



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

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



<b>BEDS Code</b>	600101060005
<b>School Name</b>	Waverly Middle School
<b>School Address</b>	1 Frederick Street, Waverly, NY 14892
<b>District Name</b>	Waverly Central School District
<b>School Leader</b>	Paul Vesci
<b>Dates of Review</b>	May 24-25, 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 Waverly Middle School

School Configuration (2015-16 data)					
Grade Configuration	6-8	Total Enrollment	330	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	1	# SETSS	0	# Integrated Collaborative Teaching	0
Types and Number of Special Classes (2015-16)					
# Visual Arts	3	# Music	3	# Drama	0
# Foreign Language	1	# Dance	0	# CTE	0
School Composition (most recent data)					
% Title I Population		51.5	% Attendance Rate		94.3
% Free Lunch		47	% Reduced Lunch		45
% Limited English Proficient		0	% Students with Disabilities		16
Racial/Ethnic Origin (most recent data)					
% American Indian or Alaska Native		0	% Black or African American		1
% Hispanic or Latino		1	% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander		1
% White		96	% Multi-Racial		1
Personnel (most recent data)					
Years Principal Assigned to School		1	# of Assistant Principals		1
% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate		0	% Teaching Out of Certification		0
% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience		2	Average Teacher Absences		
Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2014-15)					
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4		26	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4		37
Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (Grade 4)			Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (Grade 8)		77
Overall NYSED Accountability Status					
In Good Standing			Local Assistance Plan		X
Priority School			Focus School		X
<b>SCHOOL PRIORITIES AS WRITTEN BY THE SCHOOL:</b>					
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Align teaching to a common instructional model/process that all teachers follow, include all parts of the lesson, and support the needs of all students.</li> <li>2. Set goals and beliefs for the Middle School for shared expectations and common understanding AIS based intervention time, resources and supplies for students' social-emotional needs, and have a timed RTI program.</li> <li>3. Develop curriculum planning models, vertical alignment, common assessment, and common grading policies.</li> <li>4. Develop systems for management, student behavior, tardiness, absence, truancy, and systems to manage expectations.</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
Students with Disabilities	10	29

## 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 two Outside Educational Experts (OEEs) 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 a total of 82 classrooms during the two-day review.
- The OEE visited 13 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.
- In September 2015, the school became a middle school having previously been a junior/senior high school under one principal.
- Within the last five years, the district and school have experienced significant administrative turnover, with three district superintendents, three middle school principals, and three high school principals.

The Review Team concluded that the school's current systems and practices are generally aligned with Stage One on the DTSDE Rubric.

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

1. The school has developed a system for regularly recognizing and rewarding students' positive behavior and academic achievement through the awarding of certificates and The Wolverine Award. Students reported that they were proud to receive these and to have their photographs displayed on an awards board.
2. Some science and social studies teachers in grades six and seven use an inquiry-based approach to planning and instruction, which helps increase student engagement in those classrooms.
3. Students have opportunities to participate in the school band and in sports. Parents reported that they appreciate these activities, as they benefit their children's social-emotional health and help students develop additional skills.

**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 June 3, 2016, the school leader and the school leadership team should use the DTSDE recommendations as a starting point to develop the school’s vision, mission, and goals that are focused on the school’s values and priorities, as well as a plan for how these are to be achieved. The goals should be specific, measurable, ambitious, results-oriented, and timely (SMART). Before the end of the 2015-16 school year, the school leaders should appoint a team that includes teachers, school leaders, and community members to collaborate and develop these. This team should work over the summer to develop a draft plan that will be presented to teachers at the first staff meeting in September 2016. This plan should be implemented beginning in September 2016.

**Rationale that led to the recommendation:**

- The school leader stated that a school vision and mission have not been established and that he has not developed SMART goals. The school leader stated that although he has identified the school’s priorities, the school lacks the strategies and evidence-based systems necessary to implement them. The school leader also reported that while the school staff are aware of the school’s priorities, parents are not. The review team found that parents, students, and teachers had no knowledge of the school’s priorities, values, and expectations for student academic success and social and emotional developmental health. Teachers interviewed by reviewers stated that they were not aware of the expectations for teachers or students.
- The school leader reported that although there is a district strategic planning team that includes parents, students, staff, and community members, there is no comparable schoolwide strategic planning team to promote school improvement. The school leader shared that he recognizes the need to appoint a team to collaborate and develop the school’s priorities. The school leader has identified that the school lacks coherent protocols to measure school improvement and to share, monitor, and revise the practices used by staff in regard to the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), the development of an interdisciplinary curriculum, and the support and management of students’ social and emotional developmental health needs.

**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 first staff meeting in September 2016, the school leader should establish non-negotiable elements that are expected to be included and implemented in all curricula and lesson plans. These elements should include learning objectives, differentiation, specially designed instruction for students with disabilities, formative assessments, student engagement strategies, and higher-order questioning that probes student thinking.

**Rationale that led to the recommendation:**

- The school leader reported that he has conveyed his expectations to teachers in staff meetings that curriculum planning should include learning objectives, differentiation, formative assessments, higher-order questioning, and student engagement strategies. The self-reflection document reports that the school leader has provided the EngageNY curriculum modules and additional resources for all English language arts (ELA) and math teachers to support curriculum planning. However, teachers interviewed by the review team reported that they have not been provided with training on how to implement the curriculum with the exception of science, for which a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) mentor was provided, resulting in a more inquiry-based approach in science. The school leader stated that funding has been used to support the curriculum by providing daily common planning time for teachers so they can plan engaging curriculum and lessons together. However, the review team found that lesson plans seldom incorporated higher-order questioning and complex materials to deepen student understanding. Although lesson plans reviewed sometimes included learning objectives, teachers did not always share or review these with students.
- The school's self-reflection document indicates that teachers are in the process of developing protocols to monitor and adjust their curriculum plans. However, reviewers found that curriculum plans rarely accounted for the needs of students performing above and below grade level. For example, teacher planning documents showed that although social studies teachers created workbooks and packets for students, none of these materials were modified to account for individual students' needs. Additionally, the review team found that teachers rarely used achievement data to modify the curriculum. School leaders have not established a system to monitor the curriculum to ensure it is modified to meet the needs of individual and subgroups of students.
- The review team found a lack of shared planning and collaboration between general education and special education teachers to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Apart from the resource room, the review team found no evidence of, or reference to, students' Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs). Consequently, these students were insufficiently supported in their learning.

**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 2016, grade-level and department teams should meet on a regular basis, at least weekly, with the express purpose of analyzing and interpreting data to inform teaching and learning. These meetings should have clear and uniform protocols with an agenda and recorded minutes. The school leaders should review the meeting agendas and minutes and provide actionable feedback. Lesson plans should be aligned to the CCLS, use complex materials, and promote student engagement and higher-order thinking. For example, the science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) model used in grades six and seven can be used as a model for the development of lessons.

**Rationale that led to the recommendation:**

- The school leader stated that he has only just begun to engage teachers in conversations about data. The self-reflection document acknowledges that common planning time meetings for teachers are unstructured and voluntary. The review team observed a grade-level team meeting and found that it lacked direction, with no clear expectations for content and with no monitoring or accountability.

Teachers reported that although they collect a great deal of data, they have received little guidance on how to interpret and analyze data to inform instruction. Although teachers administer AIMSweb, a screening progress and monitoring tool, reviewers found limited evidence of its use to inform instructional decisions. The review team observed that teachers rarely used formative assessments to group students to meet their different needs and learning styles. The self-reflection document acknowledges the lack of uniform protocols and processes in the school. The school leader reported he is working to revise teacher practices and shares trends noted in teacher evaluations during staff meetings. A review of the school leader's visits to classrooms demonstrated that while the school leader did analyze data from classroom visits, there was no evidence of how the school leader was using data to improve teacher instructional practices.

- Reviewers found that lesson plans inconsistently aligned to the CCLS. Teachers rarely used complex materials to promote student engagement or higher-order questioning to deepen understanding. The review team also found limited evidence of curriculum maps or pacing guides. The reviewers observed that most teachers typically taught the curriculum without checking student understanding throughout lessons, and as a result, during classroom visits the review team found that students were not engaged. The IIT saw limited evidence on student work reviewed that teachers provided next steps to improve learning or opportunities for self-evaluation. Interviewed students reported their goal was to increase their test scores but were unclear about how to achieve this. In many classrooms, students worked independently even when paired or grouped together. Reviewers observed increased opportunities for students to learn in grades six and seven science lessons where the STEM model provided an inquiry-based approach, and in grade eight social studies lessons where students worked in pairs and groups to problem-solve and exchange ideas. However, these models have not yet resulted in higher achievement in these classes based on data.
- The review team found no evidence of specially designed instruction for students, including those with disabilities and limited evidence of teachers modifying materials, to account for student needs. Students reported feeling uncomfortable to answer questions in the classroom, in case they gave the wrong answer and were made fun of by others.

**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 the end of June 2016, the school leader should activate the School-Based Intervention Team (SBIT) to review the previously created planning document and sign an agreement with the Regional Special Education Technical Assistance Support Center (RSE-TASC) behavioral specialist to develop a schoolwide positive behavioral program. The SBIT plan should be implemented by September 2016. The team should create a schedule of monthly meetings to follow the process for identifying students and developing interventions with fidelity. The team facilitator should report meeting minutes to the school leader on a monthly basis. The interventions should be reviewed by the SBIT every six weeks to evaluate whether the interventions have been successful.

**Rationale that led to the recommendation:**

- The review team found that a schoolwide program to support the teaching of student social and emotional developmental health is not in place. The student support team stated there is no shared understanding or vision for student social and emotional developmental health. The student support team and school leader reported that there is currently no SBIT due to the changes in school leadership that took place, although everything is in place for its implementation and the current school leader plans to reinstate it. The SBIT members received training a year and a half ago and have systems and protocols ready to implement; however, they recognize that planning documents they prepared in the past need to be reviewed to ensure they are current. The school leader acknowledged the need for a process to identify students in need of interventions to address social and emotional developmental health issues. The reviewers noted, and the school leader acknowledged, that monthly meetings are not scheduled to identify students in need of interventions. In addition, the school currently has no shared protocols to regularly review and evaluate whether prior interventions in place are successful. The school also does not have a strategic plan to systematically collect, analyze, and use data to identify and support the social-emotional needs of all students.
- The self-reflection document showed and the school leader reported the school has established clear procedures and rules for student behavior. The school leader stated that teachers work in grade level teams in order to help them focus on common student behavior and learning expectations. However, students reported ongoing bullying is a concern, and they stated some teachers cannot manage the misbehavior of some students, resulting in lost learning time.
- The school leader, teachers, and student support team shared that there has been limited support for staff on how to use resources and develop skills that support the behavioral needs of students. For example, there is no program in place to support student social and emotional developmental health. The school leader acknowledged the need to work with teachers on better meeting student social-emotional 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:**

- At the next parent gathering held in June 2016, the school leader should use the opening to share that the school’s expectations for student learning and achievement are being developed. By the end of September 2016, based on the analysis of the recent district family engagement survey, a schedule of monthly workshops and/or meetings should be developed to support and assist parents and families in helping with their children’s learning. At the September 2016 Open House, teachers should present information on the use of the parent portal and other ways to create and sustain two-way communications. By December 2016, the school leader, with parent and teacher input, should create a plan to inform the development of partnerships with families and the community.

**Rationale that led to the recommendation:**

- The self-reflection document stated that the school is developing a plan for communication with families. A school newsletter informs parents of events and schedule changes and provides general information. However, the school leader and interviewed parents reported that families do not receive regular communications and are provided little information about the school’s expectations for its

students and families, or about how parents can support their children's learning. The school leader acknowledged that parent communications, including the school's expectations for student learning and achievement, are in need of development.

- At the time of the review, a district family engagement survey was being administered, but the results were not yet known. To date, the school has not consulted with parents and families on how the school can best assist them in helping with their children's learning. Although parents interviewed by reviewers were aware that a monthly parent group meeting is used to inform parents of events and concerns, they were unaware of any workshops or specific meetings to support them in helping their children achieve success. Parents reported that apart from Open House meetings and music and sports events, attendance at any additional events are typically low.
- Some parents reported they access the SchoolTool parent portal that the school uses to communicate concerns and grades to families. However, they noted that not all teachers post information promptly and that very few parents are aware of or access the portal. The review team found limited evidence of any reciprocal communications.
- The review team found that teachers and staff members have not been provided with specific guidance on how to build and sustain home-school partnerships. The school leader acknowledged that the school needs to develop partnerships with families and the community and share strategies, resources, and information with parents so they can assist their children in developing academic and social-emotional skills.

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

- The special education teachers and the school's library media specialist cover lunch duties as well as in-school suspension and time-out room supervision. This results in some students with disabilities not receiving their prescribed services and the library being closed for students during the lunch period. In the future, the school leader should review the deployment of these three staff members.
- Mentors are used in science education, which has led to a more inquiry-based approach to curriculum planning and student learning. Similar mentors are available at the district level to support the curriculum in other content areas such as English language arts (ELA), math, and also for special education. In the future, the school leaders should explore mentors to improve curriculum planning and instruction and raise student achievement.