

Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

Final Report



BEDS Code	331900010557
School Name	Brooklyn Gardens Elementary School
School Address	574 Dumont Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11207
District Name	NYCDOE CSD 19
Principal	Ciani Espada
Dates of Visit	March 26-28, 2018



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	1

Brooklyn Garden Elementary School serves 303 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.
- The team visited a total of 18 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, schoolwide data, and student work.
- In advance of the visit, the school provided results of a staff survey that 23 staff members (77 percent) completed.
- In advance of the visit, the school provided results of a parent survey that 134 parents (56 percent) completed.
- In advance of the visit 17 staff members (65 percent) completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. In response to the difficulties that teachers expressed during the 2017-18 school year regarding the use of the reading program to create standards-aligned lessons, the school leaders engaged teachers in developing unit plans for the 2018-19 school year. Teachers shared that the new unit plans outline the grade-specific instructional outcomes, standards, and resources, and they have simplified the planning process and helped them to better align lessons to the standards. English language arts (ELA) and math lesson plans reviewed by the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) reflected learning outcomes and instructional examples aligned to the New York State (NYS) Next Generation Learning Standards.
2. The school has an attendance team that analyzes attendance data, calls parents, and sends them letters of concern and letters for attendance improvement. The principal and parent coordinator shared that members of the team also serve as success mentors and work to build relationships with students with attendance challenges. During conversations with students and the principal, the IIT learned that the school makes efforts to recognize and reward students who have exemplary attendance and those who have shown improvement. The number of students in grades three through five with an attendance rate of 95 percent or more in the current school year increased by nine percent or more as compared to last school year for the same cohorts.
3. At the beginning of the 2018-19 school year, the new principal and the assistant principals (APs) normed their observation practices in alignment with the Danielson Framework and instituted the process of conducting instructional rounds after instructional cabinet meetings. During interviews, teachers shared that school leaders conduct classroom observations frequently and provide feedback that is meaningful and timely. The IIT's review of teacher observation data revealed that school leaders have synthesized teacher data into a data system by component of the Danielson Framework so that school leaders can analyze, monitor, and respond to teacher performance.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **School Comprehensive Education Plan (SCEP) activities need to have clearly defined timelines for completion.** While the principal identified school-specific strategies to address the needs of the school, most of the timelines span the entire school year, and interim benchmarks have not been outlined. In addition, the IIT found that many of the activities are in the beginning stages of implementation. For example, the SCEP states that professional development (PD) would be provided for staff to develop a deeper understanding of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) so that they could implement the PBIS structure with fidelity. The timeline was set for September 2018 through June 2019; however, incremental benchmarks were not included and the team found limited evidence to support implementation of a PBIS system schoolwide. In the future, the principal should collaborate with the instructional cabinet to 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 leaders can adequately progress monitor the school's improvement plan.
- **School leaders should identify measurable goals for the academic achievement of individual students, classrooms, and cohorts.** While the school has a goal to increase the number of students meeting State standards by ten percent, there was a lack of knowledge around what level of student achievement constituted

meeting State standards. The IIT found that student performance goals related to proficiency and growth for individual students and cohorts of students have not been set. The IIT reviewed Ready Assessment data for grades two through five that provided a comparative analysis of student performance on two benchmarks; however, the analysis did not reflect the percentage of students meeting growth targets nor track student growth from one year to the next. In addition, the data revealed classrooms where specific subgroups of students regressed from the previous assessment. In the future, school leaders should collaborate with teachers to set and monitor individual classroom growth goals to monitor cohort proficiency and growth from year to year.

- **The Response to Intervention (Rtl) process will need to be fully implemented in all classrooms.** During conversations with the principal and the AP responsible for Rtl, the IIT learned that the school has created a detailed Rtl protocol that outlines expectations for teachers to select research-based instructional strategies that will allow them to determine which supports students respond to best. Teachers communicated to the team that although they had been trained on the protocol at the beginning of the current school year, additional training is needed to implement the process with fidelity. During classroom visits, the IIT found that small group instruction based on individual student data was provided in some classrooms.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **School leaders should develop and implement a system to collect and monitor interim student mastery of the State standards.** The principal shared that students are currently assessed using the Ready Assessment that provides school leaders and staff with updates on student achievement four times per year for grades two through five. In addition, students in kindergarten through grade two are assessed using district-created performance tasks two times per year. The principal allowed the team to view the resources available to build and score student assessments aligned to State standards; however, these are not being used schoolwide to track and monitor student mastery of the content standards. Teachers shared that the teacher-made assessments they administer in their classrooms are not always aligned to the interim assessments, and students shared that their classroom assessments and the Ready Assessments are not as challenging as the State assessments. In the future, the principal should collaborate with the AP and instructional leads to assist teachers with developing and administering common assessments aligned to the rigor set forth by the State standards and utilize the available system to track, monitor, and respond to student performance by classroom and cohort.
- **The school leaders should maximize the use of all resources for differentiated student support.** Students and staff shared that i-Ready is a resource used at student stations. During classroom visits, the IIT observed students engaged in completing lessons on the i-Ready system. The principal reported that the school has not administered the i-Ready diagnostic assessment, which gauges student performance levels and identifies intervention needs. The IIT's interviews with teachers revealed that not all staff are familiar with the instructional and intervention resources available through the i-Ready Teacher Toolbox.
- **School leaders will need to develop a process to ensure that teachers implement agreed-upon PD initiatives with fidelity and then provide them with guidance and supports as they adjust to new materials and working practices.** Teachers shared that school leaders support them through onsite PD and allow staff to attend offsite PD as well. Teachers also shared that the system for turnkeying trainings, providing follow-up coaching support on PD initiatives, and ensuring school leader attendance at grade team meetings is limited. The IIT found that expectations for implementation of PD, as communicated by the principal and set forth by the written

protocols, were not always evident during classroom visits. For example, while discourse is a PD initiative for the 2018-19 school year, the IIT did not observe students using discourse tools during discussions to guide conversations that enable them to respond to and build upon the thinking of their peers. In addition, the IIT observed a grade team data meeting and found that while teachers followed the protocol, it was unclear how their data analysis efforts impacted instructional decisions for their corresponding math classes. In the future, the school leaders should collaborate to develop and implement a formal process to provide modeling, coaching, and follow-up on the implementation of PD initiatives.

Learning at the School

- **Teachers should use explicit instruction and visual aids to model learning.** During classroom visits, the IIT found that some students were provided with an explicitly modeled instructional example that prepared them to productively engage with material during guided practice. In addition, the IIT found that some teachers used visual aids and manipulatives to provide concrete examples and supports for students to increase access to the content. Further, the team found that some special education teachers used visual models during math lessons to assist students with grasping the content. In addition, some students were unfamiliar with how to use the manipulatives during lessons, and during interviews with the IIT, students shared that they would like more opportunities to use math manipulatives during class. The IIT also found that while teacher-made visual aids were visible in classrooms, they were rarely referenced by the teacher or used by the students. In the future, the principal should collaborate with teachers and district staff to define and outline the components of explicit instruction for all classroom settings and then monitor the impact of implemented changes in practice on the quality of teaching and learning.
- **Student activities will need to be differentiated based on student performance data and activities will need to provide students with opportunities to collaborate around completing tasks.** In most observed classrooms, the IIT found that students primarily completed the same tasks in the same way. For example, grade two Foundations lessons provided few challenging opportunities for students, as all students copied sentences from the board and spelled words that the teacher dictated. Further, students in grade four science lessons were provided with the same online and book activities. During some additional classroom visits, the IIT observed students completing different tasks in each group; however, with the exception of teacher guided groups, it was unclear how the groups were determined, as some students were given tasks that they were unable to explain or complete independently, and they often relied on their peers for the answers. Additionally, students with higher proficiency levels completed lower level tasks. Although students were seated in teams during stations and prompted to share with peers, the tasks did not require collaboration, and students typically completed them independently instead of with their teams. In addition, the IIT's review of lesson plans revealed limited planning for differentiation and student collaboration. In the future, school leaders should provide teachers with assistance in the area of using data to create differentiated student activities that promote student collaboration.
- **Students should engage in interactive science lessons in all classrooms.** While visiting classrooms, the IIT found that the content delivery during science lessons was not always engaging for students. For example, the team observed a science lesson where the teacher projected photographs onto a SMART Board, and students were asked to tell what they saw in the pictures; however, the task provided limited opportunity for an interactive experience beyond whole group sharing. During the work period, some students were completing online tasks while others completed written activities using a text. While multiple adults were available during

classes, some students were off task. Parents and students shared that science instruction is provided sometimes but not on a consistent basis in all classrooms.

- **Teachers should use formative assessments to track student learning.** While the IIT observed some teachers using informal formative assessment strategies, such as thumbs up/thumbs down, individual white boards, and teacher circulation to gauge student understanding, the team saw limited evidence to show that teachers were tracking which students mastered the lesson content. In addition, while teachers circulated through groups, the IIT noted that teachers did not always correct student errors during guided practice. For example, the team observed a math lesson in the integrated co-teaching (ICT) setting where one student was able to correctly label a number line, but there was no correction of the other students' misconceptions. In the future, school leaders should provide teachers with follow-up support regarding the collection and use of formative assessment data to inform small group instruction.
- **Teachers will need to use appropriate verbal and non-verbal cues to redirect student behavior.** During building walkthroughs, the IIT observed staff using a loud tone of voice to try to redirect student behavior. Students stated that often there is no de-escalation of student conflicts and other classroom disturbances. In the future, the principal should collaborate with school leaders and designated staff to revisit schoolwide expectations and establish a system of consequences and rewards. The principal should then communicate this system to staff, parents, and students. The principal should also collaborate with the Partnership with Children and APs to provide teachers with strategies and in-class coaching with regard to redirecting and reinforcing student behavior.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Parents and students shared that they would like more non-academic student activities.** Parent expressed that their children need more outlets, and they said they would like their children to have the opportunity to be involved in activities such as dance, music, and science experiments. Further, they said that all children should have the opportunity to take gym. Students shared that they would like the opportunity to participate in more clubs such as a video game, math, book, or fashion club.
- **Parents communicated that the school needs to address aggressive behavior in the primary grades.** Parents shared that student aggression is prevalent and bullying incidents are frequent in pre-kindergarten through grade two. They also said that the school should provide their children with more social-emotional support.
- **Parents shared they would like the school to provide more programs to support adult learners.** Parents stated that they feel the school could better meet the needs of parents by offering courses to assist them with obtaining a high school diploma, securing employment, and learning English as a second language.
- **Students shared that they would like more monitors in the cafeteria and on the school yard.** Students stated that bullying and student conflicts often happen during lunch and recess, and that few adults provide supervision during these times. In addition, students said that they eat lunch when students who attend the middle school are present and are sometimes bullied by those students.
- **Teachers communicated that they desire more vertical planning opportunities.** Teachers shared that they regularly plan with teachers from the same grade during the school day and on PD days; however, they said that they would benefit from more ongoing opportunities to plan and dialogue with teachers across grade levels.
- **Teachers shared that they would like to implement a staff suggestion box to allow teachers to communicate ideas for school change.** Teachers communicated that although the principal is approachable and encourages

teacher feedback, they are not always engaged in the decision-making process for the school. Teachers also shared that the communication structure between school leaders and staff is unclear.