

Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

Final Report



BEDS Code	331900010224
School Name	P.S. 224 Hale A. Woodruff
School Address	755 Wortman Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11208
District Name	NYCDOE CSD 19
Principal	Rochelle Hinds
Dates of Visit	March 5-7, 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:

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	2	1	1

PS 224 Hale A. Woodruff School serves 404 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 and a representative from the Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (RBERN).
- The team visited a total of 38 classrooms during the visit.
- The OEE visited 12 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, the school provided results of a staff survey that 28 staff members (88 percent) completed.
- In advance of the visit, the school provided results of a parent survey that 92 parents (29 percent) completed.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. The school leader built on the successful prior departmentalization of grade five by extending it to grade four in the current school year. In 2017-18, the principal departmentalized grade five to provide teachers with an opportunity to focus on particular content areas and to provide students with an experience more like that which they will have in middle school. Teachers reported that these changes supported student engagement in content area learning and improved teacher instruction. As a result, during the current school year, the principal departmentalized grade four. Grade four teachers indicated a renewed excitement about what they are teaching, and the team observed that grade four students were enthusiastic about what they were learning in their classes.
2. After the principal arrived at the school in 2017-18, she implemented improvements, such as developing a bee-hive theme based on a focus of having respect, responsibility, and integrity and being victorious through engagement and effort. In addition, she had the walls painted bright yellow to support this bee-hive theme. According to students, teachers, and parents, this helped create a new sense of community within the school. During the current school year, the school leaders have continued this effort by having classrooms painted in bright colors and adding bee logos in each classroom and on the floors in hallways throughout the school. Students and staff reported that this and encouraged conversations about the importance of taking pride in your environment and keeping it clean and orderly so that learning can take place without disruptions.
3. Recognizing the need to address the attendance issues within the school, the principal developed an attendance team, which includes the school's assistant principals (APs), guidance counselor, behavior specialist, and teachers. This school year, the principal added parents to the team who make phone calls to the homes of absent students. All members of the attendance team reported that parents have had success in reaching the parents who they call and convincing them of the importance of their children regularly attending school. The school leader reported that the outreach made by parents to other parents is yielding results, as attendance patterns have begun to trend upward.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **School leaders need to establish a uniform system for monitoring how teachers use their analysis of data to impact instruction and support student needs.** The principal told the IIT that until recently, the school leaders had largely been responsible for the analysis of data and that as a result, teacher ownership of the data for their students needed to be increased. One of the APs reported that she has begun to expect the teachers on the grade-level teams for which she is responsible to work collaboratively to analyze their students' data and then share with her potential strategies and resources that they will use to address student needs based on this analysis. She shared that the teachers are beginning to feel more confident in their ability to analyze and use the data independently as a result of this gradual release of responsibility, but that more work is needed so that teachers are more independent in their analysis and use of data to support student needs.
- **School leaders should establish a schoolwide practice of student-led parent-teacher conferences.** The Integrated intervention Team (IIT) learned from several grade five students and teachers that students had led conferences between their parents and their teacher using a portfolio that included samples of their best work,

as well as examples of work that they had revised and improved based on teacher feedback. Students shared that leading these conferences increased their sense of responsibility for their work and that they believed that it helped their parents understand what they were expected to learn and to accomplish. Interviewed teachers and parents confirmed this perception. In the future, the principal should establish the expectation that all teachers in grades two to five engage students and their parents in student-led parent-teacher conferences to help students take responsibility for their own learning and to increase parent engagement in their children’s learning.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **The focus in the school this year is on strengthening pedagogical practices in math instruction and deepening students’ understanding of math concepts, but the principal expressed concern that this emphasis might compromise the progress that the school has been making in English language arts (ELA).** The IIT learned from school leaders and teachers that teachers are expected to concentrate on engaging their students in meaningful discussion and writing about mathematics. The team saw mathematics accountable talk prompts posted on students’ desks in almost all observed classrooms and noted that teachers often reminded students to use these prompts to facilitate their conversations. The team observed less frequent extended conversations during ELA lessons. In the future, the principal should reinforce for teachers that meaningful, content-related conversation is important in both ELA and mathematics.
- **The school leaders need to tap into the internal capacity among the school’s teachers to strengthen pedagogy across all classrooms.** The IIT visited some classrooms where teachers were well-planned and asked students higher-order questions to encourage them to think deeply. In these classrooms, students collaborated to support one another in content discussions that were deep and meaningful. These conversations were followed by students writing about their conversations, which is a school priority. However, in other classrooms, there was minimal discussion among students and writing assignments involved responding to low-level questions. These teachers could benefit from observing teachers with more highly developed skills. In the future, the principal should identify and develop lead teachers who have strengths in particular areas who could support other teachers in a collegial coaching capacity and through a formal classroom inter-visitation schedule.

Learning at the School

- **Teachers need to create student groupings based on data.** While more than half of the lesson plans reviewed by the team included the use of data to determine groups based on identified student needs, the actual groupings of students in those classrooms was often not based on those needs identified through the data. When the groupings were based on the data, the IIT noted that all students in the different groups were frequently engaged in the same tasks rather than in differentiated tasks that were matched to their specific individual needs.
- **Teachers should regularly refer to and remind students to utilize anchor charts, rubrics, word walls, number lines, and strategy folders posted in classrooms.** In some classrooms, when asked by the team what they did if they needed help or did not know how to proceed, students stated that they used a resource such as a word wall or strategy folder, collaborated with a peer to determine how to move forward, or went to the teacher for help as a last resort. However, in most classrooms, students were only seen making use of the materials

posted around the room when teachers reminded them to do so but were not using these tools and strategies independently as part of an on-going strategy that had been developed within the classrooms.

- **The principal should re-introduce the Hive Empowerment Movement program and other initiatives including restorative circles to support students' social-emotional needs so that these programs are fully and cohesively integrated.** Teachers and students talked about individual programs with which they are familiar and/or involved, such as the Girls Empowerment Movement, My Brother's Keeper, and School Attendance Matters! but they were not always able to see the connections between the different programs in providing students with a comprehensive social-emotional learning or character education program. For example, restorative circles provide students with an opportunity to talk about their feelings of being put down, but connections were not highlighted to identify how this related to the Hive Empowerment Movement program's focus on building a nurturing and accepting community. In the future, the principal should work with staff and students to make explicit connections among these programs.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Students reported that they would like the membership of the Student Government Association made open to students at multiple grade levels.** Students interviewed by the IIT stated that participation on the Student Government Association is limited to grade five students. Grade five students talked with pride both about the efforts they made to be elected to student government, as well as the work the student government does in giving voice to students' ideas and views. They stated that the student government conducted a survey where students responded to questions about teacher practices, and they shared that members of the student government have engaged in a number of community service activities. Students at other grade levels expressed familiarity with and excitement about the work of the student government and shared their desire to be a part of it.
- **Parents expressed appreciation for the monthly assemblies to celebrate student attendance and academic progress but also expressed a desire for additional assemblies to showcase their children's talents.** Some parents suggested that they would like the school to create opportunities to recognize children who may not have perfect attendance or who have not made substantial academic progress. They indicated that many of the children in the school are talented dancers and singers who would welcome the chance to share their talents with others. Parents also pointed out that these kinds of assemblies would provide a means to engage more parents in the school community.
- **Teachers indicated that they believe it would be useful for parents to receive some of the same training teachers have received on supporting student social-emotional learning.** Teachers suggested that many of the restorative justice practices that they are learning could also be used by parents at home and would provide additional and alternative strategies for parents to use in addressing their children's behavior. Teachers expressed a belief that students would benefit if both teachers and parents have similar expectations and use similar strategies for addressing these expectations. Teachers also pointed out that this would provide common ground for a teacher and parent to discuss a child's behavior and ways to support one another in fostering a child's social-emotional development.