New York State
EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Knowledge > Skill > Opportunity

Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment
Final Report

Leadership and Systems

Curriculum

Instruction

Social-Emotional Learning

Family Engagement
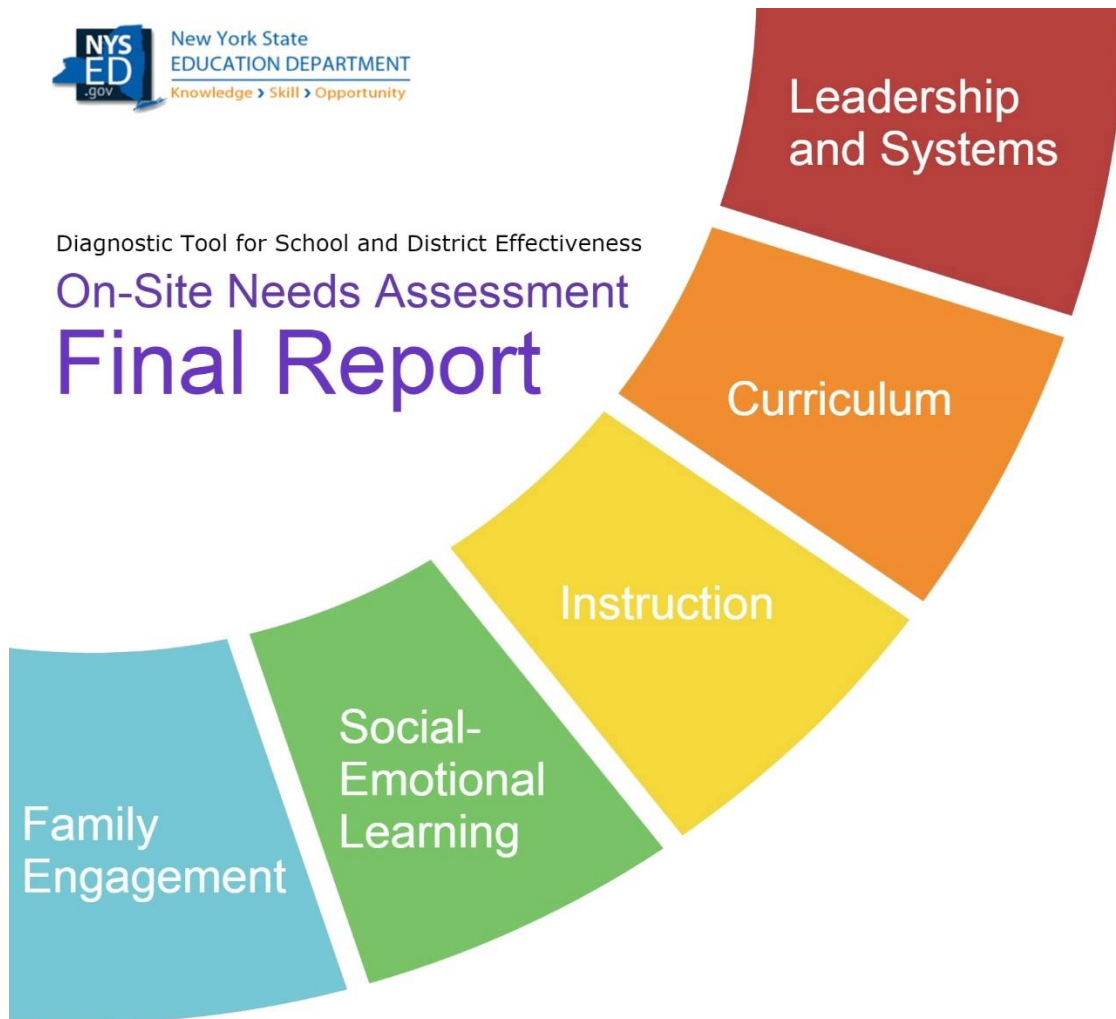
BEDS Code	580106030004
School Name	Edmund W. Miles Middle School
School Address	501 Broadway, Amityville, NY 11701
District Name	Amityville Union Free School District
Principal	Edward Plaia
Dates of Visit	April 16 – 18, 2019

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
1	1	1	2	1	4

Edmund W. Miles Middle School serves 625 students in grades seven through nine.

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 and a representative from the Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (RBERN).
- The team visited a total of 41 classrooms during the visit.
- The OEE visited 13 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 documents and lesson plans.
- In advance of the visit, 59 staff members (88 percent) completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. At the start of the 2018-19 academic year, school leaders worked with department chairs and an outside math consultant to review the math curriculum. During this process, they discovered a significant gap in the grade seven math curriculum and determined that standards regarding functions were not being taught or assessed. As a result, the school created units to integrate functions into the curriculum. In addition, the school also worked to more closely align the math curriculum for grades seven and eight.

2. The principal recognized that many students were not proficient in using graphing calculators because only a limited number of these calculators were available at the school, and many students did not have access to the devices at home. The principal reached out to the district and secured funding to purchase additional calculators. As a result, the school is now able to supply all students with graphing calculators, and a full class set is now available in each math section.

3. At the beginning of 2018-19, the principal directed math teachers to begin incorporating Regents-level questions into their daily lessons to provide students with increased exposure to these types of higher-level questions. This has led to a significant increase in the number of students passing the New York State Regents Examination in Algebra I from 20 percent in January 2018 to 40 percent in January 2019.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **School leaders should develop a system to ensure school priorities are achieved.** School leaders have identified three school priorities, improving the passing rate for all Regents examinations, integrating the use of Chromebooks to support student learning, and increasing student-centered instruction. However, the IIT found that the school had made varied levels of progress towards achieving each of its priorities. The school had implemented changes in the math curriculum which resulted in a significant increase in the number of students passing the Regents Examination in Algebra I. Teachers were provided with training on integrating the use of Chromebooks. However, Chromebooks were not distributed to classrooms until February and the IIT found variation in teacher use of the technology to support instruction. The IIT found limited evidence of student-centered instruction as most observed lessons were teacher-led.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **School leaders should conduct regular non-evaluative class visits to monitor instruction and provide teachers with feedback on the implementation of school priorities.** Interviewed teachers reported that informal class visits are not conducted regularly and they do not receive non-evaluative feedback on teaching practices or lesson planning. School leaders acknowledged that the amount of time they spend addressing behavioral issues prevents them from visiting classrooms as often as they would like. Although school leaders have identified the use of Chromebooks and Google Classroom as instructional priorities, during class visits, the IIT observed limited use of this technology. School leaders stated that they expect teachers to implement Do-Nows within the first five minutes of class and that Do-Nows should be tied directly to skills and standards relevant to the unit being taught. However, some Do-nows observed by the IIT only required students to

comply with basic operational directions, and some Do-nows lasted for twenty or more minutes. Interviewed teachers stated that their classrooms have not been visited to monitor their implementation of these instructional initiatives and they have not received feedback on the quality of their implementation.

- **The assistant principals need to provide teachers with more instructional support.** While the principal shared that each assistant principal is responsible for supporting instruction in specific content areas, teachers told the IIT that they did not know which assistant principal could support them with instructional issues or help them to improve their practice. While some teachers could identify which content areas the assistant principals were responsible for supporting, they stated that they do not receive regular class visits or frequent feedback to improve their practice. The assistant principals acknowledged that while they are assigned to provide specific subjects areas with instructional support, much of their time is spent dealing with operational matters and student behavior.

- **School leaders should ensure that department chairs are being fully utilized to support instruction.** School leaders shared that the principal has selected some teachers to serve as department chairs to support various teaching practices, run grade-level meetings, and foster curriculum development. Although department chairs' schedules include several hours each day to provide teachers with support and deliver professional development, there are no clear expectations for their use of this time, and the level of support provided to teachers is not monitored. When asked, teachers were not able to explain the roles of the department chairs and did not identify department chairs as significant resources for curricular support.

- **School leaders need to clearly communicate protocols for addressing student behavior.** Some teachers noted that school leaders issued a memorandum about procedures to address behavior concerns, but it did not include clearly defined behavioral interventions or processes for follow-up and support after an incident occurs. Some teachers and staff members told the IIT that they are not sure which school leader is responsible for overseeing student discipline and school culture. Teachers and staff shared that many educators struggle to manage behavioral issues within the classroom and sometimes request that students be removed for minor behavior infractions. In interviews with the IIT, students stated that different teachers have different expectations for student behavior. Some students also noted that certain behaviors might be allowed one day but may not be tolerated in the same class the next day. Students explained that this makes it difficult for them to know what is expected of them and can lead to increased tension between teachers and students.

- **School leaders should increase monitoring of instruction to ensure that teachers are meeting the principal's expectation for the use of Chromebooks to support instruction.** School leaders and teachers stated that teachers have received significant training in the use of Google Suite, Google Classroom, and Chromebooks to support student learning. With a new technology grant, the school was able to supply all students with Chromebooks and the principal communicated the expectation that Chromebooks should be used in all classes in all content areas. However, IIT members did not observe Chromebooks being used in accordance with the principal's expectations. While a small number of classes did use the computers to show videos, disseminate literature or informational articles, collect assignments, and monitor student responses, other classes did not use them at all. In classes that used Chromebooks, the IIT noted that the level of integration varied significantly and in many instances the Chromebook was used as an electronic version of a worksheet, graphic organizer, or note taking template.

- **The school needs to integrate resources and supplementary materials into the curriculum for all content areas.** In a review of the school's self-reflection document, the IIT noted that the New York State standards was listed at the curriculum for most content areas. The one exception was English language arts (ELA), for which Teacher College Units of Study was identified as the curriculum. In interviews with the principal, the IIT learned that steps had been taken to bolster the math curriculum by eliminating instructional gaps and strengthening vertical alignment, and the school had begun a similar process for science. However, through interviews with school and district leaders, the IIT found that the curriculum does not include integrated resources and materials. Teachers and school leaders stated that teachers are responsible for determining how to teach the standards and for finding appropriate and adequate materials to deliver their lessons.

- **Co-teachers should maximize the skills of each teacher to better support student learning.** The principal shared that the school's co-taught classes are integrated general education classes that include high numbers of either students with disabilities or English language learners (ELLs). The principal explained that he expects co-teachers to utilize small group instruction, parallel teaching, station models, team teaching, or alternative teaching models to deliver rigorous instruction that is appropriately modified to meet the needs of all students. However, during visits to co-taught classrooms, IIT members saw little evidence of these models being utilized. Instead, one teacher delivered instruction while the other teacher managed behavior or organized materials. In many observed co-taught classes, some students struggled to complete the assigned task while other students completed the work ahead of their peers and were ready to move on. In some classes that included a high number of ELL students, the IIT saw limited supports, such as materials printed in students' home languages, being used to assist ELLs in accessing the lesson content.

- **Teachers should use questioning strategies that encourage students to think critically and collaborate with their peers.** During classroom observations, most instruction was delivered through lectures and student understanding was assessed using low-level questions. When a student provided a correct answer, the answer was repeated so that other students could hear the information and write it down. When students provided answers that were nearly correct, the information was clarified, and when students provided incorrect responses, the correct answer was provided. The IIT did not observe any opportunities for students to debate or collaborate with their fellow students, nor were students given time to think critically or pose their own questions. In many classes, the same small group of students repeatedly attempted to answer the questions, and other students were not called on to participate. As a result, most students did not participate in the discussion and instead, waited for answers to be provided by their fellow classmates or the teacher.

- **Teachers need to utilize strategies that lead to high levels of student engagement.** The IIT observed many classes where students were compliant and working on the assigned task, though most activities or tasks required little if any critical thinking and did not lead to deeper learning or independent student work. Most observed instruction was teacher-led and included few opportunities for student discussion. Some students stated that they become bored with the teacher-led instruction and the constant question-response format of lessons. Interviewed students suggested that some students become disruptive because they are not interested in the lesson. The IIT found limited evidence of student choice being incorporated into the lesson. Interviewed students stated that they do not find most writing assignments to be interesting, and they would like to be able to write about topics that are personally relevant to them. In most classes, all students were given the same materials or graphic organizers, even when those materials were accessed via Chromebook and Google Classroom.

- **The school should fully utilize the eSchoolData Parent Portal to allow parents and students to monitor student performance.** Although the school uses the eSchoolData Parent Portal, school leaders reported that the school does not currently use the gradebook function to allow parents and students to monitor student performance. Parents can use the portal to access their children's past grades, transcripts, and some historical data, but they cannot view current grades or assignments. School leaders shared that teachers are not required to post assignments or current grades in the eSchoolData gradebook, only the final grades at the end of each quarter and semester. Interviewed teachers shared that different teachers use different methods or tools to record student grades, including eSchoolData, Google Classroom, hardcopy paper gradebooks, and other systems. Parents and students reported that since they are not able to access current grades, they are not able to monitor student progress throughout the year and often do not know how students are performing until quarterly report cards are posted. Students and parents explained that by that time, there is little, if anything, they can do to improve student grades.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Students and parents would like the school to use additional methods to communicate information regarding school events.** Students stated that, while information regarding upcoming school events is shared during morning announcements, the information is not shared through other methods to allow students who arrive late or are absent from school to access the information. Parents stated that finding information for upcoming events is difficult, and correspondence that is sent home often lacks detail and pertinent information. Students suggested that the school use an online bulletin or announcement board as well as a detailed calendar to communicate information about school events.
- **Parents would like the school to provide more detailed information regarding school events.** Parents shared that correspondence from the school is often vague and does not include specific information, such as requirements for participating or attending school events. Parents stated that they often need to call the school for clarity or ask other parents and teachers for details about upcoming events. Parents explained that the lack of specific information has resulted in students and families not being able to participate in some school events, and they find this to be frustrating.
- **Parents and teachers shared that current school practices do not allow parents to monitor their children's progress on an ongoing basis.** Teachers stated that because parent-teacher conferences typically take place at the end of each quarter, parents are unable to use these conferences to identify classes in which their children are underperforming and provide them with additional support to improve their grades. Parents also shared that the school does not have a system that allows them to monitor their children's grades and assignments on an ongoing basis. Instead they receive a report card once the quarter or semester has ended.