



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

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)



BEDS Code	280401030006
School Name	Westbury Middle School
School Address	455 Rockland Street, Westbury, NY 11590
District Name	Westbury Union Free School District
School Leader	Mr. David Zimbler
Dates of Review	March 29-30, 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 Westbury Middle School

School Configuration (2015-16 data)				
Grade Configuration	6-8	Total Enrollment	1078	SIG Recipient
Types and Number of English Language Learner Classes (2015-16)				
# Transitional Bilingual		# Dual Language	0	# Self-Contained English as a Second Language
				15
Types and Number of Special Education Classes (2015-16)				
# Special Classes	4	# SETSS		# Integrated Collaborative Teaching
				19
Types and Number of Special Classes (2015-16)				
# Visual Arts	16	# Music	22	# Drama
# Foreign Language	15	# Dance	0	# CTE
School Composition (most recent data)				
% Title I Population		100%	% Attendance Rate	96.43%
% Free Lunch		100%	% Reduced Lunch	0
% Limited English Proficient		26%	% Students with Disabilities	9%
Racial/Ethnic Origin (most recent data)				
% American Indian or Alaska Native		.2%	% Black or African American	25.5%
% Hispanic or Latino		71.7%	% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	.92%
% White		1.48%	% Multi-Racial	.19%
Personnel (most recent data)				
Years Principal Assigned to School		5	# of Assistant Principals	2
% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate		0	% Teaching Out of Certification	0
% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience		10%	Average Teacher Absences	
Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2014-15)				
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4			Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4	
Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (Grade 4)			Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (Grade 8)	
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. PLC—professional learning community development. 2. Utilization of CFAs—common formative assessments to inform instruction. 3. READ 180 and System 44 programs to support student literacy growth. 4. Co-teacher ENL/ ELA and HLA initiative and based on new CRPart 154 Regulation. 5. Professional development. 				

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 Students	64	64.0
Limited English Proficient	24	27.5

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 the New York State Education Department. The team also included a district representative, a Special Education School Improvement Specialist (SESIS) representative, and a representative from the Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (RBERN).
- The review team visited a total of 31 classrooms during the two-day review.
- The OEE visited nine 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 did not provide the results of student, staff, and parent surveys.

The Review Team concluded that the school's current systems and practices are a combination of Stage One and Stage Two.

SUCCESSSES WITHIN THE SCHOOL THAT THE SCHOOL SHOULD BUILD UPON:

1. The school has been providing a more rigorous math program and offering the Common Core Algebra 1 Regents exam to grade eight students. The school leader noted this has led to an improvement in the grade eight proficiency rate on the State math assessment.
2. The school leader reported that he implemented the use of research-based programs such as READ 180, Systems 44, and Achieve 3000. The data provided to the review team showed an improvement in reading comprehension and writing for general and special education students.
3. The school has implemented programs and initiatives such as Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and Lancer Loot to support positive student behavior. Many students interviewed by the IIT expressed the perspective that their social and emotional health is addressed in a safe and supportive school environment although the school is still working to address the social-emotional needs of all students in an effective manner.

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:

- The school leader should look at current programs to ensure alignment with the instructional goals of the school. Based on that analysis, he should meet with his instructional cabinet so that horizontal communication, that is, communication within the instructional cabinet, takes place to align all programs to the school’s mission.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- School leaders reported that they have put in place some strategies to increase the instructional capacity of staff through collaboration, support, and targeted feedback. For example, the school leader stated that he implemented a professional learning community (PLC) initiative, shares data collected from quarterly exams, and conducts quarterly data meetings with teachers in an effort to achieve the school’s mission of creating a community of learners. However, the IIT found that improvement in instructional practices and progress toward high quality instruction are still in their early stages. Members of the instructional cabinet, which is comprised of the school leader, assistant principals, chairpersons, and directors, conduct walk-throughs that focus on observed instructional patterns that require improvement, such as undifferentiated instruction and low-level questioning techniques. Some programs and initiatives such as the Entering English as a New Language Program and professional development (PD) offerings need to be aligned more effectively with the school’s mission.
- During classroom visitations, the review team observed that instructional practices were mostly teacher centered, were not aligned with the school’s goals, and were not consistent with the school leader’s vision. The school leader stated that the department chairs provide instructional leadership; however, the IIT found that the chairpersons are not able to attend PLC and other meetings due to the current schedule that requires them to teach during PLC meeting times. As a result, there is minimal communication among the chairs and between the chairs and teachers, which hinders improvement in teachers’ instructional practices and student achievement.

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 the next instructional cabinet meeting during the week of April 18, 2016, the cabinet should norm their expectations for the curriculum by:
 - creating a schedule to conduct walk-throughs as a team;
 - creating a template of instructional expectations;
 - conducting a follow-up meeting to share their observations; and

- creating a shared document that can be used as a reference showing how the observational process is normed.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- The school leaders noted that they have begun to develop systems such as PLCs to support teachers in developing rigorous, coherent curriculum. However, the PLC meetings in which staff develop curriculum are supervised by different members of the school leadership team, including the school leader and assistant principals, which results in disconnected and inconsistent outcomes. While the school leader, assistant principals, and chairpersons conduct frequent observations of teachers, the IIT found that the observation process protocol is not normed. The school leader stated that if feedback provided by the assistant principals or chairs is very different from what he has observed, he has a conversation with them in order to come to a consensus.
- The school leader reported that he expects teachers to develop a curriculum that incorporates student needs and includes data-driven instruction (DDI), higher-order questions, and native language support materials. However, teacher interviews and a review of unit and lesson plans by the IIT showed that teachers' plans incorporate little DDI or native language support materials. Most lessons observed by reviewers were teacher directed and did not include higher-order questions or incorporate student needs. Additionally, most teachers were not able to articulate how they use assessment data to effectively differentiate the curriculum or their lessons plans. For example, a living environment lesson plan did not include differentiation either for English language learners (ELLs) or for students with disabilities. In addition, documents for students to review in a history class required little higher order thinking skills and contained no scaffolding. The lack of normed curricular expectations minimizes the development of a consistent framework for teachers to follow.

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 next April 2016 PLC meeting, the instructional cabinet should use the PLC meetings to focus on developing teachers' effective use of the following instructional strategies:
 - higher-order questioning; and
 - scaffolding strategies for English language learners (ELLs).

The instructional cabinet should monitor teachers' implementation of these strategies through classroom observations.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- The school leaders are in the early stages of implementing the PLCs, quarterly exams, and "Word of the Day" and are using them to reinforce the desired instructional practices, including the use of higher-order questioning and scaffolding strategies. However, the IIT found that school leaders have not established the necessary systems to enable the school leader to monitor the impact of these

uncoordinated efforts.

- The review team found in their classroom observations that teachers' lessons did not incorporate higher-order questioning or text complexity. The lessons delivered by teachers included few points of entry or scaffolding for students, especially for ELLs and students with disabilities, and reviewers saw scant evidence of native language support. "Do Now" instructions in an ELA class directed all students to read the guided questions for two chapters in a source and included no adaptation for ELLs. Teachers typically asked students "What?" questions, with few questions eliciting or requiring higher-order thinking. Many questions were based on materials directly in front of the students at their desks, requiring little reflection and offering limited challenge. Students had few opportunities to respond to or engage with the material presented except in a limited fashion.

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 April 19, 2016, school leaders and the student staff support team should meet to analyze student data to identify the categories of provided services most reflective of student needs. The team should then discuss ways that the information can be shared with staff to develop supports that address current and anticipated student social and emotional needs. These supports should include:
 - continuing to have teachers and the student staff support team be the primary intake point for students in trauma and students experiencing special challenges; and
 - expanding the school's collaboration with the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and other community-based organizations to augment services provided to the school community.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- While school leaders have established some systems for identifying and supporting student social and emotional developmental health, they do not meet the needs of all students in the school. The student staff support team and school leaders noted that the student population has outpaced the school's capacity and has minimized the impact of efforts to remove barriers to learning. The school experienced an unexpected 20 percent increase in the student body over the last five years due to an influx of diverse students from Mexico, Haiti, and Central America. Many of the students are eligible for free lunch. Although the school uses PBIS strategies, staff noted the amount and depth of student and family needs has outpaced existing support systems. The student staff support team and teachers reported that various services, such as counseling or therapeutic services, are needed for students experiencing severe trauma and for students with out-of-school family responsibilities, including but not limited to newly arrived students. The ADL provided PD for staff on cultural diversity and responsibility and bias training, and the school partners with the Council for Unity programs that focus on school-family-community relationships.
- The student staff support team, school leader, and assistant principals meet on a weekly basis to share and analyze collected data related to students' social and emotional health. They follow up with parents through progress reports, media, and email, and the support team meets with parents to

discuss issues of concern. However, the review team found that school leaders have not established a strategic plan to use data to inform and monitor their efforts to identify and support students' social and emotional needs, which limits opportunities for focusing on proactive approaches rather than reactive measures.

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:

- The school leaders should convene a committee to include representatives from the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and current community partners to explore additional outreach opportunities to engage families in a reciprocal relationship. This committee should also conduct a parent needs assessment in order to plan effective programs for families and increase the participation of parents of all students, particularly ELLs and students with disabilities.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- The school makes efforts to engage parents and communicate high expectations to parents and students. The school uses various means to communicate with parents including ConnectED phone calls, letters, the school website, and an online parent portal in English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole. Teachers use parent-teacher conferences as opportunities to communicate expectations; translators are provided for parents who need translation. The school leader conducts monthly “Coffee with the Principal” meetings to connect with parents, exchange ideas, and provide general information about the school. However, school leaders noted that these efforts have not had the intended impact due to minimal parent participation. Parents and teachers expressed the perspective that although the school communicates with parents, reciprocal communication is lacking. During interviews, parents also reported that many other parents are busy and working several jobs.
- As a result of the low number of parents coming to the school, the school leader reported that he reaches out to parents at community organizations, including local churches. The review team found that the PTA board is not fully staffed and meetings are not well attended, which has had a negative impact on parent participation. The school leader reported that the ADL has provided some training for staff to promote home-school partnerships, and the school offered training to parents early in the school year on how to access and navigate the online parent portal. Parents and students shared that some families regularly use the portal; however, technology is a concern for other parents. Although the school has created a Parent Resource Room, during interviews with the review team parents stated they were not aware of the resource room or of its purpose.

ADDITIONAL AREAS TO ADDRESS

1. The school leader shared that although school leaders have encouraged interdisciplinary instruction and some teachers individually implement interdisciplinary curricula, teachers do not collaborate with their colleagues to do so. In the future, school leaders should increase opportunities for teachers to meet across subject areas to collaboratively develop interdisciplinary curricula in order to promote high levels of learning.

2. The IIT found little evidence of next steps for students in the graded student work they reviewed. Although teachers collect data from multiple assessment tools, they do not use the data to engage students in self-evaluation through feedback. In the future, school leaders should add this to “look fors” during walk-throughs.
3. Teachers use commercial curricular materials and do not adapt them to reflect the unique environment of the class, school, or community. In the future, the school leader should encourage a blended use of unique class materials created by teachers and commercial sources.