

Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

Final Report



BEDS Code	353100010031
School Name	P.S. 31 William T. Davis Elementary School
School Address	55 Layton Avenue, Staten Island, NY 10314
District Name	NYCDOE CSD 31
Principal	Daniel Singleton
Dates of Visit	January 29-31, 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

- The visit was led by an Outside Educational Expert (OEE) and a representative from NYSED. The team also included a School District Improvement Liaison and a representative from the Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (RBERN).
- The team visited a total of 29 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 curriculum maps, lesson plans, schoolwide data, teacher feedback, and student work. William T. Davis School serves 387 students in grades pre-kindergarten to five.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. Teachers, parents, and students reported that behavioral issues existed in the school over the past few years have decreased this school year because the school leaders established behavioral expectations for students and provided support and training for teachers. The school leaders secured the services of a substance abuse prevention/intervention specialist, and teachers received training on in-class de-escalation techniques and on a social-emotional teaching program, Sanford Harmony. The Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) observed classes in which teachers used Sanford Harmony language to redirect behaviors, and students told the IIT that they feel safe this school year. Teachers and parents expressed deep appreciation for the strategic work the principal has done to create a teaching and learning environment that is safer, calmer, and kinder.
2. Students, parents, and teachers told the IIT that the school's culture has improved this school year because social activities have been provided. This year the principal organized a student government organization and increased the frequency of fun days such as Crazy Sock Day and Pajama Day for teachers and students. The school has also begun to celebrate students' academic and social-emotional learning achievements. Parents and teachers said that they are impressed with the positive changes in the school and look forward to more fun activities beyond the school day.
3. Teachers successfully employ the "learning intentions" process whereby students identify what they should learn and how to know when they have learned the skill or task through a set of success criteria. In every class visited by the IIT, teachers posted learning intentions and success criteria. Teachers expressed their appreciation for the support and training offered on these strategies, and they said that they look forward to continued guidance on other instructional initiatives.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **School leaders should provide regular follow-up support to teachers who receive on and off-site professional development (PD) to support their professional growth** Although teachers are required and encouraged to attend PD offered by the district, and the school provides in-house PD, teachers reported that once training is complete, feedback about the quality of implementation is rare and/or vague, and that there are few opportunities for differentiated PD. According to teachers, the principal provides an introductory training session for each new program; however, they added that there is usually no further training and support for teachers to feel confident in their ability to implement the new programs. For example, most teachers reported that they do not understand learning progressions and do not feel comfortable attempting to use them to differentiate instruction. Based on discussions with teachers and a review of teacher feedback from the principal, the team determined that an opportunity exists for the principal to provide deeper and more concrete guidance on how teachers could improve their practices. In the future, the principal needs to address the quality and frequency of feedback provided to teachers in order for teachers to effectively implement the school's priorities.
- **School leaders should consistently use the 2018-19 School Comprehensive Education Plan (SCEP) as a blueprint for continuous school improvement.** The principal stated that the SCEP was not a driving force for school progress in the past, but that it is now starting to be used to ensure that teachers are implementing instructional goals, such as using learning intentions and success criteria for every lesson. Although school leaders are beginning to use the SCEP to focus PD, observations, and feedback, a process to benchmark the impact of goals has not been developed. As a result, staff have not utilized the mid-year benchmarks to direct

efforts and interventions to meet the school's annual goals. Teachers reported that they are unaware of the school's annual goals and benchmarks, and the principal expressed some concerns about looking at data around specific SCEP goals to measure progress. Now, during the mid-year cycle, school leaders will need to revisit the SCEP and review action plans, progress monitoring measures, and annual goals to make revisions as deemed necessary.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **The principal should clearly communicate the instructional practices expected to be seen in classes.** While the principal communicates through a weekly email to staff about observations he has seen while visiting classrooms, teachers shared with the IIT that they do not have a formal opportunity to ask questions or seek clarity about schoolwide expectations. The principal expressed that communication has not always been as clear as necessary regarding instructional expectations for teachers. He also shared his need for additional support in explicitly communicating so that teachers feel confident in their understanding of the expectations. In the future, school leaders will need to address how instructional expectations are conveyed, and they will need to ensure that teachers have opportunities to communicate their understanding or misunderstanding of those expectations.

Learning at the School

- **The principal should support teachers in their understanding of the school's PD priority for using learning standards to better assess students' learning progressions.** Two of six lesson plans reviewed by the IIT contained learning progressions on how the standards would look different at the target grade, as well as the grades below and above. During an observation of the grade two common planning meeting, teachers were reviewing students' chapter five math pre-assessment results but did not follow the School Reform Initiative (SRI) Data Driven Dialogue protocol the principal expects teachers to use to discuss data. Teachers began by sharing their predictions, the first step in the protocol, but quickly turned to suggesting how to address the issue of students not being able to solve multi-step problems successfully. As such, the teachers did not integrate the use of learning progressions during their meeting to unpack the standards and discuss what they look like in grades one and three. Teachers shared that it was their first time working with a protocol, and they said that most common planning time is used to plan lessons and discuss administrative requests. Teachers told the IIT that they informally collaborate with colleagues in grades above and below their grade to consider what is taught and when it is taught. They also said that they need structured opportunities to study the standards below, at, and above their grade level in order to understand students' learning progressions and to differentiate lessons to address individual and group needs.
- **Teachers need to use higher-order thinking questions across grade levels.** The principal acknowledged that the school has not benchmarked or created target dates for annual goals including the use of higher-order, Depth of Knowledge (DoK) questions. The IIT observed some classes in which students engaged in brief discussions; however, most teachers asked close-ended, recall questions and provided few opportunities for discussion. The principal estimated that approximately 50 percent of the teachers are proficient in asking critical thinking questions, and shared that the goal is to increase teacher capacity to ask questions that would prompt students to seek information and solutions beyond the recall process.
- **Teachers should provide challenging, differentiated, and engaging activities in all classes.** Several interviewed students told the IIT that their class work is too easy and that they would like more challenging

work, such as using technology to do research. While laptops and computers were visible in classrooms, students were not observed accessing technology for research purposes or to extend their learning. Students were online using i-Ready or myON to complete diagnostic assessments or to read as part of their independent work. In most observed classrooms, students worked on the same skill and completed the same worksheet. In addition, the team noted an absence of differentiated independent work based on specific learning styles or needs. In the future, school leaders will need to review lesson plans and conduct walkthroughs to ensure that students are productively challenged.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **The Parent Teacher Association (PTA) is beginning to operate as a supportive school partner.** According to interviewed PTA leaders, membership in the PTA has grown. Parents reported that the group is part of the School Spirit Team and that they often participate in afterschool activities such as the “Cook Shop.” Parents expressed that they are eager to work with the principal and to push his ideas and concerns out to the community. While they are committed to the school, PTA members reported some frustration about the challenges of building a better and more active school community. Interviewed parents shared that parents who work during morning hours cannot attend morning-only PTA meetings. As such, they said that only four to six parents attend morning meetings and that a teacher representative is not part of the group. Teachers and parents reported that adding a teacher to the PTA would help to link the connection between home and school. In addition, interviewed parents stated that parents are not actively using the assigned PTA room during the day because the space is not yet organized with comfortable furniture and technology for their use.