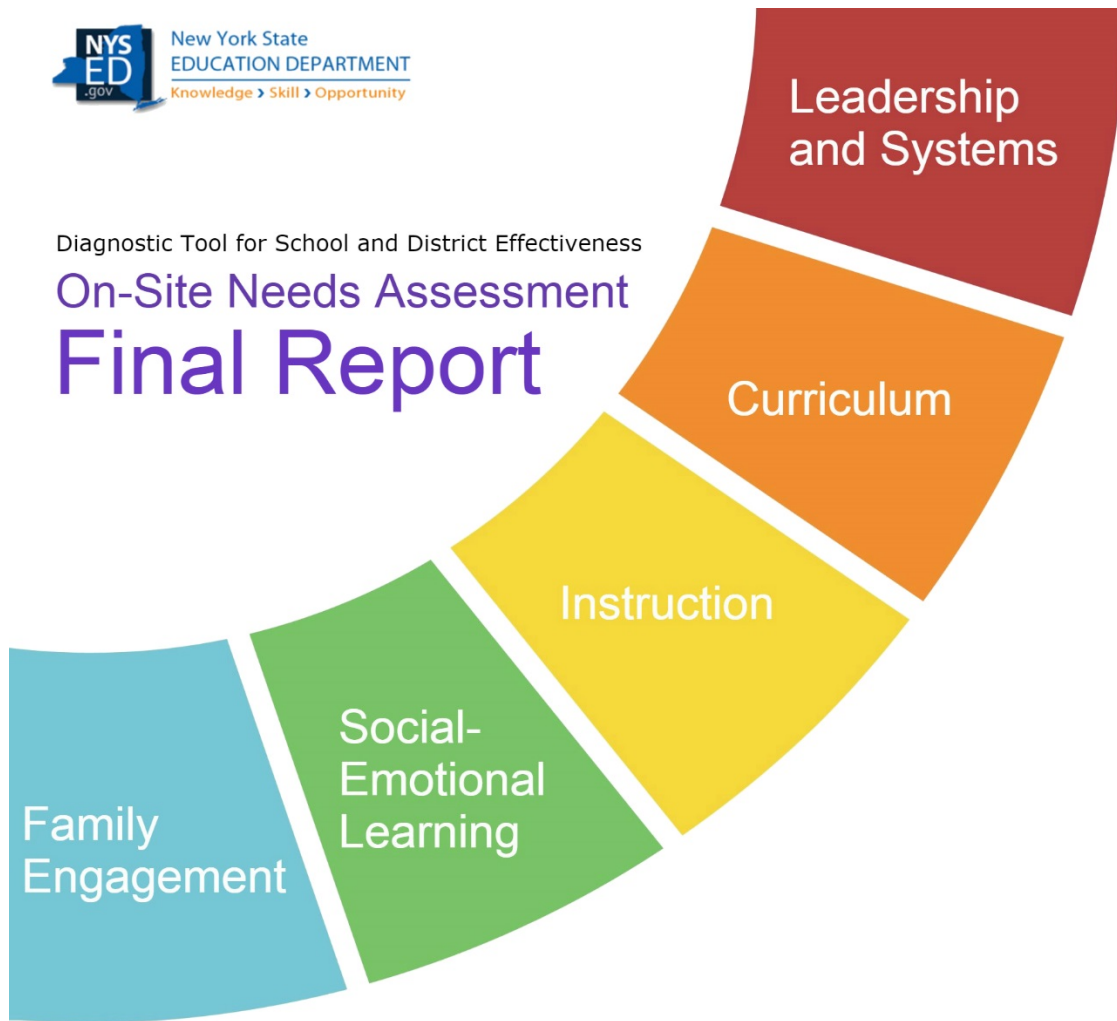


Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

Final Report



BEDS Code	332300010518
School Name	Kappa V Knowledge and Power Preparatory Academy
School Address	985 Rockaway Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11212
District Name	NYCDOE CSD 23
Principal	Ronda Phillips
Dates of Visit	June 3, 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:

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

Kappa V Knowledge and Power Preparatory Academy serves 192 students in grades 6 through 8.

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 15 classrooms during the visit.
- The OEE visited four 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 student outcomes data, schoolwide academic intervention tracking data, teacher feedback, student work, and recent Star Math and ELA assessment results.
- In advance of the visit, 18 staff members (82 percent) completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. During the 2018-19 school year, the principal instituted a strategy to distribute leadership more broadly across the staff, with the goal of increasing the number of staff who act as leaders, and who lead teams in the building. She created two peer collaborative teacher positions in the school, one for math and one for English language arts (ELA), now held by respected classroom teachers whose strong teaching and co-teaching skills were observed by the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT). The principal also formed two other teams this school year: an instructional leadership team (ILT), which immediately worked with NYCDOE staff to revise the 2018-19 School Comprehensive Education Plan (SCEP), and an attendance team, which has begun work to combat rising chronic absenteeism. The IIT heard and witnessed clear evidence of success in this endeavor, as multiple staff have stepped into new leadership and decision-making roles and undertaken new tasks.
2. Through multiple interventions, the school has taken decisive action to improve student math achievement. The principal made critical personnel changes before the start of the current school year, and for the first time in recent history, all math teachers are certified. At the principal's request, one of the school's most seasoned teachers now serves as the peer collaborative teacher for math; this school year, she has been co-teaching with a new teacher and is providing multiple teachers with mentoring, classroom observation, and coaching support. While these measures have not been in place long, there are signs of early impact. Interim Star Math assessment scores have climbed at all grade levels across multiple assessment periods. For example, one grade six class saw its performance climb from 521 to 630 in the autumn assessment cycle; four months later, it had climbed to 639. In 2018-19, the school leaders and the ILT decided to adopt the enVision Math curriculum, to be implemented in 2019-20.
3. Recognizing the need to reduce absenteeism, the principal and her attendance team coordinated the renovation and transformation of a large multi-purpose room into a new learning and recreation space. The principal had it custom painted with youth-themed art and worked with the attendance team to develop a plan for its use. This plan, to be launched in the 2019-20 school year, includes implementing programming to incentivize and reward students who are demonstrating improvement or leadership through their attendance, behavior, and/or academic achievement.
4. Since Kappa V Knowledge and Power Preparatory Academy was designated as a Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) school in 2018, the principal and staff have established a strong professional relationship with New York City Community School District 23 resource personnel to develop more effective pathways to improvement. This collaborative work was documented in materials submitted to the IIT prior to and during its site visit. Multiple IIT conversations with the principal and staff, as well as observations of frequent interactions between school staff and district resource personnel, further confirmed the strength of the collaboration. This partnership led to the development of revised 2018-19 SCEP goals to guide the final few months of the 2018-19 school year.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **The principal, ILT, and other school leaders should set goals for student achievement that communicate high expectations and complement existing school improvement efforts.** The school's student achievement goals, as articulated in the revised 2018-19 SCEP, are that the number of students who score at Level 1 on State assessments in English language arts (ELA) and math will decline by five percent. However, if the school meets

this goal by the end of the 2018-19 school year, as many as 60 percent of the students in math and 42 percent in ELA could still score at the lowest level. Star Math and Star Reading interim assessment results in the 2018-19 school year show substantial improvement at all grade levels in both math and ELA, suggesting that current staff efforts to track students who are proficient or demonstrating mastery should continue and be fully reflected in future school goals. In the future, school leaders should focus on increasing the percentage of students scoring at Levels 3 or 4 and on students becoming proficient or achieving mastery.

- **The school leaders need to evaluate the effectiveness of school-wide programs, partnerships, and initiatives, and phase out any that they deem ineffective, thereby giving staff and students greater capacity to focus on priority improvement efforts.** In conversations with the IIT, staff and school leaders agreed that too many different initiatives, projects, and approaches are under way in the school. The 2018-19 SCEP features more than a dozen partnerships, but the principal and staff reported that the quality of the partnerships varies; some are no longer funded, and others reach a very small number of students with infrequent, low-impact programming. Phasing out ineffective programs could signal to staff that leaders are concentrating the school's improvement efforts. It would also allow staff and students to focus their energies on the principal's and ILT's top priorities.
- **The principal should engage the staff in a reflection on the school's disciplinary policies and practices in order to achieve consensus and support for new schoolwide policy and practices.** The school currently has a variety of discipline initiatives and policies in place: restorative practice, merit/demerit system, house system, non-negotiables policy, and others. Parents, staff, and students noted that rules governing dress, behavior, attendance, punctuality, and cell phone use are not always enforced evenly. The IIT also noticed that the rules on the school's many "non-negotiables" posters differ, sometimes quite a bit. Multiple stakeholders emphasized the importance of resolving the inconsistencies. This summer, the school is planning professional development (PD) about restorative practices.
- **The school needs to develop a strategy for stabilizing and increasing enrollment.** After declining steadily over the past several years, school enrollment dropped an additional 16 percent from 2017-18 to the current level of 192 students in 2018-19. Multiple staff members expressed concerns about the potential causes of the declining enrollment. In an unzoned school, which can admit students from all over the district, some staff see the continuing decline as an indication that families may view other schools more favorably. However, conversations with staff did not reveal any current plan for increasing enrollment. Looking ahead, school leaders should initiate school-wide discussion and planning about ways to attract more families and students to the school.
- **The school leaders and attendance team should analyze the underlying causes of chronic absenteeism at the school and develop a comprehensive plan to address them.** Chronic absenteeism reached a high of 31 percent during the 2018-19 school year. Staff shared several possible causes. For example, they reported that a number of students are old for their grade and feel awkward going to school with younger students. Staff also stated that in an unzoned school that accepts students from across the city, some students have a long commute, which can lead to tardiness and absenteeism. Students mentioned to the IIT that there is substantial conflict among students, which likely deters some from attending. Staff reported that although they have made some home visits and have some degree of contact with families, additional communication would be beneficial. As the school develops a plan to raise attendance levels, it must consider the full range of challenges that school leaders, staff, and stakeholders identify.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **The principal should identify strategic changes needed to improve student learning and use her rapport with the staff to boost the schoolwide effort.** The principal has brought about several positive changes, such as ensuring that all math teachers are certified, appointing respected teachers to new leadership roles, and empowering a new ILT. These accomplishments provide evidence of the principal's capacity to drive change while retaining the support and engagement of staff. Current survey evidence gathered by the school district, IIT teacher interviews, and IIT observations of the principal's interaction with staff and students attest to the high regard in which the principal is held. The IIT repeatedly witnessed her disciplinary effectiveness and her impact on student behavior, accompanied by evidence of strong positive ties with students; staff credited her with instructional leadership and inclusivity. ILT members spoke of her ability to address hard problems and set priorities. The principal should build on her leadership successes and continue to effect change.
- **The principal and the ILT need to raise staff awareness of the ILT's role by presenting the team as a valuable and supportive resource for inquiry on teaching, learning, and the school's instructional improvement efforts.** The school developed an ILT in 2018-19, and its members include both appointed peer collaborative teachers and the local leader of the teachers' union. Despite the important leadership role of the ILT, there seemed to be minimal awareness of them. For example, no teachers referred to them in interviews; the ILT is not mentioned in recent school documents; the members of the ILT are not listed on the school website or in any of the 2018-19 SCEP Action Plans. Although the IIT observed that ILT members are individually respected by their peers and by the principal, the ILT collectively has yet to establish itself as a resource for teachers within the school. With support from the principal, the newly established ILT can actively and visibly guide the school's efforts to improve instruction.
- **The principal should work with the student support staff to increase opportunities for interaction between student support staff and students, and to facilitate greater communication between student support staff and teachers.** The IIT observed that the current job responsibilities or assignments of the school's eleven student support staff require a large volume of office or desk time, reducing their opportunity to interact with students and teachers. Interviews with teachers, students, and parents revealed a need for greater access to information or support services from these staff members. In discussions with the IIT, students repeatedly expressed interest in having more contact with the school's student support staff, and teachers reported that they would like more assistance when students are struggling emotionally. In the future, the principal and student support staff should explore ways to maximize the support staff's availability to the students and teachers.

Learning at the School

- **Teachers need to use formative assessments, clarify misunderstandings, and reteach skills or content as needed.** Very few teachers observed by the IIT used formative assessments other than verbal and global checks for understanding, and few of these whole class checks for understanding yielded student questions or resulted in reteaching. The IIT observed a small number of teachers actively alert students to a point of misunderstanding and reteach that content, and the team observed some exit tickets in use, but this was not typical. The principal, peer collaborative teachers, and ILT should review these teaching practices with the staff, model them, and motivate teachers to incorporate their use in their own classrooms.
- **The school's instructional leaders should highlight excellent teaching practices already in place at the school and encourage additional staff participation in mentoring and classroom inter-visitation.** In class visits, the IIT observed a few examples of excellent teaching practice. For example, in one grade six math class and in a

grade seven ELA class, the IIT saw: high levels of student engagement and independent work; effective peer sharing and small group learning; use of groups that worked collaboratively to solve problems; clear learning objectives; study of complex text; and, high expectations for rigorous student thinking. However, these practices were not prevalent in the school. School documents and information from staff interviews indicate that plans for building on the good teaching practices, such as through mentoring or classroom inter-visitations appear to be in place. Mentoring by strong teachers and visitation to their classes could provide other teachers with more exposure to effective teaching practices.

- **The ILT and the principal should lead an effort to improve student engagement and classroom management by examining current successes and challenges.** While IIT members witnessed limited student engagement and mild disruption in most classrooms, there were exceptions. For instance, whenever the principal accompanied an IIT observer, the IIT observer recorded no behavioral or classroom management issues. At the same time, in these IIT observations, student engagement varied from low to high, and did not appear to be influenced by the principal’s presence or absence. The school’s ILT may benefit from an inquiry into how effective classroom management and higher levels of student engagement are being achieved in some classrooms. The results could help provide other teachers with strategies on how to create a productive and dynamic environment in their own classrooms.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Students shared that their peers do not treat one another with respect.** In interviews with the IIT, multiple students stated that they do not think their peers are respectful of one another. As examples, they cited fighting, bullying, and disruptions in class.
- **Teachers reported that they sometimes feel overwhelmed by trying to balance their obligations to teach rigorous academic content and tend to the complex social and emotional needs of their students.** In discussions with the team, teachers acknowledged that student learning depends on the social and emotional well-being of their students; however, they also expressed the tremendous pressure they feel to focus on academic work. Two teachers cited low student performance levels, high stakes for the students, and their sense of professional ethics as strong motivators to stay focused on teaching and learning. But teachers also said that if their students do not have access to necessary emotional supports, some of which teachers must provide, they may not succeed academically. They further shared that they do not feel confident in their ability to help students who struggle with mental health issues.
- **Multiple teachers expressed a desire for more training on how to support students who have Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), and they suggested that all teachers be trained to understand and effectively implement the plans.** Two teachers pointed out that nearly a third of the students have an IEP, and though most of the teachers do not have certification in special education, they all teach students who have IEPs. They understand that the effectiveness of IEPs and learning strategies for students with disabilities relies on multiple adults knowing and supporting the identified approach for each child. They suggested that all teachers in the building go through a form of training on how to support students with IEPs.
- **Parents endorsed the idea that each student in the school should have a mentor or other “trusted adult,” and students and teachers agreed.** Parents, students, and teachers agreed that many students would benefit from the support of a mentor or trusted adult. This idea came up in multiple conversations with parents, but it was also a steady theme in teacher and student conversations with the IIT. All three stakeholder groups cited the potential for this kind of caring adult presence in the life of a child, whether it be to address social and emotional needs or to offer the knowledge, practical problem-solving, support, and perspective that an attentive adult can provide.