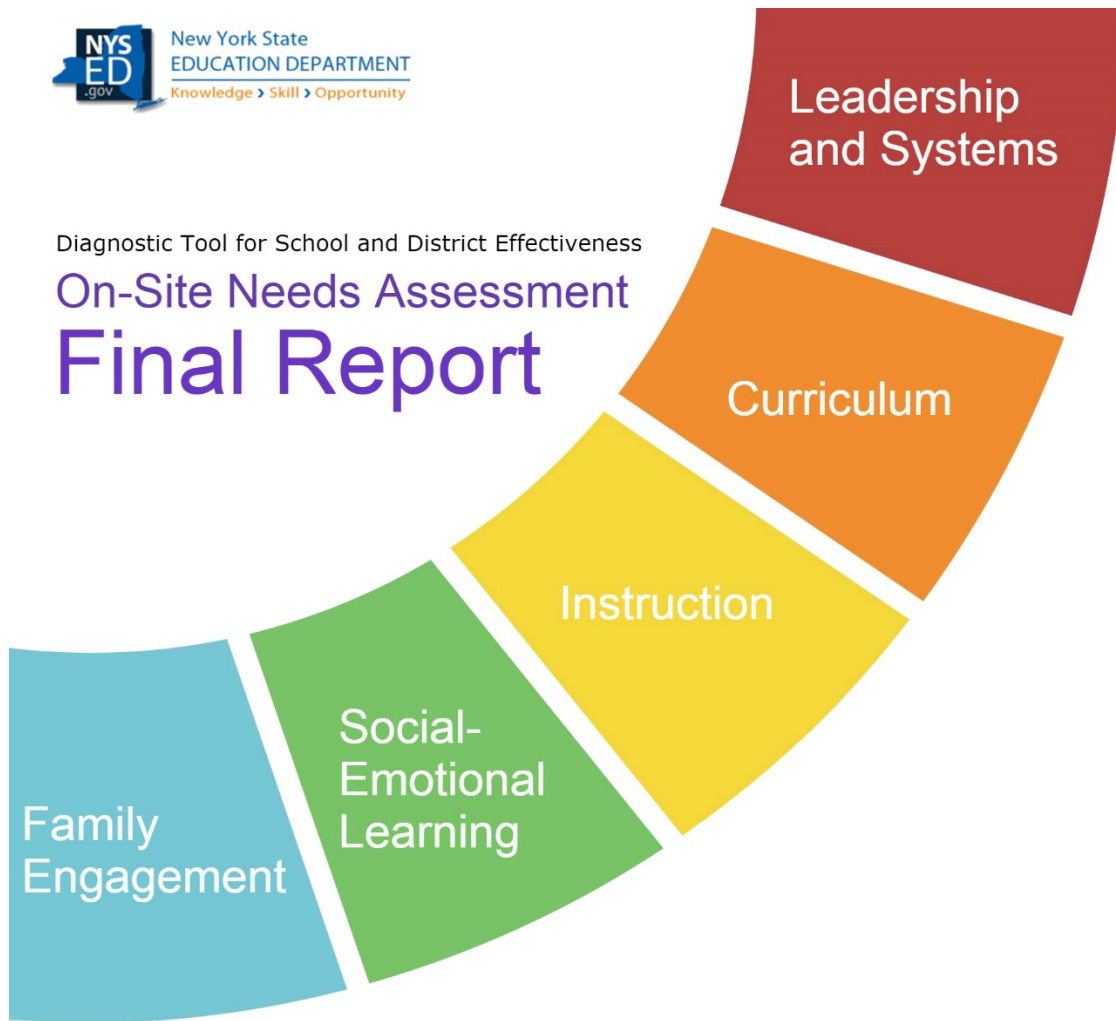


Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

# Final Report



<b>BEDS Code</b>	<b>310600010368</b>
<b>School Name</b>	<b>Hamilton Heights School</b>
<b>School Address</b>	<b>1750 Amsterdam Avenue, New York, NY 10031</b>
<b>District Name</b>	<b>NYCDOE CSD 6</b>
<b>Principal</b>	<b>Charles Reilly</b>
<b>Dates of Visit</b>	<b>January 29-31, 2019</b>



## 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

- Hamilton Heights School serves 153 students in kindergarten through grade five.
- 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 31 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.
- In advance of the visit, the school provided results of a staff survey that 17 staff members (100 percent) completed.
- In advance of the visit, the school provided results of a parent survey that 142 parents (94 percent) completed.

## Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. In the fall of 2018, the principal implemented a new school schedule which increased teacher professional time to four periods per week. Teachers are beginning to use the additional time to meet with colleagues to plan lessons and examine student work. In addition, the new schedule allows all students to participate in dance, music, and physical education classes each week. Parents and students stated that they are pleased with the array of specials offered by the school and are thankful for the opportunities to be active and creative throughout the school day.
2. In order to establish a coherent curriculum and improve continuity of instruction, the principal adopted a schoolwide, standards-based math and literacy curriculum for 2018-19 that is in the early stages of implementation across all grades. Interviewed parents and teachers stated that they are pleased with the structure and consistency provided by the new programs.
3. Beginning in September 2018, in an effort to attract more students from the community to the school and increase school enrollment, the principal developed a community outreach plan focused on promoting the school. He attended recruitment fairs, conducted weekly tours for parents, and invited neighborhood pre-K programs to tour his building. As a result of his efforts, the school has received 160 applications for kindergarten enrollment in September 2019, compared to 60 for September 2018.

4. The principal has opened a new Champs basketball program and Track at the Armory program to provide all students with access to free before- and after-school enrichment activities. The principal reported that having morning and afternoon activities for students is important to the families in his community as many of them are working parents. The new program offerings have been well-received and over 30 students are currently participating in each program. In addition, the principal just recently signed a contract to partner with the co-located school's community-based organization to ensure that additional after-school opportunities will be available to his students in the fall of 2019.
5. The principal has only been at the school since September 2018 and in that short time he has gained the trust and confidence of families. He has an open-door policy, is highly visible at school and community events, and is working to develop greater communication between home and school. He has developed a school Twitter account, writes monthly newsletters, and purchased Jupiter grades to help families stay informed about school events and student performance.

## Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

### Systems for Improvement

- **The school should establish strategic systems to ensure that intervention services are provided to all students who need them and to routinely assess the impact of services provided.** Teacher schedules include one period each week to provide tier 2 interventions to small groups of at-risk students. Students are selected by their teachers to receive services for six weeks, then a new group is selected. While teachers reported that students can participate in more than one intervention cycle throughout the year, the school has no specified system to analyze intervention data to determine the impact of services or to identify students no longer in need of these supports. In addition, the principal revealed that upper-grade students had significant academic deficits, but the Saturday Academy program, that runs from November to January, is only open to lower-grade students. The principal has plans to offer another Saturday Academy in March and April to provide reading and math skills support to all students in testing grades. He should develop, strategic, goal-oriented plans and tracking systems to guide and evaluate this intervention.
- **While school goals target some areas of need, the goals should be linked to rigorous benchmarks that measure progress in a clear way.** The School Comprehensive Education Plan (SCEP) was created in the spring of 2018 and the action plans and benchmarks have not been revised to reflect the current initiatives and expectations. Current English language arts (ELA) benchmarks measure the amount of work students will produce, but do not set measurable standards for student learning. Math goals contain soft targets that have already been achieved. For example, 26 percent of students tested in the spring of 2018 were proficient in math, yet the 2018-19 math goal states that 26 percent of students will pass benchmark assessments with a grade of 70 or higher. While pedagogy was cited as an area for improvement in the previous Quality Review, the current SCEP contains no goals, action plans, or benchmarks to address professional development and teacher growth.

## Leadership and Organization at the School

- **The principal conducts frequent walkthroughs and regularly scheduled observations but should use classroom visits to effectively monitor the quality of implementation of schoolwide initiatives and to provide teachers with feedback and explicit next steps.** The principal has launched several new initiatives this year, such as the creation of student portfolios in both reading and math and the implementation of GO Math and the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP). While the principal has made regular classroom visits to ensure that all students have developed portfolios, the IIT observed that the content and quality of the portfolios varied from room to room. Although the principal conducts walkthroughs to ensure that teachers are implementing the new curricula, the IIT found that in many classes, student conference notes were not being recorded to track student progress and inform instruction, which is a critical component of TCRWP. Teacher feedback to students was cited as an area for improvement in the previous Quality Review. However, the IIT found that many students received little or no written feedback, and a review of feedback to teachers showed few recommendations addressing this area.

## Learning at the School

- **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 found that checks for student understanding were not being used routinely in many classes. While some lesson plans indicated that students would submit an exit ticket, the IIT saw few instances of exit tickets being used at the end of the lesson. The IIT saw limited use of strategies such as thumbs-up/thumbs-down indicators, trackers to record student responses, or probing questions to clarify understanding. Although teachers are implementing the TCRWP model, which includes conferring with students as they work and recording conference notes to assess student understanding, this is not yet a common schoolwide practice. In the future the principal should make in-the-moment monitoring the primary focus for a cycle of walkthroughs and should concentrate his feedback on improving teachers' professional practice in this area.
- **Lessons must include multiple entry points that address the learning needs of all individual students and sub-groups.** Some teachers grouped students by ability and provided students with scaffolds, such as leveled reading materials, but this practice did not extend across all content-area lessons. Despite the presence of students with complex disabilities and English language learners (ELLs), most observed lessons did not contain scaffolds, specialized instructional strategies, adjusted wait time, or stated language objectives. When scaffolds were provided, they were typically the same for the entire class. Graphic organizers used in many classes were not modified to include visual cues or adapted vocabulary to make them accessible to all students.

## Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Families would like the principal to develop workshops for families to clarify information about New York State assessments.** Hamilton Heights has a history of families opting out of New York State testing. While participation increased last spring, nearly 25 percent of students in testing grades did not take the State examinations. Families shared a variety of reasons for their decisions, including a fear of having their child held back because of test results and test results having a negative impact on teacher performance ratings. Families

have obtained information about State assessments from multiple sources over time and would like the principal to dispel, clarify, or confirm their beliefs.

- **Families questioned the purpose and value of many homework assignments.** Some teachers assign class or grade work packets on Monday that must be completed by Thursday. Interviewed families shared that this homework is rarely graded. Some families reported that teachers assign reading logs, but students rarely receive any feedback on their progress in reading. Some families stated that they view homework as busy work. In the school grading policy, ten percent of a child's grade is based on homework, but families stated that they do not understand how that grade is determined.
- **Teachers stated that the school should expand the use of writing strategies used in early grades to upper-grade classes.** Students in kindergarten through second grade use a series of strategies and graphic organizers that provide students with support in generating and self-assessing different types of written responses. While the strategies are not part of the TCRWP tool-box, upper-grade teachers stated that these strategies could provide additional support and be effective tools for older students who continue to struggle with writing.
- **Teachers need additional support in implementing Go Math and TCRWP curricula.** The principal provided two workshop sessions to increase teacher familiarity with GO Math, one in September and another in November, but no additional workshops have been provided since then. Teachers have not received any training on TCRWP in 2018-19. Interviewed teachers stated that they would like additional support in order to be able to fully implement the new curricula. While teachers are aware that the school budget cannot support a reading or math coach, they suggested that inter-visitations with other schools that are successfully implementing these programs would be beneficial.
- **Students would like the school to offer additional extra-curricular activities and community-building events.** Specifically, students suggested that the school create a student government and host annual career day events. Upper-grade students would like guest speakers with different occupations to visit their classrooms to talk about their jobs and how to prepare for a career in their field.
- **Students would like students in all grades to have the same opportunities to participate in Sing-Along events.** Weekly Sing-Alongs are a popular community-building activity at the school and are attended by students and parents across all grades. While all students attend the events, lower-grade students reported that only fifth-grade students are able to perform and showcase their talents at these events. Students in lower grades stated that this opportunity should be extended to students in all grades.