



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

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)



BEDS Code	042801060005
School Name	Gowanda Middle School
School Address	10674 Prospect St., Gowanda, NY 14070
District Name	Gowanda Central School District
School Leader	Mr. David L. Smith
Dates of Review	April 19-20, 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 Gowanda Middle School

School Configuration (2015-16 data)			
Grade Configuration	5-8	Total Enrollment	378
		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	6	# SETSS	0
		# Integrated Collaborative Teaching	2
Types and Number of Special Classes (2015-16)			
# Visual Arts	12	# Music	15
		# Drama	0
# Foreign Language	10	# Dance	0
		# CTE	0
School Composition (most recent data)			
% Title I Population	0	% Attendance Rate	94
% Free Lunch	52	% Reduced Lunch	7
% Limited English Proficient	0	% Students with Disabilities	17
Racial/Ethnic Origin (most recent data)			
% American Indian or Alaska Native	26	% Black or African American	
% Hispanic or Latino	5	% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	
% White	61	% Multi-Racial	8
Personnel (most recent data)			
Years Principal Assigned to School	13	# of Assistant Principals	0
% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate	0	% Teaching Out of Certification	3
% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience	15	Average Teacher Absences	12.5
Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2014-15)			
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	16	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4	23
Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (Grade 4)	81	Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (Grade 8)	72
Overall NYSED Accountability Status			
In Good Standing		Local Assistance Plan	
Priority School		Focus School	X
SCHOOL PRIORITIES AS WRITTEN BY THE SCHOOL:			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create a vertically and horizontally aligned curriculum that is CCLS standards focused. 2. Use data to analyze performance, improve performance for the subgroup of Native American students as indicated on the NYS assessments and i-Ready diagnostic tool. 3. Use data to analyze performance, improve performance for the subgroup of economically disadvantaged students as indicated on the NYS assessments and i-Ready diagnostic tool. 4. Use data to analyze performance, improve performance for the subgroup of students with disabilities as indicated on the NYS assessments and i-Ready diagnostic tool. 5. Continue to promote and improve conditions for a positive social-emotional climate that can help students develop a foundation for coping with the significant social issues that impact learning. 			

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	59	64
Students with Disabilities	14.5	29.0
American Indian	42.5	61.0

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 Special Education School Improvement Specialist (SESIS) representative.
- The review team visited a total of 46 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 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. To address incidents related to bullying, the school implemented an anti-bullying program. The school leader reported that data indicates a reduction in the amount of bullying incidents within the school.
2. The school leader and staff promote a friendly atmosphere in the school. Staff and students noted and reviewers observed generally positive relationships between adults and children throughout the school.
3. The school offers numerous extra-curricular activities for students. They can take part in sporting activities, various clubs, and arts-related programs. Students reported that they enjoyed these activities, and reviewers noted that they provided students with a range of additional learning experiences.

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 May 15, 2016, the school leader and the district curriculum leader should develop a plan for completing walk-throughs that focus on student learning and ensure that teachers are clear about school leaders' expectations for curriculum and instruction, including, for example:
 - a clear learning objective presented to the students;
 - higher-order questioning to deepen student learning; and
 - activities designed to match students' academic levels.

The school leader should then give feedback and re-visit classrooms to check that these expectations become incorporated into day-to-day planning and delivery of instruction.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- The school self-reflection document indicated and the school leader acknowledged during interviews that although he regularly visits classrooms, the support and feedback the school leader provides to teachers is inconsistent, and he need to focus on targeted feedback related to data and instruction. During discussions with reviewers, teachers stated that the school leader has not provided clear guidance on what they need to do to improve their instructional practices. The school leader has completed the required observations and a formalized plan aligned to the district's Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR). However, documents reviewed by the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) showed no evidence that teachers had improved their practice or that the school leader had provided actionable feedback to teachers. Reviewers found that the lack of targeted feedback and follow-up visits hindered continuous improvement and high quality instruction across the school.
- Reviewers and the school leader noted during classroom visits that many teachers did not begin the lesson by informing the students what they were going to learn. Both the planning and delivery of instruction lacked specific learning objectives. As a result, reviewers found it was often unclear what students were supposed to learn in the lesson; students confirmed that this was an issue during discussions with the review team. The school self-reflection document indicated that promoting higher-order questioning was not an integral requirement in all classes, which was also acknowledged by the school leader during interviews with reviewers. The IIT's document review and classroom visits showed that few teachers asked students higher-order questions to deepen student understanding, and activities were rarely matched to the wide range of academic levels within the class.

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 May 2016, during common planning time, teachers and the school leader should identify student academic levels and plan activities that focus on the learning objective and are accurately linked to the student academic levels for:
 - students performing below grade level, with a particular focus on Native Americans and students with disabilities; and

- students performing above grade level who need extension activities.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- The school leader reported that grade level teachers meet regularly during common planning time and submit agendas to him. However, the school leader acknowledged that he does not review and rigorously monitor the agendas and that he does not regularly attend common planning time meetings. The school self-reflection document does not identify a clear vision for curriculum. The school leader acknowledged that not all teachers provide a curriculum that is clearly aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). Teachers stated that they do not receive guidance and support to improve their curriculum planning. During discussions with reviewers, the school leader confirmed that systems are not in place to monitor the planning and delivery of the curriculum or the interventions that are offered.
- During a review of a teachers' planning meeting, the IIT found that teachers did not identify clear learning objectives or focus on the inclusion of higher-order questions to extend student thinking and enrich their understanding. The school leader and teachers reported that teachers use a variety of assessments to check on student achievement; however, the IIT's review of curriculum planning documents showed that teachers seldom use this information to inform their curriculum or lesson planning. Teachers shared that they usually plan lessons without using data.
- The IIT found that in most cases, teachers do not plan activities that address student academic levels including those of students performing below grade level or those of students in need of extension activities because they were performing above grade level. Reviewers observed that teachers generally planned one lesson for students of all abilities, which was also confirmed by teachers and students during discussions with the review team. Reviewers noted that teachers did not modify the curriculum to address the needs of individual and subgroups of students, including students with disabilities and Native American students, which minimizes opportunities for college and career readiness for these students.

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 and teachers should check that instruction contains:
 - learning objectives that are explained to students so they understand what they are about to learn;
 - higher-order questions to deepen student understanding; and
 - regular assessments of student learning and understanding during each lesson and the use of this information to plan for future lessons.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- The school leader stated he has not developed a clear vision for instructional practice, and teachers

reported that the school leader has not provided clear guidance concerning his expectations. During classroom visitations, reviewers and the school leader noted that students became confused when the teacher did not clearly identify the learning objectives. During discussions with the review team, teachers were not able to articulate a clear understanding of learning objectives. In addition, reviewers found during observations that few teachers checked that all students understood what they were learning as the lesson progressed. Reviewers and the school leader noted that this issue had a detrimental effect on student learning because many students needed more guidance to stay focused on what they were learning. Many lessons ended abruptly without any discussion or lacked focus on what students were supposed to know by the end of the lesson. Teachers were occasionally observed providing an activity in which students demonstrated what they had learned during the lesson. However, reviewers saw little evidence of any on-going assessment data being used to inform teachers' practices. Teachers stated that although data are collected from assessments, teachers do not analyze and use the data to inform their instruction.

- The IIT observed few examples of higher-order questioning during classroom visitations. Teachers' questioning typically elicited student responses of one or two words. In many classes, the same few students volunteered to answer questions directed at the whole class, and in some classes, teachers answered their own questions. Teachers reported to reviewers that students were disengaged during lessons, but they were unsure as to why this was the case and did not link this problem to their instructional practices. The lack of student engagement hinders student concentration and minimizes student achievement for individuals and subgroups including students with disabilities and Native American students.

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 September 2016, the Bullying Prevention Coordinating Committee should utilize the annual survey information to revise the program that supports student social and emotional developmental health needs and includes:
 - differentiating activities to suit grades five to eight; and
 - addressing sex education and substance abuse.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- The school has implemented a program that promotes the teaching of student social and emotional developmental health. The program focuses on developing a positive learning climate, building relationships, and dealing with issues related to bullying, such as identifying different kinds of bullying and understanding what to do if someone is bullied. Students stated that each month, in every grade, a lesson is planned around a range of topics that support student social -emotional needs. During interviews, students noted that in most instances all grades have the same lesson content. Student support staff stated that some students take part in videos that illustrate the content of the lesson.
- The student support staff review the program each year when students are surveyed. Staff reported

that the survey information is analyzed, and students' thoughts, ideas, and concerns are noted and acted upon. Students shared that at times the monthly sessions were not interesting and that they did not learn much in these lessons. School leaders acknowledged that there is not enough differentiation in what is offered to each grade level. The school self-reflection document and discussions with the school leader showed that staff had identified a need to include more information related to sex education and substance abuse in the program.

- The IIT found that although incidents of bullying have declined, there was little other evidence to show that the social and emotional developmental health program is removing barriers to learning and increasing skills for students, including all subgroups. Student support staff stated they do not analyze most data related to students' social and emotional health, and they therefore do not know how well they are addressing students' needs.

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 September 30, 2016, the school leader and the district curriculum coordinator should create a data team to analyze State assessment data and i-Ready data and then present this information to staff during the Superintendent's Conference Day and to parents during the Open House Night. This should focus on the purpose of the testing and the benefits of the data collected.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- The school's expectations for student academic achievement and student performance data are communicated to parents in a number of ways such as during Open House and via electronic systems. During interviews with the IIT, parents stated they receive progress reports, report cards, and the State data sheet. However, reviewers noted that sign-in sheets from events for parents indicated that not all parents are involved in their children's education. The school leader acknowledged that parent attendance at events organized by the school was variable and sometimes low. The school leader and teachers reported that a number of students and their families do not understand the reasons for the State tests or their importance to their children's education.
- The review team's discussions with students indicated that some students do not try their best when they take the tests, and others draw and write on the test materials instead of working through the tests and responding to the questions. The school leader and teachers expressed the perspective that the State tests are not a true reflection of the students' academic achievement levels although the review team found no evidence to support this contention. School staff collect other data to support student achievement in reading and math for all students, but the school leader has not established a data team or a system for analyzing and using student performance data to inform planning, support instruction, or share information with parents.
- The school provides staff and parents with limited opportunities to learn how to develop home-school partnerships that promote parental involvement in their children's learning. The review team found no evidence of school efforts to inform parents of the curriculum that is offered to their children. During

interviews with the IIT, some parents stated that they are not equipped to support their children's learning at home. The school's lack of initiatives to educate parents about the purpose and importance of the State tests and of parental involvement in their children's education limits student achievement.

ADDITIONAL AREAS TO ADDRESS

- The school leader has established few systems to monitor schoolwide practices. In the future, the school leader will need to create systems and teams to monitor all aspects of student academic achievement, the curriculum, and student social and emotional health.
- Not all teachers use the EngageNY modules that are linked to the CCLS. In the future, the school leader will need to ensure that all students are provided a CCLS-aligned curriculum in English language arts (ELA) and math.
- The school leader has not designated a person within the building to coordinate the work of the student support team. In the future, the school leader will need to appoint a leader for the student support team.
- Parents stated that they have not been recently surveyed by the school about their views or needs. In the future, the school leader will need to allow parents to share their thoughts and then address concerns they may have about the school.