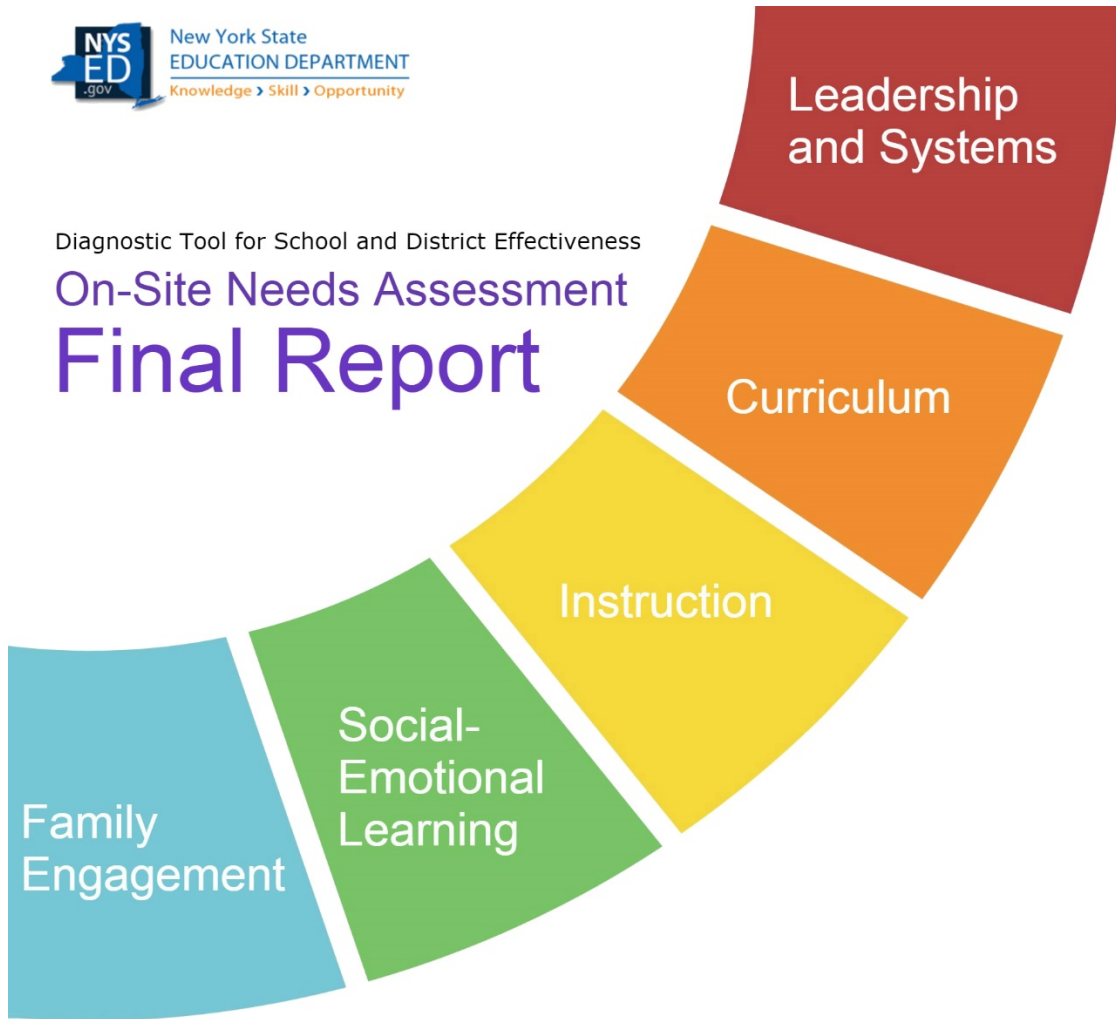


Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

Final Report



BEDS Code	310600011463
School Name	High School for Media and Communications
School Address	549 Audubon Avenue, New York, NY 10040
District Name	NYCDOE CSD 6
Principal	Juan Villar
Dates of Visit	April 2-4, 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.

School Performance

New York State uses multiple indicators to determine the identification status of schools across the state. For each of these indicators, schools receive a number of 1 (lowest), 2, 3, or 4 (highest) that corresponds with how the school performed in relation to either other schools and/or performance targets. More information about how these levels are determined can be found at: <http://www.nysed.gov/accountability/essa-accountability-designation-materials>

The most recent results for the “All Students” group at the school are as follows:

High School Performance Indicators:

4 Yr Grad. Rate <67%	Composite Performance Achievement Level	Average of 4-, 5-, and 6-year Graduation Rate Levels	Combined Composite Performance Achievement and Graduation Rate Level	English Language Proficiency Level	Average ELA and Math Academic Progress Level	Chronic Absenteeism Level	College, Career, Civic, Readiness (CCCR) Level
No	1	1	1	1	2	1	2

High School for Media and Communications serves 405 students in grades nine through twelve.

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 26 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 and student work.
- In advance of the visit, 16 staff members (59 percent) completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. For the 2018-19 school year, the school leader and staff have prioritized the importance of developing a supportive learning environment for students. The principal reported that the school had contracted for professional development (PD) services from the Ramapo for Children organization to help teachers with strategies to be more welcoming to students and to work with incoming grade nine students. Students reported that the school helped them to feel safe and welcomed when they first enrolled. One parent noted that during the current year, the school had helped her daughter who had a disability plan for a smooth transition to college. In the hallways and in classrooms, students were respectful to teachers and to one another.
2. The school is continuing and building on the formal implementation of the professional learning community (PLC) model, which was adopted during the 2017-18 school year. The principal noted that ten of 27 teachers have been formally trained in the PLC model, and an additional six will be trained by the end of the 2018-19 school year. The principal and some teachers shared that PLCs have led to an improved working climate for teachers. Teachers also noted that the PLC model provides them with an opportunity to participate in school leadership. For example, currently one teacher trained in the PLC model serves on the principal's school leadership team. In addition, some teachers who were not on the PLC team stated that as a result of the PLC's guidance, their meetings are better organized and have produced useful classroom strategies.
3. To increase parental involvement, the principal has stressed the importance of a welcoming school environment and of providing needed resources and information to families. When interviewed by the team, parents stated that they feel welcomed and informed. They noted that they are greeted upon entry to the school by name and spoken to in their native language. Parents stated that they appreciate the use of PupilPath, a program for mobile devices that helps them track their children's arrival time, attendance, and other information. Some parents also cited the resources the school provides to help them, including workshops on completing college application forms and applying for financial aid and English and computer classes.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **The principal will need to develop systems and structures to assess progress on school priorities and goals.** One of the goals in the 2018-19 School Comprehensive Education Plan (SCEP) is to create a system and structure to monitor the impact of PLC sessions on student progress, as reflected on student grade reports compared to prior years. However, the principal noted that school has not set expectations or meeting times for teachers or leaders to do so because PLC implementation is in its early stages and has not yet had measurable impact in classrooms. The IIT learned that the school has just begun to work with a district-provided data specialist to help teachers understand student achievement data. Analysis of data at the classroom level is not yet taking place, and a designated in-house staff person has not been trained in data collection and analysis. The 2018-19 SCEP also indicates that the school has developed a plan to address most student related social-emotional issues. The IIT found that the school leaders have identified a decrease in

suspensions as the only benchmark to determine if they are on track to meet the school's social-emotional learning (SEL) goals.

- **School leadership should develop and communicate the importance of a sense of urgency to address SCEP goals.** The IIT noted that an additional four major goals in the 2018-19 SCEP include the establishment of a restorative justice program, the development of a collaborative school support team to assess progress of subgroups, the establishment of a peer mediation program, and the development of plans for reentry to school and classes following absences for high-needs subgroups. However, the principal and teachers reported that most of these initiatives are not yet in place nor in the planning stages. For example, actions to address tardiness and attendance are reactive rather than preventive. The team learned that the focus on correcting attendance concerns is primarily on attempts to find immediate solutions rather than in addressing the root causes of issues. Teachers and students indicated that these include such factors as better programming of first period classes, provision of an alternative space for students to work while awaiting admission to class or attending to the social and emotional learning (SEL) issues that contribute to tardiness.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **The principal should clarify and communicate who is responsible and accountable for key functions in the school.** During discussions, the team found that school leaders and staff did not communicate with clarity who is responsible for important systems within the school such as attendance, course programming, or data collection, for example. Although parents, students, and teachers expressed concerns about large class sizes, staff could not identify who has the responsibility for checking the final class lists to see if the composition of the class might have an impact on the learning of all students in the class. Teachers, parents, and students said that students who were repeating a subject were sometimes placed in the same classes as English language learners (ELLs) taking a course for the first time, and the class was too easy for one group, or too challenging for the other group. Some parents and teachers also noted that they were not clear about the established channels of communication, which made it difficult to know who is responsible for important functions. For example, teachers who are interested in gaining more information about students in crisis situations indicated that they are not sure who to contact to discuss possible classroom and homework modifications.
- **School leaders will need to implement policies, systems, and procedures to consistently address students' academic and social-emotional needs.** Teachers reported that they are not aware of formalized policies or procedures that enable them to obtain supports for students with academic or social-emotional and behavioral needs. For example, teachers stated that the school has not implemented a system to better enable them to communicate with each other and with the support staff about their students' housing situations so that they might better accommodate their needs. Some teachers of ELLs stated that it was difficult for them to prepare and organize for the upcoming New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT). Without an administrator developed test schedule, English as a new language (ENL) teachers were not able to plan how to provide required services to students while they were administering tests to others. The team found that in classrooms with more than one teacher, the respective roles of the ENL and special education co-teachers with students was inconsistent. There was a lack of clearly set expectations for co-teachers. In visits with the OEE, the principal noted instances in which the ENL and special education teachers were not working as expected with ELLs or students with disabilities.

- **The principal will need to ensure that the school develops assessment tools and establishes expectations and protocols for the use of data by teachers to inform their teaching and to monitor student learning.** The principal indicated that the school does not have common assessments to measure and compare student growth within and across classes. During interviews, the principal and teachers expressed concerns about students' foundational math and literacy skills. The team found that the school does not have assessments to help teachers determine students' basic reading and math levels. The team learned during discussions with the principal, that the use of data to inform instruction is not yet part of required teacher practice. This is because fewer than one-half of the teachers have been trained in the PLC model for data use. In classroom visits, the IIT observed few formal or informal assessment practices such as the use of exit tickets, cold-calling students, inviting students to re-state what they had learned, or other measures of gathering data to check for understanding.

Learning at the School

- **Teachers will need to adapt their instructional practice to meet the needs of all students.** During classroom visits, the team found that teachers did not typically provide students with multiple entry points to the lessons. Most classes were teacher led, with little active student engagement other than answering factual questions, thus providing few opportunities for teachers to gauge deeper student understanding. In many classes, the teacher did not scaffold the learning activities to account for the language needs of ELLs, and many students appeared not to have a grasp of academic vocabulary. Language objectives were not identified, and word banks were not visibly present in many classrooms. Some students struggled with questions such as, How did the author portray..., because they did not understand the word portray. In the future, the school leaders will need to provide strategies required for teachers to ensure that all students can access the curriculum.
- **Teachers should provide lessons that promote student engagement and student ownership of learning.** The IIT observed that large classes of approximately 30 students were not broken into small groups under the direction of other teachers in the classroom. Teachers did not typically use strategies such as student buddies to provide peer support. While some teachers provided tools such as graphic organizers or note-taking strategies to help students stay focused and organized, some students required more interventions or opportunities for peer discourse to stay engaged. In response to a question from the IIT about the high tardiness and absenteeism rates, students said that some students are often bored. Other students said the pace of lessons is sometimes slow.
- **Teachers will need to consistently check for student understanding of lessons.** The team observed that when teachers questioned the class, they were typically satisfied with an answer from one student or a whole class choral response. Teachers did not probe individual students to encourage them to think deeply. When asking for written responses, teachers walked students through the reasoning process or accepted simple answers. In some classes, when students shouted out answers, the teacher did not follow up with any of the quieter students to see if they also understood. In nearly all observed classes, the teacher did not encourage students to engage in discourse with peers to challenge each other's thinking or to provide feedback on each other's work. In the future, teachers should develop strategies for assessing the quality of learning in their classrooms.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Teachers reported that they appreciate the support they received from the principal and other school leaders and the trend towards more collaboration; however, they stated that they sometimes need more direct guidance from school leaders about expected practices.** Some teachers noted that school leaders are sometimes overly collaborative and that at times they wish for more direction. For example, teachers stated that adult roles are not clearly delineated when there is more than one teacher in the classroom, and some teachers said they are not certain about how to handle students who are acting out.
- **Teachers said that they are open to change, including the expanding role of PLCs, but they shared that they need to see a greater connection between the theoretical construct of PLCs and the school's real problems, such as the impact of current programming and scheduling on class size and class makeup.** Teachers stated that they were beginning to see an impact of the work of PLCs in two areas—the establishment of meeting norms for teacher meetings, and strategies for the use of “I can ...” statements as learning objectives. Teachers also stated that they did not yet see an impact on significant issues that affect teaching and learning.
- **Teachers stated that they were concerned about the grouping of students and how to manage different language proficiency levels within the classroom.** Teachers said that when classes were reorganized in February 2019, they found that they were not sure of the appropriate strategies to teach the new blend of students. The reorganized classes include students whose native language is English, ELLs, students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), and new arrivals, all of whom present a wide variation of skills and needs.
- **Teachers and students said that the school provides few SEL resources for students.** While students mentioned the availability of the Catholic Charities' clinicians, teachers stated that the school has not developed systems or procedures to identify students who are at risk and in need of social-emotional support. Students noted that they are likely to turn to understanding teachers for help with SEL problems. Teachers expressed concern that there is no system in place for staff who work with the same student to share information about social-emotional issues.