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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	41150402000
School Name	New York Mills Junior-Senior High School
School Address	1 Marauder Boulevard, New York Mills, NY 13417
District Name	New York Mills Union Free School District
Principal	Mary Facci
Dates of Visit	May 7-9, 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	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	4	4	4	-	3	4	4

New York Mills Junior-Senior High School serves 245 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 the district superintendent who served as the district representative.
- The team visited a total of 32 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, teacher feedback, and student work.
- In advance of the visit, 16 staff members (47 percent) completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. The school expanded its extracurricular programs during the 2018-19 school year, introducing several academic clubs and non-athletic activities. Students and teachers told the IIT that in addition to strong athletic programs, the school now offers a reading club sponsored by the school librarian for students who want to read more, a model United Nations club in which students compete with their peers and debate current political and social topics, and a technology club for students interested in various aspects of technology, such as coding, building computers, and creating videos. Interviewed students stated that they were pleased with the additional extracurricular activities that are now available to meet and develop their interests.

2. At the beginning of 2018-19, the principal introduced a plan to increase student participation on the New York State (NYS) assessments in grades seven and eight. Teachers explained to students how data from the assessments could be used to plan instruction to meet individual student needs. Teachers also discussed the importance of the exams with families during parent-teacher conferences. Increasing student participation in the assessments was set as an agenda item at every Board of Education meeting in order to raise awareness. Interviewed parents shared that because the message around increasing the student participation rate was clear and consistent, they understood the importance and value of testing and were supportive of the school's efforts. As a result of these activities, the percentage of grade seven students participating in NYS assessments increased from 31 percent in 2017-18 to 90 percent in 2018-19. Additionally, the percentage of grade eight students participating in the assessments increased from 46 percent in 2017-18 to 90 percent in 2018-19.

3. In 2018-19, the school implemented the Integrated Co-Teaching model for students with disabilities. The principal and teachers shared that the implementation of this model has been beneficial for students. They explained that students with disabilities have demonstrated growth in meeting their Individual Educational Plan (IEP) goals, their report card performance has improved, and their performance on the STAR assessment has significantly increased in both English language arts (ELA) and math. The principal said that ICT instructors will continue to receive support and training to strengthen their instructional practice, such as ICT videos and on-site modeling provided by the district's Special Education School Improvement Specialist (SESIS) Representative.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **School leaders should develop a cohesive discipline plan and procedures to ensure consistent responses to student behavior.** The school has a designated team of teachers and student support staff that reviews behavioral data at defined intervals during the school year to identify trends and address areas of need. However, teachers and the principal told the IIT that there is no schoolwide policy that includes clear

expectations for addressing student behavior. Through interviews with the principal and teachers, the IIT learned that the current policies do not include tiered discipline procedures or guidance on how staff should manage behavioral incidents within the classroom. As a result, teachers and students reported that some teachers send students out of class for behaviors that could be resolved or managed within the classroom. In the future, school leaders will need to develop a cohesive discipline plan that includes clear expectations and procedures for addressing student behavior, communicate the plan to all staff, and ensure that all staff effectively utilize the plan to manage student behavior.

- **The principal needs to develop a system to assess the quality of the school's improvement efforts**. The school currently has attendance, discipline, and academic committees that meet regularly to support the school's improvement efforts. For example, the discipline committee reviews infractions, identifies students and classrooms needing additional support, and involves the social worker and the guidance counselor to manage any identified social-emotional issues. The academic committee examines data from five-week progress reports and quarterly report cards to identify students needing academic support, meets with those students and their parents to develop plans for improvement, and revisits plans with students and parents to ensure they are having the desired impact. According to the principal, all committees have a process in place to assess the impact of their efforts on individual students and classrooms. However, there is no system in place to analyze data to determine the impact of schoolwide improvement efforts. For example, the Positivity Project, a program that empowers youth to build positive relationships by seeing the character strengths in themselves and others, was introduced in January, but there is no system to determine if schoolwide discipline has improved because of the program. In the future, the principal should develop a system of utilizing data to monitor and assess the quality and impact of all school improvement efforts and make adjustments as necessary.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **The principal should participate in department and co-planning meetings to provide teachers with guidance and feedback on implementing the school's instructional priorities.** Teachers informed the IIT that they have department and co-planning meetings at least twice per week to plan lessons and discuss data with the data specialist. However, teachers reported that these meetings are not used to provide teachers with guidance and feedback on the effective implementation of the school's instructional priorities. The principal confirmed that she does not consistently participate in the planning meetings, and the meetings' content and outcomes are not monitored. One of the school's current instructional priorities is the use of data to determine areas of need for re-teaching and differentiation. However, the majority of lesson plans reviewed by the IIT did not include differentiated activities to meet the varying needs of students. The IIT found little evidence of planning for differentiated activities and no evidence of re-teaching based on data.

- **The principal needs to conduct more informal observations and provide teachers with actionable feedback aimed at improving their instructional practices.** School leaders and teachers stated that school leaders should visit classrooms more regularly to observe instruction and learning. The principal shared that when she conducts informal observations, she uses a walkthrough template to look for things such as posting of learning targets, evidence of student engagement, higher-order questioning techniques, use of formative assessment data to adapt instruction, and evidence that students are using academic and content vocabulary. Teachers reported that walkthrough feedback generally includes statements such as, "good job" or "ask more higher-

order thinking questions." Although teachers acknowledged that this feedback can be helpful, they stated that they would like more explicit and actionable feedback to improve their practices.

Learning at the School

- **Teachers need to utilize more strategies to increase student engagement.** In an effort to increase the level and quality of student engagement activities in every lesson, the principal established a goal for the 2018-19 school year in which students would participate in think-pair-share, use Google Classroom, engage in collaborative learning experiences, and participate in guided notetaking. The IIT observed teachers in a few classrooms effectively using these strategies. For example, in one classroom, the teacher was using Google Classroom interactively with students. Students were typing essays and the teacher was remotely checking for understanding and providing written and verbal feedback for improvement. However, in the majority of classrooms visited, the IIT either did not observe these strategies being used, or they were not being used effectively to increase student engagement. For example, in a classroom where guided notetaking was being used, students were not provided with verbal or written feedback on their notetaking, and the IIT observed low levels of student engagement. Interviewed students reported that they do little group or project work and that most lessons are teacher-led.

- **Teachers should use student performance data to differentiate instruction to meet the learning needs of all students**. The principal stated that while some teachers are just beginning to analyze data to inform instruction, most teachers are comfortable using data to inform the planning and delivery of their lessons. However, a review of lesson plans revealed that most lessons did not include differentiated activities to meet the learning needs of all students. The IIT did not observe any classes in which students were grouped for instruction or where students worked on different skills. In nearly all classes visited, all students completed the same assignment in the same way. In the future, the principal will need to ensure that teachers receive support and guidance in using data to identify and address gaps in student learning. The principal should also review lesson plans and consistently monitor teacher progress toward planning differentiated instruction to meet student learning needs.

- **The school leaders, in conjunction with teachers, should develop a vertically aligned, standards-based curriculum to meet the needs of all students.** School leaders and teachers shared that the school does not have a comprehensive curriculum in all content areas. The IIT learned that the school has worked with external supports to align the curriculum, and teachers have diligently used a combination of common planning time, department meeting time, and early release and after-school time in order to design curriculum units. However, teachers and school leaders stated that curriculum development is an ongoing process that requires time to complete, and it is a challenge to teach and create curriculum simultaneously. Additionally, teachers and school leaders acknowledged that in order to have a robust curriculum, they may need to include some pre-packaged materials to support teaching and learning. In the future, school leaders will need to provide teachers with the time, guidance, and expertise to develop a comprehensive curriculum that meets the learning needs of all students.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Teachers expressed a need for two distinct spaces to be used for in-school suspensions (ISS) and testing accommodations for students with disabilities.** Teachers informed the IIT that there is one space used for both in-school suspensions and testing accommodations. They said that the space does not meet the accommodation needs of students with disabilities because of distractions from activities associated with the in-school suspension processes. Teachers suggested that school leaders create separate ISS and testing accommodation spaces for the 2019-20 school year.

- **Seniors would like more privileges during the school day.** Graduating seniors told the IIT that they love the school and their teachers, but they have few opportunities to feel special or important during the course of the school day. They recognized that there are plans to include more senior privileges in 2019-20, but stated they would like the school to offer a few more privileges for all responsible seniors for the remainder of this school year.

- **Parents would like the school to offer more advanced classes to meet the needs of their children.** Some parents stated that their children are not academically challenged in their classes. Parents explained that in many classes, all students complete the same assignments and their children say they are bored when they are required to wait while other students catch up with them. Parents suggested that the school offer more advanced classes that are matched to their children's abilities in order to stimulate their interests.

- **Students would like to have opportunities for embedded quiet times during the school day.** Students stated that they often feel stressed during the school day and expressed a need for quiet time to relax, reflect, and re-center. They suggested that teachers may also benefit from using quiet time to gather their thoughts in preparation for teaching multiple classes. Students stated that offering a quiet time would provide a reflective period for students and teachers to think about how to deal with stress and to consider how to become a better person each day.

- **Students would like more opportunities to become active learners in their classes.** Students shared that in many of their classes, teachers talk and students listen. They said that they would like more opportunities to work in groups, complete hands-on lab assignments, or to work independently to complete long-term projects.