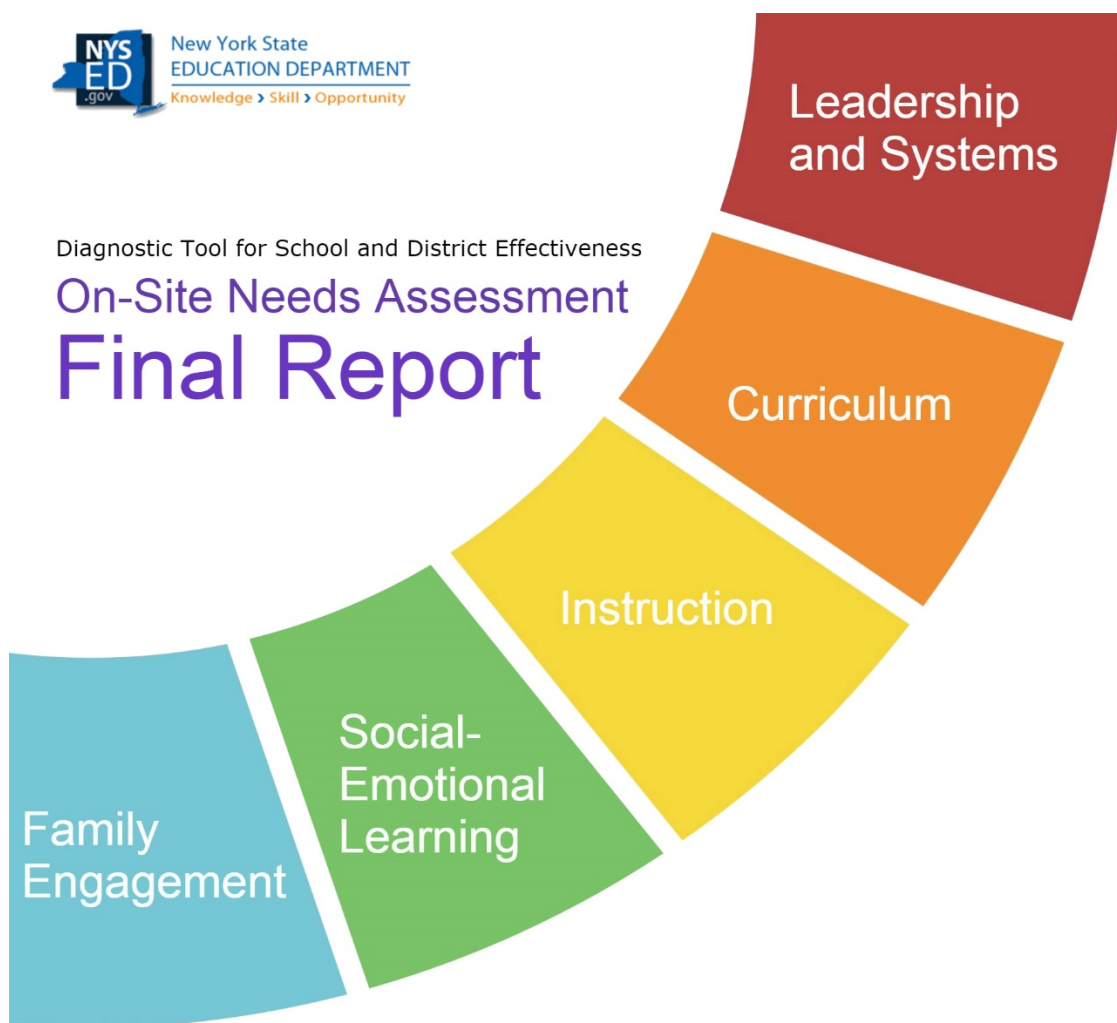


Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment Final Report



BEDS Code	331900010760
School Name	Highland Park Community School
School Address	528 Ridgewood Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11208
District Name	NYCDOE CSD 19
Principal	Ms. Jamilah Seifullah
Dates of Visit	June 3, 5, and 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:

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
2	1	1	2	1	2

Highland Park Community School serves 329 students in grades six through eight.

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 31 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, teacher feedback, and student work.
- In advance of the visit, 18 staff members (69 percent) completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. During 2018-19, students in all three grades have been completing grade-level projects as part of the problem-based learning focus of the school. Students in grade six have been exploring access to healthy food and the issue of food justice. As part of this project, students have grown food, visited the green market, and engaged in cooking competitions. Students told the IIT that learning more about food has made them more interested in enrolling in the high school culinary arts program. Grade seven students have been studying water in the environment and, more specifically, the impact of flooding. As part of their exploration, they learned about and used hydroponics systems to support a different kind of plant growth. Grade eight students chose a social justice topic to study in depth and created a summit to research and discuss lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) issues. Teachers told the IIT that project-based learning allows students to study current, relevant topics in depth, and the varied ways students research and present information allows them to work collaboratively in groups, appreciate the opinions of others, and practice their presentation and public speaking skills.
2. The principal shared that in 2018-19, she and school staff obtained multiple grants to provide additional funding for school programs. The school secured several grants to support science, technology, engineering, arts, and math (STEAM) programs, including a grant that was used to fund the hydroponics program as well as provide the science and math rooms with additional equipment. Grants from Broadway Junior, an organization that supports musical productions in schools, and the Shubert Foundation, the non-profit arm of the Shubert Theatre in New York City, have provided opportunities for students to learn more about and participate in the arts through their own theatrical productions. The school received additional funding through My Brother's Keeper (MBK) and Girls Educational and Mentoring Services (GEMS) to provide social and emotional support to boys and girls, respectively. Students told the IIT that there are opportunities for all students to participate in activities regardless of their areas of interest.
3. During 2018-19, students in grades six through eight had the opportunity to visit several colleges and universities. Students visited Drexel University and Temple University in Philadelphia as well as historically Black colleges and universities, such as Howard University in Washington, D.C. and Morehouse College in Atlanta. In addition, students visited colleges within the City University of New York system, such as Bronx Community College, City College, Lehman College, and Hunter College as well as New York University. School leaders and staff told the IIT that they feel it is important for students to become aware of the college experience and understand that achieving a college education is within their grasp. Students told the IIT that they liked learning what colleges had to offer and how they could further their education. Students also said that participating in overnight trips helped to broaden their life experiences.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **The principal should use the wide range of data she has collected to develop differentiated professional development (PD) for teachers.** During class visits, the IIT found that many teachers were skilled in classroom management strategies and had established routines that allowed effective instruction to take place. However, the IIT also found that some teachers would benefit from targeted support in classroom

management strategies as students in some classes were off task, talking to peers, and interfering with instruction. The IIT observed similar variations in teacher content knowledge and the use of instructional strategies. While some teachers demonstrated strong content knowledge and used effective teaching strategies that resulted in students being engaged in their learning, the IIT observed other teachers who would benefit from additional support in these areas. The principal has developed comprehensive systems of data collection and as a result of her data analysis, she is able to identify teacher strengths and areas where additional support is needed. For example, she demonstrated to the IIT how she was able to use data to identify which standards were problematic for individual teachers. However, teachers shared that currently all teachers receive the same content during the Monday PD sessions, which results in some teachers receiving PD in areas where they are already effective and other teachers not receiving the level of targeted support they need.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **The principal should establish a protocol, similar to the National School Reform Faculty protocol, for teachers to review lesson plans during grade-level meetings to ensure school priorities are addressed.** The principal told the IIT that the use of a common template for lesson planning is not required, and teachers use different formats for their plans. The principal explained that teachers upload their plans to Google Docs, where she reviews them periodically and provides feedback. Teachers are not expected to use grade-level meeting time to share or compare lesson plans to ensure that they are covering the same material or using effective strategies in their instruction. Although lesson plans were available in all classrooms, the IIT found that the quality and content of the plans varied widely. Many plans did not address the school's instructional priorities, such as challenging work and questions, alignment with standards, and student voice. For example, some plans included higher-order question stems, while other plans did not include stems or other evidence of planned opportunities to challenge student thinking.
- **The principal needs to ensure that teachers understand and implement strategies learned through weekly PD sessions and that teachers have an opportunity to share their experiences with implementing these strategies.** The principal and teachers told the IIT that they participate in PD every Monday afternoon, and there have been several PD sessions on data analysis and higher-order questioning. However, several teachers told the IIT that they need more support in analyzing data to inform their instruction. In addition, during classroom visits most questions asked required one-word or low-level answers and the IIT did not see evidence of higher-order questioning. Interviewed teachers shared that they would like opportunities to share information with their colleagues about how they have implemented strategies learned through PD and how successful their implementation has been. In the future, after offering PD on a particular topic, the principal should consider urging teachers to implement what they learned during that week and note the impact on student learning. The following week, teachers should share their experiences with colleagues and spend additional time exploring the topic to foster deeper understanding of the practice or material.
- **The principal should ensure that teachers work collaboratively to share and implement effective classroom management strategies.** During classroom visits, the IIT observed some classes following established routines that resulted in students being engaged and focused on their work. In other classes, the team observed few routines and many students were off task, having conversations that were not about their work, or being disruptive which resulted in limited learning for all students. Students told the IIT that rules for behavior vary depending on the teacher, and they receive consequences for certain behaviors in some classes but not in

others. Students explained that this sometimes causes them to be confused about how they should behave. In the future, the principal should capitalize on the current system of intervisitations to pair teachers who have demonstrated effective classroom management skills with those who need additional support in developing a repertoire of behavior management strategies. After the visits, the principal should monitor the extent to which teachers are implementing the effective classroom management strategies they have observed.

- **The principal should routinely provide parents with a summary of their child’s academic and behavioral data.** The principal shared an extensive amount of schoolwide data that she had collected, including data on student grades, attendance, behavior referrals, and mastery of standards. The principal and teachers use these data to identify individual students in need of academic and/or behavioral interventions. During the focus group interview, parents shared that they do not have a good understanding of their child’s academic and behavioral progress. In the future, the principal should review student data collected to determine which information is important for parents to be aware of and routinely provide parents with an easily understood, one-page summary of data related to their child’s academic and behavioral progress.

Learning at the School

- **Teachers should analyze data from several sources to identify and group students with similar needs and provide targeted interventions to address their strengths and challenges.** The principal explained that she has established protocols for collecting and recording data from multiple sources, and she showed the IIT the charts and spreadsheets she has developed. For example, she has collected data on grades for classes and individual students, mastery of standards, and attendance. Teachers have access to benchmark and progress monitoring data from assessments such as Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) and ELA and math verticals, which are tests that are compilations of released State assessment items. However, teachers interviewed by the IIT said they do not completely understand how to interpret the student data available to them and are not always clear about how to modify their instruction to target specific standards. During classroom visits, the IIT observed several classes in which students were working in groups and some teachers were providing interventions. In many other classes, all students worked independently to complete the same task and some students struggled to complete the activity.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Students would like the groupings in their classes to be smaller.** Students interviewed by the IIT understood the reasons for groupings in their classes, but said that if the groups could be smaller, such as no more than four students per group, they could benefit more from the supports that are provided.
- **Students would like to be given more challenging material.** Students said that they understand that students are performing at different levels in math and ELA but stated that students at all levels would like lessons to be more challenging. Students explained that they are sometimes bored with the material and once they have finished their assignments, they are not given additional work to complete.
- **Parents appreciate the communication they have with teachers but would like more frequent and positive communications from the school.** Parents reported that most emails and text messages they receive from the school are about something negative, and they would like to receive more positive communications from the school.

- **Teachers appreciate opportunities to participate in additional PD beyond the Monday sessions but would like the opportunity to periodically review what they have learned.** Teachers interviewed by the IIT said they realize they are fortunate to attend conferences of their choice as well as those that the principal suggests based on their areas of interest or the subjects they teach. They said they enjoy the opportunity to turnkey the information they have learned themselves and to hear about what their colleagues have learned at their conferences. However, they said they would like to be able to revisit some of the topics periodically to refresh their knowledge.