New York State
EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
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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
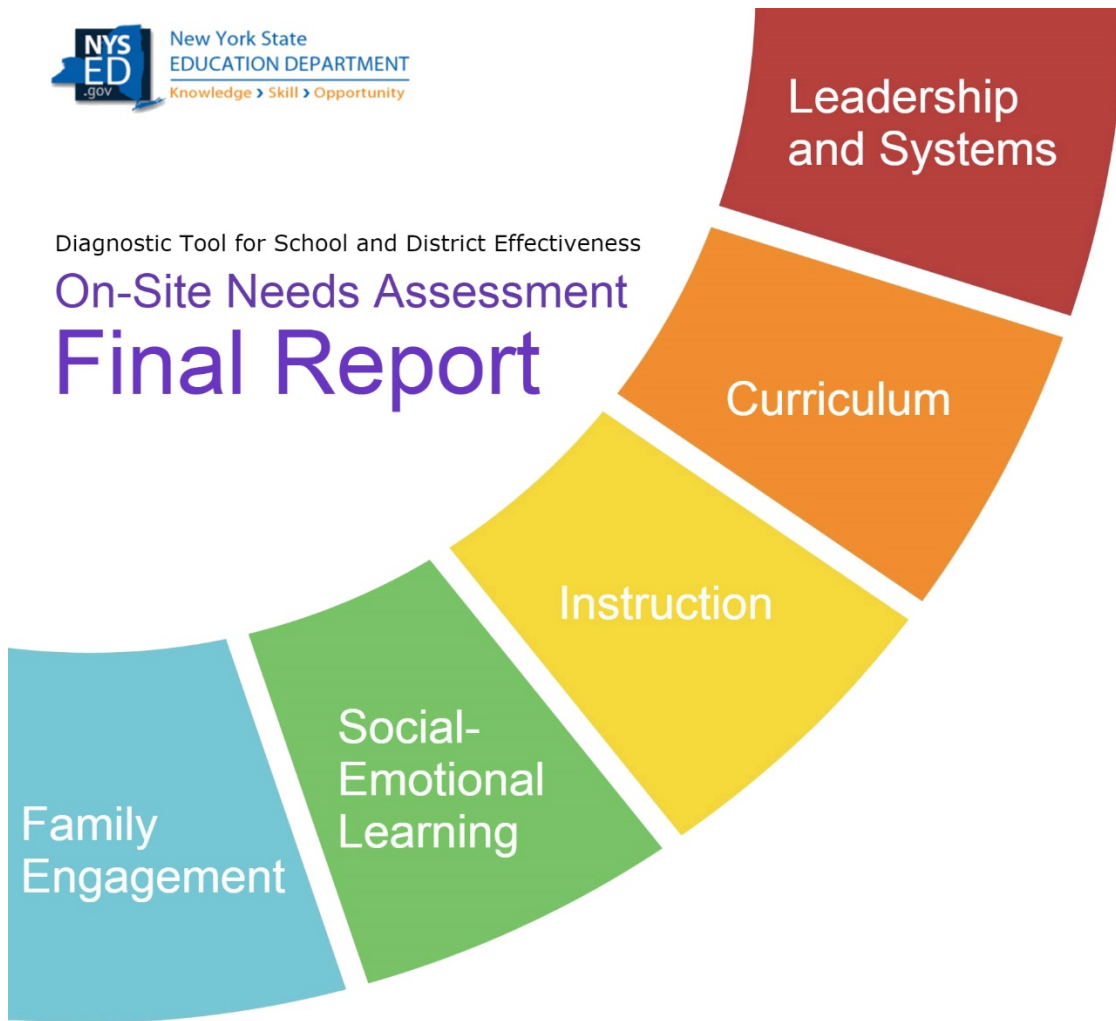
BEDS Code	142201040001
School Name	North Collins Junior-Senior High School
School Address	2045 School Street, North Collins, NY 14111
District Name	North Collins Central School District
Principal	Brandon Wojcik
Dates of Visit	April 16-18, 2019

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	2

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	4	3		1	3	3

North Collins Junior-Senior High School serves 263 students in grades seven to 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 North Collins Junior-Senior High School principal.
- The team visited a total of 24 classrooms during the visit.
- The OEE visited six classrooms with the principal during the visit.
- Team members conducted interviews with students, staff, and parents.
- In advance of the visit, 19 staff members (56 percent) completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. The school culture in classrooms is consistently one of mutual respect and effective classroom management. The Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) observed teachers address students with calm, measured voices; demonstrate knowledge of, respect for, and concern for students; and maintain a brisk pace of classroom activity that was orderly and safe. This was true in the classrooms of veteran teachers and teachers who are new to the building this school year.

2. Building on the successful introduction of seven new courses in 2017-18, the school staff, at the suggestion of the principal, introduced two new elective courses during the current school year and planned two others for the 2019-20 school year. Staff shared that they view this new work as enriching students' access to academic challenges and opportunities to explore intellectual interests, which reduces the time students spend in study hall and builds school pride in the richness and quality of teaching and learning in the school. Teachers shared that teaching courses as diverse as Fantasy and Reality, Introduction to Health Science, and Conflict in the Modern World has energized them and given them deep professional satisfaction, both in having their expertise sought out and in teaching subjects about which they and their students are passionate.

3. Starting last school year, the staff, with the active support of the principal, planned and launched a Maker Space, which is a physics, engineering, and design workshop equipped with tools, 3D printers, and other equipment and materials. This school year, the school has successfully created a series of new science, technology, engineering, arts, and math (STEAM) projects, such as robotics, that have engaged many students and staff. A Girls Who Code club and a course in the Physics of Toys are now being planned and will be introduced next year. Community backing for the Maker Space project has been strong, with civic leaders and local businesses offering support in the form of funding and donated materials.

4. By seeking to improve his own practice and working to assist other staff as they improve their practice, the principal is "leading by learning" in a deliberate, shared way. The team learned in discussions with the principal and teachers that both the principal and several teachers have focused on improving the quality and effectiveness of their work. To demonstrate his approach to improvement and accountability, the principal has conducted biannual surveys asking staff to assess his performance; he has then shared the results with staff members. The principal has visited all teaching staff and had one-on-one exchanges about their teaching practices, drawing on his observations in classrooms. Based on these interactions and his judgment about how best to support the development of the teaching staff, he has also worked closely with approximately a third of teachers in the school, and with his support, they are working on making specific improvements in their teaching practice.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **School leaders should build on the initiative and leadership of its many skilled staff and the ability of its students as they increase the school's capacity.** In interviews with the IIT, multiple staff repeatedly looked outside of the school to the community, to the district, or to the state or federal government to explain why things are not as they would prefer in the school and district. By contrast, the team noted that many adults and students within the school community are demonstrating that they can move the school forward by

focusing on school goals and paying less attention to external factors they cannot affect. Recent school accomplishments emerging from this approach include the development of the Maker Space and its use in several courses; the creation and planning of nearly a dozen new courses over the 2017-18, 2018-19, and 2019-20 school years; the ongoing re-organization of the guidance office to increase responsiveness to student needs; and the planning for the reconfigured middle school, which will launch in fall 2019. Staff made it clear that each of these projects took root in the school as a direct result of the ideas, initiative, and leadership of teachers, students, and the principal.

- **School leaders and staff should develop a common vision and culture that promotes intellectual challenge and high expectations for students.** The team found that staff are divided on whether the school's expectations of students are sufficiently high. Some staff told IIT members that students are regularly challenged; others disagreed. In many visited classrooms, the team observed limited rigor, missed opportunities for teachers to challenge students, lecture-style instruction, and minimal student engagement. The IIT also saw ambitious teaching that expected, and resulted in, high levels of student engagement and effort, such as small groups of students doing intensive problem-solving, fielding probing inquiries from one another, and demonstrably taking responsibility for their own learning. In order for best practices like these to thrive in the school, educators and students alike need to define a schoolwide set of clear, focused expectations that are common across classrooms.

- **The school leaders need to develop a coherent, agreed-upon, schoolwide plan for future action that builds the capacity of its leader and staff to achieve shared improvement goals.** Over the past year and a half, because of effective school leadership and the efforts of staff, several initiatives have been successfully launched in curriculum, instruction, guidance, and other areas. However, despite the benefits of new courses, instructional support for teachers, and the reorganization of the guidance office, these changes have come about without being linked in any clear way to a schoolwide vision or set of goals. In conversations with the IIT, the principal agreed that the absence of a schoolwide plan with stated goals and benchmarks hinders the staff's ability to assess the effectiveness and quality of their efforts and to maintain their focus on top priorities. As the number and range of its innovation efforts grows, the team found that the school's need for the "roadmap" and guidance provided by an inclusive, annually renewed plan will only increase.

- **The school should apply a comprehensive approach to systems of support for academically struggling students.** The team found that leaders and staff are making incremental improvements in providing at-risk students with academic supports, and that the school lacks an integrated and strategic system for working effectively with this group of students. For example, last school year, due to scheduling and communications problems, the guidance department did not reach its goal of meeting with every student in the school. As a consequence, the principal reported that in the 2018-19 school year, he worked with the guidance department to help them reorganize their office, collect more data, and prioritize meeting with all students. Also, during the current school year, a team of teachers and the principal worked together to improve the school's use of response to intervention (RtI) practices. For example, they made academic intervention services (AIS) available in every subject and increased the number of students being referred for support services. The principal and staff also enriched the final period of the day, period ten, making increased tutoring and academic supports available for students. While clearly showing evidence of progress, and reaching across many parts of the school, each of these improvements was done without the benefit of already being part of a coherent, schoolwide system of student support that promotes coordination, alignment, and formal progress monitoring. The principal and staff should use the planning process for the 2019-20 School Comprehensive Education Plan (SCEP), which is currently underway, to develop a systemic approach addressing this challenge.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **The principal needs to lead a process in which stakeholders create a clear instructional and educational focus for the reorganization of the grade seven and grade eight program.** The principal told the IIT that over the course of the 2018-19 school year, he and the staff decided to use the term "middle school" to emphasize the developmental learning needs of the junior-senior high school's younger students. In this time, a team has worked on the logistics of a plan that will place nearly all grade seven and grade eight classrooms in a single wing of the school, relocating several teachers and classrooms. The physical reorganization will take place over the summer of 2019, and the new middle school wing will launch in September 2019. While logistics are becoming clear, the staff and principal have yet to develop instructional and programmatic plans to guide teaching and learning at the middle school and improve teaching practices and student outcomes. The principal and staff should engage in intentional planning for improvements in the effectiveness and quality of curriculum and instruction to increase the reorganization's impact on student learning.

- **The school's approach to participatory leadership and organization should focus on improving the quality and effectiveness of instruction and student support efforts.** Since his arrival at the start of the 2017-18 school year, the principal has added parents and students to the school's shared decision-making committee, asked the president of the teachers' association to serve as that committee's chair, and engaged the committee in planning for the middle school launch in the fall of 2019. While essential for inclusive leadership, these changes have not focused on core educational improvements. In a recent move, the team learned that the principal has included three department heads and the chair of the shared decision-making committee on the school's planning team and vested them with substantial responsibilities for co-creating the 2019-20 SCEP with him. In the future, the principal should continue and expand these new leadership practices by actively involving these and other leaders in the spring and summer planning efforts to improve the quality and effectiveness of teaching and student support.

- **The principal should build on recent successes by making the school's progress toward improvement goals more public and widely understood.** The team learned that the school's improvement efforts of the past year and a half have not been meaningfully shared or communicated outside of the school. In discussions with the IIT, staff spoke about recent successful initiatives led or launched by the principal, including support of the staff's development of nine new courses, with two additional courses approved for the 2019-20 school year, the middle school redesign, and the reorganization of period ten, among others. While these efforts have often been inclusively planned and implemented and have involved multiple staff members as well as the principal, their existence has been inconsistently shared beyond the school walls and rarely, if ever, discussed in districtwide communications. The absence of new items about this work on the school's website and the principal's own reporting on his practices confirm that these efforts have not yet been highlighted in communications with families or the community at large. In the future, the principal should adopt a more visible approach to leadership by regularly reporting on and celebrating these and other substantive improvement efforts and documenting their impact on student academic and social-emotional learning.

Learning at the School

- **All teachers should provide students with high-quality instruction that achieves active student engagement.** Team members observed high-quality instruction in several classrooms that featured clear learning targets, rich content, multiple teaching techniques, and small group and student-led interactions that ensured the

active participation of a wide range of students. The IIT saw high levels of student engagement in these classrooms. In a smaller proportion of classrooms, the team observed extensive use of lecture, limited or no evidence of student voice, and few or ineffective instances of checking for understanding. The IIT saw lower levels of student engagement in these classrooms as students sat passively taking in the content.

- **The school needs to provide students with access to a coherent curriculum.** While work is underway on implementing the Next Generation Learning Standards in English language arts (ELA), math, and science, teachers pointed to the absence of a mapped curriculum that is articulated across grade levels. The principal explained to the IIT that the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and some EngageNY curriculum modules serve as the source of some grade seven and grade eight ELA and math curricula, but the entire curriculum is relatively haphazard. The principal reported that with limited documentation, it becomes difficult for staff to work together to plan and improve the curriculum. This lack of a system of curricular content and materials weakens the ties between teachers at each grade level and between grade-level teams of teachers, making student learning less likely. In the coming years, the staff should put a high priority on developing a coherent curriculum, mapping it for all teachers, and testing and refining the result. This work could be initiated through the SCEP planning process.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Some students and parents strongly support the expansion of agricultural education in the school.** The IIT learned in interviews that the desire for more courses in plant or animal science, diesel engines, or other agricultural subjects is widespread among a significant number of parents and students.
- **Teachers take different approaches to student behavior and discipline.** Interviewed teachers agreed that there is little consistency among staff in setting and observing rules or codes of conduct. These staff members said that this results in confusion and frustration for students and staff alike. For example, staff reported that different teachers have different rules on cell phone use, the dress code, and other aspects of student behavior, which results in a conflicting message to students.
- **Students reported that they would like the school to provide air conditioning or fans in the late spring and early fall.** These students told the IIT that their classrooms and the school building can get very hot at the beginning and end of the school year, making it hard for them to concentrate on school work.