

Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

Final Report



BEDS Code	331500010676
School Name	Red Hook Neighborhood School
School Address	27 Huntington Street, Brooklyn, New York 11231
District Name	NYCDOE CSD 15
Principal	Priscilla Figueora
Dates of Visit	January 22-24, 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

- Red Hook Neighborhood School serves 125 students in pre-kindergarten through grade five.
- 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 conducted 41 visits to seven classrooms during the visit.
- The OEE visited seven 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, teacher feedback, and student work.
- In advance of the visit, one staff member (five percent) completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. The principal established a community partnership with Ramapo for Children to provide staff with training focused on building a positive culture and developing an effective discipline management system. Additionally, she was able to use the Education for Sharing grant awarded by the city council to provide training for staff on core value lessons, reflections, and activities to teach students social-emotional coping skills through play and discussion. The principal also added support staff, including a counselor and a crisis intervention specialist, to help meet the social and emotional needs of students. Interviewed students and staff shared that there have been fewer disciplinary incidents in 2018-19 as compared to previous years. Students and staff also reported that classrooms, hallways, and community spaces are now much calmer, and this allows everyone to focus more on their work.
2. The principal has worked to create a school culture that invites families and community members into the school and encourages student voice. The principal engages with all stakeholders, is visible around the building, and makes herself available to meet or problem-solve with staff and parents. Interviewed parents stated that they are comfortable approaching the principal with any questions or concerns. Interviewed students reported that they feel comfortable talking to any staff member whenever they have a problem. In addition, students are able to share their views and make suggestions as part of the Climate and Culture Committee. Students shared that being part of this committee makes them feel valued and invested in helping to improve their school.

3. In 2018-19, the principal partnered with community agencies and political entities to provide the school with additional resources to support staff, families, and students. These include opportunities for students to learn about different cultural resources in their community through partnerships with the public library, local art and drama organizations, and marina organizations. In addition, a local organization donated computers for use in the school's community room. Parents are able to use this space to receive training, learn about community resources, and prepare for employment.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **School leaders should ensure that paraprofessionals are used strategically to meet the learning needs of all students.** School leaders reported that when developing the school schedule, they did not specifically look to align the assignment of paraprofessionals with the specific learning needs of students. Instead, school leaders stated that they assigned paraprofessionals based on how well they worked with other adults in the classroom. During class visits, the IIT saw little evidence of paraprofessionals being used strategically to meet the learning needs of all students. In several classes, the IIT observed a paraprofessional supporting one student while many other students struggled to complete the assignment. In the future, school leaders should ensure that the deployment of paraprofessionals is organized to support the learning needs of all students.
- **The school should develop a comprehensive system to monitor student attendance and plan interventions for students who are chronically absent.** School leaders acknowledged that a more comprehensive plan is needed to improve student attendance. Although the secretary and the district attendance officer conduct home visits once per month for students who are frequently absent, the school does not have an attendance team to analyze student attendance data, identify students who are chronically absent, and plan interventions to improve attendance. In the future, the school should establish an attendance team that includes the parent coordinator, secretary, counselor(s), physical education teacher, social worker, crisis manager, assistant principal, and district attendance coordinator. The team should develop a system to identify students who are chronically absent and plan interventions to support those students in getting to school.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **School leaders need to establish clearly defined supervisory roles and responsibilities.** Assistant principals stated that they, along with the principal, conduct walkthroughs and provide feedback to all staff. However, an observation schedule has not been developed and responsibilities for supervision of specific grade levels and content areas have not been assigned. Interviewed teachers reported that they receive feedback from all three members of the school leadership team, but different leaders provide different guidance and they are not sure which suggestions they should be following. The IIT found that teachers do not receive feedback on the quality of their lesson planning, and school leaders do not typically attend common planning time sessions. In interviews with support staff, many staff were unsure how to respond when asked who they reported to, and some staff identified all three school leaders as their supervisors. In the future, the principal

should develop a leadership structure that includes clearly defined supervisory roles and responsibilities for the three key members of the leadership team.

- **School leaders should monitor the implementation and impact of services provided by external vendors.** The school currently partners with external vendors to provide professional development, coaching support, and program-based curriculum for four separate initiatives. The Teachers' College Reading and Writing Program and Power My Learning are instructional initiatives, while Education for Sharing and Ramapo for Children are programs designed to support student social and emotional development. Although the principal stated that she evaluates the success of these programs at end of year, clear expectations and benchmarks for program implementation have not been established. In addition, there is no system to monitor the implementation of these programs or to determine their impact on student learning and teacher professional growth. Interviewed teachers reported that the feedback they receive related to the two instructional initiatives is very basic and does not provide them with specific actions or goals to build their instructional capacity. Although the Power My Learning initiative, which aims to promote personalized learning in math through the use of computer technology, is now in its second year, the IIT did not see any evidence of it being implemented in math classes.

Learning at the School

- **Teachers must plan instruction that meets the learning needs of all students.** In most classes visited, all students completed the same task with no differentiation or scaffolds to meet the learning needs of individual students. The IIT saw few instances of ELL students receiving additional supports, such as opportunities to access language through images, station kits, and bilingual labels in the room. The team also did not observe strategies such as stress-free tools, brain breaks, and peace corners, being used to support students with disabilities. In a review of teacher lesson plans, the IIT found no evidence of planning for the strategic use of paraprofessionals to support the learning needs of individuals or groups of students. Interviewed teachers shared that they need more support with planning and implementing teaching strategies and developing differentiated assignments that meet the learning needs of all students.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need

- **Families would like the school to provide guidance on how they can better support their children's learning at home.** Interviewed families stated that they would like more guidance from the school on how they can help their children when they bring work home. One parent shared that the math teacher provided a rubric and reference sheet for students to use at home, which has been very helpful. Parents also stated that they would like the school to provide workshops to help them understand what their children are learning in school. Some parents explained that the current curriculum is very different from when they were in school, and they need additional support to be able to help their children with assignments.
- **Families are concerned about the recent change in dismissal procedures.** The school recently changed procedures for dismissal so that students now exit the building through a door that is across the street from a mechanic shop. Some families expressed concern about the potential dangers associated with this location, explaining that they had witnessed a fire burning in a barrel at the shop. Families suggested that the school return to the previous procedure when students were dismissed to an enclosed playground area.

- **Teachers would like more consistency in staffing patterns.** Teachers shared that due to multiple staffing changes, it has been difficult to develop strong working relationships with their paraprofessionals that are based on mutual respect and trust.