



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

School:	Robert Brown High School	School District:	Rochester City School District
Date of Site-Visit:	March 16, 2011 (Second Visit)	Members of Site-Visit Team:	Susan Gibbons, Kathryn Ahern, Alice Roberson, Patrick Roche

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.</i>

Findings:

- The School Improvement Manager (SIM) has not yet been hired.
- Teachers were recruited from a job fair, district job displacement, or direct application. With regard to collective bargaining, the administrators expressed concern for new teachers if there are layoffs.
- Teachers were unaware of the school's status with regard to the collective bargaining. They reported they enjoyed being where they were and said the contract is "just background noise"

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 JIT 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>

Findings:

- The special education, math and ELA coaches have been hired.
- The Learning Community Committee is the decision making body for instruction, according to the administrative team.
- The administrative team consists of the principal, assistant principal, coaches, math coordinator, and two parents.
- An RTI team is in place, and a coach for RTI is mandated for next year.

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 staff stated they are enthusiastic about the professional development opportunities being offered to them. Teachers say the professional development is focused and they are attentive and want more.
- Teachers reported they meet regularly to incorporate professional development and common language through a vertical teaming approach to achieve performance targets.
- Professional development activities reported by teachers included: Tech Fridays, Teach Like a Champion, Measuring What Matters, and High Performance & Technology.
- Teachers reported a potential professional development opportunity in the construction industry. This would provide on-the-job training so they better understand the careers for which they are educating the students and can thus prepare their curriculum to meet the market needs.

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:

- Data is used to inform instruction, according to school leaders, who stated a comprehensive system, is in place.
- The Registrar reported RBHS used state eight grade test scores (Math, ELA, and Science), and Acuity and SRI assessments to create individual student baselines and schedule interventions.
- The school-wide math curriculum is structured around a series of benchmark assessments aligned with the common core standards. Benchmark data is used to adjust classroom instruction and to schedule students for individual assessment/remediation in the “benchmark café”.

- ELA staff reported they have been reviewing individual student logs for implementation of reading strategies during weekly one-on-one conferences. They plan to use local benchmarks and Springboard to create an “ELA benchmark café” next year.
- Teachers follow the protocol of “ECED” – Every Classroom, Every Day to implement the literacy component. Every Classroom Every Day is a RCSD project, which adopted a literacy class from the University of Rochester with two random study groups and two control groups. Follow up mechanisms will be instituted.

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, and 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:

- School leaders reported data for math and ELA from as far back as sixth grade records are used. The School Based Team (SBT) reported data gathered from grade schools was used to group students in learning communities and to schedule classes. The SRI is given early. Relevant data is given to each team for its students. Student progress is reviewed quarterly.
- Credit recovery is a priority, according to the school leaders. For example, U. S. History was given in ninth grade, forty-three percent passed and the rest are in a Regents prep group.
- Students reported they feely challenged academically and are proud that they do tenth and eleventh grade level work.
- Students acknowledge that teachers want to keep them in class and will “get stressed out over student performance.”
- Benchmark charts were observed on display in every classroom showing student progress. Benchmarks are based on standards, using “I can” statements. Eighty percent is considered mastery on benchmark assessments. Students have three opportunities to master a skill, according to school leaders.
- Based on the success of the math “benchmark café,” the ELA teachers plan to develop a similar system for next year.
- Strategies for reading used by teachers are The Seven Habits of Proficient Readers and Kylee Beers.
- School leaders reported students fill out their own ELA logs.
- The three highest priorities for school leaders include instruction, the structure of the system, and the climate (PBIS) for appropriate behavior. They want to develop a sequence of courses for CTE endorsement in career technology for a drawing design production course. The school held a job fair where fourteen

career representatives were available to students. The principal reported there are three pathways in construction, and three in design; the school is seeking endorsement and certification for five credits in CTE.

- Next year, the school leaders will offer construction, including carpentry, electrical, interior design, and architectural civil engineering. They want to keep up with industry.
- The site visit team observed the use of technology in math classrooms in the form of graphic calculators.
- The site visit team also observed student engagement in some classrooms, along with checking for understanding, “Are you comfortable with this?”
- A few teachers were observed to need increased classroom management skills, which are uneven, as well as pacing, maintaining student attention and engagement. The level of rigor is also uneven and there is a need for differentiated instruction.
- Lesson plan review showed plans are based on units that include learning standards. The format is not uniformly consistent.
- There are seventeen ELA students and one hundred and fifty special education students.
- ELL/ESL students use IPods to translate readings and provide an oral interpretation to the teacher.

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:

- School leaders reported a third period intervention class with mixed grade groups uses Rtl research’s best interventions. These are reviewed every quarter with a spreadsheet used to monitor academic interventions.
- All students alternate enrichment subject area groups. There are seven groups of ninth graders, with 20-25 students in each team-taught group.
- Teachers, according to parents, offer extra help during lunch periods and after school to students who need it.
- All teachers, according to the administration, conference with students’ one on one about reading on a regular basis.
- Students report teachers “really care about us.”
- Students remarked on how talented their classmates are and that RBHS offers additional activities to explore areas of interests.
- A student will represent RBHS in the robotics competition to be held at Alfred State.

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 intervention model.</i>

Findings:

- Teachers reported they have strong, flexible, open-minded leaders, with whom they share mutual trust. There is a low “intimidation factor,” and “a lot of empowerment.” Teachers feel supported by the administration.
- Professional development for leadership, in particular the principal, is provided through the district’s Rochester Academy monthly. Assistant Principals were also added recently to the Academy by the district’s School Innovation Office.

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 SED site visit team observed the facility was clean, well-equipped, and demonstrated extensive use of technology, including smart boards, computers and graphic calculators.
- The school climate is safe, according to students, parents and staff, and generally students were observed to be well-behaved and attentive.
- Parents reported the safety and climate of this school is better than at other schools and that the students love this school. In other schools, some students had experienced or observed attacks by other students.
- On the day of the site visit, attendance was visibly low. Normally, administrators reported, it is about eighty-nine percent, but this day there was a good deal of illness at the school.
- Behavior interventions are provided by Roots, an agency for student self-advocacy. Alpha Phi Alpha is a school male fraternity.
- Parents report being happy with the school, especially with Parent Connect, a system for communication with the school. Parents stated they are always welcomed into the school, which is open to drop-ins. They find this school very different from others with which they are familiar, saying that other public schools are “not good.”
- Parents reported the teachers are “great,” they are willing to work with parents, it is easy to contact them, and their children are eager to come to school.
- The few parents who were interviewed indicated they are not able to participate in the parent organization because of their work schedules, but they would take part if they could.
- Teachers reported they communicate with the parents by phone calls, positive as well as for problems, emails, and in-person meetings. Students stated their parents really like it when they get positive reports sent home.

- Teachers also provide challenging work for students who are ahead of the class. Parent Connect is a computer program that gives parents access to grades, missing homework and notices. The parents called it the “best thing ever.”
- Students indicated they believe they are smarter since they came to the school, and teachers take extra time with them, even giving up their lunch hours. They reported teachers really care about the students. Parents concurred.
- Students indicated the school year is “going really well,” that the school is “very organized.” They like collecting points in their agendas and earning “RBHS bucks”.
- Students mentioned “there are opportunities to express yourself while earning credits.”
- Uniforms are not the students’ choice, but they do make RBHS students feel like a team.
- Administrators reported strong relationships with local labor union partners and institutions of higher education.
- External/Community-based partners have been identified as Local 453, Unicon (construction industry), RIT’s STEP program, AVID (Advancement via Individual Determination) program, and Mohawk Community College’s dual articulations.
- A PBIS building climate audit was recently conducted by district staff. Feedback from the audit will be shared with learning communities. The SBT hopes to use information from the audit to gauge the success of their student acknowledgement system. A PBIS teacher assessment and a parent-student assessment are planned.

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:

- School leaders reported the use of 1003(g) funding to support integrating the College Board’s Springboard resources and materials into the curriculum as part of their Turnaround plan.
- The district supports the school’s effort through the employment of a Zone Chief who will assist in the formation of educational policy and practice and a Special Assistant to the Superintendent.
- According to the budget modification, the school’s CTE lab was purchased with Perkin’s grant funds.
- BOCES maintains and supports the on-line data system, according to the budget modification.

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 matters staffing, calendars/time, and budgeting).</i>
District has a systemic plan for intervention and improvement	<i>The LEA has incorporated all JIT 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>
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Findings:

- The District provides professional development for Response to Intervention, the use of technology, the PBIS coach, and more access to district resources from the Office of Innovation since SIG implementation.
- Because the funding came to the school late, the school is just now getting equipment and training.

Summary:

The State Education Department four member site visit team conducted an on-site visit at Robert Brown High School on March 16, 2011. This was the second visit during the 2010-2011 school year. The site visit team was able to ascertain information about the school's efforts to continue the implementation of their reform model for improved student learning.

The school climate is conducive to learning in a clean, well-equipped, safe setting. A comprehensive data system is in place, and is used to inform instruction.

Professional development is relevant to school needs and teachers demonstrated a high level of enthusiasm for it. However, classroom rigor is uneven and staff could benefit from additional professional development in classroom management, pacing, and student engagement.

Parents and students are very satisfied with the school, where they feel welcomed and respected. Teachers express positive feelings about the administration, especially its openness and support.

The next site visit to Robert Brown High School will be during the Fall of 2011.