



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

<b>School:</b>	South Park High School (SPHS) – Transformation Model	<b>School District:</b>	Buffalo Public Schools
<b>Date of Site-Visit:</b>	December 9, 2010	<b>Members of Site-Visit Team:</b>	Erica Cervine, LoriAnn Curtin, Jamal Young

<b>STAFFING</b>	
<b>Collective Bargaining</b>	<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>
<b>Teacher Evaluations linked to Student Performance</b>	<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>
<b>Identify and Reward staff or Remediate/Remove Staff</b>	<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>
<b>Implementation of Strategies to Recruit, Place, and Retain Qualified Staff</b>	<i>Activities are funded to recruit, place, and/or retain highly qualified. Name and describe the activities.</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.
- According to teachers and school leaders, teacher evaluations are conducted both formally and informally. Each teacher receives an informal walk-through with a follow-up discussion with the school leader and written feedback one time per month. Informal walk-throughs with no written feedback occur more frequently. Formal observations are conducted once per year. No evidence was gathered regarding whether or not this current evaluation system uses student performance data as a criterion.
- Teachers, school leaders, and district leaders stated that a teacher evaluation system is being put in place. Staff training on the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) system took place on December 13<sup>th</sup>. The APPR evaluation document was submitted to the PLA team. However, the SED site visit team did not see evidence that the system will include the use of student performance data in rating teachers.
- When interviewed, the focus group of school leaders and the focus group of teachers each separately stated that they are aware of education law 3012 (c), and they are aware that the newly enacted law will involve evaluating teachers based on student performance, beginning in September 2011.
- The district is currently interviewing candidates for the unfilled positions.

**PLANNING**

<b>Implementation of Timeline</b>	<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>
<b>Performance Targets</b>	<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>
<b>Implementation of JIT Recommendations</b>	<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 Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP).</i>

**Findings:**

- According to school leaders, most, but not all, of the positions that are included on the school's approved School Improvement Grant budget have been filled.
- School leaders stated that the data coaching positions have not yet been filled.
- The element that appears to be off-track for implementation is the need to hire the staff for positions delineated in the school improvement grant.
- The Performance Plan Template is under development at the State Education Department (SED). Therefore, no evidence was requested during this on-site visit.
- The plan was found to be aligned with the Joint Intervention Team (JIT) recommendations at the time the School Improvement Grant Application was approved.

<b>PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT</b>	
<b>Quality, On-going, Job-embedded Professional Development</b>	<i>Implementing job-embedded professional development, as defined by the USED, and as approved by NYSED.</i>
<b>Supportive of Instructional Needs</b>	<i>All professional development is researched based and supportive of the instructional needs of the school.</i>
<b>Monitoring and Analysis</b>	<i>Professional development is monitored and analyzed to ensure staff participation and classroom implementation.</i>

**Findings:**

- The SED site visit team did not see an established list of professional development offerings for the 2010-2011 school year.
- The SED site visit team observed that common planning time is being used effectively to deliver targeted professional development that is aligned with the Joint Intervention Team recommendations. The school leaders stated that they planned professional development opportunities to support the instructional needs of the building. Teachers had 5 days of training in the summer on topics including; vocabulary development, explicit instruction, writing lesson objectives, and lesson planning. Additionally, according to the school leaders, the professional development helped change their focus to ensuring that instructional objectives are being met.
- The school leaders stated that the implementation of skills learned during professional development is being monitored through administrative walk-throughs.

<b>DATA ANALYSIS</b>	
<b>Data to Inform Instructional</b>	<i>Data is used to identify and implement research-based instructional programs that are aligned with state standards</i>

<b>Programming</b>	
<b>Data for Instructional Decisions for Student Achievement</b>	<i>A system is being implemented which allows for the continuous use of data to make instructional decisions for students.</i>

**Findings:**

- The SED site visit team did not collect any evidence regarding the use of data to identify and implement research-based instructional programs. This will be a focus of the next on-site visit.
- School leaders stated that core subject area teachers are developing common assessments to use formatively. The SED site visit team did not see evidence of the use of data to inform instruction.
- The school leaders stated that they conducted item analysis on some of the June NYS Regents exams.

<b>CURRICULUM AND TEACHING</b>	
<b>Increased Learning Time</b>	<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>
<b>Mapped and Paced Curriculum</b>	<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>
<b>Instructional Programming is Linked to Needs Assessment</b>	<i>Curricular decisions have been made to meet the needs of all students.</i>
<b>Effective Teaching</b>	<i>There is evidence of rigor, relevance, pacing, and alignment of curriculum to State Standards, and student engagement from Highly Qualified Teachers (HQT).</i>
<b>ELL/SWD</b>	<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 administrative team reported that the school has a longer school day than most schools in the district. The extra period is used for credit recovery. The principal stated that contractually, South Park High School teachers do not work a longer day than other teachers in the district as they utilize a staggered schedule with some teachers working 1<sup>st</sup> period, and others working 9<sup>th</sup> period – the last period of the day.
- The SES site visit team observed that every classroom visited had the lesson objective posted.
- The school did not submit complete curriculum maps for all core subject areas. Some of the maps submitted did not list how each lesson was aligned to the NYS Learning Standards. Mathematics is being mapped unit by unit or month by month as the school year progresses.
- The curriculum maps submitted for English language arts were the most comprehensive.
- In each class, teachers aligned instruction to the lesson plans provided. Lesson plans identified NYS Learning Standards and performance indicators to be addressed.
- In the majority of classes, high-quality instruction was evident. Teachers posted learning objectives, modeled practice for students, posed critical, open-ended questions, sought evidence of student learning, and maintained a pace, which

demonstrated student engagement. Teachers actively used Smart Boards to deliver lessons; referred to prior lessons; and provided encouragement for students in various stages of learning content. In most classes, teachers provided direct instruction to large groups of students. Small group instruction was also used to provide intensive support for students.

- The school has several levels of English language learner courses.
- Gathering additional evidence regarding academic programming for students with disabilities and for English language learners will be a focus area for the next on-site visit.

<b>STUDENT SUPPORT</b>	
<b>Additional Support</b>	<i>Students are receiving extra academic and developmental support based on student need (AIS, character development, PBIS).</i>
<b>Counseling</b>	<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>
<b>Enrichment Opportunities</b>	<i>Students have opportunities to participate in academic and social enrichment activities during and after the school day and during the summer.</i>

**Findings:**

- School leaders stated that curricular decisions have been made to meet the needs of all students, as academic intervention services are offered in all core subject areas.
- The school's master schedule shows extensive courses for students with disabilities.
- The SED site visit team observed that the Nova Net program was in place for credit recovery. However, it was observed that only one teacher, certified in one area, was in place in the room.
- School leaders stated that students receive additional counseling support from three guidance counselors, and four school social workers (two social workers are on the crisis intervention team, one is part of the committee on special education, and the last works in the full service health clinic which is on-site). Students interviewed at SPHS reported that counseling services are available for a variety of student needs, including education/career counseling and social work.
- The principal listed the following enrichment opportunities that are available to students.
  - Advanced placement classes are available in all core subject areas.
  - A partnership exists with the Hillside Work Scholarship Program and Wegmans.
  - There are a plethora of clubs available to students. Some examples include: an audio club, an adventure club, a book club, and a green team.
  - The school holds social events for students at night.
  - A committee at the school is looking into using the school building as a full service community center, and they have on-going meetings to discuss this issue.
- Students reported participating in athletics, an environmental awareness group, a student ambassadors program, and other activities. Students reported having several extra and co-curricular options at SPHS.

<b>TRANSFORMATIONAL SCHOOL LEADERSHIP</b>	
<b>Effective Leadership</b>	<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>
<b>Leadership Development</b>	<i>School leaders receive appropriate and timely professional development. Mentoring or coaching programs are in place and effective.</i>
<b>School Improvement Manager/External Providers</b>	<i>The school is being guided and informed by its partnership with its School Improvement Manager or external provider.</i>
<b>Building Level Leadership Team</b>	<i>The school is utilizing its Building Leadership Team to implement the turnaround model.</i>

**Findings:**

- All focus groups interviewed credited the principal with the positive changes in school climate and academic programming at the school.
- All groups stressed a desire to keep the school leader at South Park High School to continue the process of improving student achievement at the school.
- School leaders stated that eleven first year administrators in the district attended a leadership academy.
- The SED site visit team met with the school improvement manager, both in the district office and at the individual schools. She is providing management of each school's implementation of its school improvement plan by meeting regularly with each PLA school's administrative team.
- The school has a building leadership team which meets regularly to discuss school improvement efforts. The team currently has eleven members including four parents.

<b>SCHOOL CLIMATE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT</b>	
<b>Environment is Conducive to Learning</b>	<i>The school is safe, orderly and academically-oriented. Supervision is sufficient, respectful and consistent.</i>
<b>Shared Vision</b>	<i>School staff understands the focus/ vision of the school's improvement efforts and supports them in a consistent and effective manner.</i>
<b>Collaboration</b>	<i>Administrators, teachers and staff communicate openly, positively and effectively. Professional learning communities exist and affect improvement efforts.</i>
<b>Parent Involvement</b>	<i>Strategies are being implemented to increase the involvement and contributions of parents.</i>
<b>External/Community-Based Partners</b>	<i>Strategies are being implemented to increase the involvement and contributions of community partners.</i>

**Findings:**

- The SED site visit team observed a safe, orderly, and academically-oriented school environment at South Park High School. Supervision was sufficient to keep hallways quiet and clear of students while classes were in session.
- The physical school plant is very clean, modern, bright, and well-maintained. One stairwell had large pieces of peeling paint.
- All groups interviewed were aware of the findings of the joint intervention team report, and communicated support for the focus and vision for school improvement.
- Administrators and teachers demonstrated a shared vision for keeping students focused academically and behaviorally on the expectations of the school.
- The culture of discipline at SPHS suggests students have internalized a code of behavior, which does not require excessive interventions by staff.

- The SED site visit team met with the school’s parent liaison. Both the parent liaison and the school principal reported that the school is utilizing various methods to increase parent involvement, including:
  - reaching out to parents personally through phone calls,
  - maintaining a school web-site, and
  - bringing services to the parents, such as help with financial aid forms and printing services, and also by sending teachers to provide tutoring at community centers.

<b>OTHER FUNDING SOURCES</b>	
<b>Use of 1003(g) or 1003(a) grant funding</b>	<i>The LEA is using School Improvement Grant (SIG) funding to support the implementation of or planning for school intervention models.</i>
<b>Use of Other Funding Sources besides 1003 (g)</b>	<i>In addition to SIG (1003(g) funds, the LEA is using a number of other resources to implement the school intervention models or the CEP, as applicable.</i>

**Findings:**

- Through multiple observations, focus group interviews, and document review, it appears that the district and the school are supporting implementation of the transformation model.
- During the on-site visit, no evidence was gathered regarding additional funding sources to implement the transformation model or the comprehensive educational model. However, this will be ascertained during the team’s next on-site visit.

<b>DISTRICT SUPPORT AND PLANNING FOR DEVELOPMENT</b>	
<b>District Support Provides Operational Flexibility to the School</b>	<i>The LEA provides or is planning to provide the school operational flexibility (such as regarding staffing, calendars/time, and budgeting).</i>
<b>District has a systemic plan for intervention and improvement</b>	<i>The LEA has incorporated all JIT recommendations and requirements of the SIG Application into the improvement plan for the school.</i>
<b>District has a plan to identify, recruit, place, and retain effective leadership</b>	<i>In accordance with SIG requirements, the LEA has a plan for hiring and retaining leadership.</i>

**Findings:**

- Regarding operational flexibility, the principal stated that most decisions are still made at the district level, but that the school had input on writing the school improvement grant. In addition, the principal stated that she feels she can be honest with the district regarding fiscal needs at the building.
- The SED site visit team observed alignment between the joint intervention team report and the school improvement grant; and also observed that implementation of the two documents is being facilitated by the school improvement manager.
- District leaders emphasized the progress being made at South Park High School since the current principal was hired. They stated concern regarding the possibility of having to replace such a strong leader when she has been the change agent for the school.

**Summary:**

The SED site visit team conducted a full-day visit at South Park High School on December 9, 2010. 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 that will be conducted will also 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.