

Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

# Final Report



<b>BEDS Code</b>	342900011327
<b>School Name</b>	Eagle Academy for Young Men III
<b>School Address</b>	171-10 Linden Blvd, Jamaica, NY 11434
<b>District Name</b>	NYCDOE CSD 29
<b>Principal</b>	Cedric Hall
<b>Dates of Visit</b>	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	3

## 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 52 visits to 34 classrooms during the visit.
- The OEE visited ten 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 student survey that 321 students (64 percent) completed.
- In advance of the visit, the school provided results of a staff survey that 20 staff members (57 percent) completed.
- In advance of the visit, the school provided results of a parent survey that 120 parents (25 percent) completed.
- In advance of the visit, no staff members completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.

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

1. Staff and students shared that the principal has revived and re-energized the school's mission since his arrival one-and-a-half years ago. They also shared that the principal embodies the school mission to uplift young black men and serves as a role model for the students. The mission of Eagle Academy for Young Men III is based on clearly defined core values and beliefs that drive the missions of the Eagle Academy network of schools. The school's core values are expressed in the acronym CLEAR, which stands for **C**onfidence, **L**eadership, **E**ffort, **A**cademic Excellence, and **R**esilience. The principal reintroduced Eagle Academy elements that had been discontinued, such as daily town halls, house advisory periods, and rituals. During the IIT's classroom visits, the principal came upon an unruly group of students waiting to enter a classroom. He loudly recited the first line of "Invictus," by William Ernest Henley, and the students immediately responded with the second line. As they lined up and entered the room, the principal and students alternated loudly reciting lines of the poem until its completion. Reciting the poem moved the students' attention from waiting to enter the room to connecting powerfully with the principal and the message of the poem. The principal shared that the choral recitation of "Invictus" was an Eagle Academy ritual that he had revived.
2. Teachers and students shared that the principal began healing problematic relationships that existed when he became principal. Teachers shared that they were especially impressed with the way he handled the most skeptical staff members and won some of them over. Teachers and students added that he is a powerful presence and a man of his word, which engenders trust in his leadership.
3. The principal made key human talent decisions to help move the school forward. The principal replaced seven of 38 teachers prior to the 2018-19 school year in an effort to hire staff who believe in the Eagle Academy mission and possess a sense of urgency for school improvement. He also increased the number of scholar coordinators to six. Both teachers and students said that the scholar coordinators were key to creating an improved school climate by developing relationships with students, helping them through difficulties, and implementing restorative practices. The principal also assigned a peer collaborative teacher from the school staff to help establish model classrooms.

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

### Systems for Improvement

- **School leaders need to view the School Comprehensive Education Plan (SCEP) as a living document tied to school improvement that should be adjusted as the year progresses.** Although the SCEP's specific, measurable, ambitious, results-oriented, and timely (SMART) goals are clear, none of the SCEP goals contain interim benchmarks to determine progress. Goals for Tenets 3, 4, and 5 have mid-year benchmarks, although some of the listed evaluation measures could not be used to evaluate progress or the quality of implementation. For example, Tenets 2 and 6 contain June 2019 goals for which progress could not be determined until August 2019. An additional goal projected a 30 percent increase in teacher-reported quality of professional development (PD) activities. However, this measure will not be available until the school environmental survey results are released in August 2019. Thus, the school cannot make adjustments during the school year based on the results. Going forward, the school leaders should create measures of progress and benchmarks that can be analyzed and adjusted as the school year unfolds.

- **School leaders need to develop systems to implement and evaluate school practices.** The school does not currently have a cohesive action plan to improve teacher practices, student achievement, social-emotional learning, student attendance and lateness, and parent and family engagement. The school leaders set goals in the SCEP and established some mid-year benchmarks. However, progress is not routinely evaluated so that adjustments can be made to these goals. School leaders meet weekly, but they have not focused on developing systems that they can use to continually evaluate school practices and to make strategic adjustments when progress toward goals is not being made. Going forward, school leaders should establish systems that include goals, action plans with benchmarks, regular monitoring and evaluation, and adjustments based on strategic analysis.
- **All members of the school community should support the Eagle Academy mission and have a sense of urgency for school improvement.** The Eagle Academy mission is based on clearly defined core values and beliefs that drive the missions of the schools in the Eagle Academy network. However, the principal shared that staff hired in the one-and-a-half years prior to his arrival do not all share the same sense of urgency for school improvement and understanding of the Eagle Academy mission. For example, in discussions with the team, some teachers shared that the school was doing “fine.”
- **Monday and Tuesday afternoon extended sessions should be used to their maximum effect.** Teachers shared that they currently have little input into the selection of topics and presentations for the 80-minute Monday afternoon PD sessions. The principal stated that he will be seeking greater teacher input into the planning and presenting of the PD sessions. The principal shared that the 75-minute Tuesday afternoon session is largely unstructured and that teachers often use the time for parent engagement activities. He acknowledged that a portion of the time could be used for common planning, lesson study, and other professional work. The principal added that although teachers maintain logs to record their outreach efforts with students’ families, the logs are not frequently reviewed.
- **The school should offer increased supports for its lowest achieving students.** Although the school provides some academic supports, such as after-school homework help, most struggling students do not receive continual support to help them succeed. The IIT observed few instances in which students received instruction that was adapted to meet their diverse needs. Teachers have access to their students’ Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) via the Special Education Student Information System (SEGIS). However, teacher usage of SEGIS is not regularly monitored. The team observed some individual students who were having difficulty receive in-class assistance but saw no evidence of instructional activities that were planned or adapted based on individual learning needs or annual goals. Some students shared that while their teachers are available to help them during lunch or after school, contact is typically initiated by the student.
- **All middle school staff should use data to evaluate student progress and school practices.** The principal and guidance counselor shared that the high school support staff have tools to track students’ credit accumulation, academic performance, and achievement on Regents exams. Currently, the middle school staff have no similar tools and do not systematically track or evaluate their students’ progress. Although the middle school staff have access to Skedula to record assignments and grades, some students shared that the student portal, PupilPath, is not kept up-to-date, and some staff shared that the school is not using all the component capabilities of Skedula. For example, although the principal hired six scholar coordinators to manage student discipline and incorporate restorative practices, staff shared that the actions of the coordinators are not regularly recorded in Skedula. As a result, when a student has been referred for disciplinary reasons, the teacher does not know what actions, if any, were taken. Additionally, although some students cut class and

go to the gym, there is presently no system in place that uses data to evaluate and address the issue of students cutting class.

## Leadership and Organization at the School

- **The principal should provide teachers with additional opportunities for collaboration.** The IIT's review of the school schedule and conversations with school staff revealed that the middle school teachers do not have common planning time embedded in their programs. Middle school teachers rarely have opportunities to collaborate and have frequent conversations about improving teaching practices. Additionally, they are not provided the opportunity to review and discuss student work and establish expectations for each content area by grade level. The principal selected a new peer collaborative teacher to work with individual teachers but, according to teachers, the impact of this position is only beginning to be realized. In addition, special education teachers, general education teachers, and paraprofessionals who comprise integrated collaborative teacher teams are not provided the opportunity to plan together. Thus, many teacher teams do not have time to coordinate instructional strategies and practices, such as each professional regularly taking an active role in instruction.
- **The principal needs to maximize all available resources.** The principal shared that when he arrived at the school in September 2017, he inherited a \$250,000 deficit that is still being repaid; this deficit has limited the principal's discretionary funds. The school received the services of four district coaches in the areas of special education, math, English language arts (ELA), and social studies. The team learned that the coaches were mainly assigned to work with teachers in the high school and not the middle school where their services were most needed. Although teachers shared that they need more time to collaborate, the school has not taken advantage of the Tuesday afternoon 75-minute extended session to conduct various professional activities. Going forward, a portion of the Tuesday afternoon extended sessions should be used for professional activities such as lesson study, common planning, and other collaborative work.
- **The school's PD needs to expand teachers' instructional practices.** Although 80 minutes during every Monday's extended session are devoted to PD and team meetings, interviewed teachers had difficulty recalling in-house PD sessions that strengthened their practices. Teacher teams also meet voluntarily during shared preparation periods during the week in order to apply PD to classroom practice, but the principal said that these meetings are not frequently monitored. Teachers said they would like more input into the school's PD activities; however, the school and teacher leaders shared that the school's PD committee is not currently functioning.
- **School leaders' feedback to teachers should be normed for quality and consistency of expectations.** Teachers shared that their classrooms are visited approximately once every two weeks by a school leader. Teachers said that they welcome school leaders' feedback and that the feedback they receive is generally useful and actionable. However, teachers do not receive feedback after every classroom visit. Teachers noted that they would like to be visited more frequently and receive feedback shortly after the visits. The principal shared that he and the assistant principals have not conducted classroom visits together in order to norm their expectations and standards for the quality of teaching practices. Going forward, school leaders should develop or use an existing walkthrough tool to record their observations and create a system to document their notes in order to track and evaluate teacher practices, as well as provide timely feedback to teachers.

- **Teachers should develop lessons that challenge students and make them enthusiastic about their learning.** Most lessons observed by the IIT did not challenge students. Few open-ended questions were asked in which more than one answer could be considered. Students in most classes gave short, fact-based answers to comprehension questions. One-word answers to questions were accepted and students were rarely asked to give answers in complete thoughts or sentences. Lessons contained very few thought-provoking questions that required students to synthesize or analyze information and reach conclusions. Lessons were mostly teacher-dominated, with limited interaction between the teacher and students and even less student-to-student interaction. For example, a “do now” activity in a history class required students to answer the question, “Major political changes occur without a revolution. Do you agree or disagree?” When a student wrote “the industrial revolution,” the reason for the student’s answer was not pursued and an opportunity missed for an interesting exchange. Despite the school’s priority to have students write in all subject areas, the team observed few opportunities for students to write more than short answers in their classes.
- **Teachers need to connect the curriculum to students’ lives to enrich their learning experiences.** For example, a grade seven science class was studying the concepts of force, motion, and distance. These concepts could have been connected to the students’ lives to make them real for the students. Additionally, the topics were presented using traditional classroom lecture techniques without drawing from the students’ life experiences. In another class, students preparing to read Steinbeck’s *Of Mice and Men* were taking part in a three corners activity. They were asked to respond to the statement, “Killing another human being is intolerable and should be punished.” Students then stood in one of three sections of the room, labeled “Yes,” “No,” and “I don’t know,” and gave a rationale for their answer in a whole-class discussion. Many students spoke at the same time and some could not be heard. Some students were making a case for “Sometimes” as the correct answer based on situations they had experienced. The nuanced “Sometimes” answers that were based on the students’ lives were not incorporated into the activity to use them as a springboard for a deeper discussion. Small group discussions would have allowed all students to share their thoughts before participating in a whole-class discussion. Going forward, students should be given more choice in their assignments. Students could then conduct in-depth study on topics of interest to them. For example, students could choose a topic to research for a long-term project.
- **Teachers need to incorporate social-emotional learning strategies to ensure that the learning environment meets the needs of all students.** Although four of the six scholar coordinators have been trained in restorative practices, few classrooms integrated these practices or addressed social-emotional learning. Students have a daily house advisory period in their schedules, which is an Eagle Academy element that the principal reintroduced. Team members who visited the house advisory period found, and students confirmed, that the quality of social-emotional activities varies greatly depending on the teacher.
- **Teachers need to regularly use formative assessments during lessons to determine the level of student learning.** The use of formative assessment is mentioned as a school priority. However, classroom visits indicated that student learning is not routinely gauged during the lesson. In most classrooms, new content was presented without any assessment of whether students understood what was previously taught. Typically, teachers asked, “Does anyone have any questions?” or “Do you understand?” to which most students did not respond. Exit tickets were visible in a few classrooms and some lesson plans; the team observed their use during one classroom visit. The IIT also saw little evidence of data being used to plan lessons and classroom activities. For example, students were rarely grouped purposefully in any observed classrooms. Instead,

students were grouped by proximity. Going forward, teachers should measure student learning by having students agree or disagree with a classmate's answer by a show of hands or other methods that will provide the teacher with qualitative information during lessons.

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

- **The parents would like the school to offer students more electives.** Parents stated that they were disappointed that the barbering and computer coding classes were discontinued due to the departure of two teachers. Students interviewed by the team agreed that they would like greater variety and choice in the elective courses the school offers. Parents added that there is a schism between parents who emphasize academics and those who emphasize athletics; however, no other constituents confirmed this divide.
- **Students would like a greater voice in school decisions and in the classroom.** Students shared that they would like to speak at the daily morning town hall meetings and lead school rituals. Students also stated that there is no student government and said they would like an opportunity to meet and share ideas with the principal. Students expressed disappointment that their role in making classroom decisions is small, and they said they would like an opportunity to make choices about topics they would like to study. Students added that they would like open access to the library during lunch and access to the gym when they arrive at school in the morning.
- **Students would like better relationships with many of their teachers.** Students said that about half of their relationships with teachers are not respectful and supportive. Some students shared that some teachers do not respond to requests for extra help and added that some teachers do not adjust instruction for struggling students.
- **Teachers would like interim assessment data available closer to the time of the administration of the assessment.** The school administers interim Eagle network assessments three times during the year in September, January, and June. However, teachers said that the results of interim assessments are sent to them weeks after the assessment is administered. Teachers stated that although the school has a scanner to scan student answer sheets, the school is dependent on the Eagle network to analyze the data and send reports back to the school for teachers to use in planning and instruction. Teachers shared that they typically receive these reports over a month after the administration of the assessments, and the lack of timeliness makes the data less meaningful.