

Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

Final Report



BEDS Code	131500010010
School Name	Poughkeepsie High School
School Address	70 Forbus Street, Poughkeepsie, New York 12603
District Name	Poughkeepsie City School District
Principal	Interim Principal Mr. Ronald Jackson
Dates of Visit	March 11, 12, 13, 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	Ms. Kathleen Lowell
Additional Team Members (Add rows as necessary)	Ms. Cheryl Rabinowitz, Ms. Yvonne Palmer



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**

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 a total of 53 classrooms observations during the visit.
- The Lead Reviewer did not visit classrooms with the principal during the visit, as the principal had a foot injury and stated that he was unable to walk.
- At PACE Academy a team member completed observations in three out of five classrooms
- Out of fifty three classroom observations, when rated on a scale of 1 - 4 for rigor, where 1 is low, and 4 is high, 34 classes were at Level One, 17 were at Level 2, and 2 were at Level Three.
- Out of fifty three classroom observations, when rated on a scale of 1-4 for Higher Order Thinking, 41 were at Level One, 10 were at Level 2, and 2 were at Level Three.
- Out of fifty three classroom observations, when rated on a scale of 1-4 for Peer-to-Peer academic collaboration, 37 were at Level One, 16 were at Level 2, no classes were rated at Level Three or Four.
- Team members conducted interviews with students, staff, parents, the principal and assistant principals.
- Team members examined documents provided by the school, including curriculum maps, lesson plans, schoolwide data, teacher feedback, and student work.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. Classroom observations reveal that Students with Disabilities and ELLs are working on content aligned with the content of their grade level peers.
2. Integrated co-teaching teams have been maintained over a sustained period of time, enabling content area teachers and special education teachers to develop collaborative partnerships that benefit children.
3. PHS and PACE staff express a strong sense of caring for their students, and an understanding of their students' difficulties and needs. Parents agree their students are known and supported in school.
4. PHS Department Chairs have considerable professional longevity in the district and the school. They have significant knowledge of institutional history and are engaged significantly in maintaining educational processes such as the administration of periodic benchmark assessments in core content areas.
5. Both the E-Tech and PACE Academy programs have strong, effective leadership, evidence of success and high levels of student, staff, and parent satisfaction.
6. There are successful community and regional collaborations with partners including, but not limited to, The Art Effect, the Bardavon Opera House, the Adriance Memorial Library, the Department of Environmental Conservation, the Dutchess County Regional Chamber of Commerce, Marist Liberty Partnership, Upward Bound, and industry partners including IBM and Central Hudson. PHS has a strong JROTC program as well.

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: School Leadership

Recommendation:

The PHS School Leader must increase his visibility as he exercises leadership to improve communication, collaboration, and the effectiveness of his administrative and teacher leaders.

Anticipated Benchmarks:

- a) No later than April 3, 2019, the School Leader must clearly communicate a vision for academic excellence, as well as student social-emotional well-being, and convey this vision to the administrative leadership team, teachers, all other school staff, students, and families. The School Leader is advised to use faculty meetings, department meetings, a school newsletter, website, and/or bilingual correspondence to accomplish this goal.

- b) No later than April 3, 2019, the School Leader must convene the PHS Transformation Team, set a meeting schedule and standing agenda for data-informed decisions in the areas of attendance, academics, and behavior. In addition to PHS staff appointed by the Board of Education, the Transformation Team must also include students, parents, and representatives of the E-Tech and PACE Academy programs.
- c) Beginning immediately, the School Leader must regularly convene the administrative leadership team at least two times a week, to direct and monitor administrative leadership at PHS.
- d) Beginning immediately, the School Leader must ensure that administrators honor weekly meetings scheduled with Department Chairs so administrators are fully informed of departmental initiatives and needs and they can support improvement initiatives in the areas identified below.
- e) No later than April 10, 2019, the School Leader will be able to produce meeting agendas and sign in sheets for the meetings listed above, demonstrating that these recommendations are being addressed.
- f) No later than May 1, 2019, the School Leader will meet with the Superintendent of Schools to review progress on all short-term recommendations, and identify any additional resources or assistance that may be required to meet the corresponding benchmarks.

Rationale that led to the Recommendation:

1. Effective schools establish schoolwide systems and structures that promote continuous improvement and success for all students. Though PHS has identified several systems, there was little evidence of the structures being carried out. For example COPs, scheduled for first period, were not observed for the majority of the departments involved.
2. Personnel interviewed presented highly inconsistent and contradictory information about when critical meetings take place, or whether or not they take place at all. Specifically the meetings in question are those that should take place regularly between the Principal and Assistant Principals, Assistant Principals and Department Chairs. All staff interviewed agreed that the PHS Transformation Team has not yet met this year at all. Given that personnel do not meet regularly, communication, planning, and collaborative implementation of critical initiatives to improve student attendance, social emotional well-being, and learning outcomes are significantly hindered.
3. The Principal, Assistant Principals and Department Chairs all presented positive but highly inconsistent visions for PHS.
4. Faculty meeting sign in sheets evidence a high level of ongoing absenteeism from this contractually required convening. While the team requested faculty meeting agendas, no agendas detailing substantive professional learning were provided.

Short-Term Recommendation #2

Area: School Safety

Area: Social-Emotional Learning

Recommendation:

Poughkeepsie High School must take rapid and strong measures to address the urgent need for improved safety and security at PHS.

Anticipated Benchmarks:

- a) The School Leader must work with his leadership team and Building Council to formulate and implement a plan to ensure that all students are fully scheduled for the fourth quarter of the 2018-19 school year, adding study halls, AIS or review classes as needed, and increasing staff supervision in corridors. This may require shifting COPs from a daily, first period schedule, to an alternating schedule, so that PHS teachers may be assigned contractually permissible duties including supervision of study halls and corridors.
- a) The School Leader must collaborate with the Assistant Superintendent who oversees safety and security and, no later than March 27, 2019, schedule training for PHS security personnel outlining expectations for the role of security personnel, including but not limited to location, movement throughout the school, strategies for interaction with students and families, including training in de-escalation. The training must take place no later than Friday, April 12, 2019, and may take place on the scheduled Superintendent's Conference Day on March 29, 2019.
- b) No later than March 27, 2019, the School Leader must clarify membership of a Student Response Team that will proactively address students who may be on the threshold of peer-to-peer conflict, and de-escalate and address the needs of students after a crisis or conflict. The team may include professional pupil personnel staff, but the school may not rely solely on the psychologist or social worker to staff this team.
- c) The School Leader must identify a consultant (the RSE-TASC has available staff) to meet with PHS and PACE Academy PBIS committees no later than May 1, 2019, to review the current PHS and PACE Academy PBIS plans, conduct a "fidelity inventory," and recommend changes to improve the plans, and schedule any required professional development.

Rationale that led to the Recommendation:

1. There are many students with unscheduled blocks, resulting in dozens of students gathering in hallways, the library, the cafeteria, and outside of the building on an ongoing basis throughout the school day. Students were observed sitting in stairwells, walking the halls alone or in pairs, and clustered in groups ranging between three and six students at a time. When asked, students stated they had free periods and did not want to be in the cafeteria or auditorium.
2. There is little evidence that PHS Security staff are prepared to prevent student escalations. Student groups gather in the hallways when they are not in class (due to unscheduled blocks and students choosing not to

attend class); some security staff engage with students in social conversations while in other instances security staff commands to relocate students are ignored or met with student indifference.

3. Security staff does not divert students away from escalating situations, thus fueling the escalation.
4. Security staff physically intervenes in student escalations, physically restraining and removing students from physical fights between students. No evidence of de-escalation strategies was observed.
5. PHS Students clearly identified many concerns with security staff and greeters--crowded entryway, visitors not greeted warmly, a very high degree of inconsistency and favoritism in their interactions with students.
6. There were between four and six student physical altercations that took place over the course of the review. The team is unable to provide a precise count, as staff reports varied from three to five fights on day two of the review, while all agreed that only one fight took place on day three.
7. PACE Academy parents and students spoke very positively about the "family environment" they experience at PACE Academy, and they praised the strong sense of physical and social-emotional safety the experience at the school.

Short-Term Recommendation #3

Area: Students with Disabilities

Recommendation:

The school leadership team and special education department chairs will revisit the previously created PHS Special Education Plan to ensure annual review processes and case managers' roles and responsibilities are implemented consistently, and in accordance with the plan, by all special education and pupil personnel staff.

Anticipated Benchmarks:

- a) Throughout the spring Annual Review process, CSE chairs will utilize the CSE agenda shared at a district School Psychologist meeting this year to ensure that meetings will include discussion of items such as: students' strengths and areas of needs, accommodations and modifications needed, annual goals and how those goals will be progress monitored, students' post- secondary goals, and the course of study that will help them prepare for those goals, pathways towards graduation, etc.
- b) Between now and June 2019, case managers will meet with students with disabilities to ensure that students understand their strengths, areas of growth, goals, accommodations and modification that should be implemented in classes as indicated on SWD's IEP.

Rationale that led to the Recommendation:

1. Parents indicated that teachers are unaware of students' 504 plans.
2. Students with Disabilities stated that they attend their CSE meetings, but they were unaware of discussions around topics other than courses passed, and courses needed for the next year. As a result, some SWDs are not aware of their IEP academic/behavioral goals or their specific pathways for graduation.

Short-Term Recommendation #4

Area: English Language Learners

Area: Instruction

Area: Students with Disabilities

Recommendation:

The PHS Leadership Team will accelerate and increase the academic success of Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners in co-taught settings.

Anticipated Benchmarks:

1. In conjunction with the revision of the master schedule to ensure that students have full schedules fourth quarter, PHS administrators will also establish a schedule, and clear expectations, for co-planning by co-teaching teams--both special education and ENL. This time may be during scheduled Communities of Practice.
2. No later than April 3, 2019, the School Leader and/or his designee will utilize evidence from staff interviews, classroom observations, and lesson plan review to form a recommendation for professional development for co-teaching teams in areas including but not limited to: co-teaching models; specially designed instruction; and the use of formative and summative assessment data to form student groupings during instruction.
3. No later than April 17, 2019 the School Leader and/or his designee will collaborate with the Special Education Department Chairs, and the Director of Instructional Support Services, to plan three phases of training to take place immediately (before June 30); over the summer of 2019, and during the 2019-20 school year.

Rationale that led to the Recommendation:

1. Although, several staff members spoke to COPs as a designated time to develop lesson plans, there was no evidence that co-teachers created lesson plans together.
2. Lesson plans submitted by special education teachers identified co-teaching strategies, however; there was minimal evidence in the execution of specified strategies.
3. In one co-taught class, team members observed intentional, data-informed grouping of students, and station teaching. This was the only co-taught class where these practices were observed. In other co-taught classes Team members observed "one teach/one assist" with instruction that was low in rigor, and did not evidence pre-planned, scaffolded, higher order thinking questions or pre-planned opportunities for peer-to-peer academic collaboration.
4. RSE-TASC Walk-Through Data Summary includes the following observation: 1/7 classes (14%) "Students disabilities work in groups of varying sizes; e.g. individual, pairs, small group, whole group";

Short-Term Recommendation #5

Area: English Language Learners

Area: Instruction

Area: Students with Disabilities

Recommendation:

The leadership team will provide educators with professional development to increase their capacity to scaffold instruction based on students' differentiated language and learning needs.

Anticipated Benchmarks:

1. Professional development centered around strategies specific to scaffolding instruction based on students' needs will be scheduled to take place between April and June, 2019.
 - a. Professional development centered around strategies for scaffolding instruction based on ELLs' proficiency in English will be planned in coordination with the HV RBERN and the ENL teachers
 - b. Professional development centered around strategies for scaffolding instruction based on students' specialized learning needs will be planned with special education teachers and, if available, specialists from the RSE-TASC.
 - c. In both cases faculty meetings, department meetings, and/or COPs may be used as the time and structure for delivery of this professional development.
2. In COPs, data from state assessments, local common assessments, and formative assessments will be used to design instruction and supports to assist student literacy advancement
 - a. Beginning no later than April 12, 2019, with support of the HV RBERN, ENL teachers and ELA teachers will use COP time to design instruction and supports to assist student advancement in each of the modalities where students are underperforming based on NYSESLAT and CFA data.
 - b. Beginning no later than April 12, 2019, with support of specialists from the RSE-TASC (if available), special education teachers and ELA teachers will use COP time to design instruction and supports to assist student advancement in reading and writing in areas where they are underperforming based on CFA data.

Rationale that led to the Recommendation:

1. Though students who are ELLs and students with disabilities are included in instructional activities and assignments in alignment with their peers, there is little evidence of scaffolds and supports (e.g. supports for building background knowledge, enhancing vocabulary, sentence frames, graphic organizers, modified texts, and/or home language supports) specific to their needs.
2. There is little evidence that classroom teachers know students' IEP/504 accommodations and/or what ELLs' proficiency levels are in English. Furthermore, there is no evidence about ELLs' literacy levels and prior academic experiences in their home language.

3. Teachers expressed a very high level of frustration regarding administrative focus on special events and activities, and insufficient attention paid to core requirements of a successful school program including academic learning and student success.
4. The RSE-TASC Walkthrough Data Summary completed as part of the review includes the following observations:
 - a. “Students with disabilities engage in structured activities designed to allow for processing; e.g., I-time, think-pair-share, numbered heads, elbow partners, think-jot” (1/7 classes, 14%);
 - b. “Students with disabilities are responding to high-order questions; e.g., problem-solving, generalization, evaluative, inferential, application” (2/7 classes, 29%);
 - c. “Teacher checks that students with disabilities understand new vocabulary by actively involving students with the word; e.g., asking students 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” (0/5 classes, 0%).
 - d. (For ELLs) “Bilingual glossaries, native language materials and ESL materials are readily available in the classroom” (0/7 classes, 0%);
 - e. (For ELLs) “There are structured language comprehension supports for English language learners; e.g., practicing with native speakers of English or speakers of their native language, use of nonverbal cues, picture symbol cards, pre-teaching specific vocabulary needed to participate in the lesson” (0/7 classes, 0%);
 - f. (For ELLs) “Students are provided with more than 3 to 5 seconds of wait time to process information given in English and to respond and ask questions in English” (0/7 classes, 0%).

Short-Term Recommendation #6

Area: Instruction

Area: Students with Disabilities

Area: English Language Learners

Recommendation:

The PHS and PACE Academy School Leadership Teams will improve academic outcomes for all students, including Students with Disabilities, and English Language Learners, by increasing the incorporation of pre-planned higher order thinking questions that promote peer-to-peer academic discourse in class, and hands-on learning activities, to more effectively engage students over the course of 84 minute block-scheduled classes.

Anticipated Benchmarks:

1. No later than April 12, 2019 the administrative leadership team will meet with Department Chairs to plan content-specific pedagogical strategies to be included as professional development in Department meetings and COP meetings beginning no later than May, 2019.

2. During any APPR observations and FILWs completed in May and June 2019, administrators will collect evidence of implementation of the corresponding instructional strategies, and effective engagement of students during 84 minute block scheduled periods, and provide teachers with concrete, actionable feedback for improvement.
3. No later than June 15, 2019 the PHS Transformation Team will evaluate the effectiveness of the professional development and plan further professional development as needed to be included in the school's 2019-20 improvement plan.

Rationale that led to the Recommendation:

1. During classroom walkthroughs, very few teachers engaged in higher-order thinking questioning strategies, and in most classrooms, students were not engaged in organized, substantial conversations or debates with their peers. Most teachers were doing most of the talking. They frequently asked low-level questions to just a few students in the class, and teachers repeatedly accepted student responses that were not formulated in complete, grammatically correct sentences.
 - a. Out of fifty three classroom observations, when rated on a scale of 1 - 4 for rigor, where 1 is low, and 4 is high, 34 classes were at Level One, 17 were at Level 2, and 2 were at Level Three.
 - b. Out of fifty three classroom observations, when rated on a scale of 1-4 for Higher Order Thinking, 41 were at Level One, 10 were at Level 2, and 2 were at Level Three.
 - c. Out of fifty three classroom observations, when rated on a scale of 1-4 for Peer-to-Peer academic collaboration, 37 were at Level One, 16 were at Level 2, no classes were rated at Level Three or Four.
2. The RSE-TASC Walkthrough Data Summary completed as part of the review includes the following observations:
 - a. "Students with disabilities engage in structured activities designed to allow for processing; e.g., I-time, think-pair-share, numbered heads, elbow partners, think-jot" (1/7 classes, 14%);
 - b. "Students with disabilities are responding to high-order questions; e.g., problem-solving, generalization, evaluative, inferential, application" (2/7 classes, 29%);
 - c. "Teacher checks that students with disabilities understand new vocabulary by actively involving students with the word; e.g., asking students 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" (0/5 classes, 0%).
3. Most teachers did not utilize whole class engagement strategies. In the vast majority of classrooms, students were sitting at desks with limited opportunities to get up and move around; double-blocks are a long time for students to sit without being actively engaged.
4. Over the course of three days, team members observed only two out of twelve possible COPs. (If each core content area met daily for three days, there would have been a total of twelve meetings). Neither ELA nor

science were observed in any COP, though science teachers gather informally in the morning in the science prep room to talk. Both math and social studies teachers were observed in COP on only one out of the three mornings. The team was informed that a math meeting was cancelled due to the absence of the Department Chair. This is evidence of a lack of routines, expectations and systems that would have enabled the math teachers to engage in substantive work despite the absence of the department's Chair.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Tenets 1 and 2 Systems, Organization, and Leadership

- Poughkeepsie High School must develop a 2019-20 Master Schedule that fully schedules all students in classes including required courses, electives, and AIS; restore first period to being a full instructional period; schedule department COPs throughout the school day.
- Schedule and staff the continuum of services corresponding with the needs of SWDs at PHS (add Resource Room and 15:1 classes, as well as other configurations if required by student IEPs).
- Plan for implementation of a fully functioning CDOS program for students as pathway to graduation.
- Ensure that administrators are regularly present in classrooms to observe instruction and provide teachers with prompt, meaningful and actionable feedback.
- Compile and clearly communicate needs for additional PHS staff to the Superintendent of Schools. Areas of particular need are special education, English as a new language, psychologist, social worker, and security.
- Enhance effectiveness of the E-Tech principal by providing the program with clerical support.
- The Transformation Team must include representatives from E-Tech, PACE Academy, students, and parents. The Team must set quantifiable goals and they must regularly document progress toward those goals.

Tenets 3 and 4: Curriculum and Instruction at the School

- Utilize faculty meetings, department meetings, COPs, and any other available structures to Implement a comprehensive professional development plan for teachers in specially designed instruction.
- Improve communication and coordination between PACE Academy and PHS for all teachers in the areas of curriculum, instruction, and professional development.
- Work with district staff to develop curriculum aligned with the special needs and goals of the E-Tech program.

Tenet 5: Social-Emotional Learning at the School

- Implement a fully functional PBIS system at PHS, and clearly define and communicate processes and expectations for Instructional Support Teams (IST).
- Address concerns clearly voiced by the students regarding inequity and favoritism in adult-student interactions at PHS, including both daily behaviors and matters of school discipline.

Tenet 6: Family and Community Engagement

- Address the needs identified by parents for expanded opportunities for parent involvement at PHS, improved home-school communication, and expanded structures for student support.
- Home school communication must be in a language understood by families, so all documents and messages must be consistently delivered in both English and Spanish.

Areas of Need Shared by Stakeholders

Families of Students with Disabilities and ELLs request improved communication in their native language regarding their students' needs, progress toward graduation, and areas of student strength and weakness.

Parents indicated that students in AP need more resources and focus. They believed that resources were funneled to students who had needs.

Parents indicated that there are limited opportunities for parents to contribute to PHS. However, when asked about establishing a PTA, parents stated they did not believe there would be enough parental support to get it established.

Teachers and administrators asked for an additional social worker and psychologist to address high level of student need, additional special education teachers for additional class sections required to conform to state CR Part 154 and federal IDEA regulations, art teachers for electives, classroom teachers for electives and AIS, and also a Reading teacher.

Teachers, administrators, and parents expressed a need for an increase in bilingual, Spanish-speaking staff, including support staff, to better meet the needs of Spanish-dominant students and families.

Teachers expressed a significant need for textbooks, instructional supplies, and technology. Teachers said there is no system or structure currently in place for collaboratively identifying building needs and prioritizing decisions or budgets.

PHS parents request additional resources and support for academically gifted and talented students. They stated that resources seem to be funneled toward students who are struggling. In addition, parents stated that students should have greater access to computers and library resources.

There is no formalized IST system. There are IST chairs at each grade level. IST chairs and guidance counselors receive calls from teachers requesting support for a student. They then contact teachers that support the student and request additional information in order to set up a meeting. Parents were not aware of any formal systems to request academic or social-emotional supports for students

Staff stated that there was not a formalized IST system. Teachers call guidance counselors to request student support and then the guidance department attempts to collect information from all teachers that support the student and set up a meeting to determine students need for intervention. The team stated the majority of meeting requests are around attendance. The team also indicated that all requests for support are really students that need Tier 3 supports. With limited resources, examples of all interventions were classroom teacher-based or referrals for support outside of the district (i.e. mental health, PINS).

At PHS parents were unable to articulate a formal system for student support. Parents stated that most students go directly to their guidance counselor for support or a trusted teacher. Some parents identified that they have set up outside counseling for their students.

At PACE Academy parents identified specific school employees who have worked closely with students to encourage school attendance, pro-social behaviors, and academic success. PACE Academy parents stated they communicate frequently with school personnel, and they have a high level of satisfaction with home-school interaction and support.