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 City School District
Date of Site-Visit:	February 16, 2011	Members of Site-Visit Team:	Andrew McGrath, Major Capers Lori Curtin

STAFFING	
Collective Bargaining	*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.*
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:
- During their focus group session, teachers indicated they have not been involved in discussions regarding the development of a teacher evaluation system that is linked to student assessment. Teachers indicated they are using the same teacher evaluation system as last year.
- During their focus group session and in individual discussions, teachers stated they were not specifically familiar with education law 3012(c).
- Staff indicated they receive extra pay for the extended teaching time that was added to the instructional day.
- The Yonkers City School District enacted its Gateway eligibility criteria for staff at its PLA schools. This screening process was used to assist in selecting teachers for the 2010-11 school year.
- Teachers and staff stated although there is a set of eligibility requirements for hiring PLA staff, there is no criterion-based means to assist in the removal of staff.

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:
- The Professional Growth room and the Parent room have been established. The rooms are equipped with tables and chairs. However, the equipment that was to be purchased according to the SIG application - computers, a photocopier and a poster maker - is not yet available.
- The district's approved School Improvement Grant 1003(g) delineated plans for two SIM - one for Cross Hill/Emerson Middle School and one for Roosevelt/Early College High School. District staff stated that a second SIM will not be hired; therefore, they will be submitting an FS-10 amendment for the use of the funds that were to go to the second SIM position.
- The SIM divides her time evenly spends 2.5 days per week between Emerson/Cross Hiss Academy and Roosevelt/Early College High School.
- The Performance Plan Template is still under development at SED and will be provided to the school when completed.

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:
- Teachers stated staff at each grade level has received SmartBoard training. This began in February, 2011 and is slated to continue through the end of March, 2011. Additionally, staff in prekindergarten through second grade has received, and will continue to receive, SmartTable training.
- Teachers stated, and external partners confirmed, seventh and eighth grade teachers received Read 180 training, which began in December, 2010 and is on-going through the end of the school year.
- School leaders, teaching staff and external partners stated science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) training – thirty hours per staff member – is available to teachers at all grade levels. First and second grade teachers are currently receiving this training.
- The school's Data team has been established. It is comprised of teachers and school administrators. It meets every two weeks and receives professional development through the Center for Secondary School Redesign (CSSR).
- School leaders indicated teaching staff receives a stipend for each hour of professional development that occurs outside of the teaching day.
- Interviews with district staff and teachers revealed a Fordham University representative continues to work with the prekindergarten to second grade staff –

observing instruction on a weekly basis and providing corrective feedback. Fordham is now providing professional development to teachers in the seventh and eighth grades.

- According to school leaders, the consultant from CSSR continues to work with the school to provide professional development to the administrative team. Examples include;
  - o Stages of Group Development – Leadership styles
  - o Teacher Role Clarification – role clarity and analysis
  - o Change Leadership
  - o Planning style inventory
- In addition, the daily walk-throughs help the administrative team ensure that skills learned in professional development are being put into practice.

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:
- Teachers and school leaders stated seventh and eighth grade students received school-wide ELA and math benchmark assessments. Item analyses of these assessments, as well as the 2010 NYS ELA and math assessments, have been used during common planning time to inform instruction.
- Accelerated Reader reports and Weaver Instructional Systems for Education (WISE) reports for first and second grade students are generated weekly to inform instruction.
- Common planning time is being used to analyze student performance in ELA, math and ESOL, using benchmark assessments to perform item analyses. Fordham University and CSSR are providing staff with training in this area.
- Teachers interviewed stated regular data analysis meetings are now beginning to take place.
- Teachers stated the "E School" data system is currently helping them keep track of school wide data, such as parent and student contact information. This leads to improved parent-teacher communication and increased student attendance.

CURRICULUM AND TEACHING	
Increased Learning Time	*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.*
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.*
Instructional Programming is Linked to Needs Assessment	*Curricular decisions have been made to meet the needs of all students.*
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:

- School leaders stated the extended learning time (30 extra minutes per day) is being used as an advisory period for all students. During the advisory period students learn study skills, get extra help, and hold group discussions on topics of interest. Students interviewed stated the advisory period is helpful and teachers "care more" this year because "you can talk to them."
- The administrative team stated curriculum is monitored and adjusted through the implementation of daily walk-throughs. At times, the administrative team models lessons to ensure effective teaching.
- During focus group interviews, teachers and administrators stated many curricular decisions have been made to meet the differentiated needs of all students, including the use of: Read 180 software (ELA), WISE software (ELA), Rosetta Stone (second language), and Starfall (ELA). In addition, non-tenured teachers must submit lesson plans using a template which requires them to show how they will differentiate the lesson for students with disabilities (SWD) and for English language learners (ELL).
- ELL courses are offered at the beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels. Procedures are in place to ensure ELL students are progressing.
- All SWDs have Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), and various levels of services are offered.
- The school is using Achieve 3000 for ELL students, and Read 180 and WISE instructional software for SWD students. Additionally, there is a Saturday program for students with interrupted formal educations (SIFE).
- Teachers stated district-wide curriculum maps exist for all subject areas for grades seven and eight, and for first and second grade mathematics.
- Most of the classrooms observed continue to show evidence of curricular alignment to the NYS Standards. Posted lesson objectives reflect performance indicators.

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 and after the school day and during the summer.*

Findings:

- Jewish Council of Yonkers - Western Community Partners (JCY-WCP) provides literacy instruction to students before and after school. The JCY-WCP representative stated volunteers meet with students as part of the Students and Mature Adults Read Together (SMART) program.
- A representative from Hudson River Museum stated the school has an artist-in-residence, working with students in prekindergarten through second grade on artist directed projects focusing on the art and science of color.

- The administrative team and the SIM stated Academic Intervention Services (AIS) are offered to students after school, in addition to the advisory period. Additionally, they stated that Response to Intervention (RtI) is being put in place for the primary grades.
- The administrative team stated a school wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS) has been put in place.
- The school submitted evidence of the curriculum used during the advisory period, demonstrating that it provides additional social support for students.
- The administrative team stated new ThinkPads and lap tops for students have been ordered.
- Students interviewed reported the student government is now in place for both seventh and eighth grade students. The student government is starting a Peer Tutoring Program.
- District and school leadership stated the school has enrichment opportunities for all students, including; sports, dances, AIS, and mentoring opportunities.

TRANSFORMATIONAL SCHOOL LEADERSHIP	
Effective Leadership	*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.*
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 remains highly visible is classrooms and common areas, and is supportive of teachers through timely feedback and input. Staff reported the efforts of the leadership team are collaborative and pro-active in nature.
- The leadership team conducts informal and formal evaluative walk-throughs of each classroom once a month, and feedback is provided to teachers.
- Administrators reported they continue to participate in leadership training provided by CSSR on a monthly basis.
- The SIM stated 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. The action plan is now being "rolled out" to the school staff.
- The seventh and eighth grade teachers stated they are now working with the SIM. The SIM has provided a plan for her work responsibilities in the building.
- The leadership team stated the school would benefit from having an additional ESL teacher, reading teacher, and guidance counselor to support the expanding academy model.

SCHOOL CLIMATE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	
Environment is Conducive to Learning	*The school is safe, orderly and academically-oriented. Supervision is sufficient, respectful and consistent.*
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 school leadership and the teaching staff reported the "new school climate" continues to be calm and conducive to learning. They attributed this to the following reasons:
  - The principal is highly visible and visits classrooms daily;
  - Teachers take more responsibility for student behavior;
  - Students in seventh and eighth 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; and
  - Parent meetings are being held.
- The principal stated middle school students are required to complete community service if they misbehave.
- When interviewed, staff again reported they receive support for the plans and initiatives that are being implemented this school year.
- As stated earlier, the parent room has been identified; however there remain resources that need to be purchased and placed in the room. According to district staff, the school's parent liaison is district-based.
- Parents stated officers of the PSTA are active in their positions. Membership now stands at approximately 65 active members.
- Parents stated they are participating in district and school forums and shared decision making committees.
- District staff provided the site visit team with examples of workshops/seminars for parents. Some of these include:
  - Strategies for the New York State English as a Second Language Test (NYSESLAT);
  - Literacy activities at home;
  - The principles of ABC;
  - Overview of testing programs; and
  - Using read alouds at home to build fluency and enhance comprehension.
- The district has hired several community partners (e.g., Jewish Community in Yonkers, Hudson River Museum, Fordham University, and CSSR) to provide support to the school in areas of data analysis, leadership development and art/culture/environment instruction.

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:
- As delineated in the School Improvement Grant (SIG) application, the district has committed approximately $238,000 for the 2009-10 school year and $261,000 for the 2010-11 school year.
- Fund resources include: IDEA, Section 611; School in Need of Improvement (SINI); 21st Century, Safe Passage 2; and Magnet school Program (MSP).
- Supporting funds are being used for data team meetings, professional development in Read 180 and PBIS, and technology training.
- The site visit team indicated an FS-10 amendment will be required to adjust several budget categories based on program and staff changes.

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 matters regarding 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's implementation plan was aligned with the Joint Intervention Team recommendations at the time the School Improvement Grant Application was approved.
- The district leadership team reported the district continues to provide the needed resources to the school to support the school's implementation plan.
- The SIM hired by the district has worked to ensure that the school implements the Joint Intervention Team (JIT) 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 State Education Department three member site visit team conducted an on-site visit at the Emerson Middle School/Cross Hill Academy on February 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 site visit team observed a number of programs and initiatives that appear to provide the school with the opportunity to make progress towards improved student achievement. The school leadership team is visible and supportive, and the school improvement manager is actively involved in the school improvement efforts. Numerous community partners are working collaboratively with the school, and the teaching staff is proactive and student-centered.

Staff, students, parents and educational partners all spoke positively of the school's efforts to improve student achievement. District and school staff were candid

with their comments and highly cooperative throughout the PLA monitoring process. The school and the district appear to be working together to coordinate their efforts and implement as much of their Transformation Model as possible.

The next site visit to Emerson Middle School/Cross Hill Academy will be during the Fall of 2011.