

Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

# Final Report



<b>BEDS Code</b>	5802050600000
<b>School Name</b>	Cayuga School
<b>School Address</b>	865 Hawkins Avenue, Lake Grove, NY 11755
<b>District Name</b>	Sachem Central School District
<b>Principal</b>	Mr. Matthew Wells
<b>Dates of Visit</b>	April 15-17, 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:

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
2	1	1		1	4

Cayuga School serves 525 students in kindergarten to grade five.

## 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 45 classrooms during the visit.
- The OEE visited nine classrooms with the principal during the visit.
- Team members conducted interviews with students, staff, and parents.
- Team members examined documents provided by the school.
- In advance of the visit, the school provided results of a staff survey that 33 staff members (84 percent) completed.

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

1. During the 2018-19 school year, many staff members have supported student learning by using the technology secured by school leaders. For example, many students have participated in math, coding, and robotics opportunities through programs such as the Sphero program. Parents, teachers, and students said they are excited about the additional technology available in the building and some cited an increased use of laptops in many classes. Students added that they look forward to classes in which they use technology to enhance their learning.
2. The principal told the IIT that new math modules were introduced during the 2018-19 academic year and have been implemented schoolwide. The principal and teachers shared that they have embraced the new math program. Several teachers and the principal noted that exposure to the new curriculum has resulted in students demonstrating increased depth of knowledge of the math content being taught.
3. Recognizing the need to support student learning in math, the principal secured funding for and purchased manipulative kits for each student this school year. The team learned that students are now regularly using manipulatives to learn concepts and demonstrate their math knowledge. During the IIT's visits to math classrooms, students were engaged in using the manipulatives to complete math tasks.

## Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

### Systems for Improvement

- **The school should establish specific goals and priorities, as well as benchmarks to measure progress toward these goals.** The IIT learned that the school derived its goals for the 2018-19 school year from the district goals. The principal shared that the school did not develop additional school-specific goals, as this has been past practice. However, he explained to the team that the school's priorities for the current school year include a renewed focus on guided reading and the initial implementation of the math modules. Teachers shared that while guided reading has been a schoolwide initiative for several years, this year they were told that guided reading would need to be prioritized during three periods each day. In the future, the principal and his team should consider formally developing school-specific goals and priorities, with accompanying benchmarks to support the aligned implementation and progress monitoring of existing initiatives.
- **The school should create formal systems to ensure ongoing progress monitoring and continuous school improvement.** The principal has established routines that have enabled the school to run smoothly for more than ten years; however, many of the established procedures are informal. For example, one of the procedures that the principal and staff reported as impactful is the meeting between each teacher and the principal twice per year to review student literacy data. The team learned that this meeting enables the principal and teacher to discuss and determine additional ways to support each student. Teachers noted that this practice has ensured that no student's needs go unaddressed. To further ensure that all students' needs are met, in the future, the principal should formalize this practice and others to support a schoolwide approach to reviewing student progress data and using the data to improve teaching and learning and support students' social-emotional development. The principal should also consider creating small teams of educators to work with him on developing these systems to support schoolwide initiatives.

## Leadership and Organization at the School

- **The school should provide teachers with additional professional supports.** The IIT learned that the district provides professional development consultants in math and English language arts (ELA) three days per year at the school, and the school's remedial teachers provide in-class support to teachers as time permits. The team's interviews with the principal and teachers revealed that there is limited school-based professional development and a need and interest in additional school-based coaching and modeling to support curricular initiatives and student learning. Teachers shared with the IIT that they feel supported by the principal, noting that he does his best to fulfill any and all of their requests. However, they said that more training would be helpful. For example, teachers shared that they were provided initial training on the math modules but noted that more training is needed to support the workshop model approach. In the future, the school-based instructional leadership team should determine key instructional priorities connected to curricular initiatives, as well as a plan to provide increased in-class teacher support.
- **School leaders need to provide teachers with regular feedback on teaching and learning outside of the formal observation process.** The IIT learned in conversations with the principal and teachers that the principal conducts informal classroom visits. Additionally, the principal and teachers noted that the principal visits classrooms and sits with students to discuss what they are working on or to check on students' well-being. However, teachers are not always provided with feedback on the teaching and learning observed during these classroom visits. Teachers noted that when feedback on their teaching practice is provided, it is often verbally communicated and typically helpful. Building upon the culture of support that exists in the school building, in order to provide ongoing instructional guidance, the principal should consider developing a walkthrough schedule to support consistent visits to all classrooms with subsequent email feedback to teachers that acknowledges positive practices and identifies areas for growth.

## Learning at the School

- **Teachers should increase their use of higher-order questions to support rigorous student thinking.** During many class visits, the IIT observed questioning that was not designed to encourage deeper thinking and extended discussion among students. For example, many of the questions posed by teachers required only one-word answers. The team observed only a few instances in which a student was encouraged to expand upon a brief, underdeveloped answer or other students were asked to contribute additional information or share ideas. In the future, the principal should consider developing professional learning opportunities for all teachers on planning and delivering rigorous, higher-level questioning that leads to extended discussions among students and higher-level learning tasks.
- **Teachers should provide more opportunities for students to contribute to their own learning.** In the classrooms observed by the IIT, the lessons were primarily teacher-led, with the majority of students paying attention during the lesson and completing the work assigned. In some classrooms, students were provided with a list of tasks that they could choose from, but the team found limited evidence that students had been asked to contribute to those choices. During the student focus groups, students indicated that they would like increased choice in the books they read and to have more input in their seating arrangements so that they could work with different groups of students. In the future, teachers should work together to develop lesson plans that include multiple opportunities to promote student choice and self-direction and to elicit student input.

- **Teachers should plan lessons and instruction that provide students with challenging learning experiences.** In many observed classes, individual and small group work typically required students to complete worksheets, and many students completed the assignments without struggle. In some classes, the teacher spent a lot of time handing out materials before the next activity while students waited to work. Although all interviewed students shared that they love the school, some students indicated that the work is often too easy. During parent focus groups, parents expressed an interest in increased lesson challenge and academically demanding programs for their children. In the future, the principal and the instructional leadership team should consider developing and providing guidance to teachers on how to implement structured but flexible grouping of students to support differentiated and challenging learning experiences for all achievement levels within each class.

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

- **Teachers would like the school to administer additional assessments in all subjects and, given the new curriculum, especially in math.** Interviewed teachers said that it is difficult to provide feedback to students and parents without the benefit of data from more frequent assessments. Teachers noted that they may be able to participate in planning additional assessments by joining a committee during the summer or engaging in this task during their preparation periods.
- **Parents would like the school to provide more challenge for their children.** Interviewed parents said that many children need accelerated support. While these parents noted that teachers sometimes provide extra assignments, and they appreciate events such as the Math Olympiad, they said that this is an area of need.
- **Parents would like the school to have a centralized way to provide information about school and district events.** Parents shared that the principal and teachers use multiple and varied communication mechanisms including Remind, ClassDojo, and weekly letters sent home. However, parents expressed the view that it would be helpful if there were one communication structure that they could access to receive all pertinent school information.
- **Students would like a more flexible learning environment.** Interviewed students shared that they do not often have opportunities to work with different partners. These students said they would also like to sometimes be able to choose who they work with.
- **Parents would like the school to provide additional technology and tools to support their children’s learning.** Parents acknowledged the improvements and additions the school has recently made in the area of technology, such as the purchase of wireless laptop carts. However, parents added that additional resources are needed so that all students have access to computers in all classes and can engage in additional real-world tasks using technology.