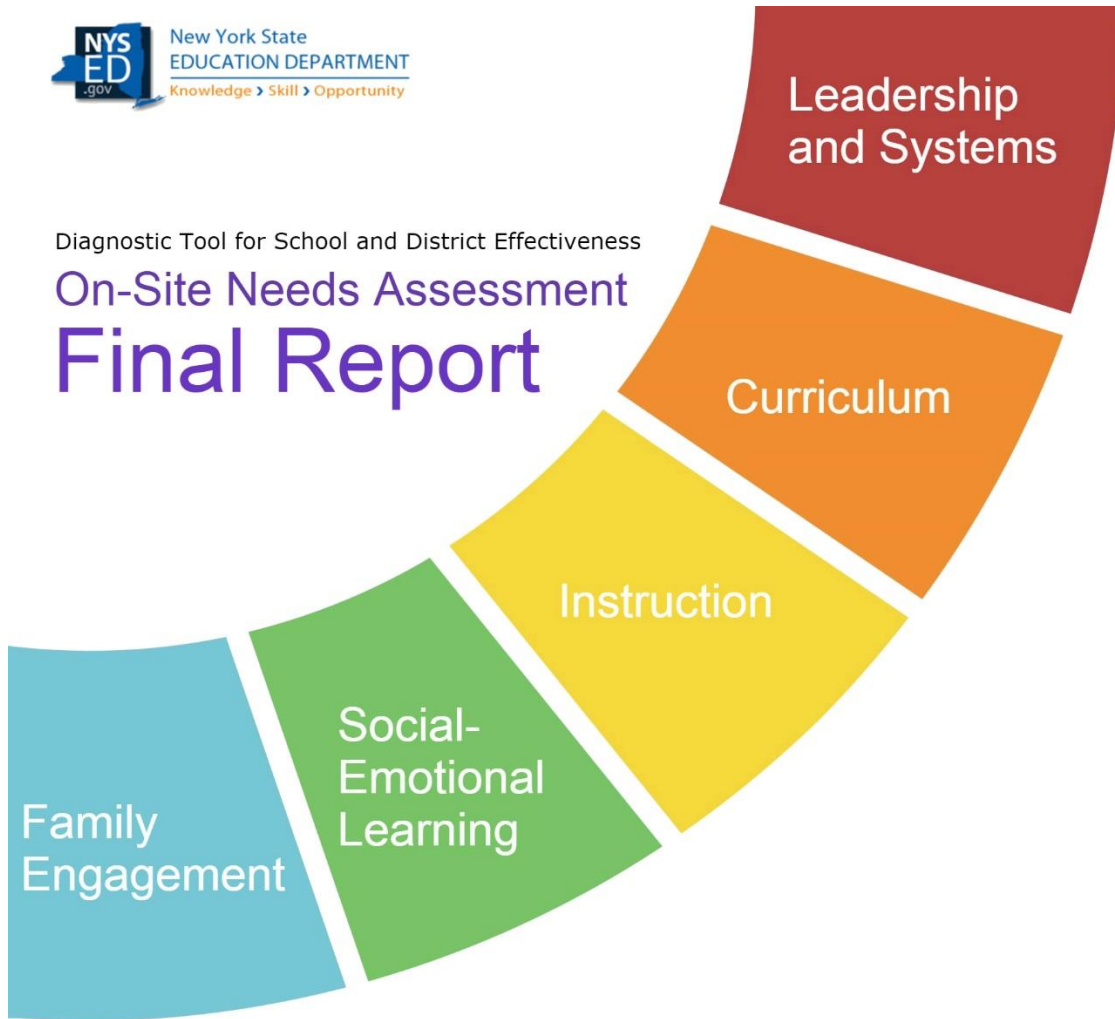


Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

Final Report



BEDS Code	400400010010
School Name	North Park Junior High School
School Address	160 Passaic Avenue, Lockport NY 14094
District Name	Lockport City School District
Principal	Dr. Bernadette Smith
Dates of Visit	April 16-18, 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

North Park Junior High School serves 664 students in grades seven and 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.
- The team visited a total of 32 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 schoolwide data and feedback provided to teachers.
- In advance of the visit, 61 staff members (91 percent) completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. Since the beginning of 2018-19, school leaders have implemented a system of informal and non-evaluative focus classroom walks to determine the percentage of classes that have a high degree of student engagement. After these walks, the principal shares the data with staff to inform them of whether student engagement levels are improving across the school. Since this process began, school leaders reported that the percentage of teachers who were observed utilizing teacher to student questioning has increased from 9 percent to 13 percent, and the percentage of classrooms in which student to student interactions were observed has increased from 13 percent to 23 percent.
2. Interviewed staff and families reported that the principal has effectively communicated to the entire school community why it is important for students to take the New York State (NYS) assessments, and how the students and school benefit from this assessment data. As a result, the percentage of students taking the NYS English language arts (ELA) assessment increased from 56 percent in 2017-18 to 96 percent in 2018-19.
3. The principal recognized that students were having difficulty organizing their thoughts into coherent ideas when responding to document-based questions. In 2018-19, teachers began implementing the Topic Sentence, Evidence, Analysis, and Reconnect method for students to use when responding to document-based questions. Students stated that this process helps them to organize their thoughts when responding to questions and teaches them how to cite evidence to support their case. Teachers stated that they have seen an improvement in student writing as a result of this strategy.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **The principal needs to consistently communicate her vision for school improvement.** Although the principal sends home Friday Newsletters, has allotted time for teachers to meet during common planning time and department meetings, and holds monthly staff meetings, these processes are not being used strategically to ensure all stakeholders understand the principal's instructional vision. For example, while teachers were able to identify student engagement as the principal's main instructional expectation, they stated that student engagement is often not discussed during common planning time or emphasized in the Friday newsletter. As a result, the principal is missing opportunities to further explain to teachers what quality student engagement looks like and how it can improve instruction. In the future, the principal should consider every opportunity to further explain her instructional vision and build support for her message.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **School leaders should assign clear roles and responsibilities for co-teachers.** Special education teachers push into many general education core classes to support students with disabilities. However, many teachers and the principal reported that the school has not clearly defined the specific roles and responsibilities of the general and special education teachers in the planning and delivery of co-taught lessons. Both special education and general education teachers stated that how teachers work together depends on individual teachers and their relationship with their co-teacher. In addition, teachers explained that co-teachers do not

have designated time in their schedule to collaboratively plan lessons and discuss what each teacher will do to facilitate the lesson. In most observed co-teaching lessons, the general education teacher led instruction while the special education teacher provided support to students with disabilities. In the majority of co-teaching classes, the two teachers worked independently and did not collaborate in the delivery of the lesson.

- **The principal should schedule her time to ensure that she is able to provide teachers with feedback to improve instruction.** The principal reported that she spends a significant amount of time on student disciplinary issues, parent communication, staff supervision, and management of the building. As a result, the IIT found that the principal does not always have time in her schedule to visit classrooms and provide teachers with feedback to improve their instruction. Although teachers stated that the feedback they receive from their Annual Professional Performance Review is helpful, they stated that they rarely receive feedback based on informal class visits. In the future, the principal should consider delegating some responsibilities to others to allow more time in her schedule to focus on improving the quality of instruction.

Learning at the School

- **The school needs to develop a guaranteed and viable ELA curriculum.** The IIT found that although the school leaders are currently developing an ELA pacing guide and benchmark assessments, the school does not have an ELA curriculum for teachers to use when planning and delivering instruction. During visits to ELA classes, the IIT noted that teachers were using a multitude of ELA textbooks and resources. In the future, the principal should ensure that staff develop an ELA curriculum that defines what should be taught, how it should be taught, and identifies best practices that teachers should use in delivering ELA instruction.
- **Teachers should plan and deliver lessons that are challenging to students.** In most classes visited, the IIT found that students were asked to complete tasks that required them to recite facts to demonstrate their understanding of the material being taught. Students were not required to analyze what they had learned, to deconstruct it and determine how various concepts fit together, or to identify how some components of the lesson might relate to other seemingly unrelated ideas or concepts. Several interviewed students stated that they do not find their coursework to be challenging. Students enrolled in honors courses explained that the content of these courses is not more difficult than general classes, but honors classes cover more material faster.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Students would like to be able to talk to an adult in the school if they have a problem.** Interviewed students stated that they would like to be able to go to an adult if they were having a problem, but several students stated that they did not believe their concerns would be kept confidential. Approximately half of the students interviewed could not name an adult that they would feel comfortable confiding in if they needed to share something important. During discussions in which students were able to identify an adult they trusted, only three adults in the school were mentioned among all groups of students interviewed. Some students stated that they would rather speak with another student than with an adult in the school.