

Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

# Final Report



<b>BEDS Code</b>	420807040002
<b>School Name</b>	Onondaga Nation School
<b>School Address</b>	NY-11A, Nedrow, NY 13120
<b>District Name</b>	LaFayette Central School District
<b>Principal</b>	John Gizzi
<b>Dates of Visit</b>	May 29-31, 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	-	1	-	1	1

Onondaga Nation School serves 125 students in pre-kindergarten through grade 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, a district consultant, a Special Education School Improvement Specialist (SEIS) representative, a behavior specialist, a Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) representative, and a Native American liaison.
- The team visited a total of 32 classrooms during the visit.
- The OEE visited eight classrooms with the principal during the visit.
- Team members conducted interviews with students, staff, and parents.
- In advance of the visit, 22 staff members (75 percent) completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.

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

1. In 2018-19, school and community projects were initiated to build relationships between the school and the Native American community. For example, the school implemented a farming project in which students and members of the Native community are planting a “three sisters garden” consisting of corn, beans, and squash. As part of the project, staff and students learned together that Native Americans inter-planted this trio because they thrive together, much like three inseparable sisters.
2. During 2018-19, school leaders have taken many steps to improve the culture and climate of the school. School leaders and teachers reported that communication between school leaders and teachers has improved and relationships between new school leaders and staff are positive. In addition, school leaders and teachers reported increased transparency between the school leaders and the staff, and school leaders have established an open-door policy. Teachers also reported that school leaders have worked very hard to introduce trauma-informed practices and are continuing to provide teachers with training to effectively address student social, emotional, and learning needs. For example, the principal stated that ten minutes of each staff meeting are devoted to strategies for implementing restorative practices. Staff also reported that the sharing of best practices and a schoolwide book study have improved collaboration between the staff and school leaders. In addition, school leaders have worked to increase communication between the school and the Nation Council, and the Nation Council is working closely with the school to address chronic absenteeism.
3. In response to a 45 percent participation rate on New York State (NYS) assessments in 2017-18, the school made concerted efforts to increase student participation in the 2018-19 NYS English language arts (ELA) and math assessments. Positive communication between the school and home has increased, and parents were provided with information regarding the importance of students taking the assessments. Teachers have encouraged students to participate in the assessments and have provided students with sample test questions to help them become more familiar with the format of the tests. As a result of these efforts, the school’s 2018-19 participation rate increased to 86 percent for ELA and 90 percent for math.

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

### Systems for Improvement

- **The 2019-20 School Comprehensive Educational Plan (SCEP) should include goals to address student ELA and math proficiency.** The school is in the process of developing a SCEP for the first time. The IIT learned in discussions with school leaders that due to school climate issues, chronic absenteeism, and the need to develop positive relationships among students, families, and staff, the school’s goals for the past two years have focused primarily on improving the culture and climate of the school. There has been limited focus on curriculum development and improving ELA and math instruction. On the 2018 State assessments, 71 percent of students scored at Level 1 in ELA, and 83 percent scored at Level 1 in math.
- **School leaders need to revise the master schedule to include time for grade-level and content-area teams to plan collaboratively.** The current master schedule does not include time for grade-level or content-area teams to plan collaboratively. Due to a lack of common planning time, teachers stated that they are unable to plan curricular units with their grade-level colleagues or discuss ways to improve instructional strategies and practices to increase student achievement. Teachers also stated that there is a need for collaboration across grade levels to ensure curricular alignment from grade to grade.

## Leadership and Organization at the School

- **School leaders should conduct informal walkthroughs to monitor the implementation of initiatives and support instructional practices.** School leaders reported that although they visit classrooms, these visits are not used to monitor instruction, support instructional practices, or provide teachers with actionable feedback. School leaders stated that classroom visits usually occur as part of formal Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) observations. School leaders shared that targeted walkthroughs are not conducted to assess the implementation or impact of initiatives or to provide teachers with next steps to advance instructional practices.
- **School leaders should strategically plan professional development (PD) activities that address the instructional needs of the school and follow-up on PD with ongoing coaching and support.** The IIT learned in discussions with teachers that PD provided by the school has not resulted in improved pedagogical and culturally relevant practices. In reviewing PD that has been provided by the school, the IIT found no overarching instructional focus. Teachers stated that PD is not supporting the development and planning of ELA and math curricula or the improvement of teacher practices. They shared that expectations for the implementation of strategies learned through PD have not been communicated. In addition, teachers stated that there is no follow-up or coaching provided after PD sessions and implementation of strategies learned through PD has not been monitored. As a result, teachers stated that not all of the strategies learned through PD are implemented effectively.

## Learning at the School

- **The school needs to develop a comprehensive curriculum for ELA and math.** The principal explained to the IIT that there is no district- or school-wide curriculum for ELA and math. As a result, he expects teachers to use their expertise and professional judgment when determining what to teach. Interviewed teachers stated that due to a lack of curriculum in the content areas, they utilize the curriculum materials and resources they believe will best meet the needs of their students. Going forward, the principal should enlist the support of the district curriculum and instruction director to develop a schoolwide curriculum for ELA and math.
- **Teachers should plan opportunities for students to actively participate in lessons.** During class visits, the IIT observed few lessons that allowed students to be actively involved in their learning. Most observed lessons were teacher-led and included few opportunities for student participation. In some classes, the team observed processes being demonstrated using the SMART Board, when students could have collaborated with their peers to complete the activity. In addition, the IIT noted that the small size of most classes would have allowed small group instruction to be easily managed, but this strategy was not utilized in most classes visited.
- **School leaders should ensure that Native American culture is integrated into the curriculum.** Through interviews with school leaders, teachers, students, parents, and members of the Onondaga Nation, the IIT learned that members of the school community strongly feel that Native American culture and language should be an integral part of the school curriculum. For example, students, parents, and members of the community stated that they would like to see the music program at the school restructured to include Native American singing, dancing, and drumming. In the future, school leaders will need to dedicate time and resources to developing a curriculum that integrates the language and culture of Onondaga Nation.

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

- **Parents would like additional guidance on completing homework so that they can better support their children’s learning.** Parents reported that they would like to help their children at home, but they sometimes don’t understand how assignments should be completed. While they are aware that their children have covered a concept in class, many times their children are unable to complete the homework independently. Parents reported that they are not familiar with the mathematical strategies presently being taught and as a result, they often cannot support or assist their children in completing math assignments at home. Parents stated that they would like teachers to provide them with an explanation of how to complete homework assignments so that they will be able to better support their children.
- **Parents reported that arrival and dismissal is unsafe at the school.** Parents stated that buses and parents’ cars arrive and leave at the same time, which has become a major safety issue. They explained that there is limited space for buses and cars which causes traffic jams and increases the risk of accidents occurring. They shared that they would like the school to create a turnaround or circular driveway for arrival and dismissal, which would allow traffic to flow in an orderly fashion.
- **Both staff and parents reported that school expectations are not clear.** Staff and parents shared that they recognize the efforts of school leaders to move the school forward. However, both groups expressed a need for clear expectations related to curriculum, student achievement, and the role of the school as a central part of the community.
- **Teachers would like more support to ensure that new initiatives are implemented with fidelity and the desired outcomes are realized.** Teachers reported that the school has introduced multiple initiatives, but they have not been rolled out in a consistent and coherent manner. Teachers stated that they would like to implement these new initiatives but stated that they need more support to be able to do so. Teachers explained that although the district provides initial PD when initiatives are introduced, they would like follow-up support in the form of ongoing PD and frequent observations and feedback from school leaders.
- **Students would like the school to provide more after-school programs, activities, and clubs.** Most interviewed students stated that after-school programs, activities, and clubs are very limited, and they would like to be able to experience other activities and programs outside of the regular school day. Students stated that they love cultural music, dancing, singing, and drumming but these activities are not currently offered at the school or in the Native American community.
- **Students reported that they would like access to technology to do special school assignments.** Students suggested that they be able to sign-out a Chromebook to complete research projects or special assignments.