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
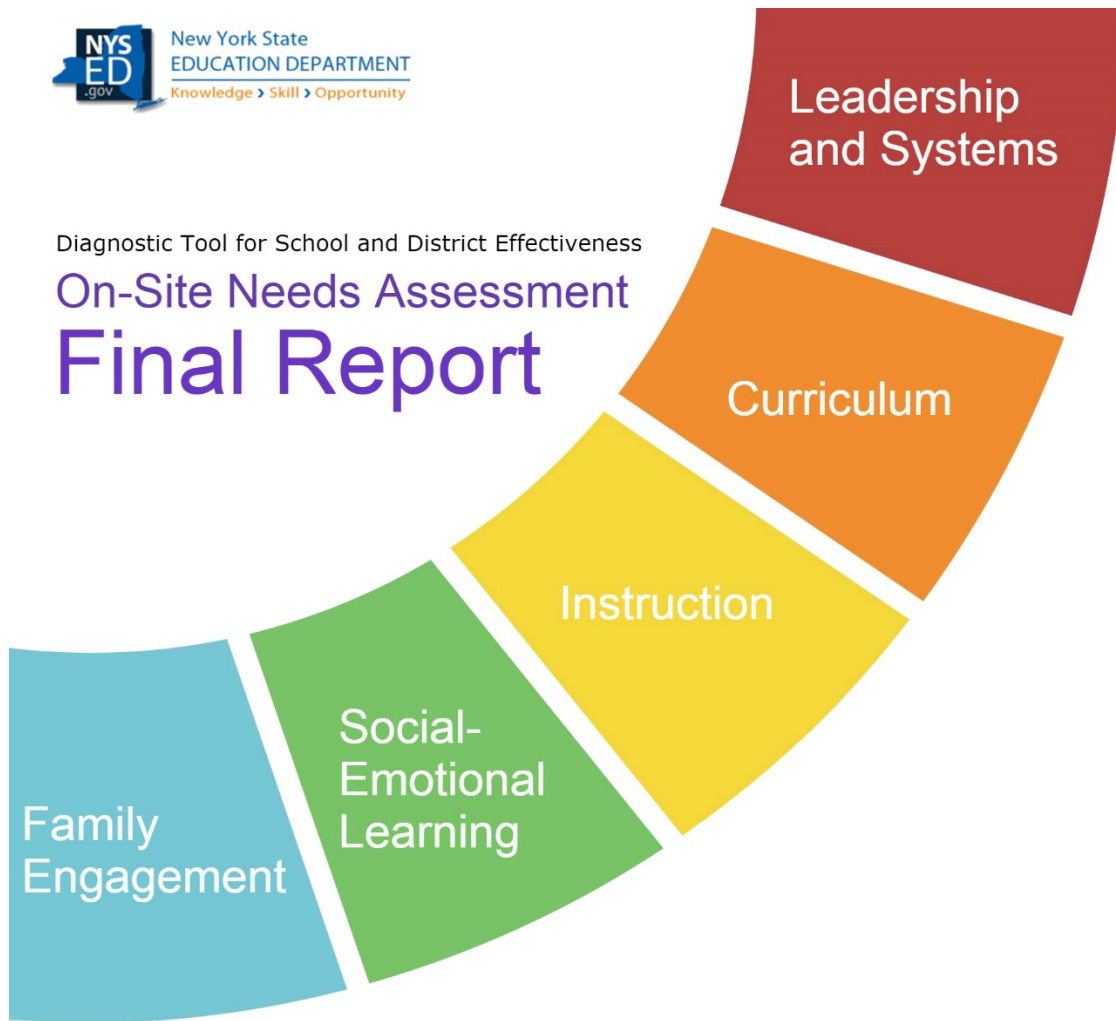
BEDS Code	170500010008
School Name	Gloversville Middle School
School Address	234 Lincoln Street, Gloversville, NY 12078
District Name	Gloversville Enlarged School District
Principal	Mark Batty
Dates of Visit	February 12-14, 2019

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

Gloversville Middle School serves 600 students in grades six through 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 52 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, schoolwide data, teacher feedback, and student work.
- In advance of the visit, 45 staff members (71 percent) completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.
- During the visit a winter storm occurred, and the school was closed for part of the time. However, the team was able complete all the planned activities and interviews.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. The IIT learned that earlier in the 2018-19 school year, students were given an opportunity to attend a career event to inform them about future career choices and what qualifications they would need to advance in those careers. Students reported to the IIT that they were enthusiastic about the event and that it had helped them visualize their career path. They reported that they drew visual maps of their future career and what they needed to do to reach their career goal. Teachers indicated that the grades of the students who attended the event have improved since that time.

2. In discussions with students and technology teachers, the IIT learned that in the 2018-19 school year a robotics club has been started and is well attended. Students reported that they are enthusiastic about the robotics club and that they think this initiative is having a positive effect on their design and technology skills. Members of the IIT observed some of the robots constructed by students and noted that they were of a sound design and employed a range of different technological techniques.

3. In discussions with school leaders, the IIT learned that in the Fall of the 2018-19 school year, the assistant principal had analyzed data from office referrals for incidents of student misbehavior. School leaders then met with teachers and put in place supports to help teachers deal with student misbehavior more successfully within the classroom environment. The IIT reviewed data that indicated that the number of referrals had been reduced over the last three months.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **School leaders should focus school improvement efforts on prioritizing areas addressed by previous recommendations and findings.** For example, both the last DTSDE report and the last district visit included recommendations that school leaders conduct regular walkthroughs; however, the IIT found that walkthroughs are not currently a priority. In interviews with the IIT, school leaders cited outside barriers to the school's progress in improving student achievement. The principal stated, for instance, that one of the barriers to improvement is that many students in the school are in need of support for social and emotional issues. However, the actions that the school has taken to address students' needs have not been examined for effectiveness and impact on student success.

- **School leaders should monitor the goals of the School Comprehensive Education Plan (SCEP) as a way to determine the degree to which the goals are achieved.** The IIT reviewed the SCEP for the 2017-18 and 2018-19 school years and noted that the goals that had been identified for these two years were very similar. Many of the goals were based on the recommendations of the 2016 review. In discussions with the principal, the IIT learned that the SCEP goal for Tenet two was for school leaders to devote 25 percent of their daily schedule to walkthroughs and informal classroom visits. However, during discussions with the team, the principal reported that only formal evaluation visits had been conducted thus far, for this school year and that no walkthroughs and informal classroom visits had been conducted since November 2018. Teachers indicated that they had not been visited by school leaders since that date. The IIT also learned from interviews with staff that the development of SCEP goals and regular progress monitoring is not imbedded in the building leadership team

meetings. From a review of school documents, the IIT found that the benchmarks in the SCEP are generally broad and that no specific increases in the outcomes for students are identified, which limits the ability of school leaders to determine if goals have been achieved.

- **School leaders should work with teachers and support staff to develop and implement a consistent strategy to ensure that resources are targeted to students with the most urgent needs.** During interviews with teachers and support staff, the team found that although individual teachers have implemented some effective strategies to support students with disabilities and other students in need of additional assistance, there is no schoolwide strategy, which limits their efforts to address the challenge of meeting the needs of increasing numbers of students with social-emotional and other pressing needs. The principal reported that staff had professional development (PD) training in supporting students living in poverty, but the IIT learned from classroom observations and discussions with teachers that this training has not been widely implemented. Teachers reported that the impact of this training on their professional practice has not been monitored or followed-up on.

Leadership and Organization at the School

School leaders need to monitor the implementation of curriculum plans to ensure that they align vertically and horizontally throughout the school. School leaders reported to the IIT that they do not routinely attend planning meetings or professional learning community (PLC) meetings so that they can monitor how well teachers plan and if the curriculum at each grade level builds on what has already been taught. The principal reported that although there are yearly plans that are submitted to the department chairs and all the teacher pairs plan together, these plans are not reviewed, so school leaders are unaware if the plans are horizontally aligned across the grade level or vertically though the school. In the future, school leaders may want to consider attending all PLC meetings to ensure that the agenda and discussions include plans for the vertical alignment of curriculum throughout the school so that learning builds progressively on what students have learned in previous grades

- **School leaders should monitor the schoolwide implementation of the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) expectations so that they are applied consistently by teachers in all classrooms across the school.** The IIT learned from discussions with students, teachers, and parents that although there are clearly posted expectations for behavior posted around the school, these are not implemented in the same way by all teachers. Some students noted, for example, that although there are four graduated steps in the PBIS expectations from a warning to an office referral, often the expectations progress directly from step one to step four without applying the intervening steps. School leaders reported that there were many office referrals for low-level behavioral issues, which resulted in them spending a great deal of time sorting out behavioral issues.

Learning at the School

- **The school needs to update the curriculum and ensure that it is aligned to current learning standards.** From classroom visits and discussions with teachers, the IIT learned that some curriculum plans have been in use for several years. Teachers also reported that they do not know if their plans align with current curricula expectations and learning standards. For example, the IIT observed a lesson on cloud types in an Intermediate Level Science (ILS) class, which is not part of the ILS curriculum. In addition, the team found that materials included in the student packet were out of date. Other teachers reported that they reproduce the same plans and packets each year.

- **Teachers should ask questions that extend students' understanding of the material being covered in the lesson.** Although the principal reported to the IIT that higher-order questioning has been a focus of instruction for the past three years, the team observed that the use of effective questioning to probe students' understanding of the material they are studying or to encourage them to advance their own ideas is not a common practice. The team observed mostly low-level questions that required a single word answer from students. On several occasions, when students appeared unwilling to answer questions teachers posed, teachers answered their own questions.

- **Teachers should use learning goals to inform students what they will learn in the lesson or how that learning will be assessed.** School leaders reported that although the use of learning goals had been a recommendation from various visits over the last three years, there has not been any PD offered on learning targets. In addition, the team found that the lack of consistent classroom visits by school leaders had resulted in a lack of emphasis on establishing the purpose of the lesson and a wide variation in professional practice. During classroom visits, the IIT observed that in approximately one-half of the lessons, there was some form of learning target displayed in the classroom; however, the majority only listed the tasks that the students would complete in the lesson. The IIT rarely observed that the learning target described success criteria or outcomes. In the other lessons, there was no learning target on display. Learning targets were not typically referred to nor were success criteria shared with the class after the start of the lesson.

- **Teachers need to provide students with increased opportunities to work collaboratively or to discuss their understanding of their learning with their peers.** Although the team observed a lesson where students were working in pairs to research and discuss the causes of World War I, there were very few other instances in which students were encouraged to work in groups or pairs. Most lessons are teacher-centered with minimal opportunities for students to contribute to the lesson. In most classes, the IIT observed that students were passive listeners and not active learners. Students reported that they do not get many opportunities for hands-on activities or other kinds of interactive learning. Teachers indicated that because of some behavioral issues, they tend to limit the amount of student interaction. Some students reported that they do not contribute during lessons either because they do not always understand the question, or because they are reprimanded for speaking too loudly.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Teachers and staff expressed the perspective that internal communications were poor throughout the school.** Teachers shared that grade-levels do not interact with each other and that each level works in isolation. Support staff also reported that the exchange of information was very limited across the school.

- **Parents and students reported that the were behavioral issues during unsupervised times and transitions.** Students reported that there were incidents of physical contact and inappropriate behavior in hallways. Some parents said that their children had complained that they had been jostled or run into in the hallways.

- **Parents stated that the communications they receive from teachers and school leaders are usually negative.** Parents noted that while teachers are accessible when parents reach out to them, they rarely initiate communications. If teachers do communicate with them, it is usually about behavioral issues or poor grades and is seldom to report positive information about their children. Parents also reported that communication about academic needs or concerns often comes from the guidance staff rather than teachers.

- **Parents recommended that the school leaders reinstate the homework hotline.** Parents reported that the homework hotline that has been in existence in previous years had not been maintained in the 2018-19 school year. They said that they missed it because it had been an easy way for parents to check up on student homework assignments.