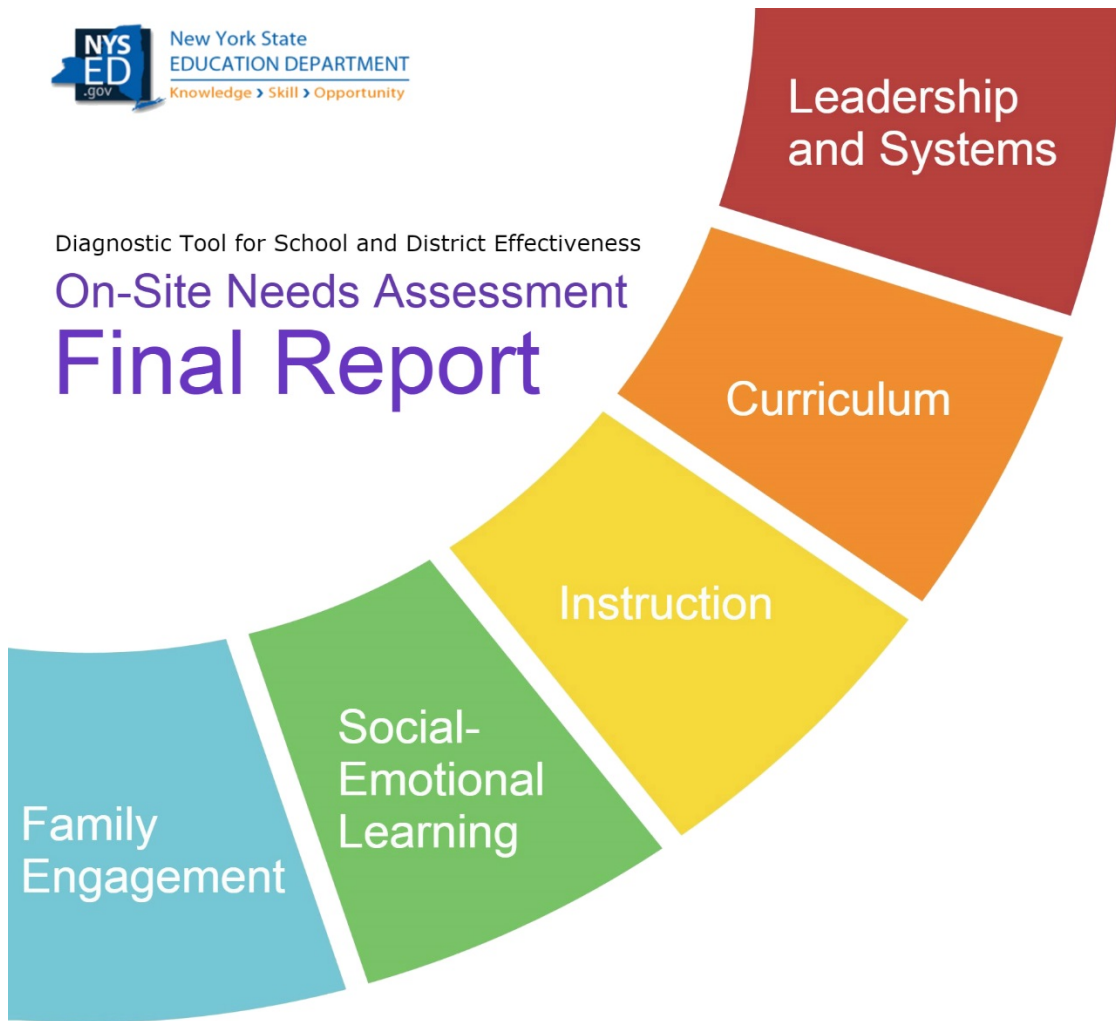


Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

# Final Report



<b>BEDS Code</b>	331900010273
<b>School Name</b>	Wortman Elementary PS 273
<b>School Address</b>	923 Jerome St, Brooklyn, NY 11207
<b>District Name</b>	NYCDOE CSD 19
<b>Principal</b>	Melessa Avery
<b>Dates of Visit</b>	May 21-23, 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	-	1	1

PS 273 Wortman School serves 353 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, teacher feedback, and student work.
- In advance of the visit, 29 staff members (100 percent) completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.

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

1. This year, the principal instituted a New Teacher Academy that allows teachers who are new to the profession, to meet as a cohort for a total of four hours each week. The group works with the principal and reviews best practices, curriculum, and plans for schoolwide professional development (PD). According to the principal and teachers, this process has enabled many new teachers to gain confidence in the classroom and with the curriculum. New teachers have also used the academy to create PD sessions they later present to all teachers, instilling a sense of leadership and ownership among the new educators.
2. In response to poor student attendance this year, the principal worked with school leaders and staff to identify chronically absent students, as well as those that are in danger of being chronically absent. School leaders shared they contacted parents of those students identified as being at risk and hosted a parent assembly to discuss issues with absenteeism at the school and the affect it has on student learning. In the months following the assembly, the principal shared that absenteeism fell by four percent.
3. School leaders instituted mindfulness exercises to help students prepare themselves for learning at the start of the day during 2018-19. Implemented during morning announcements, mindfulness exercises employ a process of meditation by which students can become calm, centered, and self-reflective, positioning students to control their emotions and focus on their lessons. The principal stated that initiative has been so successful in getting students focused that teachers have asked to implement mindfulness strategies at the start of the afternoon session to help students calm down after lunch and gym.

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

### Systems for Improvement

- **School leaders should explore potential schedule changes and options for classroom coverage that would enable regular instructional rounds to be held across the school.** The principal shared that the school had planned to implement instructional rounds, allowing teachers to observe each other and compare pedagogical approaches. While the school was able to schedule one or two instructional rounds early in the year, the initiative was not able to continue due to complications in scheduling and the school's inability to find substitutes for observing teachers. In interviews with the IIT, teachers shared that they would like to observe the other teachers in their cohort to get new ideas on how to implement the curriculum and to apply Marzano's nine Instructional Strategies as the implementation of these strategies have been a school-wide focus for the school year.
- **School leaders should develop communication systems and mechanisms that they can use to regularly disseminate information about the implementation of new initiatives and the progress towards achieving improvement goals.** In interviews with the IIT, teachers noted that they get information regarding new initiatives and school goals early in the year but that they do not receive updates on how the school is progressing towards meeting those goals as the year progresses. Teachers stated they would like to play a more integral role in progress monitoring and to receive more information about the school's next steps in implementing school-wide initiatives.
- **The principal should develop protocols and expectations for analyzing student performance data at grade levels and across the school.** School leaders shared that data-driven instruction is priority for school and that

they would like to see academic data being analyzed rigorously in grade team meetings. In observing a grade team meeting and during teacher interviews, the IIT learned that little data is being used to determine the next steps in teaching or to identify progress in the development of student skills. In interviews, teachers noted that they are not clear on school-wide expectations for utilizing data, especially data obtained from standardized tests, to inform teaching and learning. However, the IIT found they are starting to use data obtained by administering culminating projects and unit tests to determine where they might need to reteach certain standards.

## Leadership and Organization at the School

- **School leaders should ensure all classroom visits and walkthroughs are followed-up with immediate written feedback being provided to the teacher.** School leaders shared that they conduct informal walkthroughs, though not as often as they would like due to other responsibilities, such as the need for coverage and rescheduling when teachers are absent. The principal shared with the IIT that when they do conduct a walkthrough, school leaders all utilize a walkthrough tool to help them identify and record elements of specific strategies being observed. For example, if an assistant principal (AP) is going into a classroom to see how learning objectives are being used, he would use the form created for learning objective walkthroughs. If the AP is looking for elements of cooperative learning, he would utilize the walkthrough tool specifically designed for cooperative learning. In interviews with teachers, the IIT learned that teachers do not often receive written feedback from these walkthroughs. Teachers shared with the team that, if they do receive feedback, it is often brief and verbal, making it difficult to determine next steps for improvement. Teachers also shared that there are many instances where a school leader will visit the classroom and leave without giving any feedback, leaving the teacher to wonder whether or not they are meeting pedagogical expectations.
- **The principal should leverage the instructional leadership team to support the school's transition to the new math and English Language Arts (ELA) curricula.** In teacher interviews, some teachers shared that although they are members of the school's instructional leadership team, there are few details to describe the roles and responsibilities for the group. The principal noted that the school will be transitioning to new district-wide math and ELA curricula next year, and while there have been training sessions at the district to support this transition, few of the school's teachers have been able to attend since the sessions are held during the day. The principal shared with the team that the school does not have the resources to enable multiple teachers to be out of the building at one time. The school will be taking teachers to a week-long training in Boston in the summer to support the shift to the new curriculum. School leaders should consider using the instructional leadership team to help implement and monitor the curricula transition.

## Learning at the School

- **Teachers should make sure students are clear about what they are learning, such as by referencing learning objectives throughout instruction, and make sure planned lesson activities align to objectives.** By reviewing the school's self-reflection, the IIT learned that the school has prioritized learning objectives and cooperative learning as focuses for improvement in the classroom. During classroom visits, IIT members observed posted learning objectives in nearly every classroom but the objectives were often not referenced during the lesson. The IIT also noted that the learning objective posted often did not align with learning activity planned for the students. The members of the IIT observed cooperative learning in practice, with groups working

independently and with each member assigned a role in an effort to establish group accountability. While these elements were in place and met cooperative learning organizational expectations, the practice did not often successfully meet the goals of the learning objective. In reviewing some lesson plans for cooperative learning activities, the IIT discovered that although lesson plans were generally thorough and detailed, lesson plan activities were not always aligned to the objectives.

- **Teachers should plan lessons that include checks for understanding during the lesson, as well as at the end.** During classroom visits, few checks for understanding were utilized. Instruction was typically whole group with teacher-led discussion, a short reading activity, or a video. Questions posed to students were typically low-level, requiring basic recall, and usually teachers called on students with their hands raised, or a select few by choosing equity sticks. In cooperative learning activities, while most teachers were seen circulating around the room or working with one specific group, more attention was needed to check for student understanding of all students and to refocus any off-task behavior. Teachers mainly acted as timekeepers that reminded the class how much time they had left before groups were due to present their outcomes with the class. Exit tickets or individual checks for understanding beyond the final product were not typically used.
- **Teachers should work to regularly create portfolios of student work with purposeful and meaningful feedback that showcase student growth.** During interviews, some teachers noted they created student portfolios containing student work for a given unit or marking period. While conducting classroom visits, IIT members observed and reviewed these student portfolios. While the portfolios did contain a great deal of student work, few pieces were graded or provided meaningful feedback for students. More often, the portfolios were used to store student work for a given period rather than operating as a resource that collected student work that chronicled growth or achievement.

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

- **Parents and students shared that they would like the school to offer more field trips during the school year.** During group interviews, parents and students both noted that students rarely went on field trips. Some parents stated that their students had not been on any field trips all year. They also stated that they would like the school to partner with the Cool Culture program, allowing families free access to many of the city's museums, historical societies, and zoos.
- **Parents stated they would like to see the school employ a parent coordinator.** Parents noted that they do not have a staff member at the school who can provide support and information to parents and that it would be helpful if the school employed a parent coordinator who was located near the main entrance, so he or she could welcome parents into the building.
- **Parents shared that they do not receive regular reports from the school detailing student progress.** Parents noted that they do receive final report cards; however, they do not get regular progress reports, so there are few opportunities to address their student's academic needs before the end of the quarter or semester. Parents also noted that they are able to communicate with most teachers either via email or in person after school, but the information they are given regarding student progress is often not reflected in their final grades.
- **Teachers shared that changes to the daily schedule and the rescheduling of specials and preparatory periods often leaves teachers with little time for science and social studies.** Teachers stated that they regularly need to change their plans and schedules to accommodate specials and preparatory periods. School leaders shared that when teachers are out, the school's lack of substitutes to provide cover, sometimes requires classes to be combined and special periods such as gym and technology have to be rescheduled at different times during

the day. Teachers shared that this often happens with little notice, requiring lessons and content blocks to be suddenly moved. While math and ELA take precedence, blocks for science and social studies are often reduced in length or cut out altogether.

- **Teachers shared that student behavior issues in the classroom can cause disruption to the learning environment.** Teachers noted that, while these behaviors are a distraction, most issues could be better addressed if there were a safe place for students to reflect on their actions and get the support they need, allowing them to return to the classroom as soon as possible, ready to learn.