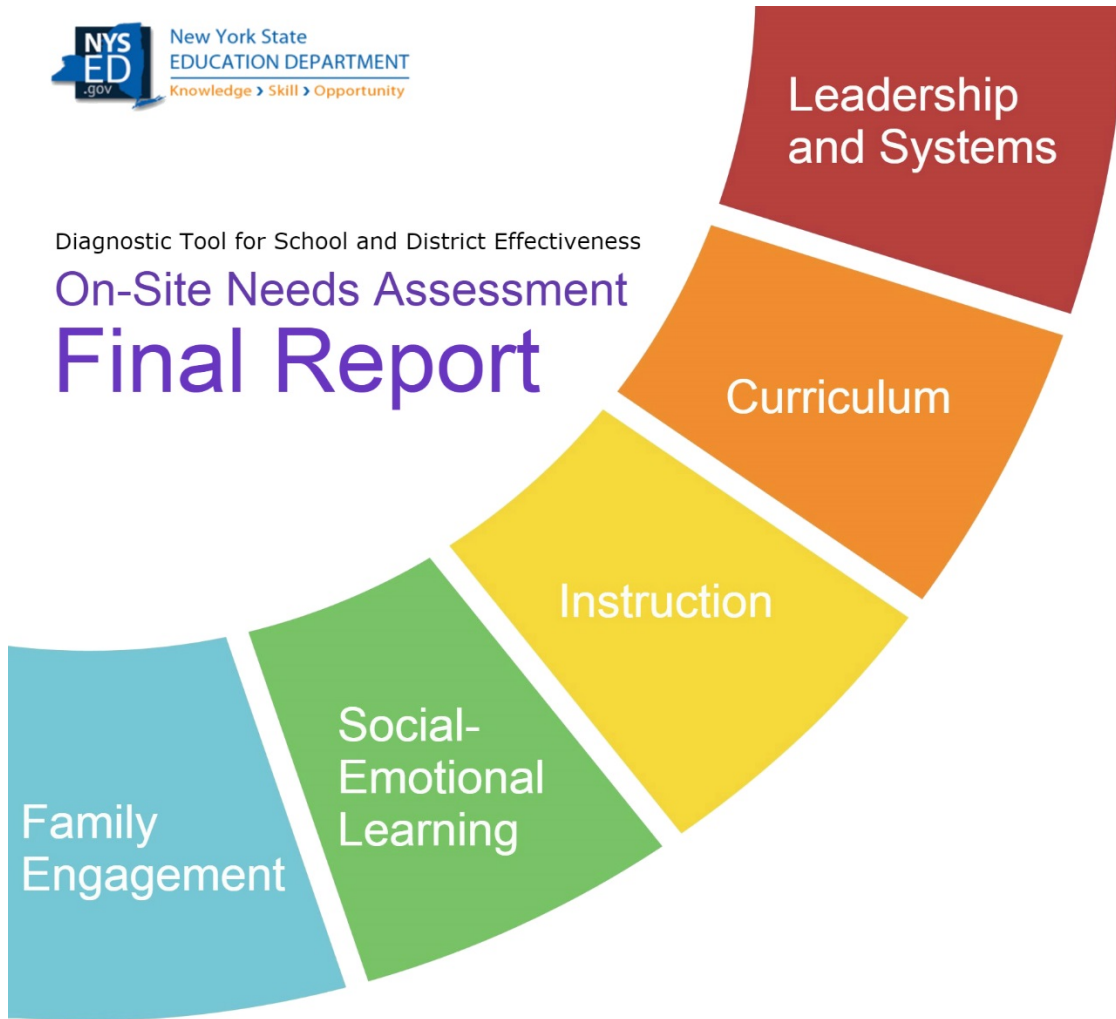


Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

Final Report



BEDS Code	420807040003
School Name	LaFayette Junior-Senior High School
School Address	3122 US-11, LaFayette, NY 13084
District Name	LaFayette Central School District
Principal	Jason Ryan
Dates of Visit	April 23-25, 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	4

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	3	2		1	4	4

LaFayette Junior-Senior High School serves 353 students in grades seven to twelve.

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, a Special Education School Improvement Specialist (SEIS) representative, a behavior specialist, and a Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) district superintendent.
- The team visited a total of 31 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, schoolwide data, and student work.
- In advance of the visit, 29 staff members (67 percent) completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. The principal initiated several activities this school year to increase the number of students in grades three to eight taking the New York State (NYS) assessments. He conducted a series of meetings with students who declined to participate in the 2017-18 assessments or were considering non-participation this year to learn why they would choose not to participate and to help them understand the importance of the assessments. Also, students created and aired a podcast for the school's student body and staff to discuss why they were or were not sitting for the assessments. As a result of these activities, the number of students who opted out of NYS testing decreased from 37 of 100 students last school year to only three of 108 students this school year.
2. At the beginning of the 2018-19 school year, the principal and a staff member decided to combine the Introduction to Robotics and Advanced Robotics classes to create a learning environment in which students collaborate to learn from each other. These classes are taught in the same space by the same staff member, who acts as a facilitator. According to students, this arrangement offers them the experience of learning from other students rather than relying solely on the teacher. The IIT observed that the students self-grouped and created their own work paths based on the tasks, their knowledge, and their skill sets. Consequently, students served as resources to each other to expand and extend the learning, allowing the teacher to become a true initiator of the learning process while students tried out different problem-solving solutions.
3. The school added counseling staff this school year, allowing counselors to concentrate their efforts on meeting with more students about course selections, college exams and acceptance, and post-secondary pathways. Students and the principal reported that the counselors make themselves regularly available to students and staff and that students are now receiving pertinent information about academic as well as social trends and challenges that are relevant to high school students.
4. The grade seven and grade eight team members and the principal have created a collaborative atmosphere at the junior high school level. Based on agreed-upon expectations established at the beginning of the 2018-19 school year, junior high students now have a consistent set of standards for hallway passage, homework completion, and behavioral norms. Seventh and eighth grade teachers and the principal reported that there has been a reduction in behavioral referrals and that students seem more focused on their learning because there are fewer distractions. In addition, grades seven and eight teachers said that this school year they now meet twice a week to discuss students' academic and social-emotional learning, as well as to participate in planning some cross-curricular activities.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **The principal should establish an effective process to monitor the instructional initiatives introduced through professional development (PD).** The IIT learned in discussions with the principal and teachers that numerous

PD opportunities, such as the Lucy Calkins Writing Workshop and the use of Chromebooks in all subject areas, were offered during the summer of 2018 and throughout the 2018-19 school year. However, follow-up and support activities for teachers were not embedded in the PD cycles. Both teachers and the principal agreed that staff received materials but were not given guidance or provided with modeling on how a particular instructional initiative should look in practice. Teachers also shared that the principal has discussed some PD-related instructional goals with them; however, they and the principal reported that the school needs to have a clear, consistent monitoring or accountability system in place to determine the impact of PD offerings on teacher practice or on student performance.

- **The principal needs to put in place a system to address the specific social-emotional needs of students.** The principal, teachers, and the student support staff reported that the school does not have a set of clearly defined processes that teachers can use to refer students with immediate or long-term social-emotional needs to the guidance and counseling staff. In addition, the school does not have clear expectations for teachers outlining their responsibilities to support social-emotional learning within the classroom, nor systems in place to identify and address the social-emotional needs of students outside of the classroom when needed. Teachers and the principal said that due to the lack of a referral system, teachers often simply send students to the principal. The principal estimates that approximately 60 percent of his day is filled with addressing the social-emotional learning needs of students. While teachers expressed that they respect and appreciate his work, the principal and teachers acknowledged that because of these demands on his time academic oversight is not at the forefront of the principal's improvement efforts. In the future, the principal will need to ensure that all staff have, understand, and use established guidelines or systems to refer students and to address the specific social-emotional needs of students.
- **The principal needs to establish a sustainable system to identify, place, and support students in need of academic interventions.** The principal and school psychologist are primarily responsible for identifying and referring students for intervention. The identification and referral process includes review of a single screening data point, the STAR assessment; teacher availability; and students' schedules. Teachers informed the IIT that academic intervention services (AIS) instructors are not always involved in identifying struggling students for services. Staff reported, and the principal confirmed, that the master schedule plays a significant role in determining the number of students who have access to AIS classes. In response to the scheduling challenges, grade seven teachers said that they configured some homogeneous groups for struggling students because there were more students who needed AIS than could be scheduled. In the future, the principal will need to ensure that students are identified, placed in appropriate settings, and provided interventions based on need and as mandated by the District.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **The principal should provide teachers with observational feedback that helps them improve their instructional practices.** The principal reported that he provides teachers with feedback from formal observations but does not have an ongoing practice of providing actionable suggestions that lead teachers to improve upon the school's instructional initiatives. Teachers expressed that there is a lack of follow-through and feedback regarding new initiatives, resulting in inconsistent implementation of practices across the school. Teachers also noted that most of the feedback provided by the principal during formal and informal observations is around the use of technology, one of the school's initiatives; they reported that this feedback is somewhat informative but does not typically help them improve their instructional practices or promote

their professional growth. For example, a key initiative this year is the expectation for students to use Chromebooks in every core subject area and for teachers to provide them with interactive feedback. However, the IIT observed student use of Chromebooks in science but not in most of the English language arts (ELA) classes. In addition, several interviewed students reported that they receive feedback on their writing through the interactive notes section of Google Documents; however, the IIT did not observe any classrooms in which students using Chromebooks for writing were provided feedback by teachers who remotely checked for understanding and provided immediate written and verbal feedback for improvement.

- **The principal should establish expectations for teacher team meetings so that time is focused on improving student achievement in an organized and continuous manner.** The IIT learned from teachers that they do not follow a specific agenda for individual team meetings, and they have not been provided with a meeting protocol template that includes expected activities to address during the meetings. In addition, the principal said that he is not always present at the meetings to provide guidance and support to teachers on the school's instructional initiatives and priorities. The IIT found that most teacher team meetings are typically administrative, with few opportunities for teachers to discuss matters related to teaching and learning or time to reflect on and create or revise curriculum. For example, in one team meeting, the IIT observed teachers using the majority of the time discussing student behavior, but the discussion did not lead to a solution or a clear action plan for improvement. In another team meeting, the IIT observed discussions around student behavior and planning future lessons around an Earth Day project that would take up three class periods. However, teachers did not discuss and problem-solve on topics such as the content and skills students should learn, use of data to determine the level of student learning, and next steps to consider in order to modify lessons to meet students' needs.

Learning at the School

- **The principal needs to ensure a cohesive curriculum for teachers to use to guide their instructional planning.** Teachers reported that the school lacks a written curriculum and that they are responsible for finding and using a variety of internet resources and materials to create unit and lesson plans. Most teachers shared that they create curriculum in isolation with little input from the principal. In addition, teachers said that there is little or no vertical alignment across grades six through nine in ELA or writing and that they make their own pacing guides without collaborating with other teachers and without oversight or guidance from school leaders. In the future, the principal will need to ensure that teachers are provided opportunities, support, and structured and continuous guidance on how to develop and revise curriculum.
- **Teachers should provide more opportunities for students to engage in their lessons.** The IIT observed independent and partner work and high levels of academic rigor in some visited classes; however, most observed lessons required little active learning of the students as they incorporated whole group teaching with the teacher doing most of the thinking and talking. In many classes, teachers provided information and gave examples while students took notes. In other classes, teachers asked and answered their own questions, and some teachers allowed minimal wait time for students to reflect and respond before moving on to another student. Additionally, when students in some classes expressed that they did not understand the concept or information, several teachers continued the lecture without adjusting for student needs or asking probing questions to involve students in the learning process.
- **Teachers should ensure that students understand what they are expected to learn.** The principal reported that teachers are expected to post and refer to learning targets throughout the lesson. However, the IIT did

not see learning targets prominently posted or commonly referred to during most lessons. When the team asked students about the objective of the learning for specific lessons, most students did not know the purpose of their learning or what their outcomes were supposed to be for that lesson or project. Some teachers said that they address learning targets at the end of lessons; however, in the majority of classes in which the team observed the end of the lesson, the bell rang, and the lesson ended without any reflection on what was learned during the period. In the future, the principal will need to establish and monitor schoolwide directives for posting, referencing, and assessing learning targets so that teachers and students will know that what was taught was learned.

- **Teachers need to use data to address learning gaps within the classroom.** Teachers told the IIT that teacher teams do not regularly discuss student data at team meetings and that most teachers do not individually review and use data to guide their instruction. As a result, teachers may not always know the depth of students' learning because they do not frequently use data to identify students' learning gaps and to inform instructional decisions. Additionally, in the classes visited by the IIT, it was not evident to the team that teachers were using data to group students based on their learning needs. Teachers shared that they find it challenging to use current data from the STAR assessments, which they stated do not provide standards-aligned scores, as a basis for planning their lessons. The IIT found that most lessons did not address the specific learning needs of students.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Students would like all teachers to demonstrate kindness and respect for students.** Most students shared that teachers are generally helpful and kind. However, approximately 40 percent of students interviewed by the team indicated that, at times, they feel disrespected by some teachers and that some teachers do not have high expectations for their learning. Students also said that they wished that teachers would be more mindful of how they address students because sometimes they find their comments to be hurtful.
- **Students and teachers would like student academic achievements highlighted in the same way athletic achievements are celebrated.** Students and teachers said that displaying exemplary academic work would help all students feel that their accomplishments are important. Other staff agreed that displaying work, such as projects, art, and writings, could be helpful in making all students feel valued for what they do well.
- **Parents would like all teachers to provide consistent communication about student work.** Some parents reported that when Google Classroom is used to communicate homework assignments and upcoming tests, quizzes, or projects, they find it very helpful. However, they stated that not all teachers use this tool to communicate in this manner with them.
- **Teachers would like school leaders to acknowledge their effective implementation of the school's instructional priorities and significant contributions to the school community.** Some teachers stated that they do not always know if they are implementing the school's instructional initiatives as the principal expects or that their contributions to the school community are recognized. They said that having the principal acknowledge these actions would motivate them to continue to improve their practices and become more involved in school community activities.