



CASE STUDY: CROWN POINT CENTRAL SCHOOL

Aaron Leo, Kristen C. Wilcox, Jessie Tobin

I have worked in other districts where you don't get that warm and fuzzy feeling from everybody. I could go to anybody in this building and say, "I need help with this." And they would do whatever they can to help me. So, whenever there're changes, it's just everyone supports each other. – teacher

We don't teach a certain class. We teach individual students here. – Dean of Students

Study Background

For two decades NYKids has been studying average-performing and outlier schools to identify some of the differences that account for better student performance in the outliers. With increased interest in what supports adaptation and innovation in the context of external shocks and community demographic changes, our current study sought to discover new insights into what sustains schools' significantly better student outcomes over time. This case study describes policies, processes, and practices in Crown Point Central School—a persistent positive outlier school.

School Selection Criteria

NYKids studied Crown Point Central School District (CSD) in our 2017-18 College and Career Readiness study because its graduation rate data revealed significantly better outcomes taking into account the population served. In 2019-20, researchers returned to Crown Point and conducted interviews and focus groups with 11 students to hear how they described their experiences in school and plans for after graduation. Both prior case studies can be found at <https://ny-kids.org/research-results/>

In this study we used New York State graduation rate data from 2021 and 2022 (the most recent at the time of study sampling), which included cohorts who started 9th grade in 2017, 2018, and 2019. This analysis yielded several persistent positive outlier schools,

PROMISING PRACTICES FROM PERSISTENT AND EMERGENT POSITIVE OUTLIERS

NYKids 20th Anniversary Study

including Crown Point.

School Context

Located in rural Essex County, in New York’s “North Country,” Crown Point CSD is situated in a large, stately brick building in the center of the town’s main street along with a few dozen homes, a convenience store, post office, and a few other businesses.

The school serves a K-12 student population of just over 300 students. The close-knit nature of the school and community provide Crown Point with – as many educators put it – a sense of “family” where everyone knows each other. Many educators described their deep roots in the community, some of them as graduates of Crown Point CSD. They credited this familiarity with the school and community with providing them with insights into the unique culture and context in which their students live and also with helping them communicate effectively with family members.

Despite declines in school enrollment across New York State¹, Crown Point saw a 24% increase in their student population in a roughly ten-year period (from 2010-11 to 2022-23), even while neighboring districts saw their enrollments decline. Staff members felt that the increase in enrollment was due to their good reputation as well as the array of services provided for students with disabilities.

As in many rural school districts, Crown Point experienced a range of challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, including a rise in mental health concerns and widening gaps in students’ academic performance. As the Superintendent explained, pandemic-related budget shortfalls resulted in cuts to staff. However, federal relief money allowed the district to rehire or hire new staff to help meet new demands. Along with these new staff members, Crown Point educators described a number of new programs and efforts to support students’ social-emotional well-being and academic performance.

PROMISING PRACTICES FROM PERSISTENT AND EMERGENT POSITIVE OUTLIERS

NYKids 20th Anniversary Study

Student Demographics 2022-23: Crown Point Central School, Crown Point Central School District		
	Crown Point CSD	New York State
Grades Served	K-12	K-12
Total Enrollment	301	2,422,494
Economically Disadvantaged	57%	58%
Students with Disabilities	20%	19%
English Language Learners	0%	10%
Student Ethnic/Racial Distribution		
American Indian/Alaska Native	0%	1%
Black or African American	0%	16%
Hispanic/Latino	0%	29%
Asian/Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	10%
White	100%	40%
Multiracial	0%	3%
Other	0%	0%

HIGHLIGHTS

Collaboration with a Shared Goal

We all work together for the common good of our kids. And if we're not doing that, why are we here? – Superintendent

At Crown Point, we found collaboration among colleagues and between teachers and leaders embedded in the school culture. For instance, educators felt that they could always turn to their coworkers for support – whether the matter was school-related or personal. In a rural context where resources in and outside of the school were sometimes insufficient, educators recognized the need to always pitch in and go the extra mile to ensure that students’ needs could be met. While educators explained that at times they differed in their approaches, the shared goal of “doing what’s best for the kids” was a mantra repeated by several educators during interviews.

Collective Responsibility in a Close-Knit Environment

If there's one thing going on in the school, everyone on the staff knows. – support staff

PROMISING PRACTICES FROM PERSISTENT AND EMERGENT POSITIVE OUTLIERS

NYKids 20th Anniversary Study

Educators described how the close-knit environment of Crown Point allowed them to communicate regularly with one another if any issues with students needed to be addressed. By developing close relationships with every student, educators felt that they could closely monitor students' well-being and share critical information.

Staying Connected and Investing in the Community

You always should be open and be available for [family members]. – support staff

Educators at Crown Point felt that an integral part of their identity, and a factor that accounted for their student outcomes, was their long-standing and deep ties to the community. Many educators explained how they had grown up in Crown Point and continued to reside there with their families. The consistency and continuity provided by these roots gave educators deep insights into the specific challenges faced by students and their families as well as resources and strengths on which they could draw in their educational pursuits.

A CLOSER LOOK

The themes above are evident throughout the six lines of inquiry that frame the study of which this case is one part. The sections below expand on each of these themes within the context of the study's framework.

Culture, Climate and Community

Collaboration and Communication

So that's one of the good things about it being a small school . . . we're very connected to everything going on. We usually know if something has happened at home by the middle of the day. – teacher

Educators described the school culture at Crown Point as characterized by close collaboration where all staff members work together to meet the needs of students. “We’re always helping each other out,” explained one teacher. Another teacher said, “People are supportive” when describing what kept her in the district.

With limited resources at their disposal, staff members described keeping tabs on students in the school regardless of whether these students were in their classes. For

PROMISING PRACTICES FROM PERSISTENT AND EMERGENT POSITIVE OUTLIERS

NYKids 20th Anniversary Study

instance, educators explained the need to ensure that students had connections with at least one other adult in the school so that no one “slipped through the cracks,” as one teacher put it.

Between formal meeting times and informal discussions, educators often collaborated to address the needs of particular students. As one support staff member explained, educators often communicated with each other throughout the school day to ensure that any student struggling would have the needed support:

Emails get sent around if there's some kind of special issue [such as], “This kid is having a difficult day; he or she wants to share this detail, but not this detail, just so you're aware.” We had an email about a kid this week who's struggling: “She's having a rough time, just so you're all aware.”

School and Community Investment

I really like that we know our student population so well . . . and I don't just mean academically, we know them, their social . . . sort of quirks. We know the home life that they're coming from, which I really think helps us to understand them and help them better because we have that knowledge, and we can connect at a different level. I enjoy that. – support staff

As the quote above illustrates, Crown Point educators felt that the close-knit nature of the school and community provided them with opportunities to connect with students deeply and understand their interests and particular needs. In addition, many educators explained that they had grown up in Crown Point and were “naturally” attuned to the culture of the community and school. As one teacher put it,

We have people in the community that know the school, either went through the school, have kids in the school, know the clientele, you know, know the sociodemographic, understand what that means. . . . So that helps because they have that understanding.

Another teacher reiterated their “love” for the school and community saying, “I have a vested interest in this school. Because I love it. It's my alma mater. It's where I wanted to be. It's where I want my kids to be.”

Building Long-Term Relationships with Students

PROMISING PRACTICES FROM PERSISTENT AND EMERGENT POSITIVE OUTLIERS

NYKids 20th Anniversary Study

A recurring theme in interviews with educators at Crown Point was the focus on building positive, long-term relationships with students. With a small staff and all students housed in the same building, educators felt that they could develop close connections with students as they progressed through the different levels of school. As a teacher explained,

. . . everyone is very in tune with the students because they have the same 25 students in their class all day long. All of our high schoolers have the same English teacher, so they have them for four years. So they're not just another kid in the bunch. [The Superintendent] can name every student's parent; where they live; who their siblings are.

Other educators emphasized relationship-building as a crucial element of their job duties and an important factor that accounts for positive outcomes with their students. “I just think relationships are so important and are one of the reasons that we have the success that we do here,” said one teacher. Another explained, “I think one of the most important things you can do with your students is to have a relationship with them.”

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

Differentiated Instruction in Small Groups

At Crown Point, small groups were used by teachers to aid in differentiating their instruction. Teachers felt that additional hires helped make differentiation in small groups more effective. One teacher explained the benefits of having additional support staff in her classes:

So when I get to have an assistant in my room . . . that's when I feel like I can be at my best because I can have differentiated learning happening. Lessons can be scaffolded to [students'] abilities, I can have my AIS [Academic Intervention Services], people being pulled into those groups. And it's great because [the assistants] get our groups to rotate. . . . I feel like [students] are getting lots of different types of teaching—lots of different activities. I feel like it's a great way to just make sure that you're meeting the needs of all the different learners and all the different modes of how they might learn, using whatever strategies work best for those kids. I think that really helps them.

During a focus group, support staff members explained how small-group instruction was crucial to address the needs of their students with disabilities:

PROMISING PRACTICES FROM PERSISTENT AND EMERGENT POSITIVE OUTLIERS

NYKids 20th Anniversary Study

Teacher 1: *I really don't think whole group is the way to learn. . . . I just don't think you can reach kids the way they need to be reached. I don't think you can differentiate the way you need to. And I think small group is, because you can target the needs more specifically, and address them.*

Teacher 2: *And no matter what, a group can be independent.*

A Responsive and Individualized Approach to Teaching

While curricula at Crown Point were aligned to state standards, educators also described their efforts to ensure that class content was engaging and tailored to the interests of students in their school. One teacher described how she developed responsive lessons that consider students' own preferences and learning styles:

I look at the standards for [subject] class, but at the beginning of the class, I always ask the students, what is it that they want to learn from this? So that is literally how I drive the course. Because I want it to be meaningful to them. And I don't want them to feel like they're wasting their time.

Other educators took similar approaches to engage students and make learning more accessible and interesting. “I’m taking an individual approach with each kid—kind of knowing who they are, being able to understand their triggers, what drives them to success or to want to be successful, because that’s really what it is,” said one teacher. Another echoed a similar sentiment about her focus: “seeing each kid for who they are and what their specific needs are.”

District and School Leadership

Leading by Providing the Right Amount of Autonomy and Recognizing Teachers as Professionals

[We] all treat each other as equals and family here. – support staff

At Crown Point, teachers felt that they were provided autonomy and trusted by leaders to use the practices they feel meet their students' needs. As one teacher explained,

I think the administration has always been really understanding and not very rigid on, I guess what you would say, “the rules.” I mean, yes, there are rules or policies that need to be followed, but . . . I think people appreciate that [understanding and flexibility].

PROMISING PRACTICES FROM PERSISTENT AND EMERGENT POSITIVE OUTLIERS

NYKids 20th Anniversary Study

Another teacher favorably compared leaders' acknowledgement of teachers as professionals who can and should exercise professional judgement with the experience of her colleagues at other schools: "I know a lot of other [subject] teachers that I get to meet, and they're often, 'Oh, my admin says this. I have to use this book, or I have to be here in this curriculum.'" Explaining that she did not like to think of herself as the "boss" of employees, the Superintendent elaborated:

I am by no means a micro-manager. I allow teachers to make decisions that are best for their students and grade/content level. In doing so, I believe this allows staff flexibility in their management and programing to gain student specific data as well as create more personal connections. They work together, staff and students, to see what works and what doesn't from one class to another. Mistakes and adjustments are expected and can carve paths for a better, bigger picture.

Supportive, Stable, and Understanding Leadership

I think we've had the most caring and compassionate leaders and administrators - teacher

Educators described the leaders at Crown Point as supportive and understanding. For instance, when asked what helped her meet her goals at work, a support staff member explained, "Helpful for me is having an administration that's very supportive, in terms of 'What do you need?'"

Another teacher described the leadership as "open and honest." She said, "I feel like if there's an issue with, you know, another staff member or student that I can come to our administrator and be like, 'I need help with this' or 'This is what's going on.'"

Veteran staff members also explained that recent decades under the current leadership have provided stability that did not exist previously. "I think we've had a lot of consistency over the last 10 years or so with administration and teachers. And I think that's huge, too. And when you have turnaround that's disruptive," said one teacher.

Active and Hands-On Leaders

[The Superintendent] is the captain of our ship. She's the one that steers us. She does have a vision for what she wants this school to be. – Dean of Students

While staff members reported being afforded a high level of autonomy in their teaching, leaders at Crown Point also described a form of leadership that involved hands-on activity in the school. This leadership characteristic was necessitated, in part, by the

PROMISING PRACTICES FROM PERSISTENT AND EMERGENT POSITIVE OUTLIERS

NYKids 20th Anniversary Study

budgetary and staffing constraints facing a small, rural school district like Crown Point. The Superintendent explained, for example, how her daily responsibilities may differ from those of other Superintendents in larger districts: “[W]hen my feet hit the ground – when I walk through the building . . . I’m dealing head on with every student, every parent, every faculty member, every staff member, every teacher.” Several staff members corroborated the more hands-on role taken by the Superintendent and how this helped her identify different needs or potential improvements.

The Dean of Students, who – as discussed below – assumes many of the roles and responsibilities of a school principal, reiterated the need to maintain a presence throughout the school for staff and students while still teaching his own classes. “I’m at the front door every single morning,” he explained as he recounted how he is supported in his role by the Superintendent, who had been school principal (a position since replaced by Dean of Students) from 2013 until 2022:

But there’s also a flexibility in my schedule. . . . [Superintendent] has it so that we have lots of support and help or lots of support within my classroom. And she also has other staff. So if there is something that is major, I’m able to get out of my classroom, I’m able to go, I’m able to address it immediately.

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and Youth Mental Health

[Students] need [SEL] to receive educational benefit and to be an active participant in their education. – district leader

A Variety of Social-Emotional Learning Programs

Educators described a number of programs dedicated to enhancing students’ social-emotional learning. Educators felt that these programs were necessary for all students – not just those exhibiting more severe challenges. “[Students] got used to being at home, and then they weren’t comfortable returning to school,” said one teacher referring to the effects of the pandemic. As another teacher put it, “The students are not the same as they were prior to the pandemic.”

One program praised by several participants is “Sweethearts and Heroes,” which, according to its website, focuses on “youth empowerment” by “invit[ing] the sharing of stories, perspectives, and emotions.” As one educator put it, the program has helped students by “bringing out the good in other people by noticing the good in yourself.” Crown Point also has used a peer mentoring group called Panther Mentors for several

PROMISING PRACTICES FROM PERSISTENT AND EMERGENT POSITIVE OUTLIERS

NYKids 20th Anniversary Study

years that involves students at all grade levels, as well as a “Positive School Environment Team” to identify students who may be struggling emotionally or behaviorally.

In addition to these programs, in 2023 Crown Point teachers began a “Lunch Bunch” group that brought together students voluntarily to meet and share with each other informally during the school day. Complementing these programs, educators felt that the close-knit nature of the school and their multiple roles ensured all students feel a sense of belonging somewhere and with someone.

Focus on Mental Health

We have families who are dedicated and resilient and are here for their kids. And we kind of pick up the pieces, too. – teacher

Like many schools throughout the country, Crown Point educators have seen a rising number of students with mental health needs. “Mental health is a biggie right now for us,” one support staff asserted. As educators explained, not only has the number of students with mental health concerns risen, but the age at which these concerns have emerged has become younger.

With the assistance of COVID-related funds from the federal Every Student Succeeds Act, the school has been able to hire additional mental health professionals to support the growing needs of students. Additionally, as staff members explained, Essex County Mental Health holds a weekly clinic for students to receive counseling on campus rather than needing to drive to a neighboring town. Crown Point has also partnered with the Prevention Team, a non-profit organization which provides counseling support four times a week for students and an educator who works with all grade levels twice weekly. Lastly, staff members also explained the benefits of becoming trained in Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI) techniques used to de-escalate situations in which a student may be experiencing a severe behavioral episode.

Even with these adaptations and additions, staff members were quick to acknowledge the challenge of meeting growing mental health needs with the resources to meet those needs at their disposal. “We have a very high need of students coming to us with mental health needs that [in the past] we’ve not had to address in the way we’re addressing [them] now,” said a support staff member.

Parent/Caregiver and Community Partner Engagement

PROMISING PRACTICES FROM PERSISTENT AND EMERGENT POSITIVE OUTLIERS

NYKids 20th Anniversary Study

Using Technology to Stay Available for Families

I would say that there's a lot of communication from the school that comes home . . . Even if there's something happening in the high school, it comes home to the elementary school. So communication from the administration, from teachers, not even just their own classroom teacher, but whatever's happening anywhere in the building, everyone's usually informed. So as a parent, you do receive a lot of communication coming home. – teacher and parent

At Crown Point, educators explained how they used technology to engage family members. A particularly popular segment of the district website, explained a support staff member, is the weekly school lunch menu. The school's Facebook page was also described as a useful way to communicate upcoming events and activities to family members and update families with photos of their children.

The application ParentSquare was also mentioned by many educators as a useful tool to connect with caregivers. As one educator said, ParentSquare is a “faster” way to communicate with family members than email and allows teachers to remind caregivers about their children's upcoming assignments or sign permission slips electronically to ensure that students would be able to go on field trips. One teacher felt that ParentSquare and other technologies (e.g., Google Meet) have aided their ability to reach family members: “I communicate with parents now way more than what I did before, just because of the convenience. It's easier now, and I've noticed that the parents really appreciate using those applications.”

Google Meet was also viewed as a useful technology to engage families. Some educators, for instance, felt that family engagement had increased during the pandemic school closure due to the access provided by this technology. A support staff member explained how virtual meetings with family members provided new opportunities for participation, an option that she continued to offer to families who could not attend in person:

Because we went remote, and we could only do remote meetings, and for parents who traditionally have a hard time getting to the building because of transportation issues or who do not feel comfortable coming in, they had an opportunity to participate . . . those boundaries weren't in the way. And it was really nice.

Fostering Personal Connections with Families

PROMISING PRACTICES FROM PERSISTENT AND EMERGENT POSITIVE OUTLIERS

NYKids 20th Anniversary Study

I would have to say, the interaction between staff and parents is very open, and it's very good. – Dean of Students

Many educators felt that the close-knit rural community of Crown Point allowed them to create positive relationships with family members. For example, many educators explained how teaching students throughout their entire K-12 education provided them with time to cultivate long-lasting relationships with family members based on years of personal experience with their children. As one educator put it, “[Students’] parents know who I am, I've been here long enough that I've kind of earned my stripes, so to speak.”

Other educators explained how their presence in the community helped connect them with parents in different ways whether it was at activities, events, or by coaching sports. “I think it's also helpful that it is small because those connections are able to be built so much easier,” said one teacher. Several educators were longtime members of the community and alumni of Crown Point. Growing up in the town gave these educators additional insights and previous relationships with family members that carried over into their positions at the school. As the Dean of Students said, “I graduated from here. So a lot of the parents I went to school with, or, you know, family, or you know, friends, whatever it is, so I'm very well known.”

Engaging Families with Events

[Family members] are happy with the school. Their kids are happy, and they go home, and they talk about what goes on in the school. And they seem to be very pleased. – support staff

Educators felt that overall families were engaged in their children’s learning, and they sought to involve them in activities and events. The Dean of Students described the “parental involvement” at Crown Point as “fantastic,” though he acknowledged how the socioeconomic challenges facing many families in the district at times created barriers to family engagement. Nonetheless, various assemblies, performances, and sporting events held at the school draw a large number of families from the community. As one educator said,

We had the assembly today, the “Value of the Month.” The parents come in. Fifth grade put on a play because it was their turn to do the value of the month. And the auditorium was packed with parents. The auditorium was packed [at] Halloween. We had a value of the month assembly [then], too, but also a costume parade. Whenever we have anything like that, it's packed with parents.

PROMISING PRACTICES FROM PERSISTENT AND EMERGENT POSITIVE OUTLIERS

NYKids 20th Anniversary Study

In addition to these events, an organization called Parent Teachers Together (PTT), spearheaded by a support staff member, has created many family-oriented programs such as book fairs, STEM camps, book and movie nights.

created additional programs. A recent effort made by this organization was to create a “Financial Aid” night to assist families with federal aid applications for students entering college.

Staffing, Retention, and Staff Development

Caring Staff Capable of Wearing Many Hats

Due to the limited resources at their disposal, Crown Point staff were expected to – as several educators put it – “wear many hats.” For many educators, this meant balancing teaching duties with extracurriculars, sports, activities, and pitching in wherever needed to support students’ learning and social-emotional well-being. One particular example of staff taking on multiple roles was when the former principal took on the role of Superintendent. Rather than hiring a new principal, the district appointed a Dean of Students who took on many of the principal’s roles and responsibilities. The former Superintendent continues to assist with the budgeting and financial aspects of leading the district.

Individualized Professional Development

As with their pedagogical approach, educators were also given autonomy to develop their own professional learning plans. Because many teachers at Crown Point were the only one at the school teaching their subject, they were often encouraged by leaders to pursue state and national conferences, webinars, and online networks to help support their professional learning. As one teacher put it,

I think what's helped me get better at what I do is the admin support. If I need to go to any conference, I can put in a requisition, and financially, they've been able to support that. I never felt like it was a hassle to do -- to take a day to do professional development.

In some cases, educators at [Crown Point applied reported applying](#) knowledge learned from colleagues trained in the sharing “circles” initiated by the Sweethearts and Heroes SEL program and Trauma Crisis Intervention practices to de-escalate situations involving behavioral crises in their classrooms.

PROMISING PRACTICES FROM PERSISTENT AND EMERGENT POSITIVE OUTLIERS

NYKids 20th Anniversary Study

At the school level, educators reported they were provided with monthly professional development offerings as well as resources from the nearby BOCES. Educators also expressed their ability to rely on colleagues for support and advice, even if they were not teaching the same subject. A support staff member, for instance, explained:

There are our peers that I can go to. I feel comfortable going to any of them and saying, "Hey, I'm having this trouble with a student, or this student is having this going on and like how would you handle it?" Because sometimes I'm like, I don't know what to do. . . "I tried this. I tried that. It's not really working. What are some other options?"

Additionally, new teachers were paired with a mentor for their first four years at the school. As the Superintendent explained:

We always give teachers mentors for their first four years before they receive tenure. So there's always someone that they can go to, but they know as well, and any teacher knows, that there's a direct open line of communication for whatever that they need from the top down.

Interventions, Adjustments, and Special Arrangements

Emphasizing Positive Behaviors, Accountability, and Respect

Educators at Crown Point described various strategies, initiatives, and interventions aimed to ameliorate the rising prevalence and severity of behavioral issues among their students. In addition to the educators' training in trauma-informed de-escalation techniques, educators implemented mindfulness programs such as MindUp, a program that teaches coping and self-regulation skills.

Educators also explained their efforts to encourage students to take responsibility for mutually respectful relationships among their peers and with their teachers. Creating a safe environment for students, especially those from families struggling with instability and poverty, was described by educators as an important part of these efforts. Indeed, according to the district's website, Crown Point's mission is to "instill in each child integrity, accountability and excellence while learning in an open and nurturing environment." As one teacher explained, "I'm trying to keep them accountable and teach them accountability and responsibility and taking credit for their actions good or bad."

Meeting Students' Emergent Needs with Additional Staff

PROMISING PRACTICES FROM PERSISTENT AND EMERGENT POSITIVE OUTLIERS

NYKids 20th Anniversary Study

Federal COVID funding allowed the district to rehire some staff cut during the pandemic and add several support staff to help address students' growing mental health needs. A teacher explained the positive impacts and relief that these new staff provided:

But it was so nice to hire people this year, like so nice. It just felt like a huge weight – it was like, ahhhh. And you have people in your room again. I definitely think we're on the rebound and just feeling that like, "Oh, we're tired. Oh, we need help. Oh, we wish we could hire staff" – like that's starting to alleviate now this year. And that's been nice because I just think, as a whole, morale is higher this year. Because we've got more people and we've got more help. And it's nice to see new people and new faces in the building and just to have more help and to get our kids – you know that they're going to be the most successful if there's enough of us to go around and help them.

In addition to new support staff, several educators explained how additional teaching assistants and AIS teachers allowed them to teach more effectively. One teacher explained how the addition of an AIS staff member was "really crucial" to ensure students with special needs were being supported: "Because there's a group of kids who might have IEPs [Individualized Education Programs] and have special needs, it's important that we have enough staffing to go around to make sure that they're always getting their needs met," he explained. For other educators, the addition of staff in their classrooms meant they could not only support those with special needs but also provide enrichment. "I was so excited because I've always wanted to be able to push the top kids, because they need it, too . . . we've got kids who could excel, we know we've always seen them. I wish we could give them more," explained one teacher.

Although the addition of staff members has provided educators with much-needed support, educators noted that the growing numbers of students in their classes sometimes meant that they were, as one teacher put it, "stretched thin."

Data Use and Progress Monitoring

Using Data to Drive Instructional Practices

Educators at Crown Point described different ways that they used data to monitor students' progress and improve their own instruction. Several educators, for example, explained how they used standardized test scores – such as the state Regents Exams – to understand how students are performing and where they are falling short. As educators explained, monitoring these data is crucial for students who need remediation

PROMISING PRACTICES FROM PERSISTENT AND EMERGENT POSITIVE OUTLIERS

NYKids 20th Anniversary Study

as well as those who could benefit from additional enrichment. The Dean of Students explained how this process looked in his own teaching and how this expectation translated to the way he evaluated other teachers:

I typically will look at my students that I had from the previous year, find out what were their areas of strengths, what were their areas of weakness? Was there something in my instruction, in my planning, that maybe I did not put enough time into? So then I go ahead, and I adjust my year-long plan, going back, reevaluate. Okay, did I spend enough time? Am I teaching this standard? Then I also look at the students who are coming to me, and I look at their performance, their data, okay, how did they perform?

Other diagnostic tools such as iReady and IXL were also mentioned as useful ways to monitor students' progress throughout the school year.

Leading Using Data

At the district level, a School Based Inquiry Team (SBIT) monitors data and assists educators in creating action plans designed to identify and address academic gaps that emerge in evaluation data. A teacher described the benefits these plans provide:

But I know that the next year that I teach that, I need to spend a little bit more time on that because maybe I didn't spend enough time on it this year. So it kind of drives my instruction for the whole year. I make a plan. I can go down and find in my room what my plan is for this year for my class, so I know where I should be, where I'm going to hopefully end, and how much time I'm going to have for reviews, and all that.

The Dean of Students and Superintendent explained that, in addition to SBIT meetings, the Building Leadership Team (BLT) convenes monthly to analyze student data and address academic gaps:

We sit down and we say, "Okay, what is the need?" And so we typically build into them a time where our staff are able to get together. We're able to look at interims, we're able to look at SLOs [Student Learning Objectives], we're able to look throughout the year to keep always reassessing: How are the students progressing? Is there a group of students that need more instruction, that need more time? That need smaller groups? And we constantly reassess to find out, what do they need? You can't wait until the end of the year.

PROMISING PRACTICES FROM PERSISTENT AND EMERGENT POSITIVE OUTLIERS

NYKids 20th Anniversary Study

In addition, teachers engage in six additional days of professional development over the summer to analyze data and plan for the coming year. These days allow educators to work across grade levels, as well, and prepare for the upcoming school year with valuable insights about their new students. As one teacher put it:

I had my reading groups set up before I even went into September, and they were almost, based on what I saw in the first two or three weeks of school, the groups hit the nail on the head, and then we got the state test results. And it was almost exactly what their performance on the state test was.

In a Nutshell

Described as a “family,” educators at Crown Point CSD explained how they worked collaboratively to address students’ social-emotional well-being and mental health needs while providing rigorous academic learning opportunities. Although staff recognized the challenges they faced in a rural context where resources were, at times, insufficient, the capacity to “wear many hats” and always “do what’s best for the children” were common anchors for their work. Educators reported that the autonomy they were afforded by leaders at their school as well as the sense of professionalism that was shared across the K-12 building were highly valued.

Both prior case studies of Crown Point are available on the NYKids website at www.ny-kids.com/research-results.

Crown Point Central School
Randy Pertak, Dean of Students
2758 Main Street
Crown Point, NY 12928

ⁱ The Education Trust report: <https://newyork.edtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/ETNY-Enrollment-Report-2023.pdf>