



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

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)



BEDS Code	400800010015
School Name	Henry J Kalfas Magnet School
School Address	1730 Beech Avenue, Niagara Falls, NY 14305
District Name	Niagara Falls City School District
School Leader	Italo Baldassarre
Dates of Review	May 31 – June 1, 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 Henry J Kalfas Magnet School

School Configuration (2015-16 data)					
Grade Configuration	PK – 6	Total Enrollment	442	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	1	# SETSS	53	# 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	100	% Attendance Rate	94		
% Free Lunch	81	% Reduced Lunch	3		
% Limited English Proficient	0	% Students with Disabilities	15		
Racial/Ethnic Origin (most recent data)					
% American Indian or Alaska Native	3	% Black or African American	58		
% Hispanic or Latino	6	% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0		
% White	20	% Multi-Racial	11		
Personnel (most recent data)					
Years Principal Assigned to School	0.75	# 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	3	Average Teacher Absences	7.5		
Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2014-15)					
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	12%	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4	14%		
Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (Grade 4)	79%	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:					
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Module integration (complete or components) in mathematics and English language arts instruction (i.e., exit tickets, higher level questioning, rubrics, and formative assessment) 2. Schoolwide focus on mathematics practices 3. Build a positive discipline program incorporating schoolwide behavior expectations 4. Integrate and apply technology skills across all curriculum areas 					

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
Students with disabilities	16.5	29.0
Economically disadvantaged students	59.0	64.0
Black or African-American students	50.5	61.0

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, accompanied by a shadow NYSED co-lead representative. The team also included a district representative and a Special Education School Improvement Specialist (SEIS) representative.
- The review team visited 38 classrooms during the two-day review.
- The OEE visited 8 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 position at the school for less than a year. In the last nine years, six school leaders have been appointed to lead this school.

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. The school leader informed reviewers that when appointed in September 2015, he identified the cafeteria and areas for arrival and dismissal as disorganized, with behavioral issues occurring there. As a result, the school leader established a discipline committee to address these areas of concern. Students told reviewers that improvements in these locations have made them feel safer, and they reported that fewer fights take place in these areas. This was reflected in school data showing that over the 2015-16 school year the number of behavioral incidents that included physical violence has dropped.
2. Reviewers noted that the school leader had undertaken a detailed and accurate needs assessment of the building. The school leader shared that he was beginning to work with staff to create plans to address identified issues, such as developing and promoting a vision for the school.
3. The review team noted that students in all classrooms had access to electronic notebooks equipped with a number of applications that teachers used to help build students' technology skills in areas such as keyboarding, among others.

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 September 19, 2016, the school leader should conduct daily walkthroughs to monitor the implementation of at least one of the following areas to ensure that:

- lessons have clear learning objectives and regular checkpoints throughout and at the end of lessons (Tenet 4);
- teachers use the information collected during the lesson to modify the following lesson to take into account student starting points (Tenet 3);
- teachers and students demonstrate courteous relationships (Tenet 5); and
- teachers take an active role in the management of student behavior in their classrooms (Tenet 5).

The school leader should provide timely feedback and targeted support based on data collected during walkthroughs.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- The school leader stated he is aware that many teachers do not clearly express learning objectives during lessons to ensure that students understand them and do not regularly check on students' learning throughout and at the end of lessons. He acknowledged to the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) that the lack of these practices has had a negative impact on student learning, as some students do not understand the purpose of their learning and teachers do not always match student work to student needs. The review team confirmed this in classroom visits. For example, reviewers noted examples of students working above grade level helping other students because they had finished their work, and students working below grade level randomly ticking boxes on multiple-choice activities because they did not understand their work. The school leader added that teachers' failure to frequently gather information about their students' learning does not support their planning for future work for students. The leader acknowledged that he has not formally set the expectation for teachers to use these practices.
- The school leader acknowledged that in some classrooms, relationships between teachers and students, student behavior, and teachers' management of student behavior have had an adverse effect on learning and need improvement. Students shared during discussions with reviewers that teachers inconsistently manage behavior, with too much misbehavior tolerated by teachers in some lessons, which slows student learning. Other students told reviewers that they are fearful of bullying in classrooms and public areas, despite recent improvements in the cafeteria and hallways. A few students reported that they did not feel well respected by some teachers; reviewer observations during classroom visits supported student accounts.
- Teachers shared with reviewers that they have often waited several months for school leaders to provide feedback on instruction, by which time they felt it was irrelevant. Teachers and the school leader both spoke of a lack of targeted support to help individual teachers improve their practice. The school leader acknowledged that although he conducts walkthroughs often enough to be aware of what is going on, the feedback he provides to teachers following lesson observations and walkthroughs

has not been sufficiently frequent, focused, and timely to help teachers improve their instructional practices; reviewers' reviews of documents supported these statements. The school leader also acknowledged that he has not held teachers sufficiently accountable for managing behavior in their 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, teachers should modify their planning for upcoming lessons so that the needs of students, including those with disabilities, are met. Teachers should adjust their planning based on the information they collect on students' learning throughout and at the end of the lessons.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- Reviewers noticed in planning documents that teachers commonly referenced pages or activities from district-approved and -provided curricular resources without modifying activities, student groupings, or materials based on student needs. Teachers confirmed during discussions with reviewers that they rarely adjust their planning to meet student needs, which they attributed to the limited time available to check on learning during lessons. Teachers stated this occurs because they feel constrained to move on quickly during instruction to keep up with the pacing guide. They added that, as a result, they typically do not plan to reteach even when they know that some students have not mastered the required skills. The school leader acknowledged that teachers do not sufficiently adjust their planning to match student needs based on information gathered during lessons.
- During visits to classrooms, reviewers noted that when teachers did not plan work that met student needs, with some students finding the work too difficult and others too easy, it frequently led to student disengagement or misbehavior and slowed learning. Students confirmed that in most lessons, teachers plan the same work for all students, and students sometimes do not understand the work or receive the help they need. During classroom visits, reviewers found this particularly evident for students with disabilities in general education lessons. For example, when such students were known to have a short attention span, teachers did not plan a series of shorter activities to hold their attention.

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 September 7, 2016, teachers should ensure that every lesson in English language arts (ELA) and math include:

- a clear objective in student-friendly language;
- regular checks for understanding as the lesson progresses; and
- a closing to the lesson in which the teacher checks for student understanding based on the lesson

objectives.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- During visits to classrooms, including some with the school leader, the IIT noted in many classrooms that the learning objectives posted by teachers in ELA and math were framed in academic rather than student-friendly language. In addition, reviewers observed that teachers often did not discuss the learning objectives in depth with students or ensure that students understood them. Consequently, students frequently did not know or could not explain to reviewers the underlying purpose of their learning. Instead, students often described to reviewers the activity they were engaged in, such as ticking boxes in a multiple-choice activity, rather than the skills or understandings they were supposed to be developing.
- Despite a few examples to the contrary, the review team noted that in most classroom visits teachers did not regularly check on student learning as the lesson progressed, for example, by monitoring students' individual work and intervening to provide support or challenge when necessary. Reviewers observed that, as a result, teachers failed to identify that some students did not understand their work or that the tasks were too easy for others. Reviewers seldom saw teachers modify or adjust instruction to account for issues that arose during the lesson. During classroom visits, including some with the school leader, reviewers noted that students often became disengaged when they struggled to complete their work.
- Reviewers found, and the school leader agreed, that few observed lessons showed teachers and students revisiting the learning objective by the end of the lesson to assess the learning that had taken place to establish the areas to be revisited by some students in the following lesson or identify the students who needed more challenge in the upcoming lessons.

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 1, 2016, the school leader should set out detailed expectations for relationships between teachers and students, student behavior, and teachers' role in the management of student behavior. These expectations should be communicated to all members of the school community and implemented daily starting September 7, 2016.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- In a number of visits to classrooms, reviewers noted that teachers did not exhibit courteous and respectful relationships with their students. Consequently, reviewers observed students interacting with teachers in a similarly discourteous fashion. Parents, the school leader, teachers, and students stated that some teachers and students showed a lack of respect and courtesy to each other in their daily interactions. Reviewers found that these types of interactions do not produce an atmosphere conducive to productive learning and the development of student self-esteem.
- The school leader reported to reviewers that he established a building-wide positive behavior management plan with a reward structure and expected behaviors. The school leader, in consultation with teachers, identified the expected behaviors to focus on, which include being respectful,

responsible, safe, and bully-free. Students informed reviewers that the plan has helped them feel more responsible for their own behavior, but stated that not all teachers manage behavior successfully in their classes.

- Parents, students, teachers, and support staff informed reviewers that expectations about behavior and ways of managing behavior varied too much across the school. During visits to classrooms, reviewers identified a number of teachers who did not take sufficient responsibility for managing student misbehavior before calling for support. The student support team explained that different teachers place different emphases on the reward system, with positive results occurring where teachers fully implement it.
- Students told reviewers they are not always comfortable with how teachers manage behavior in their classrooms and would like this to be improved and bullying incidents reduced. A number of students reported that they do not feel safe in school and are reluctant to try hard in class as other students often ridicule them. Students, teachers, support staff, and the school leader shared that student behavior and the variation in the management of student behavior frequently impede learning.

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:

Beginning October 2016, the school leader, in collaboration with the Parent Education Group and the School Quality Council, should identify and implement ways to collect input from families on their perceptions of the school and their needs in order to find out how to provide meaningful support to families.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- Parents, teachers, and the school leader reported that the school is successful in attracting parents to a number of fun events, such as Family Night, which over 100 parents have attended. However, school leaders reported that attendance at educational workshops for parents has been poor. For example, the school leader and parents stated that the Parent Education Group, which meets monthly to discuss issues such as state assessments, is typically attended by only a few parents despite having child care and food provided to make it easier for busy parents to attend. The school leader and the small core of parents involved in both the Parent Education Group and the School Quality Council, expressed to reviewers that they have tried a number of strategies to increase parental attendance at education-focused meetings, such as changing the meeting hours and days, but have met with limited success. However, the school leader, teachers, and parents acknowledged that to date, the school has not collected any data or canvassed opinions to establish parents’ views of family needs and learn family perceptions about the school so that information and guidance provided by the school more closely meet families’ needs. The school leader confirmed that surveying parents and analyzing the results is an area in need of improvement.

ADDITIONAL AREAS TO ADDRESS

- The school leader, teachers, and support staff recognize that there is no curriculum in place to support students’ social and emotional developmental health needs. In the future, the school leader will need to work with all staff to establish a program that meets students’ social and emotional developmental

health needs in all grade levels.

- Reviewers observed many instances where the school leader and teachers did not make the best use of resources and time. For example, few teachers benefitted from in-class support from coaches; special education staff rarely supported students in general education lessons because of scheduling difficulties; teachers did not consistently make good use of time between 9:00 a. m. and 9:30 a. m., as they do not always start lessons briskly and purposefully; and behavioral incidents that should have been dealt with by teaching staff were handled by the school leader and dean of students. In the future, the school leader will need to review the schedule and conduct an audit to ensure decisions and strategies make the best use of staff time and resources.

FINAL DRAFT