



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

Progress Review Report — 2011-2012

School:	Grant Middle School Transformation Model	School District:	Syracuse CSD
Date of Site Visit:	November 2, 2011	Team Member(s)	Major Capers and Andrew McGrath

Address: 2400 Grant Blvd

Principal Telephone: (315) 435-4433

Fax: (315) 435-4856

BEDS #: 421800010035

School Principal: Mr. Dean DeSantis

E-mail address: ddesantis@scsd.us

SIM /SIL: Dr. Zheadric Barbra

E-mail address: zbarbra@scsd.us

Grade Configuration: 6-8

Total Enrollments: Approximately 640

Area(s) of PLA identification: English Language Arts and math

List all identified subgroups: ELA, SWD; Mathematics SWD,ELL

Intervention model: Transformation

List the school's community-based organization (CBO) partner(s)

1.	Syracuse University (Gear-UP program)	4.	Hillside Work Scholarship Connection
2.	Say Yes to Education Partnership	5.	
3.	Partner for a Better Education	6.	

STAFFING	
Organization and Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The leadership team is new to the school and was assigned to their positions on July 1, 2011. • School leaders and teachers reported twenty-seven teachers transferred to Grant Middle School to continue working with the principal. Initial staff meetings concentrated on bringing the entire staff together as one cohesive unit. • The following positions were filled using School Improvement Grant (SIG) funds: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Instructional Coach (1.0 FTE) ○ Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) Coach (1.0 FTE) ○ Parent Liaison/School Program Coordinator (1.0 FTE) ○ Teachers for the Best Expectations Starting Today (BEST) program (2.0 FTE) ○ Dean of Students (1.0 FTE) ○ Social Worker (1.0 FTE) • Three substitute teacher positions listed in the SIG application were removed due to budget reductions. • The Academic Intervention Services /Advancement via Individual Determination

	<p>(AVID) teacher (1.0) and Behavioral Specialist (1.0) were not hired due to budget reductions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers receive compensation for an additional four hours per week to participate in planning, committee meetings and professional development. Teachers are required to maintain a log to receive payment for this additional time. The master schedule was revised to include common planning time for teachers to meet to discuss student performance and instruction.
Teacher Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The principal and the assistant principals are responsible for formal and informal teacher evaluations based on the Charlotte Danielson model. School leaders indicated they each are expected to spend 100 minutes each day in classrooms. The leadership team is highly visible in classrooms. The leadership team uses the district walk-through tool to collect information and provide feedback. The feedback is timely and constructive. School leaders and the administrative team continue to receive evaluation training and are expected to be certified by 2012.

PLANNING	
Student Enrollment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The guidance department receives detailed attendance data on a weekly basis and works with teachers and support staff to discuss student attendance issues. School leaders are reaching out into the surrounding community to promote the school's efforts to encourage children to attend school each day and get to school on-time.
Student Performance/ Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The student support team is collecting and analyzing student discipline referrals, and reviewing the Violence and Disruptive Incident Reports (VADIR) for 2010-2011. Student's academic and behavioral plans are reviewed to determine the level of academic and/or behavior intervention that is needed for each student.
Teacher Attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher attendance is not an issue that specifically affects the implementation of the school improvement plan. Nor does it have a direct adverse effect on student achievement in the school.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (PD)	
Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers and school leaders reported receiving summer professional development (PD) regarding staff cohesiveness and Understanding by Design (UbD) training. During their UbD training, teachers and coaches developed initial common assessments and lesson units to help develop assessments. On-going PD consists of assessment analysis, subsequent unit planning and assessment development. The NYSED Site Visit Team members reviewed the PD plan, for 2011, which provides an overview of PD planned for this year. School leaders reported Collaborative Coaching and Learning (CCL) and Sheltered Instruction and Observation Protocol (SIOP) PD will start in January 2012. School leaders and instructional coaches will facilitate training to staff in data analysis, CCL, SIOP, and formative assessment to inform instruction. School leaders reported SIOP training and program implementation will begin on January 12, 2012.
Instruction and Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers participate in meetings during the school day with instructional coaches to assess and modify classroom teaching and development of their lesson plans. Common planning meetings occur after school four days each week and PD is embedded in these meetings. School leaders reported instructional coaches are providing real-time PD in ELA/Math.
Monitoring and Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information acquired during walk-through observations is used to inform instructional practices and to identify professional development needs.

DATA ANALYSIS	
Data that Informs Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers throughout the building developed common assessments that were given to students during the seventh week of teaching. At the time of the NYSED team site visit, teachers and instructional coaches were conducting analyses of common assessments to inform instruction and plan for re-teaching content. Teachers and school leaders made a school-wide commitment to using information from the book, <i>Driven by Data</i> by Paul Bambrick-Santoyo, as a reference to determine how data affects and impacts classroom instruction. School leaders and staff are reviewing data during their planning times.
Data & Student Achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During their focus group session, school leaders reported the district data dashboard was not yet operational. The school is using numerous in-house systems to collect student data regarding behavior, assessments and attendance. Teachers are using E-school to analyze formative assessments. Student support staff is also using data to inform their decisions regarding development of behavioral planning for students. Weekly meetings are facilitated by two instructional coaches who examine student achievement data and identify teacher's needs regarding professional development.

CURRICULUM AND TEACHING	
Learning Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school day is extended by one hour. Students are encouraged to meet with teachers during this added hour to receive additional help. The day starts at 7:45 and ends at 2:30 pm. The school eliminated the 25 minute homeroom and reduced passing time from 4 to 2 minutes.
Mapped & Paced Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding by Design (UbD) is being used to help teachers "backward design" in order to create curriculum units, develop appropriate assessments and adjust classroom instruction. NYSED Site Visit Team members reviewed teacher curriculums and lesson plans that are being used for each content area.
Instructional Programming Linked to Student Needs Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some teachers are extensively trained in the formative assessment process. Twelve teachers have been trained in the SIOP. Language and content objectives will be observed in these classrooms. Daily lesson plans and formative and informative assessments are being used to determine student needs. The NYSED Site Visit Team observed the UbD format being used in many classrooms. Teachscape and iTouch training will take place on November 5, 2011. Documents provided by the school confirm this is scheduled.
Effective Teaching Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instructional coaches are providing direction for teachers regarding strategies to re-teach lessons. UbD is being used in instruction using the instructional cycle model, where teachers teach the lesson, adjust practice and assess results. Teachers were observed using unit topics and the Syracuse City School District curriculum benchmark rubric. Teachers also were observed using the Formative Assessment Daily Lesson Framework rubric as a tool to assess student understanding of daily lessons.
ELL/SWD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documents reviewed indicated that SIOP training will be used to address some needs of second language learners and special students. This training is scheduled to begin in January 2012. District English as a second language and special education specialists meet weekly with school teams to review data and identify student needs. Students with disabilities are placed in a least restrictive environment and some students are in other settings clustered with students with similar disabilities.

STUDENT SUPPORT	
Additional Social/Emotional Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students receive extra academic and social/emotional support from teachers and counselors. • The summer bridge program provided extra supports to incoming sixth grade students. • School leaders, teachers and guidance counselors are working to implement the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) plan. • An additional social worker was hired and is working with school staff and families to remediate issues related to poor student attendance, tardiness and to provide support the implementation of the 4-tiered Response to Intervention (RTI) framework. • There is an in-school suspension and a reflection room for students who need support outside of the classroom. • Academic Intervention Services (AIS) are ongoing and provided before school, during lunch, after school and embedded into the school schedule. • Students are not aware of a Credit-Recovery program.
Counseling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students and school leaders receive support from the guidance counselor, social worker and student support team. • School leaders have adopted a program called "All Aboard-Stay on Track," that provides a new procedure for students to smoothly transfer between classes. • The NYSED Site Visit Team met with several community organizations (e.g., Hillside, Contact) that are providing extra academic and counseling support to students. • Students reported teachers try to understand and be responsive to their needs.
Enrichment Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are ELA and math classes that are accelerated. • Students have an honor roll and junior honor society.

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP	
Effective Leadership and Principal Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers feel supported by the leadership team. The principal and the assistant principals are highly-visible in the hallways and classrooms. • The leadership team is receptive to teacher needs and is focused on positively improving classroom instruction and student behavior. • The evaluation process for both formal and informal observations is transparent and constructive. • The administrative team is responsive, respectful, and approachable.
Leadership Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School leaders provided the NYSED Site Visit Team with a PD calendar for the school year that outlines training that staff will participate in this school year (e.g., benchmark assessments, UbD, RTI). • School leaders have reviewed and are aware of the School Improvement Grant (SIG) and have provided staff with an update of the implementation plan. • School leaders are proactively reaching out to parents and the community to promote the school and to create positive relationships. • The school leadership team meets regularly to discuss school issues and the implementation of the school improvement plan.
School Improvement Manager/External Providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Director of School Reform is providing support to the school by meeting to discuss issues related to the implementation of the school improvement plan. • The school has external partnerships with local colleges and community organizations that provide support to students. They include the Syracuse University Gear-UP, Say Yes to Education and Partner for a Better Education.
Building Level Leadership Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The School Leadership Team (SLT) is established and meets regularly to discuss implementation of the school improvement plan, review data, discuss evaluations and discuss behavioral issues. • The SLT conducts quarterly reviews of data, trends, improvement needs and strategies to address identified needs. • School leaders plan to include Redesign team members in the school leadership team planning process.

SCHOOL CLIMATE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	
Environment is Conducive to Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School leaders and staff have participated in PBIS PD and are focusing on improving culture in the building. • NYSED Site Visit Team members observed PBIS matrices posted throughout school and reviewed the PBIS student handbook that outlines behavior expectations. • School leaders, teachers, parents and students reported school climate and safety have improved. • School leaders, students, parents and teachers believe there is a greater focus on high expectations for all students.
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School leaders are working in collaboration with building staff as part of the redesign and school leadership team meetings. • School partners stated that they feel supported by school leaders and are working with building leaders and staff to identify students that need services.
Parent Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents reported they are participating in the Parent Faculty Team (PFT). • Several parents expressed a desire for teachers to be more responsive to parent phone calls. • Parents stated they heard rumors of bullying and believe that this remains an ongoing issue that needs to be resolved. • Parents interviewed spoke favorably of the dress code and behavioral plan and after-school programming. • Parents have a parent liaison, a parent room and they are working to improve parent involvement.
External/Community-Based Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are several partners that are working with students. They include Syracuse University and the Hillside work Scholarship Connection.

BUDGET AND OTHER FUNDING SOURCES	
Budget Modifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructional technology resources, in the form of document cameras and projectors, were ordered for the school and are being processed by the district; however were not yet on site during the NYSED team site visit. • Desktop computers (30) and full-time substitute teachers (3.0 FTE) were eliminated from the plan due to budget reductions.
Use of 1003(g) or 1003(a) grant funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District and school staff agreed the SED delay to release SIG funding had a negative impact on the district/school's plans to order, set up, and use instructional technology in the classroom. • At the time of the NYSED team site visit, both the district and the school appear to be using SIG 1003 (g) funds as delineated in their application. • There are several budget modifications and amendments that may need to be completed, prior to the end of the grant year. • The school is receiving \$1,516,012 in SIG funding.
Use of Other Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school has committed approximately \$236,986 in other funding allocated to support and sustain the school's improvement efforts for year one of implementation.

DISTRICT SUPPORT AND PLANNING FOR DEVELOPMENT	
District Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The district has assigned a Director of School Reform and has a Director of High Schools and Career Education that provides periodic oversight to the school district.
JIT/SIG Alignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school has reviewed the JIT report and has included many of the key recommendations into their school improvement grant.

School Name

The NYSED Site Visit Team conducted a full-day visit at Grant Middle School on November 2, 2011. The team was able to collect information about the school's efforts to begin the implementation of their reform model for improving student learning. Staff, students, and parents all spoke positively of the school's efforts to improve student achievement and behavior.

The NYSED Site Visit Team met with various stakeholders and reviewed initiatives that appear to provide the school with the opportunity to make progress towards improved student achievement. The school leadership team is focused on a climate for high expectations for all students and school faculty.

Teachers meet regularly in common planning time, analyze student data, plan instruction strategies, and are beginning to develop common assessments. Common planning is in the beginning stages of implementation, and some interviewed expressed they would like to see this planning time be more consistent from department to department.

The school and the district appears to be working together to coordinate in their efforts to implement the Transformation Model. The school was safe, exceptionally clean, and conducive to learning. Transitions between classes appeared to be seamless, and the positive behavior expectations throughout the building were clear and consistent. All members of the school community are committed to the health, welfare and academic well-being of its students. However, parents would like to see more parents involved in school activities. District and school representatives were candid with their comments and highly cooperative throughout the PLA review process.