

Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

Final Report



BEDS Code	321200010212
School Name	P.S. 212
School Address	1180 Tinton Avenue, Bronx, NY 10456
District Name	NYCDOE CSD 12
Principal	Fatimah Ali
Dates of Visit	January 29-31, 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.

Information About The Visit

- P.S. 212 serves 410 students in pre-kindergarten through grade eight.
- 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 34 lessons across a total of 14 classrooms during the visit.
- The OEE visited five 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 lesson plans, schoolwide data, teacher feedback, and student work.
- In advance of the visit, 24 staff members (96 percent) completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. School leaders have implemented practices that enable teacher leaders to participate in schoolwide decision-making. School leaders established an instructional leadership team that includes the union chapter leader, teacher leaders, and an English as a new language (ENL) teacher. In 2018-19, members of the instructional leadership team led professional development (PD) sessions for their colleagues and contributed to the selection of a new English language arts (ELA) curriculum. Increased involvement of teacher leaders in the school decision-making process has resulted in stronger relationships between school leaders and teachers and a noticeably more positive school culture.
2. The principal performs a weekly focus walk that is aligned with the weekly PD topic. Following the walk, the principal provides teachers with written feedback that includes observations, recognition of what's working well, and next steps that can be implemented right away. These focus walks allow the principal to immediately monitor the impact of that week's PD session and if needed, provide teachers with additional guidance on implementing the strategies learned through PD.
3. The school provides students with many opportunities outside the classroom to supplement their learning. During the visit, a music recital made it possible for many students to perform for families, school staff, and their peers. Upper-grade students spoke positively about having a class president and vice-president who voice their concerns in frequent meetings with the principal. The school has a science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) partner that involves students in hands-on science learning, which students said they enjoy.

4. With the support of the district and community partners, school leaders have initiated and facilitated many improvements to the school building for 2018-19. New tiles, fresh paint, and better furniture have all improved the learning environment and boosted staff and student morale. The school consolidated from four levels in the school building to two floors which creates a more cohesive campus atmosphere and enables the principal to visit classrooms more frequently. The hallways now display student work, some featuring rubrics that students used to evaluate their learning, and student-centered artifacts.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **School leaders should continue to focus on building trust among staff so that school improvement efforts can be supported.** While school leaders have communicated their vision for the school and established a shared vocabulary for school improvement, some initiatives have not been fully embraced by all staff. While many staff indicated that school culture has improved, the IIT found that some school improvement efforts, such as model teachers, inter-visitation, coaching, and collaborative planning, could be improved with increased trust among staff and between teachers and school leaders.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **School leaders need to provide time for English as a new language (ENL) and Special Education Teacher Support Services (SETSS) teachers to collaboratively plan with classroom teachers and should monitor the impact of collaborative teaching.** Neither the ENL nor the SETSS teachers have time in their assigned schedules to meet with classroom teachers to collaboratively plan lessons or to plan for the deliberate use of pedagogical strategies based on the needs of individual and groups of students. Although ENL and SETSS teachers have a schedule of class visits and time allotted to deliver individual student interventions, classroom teachers reported that the level of support provided during these visits varies. Interviewed teachers stated that clear expectations for co-planning have not been established and collaborative teaching has not been monitored to ensure it is having the intended impact.
- **The principal has established schoolwide priorities and introduced initiatives that support the academic and social emotional needs of students, but teachers need support to fully implement all initiatives.** The principal has communicated her expectations through a weekly staff message, an established PD plan, and written guidelines for many of the prioritized initiatives. The principal uses the weekly focus walk to reinforce the importance of chosen instructional priorities and monitor their implementation. However, teachers stated that they need additional follow-up support to ensure the meaningful implementation of all the new initiatives. Some teachers stated that they were overwhelmed by the rollout pace of new initiatives this year and many felt that in addition to the initial PD they received, they need continued guidance to fully implement the new practices in their classrooms. In the future, the principal should include the new assistant principal in the focus walks, establish a shared document to track teachers' implementation of recommended next steps, and use the data to inform ongoing professional development and support. In addition, the principal should modify

the teacher signature area of the focus walk feedback form to allow teachers to provide her with feedback about the quality of her recommendations and to request additional support to improve their implementation.

- **The principal should establish clear expectations for parent communication.** Although teachers have time in their schedules dedicated to parent engagement, guidelines have not been established regarding the types of information that should be shared with families during this time. In addition, teacher communication with families is not monitored to determine the level and quality of home-school communication. Interviewed parents reported that most communication between parents and teachers is initiated by parents. Currently, meetings between parents and teachers are scheduled by the parent coordinators. Interviewed staff and parents reported that this practice prevents families from developing relationships with teachers as partners in their children’s education. In the future, the principal should establish clear goals, expectations, and systems to monitor home-school communications that include shared agreements about communicating behavioral and academic progress, guidelines for sharing information about school or class events and celebrations, and the use of ClassDojo. The school community should develop a shared plan for home-school communication that clearly defines the roles of teachers, parent coordinators, and school leaders so that families know what types of communication to expect and from whom.

Learning at the School

- **Teachers must provide supports to enable English language learners (ELLs) to access the curriculum.** Most lesson plans reviewed by the IIT did not include language objectives or scaffolds to promote the development of academic language for ELL students. Most observed lessons were teacher-led, and while the IIT observed the use of some strategies to increase student discussion, such as sentence starters and timers, this was not a schoolwide practice. In classroom visits, the IIT saw limited use of strategies such as sentence frames, word walls, conferencing, and the language experience approach, to enable ELL students to access the curriculum. While attempts to incorporate writing across content areas was observed frequently during the math problem of the day, in most classes, ELL students were not provided with additional supports during these activities.
- **Teachers need to ensure that students have a clear understanding of their learning and what they will need to do to improve.** Class visits, student interviews, and a review of lesson plans confirmed that students are provided with few opportunities to evaluate their own work or the work of their peers using rubrics. While many students were aware of their Fountas & Pinnell reading level, they could not identify what they needed to do to move their reading up to the next level. In most classrooms, student names were posted on colored index cards that indicated their proficiency levels, and these levels were used to form student groupings. However, students interviewed in class and during focus groups were not able to explain why they were grouped as they were and could not recall how frequently or why groups change. One group of upper-grade students stated that the groups in their class don’t change and that their role during group time was to help struggling students.
- **Although school leaders have selected and purchased SEL curricula and dedicated time in the school schedule for restorative circle work, they should develop a cohesive SEL program and a system to monitor its implementation.** Students, teachers, and parents all expressed high hopes for different elements of SEL programming. One student shared with the team that they enjoyed beginning the day with mindfulness activities and yoga, while another enjoyed the ability to explore feelings in circles or journals. However, none of the students interviewed were able to explain how all the programs and practices worked together. School leaders shared that they are planning to establish a team to develop a curriculum map that ties together all

restorative and SEL practices utilizing monthly themes that are consistent across all grades. Once that is implemented, school leaders should use the existing focus walks to support these schoolwide programs. They should observe the implementation of restorative practices and the SEL curriculum, assess the need for additional teacher support, evaluate the impact of these initiatives, and determine if adjustments should be made.

- **Teachers in integrated co-teaching (ICT) classes should collaboratively plan and implement lessons that strategically utilize both teachers to provide effective instruction.** The IIT found that the quality of collaborative planning and instruction in ICT classes varied. The current schedule does not include designated time for co-teachers to collaboratively plan instruction. While some co-teachers work together during lunch, prep periods, or afterschool to plan instruction, co-teachers in other classes are unable to meet to plan learning activities that effectively utilize both teachers to meet the learning needs of all students. In an observed ICT class, one teacher taught the lesson while the second teacher observed without moving around the classroom to provide support to individual or groups of students. In another ICT classroom, two groups of students worked independently while each co-teacher worked with a separate group. The students who were working independently completed the first step of the assignment but were unable to complete the next steps without support. The teachers struggled to support the independent groups while also leading activities with their assigned group.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Parents would like to receive feedback about their children’s homework and information about how they can help their children at home.** One parent mentioned that it was difficult to know if homework was correct after it was turned in because they received no communication about the quality or correctness of their child’s homework assignments. Another parent indicated that they would like to receive next steps from lessons that could be reinforced at home. Some parents stated that they would like the school to offer workshops about how they could help their child at home, especially in math.
- **Teachers need more support in analyzing data and using that information to inform their instructional practices.** Some teachers reported that although they received support in analyzing data earlier in the year, they are now expected to analyze data on their own. Some teachers stated that they need more support on how to use information from the recently introduced schoolwide data-tracker and district-shared tracker to inform planning and instruction. Some teachers also stated that they would like more collaboration time with their ENL and SETSS colleagues to discuss which materials and scaffolds would best support the learning needs of individuals and groups of students.
- **Some students would like additional opportunities to utilize restorative circles during the school day.** Some students reported that they enjoyed the use of restorative practices, such as journaling and circles, and stated that they would like to utilize circles more frequently throughout the day. For example, some students suggested that circles could be used to resolve problems that arise between students.