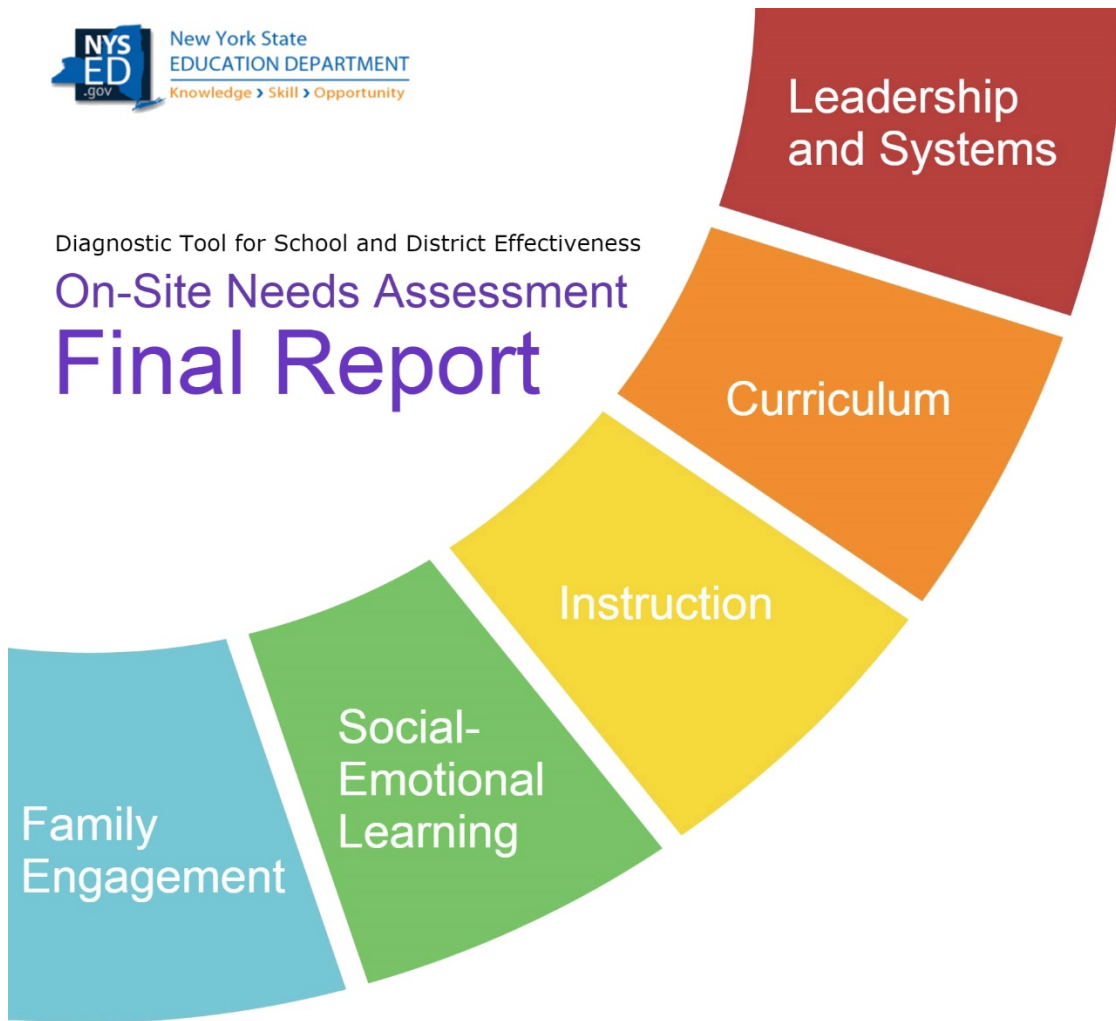


Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

# Final Report



|                       |                                  |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| <b>BEDS Code</b>      | 261600010007                     |
| <b>School Name</b>    | Virgil I. Grissom School No. 7   |
| <b>School Address</b> | 31 Bryan St, Rochester, NY 14613 |
| <b>District Name</b>  | Rochester City School District   |
| <b>School leader</b>  | David Lincoln                    |
| <b>Dates of Visit</b> | November 27-29, 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 and a Special Education School Improvement Specialist (SEIS) representative.
- The team visited a total of thirty-five classrooms during the visit.
- The OEE visited eight classrooms with the school leader during the visit.
- Team members conducted interviews with students, staff, and parents.
- Team members examined documents provided by the school, including a walkthrough protocol and an online protocol tool, schoolwide data, teacher feedback, and student work.
- In advance of the visit, seventeen staff members (30 percent) completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.
- On November 28, 2018, there was a snow storm that impacted the attendance of parents at the parent focus group. Only one parent showed up for the meeting, and the team spoke briefly to five parents in the hallway as they dropped off their children. This issue impacted the team's ability to get comprehensive input from parents.
- Virgil L. Grissom school serves 529 students in grades pre-kindergarten through six.

## Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. Recognizing the importance of a positive school climate, the principal has prioritized the development of supportive relationships with staff, students, and parents. Teachers told the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) that they felt supported by the school leader in building both their classroom management skills and instructional capacity. The team observed students interacting with the principal during classroom visits and while walking the school hallways. The principal had conversations with students about their work and problems. Parents dropping off their children at the school reported that the school leader was consistently supportive and committed to their concerns.
2. Building on the success of the Restorative Practices initiative, the principal has stressed the importance of consistent implementation of the initiative for the 2018-19 school year. Students provided positive feedback about using Restorative Practices in their classrooms and the impact it has on improving their relationships with peers and adults. Since the program was initiated, suspensions have dropped from thirty-four in the 2015-16 school year to just two in 2016-17. Both students and staff told the team that behavioral issues have decreased, and that Restorative Practices facilitate stronger communication and community building in the school.
3. The IIT observed that Zearn Math is being implemented consistently during the 2018-19 school year and has been adopted by teachers with a high level of buy-in. Teachers interviewed by the team reported that they were

satisfied with the curriculum and the roll-out of Zearn Math and appreciated having a core program that systemically facilitated the vertical and horizontal alignment of kindergarten through grade five math instruction. Many students described math as their favorite subject during interviews. During classroom visits where Zearn Math was being used, students were engaged during their computer modules and told the IIT that they enjoyed Zearn Math.

## Areas of Need to Be Addressed for Long-Term Success

### Systems for Improvement

- **School leaders should consistently monitor the quality of feedback that teachers provide on student work to measure for impact and to increase student success.** The 2017-18 DTSDE report recommended that teachers provide quality and actionable feedback on all student work. The IIT observed some teachers conferencing with students about their State test scores and reaching their personal goals. However, from a detailed analysis of student work the team found there was a need for written feedback to be provided regularly in most classrooms. While students interviewed by the IIT talked about their test scores, increasing their reading levels, and meeting their goals, the team found that this practice needs for this to be fully implemented by all teachers and monitored by school leadership to promote consistency schoolwide and higher levels of student achievement.
- **School leaders will need to consistently implement and monitor a walkthrough system to provide actionable feedback to teachers to improve their instructional practices and increase student achievement.** One of the recommendations of the 2017-18 DTSDE report was for school leaders to create a walkthrough schedule and to provide actionable feedback to teachers to increase their instructional capacity. This school year a walkthrough protocol has been established, and a district online tool has been implemented to track walkthrough data. However, the IIT found that this system and the quality of actionable feedback is not yet consistently achieving their purpose. While teachers shared that the school leaders have visited their classrooms more frequently this school year, feedback was sometimes general and focused on what was taking place in the classroom rather than targeting specific needs.

### Leadership and Organization at the School

- **The principal should arrange the master schedule so that all teachers can attend grade level meetings in order to build capacity around key school initiatives.** The team found that the school is trying to build a data rich culture to support these initiatives and has many professional development (PD) needs that they are unable to address due to time constraints. The school currently has 35minute grade level meetings each week, but they often take place during teacher's breaks, and not all teachers attend.
- **School leaders need to consistently monitor the process of departmentalizing into content areas.** The IIT learned from school leaders that during the 2018-19 school year, in grade levels that were departmentalizing, teachers were given the autonomy to determine who is responsible for teaching each content area. The IIT observed during classroom visits and learned from interviews with the principal and some teachers, that this has resulted in some teachers being responsible for teaching subjects that may not be their strength and needing extra support from interventionists to supplement their instruction.

## Learning at the School

- **Teachers should consistently implement Restorative Practices to support students with their learning needs.** Students reported that they find restorative practices helpful; however, the frequency with which they are used varies across the school. Some students shared that they use it every day in morning meetings, others used it every Friday, and others said they have only used it a few times all year. During an observation of a peace circle and from conversations with students, the IIT found that Restorative Practices enables students to practice empathy and develop closer relationships as well as address personal conflicts peacefully, which also helps to support their readiness to address academic areas.

## Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Parents reported that teachers within the school are using different communication methods to correspond with families and that some methods are being used more effectively and regularly by certain teachers.** For example, one parent who has children at different grade levels, expressed the viewpoint that one of his child's teachers sends pictures and updates on student work, whereas the other teacher uses Class Dojo to track participation or behavior issues in an easily understandable way.