New York State
EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Knowledge > Skill > Opportunity

Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment
Final Report

Leadership and Systems

Curriculum

Instruction

Social-Emotional Learning

Family Engagement

BEDS Code	421800010004
School Name	Bellevue Elementary School
School Address	1607 South Geddes Street, Syracuse, NY 13207
District Name	Syracuse City School District
Principal	Sarah Cupelli
Dates of Visit	November 28-30, 2018

Purpose Of The Visit

A team organized by the New York State Education Department (NYSED) visited the school to help the school identify areas of need that are making long-term success a challenge and provide actionable recommendations to direct the school's work in the immediate future.

The report provides a critical lens to help the school best focus its efforts.

Information About The Visit

- Bellevue Elementary School serves 432 students in pre-kindergarten to grade five.
- The visit was led by an Outside Educational Expert (OEE) and a representative from NYSED. The team also included a district representative and a Special Education School Improvement Specialist (SESIS) representative.
- The team visited a total of 33 classrooms during the visit.
- The OEE visited 11 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 lesson plans, schoolwide data, teacher feedback, and student work.
- In advance of the visit, 40 staff members (100 percent) completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.
- For the past year, the school has been housed in a neighboring middle school building while the elementary school building undergoes renovations.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. The school leader has implemented many strategic operational management systems for hallway movement, student attendance, discipline, teacher professional development (PD), and data collection, and each functional area of the school has a detailed system for operation. In interviews with the team, the staff, students, and parents reported that they are familiar with each of these processes and believe that they have contributed to the successful operation of the school by decreasing student discipline referrals, improving attendance, and increasing instructional time.

2. The IIT found that the school has ample instructional resources to support success, including PD, multi-classroom leaders, content impact teachers, teacher peer visitation, and an instructional coach. The principal has systematically shifted the school schedule and funds in order to extend the school day and hire additional support teachers. These decisions have benefited both teachers and students by providing students in need with specific supports and teachers with the time to provide those supports.

3. School leaders, staff, students, and parents all spoke highly about the positive climate for learning and working in the school. In interviews with the IIT, the principal and staff adamantly stated that the current state of the school has improved as compared to past school years. The team observed that hallways were quiet, and classroom behaviors allowed teachers to teach and the students to learn.

4. During the IIT's visit, staff demonstrated strong relationships and collaboration. Teaching and support staff said that they look to each other for support and respect the knowledge of their colleagues. Staff consistently reported that these strong personal and professional relationships allow them to learn from each other. For

example, during morning planning time, the staff participate in training based on a yearly PD schedule created by the administrative leadership team and plan units and lessons together within grade-level and subject groups.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **The School Comprehensive Education Plan (SCEP) goals should be specific, measurable, ambitious, results-oriented, and timely (SMART) and include a clear action plan with benchmarks that can be used to monitor progress toward achieving the goals.** The administrative leadership team explained that because the 2017-18 Tenet 5 SCEP goal was unclear, they were unable to complete activities intended to drive improvement in this area. The principal stated that she would have liked to adjust this goal, as well as any future problematic goals, so that the improvement process could progress. The IIT shared with leaders that the SCEP is a living document and that, in the future, the school can adjust the SMART goals as needed, which applies to the 2018-19 SCEP moving forward.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **School leadership should develop a long-range plan to motivate and promote systems for success.** The IIT found that the school has yet to gain the long-term traction needed to make systems and practices reach an expected level of success. For example, teachers have had training in the use of higher-level and open-ended questioning, but practices continue to be inconsistent in this area. The IIT found that school leaders need to develop a plan to strengthen long-range systems, such as monitoring the implementation of instructional expectations, by continually promoting to the staff, students, or parents their process, motivation, and expected outcomes.

Learning at the School

- **Interdisciplinary planning and instruction should be enhanced, particularly in core content areas.** The IIT learned from teacher interviews and classroom observations that teachers of music, library, and physical education successfully incorporate math, history, and science into their lessons. The music, library, and physical education teachers spoke confidently about integrating other disciplines into their subject areas, and the IIT witnessed the teaching of history in the music classroom and math in the physical education classroom. The librarian discussed how science and technology are used within the library, as well. However, while the team observed some interdisciplinary lessons within the core content and special area classrooms, this practice was not common. The IIT noted that during the core content area lessons that incorporated other subjects, the students were attentive and could speak to the connections between the different subjects.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Parents would like the school to create a parent support group focused on family-specific topics.** These parents said that this would connect families throughout the school and highlight the school as a community center.

- **Parents and teachers would like the principal to identify a location where parents can come to the school and access resources.** Parents stated that at one time the school had a parent resource room, but there is currently no room available where parents can access resources and materials that they can use for information and assistance. The parents and principal suggested that moving back to the renovated building provides an opportunity to reinstate that support.
- **Teachers would like to increase the frequency with which community members visit the school and classrooms.** Teachers said that community members have sometimes visited classrooms to share information with the students about jobs and opportunities for the future. However, teachers stated that this happens infrequently, and teachers do not have the time to arrange the meetings. Previously, the school's community liaison would partner with the teachers and community organizations to identify individuals willing to visit the classrooms and school, but this position is currently unfilled.