

NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Office of Accountability

Differentiated Accountability - School Quality Review (SQR)

SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW REPORT

BEDS Code:	580212060007
District Name:	Longwood Central School District
School Name:	Longwood Middle School
School Address:	41 Yaphank-Middle Island Road, Middle Island, NY 11953
Principal:	Lisa Mato
Accountability Phase/Category:	Improvement (year 1) - Focused English Language Arts - African American Students, Students with Disabilities and Economically Disadvantaged Students
Area of Identification:	
Dates of On-site Review:	January 5, 9, 11, 12 and 18, 2012

PART 1: MISSION STATEMENT

“The mission of the Longwood Middle School is “to enable all students to master those skills for success in society.”

PART 2: SCHOOL STRENGTHS

The school is a well-maintained, clean, safe, secure and caring place for students, teachers, administrators, and staff. Opportunities are available for the staff to become more proficient in their work. Teachers, support staff, and school leadership serve as great resources toward the success of this middle level program.

PART 3: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND UTILIZATION OF DATA

FINDINGS:

- A mechanism for teachers to integrate data analysis results into an action plan that informs instruction is not evident within the general education setting.
- Data used by teachers is limited to English language arts (ELA) scores and Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) reports within general education settings. Ongoing formative assessments and progress monitoring are not consistently used as elements of instruction.

- Teacher-made, authentic, formative assessments for the purpose of progress monitoring were lacking, particularly for the general education program.
- An analysis of the subgroup data from the 2011 administration of the grade 4 and grade 5 ELA assessments revealed that a large number of students who scored less than proficient on these assessments appeared in multiple subgroups.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Measurable goals should be established to evaluate student performance and progress toward proficiency. A process should be developed for teachers to integrate the data analysis results into an action plan that informs instruction. A timeline should be established for the implementation of a data analysis process. As the District moves towards the use of a Response to Intervention (RTI) software tool to track, document, monitor and manage RTI data, classroom teachers along with the school-based Inquiry Team should be able to access and analyze multiple sources of data and use this tool to make instructional decisions.
- The school should expand the development and use of on-going formative assessments and progress monitoring as essential elements of instruction. The assessment profile for students receiving Academic Intervention Services (AIS) should continue to include the benchmark assessment and progress monitoring tools currently in use. The tool's use should be extended from grade 3 through grade 6. A process for using formative assessment data to inform instructional decision-making should be developed and implemented.
- School leadership should place a schoolwide focus on the construction of teacher-made, authentic assessments and provide support for their implementation by utilizing walkthroughs and formal classroom observations.
- School leadership should develop a coordinated plan of action to identify student needs and to ensure students receive services as needed/appropriate.

II. TEACHING AND LEARNING

FINDINGS:

- The balanced literacy curriculum consists of a listing of literacy components that are not used cohesively. The review team identified these components as being too broad to implement with fidelity.
- Lessons are not in alignment with balanced literacy strategies. Evidence of the use of Reading Workshop, Writing Workshop and/or Teachers College formats in classrooms visited during the SQR was minimal. The use of an adaptive, leveled, nonfiction computer-based reading system was evident for the entire student population.
- Little evidence was found that teachers use a high level of rigor in instructional content or questioning. In many of the classes that were visited by the review team, teachers were primarily engaged in teacher-

directed instruction; differentiated instruction was rarely evident; and individual student learning was not monitored.

- Instructional strategies are not specifically matched to student learning styles or needs.
- The District AIS Plan is outdated. The school's selection of instructional content and strategies does not fully support the individualized academic intervention needs of students. The programs and services that students receive are dictated by how these programs and services fit into the master schedule. There is evidence that a significant number of students have not developed the reading fluency and comprehension skills necessary to achieve proficiency on State ELA assessments.
- There was little to no evidence of a clearly articulated instructional plan for meeting the needs of English language learners (ELLs).
- Evidence suggested that an over-dependence on accommodations for students with disabilities may hinder their ability to work independently on everyday instructional tasks.
- The Integrated Co-Teaching Model (ICT) is not implemented as a true ICT experience. There is a lack of evidence that co-teaching and team teaching strategies are conducted with both teachers fully participating in the instructional process.
- The use of questioning techniques to promote higher order thinking skills was not consistently evident in classes that were visited by the review team. Teacher questions were low level, only requiring factual recall. In the majority of classrooms visited by the review team students did not use complex language and often limited their answers to one word responses.
- In almost all classrooms visited by the review team, the lessons were teacher-centered, with little opportunity for student involvement (whether teacher/student or student/student). For the most part, high levels of student engagement were not observed by the review team.
- While the school setting enables the opportunity for true team teaching, many of the lessons consisted of *two* classes focused on *one* teacher, with the second teacher in the background, or in some cases, not present at that lesson. There were varying degrees of student attentiveness. Seating was also varied. In some cases, students sat at their seats in both classrooms while the teacher stood in the front center of the double classroom area. In other instances, some students remained in their classroom seats while the students from the partner class sat on the floor between desk rows. In almost all cases, there were whole-group lessons with no observable differentiation of instruction or activities.
- In classrooms visited by the review team, there was little evidence of the components of a successful lesson. A number of lessons consisted of homework review for the entire lesson period. Many lessons ended with movement to the next activity rather than with closure, and there was no reflection on the key points of the lesson or informal assessment of the learning that took place.
- There was little evidence of students reading books or having literary conversations during the literacy block. Each student is scheduled to meet for reading only once per week with the teacher.

- Students with disabilities in ICT settings are separated from general education classmates during the entire literacy block.
- The school uses Lexiles as measurement in assessment and leveling for readers. This is not consistent with the District initiative to implement a balanced literacy model.
- During the classroom visits, review team members noted a focus on preparation for the mathematics benchmark assessment that was scheduled to take place that week.
- Learning specialists are often directed to focus on test prep rather than targeted interventions based on individual student skill deficits. Due to the large numbers of students in need of AIS as well as the block schedule, students are scheduled to see the learning specialist only one to two times a week.
- Due to budget constraints, students do not have the benefit of extended day/school year activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The District initiative for balanced literacy is being moved forward through dedicated professional development (PD) in the Reading and Writing Workshop models. Leadership has deemed it essential for teachers to implement the model with fidelity and to identify and address the needs of all students through the use of regular formative assessments to inform instruction. Students should have opportunities to build their basic skills as well as stamina and strategies that will facilitate their progress on the continuum of reading levels.
- The school should develop, implement and maintain a mechanism for the provision of on-going PD to ensure the consistent implementation of the balanced literacy program. School leadership should use formal and informal observations to assess the use and impact of research-based strategies for literacy instruction and pair this with frequent conferencing with and among staff. The use of computer-assisted instruction should be based on student need and curtailed for students who would benefit more from direct teacher instruction.
- School leadership should use walkthroughs and formal and informal observations to monitor the consistency of rigor in the delivery of content instruction for all students. Timely feedback should be provided to teachers. Teachers should receive training in the incorporation of differentiated strategies into instruction and be held accountable for its implementation. Teachers should be provided with additional in-class support and PD to enhance the rigor of their questioning techniques and task/performance expectations and promote higher order thinking skills necessary for students to be successful on State assessments. School leadership should ensure a rigorous instructional program with high expectations for all students. Teachers should participate in reviews of the progress of their students on a class and individual level, based on teacher assessment of student learning.
- The use of active learning strategies should be expanded to all content areas and settings. Teacher selection and delivery of instructional strategies should be based on student assessment data and targeted to meet individual student needs.
- School leadership should update the AIS Plan and include elements to address the individualized needs of all students, including the selection of content and instructional strategies. A well-developed system to

identify at-risk students and provide appropriate interventions consistent with a three tiered intervention model should be developed. A targeted continuum of services should be available for all students, especially ELLs and students with disabilities. The Plan should include a component to address the needs of students who cannot read due to a deficiency in decoding skills. The school should implement the AIS plan with fidelity to support unique intervention needs of all struggling students.

- School leadership should develop an action plan to meet the instructional needs of ELLs rooted in researched-based best instructional practices. The District should contact the Regional Bilingual Education and Resource Network (RBE-RN) to assist the school in the identification of areas of ELL program needs and the development of an action plan to meet ELL instructional needs. School leadership should consider the implementation of the walkthrough instrument under construction by RBE-RN to facilitate the identification of areas of need to meet the needs of this subgroup.
- School leadership should provide PD with regard to the use of instructional modifications and accommodations and work with the staff to develop goals that would phase out/eliminate these supports when appropriate. A means to monitor the reliance on these modifications and accommodations should be introduced.
- Lunch-Time Learning Center activities should be replaced with additional opportunities for students to participate in targeted AIS. Given the large percentage of students who are eligible for AIS, and the small number of reading teachers available to provide the service, changes to the schedule, i.e., the introduction of an AIS block with all teachers participating, should be considered to ensure that all students receive intervention based on individual need. Delivery of AIS, i.e., the number of AIS sessions per week and the assignment of an appropriate instructor, should be aligned with student need for intensity of intervention services.
- General and special education staff should receive ongoing PD and other supports to ensure the effective implementation of co-teaching. Regular opportunities should be provided for structured collaborative development and delivery of co-taught lessons.
- PD should be provided in the use of effective strategies to promote critical thinking skills. The overdependence on worksheets, workbook pages, whole class lessons and CLOZE questioning techniques should be replaced with relevant and meaningful experiences that promote application, analysis, and synthesis across curriculum areas. The standard for teacher expectations of student language should include student responses in complex language.
- Lessons should be designed to include high levels of student engagement, as would be evidenced by interactive, dynamic exchanges between and among students and between and among students and their teachers. Lessons should be designed to include questioning and/or activities that foster higher-level, critical thinking.
- School leadership should maximize the opportunities presented by true team teaching by ensuring careful planning and involvement of both teachers simultaneously and incorporation of effective differentiation and flexible grouping instead of taking an “either/or” approach to division of responsibilities. The sharing of plans, materials, and student groups by co-teachers should allow for individual student needs to be met.

- The key points of an effective lesson, i.e., clear teaching point, standards-based objectives, academic vocabulary, assessing for learning, and closure are enumerated in the District Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR). School leadership should ensure that these points are evident in every lesson.
- The literacy block should be restructured to include more time spent in small-group or individual instruction (workshop model) and more time reading independently. Restructuring should include opportunities for much needed student-teacher conferencing. Additionally, the classroom libraries should offer more choices of leveled books in an appropriate range of levels for the class.
- Students should be assessed using multiple measures that provide common language and are aligned with the reading and writing initiatives in the school and District (including the use of Fountas and Pinnell independent and instructional reading levels as opposed to Lexiles derived from other sources).
- Curriculum pacing should be a priority to ensure that key concepts, strategies, and higher order thinking are embedded in the daily teaching and learning. This approach should enable teachers to reduce the focus of instruction on test “prepping,” although students should receive some review of test-taking techniques prior to the assessment.
- Students requiring the most intensive intervention services should be assigned to learning specialists with appropriate frequency to meet the individual needs of these students as opposed to a more narrow focus on test prep.
- Extended day/year programs should become an important part of the strategy for improving student achievement. The school should explore the possibilities of securing outside funding, i.e., from local agencies, to assist in the provision of additional resources.

III. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

FINDINGS:

- Three school leaders provide overall supervision for the instructional program. However, school management concerns, especially scheduling, student discipline, and meetings with parents consume much of their school day. As a result, opportunities to focus on school leadership have been overshadowed.
- The mission statement material included in the collection of evidence binders was outdated.
- Evidence is lacking to indicate how data is used in the school to improve student achievement.
- Evidence suggests that the theme of “All teachers are teachers of ELA” is not consistent with actual practice.
- Numerous programs supported with PD were in place, but no evidence was collected to indicate how they were assessed for their effectiveness.

- Evidence suggests the instructional program is too wide to identify and focus priorities and assess the effectiveness of initiatives on school improvement.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school leadership should conduct an organized review of all programs and accompanying PD to assess their effectiveness. This should include reviewing programs during classroom visits and observations.
- A coordinated plan involving all supervisors should be developed in alignment with the APPR to ensure that all programs and initiatives are being implemented with fidelity. Program implementation and instructional outcomes should be included in discussions at Cabinet level meetings throughout the year.
- The mission statement and related materials should be updated to reflect the current instructional program.
- School leadership and other supervisory staff should model effective use of data to inform instruction. This can be accomplished through the use of staff meetings, team meetings, and Cabinet meetings.
- A conscious effort by school leadership to focus on the theme of “All teachers are teachers of ELA,” including the importance of reading, writing, listening and speaking, should be made a schoolwide initiative. References to the theme should be promoted at staff meetings, department meetings, team meetings and monitored throughout the school year.
- School leadership should be provided with access to PD, i.e., conferences and visits to exemplary school programs, to effect school improvement initiatives and support in their roles as school leaders.
- School leadership should review the instructional program and agree on a focus and priorities for the school year. This plan should include regular “check points” to assess the effectiveness of each initiative and provide opportunities for ongoing readjustments as warranted.

IV. INFRASTRUCTURE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

FINDINGS:

- Inefficient transitions between class periods, delays in starting class, and poor transition between classroom activities reduce time on task. Many classroom interruptions, sometimes by staff members, were observed during the review.
- Limited information is disseminated to students and the school community. Links on the District webpage are generally static.
- Communication between the school and the junior high school and four elementary schools is not structured to promote articulation of the educational program or coordination of District-wide and schoolwide initiatives.

- There was little evidence that the faculty has an adequate understanding of the purpose and various methods of student assessment. When grade four students enter the school, they come with a wealth of data collected by elementary school staff. The review team questioned how the data was used to inform instruction and thus improve student achievement in the middle school. Common assessments are not consistently used for grades K-6.
- Different mathematics programs are used in the elementary schools.
- On two separate occasions, evidence collected during the review indicated that the school's organizational structure did not facilitate personalization of teaching and learning for students and staff.
- Publications and communications are available in both English and Spanish. However, no evidence suggested these documents were available in other languages as well.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Transitions and routine classroom procedures should be revised to maximize instructional time on task. Teachers rather than students moving between classrooms should be considered. All but essential interruptions should be eliminated. Due to the open space design of the school, student groups moving from one area of the building to another should do so quietly.
- The capacity of the school's data system to be utilized as a communication resource should be explored and fully implemented.
- The District should ensure that embedded collaborative opportunities are scheduled to improve communication and articulation among the middle school, junior high school, and elementary schools.
- The use of a common assessment program and student assessment profile that follows students from grades K-6 should be explored i.e., consideration should be given to using the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment for all students K-6 and using DIBELS Next and DAZE as a progress-monitoring measure for AIS and students with disabilities.
- The District should ensure that the Instructional program for ELA is consistent across all four elementary schools and that students arrive at the middle school with a common academic basis.
- Sharing information with faculty and staff regarding current student data and demographics should be done several times during each school year. General education, special education, and teachers of LEP/ELL students should be provided with opportunities to meet throughout the school year to gain a better understanding of the needs of all the students who attend the school. Supervisors should play an active role in these meetings and be aware of the desired organizational structures as they conduct their informal and formal classroom visits and observations.

V. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FINDINGS:

- There is a clear need for increased rigor and student engagement in lessons.
- Teacher perceptions are that there are too many initiatives at one time. A common focus for PD needs to be established.
- Daily formal opportunities exist for teacher collaboration, common planning, and the development of learning communities. However, there was little evidence that this time is used effectively.
- From the Special Education School Improvement Specialist (SEIS) walkthrough it was noted that the following areas need priority attention to improve the academic outcomes for students with disabilities: effective lesson planning; use of an anticipatory set, including standards based learning objectives; utilization of specially designed formative assessment strategies; exposure to and engagement with higher order thinking skills/questioning, and building an academic vocabulary. There was also evident the need for these strategies in general education classes.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- All teachers and school leadership should participate in PD on how to plan and implement a curriculum with rigor as well as how to deliver instruction that is student-centered. This PD should include coaching and modeling by a specialist in the field (e.g., an expert consultant if necessary). The curriculum should be relied upon as the basis for assessing individual student mastery and progress. Walkthroughs and formal evaluations should include how well a teacher knows and implements the curriculum.
- District leadership should continue to communicate a clear message regarding the literacy curriculum of the District. School leaderships should follow-up with planned PD during common planning time and faculty meetings to ensure deep understanding of how the adopted programs work together to support the curriculum.
- Collaboration activities during staff meetings and common planning time should focus on curriculum and instruction. There should be agendas and minutes that summarize key activities, decisions, and the need for follow-up activities.
- A purposeful plan of PD should be created to address the above areas of need. This plan should be coordinated with the master PD Plan for the school. Implementation of the plan needs to be universal across grade levels and content areas.
- School leadership should ensure all supervisors/administrators have access to participate in the appropriate PD for the Teachers College model so they can assist and supervise in its implementation throughout the school year.

VI. FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

FINDINGS:

- There are many SMARTBoards in classrooms throughout the school. However, although many training sessions have been provided, the SMARTBoards are used mostly as overhead projectors.
- In several visits to classrooms with students with disabilities, review team members were unclear as to the role the aides play in the instructional program.
- Activities and programs used in the Library/Media Center do not have a focus on meeting the needs of all student subgroups.
- The classroom environment is generally clean and orderly. However, little student work was displayed that would indicate mastery of New York State (NYS) Learning Standards and serve as a resource for continuous learning and reinforcement.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Any additional PD for SMARTBoards should be provided with a direct connection to the curriculum and should incorporate strategies to embed web, film clip, and other resources into SMARTBoard lessons.
- School leadership should ensure that teachers having aides in their classrooms to assist with their students with disabilities receive periodic PD as to the effective use of these individuals.
- Opportunities to open the Library/Media Center before and after regular school hours should be explored to provide additional learning experiences not only for students in the identified subgroups but also for all other students.
- Quality student work should be displayed as motivation for students to produce exemplary work. Teachers should ensure that they regularly provide feedback on student work. Rubrics should be referenced, and teachers should make clear what students need to do to improve to reach higher levels of success. School leadership is encouraged to regularly review student work.

PART 4 CONCLUDING STATEMENT:

The findings and recommendations noted in the report are intended to guide the school's inquiry, planning, and the development of the Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) for school year 2012-13. The school should also continue its efforts in the implementation of the following Regents Reform Agenda initiatives: P-12 Common Core Learning Standards, Data Driven Instruction and the Annual Professional Performance Reviews for teacher effectiveness