New York State
EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Knowledge > Skill > Opportunity

Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

Final Report

Leadership and Systems

Curriculum

Instruction

Social-Emotional Learning

Family Engagement

BEDS Code	331900010213
School Name	P.S. 213 The New Lots School
School Address	580 Hegeman Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11207
District Name	NYCDOE CSD 19
Principal	Dr. Stanley Moise
Dates of Visit	February 12-14, 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	1	1	1	1	1

The school serves 267 students in grades pre-kindergarten through 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, and a representative from the Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (RBERN).
- The team visited a total of 46 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 curriculum maps, lesson plans, schoolwide data, teacher feedback, and student work.
- In advance of the visit, the school provided results of a staff survey that 15 staff members (71 percent) completed.
- In advance of the visit, the school provided results of a parent survey that 116 parents (57 percent) completed.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. The school has prioritized student writing this year, and the IIT observed that student writing was evident throughout the school and in student portfolios. In discussions with the team, students and teachers spoke about the school's focus on writing and the increased amount of writing that students are producing.

2. The principal prioritized the development of a positive school climate for the 2018-19 school year. Students, parents, and staff reported that the school environment has improved this school year. Students shared that they now feel safe in the building, and all stakeholders noted that the school culture is welcoming. Teachers, school leaders, and parents stated that there is increased communication among parents and teachers and among the staff.

3. To support student learning, the principal has prioritized the use of higher-level questioning as a form of rigor for the 2018-19 school year. The team observed evidence of teacher and student use of questioning and questioning tools throughout the school. For example, Depth of Knowledge (DOK rubrics) were in use in many classrooms.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **School leaders need to effectively communicate and routinely implement a strategy and system to achieve the school's goal of improving student attendance.** While school leaders, teachers, students, and parents expressed an awareness of the challenges the school faced in improving student attendance, the IIT found that the school's plan to address this issue schoolwide needs to be clearly communicated and implemented consistently The principal and teachers stated that calls are made to parents of students who are absent by a designated staff person as well as by teachers. Although teachers and students noted the school provides MUMU bucks as an attendance incentive, they indicated that this is not systematically implemented by all staff members. The IIT also learned that some staff considered the issue of students' late arrival to school so difficult to address that they recommended a change in the schedule so that English language arts (ELA) and math instruction would be held later in the day so students would not miss these priority learning areas. During discussions, the principal acknowledged the importance of a renewed sense of urgency and a written attendance plan that is shared with the school community. In the future, the school leaders should develop an attendance strategy with specific action steps and share the plan with all stakeholders, including students.

- **School leaders should develop a targeted strategy for goals to increase parent engagement.** Some parents reported that parent engagement has always been low, with few parents attending school events. The team learned that the rates of parent attendance are usually higher at events that celebrate student success and showcase students' talent, such as the talent show, plays, and award assemblies and less at events and meetings related to student academic learning. In the future, the school leaders should develop specific, measurable, ambitious, results-oriented, and timely (SMART) goals for parent engagement, with specific strategies that build upon the school's areas of success and the ideas suggested by the school community.

- **School leaders need to clearly communicate and monitor the school's expectations for teacher collaboration and common planning sessions to improve student learning.** The 2018-19 SCEP indicates the importance of collaborative planning for sharing strategies and higher order questions to engage and challenge students and

for developing differentiated student supports to ensure improved student outcomes. The IIT found that teachers' planning meetings include a myriad of topics and the use of various protocols and agendas, making it challenging for teachers to work together on the development of engaging and rigorous student learning activities. One of the common planning agendas the team examined included multiple areas to be covered, such as action research objectives, instructional practices, assessment and progress monitoring, areas of success and those that need to be strengthened. The team found that during one common planning period, teachers used three agendas and one protocol, and they spent much of time reviewing the protocol guidelines, minimizing collaboration to support teacher development and student progress. In the future, the school leaders should determine the most important objective for common planning and create or adopt a protocol to be used regularly throughout the school. They should consider collecting agendas for these meetings, which can be used to provide feedback on the content.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **School leaders need to effectively communicate the importance of the school's plan for continuous school improvement and increased student achievement.**   Through interviews with staff and parents and classroom observations, the team found that the school leaders have focused primarily on compliance rather than developing and communicating the importance of a clear understanding of the achievement challenges and the need for a collective plan of action to accelerate student success. One parent noted, for example, that she was not aware of the school's low level of student achievement on the State assessments until the team's visit. The IIT learned that students, staff, and parents attributed most of the achievement challenges to factors outside of the school that are beyond their control or to low student motivation. Many stakeholders, including teachers, parents, students, and school leaders stated that there is now an improved morale in the school, and collaborative structures are in place to learn and plan together.   The principal noted that he sees this time as an opportunity to rebrand the school and to support a new mindset focused on improved student achievement. In the future, the school leaders should consider soliciting the ideas of all stakeholders for potential personal and collective actions to support school and student improvement. Selected ideas can be integrated into a cycle of continuous learning that includes goal setting, capacity building, action steps, and progress monitoring.
- **School leaders should focus consistently on professional development (PD) offerings that are aligned with current classroom needs.**   The school's PD plan indicates that the instructional focus is to build teacher capacity to create higher order thinking questions using a Depth of Knowledge (DOK) rubric to gauge quality discussions and student discourse. The 2018-19 SCEP includes a focus on modeling, cultural relevance, and targeted small group instruction. However, the team found that the PD offerings have included only a few sessions on these topics, interspersed with sessions on additional topics, such as school safety and SMART Board training. The school leaders indicated that the PD plan is continually revised to respond to district directives or new ideas, thereby preventing a consistent focus on supporting teacher development in the priority areas. Classroom visits showed that teachers are only implementing the instructional priorities on a basic level. In the future, school leaders should consider developing a PD approach that connects the Monday PD sessions and the common planning periods to the school's instructional objectives and the needs observed during the school leaders' weekly classroom visits.
- **School leaders need to provide teachers with frequent, actionable feedback to support the implementation of teaching strategies to improve student engagement and learning.** The IIT learned from teachers and school

leaders that teachers are open to feedback and that teachers are working to implement the school leaders' instructional expectations. The school leaders shared that they began the year visiting classrooms together but noted that they have not prioritized visiting classrooms as a leadership team to calibrate the types of feedback they provide to improve teachers' instructional practice and support more rigorous student learning experiences. Teachers stated that the feedback that is provided is helpful but general in nature. They noted that it often takes the form of suggestions for additional resources, such as where to find more information on a topic or a teaching strategy or information on a relevant external PD workshop rather than on specific comments and actions to improve their instructional practice. The IIT also reviewed feedback in the form of a checklist that included many components with limited actionable feedback. In the future, the school leaders should consider providing focused, actionable feedback to all teachers on a weekly basis to ensure the implementation of the instructional priorities to result in rigorous, culturally relevant learning experiences for students.

Learning at the School

- **Teachers need to routinely provide students with engaging, challenging, and relevant learning experience through the use of depth of knowledge (DOK) questioning.** The IIT's class visits showed that not all teachers were providing students with student-centered, engaging learning experiences using depth of knowledge questioning. In one observed class, a student used the DOK wheel to ask a question to another student, and the student answered it even though the question bore no relationship to the task at hand. The team rarely observed students engaging in projects, theme-based learning, Socratic seminars, or frequent turn and talks that could serve to generate authentic questioning connected to real-word tasks. The IIT observed students across grade levels using accountable talk; however, there were few examples of students responding to each to other or engaging in conversations that expanded their thinking. Conversations in most classes were teacher-led.

- **School leaders should clarify the schoolwide definition for equity for all and cultural relevance to address misconceptions and work with school staff to develop a shared definition of cultural relevance and specific strategies for instructional practice**. The IIT learned that the terms equity for all and cultural relevance were a part of the schoolwide discourse, with some stakeholders using these two terms interchangeably and others using equity for all to describe the school's interest in differentiated instruction. The team found that the SCEP broadly refers to cultural relevance as connecting to student ancestral or contemporary experience. However, the IIT observed only a few examples in classroom practice including the use, for example, of a Langston Hughes text and an activity that helped students make a connection to their neighborhood bodega. In the future, the school leaders and teachers should engage in discussions about how connecting students' ancestral or contemporary experiences can support student engagement and learning. They should identify schoolwide strategies such as the use of culturally relevant texts to enable this to happen.

- **Teachers should adapt their use of teacher modeling, teacher talk, and workshop model structure to increase student time -on- task.** In class visits, the IIT observed that teachers were often over-scaffolding and that teacher modeling contributed to additional teacher talk and less student voice. In one class, for example, the teacher spoke for four continuous minutes about how to find the main Idea and then asked students what is another good title for a book you are currently reading? Most of the students shared responses and demonstrated understanding of the task. However, then the teacher asked the students to complete the same

task using a text, which appeared to be redundant. In several classes, students sat casually while the teacher adjusted the document camera or while one student answered one question. The team found limited evidence of students reading in class as part of the instructional period or after they finished a task. In discussions with the team, teachers and the principal mentioned the workshop model but did not express an expectation that all teachers use the workshop model. In the future, the school leaders should consider establishing a common classroom structure, such as the workshop model, to frame the engaged, student-centered, time-on-task learning that is expected.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Students shared that there is a need for more challenging class work and activities.** Several students stated that they would like to have more engaging activities in their lessons and noted that the work in their classes is either easy or of medium difficulty. Students indicated that they would appreciate going on trips to different areas of New York City connected to something they are learning about. Students also stated that they felt challenged by and interested in the types of discussions they had as part of My Brother's Keeper events and that they would like to have those kinds of discussions in their academic classes. A teacher also suggested creating a Reading and Rhyme Club to support literacy to further engage students and to compensate for the lack of a music class.

- **Parents and teachers reported that students need additional and targeted academic support and programs.** Interviewed parents stated that their children would benefit from after-school programs, homework help, and tutoring. Some parents noted that the school was starting a Saturday program but wished that it was for the full school year. One parent suggested that older students could be enlisted to tutor younger students during lunch time or after school. Teachers shared that small group instruction and other types of differentiated supports are necessary to support individual student needs and that they are open to considering how to implement this in their classrooms. Both parents and teachers suggested matching students to mentors to support students' academic and social and emotional development.

- **Teachers and parents stated that the school needs to promote parent engagement by leveraging the times when parents are already in the school.** They noted that many parents pick their children up from school and suggested holding parent-teacher meetings at dismissal time. A few parents shared that they come to school with their child in the morning and have breakfast with them and that this would be a good time to showcase student work.

- **Parents suggested increasing parental/family involvement by sponsoring more celebrations and events for parents.** They indicated that holding more celebrations for parents and inviting all parents to ceremonies to celebrate, for example, student attendance, would be of interest to parents.