

Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

Final Report



BEDS Code	261600010044
School Name	Lincoln Park School No. 44
School Address	820 Chili Avenue, Rochester, NY 14611
District Name	Rochester City School District
Principal	Rodney Moore
Dates of Visit	January 23-25, 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.

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.
- The team visited a total of 23 classrooms during the visit.
- The OEE visited 12 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, schoolwide data, Response to Intervention (RtI) documents, staff newsletters, and student work.
- In advance of the visit, 25 staff members (100 percent) completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.
- The school's principal had only been in place for two months at the time of the team's visit, replacing a previous interim who started at the end of the 2017-18 school year and ended in October 2018.
- Of the 23 teachers at the school this year, 19 are new to the building.
- The school serves 271 students in grades Pre-kindergarten through six. However, there is no grade four because the school did not seek to enroll new students in 2015, due to the possible school closure.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. During classroom observations, the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) saw evidence of a low student-to-teacher ratio. With 23 teachers serving 271 students, the school has been able to create small class sizes in the 2018-19 school year. By placing and scheduling multiple educators such as interventionists, paraprofessionals, co-teachers, and volunteer grandparents for student support, the school has created more opportunities for individualized and small group instruction as well as the regular delivery of interventions to meet student needs.
2. The principal, assistant principal, and teachers have prioritized the development and maintenance of a safe, clean, and welcoming environment for students. The IIT observed that hallways and common areas were well maintained and free of litter or debris, and classrooms were appropriately arranged and decorated to engage students and promote teaching and learning. Students reported that they feel welcomed in the school.
3. During the 2018-19 school year, the principal has worked to support and promote prekindergarten as a foundation for the school's push for more small group instruction. The team found that prekindergarten classes are strong models for small group and differentiated instruction, illustrating direct and purposeful teaching to leveled small groups. The IIT observed groups of four or five students seated with one of three adults in the room, fully engaged in their table activity.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **School leaders need to develop and implement a well-defined plan to address curricular issues for each grade level.** A previous DTSDE report included recommendations for implementation of curricular reviews and meetings to ensure that what was being taught was aligned with curriculum standards. There were also recommendations to increase rigor in lessons and make more use of learning targets by posting them in class. While the IIT observed posted targets, they did not find evidence of curricular alignment or curricular consistency across classrooms. Through classroom visits and interviews with teachers and school leaders, the IIT learned that there is confusion regarding curricular expectations. For example, teachers reported that they were not aware of the principal's perspective on how they should use Zearn Math to level student groups, create lessons, and pull classroom activities, and that they were using Zearn Math to different degrees, if at all. School leaders indicated that kindergarten uses Core Knowledge Language Arts for reading, whereas grades one through six use skills and standards pulled from the EngageNY English language arts (ELA) curriculum modules. School leaders and teachers referred to reading in grades one through six as "Guided Reading," which often indicates that the school implements Fountas & Pinnell's formal program. However, the team learned that this is not the case, and it is a point of confusion schoolwide. School leaders stated that they expect teachers to use the EngageNY curriculum modules to inform lessons when guiding or helping students through reading during small groups and centers. They also stated that the school uses both the EngageNY modules and Zearn for math in kindergarten through grade six. However, teachers were unclear about how they should use both in conjunction with each other. Overall, the team found that teachers need additional clarification about what curriculum they are expected to use and how or why they are expected to use any given curriculum.

- **The principal should develop a plan to organize classrooms to minimize logistical and scheduling conflicts.** The team found that classrooms across the school are not organized uniformly by grade level but rather are broken up with multiple grade levels in a given hallway. The team found that with the history of administrative and teacher turnover, some teachers who have been at the school for several years have stayed in their original classrooms although they teach at different grade levels. Over time, this has resulted in a mix of grade levels in some hallways. For example, grade five classrooms might be split by a grade three classroom, or a grade two classroom could sit among grade six classrooms. The principal stated that this is causing logistical issues, such as complicating possible departmentalization. This also creates some scheduling conflicts. For example, teachers noted that a grade three classroom is near grade five classrooms. When grade three transitions or dismisses based on their schedule, the grade five classes do not. This creates a disruption for grade five classes that generates behavioral issues and a loss of instructional time. School leaders might want to consider establishing a policy to have all teachers pack up their rooms at the end of the current school year so items may be stored, and classrooms appropriately reassigned for the 2019-20 school year.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **The school should have a designated leader who focuses on instructional or behavioral issues.** In conversations with the IIT, teachers stated that they do not know who to go to for instructional support. They also expressed confusion regarding behavioral issues and protocols. Currently, both the principal and assistant principal cover instruction and behavior for their grade bands, with the principal supporting prekindergarten through grade two and the assistant principal supporting grades three through six. In the future, the principal should consider doing more to establish his role as the instructional leader of the building and assign roles and responsibilities related to behavior management among the leadership team members to address the school's other needs.
- **The principal needs to delegate more instructional responsibilities to staff to meet school needs.** The principal indicated that he wants to address and meet all the needs of the school, including monitoring Zearn data, working on plans to reorganize school drop-off and pick-up, and examining how to departmentalize. He also wants to support teachers regarding curriculum and educational strategies, to conduct regularly scheduled walkthroughs and deliver meaningful feedback. The principal indicated that he wants to do all of this and more, but he also said that he finds himself pulled away far too often to deal with sudden student behavior problems. In the future, the principal should consider focusing on instructional leadership and feedback on classroom instruction. While the principal should have oversight on every important facet of the school, he should also consider empowering other school leaders to manage specific needs and find potential research-based solutions to address issues and areas of concern.
- **The principal should communicate a clear message about the school's mission and culture.** With previous concerns about school closure, multiple new administrators, and teacher turnover, the team found that the school lacks a strong sense of identity. During observations and various focus groups, the IIT noted that students and staff did not express a strong school spirit or speak about the school's mission or culture. School colors and representations of the school mascot were not overtly evident in hallways or classrooms. Aside from a brief statement during morning announcements, the mission of the school lived primarily as set of bullet points on posters placed on walls throughout the building, and many classrooms lacked intensity and excitement.

Learning at the School

- **The school should have systems and structures in place to effectively address all the social-emotional needs of students.** The team's conversations with teachers and students indicated that the way some students interact with and react to each other leads to behavioral issues. The IIT observed no outwardly aggressive behavioral issues but did note some students speaking in a negative tone with one another or when redirected by an adult. While the principal expressed his desire to hold a social-emotional resources fair for families, he noted that organizing such an event would take time. School leaders should consider how to utilize their social workers more effectively to meet the social-emotional needs of students and might also consider disseminating literature to families that outlines area resources that can address social-emotional needs of their children.
- **Teachers need to provide students with more opportunities to engage academically with their classmates.** While the IIT observed classrooms arranged in small groups with students working at stations or centers, the team noted that very often instruction was delivered with minimal opportunities for students to engage with one another. Students were not observed talking to each other about the learning targets, lessons, or activities. Many students worked alone while in groups or communicated primarily with whichever adult was available at the time.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Parents reported that they feel the school is a safe environment where their children can learn and grow and that they can communicate with teachers regarding their children's needs; however, they stated that they would like to know about opportunities to volunteer at the school.** Some parents expressed concern that the lack of parking might prevent them from volunteering at the school. Also, parents that had children at the school during the period when there were rumors of the school possibly closing, noted that communication from the school about volunteer opportunities began to wane. Now, with a new principal and many new teachers, parents shared that they are eager to volunteer at the school once again.
- **Teachers reported that they would like more timely direction regarding instructional expectations.** Teachers stated that they often look to each other for support and clarification rather than from an instructional leader because they are unclear about who the instructional leader is. However, some teachers indicated that they feel they can go to coaches/interventionists if they have questions.
- **Students shared that they would like to see more positive interactions between students during class.** Some students in the focus group shared that they experience too much emotional drama with their classmates and that sometimes small issues are made into much bigger distractions in the classroom.