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Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment
Final Report

Leadership and Systems

Curriculum

Instruction

Social-Emotional Learning

Family Engagement
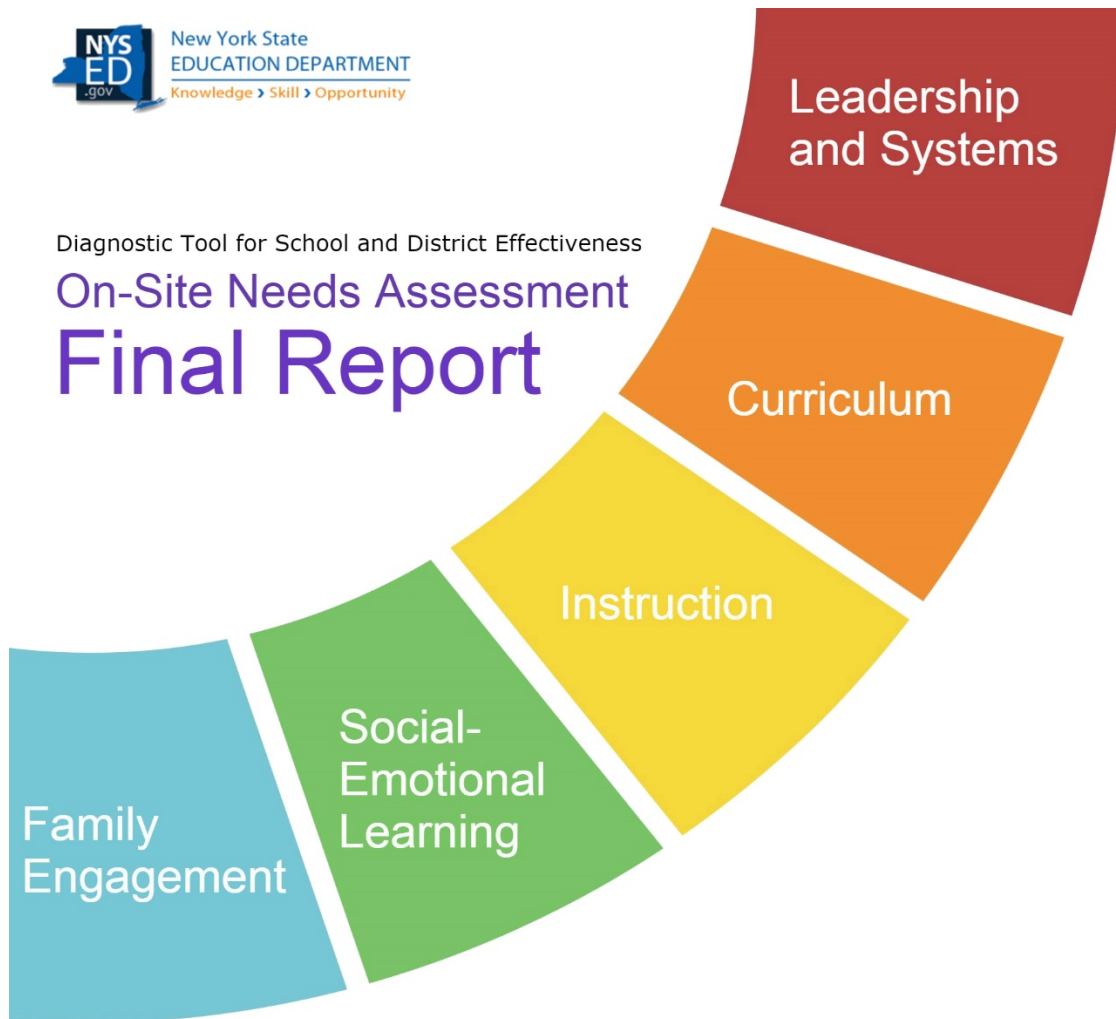
BEDS Code	161501060006
School Name	Flanders Elementary School
School Address	524 East Main Street, Malone, NY 12953
District Name	Malone Central School District
Principal	Joseph Coakley
Dates of Visit	April 9-11, 2019

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	3

Flanders Elementary School serves 257 students in pre-kindergarten through grade five.

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 and a district consultant.
- The team visited a total of 41 classrooms during the visit.
- The OEE visited ten 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, schoolwide data, and student work.
- In advance of the visit, 17 staff members (54 percent) completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. At the beginning of 2018-19, the principal worked with district staff to produce a spreadsheet that includes student assessment data for reading and mathematics. The spreadsheet also contains notes on individual students who are receiving additional support. Teachers review the information regularly during data meetings and use the data to adjust instruction to better meet student learning needs. Teachers are also able to use the spreadsheet to track student progress throughout the year. The principal reported that having access to this data has helped teachers to improve their reading instructional strategies. The IIT reviewed the spreadsheet with the principal and noted that many students had made significant gains in reading proficiency between September 2018 and February 2019.

2. In September 2018, the principal and staff introduced an incentive system in which staff give tickets to students when they demonstrate good behavior or the character objective of the month. The principal rewards these students on "Popcorn Friday" with popcorn and bottled water, and the school community recognizes them during the monthly assembly. Students reported that they find these incentives effective in promoting good behavior. The principal shared that since the system was introduced, there has been a large reduction in the number of serious behavior incidents leading to suspension.

3. At the beginning of 2018-19, the principal launched a campaign to explain to students in grades three through five and their parents the importance of students taking the New York State (NYS) assessments as preparation for their future education and career prospects. The principal has successfully communicated this message to many students, and interviewed students reported that they understand the importance of taking the tests. As a result of these efforts, the percentage of students taking the NYS assessments rose from 33 percent in 2018 to 65 percent in 2019.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **The principal needs to develop a system to collect and analyze data to inform school improvement decisions.** The principal reported that although the school now has an effective means of tracking student progress in reading and mathematics, there is no system for collecting and analyzing data related to current and past initiatives and practices. For example, the principal reported that teacher observation and student academic data has not been analyzed to identify trends, determine areas of strength, and identify areas where additional support is needed. As a result, the principal does not have sufficient information to evaluate the impact of current initiatives or plan future school improvement efforts. In the future, the principal should build on the current reading and math proficiency tracking spreadsheet to establish a comprehensive system for collecting the data needed to measure the impact of school improvement initiatives and identify areas of need. He should analyze this information on a monthly basis to continually inform school improvement decisions.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **The principal should increase monitoring of teacher team meetings to ensure that teachers are making effective use of planning time.** The principal reported that although time is allocated in the schedule for

teacher planning, teacher use of this time is not monitored. Interviewed teachers reported that teacher planning time is not used to regularly meet across grade levels to review curriculum, look at student work, assess the effectiveness of teaching, or identify specific ways in which lessons might be improved. Some teachers stated that they use the allocated planning time for lesson preparation. Teachers reported that the mathematics and English language arts (ELA) teachers in grades four and five, the two grade levels in the school which are departmentalized, do not have opportunities to meet to plan vertical alignment of these subjects.

- **Although the principal makes regular visits to classrooms, he needs to provide teachers with actionable feedback to improve their practice.** Interviewed teachers reported that although the principal regularly visits their classrooms, they only receive feedback following their formal evaluation observations. Teachers stated that the feedback they do receive does not include specific next steps to improve instruction. Teachers also said that they would appreciate actionable feedback to follow-up on the professional development (PD) they received on increasing student engagement. The principal acknowledged that due to other administrative tasks and time spent addressing student behavior, classroom visits have not been conducted regularly to follow up on PD and provide teachers with feedback on their implementation of student engagement strategies. In many classes visited, the IIT noted that there were groups of students who were not actively engaged in learning.

- **The principal should monitor teacher adherence to the master schedule.** The IIT observed that at several points during the day, the master schedule was not being followed. The IIT observed several instances when lessons did not start on time because some students were tardy, or the teacher was preparing for the start of the lesson. For example, one lesson was delayed because the teacher first had to collect the materials she needed and then spent several minutes preparing the SMART Board for use. The principal acknowledged that because of other responsibilities, teacher adherence to the schedule has not been monitored. In the future, the principal should ensure that all teachers follow the master schedule and that instructional time is not lost when lessons do not begin on time.

- **The principal needs to increase monitoring of computer use in the classroom to ensure that teachers are meeting his expectations for the integration of technology to support student learning.** The principal reported that every student in the school has access to a laptop computer and other computer equipment when needed, and that he expects teachers to integrate the use of computers into their lessons. However, the IIT observed that in many classes, students did not use computers regularly. In classes where students did use computers, the assigned tasks were low-level, such as completing simple mathematics games. Students reported that they would appreciate more opportunities to use computers to do research, design logos and pictures, and write code. Several students demonstrated that they were capable of using computers for much more complex tasks than those that were assigned by the teachers. The principal should monitor the use of computers in the school and assess their effectiveness in supporting student learning.

Learning at the School

- **Teachers must consider student proficiency levels when planning and delivering instruction and should ensure that what is taught builds on what students have already learned.** The IIT observed that in many lessons, students were not provided with opportunities to learn at different rates and in different ways. In most classes, nearly all students completed the same task, which some students found difficult while others completed the assigned task long before their peers. The team also observed few opportunities for students

to make relevant connections to what they had already learned, such as using their knowledge of multiplication tables to help them determine the area of a rectangle.

- **Teachers should ensure that lessons progress at an appropriate pace so that students are actively engaged throughout.** In many classes visited, the IIT noted that the lesson was slow to start, and the pace of the lesson was slow with many unplanned opportunities for students to stop working or wander around the classroom. For example, in one observed lesson, the teacher spent a good deal of time on activities such as organizing the lesson or talking to a colleague while students engaged in off-task chat. Interviewed students reported that they find it frustrating when they cannot proceed with their work due to these types of distractions.

- **Teachers need to design and deliver lessons that include opportunities for student discussion, debate, and other opportunities to develop their critical thinking skills.** Many lessons observed by the IIT were teacher-led and did not include opportunities for students to interact productively with each other. For example, in one lesson, the teacher spoke for ten minutes without asking students any questions. In a review of teacher lesson plans, the IIT did not see any evidence of planned opportunities for student discourse. Interviewed students reported that they would like the opportunity to participate in discussions or debates.

- **Teachers should use higher-order questioning to deepen student understanding of the content.** In many lessons observed, questions were low-level and required students to provide a short or single-word response. The IIT observed few instances of students being asked questions that were open-ended or encouraged students to consider several possible answers. Few students were asked to explain their solution to a problem or provide an extended reason for their opinion. Some teachers occasionally asked probing questions to determine student understanding of the lesson objective, but this was not common practice. Interviewed teachers reported that they had not received any recent training on the use of higher-order questioning, and they generally find it difficult to match questions to student proficiency levels. In the future, the principal should introduce training that helps teachers identify strategies for higher-order questioning and monitor teacher lesson planning and delivery to ensure that teachers are asking questions designed to deepen student engagement and understanding.

- **Teachers should integrate assessments throughout the lesson to check student understanding, measure progress, provide feedback, or refine and adjust instruction to meet the needs of all students.** In many lessons observed by the IIT, strategies were not employed to assess the level of student understanding during the lesson. Although some teachers used the thumbs-up, thumbs-down strategy to determine whether students understood a process or concept, most teachers used only the quizzes in the curriculum text to assess student learning. The IIT did not observe any classes in which instruction was adjusted during the lesson to better meet the needs of all students in the class. For example, in a mathematics lesson, the team observed that the majority of the students had not understood the faction problem, but the lesson proceeded without reteaching of the concept.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Parents would like teachers to provide challenging extension activities for students who complete their work early.** Some parents expressed concern that their children sometimes complete their work early and are either not given any additional work or are given worksheets that are not challenging. Students confirmed that when they finish their work early, they usually read a book or help other students.

- **Some families shared that they have had difficulty obtaining additional supports for their children.** One parent shared that although she had made multiple requests to have her child evaluated due to difficulties

with reading, testing had not been completed. Another family shared that they sought tutoring for their child outside of school because they did not feel their child was receiving enough support.

- **Parents would like information about strategies they can use at home to support their children's learning.** Parents stated that although teachers provide them with regular updates on their children's grades, they would also like teachers to share information about ways in which they can support their children's learning at home.
- **Parents would like report cards to include additional information.** Interviewed parents stated that they would like the report card to contain more information about their children's behavior.