

Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

Final Report



BEDS Code	321200010006
School Name	P.S. 6 West Farms
School Address	1000, East Tremont Avenue, Bronx, NY, 10460
District Name	NYCDOE CSD 12
Principal	Tiawana Perez
Dates of Visit	March 12-14, 2019



Purpose Of The Visit

This school was identified as needing additional support by the New York State Education Department (NYSED). Because of this identification, NYSED arranged for an Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) to visit the school. The visit is intended to help the school identify areas of need that are making long-term success a challenge and provide several visible Quick Wins 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 Performance

New York State uses multiple indicators to determine the identification status of schools across the state. For each of these indicators, schools receive a number of 1 (lowest), 2, 3, or 4 (highest) that corresponds with how the school performed in relation to either other schools and/or performance targets. More information about how these levels are determined can be found at: <http://www.nysed.gov/accountability/essa-accountability-designation-materials>

The most recent results for the “All Students” group at the school are as follows:

Elementary/Middle School Performance Indicators

Composite Performance Achievement Level	Student Growth Level	Combined Composite and Student Growth Level	English Language Proficiency Level	Average ELA and Math Academic Progress Level	Chronic Absenteeism Level
1	1	1		3	1

P.S. 6 West Farms serves 534 students in grades Pre-K to five.

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 representative from the Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (RBERN).
- The team visited a total of 34 classrooms during the visit.
- The OEE visited six classrooms with the principal during the visit.
- Team members conducted interviews 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, 22 staff members (50 percent) completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. The Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) observed that ongoing efforts by the principal and staff to establish and implement school-wide social and emotional support systems and expectations have resulted in a positive and nurturing learning environment for students. These efforts include, for example, social and emotional support initiatives such as school-wide classroom behavior expectations and ClassDojo. The team noted that the tracking of teachers' usage of ClassDojo indicated that they typically use the ClassDojo reward system with fidelity across the school. The observed Online Occurrence Reporting System (OORS) school-wide data shows that all levels of recorded incidents of misbehavior and the total number of instances of behavioral issues were reduced from 19 in September 2018 to seven in February 2019. During interviews, parents, teachers, and students talked about how the principal is building on the supportive, caring, and collaborative school culture that has developed and improved since she arrived at the school three years ago.
2. During the 2018-19 school year, the principal has continued to build upon her work to develop a positive and supportive learning environment. Many teachers reported that they appreciate the leadership and support they receive from the principal. New and veteran teachers indicated that they feel valued and supported by the principal. In classrooms and hallways, the IIT observed that students were typically confident, relaxed, cooperative, tolerant, and supportive of each other. During interviews, students told the team that they felt safe and well-supported in school and that staff cared for them. Parents also expressed their appreciation for what the principal has done to improve the school for the benefit of their children.
3. During the current school year, the principal has continued to develop the student council as an important opportunity for students to have a voice and contribute to school improvement. Members of the student council now wear distinctive polo shirts with pride and talk enthusiastically during meetings about how the student council works. Student council members explained that the council meets daily, with support from a staff member, and that the student council helps them to work together, build community links, and express their ideas for improving the school. Students described, for example, a recent student council community initiative in which students sang for residents at a local nursing home.
4. During the 2018-19 school year, the principal introduced Lunch Boost learning support sessions, led by staff volunteers, which provide English language arts (ELA) and math supports for groups of level one students who require additional interventions. During discussions, students indicated that they appreciated the support they received from Lunch Boost sessions and shared that the sessions helped them to improve their achievement levels. The IIT examined data that showed that Lunch Boost students' academic performance had improved. Between January and February 2019, in all grade levels, data showed that the percentage of Lunch Boost students scoring level zero on weekly assessments was reduced. In January 2019, 47 percent of grade three Lunch Boost students tested in math scored zero while in February 2019, 18 percent of grade three Lunch Boost students tested in math scored zero, an improvement of 29 percent. The team found that an improvement was also evident in observed grade four and five data.
5. Since September 2018, the principal has prioritized the development of teams and meetings to drive school improvement. She has established an Instructional Leadership Team (ILT), which includes school leaders and grade level leaders. As a result, school and grade level leaders told the IIT that they are able to meet regularly to monitor school wide practices, to measure progress toward the School Comprehensive Education Plan (SCEP) goals, and to discuss school improvement initiatives. In addition, the principal reported that she has

established clear expectations for the content of existing Teacher Team meetings so that meetings have purpose and structure. For example, the principal and teachers told the IIT that some Teacher Team meetings now use protocols to guide analysis of student work and performance data while other meetings are specifically for planning adjustments to instruction arising from data analysis.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **The school will need to develop a strategic plan for professional development (PD) that provides sufficient flexibility to enable the school leaders to respond to teachers' needs identified during their monitoring of lessons.** In discussions with the IIT, the principal stated that the PD plan was established for the school year with no space left to enable her to respond to teacher's professional learning support needs identified during school leaders' classroom walkthrough visits. For example, she explained that if classroom visits identified teachers needing additional support with developing effective questioning skills, she may not be able to schedule time to provide the necessary support. As a result, individual teachers or groups of teachers may not receive supports in a sufficiently timely way to help them to quickly improve areas of their teaching practices.
- **The school should establish a clear procedure to ensure that the school leadership team (SLT) is able to monitor progress toward identified school improvement goals.** In a review of the School Comprehensive Education Plan (SCEP), the IIT found that the school leaders identified school improvement goals based on data analysis. The IIT noted that action plans for improvement goals included broad timeframes such as September 2018 to June 2019 but few other interim checkpoints. During interviews, the principal reported that she monitored progress toward goals at monthly SLT meetings. Observed SLT meeting minutes included brief references to improvement goals and some other monitoring data, such as student reading levels. However, the IIT found that the SLT minutes included little evidence to indicate if the school was on track to meet improvement goals identified in the SCEP.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **School leaders should consistently provide teachers with detailed, focused feedback, with actionable next steps, or follow-up to improve their instructional practices.** The IIT observed that some written feedback from school leaders was detailed and actionable, referred to school-wide instructional expectations, and was aligned with the Danielson teaching framework domains. However, other feedback did not always include reference to expected school practices, the Danielson framework, or detailed, practical, and actionable next steps for teachers to immediately follow to improve their practice. For example, some examined feedback included reference to school-wide instructional expectations, 3c- Engaging Students in Learning (Danielson), and indicated no students were intellectually engaged in a lesson. Other examined feedback included comments such as, A glow was..., with no reference to school-wide expectations or the Danielson framework. The principal reported that sometimes the follow up to support teachers to implement feedback included a suggested, informal inter-visitation, which the teacher could arrange. As a result, some teachers may take the opportunity for the inter-visitation while others may not. During classroom visits, the IIT noted that the typical

quality of instruction observed across the school did not fully support the learning needs of all students. In the future, school leaders should collaborate to make sure that they always provide teachers with specific, actionable feedback, related to school-wide instructional expectations, which will help them improve their teaching practices.

Learning at the School

- **Teachers will need to regularly use student performance data to create structured data-driven groupings or to design learning tasks closely matched with students' learning needs.** During discussions with the principal and teachers, the IIT learned that teachers are able to access a range of student performance data to inform planning groups and learning tasks. However, in many lessons the team observed, although students were often seated in groups, they frequently completed learning tasks at the same level. Most lessons did not include multiple entry points to ensure that different groups of learners, including higher achieving students, were able to access their learning at different levels. The team found little evidence in observed lessons to show that teachers provided higher achieving students with additional support and challenge for their learning. For example, the team observed some students completing learning tasks quickly and then waiting for the lesson to move on. Students told the IIT that they would often read a book or just wait if they finished work quickly. The principal stated that systems for collecting and accessing student performance data were only established during the 2018-19 school year and that analyzing student performance data was new for many teachers. In the future, the principal should continue working to develop data collection systems and providing ongoing support for teachers, so they are able to increase their confidence and skill in using student performance data to inform instruction.
- **Teachers should provide timely feedback to students or adjust instruction to better meet student learning needs.** During classroom visits, the IIT observed that teachers often moved around classrooms, talked with students, and checked for understanding. However, the team found minimal evidence that showed that teachers made a record of student's responses, provided timely feedback to individual students, or adjusted instruction in response to these checks. For example, in an observed classroom, a teacher talked to individual students but there was no evidence of the teacher recording or collecting data based on the conversations. In another classroom, a teacher asked if students understood the learning based on a thumbs up, thumbs sideways, or thumbs down signal, but did not respond when thumbs held down or sideways indicated students needed further support. As a result, some teachers have limited data to inform them about student's levels of understanding during lessons that would enable them to provide timely learning feedback for students or adjust instruction to better meet their needs.
- **Teachers will need to provide lessons that promote increased opportunities for students to actively engage in their learning.** During classroom visits, the IIT noted that teachers often spent extended periods of time talking to students while they were all sitting on the rug at the front of the classroom. The IIT observed that students were typically well behaved and obediently carried out teacher's instructions. However, students were often not actively engaged in learning tasks or showing any enthusiasm for their learning. For example, the team observed many instances where students did not answer or ask questions, were looking around the classroom, did not engage in discussion opportunities, or appeared bored. During classroom visits with the team, the principal acknowledged that students sometimes appeared distracted or disinterested.

- **Teachers should pose questions that require students to engage in discussions, explain their thinking, or deepen their learning.** During classroom visits, the IIT observed few instances where teachers asked questions of individual students. The team noted, for example, that most teachers' questions were targeted at the whole group, only required brief recall answers, and often only prompted general callout responses from a minority of students. As a result, many students did not respond to questions, ask questions of the teacher or of each other, and had few discussion opportunities. Turn and talk occasions observed by the team were usually brief and did not typically enable students to engage in meaningful discussions that deepened and extended their understanding. For example, the team observed several instances during classroom visits where student talk opportunities were short with little follow up time for students to discuss and share their ideas.
- **Teachers must provide learning tasks that support the learning needs of students with disabilities and English language learners (ELLs).** During classroom visits, the IIT observed few instances where teachers provided students with disabilities or ELLs with specific scaffolds and prompts to support their learning. For instance, the team observed that learning targets were often long, not always presented in student friendly language, and teachers rarely posted learning targets in native languages. The IIT noted that most learning support resources such as posters, charts, textbooks, and work sheets were also only presented in English. Teachers told the team that they needed more support and guidance to help them with specific instructional strategies to support the learning needs of ELLs. Some teachers also stated that school leaders typically only provide PD for English as a new language (ENL) teachers to develop their skills to support ELLs. They noted that they were not aware of any follow up to check how ENL teachers used PD in the classroom or if they shared PD with general education teachers. Teachers reported that there is a perception among a minority of teachers that ELLs are the responsibility of the ENL teachers. As a result, some teachers, as observed in classrooms, rely on ENL teachers to provide specific learning supports for ELLs.
- **Teachers will need to effectively use rubrics and checklists to support student self-direction, independence, and self-reflection.** During classroom visits, the IIT observed that instructional resources in most classrooms included some rubrics, checklists, and exemplars that were available for students to use as supports and guidance for their learning. During discussions, some students were able to speak about learning rubrics and how they used them to guide and support their own learning. However, the team found that students typically did not fully understand their rubrics and checklists and were not always able to explain how they used them or what they meant. In some classrooms, the IIT noted that teachers did not modify assessment tools, including checklists, so that they were in student friendly language and accessible to students with various learning needs, such as ELLs and students with disabilities.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Family members reported that they appreciate the support they receive from workshops and meetings; however, they noted that it would be a good idea if meetings could be held at more varied times.** Parents stated that most parent meetings took place either before school or at the end of school. They acknowledged that this made it more convenient for many parents to attend but expressed the view that there were other parents for whom before or after school may not be the best time. Parents noted that school leaders could explore other options for meeting times, such as evenings or different times during the school day, which may enable different groups of parents to attend.

- **Students said they felt that teachers typically cared about them and supported their learning in classrooms; however, some students felt that lessons should be longer.** Students told the IIT that sometimes they did not have sufficient time during lessons to complete their work properly before moving on to other learning. They said that occasionally this meant they were unable to return to tasks to complete them fully and to their own satisfaction. Some students stated that making lessons longer would be helpful for their learning.
- **Teachers and students said they felt frustrated by frequent schedule changes, which meant that expected lessons did not always take place.** Students and teachers shared that they were concerned about frequent short notice schedule changes since they disrupted teachers' planning and students' learning. Some schedule changes occur due to the challenge of finding substitute teachers on short notice.
- **Parents said that they would appreciate more timely information when there was a concern about their children's academic progress.** Some parents reported that staff did not always inform them quickly enough when there were concerns about their children's learning. For example, some parents described being unaware of staff concerns about their children's academic progress until parent teacher conferences a few weeks later. They said that if staff provided timely information, it would help them to understand any concerns and work with the school to help their children.