

Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

On-Site Needs Assessment

Final Report



BEDS Code	580235060003
School Name	Brookhaven Elementary School
School Address	101 Fireplace Neck Road, Brookhaven, NY 11719
District Name	South Country Central School District
Principal	Rebecca Raymond
Dates of Visit	May 20-22, 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
1	-	1	2	1	1

Brookhaven Elementary School serves 537 students in pre-kindergarten through grade three.

Information About The Visit

- The visit was led by an Outside Educational Expert (OEE) and a representative from NYSED. The team also included two district representatives.
- The team visited a total of 22 classrooms during the visit.
- The OEE visited six 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, and student work.
- In advance of the visit, 37 staff members (60 percent) completed a DTSDE pre-visit survey conducted by NYSED.

Successes Within The School That The School Should Build Upon:

1. In 2018-19, in order to build staff capacity to implement data-driven instruction, the principal met in 40-minute blocks with individual teachers to review and analyze Northwest Evaluation Association and Measures of Academic Progress (NWEA/MAP) interim and diagnostic data. As a result, several teachers shared that they are now beginning to understand how to read data reports, identify student skill gaps, and plan and pace activities based on the specific needs of their students.

2. In 2018-19, in an effort to reduce the number of chronically absent students, the principal collaborated with staff and the social worker to begin meeting and with families to conduct needs assessments and develop plans to address the issues that were preventing students from attending school regularly. Through these efforts, staff discovered that several families were keeping their children home because there was no one to pick them up or care for them after school. After identifying this as the root cause for some student absences, the principal was able to get the after-care fee waived for some families.
3. The principal introduced elements of mindfulness in 2018-19 to help students and staff manage stress and regulate their emotions. She introduced deep-breathing exercises, created a yoga room, and purchased yoga mats and videos. Teachers can reserve the room and practice yoga with their classes or with colleagues. Since implementing these practices, the school is on pace to reduce the number of suspensions by 50 percent, from 16 suspensions in 2017-18 to eight thus far in 2018-19.
4. In order to successfully provide students with a global perspective and an appreciation of all cultures and ethnicities, the principal communicated an expectation that all teachers should integrate black history into the curriculum content during the 2019 Black History Month. As a result, some classes studied African American scientists, inventors, and authors while others studied African folktales and poetry. Teachers reported that through these activities, students gained a greater understanding of African American culture and history.

Areas Of Need To Be Addressed For Long-Term Success

Systems for Improvement

- **School leaders need to develop a system for teachers to analyze student assessment data to inform instructional practices.** The principal shared that the school does not have system for teachers or grade-level teams to analyze student learning data and use that information to inform instruction. This year, the principal started meeting with individual teachers to review student NWEA/MAP data, but there is no designated time for grade-level teams to review and analyze student data. Teachers explained that although they meet informally with their colleagues to discuss pacing or lesson plans, they do not have a process for grade-level teams to analyze data and use it to inform instruction. The IIT saw no evidence in lesson plans or classroom observations that data had been used to plan activities, form flexible strategic student groupings, or differentiate instruction to meet individual student learning needs.
- **School leaders should develop systems for coordinating and monitoring school improvement efforts.** Although the school created a team to collaborate with parents to address barriers to individual student attendance, there is no schoolwide strategy or plan to improve student attendance. While the assistant principal is responsible for overseeing discipline and office referrals, the school does not have a process to monitor the school's climate and culture, assess the quality and impact of discipline processes, or measure the impact of parent engagement efforts on student behavior. In addition, the school does not have a system to determine the impact of Response to Intervention (RtI) supports. Although the school is a dual-language magnet school, the IIT learned that there is no process for ensuring that language practices are integrated schoolwide and the team did not observe multi-lingual signs and printed materials being displayed throughout the school.

- **The principal should use data from NWEA/MAP assessments to identify school- and grade-level specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely (SMART) goals for math and English language arts (ELA), identify specific areas of need, and target supports.** The principal has identified instructional priorities of reviewing the RtI process, utilizing technology within the instructional plan, and increasing opportunities for collaborative planning. However, the school does not have identified SMART goals to improve student ELA and math performance. While the school has data available from the October NWEA/MAP assessments, this data has not been analyzed to determine baseline levels and establish goals and benchmarks to monitor student progress. In addition, NWEA/MAP data has not been analyzed to identify specific areas of need and target additional supports. When asked, teachers said that they are only just beginning to understand how to use NWEA/MAP data, and specific student growth goals have not yet been established for their classrooms.

Leadership and Organization at the School

- **The principal should increase monitoring and support to ensure that teachers are implementing strategies learned through professional development (PD).** District leaders shared, and the principal confirmed, that staff have received PD on a variety of topics including, Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP), technology integration, Singapore Math, literacy and grade-level lab site, growth mindset, social-emotional learning, Foundations, and RtI. However, when asked, only a few teachers were able to identify a specific instructional strategy learned through PD that they had implemented in their classroom. During class visits, the IIT saw limited evidence of strategies learned through PD being used effectively during instruction. Although TCRWP requires teaching points to be posted, the team observed teaching points in only a few classrooms. While the IIT observed technology integrated in a few classrooms, it was not being used effectively to enhance student learning. For example, the IIT saw students in one classroom using a Smart Table in centers to sort equations and match them to the appropriate number problem. However, students were moving around the centers without supportive discourse to help them demonstrate and develop mathematical thinking and problem-solving skills.
- **School leaders need to visit classes regularly and provide teachers with actionable feedback to improve their planning and delivery of instruction.** The principal shared that due to the amount of time she spends addressing student behavior issues and meeting with parents, classrooms visits do not occur on a regular basis. The assistant principal also stated that she spends most of her time responding to student behavior issues. In focus groups, most teachers said that their classrooms are only visited for the purposes of their Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR). Teachers shared that they submit lesson plans every two weeks and school leaders provide them with written feedback such as “good job.” Interviewed teachers stated that they seldom receive feedback that includes suggestions for improving their lesson plans. Teachers stated that they would like to receive feedback and suggestions on differentiating instruction to meet the learning needs of individual students, including ELLs and students who are struggling.
- **The principal should work with staff to develop a schedule that includes collaborative planning time and develop protocols to guide collaborative discussions.** The current school schedule does not include time for teachers to plan collaboratively. As a result, individual teachers coordinate to meet informally during specials, during lunch, or in the morning. Special-education, English as a new language (ENL), and dual-language teachers said they would like opportunities during the day to co-plan with their general education colleagues. In the future, the principal should consider repurposing the time from 8:30-9:00 a.m. each day, which is currently designated as flex time, and use it exclusively for grade-level team meetings. The principal should

also consider using the mid-day planning time for committee and RtI meetings. The principal should ensure that the schedule includes time for general education teachers and subgroup-specific teachers to co-plan. Once collaborative plan times have been established, protocols to guide collaborative discussions should be developed to ensure that agendas are distributed 24 hours before the meeting, notes are taken and shared with attendees, roles and responsibilities are agreed upon and understood, and meeting norms are established and adhered to.

- **The school leader should ensure the school’s schedule is adhered to so that instructional time is not lost.** Although the school day ends at 3:20 p.m., the IIT noted that dismissal announcements began at 3:00 p.m., and in many classes, instruction ended once the announcements started resulting in a significant loss of instructional time each day.

Learning at the School

- **Teachers should ensure that students understand the purpose of their learning.** When asked about what they were learning and why, most students described the activity they were completing, such as cutting out vocabulary words. In one class, students were highlighting sections of a packet and when asked why they were highlighting these specific sections, they explained that they were supposed to highlight everything that is important. However, they struggled to explain what it was about a sentence that made it important. In most classes, students were not able to explain the purpose of the lesson and even when the lesson objective was posted, students did not refer to the objective when explaining what they were working on. The IIT did not observe any classes in which the lesson objective was referred to during the lesson.
- **Teachers should plan and deliver activities that promote higher-level thinking and student discussion.** In most classes visited, students were asked low-level questions that required short or single-word responses such as, “What is the value of that coin?” or “What does the clock say?” The IIT saw few instances when students were required to explain or extend their thinking. In addition, most activities observed during class visits and student work posted on bulletin boards consisted of fill-in-the blank worksheets that did not require students to think critically. In most observed classrooms, discussions were between the teacher and students, and few opportunities for student discussion were provided.
- **Teachers should provide students with actionable feedback that includes next steps to improve their work.** A review of student work on bulletin boards and in classrooms revealed that students received little written feedback on their work. The team also noted that, apart from the rubrics and checklists for writing that are used as part of TCRWP, most feedback that students received was vague and did not include next steps for improvement. Additionally, most work contained uncorrected spelling, punctuation, and grammar mistakes. In focus groups, students said that sometimes they receive a comment such as “great job” or a star on their papers. Students explained that sometimes they receive a number like 12/24, but they did not understand what the number meant.
- **Teachers and staff should explicitly teach the schoolwide behavioral expectations.** The school has established Be Kind, Be Respectful, Be Responsible (3Bs) to help students understand schoolwide expectations for behavior. While most students could recite the 3Bs, they struggled to explain what they would look like in practice. For instance, when asked, students had difficulty explaining what Be Kind would look like in the bathroom or what Be Responsible would look like on the playground. The IIT observed few teachers referring to the 3Bs during lessons or explicitly using them to help students self-regulate and assess their behavior against the expectations. With the exception of the assistant principal’s office, the team saw few location-

specific posters reminding students of what appropriate behavior in the hallways, on the bus, in the bathroom, cafeteria, classroom, and/or gym looked like.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Areas of Need and Ideas for Improvement

- **Parents would like classroom teachers to send home monthly newsletters and suggested that school letters and memos be color-coded.** Parents shared that classroom-specific newsletters would help them to know what was happening in their child’s classroom and allow them to prepare for upcoming units in order to support their child’s learning at home. Parents shared that color-coded letters and memos would help them to identify the topic or issue being communicated. Parents suggested that communications printed on colored paper would also stand out in backpacks, explaining that information on white paper gets lost easily amongst other papers.
- **Parents would like the option of donating their child’s end-of-year lunch account balance to the PTA lunch fund.** Several parents said that they sometimes have an end-of-year balance in their child’s lunch account. Parents suggested that instead of having a refund check sent home, they would like to be able to donate their balance to a fund run by the PTA that benefits students who forget their lunch or have an unpaid balance.
- **Teachers and parents would like report card comments to be translated into the parents’ home language.** Teachers told the IIT that while report cards are translated, staff comments seldom are. Parents shared that they would like teacher comments to be translated into their home language.
- **Teachers would like the school to offer additional supports to families to strengthen home-school relationships.** Teachers suggested that when families bring their children to school, they would be more likely to come into the school if additional supports, such as a food pantry or clothes closet, were available. Teachers suggested that having more families come into the school would allow more opportunities to share information about academics, connect families with support agencies, update contact information, and strengthen home-school relationships.
- **Students, staff, and parents expressed concern about behaviors on the bus.** Students shared concerns about behavior on the bus explaining that sometimes students get very noisy, jump around, rough-house, and roll around on the floor of the bus. Staff shared that many of the discipline referrals involve incidents that take place on the bus, and parents shared that fighting and bullying on the bus is a sometimes a problem. Students, staff, and parents suggested that providing monitors on the bus each day would help to decrease the number of behavioral incidents.
- **Students suggested that academic interventions be provided in the classroom.** Students told the IIT that their friends sometimes get pulled out of class to receive assistance in reading and math. Students explained that this causes their friends to miss out on learning and when they return to class, they often do not know what they missed or what they need to do next. Students explained that this sometimes results in students falling behind or becoming frustrated and confused.