

Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

Final Report



BEDS Code	240901040001
School Name	Mount Morris Middle/Senior High School
School Address	30 Bonadonna Avenue, Mount Morris, NY 14510
District Name	Mount Morris Central School District
Principal	Jesse Hamilton
Dates of Visit	March 4-7, 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	-	1	1

High School Performance Indicators

4 Yr Grad. Rate <67%	Composite Performance Achievement Level	Average of 4-, 5-, and 6-year Graduation Rate Levels	Combined Composite Performance Achievement and Graduation Rate Level	English Language Proficiency Level	Average ELA and Math Academic Progress Level	Chronic Absenteeism Level	College, Career, Civic, Readiness (CCCR) Level
No	3	3	3	-	2	1	4

Mount Morris Middle/Senior High School serves 229 students in grades seven through twelve.

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 28 classrooms during the visit.
- The OEE visited seven classrooms with the principal during the visit.
- Team members conducted interviews with students, staff, and parents.
- In advance of the visit, 11 staff members (44 percent) completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. During 2018-19, the principal has worked with a representative from AmeriCorps to develop strategies to decrease student tardiness. At the beginning of the school year, school staff talked with students about the importance of getting to school on time and this message is reinforced each day. The importance of arriving to school on time is also emphasized in the school's monthly newsletter for parents. The school attendance committee monitors student tardiness and calls are made to parents of students who are late to school. As a result of these efforts, there were 743 instances of student tardiness from September 2018 through February 2019 as compared to 1,459 for the same period in 2017-18.
2. Interviewed teachers shared that since the principal started at the school, he has made them feel respected, valued, and appreciated. Teachers reported that the principal has made an effort to establish positive relationships among staff and has conveyed confidence in the expertise of his teachers. Interviewed staff shared that due to the principal's efforts to improve communication, they have a clear understanding of the principal's values and understand the urgency to improve student achievement.
3. The principal has partnered with Syracuse University to offer the Syracuse University Project Advance (SUPA) program which allows students the opportunity to take Syracuse University courses during their regular high school day and earn college credit. By experiencing the rigor and expectations of college-level coursework, students can prepare for the academic challenges of college. During the fall 2018 semester, 27 of the 28 students enrolled in the program passed their SUPA classes and earned three college credits per course. Students interviewed by the IIT shared that they are excited about the program and are looking forward to attending college.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **The school needs to develop a system to provide interventions for students needing additional academic and social-emotional supports.** Although interviews with school staff revealed that many students struggle with academics and behavior, the school does not currently have a system to identify students in need of academic or social-emotional interventions. The school does not have a Response to Intervention (RtI) program in place and conversations with school staff revealed that RtI is not known or understood by most teachers. In the future, the principal should develop a system to identify students needing interventions and provide them with additional supports.

- **The school should review and update its system for addressing chronic absenteeism.** The current rate of chronic absenteeism is 21.2 percent in the middle school and 21.5 percent in the high school. Although the principal stated that he wants to decrease the absenteeism rate for both levels, student attendance is not regularly monitored. Under the current system, families are not notified of student absence and interventions are not provided until a student has missed at least eight days of school in an academic year. In the future, the principal should develop metrics and guidelines to provide timely interventions to students who have a history of chronic absenteeism rather than waiting until they have reached eight absences.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **The principal should conduct informal class visits to provide teachers with feedback to improve their practice.** The principal stated that he primarily conducts formal and informal observations for APPR purposes. He shared that the school does not have a system of informal walkthroughs to provide teachers with feedback on their instructional practice. Teachers reported that although the principal commonly comes into their classrooms, they typically do not receive feedback afterward. Teachers shared that receiving feedback regularly would help them to know what areas they need to focus on in order to improve their practice.
- **Special education consultant teachers and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) teachers should have designated time in their schedules to meet with content-area teachers to co-plan instruction.** Special education consultant teachers and ESOL teachers reported that they do not have designated time in their schedule to meet with content-area teachers to co-plan lessons. Some teachers stated that they try to find time during the lunch period or before and after school to discuss curricular issues. Other teachers stated that due to their schedule, they are unable to meet during the school day. Class visits revealed that the consultant teachers' and ESOL teachers' level of involvement in instruction varied. Some consultant teachers and ESOL teachers were involved in co-teaching the lesson, while others observed the lesson being taught by the content-area teacher and did not interact with students or participate in the lesson. During the teacher focus group meeting, teachers stated that having time to meet with their co-teachers would help to ensure that they are planning lessons that meet the learning needs of ELLs and students with disabilities. In the future, when developing the master schedule, the principal should create regular opportunities for special education consultant teachers and ESOL teachers to collaborate with the content-area teachers with whom they co-teach.
- **The principal needs to communicate clear expectations for the daily enrichment block.** The IIT's conversations with students and staff revealed that although teachers have the opportunity to work with students needing additional support during the daily enrichment block, many teachers are not utilizing this time to work with students. Interviewed teachers stated that clear expectations for the enrichment block have not been communicated and teacher use of this time is not monitored. In the future, the principal should clearly communicate his expectations for the enrichment block and monitor its implementation.

Learning at the School

- **The school needs to support teachers in developing a coherent curriculum that is aligned to grade-level expectations.** The principal explained that because he does not have a background in curriculum and instruction, he relies on teachers to use their expertise and professional judgment when determining what to teach. He explained that teachers have autonomy in designing their own curriculum. Interviewed teachers

shared that they decide which curriculum and resources to use based on what they believe will best meet the needs of their students. As a result, the team found that the quality and coherence of curriculum across grade levels or across content areas varies greatly. In addition, the team found that a lack of pacing guides may prevent some teachers from ensuring that all grade-level standards are taught during the year. For example, some teachers shared that when students do not understand a skill, they spend additional time teaching that skill, which may result in them not having time to teach other required standards. In the future, the principal should support teachers in developing a coherent curriculum that includes pacing guides to ensure that teachers are meeting grade-level expectations in accordance with New York State standards.

- **Teachers should use common assessments to determine student progress towards meeting grade-level standards.** The principal shared that since each teacher is implementing his/her own curriculum, it is difficult to monitor student progress towards grade-level standards and expectations. Teachers explained that the school does not utilize common assessments. Instead, teachers develop their own assessments to monitor student progress. However, the IIT found that the assessments developed by individual teachers often measure student understanding of the content that has been taught, rather than progress towards grade-level standards. In the future, the principal should consider having teacher leaders create benchmark assessments that can be used throughout the year to monitor student progress towards meeting grade-level standards.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Students stated that consequences for negative behavior are not implemented consistently.** Students shared that consequences for negative behavior vary from student to student and from class to class. They explained that two students who commit the same infraction often receive different consequences. For example, one student said that he received in-school suspension for being disrespectful to an adult while his friend was only spoken to about the same behavior.
- **Parents stated that teachers do not always contact them if their child is struggling in class.** Some interviewed parents shared that teachers do not always contact them if their child is struggling, and they may not know if their child is failing a class until progress reports are sent home. Although the school uses schooltool, an information management system that allows families to access their children's grades online, parents stated that some teachers do not regularly enter grades into this system.