

Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

Final Report



BEDS Code	650101060005
School Name	Newark Middle School
School Address	701 Peirson Avenue, Newark, NY 14513
District Name	Newark Central School District
Principal	Teresa A. Prinzi
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	1	1	1

Newark Middle School serves 461 students in grades six to eight.

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 43 classrooms during the visit.
- The OEE visited nine 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, 40 (58 percent) completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. The principal made improving social-emotional supports a priority this school year. The school now uses a Restore, Educate, Discover, and Safe Room, also known as the REDS Room for tier one social-emotional/behavioral issues. The REDS Room is a place where students go when they have concerns or conflicts with other students or with a teacher. Students, teachers, and school leaders reported that the REDS Room has been beneficial, and the restorative conversations have helped students mend relationships with other students and their teachers. School leaders shared that referrals have decreased by nearly 48 percent as a result of the restorative conversations that have taken place in the REDS Room.
2. Teachers and school leaders shared with the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) that the relationship between the instructional staff and school leaders has improved this school year with a renewed focus on teaching and learning. The instructional staff said that they now see the principal and assistant principal (AP) as a unified team and that they now feel confident in seeking instructional support from either of them. Interviewed teachers said that they appreciate the leadership team's efforts to help them improve instructional practices and that because of the renewed focus on learning, students seem to be learning more during the school day.
3. The principal reported that some teachers, instructional coaches, and team leaders have begun working on an English language arts (ELA) curriculum this year with the assistance of an external consultant. Teachers shared that through this new curriculum the school is working to increase academic rigor and to deepen student thinking and learning. They stated that the ELA curriculum is leading to greater consistency and alignment across grade levels because students can access their learning, use a variety of texts, and have opportunities for extended writing.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

School Leaders should develop a system for tier two and three social-emotional and behavioral supports. Based on conversations with the principal, AP, and teachers, students who consistently demonstrate tier two or three social-emotional behaviors are not receiving the intense and targeted services that they need. Teachers send students with high social-emotional/behavioral needs to the Instructional Support Team, but the school does not yet have consistent, systematic tier two and three strategies within its Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) model. The IIT learned that teachers send tier two and three students to the tier one REDS Room and that that staff are not yet fully equipped to support their social-emotional needs, which include ongoing group and/or individualized counseling based on needs/skills.

- **School leaders need to develop a system to implement, monitor, and measure the progress of school improvement plan goals.** School leaders have begun to implement processes and procedures to address the goals in their district's school improvement plan, the Plan of Excellence, but measurable goals have not been set and data is not collected in a way that would assist them in knowing when they are going to meet their goals. School and instructional leaders have identified some activities that could become measurable goals, such as "building leadership team will engage in ongoing data analysis to determine varying needs of specific grade levels, departments, and teachers for further professional development and support," but this, and other activities, have not been linked to measurable end goals for specific grade levels, departments, or teachers. School leaders need to develop a process to determine what staff will work on, how they will do it, what

professional development (PD) will be required, how they will know that their plans are working, and when each goal will be achieved.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **School leaders should develop a plan to monitor the quality and impact of instructional priorities on instruction and student growth and provide feedback to teachers.** A review of 14 lesson plans revealed that learning targets and success criteria were evident, although success criteria were not always directly supportive of the learning target. Most often, the success criteria were lists of tasks and it was not clear how they would lead to the achievement of the learning target. The principal stated, and teachers agreed that feedback on learning targets and success criteria is based on the extent to which they are detailed in lesson plans and posted in the classroom. The evidence gathered by the IIT shows that there is no qualitative check made by school leaders on the impact that the planning and the posting of learning objectives has on the quality of either teaching or learning. Suggestions for improving the quality of the targets or criteria to extend student learning have not been provided. The principal stated that she, the AP, the PD coordinator, and the instructional coaches are now beginning to norm feedback and to focus on the quality of the implementation rather than just compliance.
- **Instructional leaders should review the system for providing instructional support and make adjustments to prioritize improving the quality of instruction and increasing the achievement of students.** While the instructional leadership team is beginning to utilize patterns and trends from walkthrough data, lesson plan collection, and feedback from PD sessions to determine what general follow up and supports are necessary, follow up activities are not yet consistently implemented for individual teachers. The instructional coach shared with the IIT that follow up between PD sessions consists mostly of interested individual teachers reaching out to the instructional coach for job-embedded coaching. The IIT learned from school leaders and teachers that no additional PD sessions, PD electives, modeled lessons, or opportunities to work with an instructional coach are offered during departmental or staff meetings.

Learning at the School

- **Teachers need to use data to design and deliver instruction that is specific to the different learning needs of the students.** Although some teachers are beginning to use the formative learning cycle to differentiate lesson planning and delivery based on data from Fastbridge, a computer adaptive assessment program, and some formative assessments, teachers and the principal reported that most teachers need further support in using data to inform their instructional decisions. Because most teachers are not using data to target student learning needs, instruction is typically whole group, with the same worksheets and text given to all students. Students said it would be helpful if teachers worked with the students that were not understanding something and allowed those students that did understand to move on, instead of re-teaching to the whole group. One student said they would like the opportunity to learn different things and explore their own interests.
- **School leaders and teachers should review the current Academic Intervention Services (AIS) system and make adjustments with a focus on supporting the learning needs of all students.** While reading, ELA, and

math AIS, along with What I Need (WIN) time, is provided to students in need, and a multi-tiered system of support is being developed, the IIT found that tiers one and two need further development. The team found that the current tier one needs more consistent instruction and expectations, tier two needs to be better targeted toward the specific needs of students, and a monitoring system needs to be put into place for both tiers in order to make adjustments as needed. Further, the IIT found that many students who require support are not able to receive tier two AIS due to a lack of providers and conflicts with scheduling.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Parents want a better connection between the school’s counseling staff and home.** Parents interviewed by the IIT said that they have not met their children’s counselor this school year. Parents stated that they want a formal and ongoing way to connect and communicate with their children’s counselor about high school course selections. Parents also want counselors to talk with them individually or collectively about available activities to support their children’s interests and emotional needs.
- **While school leaders and staff communicate with parents and families through newsletters, emails, and robo-calls, there is not an effective system to encourage open and reciprocal communication between the home and school.** School leaders and parents said that the main source of information about the school is through a newsletter and that some teachers communicate using technology and apps, such as Seesaw and Dojo. The school does not have a formal parent organization. Parents said that there are things they would like to do to help the school, but currently they do not know how to do that. As school leaders work toward increasing parental engagement activities at the school, they will need to create an effective two-way communication system with parents to maximize support and work to increase the academic and social-emotional growth of the students.
- **Students have minimal opportunities to engage with their peers during the school day.** Many interviewed students said that they like the school and many participate in after-school activities. However, students also shared that there are few opportunities for them to engage with their peers during the school day through celebratory assemblies, class projects, or by visiting other grades or classes. Similarly, several new students to the school shared that they have not found it easy to connect with their peers, as the school does not have systems to integrate new students into the school.
- **Teachers told the IIT that they need more support to manage students who are disruptive and are interfering with the learning of other students in their teaching group.** Many teachers expressed that they need more support/training to manage students who struggle with social-emotional issues. All teachers interviewed by the IIT said that they want students to be able to remain in their classrooms, but they do not have the professional skills to de-escalate tier two and three behaviors.
- **Students who are struggling behaviorally and academically need more support.** Teachers, students and parents shared that there is a need for more support for students who struggle with behavior and academic challenges. Teachers and parents said that school leaders should assess the current programs and supports and work with counseling staff to develop appropriate supports for all students.