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	580211060014
School Name	Stagecoach School
School Address	205, 1422 Dare Rd, Selden, NY 11784
District Name	Middle Country Central School District
Principal	Shaun Rothberg
Dates of Visit	March 5-7, 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
1	1	1	2	1	4

Stagecoach School serves 432 students in grades one to 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.
- The team visited a total of 30 lessons during the visit.
- The OEE visited six 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.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. For the 2018-19 academic year, the principal, in collaboration with the English as a new language (ENL) staff, assigned a teaching assistant to work with students new to the country for 40-minutes every day so that they can practice, develop, and build phonemic awareness, systematic sequential phonics, and overall language and vocabulary fluency using an online platform that emphasizes audiovisual interactivity. As a result of this decision, entering and emerging level English language learners (ELLs) are now provided with the supplemental ENL interventions they need.

2. Over the 2018 summer session, the principal hired a bilingual greeter and a security guard, renovated the school's vestibule, and established a system so that visitors and parents needing to drop off, pick up, or otherwise communicate with school staff could do so without entering the main building. This has strengthened school security measures and allowed staff better control over visitor access to the building.

3. In the 2018-19 school year, the principal, in collaboration with district leaders, began piloting the iReady adaptive learning platform in select classrooms and math academic intervention services (AIS) classes. IReady data provides teachers with detailed information on student performance by domain and instructional strand. This initiative has allowed staff to begin to learn how to gather, analyze, and act on data to provide targeted instruction and interventions to improve student learning.

Systems for Improvement

- **The principal should develop and use a system to routinely monitor instruction and provide teachers with actionable feedback outside of the formal observation process.** Although the principal routinely observes both classroom instruction and non-classroom teacher practice in connection with a formal evaluation system, teachers shared that feedback from informal classroom visits is often provided conversationally and does not usually include specific suggestions about what the teacher should do moving forward. The IIT also learned that teachers do not receive routine informal classroom visits with follow up to ensure that teacher practices are aligned to the school's curriculum or professional development priorities. For example, when asked, the principal could not share specific examples of staff or grade-level teams that were implementing specific curricula, such as the Teachers College Reading and Writing Workshop, to fidelity. The principal confirmed to the team that the school does not use an established observation and feedback tool.

- **The principal should clearly communicate an expectation that general education teachers assume a larger role in instructing English language learner (ELL) students in language development and literacy fluency.** The team found that ENL teachers bear the primary responsibility for language and literacy instruction for ELLs. The principal identified peer modeling through cooperative learning as one of many tools that teachers could use to support the learning needs of ELL students and shared that teachers commonly use peer learning as an instructional strategy to support ELLs in the classroom. Team members observed that many ENL best practices are not incorporated into lessons in general education classrooms, and in a few instances, team members observed struggling ELL students being directed to ask their neighbor for help. The team observed few word walls, scaffolding supports, Spanish language dictionaries or textbooks to scaffold student learning, posted language objectives, or evidence of differentiation. A review of PD documents showed an expectation that ENL teachers are to work collaboratively with teachers as a follow-up to trainings, but there is no structured common planning time built into the schedule to support this activity.

- **The school should explore ways to ensure that teachers use common planning time to collaborate.** The principal shared that the schedule is structured to accommodate two 40-minute teacher-directed common planning periods each day; yet these meetings are optional, and there is no formal guidance specifying how these meetings should be run. The team learned that teachers have not been polled to determine if they are willing to collaboratively meet in grade-level teams and methods of supporting teachers in doing so have not yet been explored. For example, teachers had not been approached to determine whether they would be willing to regularly meet as a grade-level team and had not been provided with written suggestions for structuring a collaborative planning time meeting. Teachers shared that they would like to have more collaborative planning opportunities so that they can meet with their grade-level peers. The team learned that the grade two team is currently meeting on their own but without formal meeting structures such as agendas, notes, or follow-up plans.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **The principal should make sure that staff have a consistent understanding of his instructional priorities and non-negotiables.** The IIT learned that the school does not have a clearly defined set of instructional looks-fors or non-negotiables that every teacher knows and implements in their classroom. Additionally, because there is no informal walkthrough system that is regularly used to monitor teacher practices and provide actionable feedback, it is not known if specific priorities, such as posting learning objectives for every lesson, are routinely being implemented.

Learning at the School

- **Teachers should ensure that math lessons provide opportunities for students who quickly grasp the content to be challenged and those who struggle to have additional supports during instruction.** Team members observed little evidence of purposeful student grouping or differentiation in process, product, or content during math lessons. Although some students said they sometimes learn using hands-on manipulatives, such as base-ten blocks for math, the IIT did not observe any instruction in which strategies such as this were used. Typically, students were seen working in math workbooks independently or in small groups receiving information from the teacher. In one class, students were asked if anyone could explain another method to show equivalent fractions. A student suggested that the class use fraction sticks, and although some students were struggling with the concept, sticks were not used to scaffold the lesson and another problem-solving strategy was not modeled. The team noted that most questions asked during lessons were process and procedure questions outlining what students should do next, rather than questions that allowed students to apply a mathematical model to solve or better understand a problem or situation. When asked, many classroom teachers did not have a strategy for using formative assessments, such as exit tickets, to plan instruction matched to student needs. Checks for student understanding of what they had just learned was observed in a few classrooms; however, the team did not observe any follow up or adjustment of instruction based on individual student needs.

- **Spanish-speaking parents would like more bilingual teachers and translators on staff and present at school and district events.** In addition to a bilingual greeter stationed at the school's main entrance, parents reported that the school has one bilingual teacher that can translate when they have questions. These parents shared that when the bilingual ENL teacher is not available they wait until she is and sometimes do not attend school events if they know she is not going to be there. The school's bilingual teacher shared that during parent-teacher conferences she moves from room to room throughout the school to translate for parents and teachers.

- **Parents would like grade five students to have Chromebooks available in their classrooms.** District leaders reported that the plan to purchase Chromebooks for all students in grade five classrooms has been temporarily put on hold. Staff and district leaders said that teachers received training in anticipation of grade five students having the Chromebooks for their use prior to this point in the school year.

- **Some parents would like grade-specific playground equipment removed and replaced by equipment appropriate for all grade levels.** Interviewed parents expressed dismay that certain students can play on the merry-go-round while others cannot. They wondered why the equipment is there if only some students can play on it.

- **Teachers would like to implement a bilingual program at the school.** District leaders shared that plans for a sheltered instruction model at the school are being discussed. In discussions the team learned that class sizes are now larger because of a recent influx of ELL students, and some teachers shared that a bilingual program could ease over-crowding.