



Office of Innovative School Models

**Persistently Lowest Achieving (PLA) Schools
School Improvement Grant (SIG)
Monitoring Report**

School:	Delaware Academy School - Transformation Model	School District:	Syracuse City School District
Date of Site-Visit:	October 14, 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.</i>

Findings:

- According to staff, the current collective bargaining agreement between teachers and the Syracuse City School District ends June 2012.
- No further action has been taken to revise the existing collective bargaining agreement to include a value added system for evaluating teachers and principals.
- Teachers stated that they have heard preliminary information regarding education law 3012(c), which describes student growth as a component of teacher evaluations. Currently, teacher evaluations are not linked to student performance.
- The district was approved to receive the State Teacher Incentive Grant (STIG), which requires a great deal of cooperation with the teacher's union. Meetings have already taken place to discuss specific details.
- Idea Pad netbooks have been offered to teachers as an incentive and tool for professional development. According to district officials, the netbooks were in the district and in the process of being catalogued. However, there was no on-site evidence available.
- In preparation for the 2010-11 school year, all teachers and principals interviewed for their current positions.

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:

- At the time of the on-site visit, the "Data Dashboard" was not operational.
- It was observed in classrooms and stated by staff that the technology delineated in the school improvement plan and budget narrative – Smartboards, classroom computers and netbooks – are not yet on-site.
- Due to bussing issues, the extended school day has not yet begun. It was scheduled to begin October 18, 2010. This was stated by school leaders and confirmed by district staff.
- The district has established an Office of School Reform and a representative joined the PLA site-visit team for the visit to Delaware.
- The Performance Plan Template is under development at the New York State Education Department (SED). Therefore, no evidence was requested during this on-site visit.
- All professional staff, as delineated in the budget narrative, has been hired.
- The plan was found to be aligned with the Joint Intervention Team (JIT) 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:

- All staff received Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) training prior to the start of the school year. In addition, a SIOP coach was hired to deliver on-going professional development.
- School leaders and teaching staff confirmed that, prior to the beginning of the school year, all staff received six days of Expeditionary Learning (EL) training. It was observed in classrooms, that teachers were actively incorporating this training into their morning "Crew" meetings.
- Teachers stated that there was job-embedded EL training. However, evidence of this professional development was not witnessed.
- Teachers stated that Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) training and activities have only recently begun, with a PBIS coach (0.3 FTE) hired October 4, 2010 and the first meeting taking place October 12, 2010.

- There was no evidence of planning for additional professional development, aside from EL, beyond the end of October, 2010. However, school leaders stated that additional professional development would be scheduled at a meeting with instructional coaches on October 19, 2010.
- Specific evidence regarding the monitoring and analysis of professional development efforts was not requested during this on-site visit.
- It was stated that the “Data Dashboard” will be introduced to the staff at the end of October, and is due to become operational in January, 2011.
- Both EL and SIOP are research based programs and supportive of the instructional needs of the school (as indicated in the school’s JIT report).
- Evidence of the first EL theme of “Responsible Citizens” was observed in many classrooms via discussions and bulletin boards displaying student work.

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:

- Teachers used information obtained from Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), Rigby assessments and NYS standardized tests to monitor student progress. Examples of these assessments were provided to the PLA site visit team.
- Teachers indicated that they had conducted benchmark assessments in Mathematics prior to the site visit.
- It was stated by teachers that data analysis meetings currently take place afterschool. When the extended teaching day is implemented, weekly data analysis meetings will occur during the teaching day.

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:

- As already noted, at the time of the visit, a school-wide extension of the teaching day had not yet been put into place.

- Teachers stated that all curricula are mapped and aligned with NYS standards. Curricula are also aligned with Expeditionary Learning and “Treasures” ELA instructional materials through November of 2010.
- It was stated that instructional programming linked to needs assessments is beginning to occur. There was no on-site evidence of this occurring.
- In the classroom, teachers were observed referring to the learning objectives for each lesson. Learning objectives were prominently displayed. This was a recommendation noted in the JIT report.
- The district hired two English Language Arts (ELA) coaches and two math coaches.
- The school has a new Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) coach who has compiled lists of students with both English Language Learner (ELL) and student with disability (SWD) needs in order to align instruction appropriately.
- It was observed that a Kindergarten/Grade 1 dual language model is currently being implemented.

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:

- Teachers stated that Academic Intervention Services (AIS) have been built into the master schedule. However, the team received copies of teacher’s schedules and it was not evident when AIS was scheduled.
- It was observed that teachers and administrators were using PBIS techniques to address student behavior. For example, teachers used positive reinforcement to promote appropriate classroom behavior.
- The PLA site visit team interviewed the parent liaison (1.0 FTE) and the attendance assistant (1.0 FTE), who were hired by the district prior to the onset of the 2010-11 school year. Both stated that they conduct home visits to targeted students.
- Specific evidence regarding counseling and enrichment opportunities was not requested during the 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 intervention model.</i>

Findings:

- According to teacher focus group responses, a new leadership team is in place and has the support of the staff.
- During focus group discussions, parents indicated that the principal is establishing a culture of high expectations for students and staff.
- Students stated that the principal ensures that all individuals are treated with fairness, dignity, and respect.
- The principal stated that she has not been able to find sufficient time during the day to conduct walkthroughs, due to student behavior issues.
- No evidence was collected regarding professional development that is solely offered to the school leaders. However, it appears that all school leaders received the same professional development that the teachers received.
- A school improvement manager was not hired for this school; however, the district established an Office of School Reform. Teachers reported that the director of that office is highly visible in the school, and conducts classroom walk-throughs frequently.

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:

- At the time of the visit, the school appeared to be clean, safe, orderly and conducive to learning.
- During focus group discussions, teachers indicated that they understand the focus of the school's improvement efforts.
- The parent liaison applied for a community grant through Syracuse University, and has scheduled pro bono law clinics through the Say Yes to Education program.
- The school was in the process of creating and developing a parent-teacher organization. Approximately 100 parents gave contact information, and 30 parents expressed a willingness to volunteer.
- During focus group discussions, parents stated that they would like to see more multicultural events planned.
- According to the parent liaison, the school currently has plans for a Christmas store, managed by parents, which will then become a general school store after the holidays.

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:

- As indicated in the budget narratives and FS-10's, and as observed on-site, the district is using SIG funding to support the implementation of the school's intervention model.
- The district has committed approximately \$5.5 million over the next three years to directly support school improvement efforts in its three PLA schools.
- Title I, Title IIA, Title IID and Title III funds have been directed to the school to support school improvement initiatives.
- Say Yes to Education program funds have been allocated to Delaware Academy School, with the program taking place on-site as a part of the extended school day.

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 regarding 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>

Findings:

- The principal reported that she has received support from the Director of School Reform and district staff assigned to the school.
- The district has presented an organized and transparent plan for school improvement at Delaware Academy School, which incorporates recommendations from the JIT report.
- The leadership team, consisting of a principal and two assistant principals, was new to the school but not the district.

Summary:

The PLA team conducted a half-day site visit at Delaware Academy School on October 14, 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.