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Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment
Final Report

Leadership and Systems

Curriculum

Instruction

Social-Emotional Learning

Family Engagement

BEDS Code	131500010009
School Name	S.F.B Morse Elementary School
School Address	101 Mansion Street, Poughkeepsie, New York, 12601
District Name	Poughkeepsie City School District
Principal	Ms. Nadine Dargan
Dates of Visit	March 4-6, 2019

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

Purpose Of The Visit

This school was identified as a Comprehensive Support and Intervention 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 Comprehensive Support and Intervention for the following subgroups:
- All Students

Information About The Visit

- The team included a district representative, a Special Education School Improvement Specialist (SESIS) representative, and a representative from the Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (RBERN). **Dr. Elizabeth Ten Dyke** served as the lead reviewer on the district-led team.
- The team made 56 classroom visits.
- The Lead Reviewer visited six classrooms with the principal during the visit.
- Team members conducted interviews with students, teachers, pupil personnel staff, and parents.
- Team members examined documents provided by the school, including the school schedule, lesson plans, schoolwide data, student work, and pre-review documents completed by the school principal and leadership team.
- The first day of the school review was curtailed by two hours due to inclement weather.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. There is a clear expression of strong staff commitment to the children and families of Morse school; families expressed a strong sense of family, and they praised Ms. Dargan's personal relationships with children. Specifically parents commented that Ms. Dargan's approach to discipline is not punitive, but rather supports student learning and growth.

2. Students had the opportunity to showcase historical learning through performance of the Black History Wax Museum.

3. Morse School houses the district's parent-training program for students with autism. This program could serve as a model for other forms of parent education programming.

4. Volunteers were observed assisting children in classes and in the library.

5. School staff provide practical support for families through the food pantry and clothing closet.

Recommendations

The Recommendations below were discussed with the principal before being finalized and were left at the conclusion of the visit for the school to address immediately.

Short-Term Recommendation #1
Area: Schoolwide Systems and Organization

Recommendation:

 No later than Monday, March 18, 2019, which is two weeks after the School Leader received this report, the School Leader will present the Superintendent of Schools with a written plan for enacting all short term recommendations made as a result of this review. The written plan will include the principal's plan for daily and weekly delegation of typical school responsibilities to release building administrators for instructional leadership. "Typical school responsibilities" includes, but is not limited to, morning student/family emergencies, morning announcements, oversight of transitions and lunch, and dismissal, among other activities.

Anticipated Benchmarks:

- Benchmark #1: The required written plan is received by the Superintendent of Schools no later than Monday, March 18, 2019.

- Benchmark #2: As a result of delegation of typical school responsibilities, the School Leader will be able to provide evidence of daily presence in classrooms. Evidence will be provided through use of electronic FILW tool, and/or the completion of formal APPR observations. Evidence will include substantive and meaningful feedback provided to teachers that will help teachers improve instruction in the areas identified below in this report. These areas include, but are not limited to, increased rigor, explicit vocabulary instruction, implementation of lesson structures that create opportunities for peer-to-peer collaboration with academic discourse, pre-planned and scaffolded higher-order thinking questions, formative assessment, the use of data to drive instruction and/or differentiation for SWDs, ELLs, and students with different levels of learning mastery.

Rationale that led to the Recommendation:

Teachers and parents asked explicitly and clearly for improved organization and systems. The School Leader acknowledged that, while her goal is to visit three classrooms a day, or fifteen a week, she may actually only visit five classrooms a week. Teachers stated they had not had administrators visit their classrooms this year. Instruction observed during the site visit was consistently low in rigor, and lacked the core best practices enumerated above. Parents asked strongly and clearly for greater rigor in their students' educational program, and learning that is more active and engaged (as opposed, for example, to having students watch videos in class).

Short-Term Recommendation #2

Area: School Leadership

Recommendation:

The school leader must develop a complete APPR plan for the balance the school year, identifying the timeline for all remaining announced and unannounced observations, including a schedule for collaboration with Warring administrators, who are completing the school's unannounced observations. The plan must include dates for all components of the APPR cycle including pre-observation conferences, observations, and post-observation conferences.

Anticipated Benchmarks:

- Benchmark 1: The complete APPR plan including all dates and names of individuals completing observations will be submitted for review by the Superintendent of Schools no later than Monday, March 25, 2019.

- Benchmark 2: No later than Monday, March 25, 2019, the School Leader will have all APPR dates set in the district's APPR tool StaffTrac as scheduled appointments with teachers.

Rationale that led to the Recommendation:

Timely completion of APPR evaluation is a statutory responsibility that supports appointment, professional growth, and retention of qualified personnel. As a result, timely completion of the APPR process also supports larger school improvement efforts. During their interview, teachers expressed uncertainty about the APPR schedule. Some had not received appointments for observations, or post-observation conferences. The APPR schedule provided by the School Leader to the review team, at the team's request, did not include specific dates or times for the completion of remaining observations.

Short-Term Recommendation #3

Area: School Leadership

Recommendation:

The school leader must collaborate with Pupil Personnel Staff (PPS) and Instructional Support Team (IST) staff to review the written, evidence-based protocols for the IST process, share this process with teachers, and develop a system for monitoring the successful completion of IST work. Successful implementation of the protocol should be included in the school's improvement plan, which may also recommend additional staff.

Anticipated Benchmarks:

- Benchmark: Beginning in April 2019, IST meeting minutes will show that IST meetings are successfully completed in that that attendees arrived with all documentation and evidence required to hold informed conversations about student needs, and make informed recommendations regarding next steps for student success.

Rationale that led to the Recommendation:

Teachers stated that they are aware of an IST chair and IST forms, but not aware of clear written procedures or expectations for IST. As a result, teachers attending IST meetings sometimes come unprepared with evidence and documentation required to make informed decisions regarding the needs of students. The School Leader stated that there are written procedures. Thus there is a contradiction between the two perceptions, and a need to clarify procedures, clearly communicate procedures, and ensure procedures are followed in the best interest of students and families.

Short-Term Recommendation #4

Area: Instruction

Recommendation:

Teachers must plan and deliver lessons that include explicit instruction in vocabulary utilizing scaffolds and *supports such as visuals*. "Explicit Instruction" means that the teacher teaches or references 3-10 terms by:

- Introducing the word by telling the students the pronunciation of the word and/or guiding them in decoding the word;
- Introducing the meaning of the word; e.g., providing a student-friendly definition; guiding students in analyzing the meaningful parts of the word such as roots/prefixes/suffixes; having students determine critical attributes embedded in a glossary definition;
- Illustrating with examples; i.e. illustrate concepts with a number of concrete, visual, or verbal examples;
- Classrooms including ELLs must display corresponding visuals to support vocabulary acquisition by English language learners.
- Checking that students understand new vocabulary by actively involving students with the word; e.g., asking students to distinguish between examples/non-examples, generating their own examples, asking questions that require deep processing of the word's meaning beyond simply mimicking the definition.

Anticipated Benchmarks:

- Benchmark #1: No later than April 30, 2019 the School Leader will be able to document communication of this expectation, supported by professional development, using staff, systems and structures currently available to her: these include but are not limited to school newsletter, staff email, faculty meeting, grade level meeting, collaborative prep, and/or individual FILW or APPR conversations with teachers.

- Benchmark #2: No later than May 15, 2019, FILWs and APPR observations completed by the School Leader and/or Assistant Principal and/or Warring administrator conducting unannounced observations will capture evidence of explicit instruction in 50% of classrooms when vocabulary is taught or reviewed during a lesson.

- Benchmark #3: No later than June 15, 2019, FILWs and APPR observations will capture evidence of explicit instruction in 100% of classrooms when vocabulary is taught or reviewed during a lesson.

Rationale that led to the Recommendation:

All team members noted a dearth of strategies for language scaffolding and language acquisition for all students, but especially English language learners. The high percentage of ELLs who are silent and/or non-responsive during instruction supports this recommendation, as does the parents' request for a higher level of rigor during instruction, a higher level of dynamic, interactive instruction during lessons, and instruction that will better prepare their students for middle school and, ultimately, high school and college.

Short-Term Recommendation #5

Area: Instruction

Recommendation:

The School Leader must use available structures (faculty meetings, grade level meetings, collaborative preps), to develop teacher understanding of formative and summative assessment strategies, and the use of corresponding data for the purpose of differentiated lesson design and instructional grouping.

Anticipated Benchmarks:

- Benchmark #1: No later than May 15, 2019, the School Leader will be able to produce meeting agendas and sign in sheets demonstrating professional conversations, and professional development, pertaining to the implementation of formative and summative assessment, and the use of assessment data to drive differentiated lesson design including student instructional groups.

- Benchmark #2: No later than June 1, 2019, observational data collected through FILWs and the APPR process will include evidence of formative assessment before, during, and/or at the conclusion of instruction, as well as data-informed student groups and differentiated lesson activities developed using formative and/or summative assessment data.

Rationale that led to the Recommendation:

- In a majority of classrooms visit, team members observed whole group instruction that was not differentiated for students at widely different levels of learning readiness and mastery.

Short-Term Recommendation #6

Area: Other--a Clean, Well Maintained, and Safe Learning Environment

Recommendation:

The school leader will utilize all available resources to improve the cleanliness of the school environment, management of entrances and exits, and hallway displays. "School cleanliness" includes but is not limited to floors, desks and tables; removing food from the floor, including the floor of the front foyer, and relocating food from the foyer to another location. In addition, teachers must remove student clothing and learning materials from the floor, and ensure that students do not sit directly on dirty floors. The floors themselves must be cleaned as well.

"Management of entrances and exits" includes but is not limited to training for the school greeter on procedures for welcoming visitors with a warm greeting, and ensuring all individuals properly identify themselves and sign in and out if required.

Finally, hallway displays must be updated and maintained when they become torn or damaged.

Anticipated Benchmarks:

- Benchmark #1: No later than April 1, 2019, a spot visit to Morse elementary school will demonstrate that the Greeter has received training on welcoming visitors, requiring identification and sign in. Food will be relocated from the foyer to another place in the building. Student garments, book bags, and learning materials will be picked up off the floor. Floors will be clean. Students who sit on the floor will sit on clean floors and/or pieces of carpet or other suitable materials. Hallway displays will be updated and/or maintained.

- Additional visits in May and June 2019 will demonstrate that these practices are being maintained, and the school itself is being treated with greater care.

Rationale that led to the Recommendation:

- Team members were not greeted upon arrival at school, nor were they required to sign in and out--though they did so anyway. Team members observed adults walk past the greeter without being asked for identification or the purpose of their visit. Team members observed food placed on the floor in the foyer, in a manner that is unsanitary and not-conducive to a positive impression of the learning environment. While the Team applauds the school's commitment to supporting families who benefit from the availability of such resources, food may be easily removed from the foyer and placed in a different location, such as just inside the cafeteria. Team members observed student coats, book bags, and learning materials in heaps on the floor in the hallways and classrooms. Team members observed dirty and unsanitary surfaces, and torn

and/or outdated hallway displays. In addition, Team members observed students sitting and even laying directly on dirty floors.   Students asked for their school to be treated with greater care.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Tenets 1 and 2 Systems, Organization, and Leadership

The school leader must develop and implement systems and structures in the following areas: internal school communication; external parent and family communication; a master schedule that provides for daily instruction ELA, math, science, social studies, and in social-emotional development health through a curriculum such as Second Step; and IST/RTI, PBIS processes.

For the 2019-20 school year, the School Leader must initiate, at minimum, weekly staff communication and monthly family and community communication.   Family/community communication must be bilingual (English/Spanish).   The School Leader must use these modalities to share, at a minimum, vision, SMART goals, periodic progress toward goals, as well as school events and activities.

The 2019-20 master schedule must be developed in collaboration with the school's Community Engagement Team and district leaders.   The schedule must include common planning time for grade level teachers, in addition to daily instruction in ELA, math, science, and social studies.

In collaboration with the Community Engagement Team, the school leader must evaluate IST/RTI and PBIS as they are currently implemented at Morse Elementary School, and develop a comprehensive improvement plan for each of of these critical initiatives for the 2019-20 school year.   The School Leader and Community Engagement Team are strongly encouraged to access support available through the RSE-TASC, as well as other, regional supports, in completing this work.

The school leader must collaborate with the CET to examine data, and write SMART goals that are informed by data, addressing attendance, academic goals, and student social-emotional and developmental health. The goals must be aligned with a clearly developed vision for excellence.

The School Leader is urged to utilize district resources, including bi-weekly district principals' meetings, to structure and pace this work.   Goals must reflect review of the schools ESSA accountability data, and Demonstrable Improvement Indicators (once received from the State Education Department). The goals must be written utilizing the terminology and benchmarks of ESSA and DIs At least once a month, CET meeting agendas must include examination of benchmark data that will inform the team regarding progress toward those goals. In this way the CET and School Leader will be able to implement required initiatives and/or course corrections to maintain steady progress toward identified goals.

These recommendations are supported by the following evidence:

- Team members received a clear request from staff and families for better organization and consistency in leadership.

- The school's goals as summarized in the Needs Assessment are process goals, not SMART goals that reflect data pertaining to attendance, social-emotional well-being, or academic success.

- The master schedule provided to the team did not reflect organization of core instructional time.

- There is an absence of structured instruction in science and social studies, as per the Needs Assessment, student interview, and classroom observation.

- There is a marked absence of systems and structures particularly in the areas of communication, IST/RTI processes, PBIS, professional learning, and expectations for instruction.

- Faculty meeting agendas reflect a focus on operations and management, rather than data review and professional learning.

Tenets 3 and 4: Curriculum and Instruction at the School

School staff must prepare and submit lesson plans on a weekly basis. At minimum, plans must include corresponding standards, lesson objectives, strategies for ensuring multiple points of access for all learners (differentiation for SWDs, ELLs, and students at different levels of learning mastery), pre-planned, scaffolded higher order thinking questions, opportunities for peer-to-peer collaboration, lesson procedures, and assessment.

The School Leader must communicate expectations regarding lesson plans to the school's staff, and determine the format in which plans will be shared with the School Leader. The School Leader is urged to work collaboratively with the Superintendent of Schools, who is also the school's Receiver, to address any concerns or challenges raised by the teachers' bargaining unit regarding this requirement.

Teachers must receive the professional development required to successfully implement the preceding recommendation regarding lesson design.

The School Leader must work with the CET to develop an improvement plan for the 2019-20 school year that clearly identifies required professional development, identifies potential providers of that PD, and anticipates the corresponding budget needs. Budget requirements must be communicated to the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction so that the district may support the school in completing this work.

These recommendations are supported by the following evidence:

- Forty six out out of fifty six classroom observations showed an absence of peer-to-peer collaboration incorporating academic discourse.

- When examined for rigor, thirty one classroom observations were at Level 1, nineteen were at Level 2 (on a scale of one to four, where one is the lowest and four is the highest).

- In integrated, co-taught classrooms, the team observed small group instruction, but no co-teaching models such station teaching, parallel teaching, one teach/one observe.

- Lesson plans provided for team review primarily reflect daily schedules. Inclusion of standards and/or objectives was inconsistent. Plans lacked procedures, pre-planned higher order thinking questions,

structures for student collaboration, differentiation for SWDs, ELLs, and children at different levels of learning mastery, and/or behavior supports.

- Classroom instruction similarly lacked elements missing from lesson plans. There was little to no evidence of scaffolded, pre-planned higher order thinking questions, differentiated lesson design, structures for student collaboration and peer-to-peer academic problem solving or discourse, explicit behavior supports, or intentionally planned language instruction or language support for ELLs.

- Math instruction observed was overwhelmingly worksheet-based, and focused on application as opposed to mathematical questioning, thinking, problem solving, or discussion. Team members did observe use of manipulatives in three math lessons, however the majority of math instruction observed did not engage students with concrete, hands-on activities.

- No explicit attention to vocabulary acquisition or language support was observed.

- There was little evidence of multi-lingual support in classrooms and the school in general (entry way, lobby).

- Staff expressed a high level of frustration at the level of academic need presented by students, and they clearly voiced their belief that the school is not sufficiently staffed to meet this level of need. Specifically they asked for additional Reading AIS teachers, Math AIS teachers, additional ENL teachers, and additional Teaching Assistants.

- There is no evidence of ENL integrated co-teaching, as required by CR Part 154 requirements.

- There was no evidence that teachers utilize their Smart Boards for any purpose other than a screen for projection. Parents called classroom smart boards "Dumb Boards" and stated that teachers use them for showing videos. Classroom computers were used solely for students to access websites such as Zearn. At no time did team members observe students using classroom computers for research or academic collaboration.

Tenet 5: Social-Emotional Learning at the School

The School Leader and PBIS Coordinator must develop and implement a culturally responsive, tiered PBIS system in collaboration with family and community partners.

The School Leader is advised to contact the RSE-TASC (Regional Special Education Technical Assistance and Support Center) to arrange consultation with a specialist who can advise the school on this work. The School Leader and PBIS coordinator must work closely with the Community Engagement Team to ensure that the culturally responsive, tiered PBIS system developed is seamlessly integrated with other school initiatives, for example master schedule development, professional development, the inclusion of behavior supports in lesson planning, and so forth. The CET must set measurable targets for the school's PBIS initiative that can be monitored at least quarterly throughout the school year.

This recommendation is supported by the following evidence:

- Staff indicated they were trained on Second Step several years ago. They were not confident that new staff have been trained. No instruction in Second Step was observed during classroom visits.

- Team members were able to identify a small number of behavioral supports in isolated classrooms. There was no evidence of school-wide behavioral supports or related PBIS initiatives.

- There is a significant discrepancy between teacher and parent perception of students. Teacher perceptions focus on student deficit (hunger, trauma, sleep deprivation, cleanliness). Parent perception is that students are not being taught at a sufficient level of rigor, or adequately prepared for academic success at the middle level.

- There is an identified PBIS coordinator in the building, however no evidence of PBIS was observed, and teachers stated "PBIS is broken."

- On at least three different instances teachers were observed berating children.

- Parents expressed concern about student mental health and whether or not the school has adequate resources to address these issues.

- Staff expressed a high level of frustration at the level of social-emotional need presented by students, and they clearly voiced their belief that the school is not sufficiently staffed to meet this level of need. Specifically they asked for a bilingual social worker, crisis worker, attendance monitor, additional teaching assistants, and support for newcomer ELLs, particularly those who are SIFE students.

Tenet 6: Family and Community Engagement

The school must sustain and build upon current community partnerships to support student academic success, for example through the use of volunteers, and student wellness, for example with community partners who can support students and families in crisis.

The School Leader and CET must review all current community partnerships, evaluate their alignment with school goals, and effectiveness. The School Leader and CET are urged to build upon all successful partnerships currently in place, and expand partnerships in a manner in alignment with related initiatives such as developing a culturally responsive, tiered PBIS program, and/or providing parents with requested training in curriculum.

This recommendation is supported by the following evidence:

- Parents expressed lack of understanding particularly about Common Core math, and an interest in learning so they can better support their students' success.

- Outside *Classroom Dojo* and Parent-Teacher conferences, parents were unable to identify any other methods of regular, school-home communication.

- Parents expressed an urgent need for additional tutoring and enrichment activities.

- Parents expressed grave concern about whether or not their fourth and fifth grade children will be adequately prepared for middle school.

- Parents want their children to be exposed to higher expectations and greater rigor in school.

- Parents expressed concern about teachers being less attentive to children who do not have parents who are actively involved--in other words, a lack of equity in teacher attention to children.

- One parent asked if all staff have had training in TCI, and recommended TCI training for all staff.

- Parents expressed considerable doubt about teacher understanding of their children, and teacher commitment to serving an urban student population.

Areas of Need Shared by Stakeholders

Areas of need shared by Stakeholders are included in the bullets above.