New York State
EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Knowledge > Skill > Opportunity

Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment
Final Report

Leadership and Systems

Curriculum

Instruction

Social-Emotional Learning

Family Engagement
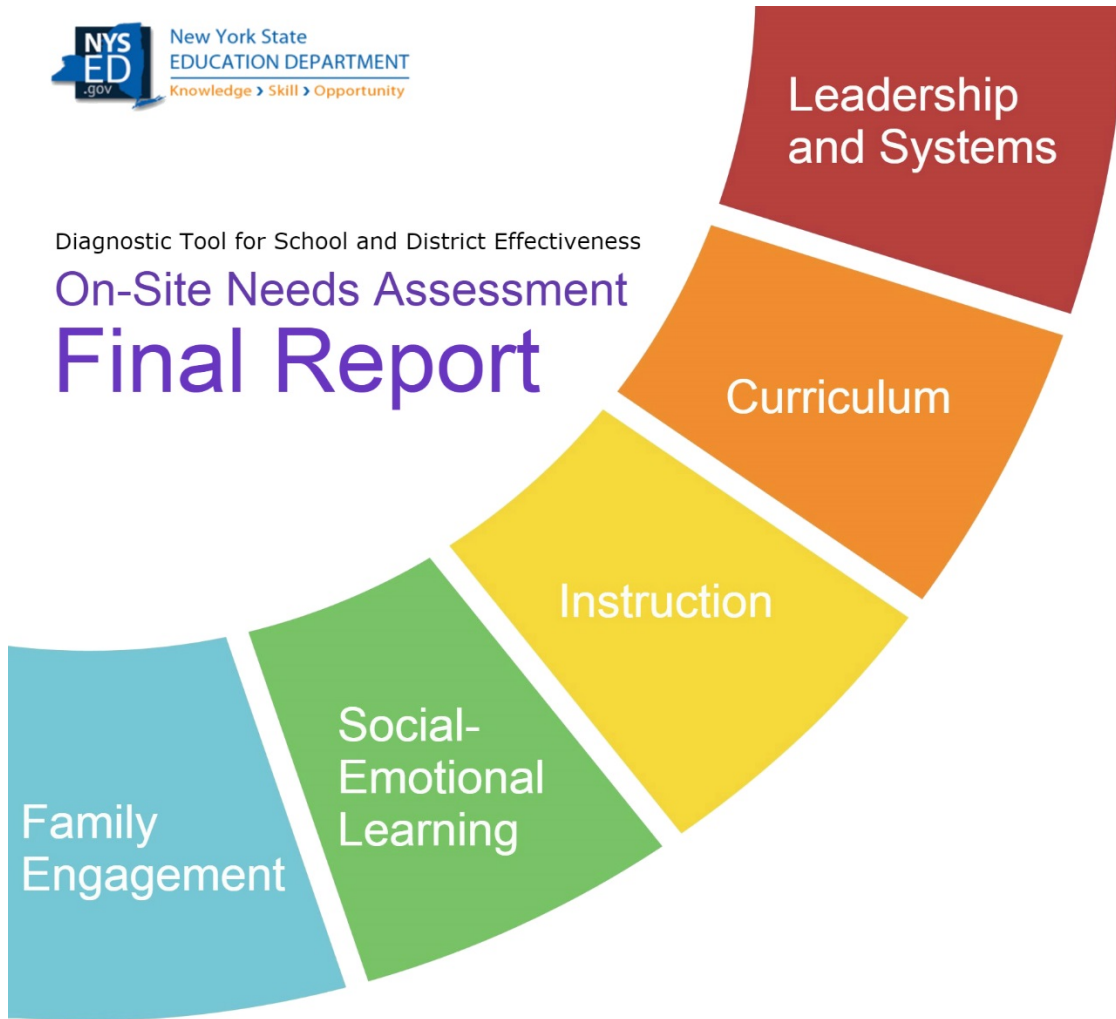
BEDS Code	320700010001
School Name	P.S. 1 Courtlandt School
School Address	335 East 152nd Street Bronx, NY 10451
District Name	NYCDOE CSD 7
Principal	Jorge Perdomo
Dates of Visit	March 19-21, 2019

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:

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
2	1	1	2	2	1

The Courtlandt School serves 666 students in grades pre-kindergarten to five.

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 58 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 curriculum maps, lesson plans, schoolwide data, teacher feedback, and student work.
- In advance of the visit, 40 staff members (65 percent) completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. During discussions with the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT), the principal explained that this school year, he has continued to make sure that students have chances to participate in a range of learning experiences outside the classroom. Many students interviewed by the team spoke enthusiastically about how much they appreciate and enjoy performing arts experiences and other non-academic learning opportunities at the school including dance, chorus, orchestra, cheerleading, and basketball. They said they enjoy working as a team during these activities and are grateful for the opportunities to perform and improve their artistic and athletic skills.

2. This school year, the principal introduced the schoolwide shared reading instructional strategy for all teachers to use in their lessons to improve students' reading proficiency. The shared reading approach includes five different phases and encourages students to use specific strategies such as annotating texts, focusing on text-based vocabulary, and answering short-response questions. In classroom visits, the team typically observed teachers implementing the shared reading strategy with fidelity. As a result, students are experiencing a coherent schoolwide strategy to support their reading development. The IIT observed data from school assessments that predicted an overall 10 percent increase in students' English language arts (ELA) scores.

3. During classroom visits, the team observed several instances where teachers effectively supported student learning during small focus groups. While working with small, targeted groups of students, teachers questioned individual students to encourage them to explain their thinking and deepen their learning. Teachers provided opportunities for students to ask each other questions and for students to discuss their learning. The IIT observed teachers providing prompts and encouraging students to work through math problems to find their own solutions and explain their problem-solving processes. As a result, the team noted that teachers provided students with opportunities to actively engage in their learning by asking and answering questions and engaging in discussions and debate. Students said they enjoy working in the small groups with the teacher.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **Action plans for school improvement goals in the School Comprehensive Education Plan (SCEP) need to be created and should include regular and frequent checkpoints to monitor progress toward achieving targets.** The IIT noted that action plans in the SCEP to support the attainment of school improvement goals include broad timeframes for completion such as September 2018 to June 2019, with few other checkpoints. For example, the 2018-19 SCEP improvement goal for "Rigorous Instruction" includes the benchmark, "By February 2019, all students will increase 5% as measured by i-Ready Reading assessment" but there are no other benchmarks included in the action plan. Further, while the IIT was able to review some checkpoint data, there was little evidence to show how school leaders track progress toward goals or how they would know whether they are on track to meet identified June 2019 goals.

- **School leaders will need to establish a system to monitor the effectiveness and impact of intervention supports for the neediest students.** During discussions with the principal and staff, the IIT learned that staff provide additional supports for struggling students, such as before- and after-school interventions. Observed

folders of individual students receiving additional support typically included examples of the student's completed assessments but little clear indication of student progress over time. As a result, the team found little evidence to clearly demonstrate how school leaders monitor the impact of various interventions on student achievement so that supports could be adjusted if necessary.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **School leaders must frequently and regularly monitor instruction and provide teachers with written, actionable feedback they could use to improve their practice.** During discussions, the principal acknowledged that school leaders do not always conduct scheduled walkthrough classroom visits because of other demands on their time such as meetings or professional development (PD). School leaders stated they typically only provide verbal feedback to teachers following classroom visits. In interviews with school leaders, the IIT learned that school leaders do not maintain a record of individual feedback provided to teachers, and they usually do not collaboratively review and calibrate teachers' feedback. As a result, it is not clear how school leaders formally identify schoolwide trends and patterns in teachers' instruction and use data from walkthrough classroom visits to identify professional learning needs of teachers. Further, school leaders have not ensured that all teachers receive consistent high quality and detailed instructional feedback from all school leaders. Teachers told the IIT that the content and quality of feedback varies between coaches and different school leaders and that the feedback does not always help them to improve their teaching. Advance formal teacher evaluation documents reviewed by the team did not always include low-inference, evidence-based notes or detailed, actionable feedback.

- **Members of the instructional leadership team should have clearly defined roles and responsibilities.** The principal informed the IIT that the assistant principals (APs) do not have specific roles and responsibilities because he expects them to supervise all aspects of teachers' and students' work. Further, in discussions with the team, the APs confirmed that they do not have clearly defined roles, and one AP described having numerous and wide-ranging schoolwide responsibilities. As a result, APs do not have clear support or expectations to guide them as they work on key schoolwide practices such as assessment and PD. Teachers told the IIT that they do not know the specific roles and responsibilities of individual members of the leadership team. Further, teachers do not always clearly understand how school leaders share responsibilities or who they should talk to about specific aspects of whole-school practices.

- **The school leaders will need to establish effective protocols and strategies to support improvement in student attendance.** The IIT reviewed data that showed the student attendance rate is currently 91 percent and chronic absenteeism increased from 34 to 41 percent over the last three years. The APs stated that they had identified some students requiring support for their attendance and reached out to some parents. However, they said they had not provided specific strategies or supports for particularly vulnerable students and their families. The IIT observed an attendance team folder and grade-level folders that held numerous individual student record sheets. The attendance team folder included one agenda dated February 2019, and a PowerPoint presentation presented to staff on March 11, 2019. Individual student record sheets in the grade-level folders included student names and a date of March 2019 but were otherwise blank and did not include any information about supports and interventions or their effectiveness. The IIT found little evidence to show established schoolwide protocols and procedures, detailed attendance data analysis, clear attendance interventions and support strategies, or any evidence of how school leaders monitor the effectiveness of support strategies.

- **Teachers need to ensure that the blended learning instructional model provides students with opportunities to learn using a variety of methods.** During classroom visits, the team noted that when teachers worked with small groups of students, other students frequently worked for extended periods of time on iPads using IXL, i-Ready, or other computer-based learning support programs. The team observed that while the teacher worked with a small focus group of students, the other students worked quietly and individually, and there was often little interaction between the teacher and these students or between the students working independently. As a result, students working at learning stations had few opportunities to be actively engaged in their learning through discussion, asking and answering questions, or taking part in group problem-solving. The team observed students as young as kindergarten age working individually on iPads for extended periods. As a result, they were not actively engaged in other forms of learning or practicing language and socialization skills. Some parents expressed the view that their children have limited opportunities to work on word problems and language skills because they spend a great deal of time on iPad computer learning programs. The team noted in many classrooms that often only the students in the small teacher's focus group received direct instruction related to the learning intention.

- **Teachers should provide students with learning tasks that are challenging and meet their individual learning needs.** The IIT observed that when using computer-based learning support programs, students often spent extended periods of time practicing and repeating skills they already knew and found easy to complete. When asked by the team during lessons and in discussions, many students said that the tasks they complete on their iPads are usually easy and do not provide any challenge or new learning. Students said that if they finish work quickly, they often look at their School 4 One (S4O) online work storage and feedback computer program or use IXL to practice their skills. The principal explained that often iPad tasks are designed for students to practice skills they already know and that learning support programs should provide some built-in challenge for students. However, the IIT observed little evidence in lessons to show that iPad activities such as IXL and i-Ready provide students with challenge and extension of their learning. As a result, some students do not receive sufficient support that would deepen and extend their learning so they could improve their achievement.

- **Teachers will need to provide learning tasks that support the learning needs of English language learners (ELLs), multilingual learners, and students with disabilities.** During classroom visits, the IIT observed few instances where the teacher provided ELLs, multilingual learners, or students with disabilities with specific scaffolds and prompts to support their learning. Data show that these students comprise 29 percent of the student population. In interviews, teachers said they had received little targeted PD to help them develop specific strategies to support the learning needs of ELLs and multilingual learners. The team noted that in some integrated co-teaching (ICT) classrooms, teachers posted learning intentions in both English and Spanish. However, in most classrooms, the IIT found that learning support resources such as posters, charts, textbooks, worksheets, and computer-based learning support programs were presented in English only. Teachers stated that they often do not have enough resources and materials specifically designed to support the learning needs of ELLs and multilingual learners. Data show that 52 percent of ELLs and multilingual learners made no progress between the 2017 and 2018 administrations of the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT). Further, although teachers reported that they are able to access students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), in class visits, the team found little evidence that teachers used students' IEPs to provide learning tasks to meet individual students' learning needs. Typically, all students accessed the same

learning tasks using the same materials, and the IIT observed few instances where teachers provided specific supports and scaffolds for students with disabilities.

- **Teachers should check for student understanding of their learning during independent work time, provide timely feedback to students, and adjust instruction to better meet student learning needs.** During classroom visits, the IIT observed that teachers typically used the schoolwide blended learning model with fidelity. As a result, teachers spent time with a small focus group of students, often providing them with effective learning support. However, some teachers shared that they often find it challenging to move around the classroom, talk with other students working independently on iPads, and check all students' understanding of their learning. As a result, some teachers have limited data to inform them about students' level of understanding during the lesson that would enable them to provide timely learning feedback to students or adjust instruction to better meet their learning needs. The team noted some instances of more effective practice that could be shared to help other teachers improve their practice. For example, some teachers managed to organize their work with small focus groups, so they had time to circulate and talk with other students to support their learning.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Students, teachers, and parents expressed the view that students should have more opportunities to experience social studies and science, including practical experiments and group problem-solving, as part of a more balanced curriculum.** Some parents and teachers said they were disappointed with what they see as minimal opportunities for their children to learn about social studies and science. Parents explained that they understand that teachers often combine social studies with ELA but feel that approach does not provide balanced learning experiences for their children. Students said they would like to do more practical science experiments and problem-solving and learn more about social studies.
- **Parents said they would like more opportunities to volunteer in the school and they would like to be informed about how they can volunteer.** Parents explained that they were not sure how they may be able to work with the school to support their children's learning or how to apply to become a volunteer.
- **Although parents reported that communications from teachers are typically good, some parents said that it would have been beneficial to have received more information about induction into kindergarten.** Parents said they appreciate that teachers' communications are frequent and regular and that teachers are usually responsive and helpful when they have concerns about their children. However, some parents stated that they did not feel they knew enough to be able to effectively support their children when they were entering kindergarten.
- **Teachers said PD does not always provide them with support to develop the skills they need to effectively implement tier one instructional strategies.** Teachers reported that school leaders have provided a lot of PD to help them effectively use technology in the classroom to support the schoolwide blended learning instructional model. However, they expressed the view that they have received limited support and guidance to help them improve their tier one instructional skills. They said they would appreciate more support to help them improve teaching skills, such as questioning, checking for understanding and providing timely learning feedback to students during lessons, providing student talk opportunities, and increasing students' active engagement in learning.