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
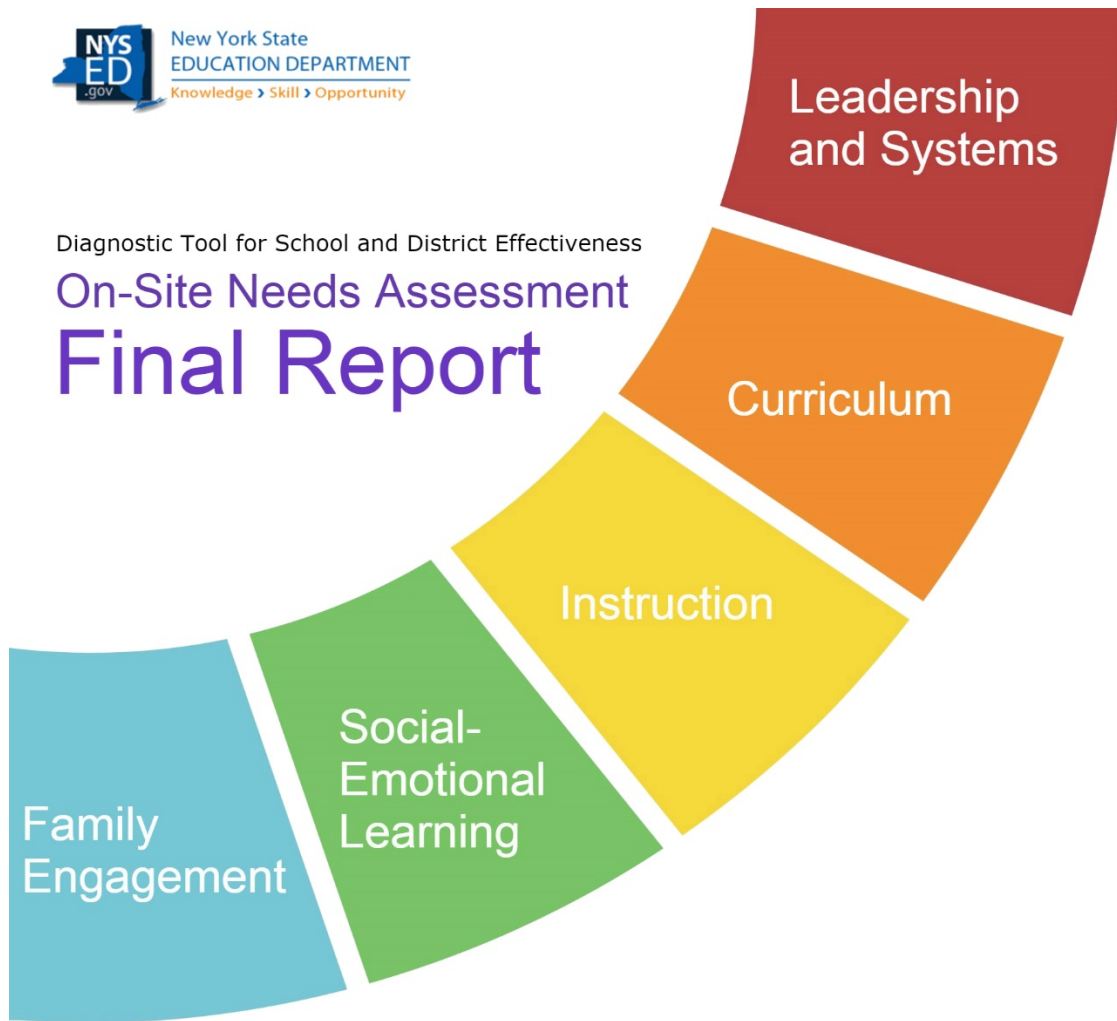
BEDS Code	580512030001
School Name	Southwest Elementary School
School Address	1095 Jefferson Ave., Bayshore, NY 11706
District Name	Brentwood Union Free School District
Principal	Michele Rogers
Dates of Visit	May 21-23, 2019

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:

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	2	1	2	1	3

Southwest Elementary School serves 1,056 students in grades pre-kindergarten through five.

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, a Special Education School Improvement Specialist (SESIS) representative and a representative from the Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (RBERN).
- The team visited a total of 71 classrooms during the visit.
- The OEE visited 18 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 lesson plans, schoolwide data, teacher feedback, and student work.
- In advance of the visit, the school provided results of a staff survey that 18 staff members (40 percent) completed.

Successes Within the School, That the School Should Build Upon:

1. The principal began a Thursday morning running club, *Run for One*, during the 2018-2019 school year. Although the number of students taking part varies from week to week, more than 40 students and several staff members, including the principal, usually run around the school track every Thursday morning. Students are encouraged to run as much as they can to compete against their own personal best. Staff and students indicated that this has contributed to the sense of community and belonging within the school and helps all members of the school community feel welcome.

2. During the 2018-2019 year, teachers received professional development (PD) in i-*Ready* for monitoring student progress in reading and mathematics. The school set a goal to increase each student's reading achievement by one grade level during the school year. Students that did not meet that rate of growth are currently being identified, and the principal indicated that they will be provided with additional instruction and support during the summer vacation.

3. The principal began to implement the philosophy of a growth mindset during the 2017-2018 school year, her first year as principal of the school. This year the principles of a growth mindset has been adapted in all 75 classrooms and evidence of it can be seen through community circles, morning meditation, and mini lessons that focus on perseverance and determination. In addition, staff and students, as a group, recite the Southwest Growth Mindset pledge every morning as a way to begin their day. Students spoke to the IIT about how the Growth Mindset has changed their thinking about achievement, noting that they now know they can accomplish their goals if they keep trying.

4. During the 2018-2019 school year, the guidance counselor established a "Girls Rock" program for students in grade five that needed additional services and preparation for the transition to middle school. These students were identified by their teachers and have been supported by the guidance counselor throughout the school year. Staff and participants noted the importance of this program in building the confidence of the young women participating.

5. During the 2018-2019 school year, the new assistant principal established a Response to Intervention (RTI) resources room that includes a wide range of resources for use by teachers in all grade levels. These resources include screening tools (with instructions for use and interpretation), instructional strategies, and work packets for use with students with different needs. The assistant principal provided PD for all staff in the use of these materials and also developed a video explaining this information. The IIT observed teachers working effectively with students using these materials. A number of teachers reported that they had not understood RTI until they had received this training and materials.

Areas of Need to be Addressed for Long-Term Success:

Systems for Improvement

- **The principal should schedule regular meetings of the data team that was established at the end of the 2018-2019 school year to inform instructional decision-making.** The IIT noted that there are multiple sources of data in the school, but there is a need for these data to be systematically used by classroom teachers across grades to inform instructional decision making. The new data team, comprised of one teacher from each grade level, should discuss, establish, and review procedures and protocols for regularly reviewing i-Ready, Fountas and Pinnell, and other formative assessment data in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics that are brought back and shared with grade level teams. These procedures could include regularly reviewing and triangulating data from multiple sources to determine patterns of student performance at each grade level, as well as the needs of individual students and different groups of students. The data team, in collaboration with grade level teams, will need to systematically monitor to ensure that these data are being used to inform the development and implementation of appropriate instructional strategies to meet different student needs. Additionally, this should be monitored for the impact and effectiveness of these strategies.

- **The principal will need to provide professional learning for teaching assistants who support teachers in the classroom.** Teaching assistants and teachers indicated that teaching assistants could provide additional support when working with individual students and small groups of students if they received targeted PD in the literacy strategies that are being implemented throughout the school. The IIT observed teaching assistants in the classroom and noted that teaching assistants are often asked to support students in understanding and completing tasks that require the use of these strategies. However, teaching assistants have not received the same PD as classroom teachers. Teachers specifically cited two programs, *Type 1 and Type 2 Collins* Writing and *Words Their Way*, as areas in which training would be particularly helpful in work with students. *Collins Type 1 & 2 Writing* is a program used to support students in developing writing and thinking skills across the curriculum while *Words Their Way* is a suite of materials used to assist students in developing phonics, vocabulary, and spelling.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **The principal should schedule weekly grade-level meetings for teachers to discuss student work and to plan instruction that addresses the learning needs of all students.** While the IIT found that there is a culture of collaboration among staff within the school, currently teachers only have regularly scheduled time for grade level and staff meetings twice each month. Grade three teachers reported that they chose to meet regularly during lunchtimes each week. Teachers in other grade levels indicated that they meet on their own time when needed and when they can find time to get together. Teachers at all grade levels said that that having regularly scheduled times to meet with their grade level colleagues would enable them to review student work collaboratively and to plan rigorous and differentiated tasks to meet the different learning needs of individuals and groups of students.

- **The principal should consider continuing to increase opportunities for teachers to loop with their classes to enable them to better understand and address student needs.** The principal and early grade teachers who have looped with their children in the school reported to the IIT that looping supported accelerating student learning. They noted that it enhanced teachers' ability to differentiate more quickly and effectively; to know, based on experience, which students work well together; to build on their awareness of children's social-

emotional needs and family circumstances; and to continue to develop stronger, reciprocal relationships with students and their families. A number of teachers who had never looped with their students, shared with the IIT that they were eager to try looping, if the opportunity was made available.

Learning at the School

- **Teachers should increase differentiation and opportunities for student-centered learning.** The IIT observed that while students were sitting in groups in many classes, the students could not explain how these groups were formed, and there was no indication that student performance data had been considered when forming these groups. The IIT observed a need for more differentiation to address the needs of students performing at different levels in the work that various groups were doing and for increased opportunities for student interaction, discussion, or input. In one class, for example, students were learning about the properties of triangles and answering questions. However, the team noted that students might have benefited from an opportunity to discuss how and where triangles could be used in everyday life as a way to make this learning more meaningful for the them.
- **School leaders should work with teachers so that they can more effectively support students in setting SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely goals.** The IIT found that the school has begun to create a culture where students know how well they are doing with respect to grades and progress. However, not all students are aware of what they need to do in order to be more successful. Many students were able to tell the IIT their Lexile levels for reading and that their goal was to move up two levels, but they did not know specific steps needed to achieve that goal. In several classrooms, student written goals were posted on bulletin boards with explanations about how they planned to achieve that goal. In many cases, the student wrote something along the lines of, my goal is to become a better writer. Their strategy for achieving their goal then typically stated, I have to practice my writing, but no specific steps were identified that would explain exactly what they needed to do to improve their writing. The team observed that the setting of meaningful and specific goals is taking place in a few classes across the school. In these classes, the students' goals were individual, precise, and attainable -- such as I will check by written work to be sure that I have begun each sentence with a capital letter. The school leaders should consider arranging for those teachers who are doing it most effectively to mentor and support other colleagues in order to promote best practices.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Teachers told the IIT that they needed more sustained support when implementing new programs and initiatives.** They shared with the IIT that they are typically provided with one or two days of PD when a new initiative is introduced and are then expected to implement it without further support or guidance. They suggested that it would be helpful to be able to share and discuss their experiences with a new initiative with school leaders and colleagues once they had begun to use it in the classroom.
- **Students told the team that they would like to see the playground equipment repaired and upgraded.** They noted that some of the equipment, for example the slides, was old and broken.
- **Parents would like the PTA to provide sessions on the English Language and mathematics curriculum for bilingual parents**. They suggested that it was important that these sessions included information and examples about how parents can help their children at home.

- **Parents shared that they would like a workshop on how to interpret their children's test results.** They mentioned, in particular, the State test, and *i-Ready* and requested that information about other assessments administered by the school be included in these workshop sessions.
- **Parents noted that they would like all teachers and the school leadership team, to communicate with them using the same methods.** Currently, some staff members use *Class Dojo*, others use *Remind*, and some others don't use any applications or means for communication. They noted that all staff members should be communicating with families.