

Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

Final Report



BEDS Code	310300010076
School Name	P.S. 76 A. Philip Randolph
School Address	220 West 121 Street, New York, NY 10027
District Name	NYC CSD 3
Principal	Charles DeBerry
Dates of Visit	January 22-24, 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.

Information About The Visit

- P.S. 76 A Philip Randolph served 444 students in kindergarten through grade eight.
- 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 a total of 42 visits to 29 classrooms during the visit.
- The OEE visited nine 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 158 students (98 percent) completed.
- In advance of the visit, the school provided results of a staff survey that 31 staff members (91 percent) completed.
- In advance of the visit, the school provided results of a parent survey that 223 parents (65 percent) completed.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. Teachers, parents, and students all shared that they feel comfortable at the school because of its welcoming environment. The principal stated that he is proud of the trusting relationships he has helped to develop between school leaders and staff. Most students interviewed by the team shared that teachers care about their welfare and that they feel comfortable approaching them in times of need.
2. The principal, parents, and students reported that they are happy with the many community-based organizations (CBOs) that have brought additional resources, activities, and services to the school. The CBOs provide an after-school program that includes homework help, dinner, and many different clubs. Currently, over 300 of the school's 444 students participate in the after-school program. Harlem Children's Zone provides college students as tutors, and students participate in clubs such as drama, dance, and African music. In addition, CBOs oversee the school's football and lacrosse teams. Students said that the opportunity to participate in these athletic activities makes their school unique, and they are proud to be part of these teams.
3. The school has produced numerous principals and assistant principals. The school's two assistant principals were former teachers in the school who rose to positions of leadership. The principal stated that two of the

school's former assistant principals have become principals in other schools, and he took pride in having contributed significantly to the development of their leadership skills.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **School leaders need to develop systems to evaluate and improve school practices.** The school does not have a cohesive action plan to improve teacher practices, student achievement, social-emotional learning, student absenteeism and lateness, and parent and family engagement. Although the school leaders set goals in the School Comprehensive Education Plan (SCEP) and established mid-year benchmarks to measure progress toward those goals, they acknowledged that progress has not been evaluated regularly and results have not been analyzed to inform adjustments to the plan. Although school leaders meet weekly, there is no system to continually monitor and evaluate school practices and make strategic adjustments when progress is inadequate.
- **Although mid-year benchmarks have been established for the school's five SCEP goals, the goals should also include interim benchmarks by which to measure progress.** The school did not achieve the mid-year benchmarks for Tenets 2, 3, and 5, which focus on teacher practice and student attendance. However, data was not analyzed to determine why the school did not achieve its benchmarks or to inform strategic decisions. Data to measure the Tenet 4 goal regarding student math achievement was not yet available, and data for the Tenet 6 goal regarding parent engagement will not be available until after the March 2019 parent-teacher conferences. Parent and family engagement is evaluated on participation in parent-teacher conferences, and the principal stated that the data from November's conferences was meaningless as attendance was exceedingly low due to a surprise snowstorm. Because only one measure has been established for parent and family engagement, school leaders do not have adequate information to develop a deep understanding of how to improve in this area.
- **The school needs to coordinate activities and services from its many CBOs to maximize the benefit to students and families.** The principal shared that he has brought 20 CBOs into the school to provide additional services and supports for students and their families. Although staff, students, and parents reported that they consider the many CBOs to be a strength of the school, the principal shared that the school does not have a mechanism or system in place to coordinate and evaluate the many programs. Thus, there is no way to know which programs are more successful than others, which programs have the greatest impact on student achievement, and which programs' services overlap. Without coordination and evaluation, it is also difficult to determine if services are being duplicated for some students and families while others go unserved. Going forward, the principal should meet monthly with CBO and school support staff to coordinate the wealth of services and ensure that services are being provided to achieve the maximum benefit.
- **The school needs a comprehensive action plan to address student absenteeism and lateness.** Although the principal chairs the school's attendance team, which meets monthly, 49 percent of students are chronically absent, defined as absent ten percent or more of the time. Additionally, the IIT observed many students arriving late in the morning with some arriving as late at 10:30 a.m. Despite this data, the IIT found that there is no action plan in place to address student attendance and punctuality. Although the school has an attendance teacher and receives services from multiple CBOs, the IIT found that home visits are not conducted for students who are chronically absent. Going forward, the school should develop a comprehensive action

plan to address student attendance and lateness, and the attendance team should meet at least twice a month. Further, case managers should be assigned to individual students and teachers should call the homes of absent and late students during Tuesday afternoon parent engagement time.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **The principal should clearly communicate his core beliefs and values that drive his vision for the school.** The principal shared his core belief that “All students can learn with the right curriculum and teaching that engages them.” He added that the school’s core values appear on the school’s logo, “Explore, Excite, Excel.” When asked by the team, none of the school’s constituents articulated the core belief about student learning and only one staff member cited the core values listed on the school logo. There is no regular communication channel with families to share the school’s vision and mission and to inspire a sense of urgency to move the school forward. The principal shared that Monday afternoon extended sessions are not used to share his beliefs and values with the staff but acknowledged that doing so would be a meaningful practice.
- **School leaders and staff need to develop a sense of urgency to drive school improvement.** The principal shared that the school’s past rating of Good Standing may have lulled school leadership and staff into complacency. Although the principal stated that he sees the school’s new Comprehensive Support and Improvement rating as a wake-up call, a sense of urgency for school improvement has not been communicated, and the IIT found that staff buy-in to school improvement is minimal. Most staff and students communicated a sense of complacency about student achievement, attendance, social-emotional learning, and the school’s standing.
- **While the school provides support to its teachers through coaches and consultants, the principal should provide teachers with additional support.** The school receives services through an early grades’ literacy coach provided by the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) Central Office through Universal Literacy, and teachers shared that the coach is extremely helpful. Although the school has had a math coach in place for 16 years, there has been a steady decline in students’ math achievement as measured by the State math assessment. The principal shared that this year he added two outside math consultants to provide teachers with additional support. The early childhood math coach provides 40 days of service to teachers in kindergarten through grade three, and the upper grade math coach provides 20 days of service to teachers in grades four through eight. The school principal and teachers agreed that the teachers would benefit from receiving more support than the consultants are able to provide during their limited days of service. The principal shared that he would like to provide more teachers with targeted support to improve math instruction and the quality of student discourse which are two of the school’s current priorities. Going forward, the principal should consider adding a peer collaborative teacher position or instructional coach position to the school’s table of organization.

Learning at the School

- **Teachers should utilize classroom materials that are connected to students’ lives and adapted to their diverse needs.** The IIT did not observe any curriculum content that had been adapted based on student need. All students read the same material and completed the same products through the same processes. This was also true in special education and SETSS classes. Although paraprofessionals were present in some classrooms, the IIT did not observe activities being adapted to help students grasp content. The IIT saw no evidence of

leveled activities based on language proficiency, learning disability, or achievement levels. An IIT member observed an elementary student telling his teacher that he wanted to learn more about soccer. He was told that there are no books on soccer. However, the class has access to computers and a school library that may contain books on soccer. Interviewed students said they would like to take greater ownership of their learning by making decisions about assignments and choosing topics for long-term projects.

- **Teachers need to plan lessons that are student-centered and ask higher-level questions that cognitively challenge students and require students to think critically.** Although one of the school's priorities is to make thinking visible, most observed lessons were comprised of students giving short, fact-based answers to comprehension questions. The IIT heard very few thought-provoking questions that required students to synthesize or analyze information and reach conclusions. For example, students reading Kadir Nelson's book on slavery, *Heart and Soul*, were individually answering recall questions on a worksheet. The lesson missed an opportunity for a rich discussion on the human experience of slavery and how its effects can still be felt today. Most observed lessons were teacher-led with limited interaction between the teacher and students and even less interaction between students. The IIT observed very few student discussions or students building on their classmates' responses. Some teachers asked students to turn and talk, but their task was low-level, requiring them to answer a few fact-based questions. For example, students were asked to count the number of Skittles of various colors and give a sum. The IIT observed students using accountable talk stems in two classrooms, although the ensuing discussions were teacher-led and did not flow freely. The team did note that students in elementary grades were typically more engaged in their classroom activities than students in the upper grades. Further, more teachers modeled problem-solving in the elementary grades. Going forward, teachers should model how students should respond to thought provoking prompts and how groups can work together to analyze information and problem-solve.
- **Teachers should use formative assessments during the lesson to determine the level of student learning.** Although a few teachers were seen circulating while students were working and making notations on a clipboard, in most observed classes, student learning was not assessed during the lesson. In many classes, new content continued to be presented without determining which students understood what was previously taught. While the team noticed a few classroom signs and some lesson plans that mentioned exit tickets, no exit tickets were observed during classroom visits.
- **Additional supports for students with disabilities and ELLs should be scheduled in a way that is least disruptive to student learning.** Teacher specialists provide services in ENL, SETSS, speech, occupational therapy, and physical therapy, and counselors provide mandated counseling. The IIT found that these services are not being provided strategically to effectively support teachers and students. Students who receive services are sometimes pulled from their core classes, which means they have to catch up once they return to class. Additionally, co-planning between specialists and students' classroom teachers does not occur regularly, which can impact the continuity of instruction. Going forward, school leaders should monitor when services are provided, consider adjusting the specialists' schedules, and evaluate their effectiveness based on student growth.
- **School leaders need to provide teachers with more support to effectively manage classroom behavior.** In some class visits, the IIT observed students and teachers engaged in negative interactions that distracted from teaching and learning. Some lessons did not include an engaging activity to capture student interest, and students had difficulty quieting down at the beginning of the lesson. In many classes, the IIT observed students sleeping or with their heads down, and in most cases, attempts were not made to arouse the students. A team member observed an argument over a chair in a classroom that was not diffused and escalated and became

violent. Most instruction was teacher-centered and students in many classes were unfocused, often ignoring what the teacher was saying.

- **Teachers should provide students with regular feedback on their work and collaborate with students to set academic goals.** Student work on display in hallways and classrooms contained student-specific feedback, such as *glows and grows* and rubrics. Some students confirmed that their teachers make helpful suggestions to improve their work and use rubrics as an evaluation guide. These displays and student statements contrasted with the level of feedback students received on their work in classrooms. Students in the upper grades shared that they rarely conference with their teachers, and few students stated that they collaboratively set academic goals with their teachers.
- **Students should have full access to the school's resources.** Some students who were interviewed in the library said they had never been in the library before, and others said they had only been in the library once or twice. The school leader explained that the school does not have a librarian and visits to the library are initiated and scheduled by individual teachers. Students also shared that they do not use computers to conduct research or complete long-term projects. Few teachers indicated that they use computers for these purposes.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **While teachers, students, and parents shared that they generally feel comfortable in the school, parents and students expressed concerns about unsafe behaviors and a lack of communication when these behaviors occur.** Despite feeling that the school is safe, both parents and students shared that too many fights and too much bullying occur. Some parents mentioned that the school does not contact them when their children are involved in an incident and does not communicate with them after the disposition of the incident. One parent mentioned that in the week prior to the visit, a student had been caught smoking marijuana in a staircase and that a fire had been set there, but he learned about the incident from his child and not the school.
- **Students would like the discipline policy, consequences for infractions, and rewards to be consistent across the school.** Students shared that disciplinary rules are not consistently enforced by all teachers. For example, in one class, a teacher may confiscate a cell phone and refer the student for punishment, whereas, in another classroom the teacher may tell the student to put away the phone without taking any further action. Students said the same inconsistencies occur in addressing students who do not wear the school uniform. Students and families also noted discrepancies in the way students are recognized for positive behavior. One parent shared that her four children arrive at school at the same time in the morning, yet one received an attendance award while the other three did not.
- **Families noted variation in the level of communication from teachers.** Interviewed families stated that teachers in the early childhood grades communicate more frequently than teachers in other grades, mostly through the ClassDojo phone app. Some families shared that they only receive negative communication from teachers, while others reported receiving positive messages about their children. Teachers reported that although they have time allocated during Tuesdays' extended sessions for parent engagement, teacher logs are not monitored to evaluate the frequency and quality of parent outreach.
- **Teachers would like the school to have an orientation process for incoming students.** Parents and students shared that when students enroll in the school, there is no formal orientation to inform them of the school's expectations and policies. Teachers stated that many students are admitted throughout the school year and that a comprehensive orientation process could help to prevent academic and disciplinary issues that arise as a result of students being unaware of school expectations.