

**New York State Education Department**  
**Contract For Excellence**  
**2008-09 Needs and Strategies Report**

**SYRACUSE CITY SD**

**SUPERINTENDENT DANIEL LOWENGARD**

**Achievement Issues :** Describe the overall student achievement need presenting the greatest challenge in your school district which the Contract for Excellence addresses. In particular, describe the needs for those schools in improvement status that qualified your district for the Contract for Excellence.

The Syracuse City School District was identified in 2004 as a District in Need of Improvement for English Language Arts achievement for the student with disabilities (SWDs) and English language learners (ELLs) subgroups. Currently, we have no middle level schools or high schools identified as Schools in Good Standing and the majority of our elementary schools are identified at various stages of improvement status. Delaware Academy, Blodgett Pre-k & 8, Seymour Dual Language Academy, Elmwood and Dr. King Elementary Schools, and Clary Middle School are identified as SURR schools. Fowler High School was removed from the SURR list this school year. Although our graduation rate continues to increase at incremental rates, we continue to have large numbers of students not graduating in four or five years and/or dropping out. Our ESL student population continues to rise with an additional 100 students arriving in September 2008. Unfortunately, our ESL dropout rate is high, especially for those students arriving in grades 4-8. Data indicates that students arriving in grades pre-k-3 graduate at a higher rate. Although our graduation rate for students with disabilities may be higher than some of our surrounding school districts as a result of our well known inclusionary practices, we are still not graduating a high enough percentage of our students with disabilities. The percentage of students living in poverty continues to increase each year with 79 % of our students qualifying for free or reduced meals during the 2007-08 school year. More than 20% of our students are identified as students with disabilities and 9% of our students are English language learners. These high risk students are found in all of our schools. Therefore, any interventions or initiatives that are implemented are done so District-wide to improve student achievement in all schools with additional supports and interventions placed in our lowest performing schools.

Although our ELA and math results increased significantly this year, these content areas continue to need a laser like focus in order to improve student achievement. Our schools in highest academic need also have a high level of poverty and in many cases a high level of ESL students, primarily Latino students. Our struggling students need more time to close the achievement gap through after school programs, summer school, and individual and small group tutoring. Academic Intervention Services and AVID teachers use differentiating instruction to meet the needs of these at risk students including those with disabilities and English language learners. C4E funding will allow us to hire math and ELA Instructional Support Teachers for our C4E identified schools to embed professional development through coaching and modeling improve teaching and learning.

**Contract Plan :** Describe the overall strategy your district will implement under the Contract for Excellence to address the above needs. Detail the new and innovative programs selected and how they will integrate with existing improvement plans.

The District will be implementing a new District wide Literacy Initiative this school year in all classrooms Pre-k-12. Clear expectations for instruction have been communicated and will be supported with embedded professional development in literacy across all content areas. The Instructional Support Teachers (ISTs) in the areas of mathematics and ELA to provide the ongoing, consistent professional development and coaching in research based practices across all classrooms, grade levels, and schools. The IST personnel will receive a specific charge with respect to expected student achievement targets. These ISTs will provide ongoing support that will ensure a clear direction for each school as part of a system of schools. For example, specific to special education, the District's Mathematics Coordinator and Math ISTs are working with approximately 65 teachers utilizing the First Steps program which is a research based intervention. Initial feedback from teachers indicates that they believe the program will have significant positive impact on students' performance and the ongoing support will ensure implementation at the most efficient/effective

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levels. Students' progress will be monitored on a regularly scheduled basis. The ELA Coordinator, Math Coordinator, and the ISTs will work closely with the Special Education Training Resource Center (SETRC) trainers to ensure common vocabulary and research based practices are presented and supported District wide, ensuring teachers across the district will experience the same training with modifications to ensure maximum benefits for students. Student performance data will be collected and analyzed to provide specific feedback to schools/teachers and to inform future professional development sessions.

The Wilson Reading Program, a research based proven intervention program, has been purchased for use in all resource and self-contained classrooms kindergarten through 8th grade. Teachers will receive three days of concentrated training coupled with a coach who will collect and analyze the data on a scheduled basis. The data will be shared with ISTs, special education administration, and SETRC trainers to ensure areas of weakness are addressed at every professional development session.

**Special Populations : The needs of special populations (LEP, students with disabilities, poverty and students with low achievement) should be assessed, with specific programmatic efforts identified.**

The District implemented the Acuity formative assessment system last school year District wide by using the system's predictive assessment in math and ELA in grades 2-8. After careful review of the results, the District has decided to use Acuity's diagnostic assessment in ELA and math for all students in the same grade levels this school year. This computer-based assessment gives teachers and school leadership immediate feedback on students' strengths and areas of need. This data will be used to guide instruction with the assistance of the newly hired ELA and Math Support Teachers who will work with classroom and AIS teachers to target instruction to remediate gaps in learning especially for struggling students.

The District is working collaboratively with experts from the NYS Comprehensive Center, the Comprehensive Center for Evaluation and Assessment in California and NYSED on a formative assessment project. The hope is the results of this project will be used to guide the use of formative assessment not only in our District and NYS, but nationally. The majority of our low performing elementary schools are receiving training in the effective use of formative assessment data through this project. All newly hired Math and ELA Instructional Support Teachers will be trained by experts in this area to ensure they are able to train teachers in their assigned schools. Our Information and Technology Division, under the leadership of Deputy Superintendent Anita Murphy, provides all schools with disaggregated data and NYS assessment results so that every building administrator and teacher are able to identify trends and patterns in student achievement to inform professional development and teaching in each school.

In addition, the District is using Reading First practices and assessment tools in all of its elementary schools, not just the 11 Reading First schools. Reading First elementary schools were paired with non Reading First elementary schools so staff and administrators could support this expansion in the use of these new assessment tools. Wilson Reading Program will be implemented by all resource and self contained special education classroom teachers in grades K-8 in the 2008-09 school year. Wilson Reading Program students will be assessed every 2-3 weeks to monitor their progress. A newly hired Wilson Reading Coach will collect data from all schools to monitor implementation. This data will be analyzed and used to modify instruction to meet the identified needs of students. The program data will also be used to determine expansion to all inclusion classrooms in the 2009-10 school year.

In most cases, the same assessments are used for both special education and general education District wide in grades Pre-k - 8. For each District initiative implemented, data is collected to monitor progress and

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determine its effectiveness for all students, including LEP and students with disabilities. There has been ongoing training for both teachers and administrators throughout the District in the use of data and differentiated instruction which will continue in the 2008-09 school year.

Finally, with the implementation of the Say Yes Program this school year, there will be a new Say Yes student monitoring tool for all students in the 6 Say Yes elementary schools in grades K-3. This program will expand by quadrant each year so that by the 2011-12 school year, all elementary schools will be a part of the program and will be using the Say Yes monitoring tool that not only captures academic information, but also health and mental health information. This tool will identify students as "Off Track", "On Track" or "On track to Thrive". Although all students, including LEP and SWDs, in this program will be offered afterschool and summer school programming, those that are "Off Track" or "On Track" will also have targeted tutorials to ensure gaps in learning are addressed.

**Targeting to Need : Provide evidence that funds are targeted to students with the greatest educational needs. Refer to the Educational Need Matrix e-mailed to each superintendent.**

All C4E funds have been targeted to C4E identified schools following the Educational Need Matrix. Most of the C4E funds have been targeted to improving math and ELA achievement by hiring math and ELA Instructional Support Teachers (ISTs) as recommended by our NYSED liaison following Title I program monitoring. In addition we added a new full day pre-k class and expanded our AVID program. In addition, the District is seeking a waiver from the regulation's prescription that every school in accountability status receive the pro rata minimum allocation as only one of our 21 schools are not being allocated this amount, and in every other case, the actual allocations by school exceed the pro rata minimum, and in most cases by a substantial amount. The following is a summary of the staff hired and programs enhanced or initiated with C4E funding to support C4E identified schools in the 2008-09 school year:

C4E School	C4E Expenditures for 2008-09
Clary Middle	0.5 Math IST; 0.4 ELA IST; Administrative mentoring
Roberts K-8	After School Programming; Hillside Youth Advocate
Huntington Pre-k - 8	New full day Pre-k class; 0.5 AVID teacher, 0.2 ELA IST; Admin. Mentoring
Dr. M L King	1.0 AIS Teacher ; Afterschool program transportation
Danforth Middle	2.0 Teachers for alternative programming redesign
Franklin Magnet	Additional Administrator-1.0 Administrative Intern; 1.0 Math IST; Admin mentoring
Frazer K-8	0.5 Tech; 0.5 Reading; Convert half day Pre-k to full day
Hughes Elementary	1.0 Math IST
Seymour Dual Language	Extended day cost
Elmwood Elementary	1.0 AIS
Smith, H.W. K-8	4.0 additional content area teachers for 8th grade conversion; Admin mentoring
Corcoran High School	3.0 Teachers
Grant Middle School	0.4 Math IST; 0.5 ELA IST; Restore 1.0 Administrative Intern; Admin mentoring; new alternative programming redesign staff (2.0 teachers)
Levy, Pre-K & 8	2.0 Common Branch Teachers to support conversion from 6-8 to Pre-k & 8 school
Nottingham H.S.	1.0 AVID Teacher; 1.0 content area teacher
Henninger H.S.	1.0 AVID Teacher; 1.0 Language teacher; 0.3 SLC Facilitator
Delaware Elementary	2.0 AIS Teachers
Lincoln Middle School	0.5 Math IST; 0.4 ELA IST; 1.4 AIS Teachers
Fowler High School	1.0 AVID; 1.0 NJROTC

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Blodgett K-8            1.0 Math IST; 1.0 VP; Administrative mentoring  
Bellevue MS Academy      0.5 Math IST; 0.5 ELA IST; Administrative mentoring

**Performance Targets :** You will need to complete a detailed Performance Matrix in the application that will capture the specific gap reduction you expect in each school with C4E funds for specific accountability areas and subgroups of students. In this narrative, describe the overall achievement outcomes that you anticipate will result from the C4E programs.

Our ELA and math scores increased this year as well as our graduation rates. Our expected targets are at least a 10% increase in ELA, Math and graduation rates for the coming year for all subgroups.

**Maintenance of Effort :** Describe how you will continue your previous year's C4E program expenditures. Explain any reductions in expenditures that will be reallocated as part of this year's contract.

Educators hired through C4E funding will continue in their roles in the schools including AIS teachers, professional developers, AVID teachers, etc. Full day pre-k classes initiated in 2007-08 will be sustained. All of the high schools have maintained their Smaller Learning Academies established last year. H.W. Smith Elementary School will continue its conversion from a K-6 building to a K-8 building this year after adding a 7th grade class during the 2007-08 school year. The establishment of our new technological high school, the Institute of Technology @ Syracuse Central, began last school year for the incoming 9th grade students and will continue to grow in 2008-09 by using C4E funds to add staffing for the 10th grade students. We used C4E funds to adopt a new textbook Pre-k -12 last year and in the coming year C4E funds in this area will provide support for a newly adopted 6-12 ELA textbook series. Acuity, IEP Direct and Quadrant planning will also be continued into the 2008-09 school year.

**New vs. Continuation of Existing Programs :** Describe how funds will supplement and not supplant current programs, except where allowed.

All of the C4E funding for the 2008-9 school year will support and enhance the District new initiatives for the coming year. The Math and ELA ISTs will provide the necessary embedded professional development on research-based practices and strategies to improve teaching leading to increased student achievement through our District wide literacy initiative Pre-k - 12. The addition of AVID and AIS teachers will enhance our ability to provide targeted tutoring in small groups and to individual students. An additional full day pre-k class in a K-8 school that has never had the opportunity to have a pre-k is wonderful with the class fully enrolled the first week it was announced. Finally, the ability to provide every new administrator with an experienced mentor (retired SCSD administrators) will ensure our nontenured leaders will be supported as they are learning their craft.