NYSED/BUFFALO CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT JOINT INTERVENTION TEAM REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

BEDS Code:	140600010059
School Name:	PS 59 Dr. Charles R. Drew Science Magnet- Museum Site
School Address:	1 Martin Luther King Jr. Park Buffalo, New York 14211
Principal:	Denise Luka
Restructuring Phase/Category:	Persistently Lowest-Achieving/School Under Registration Review (PLA/SURR)
Area(s) of Identification:	English Language Arts and Mathematics
Dates of On-site Diagnostic Review:	February 1-3, 2011

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

A. Community and School Background

PS 59, the Dr. Charles R. Drew Science Magnet, serves 475 students in grades 3 through 8. The school previously enrolled grade 2 students until June 2009 when reorganization resulted in the addition of grade 2 to PS 90, the Dr. Charles R. Drew Science Magnet Early Childhood Center, which is a feeder school to PS 59. The school enrollment is 87.6 percent Black, 3.4 percent Hispanic, 8.3 percent White, and 0.3 percent Asian/Other students. One percent of the students are English language learners (ELLs) and 15 percent are students with disabilities. The District Enrollment Office places students based on parent choice, with preference given to siblings of current students and students who live within the attendance boundary of the school. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008-09 was 91.5 percent.

The administrative team includes the Principal, the Assistant Principal (AP), the literacy coach and the school's mathematics teacher who also has some coaching responsibilities. The Principal is serving her second year and the AP is new to the school. The faculty consists of 43 teachers who are fully certified in their teaching area. Ninety-five percent of these teachers hold a master's degree or higher. On average, teachers have worked in this school more than ten years, and the turnover is minimal.

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	
-	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).	✓
-	Performance data for the school on NYSED Accountability Overview Reports (AOR) for the past two consecutive years indicate an increase in the achievement gap between	✓

Positive or Negative Indicator (+/-)	School Performance Indicators	✓
	identified subgroups and the ***All Students*** subgroup in one or more identified subject/area(s).	
-	For 2010-11, the school was identified as a **Persistently Lowest- Achieving school.**	✓

B. School Strengths

- The District has provided the school with a standards-based curriculum in all core subjects with corresponding pacing calendars and instructional guidelines. The District has also made it possible for the school to offer two advanced grade 8 science and math courses: Regents Living Environment and Regents Algebra. In addition, the District has given the school the necessary resources to implement the curriculum.

- The school is housed at the Buffalo Science Museum, and they share some facilities. The new administration has revitalized its partnership with the museum and other community and cultural organizations. As a result, the school offers informal learning activities, including a docent program with the Science Museum, a zoo residency, and a number of after-school programs.

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 literacy block is structured around the District's standards based curriculum, the scope and sequence, and the Harcourt Reading program, but there is little consistency in how well teachers use these resources across classes and grades. Observed classroom libraries consisted mostly of readers used for supplementary instruction, and students reading independently or for extended periods in the classroom were not observed. Students indicated that they like to read for pleasure, and some of them use the library to take books to read at home; few of them could name an author, and they indicated that they did not keep a reading log.

- Student work displays around the classroom and in the hallways reflected a skill oriented approach to writing, with essays organized around prompts. Students apply a small number of writing strategies that are used repeatedly and in all grades, thus limiting the rigor and depth of student written work.

Recommendations:

- Develop curriculum maps that include grade-level reading strategies to add rigor and vertical consistency. Make independent reading for a set period of time a homework requirement. Consider reviewing the use of reading time during the literacy block to incorporate time for structured, independent reading at the learning areas to practice the skills, strategies, and vocabulary presented in class and facilitate the practice of proficient readers. Extend independent

reading to the middle school. Increase accountability for student independent reading with the use of (electronic) reading logs.

- Expand the literacy curriculum to include a genre-based and developmental writing component that is aligned with the scope and sequence to add rigor and depth to the writing process. Add explicit lessons and rubrics around the craft of writing. This component could easily be incorporated in the current literacy block and centers.

II. Teaching and Learning

Findings:

- Teachers are not using the explicit instructional methodology recommended by the District, and lessons are not aligned with the needs of advanced or struggling students. As a result there is a disconnect between what teachers teach, what they think that they teach, and what students actually learn as evidenced by classroom observations and teacher interviews.

- Middle school students appear to be grouped homogenously for core subjects. Though student/teacher schedules indicate a discrete differentiated instruction period as part of the literacy block for these grades and the District expects small group instruction during the reading block, lesson plans did not account for differentiation.

- The school does not offer a continuum of special education services and all the students that "move up" from the feeder school, PS 90, are placed in inclusion classes. In addition, in inclusion classrooms the general education and the special education teacher worked side by side, but there was no co-teaching. In one of the classrooms, the special education teacher was using Voyager *Passport* while the other ten students worked in various learning centers under the supervision of the general education teacher.

- District guidelines require that lesson objectives have a specific format and be displayed in every room, and all teachers work hard to meet these demands. However, many teachers appear more concerned about displaying the lesson objective and covering the curriculum than the actual impact of the lesson on student learning as evidenced by the short response time to questions, formulaic follow-up questions, absence of meaningful feedback on student work and/or students' journals, and the brief amount of time teachers spend talking with individual students during class. Moreover, students interviewed were not familiar with the lesson objectives, and those who were could not articulate the objective or explain what they had learned in class that day. Rather, students gave some examples of tasks and themes and vague illustrations of the work done in class.

- Student engagement in the classroom is inconsistent. In some cases, the teacher ignored student noise and disengaged behavior; in other cases, it was the cause of frequent admonitions and interruptions to the flow of the lesson. Consequently, transitions could be noisy, lengthier than they should be and disruptive to other students due to loss of instructional time. The new administration established a schoolwide discipline policy last year, and there is an Academic Support Room (ASR) for students who display undisciplined behavior, but the school has not been consistent in implementing these policies. Thus, there are not always consequences to unruly behavior. In addition, the Academic Support Room is served by a teacher aide rather than a teacher.

- Teachers reported using some rubrics, mostly those provided by the District, but they did not appear to customize them according to the lesson objectives, student learning goals, and performance task. Students were not familiar with the use of rubrics, although a few of them acknowledged that the teacher at times would use a simple one to four rubric to correct assignments.

- There was no evidence of a uniform grading policy, although there are grade-specific guidelines. These guidelines are limited to percentages applied to assessments, participation, class work and homework.

Recommendations:

- Enhance teacher pedagogy to ensure student-centered instructional practice. The District curriculum and pacing calendar should become tools that lead to high levels of student engagement, academic rigor, extended independent daily reading and writing, and the use of higher order thinking skills to improve student performance and increase quality student work. Have teachers participate in professional learning opportunities and be held accountable for the quality and effectiveness of their instruction.

- Maintain flexible groups for English language arts (ELA) and mathematics, but ensure that students are in heterogonous groups for social studies and science. Ensure that lesson plans are based on student formative and summative data and include a variety of student-centered strategies to respond to individual needs. For example, pair/share, accountable talk, and small group instruction and learning area activities should occur during the lesson driven by a specific criterion and with a specific learning purpose.

- Ensure that the school in collaboration with PS 90 offers a continuum of special education services to best meet the needs of all students. Review Individual Education Plan (IEP) goals and objectives to ensure that they are appropriate yet challenging. Provide the necessary professional development (PD) to ensure that teachers work in a coordinated and cooperative manner to enrich the learning of students with disabilities through their interaction and collaboration with classmates. The effective implementation of a research-based approach is critical to this school because it has been cited over the years for the significantly low performance of students in this particular subgroup.

- Add extra time to the current schedule to include a 'lab site' day that is organized around well-planned visits to a lab classroom to build a focus of excellence and develop best practices schoolwide.

- Review current discipline policies and Positive Behavioral Intervention Supports (PBIS) action plan with the participation of student representation to ensure that all students participate in their implementation at the classroom level. Develop a schedule to ensure that the ASR is served by a teacher; in many schools teachers volunteer their time on a rotating basis. Hold teachers and students accountable for effective implementation of the PBIS initiative.

- Offer PD on the development of rubrics and the use of exemplars to develop formative assessments aligned with particular tasks.

- Develop a coherent schoolwide grading policy to add rigor to lesson plans, homework, and formative assessments. Ensure the participation of students, teachers, and parents in the definition of the grading policy, its adoption, and its effective implementation.

III. School Leadership

Findings:

- The new administration has made some progress in creating a more rigorous and stimulating learning environment with high expectations for all students, and there is some evidence of new initiatives that focus on teachers, such as teacher of the week, teacher web pages, and a professional study group facilitated by the Principal as well as new schoolwide and after-school programs. However, teacher and student observations indicate that there might be too many new initiatives and/or that these efforts are too dispersed to make a real impact.

- Teachers receive training on the use of summative and benchmark data at grade level meetings, but many teachers appear rather reluctant to make changes to their practice based on data, as evidenced by their observations during teacher forums and the lack of differentiated lessons in the core subjects.

- The school facilitates teacher participation in PD opportunities outside the school and encourages teacher leadership through e-mail notes and personal encouragement, but there is not a systemic approach to build teacher leadership and building capacity.

Recommendations:

- Establish a short list of schoolwide goals and ensure the development of a clear and shared vision that is embraced by the entire school community, and together take action to meet them.

- Review the current instructional schedule to develop a schoolwide approach to teacher meetings. These meetings should include data analysis to inform instruction and observations in classrooms identified as lab sites. Facilitate collaboration, reflection, and evaluation of teacher practice as members of a professional learning community committed to high student achievement. Make these structures inclusive of the feeder school to establish continuity and develop a stronger literacy and numeracy foundation in all children.

- Review the current approach to PD to foster strategic teacher collaborations and shared leadership to improve instructional practices and professional growth.

IV. Infrastructure for Student Success

Findings:

- Students identified as low-performing and students with disabilities appear to be in a cycle of low-expectations and consequently low-level academic work. In some instances, these students are in homogeneous groups for most of the day and are not allowed to participate in field trips, informal learning at the Science Museum, or leadership programs, among others. This is one of the root causes of the continued low performance of the school.

- The school was designed as an open classroom, or classrooms without walls. Students find this layout noisy and distracting and would welcome the addition of walls. On the other hand,

teachers who have been in the school over a number of years and are used to this structure appear to favor this open model. These teachers see the open classrooms as creating a "family" environment where adults can communicate with each other at all times. They also indicated that students sometimes hear the same lesson two or three times, from overhearing it from another class, but they see it as reinforcement and not as a distraction.

- Teachers meet regularly in grade level meetings, sometimes facilitated by either the coaches or the administration who lead conversation around data. Unfortunately, the majority of the teachers do not use these data when planning their lessons, and only two or three teachers appear to collaborate informally in lesson planning. Evidence also indicates that the guidance counselor, social worker, and specialists such as the school psychologist, are not a regular part of these meetings.

- The school has a phone system to inform parents of school activities and meetings, and the new administration is encouraging teachers to call parents to give them updates on good behavior and progress. Despite these efforts, students report that only some teachers meet with them periodically to discuss their progress. A few students shared their personal goals, but in general individual student performance is only shared with them and families at mandated times during the year.

Recommendations:

- The school should group students heterogeneously, including at the middle school level. All teachers should set high expectations for students and have all students working in small groups together including those assigned to the "differentiated" period. Teachers should use exemplars, rubrics and differentiated strategies to scaffold student work and enable struggling students to produce standard- level work.

- Ensure that the District's reconstruction plan aimed at building standard classrooms with walls is carried out according to schedule (school year 2011-12).

- Engage all teachers in structured collaborations, i.e., small cross-grade, cross-discipline, and cross-program groups around student needs to promote shared leadership and to increase teacher accountability regarding student achievement.

- Expand effort to communicate high expectations to students and parents and further their engagement in student learning. Ensure that lesson and unit objectives become learning objectives that students understand and can articulate to their parents.

V. Collection, Analysis, and Utilization of Data

Findings:

- In general, teachers and the new administration comply with District and school mandates regarding summative assessments and meet deadlines, but most teachers do not use data when planning their lessons, as evidenced by the fact that teacher do not modify their lessons to meet the needs of particular groups of students and instead rely on implementing the lessons provided in the reading program adopted by the District.

- The Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) is populated with information and data from the District, but it appears that the school has paid limited attention to incorporating the data and making the CEP a working document that drives schoolwide goals, PD, and parent outreach and involvement.

Recommendations:

- Integrate the ongoing use of data from formative and summative assessments into the culture of the school. The school leaders and teachers should become familiar with the value of data and comfortable in making use of them for instructional purposes. In addition to grade level meetings, organize collaborative teacher teams across grades and subjects to provide faculty the opportunity to work on specific targeted groups and specific academic targets.

- Review the CEP to include a short list of schoolwide goals with measurable objectives to guide the work of faculty, students, and administration. Ensure that the action plan is reviewed at the School Based Management Team (SBMT) monthly meetings to make adjustments as necessary towards meeting annual goals.

VI. Professional Development

Findings:

- The school supports PD and facilitates the participation of teachers in opportunities offered by the District. The Principal is currently facilitating a professional study group attended by a small group of teachers, but much more needs to be done in this area to make an impact on student learning.

- There is limited evidence regarding how the school administration evaluates whether teachers implement what they learn at off-site trainings and how well they are implementing these new learnings, methodologies, and/or techniques. The evaluation seems to be based mainly on teacher satisfaction with the training.

Recommendations:

- Review the current schedule and use of grade level meetings to engage teachers in structured professional collaborations focused on improved student learning. Provide teachers with PD in differentiated instruction, data analysis to inform instruction, and/or formative assessment.

- Ensure that the school administration proactively and strategically uses classroom observations and analysis of student work to provide critical, constructive feedback to teachers so that lessons are rigorous and relevant.

VII. District Support

Finding:

- The technology infrastructure of the school is at times unreliable and lacks adequate bandwidth.

Recommendations:

- Improve and expand the school technology infrastructure, and provide teachers with corresponding PD.

- Provide District support in the implementation of the Joint Intervention Team's (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</u>, <u>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.

PS 59, the Dr. Charles R. Drew Science Magnet, with the support of the District, should develop and implement a new plan in order to accelerate the learning of all students toward meeting and/or exceeding State Standards. This plan should include significant staff and organizational changes, involve all the members of the school community, and address the following:

- **Defining Clear And High Expectations**
  Teachers need to use student-centered examples in illustrating specific benchmarks when setting learning goals for students. A long term goal of high expectations should be set by showing students as early as grade 4 what they need to accomplish in high school. To that end, it is recommended that teachers and students review work produced by academically successful grade 9 and 10 students, and jointly make decisions on the exemplars that illustrate this long-term goal. Once this goal is clearly understood, the work of the committee, the SBMT and the entire faculty is to set up short-term goals that will establish a clear road map for how to prepare their students for success in high schools. It is also proposed that these samples be selected from high schools within Buffalo to build a closer emotionally/socially achievable goal rather than selected samples from other sources that students may perceive as a far less realistic goal.

  In order to accomplish this, the school should consider establishing the following committees:
  - *The PS 59 High Expectations Committee:* A District representative collects 20-30 samples from different high schools of student work that exemplifies work exceeding the standards. This representative in collaboration with the school administration identifies teachers (five-six) who have demonstrated commitment to high expectations through the delivery of rigorous instruction and invites them and student representatives from grades 4-8 to form the PS *59 High School/High Expectations Committee* that will select a few exemplars to illustrate their own expectations. Based on these exemplars, the committee should address the following essential question:

What do we need to do so that all students leave grade 8 ready to produce high school work of comparable or even higher quality?

- Review discipline issues and use PBIS to set a measurable objective for the school year.
- Review homework assignments and set a measurable objective.
- Review reading assignments and set a measurable objective.
- Discuss what needs to improve in class, including during differentiated instruction and academic support periods, to optimize instructional learning time and set a measurable objective.
- Discuss student leadership and enrichment opportunities during the school day and after school and set a measurable goal.

➢ *The Early Grades High Expectations Committee* - A similar committee should be formed to set up high expectations for the earlier grades in a way that is illustrative to younger children. It is recommended that this committee include members of the feeder school, PS 90.

- **Review CEP To Reflect Schoolwide Goal And Objectives**

  Representatives of the *PS 59 High School/High Expectations Committee and the Early Grades High Expectations Committee* meet with the SBMT, i.e. (school leader, teacher union representative/s, parent representatives, and representatives of community partners) to ensure that the recommendations and objectives developed by the Committees are incorporated into the school's annual plan. Together, the team amends the action plan and sets a timeline for the specific tasks and activities that will need to take place in order to meet the schoolwide goal and objectives.

  The Principal should take responsibility for the implementation of this amended plan. The Principal should also ensure that the SBMT and the two *High Expectations Committees* meet regularly, even weekly, to evaluate the impact of the actions taken continually and adjust as needed towards accomplishing the goal.

- **Teacher Expectations And Teacher Accountability**

  The Principal with the support of the District should present the schoolwide goals and objectives to the faculty, with follow-up individual meetings to establish goals and expectations for each teacher. The Principal should conduct focused walkthroughs and evaluations to document how teachers are responding to the action plan and take decisive steps in cases where teachers are not meeting set expectations.

- **District Support And Professional Development**

  The District should provide the necessary support to the school leaders, teachers, parents and students toward meeting the schoolwide goal. The District should;

  ➢ Provide the school leaders with coaching and training in the use of data during informal and informal observations.
  ➢ Review the school schedule to ensure that there is no loss of instructional time.
  ➢ Review the school schedule to add extra time for a lab site that facilitates teacher observation in effective classrooms with follow up meetings by expert coaches.
  ➢ Support the overall implementation of the Restructuring plan.