

Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

Final Report



BEDS Code	440102060005
School Name	Round Hill Elementary School
School Address	1314 NY-208, Washingtonville, NY 10992
District Name	Washingtonville Central School District
Principal	Steven Kiel
Dates of Visit	April 23-25, 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	1

Round Hill Elementary School serves 433 students in pre-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 two district representatives and a district consultant.
- The team conducted 38 classrooms visits.
- The OEE visited six 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 parent flyers, schedules, schoolwide data, and teacher feedback.
- In advance of the visit, 38 staff members (76 percent percent) completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. In an effort to support the school's literacy focus, the school adopted and implemented the Writer's Workshop program during the 2018-19 school year. A literacy consultant provides grade-level professional development (PD) to teachers on a monthly basis. Teachers interviewed by the IIT stated that the implementation of Writer's Workshop has been beneficial in helping them improve their writing instruction, and they have seen improvement in their students' writing.
2. The principal makes parents feel welcomed and provides opportunities for their voices to be heard through the monthly principal's Success to Connect meetings. For example, the principal stated that as a result of parents having raised various concerns about their children's social-emotional development during Success to Connect, he now invites the school social worker to regularly attend these meetings. The principal also began scheduling the meetings in the evening so that more parents could attend. Parents interviewed by IIT shared that the school offers a supportive and loving environment for their children, and they feel that their voices are heard.
3. The school was featured in *Dirt Magazine*, a local magazine about people living sustainably, acting responsibly, and thinking locally, and named one of the greenest schools in 2019 for its recycling program and garden plans. Students in grade five were recognized for collecting more than 2,000 bottles to recycle. As part of the Washingtonville Events Council activity, Wabbitville, members of the community were encouraged to drop off their recyclables to the Round Hill Table, which resulted in students collecting 2,049 bottles and cans. All donations have helped to fund the new playground that is being built through the Greater Washingtonville Lions Club.
4. In the first quarter of the 2018-19 school year, students in grade four practiced the act of bartering by holding a bartering day event. This activity highlighted lessons learned during units focusing on Native Americans and Colonial New York. Students created storefronts at their desk that consisted of homemade items, toys, baked goods, and more. Students were asked to think back to a time when goods and services might have been exchanged without the use of money and to consider the ideas of needs versus wants, supply and demand, and the concept of the overall value of an item or service.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **The school needs to establish explicit goals and benchmarks that can be used to continually measure the academic achievement and growth of students.** The IIT was unable to identify how the school measures student growth and progress towards the mastery of the New York State Next Generation Learning Standards. Interviewed teachers shared that they administer benchmark assessments to measure growth in the reading program, but there are no assessments to measure student attainment of grade-level standards in other program areas. The principal confirmed that goals and benchmarks aligned to State standards have not yet been developed for the school and there is no specific mechanism for measuring progress toward student mastery.
- **The principal should establish coherent schoolwide classroom structures and routines.** The IIT found that classroom structures and routines vary across the school. In most visited classrooms, teachers posted on the

board the meeting times for special classes, such as music and art, and a list of subject areas but did not block out dedicated times for instruction of core subjects. Students interviewed by the team shared that they often feel rushed moving from one activity to another because they are not aware of specific times for one subject to end and the next subject to begin. Students stated that breaks between activities would help with lesson transitions. Interviewed parents stated that they would like clear expectations established for instruction throughout the school day because their children are sometimes anxious due to what they perceive as a lack of routine.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **School leaders should provide informal instructional feedback to teachers on a regular basis.** Interviewed teachers stated that they rarely receive feedback about their instruction from the school leaders. They added that they would welcome more feedback on classroom practices and ways to improve their craft. The principal acknowledged that while he visits classrooms, he does not usually provide teachers with informal feedback. However, he said that he would like to make this area a priority. The assistant principal shared that she would welcome more opportunities to support teachers in achieving their instructional goals. In the future, the principal should consider creating a weekly walkthrough schedule for school leaders, providing feedback to staff, analyzing the feedback, and determining next steps for instruction.
- **The school leaders should take on a greater role as the instructional leaders of the school.** When asked by the IIT, teachers were unable to identify any specific staff members that they considered to be the school's primary sources of instructional support. The principal, assistant principal, and teachers shared that there are no clearly defined instructional leadership roles for the school leaders, explaining that much of their time is spent handling student discipline issues and meeting with parents. Although teachers shared that the school leaders are supportive, open to suggestions, listen to their concerns, and believe in their capacity as educators, teachers also stated that they rely heavily on colleagues and the internet for instructional support.
- **The principal should provide teachers with an instructional framework to guide the planning and delivery of instruction.** The IIT observed in class visits that the quality and structure of teachers' instruction varied from classroom to classroom. However, in most observed classrooms, instruction was teacher-directed with few opportunities for a gradual release of instruction to students through the modeling of learning, having students work with peers, and engaging in discussions around the content presented. The principal stated that teachers have not been provided with specific lesson plan components to align with learning standards and their instructional delivery. Teachers confirmed that they complete lesson plans but do not have a framework with specific components to guide their planning and instruction.
- **The principal should identify and communicate clear instructional priorities and schoolwide expectations.** The IIT could not identify clear school priorities and schoolwide expectations. Teachers interviewed by the team stated that they are not clear about the school's instructional priorities or the principal's expectations but would benefit from knowing what specifically is expected of them. They stated that they mostly collaborate with their grade-level colleagues to get ideas and create team priorities and expectations. However, teachers shared that they would like guidance to help them plan and implement next steps for student learning in all subject areas. In interviews with the team, the principal stated that the school is focused on many initiatives, including problem-based learning and flexible scheduling, but no specific foci for teaching and learning at the school had yet been identified.

- **The principal needs to communicate clear expectations to teachers for problem-based learning.** The principal reported that only a small percentage of staff have been provided with PD to understand the structures of problem-based learning, and those staff members have informally shared the process with other colleagues. However, teachers interviewed by the IIT shared that they do not have a clear understanding of the principal's expectations for their implementation of problem-based learning and what it should look like in practice in their classrooms on a daily basis. In class visits, the IIT observed little evidence of the implementation of problem-based learning. The principal shared that an element of the problem-based learning process is the infusion of technology in classrooms. However, the IIT observed students using computers for the Zearn Math program but not as part of the problem-based learning process.

Learning at the School

- **Teachers should plan and deliver instruction in a manner that promotes greater student intellectual engagement and ownership of instruction.** In some observed classrooms, all students worked independently for long stretches of time and then waited for instructions from the teacher after completing their work. In most observed classrooms, the expected learning outcomes were posted but not discussed with students. When asked by the IIT, many students were not able to describe what they were learning or any expectations for the lesson. The team noted a lack of student engagement during many lessons and little student involvement in their own learning. In addition, interviewed students expressed the desire to use manipulatives as a tool for their own learning as well as the opportunity to read books of their choice for longer periods of time.
- **Teachers need to incorporate checks for understanding in their lessons.** In some classrooms, the teachers conferred with students on an individual basis to see if they grasped the concept. However, in most classrooms observed by the IIT, few checks for understanding, such as exit tickets or targeted questions, were used throughout the lesson to gauge the level of student understanding. Although the principal told the IIT that checks for understanding is an area of focus for the school, the team did not find this to be common practice across the school. Interviewed students stated they know how they are progressing in their learning based on their report cards. In the future, the school would benefit from implementing targeted checks for understanding as a part of instruction to determine if students have mastered the concepts or if the lesson needs be retaught.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Students, teachers, and parents would like the school to hold more assemblies.** During interviews with the IIT, students, parents and teachers shared their desire to have more whole-school celebrations, in addition to the grade-level assemblies, to celebrate students' achievements and increase school pride.
- **Parents would like the school to provide more math workshops so that they are better able to assist their children.** Interviewed parents shared that they struggle to assist their children at home with their math homework and that they need a deeper understanding of the current math curriculum in order to help their children at home. Parents stated that they would also benefit from an informational document that provides examples or websites they could access to explain the mathematical concepts.
- **Parents would like additional time to meet with teachers.** Parents stated that currently only one parent-teacher conference is held per year and no progress reports are issued between reports cards. They said that

having a second parent conference scheduled closer to the issuance of report cards would help them learn more about how their children are progressing. Parents also said that they would like to have time to meet with their child's teacher before the first day of school.

- **Parents would like children to have more time provided to eat lunch.** Interviewed parents stated that there is not enough time for their children to eat their lunches because the lines in the cafeteria are long. Additionally, parents shared that their children often choose to eat sandwiches that they bring from home instead of hot lunches because by the time they are served, they do not have enough time left to eat the lunch.
- **Parents and students would like the school to offer more after-school clubs and summer activities for students.** Parents and students interviewed by the IIT stated that they would like to have additional opportunities for after-school activities and clubs that are free of charge. Parents and students stated that many activities are offered in the morning but have limited capacity or are offered after school for a substantial fee. Parents also said they would like to see additional supports offered for children who need remediation. Parents further stated that it would be helpful if the school provided students with a packet of work to complete over the summer to prepare for the next grade level.
- **Teachers would like to take on leadership roles.** Teachers stated that they have few opportunities to assume specific leadership roles, and they would like to take on roles such as grade-level lead or team leader. Teachers shared that they often volunteer in any capacity needed but would welcome more formal leadership opportunities.