

Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

Final Report



BEDS Code	580224030002
School Name	Tremont Elementary School
School Address	143 Tremont Avenue, Medford NY 11763
District Name	Patchogue-Medford Union Free School District
Principal	Lori Koerner
Dates of Visit	May 29-31, 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:

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	2	1	4

Tremont Elementary School serves 440 students in grades pre-kindergarten to five.

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 made 63 visits to 32 classrooms during the visit.
- The OEE visited 20 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, class data, teacher feedback, and student work.
- In advance of the visit, 42 staff members (100 percent) completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. Teachers stated that the principal is viewed as an instructional leader who models what she expects from her teachers. The Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) learned that the principal visits every classroom daily and provides teachers with written or verbal feedback. The principal shared that she at times uses a walkthrough checklist to note what she sees and maintains a record of teacher practices to help her identify targeted support she needs to provide individual teachers. Staff members shared that the principal meets with every teacher a minimum of three times a year to review their students' assessment data. Together, they analyze student progress and determine what additional support, if any, students need. The principal reviews lesson plan books to determine whether the teachers' sequence of lessons is coherent in that it builds on what students previously learned and leads logically to what they will be learning next.
2. During the 2018-19 school year, staff shared that the principal extended the nurturing learning environment and professional learning community that she developed during her first two years at the school. During focus groups, staff and parents spoke positively about the principal's values and beliefs on how adults and children should relate to each other. Teachers shared that the principal makes them feel valued, has developed close relationships with them, and praises them for their work. Sometimes during walkthroughs, the principal co-teaches classes and models the practices she would like teachers to attempt. For example, she may model one of the essential competencies. Staff and parents were able to speak on the principal's core values about creating child-centered classrooms and educating the whole child. Teachers and students shared that they feel comfortable taking risks, asking questions, and collaborating with others in the school because of the environment. Students cited the mindful minute in the morning and going to the tranquility room as two experiences that promote feeling peaceful and a sense of well-being. The school also uses the Sanford Harmony and Lion's Quest curricula to foster student self-awareness, self-management, and positive relationships. IIT members observed kind and respectful interactions between students and between students and adults throughout the visit.
3. During the 2018-19 school year, the school is continuing to build upon its project-based learning. Grade-level teams meet to collaboratively develop interdisciplinary long-term projects. The principal and teachers shared that all students participated in a minimum of two long-term projects in 2018-19. Grade five teachers shared that they had never developed a long-term project before and approached the task with trepidation. However, they collaborated among themselves and with students to create EdCamp, a full day of student-led workshops on a variety of topics that students selected. Teachers and students problem-solved and handled logistical issues in planning the event, which was set to take place the week after the team's visit to the school. Teachers shared that using four classrooms, students will teach workshops on topics ranging from creating an iMovie and applying nail swatches, to learning drum rudiments and baking layer cakes. Students will present and take workshops and are permitted to invite a family member. Plans are already underway to expand the space next year. The IIT observed students conducting research, creating advertisements, and preparing the workshop sessions that will last up to 15 minutes. Students also created exit tickets for attendees to complete to provide feedback to presenters about the quality of their workshops. The IIT also observed grade four students' Revolutionary War project and kindergarten students finishing their shark project.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **The principal should use student assessment data and classroom walkthrough data to determine next steps for teacher support.** The principal shared a few class data binders with IIT members that contained class summaries, as well as individual student assessment data. The principal meets with each teacher three times a year to analyze AIMSweb, Reading Inventory, and Fountas & Pinnell assessment data, as well as the school's math assessment data. Based on their analysis, the principal and teacher together discuss strategies to address individual student needs. Further, the principal visits classrooms daily and uses a checklist to inform her conversations with teachers around their practices. As a next step, the principal should consider combining a full overview of the student assessment data along with classroom observation notes to identify trends in student achievement and pedagogy. This information can then be used to inform schoolwide decisions regarding focus areas for professional development (PD) and teacher support.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **The school leader should explore ways to expand the length of PD sessions so that teachers have additional opportunities to explore and learn new teaching practices.** The school has 25 minutes of PD on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings from 8:30 to 8:55 a.m. However, the IIT found that this time allocation does not allow teachers to adequately receive a full and complete understanding of the training being provided. For example, the IIT observed a PD session led by the literacy coach on interpreting AIMSweb growth scores, which was attended by most teachers. Because many staff members were present and the time was limited to 25 minutes, some teachers shared that they did not have an opportunity to fully develop their understanding in this area and could have benefitted from a greater allotment of continuous PD time. Teachers and the principal stated that they would benefit from additional time dedicated to PD, common planning, and collaboration.

Learning at the School

- **The principal should support teachers in grades two through five to adapt or modify instruction to address the needs of students.** During classroom visits, the IIT observed that most instructional content was not adapted to the literacy levels of students. For example, in most observed classrooms, the IIT noted that students typically experienced the same level of learning tasks using the same materials. Generally, students were not provided with scaffolds or other supports to help them understand the content. Typically, instructional modifications were provided by reading specialists working with small groups of students and some teachers in kindergarten and grade one who conducted guided reading with small groups. Teachers in self-contained special education classes provided students with leveled centers and activities. Going forward, the principal should consider having general education teachers visit special education classrooms and having special education teachers provide PD in this area.
- **Teachers should assess student learning throughout lessons.** During classroom visits, students were not typically assessed for understanding. While some teachers asked a general question about understanding to the whole class, such as "Any questions?" many students remained silent. Grade five students shared that sometimes their teacher uses the exit tickets they completed the prior day to begin lessons on the following day; however, this was not typical across classrooms. A random sample of lesson plans reviewed by the team included learning objectives, and these were sometimes displayed in classrooms; however, objectives or the

purpose for learning, needs to be referenced during instruction and at the end of lessons to ensure students know what they are learning and why, and to determine if students mastered the concepts or skills taught.

- **Students should be provided opportunities to engage in thoughtful discussion.** In the classrooms visited by the IIT, most questions posed to students were fact-based, detail questions, that required one-word answers. Further, not all students had opportunities to respond to questions, as answers were typically called out. Accountable talk stems were taped to the desks in one classroom, but students were generally asked few open-ended questions or given prompts that led to student discussion. In one grade five class, students were discussing the academic and social-emotional challenges of transitioning to middle school. Going forward, teachers should provide students with better and more frequent opportunities to engage in thoughtful discussion in pairs, groups, or as an entire class.
- **Teachers will need to increase student ownership of their learning and help them reflect on their strengths and needs as learners.** While students shared that they feel connected to their teachers and the school, the team noted little student work was displayed in classrooms, and students shared that teacher feedback usually comprises a numerical grade or a comment such as “good work.” Students are typically not provided with specific and actionable feedback on their work to help them reflect on their learning and understand what next steps would help them improve. Teachers will need to consider conferring with individual students to provide them with specific feedback and to help them set both academic and social-emotional goals.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Special area teachers shared that they would like to attend grade team meetings, and other teachers shared that they would like to know when special events are taking place in other classrooms.** Special area teachers shared that they would like to attend grade team meetings and integrate their subject areas into their respective grade level’s long-term projects. Other teachers suggested that class events be posted on the school’s SharePoint online calendar so they and their students could attend. For example, when a grade two teacher learned about the grade five EdCamp at a focus group interview, she asked if she and her students could attend.
- **Teachers shared that their classroom libraries need updating.** Although the school has a bookroom that contains titles and topics for every grade level, some teachers feel their classroom libraries need current titles and topics that would inspire their students to read more. They suggested that teachers have an opportunity to purchase books to upgrade their class libraries.
- **Parents shared that reciprocal communication with families is an area in need of further development.** Parents shared that they generally are contacted by teachers when they have concerns. Parents also shared that they would like to be more involved in classroom activities, such as serving as mystery readers, so they are better equipped to help their children at home. They also suggested that grade teams create an online and hard copy newsletter to inform parents of special activities taking place in their classes, as well as the topics that will be studied in the coming weeks. Although parents shared that school staff are responsive when parents initiate contact, many parents said they only see their children’s teachers in the fall, as the spring parent-teacher conferences are conducted by invitation only.
- **Some parents shared that although they appreciate the school’s focus on educating the whole child, they feel the additional recess period and lack of homework has reduced the emphasis on academic rigor.** They suggested that the recess period be reduced so that additional time can be devoted to instruction. They also suggested that not all recess activities have to be athletic. For example, they suggested that older students should be permitted to read with younger students during recess. Further, they suggested that students should

receive at least 20 to 30 minutes of nightly homework that extends their understanding of what they learned in school that day.

- **Students shared that teachers tend to cluster together during lunch period and recess.** They suggested that teachers take strategic posts so that every part of the field behind the school is monitored.
- **Students shared that they have little sports equipment available during recess and the equipment they have is often unusable.** They suggested that students and parents sponsor a fundraiser to purchase new netting, badminton sets, volleyballs, soccer balls, basketballs, and other equipment for the students to use during recess.