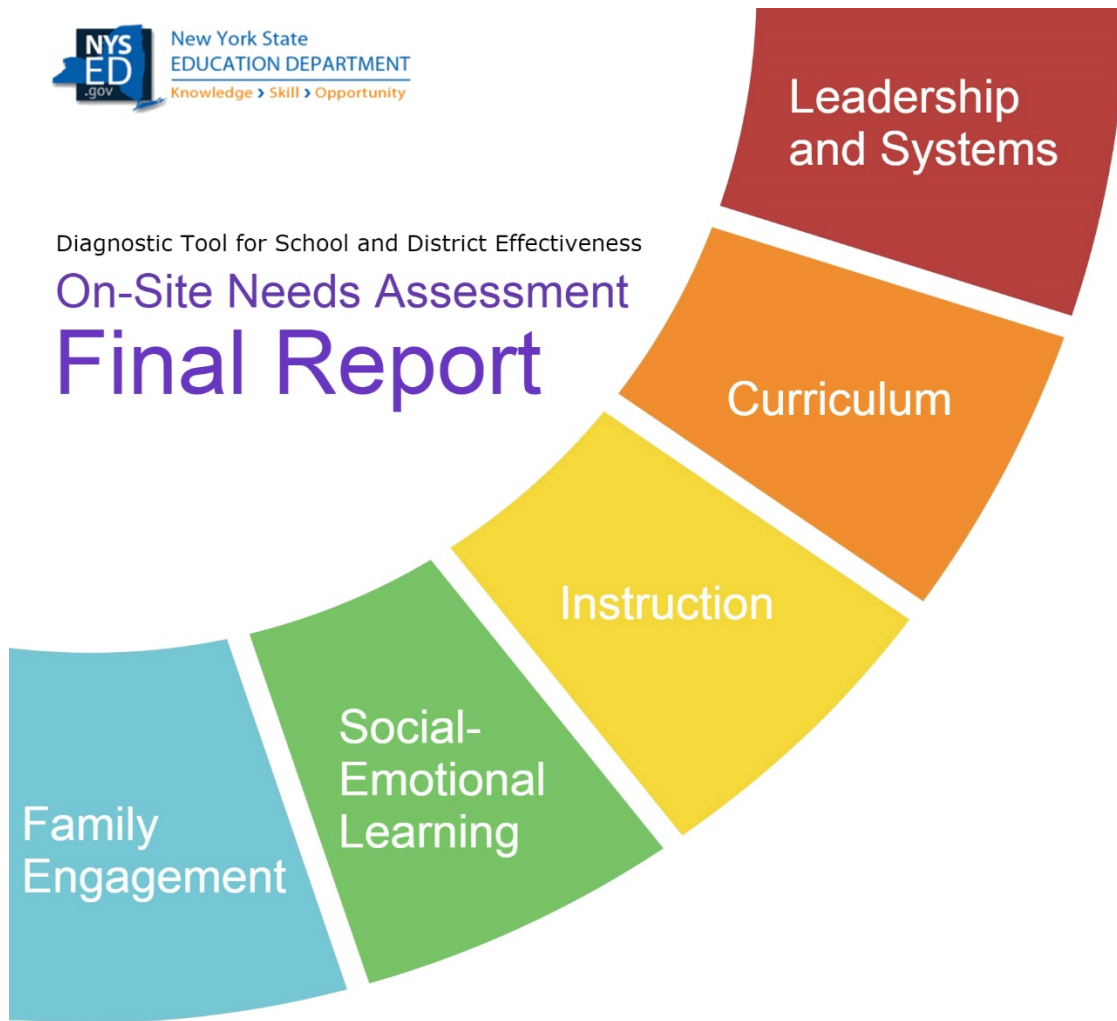


Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

Final Report



BEDS Code	310500010197
School Name	P.S. 197 John B. Russwurm
School Address	2230 5th Avenue, New York, NY 10037
District Name	NYCDOE CSD 5
Principal	Natasha Spann
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 18 classrooms during the visit.
- The OEE visited eight 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.
- From mid-November to early December 2018, five classrooms had to be moved as a result of flooding on the lower level of the building, which caused a significant disruption to the school's instructional program. Classes were fully settled by the time of the team's visit. In addition, the telephone system had been out for some time at the time of the visit, as a result of faulty copper wires in the neighborhood. The school received partial service on December 17, 2018, which enabled all families to resume having some access to communication.
- John B Russwurm School serves 320 students in grades pre-kindergarten to five.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. The principal and staff have created a cohesive and collegial working environment. The principal identified a teacher leader this school year to help support implementation of the Teachers College Reading and Writing Program within the English language arts (ELA) block. The teacher leader helps some novice teachers develop lesson plans, and she provides advice on implementing guided reading strategies. Additionally, some teachers shared that they receive support from integrated co-teaching (ICT) classroom teachers on building positive classroom learning environments.
2. Some teachers said that they received training this year on unpacking skills, using various strategies to support learning, and co-teaching. Teachers shared that co-teaching is based on students' needs and teachers' instructional strengths. The IIT observed that most of the ICT classes flowed fluidly, as general and special education teachers worked in tandem with both teachers working with all students throughout the observed lessons.
3. The IIT found that teachers and school leaders maintain respectful and nurturing relationships with students, which allows engagement across grade levels and beyond the school day. Because of the school's efforts this school year to identify and secure sustainable resources to support families in trauma, the principal and some teachers shared that they work diligently to maintain relationships with and offer support to families within the community. For example, several teachers said that if they notice inappropriate behaviors in the hallways, they feel comfortable redirecting the behavior. Additionally, most interviewed parents shared that if their children need more academic support at home, teachers volunteer to tutor or communicate with their children after school hours. School leaders, teachers, and parents also spoke about the work the school does with homeless students. They said that school leaders are aware of this population and provide them with food packs, clothes, and toiletries whenever needed. Parents and teachers said that the school does a great job of meeting the needs of the community as a community school.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **School leaders need to establish a system to manage crisis-level student behavioral issues.** The principal reported that over a span of more than two years, there has been an increase in the number of students transferring to the school mid-year. As a result, there are a number of students who require immediate attention and support beyond the scope of the classroom teacher. In the last two years, The Harlem Children's Zone was unable to continue to provide a grant to the school that supported student social and emotional health. Therefore, the school was unable to maintain support staff who were funded through the grant that focused on student needs. Although there are a social worker and guidance counselor on staff and a plan in place, teachers stated that they seek out school leaders first to manage student behaviors, and school leaders said that they typically respond to teachers' requests. As a result, school leaders reported, and the IIT observed, that the school leaders become responsible for handling many classroom behavioral issues, which limits their oversight of academic initiatives.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **The school leader should expand instructional supports in guided reading to teachers in grades three through five.** While all teachers participate in PD activities, kindergarten through grade two teachers received extensive training in guided reading and receive ongoing support from the universal literacy coach. The universal literacy coach said, and teachers confirmed, that she models lessons for them and has paired with them as a support during guided reading lessons. As a result, the universal literacy coach and school leaders said that most teachers in kindergarten through grade two are more proficient in guided reading than some grade three through five teachers. The school has identified one teacher leader who assists teachers with guided reading strategies whenever possible. The universal literacy coach and principal stated that there is a need to develop additional teacher leaders at the upper grade levels and that they have been considering how to do so. The principal and universal literacy coach suggested that they should identify and support at least one upper grade teacher who currently demonstrates proficiency in guided reading and arrange times for her/him to share their skill with other upper grade teachers.

Learning at the School

- Teachers should incorporate checks for understanding during instruction in order to make adjustments to lessons. The school submitted documents stating that checks for understanding are a common instructional practice. Conversations with school leaders and teachers also suggested that the IIT would observe the use of some type of formative assessments during instruction; however, many teachers observed by the IIT did not check for understanding during lessons. The principal shared that teachers in the lower grades receive direct support and training from the universal literacy coach on using checks for understanding, while the principal works with teachers in the upper grades on this strategy. The school leaders and the universal literacy coach said that teachers need continued support to make short- and long-term adjustments to lessons based on formative data.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Teachers reported that the role of the paraprofessionals is not understood by all stakeholders.** Some teachers said that they do not understand the roles and responsibilities of the paraprofessionals in the classroom or during recess. Teachers stated that school leaders have not shared clearly articulated expectations for paraprofessionals with them or the paraprofessionals. For example, teachers said that the paraprofessionals are expected to assist them with checks for understanding so that teachers may use formative data to inform lesson plans and create individualized activities for students. However, teachers said that many paraprofessionals are not performing this function, and some teachers therefore find it difficult to individualize instruction and/or group students for instruction. Teachers and school leaders suggested that paraprofessionals receive similar training to what the teachers receive on the Teachers College reading and writing block and other schoolwide instructional initiatives.