

Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

Final Report



3

BEDS Code	131500010003
School Name	Governor George Clinton Elementary School
School Address	100 Montgomery Street, Poughkeepsie, New York, 12601
District Name	Poughkeepsie City School District
Principal	Dr. David Scott
Dates of Visit	April 24-25, 2019

NYSED Representative	N/A
Outside Educational Expert (OEE)	N/A
District Representative	Dr. Elizabeth Ten Dyke
Special Education School Improvement Specialist (SEIS) Representative	Ms. Jenny Schinella
Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (RBE-RN) Representative	N/A
Additional Team Members (Add rows as necessary)	Ms. Cheryl Rabinowitz



Purpose Of The Visit

This school was identified as a Targeted Support and Improvement School needing additional support by the New York State Education Department (NYSED). Because of this identification, the District conducted an on-site Needs Assessment. The visit is intended to help the school identify areas of need that are making long-term success a challenge and provide several recommendations that can be accomplished and demonstrate the school's commitment to improvement.

The report provides a critical lens to help the school best focus its efforts.

School Identification Status

The school has been identified as needing Targeted Support and Improvement for the following subgroups:

- Subgroup 1 Students With Disabilities
- Subgroup 2 Multiracial Students

Information About The Visit

- The team included two district representatives and a Special Education School Improvement Specialist (SEIS) representative.
- Dr. Elizabeth Ten Dyke served as the lead reviewer on the district-led team.
- The team made a total of 28 classroom visits during the review, including the pre-review visits made by Ms. Jenny Schinella as the RSE-TASC representative; many classrooms were visited more than once.
- In addition to visiting grade level classrooms, team members also visited and observed instruction in music, art, and physical education.
- The Lead Reviewer and a district representative visited nine classrooms with the principal during the visit.
- Team members conducted interviews with two student groups, two groups of teachers, and one parent.
- Team members examined documents provided by the school including self review documents, meeting agendas, and sign in sheets.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. The school environment is bright, cheerful, and welcoming. It is decorated with student work and unique artistic displays. There are motivating and inspirational messages throughout the school, for example posters that promote kindness and provide specific ideas regarding how to be kind.
2. When asked, “What happens when a student finishes his or work really quickly, and always gets things right?” students responded that it was fine. Asked further if such students might be teased or ostracized, the students said that would not occur.
3. Students enter the school and walk in the hallways quietly, respectfully, and in an orderly fashion.
4. The school has an ongoing partnership with senior citizen Book Buddies, who read together with children on an individual basis.
5. One day a week selected, male, grade five mentors meet with selected, male, grade two mentees for academic support and social interaction.
6. All students interviewed said they feel safe in school, and they were enthusiastic about learning. In particular, students specifically referenced hands-on science learning activities, and special events such as Winter Wonderland, the STEM after school event, and a maple sugaring field trip.
7. All staff interviewed expressed a very strong sense of loyalty to Clinton elementary school, and a strong desire to work together as a team to support one another, and to support individual student and school success.

Recommendations

Short-Term Recommendation #1

Area: Social-Emotional Learning

Area: Students with Disabilities

Recommendation:

Clinton Elementary School is advised to prepare this spring and summer for roll-out of a school-wide PBIS program in the 2019-20 school year.

Anticipated Benchmarks:

- Benchmark #1 Ensure that PBIS is included as an agenda item for every Transformation Team meeting between now and the end of the school year.
- Benchmark #2 The Transformation Team and the School Leader must collaborate to identify supports needed for effective implementation of PBIS in the 2019-20 school year. These may include, but are not limited to, training for the identified PBIS coordinators, the development of specific goals, targets and plans for the 2019-20 school year, and the allocation of funding or resources to accomplish those goals.
- Benchmark #3 No later than the end of the school year, Clinton staff should meet in grade level teams to develop common, age-appropriate, positive expectations, language, and incentives that support pro-social and productive learning behaviors for all students in all classrooms at Clinton Elementary School.
- Benchmark #4 No later than August 31, 2019, the School Leader will ensure that common, age-appropriate expectations, language, and incentives for pro-social and productive learning behaviors are widely shared with teachers, staff, families, and students, posted in classrooms and corridors, included in back-to-school meetings, and otherwise prepared for full implementation beginning with the first day of school in September.

Rationale that led to the Recommendation:

- In 3 out of 4 classrooms that support students with disabilities, 3-5 positively stated behavior expectations were prominently posted in the classroom. However, those expectations were not referenced or acknowledged during the visits.
- In only 2 out of 12 classroom visits to classrooms that support students with disabilities, staff explicitly acknowledged specific appropriate behavioral responses more frequently than inappropriate responses.
- The building leader, teachers, and students all expressed concerns over student behavior.
- The building leader and teachers all expressed commitment to PBIS, and indicated that the school plans to develop and implement a PBIS system in the 2019-20 school year.
- Administrators and teachers expressed significant concern about the nature of trauma and hardship experienced by Clinton students, and a need for proactive strategies to create a learning environment in which all students can succeed, even if the students experience severe difficulty at home.
- Team members and the School Leader witnessed instances where teachers responded to student misunderstanding, errors, or inattention in a manner that shut down student participation in learning, or were directly sarcastic. For example, in one class when a student responded to a teacher by saying “What?”, the teacher stated sarcastically, “I’ll explain again because you obviously didn’t hear the first time.”
- In an integrated co-teaching classroom, a teacher called on six students in sequence, without ever using a student’s name. The teacher was not a substitute; she knew the students’ names but did not use them.

Short-Term Recommendation #2

Area: Instruction

Area: Students with Disabilities

Recommendation:

Teachers of students of disabilities will design lessons that provide specially designed instruction to meet the individual needs of students as outlined in their IEPs.

Anticipated Benchmarks:

- **Benchmark #1** No later than Friday, May 17, the School Leader and Assistant Principal will carefully review all sections of the RSE-TASC report pertaining to specially designed instruction, identify those areas where limitations or deficiencies were identified, and develop a plan for sharing this

information with all staff who work with students with disabilities (SWDs). This includes not only special education teachers, but also common branch teachers of ICT classes, as well as teachers of art, music, PE, reading, ENL, and any other subjects taught to SWDs.

- No later than the end of the school year, the School Leader and Transformation Team will develop specific goals for professional development in the area of specially designed instruction for all teachers of students with disabilities in the 2019-20 school year, and specific plans for implementing the corresponding professional development. These plans may include, but are not limited to, working with the RSE-TASC to identify an external consultant to provide training, scheduling embedded professional development with the consultant, and scheduling teacher intervisitation for classroom-based learning.

Rationale that led to the Recommendation:

- In only 2 out of 12 visits in classes serving students with disabilities, staff explicitly taught or re-taught necessary reading, writing, and/or math skills.
- In 0 out of 12 visits in classes serving students with disabilities, staff explicitly taught or re-taught necessary reading, writing, and/or math strategies, including what, why, how and when.
- In 0 out of 12 visits in classes serving students with disabilities, teachers explicitly taught 3-10 vocabulary terms, or referenced previously taught terms that are critical to understanding lesson content. 1 classroom introduced a word by telling the students the pronunciation of the word and/or guiding them in decoding the word. 1 classroom illustrated a new term with a number of concrete, visual, or verbal examples.
- 0 out of 12 visits in classes serving students with disabilities, teachers checked student understanding of new vocabulary terms by actively involving students with the word, e.g. asking student to distinguish between examples/non-examples, generate their own examples, ask questions that require deep processing of the word's meaning beyond simply mimicking the definition.
- During visits within classrooms that supported students with disabilities, students were primarily asked to individually respond to questions asked by the teacher during instruction. Oral, unison, team, written, and/or action responses were seen in only 3 out of 12 class visits.
- In only 2 out of 12 visits in classes that support students with disabilities, students were engaged in structured activities to support processing.

Short-Term Recommendation #3

Area: Instruction

Recommendation:

Beginning no later than Monday, May 20 teachers will improve the rigor of class instruction, and student engagement, by pre-planning at least one, open ended, higher-order thinking question for each lesson, and providing students with structured opportunities to discuss these questions with one or more peers, using content-specific academic vocabulary, and accountable talk stems. The pre-planned questions for each lesson will be included in the daily lesson plans which are to be available on each teacher's desk for administrative review. Students will be afforded wait time to reflect on the questions and engage with them before being asked to respond.

Anticipated Benchmarks:

- Benchmark #1 No later than Friday, May 10, the School Leader and Assistant Principal will include this recommendation as a topic for discussion and professional preparation in grade level meetings. Teachers will be afforded the opportunity to collaboratively develop content-specific, higher-order thinking questions that incorporate academic vocabulary, and share and review accountable talk stems.
- Benchmark, #2 No later than Monday, May 20, the school's leadership team must renew the practice of daily FILWs, providing teachers with actionable feedback to improve instructional rigor and student engagement in class.

Rationale that led to the Recommendation:

- Out of 28 classroom visits, on a scale of one to four, where one is the lowest, 20 were rated at level one for rigor, higher order thinking questions, and peer-to-peer academic collaboration. Eight out of 28 classroom visits yielded ratings of level 2 or higher for rigor, higher order thinking questions and peer-to-peer collaboration.
- Math instruction observed was worksheet-based. Math instruction observed revolved around applying standard algorithms. It was not founded in inquiry, or thinking through complex or multi-step problems.
- The mode of teacher questioning most frequently observed was close-ended, popcorn questioning. When open-ended questions were asked of students, wait time was rarely provided for reflection and consideration of a thoughtful, fully developed response.

- One teacher was observed using popsicle sticks to call on students randomly, but then after calling the student she placed the popsicle stick aside, perhaps inadvertently signaling to the class that the student would not be called on again.
- During the pre-review visit to classrooms serving students with disabilities, students engaged in structured activities designed to allow for processing were observed in only 2 out of 8 classes.

Short-Term Recommendation #4

Area: Instruction
Area: Students with Disabilities
Area: English Language Learners

Recommendation:

Clinton Elementary School will improve student reading ability by providing resources, professional development for teachers, and continuous evaluation by the School Leader in the area of best practices for guided reading instruction, assessment, and dynamic grouping.

Anticipated Benchmarks:

- Benchmark #1 No later than the end of the 2018-19 school year, the School Leader and the ELA Curriculum Specialist must collaborate to identify supports needed and areas of strength/weakness for effective implementation of daily guided reading in every classroom for 2019-2020 school year.
- Benchmark #2 No later than the end of the 2019 school year, Clinton staff must review and re-train in use of the Scholastic Next Steps to Guided Reading Assessment. This assessment must be administered in the fall, winter, and spring during the 2019-2020 school year. Data from this assessment will be collected by the School Leader for analysis and use in data meetings with teachers to support instructional practices in guided reading.
- Benchmark #3 No later than the end of October 2019, Clinton staff must participate in 10 hours of professional development in the best practices of guided reading instruction facilitated by the ELA Curriculum Specialist.
- Benchmark #4 For use during the 2019-20 school year, Clinton staff must receive guided reading resources for planning, implementation, and assessment. These resources may be funded through the school’s SIG grant, and/or school district Title funds. Resources will include:

- Fountas I. & Pinnell GS. “Guided Reading: Responsive Teaching Across the Grades”
 - Fountas I. & Pinnell GS. “Literacy Continuum: A Tool for Assessment, Planning, and Instruction”
 - Fountas I. & Pinnell GS. “Prompting Guide Part 1: For Oral Reading and early Writing”
 - Founts I. & Pinnell GS. “Prompting Guide Part 2: For Comprehension, Thinking, Talking, and Writing”
- Benchmark #5 Throughout the 2019-2020 school year, the School Leader and Assistant Principal must conduct FILWs, and both announced and unannounced APPR observations focusing on guided reading instruction.

Rationale that led to the Recommendation:

- Student growth in reading has been identified as a priority by the Clinton leadership team. Improvement in reading will improve overall performance on the ELA exam, which is the accountability indicator where SWDs in particular have not yet achieved expected benchmarks.
- Observational evidence, formal interviews, and informal conversations conducted during the review team’s visit to Clinton reveal that there are school-wide expectations and practices in place around guided reading, however consistent implementation of best practices across all classrooms and grades is not yet in place.
- Interviews and observational data reveal that many Clinton teachers are uncertain as to how to independently conduct a guided reading lesson [that is, as opposed to using scripted instructional materials from a commercial publisher], focused on the immediate needs of students in the identified groups, as guided by research-based resources such as the Fountas and Pinnell Continuum of Reading Behaviors.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Tenets 1 and 2 Systems, Organization, and Leadership

- The School Leader should continue to have high expectations for all students and staff.
- The School Leader should continue all structures and systems that support regular, grade-level interactions and professional learning for staff. These include, but are not limited to, common preps, common lunches, and regularly scheduled Communities of Practice. These structures, which are already in place, should be

enhanced to further develop opportunities for embedded professional development, and teacher inter-visitation for professional learning.

Tenets 3 and 4: Curriculum and Instruction at the School

- The short term recommendations above in the area of instruction must be sustained throughout the 2019-20 school year, supported by professional development and active administrative oversight.

Tenet 5: Social-Emotional Learning at the School

- Clinton Elementary School must fully commit to a well-planned, thoroughly implemented PBIS program for the 2019-20 school year.
- School leadership and school staff must clarify whether or not Second Step is going to be part of that PBIS program. If it is, the program must be implemented consistently, and with fidelity.

Tenet 6: Family and Community Engagement

- Clinton school staff are advised to expand upon existing community partnerships to include collaboration with agencies that can assist families struggling with issues such as mental health, abuse, violence, poverty, and/or neglect.

Areas of Need Shared by Stakeholders

- Students and staff strongly value after school activities and events including movie nights, dances, Winter Wonderland and STEM night. The activities create community and a sense of belonging. The review team strongly recommends continuation and expansion of these and similar events.
- Students recommended improved playground equipment suitable for older grades.
- Students recommended that Clinton Elementary School undertake a recycling initiative, particularly targeting appropriate disposal of plastics, and an overall reduction in plastic waste.
- Students recommended improved cleanliness of classrooms and restrooms.
- One student expressed that it is difficult to be Christian but not talk about God in school. The School Leader or interested staff might determine if there is interest in a Christian or Bible Study club as a before- or after-school activity for Clinton students and, if so, begin a Christian or Bible study club.

- Students recommend Friday recognition/celebration/rewards for accomplishments such as completing all homework, all week.
- Students feel strongly that discipline is important, and students who misbehave must be corrected, but a whole class should not be punished for the infractions of one or two children.
- Students observed that some of their peers who are frequently disruptive receive disciplinary consequences, but that the consequences do not effect a change in student behavior. Students asked for the school's adults to find ways to make a lasting, positive change in the behavior of their peers who are frequently or regularly disruptive.
- School leadership and teachers must collaborate on strategies to improve teacher attendance, reduce teacher absenteeism, and ensure coverage for absent teachers that does not interfere with mandated services including instruction in English as a New Language and/or Reading.
- New, untenured teachers should receive mentoring support beyond the one year provided by the teachers' union.