

NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Office of Accountability

SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW REPORT

BEDS Code/DBN:	500-402060018
District Name:	East Ramapo Central School District
School Name:	Ramapo High School
School Address:	400 Viola Road, Spring Valley, NY 10977
Principal:	Jean Fields
Accountability Phase/Category:	Improvement (year 1) Comprehensive
Area(s) of Identification:	English Language Arts- All Students; Black Students; Hispanic Students; Students with Disabilities; English Language Learners; and Economically Disadvantaged Students Mathematics- All Students; Black Students; Hispanic Students; Students with Disabilities; English Language Learners; and Economically Disadvantaged Students
Dates of On-site Review (if applicable):	January 18-19, 2011

PART 1: MISSION STATEMENT

“Ramapo High School has as its mission, to educate all students for the future by challenging each individual to:

Achieve,
Continuously learn, and
Act with purpose and compassion.

The belief is that:

All students can learn,
An open line of communication between school and community is essential to the mission of the school and [that]
The school is a major force in the elimination of the achievement gap.”

PART 2: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND UTILIZATION OF DATA

FINDINGS:

- Although there is evidence of multiple data sources available to school personnel, not all teachers use the data sources to promote maximum growth in student achievement.
- No program or supports, such as credit recovery, are available to assist students who are not on track for graduation.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Professional development (PD) opportunities for staff on the effective use of data and how to use data results to maximize student achievement should be expanded. PD should include extensive work on how to use data to form flexible instructional groups to meet specific student needs. Teachers should be encouraged to use data to systematically inform their teaching practice and to plan instruction.
- Intervention for struggling students should be a priority. Additional support should be provided for those students who are at-risk of not graduating and dropping out of high school.

II. TEACHING AND LEARNING

FINDINGS:

- Interdisciplinary planning time and collaboration among all teachers, including special education and English as a second language (ESL) teachers, was not evident.
- Teachers with special education certification are expected to teach content area subjects. Not enough of these teachers are trained in the content areas (mathematics, physical and social sciences, English, etc.) as well as methodologies that can be used with students with disabilities and ELLs. As a result, a lack of effective instructional practice was observed in some classrooms.
- There is a need for alternative programs to ensure that appropriate differentiation in curriculum and instruction are available to those students with exceptional needs, and other students who would benefit from small group instruction.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School leaders should create a flexible common planning schedule in which teachers can meet across grade levels and content level. Protocols and expectations for the use of this time should be established.
- PD days should be planned for and implemented around the content areas, as well as methodologies to be used with ELLs and students with disabilities. Teaching assistants should also be trained in the content areas and instructional methodologies to increase their expertise when working with students. The co-teaching model should also be considered in supporting students with disabilities and ELLs in the learning process.
- Explore the many alternative programs available, such as Plato, credit recovery programs, General Education Development Program, Cooperative Technical Education, etc., to meet the needs of students who would otherwise not graduate on time and implement those elements that would benefit students.

III. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

FINDINGS:

- Sample units in ELA and mathematics textbooks are not aligned with the New York State (NYS) Learning Standards.
- Not enough time is set aside for schoolwide instructional planning and monitoring of student progress towards improvement targets during the school year.
- Despite the schools failure to make AYP under the school's prior organizational structure, several teachers and students stated that there is a need for the small learning communities (SLCs) that were discontinued last year. In the SLC organizational structure, teachers, administrators and school support staff were able to focus on a smaller number of students, especially students, who were absent, chronically late or having academic problems. Students were provided with needed services in a comprehensive manner. Some students indicated that they experienced a greater sense of affiliation and safety under the SLC structure.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School administrators should provide clear directions and PD to teachers on the effective use of aligning the units of instruction with the NYS Learning Standards. School administrators should ensure that instructional practices reflect this alignment during formal and/or informal observations of instructional staff. In addition, workshops on choosing sample textbook units that are aligned with the State standards should be conducted.
- The administrative staff should ensure that enough time is set aside for instructional planning, and should encourage the use of data that is available at the school.
- The school should form an ad-hoc committee of administrators, teachers, parents and students to examine the usefulness of SLCs or other alternative models and how to best use these organizational structures to provide the necessary supports to improve the academic performance of students of at-risk students.

IV. INFRASTRUCTURE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

FINDINGS:

- Based on interviews with teachers and administrators, the team concludes that disciplinary issues are more difficult for school personnel when problems generated outside of the school (afterschool/weekend/neighborhoods) are brought into the school by students.
- High expectations and academic rigor were evident in some, but not all classes. In some classes, students were distracted and or engaged in low-level work. Observed lessons did not encourage student-to-student interaction and, therefore, students did not see the need to actively participate in classroom activities. Some lessons lacked rigor and were below grade level. In addition, there was no evidence of essential questions, and goals for units and end of unit expectations were unclear.

- Although administrators and teachers spoke about grouping students and differentiation of instruction, the team observed little use of grouping strategies or differentiated instruction.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- More community involvement/resources should be encouraged and brought into the school. A committee should be formed to advise the administrative team of appropriate community agencies and business entities that could be housed at the school and/or provide needed services and resources. Through this collaboration, student internships and volunteerism could be encouraged and fostered.
- The administrative team should ensure that teachers maintain a high level of rigor in the presentation of lessons and expectations for student work. Walkthroughs and formal and informal observations should be used by administrators to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction and to identify methodologies and skills that could be used to enhance instruction for all students.
- The school should provide ongoing, rigorous, sustained PD that focuses on varied teaching strategies to address the needs of all students. The plan should include a strong focus on differentiated instruction based on disaggregated data for all subgroups. School leaders should assess the impact of all PD on improvements made in classroom instruction.

V. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FINDINGS:

- The administrative team is supportive of PD for all staff members. However, a process is needed to ensure that the PD offerings are tailored to individual teacher needs to effectively support academic changes.
- There is no evidence of regular team planning meetings, and only one hour per month is allotted for all-staff meetings.
- The District Teacher Center was of great benefit to new and seasoned teachers but will be closed at the end of February 2011.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- A survey should be conducted to ascertain the PD needs of teachers. An evaluation process to monitor the effectiveness of the PD should also be developed.
- The administrative team should ensure that time is set aside for team planning in the content areas, as well as opportunities for interdisciplinary planning, including but not limited to ELA and mathematics.

- In the absence of the Teacher Center, the District should create a plan to provide mentoring support to new and seasoned teachers.

VI. FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

FINDING:

- The library/media center is adequately stocked and maintained. Students and teachers reported that the library/media center would be better used if the librarian had more time to assist students and teachers with pedagogical pursuits rather than filing and other clerical activities.

RECOMMENDATION:

- The administrative team should explore ways of providing additional help for the librarian, e.g., using parent or student volunteers to enable her to give students individual assistance with school projects and academics.

PART 3: CONCLUDING STATEMENT

The Principal and her staff along with District representatives are to be commended for their assistance throughout the review. During the visit, the students were well behaved and the hallways were orderly.

The District has invested resources in the collection and analysis of data. The school should continue to analyze schoolwide data and grade level student performance trend data to assess the effectiveness of current educational programs, identify priorities and inform midcourse corrections.

School leadership should provide training in the delivery of differentiated instruction. Teachers should be trained in the collection and analysis of data to inform differentiated instruction. In addition, training should be provided for flexible grouping that is implemented through the use of ongoing assessment. Teachers should align the content, product and process of their instruction to address the individual needs of students.

School administrators should require teachers to commit to the implementation of the training, monitor for implementation, and hold teachers accountable by keeping accurate documentation. They should conduct walkthroughs and informal observations that target newly learned strategies and pedagogy. Additionally, a mechanism for ongoing teacher feedback should be created to ensure that the PD plan is flexible and can be adjusted to meet the changing needs of teachers and students.

School administrators should continue to explore the possibilities of some format of smaller learning communities and where possible implement a version that would enhance student achievement.

The findings and recommendations noted in this report are intended to guide the school's inquiry, planning and discussion for the 2010-11 school year and for the development of the Comprehensive Educational Plan for the 2011-12 school year. This plan should also form an overall framework for the many initiatives that are currently in place to assure greater coordination between and among the various programs at this school.