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Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment
Final Report

Leadership and Systems

Curriculum

Instruction

Social-Emotional Learning

Family Engagement
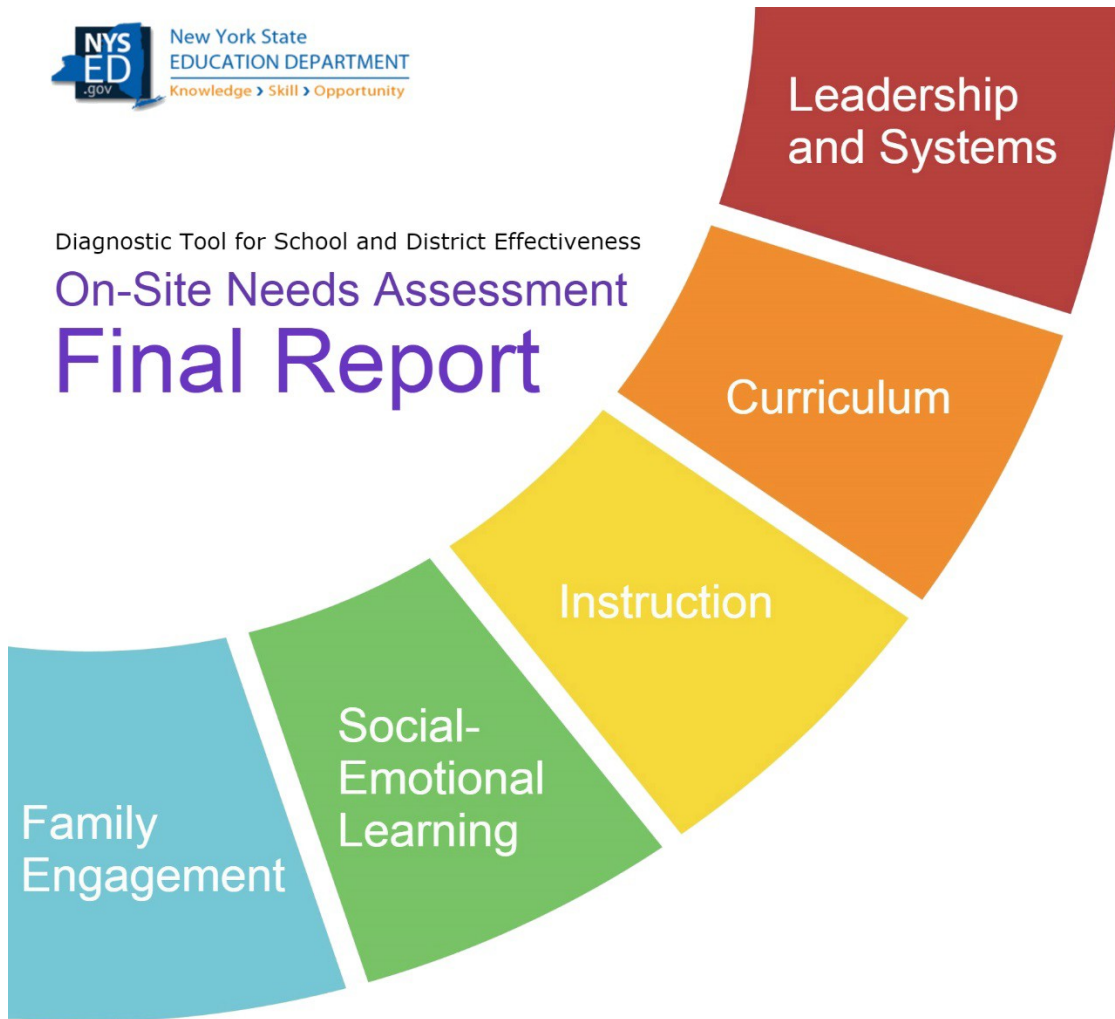
BEDS Code	342400011236
School Name	International High School for Health Sciences
School Address	48-01 90th Street, Queens, NY 11373
District Name	NYCDOE CSD 24
Principal	C. Anthony Finney
Dates of Visit	February 26 – 28, 2019

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:

High School Performance Indicators

Four Year Grad. Rate <67%	Composite Performance Achievement Level	Average of 4-, 5-, and 6-year Graduation Rate Levels	Combined Composite Performance Achievement and Graduation Rate Level	English Language Proficiency Level	Average ELA and Math Academic Progress Level	Chronic Absenteeism Level	College, Career, Civic, Readiness (CCCR) Level
Yes	1		1	3	1	1	1

International High School for Health Sciences serves 284 students from grades 9 through 12.

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 made 53 visits to 22 classrooms during the visit.
- The OEE visited 11 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, observation reports, teacher feedback, and student work.
- In advance of the visit, the school provided results of a student survey that 254 students (87 percent) completed.
- In advance of the visit, the school provided results of a staff survey that 26 staff members (100 percent) completed.
- In advance of the visit, the school provided results of a parent survey that 175 parents (63 percent) completed.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. During the 2018-19 school year, the school leaders, staff, and students further developed a positive and nurturing school environment. Students and parents shared that they consider the school staff their second family and that the feeling of support and caring is pervasive throughout the school. The Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) observed students helping each other in almost every classroom, and teachers shared that they help and support each other as well. The IIT found that members of the school community exhibited aspects of the school's core values – dignity, collaboration, communication, and service. During the visit, the team observed caring and respectful interactions between students and between students and adults.

2. To enhance student learning and address student needs, during the 2018-19 school year, the school updated its plan for students completing inquiry-based long-term projects. In grades nine and ten, students complete inquiry-based projects in preparation for their more challenging graduation worthy projects in grades eleven and twelve. Students complete graduation projects in each core content area – English language arts (ELA), social studies, science, and math. Successfully completing these four projects exempts the students from having to take all Regents exams except for the grade ten Algebra and grade eleven English exams. Teacher teams prepare a comprehensive guide to help students complete their projects. The guide includes a detailed description of all the project components and a timeline with due dates for completing the various elements of the project. Teacher mentors meet weekly with small groups of students to guide them through the completion process, and teacher panels evaluate the projects based on the State's rubric. Although topics are selected by teachers, the work is based on the students' in-depth research.

3. To enhance collaboration and school improvement efforts, the school leaders effectively implemented distributive leadership by creating 17 teams and committees that teachers serve on. Teachers, who serve on multiple teams and committees, shared that they are empowered by the high level of collaboration and by participating in making school-wide decisions. During discussions with the IIT, teachers also shared that they respect the school leaders' judgment and appreciate the feedback they receive after classroom visits.

4. For the 2018-19 school year, the school is continuing with and building on a sequence of courses in Career and Technical Education (CTE) for the health professions that were developed over the past two years. Students enroll in a survey course, followed by an anatomy course, culminating in the medical assistant course, and a health internship in grade eleven. During the on-site visit, students appeared to be engaged and motivated in the CTE classes, where they sometimes wore white lab coats, and worked on dummies to apply what they were learning about the human anatomy. Students shared their interest in pursuing a career in health services, while others reported a definite commitment to pursuing a career in the health field, first as a physician's assistant, and then as a doctor, for example. In another class, the teacher provided students with a rubric to self-assess their work and to evaluate other students' work. During a medical assistant class, for example, one student remarked to a classmate while the student was administering the varicella vaccination, that the student did not place the cotton ball between the two fingers of the nondominant hand.

5. During the current school year, the school leaders expanded the use of restorative practices to address student disciplinary incidents. The assistant principal shared that there were two suspensions from September 2018 through January 2019, compared to six for the same period in the prior school year. Guidance counselors and staff reported that they address the underlying issues that cause the student to act out, rather than merely respond in a punitive manner. Students in their focus groups shared that disciplinary incidents and conflicts between students are mediated by different staff members, most frequently by a guidance counselor. In addition, students in advisory classes led circle discussions on such topics as managing their anger effectively, creating a life map of significant life events, and addressing obstacles that are preventing them from being the best they can be. School leaders and staff reported that these discussions increased self-awareness and contributed to students' positive interactions with other members of the school community.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **School leaders will need to ensure that teachers understand the importance of developing a sense of urgency for school improvement** Although school leaders noted that they have articulated a sense of urgency for school improvement, the ITT learned that not all teachers have adopted the importance of embracing the sense of urgency to better enable the school to achieve its goals and improve student achievement. For example, during discussions with the IIT about different teaching practices that might improve student learning, one teacher commented that we have it all together, and another noted that we are doing okay. Going forward, school leaders should continue to communicate their sense of urgency and prioritize certain teaching practices to improve student learning and increase the four-year graduation rate. The IIT learned that every June, the school evaluates the effectiveness of its teams and committees for the past school year and makes strategic decisions to improve structures in place that support academic success. In the future, it is recommended that part of that evaluation include an assessment of how the committees and teams' work has improved teaching practices and impacted student learning.

- **School leaders need to develop School Comprehensive Educational Plan (SCEP) goals that include identification, expansion, and improvement of teachers' use of specific teaching practices.** The team found that although the school set realistic SCEP goals and met its timetables, the goals did not focus on identifying and improving particular instructional practices. For example, the school's students are all English language

learners (ELLs), yet the IIT saw minimal use of adaptations in classrooms to make content more accessible to students of different language proficiency levels. Going forward, the school leadership should focus on and provide support in teachers' use of scaffolds and adaptations to address the diverse language needs of students and include it as a goal in the school's 2019-20 SCEP.

- **The school leaders need to develop a system to collect, track, and analyze attendance data to provide timely targeted supports for chronically absent students.** The team found that the school has established an effective system for students' completing graduation worthy projects; however**,** this type of focused attention toward developing a system to address other school needs has not been evenly applied. The school, for example, has not addressed the 35 percent chronic absentee rate with the same specificity of incremental steps. While all grades eleven and twelve students have a mentor to guide them through the project process, individual chronic absentees do not have case managers assigned to coordinate, monitor, and evaluate the school's efforts to improve their attendance.

- **The school leaders should consistently monitor the school's teams and committees use of data in relation to specific teaching practices that improve student learning.** The school's many teams and committees have given increased voice to staff and empowered them to take ownership for schoolwide decisions. Some teams need additional support in the use of data to inform strategic decisions to improve student learning. For example, the IIT found that teachers and students generally did not know students' language proficiency levels as measured by the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT). School leaders indicated that the Internationals Network of Public Schools does not consider NYSESLAT scores to be a primary measure to use. They noted that the school has not used these data to identify students who have not made sufficient progress or regressed in English language acquisition to inform instructional decisions that better address their needs.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **The school leadership should ensure that the school's limited professional development (PD) time is aligned with student performance outcomes.** Although the school leaders have implemented a network of interconnected committees and teams**,** the IIT found, for example, that the school's use of the Monday afternoon extended sessions for team meetings has limited the time available for PD activities. The IIT learned that approximately one-half of the Monday after-school extended sessions is devoted to PD activities that are typically organized and presented by various committees. The other half is devoted to committee and team meetings. In addition, the PD presented by the various teacher groups are on topics of their choosing. Thus, teachers may not choose to explore needed training on topics such as using data to inform planning and instruction, adapting instructional activities to students' different language proficiency levels, and increasing opportunities for student discussion.

- **School leaders will need to effectively monitor teachers' use of extended instructional periods.** The IIT learned that teachers do not always effectively use the extended periods, and the school leaders have not consistently monitored the use of this time. Instructional periods last between 50 and 54 minutes, as compared to the typical 40 to 44 minutes in most secondary schools. The IIT found that the lengthened periods are especially useful when students are working on their inquiry-based long-term projects. However, due to some teachers' pacing of lessons, the IIT observed students continuing to work on do nows midway through the period, and there was a lack of closure activities at the end of the period. The team found limited evidence of school leaders monitoring teachers' use of this extended time.

- **School leadership should consistently monitor the implementation of the school's mission to help non-English speaking students acquire English language skills.** School leaders have communicated the school's core values—dignity, collaboration, communication, and service —to the school community, and the IIT found that most teachers and students were able to articulate the school's core values. However, the team learned that part of the school's mission that includes helping new non-English speaking students acquire English language skills, has not been addressed effectively. Staff, for example, are not using English language proficiency data to inform lesson planning and classroom activities. In addition, based on classroom visits, the IIT noted that the school's reading classes do not teach students a developmental progression of English literacy skills. The IIT observed few instances of literacy instruction during reading periods. Students generally worked on the online Reading Plus assessment software, but the IIT did not find that teachers were using Reading Plus data to inform instructional decisions. In addition, students shared that they do not set annual goals for improving their English language skills.

- **The school leadership needs to identify and prioritize implementing specific teaching practices to improve student learning.** The team found that the school leaders have emphasized instructional leadership and developed a walkthrough tool to record and track teacher practices. However, they need to identify specifically which teaching practices would be most effective for the 100 percent limited English proficient student population. The school leaders should share identified practices with teachers, look for them during classroom visits, track them on their spreadsheet, and provide feedback and support based on their visits. Teachers should also include these practices in the informal support they provide when they meet with teachers as well as when they visit their colleagues' classrooms.

- **The school leaders' feedback to teachers should consistently include specific action steps to improve instruction.** Teachers shared that they respect the school leaders' instructional expertise and find their feedback insightful. School leaders indicated that they do not always visit classrooms with the purpose of observing specific teaching practices and provide feedback on those practices. Instead, feedback can be given on any aspect of the lesson and is generally informal. Recommendations made in the observation reports viewed by the IIT did not include next steps with a return visit date to observe whether the teacher implemented the school leader's suggestions and to assess the quality of that implementation.

- **School leadership should develop a formal intervisitation process that identifies specific teaching practices that promote improved student learning.** Teachers shared that they open their classrooms to their colleagues and can freely observe others or be observed. However, the team learned that the informal nature of the teacher support system does not focus on highlighting effective teaching practices. Instead, teachers often select classrooms to visit based on their relationships, and not because the observed teacher was identified as mastering specific teaching practices, such as teaching students literacy skills and promoting student discussion through open-ended questions and prompts. The IIT found that these aspects of instruction were areas of need during its classroom visits.

Learning at the School

- **Teachers need to provide adaptations, scaffolding, and other supports for students of different English language proficiency levels.** The IIT found that teachers typically grouped students heterogeneously, which is part of the school's philosophy, as it allows students at higher levels to help students who need assistance. However, some students shared that they are called on too frequently to assist classmates and would like

additional opportunities to attempt more challenging work. The IIT observed only two teachers providing leveled instruction by giving students content at more than one level. In one class, for example, the teacher appeared to provide reading activities at different levels – Beginner pages 1-2, Intermediate pages 1-4, Advanced pages, 1-8. However, the intermediate and advanced groups were assigned more pages to read without increasing the complexity of the text. In most classes, all students studied the same content, completed the same processes, and produced the same products. Going forward, teachers should provide students with learning activities more closely aligned with their English language proficiency levels.

- **Teachers should focus on vertically aligning the curriculum in departments so that structured skill development can occur across content areas.** Teachers reported that they would like to know what their colleagues are teaching in their subject areas at other grade levels. The team found that departments meet on a monthly basis but have not developed curriculum maps to help teachers identify and plan the sequence of units studied at each grade level. Teachers noted that greater vertical coherence would help teachers better prepare students for the demands of the upper grades. The team learned that students in grades nine and ten are looped with the same teachers for two years and receive high levels of support that does not always adequately prepare them to work more independently in completing their graduation worthy projects.

- **Teachers need to integrate learning and language objectives into classroom activities.** The IIT noted during classroom visits that learning objectives or the focus of the lessons were not always referenced during the lesson or at the end of the lesson. Most teachers typically included language objectives in lesson plans; however, they did not usually incorporate tasks into their lessons that developed students' English language skills.

- **Teachers need to use formative assessments during their lessons to determine the level of student learning.** During classroom visits, the team observed that teachers typically did not gauge student learning during the lesson. New content was presented without knowing if students understood what was previously taught. Typically, teachers asked students, any questions or do you understand? Students did not usually respond. The IIT found that some lesson plans mentioned exit tickets although few were seen in use during classroom visits. Going forward, teachers could measure student learning during lessons by having students agree or disagree with a classmate's answer by a show of hands, for example, or using other methods that will provide the teacher with qualitative information.

- **Teachers should regularly provide lessons that promote thoughtful discussions with peers and student ownership of learning.** The IIT observed that in most classes, although students collaborated and assisted each other, they did not often take part in thoughtful discussions. There were a few notable exceptions, such as in grade twelve student-led Socratic seminars and in student-led circle discussions in advisory. Teachers indicated that due to students limited English language proficiency, students may lack the confidence to participate in class discussions. The team found that students were not typically provided with prompts and open-ended questions to spur discussion. In addition, teachers were not observed modeling for their students how to participate in discussions, how to logically advance an opinion, how to support opinions with evidence, or how to build on classmates' statements.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Students in grades nine and ten shared that they wanted an opportunity to interact with upperclassmen and present their long-term projects to them.**   Students shared that they wanted to be better prepared for the

demands of developing graduation worthy projects and wanted grades eleven and twelve students to evaluate their projects and provide them with feedback. They also wanted to have the opportunity to speak with upperclassmen about all the coursework in grades eleven and twelve and how to be better prepared for college.

- **Students reported that they would like courses and other opportunities to learn about their classmates' cultures.** Students stated that they enjoyed being in a school with students from over 25 different countries and expressed a strong interest in learning about those students' cultures. Students explore their own cultures in some classes, such as creating mandalas and posters in art depicting key facets of their home culture. However, students noted that that there should be more opportunities to expand their understanding and appreciation of other students' cultural heritage.

- **Teachers stated that there should be a liaison between the attendance team and the Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE) committee.** Teachers stated that there are likely SLIFE students who are also chronic or long-term absentees, and the two committees should cross-reference this information. They noted that both teams would then be able to address these students' attendance issues in a unified and effective manner by developing strategic action plans together.

- **Teachers reported that the articulation process between grades ten, eleven, and twelve should be improved.** They stated that because students are looped in grades nine and ten, their grade ten teachers know them well from the prior year. However, there is not a similar level of awareness of student needs between grades ten through twelve. Teachers shared that if they had an opportunity to learn about their students before having them in their classes, they would be better prepared to provide instruction tailored to their needs, and they would also be aware of personal issues the students may have.

- **Parents shared that they would like the school to offer students foreign language courses and more electives.** Parents reported that they would like students to have an opportunity to study second languages, either their home language or another foreign language. Although parents noted that they were pleased with the school's course progression in the health professions, they were disappointed that the school did not have additional electives.

- **Parents shared that the school should help students in grades nine and ten to begin preparing for life after high school.** Parents shared that students in grades nine and ten should be better prepared for college and life after high school. They suggested the school take grades nine and ten students on college trips and have the students begin to learn about aspects of the college application process. They noted that guidance counselors should begin helping students think about their college application essays and begin exploring which colleges might be best suited for them.