



Office of Innovative School Models

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

School:	International School #45-- Transformation Model	School District:	Buffalo Public Schools
Date of Site-Visit:	December 9, 2010	Members of Site-Visit Team:	Major Capers, Barbara Moscinski, Kathryn Ahern

Approximate enrollment is 860 students; approximately 49% English Language Learners (ELL) and including formerly identified ELL students known as FLEP the total is approximately 64%. The school is currently serving students in PreK- Grade 8 and is planning to reconfigure to a PreK-Grade 6 school in the 2011-2012 academic year.

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:

- District staff stated that meetings and discussions have taken place with the Buffalo Teachers Federation (BTF) and the Buffalo Council of Supervisors and Administrators (BCSA) regarding the collective bargaining agreement and the development of a teacher evaluation system.
- The Buffalo Public Schools (BPS) created and is implementing a new Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) system for the 2010-2011 school year. Teachers and school leaders stated that they have received training and have begun to use the new system.
- There are several positions funded by the School Improvement Grant (SIG) that have been or are in the process of being filled, and there are some positions that are not yet filled. School leaders indicated that they had input/flexibility regarding the hiring process.
- Teachers stated that there is a need for more bilingual aides to provide support for parents and students.
- Evidence regarding a clear and transparent process for identifying staff for rewards and remediation was not requested during this on site visit.

PLANNING	
Implementation of	<i>The district/school is on track to complete activities in accordance with the</i>

Timeline	<i>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 school has started to implement several of the activities outlined in its transformation model plan: Teacher training has begun to help teachers plan and implement teaching of the district approved curriculum. English language arts teachers are involved in professional development five days a week.
- Evidence regarding the school's performance targets was not requested during this site visit. The performance plan is under development at SED
- The district and the school are implementing components of the plan based on JIT recommendations outlined in the school's transformation plan.

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:

- Teachers interviewed stated that there is a lot of professional development offered at the International School. For example, teachers have completed a survey of needs, participated in classroom management training, science, ELA, ELL sessions by grade levels.
- Teachers stated that there are computers and White Boards available; however they would like to receive additional professional development in the use of this technology to support instruction.
- The school leadership team stated that they plan to implement a multi-grade professional development opportunities as soon as all coaches are hired.
- Teachers and school leaders stated that permanent substitute teachers are assigned to the school. This allows newly-hired staff to shadow current staff. It also allows staff to participate in lesson-shares with colleagues. Both practices are research-based and supportive of the instructional needs of the school.
- Some teachers stated that there is a need for more vertical common planning time related to discussions on curriculum articulation across grade and content areas.

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>
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Findings:

- Staff and school leaders stated that common planning time is used to create interim assessments. Test items are referenced directly to NYS performance indicators (PI).
- Teachers stated that although they meet together as a grade level to discuss data, there is too much data to process, and they need time for training and discussions across grade levels on the use of data to improve instruction.
- The school leadership team stated that the district data warehouse project has not yet started, but is expected to begin within the next few months.
- Teachers stated that there is a designated district staff person and literacy coach who have access to and can retrieve and display data for their school.
- District administrators shared the data dashboard currently under development. The dashboard is to be rolled out to school leaders of the PLA schools in January.
- The school leadership team stated that staff receives professional development on the use of data and the literacy coach meets with the principal weekly to discuss data and its use to support instruction.

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>
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:

- Teachers stated that the Associate Superintendent for Teaching/Learning provided curriculum and pacing guides to the faculty.
- Teachers stated that the district assessments tests for fluency at selected intervals (i.e., benchmarking at the beginning, middle, and end of year); however they would prefer to receive more comprehensive assessment information that would show student testing trends.
- Teachers stated that due to the large number of languages and diverse backgrounds of students, there is a need to focus on strengthening student's conceptual knowledge.
- Teachers stated that the Diebel assessments do not correlate with the district curriculum.
- Teachers stated that there should be a focus on both differentiated instruction and differentiated assessments.
- Teachers stated that they would like to see co-teachers at the Grade 3 level as co-teachers already exist at other grade levels.
- Teachers stated that there are additional challenges, which include understanding the use of pacing guides for ELL's and students with disabilities

(SWD), a policy for the identification of SWDs, and acquiring needed resources to meet the needs of this student population.

- Teachers stated that they are aware that the building math teacher meets with the principal to review data binders; however teachers also need time to meet together to review, discuss, analyze and process the information included in the binders.
- Teachers stated that science kits are not in all classrooms and some textbooks are still not available for upper grades. Some teachers also stated that they would like requests for social studies and science materials to be ordered as quickly as they are for reading and math.

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:

- The SED site visit team observed that some students are receiving additional academic support during math and reading blocks.
- Teachers stated that their students need extra support and several programs are expected to start in the near future. The Saturday Jump Start program will start in January 2011 and the Saturday help for ELLs will start December/January which will be housed at the International School.
- Parents and community agency representatives stated that students and parents receive support from the local community centers that have multilingual staff. Several centers have staff that work directly in the building several days a week.
- Students reported feeling that they are supported by the new administration at the International School.
- Guidance staff stated that it would be a benefit to have a PreK-Grade 4 counselor designated in order to assist students develop appropriate social skills.
- Guidance staff also stated that student support services staff need to develop a PBIS matrix, and develop a system to coordinate SWD/ELL referrals.
- No evidence was requested regarding enrichment opportunities for students. This issue will be discussed during the next 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:

- School leadership stated that the principal, assistant principals, and other selected staff are receiving professional development via the NYC Leadership Academy.
- The district administration states that the school principals are appointed based upon their past experience as change agents.
- The building leadership has received professional development and has attended training on the instructional rounds. A consultant contact is development to continue instructional leadership training to make improvements in teaching and learning.
- The assistant principal was hired and stated that she is working directly with the school on the implementation of the transformation plan.
- The district plan states that the School-Based Management Team (SBMT) completed its first meeting and has been operational over the last two years. The SBMT has developed a plan to address issues, and to meets monthly with the principal, teachers, parents and students.
- The district is providing leadership training to the principal and assistant principals, and selected staff.

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 that the school was recently renovated and is very clean and well maintained. Supervision in the hallways was sufficient.
- Students transferred between classes orderly and students were not observed roaming the hallways. In many classrooms observed, students were attentive and on task.
- Teaching staff displayed positive morale and enthusiasm for the new initiatives at their school.
- Teachers stated that they meet as a grade levels (e.g., grade 3 only) to discuss curriculum and to review data.
- Teachers would like to see improved communication between teachers, the administration and the district.
- Teachers stated that they would like information about and be involved in the planning for the transition to a Pre-K-6 building.
- Parents stated that they would like to develop a system where school information can be translated prior to being sent home. They would also like to have phone calls translated for parents who are not English speakers.
- Parents and staff stated that there is no brochure to provide information to parents on community services that are available for students and their families.
- The school is collaborating with community-based partners to provide translation and other family supportive services.
- The school has a Parent Facilitator who is working to provide support to parents. There is also an operational parent resource center that has a variety of

resources for both parents and students and parents have participated in workshops.

- There is an active PTO that has recently held elections for officers. The PTO is planning to develop bylaws. Parents also participate on the Parents coordinating Council.

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 SIG funds to support the transformation model at the International School. According to the budget documents, the district has committed approximately \$5.5 million over the next three years to directly support implementation of the transformation model.
- According to the approved FS-10 for the International School 1003(g) grant, other funding sources include the learning technology grant that is being used to provide professional development to teachers on technology integration.
- The SED site visit team cross-checked the school’s FS-10 with staff lists and programs that are expected to be in place. As stated and verified during staff interviews, several staff positions need to be filled and several programs areas remain to be funded.

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 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 school has the flexibility to modify the schedule and to allocate funding to hire extra staff as needed over a three year period.
- The district has created a school turnaround office and is funding an associate superintendent to provide support directly to the PLA schools. The associate superintendent is charged with helping the school meet the requirements of their SIG application and JIT recommendations.

Summary:

The SED site visit team conducted a full-day visit at the International School #45 School on December 9, 2010. Although the visit was brief, the SED site visit 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.