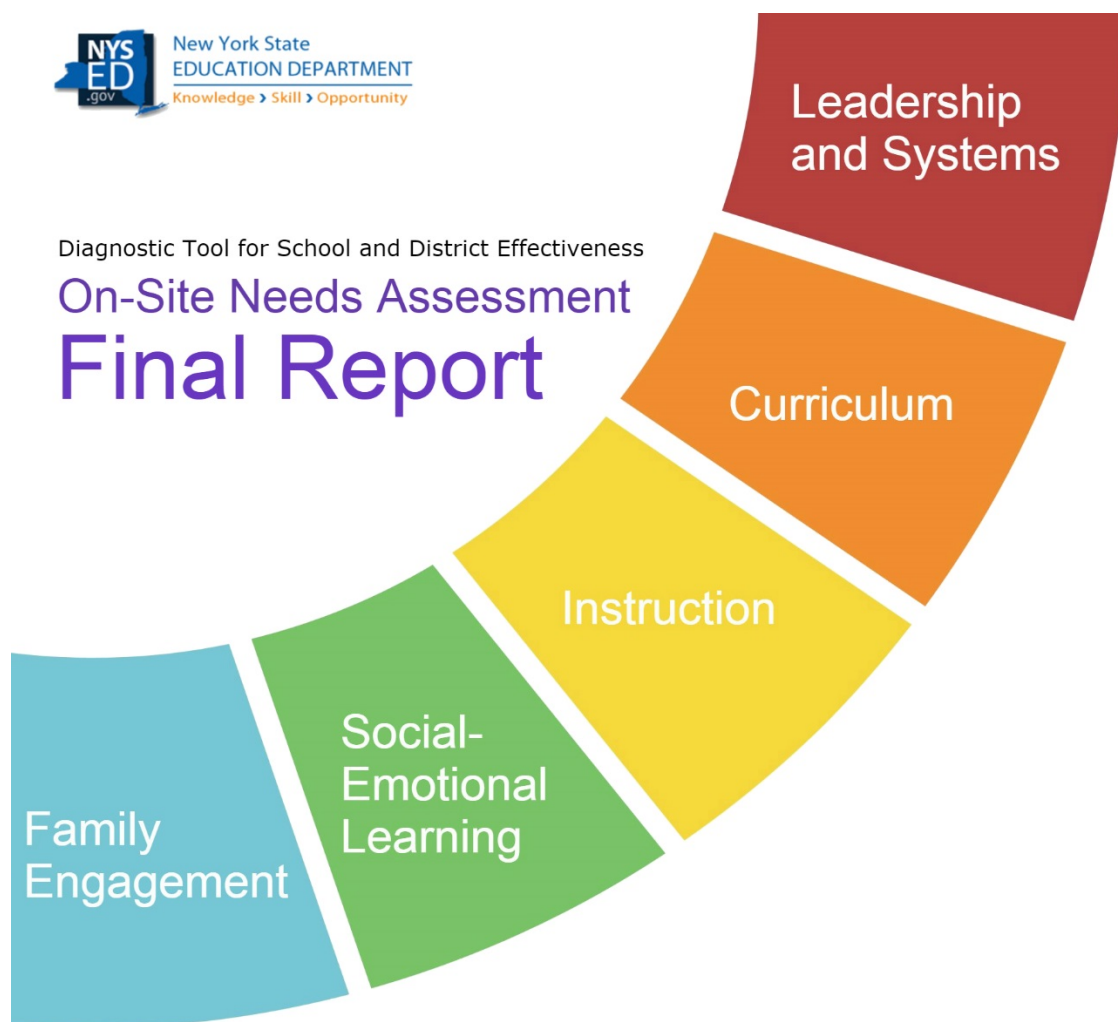


Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

Final Report



BEDS Code	050100010002
School Name	Casey Park Elementary School
School Address	101 Pulaski St, Auburn, NY 13021
District Name	Auburn Enlarged City School District
Principal	Kelly Garback
Dates of Visit	January 29-31, 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.

Information About The Visit

- Casey Park Elementary School serves 524 students in kindergarten to grade six.
- 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 36 classrooms during the visit.
- The OEE visited ten classrooms with the principal during the visit.
- Team members conducted interviews with students, staff, and parents.
- In advance of the visit, 45 staff members (33 percent) completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.
- There was a wind chill advisory and snow storm on day two of the visit, which may have prevented some parents from attending the parent focus group. While the principal indicated there was a good response rate and she expected a number of parents for the focus group, only four parents were in attendance for the meeting.
- School was cancelled on day three of the review due to the wind chill and extreme cold.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. Teachers, students, and parents reported to the IIT that school leaders have created a positive school environment in which everyone works as a team. The teachers reported there is a sense of community at the school and some staff shared that they were proud to have worked at the school for a number of years. Students reported they feel safe, cared for, and supported by most teachers. Parents reported the teachers are easy to talk to, welcoming, and responsive when returning calls and contacting parents.
2. The IIT observed that the school actively responds to and provides resources for students' safety. For example, on the second day of the visit the principal announced there were hats, scarves, and gloves available for students who may not have warm enough outer clothes for their walk home.
3. Each grade level has at least one special education teacher assigned to a regular education classroom. In these classrooms the general education teacher and the special education teacher co-teach the English language arts (ELA) lessons. The special education and general education teachers reported to the IIT that they plan and develop lessons together. The IIT observed that in the co-taught classrooms, both adults were actively engaged in teaching and working with students.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **The principal needs to clarify and communicate expectations for the extended learning time period.** Teachers reported to the IIT that the expectations for extended learning time sessions to provide students with interventions have not been communicated to the instructional staff. Conversations with staff and classroom visits showed that there is no common understanding regarding the principal's expectations for this time and that different teachers are using the supplemental session in different ways. Conversations with the staff revealed that many extended learning time periods are not supported by the interventionists and special education staff to meet the learning needs of students. Conversations with some special area teachers revealed that they have unencumbered time within their schedule that could be used more strategically and that staff members are not always scheduled so that they can support student interventions during extended learning time. The IIT also learned from their discussions with teachers that the quality of teaching and learning during these sessions is not routinely monitored and, therefore, the effectiveness of the sessions is unclear. In the future school leaders should clearly explain their instructional expectations for extended learning time to all staff and should monitor the quality of teaching and learning taking place in these sessions to ensure that the needs of all students are being met by all available staff.
- **School leaders need to establish effective schoolwide systems for the review of school performance data and the monitoring of progress being made towards performance goals.** The school leaders reported in their meeting with the IIT that systems have not yet been developed to monitor the progress being made towards schoolwide goals. For example, school leaders reported classroom data is not being tracked and monitored and, therefore, identified instructional improvements that may need to be made to achieve gains in academic performance have not yet been identified. Classroom teachers reported that they would like school leaders to spend more time in grade-level meetings discussing this data and providing instructional guidance to staff. Interventionists reported to the IIT that they have requested meetings with the principal to discuss current data and strategies to target their efforts to best support students with the greatest need, but a meeting had not yet taken place at the time of the visit. Additionally, although school leaders reported that classroom walkthroughs account for a large portion of their time, the team learned the data gathered in classrooms is not being collected and analyzed and teacher implementation of school leader feedback is not routinely monitored.
- **The principal should develop an action plan to address the findings and recommendations made during the 2017-18 Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness (DTSDE) visit.** For example, the last DTSDE visit identified the need to unite the school staff around a common mission and clear expectations across the school. However, conversations with teachers and school leaders confirmed that the school has not yet followed through with a plan to prioritize school unity through a common mission. Teachers also said that there is a lack of common understanding about instructional expectations and no common understanding among school leaders and staff about how the curriculum should be modified to meet the learning needs of different individual and groups of students, which class visits confirmed. Additionally, while the last DTSDE report identified the need for school leaders to better manage and use adults within the building to further student learning, the IIT observed only some classrooms with additional adult support available during instruction.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **The principal needs to communicate a vision for the school.** Conversations with teachers and school leaders revealed that the need to unite the school around a common vision for success has not yet been prioritized. The last DTSDE report stated that teachers and parents were not able to describe the vision or goals for the school. During the teacher and parent focus group meetings, the IIT asked about the school's vision and improvement goals, and both groups reported that they were not familiar with the school vision or any specific school goals. The principal reported that she has not yet communicated her vision to the staff or the wider school community. To move the school forward more quickly, the principal and school leadership team should develop and articulate to the staff, parents, and students their vision for the school.
- **The principal should provide teachers with actionable feedback on the implementation of the schools' curricular and instructional priorities.** The principal stated to the IIT that curricular programs are not being implemented to her expectations or with fidelity. For example, the principal said that teachers choose which components of the program they implement during lessons. However, in their meeting with the IIT, the teachers said that instructional expectations have not been clearly defined. Teachers shared with the team that they are still learning the curriculum and do not feel that they are receiving the guidance and support needed to improve their implementation of programs.
- **School leaders should match schoolwide performance data with the relative strengths of specific instructional staff when assigning teachers and support staff to grade levels and classes.** The 2017-18 DTSDE report identified the need for school leaders to strategically use adults in the building. The IIT observed that in some classrooms additional adults were working purposefully with students, whereas in other classes there were no other staff observed working with students at all. Teachers confirmed that additional adults are not always scheduled to maximize the supports provided to students during instruction. This conclusion was supported by classroom observations completed by the team.

Learning at the School

- **Teachers should use instructional strategies designed to ensure student understanding of the purpose of lessons and increase student engagement.** The IIT visited several classrooms where the lessons were overwhelmingly teacher-directed and provided little or no opportunity for student interaction. When students were given the opportunity to interact, it was observed by the team that the substance of the conversations was typically of a low level. Additionally, conversations with students during class visits revealed that many students do not understand the purpose of the lessons. For example, even though learning targets were posted in most classrooms, some students could not explain the purpose of the lesson when questioned by team members. In some classrooms the IIT observed that even if the teacher shared the lesson objective at the beginning of the class, it was not mentioned again during the lesson or used as a focus for reinforcing what had been achieved at the end of the session.
- **School leaders will need to develop a PD plan to support teachers in implementing the school's instructional priorities.** Teachers shared with the IIT that they are in the early stages of understanding the new curricular programs and resources they are implementing this school year. These teachers added that they are being asked to deliver these programs without the benefit of a program of PD to support them in planning and delivering lessons aligned to the new instructional initiatives. The principal confirmed the teachers' view that implementation of many of these practices is at a very early stage. The principal stated that initial PD had been provided to support teachers with several curricular approaches including the use of math modules, specially designed instruction, science kits, and interactive white boards, but agreed that more support would be

required for these approaches to be embedded in teachers' professional practice. The IIT observed that these practices are not currently being implemented with a high degree of quality in most classrooms.

- **The principal should balance the emphasis on social and emotional learning (SEL) with the need for improving the quality of teaching and learning to raise academic standards in the school.** Teachers reported that the school has prioritized SEL and has not been sufficiently focused on improving the quality of instruction. The principal shared her belief that the SEL needs of students must be addressed for students to be ready for learning. The principal explained to the IIT that the school's positive behavioral interventions and supports program (PBIS), the Be in Control Room (BIC), the calming room, and home visits are all components of a comprehensive SEL program. However, in interviews with the IIT, the teaching and support staff groups reported that they do not understand how the various initiatives that are being put in place are part of a coordinated approach to a comprehensive SEL support system. In the future, the principal will need to strike a better balance between meeting both the social-emotional and academic learning needs of the students and will need to explain her rationale to staff so that they know and understand the strategic direction that she is proposing.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Many staff would like more guidance on the school's PBIS continuum of response system and the BIC room work procedures.** Staff members explained that they do not understand how these programs work as part of a unified approach to intervention. Some teachers reported to the IIT that although they are aware of the PBIS and BIC protocols, they do not always know how or when to access the supports. These teachers indicated to the IIT that they need more guidance from the principal on the use of these different discipline protocols and procedures. For example, teachers reported they would like an explanation of the school's PBIS continuum of response process because either they are not sure how to use it or not sure they are using it as intended.
- **Parents requested that school leaders explore alternative ways to provide families with information.** Parents reported that the school uses various communication methods to reach out to families, but the number of families actively involved with the school is small. Parents said they are generally supportive of the school but would like to see more families take part in school events and decision making. These parents would like the school leaders to continue their efforts to communicate with parents using a variety of different methods.
- **Students would like their learning to incorporate more technology.** Students reported that they are excited to have Promethean Boards in their classrooms but would like teachers to use this technology in as many lessons as possible during the school day. Most students in the focus groups indicated that they would like opportunities to use available technologies every day at school because it would make their learning more interesting and relevant.