Office of Innovative School Models
Persistently Lowest Achieving (PLA) Schools
School Improvement Grant (SIG)
Monitoring Report

School:	International School #45 – Transformation Model	School District:	Buffalo Public Schools
Date of Site-Visit:	March 9, 2011 (Second Visit)	Members of Site-Visit Team:	Major Capers, Kathryn Ahern, Rebecca Valenchis

Approximate enrollment is 860 students; approximately 49% English Language Learners (ELL) and including formerly identified ELL students, known as FLEP, the total is approximately 64%. The school is currently serving students in Pre-kindergarten through Grade 8 and is planning to reconfigure to a Pre-kindergarten through Grade 6 school in the 2011-2012 academic year.

STAFFING	
Collective Bargaining	*Negotiations are continuing regarding revision of the collective bargaining agreement in order to support the development of a teacher evaluation system, removal of staff based on the evaluation system and changes in workday, duties and hours.*
Teacher Evaluations linked to Student Performance	*Teacher evaluations linked to student performance have been put into place. The system and data used must be consistent with State APPR system.*
Identify and Reward staff or Remediate/Remove Staff	*A clear and transparent process for identifying staff for rewards and remediation is in place (A process must be in place immediately upon the development and implementation of the Teacher Evaluation System).*
Implementation of Strategies to Recruit, Place, and Retain Qualified Staff	*Activities are funded to recruit, place, and/or retain highly qualified teachers.*

Findings:
- District staff stated meetings and discussions are continuing with the Buffalo Teachers Federation (BTF) and the Buffalo Council of Supervisors and Administrators (BCSA) regarding the collective bargaining agreement and the development of a teacher evaluation system.
- The Buffalo Public Schools (BPS) continues to implement a new Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) system for the 2010-2011 school year. School leaders stated they hold pre and post-observation conferences to discuss and review the delivery of the lesson and to provide feedback to teachers. The goal is to support teachers in a commitment to improve instructional methods.
- Teachers reported the new APPR system is going well, the process was introduced effectively, and expectations are clear and administrators have been fair.
- The district has disseminated a survey to solicit feedback regarding the identification of rewards and remediation for staff.

- The school leadership reported most positions funded by the School Improvement Grant (SIG) are filled. The data coach is hired and receiving training, ESL Coordinator and coaches are hired; Guidance Counselor and Social Worker and bilingual aides are now hired. School leaders indicated that they had input/flexibility regarding the hiring process.
- Teachers reported two bilingual aides are hired, and one more aide is expected to be hired in Burmese and/or Karen. Teachers also stated it was their understanding that five bilingual aides would be hired.

PLANNING	
Implementation of Timeline	*The district/school is on track to complete activities in accordance with the approved timeline for implementation, or to submit an approvable School Improvement Grant (SIG) application. Identify elements that are off-track.*
Performance Targets	*The district/school is implementing activities, which will help them meet the school's performance targets. (Performance targets are tied to the school's achieving "In Good Standing" by the end of the 3 year grant period. Refer to the school's Performance Plan Template, as available.)*
Implementation of JIT Recommendations	*The district and school are implementing the plan based on the JIT recommendations. The recommendations of the JIT are addressed as delineated in the SIG application or Restructuring Plan, as applicable.*

Findings:

- Teacher training continues to help teachers plan and implement teaching of the district-approved curriculum. English language arts teachers are also very involved in professional development five days a week and teacher substitutes are now being trained.
- Teachers reported and documents reviewed confirm thirty-six hours of professional development is being offered in Math to help teams of teachers engage in backward planning. The Literacy Coach is working with ELA staff to align vertically skills K- 8 and curriculum teams meet weekly to plan instruction.
- School leaders stated that staff developers have developed a plan to work with teachers during grade level meetings and professional learning communities (PLOs) to focus on implementing a curriculum that better meets the needs of students.
- School leaders are reportedly working collaboratively with staff using a shared decision making process and meet weekly with coaches to review data, plan grade level meetings, and address other necessary actions steps.
- Evidence regarding the school's performance targets will be included in the performance plan that is under development at SED for use in the 2011-2012 school year.
- The district and the school are implementing components of the plan based on JIT recommendations outlined in the school's transformation plan.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	
Quality, On-going, Job-embedded Professional Development	*Implementing job-embedded professional development, as defined by the USED, and as approved by NYSED.*
Supportive of Instructional Needs	*All professional development is researched based and supportive of the instructional needs of the school.*
Monitoring and Analysis	*Professional development is monitored and analyzed to ensure staff participation and classroom implementation.*

Findings:

- The school leaders reported a staff survey was conducted to determine professional development needs.
- Teachers interviewed stated there is an abundance and consistent amount of professional development offered at the International School. Professional learning opportunities (PLO's) are mandatory and are planned during the day at grade level, faculty meetings and during early release days after school. Professional development has been provided in the areas of classroom management, and differentiated instruction. Explicit instruction, guided practice, co-teaching and coaching models are methods of teaching used to support teachers in classrooms. PLO sessions are tailored to meet the needs of both students and teachers.
- School leaders reported professional learning opportunities are scheduled for SIOP, LETRS, lesson plans are reviewed for differentiation, and teacher conferences focus on differentiation.
- School leaders reported RTI level I and II training has commenced; however RTI Tier III intervention training needs to be completed.
- School leaders stated teachers would receive SIOP training this summer.
- Teachers stated there are computers and White Boards available and teachers are receiving additional professional development in the use of this technology to support instruction. The ITC coach has scheduled weekly technology training for the remainder of the school year to help teachers integrate the use of technology to support instruction.
- The school leaders reported instructional coaches are hired in the areas of technology, literacy, Math, data and ESL. Coaches conduct weekly meetings to observe and provide feedback to teachers about instruction.
- There are four substitute teachers which work every day in the school, they are trained in core and intervention programs and provide consistent instruction while teachers are out of the classroom at PLOs.
- The school leadership team stated all coaches are hired and have began implementing a multi-grade professional development opportunities. This practice is research-based and supportive of the instructional needs of the school.
- Some teachers stated there is a need to continue discussions on vertical common planning time related to discussions on curriculum articulation across grade and content areas. The school leadership reported thirty six hours of math professional learning opportunities were scheduled for grades K-8, a vertical review of Algebra is planned for May and a literacy coach is working with ELA staff developer to plan a vertical review of skills rolled out for K-8.
- The school leadership also plans to incorporate additional common planning time into the schedule for next year.
- The school leadership stated data dashboard professional development would be completed in June 2011.

DATA ANALYSIS	
Data to Inform Instructional Programming	*Data is used to identify and implement research-based instructional programs that are aligned with state standards*
Data for Instructional Decisions for Student Achievement	*A system is being implemented which allows for the continuous use of data to make instructional decisions for students.*

Findings:

- School leaders reported the data coach was hired (3/2011) to assist with coaching teachers to analyze data to inform instructional decisions.
- Staff and school leaders stated common planning time is used to create interim assessments. Test items are referenced directly to NYS performance indicators (PI).
- Teachers stated although they meet together as a grade level to discuss data, there is too much data to process; they need additional time for training and discussions across grade levels on the use of data to improve instruction.
- Teachers indicated they continue to make requests to designated district staff person and literacy coach to retrieve and display data for their school.
- The school leadership team stated that staff receives professional development on the use of data and the literacy coach meets with the leadership team weekly to discuss data and its use to support instruction.
- The school leaders reported the new School Counselor is now responsible for tracking student attendance and providing needed interventions. The SWIS data collection system is being used to track trends in student behavior.
- The school leaders and teachers reported classroom profile sheets are created to provide teachers with an overview of important background information for each student.
- District administrators shared the data dashboard that continues to be under development. The dashboard is to be rolled out to school leaders and building staff at a later date. The principal stated she has received training.
- The school leadership team stated the district data warehouse project is not yet live; however, the district and school uses accessible data to inform instruction.

CURRICULUM AND TEACHING	
Increased Learning Time	*The school has implemented a longer school day, week, or school year to increase significantly the total number of school hours to provide additional time for instruction in core academic subjects, or in enrichment subject areas, or added time for teacher collaboration.*
Mapped and Paced Curriculum	*The written district/school level curriculum is aligned to NYS standards, performance indicators, the core competencies and is being implemented. Pacing guides are developed, used and monitored.*
Effective Teaching	*There is evidence of rigor, relevance, pacing and alignment of curriculum to State Standards, and student engagement from Highly Qualified Teachers (HQT).*
ELL/SWD	*The necessary instructional programs and highly qualified staff are in place to support the needs of English language learners (ELL) and students with disabilities (SWD).*

Findings:

- Teachers stated the Associate Superintendent for Teaching/Learning provides curriculum and pacing guides to the faculty. School leaders reported that staff developers in ELA, Math, science and social studies visit weekly to provide additional support to coaches and teachers.
- School leaders reported the development of common assessments is a topic of consideration for the 2011-12 school year.
- Teachers stated there still remains a need to focus on both differentiated instruction and differentiated assessments.
- Teachers reported due to the large number of languages and diverse backgrounds of students, there still remains a need to focus on strengthening student's conceptual knowledge. Teachers now report using explicit instructional strategies to ensure all students access the content being presented. Thirty

minutes is set aside each day to provide targeted interventions based on each student's learning needs.

- School leaders reported Language Essentials for teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) training provides teachers with a better understanding of how DIBELS can be used to identify areas in need improvement/remediation in reading. Teachers still express a concern regarding the lack of correlation of DIBELS with the district curriculum.
- Teachers reported existing schedules for co-teachers were adjusted to meet the IEP requirements for grade 3 students.
- Teachers reported textbooks were ordered and received. Students stated they would like to have more NYS practice books and one student requested obtaining more Braille resources.
- Teachers stated they need time to meet together to review, discuss, analyze and process the information included in the binders. Teachers recommended the school be removed from their commitment to Model B, which requires a double period of ELA and math. Teachers advised this time could used to schedule and provide support services for students with special needs. Students reported they could use the available time for more hands-on activities and to learn other subjects, such as American Sign Language (ASL) and Braille.
- Teachers stated there are additional challenges, which include understanding the use of pacing guides for ELLs and students with disabilities (SWD), a policy for the identification of SWDs, and acquiring needed resources to meet the needs of this student population. Teachers reported they would like to incorporate additional time, built into the district-pacing guides, to address student remediation.

STUDENT SUPPORT	
Additional Support	*Students are receiving extra academic and developmental support based on student need (AIS, character development, PBIS).*
Counseling	*Student support services are in place to provide students in need with additional social support (education/career counseling, social work, drug/alcohol/violence counseling, school psychologist, health/mental health professional)*
Enrichment Opportunities	*Students have opportunities to participate in academic and social enrichment activities during, after the school day and during the summer.*

Findings:
- Teachers stated their students need extra support and several programs are expected to start in the near future. The Saturday Jump Start program and the Saturday help for ELLs have started to provide academic support to students. The after school program begins on April 13, 2011. Some students reported they are not attending the Saturday and after school programs due to transportation issues that they feel needs to be addressed. Students also stated they would like to have activities that are more diverse after school, including special interest clubs and sports.
- Parents and community agency representatives stated students and parents continue to receive support from the local community centers that have multilingual staff; the center provides translation services for students and their families. Several centers have staff which work directly in the building several days a week.
- The school leaders reported the Parent Facilitator was provided more hours to work in the building. The position was divided among three facilitators to provide more support to parents.

- School leaders reported and documents reviewed stated a translation team was established to ensure important documents or Connect Ed messages are translated into the five major languages.
- Students reported feeling they are supported by the new administration, teachers and peers at the International School. Students stated they feel a strong sense of community within classes and the school. Students believe their teachers want the best for them and they appreciate the efforts teachers make to support their success.
- The PBIS team was created and the team meets weekly and works with the school based management team to create a behavior matrix. A "No Tolerance" policy has been adopted for bullying. A fall assembly was held on bullying and guidance counselors have conducted classroom presentations on bullying. The PBIS team continues to meet weekly to plan for the full-scale implementation of the PBIS initiative slated for September 2011.
- One student reported it would be helpful to have more Braille resources.
- Administrators and teachers stated enrichment opportunities are being provided as part of the 30 minutes of differentiated instruction that is part of the school day.

TRANSFORMATIONAL SCHOOL LEADERSHIP	
Effective Leadership	*The school leader has the experience and skills needed to implement successfully a turnaround model and to act as a change agent for the school.*
Leadership Development	*School leaders receive appropriate and timely professional development. Mentoring or coaching programs are in place and effective.*
School Improvement Manager/External Providers	*The school is being guided and informed by its partnership with its School Improvement Manager or external provider.*
Building Level Leadership Team	*The school is utilizing its Building Leadership Team to implement the intervention model.*

Findings:
- School leadership stated the principal, assistant principals and other selected staff continue to receive professional development via the NYC Leadership Academy, Assistant Principal Leadership academy, conferences, building level PLOs, Principal and Assistant Principal Mentors.
- The district will continue to provide leadership training to the principal and assistant principals, and selected staff.
- The building leadership continues to receive professional development and staff has attended training on the instructional rounds. A consultant contact is developed to provide instructional leadership training to support the advancement of teaching and learning.
- The assistant principal continues to work directly on the implementation of the transformation plan.
- The district plan states the School-Based Management Team (SBMT) continues to meet and has been operational over the last two years. The SBMT has developed a plan to address issues, and to meet monthly with the principal, teachers, parents and students.

SCHOOL CLIMATE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	
Environment is	*The school is safe, orderly and academically oriented. Supervision is sufficient, respectful and consistent.*

Conducive to Learning	
Shared Vision	*School staff understands the focus/ vision of the school's improvement efforts and supports them in a consistent and effective manner.*
Collaboration	*Administrators, teachers and staff communicate openly, positively and effectively. Professional learning communities exist and affect improvement efforts.*
Parent Involvement	*Strategies are being implemented to increase the involvement and contributions of parents.*
External/Community-Based Partners	*Strategies are being implemented to increase the involvement and contributions of community partners.*

Findings:

- The SED site visit team observed the school was recently renovated and is very clean and well maintained. Supervision in the hallways was sufficient.
- Students transferred between classes orderly and as on the last visit, students were not observed roaming the hallways. In many classrooms observed, students were attentive and on task.
- Teaching staff continued to display positive morale and enthusiasm for the new initiatives at their school.
- Teachers stated they meet as a grade levels (e.g., grade 3 only) to discuss curriculum and to review data.
- Teachers would like to see improved communication between teachers, the administration and the district.
- Teachers stated they would like information about and be involved in the planning for the transition to a Pre-K-6 building.
- Parents indicated they would like to develop a system where school information can be translated prior to being sent home. They would also like to have phone calls translated for parents who are not English speakers. School leaders reported a translation protocol has been established. Connect ED messages and important documents are translated into five major languages represented by the school's population.
- Parents and staff stated there is no brochure to provide information to parents on community services that are available for students and their families.
- The Parent Facilitator has been provided more hours to work in the building to provide support to parents. There is also an operational parent resource center that has a variety of resources for parents and students.
- There is an active PTO which has recently held elections and appointed officers. The PTO continues to work on developing bylaws. A draft is tentatively scheduled for approval in May 2011. Parents continue to participate on the Parents Coordinating Council.
- Parents expressed a serious concern regarding the future status of the school in relation to its mission, and student population. There have heard several rumors regarding the school and parents have contacted the school board and district to request additional information regarding whether their students will continue to be enrolled in the school next year.
- The school continues to collaborate with community-based partners to provide translation and other family supportive services.

OTHER FUNDING SOURCES	
Use of 1003(g) or 1003(a) grant funding	*The LEA is using School Improvement Grant (SIG) funding to support the implementation of or planning for school intervention models.*
Use of Other Funding Sources besides 1003 (g)	*In addition to SIG 1003(g) and/or 1003(a) funds, the LEA is using a number of other resources to implement the school intervention models or the Restructuring Plan, as applicable.*

Findings:

- The LEA is using SIG funds to support the transformation model at the International School. According to the budget documents, the district has committed approximately $5.5 million over the next three years to support directly implementation of the transformation model.
- The SED site visit team crosschecked the school's FS-10 with staff lists and programs that are expected to be in place. As stated and verified during staff interviews several positions that were vacant, during the last visit, are now filled.
- The district was asked to review expenditures to determine if they need to make amendment(s) to the budget prior to the end of the school year.
- According to the approved FS-10 for the International School 1003(g) grant, other funding sources include the learning technology grant that is being used to provide professional development to teachers on technology integration.

DISTRICT SUPPORT AND PLANNING FOR DEVELOPMENT	
District Support Provides Operational Flexibility to the School	*The LEA provides or is planning to provide the school operational flexibility (such as staffing, calendars/time and budgeting).*
District has a systemic plan for intervention and improvement	*The LEA has incorporated all JIT recommendations and requirements of the SIG Application into the improvement plan for the school.*
District has a plan to identify, recruit, place, and retain effective leadership	*In accordance with SIG requirements, the LEA has a plan for hiring and retaining leadership.*

Findings:

- The school has the flexibility to modify the schedule and to allocate funding to hire extra staff as needed over a three-year period.
- The district has created a school turnaround office and is funding an Associate Superintendent to provide support directly to the PLA schools. The Associate Superintendent is charged with helping the school meet the requirements of their SIG application and JIT recommendations.

Summary:

The SED site visit team conducted a second full-day visit at the International School #45 School on March 9, 2011 and was able to ascertain information about the school's efforts to continue implementation of their reform model for improved student learning.

The next site visit, to be conducted in the Fall of 2011, will be a full day review and will focus on findings related to: staffing; planning; professional development; data analysis; curriculum and teaching; student support; school leadership; school climate and community engagement; and district support and planning for development.