

Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

Final Report



BEDS Code	310400010155
School Name	P.S. 155 William Paca
School Address	319 East 117 Street, New York, NY 10035
District Name	NYCDOE CSD 4
Principal	Marcia Sulit
Dates of Visit	January 7-9, 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 district representative and a representative from the Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (RBERN).
- The team visited a total of 20 classrooms during the visit.
- The OEE visited 13 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.
- P.S. 155 William Paca serves 247 students in grades pre-kindergarten through five

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon

1. Recognizing the importance of increasing student achievement, the principal has been analyzing the potential causes of low English language arts (ELA) scores on the State assessment since assuming her position in the 2018-19 school year. During her first two months as principal, she evaluated the current ELA curriculum, and she requested feedback from staff regarding its overall effectiveness. Staff, including teachers and instructional coaches, shared that the ELA curriculum did not include the supplemental materials needed to meet the academic needs of all students. Based on the information gathered, the principal decided to implement a new ELA curriculum in January 2019. The new curriculum is intended to provide instructional materials to maximize students' achievement, regardless of the students' levels.
2. School leaders have prioritized the importance of developing a welcoming environment for parents. The principal utilizes text messages, morning greetings, and Parent Engagement time, which is held every Tuesday across the city, to regularly communicate with parents. To encourage parental participation at the school, she also uses a program called Second Cup of Coffee. During Second Cup of Coffee meetings, which are conducted on a monthly basis, the principal meets with parents to discuss school-related issues. The principal reported that parent attendance at evening meetings and workshops has increased thus far for the 2018-19 school year.
3. The principal revised the process the school uses to refer a student for an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for the 2018-19 school year. The principal, in collaboration with select staff, determined that there was an overrepresentation of students with an IEP among the school's student body. The revised referral process includes a six-week period to collect academic data on students and has resulted in a 15 percent decrease in the number of students being referred for additional services. Prior to the revised process, some students who

did not qualify were receiving IEP services. Since the revised process was implemented, teachers and school leaders reported that students' needs are being addressed more effectively.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **The principal should develop and implement a system to enable teachers to introduce and train students on schoolwide initiatives.** The team found that some schoolwide initiatives are currently taught while being incorporated into teachers' lessons. For example, teachers are implementing a current initiative, The RULER, in their lessons. The IIT learned that application and use of this initiative was inconsistent and that there was a need for explicitly training students on The Ruler. In approximately eighty percent of visited classrooms, the team did not observe students and staff using language suggested by The RULER approach.
- **The principal should develop a more comprehensive mentor system to address the needs of new teachers.** For the 2018-19 school year, fifty percent of the school's teachers were new to the school. Although the principal has supported teachers mentoring other teachers, due to the large number of new teachers, there is a need for additional mentors and support in order to improve the performance of new teachers..

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **School leaders need to adapt the master schedule to meet the needs of all students and staff.** The principal indicated that in accordance with the current master schedule, the grade five class uses its classroom rather than the gymnasium for physical education during inclement weather. This is a limitation caused by sharing the gymnasium with a middle school located in the same building. The team learned that some of the activities offered to other grade levels, including basketball and kickball, are not offered to the grade five class when it becomes too cold and these activities cannot be held outside.
- **The principal should promote the development of teacher leadership to drive school initiatives.** Although the principal is working on the further development of teams of teacher leaders, the IIT learned that many school initiatives are being driven by school leaders and that there is a need for increased buy-in from staff. Teachers reported that school leaders and the instructional coach drive the majority of school-based initiatives.

Learning at the School

- **Teachers should increase opportunities for student ownership of their learning.** The IIT observed teacher-centered instructional strategies in most classes. Students reported that they learn more when they work in groups with their classmates. Teachers shared that they would like to increase the use of student groups in their lessons; however, some teachers perceive this strategy as a possible instructional risk.
- **The school needs to implement a school-wide system to support the academic achievement of all students.** The IIT found that a Response to Intervention (RtI) program has not been fully established. Teachers and school leaders reported that only Tier 1 of the three-tier program has been implemented. To effectively meet the instructional needs of all students, staff will need to fully implement a comprehensive RtI program.
- **Teachers should increase the use of questioning strategies that require students to evaluate information and think critically.** The IIT observed that in approximately 80 percent of visited classrooms, questions were

posed to students that required a yes/no or recall answer. In approximately ten percent of classrooms, teachers answered their own questions after providing a moment for students to answer.

- **Teachers need to identify learning objectives at the start of and during the lesson.** The IIT observed that approximately ten percent of teachers in visited classrooms referenced learning objectives during their lessons. Teachers indicated a lack of emphasis on the use of learning objectives by school leaders.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Parents reported that families in the immediate community do not usually perceive the school as an educational option.** Parents stated that school leaders need to promote the great work of staff and students.
- **Students expressed the perspective that consequences for negative behavior are not always administered fairly.** Students stated that all students in a class are sometimes punished for the negative behaviors of one or two students and that consequences should be administered to students who violate class rules, not to the entire class.
- **Parents and students stated that additional academic and non-academic activities should be offered during and after school.** Parents noted that art should be offered in school and that afterschool programs should include hobbies. They also noted that school leaders and teachers should conduct more field trips. Students stated that the school should offer more sports programs and computer options through its afterschool program.
- **Parents reported that report cards of all students should be translated into the language spoken at home.** Currently, only the report cards of students in the bilingual program are translated into the language spoken at home.