



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

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)



BEDS Code	110101040001
School Name	Cincinnatus Elementary School
School Address	2809 Cincinnatus Road, Cincinnatus, New York 13040
District Name	Cincinnatus Central School District
School Leader	Lorri Whiteman
Dates of Review	May 24-25, 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 Cincinnatus Elementary School

School Configuration (2015-16 data)					
Grade Configuration	UPK-6	Total Enrollment	364	SIG Recipient	Yes
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	0	# SETSS	18	# Integrated Collaborative Teaching	0
Types and Number of Special Classes (2015-16)					
# Visual Arts	1	# Music	1	# Drama	0
# Foreign Language	0	# Dance	0	# CTE	0
School Composition (most recent data)					
% Title I Population	29	% Attendance Rate	95		
% Free Lunch	49.6	% Reduced Lunch	8.6		
% Limited English Proficient	0	% Students with Disabilities	18		
Racial/Ethnic Origin (most recent data)					
% American Indian or Alaska Native	0	% Black or African American	0		
% Hispanic or Latino	1	% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0		
% White	98	% Multi-Racial	1		
Personnel (most recent data)					
Years Principal Assigned to School	6 months	# 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	9	Average Teacher Absences	10.45		
Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2014-15)					
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	21	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4	41		
Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (Grade 4)	89	Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (Grade 8)	0		
Overall NYSED Accountability Status					
In Good Standing		Local Assistance Plan			
Priority School		Focus School	X		

SCHOOL PRIORITIES AS WRITTEN BY THE SCHOOL:

1. Monitoring and adjusting the current data collection system in order to use the current data collection protocols to monitor and adjust curricula in order to meet the needs of all students. Develop and monitor systems for the data that are collected for instructional purposes.
2. Creating aligned, interdisciplinary, and differentiated lessons that meet the developmental needs of all learners.
3. Creating and improving upon communication with families, including providing training to families.
4. Increasing student growth and achievement, especially in reading and math.

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	57.5	64.0

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, a district-selected OEE, and a Special Education School Improvement Specialist (SEIS) representative.
- The review team visited 55 classrooms during the two-day review.
- The OEE visited 11 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 school leader has been in post for six months.

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

SUCSESSES WITHIN THE SCHOOL THAT THE SCHOOL SHOULD BUILD UPON:

1. The student attendance rate is 95 percent. Staff follow procedures to monitor and promote attendance, such as calling home to inquire when a student is absent.
2. Some teachers are beginning to use student performance data to adjust curricula and plan targeted instruction, especially in reading.
3. Students receive opportunities to develop their artistic skills using a range of media, such as paint, crayons, and construction paper. Student artwork is attractively displayed for all to admire.

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:

During the summer of 2016, the school leader, consultants, and teacher leaders should communicate to all staff what they expect to see during their weekly walkthroughs via a letter. For example:

- a learning objective that is clearly displayed and explained to the students at the beginning of each lesson; and
- checks for student understanding of the learning objective during and at the end of each lesson.

The school leader should provide actionable feedback to teachers and re-visit their classes to monitor for improvement.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- School leaders stated in the self-reflection document that they had established a formal observation procedure to promote reciprocal communication between school leaders and teachers by providing opportunities for discussion and feedback during pre- and post-observation conferences. However, the reviewers found through a review of documents that school leaders provided teachers with limited growth-promoting feedback, and there was no system to ensure that teachers implemented any suggestions for improvement. In interviews, teachers stated they received few suggestions from school leaders, which were not always useful. Teachers added that leaders often directed them to websites rather than provide specific, constructive advice on how to improve their instruction. The school leader told the IIT that she did not give teachers immediate feedback following her walkthroughs.
- During visits to classrooms, including some with the school leader, the IIT found that although teachers had access to student performance data for English language arts (ELA) and math, few teachers used these data to differentiate instruction according to students' strengths and needs. In addition, observed teachers did not always state the objective for the lesson and monitor student learning to ensure that students were making progress toward mastery. Lessons often ended abruptly because teachers had not planned a formative assessment, such as an exit ticket, to determine what students had learned. The school leader acknowledged that she has not made her instructional expectations clear to teachers.
- Reviewers and the school leader noted, during visits to classrooms, that teachers did not often perform checks for learning during and at the end of the lessons. During discussions with some students as they learned, reviewers heard students who were below grade level state that they did not understand their learning, while students above grade level said that they already knew the content the teacher was teaching. As a result, learning was not always beneficial for these groups of students. Many parents during the discussion with reviewers stated that teachers did not meet the needs of their children. In interviews, the school leader stated the need for more focused walkthroughs resulting in actionable feedback in order to ensure high quality instruction in all classes.

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 September 7, 2016, all teaching staff, with help from consultants, should use the May 2016 STAR reading and math standard assessment results to plan for two instructional groups in addition to the grade-level group they already plan for. To do this teachers should focus on:

- students who are functioning above grade level; and
- students who are functioning below grade level.

The school leader should monitor and give actionable feedback.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- The self-reflection document states that teachers have recently begun to assess student proficiency in ELA and math using the STAR benchmark assessments. In interviews, teachers told the IIT that they have access to assessment results and are able to use them to identify the students in their classes who are functioning below, at, and above grade level in reading and math.
- The IIT found through a review of teachers' lesson plans that teachers did not commonly use assessment results to differentiate instruction. In most observed classes, all students participated in the same activities subject to the same expectations. The IIT and the school leaders observed that some teachers used student assessment data to form instructional groups for math and reading lessons. However, most teachers did not routinely use student achievement data to make accommodations for all learners, especially students functioning below and above grade level. The IIT also found that teachers were not accustomed to using student achievement data to modify the curriculum.
- The IIT observed that when teachers used student assessment data to plan activities matched to students' performance levels, students were engaged in their learning and read with confidence and understanding. However, the school leader said, and the IIT observed, that this was not typical practice. The IIT found that curriculum planning varied in quality because the school leaders or consultants were not monitoring it. In interviews, teachers stated that they lacked constructive feedback intended to improve the quality of their curriculum 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:

When delivering instruction teachers should ensure that:

- learning objectives are clearly displayed and explained to the students;
- student understanding of the learning objectives is checked during and at the end of each lesson; and
- verbal and written informative feedback is given to move students on to the next level.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- The school leader stated that teachers had received some professional development from consultants

that focused on the use of learning objectives. However, visits to classrooms, by reviewers and the school leader, showed that the use of learning objectives to support instruction was variable. Reviewers found that teachers displayed learning objectives in some classes, while in others there were no objectives to provide students with a focus for their learning. Some teachers used learning objectives more effectively than others did by referring to them periodically throughout the lesson and checking systematically for student understanding. The school leader stated that most teachers did not routinely use learning objectives to drive learning in lessons. Consequently, the IIT found that many students did not have a clear idea of what they were learning and why.

- Many teachers did not check for student understanding periodically during and at the end of lessons. As a result, the IIT observed that some students had difficulty concentrating and showed low levels of engagement as lessons progressed. This was particularly evident with students functioning below grade level, since instruction generally consisted of one lesson for all students based on grade-level expectations. Although teachers could identify the students functioning above grade level, reviewers found they did not typically plan and implement challenging activities for them. These students were observed to be listening and cooperating, but with low levels of enthusiasm and engagement.
- Reviewers identified during a document review, that the written feedback that students received from teachers did not always inform them about what they needed to do to improve. Students stated that written and verbal feedback that they received from their teachers was not always helpful in enabling them to improve. Some students said that the marking systems their teachers used were difficult to understand. Older students stated that teachers sometimes used rubrics to evaluate their work; however, not all students could read and understand the rubrics because the reading level was too high. Students added that some rubrics were confusing and uninformative.

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 immediately, the school leader and the student support team and partners should:

- select and implement a program or curriculum to promote the teaching of student social and emotional developmental health needs throughout all grades; and
- analyze, share, and utilize data related to student social and emotional developmental health needs to determine how well these provisions are removing barriers to learning.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- The self-reflection document states that there is no program or curriculum to address students’ social and emotional developmental health needs. It goes on to explain that while staff are working together to develop a vision for the social and emotional developmental health needs of students, much of their time is currently devoted to managing student behavior to ensure their safety. In interviews, the school leader stated, and teachers and support staff confirmed, that there is no whole-school approach to meeting students’ social and emotional developmental health needs.
- The school leader and student support staff stated that the school conducts periodic assemblies for students in kindergarten to grade four focused on development of the character traits of cooperation,

assertion, responsibility, empathy, and self-control. In interviews, parents and students stated that these assemblies were insufficient because students did not always practice these traits and were sometimes unkind to one another, especially on the school bus. The school leader, teachers, student support team members, and students told the IIT, and an analysis of disciplinary records confirmed, that bullying and other negative student interactions were concerns in the school.

- During discussions with reviewers, students spoke of issues related to bullying and stated that their teachers did not always successfully deal with reported incidents of bullying. Some older students stated that they no longer report bullying incidents because their teachers did not resolve the situation and then bullying became more problematic.
- The school leader and student support staff told the IIT that they are aware of such issues and have identified an urgent need to devise a kindergarten to grade six curriculum or program to address students' social and emotional developmental health needs, with a particular focus on anti-social behaviors.
- While the school leader and the student support staff stated that academic, attendance, and disciplinary referral data are collected, there was no evidence that school staff use these data to provide students with appropriate student support services and evaluate their effectiveness. Consequently, the school leader, student support team, and teachers do not know how well they are removing barriers to learning and helping all students reach their full potential.

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:

The school leader should ensure that:

- teachers provide all parents of children in kindergarten to grade four with midterm progress reports that contain information on what each child needs to do to move to the next level of learning; and
- parents of children in all grades receive training on how to understand the information in these reports.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- The self-reflection document stated that the school informs parents of the academic performance of their children through progress reports and report cards that are sent home regularly. The committee on special education meetings further inform parents of students with disabilities of about their children's achievement.
- The IIT found that information sent home, such as progress reports and report cards, did not include information about what the child needed to do to move to the next level of learning.
- Through interviews and a review of documents, the IIT found that parents of students in grades five and six receive academic information about their children every five weeks. However, parents of children in kindergarten to grade four receive information about their children's achievement only every ten weeks. Parents expressed the view that ten weeks was too long to wait for information about their children, especially if they were experiencing difficulties. The school leader said that

parents of kindergarten to grade four students need more frequent information, such as midterm progress reports to be better informed.

- The IIT found that the parent-student handbook and recent newsletters do not contain information about the newly revised report card. In addition, there has been no training for parents on how to interpret the revised report card.

ADDITIONAL AREAS TO ADDRESS

- There is no coordinator to oversee the work of the student support team and channels of communication among members of the support team are under-developed. In the future, the school leader will need to identify a coordinator and define roles and responsibilities.
- A number of consultants work in the school, but there is little evidence of how their work impacts on student achievement or other areas of school improvement. In the future, the school leader will need to ensure that evidence of the effect of the work of consultants on school improvement is collected, documented, analyzed, and used to make informed decisions.
- Monitoring is not systematic. In the future, the school leader will need to ensure that systems to track schoolwide practices are firmly established.