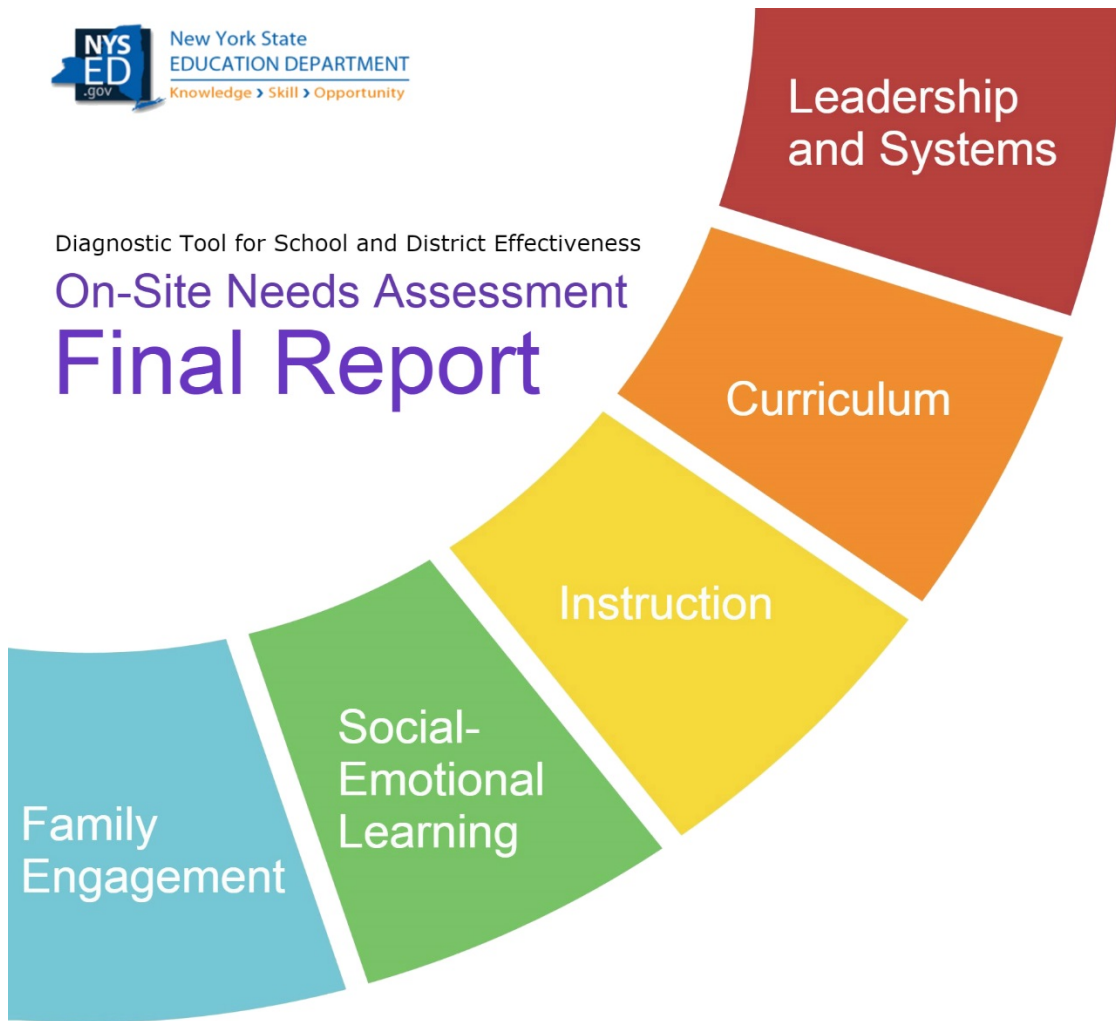


Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

Final Report



BEDS Code	441600010012
School Name	Vails Gate Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math Academy
School Address	400 Old Forge Hill, New Windsor, New York 12553
District Name	Newburgh Enlarged City School District
Principal	Ciria Briscoe-Perez
Dates of Visit	November 26-28, 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 recommendations 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

- Vails Gate STEAM Academy serves 564 students in kindergarten through grade five.
- 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 37 classrooms during the visit.
- The OEE visited eight 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, schoolwide data, teacher feedback, and student work.
- In advance of the visit, the school provided results of a student survey that 255 students (45 percent) completed.
- In advance of the visit, the school provided results of a staff survey that 42 staff members (90 percent) completed.
- In advance of the visit, the school provided results of a parent survey that 102 parents (20 percent) completed.
- In advance of the visit, 37 staff members (75 percent) completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. The school has implemented the use of the Mood Meter, a tool to help students to identify their current emotional state. Interviewed students explained that if a student needs emotional support, the teacher will take time to talk to them and use the Mood Meter to help them verbalize their feelings. All interviewed students spoke positively about this process and appreciated the opportunities to speak to a teacher about their feelings. Several students also spoke positively about the use of reward stars which are awarded to classes based on their behavior. Students can use these stars to take part in special events like ice cream socials, pizza parties, or watching a movie with popcorn. The use of these tools has contributed to a decrease in the number of student disciplinary referrals. The school is currently on track for only 300 referrals in 2018-19 which is a ten percent decrease from 2017-18.
2. Interviewed teachers reported an increase in the amount of support they receive from the student support team. The student support team uses student behavioral data to determine which staff members need additional support and provides those staff with strategies to help them better manage classroom behavior and be more responsive to student social and emotional needs. Interviewed teachers spoke positively about the support and strategies that they receive from the student support team. In most classes visited, the IIT found that the climate was very friendly with teachers and students communicating respectfully and teachers effectively managing student behavior.
3. The principal has embedded common planning time in teacher schedules for 2018-19. Teachers use this time to plan student groupings with the use of student performance data. Teachers keep minutes of these meetings which the principal uses to monitor their use of this time. Although this is a new process, teachers explained that it is a more organized approach to planning than in the past, and they believe that it will result in a better use of student assessment data to inform planning and instruction.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **The school should develop School Comprehensive Education Plan (SCEP) goals that are specific to the needs of the school.** In reviewing the 2018-19 SCEP, the IIT found that each goal is identical and starts with, “Beginning July 1, 2018 the school leadership team will work with the school-wide faculty and staff to implement actions that will minimally impact the following sub-population performance:” The goal goes on to state the improvement that the school will make on the New York State (NYS) English language arts (ELA) and math assessments for each student subgroup. However, the goals are not unique, do not reflect the individual needs of the school, and are not specific to the tenet for which they are written.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **School leaders need to ensure that teachers understand how the different school initiatives fit together to create a cohesive vision for high-quality instruction.** The principal and district have introduced multiple new programs such as Go Math, Guided Reading, and Guided Math. Some teachers stated that they do not see

how all these initiatives tie together to create a cohesive instructional program, and many teachers see each as a separate stand-alone program.

Learning at the School

- **Teachers should provide students with formative and actionable feedback on their work.** The IIT found that most student work lacked formative and actionable feedback which would allow students to understand their strengths as well as what specifically they need to do to improve their academic performance. On most student work reviewed by the IIT, the student either received no feedback, an annotation if a response was correct or incorrect, or a brief platitude such as “Good Job.” When students were asked what areas of ELA they were strongest in and which were their greatest area of need, none were able to respond.
- **Teachers should use unit plans to inform daily planning.** Although unit plans are informed by the Understanding by Design model, unit plans are not being used to develop daily plans. This limits teachers’ ability to plan for daily learning targets, higher-order questions, formative assessments, and opportunities for differentiation of instruction.
- **English as a new language (ENL) teachers need to consistently implement language objectives in daily lesson plans for English language learners (ELLs).** The IIT found that not all daily lesson plans included language objectives to support ELL students and as a result, the linguistic needs of these students are not being consistently supported. The school’s assessment data shows that over the past two years, ELLs have not made adequate progress on the NYS ELA assessment, with the majority scoring at levels one and two.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need

- **Several families expressed concern about the security of the school building.** Some family members explained that there are times during the day when the door is not being monitored and the school can be accessed by visitors without permission. Families also reported that even if a visitor provides identification at the office, once they are admitted to the school, they can then move throughout the building with little supervision. One parent noted that the school used to have two security guards and now only has one and as a result, she feels that the building is less secure.