

Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

Final Report



BEDS Code	411800010025
School Name	George R. Staley Elementary School
School Address	620 E. Bloomfield Street
District Name	Rome City School District
Principal	Julie K. Kimmel-Gorman
Dates of Visit	February 7 – 9, 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	2	1

George R. Staley Elementary School serves 621 students in grades Kindergarten through six,

Information About The Visit

- The visit was led by an Outside Educational Expert (OEE) and a representative from NYSED and a District Representative.
- The team visited a total of 21 classrooms during the visit.
- The OEE visited seven 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, the school provided results of a staff survey that 66 out of 98 staff members (67 percent) completed.
- The school began the year with a mold issue in the building. As a result of this issue, students started school two days after the rest of the district.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. This school year, the school has implemented a community school initiative aimed at increasing family engagement. School and teacher leaders reported that this initiative has helped connect the school to families more closely, as the school continues to focus on and support student social and emotional developmental health. The school's partnership with the Rome Community Alliance, the Upstate Cerebral Palsy New Discoveries Learning Center, and its Safe Schools Partnership have helped the school develop positive relationships with families by providing outreach and support that is targeted to the needs of families. Teachers shared with the team that parents can come into the school, and with the support and knowledge of the principal, can be referred to one of the partner organizations that will direct family members to various external resources. Representatives of these partner organizations told the IIT that they provide a variety of comprehensive family services, such as assisting parents with completing job applications or offering families transportation to the local community center. Parents interviewed by the IIT reported that some the initiatives directed at increasing parental engagement such as the Rome Community Alliance have been very helpful.
2. During the 2018-19 school year, the school has transitioned from providing morning announcements over the public address system to a morning announcement through a video format. Teachers noted that announcements over the public address system were disturbing class instructional time, and this new format gives instructional staff the flexibility to play these announcements at any time during the school day without disrupting classes. Students told the IIT that participating in the video announcements has helped them build relationships with other students they did not know, or might not see during the school day, because they may be on different floors or in different grades. Students indicated that this new practice has increased their awareness of what initiatives and events are taking place at school, and more members of the school community want to be involved in the creation of the video announcements.
3. To address the needs of students who may need additional social and emotional support, for the 2018-19 school year, the school leaders and staff have created a check and connect program. Each student who is identified for these services is connected to a teacher who acts as their mentor. This gives the student the opportunity to receive individualized support and intervention from the designated teacher. Teachers participate in this program on a voluntary basis, and students are matched to a teacher by the guidance staff. Teachers report more positive behavior from students who have been targeted for these services. The principal indicated that with the addition of this program, there has been a decrease in negative behaviors that had prevented students from engaging in school. Interviewed students also reported that behavior has improved, and there is now no bullying happening in school.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **The principal should set clear expectations for how teachers are to teach literacy across the school.** Teachers told the IIT that clear instructional expectations for teachers have not yet been established as they try to implement the district's instructional priorities of developing guided reading and the writing curriculum. Teachers reported that teachers' skills vary, and some teachers are at the early stages of being effective teachers of literacy. Several teachers shared with the team that they are not sure what the expectations are for instructional walkthroughs in literacy lessons. Teachers indicated that although they have participated in professional development (PD) about the guided reading and the writing curriculum, many teachers are still wrestling with its implementation.
- **School leaders should develop a comprehensive plan with the school's community-based organizations (CBOs) to build on its parent engagement outreach strategy.** The principal reported that although she is working closely with the CBOs to support what the school is doing to increase parent engagement, she has not yet met with these organizations to develop a long-term strategic parent involvement plan. During interviews with the IIT, one of the community-based organizations also noted that it would be beneficial for the school leaders to meet with them to develop a comprehensive plan to enable them to better support plans for parent engagement and involvement in the school. School leaders and staff stated that the school is addressing the individual needs of students; however, the team found that the school could benefit from a long-term strategic plan on how to use their community-based partners more effectively to broaden their current strategies around parent engagement and ensure that parents are more involved in the everyday life of the school.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **The principal needs to match the teaching staff to the grade levels where they can implement the school's priorities most effectively.** The principal told the IIT that it is the district's expectation that all teachers should be able to implement the guided reading and the writing curriculum. The principal noted, however, that it is difficult for her to reorganize the staffing structure when she does not have enough teachers with the pedagogical skills required to teach the curriculum. The team found that the district has provided teachers with PD to implement the instructional initiatives and that school leaders are expected to support staff in their buildings based on this expectation. The principal indicated that teachers can request the services of the literacy coaches if they need instructional support and those requests are approved by the district. Teachers interviewed by the IIT confirmed that teachers can request support from the district literacy coaches. However, some teachers stated they had not requested support from district coaches and that they had not received any other additional support.
- **The principal needs to provide teachers with consistent instructional feedback, as a follow up to her regular walkthroughs, to improve pedagogical practice.** The principal reported that she has been focusing her attention on addressing the social and emotional developmental health needs of students, which has limited her attention to providing instructional feedback. She noted that she has been involved in addressing the needs of students in crisis or meeting with the guidance staff to discuss students who have been selected for the check and connect program. As a result, the team learned that teachers have not had consistent

personalized guidance and support to improve their professional practice to better enable them to plan and deliver learning activities that are closely matched to district expectations and promote student achievement, particularly in the targeted area of literacy.

- **The principal should develop a plan or system to support teachers that are having difficulty teaching literacy to students in the lower grades, since the restructuring of the school into an elementary school.** The principal told the IIT that two years ago the school was reconstituted as an elementary school for students in kindergarten through grade six, having previously been a middle school for students in grades seven through nine. She noted that many of the instructional staff are now teaching students that are in grade levels that are outside of their previous instructional experience. The team found that the restructuring has resulted in some teachers not feeling sufficiently confident as they attempt to implement the guided reading and the writing curriculum. Teachers shared with the team that they are not used to teaching students either how to read or to develop their early reading skills. The IIT observed, for example, teachers struggling with the use of age appropriate text for the group work as they taught students a specific reading strategy.

Learning at the School

- **The guidance counselors should implement the Second Step program consistently.** The principal noted that the school has adopted the Second Step initiative to help the school provide a supportive learning environment where students thrive. She noted, however, that she has not monitored the guidance staff to ensure that this initiative is being executed consistently and effectively. The principal indicated that this is due to the school's focus on supporting students who have been identified as at-risk. Teachers reported that Response to Intervention (RTI), the check and connect program, as well as the referral process have gone well, as the principal has been supportive. In some classrooms the IIT observed, there were set routines during morning meeting time, and students were using responsive classroom practices. However, the guidance staff noted that although they are supporting teachers and students, implementing the Second Step initiative effectively has been challenging because they have often been pulled away from teaching their Second Step lesson to address students who were in crisis.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Teachers of kindergarten and grades one through three told the IIT that they would like school leaders to provide supplemental resources to support their teaching of balanced literacy.** Teachers reported that they need supplemental materials because students enter kindergarten with varied backgrounds, and some students may not have been in a formal pre-school setting. Teachers stated that they want to supplement the reading curriculum with other reading support materials aligned with the balanced literacy approach.
- **Parents reported that they would like the school to provide additional academic support so that they can assist their children at home.** Parents said that they were unable to help their children with their reading and math homework because the approaches being used were different from those that were used when they were at school. They expressed concern that they may confuse their children if they use different strategies from those being taught in school.
- **Parents stated that they would like the school to eliminate some of the communication tools the school uses to communicate with families.** Parents told the IIT that different teachers use different means to communicate

with parents, including Class Dojo, Peach Jar E-Flyers, Parent Portal, Twitter, and Facebook and that it would be much easier for them if school leaders limited these applications to just one that was used by all teachers.

- **Students reported they would like to have flexible seating in all classrooms throughout the school.** Students stated that they want more flexible seating in their classroom because in those classrooms there are sofas and comfortable chairs that encourage them to interact with their peers during reading and other academic activities, including group work.
- **Students reported that they would like the school to provide a wider variety of activities to enhance their action-based learning experiences during the lunchtime recess.** Students shared that they would like more organized activities to engage in, whether they stay indoors or go outside. Students noted, for example, that they wanted to play games such as checkers or chess or mum ball.