



The University of the State of New York
The State Education Department

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)



BEDS Code/DBN	01-01-00-01-0000
District	Albany City School District
District Address	1 Academy Park, Albany, NY 12207
Superintendent	Marguerite Vanden Wyngaard, Ph.D.
Date(s) of Review	February 25, 2013
Schools Discussed in this Report	Sheridan Preparatory Academy Phillip J. Schuyler Achievement Academy

District Information Sheet											
District Grade Configuration	PK-12	Total Student Enrollment	8609	% Title 1 Population	76 %	% Attendance Rate	91 %				
% Free Lunch	52 %	% Reduced Lunch	8 %	% Student Sustainability	N/A	% Limited English Proficient	6 %	% Students with Disabilities	NP		
Racial/Ethnic Origin of District Student Population											
% American Indian or Alaska Native	0 %	% Black or African American	59 %	% Hispanic or Latino	12 %	% Asian, Native Hawaiian /Other Pacific Islander	7 %	White	21 %	Multi-racial	1 %
Personnel											
Number Years Superintendent Assigned/ Appointed to District	<1	Number of Assistant Superintendents	3	Average Years Assistant Superintendents in Role in the District	4	# of Directors/ Supervisors of Programs	8				
% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate in District	0 %	% Teaching Out of Certification in District	0 %	% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Yrs. of Exp. in District	2 %	Average Teacher Absences in District	8.5%				
Overall State Accountability Status (Mark applicable box with an X)											
District in Good Standing		Focus District	X	Number of Focus Schools Identified by District		Number of SIG Recipient Schools	2	Number of Schools in Status	NP		
% ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	34.5 %	% Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4	39.3%	% Science Performance at levels 3 & 4	68.1 %	% 4 yr. Graduation Rate (for HS only)	51 %	% 6 yr. Graduation Rate (for HS only)	58.3 %		

NP = Not Provided

Did Not Meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in ELA			
	American Indian or Alaska Native	X	Black or African American
X	Hispanic or Latino		Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander
	White		Multi-racial
X	Students with Disabilities	X	Limited English Proficient
X	Economically Disadvantaged		
Did Not Meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Mathematics			
	American Indian or Alaska Native	X	Black or African American
X	Hispanic or Latino		Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander
	White		Multi-racial
X	Students with Disabilities	X	Limited English Proficient
X	Economically Disadvantaged		
Did Not Meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Science			
	American Indian or Alaska Native		Black or African American
	Hispanic or Latino		Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander
	White		Multi-racial
	Students with Disabilities		Limited English Proficient
	Economically Disadvantaged		
Did Not Meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for Effective Annual Measurable Achievement Objective			
X	Limited English Proficiency		

Tenet 1 - District Leadership and Capacity: The district examines school systems and makes intentional decisions to identify and provide critical expectations, supports and structures in all areas of need so that schools are able to respond to their community and ensure that all students are successful.

Mark an "X" in the box below the appropriate designation for each statement of practice (SOP), and indicate in the **OVERALL RATING** row the final designation for the overall tenet rating.

#	Statement of Practice	H	E	D	I
1.1	The district has a comprehensive approach for recruiting, evaluating and sustaining high-quality personnel that affords schools the ability to ensure success by addressing the needs of their community.			X	
1.2	The district is organized and allocates resources (financial, staff support, materials, etc.) in a way that leads to appropriate levels of support for schools based on the needs of the school community, which promotes school improvement and success.				X
1.3	The district leadership has a comprehensive explicit theory of action about school culture that robustly communicates high expectations for addressing the needs of all constituents.			X	
1.4	The district has a comprehensive plan to create, deliver and monitor professional development in all pertinent areas that is adaptive and tailored to the needs of individual schools.				X
1.5	The district promotes a data-driven culture by providing strategies connected to best practices that all staff members and school communities are expected to be held accountable for implementing.				X
	OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 1:				I

Tenet 2 - School Leader Practices and Decisions: Visionary leaders create a school community and culture that lead to success, well-being and high academic outcomes for all students via systems of continuous and sustainable school improvement.

#	Statement of Practice	H	E	D	I
2.1	The district works collaboratively with the school to provide opportunities and supports for the school leader to create, develop and nurture a school environment that is responsive to the needs of the entire school community.			X	

Tenet 3 - Curriculum Development and Support: The school has rigorous and coherent curricula and assessments that are appropriately aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) for all students and are modified for identified subgroups in order to maximize teacher instructional practices and student learning outcomes.

#	Statement of Practice	H	E	D	I
3.1	The district works collaboratively with the school to provide opportunities and supports that are connected to the implementation of a comprehensive curriculum appropriately aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and are inclusive of the arts, technology and other enrichment subjects in a data-driven culture.				X

Tenet 4 - Teacher Practices and Decisions: Teachers engage in strategic practices and decision-making in order to address the gap between what students know and need to learn so that all students and pertinent subgroups experience consistent high levels of engagement, thinking and achievement.

#	Statement of Practice	H	E	D	I
4.1	The district works collaboratively with the school to provide opportunities and supports for teachers to develop strategies and practices that lead to effective planning and account for student data, needs, goals, and levels of engagement.			X	

Tenet 5 - Student Social and Emotional Developmental Health: The school community identifies, promotes, and supports social and emotional development by designing systems and experiences that lead to healthy relationships and a safe, respectful environment that is conducive to learning for all constituents.

#	Statement of Practice	H	E	D	I
5.1	The district creates policy and works collaboratively with the school to provide opportunities and resources that positively support students' social and emotional developmental health.			X	

Tenet 6 - Family and Community Engagement: The school creates a culture of partnership where families, community members and school staff work together to share in the responsibility for student academic progress and social-emotional growth and well-being.

#	Statement of Practice	H	E	D	I
6.1	The district has a comprehensive family and community engagement strategic plan that states the expectations around creating and sustaining a welcoming environment for families, reciprocal communication, and establishing partnerships with community organizations and families.			X	

District Review Narrative:

<p>Tenet 1 - District Leadership and Capacity: The district examines school systems and makes intentional decisions to identify and provide critical expectations, supports and structures in all areas of need so that schools are able to respond to their community and ensure that all students are successful.</p>	<p>Overall Tenet Rating</p>	<p>I</p>
<p>Statement of Practice 1.1: The district has a comprehensive approach for recruiting, evaluating and sustaining high-quality personnel that affords schools the ability to ensure success by addressing the needs of their community.</p>	<p>SOP Rating</p>	<p>D</p>
<p>Debriefing Statement: Supports for instructional feedback, teacher retention and evaluations are being developed. In addition, personnel policies often focus on maintain compliance rather than the strategic identification of candidates in support of specific community and school improvement needs.</p> <p>Areas for Improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The District seeks to recruit personnel from multiple sources. The IIT was informed that the District relies on hiring from a pool of applicants identified through an online application system (OLAS) and from applicants from within the District and community. The self-assessment and interviews indicated that all teachers are certified and are teaching in their areas of certification. New hires are provided with mentoring, and four District-wide Peer Assistance and Review teachers (PARs) provide on-going evaluation and support for new teachers. The District has a comprehensive Board Policy on staff evaluation that spells out District requirements for the yearly evaluation of administrators, professional employees, and support staff. Interviews conducted by the ITT with District and school staff indicated that supports for instructional feedback, teacher retention and evaluations are being developed. School staff indicated to the IIT that there is a desire for additional professional development (PD) and follow-up support to sustain school improvement efforts. The District is in the last year of a three-year District PD plan and is in the process of review and revision of the plan for submission to SED in June 2013. District staff indicated that the new plan is being developed to sustain quality personnel and address school and district-wide needs for school improvement. Although there are discrete policies for hiring, evaluation and the provision of mentoring, the focus of these policies is to maintain compliance with State and federal mandates and regulations. The District’s singular approach for recruiting, evaluating and sustaining high-quality personnel that is designed solely to ensure compliance with regulations limits the establishment of a comprehensive approach that addresses community and school improvement needs. 		
<p>Statement of Practice 1.2: The district is organized and allocates resources (financial, staff support, materials, etc.) in a way that leads to appropriate levels of support for schools based on the needs of the school community, which promotes school improvement and success.</p>	<p>SOP Rating</p>	<p>I</p>
<p>Debriefing Statement: The District’s use of resources is largely driven by compliance and availability of grant funding and involves decisions around where to cut resources rather than targeting resources to meet individual school needs and identified achievement gaps.</p>		

Areas for Improvement:

- The IIT learned from a review of documents that funding levels have necessitated the cutting of staff, elective programs and security expenditures. District and school leadership indicated that funds that come from school improvement funding sources are used to support school priorities and SCEP goals. School staff indicated that they felt there is not enough follow-up or school-embedded support by the District in the implementation of new District and school initiatives and that the provision of PD was not always timely or sufficient to enable effective implementation of these initiatives. Schools reported to the IIT that the District has provided assistance in the development of School Comprehensive Education Plans and has provided coaches to improve instruction. In the District Self-Assessment, the District reported that, “We need to work on resource allocation based on equitable principles to meet targeted and specific building needs. Funds have been earned through grants to meet targeted needs for our lowest-performing students and for our lowest-performing buildings. However, it is unclear at this point how that has impacted support, degree of success or if we need to work differently with those resources from state and local sources to distribute them in a different manner, given that grants associated with our lowest-performing students and buildings will eventually leave the system.” Because District resources are organized based on mandates and regulations, funding is not organized in a way that ensures appropriate levels of support for schools based on the needs of the school community to promote school improvement and success.

Statement of Practice 1.3: The district leadership has a comprehensive explicit theory of action about school culture that robustly communicates high expectations for addressing the needs of all constituents.

SOP Rating

D

Debriefing Statement: The Superintendent is working with partners to advance a theory of action about high expectations for all constituents. This theory of action has not yet been fully developed or implemented.

Areas for Improvement:

- The District leader, hired in September 2012, has articulated high expectations for all students through multiple venues, including speaking engagements, and print and electronic communication vehicles. The District leader indicated to the IIT that District leadership is working with partners to develop and advance a theory of action that reflects high expectations for meeting the needs of all constituents. However, from a review of documents and from interviews with staff, the IIT learned that a District theory of action that connects professional practices to student outcomes has not yet been fully developed, published, communicated or implemented. The lack of a comprehensive, explicit theory of action hinders the establishment of a culture that addresses the needs of all constituents and maintains high expectations for the success of all constituents.

Statement of Practice 1.4: The district has a comprehensive plan to create, deliver and monitor professional development in all pertinent areas that is adaptive and tailored to the needs of individual schools.

SOP Rating

I

Debriefing Statement: The District offers and communicates PD opportunities but there is no strategic plan to ensure that PD is addressing the needs of individual schools to positively impact student outcomes.

Areas for Improvement:

The district historically has had little input into professional development at the site levels as each site was receiving support monies.

- Information included in the District Self-Assessment indicated that the District historically has had little input into PD at the site levels as each site was receiving support monies. Grant-derived funding is also tied to individual school planning which has resulted in schools producing individual school plans that lack alignment with each other and with District-wide learning strategies. From interviews and documents reviewed, the IIT learned that the District is in the last year of a three-year District PD Plan. The IIT found that the Plan does not address the development, implementation, monitoring or evaluation of PD in all pertinent areas. The District provides and promotes PD opportunities through My Learning Plan. The District is also able to track participation in PD through this tool. The District PD Plan does not address the tailoring of PD to meet the needs of individual students and schools nor does it contain a component to monitor or evaluate the impact of PD on teacher practice or student achievement. The lack of a coordinated system to tailor PD to meet the needs of individual schools limits opportunities for staff to participate in school-based, targeted PD and limits the District's ability to create, deliver and monitor professional development in all pertinent areas.

Statement of Practice 1.5: The district promotes a data-driven culture by providing strategies connected to best practices that all staff members and school communities are expected to be held accountable for implementing.	SOP Rating	I
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Debriefing Statement: The District has communicated some expectations for the collection of data but has not yet built the capacity of staff to utilize the data to inform instruction and individual student goals.

Areas for Improvement:

- The IIT learned from the District Self-Assessment and interviews with staff that the District has communicated some expectations for staff members to collect data. The IIT also found that although data are being collected and reviewed, the District has not yet defined expectations for how data is to be used by staff members for supporting, instructing and establishing goals for students and the schools. Although the District began the use of a web-based tool, in September 2012, to understand student-level data and guide instructional decision-making, the Self-Assessment indicated that the District has not yet built the capacity of staff to utilize data to connect instruction to best practices or create individual student goals. The District is implementing a systemic change grant which contains a component in the utilization of data throughout the District (including at the Board of Education [BOE] level) to monitor and evaluate progress of the District in meeting BOE goals. Because the District has not identified or communicated expectations for how data is to be used by staff members for supporting, instructing, and establishing goals for students and the school, the development of a data-driven culture is hampered.

This section provides a narrative that communicates how school communities perceive the support provided by the district.

Tenet 2 - School Leader Practices and Decisions Statement of Practice (SOP) 2.1: The district works collaboratively with the school to provide opportunities and supports for the school leader to create, develop and nurture a school environment that is responsive to the needs of the entire school community.	SOP Rating	D
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Areas for Improvement:

- District leadership indicated that, “Like most school systems, we tend to be reactionary in our support and response in order to meet compliance obligations. Therefore, our principals utilize funds and partners to provide services for their students, and arrange for professional learning for themselves and staff solely out of the use of grant funds or local partners.” As indicated in the school and District Self-Assessments, the District provides support to the twelve elementary school leaders by way of monthly principal meetings led by the Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education and attended by the District mathematics and ELA supervisors. School leaders also participate in monthly administrative meetings with the District leader. Meeting agendas are developed in response to school leader requests. The District provides supports to schools, including a literacy coach, mathematics coaching and the services of an Outside Educational Expert (OEE) employed by the District. From interviews with school and District staff, the IIT learned that the District forges relationships with school leadership that encourage school leaders to consult and engage with the District. One elementary school leader indicated that the District is responsive to requests. A school leader indicated feeling confidence in going to the Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education when there are “things that need to be addressed and potential solutions that require additional resources.” For the last two years, the District has paid for the school leaders’ enrollment in the regional Principals’ Guild sponsored by the College of Saint Rose and CASDA. This has allowed for networking and opportunities to problem solve with principals within and beyond the District. One school leader indicated that although the District provides instructional practices supports, “engaging the community could be stronger.” Although the District is open and responsive to school leadership’s needs, the school-District relationship is one dependent on individual school leaders making the District aware of their school’s needs and the needs of their school communities. This approach hinders the promotion of a District-wide culture that is responsive to the needs of the entire school community.

Tenet 3 - Curriculum Development and Support Statement of Practice (SOP) 3.1: The district works collaboratively with the school to provide opportunities and supports that are connected to the implementation of a comprehensive curriculum appropriately aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and are inclusive of the arts, technology and other enrichment subjects in a data-driven culture.	SOP Rating	I
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Areas for Improvement:

- There has been limited District-wide focus and support on the implementation of the CCLS. According to staff interviewed by the IIT, the District mathematics and ELA supervisors provide direction on curriculum and professional development (PD). Although supervisors provide on-site PD, for the convenience of staff members, teacher attendance is voluntary. It was also reported that the

mathematics supervisor has not had the resources or support to provide targeted, CCLS-aligned PD to staff. Instructional support for the CCLS shifts in mathematics has been left to the building instructional leaders. The District has engaged the services of a mathematics coach, however at the time of the IIT review, coaching had not yet begun. Although supervisors provide on-site PD, as staff members are more likely to attend offerings in their own buildings than at other locations, teacher attendance is voluntary. From a review of documents and interviews with staff, the IIT found that school-based constituents felt there was a need for more follow-up and support to implement new initiatives. Staff reported to the IIT that PD was not provided to schools with enough lead-time for effective implementation. They also identified a need to be able to adapt curriculum and materials to provide access for all students and develop a deeper understanding of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) as well as a need for job-embedded support for the implementation of CCLS-based instruction in the classroom. From the District Self-Assessment, the IIT found that the District has invested in a computerized assessment tool that generates detailed information for the schools to use to build curricula and inform instructional planning tailored to meet individual and school needs. However, at the time of the IIT review, the District was in the earliest stages of introducing this tool. According to the Self-Assessment, the District staff indicated that the District had not clearly defined expectations for teaching practices and was working with staff to develop an understanding of the role of data in driving instruction. During classroom visits, the IIT did not find evidence of the integration of CCLS into instruction. Because schools are not provided with sufficient, job-embedded opportunities to develop and acquire necessary understanding and skills, and have not been provided with clear expectations in the use of data to inform instruction, the implementation of comprehensive CCLS-based curricula that incorporates the arts, technology and other areas of enrichment have been hampered.

Tenet 4 - Teacher Practices and Decisions

Statement of Practice (SOP) 4.1: The district works collaboratively with the school to provide opportunities and supports for teachers to develop strategies and practices that lead to effective planning and account for student data, needs, goals, and levels of engagement.

SOP Rating

D

Areas for Improvement:

- In the Self-Assessment, the District stated that PD is often connected to the mandates of specific grants, and as a result “there is limited systemic learning for all educators.” The IIT learned from interviews and a review of documents that mathematics and ELA PD opportunities were not available until after the school year started. School staff indicated that District-provided PD was not enough, not timely, and did not include follow-up. The District has provided a literacy coach on a part-time basis in each building and the services of a mathematics coach have been secured. Teachers indicated to the IIT that PD received from the literacy coach provided support for the implementation of the Words Their Way initiative. Teachers also indicated that although the District provides them with many training opportunities, few are targeted to meet their specific needs. The lack of timely, job-embedded PD opportunities provided by the District that are developed in collaboration with the schools, are tailored to meet the individual needs of each school community, and are designed with follow-up support has hampered the development and implementation of data-driven, school-based practices that address student needs and goals, and ensure high levels of student engagement.

Tenet 5- Student Social and Emotional Developmental Health Statement of Practice (SOP) 5.1: The district creates policy and works collaboratively with the school to provide opportunities and resources that positively support students’ social and emotional developmental health.	SOP Rating	D
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Areas for Improvement:

- The District noted in the self-assessment that it has established a system of partners with local agencies to create the infrastructure to ensure the well-being of our students and our families. However, the assessment also indicates, “The creation of a systemic response and reciprocal communication and support are areas of change that must be addressed...We have a system of support that is, at times, diminished by resource allocation, lacks uniformity or understanding in who to contact for what service, and partners working at cross purposes.” While the District holds seminars on the social and emotional needs of students, during interviews with the IIT, staff reported that there is not enough targeted PD offered by the District in the area of how constituents can positively support and promote students’ social and emotional developmental health. Although the District has taken steps to develop partnerships and utilize systems to positively support students’ social and emotional health, the lack of a clear system has resulted in schools receiving inconsistent levels of support, and as a result, schools are not benefitting from a unified approach toward social and emotional developmental health.

Tenet 6 - Family and Community Engagement Statement of Practice (SOP) 6.1: The District has a comprehensive family and community engagement strategic plan that states the expectations around creating and sustaining a welcoming environment for families, reciprocal communication, and establishing partnerships with community organizations and families.	SOP Rating	D
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Areas for Improvement:

- As indicated in the Self-Assessment, the District provides an infrastructure for communications through multiple media including email, websites, quarterly newsletters, and the annual budget publication. The district also provides certain structures, such as the use of outreach liaisons, to promote community engagement and reciprocal communications. However, the District does not have a comprehensive family and community engagement strategic plan that specifies expectations for the establishment of an environment that is welcoming for families, promotes reciprocal communication and establishes partnerships with community organizations. As reported by staff during interviews, the District does not provide PD on the establishment and maintenance of partnerships with community organizations and families, as well as how to match family needs with community resources. In addition, the schools reviewed by the IIT lacked clear plans to share data with families to encourage a dialogue regarding student achievement and to ensure that student data was easy to understand. During school visits, the IIT noted that the report cards sent home were not translated into languages other than English. One school indicated that the district decided not to send parent reports on the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) mathematics and ELA assessments until teachers were trained on how to better articulate student progress to families. As a result, no parent reports on NWEA assessments were distributed during the 2012-13 school year. Although the district provides some communications and activities to encourage reciprocal communications, the lack of a

comprehensive family engagement plan hinders the Districts efforts to ensure that partnerships are developed between schools and families that promote increased student achievement.

DISTRICT LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS:

Tenet 1: District Leadership and Capacity

In order for the District's strategy and practices to fully align with the concepts in the Effective column of Tenet 1, the District should:

- 1.1: Ensure that the District creates and implements a comprehensive plan for the recruiting, evaluation and sustaining of high-quality personnel and that the plan promotes each school's capacity to address the individual needs of the school community.
- 1.2: Ensure that resource allocation is based on equitable principles and that resources are targeted to meet specific school needs. Evaluate the implementation of grant-funded initiatives for their impact on promoting school improvement and improving student success.
- 1.3: Ensure the establishment, District-wide communication and understanding of a comprehensive, explicit theory of action among all constituents.
- 1.4: Develop and implement a comprehensive plan that creates PD opportunities tailored to address the needs of individual schools and the community. Ensure the plan implements District-identified intentions to:
 - Learn what is currently taking place in the name of professional development to change and challenge teacher practice in each school;
 - Determine the degree of overlap of professional development delivered across multiple sites;
 - Determine the degree of measurable success PD has accomplished to meet District and BOE academic expectations;
 - Create standards of practice for leaders and teachers that clearly outline expectations;
 - Create a teacher/leader institute with clearly outlined expectations for teacher and administrator practice, with job-embedded follow-up PD;
 - Ensure coordination of District-wide PD efforts in all schools and at all instructional levels, and build a year-long at-a-glance topical instrument to track PD;
 - Create and publish a coordinated calendar of learning for all professionals in the District;
 - Build leadership teams in each school to work with the school leaders to identify staff development needs and work with internal staff (coaches) and external partners to plan and deliver training, PD sessions, and follow-up activities.
- 1.5: Identify expectations for how data is to be used by staff members for supporting, instructing, and establishing individual and school-wide goals based on best practice concerning teachers' use of data. Communicate these expectations community-wide and ensure all constituents understand them as well as constituents' accountability in the implementation of data-driven practices. Provide PD and on-going support to all staff to ensure the growth of a data-driven culture that promotes strategies connected to best practices in the effective use of data to inform instruction and promote student success