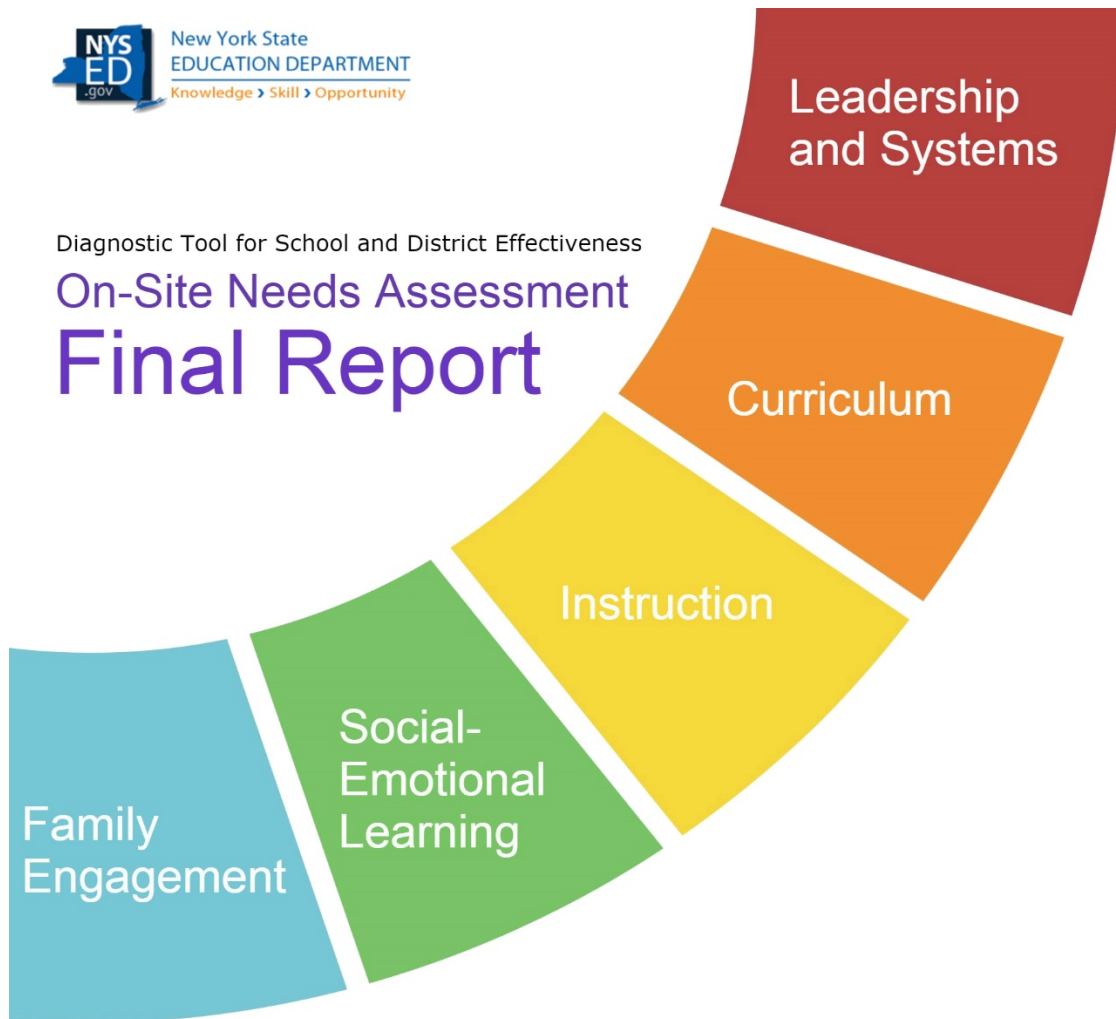


Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

# Final Report



<b>BEDS Code</b>	250901060005
<b>School Name</b>	Roberts Street Middle School
<b>School Address</b>	120 Roberts Street, Canastota, NY 13032
<b>District Name</b>	Canastota CSD
<b>Principal</b>	Michael Faustino
<b>Dates of Visit</b>	May 14-16, 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	-	1	3

Roberts Street Middle School serves 337 students in grades four to six.

## 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 31 classrooms during the visit.
- The OEE visited nine 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 schedules, and student work.
- In advance of the visit, 23 staff members (52 percent) completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.
- The current school leader was hired in January of 2019 and is new to the Canastota CSD.

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

1. Staff stated there has been an improvement in school climate since January 2019, when the current principal started his tenure. The teachers, students, and parents shared that student discipline rates have declined, and that follow through on discipline referrals has been consistent this spring. The students and teachers shared that the principal is visible in the hallways and in classrooms and works to build rapport with students who have challenging behaviors. The principal shared that he has been intentional about having parent conferences with parents and developing social contracts with students with challenging behaviors. During the visit, the team found that the school climate was conducive to learning and students were generally well-behaved and on task during lessons.
2. The principal and school staff stated that they have been successful in increasing student participation rates for State assessments in reading and math. The principal shared that the school traditionally had a high opt-out rate for State assessments and that he has made it a priority to meet with staff, parents, and students to communicate the importance of utilizing the State assessments as valid data points to gauge student proficiency and growth. As a result of the emphasis on the importance of opting into the State assessment program, the student participation rates increased from approximately 30 percent for the 2017-18 school year to approximately 80 percent for the 2018-19 school year.
3. Staff stated that the school has placed a greater priority on student use of technology to enhance the learning experience this year. For example, grade five and six students are using one-to-one technology devices and grade four students have access to multiple laptop carts. During the visit, the IIT observed students utilizing laptops as a tool to conduct research and complete assignments and activities. In addition, the team found that many teachers were utilizing Google classroom to facilitate instruction. During classroom visits, students were able to explain to the team how they navigate the system, work at their own pace, and self-monitor progress. Parents also shared that the use of technology for student assignments enables them to better understand the assignments that students are expected to submit.
4. The current principal began his tenure in January 2019 and stated that he has been intentional about building relationships with members of the school community. He stated that he has prioritized developing relationships with families and developing a supportive school environment. For example, the school leader shared that he has been scheduling meetings with families as well as walking through the local community to meet and talk with families and community stakeholders. Many of the school staff are members of the school community and stressed to the IIT the importance of retaining a school leader who is committed to the school. Conversations with students and families confirmed that the principal has been initiating several outreach strategies to develop relationships to enhance school and family partnerships, such as with mental health and dental services organizations.

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

### Systems for Improvement

- **The school leader should engage staff in the school improvement planning process while developing the School Comprehensive Education Plan (SCEP) and consider how the activities need to be incrementally implemented based on the needs of the staff and students.** During conversations with the school leader, the

Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) learned that he has identified specific areas for growth such as differentiated instruction, curriculum, and assessment. The principal shared numerous action plans and potential resources that he believes would specifically target gaps in implementation of the State standards and instructional practices. The principal also shared that he developed an implementation plan for instructional initiatives; however, the amount of time allotted for action items had to be extended to ensure implementation with fidelity. Teachers who met the IIT identified similar improvement areas and shared that collaborative decision-making, time to learn strategies, and structured follow-up and support will be essential if the school is to be successful in addressing its improvement needs.

- **The school leader should establish a school-wide system of intervention to support all struggling learners.** While the school has three academic intervention support (AIS) staff, the IIT learned that they are only able to support a subset of the students who are performing below grade level in math and reading. The IIT observed students receiving math and reading AIS support, which focused on math standards and fluency. The IIT learned from AIS staff and the principal that the student intervention team referral process has been revised and that the team has now begun to meet weekly with teachers to review student referrals. However, while the school professional learning plan prioritizes differentiated instruction, during classroom visits, there was little evidence of students receiving targeted small group tier two instruction based on their needs, as students primarily completed the same tasks in the same way.

## Leadership and Organization at the School

- **The school leader should establish an instructional leadership team to ensure shared decision-making about instructional strategies and to promote strategic, shared responsibilities for consistent implementation.** The school leader shared that professional development (PD) for the school has primarily been district-led and that he now wants to move towards more school-specific professional learning. While the school leader has engaged staff in PD, targeting areas such as data-driven instruction and student engagement, he and staff with the capacity to assist have been the primary vehicles for the delivery of PD. Teachers confirmed that they have participated in district and school-level PD but agreed with the principal that follow-up support is limited. In addition, the IIT learned from teachers that shared decision-making is a practice that needs strengthening in the school. As a result, implementation of strategies and instructional initiatives has been uneven across grade levels due to limited buy-in. The IIT learned from the principal that the school will have access next school year to a part-time instructional coach who will be shared with other schools within the district. The principal also shared that strategic plans for the coach will be used to support staff with implementing school-level initiatives.
- **The school leader should collaborate with the school leadership team to establish norms for vertical and horizontal team meetings regarding instruction and the use of student data.** The IIT learned that team meetings primarily provide teachers with the opportunity to share information such as upcoming events, scheduling, and specific students concerns. The IIT observed teachers reference student progress monitoring and State standards in the team meeting it visited, but the discussions mostly focused on procedural matters such as the completion of assessments and the need to further review the Next Generation English language arts (ELA) standards. The school leader shared that the teachers do not often have opportunities to meet in vertical teams with a focus on student data, assessments, and progression in learning expectations as they relate to the State standards.
- **The school leader should collaborate with teachers to outline instructional schedules and then monitor these schedules to ensure that appropriate instruction is taking place during identified times.** The IIT found

through classroom visits that some class schedules included time blocks identified as study time where students sat and completed various assignments or read silently, rather than receiving instruction. In addition, during conversations with the school leader, the IIT learned that expectations regarding the use of academy time had not been clearly defined. When the IIT visited the cafeteria during academy time, students were being monitored while they completed written and technology-based assignments or read silently.

- **The school leader should collaborate with instructional staff to establish cohort and classroom goals for ELA, math, and science and implement a data system to collect data and monitor progress toward these goals.** During conversations with the school leader and staff, the IIT learned that while AIMS Web screening data is collected, the school does not have a system to gauge student mastery of the content standards and has not set classroom level growth goals as they relate to school-level State assessment results. Further, staff shared that current in-class assessment tools do not accurately gauge student mastery of State standards or predict accurately outcomes on the State assessments.

## Learning at the School

- **Grade-level teams should collaborate with the school leader to review pacing guides and the instructional expectations of each standard.** During classroom visits, the team found that while instruction was related to the standards included in lesson plans, the activities and discussions students engaged in rarely challenged students at the level set forth in the standards. For example, in several ELA classrooms, while students were provided with a choice, activities required them to write using strategies such as summarizing the beginning, middle, and end, or retelling the story using specific facts. In science classrooms, student watched videos and recalled the facts from the video during class discussions without extension or application to the global context.
- **Teachers should collaborate to create classroom-level common assessments and quarterly assessments aligned to the rigor set forth in State standards in all core subject areas.** During conversations with teachers, the IIT learned that while teachers discuss the standards that will be taught, the grade teams need to institute a practice of administering common assessments across the grade level that reflect the rigor of the State assessments. The IIT also learned that quarterly assessments for the same subject area are sometimes different across the grade level and are often not aligned to the State standards. Students shared with the team that the questions on their classroom assessments are not as challenging the State practice assessments items they completed in preparation for State assessments. The school leader also shared that students face challenges with regard to endurance when taking State assessments, as they are not accustomed to the length and challenge level expected.
- **Teachers should implement uniform practices with regard to social emotional learning (SEL) and behavioral expectations.** Staff and students shared that while the school climate has improved, expectations regarding student behavior and the issuance of rewards and consequences still varies across classrooms. The IIT learned from staff and the school leader that a Positive Behavioral Interventions Support (PBIS) program was adopted previously; however, not all staff are using the program with fidelity across all classrooms. Students shared that students with behavioral challenges are rewarded for positive behavior; however, students who regularly exhibit positive behavior are rarely recognized. The school leader shared that conversations about programs such as The Positivity Project and Restorative Practices are being held with staff and decisions regarding implementation are forthcoming. Teachers shared that while they have received some training in the area of

SEL, additional support with implementation is necessary and all staff, including aides and cafeteria workers, should be trained as well.

- **Teachers should incorporate higher-order-thinking questions into lessons with an emphasis on student-dominated discussions.** During classroom visits, the IIT found that in nearly all classrooms, most questions were asked at level one or two of Webb’s Depth of Knowledge. Typically, students had few opportunities to extend their thinking or build upon the responses of their peers. The team observed several social studies lessons that required students to apply their understanding of the judicial system to current affairs, and math lessons that gave students opportunities to respond to open-ended questions that helped them learn and apply strategies to solve problems. However, most lessons presented students with closed questions, which required only one correct answer. In addition, in most classrooms, students were provided with little wait time to answer questions and most classroom discussions were teacher-dominated.
- **Grade teams should collaborate with the school leader to outline the instructional components expected in all lessons and during the work period.** During interviews with teachers, the IIT learned that due to the number of different school leaders in recent years who have each identified different instructional improvement priorities, staff are unclear about the school’s current instructional priorities. While the school plan outlined data-driven instruction, intervention plans, engagement techniques, and formative assessment as strategies the IIT should be able to see evident in classrooms, the team observed limited evidence of these strategies during classroom visits. For example, the team observed evidence of turn and talk strategies, exit tickets, pre-assessment, guided reading, and fluency assessments in only a few classrooms. Teachers shared that they received training in the area of student engagement and received a resource with 40 student engagement techniques; however, they stated they need additional follow-up support and feedback in order increase student engagement.

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

- **Teachers would like to actively contribute to PD activities.** During teacher interviews, the IIT learned that there are a number of teachers who have participated in district-led and external PD sessions aligned to the State standards; however, there are limited opportunities for teachers to collaborate with peers who teach in different grade levels. Teachers shared that they would like opportunities to engage in classroom inter-visitations, to turnkey training for the purpose of sharing instructional strategies and to develop a shared understanding of the content set forth by the State standards.
- **Students desire more opportunities to participate in activities outside of the school day.** While the school provides clubs such as band, chorus, fitness club, and the student government club, which provide students with the opportunity to take on leadership roles within the school, they would like additional clubs in other areas including dance, math, and science.
- **Families shared that they would like increased communication from the school through the use of technology tools.** During conversations with parents, the team learned that teachers communicate with parents in some grade levels through weekly Friday folders and written notices that are sent home with students. Parents also shared with the team that they are able to learn about student progress at parent-teacher conferences and through Google classroom. However, parents shared that the school could expand its outreach to parents, and possibly increase participation, if technology applications were used more frequently to provide advance notices about events and keep parents informed about general school information.

- **Teachers would like additional support in the area of data analysis and data-informed instruction.** Teachers communicated that they need additional support to ensure that they are accurately analyzing student data. In addition, teachers shared that they needed further support in how to use data to inform instructional planning and decisions.