



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

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)



BEDS Code	441800050005
School Name	Port Jervis Middle School
School Address	118 East Main Street, Port Jervis, NY 12771
District Name	Port Jervis City School District
School Leader	Jean Fazzino Lain
Dates of Review	May 10 – 11, 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 Port Jervis Middle School

School Configuration (2015-16 data)			
Grade Configuration	7-8	Total Enrollment	409
		SIG Recipient	
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	12	# SETSS	0
		# Integrated Collaborative Teaching	23
Types and Number of Special Classes (2015-16)			
# Visual Arts	6	# Music	12
		# Drama	0
# Foreign Language	10	# Dance	0
		# CTE	0
School Composition (most recent data)			
% Title I Population	64	% Attendance Rate	93
% Free Lunch	55	% Reduced Lunch	9
% Limited English Proficient	0	% Students with Disabilities	20
Racial/Ethnic Origin (most recent data)			
% American Indian or Alaska Native	0	% Black or African American	9
% Hispanic or Latino	13	% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	1
% White	75	% Multi-Racial	2
Personnel (most recent data)			
Years Principal Assigned to School	3	# of Assistant Principals	1
% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate	0	% Teaching Out of Certification	3
% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience	5	Average Teacher Absences	8.8
Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2014-15)			
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	20	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4	17
Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (Grade 4)	N/A	Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (Grade 8)	68
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. Develop interdisciplinary curriculum that is data driven and responsive to student needs. 2. Expand and improve outreach to parents. 3. Develop protocols for the regular analysis of data to inform instruction. 			

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	6.5	29.0
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 and a Special Education School Improvement Specialist (SEIS) representative.
- The review team made 54 classroom visits to 38 classrooms during the two-day review.
- The OEE visited 12 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.

SUCCESSES WITHIN THE SCHOOL THAT THE SCHOOL SHOULD BUILD UPON:

1. The school leader has created a culture of caring as evidenced by student and parent statements that school staff are sensitive and responsive to their needs. The review team observed generally respectful and friendly interactions between staff and students.
2. The school established lunchtime academic study halls for students who require additional academic support. Data documentation showed that eight of the first 40 assigned students were passing all their classes after eight weeks in the program and another 16 students were failing fewer classes.
3. The school established "Chill Zone," a student incentive program that takes place every Friday, to recognize students with perfect attendance and superior academic performance. Consequently, the average daily student attendance rate has risen to 93 percent.
4. The school leader embraced the DTSDE review process as an opportunity to rally the school community around school improvement. Teachers and staff spoke with candor and sincerity during interviews and conversations with the IIT, reflecting their commitment to the school improvement process.

Tenet 2 - School Leader Practices and Decisions: Visionary leaders create a school community and culture that lead to success, well-

Recommendation for Tenet 2 – School Leader Practices and Decisions:

- Beginning with the May – June 2016 faculty conferences and to be completed by September 30, 2016, the school leaders should facilitate discussions to identify expectations the staff have of each other, parents, and students. These discussions should lead to a shared understanding of everyone’s roles in ensuring continuous school improvement. The school community should also consider creating a school motto that captures the spirit of the school’s vision and mission.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- The school leader has created a caring and nurturing school environment; however, the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) found that different constituencies expressed different perspectives on the school values and beliefs. Statements by staff, parents, and students at the different focus group interviews revealed an absence of shared values and desired outcomes for students. The school does not have a shared decision-making body, such as a school leadership team comprised of representatives of the school community. Consequently, goals that are specific, measurable, ambitious, results-oriented, and timely (SMART) have not been developed, and the school’s self-reflection document did not include the school’s priorities. The self-reflection document speaks of a “data-driven” vision; however, statements by school staff did not reflect an emphasis on strategic data-driven decision-making.
- The school leader’s statements revealed an evolving understanding of her role as an instructional leader and the importance of defining the roles of others. She has not yet established clear expectations of the respective roles that teachers, parents, and students play in driving continuous school improvement, as evidenced by statements from all constituents.
- The school leaders have not established standards and expectations for schoolwide practices such as planning and instruction, work of the grade teams, and use of Wednesday afternoon professional learning community time. Thus, the lessons in most classrooms visited by the IIT, for example, did not contain a learning objective, engaging activities, or checks for understanding. Statements by the school leader and teachers revealed unclear expectations regarding teachers’ planning and development of a cohesive curriculum. Their statements also indicated that school leaders do not have a system in place to monitor, review, and provide feedback on teachers’ lesson plans and classroom instruction. As a result, teachers have generally not implemented best practices, such as purposeful grouping, or incorporated the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) instructional shifts. Staff reported that school leaders have not maximized use of the five weekly common planning periods scheduled for the four grade teams. Reviewers learned that school leaders do not provide administrative oversight of the grade meetings and have not set expectations of what teachers should accomplish during these meetings. Additionally, staff statements indicated little professional development (PD) or instructional discussions take place at the Wednesday afternoon professional learning community meetings.

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:

- During May and June 2016, school leaders should provide teachers with several “looking-at-student-work” protocols that teachers can adopt or adapt to serve their needs. Beginning in September 2016, teachers should integrate looking at student work as a regular activity at weekly grade team meetings. Thereafter, teachers should use their analyses of student work to establish normed expectations for student work at each grade level and to inform instructional planning. School leaders should provide targeted feedback to teachers regarding their protocols, record and monitor implementation to evaluate impact on planning and instruction, and provide support as needed.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- The school leaders have not established standards and expectations for curriculum planning, work of the grade teams, and feedback to students. The school leader scheduled daily common planning time for the four newly established grade teams to meet. However, the school leader and teachers stated that the teams’ work is not monitored and evaluated; consequently, this valuable resource has had minimal impact on curriculum planning and instruction. For example, teachers at the grade team meeting observed by the IIT discussed the needs of three individual students, but those discussions did not drive strategies in planning and instruction for those students; reviewers found this was largely due to a lack of formal standards and expectations regarding the work of these teacher teams.
- Student work examined by the review team showed that teachers provided little actionable feedback with next steps to address areas of weakness. Although some teachers use generic rubrics to evaluate student work, students are not involved in developing rubrics collaboratively with teachers to establish standards for their work. Statements by the school leader and teachers revealed that standards for student work at each grade level have not been established. Further, the IIT saw little evidence of teachers addressing the diverse needs of students through student-specific actionable feedback, scaffolding, re-teaching, and other modifications. Interviewed students reported that teachers do not provide them with regular feedback to support them in taking responsibility for their own learning; the IIT’s review of student work confirmed this.

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:

- Beginning with the June 2016 grade team meetings, the teachers should receive training to provide lessons that contain, at minimum, a student learning objective, a formative assessment, and a minimum of one highly engaging learning activity, such as think-pair-share, a hands-on activity, student choice in learning products, or varying response strategies. Thereafter, teachers should be able to determine if students learned what the teacher intended during the lesson and students should be able to articulate what they learned. School leaders should provide explicit feedback to teachers and record implementation to evaluate impact on student learning and provide support as needed.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- School leaders have not established a shared understanding of what elements belong in lesson plans and classroom lessons, and they have not clearly articulated their expectations for teaching and learning, such as student-centered instruction. Thus, most lessons observed by the IIT did not contain a learning objective, engaging activities, or checks for understanding, and teachers typically did not implement best practices and the instructional shifts. Interviews with the school leader and teachers revealed unclear expectations regarding teachers' planning and development of a cohesive curriculum. School leaders do not have a system in place to monitor, review, and evaluate teachers' lesson plans. Submitted lesson plans showed that teachers generally did not use data to inform their planning or include learning objectives and checks for understanding. Many plans were merely downloaded from EngageNY and other online sources without modifications for the students at the school. Teacher statements indicated that they typically do not use data to plan instruction and do not embed interim assessments in lessons to evaluate student understanding.
- Most lessons observed by the review team were teacher- and content-centered. Teachers frequently called on a small group of students who volunteered to answer questions, and teachers did not require students to build on each other's responses. Thus, student voice was limited. Students in almost all visited classrooms were compliant and attentive; however, they were not highly engaged in activities that required critical thinking or fostered intellectual discovery. Most questions asked by teachers during class visits were literal-level, fact-based questions that did not promote high-level thinking and foster a deeper understanding of content. Although most teachers had a powerful presence in the classroom that commanded authority, they generally followed the "chalk and talk" teaching method without highly engaging students.
- Interviewed teachers stated that they have received little school-based PD. Teachers also stated that although some staff have participated in district-led PD, they did not turnkey new learnings with their grade-level teams or other staff members.

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 June 13, 2016, the school leaders and student support team should develop a shared online spreadsheet to record all student disciplinary and clinical referrals, the interventions and services provided, and their impact on student learning and behavior. Thereafter, the school leaders and support staff should analyze data on a monthly basis to eliminate duplication of services, determine effectiveness of interventions, and make adjustments as necessary. These analyses should be shared with teachers to inform strategic decisions regarding targeted student interventions in their classes.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- School leaders have not put a strategic plan in place to record, analyze, and use data to address the social and emotional developmental health needs of all students. The school leader supplied data to

the review team comparing disciplinary outcomes for the 2014-15 school year with those for the period of September 2015 through May 11, 2016. In a shorter period of time in 2015-16, 485 lunch detentions were assigned compared to 301 for all of 2014-15; after school detentions rose from 164 to 332, in-school suspensions rose from 116 to 128, and out-of-school suspensions rose from 71 to 73. However, the school leaders have not analyzed these data to determine why reported incidents and penalties have increased or what the recidivism rates are. The school leader stated that there is no system in place to record student referrals, monitor and evaluate interventions, and make adjustments in services when necessary. Consequently, the school leader has not determined whether services are having the desired impact or whether some services are duplicated by multiple providers. The student support team stated they knew their efforts were successful based on anecdotal evidence; however, they could not reference data to support their assertions.

- The school has implemented some stand-alone programs that address the social-emotional needs of some referred students; however, school leaders do not know whether interventions are having the desired impact. Although the school leader and student support staff claimed that the school's social-emotional programs are having a significant impact on students, they were unable to reference specific data to support their assertions of impact. The student support team identified cyberbullying as a serious problem that triggers verbal and physical altercations between students, but the school has not adopted an overarching program to address this issue. Although the student support team stated that they have developed close relationships and often work with numerous agencies such as the Maternal-Infant Services Network, Orange County Mental Health, and Cornell Cooperative Extension, the team's members were unable to quantify the impact of the work of these outside agencies.
- Although the student support team meets weekly, they reported that there is no system in place to track, evaluate, and adjust student services and interventions. The student support team and school leader reported that the school's discipline system and support services work collaboratively to address students' social-emotional needs. For example, lunch counseling circles are provided for students facing significant emotional issues and small group counseling for repeat disciplinary offenders. However, clinicians have not formally evaluated the impact of these services on students' behavior and 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:

- By June 30, 2016, school leaders should analyze the results of the district's parent survey to determine what parent events and training parents wish to receive. If these data are insufficient to provide a comprehensive parent needs assessment, the school should administer its own survey online and during the September 2016 orientation and open house. By August 30, 2016, a task force should be established comprising school staff and parents to analyze the survey data and develop an action plan to increase parent engagement in school life.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- The school has generally not collaborated with families and staff to strengthen the home-school

partnership and positively impact student achievement. Parents and school staff reported that the school leaders and student support team have not provided workshops for parents to increase their awareness of the school's academic program or training to support parents' efforts to help their children succeed. Parents stated that there have been no parent workshops of any kind during the 2015-16 school year.

- Parents reported that the same small group of parents attends parent association meetings. However, meetings do not feature a theme, workshops, or presentations that might draw parents. The school leader stated that the school has not administered a survey to determine parent needs, desired topics for potential workshops, and best times to provide parent training.
- School staff and parents acknowledged that the school does not use school events as an opportunity to share school and student data with parents and does not share data with staff regarding family needs. Students and parents stated that the four report cards and four progress reports provided each year are the school's primary vehicles to share student data. However, some parents expressed the perspective that the generic and vague comments included on progress reports are not helpful in determining their children's progress.

ADDITIONAL AREAS TO ADDRESS

- The review team's classroom visits revealed that the expertise of the school's special education teachers is generally untapped as they serve primarily as teaching assistants. Further, special education teachers reported that they do not help develop students' Functional Behavior Assessments and Behavior Intervention Plans. During the 2016-17 school year, the school leaders should deploy special education teachers more effectively and establish an active Response to Intervention (RtI) committee.
- Statements by parents and staff confirmed observations from the IIT's classroom visits that the students' academic enrichment period is generally utilized as a study hall where very few students participate in enrichment activities or receive targeted support to address deficiencies. During the 2016-17 school year, the school leaders should consider abolishing the academic enrichment period and distributing these 42 minutes into the other instructional periods to increase overall instructional time.
- Although some data are collected, school leaders have not established systems to monitor schoolwide practices and inform strategic decisions to ensure continuous school improvement. Statements by teachers, support staff, and school leaders revealed a general absence of systems in place to monitor, evaluate the impact of, and adjust school programs and practices. Going forward, school leaders should create systems to monitor, evaluate, and adjust curricula and planning, classroom instruction, special education services, and parent and family engagement efforts.
- Statements by teachers and the school leader indicated an absence of curriculum maps for teachers to use in all content areas. Additionally, the school leaders did not provide training to the staff on using the Atlas Rubicon planning tools connected to the CCLS. During the 2016-17 school year, school leaders and teachers should collaboratively develop grades seven and eight curricula in all subject areas.