

Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

Final Report



BEDS Code	530600010013
School Name	Paige Elementary School
School Address	104 Elliott Ave, Schenectady, NY 12304
District Name	Schenectady City School District
Principal	Deborah Price
Dates of Visit	April 16-18, 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	2	1	2	1	2

Paige Elementary School serves 507 students in grades pre-kindergarten to five.

Information About The Visit

- The visit was led by an Outside Educational Expert (OEE) and an OEE who was the representative from NYSED. The team also included a district representative.
- The team visited a total of 37 classrooms during the visit.
- The OEE visited ten classrooms with the interim principal and instructional supervisor during the visit.
- The second OEE visited six classrooms with the interim principal.
- 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, 23 staff members (44 percent) completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. The Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) learned during discussions with the school leaders and teachers that the principal has created a Turn-Around Room this year to support students who need short periods of time out of their classroom environment. The Turn-Around Room allows students to talk to adults about issues that concern them for a short period of time before they return to their classrooms. The principal stated that that approximately 15 students visit the Turn-Around-Room each day. As a result, the number of students that teachers send to the office daily has been reduced and school leaders have fewer behavior issues to address. Most students have their behavior turned around in a short period of time and then return to the classroom.
2. The IIT found while visiting classes in grade two that school leaders have placed students in three ability class groups for English language arts (ELA). As students worked in their ability groups, they listened carefully and followed teachers' instructions accurately while working on developing their speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. Student engagement was good because teachers designed activities that focused on developing reading and writing skills to meet the different achievement levels of students.
3. The pupil personal services team meets with school leaders weekly to discuss at-risk students. The team discusses approximately 40 students during each meeting and color-codes them to identify their level of risk. Teachers identify students and add their names to the list as concerns about their learning and behavior arise. These pupils' needs and difficulties are then highlighted to staff who work with them. Pupil personal services staff remove student names from the list as their behavior or academic achievements improve. Staff volunteer to monitor individual students, for example, by check and connects in the morning. Most recent data show that the number of students monitored by the pupil personal services team has decreased from 64 to 40 because behaviors are more effectively under control across the school.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **School leaders will need to develop a system to monitor school goals to ensure that improvements take place in the time allocated.** School leaders have developed a system to drive school improvement by identifying school priorities and turning them into goals. The IIT found that while activities are identified for improvement, these are not organized into incremental actions and benchmarks, which makes it difficult to measure progress toward reaching the goals.
- **School leaders should develop a system that allows them to walk through classrooms each week to check how well teachers are developing their instruction and then give them actionable feedback to improve their practices.** The IIT found that teaching practices varied across the school. Thus, there was a need for school leaders to observe teacher instruction more frequently through walkthrough classrooms and then to teachers with provide actionable feedback in order to support them in improving their pedagogy.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **School leaders should ensure that teachers use the daily professional learning community (PLC) time effectively.** The IIT found that PLC meetings do not typically start on time. During discussions with the IIT,

teachers stated there were no agendas for these daily PLC sessions and that school leaders did not often participate in PLCs. In the future, the school leader should visit PLC meetings weekly to ensure that agendas are in place, meetings start on time, and that teachers use the half hour each day productively.

- **School leaders will need to ensure that the location of classes in the building allows for the maximization of student learning.** The IIT found that a classroom for older students was located next to a Pre-K class and that as a result, Pre-K students were exposed to inappropriate language and observed behavior that was not always developmentally appropriate for their young age. In the future, school leaders should ensure that older students are situated closer in the building to students similar to their own ages.
- **School leaders should monitor teachers' use of the districts' high leverage practices to plan and deliver instruction.** School leaders stated that teachers received coaching and a handbook on the district's expected use of high leverage practices; however, the IIT found that typically teachers' instruction did not include the instructional expectations included in the High Leverage Practices Handbook, such as turn and talk to support student discussions. Further, when asked, teachers stated that they did not always follow the instructional expectations included, as many could not name any of the practices in the handbook.

Learning at the School

- **Teachers will need to use data to meet the needs of all students.** During classroom visits, the IIT found that many teachers did not use student performance data to plan instruction that meets the needs of all students. Teachers told the IIT that they mainly plan one lesson for all students. Students stated that in most classes there were students who struggled with their work, while others quickly finished and then waited for the lesson to move on. In the future, school leaders should support teachers in their use of student achievement data to plan instruction that meets the needs of all children in their classrooms.
- **Teachers should embed social and emotional learning skills into all areas of instruction and school life.** A review of discipline data demonstrated a large number of disciplinary incidents. During discussions, the team learned that school leaders are thinking about developing a Morning Meeting for students to focus on behavior, respect for others, and understanding the different cultures within the school. In the future, school leaders should ensure that all staff work together with students so that everyone knows why it is important to respect each other and the different cultures in the school and wider world.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Parents, teachers, and students reported that bullying incidents are regular occurrences.** Parents stated that some students are frequently bullied across the school. Teachers agreed that bullying did happen from time to time. Students spoke of many incidents of bullying and stated that they did not always report incidents to teachers. They stated that they know many students do not enjoy school because they are bullied. Students also said that sometimes, even when teachers deal with bullying incidents, the bullying does not stop.