

Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

Final Report



BEDS Code	32100007018
School Name	P.S. 18 John Peter Zenger
School Address	501 Morris Avenue, Bronx, NY 10451
District Name	NYCDOE CSD 7
Principal	Lauren Sewell Walker
Dates of Visit	January 29-31, 2018



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 47 classrooms during the visit.
- The OEE visited 13 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 44 staff members (81 percent) completed.
- In advance of the visit, the school provided results of a parent survey that 95 percent completed.
- The school noted that they currently have five teachers on leave, including the school's culture coach. As a result, substitute teachers are responsible for many classes.
- John Peter Zenger School serves 582 students in grades pre-kindergarten to five.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. School leaders have made the decision to limit the use of external consultants in the school this year and use funds to build internal capacity. This has led to the expansion of opportunities for staff to share their areas of expertise with their colleagues.
2. School leaders have developed a system this year where designated staff members check in first thing in the morning with students who have had behavioral issues, and then again at points throughout the day. This has resulted in a reduction in the number of behavioral disruptions during the school day.
3. School leaders have begun a new process for documenting and addressing behavioral issues, whereby the classroom teacher completes a form describing the issue and what is being done to address it. The school leader says this has led to classroom teachers taking more responsibility for students' behaviors rather than immediately referring them to a dean or the school leader.
4. The school environment is welcoming and inviting, with examples of student work, often with feedback from teachers, posted on bulletin boards in hallways and classrooms throughout the school.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **The school should develop a unified student information system where data regarding individual students is housed.** The principal, with support of a teacher designated as student support staff, maintains EXCEL spread sheets that record state test data. However, this spreadsheet does not include data about special education students, I-Ready data, or Fountas and Pinnell reading level data. Teachers told the IIT that they administer, score, enter data on their own spreadsheets, and maintain data for their own benchmark exams, but they are not submitted to school leaders. As a result, school leaders are not able to track student progress, or monitor and assess the quality and impact of services provided for students. In the future, the school leader should develop a student information system where student growth and the efficacy of school programs and initiatives can be tracked and evaluated to guide instructional planning.
- **The school should designate a person who will be responsible for overseeing, maintaining, and ensuring the quality of all data within the school.** Data are reviewed and used by the school leaders, the school instructional leadership team, and at grade level meetings, but the school has not identified a person that is responsible for the quality, consistency, and coherence of student performance data across the school.
- **The school should develop a system to investigate and address the root causes of chronic absenteeism.** Although the school has created an attendance team that recognizes students for good attendance, there is a high level and growing rate of chronic absenteeism at P.S. 18. In the future, school leaders will need to develop a plan for reaching out to and following up with the families of chronically absent students.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **The school leaders should clarify the roles and responsibilities of different member of the administrative team.** The administrative team includes the principal and two APs. One member of the team is responsible for each floor of the three-story school building. Halfway through the school year, school leaders switch the floors for which they assume responsibility. The principal indicated that she believed that ensuring that all school leaders were familiar with what was happening on all grades in the school and had the opportunity to know all the children in the school was a good thing. At the time of the IIT visit, the switch was imminent, but APs were unsure about where they would be assigned.
- **The school leaders should clarify the roles and responsibilities for model teachers, peer collaborative teachers, and instructional coaches to provide additional support to teachers on all grade levels.** While there is a second-grade teacher whose class serves as a model classroom, model classrooms do not exist at other grade levels. Teachers from all grade levels have the option of visiting the second-grade model classroom; however, there are not specific opportunities for visiting classrooms on other grade levels. There are also two peer collaborative teachers within the school who can support their colleagues, as well as instructional coaches, but peer collaborative teachers and coaches indicated that they have not be given specific assignment and responsibilities.
- **Teachers have dedicated time each week for grade level team meetings but will need to enhance the quality and effectiveness of team meetings and work.** The IIT observed an effective team meeting in the lower grades where teachers were visiting one another's classes and sharing feedback on the instructional practices that they observed, as well as analyzing and discussing student benchmark data and student work. The IIT did not have the opportunity to observe other grade level team meetings because these meetings were scheduled on days other than those on which the IIT was at the school. However, the IIT was told by the principal and by instructional coaches that the grade level team meetings on the other grades were less effective than those at the lower grades because these upper grade teams were still developing their capacity to collaboratively review and analyze student data and student work.

Learning at the School

- **Teachers should increase the instructional time in science and social studies.** Grade four and five students are receiving only one to two periods of science and social studies per week, which limits their ability to develop the knowledge, skills, and understanding in these content areas that they require in order to be successful either in the Science state assessments or in middle and high school. Grade four and five teachers stated they are working each week to plan lessons in multiple content areas.
- **Teachers should diversify their learning strategies during the literacy block.** The IIT observed that at all grade levels, teachers lead students in reading by either reading passages to them aloud or asking a student to read a passage aloud for the whole class. However, teachers do not provide opportunities for students to read independently or engage in discussion with other students on the content and ideas about which they are reading.
- **Math instruction should include manipulatives, critical thinking, and reasoning.** During classroom visits, the IIT observed students following teacher directions and using formulas to solve straightforward mathematical problems presented on SMARTBoards or worksheets. However, neither instruction nor assignments provided students with opportunities to engage in deep thinking about mathematics, use mathematical reasoning, or engage in discourse about mathematics.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Teachers of other grades would like the chance to learn the strategies that are being used in the Reading Rescue program with grade one students at the school.** Grade one teachers stated that the Reading Rescue program has been successful in helping struggling readers become more confident readers. Teachers in other grades reported that when students who have participated in Reading Rescue as first graders move to their classes, they have seen the impact of the program on students' willingness to engage independently in one or more strategies to make sense of what they are reading. These teachers would like to become knowledgeable about Reading Rescue strategies so that they can use these approaches to strengthen their own students' reading.
- **Students would like additional after-school opportunities to participate in sports and enrichment activities.** Students acknowledged that the school offered a choice of activities in which they could engage, such as dance, chorus and soccer. However, they suggested that these were often not the activities that they wanted. Several girls, for example, indicated that would like a basketball team. They pointed out that there was a boys' basketball team at the school, but question why the girls didn't also have a team. Students interviewed by the IIT also talked about wanting more voice in how things were done at the school. They indicated that they would like a student council for this purpose.