



The University of the State of New York
The State Education Department

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)



BEDS Code	441600010009
School Name	Horizons on the Hudson Elementary School
School Address	137 Montgomery Street, Newburgh, NY 12550
District Name	Newburgh Enlarged City School District
School Leader	Lisa Buon
Dates of Review	October 5-6, 2016
Date of Return Visit	December 14, 2016
School Accountability Status	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Focus School
Type of Review	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SED Integrated Intervention Team (IIT)



School Information Sheet for Horizons on the Hudson Elementary School

School Configuration (2014-15 school report card data)					
Grade Configuration	K-5	Total Enrollment	398	SIG Recipient	No
Types and Number of English Language Learner Classes (2016-17)					
# Transitional Bilingual	0	# Dual Language	0	# Self-Contained English as a Second Language	0
Types and Number of Special Education Classes (2016-17)					
# Special Classes	4	# SETSS	1	# Integrated Collaborative Teaching	6 -1/2 time
Types and Number of Special Classes (2016-17)					
# Visual Arts	1	# Music	1	# Drama	0
# Foreign Language	1	# Dance	0	# CTE (tech facilitator)	0
School Composition (2014-15 school report card data)					
% Title I Population		82%	% Attendance Rate		93%
% Free Lunch		73%	% Reduced Lunch		6%
% Limited English Proficient		12%	% Students with Disabilities		14%
Racial/Ethnic Origin (2014-15 school report card data)					
% American Indian or Alaska Native		0	% Black or African American		35%
% Hispanic or Latino		42%	% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander		2%
% White		15%	% Multi-Racial		5%
Personnel (2016-2017)					
Years Principal Assigned to School		10	# of Assistant Principals		1
% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate		1	% Teaching Out of Certification		1
% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience		15	Average Teacher Absences (2015-16)		9
Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2014-15)					
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4		23	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4		20
Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (4th Grade)		41	Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (8th Grade)		NA
Overall NYSED Accountability Status					
Priority School			Local Assistance Plan		
Focus School (indicate subgroups identified below)		X	In Good Standing		
Focus School Identified Subgroups					
	Black/African American				
	Economically Disadvantaged				
<p>SCHOOL PRIORITIES AS WRITTEN BY THE SCHOOL:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase the number of students receiving Level 3s and 4s on the NYS ELA and math exams by at least 3%. 2. Continue to advocate tirelessly to the district for (1) our ENL and AIS services to be in NYS compliance and (2) adequate staffing for our students with special needs to receive the services mandated by their IEPs in a timely manner with fidelity. 3. Increase student achievement by providing engaging classroom environments that meet the needs of all learners. 					

Purpose of the visit

This school was visited by the State Education Department Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) because of its low performance.

The purpose of this review is to provide the school with feedback regarding the practices across the school and to provide a number of actionable recommendations to direct the school's work in the immediate future.

This report is being provided as a feedback tool to assist the school and to help identify areas for improvement. These areas can address the subgroups identified or they may be broader and cover additional subgroups or the entire school. NYSED recognizes that there are dedicated staff members at the school committed to the success of the students. The report below provides a critical lens to help the school best focus its efforts.

Information about the review

- The review was co-led by an Outside Educational Expert (OEE) and a representative from the New York State Education Department. The team also included a district representative.
- The review team visited a total of 58 classrooms during the two-day review.
- The OEE visited eight classrooms with the Principal during the review.
- Reviewers conducted focus groups with students, staff, and parents.
- Reviewers examined documents provided by the school, including curriculum maps, lesson plans, schoolwide data, teacher feedback, and student work.
- In advance of the review, 25 (63%) staff members completed a DTSDE pre-review survey conducted by NYSED.

The Review Team concluded that the school's current systems and practices most closely align with Stage Two on the DTSDE Rubric.

SUCCESSSES WITHIN THE SCHOOL THAT THE SCHOOL SHOULD BUILD UPON:

1. The school leader, supported by school staff, has initiated actions, including home visits and a rewards system, to improve the attendance of students who have been absent for more than 20 days. Staff reported that since implementing these initiatives attendance of this sub-group of students rose by four percent during the 2015-16 school year, and overall attendance for all students has improved.
2. School leaders recognized a need to develop intervention programs to decrease suspension rates, particularly for specific groups of students. The school leaders reported that data showed that African American girls had a higher rate suspension than most other students. The school leader introduced a mentoring program for this group and early data indicated that none of the students who regularly attended the program were suspended during the 2015-16 academic year. In addition, overall school suspensions fell from 66 in 2014-15 to 26 in 2015-16.
3. The school leader and teachers have formed positive relationships with many families. During the review, more than 50 parents and grandparents attended a breakfast meeting with school leader and the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT). Parents spoke favorably about the level of support that teachers

provide to their children. Additionally, parents told the IIT that they enjoy coming to events at the school, and staff are responsive to their concerns.

Tenet 2 School Leader Practices and Decisions: Visionary leaders create a school community and culture that lead to success, well being, and high academic outcomes for all students via systems of continuous and sustainable school improvement.

Recommendation for Tenet 2 – School Leader Practices and Decisions:

Starting October 17, 2016, the school leader and assistant leader, supported by the district, should:

- provide individual feedback to teachers following walk-throughs in mathematics targeted on how well teachers are meeting the needs of students in different ability groupings;
- conduct follow-up walk-throughs to provide further guidance; and
- identify areas of good practice in mathematics within the school and provide opportunities for teachers to observe good practice.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- The school leader reported that although she and the assistant principal (AP) conduct regular walk-throughs focusing on student engagement, they do not routinely provide individual feedback to teachers. A few teachers reported to reviewers that they had asked for and received feedback from school leaders. In addition, these teachers shared that they had made adjustments in their instruction because of the feedback they received. However, most teachers interviewed by the IIT reported that they needed more in-depth feedback to help them improve their practice. A review of observations reports showed that comments were brief and did not provide enough details to guide teachers in making improvements in their instruction.
- The school leader acknowledged that she and the AP rarely conduct follow-up visits to target issues previously identified during walk-throughs. During discussion with the IIT, some teachers reported that they would benefit from targeted feedback on areas of instruction they lacked confidence in, such as mathematics instruction or in areas that were new to them, such as developing and implementing cross-curricular lessons.
- The school leader reported that she occasionally utilizes teachers who have demonstrated expertise in particular instructional practices to support and guide teachers who are new to the school. However, the school leader reported that she has not systemically utilized these teachers to model best practices and share resources with their colleagues who are not new, but might benefit from this type of peer support.
- Lesson observations by the school leader and reviewers showed that many teachers are struggling to plan and implement math lessons that incorporate different strategies to address students' varying ability levels. The IIT saw a few examples of instructional practices that promote students' problem solving skills, such as a lesson in which the teacher allowed students to work in groups and then explain to the class how they solved a math problem. However, in the vast majority of plans reviewed by the IIT, the learning objectives and activities were the same for all students, regardless of their starting points. As a result, during instruction, some students completed their assignments quickly and appeared bored, while other students struggled to complete their assignment.

Tenet 3 Curriculum Development and Support: The school has rigorous and coherent curricula and assessments that are appropriately aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) for all students and are modified for identified subgroups in order to maximize teacher instructional practices and student learning outcomes.

Recommendation for Tenet 3 – Curriculum Development and Support:

Starting October 21, 2016, senior leaders, supported by the district and by teacher-volunteers, should use planning time to provide guidance and modelling to teachers in using assessment data to plan mathematics lessons that take account of the varied needs of students within classes.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- The school leader stated that the use of data to plan for instruction was a school priority. The school leader also reported that not all teachers use data to plan lessons that address a range of ability levels, particularly in mathematics where student achievement is lowest. During discussions with reviewers, teachers said that they required further support on how to use data to plan and modify lessons to support students' needs, especially in mathematics. Some teachers reported that they found it easier to assess students' work and modify their plans in English language arts than in mathematics. They also reported that in mathematics teachers mainly use assessments they design, but in guided reading teachers use a combination of their own assessments and a commercial program to establish starting points for students. The school leader told reviewers that the district has identified a commercial assessment program for math and plans are in place to have coaches from the district provide training and modelling to teachers on how to use data generated from this program to plan lessons.
- A review of lessons plans showed that most teachers do not use data to plan instruction. Although reviewers noted some examples in teachers using assessment data to group students by ability levels in guided reading plans, this is not typical across classrooms and grade levels in the school. Lesson plans reviewed by the IIT and interviews with the school leader confirmed that teachers did not use student data to plan activities to meet students. Teachers' plans typically did not include any accommodations or references to data used to provide alternative activities. Additionally, most plans did not include extension activities for students working at or above grade level. In many classes observed by the IIT, planned activities typically did not meet the needs of all students.
- The school leader indicated that in classes where teachers are using available data to plan and modify instruction, students' reading levels have increased such as in grade one. However, reviewers and the school leader agreed that most teachers require more support in using data to inform instruction. The school leader also indicated that teachers who are having success in using data could be utilized more to model practices for their colleagues.

Tenet 4 Teacher Practices and Decisions: Teachers engage in strategic practices and decision making in order to address the gap between what students know and need to learn, so that all students and pertinent subgroups experience consistent high levels of engagement, thinking, and achievement.

Recommendation for Tenet 4 – Teacher Practices and Decisions:

Starting October 27, 2016, teachers, supported by the district and by teacher-volunteers, should use assessment data to place students in ability groupings in each mathematics lesson. Teachers and those supporting them

should collaborate during planning time to adjust the range of instructional strategies used to meet the needs of the students in each group.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- In most lessons observed by reviewers, especially in mathematics, teachers frequently used the same instructional practices for all students, and teachers typically did not modify instruction to meet students' needs. Reviewers' discussions with students and examination of student work confirmed that this was typical. Results of a student survey showed that 30 percent of students who completed the survey reported that their work lacked challenge. The IIT found that few teachers' instructional practices promoted students' in-depth inquiry and critical thinking skills. Some teachers reported that they found some instructional practices, such as inquiry, difficult to use as they had not used them before.
- In a few lessons, especially in guided reading where teachers grouped students by ability, reviewers saw some examples of instructional practices that promoted students' inquiry skills. For example, in one lesson the teacher probed students about inference. Another example was in a math lesson, where the teacher asked students to explain and justify the strategies they had used to solve a math problem. However, reviewers saw few instances of these strategies being implemented in classrooms across the school. In most mathematics lessons observed by the IIT, students typically were engaged in solving the same problems, which a number of students finished rapidly. Many students commented to reviewers that their work was too easy; however, teachers in these classes did not provide opportunities for students to complete tasks that are more challenging. The review team noted that some students struggled to complete activities because they had difficulty understanding the language or math operations. The IIT found that although these students appeared frustrated, the teachers did not modify their instructional strategies to make the work more accessible for these students.
- The school leader stated that teachers struggling with employing diverse instructional strategies would benefit from more collaboration with and support from their colleagues who are using a wide range of instructional strategies to address students' need. The school leader reported that one of the challenges in identifying and implementing instructional practices that met student needs in mathematics is the absence of a school-wide assessment system in place. The school leader indicated that plans are underway to adopt I-ready in mathematics, which includes a baseline assessment.

Tenet 5 - Student Social and Emotional Developmental Health: The school community identifies, promotes, and supports social and emotional development by designing systems and experiences that lead to healthy relationships and a safe, respectful environment that is conducive to learning for all constituents.

Recommendation for Tenet 5 – Student Social and Emotional Developmental Health:

Starting October 27, 2016, the school leader and school climate team, assisted by the district, should:

- consistently implement the district-approved social and emotional developmental health curriculum chosen by the school, within six weeks;
- utilize data to monitor the impact of this curriculum on the social, emotional, and behavioral development of all students, but particularly for African American and economically disadvantaged students; and

- monitor the impact of this curriculum on relationships between students and staff and make adjustments as necessary.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- Although the school leader reported that the school has selected a new curriculum to promote student social and emotional development, currently the school does not have a program or curriculum in place to consistently meet the social and emotional developmental health needs of all students.
- Reviewers noted some instances where students' social and emotional health needs were not met. For example, although most students interviewed by the IIT reported that they have an adult they could trust in school, some students said they do not have an adult they feel comfortable talking to at the school. During focus group discussions, students from different grades disclosed to reviewers some social and emotional challenges they were facing that they indicated they had not shared with anyone at school. School leaders reported that, despite recent improvements in attendance and suspension rates, African American and economically disadvantaged students still have higher suspension and lower attendance rates than many other groups of students.
- Teachers and school leaders reported that staff require further guidance to deliver a program to develop students' emotional and social developmental health. The IIT found that not all teachers understand or support the school's approach to behavior and relationship management. Teachers stated that different staff have different opinions about what comments made and behaviors exhibited by students warrant disciplinary action. The school leader said that the new program chosen by the school includes training for all teachers on ways they can assist students in developing skills in managing their responses to conflict. The school leader said that she believes this program, if implemented with fidelity, will introduce a degree of consistency in school climate and behavior management.
- School leaders stated that they regularly collect data on student attendance and suspension rates that they present to school staff. However, the IIT found little evidence that the school leaders have sufficiently analyzed or used this data to determine which actions within programs have had or have not an impact. For example, it was not clear why attendance had increased at a more rapid pace in some grades than others or what impact home visits have had on student attendance as not all students in the target group received such visits.

Tenet 6 Family and Community Engagement: The school creates a culture of partnership where families, community members, and school staff work together to share in the responsibility for student academic progress and social emotional growth and well being.

Recommendation for Tenet 6 – Family and Community Engagement:

Starting November 3, 2016, teachers, monitored by school leaders, should:

- analyze attendance data sheets from parent meetings;
- identify parents who rarely attend; and
- reestablish contacts with hard-to-reach parents using a range of methods, for example by contacting families by phone or email and extending personal invitations, having an informal chat, or inviting them to events such as Bring Dad to School Day, Poetry Out Loud, and International Baccalaureate (IB) night.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- Although comments made by parents in the focus group and on a parent survey indicated that the school has established positive relationships with some parents, school attendance sheets show that not all parents attend school events and have contact with the school. A review of records showed that the number of parents attending parent conferences varies from class to class. Some classes had 100 percent of the students' parents attending conferences, while some classes had less than one-third of the students' parents attending conferences. The IIT found little evidence that school monitors and evaluates its communication to determine patterns and trends and to make adjustments in its outreach efforts.
- The school leader reported that senior staff have not sufficiently analyzed attendance lists and data related to other contacts with parents to determine which parents have limited contact with the school or to identify any patterns particularly for parents of individual and subgroups of students who are performing below grade level. Although the school leaders identified that attendance for some groups of students have improved, there has been no analysis of whether contact with parents has been a key factor in the improvement.
- Parents interviewed by the IIT reported that the school uses the on-site parent café, Open House, book fairs, math and literacy nights, and monthly newsletters to share information. Parents also reported that the school rarely extends personal invitations to individuals. They expressed the perspective that a personal invitation might encourage parents not engaged with the school to attend an event.

ADDITIONAL AREAS TO ADDRESS

- Reviewers found that not all teachers are implementing the phonics program consistently across classes and grade levels. For example, some teachers use one gesture for a sound while other teachers use a different gesture for the same sound. In the future, school leaders should monitor teachers to ensure they follow the course guidance consistently.
- While the school was recently awarded re-accreditation for the IB Primary Years Program to develop specific characteristics in its students, such as being reflective and inquisitive, the review team did not see consistency in teaching practices that promoted these characteristics. In the future, the school should reflect on how it can further ensure that the skills and characteristics it values are promoted in the learning opportunities provided to students on a routine basis.