

Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

# Final Report



<b>BEDS Code</b>	080101040003
<b>School Name</b>	Afton Junior-Senior High School
<b>School Address</b>	29 Academy Street, Afton, NY 13730
<b>District Name</b>	Afton Central School District
<b>Principal</b>	Ms. Laura Zanrucha
<b>Dates of Visit</b>	March 12-14, 2019



## Purpose Of The Visit

This school was identified as needing additional support by the New York State Education Department (NYSED). Because of this identification, NYSED arranged for an Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) to visit the school. The visit is intended to help the school identify areas of need that are making long-term success a challenge and provide several visible Quick Wins that can be accomplished and demonstrate the school’s commitment to improvement.

The report provides a critical lens to help the school best focus its efforts.

## School Performance

New York State uses multiple indicators to determine the identification status of schools across the state. For each of these indicators, schools receive a number of 1 (lowest), 2, 3, or 4 (highest) that corresponds with how the school performed in relation to either other schools and/or performance targets. More information about how these levels are determined can be found at: <http://www.nysed.gov/accountability/essa-accountability-designation-materials>.

The most recent results for the “All Students” group at the school are as follows:

### Elementary/Middle School Performance Indicators

Composite Performance Achievement Level	Student Growth Level	Combined Composite and Student Growth Level	English Language Proficiency Level	Average ELA and Math Academic Progress Level	Chronic Absenteeism Level
2	1	1		1	2

### High School Performance Indicators

4 Yr Grad. Rate <67%	Composite Performance Achievement Level	Average of 4-, 5-, and 6-year Graduation Rate Levels	Combined Composite Performance Achievement and Graduation Rate Level	English Language Proficiency Level	Average ELA and Math Academic Progress Level	Chronic Absenteeism Level	College, Career, Civic, Readiness (CCCR) Level
No	2	4	3		1	2	1

Afton Junior-Senior High School serves 247 students in grades seven to twelve.

## Information About The Visit

- The visit was led by an Outside Educational Expert (OEE) and a representative from NYSED. The team also included a district representative.
- The team visited a total of 28 classrooms during the visit.
- The OEE visited eight classrooms with the principal during the visit.
- Team members conducted interviews with students, staff, and parents.
- Team members examined documents provided by the school, including curriculum maps, lesson plans, schoolwide data, teacher feedback, and student work.
- In advance of the visit, 22 staff members (81 percent) completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.

## Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. Recognizing the need for improved student behavior in the 2018-19 school year, the principal implemented a positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) program. Staff were trained at the beginning of the school year, and the principal stated that each teacher has taught several lessons on character education, as well as student behavioral expectations. Students reported that they appreciate receiving Crimson Crests as a reward and reinforcement for good behavior. Many teachers and the principal expressed the view that this has led to a reduction in both in-school and out-of-school suspensions during the 2018-19 school year. In-school suspensions decreased from 99 in September 2017 through February 2018 to 82 for the same period this school year, and out-of-school suspensions decreased from 88 to 59 over the same interval.
2. At the beginning of the 2018-19 academic year, the principal started a formal student mentoring program in which at-risk students are paired with adults in the building who regularly meet with them for guidance and support. The principal has tracked the behavior and attendance of these students and found that several of the students have shown improvement in these areas.
3. Recognizing the need to keep parents and staff better informed, the principal introduced parent and staff newsletters for the 2018-19 school year. The parent newsletter informs families of the school's curriculum, upcoming school and community events, and fundraising efforts. Some parents interviewed by the IIT stated that the communications are helpful and make them feel more connected to the school. The principal uses the staff newsletter to keep staff members updated on current initiatives such as PBIS and strategies to improve instruction, as well as to remind them of upcoming school events.

## Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

### Systems for Improvement

- **The principal should analyze teacher performance data to make strategic decisions.** The principal conducts between three and five formal teacher observations per teacher during the school year and compiles teacher practice data from these visits. However, data has not been routinely analyzed to determine if these actions have improved instruction or positively impacted teacher practice, as a system has yet to be established to do so. Additionally, teacher performance data has not been used to develop a professional development (PD) plan based on teacher needs. In the future, the principal should regularly review and analyze the data collected to determine if these efforts are working to improve instruction and the quality of PD or if adjustments are needed to achieve different results.
- **The principal should develop specific goals for student achievement in English language arts (ELA) and math and an assessment system to monitor student progress.** Although the principal stated that she seeks to increase student proficiency in math and ELA for all students, specific goals and benchmarks have not yet been established to guide the work in these areas. As a result, there are currently no means to reliably determine if school practices will lead to the desired outcomes in math and ELA. Some teachers also stated that their goal is to increase students' ELA and math scores, but they were unable to cite the degree to which these scores would need to increase. In the future, the principal and staff should examine the current achievement data of their students and develop realistic yet ambitious goals to provide a benchmark for success.

## Leadership and Organization at the School

- **The principal should establish a team whose sole focus is the improvement of instruction.** The team learned that the principal has identified instruction as a main area of practice that she wishes to develop. While the principal has formed school teams to address academic issues such as grading policies, a team solely focused on the improvement of teaching and learning in the school has not yet been assembled. As a result, there is not a team whose only focus is to increase the level of student academic achievement. Many teachers reported that there are many teams and committees related to school improvement efforts. However, they often see a lack of cohesion in how these teams work together to improve school practices, particularly instructional practices. In the future, the principal should develop an instructional leadership team to focus solely on improving teaching and learning.

## Learning at the School

- **Teachers should plan and deliver relevant lessons that engage students in their learning.** Many interviewed students stated that they do not see connections between what they are learning and applications outside of the school. Some students shared that they find many of their classes boring. In visited classes, the team noted that lessons were mostly teacher-led, with little questioning or discussion generated by students. Lessons typically included few opportunities for student voice and choice in their learning.
- **Instruction should provide students with rigor, complexity, and a meaningful attainment of knowledge.** The IIT observed that many lessons focused primarily on rote learning. The IIT found in almost all visited classrooms that students were not asked to respond to open-ended questions, complete complex tasks, or lead their own learning. Typically, students were asked to respond to simple, open-ended questions or complete low-level tasks to demonstrate that they understood what was just taught. In one ELA classroom, students were asked to cite on a worksheet the main characters and the setting of the story; students were not asked to compare these characters with others they had read about in other stories or contrast the setting with other books they had read, for example. On only a few occasions were students asked to analyze or evaluate learning content.

## Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Parents would like teachers to call home with information about their children's progress.** Staff and parents reported that most teachers do not call homes to alert families about their children's progress. Although parents stated that they receive information from the school's online grading portal, as well as texts and emails from some teachers, they almost never receive phone calls from their children's teachers. Most interviewed parents stated that they need to reach out to teachers to obtain additional information on their child's progress. Interviewed teachers stated that currently the principal solicits names of students from teachers each week so that she can make positive phone calls to parents on the teachers' behalf.