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
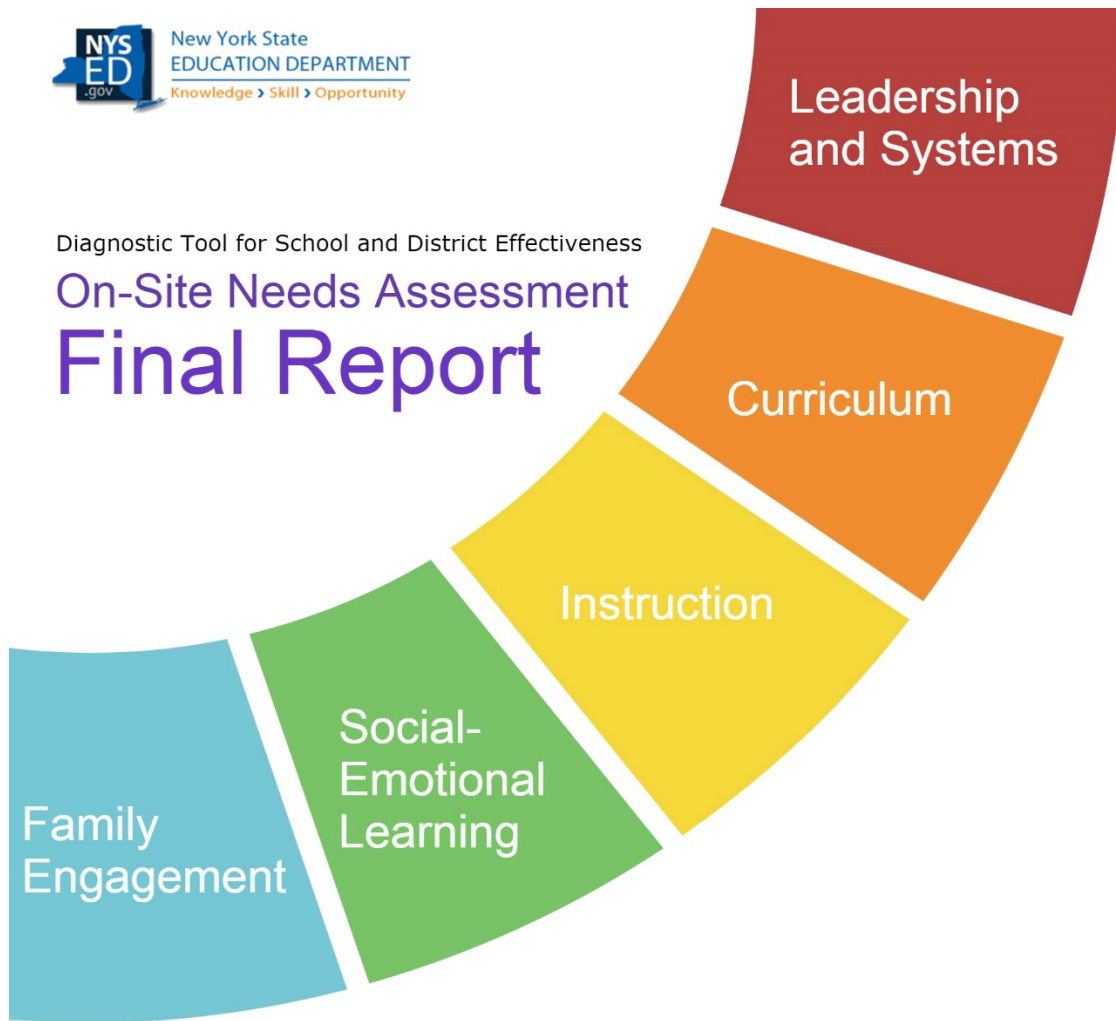
BEDS Code	030501040001
School Name	W. A. Olmsted Elementary School
School Address	54 Main St, Harpursville, NY 13787
District Name	Harpursville Central School District
Principal	James DiMaria
Dates of Visit	May 14-16, 2019

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
1	2	1		1	1

W. A. Olmsted Elementary School serves 351 students in pre-kindergarten to grade six.

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 23 classrooms during the visit.
- The OEE visited seven 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 unit plans and teacher feedback.
- In advance of the visit, the school provided results of a staff survey that 21 staff members (70 percent) completed.
- In advance of the visit, 19 staff members (63.3 percent) completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. The principal has worked to build strong professional relationships with the staff by creating opportunities for authentic and transparent conversations about teaching and learning and maintaining an open-door policy for all school staff. This collegial environment has encouraged emerging teacher leaders to collaborate with school leaders and take the initiative in improving school practices.

2. The school has worked in partnership with Binghamton University to strengthen community engagement and provide students and their families with access to needed resources. The school leader has worked with the university-provided school community coordinator to implement an internship program that has had a positive impact on the quality of social and emotional support provided to students across the school. Parents reported that they appreciate the positive interactions Binghamton University interns have with students, as well as the afterschool social activities the program has provided for their children. The school leader said that parents have come to use the coordinator as a resource, and parents confirmed that they value the assistance of the community school coordinator in connecting families to outside resources.

3. The school has successfully implemented the initial phase of the Pyramid Model, which provides a framework of strategies to serve the social-emotional growth and health of students. They have also begun to implement the Primary Project, which serves to use play to promote student self-discovery and learning in the lower elementary classes. School leaders have introduced these programs with a goal of creating a healthier climate and culture of learning for all students at the school and intend to continue building staff proficiency in the 2019-20 school year.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **The principal should consider creating building leadership teams to examine attendance, behavior, and achievement data.** In interviews with the IIT, the teachers and the principal shared that there are no building leadership teams actively monitoring student attendance, behavior, or achievement data. The principal shared that he would like to work with teacher leaders to begin examining data across the school, as it would help determine potential approaches to ameliorate chronic absenteeism and behavior issues and allow teachers to be purposeful and proactive in their lesson planning. Teachers noted that the use of student achievement data to support teaching and learning is minimal and rarely used to identify trends and set targets in areas such as the development of curricula or planning of instructional strategies.

- **The principal should work with staff to establish expectations and protocols for student behavior in classrooms and common areas.** Teachers and staff shared that student behavior regularly affects teaching and learning in the classrooms, during hallway transitions, and in the lunchroom. The principal confirmed that much of his day is spent addressing a variety of behavior issues in the school. During teacher interviews, teachers stated that they would like explicit directives detailing what type of behaviors receive specific consequences. Teachers also stated that students do not always understand what is and is not acceptable behavior. They believed that posting behavior expectation posters in classrooms and common areas that they could refer to when addressing disruptive students would help students manage their behavior. Students noted that rules and expectations vary from teacher to teacher and day to day, making it difficult for them to

determine what is regularly acceptable behavior and impossible to predict what consequences they may face for any infraction.

- **The principal should consider reorganizing the master schedule to provide adequate time and opportunities for support during teachers' professional learning community (PLC) meetings.** The principal stated that he would like to take part in and monitor PLC meetings to support teachers in maximizing the sessions' impact on teaching and learning but is unable to do so regularly because PLC meetings are currently scheduled early in the morning. During this time, the principal is typically addressing operational issues, coverage issues, and student arrival. During teacher focus groups, some teachers shared that PLC meetings are often used to discuss planning and teaching strategies, but others said that with only thirty minutes available at the start of the morning, they are typically short on time. Many teachers added that while they feel this meeting time is important, they are unable to dive deeply into formative or summative assessment data or have lengthy discussions with colleagues regarding strategies to meet their student needs, given the brief time available.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **The principal should manage his time to allow for more frequent classroom visits.** In interviews and during classroom visits with the OEE, the principal stated that he would like to be in classrooms more often to support teaching and learning but that much of his time is dedicated to handling school operations and managing behavior. In discussions with teachers and district leaders, the IIT learned that the elementary administration was restructured this year to include only one principal with no support from an assistant principal or dean, making it difficult to delegate operational or behavior responsibilities. The teachers noted that they do not typically receive classroom visits other than formal observations.

- **The principal should share his overall vision for school improvement with staff, including instructional leadership goals.** Teachers shared that they do not know the vision the principal has for the school or what role they might play in improvement efforts. The principal stated that he has a vision for the school but acknowledged that it has not been shared in detail with staff. He noted that realizing this vision, in part, would require his regular presence in classrooms and taking a more impactful role in addressing teachers' instructional needs and implementation of strategies. The principal also stated that he has been successful in blocking out time to visit the resource room to monitor and support instructional needs and would like to build on that foundation to expand his ability to support instruction across the school.

Learning at the School

- **Teachers should create more frequent opportunities for students to participate in research, inquiry, and debate.** During classroom visits, the team observed students on task, though in many classrooms the tasks only required them to await the right answer to a question and then copy that answer down. In only a few classes did IIT members see students engaged in activities that required them to think independently, pose questions, or interact with fellow students in debate. The team found that most students in most classes were not provided with opportunities to develop critical thinking skills by interacting with each other or exploring their own opinions on a given topic.

- **Teachers should expose students to high-order questions and allow students to dive deeply into content to determine alternative solutions.** During classroom visits, the IIT typically observed teacher-led lessons that offered students low-level questions that they easily answered by recalling basic information or by referring to

phrases or definitions in the textbook. In many classes, small numbers of students would raise their hands or offer answers. In instances where students were called upon, teachers would listen to the student's answer and make necessary corrections without using additional questioning to promote deeper thinking or discovery. While IIT members observed classes that used some small group or paired work, this was not typical across the school. Most classes the team visited were directed by the teacher with no opportunities for students to engage in the work independently or in small groups. These classes were often seen working on one common worksheet or paper, a version of which was projected by the teacher and filled out for students to copy. Students shared that they wanted more hands-on activities in class, but typically find the work they do in school to be unengaging and not challenging.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Students would like the positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) system to be reinstated.** Students stated that PBIS was used at the beginning of the school year but as the year went on, rewards and recognition for good behavior decreased until they stopped completely. Some teachers noted a need for a PBIS system but said that it must be properly managed and implemented consistently. These teachers said that when PBIS was first implemented in September 2019, some staff members were not equitable in giving rewards for positive student behavior, while others used the program as a disincentive by taking away previously earned awards or denying earned activities for students not meeting behavior expectations.
- **Staff members would like training in de-escalation strategies for addressing student behavior.** The IIT learned that some behaviors are handled in a way that compounds the issue and sometimes creates more conflict, instead of resolving the issue.
- **Parents would like to be notified immediately if their student is involved in an incident at school or receives a referral.** During the parent focus groups, some parents indicated that their students had been involved in incidents while at school. Parents stated that were not notified by the school and learned of the situation from speaking with their children once they returned home. Other parents also noted that they were not informed that their student had received a referral until a month or more after the incident when a copy of the referral was eventually mailed home.