

NYSED/NYCDOE JOINT INTERVENTION TEAM REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

BEDS Code/DBN:	27Q226
School Name:	Virgil I. Grissom Middle School
School Address:	121-10 Rockaway Blvd. Queens, NY 11420
Principal:	Rushell White
Restructuring Phase/Category:	Restructuring Advanced Focused
Area(s) of Identification:	English Language Arts - Black Students; Students with Disabilities; English Language Learners
Dates of On-site Diagnostic Review:	April 5 – 6, 2011

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

A. Community and School Background

MS 226 Virgil I. Grissom Middle School serves 1,459 students in grades 6 through 8. The school enrollment is 41 percent Black, 32 percent Asian, 25 percent Hispanic, one percent White, and one percent American Indian students. Of these students, four percent are English language learners (ELLs) and 19 percent are students with disabilities.

The administrative team includes the Principal, four Assistant Principals (APs) and one Teacher Center (TC) teacher. The Principal is serving in her first year, and the APs have served between ten to five years. This is reflective of a low turnover rate among administrators.

There are 85 teachers on staff , including four new teachers, four teachers at the school for one year or less and nine teachers at the school for between one and three years. Of these teachers, 92 percent are highly qualified. Teacher turnover rate is 17 percent.

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	
-	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.	✓
-	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)	✓

Positive or Negative Indicator (+/-)	School Performance Indicators	✓
	for 2007-08 and 2008-09 indicate an increase in the achievement gap between identified subgroups and the <i>All Students</i> subgroup in one or more identified subject/area(s).	
	NYCDOE Quantitative and Qualitative Performance Measures	
-	2009-10 NYC Progress Report Grade of C	✓
+	2009-10 NYC Quality Review Score of Proficient	✓

B. School Strengths

- Student suspensions have decreased because of clear expectations and consequences.
- The Principal has increased parental involvement through a variety of activities, including an August community barbecue that attracted 600 parents, students and community members.

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:

- Oversight and supervision of English Language Arts (ELA) over time has been inadequate and the documentation provided contained no evidence of a written ELA curriculum. The Principal and AP in charge of ELA stated that the school is working on an ELA curriculum for implementation in September 2011.
- There was no evidence of a scope and sequence or pacing calendars for ELA provided in the documentation given to the team.
- There was no evidence of the delineation of important concepts or grade-to-grade alignment for ELA.

Recommendations:

- The Network should work with the school on the development of curriculum in all core areas and ensure the curriculum is aligned with the current New York State (NYS) Learning Standards. Curriculum should be aligned to the new NYS Common Core Learning Standards in ELA and literacy by 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 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 the individual student mastery and progress.

Walkthroughs and formal evaluations should include how well the teacher knows and implements the curriculum for the subject being taught.

- School leaders, in collaboration with the ELA teachers, should develop a scope and sequence and pacing calendar to accompany the new curriculum. These efforts should be completed during the summer and implemented in September. Teachers should receive PD on implementing the new ELA curriculum so that they are prepared to provide quality instruction for all students from the start of the new school year.
- School leaders should ensure that the new ELA curriculum is aligned from grade to grade. In addition, important concepts should be fully delineated in the ELA curriculum. Upon completion of the ELA curriculum, school leaders should ensure that instructional resources are aligned with the NYS standards.

II. Teaching and Learning

Findings:

- Most teachers observed used a didactic approach and whole group instruction. Teachers used a lesson plan format devised by the school that does not include specific accommodations for ELLs or the large number of students with disabilities. Classroom libraries did not reflect the needs of the students.
- The pacing in most ELA classes was weak. Teachers did not maximize instructional time and did not complete or summarize the planned lessons. Students in most classes were not given time to self-reflect on their learning.
- Discipline during class and passing time was often poor, and teachers did not treat late arrival to class consistently. School safety officers (SSOs), deans and APs do not patrol stairways to eliminate loiterers and, in turn, maximize instructional learning time.
- Most teachers did not refer to lesson objectives during the ELA lessons. The objectives in the day's plan and written on the board were neither emphasized by the teachers nor acknowledged or understood by the students.
- Students were not engaged in meaningful activities in ELA classes for the majority of the allotted time. As a result, learning opportunities were lost.
- Expectations for students were too low. For example, teachers seldom required students, in the 79 classes observed, to do extended writing or to draw conclusions as part of their assignments.
- Questioning strategies were poor in ELA classes. Observations revealed that most teachers asked short answer, factual recall questions and frequently repeated answers or answered their own questions.
- Although teachers grouped students to address their diverse needs, only 30 percent of the teachers used effective strategies that addressed the learning needs of the students in ELA classes.

- Technology was not available to all students, thereby limiting students' ability to learn skills necessary to prepare them for high school, college and careers. There were few computers in the ELA classes and the school has only three SMART Boards in classrooms.

Recommendations:

- Teachers should use a variety of instructional strategies in ELA to address the needs of all student subgroups instead of using direct instruction. Teachers should receive PD from the AP in charge of ELA, and the Network to assist them in planning learning strategies appropriate for all subgroups. The AP in charge of students with disabilities should conduct PD sessions on ELA strategies for students with learning disabilities. The AP in charge of ELA should review each class library, and with the help of the school librarian, update materials and develop a system for distribution to the students. The school leaders should closely monitor the instruction in classes to ensure that teachers are using a variety of strategies that are appropriate for students with various learning modalities.
- ELA teachers should be cognizant of the time spent on each part of their lesson plans and adhere to the allocated time. Teachers should allow time in each lesson for students to self-reflect or write reflections in their notebooks. The AP for ELA should model lessons and provide PD for the ELA teachers as well as the teachers of students with disabilities who provide ELA instruction. In addition, school leaders should focus on pacing and summarizing during their daily informal observations and formal observations.
- Teachers should consistently enforce the lateness policy of the school and have students sign in if late and forward the late list to deans. The deans should administer appropriate consequences for lateness and contact parents in order to address this problem. School leaders should ensure that SSOs regularly patrol the staircases and see that students arrive in class on time. School leaders should be visible at transition times and help to ensure that procedures and protocols are consistently implemented to avoid any loss of instructional time.
- Teachers should make lesson objectives explicit to ensure students understand the framework of the daily lesson and how the lesson relates and unifies the curriculum. School leaders should support this initiative and monitor that students are taking ownership of their learning.
- Teachers should assign specific roles to students working in groups, with clearly established expectations and rules that should be adhered to in group work. Teachers should consistently train and use monitors to efficiently distribute and collect materials. The school leaders should conduct formal observations to ensure that instructional time is being maximized in all lessons.
- School leaders, with support of the Network, should provide PD particularly targeted for the ELA teachers, but also for other content area teachers, aimed at developing student ability to complete extended pieces of writing and other higher order writing skills. School leaders should make expectations clear as to how teachers should seek to develop student writing skills across other subject areas. Teachers should incorporate the strategies outlined in PD into their instruction, and school leaders, particularly the AP responsible for ELA, should monitor lessons and evaluate the impact of the PD on improving student achievement in ELA.
- School leaders should include the Network in planning PD in all subject areas on questioning techniques. Teachers should be required to include higher level thinking questions in their planning that is then delivered in the classroom. Teachers who use good questioning techniques

should be identified and other teachers should observe them in order to improve their own techniques. The AP in charge of ELA should conduct frequent walkthroughs to ensure that teachers ask appropriate higher level questions that challenge students and extend their learning.

- ELA teachers should prepare materials that address the needs of students by subgroup. Teachers should prepare materials with different levels of expectation and difficulty and use assessments during the lesson to determine the need for further small group instruction. Teachers should include in their lesson plan activities on different instructional levels. The AP in charge of ELA should include comments on differentiation in his documentation for informal observations, and these documents should include specific recommendations to assist teachers in preparing lessons that meet the needs of all student subgroups.
- School leaders should convene a technology committee, with Network support, to address the technology needs of the school. Teachers should receive PD in order to become proficient in using the software and hardware that the school currently has.

III. School Leadership

Findings:

- Members of the School Leadership Team (SLT) were unable to articulate the goals of the Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP). Additionally, the CEP goals did not address the identified needs of the identified subgroups.
- The school schedule does not provide adequate common planning time for teachers. All teachers have a common planning period during the last period twice per month, but there is no scheduled common planning period for departments or grades, and only one common planning period per week for each academy. The current schedule does not enable teachers who teach ELA, general education and students with disabilities to discuss teaching strategies, plan collaboratively and share student assessment data.
- School leadership has not ensured that there have been sufficient resources in the key content area of ELA to support teaching and learning adequately. ELA classes did not have sufficient books or classroom libraries. Students were observed sharing novels and texts in some classes. A review of classroom libraries revealed that these libraries did not reflect the needs of ELLs or students with disabilities. There was a shortage of multi-cultural selections as well. The school library did not have a sufficient collection of native language books for the ELLs.
- Instructional leadership provided by the APs responsible for students with disabilities and ELA is ineffective and does not bring about improvement in teaching and learning. The recommendations for improvement written in observations do not give teachers specific suggestions to improve their pedagogy and, as a result, little changes in the quality of instruction.

Recommendations:

- The Principal, with the support of the Network, should work with the SLT in setting challenging and accurate school goals that reflect the areas of academic performance that are priorities for the school to address. Over time, the SLT should be consistently involved in the goal setting process so that they are aware of and updated on the academic weaknesses of the school. The Network

should ensure, through ongoing training and visits, that the SLT members continue to be well informed and are active participants in the decision-making processes.

- School leaders should revise the master schedule to provide common planning periods for teachers in each department so that teachers can plan together, discuss instructional strategies, create common assessments and analyze student data to inform instruction. School leaders should ensure that the agreed outcomes make a difference to teaching, learning and student achievement in the classroom.
- The AP in charge of ELA should conduct an audit of novels and textbooks. Where there are deficits, the Principal should reallocate funds or find additional funds to ensure that each student has a novel or textbook to use at all times. Secondly, this AP should review the class libraries in each ELA class to determine if books meet the needs of all students, especially ELLs and students with disabilities. School leaders should review the school library book collection and order books in students' native languages as well as dictionaries and magazines in these languages.
- The Principal should develop a formal observation schedule for the APs to ensure that all teachers are observed in a timely manner. The Principal should monitor to ensure that these observations are being conducted according to this schedule and that the observations reports include high quality recommendations for improvement. The Principal should frequently conduct formal observations herself with a focus on ELA teachers and teachers of students with disabilities.

The Principal should meet with the AP in charge of students with disabilities and develop a strategy for the timely completion of the required annual reviews. The Principal should enlist the assistance of the Network person in charge of students with disabilities to obtain extra staff to conduct these reviews in the near future. Additionally, the AP responsible for attendance should work with the designated Pupil Personnel Team member to close the open attendance cases.

IV. Infrastructure for Student Success

Findings:

- Missing ceiling tiles and exposed wiring in a hallway leading to a suite of classrooms create a potentially dangerous situation for students and staff.
- There are no guidance group-counseling sessions scheduled for specific issues such as bereavement or home emergencies. The AP in charge of student personnel staff stated that she was unaware that the school was required to have a crisis intervention team. There was no evidence of a calendar for the Guidance Department that indicated monthly responsibilities and activities, and the school's social worker is assigned to the school only one day per week despite a student population of 1,459 students.
- There was no evidence of career planning for students in grades 6 and 7. The only career planning for grade 8 is in conjunction with the high school application process.
- There is no formal policy or schedule for articulation between classroom teachers and support staff, and pupil personnel staff are not part of the twice-monthly teacher common planning times.
- The school does not have a dedicated science laboratory.

- The school does not use the services of the DOE translation unit to provide newsletters and other correspondence in all languages spoken in the school community. Despite the fact that 32 percent of the school's population is Asian, only report cards and progress reports are sent home in languages spoken by these families. This limits some parents' ability to keep abreast of student progress and school activities.

Recommendations:

- The school should relocate, as a matter of urgency, students and staff working in the potentially dangerous part of the school to another area of the building and request that the DOE replace the tiles and wires in order to provide a safe learning environment for students and staff.
- The Guidance Department should have a written policy in place to handle home emergencies and bereavement issues in order to meet the needs of students and families. The school should create a crisis intervention team. The Guidance Department should create a monthly calendar that lists responsibilities and activities for each of the counselors. The Principal should adjust the budget so that there is a full-time social worker in the school and regularly monitor the quality of services provided.
- A comprehensive three-year plan that focuses on career planning for all students should be implemented and its effectiveness closely monitored and evaluated. A transition plan should be in place for all 15-year-old students with disabilities.
- Support staff should be included in the regularly scheduled bi-weekly common planning time that teachers have in their schedules. School leaders should attend these meetings and assess the impact of agreed outcomes on improving students' academic and social development.
- Network facilities representatives should work with the school to identify appropriate space to accommodate science laboratories.
- The school should have all documents translated for parents and should use the services of the translation unit for document translations, as well as provide appropriate translation at all school informational meetings.

V. Collection, Analysis, and Utilization of Data

Findings:

- The school leaders and teachers are not rigorously analyzing all of the available data to identify precisely what aspects of ELA need to be the focus of improvement in instruction and student achievement. A comprehensive plan to strengthen ELA instruction and address shortcomings for all students is not in place. The school lacks a sense of urgency to bring about improvement and meaningful change in student achievement in ELA.
- A plan to strengthen ELA instruction for all students has not occurred and the school has yet to develop a full understanding of the academic issues impacting student performance and achievement.

- Data that is collected is not consistently used to guide and inform instruction for all student subgroups.
- Student performance data is not always used to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions or school educational programs. Data is not consistently being used to target and develop high quality ELA instructional supports and strategies for all students.

Recommendations:

- The Network should provide PD to school leaders, ELA teachers, and the ELA Inquiry team members in the effective use of data to inform the school's continuous improvement planning. The PD that the Network provides should go beyond the analysis of standardized testing so that all parties can learn how to disaggregate data and diagnose the learning needs of all students so that instruction is directly informed. All school staff should be taught how to use data to identify trends and priorities in evaluating the school program. These priorities should become the ELA goals and incorporated into the CEP. School leaders should evaluate the impact on classroom practice and on student learning and achievement.
- The school should take advantage of PD offerings by the Network. PD regarding the use of the DOE student data systems, such as Achievement Reporting and Innovation System (ARIS) and the Instructional Targeted Assessments (ITA), should be provided to the staff. Teachers should engage in data use in lesson planning to differentiate their instruction and target the needs of the identified subgroups. School leaders should monitor the use of data in planning daily lessons and its effectiveness within the classroom.
- The school leaders should call on the Network to provide ongoing PD to all staff on how data can be used to drive and inform instruction. School leaders should review teachers' data binders, lesson plans and student portfolios in order to provide quality feedback and next steps. The school leaders should hold regular meetings with all of the ELA teachers to monitor and evaluate the progress and achievement of students in their classrooms. The AP who oversees the ELA department should be charged with the responsibility of conducting an analysis of all ELA data and monitoring how this data is being used in driving the instruction within the classroom.
- The school should seek the support of the Network to train leaders and teachers to effectively analyze and use data to drive instructional planning. The school should conduct pre- and post-testing of students to reevaluate the effectiveness of Academic Intervention Services (AIS), and all other current interventions and supplemental programming. Specific action plans should be developed to be carried out at the department, classroom and academy level to address low student achievement in ELA. Action plans should include measurable improvement targets. The school leaders should conduct frequent monitoring of improvement initiatives to determine their effectiveness.

VI. Professional Development

Findings:

- PD opportunities are not aligned with the CEP goals or the identified ELA subgroup.
- Most of the PD offerings occur during teachers' lunch periods and attendance is voluntary. Not all teachers who need PD attend these sessions, thereby limiting their ability to improve their

techniques and strategies. The PD provided both internally and externally has not been sufficiently focused on improving teachers' ELA techniques and has not resulted in accelerated student learning.

- Teachers only have two common planning periods, by academy, per month. Members of the support staff are not part of the common planning periods. This reduces the school's ability to use the skills and expertise of all staff effectively.
- The AP responsible for students with disabilities and ELLs stated that the teachers of ELLs and students with disabilities did not attend any Network PD sessions.

Recommendations:

- PD opportunities should be aligned with the identified ELA subgroup deficiencies. The school leader should work with the Network Leaders and the SLT to develop a CEP that will include a comprehensive PD plan to address the identified accountability area. In addition, school leaders should work together with the TC teacher to offer PD opportunities that are aligned with the CEP goals.
- PD should be offered at a time when teachers who need additional training can attend. The Principal should arrange coverage or use substitutes so that teachers can attend in-school and outside PD sessions to inform their instructional practice. School leaders should work with the Network and TC Coordinator to identify effective ELA instructional strategies that have resulted in accelerated student learning. A revised comprehensive PD plan should be implemented that ensures activities are focused on improving teachers' ELA skills, instructional strategies and student achievement. School leaders should make clear their expectations and make this a focus of formal and informal observations.
- Every effort should be made to improve the quality of the delivery of instruction. Sufficient time should be scheduled for daily common planning periods. The school leader should work with the APs who supervise each of the academies to restructure teachers' schedules to include additional common planning periods. Support staff should be included in common planning time so that everyone who interacts with a student can be included in discussions about that student.
- All teachers should have the opportunity to regularly attend PD sessions that are offered by the Network. The school leader should work with the Network and the AP responsible for students with disabilities and ELLs to plan PD for ELLs and students with disabilities teachers. Regular on-going PD opportunities for teachers of ELLs and students with disabilities should be included in the PD calendar of activities offered to staff.

V. Network Support

Findings:

- The Network has not provided appropriate academic support for the school, as indicated by the Network's approval of the CEP goals even though the goals did not adequately address the identified area and subgroups. The Network has not provided sufficient PD in ELA for teachers of students with disabilities or general education.

- Interviews indicated that Network staff had only visited the school once during this school year. The Network has not provided adequate guidance to support the school in its efforts to accelerate the learning in ELA for students with disabilities and ELLs.

Recommendations:

- The Network Leader should review the school CEP goals to ensure that the CEP addresses the ELA needs identified on the State’s Accountability Overview Report. The Network should assist the SLT in creating CEP goals that address the needs of the student subgroups. The Network should closely monitor the school’s progress towards its goals and provide strategic interventions if progress is not on track. Additionally, the Network should create PD sessions for the school’s ELA teachers that focus on the needs of students with disabilities, ELLs and Level 1 and Level 2 students so that teachers can improve their pedagogy and accelerate student learning.
- Network personnel should visit the school frequently and provide support for the AP in charge of students with disabilities and ELLs so that school leaders receive training they can use to work with their teachers to improve ELA instruction and, in turn, improve student-learning outcomes.
- The Network should support the school in the implementation of the Joint Intervention Team’s (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.

- The school leaders should immediately focus on completing the writing of the ELA curriculum and ensure that it is implemented with fidelity across the school.
- The AP in charge of ELA must be able to properly supervise the ELA teachers, make high quality recommendations for improvement, and provide PD to inform teachers’ practice.

- The AP in charge of students with disabilities and ELLs must be capable of supervising the teachers and providing PD to improve their instructional delivery.
- A rigorous observation schedule should be instituted to ensure that ELA teachers are effective.
- The school leader should ensure that the school's revised PD plan focuses on ELA instruction with an emphasis on students with disabilities and ELLs.
- The school leader should ensure that the required three-year comprehensive guidance plan is implemented and its effectiveness closely monitored.
- The school leader should be provided with a mentor from the Network to help address the many issues confronting the school.
- The school leader should make greater use of Network services to assist in the operation of the school.