



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

**DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)**



<b>BEDS Code</b>	031502060000
<b>School Name</b>	Johnson City Middle School
<b>School Address</b>	601 Columbia Drive, Johnson City, NY 13790
<b>District Name</b>	Johnson City Central School District
<b>School Leader</b>	Mr. Joseph Guccia
<b>Dates of Review</b>	June 7-8, 2016
<b>School Accountability Status</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Focus School
<b>Type of Review</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SED Integrated Intervention Team (IIT)

### School Information Sheet for Johnson City Middle School

School Configuration (2015-16 data)					
<b>Grade Configuration</b>	6-8	<b>Total Enrollment</b>	571	<b>SIG Recipient</b>	no
Types and Number of English Language Learner Classes (2015-16)					
<b># Transitional Bilingual</b>	0	<b># Dual Language</b>	0	<b># Self-Contained English as a Second Language</b>	0
Types and Number of Special Education Classes (2015-16)					
<b># Special Classes</b>	4	<b># SETSS</b>	0	<b># Integrated Collaborative Teaching</b>	0
Types and Number of Special Classes (2015-16)					
<b># Visual Arts</b>	6	<b># Music</b>	9	<b># Drama</b>	0
<b># Foreign Language</b>	2	<b># Dance</b>	0	<b># CTE</b>	0
School Composition (most recent data)					
<b>% Title I Population</b>	26%	<b>% Attendance Rate</b>	93.7%		
<b>% Free Lunch</b>	61%	<b>% Reduced Lunch</b>	6.5%		
<b>% Limited English Proficient</b>	3%	<b>% Students with Disabilities</b>	17.5%		
Racial/Ethnic Origin (most recent data)					
<b>% American Indian or Alaska Native</b>	.17%	<b>% Black or African American</b>	16%		
<b>% Hispanic or Latino</b>	8%	<b>% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</b>	7%		
<b>% White</b>	61%	<b>% Multi-Racial</b>	7.5%		
Personnel (most recent data)					
<b>Years Principal Assigned to School</b>	7	<b># of Assistant Principals</b>	1		
<b>% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate</b>	0%	<b>% Teaching Out of Certification</b>	4%		
<b>% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience</b>	8%	<b>Average Teacher Absences</b>	6.2%		
Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2014-15)					
<b>ELA Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4</b>	22%	<b>Mathematics Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4</b>	31%		
<b>Science Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4 (Grade 4)</b>		<b>Science Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4 (Grade 8)</b>	69%		
Overall NYSED Accountability Status					
<b>In Good Standing</b>		<b>Local Assistance Plan</b>			
<b>Priority School</b>		<b>Focus School</b>	x		
<b>SCHOOL PRIORITIES AS WRITTEN BY THE SCHOOL:</b>					
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Using Rtl as a strategic approach to meeting students' academic and behavioral needs.</li> <li>2. Address differentiated and specially designed instruction.</li> <li>3. Align the school's mission to the District mission.</li> <li>4. Increase family engagement.</li> </ol>					

School Identification Status		
The school was identified for <b>not meeting</b> the subgroup performance minimum cut point for the following subgroups in 2014-15:		
Subgroup	School's Performance	Minimum Cut point
Black	59	61
Students with Disabilities	25	29

## 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 (SEIS) representative.
- The review team visited a total of 30 classrooms during the two-day review.
- The OEE visited seven 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.

### SUCCESSSES WITHIN THE SCHOOL THAT THE SCHOOL SHOULD BUILD UPON:

1. School leaders have invited successful members of the local community to speak with students, and this initiative is giving students opportunities for a broader perspective on the next stage in their education.
2. To encourage staff to use data, the school leader has implemented a calendar for assessment that enables teachers to check for growth in students' achievement.
3. Recognizing the need for teacher collaboration, the school leader has scheduled frequent opportunities for common planning time at each grade level.

**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:

At the leadership team meeting on June 27 - 29, 2016, the school leader should develop a monitoring schedule that includes routine procedures for holding staff accountable for implementing school-wide practices associated with curriculum development and support, teacher practices and decisions, and student social and emotional developmental health. Monitoring activities should include collaboration with content area coordinators, walk-throughs, examination of documentation, and actionable feedback to staff. School leaders should then take all steps necessary to sustain the development of school-wide practices for improved impact

on student engagement and achievement.

**Rationale that led to the recommendation:**

- Although the school leader has introduced some strategies to drive school improvement, these strategies are not having the intended impact on increasing student achievement. The review team did not find evidence of protocols to hold staff accountable for implementing school-wide improvement initiatives, which was also acknowledged by the school leader. For example, at the beginning of the school year the school leader agreed to the development of a modified curriculum for students with disabilities, with the intention that this curriculum would promote firmer foundations in their understanding and application of basic skills. However, during interviews with the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) the school leader stated that he has not developed checks and measures to determine the impact that this curriculum is having on these students' academic growth.
- The school leader reported to the IIT that he revised the schedule to include daily common planning time. However, he has not specified the focus for these meetings and expects teachers to make their own arrangements for meeting with each other. The school leader also noted that he has not implemented procedures to ensure that these meetings take place and that teachers with particular responsibilities, such as special education teachers, allocate their time to collaborate with other staff members on behalf of the student subgroups they serve. During interviews, teachers reported that they have not received sufficient guidance from the school leadership about effective curriculum planning.
- Evidence from classroom observations demonstrates that instruction is not differentiated. For example, reviewers found that teaching techniques often focus on whole group presentations rather than customized learning activities based on an assessment of students' academic needs. The school leader reported that he has identified the need to monitor the quality of teachers' planning time more formally and he intends to introduce these procedures in the 2016-17 school year.
- Teachers have received professional development (PD) concerning the implementation of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). However, the school leader and teachers reported that PBIS is not being integrated within the school because there are too few monitoring systems to ensure that teachers reinforce PBIS practices and language in order to improve students' behavior and relationships.

**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:**

At the leadership team meeting on June 27-29, 2016, the school leader will develop a plan for school leaders to work with grade level teams during common planning time. During these meetings, school leaders will provide guidance on using data to plan effective lessons and preparing appropriate action plans to address students' academic needs identified through interim assessments. This plan should be incorporated in the Tenet Two monitoring schedule and include routine activities for school leaders to monitor the impact of these plans on student engagement and achievement.

**Rationale that led to the recommendation:**

- The school leader has introduced routine assessment procedures, but assessment results are not being

used effectively to increase students' academic achievement. For example, although student achievement varies on the STAR assessments, which are administered three times annually, the IIT found that lessons plans often are not adapted to meet the needs of all students, which reviewers also observed during classroom visitations. Teachers typically do not provide strategies in their lesson plans to address the diverse needs of individuals and subgroups, and reviewers noted that students in the same class generally used the same reading materials during lessons. During observations, the IIT found that students who comprehended the text easily completed the associated tasks quickly and successfully while students who had difficulty understanding the text waited for assistance from the teacher. Teachers typically gave struggling students the answers rather than providing strategies for completing the tasks independently. Reviewers examination of lesson plan showed that few teachers use data in their lesson planning to inform instructional grouping, and they found during observations that this was having an impact on the performance of students with disabilities in particular, who had to wait for targeted support outside of class time.

- The school leader reported that he expects teachers to prepare action plans to address the gaps in students' skills that are identified by interim assessments. However, the review team found that these plans are not having the intended impact. Teachers shared that they have yet to find the balance between delivering a curriculum based on the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) with fidelity and adjusting it to accommodate diverse student needs. They noted that school leaders have not articulated the priorities clearly, and teachers do not understand how to adjust the curriculum and their lesson plans to make appropriate accommodations for all students. In addition, teachers explained that they are not being held accountable for implementing the action plans for their students. For example, while documentation provided by the school shows that students' analytical skills are underdeveloped, the IIT found that actions plan did not effectively address this problem. Teachers' curriculum and assessment plans commonly focused on factual recall and literal comprehension rather than analysis, synthesis, and application of knowledge.

**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:**

Following the PD already planned for June 22 2016, the school leader should add to the Tenet Two monitoring schedule the arrangements for evaluating the implementation of the teacher practices and decisions determined by the trainer in this training. Activities should include walk-throughs to determine the impact of strategies on student engagement and their ownership of learning, especially for student subgroups such as students with disabilities, English language learners (ELLs), and students who respond quickly to new learning. The school leader should then determine the emphases for subsequent walk-throughs to sustain the impact on student achievement and engagement.

**Rationale that led to the recommendation:**

- The school leader has not effectively articulated and shared with staff the components of high-quality instruction appropriate to students' diverse needs. The IIT found that teachers' instructional practices do not incorporate multiple opportunities for learning. For example, during classroom observations reviewers found that the expectations are the same for all students. Teachers often missed opportunities to use checks for understanding to adjust planned activities. Accelerated students were

not challenged to increase their level of understanding through interactive dialogue. These students waited for other students to complete the assigned task, diminishing their engagement. Some teachers provided simple tasks for these students to complete as they waited, such as coloring and other activities that were not intellectually rigorous.

- A review of the lesson plans for students with disabilities showed that while teachers and aides identified procedural elements, such as the timing of interventions for particular students, there was little evidence that teachers had identified in advance the strategies necessary to support these students with respect to the content and intent of the lesson. Students with disabilities told the IIT that they were often too embarrassed to ask for the help they needed to complete a task successfully. The IIT also observed that ELLs were given insufficient time to understand task requirements because teachers explained tasks quickly, without defining key vocabulary. As a result, some students did not understand the instructions. In addition, the IIT found that teachers often did not guide students through a practice example to ensure their understanding of the task prior to having them work independently.
- Documentation provided to the IIT showed that few students learning English as a New Language (ENL) achieve higher standards of English language proficiency as determined by the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT). The school leader has identified this as an area of concern and noted that PD in this area is planned as part of the training on June 22, 2106.

**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:**

At the leadership team meeting on June 27-29, 2016, the school leader should reassign responsibilities to ensure a leader takes leadership of the integration of the PBIS program throughout the school. Activities should be specified in the Tenet Two monitoring schedule and should include walk-throughs to ensure fidelity to the school’s PBIS principles and the common language of PBIS, as well as routine checks on the impact of behavior plans for students exhibiting Level 1 behaviors.

**Rationale that led to the recommendation:**

- Reviewers found that the school leader has not implemented the principles of effective PBIS practice within the school to promote positive student behavior and the effective management of crisis situations by teachers and support staff. Students told the IIT that negative interactions between teachers and students as well as interactions with peers were one of the primary barriers to learning. For example, students reported that some students intentionally disrupt learning with attention-seeking behaviors. Teachers and students stated that low-level disruptions, such as inappropriate language often escalate when teachers do not reinforce the basic principles of PBIS in response.
- Some teachers shared with reviewers that they were not able to manage some students' behavior and needed more support from school leaders. The school leader noted that many teachers prepared multiple activities to keep students busy in order to limit the potential for disruptive behavior instead of creating more opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own learning. In observed classes, teaching aides encouraged students to keep on task instead of helping them to understand task requirements in more detail.
- The IIT noted that some students are not learning to moderate their behavior and are misbehaving in

the corridors and during recess. Students stated that fights in the cafeteria were common and that students were not always well behaved on the school buses. They added that bullying was common in the school.

- The school leader reported that he has made provisions for students who misbehave through the Alternative Behavior Choices room and the Pupil Assistance Center. The Alternative Behavior Choices room is designed to allow students to reflect on their poor choices, resolve to make better choices, and return quickly to class. The Pupil Assistance Center accommodates students with chronic and serious misbehavior problems. However, the IIT observed that the supervision was inconsistent in both of these facilities and that the supervisors were not helping students to learn from the consequences of their behavior.
- The school's self-reflection document indicates that support staff are not able to keep up with expectations because they are often dealing with crises. In addition, the school has not developed the data systems necessary to understand the root causes of students' misbehavior. For example, the school has few ways to determine whether misbehavior is directly related to frustration with learning difficulties or with other issues.

**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 June 23, 2016, the school leader should meet with representatives of the student support team to identify community groups with the potential to collaborate with the school in promoting family partnerships. This information should be incorporated in a strategic plan coordinating family access to community services with purposeful school communication.

**Rationale that led to the recommendation:**

- School leaders and staff reported that they have identified some barriers to the creation of home-school partnerships. However, the school leader has not developed a strategic plan to promote family engagement and reciprocal communication. Teachers stated that some families are impoverished and are often not able to attend events at the school because they do not have their own transportation. The school leader noted that some of the families are in transient situations and at times do not have reliable access to a telephone. The school leader reported that the school uses multiple means to contact families, including home visits, but stated that these methods have not been successful in effectively communicating the school's mission and gaining and sustaining parental support of the school's high expectations for student success. Parents who met with the review team stated that they do not receive information from the school about curriculum requirements and assessments, and they were not able to support their child's academic growth effectively.
- During interviews with the IIT, the school leader reported that communication between the school and families is not reciprocal. Parents shared that they did not consider the school to have a detailed understanding of the features of the diverse community since the annual parent survey generally asked them about their children's interests rather than for information about how best to understand the needs of the community.
- Teachers stated that a recent initiative to mentor students with poor attendance was unsuccessful because the school did not engage with parents effectively and work collaboratively with them to

overcome the circumstances contributing to attendance problems.

- The IIT noted that some staff spoke insensitively to students who entered the school late in the academic year and experienced difficulties, such as catching up with missed assignments and contending with gaps in skill acquisition and background knowledge.

#### **ADDITIONAL AREAS TO ADDRESS**

- Although the school leader has defined a broad mission statement for the school, it does not culminate in specific, measurable, ambitious, results-oriented, and timely (SMART) goals to determine the effectiveness of school-wide practices. As the school leader implements the systems necessary to hold teachers accountable for implementing school-wide practices, he will need to ensure that these practices are aligned to a data-driven mission for a sharper focus on measurable school improvement.
- Learning time is often wasted because curriculum and lesson plans are not being adjusted to meet diverse student needs. Student subgroups wait to make progress through interventions provided outside of class time. Teachers' planning decisions prioritize work completion over learning, and teachers lack efficient routines for organizational matters, such as distributing and collecting materials. In the future, the school leader will need to ensure that teachers use common planning time to prepare lessons that take full advantage of the available learning time.
- Teachers often defer adjusting learning activities during lessons and rely upon interventions provided during lab time, E period, and the resource room. In the future, school leaders should ensure that teachers increase their knowledge of the curriculum and effective formative assessment techniques in order to enable them to identify and respond immediately to students' emergent needs during instructional time.
- Available data are not being used effectively to determine students' social and emotional developmental health needs. In the future, the school leader should establish a system for identifying these needs, designing appropriate interventions, and monitoring the impact of these interventions in removing barriers to student success.