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
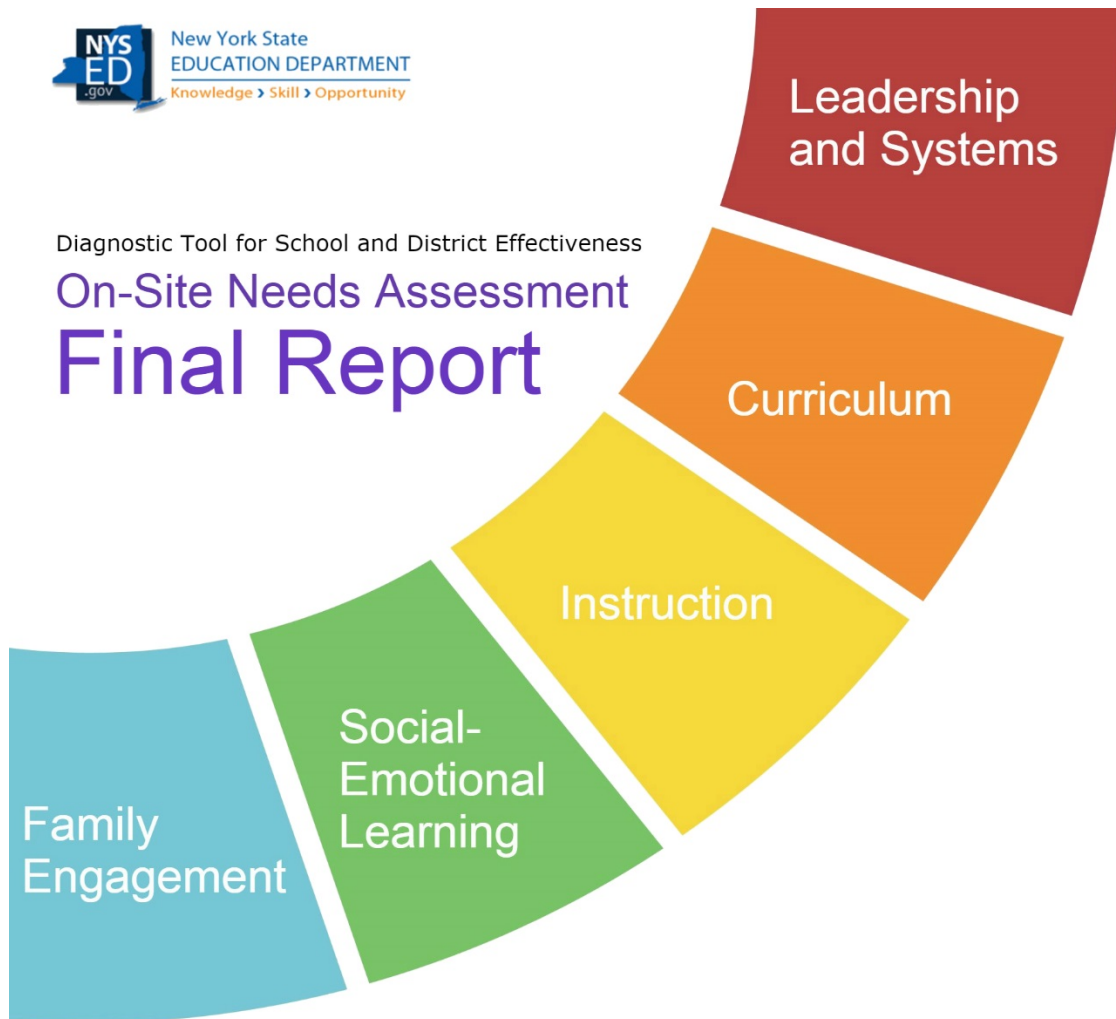
BEDS Code	580212060007
School Name	Longwood Middle School
School Address	41 Yaphank Middle Island Road, Middle Island, NY 11953
District Name	Longwood Central School District
Principal	Tracy Adams
Dates of Visit	March 12-14, 2019

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	2	1	1

Longwood Middle School serves 1,426 students in grades five through 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 46 classrooms during the visit.
- The OEE visited 11 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 lesson plans and student work.
- In advance of the visit, 76 staff members (68 percent) completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. This school year, school leaders have been successful in including the bus drivers in the school's positive behavior system. The principal reported that the school gave drivers a card that indicates the positive behaviors students are expected to exhibit on the bus and that drivers use this card to score student behavior on their bus ride each day. The results are included in the school's data system, and the buses with the best student behavior are posted on a large mural in the school lobby. The school provides incentives for students, such as pizza parties, bus bingo, and games days to promote good behavior on the buses. The principal showed the IIT data that demonstrated that this effort has resulted in a decrease of approximately 50 percent of office referrals for misbehavior on the bus.

2. At the beginning of the 2018-19 school year, the school leaders set up a system of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) with student ambassadors to reinforce the school's behavior response program with all students. The school currently has 25 student ambassadors who went through an application process that included writing an essay explaining why they wanted to take part in this initiative. Ambassadors the IIT interviewed reported that they are actively promoting the behavior program, and currently they are writing skits to promote good behavior. School leaders shared data to show that this initiative is having a positive effect on student behavior throughout the school by reducing behavior incidents in the hallway.

3. Teachers reported that the school leaders are supportive of the arts, and this year school leaders have encouraged the development of several arts-related projects, such as designing sneakers or set designs for the school play. Students also produce murals around the school, and they are currently engaged in a slogan competition. The school leaders are currently developing a science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM) initiative, which has begun with a popular robotics club. Students reported that they are highly motivated by the art and design projects, and the IIT observed that much of the work on display around the school was of high quality.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **The school leaders should develop and implement a strategic plan for schoolwide improvement and student achievement.** The principal reported that although several initiatives currently are being implemented in the school, an overall plan to track these programs or to gauge their impact on improving student achievement has not yet been established. For example, although teachers should be implementing the workshop model in English language arts (ELA), the school leaders reported they have not been monitoring whether teachers use the workshop model in their ELA classes. Interviewed staff reported that they are not aware of a clear strategy for implementing the many programs, and the impact of these programs on student achievement is not being measured. In the future, school leaders will need to identify the school's key priorities and create an improvement plan with specific, measurable, ambitious, results-oriented, and timely (SMART) goals and clearly defined short-term benchmarks so that they can measure progress towards the changes that will bring about school improvement and increase student achievement.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **School leaders need to establish a system to collect and analyze a wide range of data about current practices to inform school improvement decisions.** The school leaders reported that they collect data on student attendance and student behavior on the buses and in the building, and they have analyzed the data to some extent to determine whether the initiatives to improve attendance and behavior are successful. They noted that this analysis enabled them to identify which students were the most chronic non-attenders at school and which teachers sent the most students to the office for incidents of misbehavior. However, teachers reported that monitoring and feedback mechanisms have not been established for ensuring that other initiatives are being implemented effectively and are having a positive impact on student achievement. For example, teachers reported that there is no follow up to assess the impact of professional development (PD) on classroom practice. The IIT also learned that the school is in the process of receiving laptop computers for every student, but school leaders reported that a mechanism for determining the effectiveness of this initiative has not yet been put into place. School leaders also reported that analyzing data such as student test grades to make school improvement decisions is not an established practice.
- **School leaders need to monitor teachers' implementation of a schoolwide incentive system, which rewards students for effort, good behavior, and academic achievement.** The school established an incentive system based on the BR3 program. However**,** the IIT learned in discussions with teachers and students that individual teachers have developed and use their own reward systems, which students reported they find confusing. Students stated that using different systems is unfair as students in some classes receive more rewards than those in other classes. Teachers noted that the present system is confusing, and although they like the authority to have their own incentives, they recognize that students perceive it as inequitable. In the future, school leaders should meet with teachers and students to ensure that the official school incentive policy is established equitably in all classes.

Learning at the School

- **Teachers should encourage students to think deeply about what they are learning by posing high level questions.** Although school leaders reported that the issue of providing students with challenging questions has been a focus of instructional practice for several years, they have not been following up on teachers' use of questioning in their classroom visits. The IIT's review of teachers' lesson plans showed that higher-order questions were not identified. In most observed lessons, students had few opportunities to discuss ideas with each other or to think about challenging questions. For example, in some mathematics classes, the team found that problems were explained rapidly without asking any questions or inviting students to suggest their own solutions.
- **Teacher plans should be informed by a detailed analysis of students' prior learning or academic needs.** In observed lessons, the team found that students were not provided with a range of tasks that were well matched to their prior learning or achievement. For example, several students reported that they were repeating material that they had done the previous year. Teachers shared that they do not use data to adjust their planning or instruction. For example, the team learned that although some teachers have information from quizzes and unit tests, these data are not used to group students for subsequent lessons. School leaders reported that there had not been any PD recently to help teachers improve their instructional practice so that it better matches students' current levels of achievement. In the future, school leaders should consider

providing teachers with PD focused on how they can modify their lesson planning in light of available data to better match activities to students' prior learning and academic needs.

- **Teachers should plan for providing opportunities for student interaction and meaningful discussion.** The team found that although the issue of teachers' promoting student discussion and interaction have been a focus of PD for the last few years, school leaders have not been following up this training, and many teachers are not implementing practices that promote student discussion and interaction. The IIT observed a wide range of lessons, and in the majority of the classes, the teacher dominated the lesson and provided students with few opportunities to join in discussions or work together on joint projects. For example, in a lesson the team observed, examples of problems were shared on the white board for 20 minutes without a chance for students to ask questions or discuss problems with their peers. Students could often answer questions with a single word, and most of the time students sat passively during lessons and were not engaged in active learning. The IIT also observed that the desks in several classroom areas were separated and facing the white board, making it difficult for students to interact or have discussions.

- **Teachers should routinely use learning objectives to extend students' knowledge of what they are learning in the lesson.** School leaders reported that one of the recent initiatives to improve instruction has been for teachers to use learning objectives to extend students' learning; however, the IIT observed that few learning objectives were being used in classrooms. Many of the lesson plans examined by the IIT did not identify a learning objective, and those that did typically only identified what students would do in the lesson. Learning objectives were typically not referred to at the beginning of the lesson and were not reinforced at the end of the lesson. For example, in several classes, the lesson ended without reference to the learning objective that was posted on the bulletin board, and students were not reminded of what they had been learning in the lesson.

- **Teachers should actively promote student ownership of their learning by helping them set and achieve academic and personal goals.** Students reported that they do not have any personal academic or personal goals, and several students shared that they did not understand the purpose of the material they were studying. During discussions with the IIT, the principal and interviewed teachers acknowledged that they needed to work with students to set personal goals to promote student ownership of their learning and doing this would help students feel a sense of responsibility for their progress.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Parents, teachers, and students shared that they do not know what the school vision is or what the school leaders' key priorities are.** Teachers stated that they were unsure of the principal's key priorities or the mission of the school. Students reported they had never seen a school vision or mission statement or did not know what it is. Parents also indicated that they had not had any communications about the school leaders' vision or mission statement.

- **Parents and some students reported that the school does not provide enough challenge for high performing students or suitable extension activities to address their needs.** One parent commented, for example, that her child was doing the same work in mathematics this year as she did last year and was not being challenged. Other parents also noted that that some of the work given to their children appeared to be too easy. Many interviewed students shared that they often do not find the work they are given to be challenging and that they are frequently bored. Some teachers noted that they do not routinely plan extension activities, such as

individual investigative projects for students and that when students have finished their work, they help other students.

- **Parents stated that there is a lack of consistency in the way the school communicates with them, and sometimes important information is missed.** For example, several parents reported that they had not received the notice that school photographs would take place the week of the IIT's visit, so they could not ensure their children were appropriately dressed for the school photographs. Parents said that teachers use a range of communication methods, including emails, text messages, and traditional paper newsletters, and that the paper newsletters often are not given to them by their children.
- **Teachers and students reported that they do not often see school leaders around the building.** Interviewed teachers stated that the school leaders do not often visit their classroom or make themselves visible in the building. Students also noted that school leaders do not often visit their classes, and when they do so, it is usually because some students are misbehaving.