

Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

Final Report



BEDS Code	261600010089
School Name	Northwest College Preparatory School
School Address	940 Fernwood Park, Rochester, NY 14609
District Name	Rochester City School District
Principal	Mr. Steven Soprano
Dates of Visit	February 26-28, 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:

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
1	2	1	3	1	1

Northwest College Preparatory School serves 274 students in grades seven through eight.

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 visited a total of 31 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 curriculum maps, lesson plans, schoolwide data, teacher feedback, and student work.
- In advance of the visit, 33 staff members (80 percent) completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. To increase learning time, the principal has changed the master schedule for the 2018-19 school year to include all students in one lunch period. In previous years, the school has had separate lunch periods for each grade level. Teachers reported that as a result of this change, there is increased instructional time due to the decrease of transitions to and from lunch, multiple periods each day. Community partners also noted that they have used the space that was previously used as a cafeteria for meeting areas and community programming. Students and teachers stated that these spaces are a valuable resource.
2. The principal and teachers stated that programs aimed at reducing the number of days students are out of school for suspension have been used more effectively during the 2018-19 school year than in past years. These programs include the Panther Help Zone and the Pathways program, which was developed for the current school year to provide social-emotional support for students with disabilities. The staffing model of the Bridges program was also reorganized to address the social-emotional needs of the students in the program. Staff and school leaders reported that as a result of these initiatives, the number of suspension days over the past year has decreased. Current suspension data shows that the school is on track to decrease the number of days students are out of school for suspension from an average of 110 days per month in the 2017-18 school year to 16 per month in the 2018-19 school year. The IIT reviewed this data, which was provided by the principal.
3. School leaders have implemented a ban on cell phones during the school day and enforce this policy by collecting all phones during the arrival process. Teachers stated that there has been an increase in instructional time and student engagement as a result of the elimination of the distraction of students using phones as well as the time taken in disagreements over appropriate use of phones. Students reported a decrease in the amount of bullying via social media as well as a decrease in the spread of rumors that had previously led to inappropriate behavior.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **The principal needs to monitor the school's current School Comprehensive Education Plan (SCEP) to ensure that the school is on track to meet its goals.** Although the principal developed a SCEP for the 2018-19 school year, which has goals and an action plan, the team found that the school does not formally review this plan to ensure that the plan is being carried out and that the plan is helping the school meet its goals. As a result, the school leaders are not able to determine if this plan is being implemented with fidelity, if the school is on pace to meet its goals, or if the action plans are being followed as intended. Additionally, there were very few staff members who helped develop this plan with the principal, limiting the voice of many stakeholders in the school community. The team found that the school leadership and other members of the school community were unable cite progress in areas that they deemed important when they developed the SCEP last school year.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **The school should develop a process for teachers to provide recommendations to the principal about how to best improve instructional practices.** The school leadership team, which is comprised of the principal, assistant principal, and coordinator of special education, meets regularly to discuss instructional practice when they visit classes, and to determine the professional development (PD) they believe will be beneficial to staff. Teachers interviewed by the IIT stated that they do not have a direct voice on how to improve the school pedagogically. In the future, the school leader should consider developing an instructional leadership team, which would include the school leadership team, as well as a representative sample of teachers from various subject and grade levels to add teacher voice to instructional decision-making and to recommend best practices to move the school forward and increase student success.
- **The school needs to schedule time for English language arts (ELA) and math teachers to meet regularly and plan with their tier two counterparts during the school day.** The IIT found that ELA and math teachers and the tier two ELA and math lab teachers do not regularly meet to plan their curriculum and lesson plans or to review student performance data. As a result, there is a lack of cohesion between the tier one and tier two levels in the ELA and math curriculum

Learning at the School

- **The school needs to develop a professional development (PD) plan, which is consistently based on teacher and student performance data.** The IIT found that the school has a calendar of PD events, which details who will be providing the PD, and what they will be teaching. However, the decision of who to have present, and what they will cover is not based on student performance data or teacher practice data. Teachers stated that often this decision is based on what the school leaders perceive as teachers' needs. Additionally, after PD is provided, there is no process in place to observe and evaluate teacher practice to determine if the PD has enabled teachers to improve their practice. The IIT also learned from teachers and the principal, that student performance data from the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) is not analyzed to determine if the PD has led to improved student performance.
- **School leaders should collect teacher performance data to determine if the school's instructional initiatives are being implemented and are improving teachers' instructional practices.** Although the school leadership team visits classrooms throughout the week, primarily for the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) evaluations, there is a need for a formal process to collect teacher practice data to determine if pedagogy is improving, or how best to meet the needs of staff through PD and formative feedback. The school leadership team should consider tracking the teacher practice they observe when they visit classrooms, analyze this data every two weeks, and discuss ways to best support the needs of teachers.
- **Teachers lessons should address the varying needs of students with disabilities.** During classroom visits, the IIT found that instruction in special education classes was often one-size-fits-all and, in many instances, the content was below grade level. For example, in one class the IIT visited, students were completing the same worksheets, with little alignment to each child's individual needs. As a result, students' individual needs were often not being addressed.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Parents, teachers, and support staff stated that communications from the school office and teachers are not translated into families first language.** Although fourteen percent of students at the school are English language learners (ELLs), the school does not ensure that all letters and communications from the school and teachers are translated. Parents reported that this issue minimizes the ability of some parents to fully support their child's academic, social, emotional, and behavioral success.