

Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

Final Report



BEDS Code	
School Name	Early Learning Center (ELC) Smith School
School Address	372 Church Street Poughkeepsie. NY
District Name	The Poughkeepsie City School District
Principal	Colleen Hardiman
Dates of Visit	May 20, 2019

NYSED Representative	
Outside Educational Expert (OEE)	
District Representative	Cheryl Rabinowitz and Charlotte Mennona
Special Education School Improvement Specialist (SEIS) Representative	
Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (RBE-RN) Representative	
Additional Team Members (Add rows as necessary)	

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 not been identified at this time.

Information About The Visit

- The team included two district representatives.
- **Cheryl Rabinowitz** served as the lead reviewer on the district-led team. **Charlotte Menonna served as the other district representative.**
- The team visited a total of **5** classrooms during the visit.
- The Lead Reviewer visited **5** classrooms with the principal during the visit.
- Team members conducted interviews with students, staff, and parents.
- Team members examined documents provided by the school, schoolwide data, teacher feedback, and student work.

The Poughkeepsie City School District **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.

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

- School leadership and school staff must clarify whether or not Restorative Practices are going to be part of the PBIS program. If it is, the program must be implemented consistently, and with fidelity.
- School leadership and school staff must clarify whether or not Second Step is going to be part of the PBIS
- program. If it is, the program must be implemented consistently, and with fidelity.

Tenet 6: Family and Community Engagement

- Early Learning Center 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, parents/guardians, and staff strongly value after school activities and events including reading nights, dances, and Academic parent/teacher teams. The activities create community and a sense of belonging. The review team strongly recommends continuation and expansion of these and similar events.
- Staff would like more professional development on systems such as Google, etc.
- Students shared that they feel that “recess monitors yell too much”. The School Leader should provide
- ongoing oversight and professional development to monitors throughout the year, keeping in mind when there are changes in who the monitors are so that new monitors receive professional development and support as soon as possible.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

–Identify three to five things that you would like to commend the school on. Be mindful of how you phrase this so that there are no contradictions with the narrative that follows. Also, be mindful of endorsing activities if you are not confident in the quality or effectiveness of these activities.

1. The Early Learning Center presents as a welcoming environment. The walls were decorated with student work, staff members were friendly and approachable, and students were engaged and well spoken.
2. Parents, staff and students all spoke excitedly about certain events that took place throughout the year such as the ‘Someone Special Dance’ organized by the PTA; the piloted Academic Parent and Teacher teams; Book buddies program in which students from Marist college come read to the students.
3. Positive school wide behavioral supports in the form of the ‘Three Bs’ (Be Kind, Be Safe, Be Respectful) have been consistently implemented and are known by staff, parents and students alike.
4. Parents shared that they enjoy when they receive a positive message or phone call about their children.
5. All staff interviewed expressed a very strong sense of loyalty to the Early Learning Center, and a strong desire to work together as a team to support one another, and to support individual student and school success.

Recommendation

Short-Term Recommendation #1

Area: School Leadership

Recommendation: Early Learning Center is advised to increase and improve communication to families.

Anticipated Benchmarks:

Benchmark 1: By June 28, the Principal will convene the Transformation Committee which should include parent and teacher representation to develop draft detailed plan for improving communication regarding the “Opening of School”. This can include but is not limited to end of summer/early fall student and family orientation, back to school newsletter and automated School Messenger in both English and Spanish.

Benchmark 2: By June 28, the Principal will establish a protocol for the 2019-2020 year for collecting and disseminating information to parents in multiple formats and communicating the information consistently. This should include processes for emergency situations, school-wide events, staff professional development, classroom activities and possible community events.

Rationale that led to the Recommendation:

During parent interviews, communication needs were discussed regarding the following:

- *Families would like monthly newsletters from school and classrooms on a consistent basis*
- *Some Issues were felt to be unresolved*
- *Poor communication at the start of the current school year*
- *A concern of safety issues in neighboring schools, and ELCs response/plan (“What is a safety plan for ELC? High School is right next to it. Is the school on lock down?”)*
- *Spring orientation suggested*
- *Bus pick up and drop off times are not communicated*
- *Families felt that monitors need more training.*

Short-Term Recommendation #2

Area: School Leadership

Recommendation: The ELC School Leader is advised to increase and improve communication with faculty and staff surrounding professional development needs and dissemination of information regarding school events.

Anticipated Benchmarks:

- Benchmark #1: By June 28, 2019 the Principal will distribute a brief Google form to survey the faculty and staff professional development needs.
- Benchmark #2: By September 10, 2019 the Principal will have reviewed survey responses and subsequently developed a comprehensive professional development plan for 2019-2020, which must be shared with all internal stakeholders.
- Benchmark #3: By September 30, 2019 the Principal, in collaboration with the teachers, will develop a systemic approach to disseminating information to school staff regarding school events in multiple formats, consistently and with advance notice.

Rationale that led to the Recommendation:

In meeting with teachers, communication needs were discussed regarding the following:

- 'The Buzz' is not consistently disseminated
- Multiple forms of communication should be used - Systemic process that considers all.
- School-wide events are not being shared with faculty far enough in advance
- Support provided does not always match the needs of the staff
- PD times need to better considered and organized
- PD is not always meaningful

Short-Term Recommendation #3

Area: Curriculum

Area: Instruction

Recommendation:

The Early Learning Center will improve student reading and writing ability by continuing to provide resources; ongoing professional development for teachers, vertical and horizontal alignment and continuous evaluation by the School Leader in the area of best practices for guided reading instruction and instruction in writing.

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 continued implementation of daily guided reading and writing in every classroom for 2019-2020 school year.
- Benchmark #2: No later than the end of November 2019, ELC staff must participate in 10 hours of professional development in the best practices of guided reading instruction and writing facilitated by the ELA Curriculum Specialist.
- Benchmark #3: Throughout the 2019-2020 school year, the School leadership must allocate a minimum of 5 collaborative preps and/or grade level meetings to focus on vertical and horizontal alignment of guided reading and writing.

Rationale that led to the Recommendation:

- Observational evidence, formal interviews, and informal conversations conducted during the review team's visit to the Early Learning Center reveal that there are school-wide expectations and practices in place around guided reading, however consistent implementation of best practices across all classrooms is not yet in place, and further professional development is needed.
- Interviews reveal that many ELC teachers would like a writing curriculum that would coincide with and enhance reading experiences for the students.
- Interviews reveal that many ELC teachers would like a cohesive curriculum in each grade that vertically and horizontally aligns utilizing mapping and intervisitations.