

Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

Final Report



BEDS Code	331900010663
School Name	School of the Future Brooklyn
School Address	574 Dumont Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11207
District Name	NYCDOE CSD 19
Principal	Robert L. Burnside
Dates of Visit	February 6 – 8, 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

School of the Future Brooklyn serves 190 students in grades six to 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.
- The team visited a total of 16 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, and teacher feedback.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. The IIT learned that the new principal is developing a culture of trust and support, which has created a more welcoming environment for parents and students. The parents and students with whom the team met spoke highly of the principal and his ability to connect with them. They said he is very personable and approachable and works extensively to help parents and students with issues both inside and outside the school. Parents stated that the principal provides his personal phone number to parents and regularly connects with them to discuss academics and concerns. Students and parents expressed that they view the

principal as a mentor, a father figure, and a positive African American male role model for students.

2. Teachers shared that the school leaders have established high expectations for teachers' instruction to address the low student proficiency on New York State (NYS) assessments in math and English language arts (ELA) in previous years. These expectations include developing standards-based lessons and rigorous tasks for students, as well as the ongoing use of data to inform instructional practices. The expectations are communicated through the walkthrough feedback given to teachers, the weekly staff newsletter, and professional development (PD) topics such as developing lessons and unpacking standards. The school schedule provides for team planning opportunities throughout the day as well as during the early dismissal day on Wednesday, which supports these efforts by providing teachers with PD and family engagement time.
3. The principal has secured grants that have provided technological and curricular resources to develop and increase student interest in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) topics. This investment aligns with developing the student both academically and socially and promoting learning in areas of possible career opportunities. As a result, these technology grants have helped to enhance the learning experience for the students and expand the resources available to teachers. Each class has a computer cart with student laptops and a Promethean board. The science teachers have additional resources such as the Z-lab, which allows for virtual science experiments and dissections, three-dimensional printers, and a robotics curriculum. The principal is seeking additional grant funding and training that will support the staff in learning how to effectively use these resources.
4. School leaders and teachers have prioritized addressing the social-emotional needs of students, which constitutes a shift in practice and mindset for the school compared to the previous school year. The principal has invested financial resources in programming and staffing to create a strong school environment that focuses on the social-emotional needs of students. Students have several opportunities to receive positive support from adults through mentoring, academic and conflict resolution support, and mindfulness exercises, and every staff member in the building is responsible for monitoring the academic and behavioral progress of a specific group of students. School leaders, staff, and parents reported that these initiatives, which are new to the school this year, have contributed to a calmer school atmosphere.
5. The school has provided opportunities for students to participate in a variety of cultural and educational enrichment activities, both during and beyond school hours. For example, the principal has established partnerships with organizations to provide trips to Washington, D.C. or to museums. Students also have opportunities to participate in career and college tours, and interviewed students shared that these experiences motivate and excite them to pursue specific careers or attend college. The principal has also created opportunities for all students to participate in art, music, and Mandarin Chinese, all new options for students this school year. The principal has established the understanding that any interested student can participate in these opportunities, as long as parents provide permission.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **The school should strengthen and expand the structure of the instructional leadership team.** According to staff, internal support for instruction is the sole responsibility of the principal and the assistant principal. As such, the principal and the assistant principal are responsible for communicating instructional priorities,³

identifying academic needs using assessment data, facilitating data meetings with teams, conducting walkthroughs, and providing feedback, as well as providing support to staff through professional development options. For example, the IIT observed the assistant principal leading content level meetings and the principal engaged in feedback conversations with staff. The team learned that some staff are designated as content leads, but these staff are not included in regular meetings with school leadership or involved in instructional decision-making conversations.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **School leaders should provide consistent opportunities for special education and English language learner (ELL) teachers to co-plan with content area teachers.** The current schedule includes planning time for grade-level and content area team members to plan collectively. However, teachers reported, and the IIT's document review confirmed, that special education and ELL teachers cannot regularly join planning sessions because their schedules require them to follow their students' schedules and be available in students' content area classes. Special education and ELL teachers each meet as departments but do not have time to adequately prepare with general education teachers for meeting their students' needs. During class visits, the IIT observed that in many classes all students were provided the same assignments with no scaffolding or accommodations offered for students who needed them. The team noted that special education and ELL teachers focused their support for their students on completing the general education assignment. In the future, school leaders should schedule a designated time for special education and ELL teachers to co-plan with core content area teachers to support the needs and maximize the learning opportunities of students with disabilities and ELL students.
- **The master schedule should include consistent daily times for electives for students and common planning time for teachers.** The IIT learned that elective teachers do not meet with their students regularly enough to provide complete programming in the elective subject. A full class schedule of an elective teacher, traditionally teaching a homeroom class daily, has been reduced to teaching a homeroom class twice a week. This fragmented schedule allows for more classes to participate in the elective, and it also allows students to take two electives a week. However, as such, elective teachers are not able to plan and deliver complete units of study, minimizing the ability of students to master the elective curriculum. Additionally, teachers' common planning time varies from day to day. The IIT encountered difficulty arranging interviews with staff and planning meeting locations due to the variation in the daily schedule. Teachers shared that the inconsistency of planning time makes it difficult for them to engage in daily collaborative conversations. They explained that diverse activities and responsibilities often make it logistically challenging for staff to get to the meetings on time or stay for an entire session, particularly when these duties vary daily. School leaders should consider working with staff to create a schedule that reflects agreed-upon planning times for teachers and that allows for student participation in elective classes that meet daily.
- **The positive behavior management team needs to communicate clear and specific expectations to students on how to accumulate points and gain recognition at the monthly positive behavior celebrations.** The IIT observed a small behavior matrix posted in the building that highlighted appropriate behaviors for students to exhibit in common spaces. Teachers award points to students for good behavior and track the points awarded. However, students reported that often they are not aware of the behavior they are being recognized for, the number of points they are awarded per behavior, or their weekly point accumulation. The IIT observed no evidence of any visual tracking of students' points, such as a bulletin board in a common area that is updated daily. Students stated that they do not know if they have accumulated enough points to

participate in the scheduled monthly celebration until it is held. In the future, the positive behavior management team should develop a tracking system that is publicly shared with students on a consistent basis to ensure that teachers are communicating to students the points they have earned.

- **The mindfulness room should be used strategically.** The principal explained that the mindfulness room is designed to promote student self-behavior and management skills. The principal secured financial resources and training from the district and outside organizations to create this designated space that includes the proper equipment and a facilitator. The social worker responsible for the mindfulness curriculum receives training and is teaching some mindfulness techniques to students on her caseload as well as to all students during the Wednesday school assemblies. However, the social worker stated that a schedule has not yet been established that allows a group of students or a class to be engaged in mindfulness activities with her in the mindfulness room. During the IIT's visit, the team observed that the room was usually locked and opened only occasionally for students who requested to use the room. In the future, the school leaders should revise the master schedule to include a daily schedule for students and/or classes to use the mindfulness room with the social worker in order to maximize the program's impact in promoting students' consistent practice of mindfulness strategies to help them manage their behavior and emotions.

Learning at the School

- **The school offers only one foreign language, Mandarin Chinese, but should consider offering other foreign languages.** The principal shared that based on research about the impact that learning Mandarin Chinese has on students, he replaced Spanish with Mandarin Chinese as the one foreign language offered by the school. However, the IIT observed that some students were minimally engaged during lessons. For example, the team noted that many students demonstrated a lack of interest in what was being taught, and a few students were disruptive during instruction. Some students explained that they would like the option of learning a foreign language they feel is more relevant and meaningful to their lives. In the future, the school leaders should consider adding another foreign language to provide students with an option they may find more engaging.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Parents would like the school to offer more educational opportunities for families.** Parents acknowledged that the principal is working hard to provide their children with resources such as educational trips and technology. They said that in previous years the school did not offer many workshops or supports for families, and parent participation in school events and activities was low. Parents stated that they would like the school to offer more educational opportunities for families such as High School Equivalency (HSE) diploma and English as a second language (ESL) classes.
- **Parents shared that the location of the school on the fourth and fifth floors of the building makes it challenging for families to be involved in school activities.** Interviewed parents stated that the school is more welcoming to families this year and they are excited about the programs and initiatives leaders are implementing in the school. Parents shared that many families would like the school to offer more family activities so they can become more involved, but said that the location of the school on the fourth and fifth floors of the building makes it difficult for many parents to participate in activities because the school does not have elevators to accommodate parents who cannot climb the stairs. These parents suggested that activities be offered on the first floor of the building.

- **Parents would like current and timely communications from the school.** Parents stated that although the school has a Facebook page and the principal uses Twitter to communicate positive events, the information on these two social media options needs to be more frequently updated. These parents added that many families appreciate receiving the school newsletter, but said they often receive the information late because many times their children forget to share the newsletter with them. These parents added that they would like additional options to receive school information beyond the traditional newsletter.