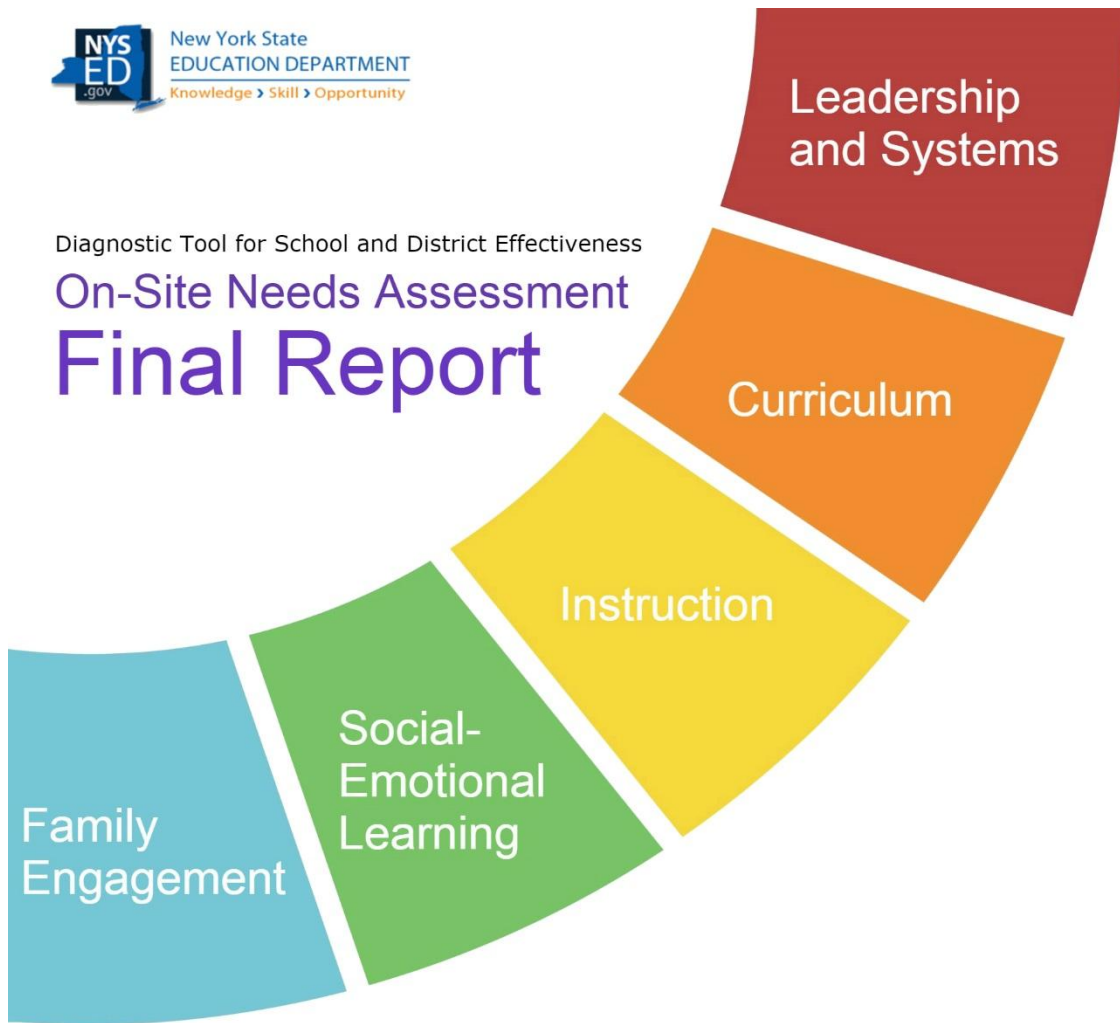


Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

# Final Report



<b>BEDS Code</b>	<b>580235060004</b>
<b>School Name</b>	<b>Bellport Middle School</b>
<b>School Address</b>	<b>35 Kreamer Street, Bellport, NY 11713</b>
<b>District Name</b>	<b>South County Central School District</b>
<b>Principal</b>	<b>Dr. Jamal Colson</b>
<b>Dates of Visit</b>	<b>May 29-31, 2019</b>



## 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	3	1	2

Bellport Middle School serves 1021 students in grades six to eight.

## 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 district representative shadow.
- The team visited a total of 32 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, including schoolwide data and teacher feedback.
- In advance of the visit, 37 staff members (35 percent) completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.

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

1. In September 2018, the principal in collaboration with teachers implemented a policy change that prohibited student use of cell phones during the school day. During the 32 class visits and in common areas, the IIT members did not see any students using their cell phones. This change of policy was prompted by teacher concerns that the use of cell phones by students served as a disruption during instructional time. Students noted that the introduction of the policy now makes it easier for them to focus in class.
2. During the 2018-19 school year, school social workers piloted a program in which they delivered five support sessions to students in grade six. The sessions were intended to further strengthen the school's social emotional learning (SEL) supports for students and included topics such as bullying prevention, the identification of school resources, and treating others with kindness. School data showed that his school year, grade six students have had fewer major disciplinary incidents when compared to students in grades seven and eight.
3. Starting in September 2018, the principal began emailing weekly schoolwide event calendars to parents to strengthen communications between school leaders and families. This initiative was implemented in response to a suggestion made by the school's shared decision-making committee. Each weekend, calendars are distributed to parents to announce events for the upcoming week. Parents reported that before the calendar was distributed, they had little knowledge of activities being conducted at the school. As a result of receiving the calendar, parents noted that they attend more school activities and are more prepared to support their children with school-related issues.

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

### Systems for Improvement

- **School leaders should establish a comprehensive Response to Intervention (RtI) program to meet the needs of struggling students.** The IIT found that the school's RtI program does not include a standardized process to assess students' need for tier two or tier three supports. Staff noted that some students receive tier three supports but acknowledged that a process for students to progress from the tier three supports has not yet been developed. Additionally, during class visits, the IIT did not observe teachers differentiating their lessons, a tier one support, to meet the varying needs of students. On New York State (NYS) ELA and math assessments for the 2017-18 school year, 59 and 61 percent of students scored at level 1, respectively.
- **Regular collaborative meetings should be held with key staff to drive the implementation of instructional initiatives.** The principal identified student discussions, group work, and student-centered classrooms as instructional initiatives for the 2018-19 school year. However, when asked, teachers did not consistently identify these same initiatives as the school's instructional priorities. Although the principal noted that the school's professional development program included training specific to the school's instructional initiatives, IIT members examined teachers' instructional practices during classroom visits and observed few teachers implementing the instructional initiatives. In the future, the principal should schedule regular meetings with school and staff leaders to generate collective agreement and effort related to the implementation of instructional initiatives.

## Leadership and Organization at the School

- **The principal should provide meaningful feedback to teachers to improve the school's instructional program.** The team confirmed that the principal provided some teachers with written feedback about their practice during this school year. However, the frequency and quality of the feedback varied. For example, many teachers shared that they had received only one piece of written feedback, while other teachers noted they had not yet received any instructional feedback from the principal. The principal acknowledged that he provides teachers with autonomy over their instructional programs and does not regularly offer teachers feedback related to schoolwide instructional initiatives.
- **The roles of assistant principals should encompass responsibilities intended to improve the quality of instruction in the school.** Teachers noted that they receive minimal feedback about their instructional practice from school leaders. For example, although assistant principals possess specific knowledge of the school's instructional programs, they do not provide teachers with regular and consistent feedback. For example, aside from conducting some classroom observations as prescribed by the school's Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) process, assistant principals told the IIT that they have not been included in discussions or activities directly related to the school's academic program. Their responsibilities include, but are not limited to, assigning substitute teacher coverage, coordinating transportation activities, creating schedules, and serving in positions such as the school's testing coordinator. Only one of twelve staff interviewed provided details of an instance in which an assistant principal provided meaningful instructional feedback after observing professional practice.

## Learning at the School

- **School leaders should work with teachers to develop a rigorous instructional program that is closely aligned to the levels required to ensure student success on quarterly and NYS assessments.** School leaders conducted an analysis comparing the grades awarded to students in courses to their performance on quarterly and NYS assessments. Although nearly 300 students had course grades that exceeded 85 percent, few students performed at mastery levels on the quarterly and NYS assessments associated with these courses. For example, on the NYS ELA assessment administered in the 2017-18 school year, 61 students scored a level 3 or 4. Similarly, on the NYS math assessment administered during the same year, 68 students scored a level 3 or 4. Students shared with the IIT that the tasks included on the quarterly and NYS assessments are often more challenging than those required to complete coursework.
- **Teachers should plan and present lessons that include learning activities that are interesting and engaging.** Of the 32 classrooms visited by the IIT, 28 of the observed lessons included tasks that required students to complete worksheets. In approximately 75 percent of classrooms in which students were engaged in such activities, worksheets included fill-in-the blank sentences and questions that required students to recall only literal information. Interviewed students noted that they complete packets of worksheets in nearly every class. Students expressed a sense of boredom at having to complete worksheets in most of their classes.
- **Teachers should plan lessons that contain more frequent opportunities for students to be actively involved in their learning.** During most classroom visits, the IIT observed that the instructional strategies used did not require students to be actively involved in lessons. Although group work is identified as one of the school's

focus initiatives, IIT members observed teacher-directed lessons in all but one classroom. Students reported that lessons are often not engaging, as they are mostly comprised of teachers leading class lectures.

- **Teachers should ensure lesson objectives are known to students and regularly assess students' mastery of specific skills throughout the lesson.** Although the principal noted that learning objectives were supposed to be posted and referenced to guide lessons, only 11 of 32 visited classrooms had learning objectives displayed. During observed lessons, the team found that the skill or content students were expected to learn was often not emphasized, and when asked, some students noted to IIT members that they were unclear about what they were supposed to be learning. Two teachers shared with the IIT that they assess students' mastery of skills based on students' ability to identify what they learned during the lesson, without the aid of a posted learning objective. During class visits, IIT members did not observe any teachers conducting assessments of student understanding aligned with learning objectives.

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

- **Several of the students interviewed told the IIT that their parents do not access report cards distributed via electronic communication.** The principal shared with the team that he is aware of this issue and plans to provide an opportunity for parents to request the delivery of report cards via post or electronic mail at multiple times during the coming school year.
- **Parents told the IIT that not all teachers consistently upload students' grades and assignments into the online portal.** Parents said that they would like to support their child's academic performance, but information about their students' current progress is not always available when they access the parent portal.