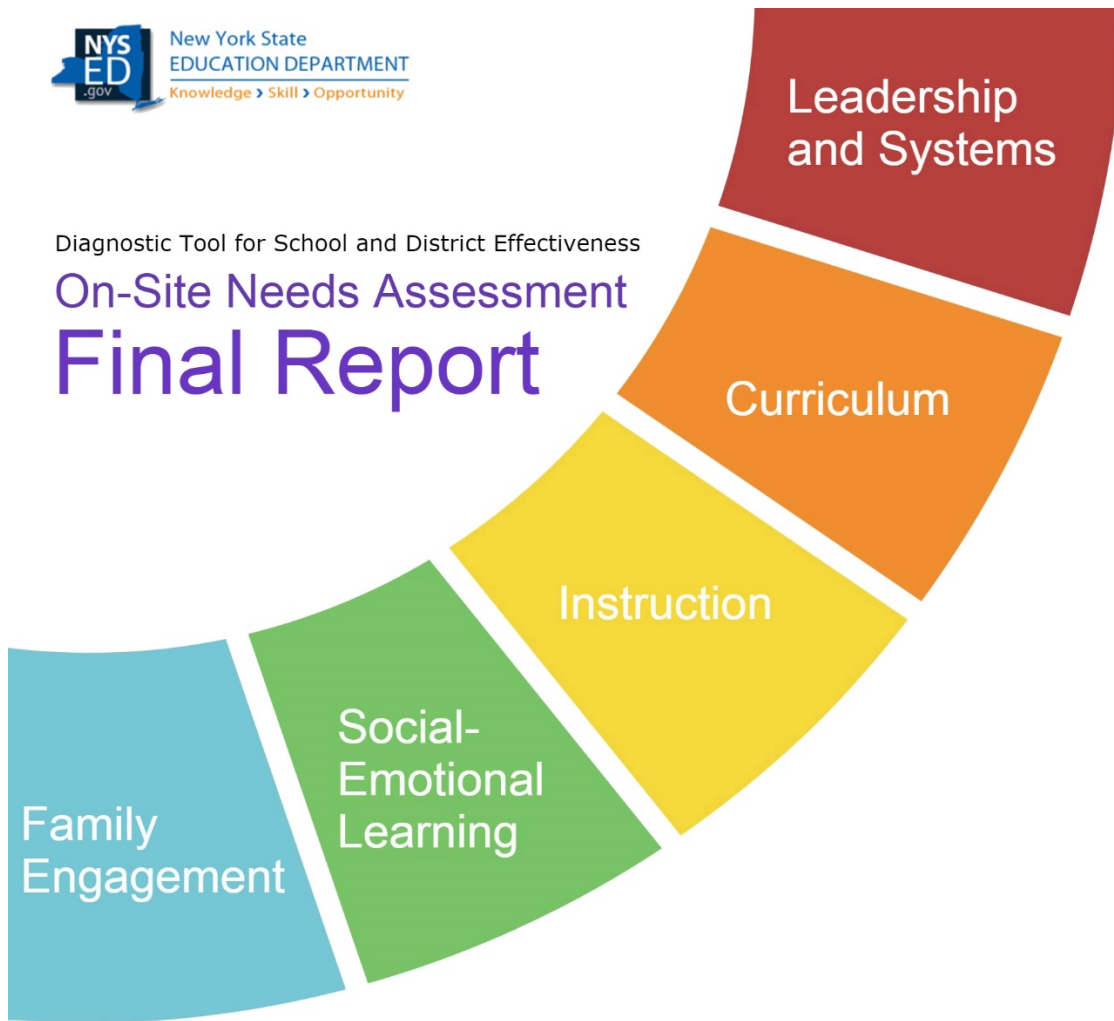


Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

# Final Report



BEDS Code	331700010705
School Name	Brooklyn Arts and Science Elementary School
School Address	443 St. Marks Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11238
District Name	NYCDOE CSD 17
Principal	Dr. Sandra Soto
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**

- 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 23 classrooms during the visit.
- The OEE visited three 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 curriculum maps, lesson plans, schoolwide data, teacher feedback, and student work.
- In advance of the visit, 25 staff members (100 percent) completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.
- The school serves 370 students in grades pre-kindergarten through five.

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

1. For the 2018-19 school year, school leaders and staff have continued their emphasis on developing and sustaining a positive learning environment for students. As a result of this effort, relationships between teachers and students and between all stakeholders continue to become more positive, cooperative, and supportive. Parents told the IIT they felt their children were well cared for and safe in school and that staff were responsive and helpful to their needs. Students shared with the team that they liked their current teachers and that most teachers helped and supported them with their learning and personal development.
2. The school continues to offer students a range of additional learning opportunities such as music, art, and fencing. Students shared how much they enjoyed these additional learning experiences. Parents and students also stressed to the team how much they appreciated the afterschool program enrichment opportunities that the school provides, which include a game club, and yoga, karate, and chess groups.
3. School leaders and staff have prioritized the further development of social and emotional supports for all students. Classrooms now all have behavior and attitude charts and "Peace Paradise" areas where students can go if they need time to themselves or to calm down. Staff reported that "Compass Points" meetings take place every morning to celebrate student achievements and birthdays, and to set the tone for the day. The "Move this World" social and emotional program provides students in kindergarten through grade two with structured guidance and support. The team observed that staff reinforce behavioral expectations and that data show a six percent reduction in behavioral incidents recorded on the online occurrence reporting system (OORS), from October 2018 to January 2019.

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

### Systems for Improvement

- **School leaders should develop a system to monitor and assess teachers' implementation of strategies learned in professional development (PD) and provide ongoing support to improve teacher practices.** The 2017/18 quality review report indicated that feedback is not yet actionable for students and referred to the inconsistent use of teachers' checks for understanding. Teachers and the principal told the IIT that school leaders had provided professional development (PD) support to help them improve their practice in this area. The team noted that the Brooklyn Arts and Science Elementary School (BASES) instructional beliefs and principles handbook highlights the importance of checking student understanding and providing learning feedback and includes some useful guidance for teachers. While conducting classroom visits, the team found that strategies such as questioning for student understanding to identify any misunderstandings and providing students with timely actionable learning feedback are not being utilized frequently to improve student learning at the school.
- **School leaders need to establish a system for assessing progress toward meeting goals and modify approaches based on their findings to make certain targets are met.** The team noted that the School Comprehensive Education Plan (SCEP) includes specific, measurable, ambitious, results-oriented, and timely (SMART) improvement goals, and the school leaders monitoring of the goals indicates that most of these priorities are on track for completion by June 2019. The principal shared, however, that the priority aimed at improving teacher's instruction, as rated on the Danielson instructional framework (Domain Three; Instruction), was not on track to improve from an average rating of 2.51 to 2.85 by June 2019. The IIT noted that domain three of the Danielson framework includes a wide range of complex instructional components, including questioning and discussion techniques, engaging students in learning, and using assessment in instruction. In the future, school leaders should consider revising the SCEP instructional improvement goal so that it includes fewer components for teachers to work on. With the support of the district and other support agencies, the principal should provide teachers with instructional guidance and professional learning to help them improve a small number of specific instructional components.

### Leadership and Organization at the School

- **School leaders need to identify and clearly communicate instructional expectations and improvement priorities to teachers.** Teachers have access to the BASES instructional handbook; however, they told the IIT that they were not always sure about the principal's expectations and priorities. During discussions, not all teachers were able, for example, to describe the principal's instructional expectations or explain what they should be working on to improve their teaching. Teachers told the IIT that they often felt overwhelmed with initiatives and instructional improvement requirements and shared that the focus of walkthrough visits varied when school leaders visited classrooms. As a result, they do not always know the specific instructional practices school leaders were looking for. In the future, school leaders should consider sharing with the staff, on a Friday, the specific focus for informal classroom visits for the coming week.
- **School leaders should provide specific and actionable feedback to help teachers improve their instructional practice.** School leaders and teachers both shared with the team that school leaders regularly visit classrooms and provide instructional feedback for teachers. However, the team's analysis of observation feedback forms

showed that the feedback did not usually include the level of detail needed to help teachers know what to do to improve their practice. For example, the IIT observed feedback provided for teachers that was often in the form of a checklist and lacked clearly defined actionable next steps for teachers. Some teachers said that they needed more frequent and timely feedback and follow-up from the school leaders.

## Learning at the School

- **Teachers need to pose high level questions to engage students and to deepen and extend their learning.** During classroom visits, the IIT observed students responding to low-level questions that require short responses. The first answer offered by students was often accepted and rarely were students asked follow-up questions. Often, teachers moved on to the next item without checking for either understanding or mastery. As a result, students had limited opportunities to explain their thinking or engage in discussions about their learning. In addition, the team observed some teachers asking general, whole-group questions that a few students responded to with callout answers, instead of asking targeted individual questions to make sure that all students engaged in and understood the content of the lesson.
- **Teachers should provide students with more opportunities to actively engage in their learning with their peers and use strategies that encourage student interaction and collaboration.** During visits to classrooms, the IIT found that although students often sat in groups, they typically worked independently. The team also observed that limited opportunities were provided for students to engage in structured group work and discussions or to be actively involved in their learning. The IIT found few instances when students engaged in group projects or participated in asking and answering questions about their learning. Students stated that they would appreciate more interesting and engaging activities in lessons and enjoyed the few opportunities that were available for them to work with peers and to take part in projects, debates, experiments and problem-solving.
- **Teachers will need to use data to plan and deliver instruction that meets the diverse needs of students.** In discussions with teachers and the principal, the IIT learned that teachers have access to a range of student performance data and guidance information, including “Students at a Glance.” This resource provides teachers with information about individual students, including English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, generates student groups based on abilities, and provides suggested instructional strategies. The principal shared that some teachers were not using the “Students at a Glance” resource as often as she would like. Some teachers told the IIT that they were unaware of this resource. The team observed that in many lessons all students completed the same learning tasks at the same level, using the same materials. As a result, while some students struggled to complete work that was too difficult, other students finished work quickly because it is too easy for them. A high achieving student shared with the team that when the student had finished the assignment, teachers usually asked the student to help other students instead of providing more challenging work. Several students told the IIT that they read a book, wait, check over their work or help another student if they complete work quickly. In the future, school leaders should ensure that they provide support to help teachers make better use of student performance data and other information to plan and deliver instruction that matches the different learning needs of all students.
- **Teachers should use models of integrated co-teaching (ICT) strategies in designated ICT classrooms to maximize student learning experiences.** The principal stated that all co-teachers had received PD to help them implement co-teaching practices in ICT classrooms. During visits to classrooms, members of the team

typically observed co-teachers using a lead teacher with a teaching aide approach. There were few observed instances where staff in ICT classrooms used co-teaching approaches such as parallel teaching.

- **Teachers need to implement the school’s dual language program with fidelity in order to provide effective learning support for both English and non-English speaking students.** In their classroom visits, the team observed few examples of teachers implementing strategies to meet the learning needs of all students. For example, there were few instances where scaffolds or language prompts were provided to support the learning needs of ELLs. In addition, because all students were often completing the same learning tasks, there was little to show how instruction addressed the diverse learning needs of all students in dual language classrooms. Teachers’ reported that they struggled to meet the needs of all learners, especially ELLs, in the dual language classrooms. They noted that they need additional support and guidance to help them to understand and implement dual language and ELL strategies effectively. The principal acknowledged that the dual language program is not implemented with fidelity schoolwide. She noted there was a need to review and clarify the expectations so that teachers understand the purpose of the dual language program and were familiar with instructional strategies designed to support the learning needs of all students. In the future, the principal should, with support from district and the Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (RBERN), make sure that dual language program staff receive ongoing support and guidance to help them implement the dual language program for the benefit of all students.

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

- **Parents reported that they were not sure of the purpose of the dual language program or how it should work to support their children’s learning.** During discussions, some parents of students in dual language program classrooms said that they did not understand how the program was supposed to work for their children and that they were not sure how effective the dual language program was proving to be for all students. One parent noted that students in dual language classrooms sometimes spend two days participating in learning, during which adults and students only speak Spanish in the classroom. The parent stated that she understood the need to support English language learners (ELLs). However, she and some other parents expressed the viewpoint that they were not sure of the overall value of the dual immersion approach, apart from developing their children’s skills in Spanish.
- **Parents told the IIT that school leaders and staff do not always make sure that they translate all communications for parents into home languages.** Interviewed parents reported that the school did not translate all communications and that the school produced some documents for parents only in English.
- **Parents stated that they felt their children did not experience enough science in school.** Some parents expressed concerns that students did not currently have access to a program that ensured the development of key scientific skills.
- **Specialist teachers reported that they were not always able to collaborate face to face with classroom teachers.** Some specialist teachers, including English as a new language (ENL) teachers and speech specialists, told the IIT that time was not set aside for them to meet with classroom teachers to collaborate and plan learning activities for those students most in need of support. Specialist teachers shared that while most teachers were cooperative and helpful when they did have a chance to collaborate, they were often required to plan activities independently without being clear about the focus of the main classroom lessons.