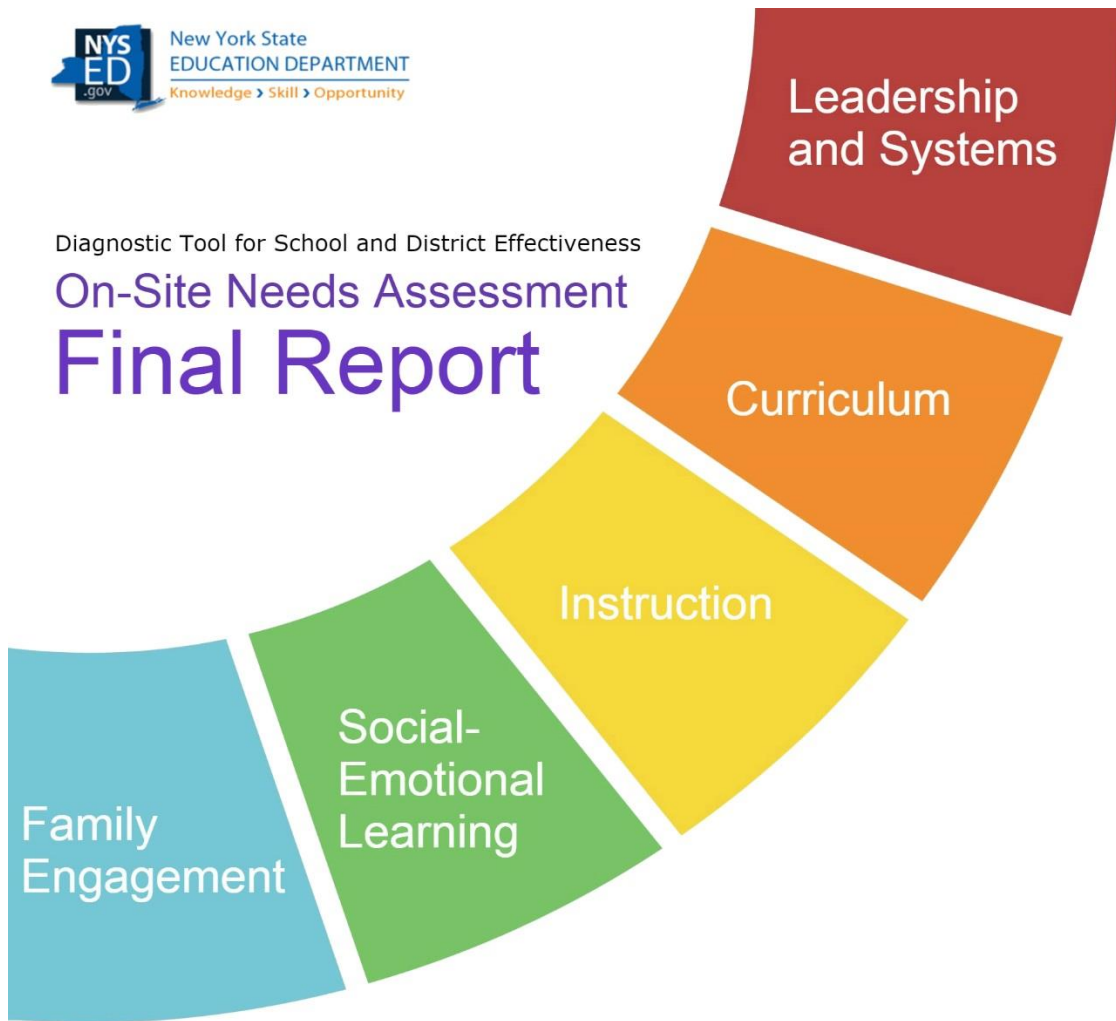


Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

Final Report



BEDS Code	342900010289
School Name	Queens United Middle School
School Address	229-02 137 th Avenue, Springfield Gardens, New York 11413
District Name	NYCDOE CSD 29
Principal	Tosha-Lyn Francis
Dates of Visit	March 12-14, 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	2

Queens United Middle School serves 172 students in grades six through 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 19 classrooms during the visit.
- The OEE visited five 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 175 students (89 percent) completed.
- In advance of the visit, the school provided results of a staff survey that 18 staff members (100 percent) completed.
- In advance of the visit, the school provided results of a parent survey that 54 parents (31 percent) completed.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. The principal contracted the Box Out Bullying program to provide bullying prevention services beginning in November 2018. All students have now begun participating in classroom presentations that will continue throughout the year. Students reported that the program is fun and helpful because it uses interactive theatre techniques to teach them how to identify bullying and provides them with proactive strategies for prevention. While leaders, teachers, and students stated that some incidents of bullying still occur, all stakeholders reported a reduction in the severity of these incidents. Students reported that because of the program, they are more likely to seek out adult intervention to diffuse problems before they escalate into something more serious. A review of student surveys administered by the program revealed that students feel safer and more empowered than in the past.
2. The principal purchased Skedula, an online platform that enables parents to access student grades daily and provides an additional vehicle for home-school communication. The program was rolled out for teachers in September 2018, and parent training and access codes were provided at the September Curriculum Night. To support the use of the tool by families who were not present at this event, instructions and access codes were mailed out and back-packed home with students. The system was introduced and explained to parents again during the first Parent-Teacher conference. In addition, instructions and access codes were attached to report cards at the end of both the first and second marking periods. The parent coordinator continues to reach out to families to increase usage. The principal monitors utilization and while initially only 30 percent of parents had logged in, numbers continue to increase. Currently, 50 percent of parents are using the program. Interviewed parents reported that they like the Pupil Path feature of the program and stated that it has made it easier for them to track their children's performance.
3. The principal is utilizing resources to ensure that students have access to technology. Upon her arrival to the school, the principal discovered that the 250 laptop computers in the technology room were not in working order. This severely limited student access to the online instructional programs the school had purchased, such as Max Scholar and iReady. The principal hired a computer technician who worked over the winter break to repair and reconfigure the salvageable computers. As of January 2019, 60 laptops had been refurbished enabling the administration of the new iReady baseline assessments. In addition, these computers are currently being used to implement the Max Scholar reading program and are available for classroom use. The technician is continuing to repair salvageable machines and is working with the principal to purchase additional materials to increase student access to technology.
4. The principal and newly hired parent coordinator have established open lines of communication with families and encourage them to work in partnership with the school. Parents reported that the new principal has adopted an open-door policy that affords them easy access to her and the parent coordinator by telephone, email, or in person. In addition, the principal re-established the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) in September 2018. Parents reported that the principal's changes in policies have renewed families' trust, and they believe the school is becoming safer. A review of attendance data shows that in 2018-19, fewer students have left the school mid-year as compared to previous school years.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **The School Comprehensive Education Plan (SCEP) should be revised to reflect current initiatives.** The new principal was assigned in July 2018 and developed and submitted the required 2018-19 SCEP. However, the IIT found that the SCEP action plans are not being implemented as written, and the school is not on track to meet many of its identified goals. For example, a goal for student achievement stated that 100 percent of students would meet individualized targets in ELA and math, as measured by the new iReady assessment program, but the lack of functioning technology impeded the timely implementation of the program. Although an initial baseline assessment was administered in December 2018, iReady is not currently being used to establish student goals or to provide strategic individualized interventions in either ELA or math. Some students reported that they occasionally use iReady at home, but iReady utilization and its impact on student achievement is not monitored. A second goal stated that all teachers would use Data Wise to track student progress and inform instruction. However, teacher interviews revealed that Data Wise was never introduced, and data-driven instruction has not been a schoolwide initiative. In the future, the principal should revise the SCEP to include goals, action plans, and short-interval benchmarks that are aligned to current initiatives. These plans should then be monitored and modified on a regular basis to ensure they are having a positive impact on student progress.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **School leaders should monitor the impact of common planning time on the development of lesson plans.** The principal reported that in 2018-19, at the request of the staff, common planning time was added to the schedule for all teachers. Although the principal provided teachers with a template and asked teachers to submit an agenda and minutes for all common planning meetings, the principal reported that these forms are often not submitted. As a result, school leaders do not have a written record of what takes place in most planning meetings. The assistant principal reported that she attended a few common planning meetings for one integrated co-teaching team (ICT), but this is not a regular practice. Although school leaders provided teachers with guidelines for lesson planning and sample plans to use as models, teacher lesson plans are not collected and reviewed regularly. Most lesson plans reviewed by the IIT lacked clear learning targets, rigorous tasks, scaffolds to support diverse learners, and clear assessment strategies.
- **The principal needs to communicate clear expectations for instruction.** Although the principal has developed a vision for the school, school leaders reported that the principal's vision and expectations are not understood by all teachers. Interviewed teachers reported that clear and consistent expectations for instruction have not been communicated. Although the principal has introduced new initiatives and programs such as Connected Mathematics 3 (CMP3), Passport, and Expeditionary Learning, teachers reported that they have received little follow-up to support the implementation of these initiatives. In addition, iReady and Khan Academy were introduced but never fully implemented. A review of the school's professional development (PD) calendar confirmed a lack of consistent support for these new programs.
- **The principal should develop a leadership model that fosters collaboration and clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of each administrator.** The assistant principal reported that there are no formal weekly administrators' meetings, and the lack of communication negatively impacts school leaders' coordination of

efforts. The assistant principal reported that the creation of the SCEP was not a shared responsibility and she could not articulate the school's specific goals or explain how school initiatives were selected. Interviews with both school leaders revealed that they do not share a coherent view of some school policies. For example, leaders offered different versions of the school grading policy and interim assessment plan. The IIT also found that there is no shared understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each administrator. For example, the principal reported that the assistant principal is responsible for the supervision of instruction. However, the assistant principal reported that she only supports and supervises ICT and humanities teachers. Although the principal identified the assistant principal as the primary instructional leader, the assistant principal stated that she did not participate in the creation of the PD calendar and could not confirm that the PD that has been provided supports all instructional initiatives or is aligned to teacher needs.

- **School leaders need to collect and analyze data about current teacher practices to inform school improvement decisions.** Interviews with school leaders revealed a list of planning and instructional non-negotiables and expectations, and the principal reported that improving instructional practice is a schoolwide goal. However, frequent and regular classroom visits have not been conducted to support the implementation of these expectations or to inform the professional development of staff. A review of the Advance Measure of Teacher Practice (MOTP) Summary Report revealed that only five teachers have been observed thus far this school year. Of the 48 required observations to date, only nine have been conducted. A calendar for class visits has not been developed, and a plan for which leader will observe which teachers has not been established. Some teachers reported that they have never been observed. Teachers who had been observed stated that they did not receive timely feedback following the visit.

Learning at the School

- **ICT teachers need to collaborate with long-term substitutes and math tutors to plan and deliver effective math instruction.** Currently the school is without a licensed math teacher and has hired long-term substitutes to fill the vacancies, but none of the substitute teachers have a math background. In the absence of permanent staff, ICT teachers have been assigned to co-teach math lessons, and the principal contracted with Tutors on Wheels to provide math specialists to assist with instruction. Through interviews with ICT teachers and observations of math classes, the IIT found that plans to deliver instruction and manage classroom behavior are not being developed collaboratively. In many math lessons observed, the IIT saw no evidence of a strategic co-teaching model and direct math instruction was not provided. The new CMP3 math curriculum was not being implemented in any of the math classes observed. ICT teachers reported that they participated in one CMP3 workshop in the fall, but the tutors and substitute teachers have not received any training in the program. While co-planning time is provided for teacher teams, the IIT saw no evidence of strategic planning for math instruction, and in several observed math classes, there were no formal lesson plans. In many math classes, students were assigned low-level worksheets created by the tutors. Interviewed students reported that behavior in math classes is often disruptive and lessons are rarely completed in the allotted period. In one observed class of 22 students, one teacher worked with a group of five students, a second teacher worked with three students, and the remaining 14 students engaged in loud conversations and distracting off-task behaviors. In the future, the principal will need to ensure that ICT teachers, long-term substitutes, and math tutors collaboratively plan and deliver math lessons that meet the learning needs of all students.

- **Teachers should design lessons that include in-the-moment monitoring of student learning.** While the principal reported that teachers should assess student learning throughout each lesson and use this data to adjust instruction, the IIT saw few checks for understanding during the lessons observed. While some lesson plans indicated that students would submit an exit ticket, the IIT saw only one exit ticket used at the end of the lesson. The IIT saw limited use of strategies to clarify understanding, such as thumbs-up/thumbs down indicators, trackers to record student responses, and probing questions. In the future, school leaders should make in-the-moment monitoring the primary focus for a cycle of walkthroughs and observations and should concentrate their feedback on improving the professional practice of teachers in this area.
- **Teachers should create lesson plans that include clear learning objectives, rigorous tasks, and differentiation to meet the learning needs of all students.** The principal reported that at the beginning of 2018-19 she provided teachers with guidelines for lesson planning that included non-negotiable elements, such as clearly articulated learning objectives, high-level cognitive tasks, differentiation and grouping aligned to student needs, on-going assessments, and opportunities for student choice. However, a system to collect and review teachers' plans and provide feedback to guide improvements has not been established. While there were some exceptions, most lesson plans reviewed by the IIT lacked clear learning targets, rigorous tasks, and scaffolds to support diverse learners. Some plans contained only the topic of the lesson, such as mean, median, and mode, and included no description of planned activities beyond the completion of a worksheet.
- **Some teachers need additional support to effectively manage student behavior.** Although in some classes, the IIT observed teachers successfully implementing behavioral interventions, in other classes disruptive behavior continued despite attempts to address off-task behavior. In some classrooms, disruptive behaviors were not addressed at all. For example, in one classroom, an IIT member observed off-task students moving from table to table to converse with other students without any intervention. In another observed lesson, the teacher raised her voice to teach over student conversations. Interviewed students confirmed that poor classroom behavior is commonplace and frequently extends the time it takes to complete a single lesson.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Students would like more opportunities to be recognized.** Students told the IIT that while the school acknowledges students who make the honor roll and those who have excellent attendance, it provides few opportunities to celebrate other student achievements. Students stated that they would like to have an awards assembly during which students could be recognized for additional efforts, such as community service, leadership, independent use of iReady or Khan Academy, positive behaviors, or excellence in a specific subject area.
- **Students would like the school to do more to address negative student behavior.** Students stated that although they are beginning to learn how to prevent and resolve conflicts through the Box Out Bullying program, and episodes of physical altercations have decreased, inappropriate classroom behaviors continue to interfere with their learning. Students suggested that the school should have more serious consequences for students who engage in loud conversations, taunt teachers, and disrupt lessons.
- **Teachers need more support to implement new initiatives.** Teachers reported that multiple initiatives were introduced at the same time, and several of those initiatives never got beyond the initial rollout. For example, in the absence of math teachers, the principal created Khan Academy accounts for every student and posted tracking charts in the corridor. However, few students used the program and the tracking charts displayed contained little student data. New curriculum in ELA, social studies, and math were introduced in the fall but

teachers reported that their implementation was not supported with on-going professional development or frequent observations and feedback to teachers.

- **Teachers would like opportunities to provide input into school improvement decisions.** Interviewed teachers shared that they have few opportunities to collaborate with school leaders on schoolwide decisions and initiatives and stated that their opinions are not valued. While teachers said they have taken on several new projects this year, they expressed frustration with their limited ability to provide school leaders with feedback about the impact or effectiveness of these initiatives.
- **Parents would like training on the web-based programs available to students so that they can better support their children's learning.** Parents reported that the school has provided students with Khan Academy and iReady accounts. While they were aware that these intervention programs can be used from home, parents reported that many families are not skilled in using technology and do not understand how they can support their children and monitor their use of these tools. Parents would like the principal to offer snack and learn workshops, at times that are convenient to working parents, to teach families how to utilize and monitor these programs.