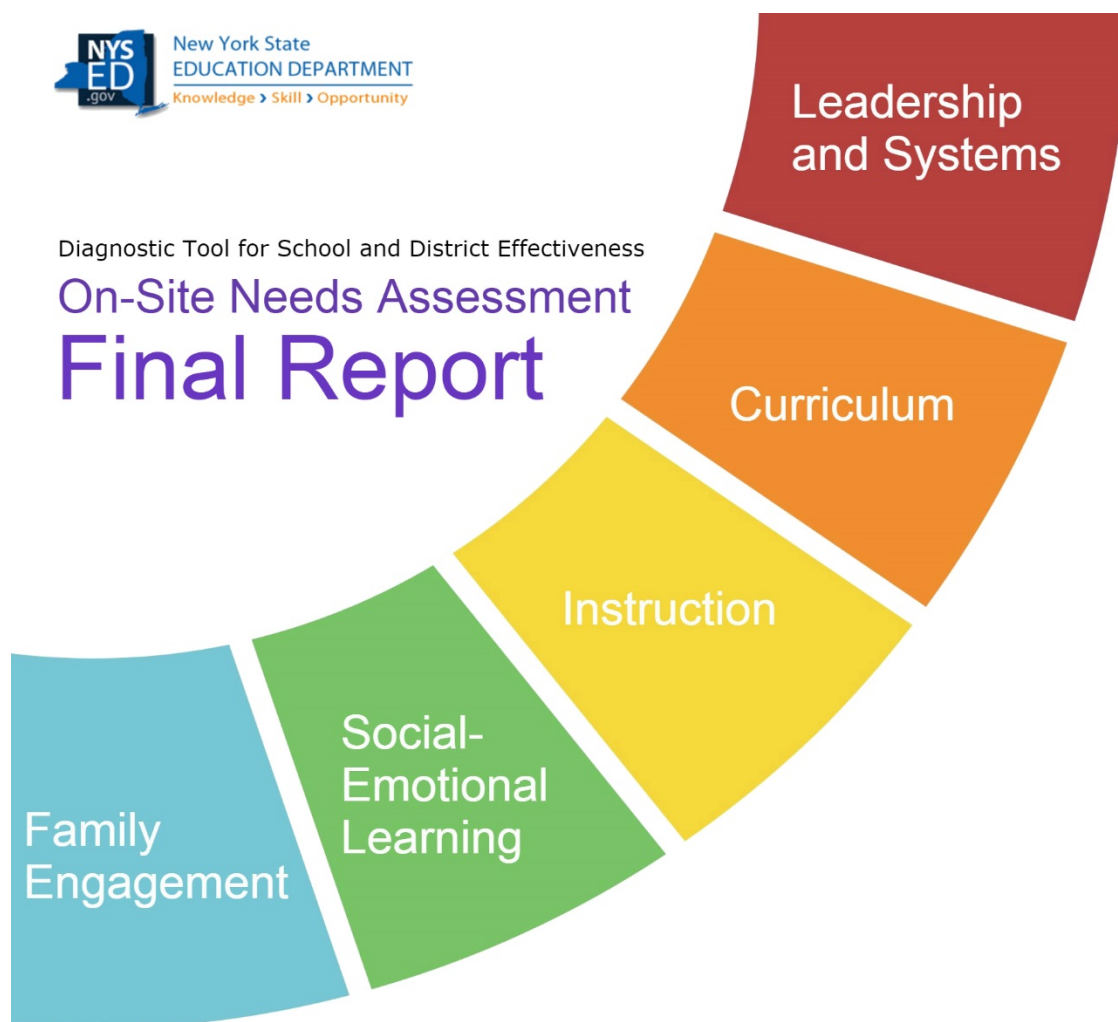


Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment Final Report



BEDS Code	441600010016
School Name	South Middle School
School Address	33-63 Monument Street, Newburgh, NY 12550
District Name	Newburgh Enlarged City School District
Principal	Lisa Buon
Dates of Visit	December 4-6, 2018



Purpose Of The Visit

A team organized by the New York State Education Department (NYSED) visited the school to help the school identify areas of need that are making long-term success a challenge and provide actionable quick wins to direct the school's work in the immediate future.

The report provides a critical lens to help the school best focus its efforts.

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 representative from the Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (RBERN).
- The team visited a total of 49 classrooms during the visit.
- The OEE visited seven 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 curriculum maps, lesson plans and class assignments.
- In advance of the visit, the school provided results of a staff survey that 55 staff members (100 percent) completed.
- South Middle School serves 874 students in grades six to eight.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. The Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) observed teachers communicating with colleagues beyond their given common planning time. In addition, teachers shared that they rely on one another to borrow resources and to learn from each other. For example, one teacher shared how he adopted new instructional practices after on-going discussions with a colleague.
2. Several electives and enrichment activities are available for students during and after school. The school offers Spanish and Italian, as well as band, choir, art, technology, physical education, and drama. Some of the electives provide afterschool enrichment activities that engage family and community members, such as band concerts or drama productions. In interviews with the IIT, students stated that the varied choices of enrichment activities helped draw them to the school.
3. The IIT found that the staff demonstrate a caring attitude toward students. The IT observed security officers smile and greet students and some parents by name. Office staff stated they provide information to bilingual parents and students seeking assistance when enrolling in the school. Several interviewed students stated that they have teachers they can go and talk to if they need help.
4. The IIT found that teachers demonstrated an understanding of different co-teaching models during classroom visits. For example, some teachers used a model where one adult taught and the other assisted, while other teachers used the model where both adults shared the responsibility of facilitating and engaging students in discussion of the content simultaneously.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **School leaders should follow up on the feedback they provide to teachers around instruction and classroom management.** Teachers stated that school leaders do not conduct frequent classroom walkthroughs and that while they do receive verbal and/or written feedback when walkthroughs occur, there is often limited follow up regarding whether the feedback was applied to classroom instruction. While each school leader supervises one of the three grade levels, the formal observations are divided such that the principal observes the new teachers and teachers who are struggling with their instructional practices, while the assistant principals (APs) observe the other teachers. School leaders stated that much of their time is spent handling student behavior and that conducting more than a few walkthroughs a week is difficult.
- **School leaders should establish a schoolwide protocol for Response to Intervention (RtI) or a flowchart of the support available to address the SEL needs of the students.** Staff reported that the procedure for referral of students for support is not clear to them. Although support staff are present daily at school, teachers are not clear about how they can refer a student for mental health services or seek strategies to support students in class. Further, there is no organizational chart that identifies staff members, their roles, and their contact information. In addition, staff are in need of support from leadership regarding strategies to help students with trauma.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **More communication is needed between teachers and school leaders.** Teachers reported that they wanted more of a voice regarding decisions to change staff rooms and the location of the staff lounge without including the voice of the staff. They also expressed that the changing of the schedule to implement the Restore 360 program conflicted with current teacher obligations and time requirements in grade seven and eight.

Learning at the School

- **Technology for the students should be more challenging and be used as a means to provide supplemental support.** The newly acquired technology for teachers and students is being used in a very basic way. The IIT noted that the SMART Boards were utilized as whiteboards and that technology was not used for content-focused programs that support learning, but only as information gathering and/or presentation tools.
- **Classroom content teacher's instruction should be more student-centered with more opportunities for students, including English language learners (ELLs), to directly engage with peers.** During class visits, students were asked questions that required basic recall responses. The wait time for responses should be increased to allow students to respond to teacher questions. More questions could be asked throughout the class to stimulate academic discourse or thinking. ELL students needed more opportunities to ask higher-order thinking questions. Students could also use more encouragement to answer each other's questions to enhance their learning.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need

- **Not all teachers have weekly co-planning time scheduled.** Foreign language teachers, elective teachers, and English as a new language (ENL) teachers are not included in the current common planning time schedule. Staff reported that they desire to have time to collaborate with their content area and general education peers but must make special efforts on their own to connect.
- **The hallways are congested and lack order during transitions.** Students stated that hallways are very crowded and chaotic. A few students stated that they felt unsafe because other students walked and ran all over the hall.
- **The presence of security is minimal in the front and rear of the school at the start and end of the day.** A few parents stated that they were concerned with the amount of students running across traffic at dismissal, afraid that students will be hurt. One parent stated how they feel students are unsafe at the back-entry doors in the morning because security is not present, and students are outside unattended. This parent said waits in her car until the doors open.
- **Lavatories are not clean.** Students stated that graffiti is all over the lavatory stalls, and the floor is covered with debris.