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

School:	Martin Luther King, Jr. Multicultural Institute	School District:	Buffalo Public Schools
Date of Site-Visit:	December 9, 2010	Members of Site-Visit Team:	Susan Gibbons, Sharon Holder, Jean Beaudet, Alexandra Pressley

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:
- District staff indicated 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.
- According to the school leaders, the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) evaluation process has been put in place and includes a pre-observation conference, and a collaborative discussion of the purpose of the lesson. After the observation, a post observation conference takes place, incorporating the data from the walk throughs, to provide feedback and an opportunity to create a Teacher Improvement Plan with no more than three areas for improvement. Follow up occurs within 15 days.
- The Principal stated that she and the staff were knowledgeable about and in the process of implementing a new teacher evaluation system, agreed upon by the district and union this fall. This system is not currently aligned with Educational Law 3012-c to link teacher evaluations to student achievement.
- School leaders are expected to use the evaluation process as a tool to look at the general classroom environment as well as explicit instruction.
Walk through notes are made daily, then the administrators schedule individual or partner team meetings. Evaluation strategies are intended to provide support for teachers according to the administration. The district will provide coaches and modeling.
- Specific evidence regarding rewarding staff was not requested on this site visit.

- The district screens all new positions and the school interviews and makes the final decisions on hiring.
- There are four full time substitutes and one more will be hired by the district to allow for additional teacher planning time.
- Candidates for the position of data coach are being interviewed. Two new full time math coaches and a new literacy coach have been hired since September to help with AIS services.
- Currently, twenty percent of teachers are temporary or probationary. Two are up for tenure each year. According to the principal, 80% of the staff is tenured.

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:
- Charts in the SED visitors' room showed steps in the implementation plan with sticky notes showing staff input.
- The required activities that were taking place at the time of the visit were enhanced and site-specific professional development, the employment of the School Implementation Manager (SIM), the hiring of building substitutes to support teacher planning time, and clear support from the district regarding implementation of the model. Required activities that were not in place at the time of the visit were: training for the Principal through a coach, extended day, and the use of data to inform instruction. According to the district representative, the principal's coach would be in place by the end of December.
- The principal stated that an ELA coach had just been hired in September, and the school was still looking for a math coach and a data specialist.
- 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.
- The administrative staff stated that each activity initiated at the school is tracked and measured against whether the activity is in alignment with the recommendations of the JIT. The principal also stated that the JIT recommendations have been integrated into the Professional Learning Plan for each staff member and staff are required to track actions taken in the classroom that align with the recommendations.
- More is expected of teachers now, as well. They describe themselves as being in a "growth and acceptance phase." They reported that they are happier as they see progress. Students are also more aware of their responsibilities in being accountable. The academic assistant principal stated that they have moved from a sense of compliance to one of accountability and "fidelity."

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	
Quality, On-going,	*Implementing job-embedded professional development, as defined by the*

Job-embedded Professional Development	*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:
- Administrators indicated that the professional development program provides more opportunities for collaboration, and expectations for students have risen. There are a number of professional development opportunities, after school and some Saturdays, in reading, classroom management, technology, vocabulary instruction, and learning centers; these sessions address teacher and student needs based on data. The money incentive is contractual and is effective, according to school leaders. This level of participation in planning professional development
- Staff reported that Professional Learning Opportunities (PLOs) had occurred prior to the start of the school year, and were on-going. According to staff, administrators surveyed staff to develop appropriate PLOs, and staff felt their recommendations had been heard. This approach is supportive of instructional needs, school by school, rather than by the district.
- Administrators described quality, on-going, job-embedded professional development and shared a monthly calendar of PLOs for the school year. They are only two days into the formal PLO program and so far only two sessions of Technology 101 have been offered. Only ten can participate in each session, but those who the school leaders feel need it most are attending. The school is transitioning from MAC computers to PCs, and some professional development is needed to accomplish the change.
- This level of participation in planning professional development was not available at the school before, according to staff.
- School leaders indicate that internal coaches are trained by the NYC Leadership Academy.
- The academic assistant principal stated she is able to view instructional practices, identify needs and suggest improvements to teachers.
- The principal stated that she is holding staff accountable for implementing instructional strategies that increase student achievement, and she is supporting this implementation by offering related school-based PLOs. These PLOs have been developed in consultation with the staff. However, staff is still not required to attend after school professional development activities, although a pay incentive for attending had had some effect on participation. The school leaders indicated that teachers are held accountable for content and implementation, whether they attend or not.
- Specific evidence regarding monitoring and analysis was not requested during this on-site visit. This area will be a focus for the next visit.

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:
- Data collection has started; teachers reported that they are aware that changes have occurred since last year.
- The academic assistant principal stated that although the school plans to move toward using data to inform instructional decisions, the procedure for doing so was not yet in place. However, the data to inform instructional programming is available from a number of sources, including MClass, DIBELS, state assessments, student work and classroom observations. Staff needs to learn how to use this information to inform instruction and instructional decisions. Non-academic data, such as student and teacher attendance and suspensions, will need to be considered, as well. The School Wide Information System will be utilized for Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) data. PBIS is structured similarly to the response to intervention approach to behavior.
- School leaders indicated that the school uses DIBELS and end of unit assessments in reading and math, but social studies and science assessment analyses identify specific weaknesses. There has been discernable progress in reading. The school reviews the state assessment results and does an item analysis by building, 3-8, and dissects the questions. Assessment "data points" have not yet been identified.
- Teachers reported that last year they were trained on the use of the data system and this year they will be trained by a data coach on how to use the data from the system.

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:
- At the time of this visit, increased learning time activities had not been implemented by the school. According to the approved SIG plan, the increased learning time had to be negotiated as part of the collective bargaining agreement.
- The administrative team and instructional staff stated that they are implementing the district curriculum framework. The academic assistant principal stated that although the school plans to align current student academic needs with the district curriculum framework, this work has not yet begun.

- The SED site visit team observed during classroom visits in the upper grades that students were either placed in ELA classes focusing on basic phonemic and decoding instruction, or were placed in traditional grade level ELA classes with little differentiation. Teachers reported that differentiation in the classroom consists of narrowing down, grouping, specifying content and strategies for different learning areas. However, the academic assistant principal stated that in order to support literacy skill development, there was a focus on integrating vocabulary instruction across the curriculum. The academic assistant principal further stated that there was a need to focus on "purposeful planning." She stated that at the moment, there was grade-level meeting time but very limited department meeting time to allow for vertical planning. By March, they hope to be engaged in "purposeful practice" for all learning areas, with differentiation in place for small groups.
- School leaders and teachers indicated a need for common planning time, both across grade levels and between them.
- During classroom visits, the SED site visit team observed in grades 5-8 that instruction lacked rigor, and did not engage the higher order thinking skills of students.
- School leaders indicated that instructional programming is linked to needs assessment, which may explain why the curriculum and supportive materials that were reviewed appeared to be on a lower level than might be assumed for the grade level being taught. The school requires explicit instruction at this time. There were Direct Instruction charts on the walls in some classrooms, including steps for I, we, you, and feedback, but there was little evidence the strategy was being implemented. Most instruction observed was teacher led or teacher directed, with students responding to specific questions.
- The curriculum follows district pacing guidelines, but there is limited vertical alignment. The alignment of student needs with district curriculum, where curricular decisions are limited by the district, does not allow much leeway.
- The library is accessible to classes by a schedule twice a cycle for each classroom; access and use is available at any time. There are no classroom libraries as part of the program.
- Teachers reported there is an issue about expectations for students. Expectations are higher but may not be realistic   Children currently do not achieve at a level high enough to reach the expectations. The teachers and the students appear to be on a "catch up" arc or trajectory to reach a reasonable baseline and level of rigor, according to the academic assistant principal.
- Lesson plan review showed that comments are provided to classroom teachers, both positive and constructive, and the plans appear to have been thoroughly reviewed by the administration. Mention is made of rigor, lack of rigor, and the need for higher expectations in the administrators' comments.
- There are weekly grade level meetings, where math and ELA are alternating topics. This is more time than was scheduled in the past, but there is very limited department meeting time to allow for vertical planning.
- In 7th and 8th grades, work is being conducted on vocabulary across the curriculum.
- Teachers indicated that hey plan on using "authentic literature," but are not yet prepared, and are focusing on expository writing across the curriculum.
- Writing portfolios are not used regularly in the focus on literacy, but rather seem to be a collection of samples of student work and data collection.
- School administrators indicate that teachers don't understand "skilled fidelity" as it applies to the response to intervention process.

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:
- AIS services are provided by teachers in the classroom, and tracked by individual teachers.
- The majority of students should be receiving services according to the academic assistant principal.
- The 21st Century Schools program is a partnership, providing after-school academics and enrichment, tutoring, dinner, as well as extracurricular activities such as scouts, dance, art, music and computer classes. Some of the school's classroom teachers also work in the 21st Century program.
- The mentoring program commenced the day prior to the visit. Each student is assigned to an adult in a mixed group for 45 minutes on half days, once each month. The attendance problem is one area targeted for change through this program.
- Students indicated that the leadership of the school is both supportive and effective. Students reported that the learning environment has improved dramatically as a result.

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:
- The principal indicated that she fosters the spirit of collaboration, and student advancement and common goals are among her priorities for the school.
- The principal has completed the Academy, and will have a principal coach at the school one day a month as part of the plan. There are also program specific coaches in the use of data, math and ELA.
- Teachers indicated that they feel that the principal respects them.
- The academic assistant principal has a Reading First BOCES background with intense training, and her priorities are the climate to assure instructional practice and focus, and the implementation of changed expectations for behavior.
- The academic assistant principal is in the second year of three for the district-sponsored Principals Academy (held for approximately 30 individuals at a time, including probationary assistant principals); some training is district-specific, some not.

- The SIM sees her role as keeping the principal focused on the educational program by taking over management duties. She has management and behavior management skills. The SIM assistant principal reports that she focuses on building management, student behavior and the organization of the building.
- The School Implementation Manager leadership program for assistant principals started on November 29, 2010.
- Teachers, parents and staff indicate that they are pleased with the new administration, and feel that the school has a more orderly environment since the current principal began in 2009.
- Students indicated that the leadership of the school is both supportive and effective.
- Students stated that the school leaders are visible and approachable. They can express their concerns and have them addressed immediately.
- At the time of this visit, the Principal had not yet been assigned a coach. The district representative stated that the coach would be in place by the end of December.
- The Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) implementation has just begun, according to the school leader.
- The SED site visit team observed during classroom visits that in the upper grades (5 -8), classrooms were not engaging learning environments. Materials were unorganized, reference charts were not posted, and very few examples of student work were posted. Student work that was posted was often worksheets, and student writing was not displayed.
- Parents expressed support for the current principal and staff, and stated that they felt they could communicate concerns and have them addressed promptly. Teachers see changes under the new administration and appreciate the additional feedback they are getting.

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:
- At the time of the visit, the school appeared safe and the overall school climate was generally orderly. Administrators and staff were present in the hallways during transitions to ensure a calm and orderly process.
- The hallways were clean, classrooms not as much so. Some classrooms were messy with litter on the floor.
- Staff was using a color card system for discipline. Administrators and staff were present in the hallways during transitions to ensure a calm and orderly process.
- Students often appeared bored or confused, in need of direction; however, they were not predictably disruptive.
- Specific evidence regarding a shared vision was not requested at the time of the visit.
- School administrators reported that the climate is slowly changing as the school structure does, first for teachers, then for students. The administration is trying to

be more focused than reactive and is working on developing a spirit of collaboration.
- There is an automated telephone system in place to notify parents of activities at the school. Parents and teachers stated that there was a need for parent education classes to be held at the school. According to parents, although there are classes provided by the district, parents would be more likely to take advantage of this resource if it were provided in the school.
- External/community-based partners include the 21st Century partnership, which provides after school academics and enrichment, tied to school support of students as above.

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:
- Title I provides a full time instructional technical coach and a part time teacher for integration services.

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 principal reported that the district had been to the school to provide implementation support over 30 times since the beginning of the school year.
- The administrative staff stated that the district had allowed them to hire the ELA, math, and data coaches.

Summary:

The four member SED site visit team conducted a full-day visit at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Multicultural Institute on December 9, 2010, where some evidence of the implementation of the transformation model was seen.

The school is in the early stages of implementing professional development, the new administrative structure, and the annual professional performance review process for evaluation of teachers. It has not addressed extending the school day, the use of data to inform instruction, vertical alignment of the curriculum, or increasing the rigor of the teaching and learning process.

The next site visit will focus on evidence of the expansion of the steps in the plan and faithfulness to the time line.