



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

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)



BEDS Code	441600019916
School Name	South Middle School
School Address	33-36 Monument Street, Newburgh, NY 12550
District Name	Newburgh Enlarged City School District
School Leader	Mr. Carlos Santiago
Dates of Review	April 4-5, 2017
Date of Return Visit	May 26, 2017
School Accountability Status	<input type="checkbox"/> Priority School <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Focus School



School Information Sheet for South Middle School

School Configuration (2016-17 data)					
Grade Configuration	6-8	Total Enrollment	615	SIG Recipient	No
Types and Number of English Language Learner Classes (2016-17)					
# Transitional Bilingual	1	# Dual Language	0	# Self-Contained English as a Second Language	4
Types and Number of Special Education Classes (2016-17)					
# Special Classes	32	# SETSS	6	# Integrated Collaborative Teaching	26
Types and Number of Special Classes (2016-17)					
# Visual Arts	23	# Music	30	# Drama	9
# Foreign Language	2	# Dance	6	# CTE	20
School Composition (most recent data)					
% Title I Population		74%	% Attendance Rate		91%
% Free Lunch		63%	% Reduced Lunch		7%
% Limited English Proficient		11%	% Students with Disabilities		21%
Racial/Ethnic Origin (most recent data)					
% American Indian or Alaska Native		0%	% Black or African American		36%
% Hispanic or Latino		38%	% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander		1%
% White		23%	% Multi-Racial		1%
Personnel (most recent data)					
Years Principal Assigned to School		0.75	# of Assistant Principals		3
% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate		0	% Teaching Out of Certification		0
% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience		10	Average Teacher Absences		8.6
Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2015-16)					
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4		15%	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4		10%
Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (4th Grade)		NA	Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (8th Grade)		18%
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			
		English language learners			
		Economically Disadvantaged			
SCHOOL PRIORITIES AS WRITTEN BY THE SCHOOL:					
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To develop a school-wide literacy focus to improve on student academic performance. 2. To implement a structure to allow teacher teams to meet and engage in data-driven inquiry. 3. To formalize a system of walkthroughs and observations to provide on-going feedback, as well as provide professional development based on the needs of the school. 4. To create structures to provide social-emotional supports to students. 5. To create a culture of partnerships with families, community members and school staff to support students academically and socio-emotionally. 					

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 and a representative from the Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (RBERN).
- The review team visited a total of 52 classrooms during the two-day review.
- The OEE visited seven 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, the school provided results of a student survey that 512 students (68 percent) completed.
- In advance of the review, the school provided results of a staff survey that 43 staff members (55 percent) completed.
- In advance of the review, the school provided results of a parent survey that 69 parents completed.
- In advance of the review, 50 staff members (64 percent) completed a DTSDE pre-review survey conducted by NYSED.

The Review Team concluded that the school's current systems and practices are generally aligned with Stage Two on the DTSDE Rubric, with the majority of Statements of Practice aligning with Stage Two.

SUCSESSES WITHIN THE SCHOOL THAT THE SCHOOL SHOULD BUILD UPON:
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The new school leadership has provided a clear direction to the work of the school and shared that vision with the school community. Teachers, parents, and students reported they have confidence that the school leaders are moving the school forward.2. The school is known for excellence in instruction in the arts and technology. Students are regularly involved in stage productions such as a recent staging of <i>Aladdin</i>, and the school provides dance, drama,

band, technology, and music classes. The Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) noted that the student artwork displayed around the school was of a high standard.

3. To encourage parental involvement, school leaders provide a number of events for parents, including a book and breakfast morning, that are well attended. Parents reported that the school has reached out to parents more in the 2016-17 school year than previously by increasing communications and community events.

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:

Beginning April 17, 2017, school leaders should set up a data inquiry team to collect, collate, analyze, and summarize school data to produce an executive summary of all key indicators. This executive summary should be available to school leaders monthly beginning May 8, 2017, to enable them to make focused and informed strategic decisions that will continue to move the school forward.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- School leaders have established systems to gather information about student achievement and progress, attendance, referrals, and other key indicators. However, the IIT learned from discussions with school leaders that these systems are too recent and fragmented to provide school leaders with the type of information they need to move the school forward. Reviewers found that the school leader has not established a data inquiry team to help collate and analyze data streams so that school leaders can readily access the information that would enable them to measure the impact of their decisions on student achievement and social-emotional development.
- The review team observed that the instructional technology facilitator is training a group of staff to use an online assessment tool dashboard to increase teachers’ ability to use data to improve instruction. However, the facilitator reported that this dashboard has not yet been disseminated to the school leaders and other staff so that they have a clear view of trends in student achievement and progress. In addition, the IIT’s examination of documents showed that although school leaders have collected data on referrals and behavioral incidents school-wide, they have not analyzed these data to detect trends or patterns, minimizing their ability to determine how to best deal with behavioral issues. School leaders also reported that they do not receive sufficient information about how English language learners (ELLs) or students with disabilities are being supported.

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:

Beginning April 17, 2017, school leaders should work with teachers to create an agreed-upon protocol for lesson planning that meets the district expectations and that includes indications of the lesson objectives in student accessible language, the assessment teachers will use to check student understanding of the lesson content, and

the questions teachers will ask to challenge students to think critically and rigorously about what they are learning. This protocol should be implemented no later than May 8, 2017 and monitored by school leaders regularly to ensure fidelity.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- School leaders reported that although the school leaders and teachers have begun to develop curriculum plans across the school, school leaders are not monitoring the plans to ensure they are consistently rigorous in all subjects. The IIT’s examination of curriculum maps showed that not all teachers are addressing student needs in their curriculum planning. The review team observed that lesson plans varied considerably from teacher to teacher and from subject to subject. The school leaders have not provided templates, and expectations have not been set. Some plans state the learning standard to be covered by letter code while others only list student and teacher activities. The plans did not typically contain specific information about how teachers would match the course content to students’ needs and starting points. Although reviewers noted that a few teachers used reading and math assessment data to group students and adjust their plans, this was not typical in the plans examined by the review team.
- Although school leaders reported they have emphasized that teachers’ lesson plans should follow district guidelines and include clear learning objectives, reviewers observed that in some plans the learning objectives were omitted or that they simply reiterated the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). When reviewers asked students to explain the learning objective, they were generally not able to articulate the objective.
- Few of the lesson plans examined during the review identified how teachers would use formative or on-going assessment to check for students’ understanding of the lesson content. Generally, teachers planned to teach the whole class at the same level, and reviewers found no plans written for small groups. Only a few plans included reference to lesson modifications based on assessment data.
- The IIT observed that a few teachers were adept at planning and delivering challenging and probing questions. Where this occurred, students were challenged to think critically and rigorously about their learning. However, teachers typically did not plan to ask higher-order questions. Reviewers observed that most questioning was low level, and in many classes only a few students answered the teacher’s questions, sometimes with a single word.

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:

School leaders should plan with teachers a series of learning walks by key staff to identify those instructional practices in the school that are most effective in engaging students in active and challenging learning. These practices should then be reviewed at a faculty meeting and become the focus of walk-throughs in the 2017-18 school year. The learning walks should commence no later than April 24, 2017 and be concluded by May 22, 2017.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- Although school leaders and teachers reported that the school has provided some training focused on instructional practices that promote student engagement and students' active involvement in challenging learning activities, the IIT found that these practices were not common during most classroom visitations. Reviewers noted groups of students who were not engaged in learning in most observed lessons, and when asked by reviewers why they were not paying attention, the students reported that the lesson was boring or they did not see its relevance to real life. Although school leaders have adjusted the schedule to include some common planning time, teachers reported to the IIT that this time is not typically used to promote instruction that engages students.
- While the review team saw isolated examples of highly effective instruction, in many classes the teacher gave students tasks that were not challenging. The IIT observed that much of the instruction was teacher led and did not encourage students to become active learners. For example, in a social studies class, students were asked to draw a picture of a Greek temple, label the parts, and then color it in. As students had a worksheet with the parts already labeled, students reported they found the exercise boring, and reviewers observed that several students did not complete this task. Although the IIT observed a challenging social studies lesson that required students to think about and give reasons for the differences between the cultures of Athens and Sparta, this type of approach was not typical in most classes.
- The IIT observed that in many classrooms students were seated in rows and had limited opportunities to engage in discussions with one another. Most students were compliant in class, but in some classes the lack of engagement resulted in students talking over the teacher about topics not relevant to the lesson. In discussions with reviewers, some students shared the perspective that they are reluctant to speak in class because they believe they may be ridiculed by others. Students also reported that lessons are sometimes disrupted by students who are disrespectful and who appear not to want to learn.

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:

Beginning the week of April 17, 2017, school leaders and hallway staff should meet with students to suggest ways in which student behavior and student movement to class can be substantially improved, including how positive behavior interventions and incentives such as points or reward “tickets” can be put in place. The group should report back to staff and the student body with a plan no later than May 15, 2017.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- School leaders reported to the IIT that there were some previous attempts to introduce a school-wide curriculum to support students' social and emotional developmental health needs; however, these efforts were not followed through because of lack of funding. Currently, the school does not have a coherent system or curriculum to support students' social-emotional needs or to address behavior management issues in the school. Reviewers observed in several classrooms that teachers' behavior

management strategies were not effective in addressing incidents of misbehavior. For example, in one science class the teacher failed to get students' attention and then proceeded to talk over the noise while students continued with their own social conversations. Reviewers also found that most staff were fully occupied in reacting to crisis situations, and the IIT found little evidence of a strategic plan to identify and address long-standing underlying factors that lead to inappropriate student behavior.

- The IIT observed that many students took too long to get to class, and school leaders and security staff had to direct them to the correct rooms. Reviewers also observed that some students did not respond respectfully to staff and that there were altercations in the classrooms and hallways. The IIT also learned that students have few opportunities for physical activities during lunch and recess, which students reported is adding to the misbehavior of some students.
- In discussions with support staff, reviewers learned that many of the interventions used in the school, such as hallway sweeps and referrals to the office, do not address students' social and emotional developmental needs, and in some cases the interventions have contributed to the behavior issues in the school. Some students expressed the viewpoint that some teachers did not treat students with respect.

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:

School leaders and the parent-teacher group should survey parent and community views on how the school can better promote the recognition and celebration of the diverse cultures represented in the school and local community in order to draw up a schedule of cultural events for the 2017-18 school year. This activity should commence as soon as practical and be concluded by the end of June 2017.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- School leaders reported that there has been a significant increase in the number of events for parents and the community, and they are generally well attended. During interviews, parents shared that they appreciated the increase in the number of events and the nature of the events and that the new school leader was communicating the school's values and mission to the community at large. However, both school leaders and parents reported that there is a large group of parents who are not included in the life of the school because of cultural and language barriers that are not being addressed. The school leader shared that he recognizes the need to reach out further to such parents.
- Demographic information shows that about one-third of the parents are Hispanic, and the school leader reported that the majority of Hispanic parents speak Spanish as their first language. The school leader stated that although he communicates regularly in both languages, most school events are conducted in English, and there has been little celebration of the diverse cultures represented in the student and local community. Another one-third of the school population is African-American, but apart from the recognition of events such as Black History Month, little has been done to celebrate African-American culture.
- The school leader and a few staff speak Spanish, and parents reported that this helped them adjust when they first arrived at the school. Counselors help parents find the services they need, such as access to

healthcare. However, parents shared that some teachers do not communicate with them in a way they can understand, as the parents grasp of English is still limited, and other teachers do not communicate with them at all. Teachers reported that they have not had training in how to develop relationships with families, especially those from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

ADDITIONAL AREAS TO ADDRESS

- School leaders reported that little has been done to create interdisciplinary units or projects to link subjects across the curricula. In the future, school leaders and teachers will need to create at least one interdisciplinary project per semester that focuses on aspects of life that are relevant to the students in the school.
- The IIT learned from the school leaders that they have not established a coherent curriculum or system for addressing students' social and emotional development health needs. In the future, school leaders and staff will need to work with the district to implement a school-wide program to identify and support students' social-emotional needs, including a systematic behavior management strategy that is adopted by all staff.
- The review team observed that although teachers are beginning to make some effective use of data from formative and on-going assessments, they are not using the information to group students purposefully to ensure they are getting the supports they need to accelerate their progress. In the future, the school leader will need to ensure that teachers work with the newly formed data inquiry team so that students are purposefully placed in groupings to support their learning.

RETURN VISIT

South Middle School

An Outside Education Expert (OEE) returned to the school on Friday May 26, 2017, seven weeks after the review. The OEE reviewed the school's progress toward the recommendations and provided further guidance regarding what the school should do next.

PROGRESS TOWARD RECOMMENDATIONS

Tenet 2 Update:

The school leader shared with the OEE the comprehensive tool school leaders used to monitor the impact of the actions taken to address the recommendations. Several further developments have been identified. For example, the impact of the analysis conducted by the newly formed data inquiry team has been used to identify a focus group of students most in need of support to improve their attendance and behavior. The OEE and the school leader discussed how these data analysis systems could be developed to support students' academic growth.

Tenet 2 Next Steps:

The OEE and the school leader agreed that school leaders will establish a systematic approach to implementing the next phase of policy improvements identified as a result of the actions that have been taken to address the recommendations. They will begin by developing a plan to analyze assessment data for a comprehensive insight into students' academic needs.

Tenet 3 Update:

The school leader shared that he has established building-wide expectations for effective lesson planning by collaborating with teachers and district representatives. School leaders and lead teachers have been monitoring the impact of these plans during walk-throughs. School leaders and the OEE discussed ways in which the strengths and developments emerging from walk-through data could be used to further improve the quality of teachers' planning.

Tenet 3 Next Steps:

The OEE and the school leader agreed that school leaders would work with the lead teachers to develop teachers' understanding of the features of planning. For example, in the first instance they will clarify the distinction between the aim, the learning objective, and the essential question for each lesson.

Tenet 4 Update:

The school leader shared school leaders' findings from the series of walk-throughs conducted since April 19. These walk-throughs confirmed many of the features identified by the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) as well as the potential to deploy teaching assistants more effectively. The school leader and the OEE discussed how best to optimize teachers' existing classroom arrangements and the new lesson planning protocol to improve student engagement.

Tenet 4 Next Steps:

The school leader and the OEE agreed that school leaders would create an instructional program to establish the expectations for teachers and teaching assistants to promote student discussion in small groups. This will include how to plan relevant questions informed by data as well as the protocols for constructive debate between students.

Tenet 5 Update:

The school leader reported that the student advisory team advocated for a change in the building culture. The team requested a greater emphasis on affirming students' positive behaviors. As a result, school leaders have initiated several projects that involve engaging members of the school community in developing suitable incentives. The school leader reported that these efforts were having an impact in motivating students to behave respectfully. The school leader and the OEE discussed ways to sustain the impact of these new policies and procedures.

Tenet 5 Next Steps:

The school leader and the OEE agreed that school leaders would develop a system for monitoring the impact of new policies and for sharing data with common planning teams to ensure an inclusive approach.

Tenet 6 Update:

The school leader reported that the community schools' grant coordinator has been surveying students and parents about diversity and how best to embrace the diverse cultures represented at the school. One successful cultural event has already taken place. The OEE and the school leader discussed ways in which the school could take advantage of these events to partner with families and promote student success.

Tenet 6 Next Steps:

The OEE and the school leader agreed that school leaders would create a system for collating information about the partnership between parents, the community, and the school. In analyzing this data, the school leaders will seek to create opportunities to share supports for students social and emotional development health as well as their academic achievement during these cultural events.