

Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

Final Report



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| BEDS Code | 261600010067 |
| School Name | Joseph C. Wilson Magnet High School |
| School Address | 501 Genesee Street, Rochester, NY 14611 |
| District Name | Rochester City School District |
| Principal | Julie Van Derwater |
| Dates of Visit | December 11-13, 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 several 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

- The visit was led by an Outside Educational Expert (OEE) and a representative from NYSED. The team also included a district representative, a Special Education School Improvement Specialist (SEIS) representative, and a representative from the Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (RBERN).
- The team visited a total of 48 classrooms during the visit.
- The OEE visited seven classrooms with the principal during the visit.
- Team members conducted 25 interviews with students, staff, and parents.
- Team members examined documents provided by the school, including lesson plans, teacher worksheets, teacher feedback, teacher assessments, the professional development (PD) agenda, and the learning center schedule.
- In advance of the visit, 30 staff members (42 percent) completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.
- The school serves 786 students in grades nine through 12.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. The principal has prioritized the development of a positive school culture to promote teacher development and student learning. Teachers interviewed by the team stated that the principal is open minded, is receptive to and supportive of their creative ideas, and will let them experiment with new teaching techniques. Students reported that teachers care for them and provide extra help during lunch and after school, which helps them improve their grades.
2. Recognizing the need to provide additional support to students to prevent course failures and help students recover credits, the school leaders have developed a marking period recovery program and an online credit recovery program. The principal stated that students have recovered 36 credits since the start of the 2018-19 school year.
3. The school leader created a small grade nine learning community, with an assistant principal responsible for this academy. The IIT observed test data posted for grade nine students in the grade nine hallways, and school leaders stated that students in the grade nine community share common teachers, rules, systems, and processes. Students and staff members reported that they appreciate the grade nine house configurations, which they said provide a sense of community and accountability.
4. To make the International Baccalaureate (IB) program more accessible to all students, the principal stated that the middle years program is now offered in grades nine and ten, and students can earn IB certificates. Students in grades 11 and 12 have the option of earning an IB diploma. Interviewed students reported that they

appreciate the IB program, which only a few district schools offer, because the program prepares them for college and may better enable them to obtain scholarships for their college education.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **The school should develop a uniform policy and system for grading students.** The team found that teachers develop individual grading systems because a common grading policy has not been established. Students the team interviewed, stated that the way in which teachers calculate or arrive at grades varies from class to class.
- **School leaders need to develop and implement the use of school-wide data systems and processes to inform and monitor decisions for school improvement.** School leaders reported that data collection systems for the school need to be updated and used to make instructional decisions. They indicated that the school needs to collect and monitor additional cohort data, including credits earned and Regents exams passed, starting with grade twelve students, and then phased in across other grade levels.
- **School leaders should clearly communicate the school's vision, goals, and priorities.** When asked by the team to identify key priorities, most staff members reported increased graduation rate and reduced suspension rate, but they did not articulate the instructional priorities of learning targets and differentiation that are included in the School Comprehensive Education Plan (SCEP). Various staff members stated that different priorities are communicated by the school leaders. When asked by the team how the vision, goals, and priorities are communicated, staff reported that key priorities are communicated by multiple individuals and through various mediums, including a biweekly bulletin from the principal and emails from the coaches, and in department meetings.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **The principal should supervise core content areas to provide feedback on instructional practice.** The principal stated that she is responsible for supervising instructional coaches, counselors, and paraprofessionals because the other school leaders cannot evaluate these staff members and that she also sees many students for disciplinary issues. The team found that this issue creates a disconnect with the instructional focus for teachers, as the instructional coaches and other school leaders are directly responsible to a school leader who does not oversee or provide model feedback for classroom instruction. In the future, the principal should consider leading the evaluation of a core department in order to model expectations of targeted feedback for the school leaders.

Learning at the School

- **Teachers need to provide increased opportunities for students to engage in challenging work with their peers.** The IIT observed teachers leading instruction and completing the work, without providing opportunities for students to model completion or understanding of the work before working independently. The team observed whole group instructional practices and activities in most classes. Interviewed students reported that they are typically given worksheets to complete and are not often provided with opportunities to work on

assignments in groups. Students stated that they would appreciate more opportunities to work with their peers during class. They noted that if they are not engaged in class, they are rarely approached by the teacher.

- **Teachers should provide more checks for student understanding of lessons.** The team found that most checks were self-reports by the students. Check for understanding charts were observed in several classrooms, whereby students were asked to self-report if they understood the lesson based on three levels, green, yellow, or red. The IIT found that when students asked for help, the teacher assisted but typically did most of the assignment for the students instead of guiding the students through the work. The team found that teachers made minimal use of targeted questions and exit tickets.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need

- **Students stated they would like more opportunities to receive extra support with their classwork.** Some interviewed students expressed the viewpoint that while they can take advantage of tutoring opportunities after school, they do their best when the teacher reteaches them something that they did not understand instead of letting them fail and moving on. Some students also noted that while there are opportunities for students to recover credit after school and for students in the IB program to receive extra support, there should be tutoring support for students who are not in the IB program or who do not need to recover credits.
- **Students reported that although they have home base, they would like to have some clear goals or outcome/framework for this period.** Interviewed students reported that home base time is used for counselors to provide information about various topics and school events. Students stated that this time would be better used if it were connected to the lunch hour because it would allow them more time to receive assistance from their teachers and extend the lunch time by 20 minutes.
- **Parents expressed the perspective there should be higher expectations for academic achievement and student behavior.** Interviewed parents stated that they would like school leaders to implement stronger consequences for student misbehavior and that teachers should have high expectations for academic achievement. Parents stated that they do not feel their children receive adequate conferences for behavioral problems.