



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

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)



BEDS Code	421800010006
School Name	Van Duyn Elementary School
School Address	401 Loomis Avenue, Syracuse, NY 13207
District Name	Syracuse City School District
School Leader	Eva Williams
Dates of Visit	October 4-6, 2017
Date of Return Visit	
School Accountability Status	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Focus School
Type of Visit	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SED Integrated Intervention Team (IIT)



School Information Sheet for Van Duyn Elementary School

School Configuration (2017-18 data)					
Grade Configuration	PK-5	Number of Students	439	Number of Teachers	36
Types and Number of English Language Learner Classes (2017-18)					
# Transitional Bilingual	0	# Dual Language	0	# Self-Contained English as a Second Language	0
Types and Number of Special Education Classes (2017-18)					
# Special Classes	1	# SETSS	6	# Integrated Collaborative Teaching	0
School Composition (most recent data)					
% Title I Population	57.9		% Attendance Rate	91.7	
% Free Lunch	57.4		% Reduced Lunch	0.5	
% Limited English Proficient	0.5		% Students with Disabilities	21.6	
Racial/Ethnic Origin (most recent data)					
% American Indian or Alaska Native	2.5		% Black or African American	62.4	
% Hispanic or Latino	7.1		% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.7	
% White	14.4		% Multi-Racial	13.0	
Personnel (most recent data)					
Years Principal Assigned to School	5		# of Assistant Principals	1	
% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate	2.8		% Teaching Out of Certification	0.0	
% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience	8.3		Average Teacher Absences	5.8 (16-17 data)	
Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2016-17)					
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	15.3		Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4	16.3	
Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (4th Grade)	63.3		Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (8th Grade)	N/A	
Overall NYSED Accountability Status					
Priority School	No		Local Assistance Plan	No	
Focus School (indicate subgroups identified below)	Yes		In Good Standing	No	
Focus School Identified Subgroups	Black				
Economically Disadvantaged					
<p>SCHOOL PRIORITIES AS WRITTEN BY THE SCHOOL:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue professional development on lesson planning review and feedback. • Use walkthrough data trends to drive targeted professional development, monitor instruction, and provide feedback to improve teaching and learning. • Implement data walls in all classrooms. • Teach students to understand and communicate all data. 					

Purpose of the visit

This school was identified as needing additional support by the New York State Education Department (NYSED). As a result of this identification, NYSED arranged for an Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) to visit the school.

The purpose of this visit is to provide the school with feedback to assist the school in its improvement efforts 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. The areas of feedback may include 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 visit

- The visit was led by an Outside Educational Expert (OEE) and a representative from NYSED. The team also included a district representative and a focus district consultant.
- The team visited a total of 37 classrooms during the visit.
- The OEE visited six classrooms with the school leader during the visit.
- Team members conducted focus groups with students, staff, and parents.
- Team members examined documents provided by the school, including curriculum maps, lesson plans, schoolwide data, teacher feedback, and student work.
- In advance of the visit, 20 staff members (50 percent) completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.

SUCSESSES WITHIN THE SCHOOL THAT THE SCHOOL SHOULD BUILD UPON:

1. The schools' social and emotional programs and curricula provide positive interventions and supports for students' social and emotional needs. Such programs include ClassDojo, an online, live feedback system for students and parents; Peace, Productivity, Health, and Happiness (Pax); Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS); the Positivity Project; and the Courageous, Hardworking, Achievers, Motivated, Persistent, Scholars (CHAMPS) program. In addition, the school leader and the student support team have implemented a schoolwide referral process to identify and address the needs of individual students. The referral procedure includes triage meetings, student intervention team meetings, and collaboration with external partners. The IIT noted that the school learning environment was calm and orderly and learned that the number of behavioral incidents was reduced from previous school years. For example, between the 2014 – 15 and 2016 – 17 school years, in-school suspensions decreased from 172 to 0 and out-of-school suspensions from 87 to 0.
2. The IIT examined data to demonstrate improvements in students' academic performance in recent years. For example, between 2016 and 2017 the percentage of students reaching proficiency levels on New York State assessments increased by 8 percent in math and by 7 percent in English language arts (ELA). In addition, between the 2014 – 15 and 2016 – 17 school years the schools' performance index (PI) score increased by 34 points for ELA and 18 points for math. The IIT was also provided with data to show the

school met all academic targets for the 2016 – 17 school year, and the school’s state assessment results percentage increase was higher than all other Syracuse elementary schools and the state average.

3. During various focus group interviews, the IIT learned that the school leader and staff were working to develop student ownership of learning by making sure students knew their learning levels. To accomplish this goal, teachers provide students with personal datasheets that students use to record their assessment results. Conversations with students confirmed that most students are aware of their reading levels, reading level goals, and their learning levels in math and ELA.

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:

- School leaders should inform teachers that, beginning October 13, 2017 for a period of two months, classroom walkthrough observations and feedback will focus on improving the quality and effectiveness of two specific aspects of instructional practice. These may include, for example, the use of learning objectives and higher-order questions in lessons.
- School leaders should provide teachers with detailed, actionable feedback aligned to the specific focus areas within 48 hours. Leaders should provide targeted support and monitor the implementation of this feedback in subsequent classroom walkthrough visits.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- The IIT found in a review of documents and discussions with the school leader and staff that the schools’ academic leadership team regularly completes classroom walkthrough observations and routinely provides teachers with written feedback. When examining these documents, the IIT observed that the classroom observation walkthrough form was a checklist of many elements of instruction such as the use of questioning, learning objectives, student voice, methods of instruction, and the use of formative assessments. As a result, the walkthrough form typically provided a method for academic leadership team members to document instances when they observed various instructional elements but did not provide any indication of the quality and effectiveness of these instructional strategies. For example, the IIT examined walkthrough data graphs that indicated how many times the academic leadership team had observed the use of learning objectives in classrooms but gave no indication of the quality or effectiveness of these learning objectives in supporting student learning.
- In a review of documents, the IIT found that the feedback provided to teachers from walkthrough observations was often general and descriptive rather than detailed and actionable feedback that teachers could use to improve their instructional practices. For example, in feedback documents the IIT found that leaders’ comments were often reminders or suggestions instead of clear improvement guidance. During discussions, teachers reported that they assumed they were implementing elements of instruction to meet the school leader’s expectations if checklist boxes were checked and they did not receive specific feedback for improvement. As a result, the IIT found that school leaders did not always provide focused developmental feedback. In discussions with the IIT, members of the academic leadership team stated that to ensure improvement in teachers’ instructional practices, they needed to focus more attention on providing them with timely, detailed, and actionable feedback.

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:

By November 17, 2017, the school’s academic leadership team should complete work to establish clear expectations for how teachers should adapt curriculum resources to meet the learning needs of all students.

By December 8, 2017, the academic leadership team should share these expectations with teachers and provide support for teachers, so they are able use curriculum resources to make sure students’ learning experiences match their needs.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- In discussions with the IIT, the school leader stated that she expects teachers to adapt curriculum resources to meet the specific learning needs of different groups of students. However, discussions with teachers revealed they did not always have a clear understanding of what the school leader’s expectations for adapted curriculum and instruction looked like in practice. During a review of lesson plans and focus group discussions, the IIT found that teachers typically use resources such as EngageNY and Pearson math programs to develop lesson plans aligned with Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) expectations. However, while lesson plans showed that teachers sometimes planned to meet the individual needs of students through behavioral strategies and classroom organization, they typically did not plan for curricular adaptations to meet the different learning needs of the students. The IIT further confirmed these findings during visits to a range of classrooms where they observed students completing the same work with no modifications to account for learning differences.
- During classroom observations, the IIT found that typical instructional practices did not support a wide range of student learning needs. For example, although the IIT found many instances in classroom observations of students working in groups, students were often completing the same learning tasks at the same level. During discussions with the IIT, students confirmed that all students within a classroom typically complete the same learning activities in lessons.

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:

Beginning October 20, 2017, the school leader should work with the academic leadership team to clarify the purpose and content of student data binders.

By October 30, 2017, school leaders should make sure that all teachers clearly understand how to use data binders to support student learning and implement them correctly.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- During discussions, the school leader, teachers, and students told the IIT that all students have data binders containing assessment results and improvement guidance. However, during a review of documents, the IIT found that student data binders varied greatly in both content and quality across the school. Some of the data binders reviewed by the IIT contained little information from teachers to their students and included only student-written improvement comments such as “do my homework.” The school leader noted that a data binder she examined with the IIT did not include comparative data, such as grading levels or class averages, to inform students’ self-evaluation of their learning and progress. Although students who met with the IIT were able to cite their learning levels, reading levels, and reading targets, the IIT found that the data binders typically did not provide students with the high-quality support and guidance needed to help them improve their work and raise their achievements. As a result, students were typically not able to discuss improvement advice that teachers provided or individual strategies that would help them increase their performance.
- In discussions, teachers who met with the IIT reported that not all teachers used data binders successfully across the school. Teachers told the IIT that data binders needed to be implemented with fidelity across the school in order for them to be an effective tool in supporting the development of students’ ownership of learning and increasing their academic achievements.

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:

By October 20, 2017, school leaders and support staff should make sure that classroom teachers are fully engaged in the triage process that identifies Tier 2 support strategies for specific students, so that teachers are able to contribute to the process of developing interventions and are better able to implement support strategies.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- The IIT found that the school leader and the student support team have established a schoolwide, shared referral process. Discussions and a review of documents detailed referral procedures that include meetings with teams such as the triage team and student intervention team to discuss individual student’s needs, identify preferred interventions, and review student data to monitor the implementation and impact of interventions. However, discussions with school leaders and the student support team revealed that teachers were not actively involved in the development of interventions for individual students in their care. Student support team members told the IIT that many times this results in teachers having difficulty understanding and implementing the identified interventions. To address this, the student support team often provides extra support for teachers regarding strategies for individual students. The school leader and support staff told the IIT that they recognized the need for teacher engagement in the referral process so that teachers are involved in discussing student’s needs and planning interventions, have more ownership of strategies, and are better able to implement support plans with fidelity.

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 October 23, 2017, the school leader should design and implement a parent survey to ascertain parents’ views on the effectiveness of existing school communication strategies.

By November 1, 2017, the school leader should use the outcomes from the survey to establish the communication strategies parents prefer and adjust the communications strategy as necessary.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- The IIT learned that the school leader uses a wide range of strategies to encourage reciprocal communication with parents. For example, the IIT found that the school provides information to families through newsletters, ClassDojo, Facebook, Twitter, emails, and automated Robo Calls, and hosts events such as family nights and curriculum nights. As a result, the IIT found that the school leader and staff provide various opportunities for parents to engage with the school and express their views and opinions. During discussions with the IIT, school staff and parents were typically positive about the communication methods in place. However, some expressed concern that messages, telephone calls, and other communications may not be reaching all parents and families. Additionally, the school leader reported that teachers provide parents with a weekly “Monday Matrix” data information sheet for each student. However, she was not confident that the information contained in the data sheet was easily understandable or effective in making all parents aware of their children’s progress and needs.
- The IIT learned that the school leader has not been able to encourage some groups of parents to engage with the school despite various efforts involving the use of a number of different strategies. Although the school leader surveyed parents about the school climate using a District survey tool, she has not specifically gauged parents’ satisfaction with the schools’ current communication methods and determined the methods that parents would prefer to see implemented. As a result, the school leader was unable to identify the communication strategies that parents found most valuable or used most.

ADDITIONAL AREAS TO ADDRESS

- In discussions, the school leader and staff reported they had been working to implement “personalized learning” as a schoolwide instructional strategy designed to closely match learning with student needs and improve achievement. However, in discussions with teachers and during classroom observations, the IIT found that there was no schoolwide, shared understanding of what “personalized learning” should look like for students in lessons. In the future, school leaders will need to work with teachers to establish a clear, schoolwide understanding of how the elements of “personalized learning,” i.e., targeted instruction; data-driven decision making; integrated digital content; student reflection; and ownership, should work to support all students’ learning.
- Document analyses and discussions with teachers confirmed the IIT finding that the school leader provides a range of professional development opportunities for teachers. However, some teachers reported that professional development does not always provide manageable and specific strategies to help them improve their instructional practice. In the future, the school leader will need to work to

structure and focus professional development so that it provides clear and manageable guidance closely linked with teachers' identified instructional development areas. The academic leadership team will need to monitor the implementation and effectiveness of professional development through scheduled walkthrough observations and provide feedback for individual teachers.