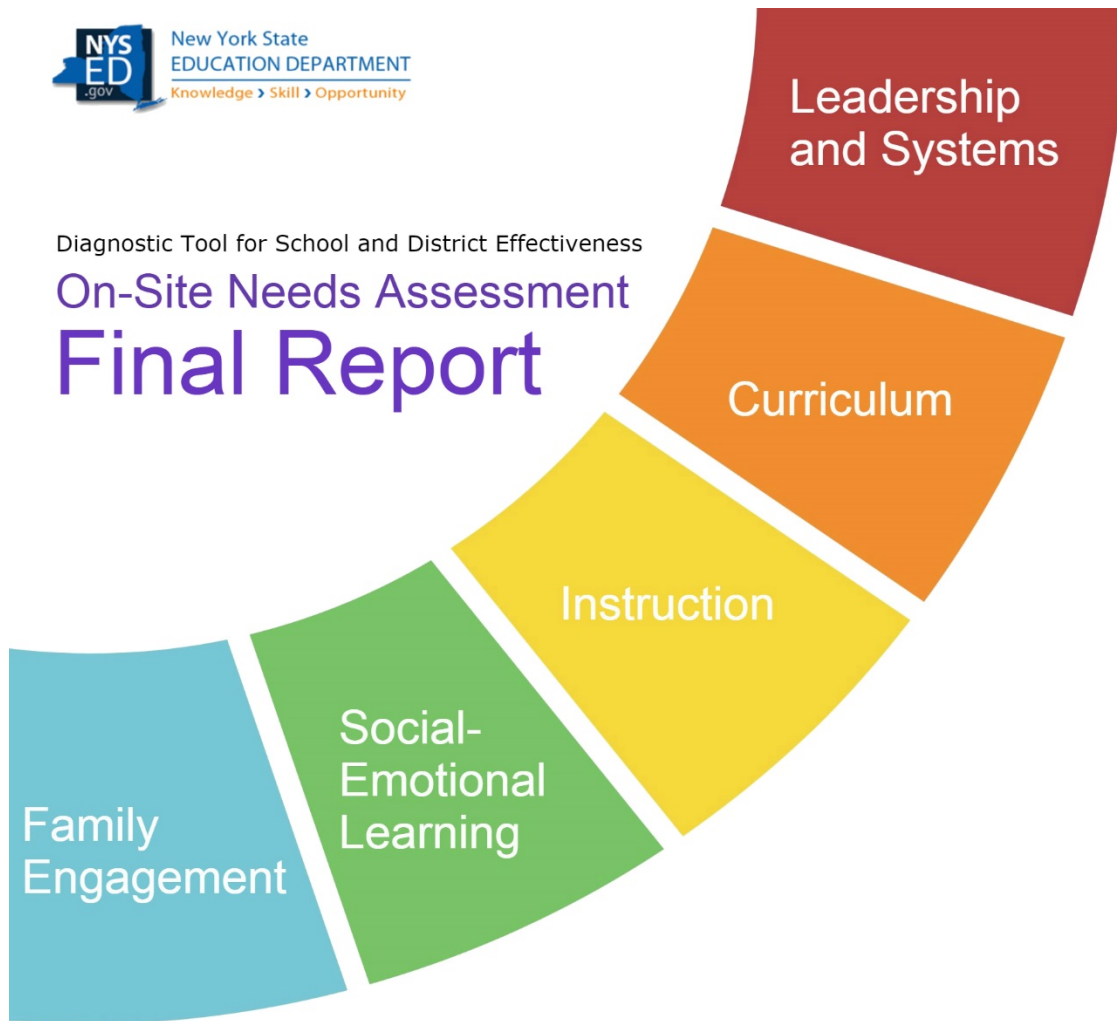


Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

# Final Report



<b>BEDS Code</b>	320700010224
<b>School Name</b>	P.S./I.S. 224
<b>School Address</b>	345 Brook Avenue, Bronx, NY 10454
<b>District Name</b>	NYCDOE CSD 7
<b>Principal</b>	Patricia Catania
<b>Dates of Visit</b>	May 21-23, 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:

### *Middle School Performance Indicators*

Composite Performance Achievement Level	Student Growth Level	Combined Composite and Student Growth Level	English Language Proficiency Level	Average ELA and Math Academic Progress Level	Chronic Absenteeism Level
1	1	1	2	1	1

P.S./I.S. 224 serves 322 students in grades six through eight.

## 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 21 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 lesson plans and New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) schoolwide data.
- In advance of the visit, 13 staff members (50 percent) completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.

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

1. In 2018-19, school staff began implementing the Thinking Maps initiative to support student learning. This initiative, in which graphic organizers are used as an instructional strategy, has been implemented in half the school's classrooms thus far. The IIT saw evidence of thinking maps in many areas throughout the building. Thinking Maps anchor charts were displayed in classrooms and thinking maps completed by students were displayed in classrooms and hallways. The IIT also observed students using thinking maps during class instruction. Teachers included thinking maps in lesson plan design to introduce topics and to provide students with a deeper understanding of the lesson content. Several interviewed students reported that thinking maps have helped them to be more organized and to learn new concepts in the classes in which they use them.
2. The principal and staff have created extended learning enrichment opportunities for students through multiple partnerships and school programming. The school recently presented a production of *The Wizard of Oz* that was facilitated by school staff and attended by parents, students, and community members. In addition, many students participated in an art curator program this school year at the New York Historical Society. The school has also participated in a district-wide initiative with Girls Educational and Mentoring Services (GEMS) to offer a mentoring program that provides female students with opportunities for empowerment and leadership. Interviewed students shared that they feel the school prepares them for high school through both their classwork and enrichment activities.
3. The attendance team and school leaders are proactively addressing student tardiness by engaging with students who are late to school each day. In 2018-19, in an effort to promote more personal interactions with students who arrive to school late, the sign-in sheet was moved to a desk near the dean's office. Students who arrive late are greeted by the dean or a school aide who is able to check in with students, discuss the reason for tardiness, and problem solve with students about how to get to school on time. School leaders stated that as a result of the personal interaction with staff when signing in, students are making better efforts to get to school on time. School leaders also shared that this new procedure allows for better tracking of student tardiness data, and the attendance team is using this data to inform next steps for intervention.

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

### Systems for Improvement

- **The principal should identify committee leads and define the role of each committee in contributing to school improvement efforts.** The principal shared that staff who previously led some committees have left the school, and new committee leaders have not been identified. Members of several of the school's teams and committees, including the attendance and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) teams, were not able to clearly articulate the school's goals or how the work of their group supports school improvement efforts.

## Leadership and Organization at the School

- **The principal should clearly communicate her vision for teaching and learning.** Through discussions with school leaders and teachers, the IIT found that there was no shared understanding of the principal's expectations for teaching and learning. With the exception of thinking maps, teachers did not identify any consistent practices that they are expected to use when planning and delivering instruction. Teachers stated that communication regarding curriculum and instruction occurs sporadically and within small groups, and the inconsistent messaging has created confusion regarding the academic priorities and philosophy of the school. The principal sends a weekly newsletter to staff via email, but the newsletter does not include information about the school's instructional priorities.
- **School leaders should establish shared look-fors when conducting walkthroughs and provide staff with consistent feedback.** The district has provided a principal assigned to assist with administrative responsibilities at the school. Both the principal and principal assigned conduct walkthroughs and provide teachers with feedback to improve their practice. The principal stated that school leaders initially conducted walkthroughs together to norm and calibrate their feedback, but since then, the two leaders' walkthroughs have focused on different aspects of instruction. For example, the principal assigned focuses primarily on classroom management while the principal focuses more on instructional strategies. Interviewed teachers stated that school leaders sometimes provide them with conflicting feedback which can be confusing.
- **The principal needs to follow up on professional development (PD) to ensure effective implementation of strategies learned through PD.** The principal and teachers told the IIT that PD has been provided on areas such as Thinking Maps, restorative circles, and Google Classroom. However, teachers reported that follow-up to PD and implementation of these initiatives has varied. For example, teachers have received weekly consultant support on the implementation of Thinking Maps, and the IIT saw evidence of Thinking Maps being implemented in many classrooms. However, teachers reported that the use of Google Classroom and restorative circles has not been monitored or supported as often, and the expectation to implement these strategies has not been communicated.
- **The principal needs to ensure that teachers are able to collaboratively plan and participate in professional learning opportunities.** The current schedule includes time for teachers to collaboratively plan with content-area teams or co-teaching colleagues. However, interviewed teachers stated that due to ongoing staff absences and the resulting need to cover other classes, teachers have not been able to meet or plan consistently with their peers. In addition, teachers stated that they would like opportunities to learn from one another's practices. The principal acknowledged that there is currently no system in place for teachers to share professional practices or participate in peer observations.
- **School leaders should provide teachers with additional support in planning instruction to meet the needs of English language learners (ELLs).** Interviewed teachers stated that they were not confident in their ability to plan supports to meet the learning needs of ELLs. Some teachers stated that they have not received training in understanding and accessing data from the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) to inform their instruction. Some teachers stated that they need additional support to be able to differentiate instruction to address the modalities of listening, speaking, reading, and writing and to provide appropriate strategies for ELLs that lead to multiple points of entry. Many teachers stated that they did not know how to get documents translated into the home languages of students in their classes.

- **The principal should clearly define and communicate the roles and responsibilities of all staff.** Some staff interviewed by the IIT stated that they were unsure who could support them in planning and delivering instruction, accessing and analyzing data, or solving day to day issues. Some new staff reported that they do not know the positions of staff working in the building, what their responsibilities are, or how they can support them as a new teacher. Although the district has provided a principal assigned to support administrative duties, she told the IIT that other than assisting with evaluations, her responsibilities have not been clearly defined and communicated. In the future, the principal will need to clearly define the positions and responsibilities of all staff and communicate this information to all stakeholders.

## Learning at the School

- **Teachers should use data to plan instruction that meets the learning needs of all students.** Although students were seated in groups in all classes visited, all students completed the same activities in the same way. In most observed classes, student groupings were not based on proficiency, skill, or need. In discussions with the principal and teachers, the IIT found little evidence that data is used to inform instruction or to establish individual and classroom learning goals. In a review of lesson plans, the IIT found no evidence that data had been used to plan instruction. Although the IIT observed teachers in some classrooms circulating the room and talking to students about their work, there was no evidence of data collection or adjustments to instruction based on student understanding.
- **The role of paraprofessionals in supporting student learning should be clearly communicated.** In several classes visited, paraprofessionals were sitting with students, but there was limited interaction between paraprofessionals and students during the lesson. In many instances, students did not receive additional support until they asked for assistance. Staff stated that the role of paraprofessionals in supporting student learning has not been clearly communicated.

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

- **Students would like the school to provide more clubs, trips, and activities.** Interviewed students stated that attending field trips and participating in extracurricular activities helps make school more enjoyable. However, students said that there are very few clubs and sports offered at the school. Additionally, grade eight students stated that there have been fewer activities this year than there were for grade eight students last year, and they were disappointed by the discontinuation of the grade eight prom. Students also suggested that all students should not be eliminated from activities or trips due to the behavior of some students.
- **Teachers would like school leaders to develop a long-term plan for covering teacher vacancies.** Teachers explained that there have been multiple staff vacancies this year as a result of teachers resigning or going on leave. Teachers expressed frustration with the need to cover these vacancies and said that there is no long-term plan in place to address this issue. Teachers stated that their coverage of other classes reduces the amount of time they have for daily preparation and interferes with their ability to effectively plan with content-area team members or co-teachers.
- **Parents would like more information about what their children are learning so they can better support their children at home.** Interviewed parents shared that they appreciate how the school staff communicates

with them via phone, text message, or in person about their children’s behavior or academic progress. Parents stated that they want to support their children at home with their learning but do not have access to curricular resources or may not have the technology necessary to access the resources being used in class. Parents said they would like to the school to provide more information about what is being taught and what resources they can use at home to support their children’s learning.

- **School staff would like opportunities to participate in discussions regarding school decisions.** Several interviewed staff stated that they would like opportunities to share their views with school leaders and provide input into school decisions. They explained that often decisions are made without consulting staff or explaining the rationale for the decision. Teachers also shared that they are not consistently informed about decisions regarding instructional resources or programming. Additionally, staff stated that they would like opportunities to talk with school leaders about ways to improve staff morale and build trust.