



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

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)



BEDS Code	472506040001
School Name	Worcester Central School
School Address	198 Main Street, Worcester, NY 12197
District Name	Worcester Central School District
School Leaders	Ms. Jessie Westfall and Mr. Kevin J. Stevens
Dates of Review	June 7-8, 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 Worcester Central School

School Configuration (2015-16 data)			
Grade Configuration	PreK-12	Total Enrollment	361
		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	3	# SETSS	27
		# Integrated Collaborative Teaching	7
Types and Number of Special Classes (2015-16)			
# Visual Arts	19	# Music	7
		# Drama	0
# Foreign Language	5	# Dance	0
		# CTE	14
School Composition (most recent data)			
% Title I Population	100	% Attendance Rate	87
% Free Lunch	45	% Reduced Lunch	2
% Limited English Proficient	0	% Students with Disabilities	37
Racial/Ethnic Origin (most recent data)			
% American Indian or Alaska Native	0	% Black or African American	1.5
% Hispanic or Latino	5	% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0
% White	98	% Multi-Racial	0
Personnel (most recent data)			
Years Principal Assigned to School	1	# 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	17	Average Teacher Absences	6
Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2014-15)			
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	21	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4	34
Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (Grade 4)	94	Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (Grade 8)	75
Student Performance for High Schools (2014-15)			
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	87	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4	60
Global History Performance at levels 3 & 4	87	US History Performance at levels 3 & 4	80
4-Year Graduation Rate	70	6 Year Graduation Rate	78
Regents Diploma w/ Advanced Designation	33	% ELA/Math Aspirational Performance Measures	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. Perform in the top 20% in the region on NYS assessments. 2. Provide an educational program premised on career and college readiness for all students. 3. Establish and maintain a supportive and challenging learning environment. 			

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	58	64

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-selected OEE.
- The review team visited a total of 41 classrooms during the two-day review.
- The OEE visited 12 classrooms with one or both of the school leaders 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's co-leaders are both in their first year of service.

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 schedules common planning time and grade level meetings for teachers in grades kindergarten to six to collaborate on curriculum development.
2. Teachers provide multidisciplinary projects for students in grades one to eight. These projects focus on science, technology, engineering, and math. Students spoke enthusiastically about the projects, and during classroom visitations reviewers observed that students were fully engaged in project-based learning.
3. Students, in all grades use Chrome Books in many subjects to support and extend their learning. For example, students use Chrome Books to do research in English language arts (ELA) and social studies.

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 in September 2016, the school leaders should:

- conduct walk-throughs and collect school-wide data that is focused on the instructional expectations identified in Tenet four;
- provide actionable feedback to teachers; and
- re-visit to check for improvement.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- The Integrated Intervention Team’s (IIT) review of documents showed that the former school leaders did not complete formal observations in the 2014-15 school year. Although an Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) system was in place, reviewers did not find evidence to document improvement in teachers’ instructional practices from the current school year.
- The IIT learned in interviews that the current school leaders conducted informal walk-throughs that resulted in verbal suggestions for improvement. School leaders told the IIT that although they had identified instructional practices needing improvement such as teachers’ questioning and discussion techniques, they had not focused subsequent walk-throughs to address these common weaknesses.
- In observed classes at all grade levels, the IIT found that teachers posed questions that often required only one or two word responses. In addition, teachers gave students few opportunities to articulate their thinking and discuss issues extensively with their peers.
- Although the current school leaders’ formal observations were documented, the IIT found that the feedback typically was not specific or actionable. In addition, teachers stated and school leaders confirmed that school leaders do not routinely re-visit classrooms to monitor for improvement in instructional practices.
- The self-reflection document stated that school leaders had not yet conducted an assessment of teachers’ professional development (PD) needs in order to provide training to help them to improve the quality of their instruction.

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:

Beginning in September 2016, school leaders should:

- monitor the ELA and math curricula to ensure that both are coherent and vertically aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) so that students develop skills, knowledge, and understanding in reading, writing, and math; and
- ensure that all teachers incorporate the instructional shifts in ELA and math in their unit and lesson

plans.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- The self-reflection document indicated that teachers are expected to align curriculum plans in ELA and math to the CCLS. School leaders stated that they expected teachers to refer to and use the published ELA and math modules aligned to CCLS and New York State (NYS) standards that they had provided for them. The IIT found that not all teachers were using these resources and materials. Reviewers' interviews with teachers and examination of planning documents showed that teachers were not modifying the curriculum to accommodate a range of students' needs, including the needs of subgroups such as students with disabilities and high-performing students. School leaders acknowledged that they did not monitor systematically to ensure that teachers were planning the curriculum consistently at each grade level and from grade level to grade level.
- School leaders told the IIT that although teachers were given daily common planning time to develop the curriculum, they did not monitor teachers' use of this time. The IIT found through interviews and observations of grade level meetings that teachers often used planning time to discuss the needs of individual students and make appropriate provisions for them. However, there was little evidence that this information was used to inform teachers' planning.
- The IIT found little evidence of instructional shifts in ELA and math in their review of unit and lesson plans and during classroom observations. In their lesson planning and in in observed classes, teachers did not provide opportunities for students to develop vocabulary through conversation and use evidence from texts to defend claims. There were also few opportunities for students to increase their knowledge, skills, and understanding through speaking and writing.
- Curriculum plans in math did not emphasize opportunities for students to articulate their reasoning, employ a variety of strategies in problem solving, and assess the reasonableness of results.

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, the school leaders should share instructional expectations with teachers and expect them to use them to self-assess their instructional practices. These should include:

- learning targets with aligned checks for understanding, during and at the end of each lesson;
- using assessment information to ensure that students performing above grade level and below grade level receive appropriate instruction; and
- using a range of higher-order questions that engage students in extended discussions to create deeper understanding.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- The self-reflection document stated that school leaders have identified some important aspects of

instruction that were missing from teachers' practices. School leaders stated that they have not shared their instructional expectations with teachers. During interviews with the IIT, teachers reported that they were not aware of any expectations concerning instructional practices.

- In observed classes, teachers typically did not state and clearly explain the learning objective. The IIT found through interviews and observations that there were no consistent procedures and strategies for determining student understanding during the lesson and mastery at the end in order to inform the planning of the next lesson. As a result, reviewers noted that during visits to classrooms some students were not suitably challenged because they already knew what was being taught.
- In observed classes, teachers typically posed literal comprehension questions that students could answer with brief unelaborated replies. Some teachers posed questions that required students to express reasons and opinions and waited before calling on volunteers to promote deeper reflection, but this was not typical. In many observed lessons, teachers allowed some students to sit passively and not be involved in the lesson. Follow-up questions that teachers posed often did not help students reach a deeper level of understanding.

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:

The school leaders and their advisory team should:

- formalize plans to implement a curriculum or program that promotes the teaching of student social and emotional developmental health skills by September 2016; and
- address current issues related to bullying and classroom behaviors that interfere with learning immediately.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- The IIT found through a review of the self-reflection document and interviews with school leaders and student support team members that there is currently no program or curriculum to support students' social-emotional developmental health needs. School leaders stated that they identified the need to implement a program that focuses on students' social-emotional needs and noted that staff were considering the adoption of the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program. A PBIS committee has been formed. Staff have been surveyed, and the school has achieved an 80 percent agreement from staff to participate in the training and the program.
- The IIT found during interviews with school leaders, members of the student support team, teachers, and students that bullying and misbehavior were areas of concern. Parents told the IIT that teachers did not always deal successfully with bullying incidents and classroom misbehavior. Students reported that bullying was usually name calling and occurred in and around the school. They also stated that student misbehavior regularly interfered with teaching and learning. School leaders, teachers, the student support team, parents, and students told the IIT that the learning environment was not always respectful and conducive to 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 September 2016, the school leaders in collaboration with teachers and parents should develop a plan to improve reciprocal communication between parents and the school. As a matter of urgency, the school should focus on communicating curriculum and homework expectations to all parents.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- Parents interviewed by the IIT stated that they did not fully understand the curriculum and often did not know what homework their children had been assigned. Parents reported that homework assignments were often not clearly recorded in their children’s planners. They expressed particular concern about homework procedures and expectations at the secondary level. Parents noted that upper grade level teachers expected students to be able to record their homework assignments independently, but many students still needed external structure and support to record the assignments correctly and completely. Parents also stated that homework requirements were inconsistent and varied from teacher to teacher.
- During interviews, parents stated that they did not always understand the homework their children were assigned, especially homework in math. They shared that they would like to know more about the school’s math program, in particular.
- Parents told the IIT that they were not informed about the curriculum that was offered to their children. Reviewers found no evidence that the school has provided guidance to enable parents to help their children at home and participate in their education. School leaders acknowledged the validity of parental concerns and told the IIT that there was a need to improve reciprocal communication.

ADDITIONAL AREAS TO ADDRESS

- Teachers and school leaders do not analyze student achievement, attendance, and disciplinary data in order to identify trends and patterns. In the future, the school leader will need to disseminate data, determine the implications, and develop systematic procedures to use data to make informed school-wide decisions.
- Student support staff do not meet formally to discuss their work, and staff members do not have a clear understanding of what their colleagues are working on. In the future, the school leader will need to identify a leader to coordinate the work of the student support staff and determine how successful they are in removing barriers to learning.