

Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

Final Report



BEDS Code	420303060007
School Name	Roxboro Road Elementary School
School Address	200 Bernard Street, Syracuse, NY 13211
District Name	North Syracuse Central School District
Principal	Matthew Motala
Dates of Visit	March 27 - 29, 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		2	1

Roxboro Road Elementary School serves 504 students in kindergarten to grade four.

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 28 classrooms during the visit.
- The OEE visited six 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 schoolwide data and teacher feedback.
- In advance of the visit, 13 staff members (six percent) completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. Staff members support each other and maintain mutual respect. Teachers said that they ensure other staff members are successful by actively providing support for each other through formal meetings and planning times, as well as informally through motivational conversations. The principal and teachers lauded how well new staff connected with existing staff to develop positive and respectful working relationships.
2. Students create individual achievement goals in reading, writing, and math. Interviewed teachers described the Reading and Writing Workshop program and working with each student to develop individual reading and writing goals. When the IIT spoke with students, each was able to state their individual learning goals quickly and easily. The principal and teachers stated that the school is building on this success during the current school year, as teachers are also developing math goals with students in preparation for implementation of the Math Workshop curriculum model in the 2019-20 school year.
3. Students and parents described a strong connection with the school and said that they trust and positively view the school staff. Students also stated that they feel safe in school, citing their participation in procedures such as safety drills each month. Parents shared that the school staff care about the students and the school environment is positive because the staff are friendly and the teachers maintain open communication with them. For example, parents appreciated that this school year the teachers have used the Remind app and ClassDojo to share information with them about how their child is progressing each school day. Parents further stated that they are happy with how the school operates and the success their children have experienced, which promotes a strong connection between the school and the community.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **The school's attendance tracking system should focus attention and action on students who are chronically absent.** Data for the 2018-19 school year show that ten percent of the student body have more than 30 days of absence. The IIT and principal reviewed the school's process for identifying, tracking, notifying, and taking corrective action on chronically absent students. The team found that the tracking system is not part of a systematic process, and information is not updated throughout the school year. The tracking system consists of a support staff member writing the names of students who have multiple absences in a chart to document the number of days absent and determine which letter is sent home. About twice a month, the data is reviewed but no additional action is taken, such as sending letters to the parent/guardian of the student after six, ten, fifteen, and eighteen days of absence and making follow-up phone calls to the parents following each letter home. The IIT learned in conversations with the staff responsible for maintaining attendance records and communicating with parents that the initial communication with parents about their child's absence does not include a follow-up communication that conveys a sense of urgency and importance for students to attend school. Interviewed teachers stated that students who are chronically absent find it difficult to catch up academically. The principal and support staff member agreed that a more coherent process with a stronger emphasis on the importance of school attendance needs to be implemented.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **The principal needs to develop a system to clearly and regularly communicate his core values, beliefs, and expectations for teaching and learning.** The principal shared that his communication of expectations with the staff typically takes the form of occasional emails, staff meetings, and face-to-face informal communication. The staff confirmed that they mostly receive communications from the principal during meetings and direct face-to-face encounters. As a result, the team found that staff do not always have the information needed to ensure that they understand and can put into practice the principal's instructional expectations, so that classroom implementation can be systematically tracked and followed up on within an established timeline. Teachers suggested that if the principal were to maintain a weekly routine for communication, it would increase their understanding of his expectations as it relates to instructional outcomes and daily operations. In the future, the principal should communicate electronically to all staff on a weekly basis to create a shared understanding of the school's priorities and to develop a sense of urgency for school improvement.
- **The principal should be directly involved in and present at teacher-led meetings so that he is familiar with the implementation and progress of initiatives.** Teachers shared that they would like the principal to be regularly present at and directly involved in their professional learning community (PLC) and planning meetings. Teachers stated that the principal sometimes attends the meetings, but they would like him to attend more often because he is a key part of the planning process and teachers want to be certain that their work is aligned with district initiatives and his expectations. The principal stated that he would like to attend more PLC meetings and is aware that the teachers want him there but added that other schoolwide responsibilities often prevent him from attending.
- **The principal should prioritize his daily and weekly schedules to more efficiently manage his time.** The principal shared that he experiences urgent daily demands on his time that often pull him away from leadership opportunities. The principal explained that his schedule fluctuates daily, and he is pulled in different directions depending on the types of issues that arise in the building. Further, the IIT learned that the principal does not maximize the use of his available time by prioritizing his activities, which diminishes his ability to attend teacher meetings and maintain a purposeful presence throughout the building. Going forward, the principal should develop a daily and weekly schedule that prioritizes his activities and helps him manage his time more efficiently.

Learning at the School

- **Teachers should provide students with challenging classwork that includes meaningful, leveled instruction.** The IIT learned that students who complete their work early are not typically provided with challenging extension activities. For example, students stated that when they finish their work, they complete a worksheet, read silently, or help other students at the teacher's request. Parents confirmed that some children who are quick to finish their classwork are deployed as teacher assistants to help other students instead of receiving additional activities to engage them. In one observed classroom, many students finished early and then read a book, drew pictures, talked with friends, or helped a friend. In most visited classrooms, the team did not observe teachers providing students with appropriate leveled learning activities adapted to their diverse needs. Further, most teachers did not use data to purposefully group students and tier instruction to challenge higher functioning students to learn at their appropriate levels. In conversations with the IIT, the

principal and teachers talked about creating leveled groups based on data, but the team observed this in only a few classrooms.

- **The school needs to effectively address the social-emotional needs of its students, especially students who have experienced trauma.** Teachers shared that the number of students in the school who have experienced emotional trauma has increased and become a significant obstacle to student learning. Teachers stated that the district provided them with training on how to work with students who have severe social-emotional issues. However, all interviewed teachers expressed the perspective that a one-time training workshop was not comprehensive enough and that more time needs to be devoted to this topic. The principal stated that a conflict resolution cycle poster should be displayed in every classroom. However, the IIT saw the conflict resolution cycle poster displayed in some, but not all, visited classrooms.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Students would like classroom environments that are more conducive to thinking, learning, and respectful relationships.** Students shared that they enjoy opportunities to relax and think deeply within the classroom. They said they would like a classroom environment that provides areas where they can be comfortable, do their work, and have fewer interruptions resulting from the poor behavior of some students. These students suggested that classrooms should have soft music and areas within it where they can read silently. They added that some teachers do not manage student misbehavior in the classroom well. Teachers confirmed that some students act out and interrupt instruction.
- **Teachers would like a schoolwide recognition program reinstated to help maintain a positive school environment, motivate student actions, and empower the staff.** Stakeholders informed the IIT that for several years prior to the current school year, the school had a thriving positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) program. They noted that over the past year, some of the activities within that program have stopped due to scheduling changes and a change in school leadership. Teachers told the IIT on multiple occasions that they would like to reintroduce the activities that constituted the heart of the program. They cited activities such as grade-level recognitions, schoolwide recognition events, and announcements of student and teacher successes. The teachers stated that they have already outlined the staff who would oversee the organization and planning of the PBIS program and work directly with the principal to make sure it works within the school schedule.