



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

School:	Emerson Middle School/Cross Hill Academy - Turnaround Model	School District:	Yonkers Public Schools
Date of Site-Visit:	October 21, 2010	Members of Site-Visit Team:	Major Capers, LoriAnn Curtin, Sharon Holder and Andrew McGrath

STAFFING	
Collective Bargaining	<i>Negotiations are continuing regarding revision of the collective bargaining agreement in order to support: development of a teacher evaluation system, removal of staff based on the evaluation system, and changes in work day, duties and hours.</i>
Teacher Evaluations linked to Student Performance	<i>Teacher evaluations linked to student performance have been put into place. The system and data used must be consistent with State APPR system.</i>
Identify and Reward staff or Remediate/Remove Staff	<i>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).</i>
Implementation of Strategies to Recruit, Place, and Retain Qualified Staff	<i>Activities are funded to recruit, place, and/or retain highly qualified teachers. Name and describe the activities.</i>

Findings:

- According to staff, no further discussions have taken place between the teachers union and the district regarding revising the collective bargaining agreement.
- Teachers reported that they are aware of education law 3012(c) requiring teacher evaluation systems to include twenty percent of its entirety be linked to student academic growth. To date, discussions related to this have not taken place at the school.
- Teachers stated that over 60% of the 7th and 8th grade teaching staff is new.
- Staff reported that all teachers in grades pre-k through 2nd are new to the school. This is the first year these grades have been housed at the school.
- Specific evidence regarding rewarding or remediating staff or recruiting and retaining staff was not requested during this on-site visit. These areas will be a focus for the next on-site visit.

PLANNING	
Implementation of Timeline	<i>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.</i>
Performance Targets	<i>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.)</i>

Implementation of Joint Intervention Team Recommendations	<i>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.</i>
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Findings:

- It was observed that, to date, the Center for Professional Growth/Parent Room has not yet been established. The school has set aside \$100,000 for the development of the Center for Professional Growth/Parent Room according to the approved FS-10. School staff stated that when completed, the room will be equipped with a photocopier, computers, and a poster maker.
- According to interviews with district staff, the school improvement manager (SIM) assigned to work with Emerson/Cross Hill Academy is dividing her time with Roosevelt/Early College High School. Each school was to have its own SIM according to the approved FS-10s for these two schools. An additional full-time (1.0 FTE) has not yet been hired.
- The Performance Plan Template is under development at SED. Therefore, no evidence was requested during this on-site visit.
- The school's implementation plan was found to be aligned with the Joint Intervention Team recommendations at the time the School Improvement Grant Application was approved.

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

Findings:

- The approved implementation plan for Emerson Middle School/Cross Hill Academy stated that “professional development will be collaboratively designed with Fordham University and other support partners.” Interviews with district staff and teachers revealed that currently, a Fordham University representative is working regularly with the pre-k to grade 2 staff - observing instruction on a weekly basis and providing corrective feedback.
- The 7th and 8th grade teachers interviewed have not worked with the Fordham University representative. The school's implementation plan does not indicate that the Fordham University representative will only work with the pre-k to grade 2 staff.
- Staff reported that Fordham University has provided professional development for the lower grade teachers on brain-based learning, author studies and early literacy.
- It was stated by grade 7 and grade 8 teachers that few professional development opportunities have been made available to them.
- District staff, teachers, and the Fordham University consultant stated that a professional development meeting for the entire staff is scheduled for November 2, 2010, with Fordham University to establish a more specific time line of future professional development activities.

- According to school leaders, the consultant from the Center for Secondary School Redesign is working with the school to provide professional development to the administrative team.
- As additional professional development was not yet planned, there was no specific evidence collected regarding whether or not the professional development would be research-based. Additionally, other than follow-up from the Fordham University representative, no further evidence was gathered regarding monitoring and analysis of the professional development. These areas will be a focus for the next on-site visit.

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

Findings:

- According to 7th and 8th grade teachers, bench mark assessments are not currently being used to analyze student data. Archived NYS ELA and math assessments are obtained from the NYSED web-site and given quarterly.
- Teachers interviewed stated that regular data analysis meetings are not taking place.
- Teachers exchange information informally with members of their house teaching teams.
- Teachers stated that the “E School” data system is currently helping them keep in touch with parents.

CURRICULUM AND TEACHING	
Increased Learning Time	<i>The school has implemented a longer school day, week, or school year to significantly increase 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.</i>
Mapped and Paced Curriculum	<i>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.</i>
Instructional Programming is Linked to Needs Assessment	<i>Curricular decisions have been made to meet the needs of all students.</i>
Effective Teaching	<i>There is evidence of rigor, relevance, pacing, alignment of curriculum to State Standards, and student engagement from Highly Qualified Teachers (HQT).</i>
ELL/SWD	<i>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).</i>

Findings:

- District staff and teachers reported that the teaching day has been extended by 30 minutes. Teachers reported receiving the stipend for this extended teaching time.
- Teachers stated that district-wide curriculum maps exist for all subject areas for grades 7 and 8, and for first and second grade mathematics.

- Most of the classrooms observed showed evidence of curricular alignment to the NYS Standards.
- Specific evidence was not collected regarding differentiation of instruction, or linking curricular decisions to meet the needs of specific students. This will be a focus for the next on-site visit.
- During the visit, no evidence was gathered regarding necessary supports for English language learners (ELL) and students with disabilities (SWD). That will also be one of the major areas of focus for the SED site visit team's next visit.

STUDENT SUPPORT	
Additional Support	<i>Students are receiving extra academic and developmental support based on student need (AIS, character development, PBIS).</i>
Counseling	<i>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)</i>
Enrichment Opportunities	<i>Students have opportunities to participate in academic and social enrichment activities during and after the school day and during the summer.</i>

Findings:

- Grade 7 and 8 teachers stated that overall school behavior has improved greatly. This is due to the new organization of classes and the efforts of school leaders. No formal behavior management system has been implemented at the school
- Teachers stated that the school has two full-time (2.0 FTE) guidance counselors.
- Staff state that they are currently using E-school to manage student-home information. This allows them to communicate with parents in a timely and efficient manner.
- Students, staff and parents stated that the leadership of the school is both supportive and effective. The learning environment has improved dramatically as a result.
- Teachers stated that the advisory period is supporting students by giving them an opportunity to get academic support, voice concerns, settle conflicts, and positively interact with peers. According to the teachers, the advisory period uses a College Board curriculum.
- Students reported that some of the computers do not work and they would like to see the science lab space improved.
- Students reported that they receive extra academic support both during the day and after school.
- Students reported that the student government and Junior Honor Society have not yet started.
- Specific evidence regarding enrichment opportunities was not requested during this on-site visit. This will be a focus for the next on-site visit.

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

Building Level Leadership Team	<i>The school is utilizing its Building Leadership Team to implement the turnaround model.</i>
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Findings:

- As already noted, the school leadership is highly visible and supportive. Staff reported that the efforts of the leadership team are collaborative and proactive in nature.
- The leadership team conducts informal evaluative walk-throughs of each classroom once a month, and feedback is provided to teachers.
- Administrators reported that they have participated in leadership development, for example: National Principal Leadership College Board training.
- The SIM stated that she helped the school to create an action plan for the implementation of the initiatives approved in the School Improvement Grant. She provided a copy of the action plan to the site visit team. She stated that the action plan will be “rolled out” to the school staff on November 2, 2010.
- The SIM reported that she spends 1.5 days per week at Emerson/Cross Hill. The 7th and 8th grade teachers stated that they do not work with the SIM.

SCHOOL CLIMATE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	
Environment is Conducive to Learning	<i>The school is safe, orderly and academically-oriented. Supervision is sufficient, respectful and consistent.</i>
Shared Vision	<i>School staff understands the focus/ vision of the school's improvement efforts and supports them in a consistent and effective manner.</i>
Collaboration	<i>Administrators, teachers and staff communicate openly, positively and effectively. Professional learning communities exist and affect improvement efforts.</i>
Parent Involvement	<i>Strategies are being implemented to increase the involvement and contributions of parents.</i>
External/Community-Based Partners	<i>Strategies are being implemented to increase the involvement and contributions of community partners.</i>

Findings:

- The school leadership and the teaching staff referred to the “new school climate” as being calm and conducive to learning. They attributed this to the following reasons: the principal is highly visible, visits classrooms daily, and knows the students well; teachers take more responsibility for student behavior; students in 7th and 8th grade feel supported due to the advisory period; smoother transitions occur because students were split into “houses” that don’t transition at the same time; hall sweeps are conducted regularly; parent meetings are being held; and the Parent Teacher Student Association has a large membership.
- The principal stated that one method that seems to be working to improve student behavior is asking the middle school students to complete community service if they misbehave.
- An SED site visit team member observed that a girls’ bathroom door seemed unsafe as it was too heavy for one student to open on her own, and it slammed quickly. The school resource officer on hall duty stated that she repeatedly handles the door for students because they have a difficult time opening it.
- When interviewed, staff repeatedly reported support for the plans and initiatives that are being implemented this school year.
- As stated earlier, the parent room has not been established. According to district staff, the school’s parent liaison is district-based.
- Parents stated that officers of the PTA were recently inducted. Membership stands at approximately 50 active members.

- Parents stated that they are participating in district and school forums and committees.
- No specific evidence was collected regarding strategies to increase involvement of community partners. This will be a focus during the next on-site visit.
- No specific evidence was found regarding the communication between administrators, teachers and staff. This will be a focus during the next on-site visit.

OTHER FUNDING SOURCES	
Use of 1003(g) or 1003(a) grant funding	<i>The LEA is using School Improvement Grant (SIG) funding to support the implementation of or planning for school intervention models.</i>
Use of Other Funding Sources besides 1003 (g)	<i>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.</i>

Findings:

- The district committed approximately \$238,000 during the 2009-10 school year and indicated that it intends to commit \$260,595 during the 2010-2011 school year. It was not indicated how the funds would be used.

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

Findings:

- As stated above, the school's implementation plan was found to be aligned with the Joint Intervention Team recommendations at the time the School Improvement Grant Application was approved.
- The district leaders interviewed were extremely supportive of the school's new principal and felt that he had the capacity to lead change at the school.
- The district leadership team reported that the district is providing the needed resources to the school to support the school's implementation plan.
- The district replaced the school's leadership team in August 2010.
- The SIM hired by the district is helping to ensure that the school implements the Joint Intervention Team recommendations.
- According to interviews with school and district staff, the school's new leader is effectively leading the school in its improvement efforts.

Summary:

The PLA team conducted a half-day site visit at the Emerson Middle School on October 21, 2010. Although the visit was brief, the PLA team was able to ascertain

information about the school's efforts to begin the implementation of their reform model for improved student learning.

The next site visit conducted 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.