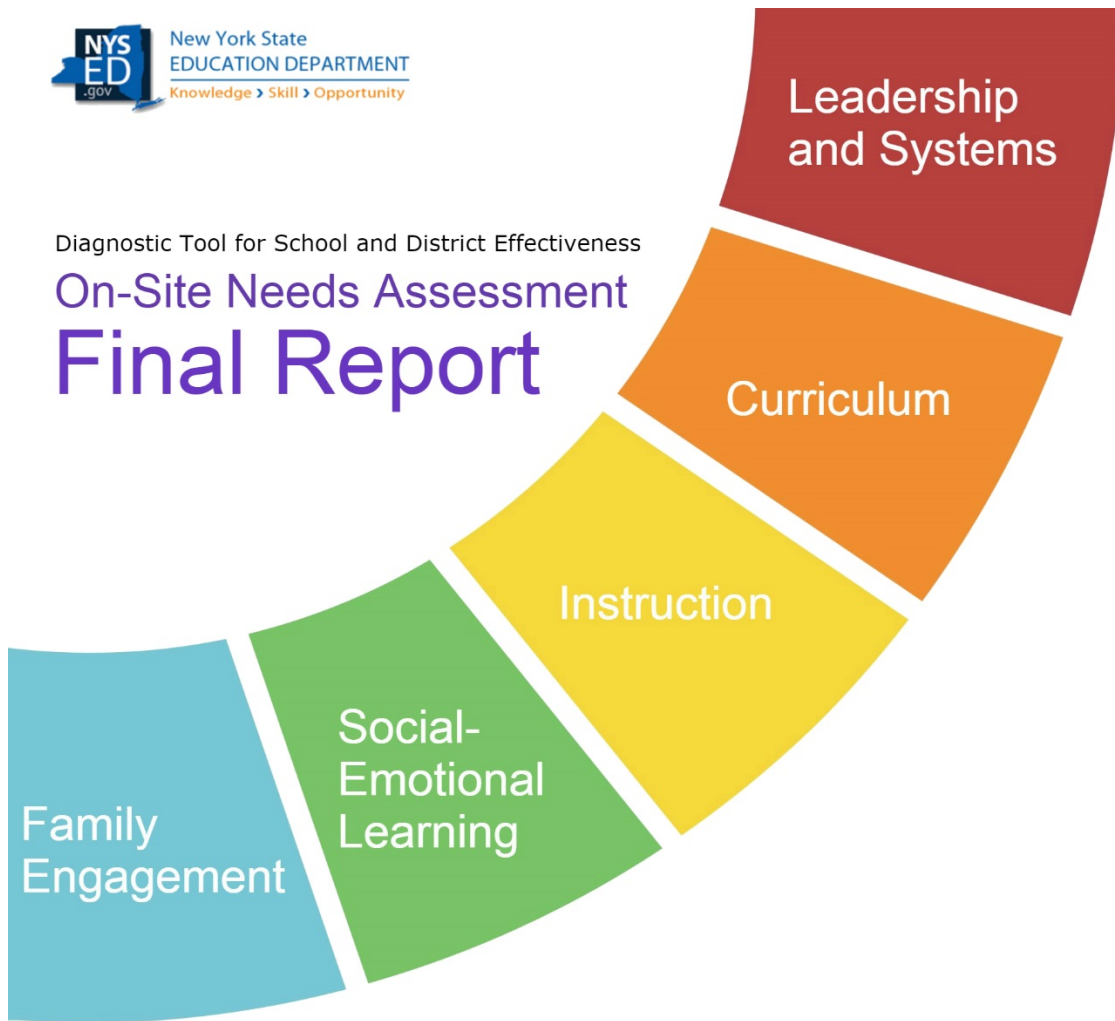


Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

# Final Report



<b>BEDS Code</b>	331400011586
<b>School Name</b>	Lyons Community School
<b>School Address</b>	223 Graham Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11206
<b>District Name</b>	NYCDOE CSD 14
<b>Principal</b>	Karen Taeko Onishi
<b>Dates of Visit</b>	June 3,5,7, 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	-	2	1

### *High School Performance Indicators*

4 Yr. Grad. Rate <67%	Composite Performance Achievement Level	Average of 4-, 5-, and 6-year Graduation Rate Levels	Combined Composite Performance Achievement and Graduation Rate Level	English Language Proficiency Level	Average ELA and Math Academic Progress Level	Chronic Absenteeism Level	College, Career, Civic, Readiness (CCCR) Level
No	2	1	1	2	2	2	1

Lyons Community School serves 492 students in grades six through twelve.

## 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 42 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 lesson plans, unit plans, schoolwide data, google docs, sample strategies, teacher assignments and student work.
- In advance of the visit, 26 staff members (54 percent) completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.

## Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. For the 2018-19 school year, the school instituted a schoolwide, point-based, incentive system, entitled “Maritcha Bucks,” as part of the Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) system. This incentive system provides students with the opportunity to earn points for behaviors aligned to the school’s mission and core values. A store has been created that contains prizes, with different point values assigned to them, whereby students can purchase items such as a school sweatshirt. During interviews, students reported how much they liked the school and that the PBIS program provided incentives for attendance, good behavior, and the honor roll. Students interviewed shared that they were proud to be earning the prizes and welcomed the positive attention that they brought. Students indicated that the prizes positively affected their behavior, and the principal told the team that the introduction of the program has been effective in helping the students internalize learning for acceptable behavior.
2. For the 2018-19 school year, the school joined the Middle School Quality Initiative (MSQI). Through this program and the creation of the middle school literacy team, middle school teachers are now aligning their work around reading and writing. Students are assessed three times per year using the Degrees of Reading Power assessment, which has allowed teachers to recognize the range of readers they have in their classroom. The team is now focusing on implementation of Reciprocal Teaching across classrooms.
3. To help strengthen their advisory period, for the 2018-19 school year, the school has worked with NYC Outward Bound to build a curriculum to implement during advisory. The principal stated that teachers have received training on the curriculum, which will provide students with rigorous, challenging learning experiences that will test their resolve and help them discover their capabilities. Beginning in the 2019-20 school year, students will remain with the same advisory teachers from grade nine through twelve.

## Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

### Systems for Improvement

- **The principal should create a school wide schedule for the implementation of intervention programs.** Teachers interviewed by the IIT shared that it was difficult to focus on grade level standards because many students needed extra support at their present grade levels. The principal noted that students are tested three times a year using the Degrees of Reading Powers (DRP); however, there were no specific intervention programs provided for students. Most interventions were planned and delivered in individual classrooms. The principal indicated that school leaders and teachers have access to the reading level data collected using i-Ready, but presently there is no time scheduled each day to meet the needs of those students that require interventions.
- **The principal needs to schedule a weekly meeting time for the attendance team to analyze attendance data and coordinate plans to address those students who are chronically absent.** Staff interviewed by the IIT stated that currently the school needs a formal process to address chronic absenteeism and that there is a need for attendance data to be reviewed more frequently and rigorously. Teachers interviewed stated that they call students who are absent, but after those calls are made, they are unclear about the roles and responsibilities of the attendance team and to whom they should report attendance issues. Staff members noted that they are not usually aware if their efforts were having an impact on chronic absenteeism since outcomes are not communicated back to them.

- **The principal should develop a system to measure the progress made in achieving school wide goals by developing benchmark measurements throughout the year.** The IIT found that while the school has goals, there is a need for processes to be put in place to measure the progress made towards achieving them. Staff interviewed by the team were not sure about the specific school goals or priorities and whether the school was making suitable progress towards achieving them. The principal noted the need to put more systems and measures in place to ensure that the school is meeting their goals.

## Leadership and Organization at the School

- **School leaders need to consider creating a weekly, informal classroom visitation schedule and providing feedback to teachers on the quality of their lesson planning and instructional practice.** Teachers in the middle and high school indicated to the team that there was a need for feedback on the quality of their lesson planning and delivery of instruction and that they would benefit from additional coaching and feedback. Special education teachers reported that developmental feedback on the quality of the special education support being provided would also be very helpful. Middle school teachers stated that the ongoing coaching that they have received from the Affinity Math, MSQI, and Generation Ready coaches has been very helpful. However, teachers noted that much of the feedback they received came from their colleagues. Teachers told the IIT that they see the assistant principal as an instructional leader to go to for guidance and support, but his many other responsibilities often take him away from his role as an instructional leader. The IIT reviewed the template used for lesson planning that included key lesson components, such as objectives, formative assessments, and student-to-student interaction. However, upon review of the teachers' lesson plans and through classroom observations, the IIT noted that teachers' interpretation of these terms varied as did their implementation in classroom instruction. The principal noted that her focus on instruction has been on daily instructional practices via the MSQI work and shared that due to a shortage of staff, classroom visits have not taken place as often as she would have liked.
- **The principal should ensure that literacy information provided to teachers during professional development (PD) is implemented with fidelity.** The principal shared that the school is providing an additional literacy block to provide support for middle school students that are reading below grade level. However, the team found that implementation of literacy strategies varied from class to class and that many students reported they have read fewer than five books over the course of the year. The IIT observed that although the classrooms they visited contained guided reading libraries, in some cases these resources were not being used effectively, and students were not assigned books based on their reading level.
- **School leaders should consider working to build the capacity of the youth advocates to enable them to take more responsibility for discipline concerns and behavioral issues.** The principal shared that there are four youth advocates on staff that are charged with handling behavioral and discipline concerns for the school. The assistant principal indicated that much of his time is involved in working with the youth advocates in responding to behavioral incidents and that some of this time could be used more effectively in providing instructional support to teachers. Youth advocates interviewed by the IIT indicated that they had a clear understanding of restorative justice practices and school-based procedures. The principal shared with the IIT that the youth advocates were learning their role this year and could possibly lead this work moving forward in the new school year.
- **School leaders need to schedule regular times for teachers to meet to increase vertical collaboration between the high school and middle school departments.** Some high school teachers interviewed by the IIT

stated that they were not aware of the expectations and curriculum for the middle school, and the middle school teachers reported the same concerns regarding the high school curriculum. Teachers also noted that their ability to collaborate regarding the curriculum and instructional strategies of colleagues is limited due to the lack of structured meeting times. Teachers noted that there had been previous work around vertical curriculum alignment that took the form of an ongoing conversation but that it had not resulted in significant changes being made either to the curriculum or instructional approaches. The IIT observed that the content and complexity of the high school math classes were similar in some cases to that being provided in middle school classes. For example, the IIT observed similar concepts being taught in both a middle and high school math class. The principal stated that the teachers primarily meet in departments by levels and have not met vertically as teams but noted that such meetings should be considered for the 2019-20 school year.

- **The principal should consider posting, referencing, and reinforcing positively stated behavioral expectations throughout the building.** The IIT team observed that the school's core values and traits were posted in classrooms, detailing what behavior should look like in different places throughout the building. However, the signs were not posted in areas such as hallways, the cafeteria, and bathrooms. Teachers interviewed stated that while students understand the expectations for behavior in some specific settings, there needs to be higher behavioral expectations and greater respect exhibited in other spaces throughout the building. The IIT observed that the behavior of students outside of the classrooms was different from what was observed in the classes. In the future, the school could benefit from posting the behavioral expectations for students throughout the building and including these areas as part of the point systems already in place for positive behavior.

## Learning at the School

- **Teachers should provide students with increased opportunities to work together and take part in engaging activities to enhance their critical thinking.** The IIT observed that student engagement varied considerably from class to class. During classroom visits, the team observed that there was a need for the use of turn-and-talk or other student-to-student interaction techniques to engage students in discussion. While students were seated in groups, most students were observed working independently on the same assignment. In some classes, students were not engaged in the lesson, and there was a need for efforts to involve them in the learning activity. In other classes, teacher redirection was effective in the short term; however, it did not always result in sustained engagement from students. Although lesson plans referenced student-to-student interaction as an important approach to increase learning, in most of classes visited, instruction was primarily teacher-led with little student-to-student engagement. The IIT observed that when students were asked to provide feedback to other students, it was often conducted individually by writing on each other's paper in lieu of having a conversation.
- **Teachers need to use formative assessments to determine student understanding of concepts being taught.** The IIT observed that while formative assessment strategies were identified in some lesson plans, there was a wide range of its implementation in classrooms. The IIT observed that few formative assessments were used during classroom instruction. Students were typically asked to self-report their progress by answering questions such as, do you understand it? In some other classrooms, objectives were not standards-aligned, and most were focused on what students were doing rather than what they were learning. The team observed that learning goals and the purpose of activities were often not fully understood by most students.
- **Teachers should use open-ended, higher order thinking questions that invite students to consider and/or offer multiple possible answers.** In classrooms the IIT visited, students were typically asked questions that

were mostly recall or at the basic comprehension level. Some students were encouraged to think critically and build upon the thinking of others, but the majority of questions did not elicit high level responses from the students to deepen understanding of the content presented or to encourage students to formulate hypotheses, make connections, or challenge previously held views. The IIT observed that when students were asked questions, one-word responses were sometimes accepted without additional follow up or prompts for deeper meaning.

## Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Parents stated that they would like the Pupil Path grading system to be used more effectively.** Parents shared with the IIT that they would like to receive information about upcoming assignments through the Pupil Path system in addition to the assignments that have already been graded. Parents stated that they would like grades to be entered on-line more consistently and wished that school leaders ensured that there were specific timelines for teachers to enter grades so that parents could check on their children's progress. Some parents indicated that there are components of the system, such as uploading assignments, that are not being fully utilized by some teachers.
- **Parents reported the need for a greater emphasis on academic rigor.** Some parents stated that while they are happy with the school and appreciated that students are well known by everyone in the school, they feel the students are not being challenged enough and that in some cases there is a need for more rigorous instruction to prepare students for SAT testing. Some parents shared with the IIT that they had children who have graduated from the school, and their children needed to take some special classes as they entered college because they were not sufficiently prepared for the level of work. Parents also stated that they would like students to have opportunities to take more rigorous, upper level or dual enrollment classes through programs such as College Now offered through the City University of New York (CUNY).
- **Students and parents reported that they would like the school to offer more afterschool activities.** Parents shared that while the school offered some athletic programs, the afterschool opportunities should be broadened to provide students with more social opportunities based on their interests, such as band and art. Students stated that they attend clubs of interest during their lunch time and would rather attend social clubs and tutoring programs after school in lieu of their lunch time.
- **Parents stated that they would like the school to provide additional opportunities for student recognition and celebrations.** Parents shared with the IIT that they felt it would be beneficial for students to have individual goals to work towards, which could then be celebrated once the goal was reached. Parents told the IIT that while the school has banquets for students at the end of the year, it would be beneficial to also have quarterly assemblies to recognize students for reaching their goals. These assemblies might encourage parents to come to the school to celebrate these successes. Parents stated that while they like the point systems the school has in place, there needs to be more transparency and consistency in the structure of the program. They noted that they do not feel that points are being distributed consistently.
- **Teachers would like to know the instructional requirements and school wide expectations and then complete a self-evaluation based on those items.** Teachers interviewed by the IIT indicated that it is important for the school leadership to communicate the rationale for requirements and follow up on a set of non-negotiables and expectations for planning, instruction, and attendance. Teachers stated that it would be valuable to have the staff complete a self-evaluation, based on these items, to measure what was implemented and how to move forward.