

Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

Final Report



BEDS Code	210302040003
School Name	West Canada Valley Junior-Senior High School
School Address	5447 NY-28, Newport, NY 13416
District Name	West Canada Valley Central School District
Principal	Jeremy Kozak
Dates of Visit	May 7-9, 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
2	1	1		1	3

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	3	4	3		1	4	4

West Canada Valley Junior-Senior High School serves 325 students in grades seven to twelve.

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.
- The team visited a total of 19 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, teacher feedback, and student work.
- In advance of the visit, 30 staff members (96 percent) completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon

1. The school community is proud of the school's history and traditions. The Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) learned that many parents and some staff were once students at the school. Interviewed parents stated that they have passed on the strong sense of pride they have for the school to their children.
2. Recognizing the need to expand the subject offerings available to students for the upcoming 2019-20 school year, the principal reported that the school had received final approval from the Board of Education in April 2019 to provide access to online courses delivered by outside providers. Teachers, parents, and students told the team that they had expressed a need for more class offerings and were appreciative of the principal's efforts. This expansion of course offerings provides more opportunity for the students of this small school and district.
3. The school ensures that students with disabilities are fully connected with the school through academic and social emotional learning opportunities. For example, targeted academic supports have provided the assistance needed for students to be successful in general education classes, and assessment results for this student group have improved over previous school years.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **The school should develop a system to routinely recognize students who improve academically and behaviorally.** The IIT learned in discussions with the principal, staff, and students that the only recognition system the school has is for students who achieve high honor or honor roll and students who excel in sports. The recognition for high honor and honor roll occurs at the end of each marking period, and for sports at the end of each season, at an assembly. To qualify for honor roll, a student must have a grade average of 88. Teachers stated that it is common for only the highest-achieving students to receive recognition, and many students are not getting recognized for growth or other achievements. Students stated that they would like to be recognized more often, especially when they improve but do not attain a grade average of 88. Additionally, students stated that there is no system to recognize students within individual classrooms for improved achievement, and no programs throughout the school to recognize students for improved behavior. The IIT saw little student work posted in the classrooms or other forms of recognition intended to celebrate individual students for doing well on academic tasks or exceeding behavioral expectations.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **The principal should conduct walkthroughs and share the walkthrough data with staff in order for staff to reflect on their instruction.** The IIT learned in interviews with the principal and teachers that informal walkthroughs are not conducted to observe teacher practice and student learning. Currently, the teachers receive two formal observations a year. However, the teachers stated that they do not typically receive feedback that they can use to improve their teaching following these visits and would welcome frequent, actionable feedback from the principal. Teachers stated that they personally reflect on their own teaching and actions to make improvements in their practice, but their reflections are not based on data or feedback from

the principal. The IIT found that because walkthrough data is not collected and the results shared with the staff, teachers do not have opportunities for meaningful conversations with the principal or each other about the quality of their teaching.

Learning at the School

- **A schoolwide written curriculum should be developed for each subject area.** The IIT's review of documents and discussions with the principal and teachers revealed that the school, as well as the district, does not have a formal curriculum. The teachers have created their own instructional programs and curricula based only on the New York State (NYS) standards instead of formalizing and aligning a common curriculum based on both the needs of the school's students and NYS standards. Teachers reported that they have created their own curricula but have not aligned it vertically with other grade levels and horizontally within individual grade levels. Some teachers stated that they have taken the initiative to align their lessons with those of other teachers of different subject areas on their own without scheduled time to do the work. Teachers shared that they would like additional time to create a comprehensive curriculum; however, both the school leaders and teachers noted that scheduling for this has been difficult.
- **Classroom instruction should be more student focused.** The IIT found in classroom visits that most instruction was teacher led and included minimal student direction or interaction during lessons. For example, most instruction took the form of lecture, during which students did not have opportunities to voice their thinking or otherwise interact in the learning process. Questioning typically required students to recall basic facts and concepts. When students were asked questions that required extending thinking, they were rarely allowed appropriate time to process, discuss, and respond. On many occasions the first student who arrived at the correct answer was allowed to respond or the answer was given to the students without additional discussion. Interviewed students shared that they would like more hands-on learning and fewer worksheets to complete; several students stated that they are given too many worksheets and not enough group work. Teachers expressed the view that in most lessons there is not enough time for productive group work to occur.
- **Teachers should ensure that students have fully grasped concepts taught before moving on with the lesson.** The IIT observed in classroom visits that checks for student understanding did not occur throughout most lessons. In many visited classrooms, students were not provided time to process what they were learning, and the lesson moved forward regardless of whether students understood the content. For example, in some classes, a concept was quickly explained, students were asked if they understood, and the lesson moved forward without further discussion. Students in multiple classes shared that some teachers do not stop to check if they understand what they are learning. Formative assessments, such as exit tickets, were observed being used in only two classrooms. School leaders confirmed that the use of multiple ways of checking for understanding, including closure activities such as exit tickets, is not common practice at the school.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Parents and students stated that the transition from elementary to middle school and from middle school to high school is difficult for some students.** During focus groups with the IIT, both parents and students stated that students often have difficulty transitioning to an increased workload and new expectations when they move from one school level to the next. Often new expectations and procedures, which they are expected to follow, are not explained to them, specifically those related to how students move throughout the building

and how their work should be prepared and materials organized. They suggested that the school provide the students with social, organizational, and time management skills, either through assemblies, counseling sessions, or schoolwide programs, to assist with the transition.

- **Parents raised a concern regarding the inconsistency of teachers' grading policies and the percentage weight that each teacher applies to student work and activities such as homework, projects, class participation, and group work.** Parents also expressed an interest in the creation of a school- or district-wide grade weighting policy to help alleviate the confusion and subjectivity of grading overall. Parents stated that the grading from teacher to teacher and grade to grade is not the same. They feel that grading is partly subjective and that grading throughout the subjects, grade levels, and school as a whole should be consistent.