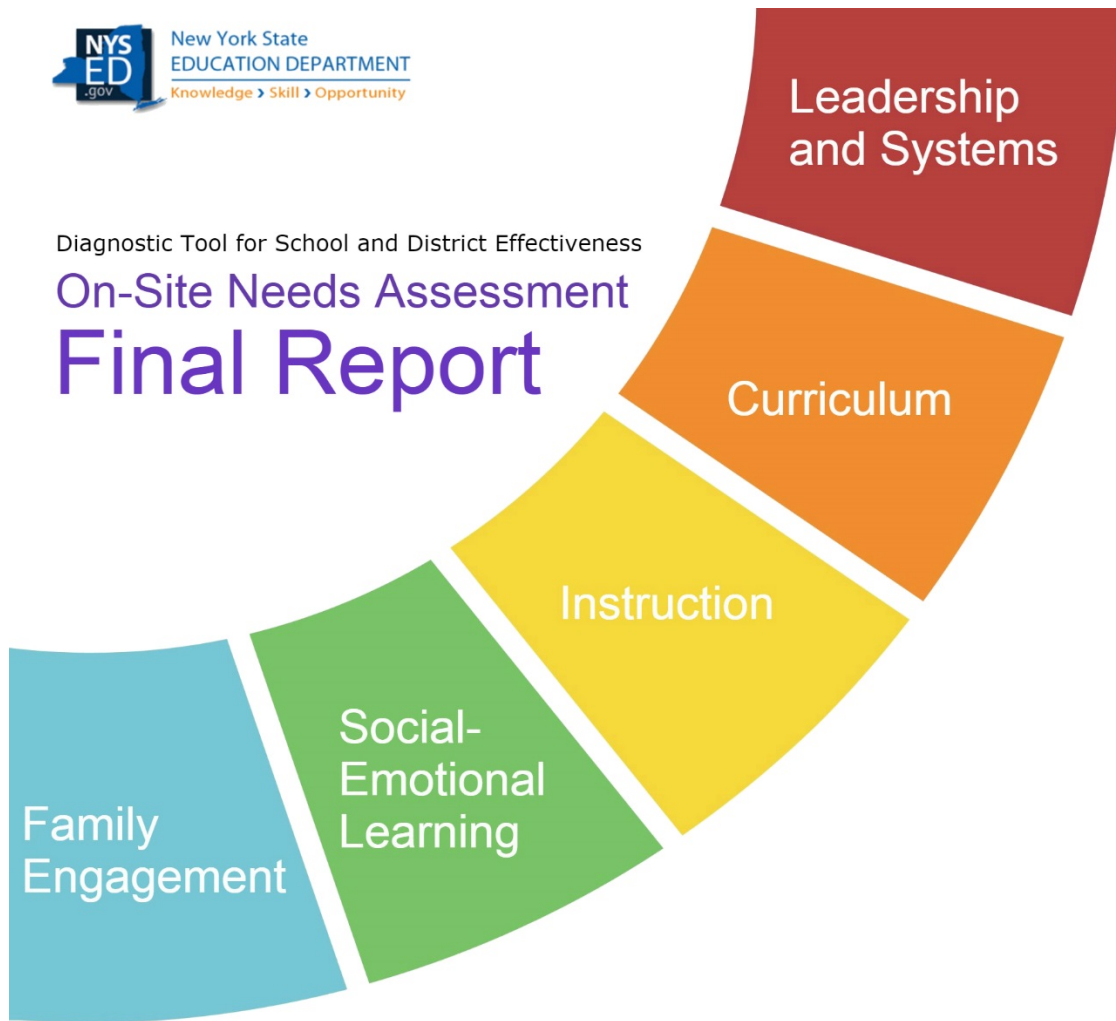


Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

# Final Report



<b>BEDS Code</b>	460801060008
<b>School Name</b>	Central Square Middle School
<b>School Address</b>	248 U.S Route 11, Central Square, NY 13036
<b>District Name</b>	Central Square Central School District
<b>Principal</b>	Mathew Penrod
<b>Dates of Visit</b>	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
2	1	1		1	2

Central Square Middle School serves 864 students in grades six to eight.

## 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 district consultant.
- The team visited a total of 29 classrooms during the visit.
- The OEE visited ten classrooms with the building principal during the visit.
- Team members conducted interviews with students, staff, and parents.
- Team members examined documents provided by the school, including schoolwide data, teacher feedback, and student work.
- In advance of the visit, 52 staff members (47 percent) completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.

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

1. The school offers a range of accelerated courses that allow grade eight students to accrue high school credits. Living Environment and a technology course were added for the 2018-19 school year to expand the wide range of subjects already offered. School data showed that 54 students are on track to gain high school credit for the Living Environment course, 119 students for a technology course, 71 students for the Algebra I course, 19 students for a German course, 158 students for a Spanish course, 50 students for a French course, and 47 students for a Studio Art course. Students interviewed by the IIT reported that they enjoy the more challenging

material these courses provide. Interviewed parents said they are pleased with the range of accelerated courses that are offered.

2. During the 2018-19 academic year, the school piloted, primarily in grade six, the Positivity Project, which empowers students to build positive relationships by seeing the character strengths in themselves and others. Most teachers interviewed by the team spoke of using character strengths and attributes to cultivate positive relationships schoolwide. Interviewed students said that a focus on different character strengths each week helps them to further develop their own strengths.
3. Teachers reported that there is a strong sense of collegiality and team support during the 2018-19 school year. The IIT found in discussions with teachers that they are supportive of each other and often turn to each other for ideas and inspiration. The master schedule ensures that most core subject area teachers have daily team time to meet, and teachers of integrated co-teaching classes have co-planning time; teachers shared that they appreciate these opportunities to plan together.

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

### Systems for Improvement

- **School leaders will need to develop an attendance monitoring system that includes supports for all students to regularly attend school.** The IIT learned in discussions with the building principal that although the majority of students attend school regularly, 25 percent of students do not, and their attendance has been identified as a cause for concern. The system that staff use to monitor attendance ensures that parents receive phone calls and letters when their children do not attend school. However, there is no regular or systematic follow up that occurs to learn why students are not in school or to emphasize the importance of attending school regularly. In addition, attendance data has not yet been analyzed to identify the reasons why a quarter of the students do not attend school regularly.
- **School leaders will need to analyze schoolwide data collected from the many systems they use, such as data related to student behavior, social and emotional learning, and academic performance.** The IIT found that data are not analyzed to show trends and patterns or to identify strengths and areas that need improvement. For example, the team learned that most staff and many students know that a minority of students are responsible for many of the school's behavior referrals. However, there has been no deep data analysis to understand why this is the case and to determine how this can be avoided. In the future, school leaders will need to analyze all forms of data they collect to enable them to see how well the school is doing in all areas of its work and then celebrate successes and incorporate the areas that need improvement into school improvement planning.

### Leadership and Organization at the School

- **The school leaders will need to devise a schedule of classroom walkthroughs to check that instructional expectations are being followed, to offer actionable feedback to teachers, and to allow for revisits to see if improvements are maintained.** The IIT found that the school leaders' schedule for visiting classrooms has not been sustained because they have been focusing on other priorities, such as managing student behavior. The

team's discussions with school leaders and teachers revealed that, in the past, teachers received walkthroughs from school leaders and were provided with general feedback about their practice; however, currently, teachers are not consistently receiving walkthroughs and actionable feedback on the school's identified instructional expectations. During visits to classrooms, the IIT found that many of the instructional expectations were not addressed, such as delivering lessons that focus on meeting the needs of students, checking student understanding during lessons, or giving students opportunities to develop their critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

- **The school leaders should reestablish data meetings with individual teachers in order to identify learning gaps and ensure that all teachers know how to use data to inform their instruction.** The IIT found that while a great deal of data are collected on student academic performance in reading and math, lessons are typically planned for all students without using data to account for varied student needs and abilities. Many students stated that the activities they are given are too easy and they could do harder work, while other students told the IIT that they could sometimes benefit from additional support. The school leaders' discussions with the team suggested that not all teachers are confident at using student academic performance data to inform their instruction or to identify the skills to focus on when students are provided additional support.

## Learning at the School

- **Teachers should reinforce the learning targets during and at the end of the lesson to check student understanding and use the results of ongoing assessments to inform future lessons.** The IIT found in class visits that teachers usually identified the lesson's learning targets. However, they did not always make sure that by the end of the lesson they had checked students' understanding and collected ongoing assessment information to inform future lessons based on the needs of the students. Students stated that they often do not feel comfortable asking for additional support and are sometimes confused about their learning when they leave the lesson.
- **Teachers will need to focus on enabling students to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills.** The IIT observed that teachers' questioning usually allowed students to recall information and reinforce learning by responding with short, quick answers. Teachers did not typically provide opportunities for students to discuss issues in small groups or as a whole class. Students were rarely encouraged to extend their answers, make reasoned judgements that were logical and well thought out, or question the arguments and conclusions of others.

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

- **Students stated that they learn better when they work together on assignments rather than working individually through classwork.** During discussions with the IIT, students stated that they often work on worksheets but prefer to work on group assignments during which they can discuss issues with other students and work cooperatively as a group. Teachers stated that they sometimes plan for students to work in groups.
- **Teachers, parents, and students all expressed concerns regarding the handling of discipline issues.** Interviewed parents stated that discipline issues are not always dealt with consistently. During discussions with the team, students reported that behavior is handled inconsistently from class to class and different students do not always receive the same consequences for the same behavior. Many students stated that poor student behavior often interrupts their learning.