New York State
EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
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Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment
Final Report

Leadership and Systems

Curriculum

Instruction

Social-Emotional Learning

Family Engagement
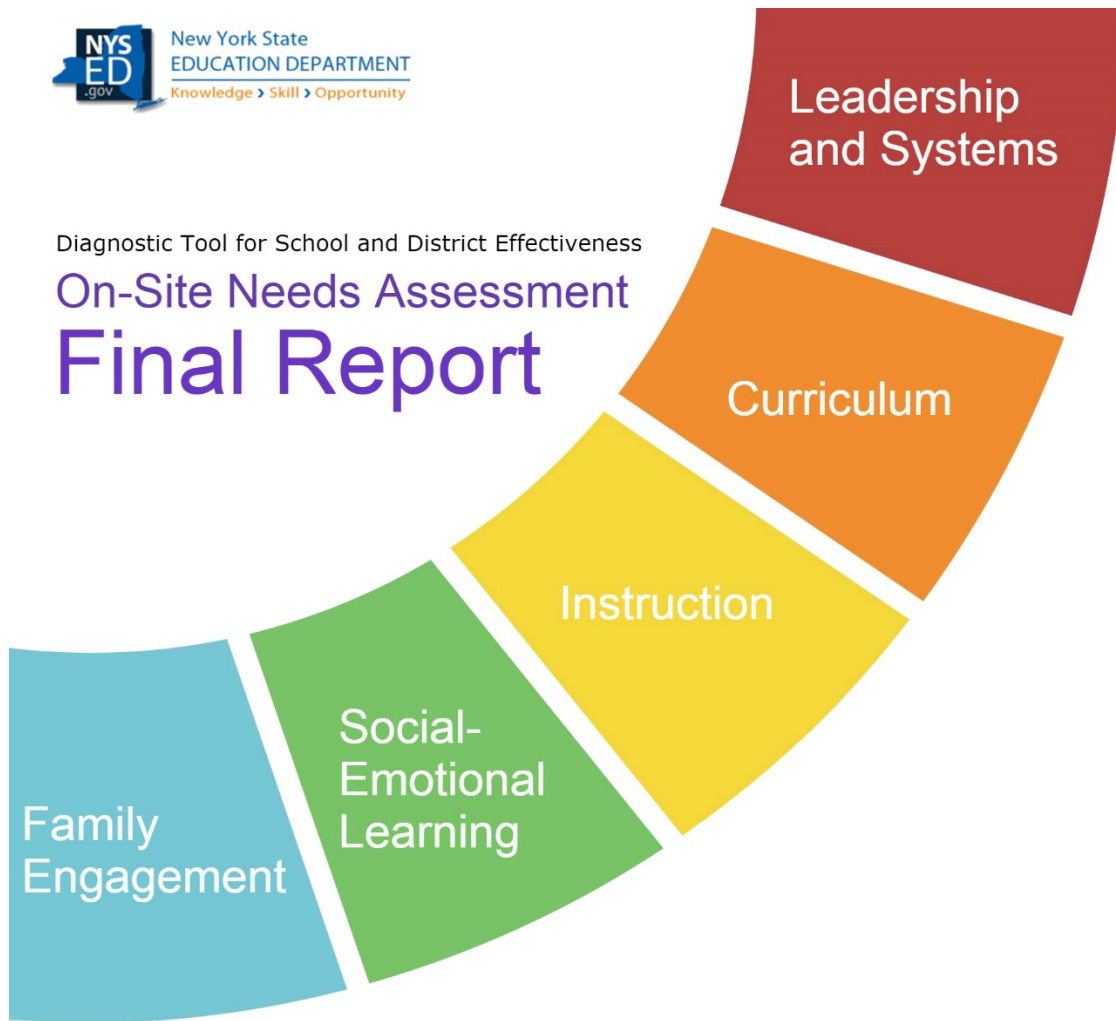
BEDS Code	4307000 10002
School Name	North Street School
School Address	400 W. North Street, Geneva, NY 14456
District Name	Geneva City School District
Principal	Eric Vaillancourt
Dates of Visit	February 26-28, 2019

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	2	1	2	1	3

North Street School serves 618 students in grades two 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 and a representative from the Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (RBERN).
- The team visited a total of 39 classrooms during the visit.
- The OEE visited ten classrooms with the principal during the visit.
- Team members conducted interviews with students, staff, and parents.
- Team members examined documents provided by the school, lesson plans, schoolwide data, teacher feedback, and student work.
- In advance of the visit, 64 staff members (96 percent) completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. Building on earlier efforts, the principal has prioritized the importance of developing supportive relationships with parents, teachers, and staff. Parents, teachers, and students shared that he is enthusiastic, data-driven, and communicates a positive attitude about activities around the school. Staff and parents who have some history at the school stated that the routines and systems the principal has introduced, such as regularly sending written communications celebrating teachers' accomplishments and holding monthly assemblies to celebrate students' successes have increased morale, and created a welcoming climate.

2. The school is implementing the philosophies and components of the Responsive Classroom during the 2018-19 school year. School leaders and staff attributed a decrease in behavioral incidents to the consistent implementation of Responsive Classroom practices across classes. The number of referrals in October 2018 decreased by 23 percent compared to October 2017, in November 2018 by 16 percent compared to November 2017, and in December 2018 by 49 percent compared to December 2017. The team noted that these data appear to take on added significance because the student population has increased this school year due to the addition of grade two in the building.

3. The principal has established routines around the school and understands the importance of holding teachers and staff accountable. For example, he expects teachers of art and music to attend Morning Meeting, a component of the Responsive Classroom that is implemented in all classes at the beginning of each school day. Special teachers stated that attending Morning Meetings has helped them know their students better than they had in the past when they only met with them once each week.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **School leaders should develop a system that enables them to consistently provide robust feedback to teachers as a part of their informal walkthroughs to improve teacher practice and to monitor the implementation of feedback.** The team found that the feedback provided typically includes a general comment about what was liked in the lesson, such as it was observed that most students were engaged; a suggestion for the teacher to consider, such as providing more student choice; and a thank you to acknowledge the teacher's good work. However, the feedback is not specifically focused on steps directed at improving student achievement and ensuring the implementation of the feedback. In the future, school leaders will need to establish a system that will allow them to provide more targeted feedback and then follow up to ensure that teachers are held accountable for effective instruction that results in improved student achievement. Examples of such feedback could include creating more small groups based on students' i-Ready assessment scores and using the Academic Intervention Services (AIS) component of the Wonders literacy program.

- **The principal should implement a system to effectively monitor math instruction to focus on addressing students' varying needs.** The principal reported to the IIT that over the years teachers have been free to modify the math curriculum themselves, which has resulted in an inconsistent program. This school year, much of the attention of school leaders and teachers has focused on implementing the Wonders literacy program, with less attention to math. The team found that math instruction is not being monitored in such a way as to ensure that students gain grade level math concepts and skills and that achievement levels improve.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **The principal needs to reiterate the expectation that teachers should create a data binder for each student in their class and monitor teachers' implementation of this practice schoolwide.** When interviewed by the IIT, many students were confused about whether or not they had a data binder and if they had goals based on their test scores. The team learned that students were unsure of what they could do to improve their learning. Although teachers reported they review student data, much of which would be in the student's data binder, during their pod meetings, the teachers told the team that this is not a consistent practice across all pods or grade levels throughout the school. The principal stated that there are plans to institute more frequent data meetings where there will be regular monitoring of the use of data binders. The principal noted that each of the school leaders are assigned grade levels, but do not always attend pod meetings or grade-level meetings in order to discuss data with teachers on a regular basis. In the future, the principal should require that assigned school leaders attend every pod meeting and that they meet regularly to ensure all pods are adhering to his expectations.
- **The principal should develop and monitor procedures for teachers to use data to inform their instruction.** The principal relies on data to track attendance, grades, and behavior, for example. However, the IIT did not see evidence in all classes that teachers were accountable to routinely use data to the extent he does and, therefore, to identify specific student needs so they could address these needs directly.

Learning at the School

- **The math committee should identify the general components of a quality curriculum, including how to implement best practices, and focus specifically on the math standards, including content and skills needed in an effective math curriculum.** During discussions with the principal, the team learned that teachers should be focusing on examining specific math programs and assessments to ensure they are aligned with New York State standards. The teachers should also be considering ways in which a math curriculum has the components needed to support students who are performing below grade level. The principal indicated that teachers should focus efforts on addressing the initial stages of curriculum development, such as identifying non-negotiables for what students need to know, including conversations with teachers from grades above and below to ensure alignment. The team also found that committee members do not always understand the urgency needed to ensure math instruction and student achievement improve.
- **Teachers should incorporate higher-level questions into their Wonders literacy program lessons.** During class visits, the IIT did not often observe students being asked the challenging, higher-level questions that are outlined in the Wonders program or posing follow-up questions when students give one-word answers. The team found that school leaders who are conducting the informal walkthroughs are not always focusing on higher-level questioning or other forms of challenging work for students. The principal indicated that he and the other school leaders agree on what practices they will look for during their walkthroughs, and they calibrate their findings; however, the school leaders noted that consistently focusing on the frequency and quality of higher-order questioning during classroom visits is an area of need.
- **Teachers in dual language classes should expect students to respond in the language the students are expected to learn.** During visits to Spanish and Mandarin classes, the IIT observed that when questions were posed in the language they were learning, students were allowed to answer in English. In addition, the questions posed were low level, and the teacher often accepted one-word answers. The principal explained

that although the school has had a dual language program for several years, the results have not always been consistent due to staff changes, and the roll-out of language instruction varies at different grade levels.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Parents said they wish teachers and staff did more to foster their relationships with students and parents.** Parents were positive about the use of the software application "Talking Points." However, parents stated that they would like to have more communication to help them understand aspects of their child's education, such as assessment results, so they could offer more support at home.

- **Students reported that although they like having a large cafeteria and a smaller one that is supposed to be a calmer, quieter area**, **the "quiet" cafeteria is not always quiet, and each room has different rules about behavior depending on which monitor or school leader is stationed there.** Students said this issue regarding different rules is confusing to them and that it seems unfair to not have consistent rules.

- **Students shared that in some classes when they finish their tests or other work, they are expected to sit quietly and wait for other students to finish their work.** They stated they would like to be able to read a book or engage in some quiet enrichment activity by themselves while they wait for the other students to finish.

- **Teachers, students, and parents all shared that students would benefit from more physical activity during the school day or after school**. Teachers said that although they think Responsive Classroom practices have decreased discipline referrals and made their classes calmer and more focused, opportunities for students to release their energy in more physical activities throughout the day and/or in additional after-school programs would be beneficial. Students shared that they enjoy their time outdoors and would like to have more opportunities to play games outside.

- **Some parents stated that they are not sure whether or not the dual language program is beneficial to their children**. They shared that they feel their children are not receiving sufficient grammar instruction and are not being required to speak exclusively in the language they are learning during class.