



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

School:	Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Multicultural Institute, School 39	School District:	Buffalo CSD
Date of Site-Visit:	March 29, 2011 (Second Visit)	Members of Site-Visit Team:	Susan Gibbons, Amy Rudat, Alexandra Pressley

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:

- School leaders reported collective bargaining continues.
- The District is still working with the BTF and the Council of Supervisors and Administrators on the extended day, which is not occurring yet. The External Learning Opportunity Program (ELOP) will be in place during the mornings this summer, and teachers will be trained in the afternoons.. Students were strongly urged to attend last year and about seventy percent did.
- Staff additions that have been made:
 - Four teacher assistants to support classroom instruction
 - One literacy coach for the junior high school
 - One Math coach, K-8
 - One Math teacher
 - Two Reading teachers, assigned to particular grade levels
 - Data coach, just hired, is split with School 45, and currently in training
 - Integrated instructional technology coach, not funded through SIG, but through the district
- Coaches have been hired, and most are in the process of working with teachers and planning/giving PLOs, modeling of lessons, and coaching. Coaches coordinate among themselves for planning purposes.
- Teachers indicated the District brought in Cognitive Coaching training for the coaches in PLA schools. In order to improve their own expertise and build internal capacity, instructional coaches shadow the consultants from Voyager

Learning, the Great Books Foundation and JP Associates as they work directly with classroom teachers. The school hired a literacy coach within the CBA.

- School level discussions of teacher evaluations are taking place.
- There has been some teacher turnover this year, but layoff information from the district has not been forthcoming. School leaders expect several teachers will leave.

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 principal and assistant principal each have a coach.
- Coaches and additional teachers have been hired.
- District representatives indicated extended day changes will need to be made through an amendment to the grant. They would need to implement ELOP in order to do so. ELOP is not required for students, but most do attend. Some students will be strongly encouraged to attend.
- Teachers indicated they were involved in planning for the next year's SIG grant.

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:

- Professional development for teachers has been provided in the form of PLOs and embedded in the classroom. Coaches have modeled lessons with teachers, begun using backward planning from unit assessments to drive and pace instruction, and provided guidance in using assessment data to inform instruction with teachers who are ready to do so.
- The professional development plan is coordinated and comprehensive with support from the coaches and with extensive PLO offerings during after-school and extended grade level meetings, as well as with modeling in classrooms by coaches. School leaders reported the extended grade level meetings of forty-five minutes daily may be scaled back next year. They described the process of providing professional development "front loading" this year, with a fine balance between pushing and nudging teachers, but expect to "settle down" next year.
- There can be so many things on which to focus that seem to be equally important that teachers feel overwhelmed. The school leaders indicated some teachers

feel overwhelmed at the number of meetings/trainings that are offered. There are ongoing discussions with administrators so there is a concentration rather than competing initiatives. Based on teacher recommendations, the remainder of the year will have fewer PLOs to provide teachers with sufficient time to implement the strategies/activities from the previous PLOs in their classrooms and work them into the curriculum. Over the next several months, the focus will be on implementation in the classrooms.

- Teachers spoke of next year, making sure they have enough time to focus on a particular topic or strategy by working with the administration to ensure that the professional development plan is grouped by theme.
- A framework for working collaboratively with outside consultants has been established; the literacy coach or appropriate site based professional developer shadows outside consultants when they work at MLK so the coach can support the work of the consultant in classrooms once he/she leaves.
- The identification of professional development needs and appropriate providers come from staff surveys and administrators' perceptions.
- Last summer teachers attended numerous PLOs sponsored by the district. This school year the teachers at #39 will use afternoons to train and practice co-teaching and other areas identified as needs.
- Coaches work with teachers within a grade level. This schedule was based on requests from teachers and administrators. According to teachers, the coaches provide three or four PLOs each week after school. Teachers reported the coaches provide immediate feedback and "it feels like a co-teaching situation." Grade level meetings are more focused, with a different facilitator for each meeting.
- Attendance at PLOs has been satisfactory. Administrators do track attendance, but assure staff they are not compelled to attend. Staff members understand they will be held accountable for the information and skills covered in the PLOs.
- A positive response to the use of technology in the classroom has been reported with the professional development provided by the technology coach. Classroom observations confirmed this.
- Cognitive Coaching has been provided for coaches and teachers as professional development for working together, and was reported as extremely helpful.
- The administration indicated it is still very early to measure the impact of professional development, although they have observed traces of impact at every grade level. Sometimes evidence is seen in the planning process, and sometimes it is observable in classroom practice. Many more teachers are using the whiteboards since PLO sessions were held on how to use them. Math teachers are doing backwards planning, starting with unit assessments. Teachers indicated they appreciate this approach, and are now doing additional PLOS. Teachers reported looking at the curriculum material and the planning of lessons in a different way after exposure to backwards planning.

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:

- A data dashboard is under development by the district. Rollout will take place at the administrative level in the summer of 2011, and at the teacher level in the summer of 2012.
- Data is being used in professional development with the intention to guide instructional practices.
- This use of data to inform instruction is still in the early stages, but coaches are working with teachers to ensure data is reflected in lesson planning and teaching strategies.
- The Administration is working toward making data use systemic and having teachers connect data results to instructional decisions for individual students. They reported traces of effectiveness are apparent.
- Teachers reported they have really begun to dig into the data, thanks to the coaches.
- Reading teachers reported using data to identify needed centers and areas of focus for instruction. Data is used to group students, with opportunities for meaningful practice of skills.
- The administration reported the school has begun to implement progress monitoring folders with students.

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:

- The school has not yet fully implemented the longer school day/school year as described in the grant application.
- The District representative reported meetings are being held with institutions of higher education at the District level about the common core standards. The higher education representatives want to attend the cross functional team meetings.
- The partners indicated they would like to see broader offerings in the sciences, especially with “fun” activities.
- The focus of the JIT report findings included writing across the curriculum, lesson writing and delivery through grade level and individual meetings as well as professional development technology.
- K-8 staff is participating in a writing across the curriculum program.
- Seventh grade students are “stressed out” by the focus on writing, according to the teachers. They are expected to participate in the writing across the curriculum program and step up to writing. Teachers feel writing helps with

behavior management. The coach is working with the teachers on pacing in this area.

- Grades 3-5 students requested more rigor and more opportunities to get up and move during class. They requested more academically related class projects (such as terrariums), the creation of a garden program and an after school reading program, as well as field trips to the museum and team sports for younger students. They also requested a music program
- Observations showed rigor and pacing in lessons across the grades is still uneven in practice. There are classrooms with great pacing and with high expectations, and classrooms where the pace was extremely slow and little to no demands were made of students. In PK-5 classrooms, most students were engaged, attentive and orderly, and there was consistency in terms of student work posted, lesson plan objectives, and the use of developmentally appropriate strategies.
- There was classroom evidence of a focus on early literacy and math in the PK-2 classrooms; most classrooms are text rich, contain word walls, have stations, show evidence of student work and student engagement. Instruction varied from direct instruction with no check for understanding to guided, explicit instruction with continual checks for understanding. Evidence of formative assessment was displayed on classroom walls.
- However, in grade six through eight classrooms observed there was not consistency in terms of student work posted, lesson plan objectives, or use of developmentally appropriate strategies. The level of student engagement varied greatly from classroom to classroom.
- The administration reported the implementation of greater use of technology has increased the level of motivation for students. Compared to the visit in December, many more teachers were observed using the whiteboard technology.

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:

- Students reported some teachers need to explain work more fully. Others said a lot of the material is easy, if you are paying attention. There are not many hands-on lessons, but lots of book work and worksheets. They feel if there are problems in the classroom, no learning takes place.
- Limited tutoring was available at the beginning of the year, but only some students took advantage of it.
- Every student has a mentor and they share one period each month on half days of school. Mentors work with six to ten students and are tasked to be advocates for the students. In some cases, parents have requested their child's mentor be present at a parent teacher conference. Attendance has increased on these half days and the causational or correlative relationship will be determined as more data is collected. The administration has provided guidelines and the front

loading of information for the mentoring program's first year activities, so the next year can focus on sustaining the program. Students, staff and parents reported a wide variety of opinions of whether or not mentoring is helpful to their schooling. The partner representatives described the mentoring program as "fantastic."

- Students indicated an understanding they can always go to student support services or to a counselor. Eighth grade parents were pleased their students were being prepared for high school, including those with IEPs.
- No evidence was gathered regarding enrichment opportunities for students.

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:

- The partners indicated they feel the principal has raised the standards.
- The partners indicated the principal has developed the level of trust at the school and knows the students. The school leaders do not take undue advantage of the offerings of the partners. The partnership team speaks highly of the principal's leadership.
- This is the principal's second year at the school, and the assistant principal is half-way through her second year. They see the administration as stabilizing.
- The principal received her coach about four weeks ago, and they touch base every week. The coach is strong with data and came from a District principalship. The principal and the coach together determine needs and the schedule. The assistant principal for academics has a coach as well. The school leadership reports that there are no specific guidelines for coaches.
- The principal has attended an overview session on the use of data recently and will be further trained at the end of June, after which teachers will be trained.
- The administrative team is implementing professional development activities and partnership activities as in the grant.
- The parents reported the school has done a very good job with the site based management team.

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:

- Student work lined the walls of the hallways and the classrooms along with charts and teacher-made posters. Learning standards were posted in the halls as well as “Mentor Group” photographs of the students and their mentors. The school as a whole was very clean and bright and well suited for its purpose.
- The partners indicated teachers are very loyal to each other, and very dedicated to and supportive of their students. Classroom visits showed teachers and students interacted with mutual respect for the most part.
- Parents reported attendance is a problem, especially on half days, which are a challenge for parents as well as the school. Staff are confronting the issue and “not making excuses.” The school leaders indicated the mentoring program has served to alleviate the half day attendance problem somewhat.
- According to the school leaders, the school has begun the rollout of PBIS, which will be complete by September. The number of suspensions has been reduced by half (33 students) this year.
- The school is trying to collect the data from the School Wide Information System (SWIS) for PBIS.
- The administration reports some grade four and five students have not taken on the charge from PBIS and are not working to potential. Motivation strategies include the King’s Cash reward system in the middle school every ten weeks as an incentive.
- Students reported frustration with student misbehavior, especially when it affected their ability to participate in celebrations.
- The assistant principal believes the building has “stabilized” in terms of shared expectations.
- The school has a very parent friendly environment. Parents reported opportunities for involvement are facilitated by a full time and a part time parent facilitator. A parent room is staffed and focuses on communication with parents, bringing them into the school, and linking them to the PTO. Parents report there are eight to ten parents at PTO meetings, which are held once a month. They have an agenda for the meetings and the principal, teachers, district representatives and guest speakers attend.
- Parents reported they were able to have some input into the hiring of the full time parent facilitator, in addition to the part time position. The facilitators’ role is to bring the parents to the school, and get them involved. Sometimes parents get together to call other parents.
- A parent survey goes out monthly. Parents want to be involved, and the parents at the meeting report the teachers welcome classroom involvement and attempt to accommodate parent schedules. Parents want to come into the school, to work with students, to go on field trips and to meet with individual teachers.
- The small group of parents interviewed in the focus group indicated they feel welcomed and they have a sense of ownership. Parents reported the school based management team does a good job at this school, with involving parents. Thorough and up to date records are kept. Dramatic improvements have taken place over the last two years.
- The school structure has changed, according to parents interviewed. More information is going out and there is more administrative follow-through and going into classrooms. Parents indicated the school communicates with them via Connect Ed and sends out letters to parents to invite them in. A packet is sent home twice a month. Parent teacher conferences have changed for PLA schools in that each parent will get an individualized plan for each student, an appointment is made for the student, teacher and the parents, and a follow up meeting takes place in the third quarter, with real-time data from the dashboard. This will be fully phased in next year.

- Parents feel the school is working slowly but steadily to achieve its goals, and the students are doing much better and feel more comfortable. The “children are excited about doing what they need to do.” The teachers are getting the students excited. The school is pushing for higher expectations. School leaders attribute this to the fact that every student is connected to at least one adult, through the mentoring program and in other ways. Mentor meetings occur at least once each month where they participate in activities around goal setting. Older students also mentor the younger ones, even in settings outside the school.
- Students indicated they are excited about the recent changes at the school, including higher expectations, greater structural enforcement, and more administrative follow up.
- One student reported she thinks her parent does not like the school because she feels expectations are not high enough.
- Business Partners include 21st Century, WNY United, and DuPont. These outside partnerships center around mentoring and support. While not officially coordinated with each other, there is regular communication among the three partners the visitors met with, and the partners report the school administration is guiding the partnerships in a positive way. Each partner intends to continue the program next year, with collaboration with administration regarding next steps. Current mentoring partnerships are full to capacity.
- Monthly meetings are held with the 21st Century program representatives to ensure the program is getting what it needs, and if 21st Century is providing what it should. The CAO procured a three year grant to address student achievement and student assessments during an after school program. A hot meal is provided, with one and one half hours of academics and enrichment activities. The average attendance is between 80 and 100 students, with 6 teachers and 9 teacher assistants or aides. Parents are welcome to attend. The representative indicated he wants to raise expectations and get things done.
- The Western New York United collaborative partnership began almost ten years ago and provides a curriculum about drugs, alcohol, and conflict resolution, which is taught by WNY United staff in regular 45 minute classroom sessions. Students are referred to the program. The Achievement mentor program (AMP) pairs up with students teachers have identified with social and behavioral needs, for a total of 20 hours each week. The mentors report out to teams once a month. The partner representative reported the teachers are loyal to each other and dedicated to their students.
- DuPont has different networks sponsored by the company, and one, the black network, was challenged to not just celebrate MLK Day, but to sponsor projects aligned with MLK’s purpose. There are nine members of the network and they work with fifteen students (chosen by the school) to fill the gap parents have left behind. They hope to work through the students, to have parents notice a change, and then come to the school to ask how they can support this change at home. The network members teach achievement and behavior skills, buy books, take students to functions, and will purchase computers for them. They obtained a grant to provide memberships to the inner city YMCA. This program is tied to the school’s mentoring program. Parents were invited to attend a dinner to celebrate student growth. They need a long term strategy for next year, with a team timeline and a strategic plan.
- The partners share dialog about referrals among resources available in the different programs in informal meetings as they see each other in the building.
- The administration reported the school has begun a partnership with Buffalo Hearing and Speech to support the population of students with hearing and speech issues.

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 LEA is using some of the SIG funding to support the implementation of the school intervention model. It has not implemented all of the components of the grant.
- The Instructional Technology Coach is funded through district funds.

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>

Findings:

- District support, according to the school leaders, has been consistent and very helpful, with the District liaison assigned to the school on site frequently.
- The District representative expressed a need to ensure all aspects of the school act as one body.
- The District has had all of the higher education partners in to a discussion of the common core standards and their implementation.
- The school leaders report a great deal of support from the District, “only a phone call away.” The District representative participated in portions of the visit.
- The LEA has replaced the school leadership.

Summary:

The SED three member site visit team conducted a full-day site visit at Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Multicultural Institute on March 29, 2011. The school is continuing the implementation of most of the grant’s plan, with the exception of the extended day, the finalization of the teacher evaluation system, and other contractual issues.

A great deal of relevant professional development is being made available to teachers, through PLOs, classroom-based coaching, and outside providers; to the extent that the school leaders need to slow down to allow teachers time to assimilate what they are learning. Effects are beginning to be seen in teaching and learning. Similarly, early results of data use for instructional decision making are evident.

However, pacing and rigor continue to be concerns as they are not consistent across classrooms.

Effective parent involvement and partnerships are developing. The relationship with district staff provides consistent and valuable support.

The next site visit to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Multicultural Institute will be during the Fall of 2011.