

Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

Final Report



BEDS Code	680801040001
School Name	Dundee Junior-Senior High School
School Address	55 Water St., Dundee, NY 14387
District Name	Dundee Central School District
Principal	Christopher Arnold
Dates of Visit	March 26-29, 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
2	1	1	-	2	1

High School Performance Indicators

4 Yr Grad. Rate <67%	Composite Performance Achievement Level	Average of 4-, 5-, and 6-year Graduation Rate Levels	Combined Composite Performance Achievement and Graduation Rate Level	English Language Proficiency Level	Average ELA and Math Academic Progress Level	Chronic Absenteeism Level	College, Career, Civic, Readiness (CCCR) Level
No	2	2	2	-	1	2	1

Dundee Junior-Senior High School serves 276 students in grades seven to twelve.

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 25 classrooms during the visit.
- The OEE visited eight 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 schoolwide data.
- In advance of the visit, 20 staff members (67 percent) completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.
- With the school district being rural and small, the district representative was also the Junior-Senior High School principal.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. The school newly provides a universal breakfast program for all students. Prior to the current school year, only certain students qualified for daily breakfast. With the current program, all students can arrive to school early to eat breakfast. This program helps ensure that students are prepared to engage in a full day of instructional activities without hunger. Parents and staff agreed that this program is a benefit for students, as it removes a potential barrier to learning.
2. The Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) found that the principal is dedicated to building positive and productive relationships with families and the local community. For example, students and parents stated that they feel that they can reach out to the principal, at any time, with any concern. Further, they shared that he knows all the students' names and expresses an interest in getting to know them and in finding out what they are interested in. The principal shared he is available to meet with students and parents each day and that he works with the community and local organizations to support student learning. Students stated that the principal asks about their extra-curricular activities and personal lives, expressing interest and support and that this helps to make school a positive experience.
3. The Gemini program, a Finger Lakes Community college dual enrollment program, provides college credit for students at the school. Students have access to classes that will allow them to gain college credit and get an Associate Degree before they graduate. The minimal cost, \$5 per credit hour, allows for the college courses to be affordable to most students. This program allows for students to be taught by adjunct professors who are also full-time Dundee school employees, paid by the district. The college class is built into the regular class schedule of the teacher. Parents and students stated that some students seeking a challenge and who plan to attend college, take advantage of this program. Students and their parents stated that they appreciate the opportunities that this program provides.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **School leaders should develop measurable school improvement goals aligned to school initiatives.** Areas of academic growth and benchmarks to measure the progress made in achieving them have yet to be clearly identified. The principal identified the school goal as “evolving instructionally and becoming a truly personalized learning environment.” Although, the theme identified references a higher level of achievement, it is unclear how the school is measuring higher levels of achievement. For example, the school is implementing technology as a tool to move to a personalized learning model; however, the school has yet to establish a measurable goal that can be used to measure progress towards this initiative.
- **School leaders need to develop progress monitoring systems to ensure that resources are being utilized effectively to support student learning.** Although several adults were observed supporting teachers in their classrooms, their involvement in instruction varies considerably from room to room. While the IIT observed adults in some classes working with small groups of students, they also observed support staff in other classes standing and watching while the teacher led the lesson. The IIT discovered through their observations and from discussions with staff that support staff do not all fully understand their roles and their responsibilities and do not know how best to support the learning needs of students. Additionally, while staff are using supplemental resources such as the web-based programs iReady, iExcel, Zearn, and Odyssey for teaching and learning, there has not been any analysis of student performance data to substantiate the impact of these resources on student learning since their introduction three years ago. It is not clear how teachers use the data from these programs to inform how they plan lessons, form student groups, or develop assessments. In the future, the principal will need to regularly monitor data to ensure that the utilization and impact of resources and programing are being maximized.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **The principal needs to strategically schedule courses in order to maximize the capacity of teachers in the school.** The school offers many classes to its students that have low enrollments, including several of the electives, college level courses, and math courses. This creates a complicated scheduling issue because while the school wants to offer a wide range of courses despite low enrollment, this is a difficult task because of the relatively small staff at the school. The school has begun to develop a plan to provide dedicated teachers for students in grades seven and eight; however, this plan lacks specific action steps to ensure that the plan is achievable. In the future, the school should review recent course offerings to identify enrollment trends that can be used to inform future course offerings.
- **The principal will need to consider how to better support teachers with planning courses and lessons.** While the small number of teaching staff in the school have multiple grade and content certification that enable multiple assignments to be made, it does not currently allow for teachers to be assigned to a specific grade or content area. With the integration of the special education students into general education classes, even more sections per grade level have now been created. Teachers shared with the team that they feel overwhelmed by the amount of work required to effectively build and resource a class when they know that they will probably not be needed to teach that class again. Further, teachers stated that there is little time

for them to plan for the multiple classes and there are not always curriculum resources for them to use when they are planning.

- **The principal should monitor the quality of teacher planning and instruction through frequent classroom observations.** The IIT found that the principal feedback on planning and instruction often only takes place when formal observations are completed. The principal shared that conducting walkthroughs and providing regular feedback to teachers needs to be a priority in order to ensure that teachers are provided with the support and guidance that they need to improve their instructional practices.
- **The principal will need to share and monitor his expectations for the work study periods.** Since the school has not established clear expectations for the staff assigned to work study periods, the effectiveness of the use of work study period time varies greatly across the school. Some students told the IIT that they use the work study periods to complete homework, but others shared that they are free to do anything during work study time, including using their phones. Students and staff told the team that students who do not like an elective class or who do not wish to engage in the activities are able to go to the counselor, drop their elective, and move to a work study period which could lead to students spending several periods a day in work study. For example, some students shared that on some days they spend up to five periods in work study classes.

Learning at the School

- **Teachers need to plan lessons that include an effective balance between technology as a tool for learning and teacher-guided instruction.** The IIT found that the use of one to one technology has provided students with access to a laptop with the expectation of bringing this tool to class daily. Teachers have been provided with training on Google classroom and have access to various digital instructional platforms, such as IReady, IExcel, Zearn, Odyssey, and videos to use with students as they begin to engage with personalized learning. A few of the teachers have established an effective balance between the use of technology as a tool for learning and more conventional forms of lesson delivery. One observed teacher, for example, had created opportunities for students to research concepts in groups and they were then required to develop a presentation to report out to the rest of the class. However, other teachers have totally shifted learning to digital platforms and are implementing an instructional model where instructional content is often delivered on-line through digital resources. For example, students in math classes, typically watch videos and are asked to complete assignments without any teacher support. Students shared with the team that this style of teaching makes it difficult to learn math and that the homework set does not always align with the videos they have watched.
- **School staff should promote the higher-level courses that are offered.** Students have a variety of options to take depending on the graduation track chosen, such as opting for the Regents, Non-Regents, or Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) track. Students can decide which track to take and then complete the courses aligned with that track. However, the IIT found that not many students enroll in the higher-level courses that are offered, even though parents and students spoke highly of these courses. While the school provides information to students about available courses during the Spring semester, parents stated they are not always aware of all the options available to students. The IIT found that it is not evident how often information on course selection and career alignment is shared beyond scheduling time for the next year. Students goals for going to college are not discussed regularly and students stated that they would like to know which classes can be taken that will align with the careers they want to major in.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Parents have concerns about the inconsistent implementation of the discipline policy.** Parents shared that while the overall climate of the school is safe and welcoming, the discipline policy and consequences for things such as students using their phones and student misconduct are not implemented consistently across grade levels. They believe that consequences vary from student to student and that while the misbehavior of some students is overlooked, other students may be sent to in-school detention or recommended for suspension.
- **Parents are not sure that the learning needs of all students are being consistently met.** Parents appreciate the partnership with Finger Lakes Community College and the inexpensive college courses offered to students; however, they stated that they do not feel their children are being challenged in core classes or that adequate supports are being provided for students with disabilities. The integrated classes contain students with a range of needs and parents feel some students are not currently given the supports they need to be successful.
- **Students shared that the quality of support provided by teachers in the built-in afterschool period is inconsistent.** Students shared with the IIT that some teachers are not available in their rooms to support students with questions or work during period eight, which is the school's after-school period. A few students also shared that teachers stated that they don't have time to help the students, even though this session is designated for teachers to support students.
- **Parents have concerns about the way that in-school detention and in-school suspension is managed in Room 330.** Although the concept of Room 330 is appreciated as a behavior deterrent for students, parents stated that the in-school detention and in-school suspension structure should be restructured. They are concerned with the age differences of students in the room since, for example, there can be elementary students and middle/high school students present in the same space with the one adult coordinator monitoring. Parents shared their concerns about the language heard and behaviors exhibited during in-school detention and suspension.