

Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

# Final Report



<b>BEDS Code</b>	010701030001
<b>School Name</b>	Heatly School
<b>School Address</b>	171 Hudson Avenue, Green Island, NY 12183
<b>District Name</b>	Green Island Union Free School District
<b>Principal</b>	Erin Peteani
<b>Dates of Visit</b>	April 9-11, 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	-	1	2

### 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	1

The Heatly School serves 310 students in grades kindergarten to 12.

## 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, a district consultant, and a Special Education School Improvement Specialist (SEIS) representative.
- The team visited a total of 44 classrooms during the visit.
- The OEE visited five 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, the school provided results of a staff survey that 22 staff members (55 percent) completed.

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

1. Recognizing the need to improve the quality of student writing, for the 2018-19 school year, the school leader and staff have created small guided writing groups. All students in grades three to six, meet three to five days a week for 30 to 50 minutes per day, for intensive one-on-one writing instruction. Groups are comprised of three to five students, with each student writing via their Chromebooks while the teacher monitors on a connected computer. Students produce and edit their writing, and the teacher provides real time feedback. Students shared with the IIT that they like to write more now than they did last year because they choose what they want to write about, and they get help to improve their writing. Teachers shared that students are excited to write, their stamina for longer writing has increased, and the overall quality of students' writing has improved.
2. For the 2018-19 school year, school leaders hired a curriculum director to assist with the development of a cohesive, standards-aligned math and English language arts (ELA) curriculum. The director meets with staff in vertical planning meetings and has started to help teachers unpack the State standards and identify high quality options for a new math curriculum. Some teachers indicated that, when asked, the director provides feedback on their instructional practice and helps with lesson planning. Both school leaders and teachers noted that the director is their primary go-to person and has increased the capacity of the administration team.
3. Building on the prior school year's success with Farewell Friday, and to increase parent engagement, school leaders revamped the end of the week celebration by encouraging children to invite family members and introduce them during circle time. Parents are now able to meet their children's teachers and classmates, listen to students talk about the character word of the month, read the weekend weather, and watch students perform skits, sing songs, or read poetry. Some parents noted that as a result of this initiative, more parents are engaged and invested in the life of the school and in the learning of their children.

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

### Systems for Improvement

- **The principal should prioritize the completion of previous DTSDE recommendations.** The IIT learned, for example, that previous DTSDE recommendations that related to the establishment of a behavioral management system had not been prioritized because the school leadership has been grappling with how to address significant student social and emotional needs. Another previous recommendation focused on the completion and communication of a clear definition of the roles and responsibilities of school leaders and staff. The principal reported to the team that the teachers had received a document early this year about roles and responsibilities, but the document described new staff titles, grade level switches, and grade level assignments. The principal indicated that time constraints have prevented the revision of the School Comprehensive Educational Plan (SCEP) goals and action plans. In the future, school leaders should work together to ensure that recommendations and action plans are followed up on to ensure that the identified school needs are being addressed.
- **The school leaders should ensure that the SCEP goals include benchmarks or intended outcomes.** When the team examined the goals, they found that the goals were not written in a specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) format, and the goals serve as activities to complete or tasks to be done. The school's tenet four goal, for example, states that by June 2019, 100 percent of lesson plans and classroom instruction will evidence the use of objectives, checks for understanding, and differentiation; however, no benchmark check-in dates or goal-aligned activities are indicated to enable school leaders to measure progress towards the achievement of these goals. In the future, school leaders should identify goals and develop strategic points in the year to collect relevant data as benchmarks.
- **The school leaders will need to align SCEP activities with the stated goals.** The school's goal to improve the graduation rate, for example, is linked in the SCEP to the establishment of a cohesive curriculum. However, the activities that are listed, such as the hiring of a new director of curriculum and the scheduling of curriculum meetings with kindergarten to grade 12 staff by discipline or grade, are not specifically related to understanding and/or mitigating the reasons why students are dropping out and/or not graduating on time. The tenet five goal to develop and implement a schoolwide student behavior management system is also not related to the activities listed to solve the problem. The activities include new arrangements for the induction and orientation of teachers, opening day conferences, and Farewell Friday.

### Leadership and Organization at the School

- **The principal will need to establish a schoolwide plan to address interpersonal conflicts between students.** During discussions with the team, the principal indicated that conflicts that occur between students and sometimes lead to incidents of fighting, are often the result of childhood traumas students have experienced. A schoolwide plan with specific strategies that the school uses to address the effects of trauma or the incidents of fighting or misbehavior has not yet been developed, and the specific trauma - informed responses or structures that have not yet been put in place to help students self-regulate or deal with issues. The team found that the school had provided recent professional development (PD) on trauma, which highlighted strategies teachers could use and how to distinguish between defiance and anxiety, for example. However, the team learned that teacher implementation of these practices has not been monitored. Ideas for a cool down room and de-escalation or

restorative justice practices have been discussed by school leadership, but there are no specific plans to implement them as yet. The principal acknowledged that the school could help students develop healthier decision-making, conflict-resolution, and self-awareness skills. She noted that school leaders could address these issues more effectively and indicated that different options are being considered.

- **The principal must communicate her instructional expectations to teachers and develop SMART goals.** Teachers noted that the school does not currently have an instructional vision that includes an articulation of what constitutes high quality instruction or a comprehensive set of instructional priorities and SMART goals. When asked about the school's instructional focus areas, the principal noted the college program for seniors, reducing class size in the elementary level, and hiring a curriculum director for vertical alignment. The principal indicated that opportunities to observe classes to monitor the quality of teaching and learning and give teachers feedback or to focus on instructional walk-throughs are limited because discipline referrals often take precedence.
- **The principal should ensure that school leaders and staff routinely use data to drive decisions about school improvement or organization.** A review of the SCEP indicates that the school's instructional goals do not follow the SMART goal format and are not linked to quantitative or quantifiable measures. Tools such as data walls and data charts or other elements of data-driven decision making are not typically used. Although the school has a system to collect behavioral data, for example, the team found that these data are not analyzed to identify daily or weekly trouble spots in the building or to re-deploy resources in anticipation of behavioral issues. During classroom observations, the IIT found that as many as three students would leave the classroom for 10 to 15-minute bathroom breaks, most without a pass. The principal noted she has been exploring ways to monitor students in the hallways during classes.
- **School leaders will need to establish a system for providing teachers with feedback.** Because of the small size of the district, the team found that some school level staff also have district-level responsibilities. The assistant principal, for example, also functions as the director of special education, the athletic director, and the district's data coordinator. School leaders indicated that district responsibilities often prevent them from providing instructional walkthroughs on a collaborative basis. The principal reported that she is often occupied with behavioral issues, which make it difficult for her to carry out walkthroughs and to provide feedback. During a focus group meeting, a teacher told the IIT that if you are a new teacher in the building, administrators come in your room and tell you what you need to teach, but you go to your colleagues for help. School leaders are encouraged to prioritize walkthroughs as a means for collaborating with teachers on instructional techniques and classroom management.
- **The school should develop a proactive approach to discipline that focuses on conflict prevention and resolution.** The team found that the school does not have a cool down room and teachers are not trained in de-escalation strategies. Students stated that the school does not have a process to guide reentry such as restorative justice circles and to reconcile students and adults back together after offending students return from suspension, but this would be beneficial. Some staff reported that when they ask about classroom management strategies, they are told to send the offending student to the office.

## Learning at the School

- **Teachers will need to increase their use of challenging questions that require students to think deeply about what they are learning.** During class visits, the IIT observed low-level questioning techniques that often required a single correct response. In many instances, students were only allowed minimal time to think before an answer

was provided. For example, in one class, the teacher asked students a series of recall level questions about a book they were reading and accepted all contributions without asking students to explain their reasoning with evidence from the book. Students typically did not have the opportunity to ask clarifying questions or to contribute new information related to what they were learning. Instead, most questions were process questions, such as what page are we on or what do we do when we are finished. In most classes, students were rarely encouraged to share their thinking by demonstrating their understanding of new concepts or skills.

- **Teachers should establish behavioral expectations and communicate them to students to guide their behavior in class.** During class visits, the team found that teachers did not refer to a set of rules when redirecting behavior. When students were asked how they know how to behave, most students referenced the clip-up/clip-down device used in most kindergarten through grade five classrooms rather than specific rules or behaviors. Behavioral data reports indicate that failure to abide by school rules is among the top two reasons why teachers send students to the office. But when the team asked about specific behavioral rules, teachers and students typically struggled to articulate any, and parents also expressed confusion as to how students know what behaviors gets them sent to the office. School leaders are encouraged to develop and establish school behavioral expectations as a way to ensure that students, teachers, and parents have an understanding of acceptable behaviors and appropriate consequences.

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

- **Parents shared that they wished that discipline, office referrals, and suspensions were applied consistently to all students by all staff members.** Some parents reported that suspension and discipline decisions are not always transparent or decided fairly, based on objective criteria.
- **Parents reported that school leaders do not inform them about discipline office referrals and suspensions in a timely manner.** Some parents commented that they are not notified quickly enough when there is an incident at school. One parent shared, for example, that she was not notified that her child had been suspended until the middle of the next day.
- **Teachers shared that the principal is rarely seen interacting with parents, staff, and students.** Staff reported that they struggled to answer questions pertaining to the school leader on the staff survey because they seldom see her. Teachers commented that the principal is not visible during arrival/dismissal or in the halls, cafeteria, or in classrooms during the day. Some students also indicated that did not usually see the principal during the school day.
- **Students shared that there is no re-entry process for students who were involved in a fight, were suspended, and then reenter the class.** Students indicated that sometimes students are back together in the same classroom after fighting over the weekend and nothing is done to mitigate further conflict, and sometimes issues flare up again in school.