

Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

Final Report



BEDS Code	321200010300
School Name	The School of Science and Applied Learning
School Address	2050 Prospect Avenue
District Name	NYCDOE CSD 12
Principal	Venessa Singleton
Dates of Visit	February 26-28, 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
2	1	1	2	1	1

School of Science and Applied Learning serves 612 students in grades pre-kindergarten 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 28 classrooms during the visit.
- The OEE visited nine 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, English as a new language (ENL) data, mathematics data, teacher feedback, and student work.
- In advance of the visit, the school provided results of a student survey that zero students (zero percent) completed.
- In advance of the visit, the school provided results of a staff survey that 44 staff members (90 percent) completed.
- In advance of the visit, the school provided results of a parent survey that 244 parents (57 percent) completed.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. The principal has identified teacher leaders within the school that she is working with to help build staff capacity across grade levels. For example, the principal identified grade team leaders at each grade level who also participate on the school's instructional leadership team. In addition, teachers told the IIT that instructional coaches and teacher leaders provide them with support to improve their practices in order to better meet the needs of struggling students.
2. Due to the challenges associated with mathematics achievement, the principal expanded mathematics instructional leadership support by transitioning the math coach position from part-time to full-time for the 2018-19 school year. As a result, the planning completed by teachers during the 2018-19 school year has moved from them relying solely on the Go-Math program to a process where they analyze practice test items and the State standards to inform lessons and create interim assessments aligned to the State assessment. Teachers have also started analyzing assessment data by standard, which resulted in them collaborating with the math coach to institute Whatever I Need (WIN) days to provide differentiated small group instruction to students based on mid-chapter proficiency levels.
3. The school outlined the use of Kagan Strategies as a method to promote student engagement during the 2018-19 school year. During classroom visits, the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) observed teachers using Kagan Strategies to direct student behavior during instruction and activities, as well as to refocus students throughout lessons. The IIT found that students were familiar with the expectations for each strategy and responded to teacher cues with the appropriate responses.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **Activities described within the School Comprehensive Education Plan (SCEP) should have clearly defined timelines for completion and include effective procedures for progress monitoring.** The principal told the IIT that school leaders meet regularly to discuss progress on action items and to monitor the progress made toward SCEP goals. While the plan includes numerous activities, strategies, and specific goals, there needs to be clear interim benchmarks to measure the success of each initiative throughout the year. The SCEP outlines, for example, that the school will provide professional development (PD) for teachers in the areas of Kagan Cooperative Learning and the Morningside Center, restorative circles, checks for understanding, student engagement, and assessment of students. The timeline for these activities was set for September through June but interim benchmarks were needed. In the future, the principal should map out the incremental implementation of steps for the action items to be addressed by the school, along with completion dates for each step, so that the school can adequately progress monitor the improvement plan.
- **Staff will need to have a clear understanding of the school's goals and the action steps included in the SCEP to address the improvement needs of the school.** During conversations with teachers and staff, the IIT found that while the teachers and staff were aware that the school has academic goals, it was evident that they need additional support to articulate them and the related action steps included in the SCEP to address school needs. The principal stated that SCEP training had been provided for grade team leaders and that the expectation was that grade team leaders would convey that information to their teams. In the future, the principal should

regularly communicate the school goals to staff using multiple modes of communication and to explain the link between the implementation of school initiatives and the school goals. In addition, the principal should begin using the school leadership team (SLT) meetings to build on team leader communication practices within grade teams, to elicit feedback from grade teams regarding school improvement, and to begin writing the SCEP for the 2019-20 school year.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **School leaders will need to establish a system to track math and English cohort growth and proficiency from year to year.** While the school has established goals within the SCEP related to increases in math proficiency and reading levels, classroom-level goals that track student growth from year to year have yet to be established. The principal shared that the school primarily monitors student growth in the area of English language arts (ELA) using assessments such as the Fountas and Pinnell reading assessment, writing artifacts, and running records; however, assessments chosen to track student progress should be aligned to the State standards. While teachers have begun the process of monitoring student mastery of the State math standards through common assessments, the team found that this process should factor in student growth from the previous year. In the future, the principal should analyze student baseline data from the previous school year and collaborate with teachers and support staff to set classroom goals to further promote investment and shared accountability for school improvement by staff.
- **School leaders must ensure that all instructional staff maximize the time available for instruction.** During classroom visits, the IIT found that transitions between activities in some classrooms needed to be more efficient. In addition, the IIT observed instruction concluding in most classrooms 30 minutes prior to the 2:20 p.m. dismissal time, which led to the loss of valuable instructional time. In the future, the principal should collaborate with both assistant principals (APs) to conduct classroom walkthroughs focused on transition time between activities and lessons, then provide teachers with strategies to improve the efficiency of transitions and conduct follow-up classroom walkthroughs focused on implementation of those suggestions. In addition, the principal should collaborate with grade level teams to devise a strategy to minimize the amount of instructional time lost before dismissal time.
- **School leaders should maximize the skills and expertise of the social emotional learning (SEL) support staff to ensure that the needs of all students are being met effectively in all classes.** The IIT learned during conversations with teachers that SEL support staff provide suggestions to teachers in the area of SEL upon request and conduct classroom SEL lessons when conflicts arise. While the SEL staff provide support to students, the IIT found that the school leaders need to implement a plan to coordinate SEL staff support so that there is a regular practice of interacting with all teachers to discuss individual student needs, student triggers, and de-escalation strategies, as well as to conduct character education classes. During interviews, parents and students shared with the IIT that some teachers need additional support and strategies to respond positively to students with challenging behaviors.

Learning at the School

- **Teachers need to regularly model ELA skills with students and provide them with frequent opportunities to deepen their understanding of the ELA content standards.** While the team observed integration of the shared

reading professional development (PD) initiative, which targets select ELA standards, classroom visits revealed that classroom teachers need to provide explicit standards-based instruction in ELA. Interviews with teachers and school leaders revealed that teachers provide instruction during guided reading groups related to guided reading levels and skills embedded within the shared reading activities; however, lessons do need to provide students with instruction for all the skills embedded within the standards. Teachers further shared that while students decode words with ease, their comprehension skills need support. To address this challenge, school leaders should collaborate with teachers to create and model mini lessons aligned to the ELA standards and develop learning activities to ensure students are provided with tasks aligned to the state standards.

- **Teachers should create opportunities for students to engage in discussion and work collaboratively with their peers.** During classroom visits, the IIT found that students spent most of their time in the whole group setting, either sitting at their desks or seated on the carpet for lengthy periods of time. This finding was confirmed during student interviews where students expressed a desire for shortening the time they are required to sit on the carpet. While students were given opportunities to share and respond to their peers, activities were primarily completed independently and needed to provide students the opportunity to collaborate in pairs or work in larger teams so that they may learn with and through one another. In addition, a review of teacher lesson plans revealed that lessons need to outline student collaboration during the work period. In the future, instructional coaches should assist teachers with creating and executing lessons that require active student engagement and collaboration during the work period.
- **Teachers will need to implement the iReady program consistently to provide students with adaptive standards-based interventions and skills practice.** The principal told the team that one of the APs is responsible for providing updates on the implementation and impact of iReady. The principal also shared that the expectation is that teachers provide interventions based on student progress and ensure students get the appropriate number of minutes on the software each week. While a review of teacher Whatever I Need (WIN) lessons by the IIT revealed use of the Ready Teacher Toolbox resources for small group instruction, interviews with parents, students, and teachers revealed that use of the iReady computer-based program to support student learning needs to be more of a common practice. Teachers shared that they found it challenging to coordinate student use of the program during instructional time. In the future the instructional coaches should work with teachers to plan iReady student computer rotations and intervention lessons. In addition, the AP responsible for iReady should provide the instructional learning team with updates on iReady implementation and student performance during weekly instructional learning team meetings.
- **Teachers should use ELL student data to plan instructional strategies that meet the needs of their ELL students.** While the school has some bi-lingual teachers, the IIT learned that classroom teachers need to be more familiar with New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) data and how to use this data to inform instruction. The IIT also learned that although ENL teachers sometimes participate in grade level meetings, they need to provide additional planning support and strategies to general and special education teachers. The principal shared with the IIT that the school currently serves over 100 ELL students and stated that the school currently only has two certified staff members credentialed to support these ELL students. A review of the NYSESLAT results for the 2017-18 school year revealed limited growth in student English proficiency levels. In the future, the principal should ensure that ENL teachers participate in grade team meetings at least once per month to provide teachers with up to date data and support, planning assistance, and guidance in the use of instructional strategies aligned to the lessons they are planning. The principal should also initiate plans to support bi-lingual teachers in obtaining ENL certification to expand the school's capacity to serve ELL students.

- **Teachers should provide daily instruction to students in all core subject areas.** The IIT found that the school schedule indicates that instruction will take place in the areas of science, social studies, and writing using the push-in approach, where teachers push-in and take over during the regular classroom teacher’s preparation period. During classroom visits, the IIT observed variations in the quality of instruction and expectations for student learning during general education and 12:1 push-in writing sessions. In addition, students communicated to the IIT that they only receive science and social studies instruction occasionally. To address this issue, the principal should meet with grade teams to revise the master schedule to incorporate science, social studies, and writing into the daily instructional schedule for each grade level.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Families reported that they would like additional teacher support to give them a better understanding of the learning that takes place in the lower grades.** While the school provided training to parents of pre-kindergarten students at the beginning of the 2018-19 school year, the parents interviewed stated that they would like additional training focused on how to support their children’s early learning in reading and mathematics.
- **Parents stated that the school should modify school-wide procedures for end-of-day dismissal.** The IIT observed that dismissal procedures were orderly and safe. However, parents noted that they are required to wait outside the building until they are granted entry to collect their children and that this practice is problematic during the winter months.
- **Students reported that they would like opportunities to engage in different types of activities during and after school.** Students shared that during physical education class, they usually do the same activities and would like opportunities to engage in new activities such as gymnastics during that time. Students also communicated a desire to participate in clubs such as cooking and dance after school. In addition, students explained that during the school day, they want school aides to ensure that the activities they engage in while they are in the auditorium are varied.
- **Students would like more frequent opportunities to explain their performance and share work samples with their parents.** While the school provides regular opportunities for parents to conference with teachers about their children’s performance in school, during student interviews, students shared that they would like to be more actively involved in parent teacher conferences. Grade four and five students communicated that they would like opportunities to lead parent-teacher conferences and be responsible for explaining their work products and performance to their parents.
- **Teachers stated that they would benefit from more frequent opportunities to vertically plan in the areas of ELA and math.** While the school has provided some opportunities for teachers to plan vertically, teachers shared with the IIT that due to the instructional shifts taking place at the school, ongoing opportunities to plan with vertical teams would be helpful to ensure coherence across grade levels in the areas of ELA and math.