



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

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)



BEDS Code/DBN	61-05-01-04-0000
District	Groton Central School District
District Address	400 Peru Road, Groton, New York 13073
Superintendent	James Abrams
Date(s) of Review	May 13-15, 2013
School Discussed in this Report	Groton Elementary School

District Information Sheet											
District Grade Configuration	K-12	Total Student Enrollment	900	% Title 1 Population	3 9 %	% Attendance Rate	95%				
% Free Lunch	31%	% Reduced Lunch	8%	% Student Sustainability		% Limited English Proficient	0%	% Students with Disabilities	16%		
Racial/Ethnic Origin of District Student Population											
% American Indian or Alaska Native	0%	% Black or African American	1%	% Hispanic or Latino	1%	% Asian, Native Hawaiian /Other Pacific Islander	0%	% White	96%	% Multi-racial	1%
Personnel											
Number Years Superintendent Assigned/ Appointed to District	2	Number of Deputy Superintendents	0	Average Years Deputy Superintendents in Role in the District	0	# of Directors of Programs	0				
% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate in District	0	% Teaching Out of Certification in District	1	% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Yrs. of Exp. in District	3	Average Teacher Absences in District	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	2	Number of SIG (a) Recipient Schools	0	Number of Schools in Status	2		
						Number of SIG (g) Recipient Schools	0				
% ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	52%	% Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4	54%	% Science Performance at levels 3 & 4	76%	% 4 yr. Graduation Rate (for HS only)	81%	% 6 yr. Graduation Rate (for HS only)	75%		

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

Above are for Elementary/Middle Level

2ndary: ELA- White Students did not make AYP; Math- White Students did not make AYP

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:			X	

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>D</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><u>Debriefing Statement:</u></p> <p>The district has strategies for recruiting qualified personnel that includes partnerships with nearby colleges. The district has provided support for building leaders to conduct evaluations; however, evaluations do not provide teachers with feedback on instructional practice that would lead to improved practice. The district has not developed a comprehensive plan to support school leaders in their provision of an effective, cohesive response to staff needs. There is also no district comprehensive plan for sustaining high quality staff. Because the district has neither developed nor implemented comprehensive plans to provide staff actionable feedback from evaluations; on-going support and professional development (PD) regarding instructional practice; or PD and support on meeting student and school needs, the district's ability to ensure schools are able to optimally sustain high quality instruction and address the needs of school communities is impeded.</p> <p><u>Areas for Improvement:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) found that district has recruitment structures that enable school leaders to hire high-quality personnel and to access instructional effectiveness, a comprehensive plan that includes frequent, relevant feedback and PD that leads to improved practices has not been fully actualized. The Superintendent reported to the IIT that the district maintains partnerships with area colleges and uses the district website and regional newspapers to recruit staff. The Superintendent stated, "We are looking for dual-certified, good candidates." School leaders reported to the IIT that the hiring process involves interviews conducted by teams of constituents and that school leaders have an opportunity to choose school staff. The district has a Board Of Education-approved Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) plan to evaluate teachers and school principals. The district leader reported to the IIT that part of APPR is about improving conversation, stating, "A good conversation about practice makes a person a better teacher." Teachers informed the IIT that staff would prefer that the PD and feedback on professional practice focus on teacher classroom practice as opposed to a focus on the APPR process. Although the district's recruitment strategies attract qualified personnel, the lack of frequent feedback and PD that leads to improved practices limits the district's ability to ensure schools are able to optimally sustain high quality instruction and address the needs of school communities. 		
<p>Statement of Practice 1.2: The district is organized and allocates resources (financial, staff support,</p>	<p>SOP Rating</p>	<p>D</p>

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.

Debriefing Statement:

The district does not systematically analyze needs to organize the allocation of resources. The district leader places responsibility for resource allocation on school leaders. Without a system that makes decisions based on data, the district cannot ensure that it addresses the needs of all members of the school community.

Areas for Improvement:

- The district has limited structures in place to address the needs of the school community and to allocate resources. The district leader reported to the IIT that the district has been cutting resources; “each year they get less. Building leaders decide how to utilize the resources.” The elementary school utilizes grant funds for Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) and Response to Intervention (RtI). School leadership reported to the IIT that, due to the lack of a grant writer, the district does not typically apply for grants. The middle school and high school are not Title I eligible, which school leadership ascribes to the fact that parents do not complete the free lunch forms. School leadership reported; “we are such a poor district we didn’t have a fund balance so we had staff cuts.” The district has partnerships with local colleges to provide tutoring and extended day services to students. The lack of a formal plan, to ensure resources are equitably and adequately allocated throughout the district to meet the needs of staff and families limits school improvement efforts to address the needs of school communities.

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

I

Debriefing Statement:

Although the district leader indicated to the IIT that the district goal is to prepare students to be college and career ready, he also reported numerous concerns about reaching this goal. Staff at the school level expressed their concerns about a lack of systems and structures to support a theory of action based on high expectations. Without leadership robustly communicating high expectations, the district culture does not support improved student outcomes for all students.

Areas for Improvement:

- The district leadership shares a common theory of action; however, this theory of action is not fully developed, widely communicated or connected to professional practices. School leadership report the goal is to “make sure every student leaves ready for college or career”. “Combined we have to get kids ready.” The district leader commented that his expectation is, “Do the best we can this year. We are trying to find a system that works. It’s taking too long. The return on investment is not good.” From

staff interviews the IIT was told, "There is no consistency." "Where is the system that puts the student first?" "Overall, I don't think we are honoring the modern student." The IIT noted that the District Comprehensive Improvement Plan (DCIP) indicates an overarching focus of the plan is to "Create a common language connected to the District Mission and Building Vision statements." In interviews with school leadership, the IIT learned that school leadership shared the district concern about the delivery of appropriate, compliant special education services. At the time of the IIT review, the district had engaged a new Coordinator of Special Education who was reviewing and evaluating special education process and procedures. The District Leadership Team's theory of action about school culture is in the beginning stages of development, therefore it is not understood, shared or embraced by all staff and is not driving improvement in student achievement.

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

D

Debriefing Statement:

The district developed a PD plan, which is not comprehensive. The district provides PD, however, there is no follow-up based on individual school need. Without PD, that aligns school needs to district expectations and support, the ability of schools to achieve improvement goals is hampered.

Areas for Improvement:

- The district has developed a three-year Professional Development Plan, (PDP) which states that it is based on the district's goals of providing high quality programs - preparing all students to become responsible citizens, productive workers and lifelong citizens; increasing student academic focus; and improving student climate. School leadership reported to the IIT that, at the elementary school, any time a need is shared, training is provided by the district if funding allows. For example, "We all had a big concern in the lack of written curriculum, this has been included as part of the PDP." District personnel interviewed by the IIT indicated that district-determined support is generic. PD is provided through the local Board of Cooperative Education Services (BOCES) and Literacy-Coach training is provided at individual schools. During interviews with staff, the IIT was told, "We have a lot of in-service training; we are out of the classroom a lot." "We need to develop a plan." We "...need better planning of Superintendent Conference Day." "Administrators decide what is done then building leaders somewhat run meetings." "When the Literacy Coach runs meetings, it is very directed and specific." "With all the new curriculum, the only support I feel we have is from the Literacy Coach." "I feel more knowledgeable after BOCES training or with Literacy Coach." The district leader reported, "This week a group will go over the PDP." "PD is provided to administrators." "Principals and eight or ten teachers will go on retreat this summer." The IIT found that although a district PD exists with PD and follow-up provided, the PD is often not targeted or in pertinent areas nor is it adapted or tailored to the needs of individual schools. The lack of a comprehensive plan that is tailored to meet the needs of individual schools impedes the ability of school staff to effectively implement an instructional

program that optimizes student outcomes.

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

Debriefing Statement:

The district has not provided schools supports to help them to create a data-driven culture. Without schools having the capacity to use data effectively, the ability of the school and district to promote a data-driven culture and to implement and monitor the use of best practices is hampered.

Areas for Improvement:

- The district has not established or communicated expectations on how data is to be used. School leadership reported to the IIT that data-driven instruction does not exist, stating, “Data is being used at the Leadership level but not at the instructional level.” At the elementary school, the IIT observed data being used to identify students in need of literacy supports and RtI. Based on a review of the DCIP and interviews with personnel, the review team found that the district does not adequately collect and analyze data for all subgroups at all levels. The IIT noted that, at the time of the IIT review, the district had not provided adequate supports to all schools in the analysis and application of data to inform instructional strategies. Therefore, data-driven, targeted instruction is limited and school communities are not held accountable for implementing consistent best practices.

This section provides a narrative that communicates how the 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

Areas for Improvement:

- The District Leadership Team (DLT), consisting of the district leader and school leadership, meets twice monthly to address areas of concern. The district leader reported, “Today’s meeting was about an evacuation drill.” Prior to the current district leader, the practice was three to four hour meetings. “I can’t keep them out of the building that long.” “I want to make sure it’s manageable.” School leadership reported that DLT agendas are well scripted. School leadership reported to the IIT that district leadership is aware of the time it takes to conduct teacher evaluations and provides school

leaders with support to complete staff evaluations. School leadership were also given time to attend evaluator training. Concerns stated by school leadership focused on mental health needs, programs and services for students with disabilities, and the lack of written curricula. Based on a review of the DCIP and interviews with staff, the IIT found that the district does not consistently maintain a reciprocal relationship with the school leadership to create, nurture and sustain a school-wide vision, and although support is provided to meet specific district needs, the support is not tailored to address the unique needs of each school. These factors limit school leadership capacity to create, develop and nurture school environments that are responsive to the needs of the 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:

- Curricula appropriately aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) are not yet fully developed or implemented in the schools. The district leader reported, “I would like to have felt we were a little further ahead on Common Core Learning Standards.” He stated that the CCLS is his priority; however, the IIT noted during interviews with school staff that there was no common understanding regarding curriculum and one staff member stated, “We have programs; no curriculum. Everybody interprets it on their own. There is no consistency. We need to develop a plan.” School leadership reported to the IIT that there is no written curriculum and schools are just beginning to use CCLS. The primary classes have recently begun piloting the ELA Listening Strands from Engage NY and grades three through five are piloting Module 1 of Expeditionary Learning. School leadership report “though everyone is committed to a pilot there is no consistency.” Although the district leader reported to the IIT that the district had “a lot of laptops, desk tops, and a set of I-Pads,” school leadership reported that there were “very limited opportunities for enrichment with the arts and technology.” The IIT found that data about individual school progress, the identification of patterns in student learning, and school effectiveness is not thoroughly analyzed at the district level. As a result, high levels of ownership and accountability are not fostered in every school. School leadership reported to the IIT that data-driven instruction does not exist, with one school leader stating, “Data is being used at the Leadership level but not at the instructional level.” Due to the limited offerings that integrate the arts, technology and other enrichment subjects, the lack of data-driven instruction and the lack of universal access to rigorous CCLS-aligned curricula, students are not provided instruction that engages them in their learning.

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
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Areas for Improvement:

- PD provided by the district has focused on initiatives, such as the APPR process, and has not taken school needs or student data and individual learning needs and strengths into consideration. When asked about the use of formative assessments in the district, the district leader responded, “I don’t think you will see really good formative assessment.” He further stated, “I want to make sure it’s manageable.” The school leadership reported that there is a district PD plan and that he has input into the plan, which is based on “what we want teachers to do.” The school leadership reported that there are three PD days for everyone. The lack of full collaboration with individual school leaders and a strong district plan utilizing school and student data, has limited effective planning that can improve student engagement and student outcomes.

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

I

Areas for Improvement:

- The district leader reported that “Our Mental Health piece is huge for us,” and that he was considering having a county caseworker on staff. He reported, “Some of the mental health issues take the principals from their work.” When asked about the implementation of the Dignity for All Students Act, the district leader responded that the district has met the minimum requirements, and that his focus was on CCLS implementation. Members of school leadership stated, “Mental health is a major issue.” We need training in how to help these kids survive.” “ What we need is mental health support.” Based on documents reviewed and interviews conducted, the IIT found that the district does not provide specific training to staff to address students’ social and emotional needs. The district does not have an explicit plan that commits to providing opportunities and resources that positively support student social and emotional developmental health. Inconsistent follow-up and support to school staff has limited the schools’ ability to develop and implement strategies to address the social and emotional developmental health needs and provide positive behavior supports and interventions to ensure the academic success of all students.

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

Areas for Improvement:

- The district website’s parent involvement screen contains a notice to parents that outlines what the district and parents can do to support their child’s academic achievement. The website also contains a copy of the Parent Compact that parents and students must sign. The Compact outlines responsibilities of parents and students in achieving the goal of supporting the academic success of all children. During interviews, the IIT noted that although some parental involvement was occurring, the families of disengaged students who do not participate actively in school events or in their child’s learning were not being reached. A school leader stated to the IIT, “Getting parents in is a challenge.” The lack of a district comprehensive strategic plan and supports that expect and enable school leaders to engage collaboratively with constituents and external partners, the schools do not have fully developed systems and structures in place that support family engagement and participation.

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 the district has a system in place to recruit, evaluate and sustain high quality staff. Ensure that district plans go beyond addressing district needs to include the needs of individual schools.
- 1.2: Allocate resources strategically making data-based decisions to meet the needs of individual schools in accordance with the DCIP. Provide supports for schools' efforts to develop CCLS-aligned curricula that include cross-content collaborations. Develop policies and collaborate with the schools to ensure they have resources to address student and family social, emotional, developmental health needs. Explore strategies to secure necessary paperwork from families or alternatives in reporting economic status of families to qualify for Title I funding.
- 1.3: Develop a theory of action based on high expectations for all students that holds all members of the district and school community accountable. Ensure this theory of action is communicated and understood by all constituents.
- 1.4: Deliver high quality PD, based on data, to build school and district staff capacity that ensures all students are provided access to what they need to know to succeed. Use formative assessments to identify needs for targeted follow-up support. Monitor the effectiveness of the provision of PD and analyze the effect of its implementation on school improvement.
- 1.5: Develop district-wide systems and structures that create a data-based culture and are based on best practices. Communicate expectations that hold all members of the district community accountable for district and school improvement. Collaborate with schools to provide opportunities for teachers to build their capacity to develop instructional strategies and practices, informed by data that leads to student engagement in their own learning.