

Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

Final Report



BEDS Code	331700011382
School Name	Academy for College Preparation and Career Exploration: A College Board School
School Address	911 Flatbush Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11226
District Name	NYCDOE CSD 17
Principal	Joan Mosely
Dates of Visit	May 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.

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	2	1		1	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	2	2	1	1	2

Academy for College Preparation and Career Exploration serves 379 students in grades six to twelve.

Information About The Visit

- The visit was led by an Outside Educational Expert (OEE) and a representative from NYSED. The team also included two district representatives and a representative from the Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (RBERN).
- The team visited a total of 21 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, and student work.
- In advance of the visit, the school provided results of a student survey that 322 students (81 percent) completed.
- In advance of the visit, the school provided results of a staff survey that 20 staff members (87 percent) completed.
- In advance of the visit, the school provided results of a parent survey that 64 parents (18 percent) completed.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. To create a student-centered learning environment and authentic personalized learning opportunities for middle school students, this year the principal, in collaboration with staff, created an integrated co-teaching (ICT) English language arts (ELA) multiple-station classroom. Students are placed in flexible groups based on their individual learning needs, with English language learners (ELLs) grouped together and other students heterogeneously integrated into skill and topic specific groupings. The ICT teachers work in collaboration with the English as a second language (ESL) teacher to provide individualized collaborative learning stations using multiple modalities to promote student engagement. School data showed that the percentage of ELL students who passed the ELA examinations increased from zero in August 2018 to 25 percent in January 2019.
2. To support student social-emotional learning, decrease the number of suspensions, and improve home-school collaboration, this year the principal established student-centered behavior and discipline processes and procedures aligned to the district's newly revised Citywide Behavioral Expectations to Support Student Learning Blue Book. Parents are immediately contacted after a student infraction and before a discipline referral is made. If the situation does not improve, a meeting is held between all the student's teachers and the parents. This meeting is scheduled for the Tuesday following the infraction and is observed by the dean of culture and climate. If the situation remains unresolved, guidance counselors, in collaboration with parents and the student, develop a behavioral contract. As a next step, the dean uses mediation and restorative practices to find a resolution, including pre-suspension conferences, before resorting to suspension. The number of suspensions decreased from eleven in the 2017-18 school year to six in the 2018-19 school year. In addition, the number of level three, four, and five incidents decreased from 102 in the 2017-18 school year to 52 in the 2018-19 school year, resulting in 50 fewer serious incidents to date this school year.
3. Recognizing the need to address chronic absenteeism, this year the principal established an attendance team focused on tracking and monitoring student attendance and developing proactive interventions including rapid response measures. The team is comprised of the principal, assistant principals, guidance counselors, and special education and English as a new language (ENL) teachers, as needed. This team meets weekly to examine and group individual students based on the number of unexcused absences and uses the Automate the Schools (ATS) system as an administrative tool to store notes, create meeting agendas, and track next steps. The percentage of students designated chronically absent by missing at least ten percent of school days decreased from 46 percent, 174 students in the 2017-18 school year, to 24 percent, 91 students year to date in the 2018-19 school year, which represents a 22-percentage point drop in the number of chronically absent students.

4. This year, in an effort to ensure that students accumulate the credits needed to graduate, the principal strategically examined existing course offerings and changed the way student classes are programmed. For example, the principal eliminated classes without syllabi, such as technology math, and ensured that students were scheduled for classes based on student needs. Based on a review of data, school leaders project that this initiative will help to increase the school's graduation rate from 71 percent in the 2017-18 school year to an anticipated 75 percent this year.
5. The results of the 2017-18 parent survey showed that 78 percent of parents felt satisfied with the home-school communications. In an effort to improve on those results, the principal researched alternative communication tools and introduced KinVO (KiNVO), a smartphone texting app, to increase communication with parents and provide staff with an effective tool to better manage attendance. The school also developed a KiNVO attendance plan that clarifies what actions trigger a KiNVO communication with parents and how staff should input data into the KiNVO system when students are late. Parents shared that KiNVO is now their preferred method of home-school communication. According to KiNVO data, the school had the highest usage rate of all schools in the city, sending and receiving over 18,000 messages in a single month.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **The principal should identify common math assessments for use at the middle and high school and create an assessment calendar so that staff can use the results to set team targets and monitor progress toward School Comprehensive Educational Plan (SCEP) goals.** A review of pre-visit documents showed that the school does not have agreed upon common assessments that they use to monitor progress toward the annual math goal set in the SCEP. According to the SCEP, high school teachers select from a menu of Regents released questions on Mastery Connect to develop math interim benchmark assessments. However, staff told the IIT that not all teachers use Mastery Connect to create benchmark assessments. Middle school teachers use intervention programs like Read 180 and Assessment and Learning in Knowledge Spaces (ALEKS) along with teacher-created assessments developed on Teacher Wiz. Additionally, while the SCEP indicates that mid-point benchmarks take place in November and February for the high school and in December and April for the middle school, when interviewed by the review team, staff told the team that the schedule is not always adhered to.
- **The principal should reconfigure collaborative planning time for middle school teachers so they can meet in content-specific professional learning communities with high school teachers.** The school has a plan to have teacher leaders turnkey professional development (PD) during department and inquiry-based grade level team meetings. However, the team found that this plan is not aligned to the existing structure of teachers' meetings. Teachers shared, and the IIT confirmed, that teachers meet in grade level teams for student-focused inquiry but do not typically share content-specific best practices. Middle school teachers shared that they do not have designated teacher leaders for math, ELA, social studies, or science. Teachers told the IIT that they would like to meet in content-specific professional learning communities to share and learn new strategies and turnkey PD; however, given current meeting structures and protocols, this is not happening consistently.
- **School leaders should update the SCEP to reflect the fact that the Summit Learning model and the attendant assessments are not being implemented at the school.** The principal explained that the school is not using components of the Summit Learning model, particularly the assessments, as it is no longer a district-supported

initiative. However, the IIT noted that elements of Summit Learning still inform the school's SCEP. For instance, Summit Learning Assessments (SLAs) are still identified in the SCEP as the assessments that staff should use to make decisions about academic intervention services (AIS) and that assistant principals should use to set content area goals and monitor PD.

- **The principal needs to monitor the quality of academic intervention services (AIS) to ensure supports are research-based, standards- and curriculum-aligned, and are meeting the needs of students.** The principal told the IIT that the school uses free online interventions for middle school math, including Prodigy and Math Excel, during period six intervention time. Students in grades six and seven receive teacher-delivered math instruction twice a day, in addition to Reading Plus instruction for ELA. High school students access Learning Pal software and Achieve 3000 as an in-class self-directed intervention along with push-in supports. However, staff were unable to describe how the school monitors student progress on the various interventions that have been applied. Teachers said there is no formal progress monitoring system in place and several teachers said that they do not routinely access data from these platforms to monitor student learning and make instructional decisions.
- **The principal should collaborate with partnership organizations to establish at least three vision-aligned, specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely (SMART) goals and use them to assess the effectiveness and impact of partnership programs.** Through discussions with staff, the IIT learned that there are over 25 partner organizations working with students at the school and each partner is paired with a liaison assistant principal. Organizations include Young Kings, GEMS, SuperSTARS Leadership Academy, Urban Advantage Science Initiative, New York Edge, and One Goal to Graduation, among others. However, the IIT learned that the school does not track and monitor program data, such as the number of students participating in each program or the progress of participating students, and program-specific targets for participating students have not been identified. Similarly, the school offered no data rationale for partnership program selection or the criteria used to determine each program's effectiveness. For instance, the school offered no data to show whether students who participated in the Urban Advantage Science Initiative outperformed their non-participating peers on the Earth Science or Living Environment Regents exam. As a result, it is difficult for the school to determine whether the programs are having a positive impact in areas such as student learning, attendance, graduation rate, or social-emotional learning.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **The principal, in collaboration with assistant principals and lead teachers, should adopt a cohesive and vertically aligned curriculum for middle and high school core content areas.** The IIT learned that the school's curriculum is not vertically aligned between grades and teachers shared that they are not always sure what to teach or when during the year topics should be taught. The team confirmed that teachers use a variety of curricula and online supplemental materials of varying quality. A review of pre-visit documents showed that the high school uses the New Visions curricula for social studies and science, and EngageNY for math. In the middle school, teachers use a patchwork of curricula including Connected Math, Code X, Passport, and NYCDOE curricula for math, ELA, social studies, and science. According to the SCEP, the school uses Gateway to support science and social studies content for ELLs, but the IIT did not observe this curricula being used in classrooms.
- **The principal, in collaboration with assistant principals and lead teachers, should identify curriculum-aligned interim benchmark assessments for each content area so teachers can use student performance data to modify the curriculum to meet individual student learning needs and create flexible groupings.** Although

the school is no longer implementing the Summit Learning model, the SCEP indicates that SLAs will be used as interim benchmark assessments for social studies and science and as a baseline for AIS. Staff shared that social studies teachers use released Regents questions in Mastery Connect as interim assessments, but the questions teachers select vary, even within the same content area. The principal told the IIT that some teachers use Teacher Wiz to generate their own interim assessments, but further shared that there is no system in place to monitor the quality of teacher-generated assessments.

- **The principal in collaboration with assistant principals, needs to establish schoolwide instructional expectations for the quality of lesson planning and delivery.** A clear instructional vision and precise instructional non-negotiables have yet to be established across the middle and high school. Staff shared that teacher lesson plans have become more rigorous, but lesson plans are not always implemented as originally created. In addition, a review of lesson plans revealed that most plans did not contain differentiated activities based on student skill, learning style, or performance level, and when lesson plans did evidence differentiated activities, they often did not include a data rationale supporting the differentiation. Although personalized learning strategies and data-driven instruction are stated priorities, they are typically not reflected in teacher practices. The team noted that interim assessments that teachers should use have not yet been identified, nor have the timing and rationale for using them.
- **The principal should communicate her expectation that assistant principals make frequent and regular visits to classrooms to ensure teachers are receiving actionable and timely feedback to improve their instructional practice.** When interviewed by the IIT, assistant principals shared that they try to visit classes multiple times a week to support teachers and give them feedback related to their instructional practice, but visits do not occur consistently across all grade levels and content areas. Teachers told the IIT that they value the feedback they get from assistant principal walkthroughs, but they do not occur often enough. When asked about feedback on lesson plans, teachers said they are sometimes offered improvement suggestions; however, the feedback is not always actionable or timely.
- **The principal should consider repurposing three of the five days set aside for teachers to meet in grade level teams as vertical team meeting time for middle and high school teachers.** The IIT learned that teachers do not have scheduled opportunities to meet in vertical teams to discuss student learning progressions and grade level expectations. Teachers said they want more content-specific collaborative planning time so they can improve content knowledge and norm effective instructional strategies. Teachers new to the profession told the IIT that they have a hard time knowing what and when to teach specific content and added that they would like more opportunities to norm best practices with colleagues. Staff shared that they would like vertical team meetings to feature collaborative discussions and feedback about planning and instruction.
- **The school should recognize and incentivize students with improved attendance each week by publicly celebrating their achievement on a bulletin board.** The school celebrates individual students with perfect attendance on a bulletin board display but does not do the same for students with improved or improving attendance. A review of the school's attendance incentive plan showed that the school incentivizes and publicly recognizes students with good or perfect attendance during end of marking period awards assemblies. However, while students with improved attendance can earn incentives, such as gift cards, they are not publicly recognized during assemblies. In the future, the school should find ways to celebrate and recognize students' efforts each week by using the bulletin board for public recognition.

- **The principal should support teachers to build their content knowledge and use more precise academic vocabulary in the classroom and at grade team meetings.** In most observed classrooms, the IIT found that teachers presented the content accurately. However, some teachers' communication included imprecise use of academic language. The principal told the IIT that she and the assistant principals have made content area literacy a focus this year. Their goal is to help math, science, and social studies teachers model subject-specific literacy in lessons so that students experience how experts within a discipline speak. While lead teachers attended PD in this area, the team learned that specific instructional strategies are not regularly shared with teachers and lessons are not monitored to make sure that strategies that have been shared are being used.
- **The school leaders should support teachers to design activities that give students the opportunity to engage in academic debate and discourse with each other.** In most observed classrooms, lessons were teacher-centered with minimal student participation, and typically students responded with two to three-word answers to questions that had just one right answer. The team saw some instances in which students sat in proximity groupings, but they were still working independently, and any collaboration was incidental and initiated by students. The IIT's review of lesson plans showed that most teachers were not intentionally planning for accountable talk.
- **The school leaders should support teachers to design lessons that follow an organized progression.** The IIT found that some lesson plans were not well-structured or sequenced and were unrealistic in their expectations. For example, sometimes "*do now*" activities took longer than the time allotted in lesson plans. In one class, the teacher gave students 20 minutes to complete the *do now* activity, even though the lesson plan called for ten minutes. In another class, a teacher lectured for ten minutes, gave students 15 minutes for a *do now* activity, and spent ten minutes modeling the problem. This left five minutes for students to solve the remaining six problems, which most students were unable to complete. In another classroom, the teacher delivered the closing summary questions as students were walking out the door. Even when teachers used a time-bound schedule they sometimes still struggled to complete the lesson and distribute an exit ticket.
- **Teachers should seek out opportunities to intentionally group students so they can inquire and problem solve together in small groups or pairs.** The IIT found that the content and rigor of group activities across classrooms did not typically promote higher order thinking or discussion or debate among students. In many observed classrooms, the team found students working in random groups with no data rationale supporting the grouping. Class visits also showed that, even when students were intentionally grouped heterogeneously or homogeneously, they were often working with the same scaffolded tasks.
- **Teachers and other staff should deliberately reference the seven non-negotiable behavioral expectations and uniformly enforce them.** The school has a set of schoolwide behavioral expectations, but they are not well known by students and are not written in student-friendly, easy to recall language. The team observed only a few visual cues or posters referencing the school rules and almost never heard teachers refer to them or use them to redirect student behavior in classrooms, during transitions, or in common areas. Staff shared that they spent the first week of school teaching students about the non-negotiables. However, staff agreed that more proactive and consistent methods to encourage student compliance could have been used and the language streamlined so that the expectations were more relatable to students. Students shared that some teachers enforce the rules and others do not, and whether students are held accountable for not following the rules is dependent on the teacher.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Teachers would like more classroom management training especially in strategies to help mitigate student frustration.** In focus groups, teachers told the IIT that they would like to see the school engage in more restorative practices. Teachers said that some students get frustrated and overwhelmed because they find it difficult to catch up when they are late to or absent from classes. Staff said that leaders sometimes visit classrooms to support teachers in applying classroom management strategies but often have other issues take priority. According to staff, students are more responsive to teachers with whom they are able to build relationships.
- **Teachers would like a uniform grading policy that is implemented consistently across grade levels.** During focus groups, teachers told the IIT that establishing a uniform grading policy across all grades would help students to take ownership of their learning. In addition, the team learned from students across the school community that they were not always aware of specific grading policies and expectations for their classes. Teachers shared that the school instructional leadership team has been discussing the creation of a uniform grading policy for the middle school since September 2018, but no decisions have yet been made.
- **Parents would like the school to do more to ensure that parents are actively involved in new initiatives.** Parents shared that they appreciate the attendance and lateness alerts the school sends out using KiNVO but believe that the school could do more to get parents and community organizations involved in school activities. Through discussions, the team learned that the school does not have a plan for engaging community partners and monolingual parents who speak languages other than English.
- **High school students would like a five- to ten-minute break in the day to get a snack.** High school students shared that having a lunch scheduled during period eight prevents them from eating anything until 2:00 p.m., which is six hours after they eat breakfast. They further shared that they do not always have time to go to the school store as assigned during period four, and even when they do, they do not always have time to wait for the middle school students to finish their purchases. Students suggested that high school teachers might have a school store pass in addition to a bathroom pass so students can go to the school store and buy a snack at times other than period four.
- **Parents suggested that student cell phones be turned in at the beginning of the school day, stored, and returned to students at the end of the day.** Some parents believed that cell phones are a distraction and negatively impact student learning. A few teachers said that they allow students to use their cell phones only for research in the classroom. Students told the IIT that most teachers do not want them to have their phones out during lessons. The principal indicated that she actively exploring cell phone control systems for the 2019-20 school year.
- **Students would like an opportunity to explain their actions before the school calls their parents about disciplinary issues.** The IIT learned that the school's student-centered discipline policies call for school staff to mediate issues with parent involvement, and parents are called immediately regarding student behavioral infractions. Culture and climate staff suggested that the school could be more proactive in incorporating the student government into decision-making processes and procedures concerning student discipline.