



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

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)



BEDS Code	490202040003
School Name	Tamarac Elementary School
School Address	3992 NY-2, Troy, NY 12180
District Name	Brunswick Central School District (Brittonkill)
School Leader	Karen Lederman
Dates of Review	March 22-23, 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 Tamarac Elementary School

School Configuration (2015-16 data)					
Grade Configuration	PreK-5	Total Enrollment	525	SIG Recipient	No
Types and Number of English Language Learner Classes (2015-16)					
# Transitional Bilingual	0	# Dual Language	0	# Self-Contained English as a Second Language	0
Types and Number of Special Education Classes (2015-16)					
# Special Classes	7	# SETSS	5	# Integrated Collaborative Teaching	9
Types and Number of Special Classes (2015-16)					
# Visual Arts	26/wk	# Music	26/wk	# Drama	0
# Foreign Language	0	# Dance	0	# CTE	0
School Composition (most recent data)					
% Title I Population	20	% Attendance Rate	95.6		
% Free Lunch	24	% Reduced Lunch	9		
% Limited English Proficient	1	% Students with Disabilities	11		
Racial/Ethnic Origin (most recent data)					
% American Indian or Alaska Native	0	% Black or African American	2.5		
% Hispanic or Latino	4	% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	1.3		
% White	94.1	% Multi-Racial	2.1		
Personnel (most recent data)					
Years Principal Assigned to School	12	# of Assistant Principals	0		
% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate	0	% Teaching Out of Certification	0		
% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience	16.67	Average Teacher Absences	6.47		
Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2014-15)					
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	60	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4	63		
Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (Grade 4)	34	Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (Grade 8)	N/A		
Overall NYSED Accountability Status					
In Good Standing		Local Assistance Plan			
Priority School		Focus School	X		
SCHOOL PRIORITIES AS WRITTEN BY THE SCHOOL DISTRICT:					
1. None provided.					

School Identification Status		
The school was identified for not meeting the subgroup performance minimum cut point for the following subgroups in 2014-15:		
Subgroup	School's Performance	Minimum Cut point
Economically Disadvantaged	50.5	64

Purpose of the visit

This school was visited by the New York State Education Department (NYSED) 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 NYSED. The team also included a district representative.
- The review team visited 43 classrooms during the two-day review.
- The OEE visited nine classrooms with the school leader 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.
- The district did not provide the results of student, parent, and teacher surveys.

The Review Team concluded that the school's current systems and practices are a combination of Stage One and Stage Two on the DTSDE Rubric.

SUCCESSSES WITHIN THE SCHOOL THAT THE SCHOOL SHOULD BUILD UPON:

1. Reviewers noted the school's welcoming environment immediately upon entering the school due in large part to the school leader's emphasis on an open door policy and attention to making all students and families feel comfortable at school. Students were cordial and smiling. Teachers and staff interact with students and each other in a caring way, which creates a positive culture throughout the school.
2. The IIT observed several examples of high-quality teaching in classrooms. In some classrooms, teachers asked students higher-level questions that required deeper thinking about their assignments.
3. Students showed focus in classrooms by following directions and completing their work as assigned. Reviewers did not observe any behavior that interfered with learning in any of the classes visited.

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:

- By mid-May 2016, the school leader and the Building Compact Team should develop specific, measurable, ambitious, results-oriented, and timely (SMART) goals for curriculum development and

revision, improved instructional practices, student social and emotional developmental health, and increased parent engagement. Goals should include plans for data collection to facilitate progress monitoring. Goals should be communicated to teachers, staff, parents, and the school community members.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- The school leader has a clear vision for the school: that all students should succeed. Although she has verbally shared this vision with the teachers, staff, and school community, the IIT found that she has not identified and prioritized the SMART goals necessary to attain the vision and therefore cannot monitor progress toward increased student achievement. Additionally, without a clear focus on areas such as curriculum, instruction, student social and emotional development health, and parent engagement, the school leader cannot make strategic decisions regarding the use of the resources available to her. The school leader recognizes that it is critical to create systems to collect and analyze data on all aspects of the school including, for example, formative and summative assessment data, academic and behavioral referrals, and attendance data. Analysis of these data will help guide instruction and any necessary curricular revisions, as well as inform other school programs and practices. In recent years, a lack of additional administrative support resulted in the school leader taking on more day-to-day responsibilities around the school, leaving less time for long-range planning. However, she has assembled a representative group including teachers, staff, and parents to serve on the Building Compact Team, which is the school’s shared decision making team. This group meets regularly and is equipped to work with the school leader to identify schoolwide goals and monitor progress toward achieving them, as well as to devise a plan to communicate the goals and the progress toward them to the teachers, staff, and school community at large.

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:

- By the end of April 2016, the school leader should share her expectation to see evidence of planning by all teachers. She should identify areas she expects to see in this evidence such as higher-order question stems and differentiation of learning to meet the needs of all students. A schedule should be developed for submission of the evidence.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- Teachers are not required to submit formal lesson plans to the school leader. Over time, the practice of not submitting written lesson plans has resulted in the school leader not receiving any evidence of instructional planning with the exception of planning documents provided for the one formal observation performed each year as part of the teacher evaluation process. The school leader shared with the IIT that it has been past practice over her tenure at the school that teachers do not regularly provide evidence of planning to administrators. Reviewers found that without access to this

information, the school leader compromises her ability to conduct focused, informal visits culminating in opportunities for teachers and leaders to discuss best practices leading to stronger student learning. In addition to the absence of a system for collecting evidence connected to schoolwide curricular priorities such as higher-order questioning, reviewers also found no system for providing helpful feedback to teachers on the quality of their planning.

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:

- By the end of April 2016, the school leader, Building Compact Team, and representative teachers should develop a procedure, including a schedule, for administering formative assessments in all classes. Teachers should use the data from these assessments to inform instructional decisions, including student grouping, and to monitor the effectiveness of interventions.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- Teachers make limited use of assessment data to group students according to need. The school relies heavily on data from the Fountas & Pinnell benchmark assessments, which teachers administer at the beginning, middle, and end of each school year. Teachers group students and provide interventions based on students' results on these tests. However, students shared with the IIT that they stay in the same groups until the next administration of the benchmark exam. This means that teachers group students in the fall and again in the late winter without having their learning differentiated on an ongoing basis in the interim. While some teachers use other forms of assessment such as running records to monitor student progress, this is not a schoolwide practice or even a grade-level expectation. The school leader stated that these other practices take place in some classrooms, but she has not required a formal schedule for their administration or established protocols for the systematic collection and analysis of the data. In their classroom visits, the review team saw few teachers checking for understanding or using formative assessment to inform their instruction, and reviewers learned that few teachers analyze data from formative assessments to measure student progress and identify the continued needs of students. A district-wide Response to Intervention (RtI) committee has developed a comprehensive system for referral of students for academic interventions; however, that system is not yet in place in the school. Because not all teachers continuously use assessment data to track student progress and adjust instruction, they are not able to ensure that individual students receive support in the areas in which they are struggling or enrichment in areas in which they are excelling.

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:

- By mid-May 2016, the school leader, Building Compact Team, and student support staff should

complete their review of potential schoolwide programs to support students' social and emotional developmental health. Recommendations should take into consideration, but not be limited to, how well the programs interface with existing programs and approaches currently used in the school, potential for successful implementation throughout the school, and amount of professional development (PD) needed for implementation with fidelity.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- Several programs and approaches to supporting students' social and emotional development health exist within the school, but they vary by teacher, and not all teachers have training in using the methods to address student needs. The IIT found a positive culture in evidence across the school. However, the school leader shared that addressing students' social and emotional developmental health needs would be most effective if a consistent program(s) existed across the school and all members of the school community used the same language and vocabulary. Currently, some teachers use a character education program developed by teachers that focuses on a monthly theme. Several other teachers and support staff have received training in "social thinking," and though favored by many, not all staff use the approach for conflict resolution. Additionally, students interviewed by the IIT stated that many teachers establish rules specific to their own classrooms. Because of these consistency considerations, the student support team is currently reviewing Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) as a program with potential, since many teachers have had training in the program and some already use aspects of it in their classrooms. In addition, according to the school leader, teachers, and support staff, it is difficult for teachers to come together for PD due to meeting time constraints and the need for class coverage by substitute teachers, which complicates the planning process for training and implementation activities for a new program or schoolwide approach to addressing student social and emotional developmental health.

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:

- By the end of April 2016, the school leader and the Parent-Teacher-Student Association (PTSA) should explore the feasibility of developing a new type of newsletter that is user-friendly and simply lists upcoming events of interest to parents and families.
- Before the next parent-teacher conference at which a large number of participants are expected, the school leader and Building Compact Team should develop a three-question survey to share with parents to determine, for example, the types of events they would like to attend at the school, the best times to hold events, and potential challenges to their attendance.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- The IIT found that the limited number of parents and families who participate in school events, particularly families representing the student subgroups for which the New York State (NYS)-

designated focus school was identified for, is troubling to the school leader, teachers, staff, and members of the PTSA. Parents shared with the IIT that they find the existing school and district website difficult to navigate when looking for information about upcoming events. The review team concurred with this assessment based upon an examination of the websites showing that while the information is available, one needs to know where to look or dig deeper to find specific information. Parents suggested that a newsletter dedicated to simply giving specifics about events of interest to parents and families would be useful and appreciated. The IIT's discussions with parents revealed, however, that the larger issue school leaders and staff must address is the need to develop and provide events that intentionally support areas of interest and importance to parents. Parents stated that when school events have many participants, the school leader does not use them as opportunities to assess the needs of parents and loses an opportunity to plan events that would help attendees better understand their respective roles in building a home-school partnership that would benefit students. For example, the school leader acknowledged that more than 90 percent of parents attend parent-teacher conferences and the first scheduled conference is early in the school year, which offers a good venue to administer a short survey.

ADDITIONAL AREAS TO ADDRESS

- The school leader and staff have not yet implemented the comprehensive, districtwide plan for RtI in the school. In the future, the school leader and student support staff will need to make teachers aware of the plan, explain the procedure for referral to an RTI committee, and hold teachers accountable for following the protocol as written.
- A child study team exists to address academic and behavioral referrals of students. However, this team does not meet on a regular basis. This results in teachers informally seeking out the student support team members for advice on how to address behavioral issues for individual students. In the future, the school leader and student support team will need to develop a more formal, regular meeting schedule for the child study team, a protocol for data-driven referrals to the team, and methods for monitoring student progress.
- Although the school leader visits classrooms, she does not have a regular schedule for walkthroughs or a method for providing informal feedback to teachers. In the future, the school leader will need to plan regular visits to all teachers' classrooms and provide feedback to highlight strengths and areas to address to improve teachers' practice.
- The school does not yet have a comprehensive system for collecting and analyzing data, including but not limited to formative and summative assessment data. Once leaders have created a system and put it in place, the school leader can share her expectation with teachers that instructional strategies to address student strengths and challenges, based on data, should appear in the evidence of instructional planning they share with her.
- The school leader provides PD for teachers. However, the leader often links PD topics to district initiatives, such as use of technology. In the future, the school leader, using information gathered from regular visits to classrooms, will need to link PD with the instructional focus areas identified during walkthroughs.