

Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

Final Report



BEDS Code	620600010025
School Name	M. Clifford Miller Middle School
School Address	65 Fording Place Road, Lake Katrine, NY 12449
District Name	Kingston City School District
Principal	Andrew R. Sheber
Dates of Visit	January 7-9, 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.

Information About The Visit

- M. Clifford Miller Middle School serves 876 students in grades five through eight.
- 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 54 classrooms during the visit.
- The OEE visited 12 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 and student work.
- In advance of the visit, 89 staff members (74 percent) completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. As part of their efforts to improve school culture and climate, school leaders are ensuring that they are visible throughout the school. School leaders stated that student behavior has improved as a result of their increased presence in hallways, classrooms, and outdoor areas. During the first quarter of 2018-19, there were 21 out-of-school suspensions compared to 62 during the same period in 2017-18. Students and staff also noted improvements in the school environment, explaining that there has been a decrease in the number of student fights.
2. The principal has added data meetings and common planning time to teacher schedules. Teachers reported that during this time, they are able to create common assessments, review data, and plan for instruction. Teachers also reported that the principal ensures that current data is readily available for these meetings allowing them to discuss the data in a timely manner.
3. For 2018-19, school leaders have prioritized the sharing of instructional and positive behavior support strategies with teachers. For example, teachers reported that school leaders share best practices during staff meetings and the principal stated that ten minutes of each staff meeting is devoted to discussing strategies for the implementation of restorative practices. Teachers reported that the sharing of best practices has led to improved collaboration between teachers and school leaders.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **The school's goals should include benchmarks to determine progress, and action plans should include a clear timeline for implementation.** The school's current goals do not include action plans with sequential timelines

or benchmarks that can be used to monitor and adjust actions to ensure successful attainment of goals. Although school leaders have planned PD activities to address the needs of students who have experienced significant trauma and students in need of ELL support, they should also develop specific timeframes to measure progress.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **School leaders need to conduct walkthroughs to monitor instruction and provide teachers with feedback on instructional practices.** Although teachers reported that school leaders have been more visible throughout the school, they said that walkthroughs are not conducted regularly. Further, teachers stated that they do not receive written instructional feedback to help them to improve their practice. Currently teachers only receive feedback on instruction through Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) evaluations. Teachers reported that they rely on instructional coaches to help them improve their practice.
- **School leaders should focus on improving the quality of instruction.** Although student math and reading scores have not improved significantly over the past three years, the principal stated that improving instruction has not been a priority. Instead, he explained that the focus has been on improving school climate, school environment, and social-emotional learning.

Learning at the School

- **Teachers review data at common planning and data meetings, but they should use this data to identify the learning needs of individual students.** Teachers review data with their team and the director of teaching and learning to determine student growth in the areas of math and reading. Teachers stated that they meet to discuss how students have performed on their common and STAR assessments. However, school leaders stated that teachers typically review data for the class as a whole and the data is not analyzed to determine individual student learning needs.
- **Tier 2 interventions need to be implemented with fidelity.** Although the school has implemented response to intervention (RtI) to provide tiered instruction, most interviewed teachers were unable to explain how they implement the Tier 2 interventions prescribed by the RtI team in their classrooms. The school does not have a system to monitor the RtI process and as a result, school leaders are unable to determine the level of implementation or whether the interventions are having an impact on student reading and math skills.
- **Teachers must plan lessons and activities that are matched to the learning needs of all students.** Interviewed parents reported that children who finish their work early do not receive extra work or special assignments to accelerate their learning. Some students reported that once they complete their assignments, they usually read a book or help other students.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Although school leaders' communication with staff has improved, staff identified a need for improved communication when specific issues occur at the school.** While the school provides weekly newsletters and staff reported that the school leaders' communication with them has improved, they stated that they are often not aware of daily issues occurring in the building. For example, a teacher did not know that one of her students was assigned to in-school suspension. Another teacher did not know that her student had been

reprimanded in another classroom. Teachers stated that the school did not inform them of an incident at the school that was publicized in the newspaper and interpreted by parents as a safety concern.

- **All students should be supervised at the end of the school day.** Teachers stated that many students are choosing to stay through the extended day tenth period but because they have not all signed up for afterschool activities, they are not all accounted for, and a number of students remain in the building unsupervised.
- **Although the school climate and environment have improved, the facility is in need of improvement.** Parents, students, and staff reported that the building is safe, but the condition of the bathrooms is particularly poor and in need of improvement.
- **Communication with families varies from teacher to teacher.** Interviewed parents explained that some teachers communicate with families through ClassDojo, emails, phone calls, or text messages, and other teachers do not communicate with them at all. Interviewed parents added that some teachers put information, including worksheets and homework assignments on the website promptly, but other teachers do not use the school's website.