

Findings:

- Homogeneous grouping of students in some grades means that teachers and school leaders do not share a common understanding of the purpose of grouping students or intended outcomes. School leaders perceive this practice as clustering students to provide interventions more efficiently for students with similar needs, but teachers report that grouping students in high, medium and low groups reduces the burden of differentiating instruction. Teachers report that groupings slow the pace of instruction in lower level classes.
- Teaching time is not maximized in all classrooms. In some classes, the “do now” activity lasts for longer than ten minutes. The flow of the day is not posted in many classrooms, so some teachers are not mapping out times, and consequently activities do not follow the timeframe.
- The cultures of the students and the community are not represented in most classroom materials and activities. The library has a very limited collection of materials, and these do not adequately reflect the languages and cultures of the groups present in the school.
- Learning goals are not evident in some lesson plans and classrooms. Learning goals and aims are posted in some classrooms but are not written in student-friendly language. Students are unable to comprehend and benefit from the posting of aims, and learning is not enhanced by these postings.
- Student-to-student interaction in some classrooms is minimal, and this is negatively impacting active student engagement in learning. In some classrooms, teachers ineffectively attempt to encourage student discussions. Students are not provided with clear expectations for the purpose or expected outcome for student-to-student sharing.
- Teacher questioning techniques were at a low level of Bloom’s Taxonomy, often requiring students to respond with single-word responses. There was a lack of rigor in questioning observed. Students were not regularly engaged in higher order thinking and problem solving.
- In most classes, there was limited evidence of differentiated practice. Teachers reported that they have no access to a variety of differentiated materials and the class sets of texts have not been labeled by level of difficulty to guide teachers in their use or enable easy access by students.

- In most classrooms, students were engaged in identical activities, and lessons lacked the required differentiation to ensure that students were engaged at their optimal instructional level. The diverse needs of students were not met in classrooms where there was inadequate differentiation of materials or academic content.
- The small volume of student work displayed does not provide students or parents with evidence of learning. Some student work displayed included rubrics and teacher comments. Some of the teacher comments posted on written work were too complex for young students to understand and benefit from.
- The use of technology was not integrated sufficiently into instruction to enhance learning. The power of SMART Boards was not maximized, as many teachers used them as projectors or whiteboards. The computer lab was underutilized, and classroom computers were not effectively used to provide focused skill development or support independent student research. The technology position is unfilled and, as a result, teachers are not sufficiently supported to effectively integrate technology into instruction.

Recommendations:

- School leaders should clearly communicate the purpose of grouping students for instruction and ensure that teachers differentiate work and tasks so that they meet the differing abilities and needs of students. All teachers should be provided with PD to help them design instruction to accelerate the progress of lower performing students so that the gap between lower performing students and higher performing students closes and all students achieve proficiency.
- School leaders should monitor teachers to assure that instruction begins promptly at the start of each period. A schoolwide standard for the length and purpose of “do now” activities should be established, as well as expectations for the posting of daily agendas. School leaders should regularly monitor lessons for the effective use of instructional time.
- The school should acquire, distribute and effectively use instructional materials that reflect the cultures and diverse languages of students. The library should be established as a center for multicultural materials and classroom libraries should be supplemented with cultural materials that support learning, projects, and the curriculum.
- School leaders and teachers should ensure that all lessons have clear teaching points, aims or objectives that are aligned with NYS standards; are shared with the students at the outset of lessons; and are revisited at the end of the lesson to check for understanding and mastery.
- Teachers should be provided with PD that enables them to maximize opportunities for meaningful student interaction and engagement. The PD should focus on ensuring that teachers emphasize to students the importance of providing evidence for their thinking, building on the thinking of others and solidifying their own understanding. School leaders should hold teachers accountable for incorporating PD strategies into their daily teaching routines.
- All teachers should incorporate critical thinking, problem solving and analysis in the lesson planning process to ensure that higher order thinking and academic rigor is carefully planned and delivered. PD should be provided to teachers who struggle with these important concepts. School leaders should review lesson plans and monitor lessons to ensure that rigorous questioning occurs and that students are challenged and cognitively engaged.

- High quality PD should be sought to increase teacher capacity to deliver differentiated instruction. School leaders should work with the Network to identify and purchase a variety of instructional materials, including leveled books, to address the specific learning needs of all students.
- The school, with support from the Network, should provide training for teachers to enable them to develop students' ability to work independently and to collaborate as successful problem solvers and researchers. School leaders should monitor the implementation and impact of this training in the classroom during routine observations.
- School leaders should set clear expectations for the display of student work in hallways and classrooms. School leaders should request that student work be accompanied by informative written teacher feedback that explains the quality of the work and what is needed to improve. Teachers' written comments on student work should be clear and incorporate the language of the NYS standards. Staff should be provided with exemplar student work samples with model written comments to ensure greater uniformity and shared understanding of expectations. School leaders should regularly monitor and evaluate displayed student work.
- The school should expand the use of technology to support curriculum development, enhance instructional practice and increase student engagement in all classes. Technical assistance should be provided to teachers to ensure that technology is effectively integrated into instruction.

III. School Leadership

Findings:

- School leaders and some staff demonstrate low expectations for students and do not expect to be able to help students overcome barriers to success. Administrators and staff cite external factors as root causes of the school's lack of consistent academic achievement.
- The school leader has not fully engaged the School Leadership Team (SLT) in a thorough needs analysis, the creation of meaningful school goals, and the frequent monitoring of progress on school goals. SLT members report that they need leadership and training to fully understand roles and responsibilities and that it has not been provided. The SLT is always scheduled to meet at the same fixed time, and parent representation at SLT meetings is low.
- The school leader has ineffectively managed resources to support an effective learning environment. The school technology lab is underutilized, as the technology teacher was assigned to a classroom teaching position and the position has not been filled. Teachers report that they need support to integrate technology into instruction.
- The school leaders have contributed to institutional instability through frequent reconfiguration of teacher assignments. Redistribution of teachers sometimes occurs as a first response to the release of test data. This results in teachers assigned to new positions with new curriculum and new grade level requirements. These actions contribute to a haphazard environment; it is disruptive to teacher teams, does not allow all teachers to fully develop their skills, and does not provide adequate support to permanently address teacher deficits.

- The school leaders do not effectively manage and monitor school procedures. For example, school leaders have expected teachers to independently maintain class data binders; however, some teachers are not maintaining them. Insufficient support is provided to ensure compliance and effective collection and use of data.
- The school leaders have not sufficiently provided adequate materials and resources to support improvement in ELA. The quantity of instructional materials is insufficient to engage all learners. Classroom libraries are not extensive and do not contain differentiated materials for all subgroups. Teachers report that needed resources are not provided and that they provide materials themselves.
- The school leaders have not created and communicated a comprehensive PD plan that addresses the needs of all teachers. For example, *The Six Traits of Writing* has been introduced to teachers; however support for incorporating this PD in classrooms is not occurring, and the focus on this initiative has not been adequately sustained.
- The school leaders are not effectively ensuring that ELLs receive explicit English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction. There is no push- in or pull- out support for ELL students in general education classes.
- The school has not clearly communicated and appropriately introduced the school's performance based teacher evaluation system. The school's rollout of the system was poorly introduced to the staff and is contributing to high numbers of underperforming teachers. The system is insufficiently providing teachers with formative and summative feedback. The Partial Period Observations, i.e., informal observations, are not consistently used to provide teachers with evaluative feedback. Most of the observation format is neutral documentation that does not inform next steps or inform the teacher of the effectiveness of the practice observed.

Recommendations:

- The school leaders should encourage all staff to embrace high expectations in the form of improved teacher practice and measurable student performance gains for all students.
- School leaders should work closely with the SLT chair to fully understand the new chairperson's needs and the needs of the entire SLT. School leaders should review SLT by-laws with the team to help the team meet its requirements for a quorum.
- The school leader should assign technology integration to each of the APs and ensure that they create schedules for teachers to use the computer labs. Technology integration support should be provided by identifying a technology teacher who will assist teachers in the use of the lab and the integration of technology into instruction. The school leaders should ensure that computer labs are used for more than test administration and regularly observe practice and use.
- All data points should be closely examined before making teaching reassignments. Teacher teams that will collaboratively build on the strengths of each other should be established.
- Annual and periodic orientations and training for all staff should be conducted to ensure that all teachers fully understand the school requirements and the school leader's expectations for teacher performance. The school should provide all teachers with a staff handbook that is regularly

updated to ensure that a comprehensive and common message is communicated to teachers about expectations and processes.

- School leaders should identify materials and supplies that have successfully contributed to positive academic gains and teacher effectiveness. The allocation of funds should be prioritized to ensure that teachers and students have the materials they need to improve teaching and learning.
- The training model from Expediting Comprehension for English language learners (Exc-ELL) - vocabulary development strategies should be replicated. The school should train, follow up with additional training sessions, conduct class visits, and provide in-class coaching to teachers who are implementing PD initiatives. School leaders should see each initiative through and provide follow up support to ensure that each initiative has the intended impact on improved student achievement and teacher effectiveness.
- The school should ensure that State and Federal requirements for the delivery of English as a Second Language (ESL) services are met. The full spectrum of services for ELLs should be provided, including direct academic and English instruction, supplemental materials, academic support, and language enrichment activities.
- The school leaders should reexamine the rollout of the new observation system. Teacher understanding of the new tool and standards should be scaffolded so that more teachers fully understand the new 'lens' through which they will be evaluated. The school should provide training on performance-based observations. This should include looking at student engagement and student productivity to determine teacher effectiveness. The schools should immediately provide ongoing and imbedded support for all teachers so that they too look at student productivity and student achievement as the ultimate measure of teacher effectiveness. All feedback provided to teachers should be clear and informative. All teacher observations should be appropriately evaluative and lead, if necessary, to increased support and training. Shared observations between the administrative team should be arranged to ensure a common approach to use of the Partial Period Observations.

IV. Infrastructure for Student Success

Findings:

- The facility is not adequately cleaned and maintained. The school leader has struggled to identify and retain custodians to adequately maintain the school facility.
- The school is not completing triennial, initial, and annual review assessments for students with disabilities within the required timeframes. Some students are not receiving required counseling.
- The library is insufficient to support improved academic achievement for K-8 students enrolled at the school. The library does not contain appropriate materials and resources for middle school students. The library is not a fully developed media center; the computer center is small and will not accommodate more than a few students at one time.
- The schedule to survey parents consistently throughout the year, as described in the school Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP), has not been implemented. Formal parent feedback is not regularly considered in improvement efforts.

Recommendations:

- The Network (School Facilities team member) should assist in ensuring that the custodian is properly supervised and that the physical plant is properly maintained.
- School leaders should create and convene a committee to monitor all pertinent assessment results and the delivery schedule of related services for students with disabilities. Special education staff should be reassigned to ensure that all required timeframes are met. School leaders should seek assistance from the Network to assist in acquiring the necessary staff to meet all requirements.
- The school should, through existing funds or other funding streams, seek to create a satellite library/media center that will be used by middle school students to compensate for lack of expansion space in the current library. The current middle school collection should be reallocated and expanded with enhanced technology resources to facilitate research and project-based learning.
- The school should implement the current plan in the CEP to conduct interim parent surveys to ensure that the school fully engages parents in the assessment of school strengths and areas for development. Results should be analyzed for each cycle and plans created to implement improvement initiatives.

V. Collection, Analysis, and Utilization of Data**Findings:**

- Schoolwide and grade-level performance data is not effectively examined to determine the effectiveness of school programming and teacher effectiveness. The results of subgroup performance are insufficiently analyzed to fully understand the school's history of underperformance in ELA.
- A comprehensive needs assessment has not been conducted or effectively communicated to SLT members. The school leader independently determines schoolwide needs and does not regularly analyze the effectiveness of programming, staffing assignments, and interventions with the full participation of the SLT. The CEP contains just two goals related to student achievement and does not sufficiently target the underperformance of students in ELA.
- The use of formative assessments is limited. There are no consistent protocols for the use of formative data to inform or modify instructional practice. The content of curriculum maps remains the same throughout the year and is not influenced by student performance trends or assessment results. In addition, summative assessments are used to track students in homogeneous class assignments in the middle school and are not systematically and regularly used to reassess placements and move students to new groups or classes.
- The school does not systematically collect, record, and analyze assessment data. The collection and use of assessment data is not standardized. The content of student portfolios, assessment binders and data binders is inconsistent from teacher to teacher. The inconsistency of data collection and use is negatively impacting the quality of instructional planning. Instruction does not closely align with the results of data analysis.

Recommendations:

- The school should develop a schoolwide, collaborative inquiry process that outlines roles, establishes protocols and monitors effectiveness of data collection, analysis, and implementation of instructional initiatives. The school subgroups should be reflected in the data sources and examination. School leaders should ensure that data used to evaluate teachers is aligned with NYS Standards and ensure that teachers are provided with appropriate feedback mechanisms to adjust their instructional practice.
- School leaders should develop a data collection system to better inform the CEP needs assessment. School leaders, with support from the Network, should provide data training for the SLT to enable them to be better involved in the examination of quantitative data that will allow for the identification of programmatic deficiencies to improve all students' performance in ELA.
- The school should develop a standardized formative and summative assessment inventory that includes explicit item analysis to support the modification of the schoolwide instructional program. Review of the item analysis should occur regularly to support flexible grouping of students and differentiated instruction. Additional PD should be provided, where appropriate. School leaders should monitor teaching, learning, and teacher planning to ensure that data is being used effectively to drive planning and instruction.
- School leaders should generate and communicate a list of the content to be collected and analyzed in the data binders and student portfolios. The consistency of data and volume of data collected in these binders should be regularly monitored. All teachers should be held accountable for incorporating these data pieces into differentiated instruction and targeted small group instruction within classrooms.

VI. Professional Development**Findings:**

- The school has not developed a comprehensive PD plan.
- There are no formally established feedback mechanisms to ensure that PD is effective and appropriate for all teachers. There is no formal mechanism in place to determine PD outcomes or next steps. Some teachers report that PD is not consistently differentiated to address the needs of veteran teachers who have experience and should expand their repertoire of best practices.
- The school's current PD initiatives are being conducted with inconsistent quality and implementation. Teachers report that the Six Trait Writing initiative has not been implemented systematically or continuously supported throughout the school year.

Recommendations:

- School leaders, with support from the Network, should conduct a comprehensive professional needs assessment that is based on student data, classroom observations, and expressed teacher needs. The school should develop an annual calendar of in school, afterschool, and off site training that aligns with the needs assessment and school goals. School leaders should monitor for the implementation and application of PD initiatives in classrooms and adjust PD sessions to ensure continuous growth and increased teacher competence.

- School leaders should create and implement specific, formal, and ongoing teacher feedback mechanisms that allow/require teachers to identify positive changes in practice and student achievement results and to self identify areas that need further development. School leaders should ensure that PD is differentiated to better meet the needs of individual teachers.
- Student writing skills should be improved by ensuring that PD continues for all staff and that the Six Trait Writing program is fully implemented to have a positive impact on student achievement in ELA.

VII. District Support

Findings:

- The Network has not successfully provided the school leader with appropriate academic or operational leadership and has not met the expectations of the school leader for timely response and follow-through.
- The Network has provided PD in the new SESIS tool but is not involved in the implementation of the school's current PD initiatives.
- The Network has not enhanced the schools efforts to collect and analyze data. The Network has not sufficiently supported the creation of the needs assessment or the development of the CEP.
- The Network has not successfully assisted the school to reallocate funds to support a literacy coach position. The needs of all students in ELA are not being met.
- The Network ineffectively provided feedback on the CEP. The Network advised the school leader to modify the literacy goal, but the school leader did not perceive the new goal as appropriate and achievable.

Recommendations:

- The school should seek assurances of additional support from its existing Network or identify and contract a Network that will provide consistent and appropriate K-8 supports to address the needs of socio-economic, ELL, and students with disabilities and that will meet the expectations of the school leaders.
- The Network should be involved in supporting attainment of school goals through ongoing literacy PD opportunities. These PD offerings should be collaboratively determined on school needs.
- The Network should support the school in the analysis of student and teacher performance data. This analysis should be incorporated into the CEP. School leaders should engage the Network in the development of data protocols to ensure consistent approach to data collection and analysis.
- The school leader should engage the Network in the financial analysis of the budget and school expenditures to support the school's need for a literacy coach and to ensure that all teachers and students have adequate instructional materials. The Network should ensure that fund allocation provides for optimal use of the school's technology resources.

- The Network should support the development of all aspects and components of the school’s CEP. The Network should ensure that all members of the SLT fully understand and participate in the setting of the CEP goals and that CEP goals are aligned with the identified needs of the school.
- The Network should support the school in the implementation of the JIT recommendations.

PART 3: JOINT INTERVENTION TEAM OVERALL FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

A. Overall Findings

Reference	JIT Finding for Restructuring Advanced Schools	✓
(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	Recommendation by the JIT for Restructuring Advanced Schools	✓
(c)	Develop and implement a new Restructuring Plan that includes <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 JIT recommendation should be implemented.

- Develop a new Restructuring Plan that includes ongoing, school-based outcomes focused mentoring for the school leader. The current school leadership has not provided academic and organizational leadership to produce positive gains from year to year and requires significant support to ensure that student achievement in ELA immediately improves and continues to steadily increase. The mentor should establish a regular presence in the school, assist with the creation of a long-term staffing plan to stabilize grade level teams and assist the Principal in the creation and delivery of a comprehensive PD plan to meet the needs of all teachers. The mentor should assist the Principal in the continued implementation of the school’s new teacher observation tool to ensure effective implementation and that it increases teacher capacity to improve student achievement.
- Identify and provide ELA instructional support. A literacy coach should be assigned to the school.
- Establish demonstration classrooms based on student outcomes and effective professional practices and create an intervisitation schedule so that all teachers are regularly provided with examples of effective instruction.
- Coordinate APs and school leader responsibilities to better support academics, ELLs and students with disabilities.