



The University of the State of New York
The State Education Department

2015-16 Demonstrable Improvement Indicator Review (DIIR)

Schuyler Achievement Academy

FINAL REPORT

BEDS Code	010100010043
School Name	Schuyler Achievement Academy
School Address	676 Clinton Avenue, Albany NY 12206
District Name	Albany City School District
School Leader	John Murphy
Dates of Review	May 17-18, 2016
School Identification Status	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Struggling

School Information Sheet for Schuyler Achievement Academy

School Configuration (2015-16 data)					
Grade Configuration	PK-5	Total Enrollment	261	SIG Recipient	X
Types and Number of English Language Learner Classes (2015-16)					
# Transitional Bilingual	-	# Dual Language	-	# Self-Contained English as a Second Language	-
Types and Number of Special Education Classes (2015-16)					
# Special Classes	1	# SETSS		# Integrated Collaborative Teaching	6
Types and Number of Special Classes (2015-16)					
# Visual Arts	13	# Music	15	# Drama	-
# Foreign Language	-	# Dance	-	# CTE	-
School Composition (most recent data)					
% Title I Population	100%	% Attendance Rate	94%		
% Free Lunch	100%	% Reduced Lunch	0%		
% Limited English Proficient	10%	% Students with Disabilities	18%		
Racial/Ethnic Origin (most recent data)					
% American Indian or Alaska Native	0%	% Black or African American	55%		
% Hispanic or Latino	18%	% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	6%		
% White	8%	% Multi-Racial	13%		
Personnel (most recent data)					
Years Principal Assigned to School	1	# of Assistant Principals	0		
% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate	0	% Teaching Out of Certification	0		
% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience		Average Teacher Absences	7		
Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2014-15)					
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	5%	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4	7%		
Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (4th Grade)	71%	Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (8th Grade)			
Student Performance for High Schools (2014-15)					
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4		Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4			
Global History Performance at levels 3 & 4		US History Performance at Levels 3&4			
4 Year Graduation Rate		6 Year Graduation Rate			
Regents Diploma w/ Advanced Designation		% ELA/Math Aspirational Performance Measures			
Overall NYSED Accountability Status					
In Good Standing		Local Assistance Plan			
Priority School	X	Focus School			
SCHOOL PRIORITIES AS WRITTEN BY THE SCHOOL: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improved student attendance 2. Fidelity to the Studio Model (ongoing support for implementation) 3. Coaching in English language arts (ELA) and math 4. Response to Intervention (Rtl) for behavior 5. Feedback (administrative, peer to peer and coaches) 					

Purpose of the visit

This school was identified as a **Struggling** school in 2015. In Fall 2015, the New York State Education Department required all districts with Priority Schools designated as Persistently Struggling and/or Struggling to identify the indicators of Demonstrable Improvement for each district's Persistently Struggling and Struggling schools.

One of the measures of Demonstrable Improvement that this school chose was a Tenet on the Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness (DTSDE) rubric. The school chose to be evaluated on Tenet Four, which focuses on Instruction and Teacher Practices. The results of this review, which count ten percent or less towards the school's Demonstrable Improvement Index, will contribute to the Commissioner's determinations about the accountability status of the school.

NYSED recognizes that there are dedicated staff members at the school committed to the success of the students. The review team used the DTSDE rubric to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the school’s practices. The review team made its determinations based on the impact of the school’s work as reflected in the DTSDE Tenet.

Information about the review

- The review was co-led by two Outside Educational Experts (OEEs) and a representative from the New York State Education Department (NYSED).
- The review team visited 21 classes during the two-day review.
- The OEEs visited eight classes with the principal during the review.
- Reviewers conducted focus groups with students, staff, and parents.
- Reviewers examined documents provided by the school, including curriculum maps, lesson plans, schoolwide data, teacher feedback, and student work.

Tenet 4 - Teacher Practices and Decisions: Teachers engage in strategic practices and decision-making in order to address the gap between what students know and need to learn, so that all students and pertinent subgroups experience consistent high levels of engagement, thinking, and achievement.

Statement of Practice	Stage 4	Stage 3	Stage 2	Stage 1
School and teacher leaders ensure that instructional practices and strategies are organized around annual, unit, and daily lesson plans that address all student goals and needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teachers provide coherent, and appropriately aligned Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS)-based instruction that leads to multiple points of access for all students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teachers and students work together to implement a program/plan to create a learning environment that is responsive to students’ varied experiences and tailored to the strengths and needs of all students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teachers inform planning and foster student participation in their own learning process by using a variety of summative and formative data sources (e.g., screening, interim measures, and progress monitoring).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
TENET 4 OVERALL STAGE :			2	

Tenet 4 - Teacher Practices and Decisions: Teachers engage in strategic practices and decision-making in order to address the gap between what students know and need to learn, so that all students and pertinent subgroups experience consistent high levels of engagement, thinking, and achievement.	Tenet Stage	2
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The school is at **Stage Two** for Tenet 4 – Teacher Practices and Decisions.

Summary of Key Findings:

- The school leaders and teacher leaders engage teachers in conversations and professional development regarding planning for student-centered and data-driven teaching practices. However, the leaders have not developed the procedures necessary to ensure that these teacher practices are regularly implemented in classrooms and result in high student achievement.
- While the instructional supports in some classrooms allow the students to access the curriculum, the instruction observed by the review team resulted in only some students being fully engaged in learning.
- Teachers and other staff have begun implementing some strategies to ensure that the classroom environment is mindful of students’ needs, though the classroom lessons and activities do not yet encourage rigorous learning that fully challenges all students.
- Teachers examine assessment data to identify student needs, group students based on these needs, and establish student goals; however, instruction is not sufficiently modified based on student needs, and the feedback teachers provide to students does not sufficiently provide students with guidance on how to improve.

Supporting Evidence:

- The school leaders and teacher leaders engage teachers in conversations and professional development regarding planning for student-centered and data-driven teaching practices. However, the leaders have not developed the procedures necessary to ensure that these teacher practices are regularly implemented in classrooms and result in high student achievement. The school leader stated that lesson planning and student engagement have been the instructional focus areas this year and that the school has used the studio workshop model and embedded coaching in ELA and math to improve instruction. The school leaders reported that teacher practice has improved, which the leaders have determined based on what they have observed during their informal walkthroughs; however the school does not analyze data collected to support this claim or measure how practices may have improved. The school leaders plan to implement a system for formal monitoring and data collection in these areas of instructional focus during the 2016-17 school year. The school leader stated that he and other leaders have used a checklist to monitor implementation of the expectations defined in the school’s Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between staff and leaders; however, the leaders used the checklist to identify the presence of specific instructional elements without consistently assessing the quality of the staff’s planning or instructional practices. During classroom visits, reviewers found that most lesson plans contained the required planning elements from the MOA, but

elements were under-developed in several plans, in areas such as differentiation and formative assessment. While teachers reported that the school and teacher leaders give helpful feedback during class visits and coaching meetings, reviewers found that feedback on the checklists reviewed did not consistently provide actionable next steps to improve teachers' practices.

- While the instructional supports in some classrooms allow the students to access the curriculum, the instruction observed by the review team resulted in only some students being fully engaged in learning. The majority of classrooms visited were co-taught, and instructional support staff, such as reading specialists, teaching assistants, and English as a New Language (ENL) teachers, regularly worked with groups of students and individual students. However, the reviewers found that the questions asked during whole group instruction were typically low-level and did not result in students thinking deeply about the topic. For instance, the Review team observed that when questions were asked during lessons, the typical questions began with the word "what" and sought to elicit facts that did not require students to synthesize information. Reviewers also noted that few challenging follow-up questions were asked. Instructional support providers stated that teachers have just recently begun using the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) Vertical Progressions for Reading to set goals with students and assess progress. While reviewers observed higher-order questions and tasks occurring in the teacher-led small groups and pull-out intervention sessions, the students working independently were often completing low-level activities. Reviewers noted that some of these students were off-task and disengaged, and only occasionally were these students redirected by the teachers.
- Teachers and other staff have begun implementing some strategies to ensure that the classroom environment is mindful of students' needs, though the classroom lessons and activities do not yet encourage rigorous learning that fully challenges all students. The school adopted a point system for managing classroom behavior this year, with clearly stated expectations and regular celebrations of student success. Staff interviewed attributed this point system to improvements in the school environment. In addition, teachers regularly conference with students and work with them to create student goals, though students interviewed were not able to articulate what they needed to do to reach these goals beyond generic steps such as "read more." Although teachers used benchmark data to create small groups for teacher conferencing and interventions, the team observed that students not assigned to the teacher-led groups work independently and were often not focused on the assignment or challenged to go further. In addition, some teachers use hands-on materials and project-based learning to motivate and allow students to collaborate with their peers, though not all tasks challenged students. For example, in one classroom visited, students worked in groups to determine if different pieces of wrapping paper would be large enough to wrap a present. Reviewers found that one or two students in each group did most of the work on the assignment, while others appeared disengaged and did not contribute to the group activity.
- Teachers examine assessment data to identify student needs, group students based on these needs, and establish student goals; however, instruction is not sufficiently modified based on student needs and the feedback teachers provide to students does not sufficiently provide students with guidance on how to improve. School leader and instructional coaches shared that teachers examine student data regularly in common planning time, though coaches interviewed acknowledged that the school was at the beginning stages of using data effectively to modify lessons. In addition, reviewers noted that only a few teachers

checked for student understanding during lessons and that teachers generally did not adjust instructional practices for those students who appeared to struggle. Although ELA and mathematics teachers have adopted the studio classroom where students are involved in self-directed project-based learning, reviewers observed that student assignments are typically identical and that teachers' instructional strategies are not adapted to meet the needs of individuals or groups of students. Students stated that some teachers use rubrics and checklists to make expectations clear for class assignments. In addition, students and parents both acknowledged that students have developed individualized goals; however, while students were aware of their goals, many of the students interviewed were not able to articulate how they were expected to achieve those goals beyond vague actions such as "practice my math facts" and "read more." Reviewers determined that the quality and frequency of progress monitoring and feedback varies across the school, which makes it difficult for students to understand what they need to do to improve. For example, while some teachers use progress reports that identified individual strengths and goals, other teachers' progress reports were formatted as academic or behavioral checklists. These progress reports offered vague comments, such as "Always a pleasure!" and did not provide explicit feedback on how students could improve in specific skills areas.

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