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

School:	East High School – Transformation Model	School District:	Rochester City School District
Date of Site-Visit:	March 15, 2011 (Second Visit)	Members of Site-Visit Team:	Andrew McGrath, Susan Gibbons, Patrick Roche, Jennifer Span

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 and school staff indicated the Rochester Teachers' Association (RTA) contract expired June 30, 2010, and that negotiations were currently at an impasse. A mediation meeting was scheduled for March 15, 2011.
- According to district officials, the removal of ineffective staff is determined in part by conducting three evaluations per year for non-tenured teachers. The three school chiefs carry out a school by school check of teacher evaluations completed by principals; this is part of the monitoring of principals and part of their evaluations.
- The district continues to use its current teacher evaluation system that includes formal observations for non-tenured teachers. Tenured teachers may choose between observations or approved learning projects.
- Rochester City School District is participating in the statewide development of a performance based compensation system through the Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) grant. Statewide meetings have occurred throughout the current school year.
- Teachers, leaders and district staff indicated East High School is prepared to reward teachers with incentive grants. The "2010-11 School-Wide RTA Incentive Agreement" ties monetary rewards ranging from $200 to $500 for such goal attainment as school attendance, student disciplinary referrals, and graduation rate, among other measures. More than ninety percent of RTA members at the school voted in favor of the rewards.

- According to district staff, Human Capital Initiatives (HCI) is responsible for the development and implementation of workforce strategies that align district initiatives and priorities. Its purpose is to "develop and retain high-performing and high-potential talent."

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:
- The principal reported the primary initiative for the school year is the continued integration of Small Learning Communities (SLC) into the school framework. The leadership team planned the teaching schedule to accommodate common planning time for each SLC. Teachers reported this time is essential for coordination, collaboration, and student data analysis.
- During their focus group sessions, school and district staff indicated Data Mate is being used as an analytical tool to inform instructional planning, track student growth, and address student attendance and graduation issues.
- The leadership team and teachers report a Response to Intervention (RTI) specialist is meeting with four clusters of teachers per week in grades 7 and 8. The principal plans to expand RTI to the high school using the same model. School leadership shared there is currently no RTI program evaluation formally in place.
- The principal shared a comprehensive written plan for an East High School "Professional Learning Center" developed by the Leadership Committee, which has school-wide representation. Many phases of the plan are in place. For example, a room was designated and equipped, school-wide PD calendar and implementation plans were drawn up, SLCs have common planning time, and staff members attended selected trainings (*Teach like a Champion*, as an example). The school has not hired staff to run the center. The leadership team feels this is hampering the quality implementation of many initiatives.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	
Quality, On-going, Job-embedded Professional Development	*Implementing job-embedded professional development, as defined by the 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:
- During their focus groups session, teachers stated they have in-house training on the use of SMART Boards available two times per month for two hours. It was also reported administrators monitor classroom use of technology during walk-throughs and formal observations.
- Teachers received training on the use of Data Mate in traditional school-wide PD events, in their SLCs, and also during their department meetings. The program is used for benchmarking and error analysis. Teachers stated it has created a "common language" around data analysis.
- New teachers are assigned a mentor and meet with them two to three times per month. Qualified teachers must apply for and are chosen to become mentors based on a set of criteria delineated within the Career in Teaching (CIT) program.
- Teachers report that *Teach like a Champion* is being used to varying degrees in each SLC. There is currently no consistent school-wide coordination of PD for this program.
- Common planning time has been provided for staff, but at the time of the on-site visit, vendors for professional development as indicated in the SIG application have not been contracted.

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:
- Datamate is used to analyze data for math and ELA, as well as special education students and English language learners (ELL). According to school leadership and district staff, Datamate:
  - Allows staff to track benchmark assessments;
  - Can be used to conduct error analyses;
  - Includes lesson plans and/or power point presentations; and
  - Presents data to more effectively address attendance and graduation issues.
- At the time of the site-visit, the district was in the process of expanding Datamate to include science, social studies, and languages other than English.
- The Rochester City School District (RCSD) Online Dashboard is housed within the district's web-site, but is not yet operational.
- School leaders reported using Datamate to monitor and adjust instructional practices and curriculum on a school-wide basis, as well as to make instructional decisions for individual students.
- During their focus group session, social studies and science teachers indicated that they review their common assessments six times a year and then use this data to directly inform/adjust instruction.

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:
- Many teachers were observed asking open ended questions to introduce new topics and review previous work (student-based inquiry).
- In certain classes observed, many students were not active participants (not raising hands, no eye contact with teacher, on the wrong page, etc.). In general, the student energy level was very low.
- It was observed in one inclusion class, while students were taking a quiz, four students had their heads down on the desk not writing. The teacher indicated this was normal behavior.
- There were no overt disruptions observed in classrooms. In some cases, limited engagement on the part of the students was observed. The on-site team observed some students who were inattentive and/or impervious to the teacher's efforts to teach.
- Further observed, in a few isolated instances, was a lack of appropriate classroom management that would allow a teacher to address an issue with one student without losing control of the rest of the class.
- Most instruction was seen to be teacher-directed, rather than student centered. Teachers were observed answering their own questions when students did not respond.
- Several classrooms observed were quite effective in that observers saw attentive students interested in curriculum which related to their own lives and personal experiences.
- Parents indicated students need help at home and from their teachers to learn to make positive choices and become self-motivated, because some students "don't want to learn."
- Parents report having good, open relationships with teachers, who call home for academic concerns (such as a student needing to make up work) as well as disciplinary ones.
- Curriculum maps for students with disabilities (SWD) are discussed during common planning time. There is a six week curriculum map developed for special education teachers. The curriculum maps include adaptations and student performance indicators/skills. Teachers are trained on Individualized Education Program (IEP) direct and are given release time to write students IEPs. The same occurs for ELL students.
- Special and general education teachers integrate their curriculums but do not co-teach content

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:

- Teachers report a low attendance rate and admit they have issues with attendance school wide. Additionally, teachers report they have used various attendance incentives to encourage student attendance such as: robo calls, home visits, and intervention strategies)
- The coordinator of attendance requires monthly reports from service providers. Included in the reports is: attendance, counseling memos, etc.
- Students at East High School are provided with the following supports:
  - Student Support Center (multiple service providers)
  - YMCA
  - Center for Youth which provide counseling to students.
  - GEAR UP program which provide college prep to students. The senior cohort has 200 students participating.
- The coordinator of attendance works with guidance on student attendance referrals. The school fact team contacts the family regarding school attendance and develops a plan for the student. If the student does not comply, the student/family is referred to county court.
- East High school has a coordinated effort to target attendance. The home-school assistants conduct home visits. Student attendance survey data was being analyzed at the time of the site visit. It has been concluded that repeat 9th graders has the highest non-attendance. 9th graders are offered credit recovery and counselors meet with students to develop a plan. This information was reported, however, data was not provided at the site visit.
- Grade 12 students meet with administrators, counselors and a graduation coach. Student attendance is targeted in these meetings.
- East High hosted a family night with over 600 parents in attendance. At which time, over 10 parenting workshops were offered.
- ESOL and world language teachers co-plan together to provide a cohesive enrichment to ESL students.

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:

- Students report the principal is highly visible throughout the building. He is, "…always there when you need him…", and "…always on the go and checking things out."

- The leadership team reports having many PD opportunities, including the national SLC conference in Nevada. In addition, the principal attends the Rochester Leadership Academy once per month for a full day.   ASAR (administrator's union) training is also available once per month for a full day to one administrator.
- The leadership team stated they are supported by the school's zone chief, yet questioned the sufficiency of overall district support for east HS as a PLA school.
- Teachers report they welcome administrators into their classrooms for observations and appreciate the professional feedback they receive from school leaders. Teachers indicated their support of new principal.
- Teachers reported school leadership included them in the development of the transformational plan for East High school.

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:
- The school was observed to be generally clean and quiet. Very little student work was on display. However, "inspirational" and SLC "branding" posters were highly visible throughout the building.
- The staff was friendly and helpful to the site visit team. It was evident through observations of student-faculty interactions that teachers and leaders have a high level of respect and awareness of individual students.
- Classes observed were small (far less than the 25-30 enrolled), confirming the 50% average daily attendance rate as indicated by the administration. Administrators also reported a high truancy rate.
- Teachers average a 92% attendance rate.
- The school has a system of in-school suspensions. A teacher was observed escorting a group of students to the rest room from the suspension room. The administration reported that the school offers a 2.5 hour "evening school" as alternative instruction.
- Teachers and school leaders stated that PBIS is believed to have been responsible for a reduction of disciplinary incidents by 40%.
- Student behavior was not observed to be a concern; however, many violations of the dress code in the staff handbook were observed (i.e., headgear, headphones, mobile phones, sagging pants, and immodest girls' clothing) and some, relatively mild, inappropriate language was heard in the hallways. Food and drinks were also seen in classrooms.
- Parents reported the school climate has improved a great deal over the past three years. Previously, there were many fights, and it was an unsafe environment. Parents further indicated they were unaware of gang activity within the school.
- Parents reported making the choice to send their children to this school.   One mother stated she will send another of her children to this school next year for

the culinary arts program. In their opinion, there is reportedly a higher level of parent involvement here as compared to other schools.
- Parents reported attending such activities as Family Nights and school concerts. Additionally, there are specific programs for fathers and sons, and a peer mediation system which provides immediate resolutions and responses.
- Parents reported no involvement in SIG or CEP, although they stated the choices made for the school have been seen as positive.
- Parents specifically report more communication with the school over the past two years. In addition, relationships now exist with the parent coordinator and guidance counselors.
- Parents reported transportation, using buses, is a problem. There are downtown safety issues, and the school's transportation arrangements need revamping,
- Community partners include:
    - Hillside, which works with 200 students in grades 9-12. They provide job placement in the community for special education students, as well as coaching and academic support.
    - The University of Rochester provides a college preparatory center, with on site administrators. The program includes the Science Stars.
    - Monroe County Community College has increased its offerings of dual credit courses.
    - Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (Gear Up) is a national program that supports high poverty middle and high school students in gaining admission to college.
    - St John Fisher College provides student teachers to the school as well as teacher leader instruction.
    - RASA (after school program),
    - AVID (college prep)
    - The Firefighter program
    - Catholic Family Center provides services to ESL families. They provide experiential learning trips and expose students to various community agencies.

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:
- As delineated in its school improvement application, the district and school have allocated SIG funds to support school improvement efforts, including:
    - Needs-based increases in teaching/support staff;
    - Targeted professional development;
    - Community partnerships;
    - Common planning time and small learning communities; and
    - Financial incentives to school staff for meeting or exceeding school improvement targets.
- In addition to SIG funding, the district has committed approximately $62 million to East High School over three years, using federal Title I funding, state funding under Contracts for Excellence, local funding, and district-obtained federal, state and local grants.

- The school applied for other funding, including an education grant through the office of NYS Senator Alesi.

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 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 district has started providing leadership development for assistant principals. Principal leadership conferences have diminished in number from last year, according to the school leaders.
- During their focus groups, teachers and school leaders stated the district has provided departmental professional development, on request from the school. However, they feel the district has not offered intensive, PLA-level instructional support to the school.
- During their focus groups sessions, teachers and school leaders opined that the district is currently embroiled in financial concerns and union contracts. As a result, the emphasis on instruction has decreased and school morale has been adversely affected.
- Teachers and school leaders stated the career-focused SLC model requires continued district support to reach an appropriate level of sustainability.

Summary:

The State Education Department four-member site-visit team conducted a full-day site visit at East High School on March 14, 2011. Although the visit was brief, the team was able to acquire information about the school's efforts to implement their reform model for improving student learning.

The site visit team observed a number of programs and initiatives that appear to provide the school with the opportunity to make progress towards improved student achievement. The school leadership team is visible and supportive, and the school improvement manager is actively involved in the school improvement efforts. Numerous community partners are working collaboratively with the school, and the teaching staff is proactive and student-centered.

Staff, students, parents and educational partners all spoke positively of the school's efforts to improve student achievement. District and school staff members were candid with their comments and highly cooperative throughout the PLA monitoring process. The school and the district appear to be working together to coordinate their efforts and implement as much of their Transformation Model as possible.

The next site visit to East High School will be during the Fall of 2011.