

Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

# Final Report



BEDS Code	421800010039
School Name	Nottingham High School
School Address	3100 E. Genesee Street Syracuse, NY 13224
District Name	Syracuse City School District
Principal	David Maynard
Dates of Visit	April 30, 2019 - May 2, 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:

### High School Performance Indicators

4 Yr Grad. Rate <67%	Composite Performance Achievement Level	Average of 4-, 5-, and 6-year Graduation Rate Levels	Combined Composite Performance Achievement and Graduation Rate Level	English Language Proficiency Level	Average ELA and Math Academic Progress Level	Chronic Absenteeism Level	College, Career, Civic, Readiness (CCCR) Level
No	2	1	1	2	1	1	1

## 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 representative from the Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (RBERN).
- The team visited a total of 54 classrooms during the visit.
- The OEE visited 12 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 49 staff members (49 percent) completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.

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

1. Nottingham High School provides numerous opportunities for students to enroll in rigorous advanced coursework. The principal shared that the school currently offers 25 Syracuse University Project Advance (SUPA) and Advanced Placement (AP) courses. During classroom visits to SUPA and AP classes, the IIT saw students engaging in activities that effectively challenged their thinking and promoted critical reflection and student discourse. During conversations with students, school leaders, and staff, the IIT learned that students enrolled in SUPA and AP courses are now being accepted to highly competitive schools such as Brown University, West Point, Northwestern University, and Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
2. Members of the Nottingham High School community embrace diversity and foster an environment of acceptance. Parents, students, staff, and school leaders shared that this unique culture is one of the parts of the school that they value the most. School leaders ensure that students are made to feel they are a part of the school community by hosting numerous multicultural events throughout the school year. For example, during the visit the IIT viewed a bulletin posted throughout the building pertaining to a school event linked to Ramadan. The IIT also found that diverse perspectives are integrated into some lessons. For example, in an English class students explored how gender, race, and class intersect in geopolitical spaces. The IIT observed students offering reflections on the content using western and gender-based perspectives.
3. The principal has organized an approach to humanities that affords English language arts (ELA) and social science teachers with opportunities to collaborate and create cross-curricular projects that enable students to apply the standards to real-world contexts. This partnership has promoted the practice of teacher collaboration across all grade levels. During visits to team meetings, the IIT observed teachers working in teams to develop projects relevant to current events, with specific requirements and performance metrics. During parent interviews, the IIT learned that as a result of this approach there has been an increased interest in the humanities from the students. Teachers who teach content areas outside of the humanities and ELA disciplines shared that they would like to adapt this same practice of collaboration to their instructional areas.

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

### Systems for Improvement

- **School leaders should implement a systematic intervention to support students who struggle with their reading.** The IIT found that while the school has large English as a new language (ENL) and special education populations, there is not a structured intervention system in place to address the individual reading needs of these students. From conversations with school leaders and a review of the School Comprehensive Education Plan (SCEP), the IIT learned that targeted small group instruction is a professional development goal that the school has identified to address the different instructional levels of students. However, the IIT did not observe students engaging in small group instruction within many of the classrooms visited.
- **School leaders should track the progress made against specific SCEP goals using measurable benchmarks.** The IIT found that while the school has identified strategies to improve student performance and build teacher capacity, the implementation of these initiatives has not been measured through incremental action steps and many of these initiatives are still at the initial phase. In addition, the IIT found that many of the initiatives are

being implemented school-wide rather than focusing on those groups of students that require the most urgent support.

- **School leaders should collaborate with the school leadership team to ensure that staff know what the school-wide academic, graduation, and attendance goals are and what progress has been made in achieving them.** The IIT learned through discussions that some staff are unsure of the school goals and do not know exactly what progress has been made toward achieving those goals for the 2018-19 school year. During conversations with the school leaders, the IIT found that clearly defined academic goals for courses in the accountability model have not been collaboratively set and that the goals have primarily been prioritized using a holistic approach to preparing students for college or future careers.

## Leadership and Organization at the School

- **The principal will need to establish an instructional leadership team with representation from all disciplines.** During conversations with the principal, the IIT learned that while the school has a school leadership team, the team serves more in the capacity of a shared decision making body and does not have representation from all subject areas and special populations. This limits the principals' ability to use the team to disseminate and support school-based initiatives in all content areas. The IIT also learned that the school leadership team does not regularly collaborate to make instructional decisions for the school based on student performance data and school-wide trends.
- **The school leaders should identify teacher leaders that have the capacity to support instructional initiatives and provide opportunities that allow them to support school staff.** School leaders shared that the training support for instructional initiatives has been provided during professional development sessions, in online module form, and during some team meetings. During conversations with teachers, the IIT learned that some teachers are currently participating in inter-visitations with a focus on specific instructional initiatives, but this practice is not widespread, and some teachers do not yet know what some of the school's instructional practices should look like in practice for their content area. The IIT found that the school has a full-time instructional coach and a part-time personalized learning coach to support a staff of nearly 100 teachers. School leaders shared with the IIT that there are teachers on staff capable of supporting other teachers with the implementation of instructional initiatives within a daily schedule that permits teacher collaboration.
- **The school principal and vice principals should norm classroom observation look-fors and observation feedback practices for both formal observations and classroom walkthroughs.** School leaders shared that they each conduct formal evaluations for an identified group of teachers and that classroom walk-throughs are conducted periodically. Teachers shared that they receive written feedback for formal evaluations but while some teachers have received written feedback for classroom walkthroughs, others have not. A review of classroom observation feedback revealed that some school leaders are providing teachers with strengths and recommendations for future actions as part of their feedback whereas others are not. Teachers shared that uniformly receiving commendations and recommendations after each classroom visit would be beneficial to the development of all teachers.
- **The school leaders should deploy and enable specialized support staff to more effectively support teachers and students.** Staff and parents shared that additional social-emotional learning (SEL) support is necessary to meet the needs of students. During conversations with school leaders, the IIT learned that while the guidance counselors provide services to students, their focus is primarily academic. In addition, the IIT found that the

school counselors, social worker, and psychologist do not provide ongoing SEL training and support to teachers. As a result, teachers are not always able to identify atypical student behaviors and provide the specialist supports that these students need. Teacher support for students with disabilities and ENL students is also not always sufficiently informed by regular conversations with specialist ENL and special education teachers.

## Learning at the School

- **School leaders and teachers should develop and implement a school-level assessment system to measure student mastery of content standards.** During interviews with school leaders, the IIT learned that while they administer the district quarterly assessments, they have not yet adopted the practice of collecting data at the school level to track student mastery of the content standards for each subject in a systematic way. Some teachers shared that they have created their mid-term assessments using former New York State (NYS) assessment items, but this practice is not implemented for all courses.
- **Teachers should provide instruction that is rigorous and closely aligned to the content standards.** During classroom visits, the IIT found that in many classrooms teachers were focused on students acquiring procedural knowledge rather than requiring students to analyze and reflect on content. For example, in some math classrooms, students were provided with real-world scenarios for which they calculated values using a formula, but they were not asked to interpret their solutions within the context of the problem. During visits to some ENL classrooms, the IIT found that vocabulary was being taught in isolation rather than being connected to the grade-level content standards.
- **Teachers should regularly use strategies to promote student collaboration and discourse during lessons.** During classroom visits, the IIT observed some classrooms in which students had opportunities to collaborate with their peers and engage in student-led discussions. Most lessons were teacher-driven, and students focused on the completion of independent tasks during the work period. The team observed that while students were seated in teams, eager to assist their peers, the assignments rarely required students to discuss or to complete a task collaboratively. While accountable talk was identified as a professional development priority for the 2018-19 school year, the IIT observed few classrooms in which supports to promote student discourse were visible or in use by students. The IIT observed that in many classrooms with ENL students there were few opportunities provided for the student discourse required to support language development.
- **Teachers should use student performance data more effectively to plan learning activities that are closely matched to the needs of the students.** Differentiated instruction is an instructional priority for the 2018-19 school year, but the IIT observed few classes in which students were receiving targeted small group instruction or provided with differentiated content. During conversations with the school leaders and from a review of lesson plans, the IIT learned that while some teachers are targeting the development of skills for specific students based on data, others are not adapting instruction based on data. While observing teacher team meetings, the IIT found that the focus of conversations around data varied by team. Some teams discussed how the data will inform Regents review topics, while other teams focused on how data would be used to adjust instruction for the 2019-20 school year.

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

- **Teachers would like more opportunities to visit and learn from the team meetings of other disciplines and the classrooms of their peers.** While school leaders schedule opportunities for teachers to collaborate by department and provide opportunities for them to visit the classrooms of their peers by request, teachers would like opportunities to observe their peers in practice in a more systematic way. Teachers shared that some staff members are uncomfortable with classroom visits from their peers and believe the practice of classroom inter-visitation needs to become an established part of the school culture.
- **Teachers would like more support with implementation of instructional initiatives as they relate to their disciplines.** During teacher interviews and interviews with school leaders, the IIT learned that teachers were provided with training on instructional initiatives such as differentiated instruction, personalized learning, and student ownership and reflection. However, some teachers shared that they do not always know how to implement the strategies in their specific disciplines and that additional opportunities to see the initiatives in practice would help to build their capacity.
- **Parents believe that students would benefit from interacting with teacher mentors.** Parents shared that staff work to build positive relationships with students, but stated that connecting a small group of students to one staff member with the responsibility for assisting students with college and career decisions, community service, expeditionary learning, and developing leadership skills would be helpful to students. Parents also shared that they would like the teacher mentors to serve as a point of contact for parents.
- **Parent would like teachers to communicate student concerns and progress more quickly.** The IIT learned during parent and student interviews that while the school staff communicate with parents when there are behavioral concerns, they rarely update parents on the academic progress of students between required reporting periods. Parents also shared that teacher responses are not always timely when a parent makes an inquiry.
- **Parents and students would like events to be held in various locations and at different times throughout the day.** Parents shared that the school hosts events throughout the school year to engage parents, but attendance at these events can be challenging due to the distance between home and school for some families. Students shared that their parents would often like to attend school events, but their work schedules prevent them from attending.