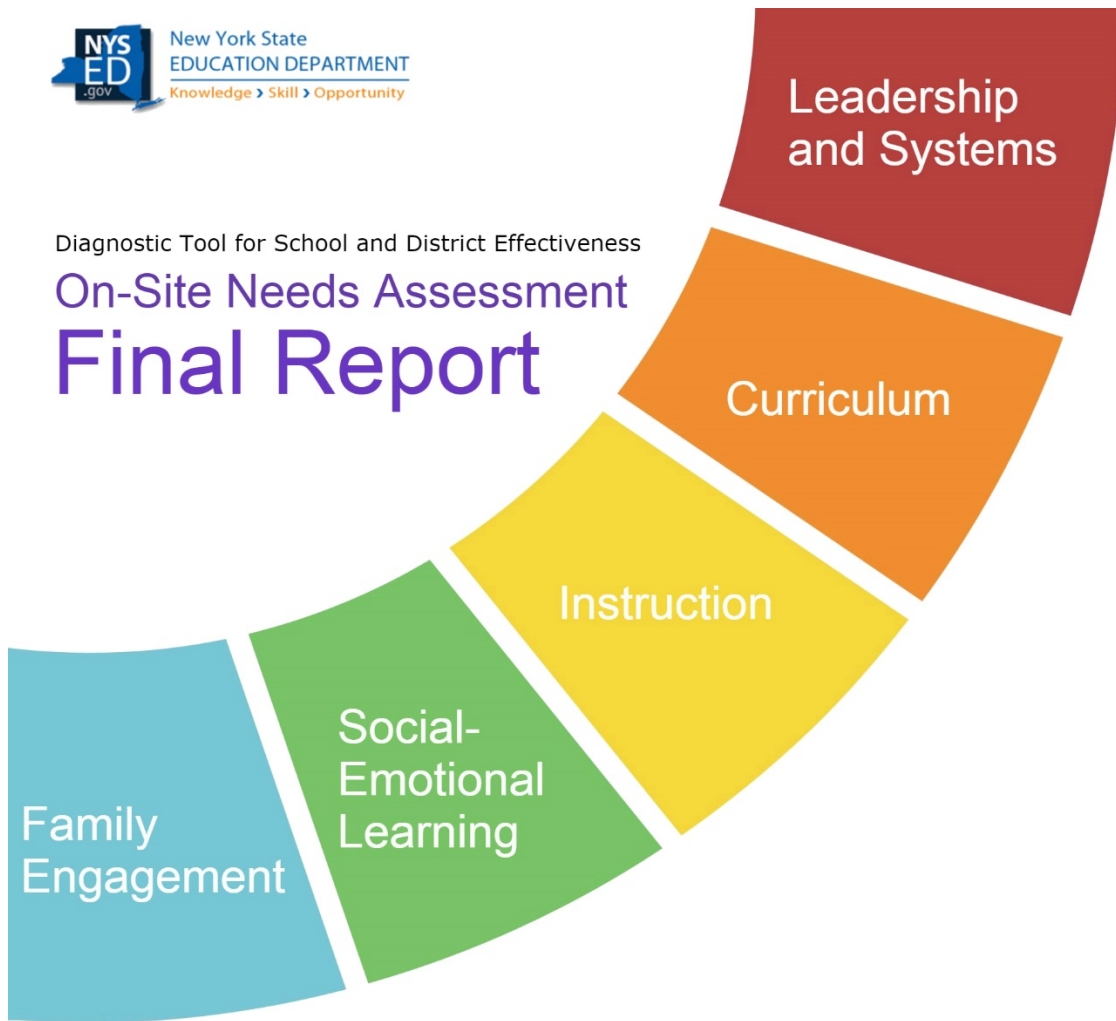


Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

Final Report



BEDS Code	411800010001
School Name	Gansevoort Elementary School
School Address	758 West Liberty Street, Rome, NY 13440
District Name	Rome City School District
Principal	Wendy W. Waters
Dates of Visit	March 19-21, 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
1	1	1	--	1	1

Gansevoort Elementary School serves 381 students in grades kindergarten through 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 24 classrooms during the visit.
- The OEE visited five classrooms with the principal during the visit.
- Team members conducted interviews with 18 students, 13 staff, and eight parents.
- Team members examined documents provided by the school student work samples, instructional reading material, schoolwide data, teacher feedback, and student work.
- In advance of the visit, 31 staff members (60 percent) completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. To promote teacher's professional practice and student learning for the 2018-19 school year, the principal has prioritized the development of a positive school culture. Staff and students interviewed by the IIT stated they respect the principal as the leader of the school. Staff reported that the principal provides valuable feedback, has an open-door policy, is accessible, and addresses the needs of the school community. Interviewed parents stated that they feel welcome in the school. Students and parents reported that the principal is visible, listens to their ideas, and talks to them. Parents also noted that they feel comfortable asking for help and for needed resources.
2. Recognizing the need for improved student behavior, this school year the principal instituted a Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS) program. As a result of this initiative, the principal and staff reported that student behavior has improved and the need for addressing issues of misbehavior has decreased. The team observed well behaved students who followed the systems and procedures outlined for PBIS and students who were able to articulate the intent of the program. In addition, with the PBIS initiative, there has been an increase in the proportion of incidents that are entered into the school information system, providing the school leaders and staff the opportunity to use the data gathered to identify students who may need additional behavioral and social-emotional support.
3. Recognizing that some families need additional support and access to resources, the principal has partnered with Community Schools this year to help provide resources to students and their families through foodbanks, health services, and mental health resources. The principal reported that through this partnership, more than 75 families have benefitted from the provision of on-campus food since the beginning of the current school year.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **School leaders should put systems in place to measure how well students are meeting grade-level standards and to monitor their progress.** Teachers and school leaders reported that they use the STAR assessment as a universal screening tool and the Fountas & Pinnell assessment twice a year to monitor student growth. The school should also identify other ways or develop systems to determine the mastery of grade-level standards other than these means and the annual New York State assessments. She acknowledged that creating a better way to determine students' mastery of the standards would help to guide instruction. In the future, the principal should consider creating a tracker to regularly measure student progress in mastering the standards taught.
- **The school leaders should set goals and benchmarks so that the priorities they have communicated are clearly understood by all staff.** When asked by the team to identify key priorities, various staff members stated different priorities such as reading, school safety, and parent engagement. Staff reported that the priorities are communicated through various means such as the principal's weekly Monday memo and emails from the principal. The principal acknowledged that it is important that staff understand the main priorities for the school, which she stated are PBIS, shared/guided reading, and parental engagement, in order to ensure that all staff are working toward the same outcomes.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **The principal should provide teachers an instructional framework of gradual release of responsibility for delivering their instruction to promote student ownership of their learning.** In class visits, the IIT noted that teachers had a schedule of activities that were to take place in the classroom. Teachers also need to set an agenda to ensure a precise flow of instruction. The team observed that instruction was primarily teacher directed with few opportunities for gradual release of instruction through group work, student discussion, student modeling, and sharing of learning with others. In the future, the principal should consider adopting a gradual release model to help support the flow of instruction and to promote student ownership of instruction.
- **The principal should build capacity for distributive leadership with non-instructional tasks.** Teachers interviewed by the IIT stated that the principal handles student discipline and meets with all parents. The principal shared that the majority of her time has been focused on the culture and climate of the school at the expense of a focus on instruction. In the future, the principal should consider utilizing the Community School partner, the guidance counselor, and the school psychologist to help address parents' needs and to assist in supporting the social-emotional needs of students.

Learning at the School

- **Students should be able to articulate the learning objectives of the lesson.** The principal noted that she would like to see students take ownership of their learning by being able to articulate what they learn from the lesson. Teachers need to post learning objectives in their classroom or refer to the objectives during the lesson. When the team asked students what they were learning, they were able to state what they were doing at that moment; however, they were not able to identify or articulate the specific skill or standard they learned. When asked, students stated for example, that they were doing math or reading.
- **Teachers should provide regular checks for understanding throughout the lesson.** The team found that most teachers need to effectively check that students understand what they are being taught. The principal stated this is an expectation, and she needs to monitor this practice. In one observed class, for example, the IIT noted an exit ticket on the table, but exit tickers needed to be distributed for students to complete. In another classroom, the team observed a check for understanding chart on the wall that asked students to self-report their level of understanding of the information taught. Teachers also needed to reference these anchor charts during instruction to determine student understanding of the lesson. Teachers shared that they struggle to determine whether to reteach a lesson or move forward with the pacing guide.
- **Teachers should provide students with opportunities to engage in the lesson and process new information.** In observed classrooms, instruction was teacher led, and the students had few opportunities to engage in discussion. Teachers need to use strategies to elicit student discourse, such as think-pair-share or turn and talk. The IIT observed well-behaved, students who listened to their teachers and responded to their questions; however, students were not often provided with opportunities for a more active role in their learning. Students stated that most activities in their classroom require them to sit at their desk and complete handouts, and more challenging and interesting learning activities were not often assigned. Students noted that they like more hands-on learning activities and work and discussions with other students.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Parents expressed concern that their children are not able to get to school during inclement weather because sidewalks are not cleared during snowstorms.** Interviewed parents stated, and the principal confirmed, that Gansevoort Elementary School is the only school in the district where students have to walk to school on a daily basis. Parents stated that inclement weather can affect the ability of their children to get to school. Parents noted that having a bus to pick up children, at depot stops, during inclement weather would be helpful.
- **Parents stated that they would like the school to provide more challenging activities for children who are achieving above grade level.** Parents shared that the school does not have a gifted and talented program and that they would like children who are performing above grade level to have opportunities to participate in challenging activities that would enhance their learning, such as serving as tutors, and enrichment activities.
- **Students stated that they would like the opportunity to participate in more after-school activities.** Interviewed students shared they would like to have gymnastics, drama, and other enrichment activities like chess and music after school. Students and parents noted that although a Gator Academy is offered after school, a limited number of students can participate in it.