



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

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)



BEDS Code/DBN	440901040000
District	Highland Falls – Fort Montgomery Central School District
District Address	P.O. Box 287, Highland Falls, NY 10928
Superintendent	Debra Jackson
Date(s) of Review	May 13, 2013
Schools Discussed in this Report	Highland Falls Intermediate School

District Information Sheet											
District Grade Configuration	K-12	Total Student Enrollment	983 (1,037*)	% Title 1 Population	62%**	% Attendance Rate	94%				
% Free Lunch	21%	% Reduced Lunch	7%	% Student Sustainability	24%	% Limited English Proficient	6%	% Students with Disabilities	11%		
Racial/Ethnic Origin of District Student Population											
% American Indian or Alaska Native	0%	% Black or African American	12%	% Hispanic or Latino	23%	% Asian, Native Hawaiian /Other Pacific Islander	3%	% White	58%	% Multi-racial	3%
Personnel											
Number Years Superintendent Assigned/ Appointed to District	5	Number of Deputy Superintendents	0	Average Years Deputy Superintendents in Role in the District	N/A	# of Directors of Programs	2				
% 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	4%	Average Teacher Absences in District	8.64				
Overall State Accountability Status (Mark applicable box with an X)											
District in Good Standing		Focus District	X	Number of Focus Schools Identified by District	1	Number of SIG (a) Recipient Schools	0	Number of Schools in Status	1		
						Number of SIG (g) Recipient Schools	0				
% ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	43.5%	% Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4	52%	% Science Performance at levels 3 & 4	86.3%	% 4 yr. Graduation Rate (for HS only)	90% (2008 Cohort)	% 6 yr. Graduation Rate (for HS only)	93% (2006 Cohort)		
* Total student population, including students placed out of district.											
** % of Title I population for the Highland Falls Intermediate School.											

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		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
	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 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:		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>E</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>E</p>
<p>Debriefing Statement: The district leadership uses robust recruitment and retention strategies to ensure it has adequate personnel and communicates high expectations for addressing the needs of the community. Because the district provides a voice to schools in the recruitment and hiring process, schools are able to address the needs of their students and community, which promotes student success.</p> <p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The district leaders reported that the district has a systematic approach to recruiting, preparing, and retaining high quality personnel. Formerly, few supports existed for preparing and mentoring school leaders and teachers, and the district experienced high leadership turnover. According to the Board of Education (BOE) representative and staff, the current superintendent, serving in the leadership position for seven consecutive years, provided a more stable condition for staff recruitment and retention at the school and district levels. Interviews with district staff and documents reviewed by the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) indicated that substantial changes have been made in recruiting and training new school leaders and teachers. For example, in order to provide a more comprehensive strategy for advertising district vacancies, the superintendent hired an independent evaluator to assess the hiring process and ensure a more comprehensive human resource (HR) management system. Second, as a top priority for the design of a comprehensive HR strategy, which encompasses recruiting and hiring, the superintendent selected a committee consisting of school leaders, teachers, and parents to screen applicants and interview candidates before recommending the most qualified candidate to the second level interview with the superintendent. Third, the district uses all available resources including networking, web-based searches, local and national database searches of college and university graduates and the Online Application System (OLAS) to find the most highly qualified teachers and leaders. The district developed and implemented some successful strategies for supporting and developing high levels of staff retention. For example, a review of documents and staff interviews conducted by the IIT showed that the district has implemented a systemic approach for retaining new leaders by providing mentors, whose roles include supporting the growth and development of all new staff for a period of one year, based on individual needs, grade levels, subjects, and other school- or district-related factors. Finally, the district has provided for the evaluation and retention of the new leaders by providing leadership training and ongoing professional development (PD) embedded in the Charlotte Danielson’s Framework for Teaching for teacher evaluation and the Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education for the principal evaluation. These resources are used as a partial requirement for the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR). In addition, the district staff reported that 		

additional PD occurs at the district leadership level to include the District Leadership Team, Technology Leadership Team, and the Common Core Leadership Team to support the overall improvement of the new leaders. Consequently, these systematic and the comprehensive approaches to recruiting, hiring, developing, evaluating, and retaining high quality classroom teachers and school leaders, enhance the district's ability to meet the needs of the school community.

Areas for Improvement:

All ratings for this Tenet are either **Highly Effective** or **Effective** and therefore, comments are listed under **Strengths**.

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.

SOP Rating

D

Debriefing Statement: The district does not have a comprehensive approach for the use of resources to meet the needs of all populations in the district community, particularly in the translation of all pertinent documents into languages other than English. As a result of the limited resources and allocations, schools experience barriers in the provision of services toward improving the performance all students.

Strengths:

All ratings for this Tenet are either **Developing** or **Ineffective** and therefore, comments are listed under **Areas for Improvement**.

Areas for Improvement:

- The district has a high concentration and diversity of English language learners (ELLs). The parents and students are from different language backgrounds, including Greek, Arabic, Spanish, and Creole. This presents a major challenge for the school district to provide for the language accommodations for all students and parents. The problem is complicated further because the district has limited structures in place for deploying resources to address the needs of ELLs within the diverse communities of the school district. The district has not allocated the fiscal resources needed to facilitate parental engagement in their children's education. The only opportunity that was available for parents was through the Parent Portal, which did not include translation services except for those whose native language is Spanish. Schools are also restricted in their allocations because fiscal management decisions are made at the district level. In addition, structural constraints afford limited access to additional funds beyond annual budget allocations. District staff reported to the IIT that more recently, allowances were made for approving additional funding to schools when the school leaders made a request to the district. However, school leaders may receive generic support concerning resources and allocations when these become available to the district. According to staff interviews, in the event that funds become available, the district works with school leaders in planning for the school year to leverage their fiscal, staff, and material resources. Fiscal reports are distributed regularly to the district and school administration, to communicate the total expenditures anticipated for the each school. District staff explained that the district bases the allocation on the school's needs. The allocation for personnel is based on the staff roster on file in the previous school

year. Information from interviews with the members of the district cabinet indicated that the school leaders have the flexibility to request and make modifications of the fiscal allocations but not without the approval at the district level. Because the district’s approach for the allocation of resources does not consider the needs of all constituents, particularly those whose native language is not English, school improvement and student success is limited.

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 district does not have a comprehensive explicit theory of action to respond to the needs of identified subgroups, such as Limited English Proficient (LEP) students and economically disadvantaged students. As a result of the district’s lack of an explicit plan for improvement and failure to translate the plan into the languages of the district’s constituency, the district does not adequately consider the specific needs of these subgroups.

Strengths:

All ratings for this Tenet are either **Developing** or **Ineffective** and therefore, comments are listed under **Areas for Improvement**.

Areas for Improvement:

- The district leaders have developed a set of expectations, which includes a vision for improving the academic, social, and emotional needs of all students to prepare them to become college and career ready. The district leaders communicate these expectations at meetings of the board, administrative cabinet, and faculty although this is not inclusive of the district constituencies or the school level. According to the superintendent, frequent formal and informal meetings are conducted with building leaders to communicate the district’s expectations. The district also brought together a core group of administrators, teachers, and board members, to develop the vision for the district. Despite this effort, the vision has not been strategically communicated to a wide cross-section of the community to enhance collaboration, provide a common language for instructional practices, and increase student academic achievement. In addition to the district’s expectations and vision, the district leaders stated that their mission was to “inspire, guide, and challenge all students through an all-encompassing rigorous learning experience which empowers them to connect to and compete in the ever-changing global community.” Based on a review of documents and staff interviews, the IIT found that the district began to develop a theory of action in October 2012 to support the proposed mission of the district. This theory was designed in response to the new mandates of the New York State Education Department (NYSED) for districts and schools to implement the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). The IIT examined the district’s strategic action plan and found that the plan did not include expectations for translation services for all district and school communications. In addition, the superintendent worked with the teacher’s union to use the Gates Demonstration Grant to provide training for staff in conducting video observations. While this initiative was developed to improve teacher instructional practices through self-monitoring and peer-feedback, the IIT found no evidence to support the implementation timeline for the training and evaluation of

instruction to ensure more effective practices to engage students in learning challenging materials. Despite the district’s mission to prepare students to “compete in an ever changing global community,” the district’s plan did not indicate strategies for increasing the number of subgroups who make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics. The district’s limited articulation of it’s goals and expectations to all members of the community hinders it’s ability to address the needs of all constituents, particularly for identified subgroups.

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

E

Debriefing Statement: The district provides tailored professional development (PD) that connects to expected professional practices. The district’s communication of expectations through ongoing conversations and regular PD creates an adaptive learning environment toward meeting the needs of students and staff.

Strengths:

- The district has a plan that leads to the creation of PD opportunities that address the specific needs of each school community. The superintendent and personnel administrator stated that the district provides staff with My Learning Plan (MLP), an online registration system that can be used to monitor attendance of staff for PD activities. The superintendent reported to the IIT that the district instructional plan was informed by the data obtained from student performance indicators on standardized examinations and staff feedback. The district has set up systems of collaboration with different service providers for facilitating literacy programs in district schools. For example, to support the district-wide initiative across schools, the Teachers College Consortium provided the district-led Literacy Initiative. The superintendent worked with building level administrations to identify teacher needs through survey and interview responses. From a sample of survey findings, the IIT found that teachers attended and participated in various PD activities focusing on instructional coherence through technology and classroom instruction, as well as strategies for improving student learning. In addition, the district leadership is supportive of the school leadership and encourages each of its schools to promote a culture that is responsive to the needs of the academically and economically diverse community, thereby holding school leaders accountable for communicating information about their schools with school stakeholders via websites, mobile devices, and cloud-based technology. Parents have access to school level information about their schools and children’s progress through the Parent Portal and electronic progress reports, respectively. The district supports principals through PD and mentoring. Additionally, the district supports new and experienced teachers across the district through an array of PD offerings.. For example, during the school visit, two teachers and the school leader reported that the district provides opportunities for teachers to become leaders by engaging them in professional learning opportunities and encouraging them to participate in district-level leadership teams. Documents reviewed and interview responses indicate the district has used Survey Monkey to assess staff feedback on PD offerings. As a result, school level staff has a continuum of support in the areas of curriculum development and instructional practices.

Areas for Improvement:

All ratings for this Tenet are either **Highly Effective** or **Effective** and therefore, comments are listed under **Strengths**.

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

E

Debriefing Statement: The district trains staff on the use and analysis of data. A culture of accountability and setting expectations for all staff members increases opportunities for progress toward positive student achievement.

Strengths:

- The district communicates expectations about the use of data to inform instruction and make decisions for improving student academic achievement. District-level staff indicated that district expectations are communicated frequently to all levels of staff through formal and informal conversations. In addition, information obtained from documents and interviews showed that district expectations are communicated at board meetings, administrative cabinet meetings, and faculty meetings. The district and school level evaluation benchmarks reviewed by the IIT indicated clear expectations for school and district improvement. For example, expectations and opportunities for teachers’ professional growth include teachers attending district training, regional BOCES sponsored workshops, and the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) coaching program on using data for instructional planning. In addition, the district provided training for a group of staff in implementing and administering MAP (Measures of Academic Progress) and MPG (MAP for Primary Grades) tests to measure student progress and to identify instructional needs. Agendas from district-level meetings indicated that the district discussed the need to leverage data to improve planning for achieving student and school goals. In addition, the superintendent shared that she hosted an administrative retreat and trained the district administrators on data collection, the development of Student Learning Objectives, and the use of a growth model. Implementation of these practices, along with a system of tracking progress and modifying instruction based on the data was not complete at the time of the visit. Specifically, the district uses the Charlotte Danielson’s Framework for Teaching for teacher evaluation and the Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education for principal evaluation. The superintendent shared that both evaluation tools consist of measured areas focused on the use of data to inform instruction. In addition, documents reviewed and staff interviews conducted by the IIT indicated that staff were trained on “Stepping Stones to Using Data and Climbing the Data Ladder” programs to generate data reports that identify student needs for differentiated instruction. As a result, an evolving data-driven culture provides strategies connected to best practices for using data to inform instructions, which enhances the district’s ability to hold staff and schools accountable for student achievement.

Areas for Improvement:

All ratings for this Tenet are either **Highly Effective** or **Effective** and therefore, comments are listed under **Strengths**.

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	E
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Debriefing Statement: The district consults with school leaders during bi-weekly meetings to provide schools with professional and fiscal support. The relationship between the district and school leaders ensures that schools can be responsive to the needs of the school community, thereby supporting student success.

Strengths:

- The district forges a relationship with school leaders that encourages each school leader to consult and engage with the district. Specifically, the superintendent and school leaders reported that they have bi-weekly meetings as an administrative council. The attendees at the bi-weekly meetings include the superintendent, district-wide directors (Pupil Personnel Services and Instructional Technology), as well as the school leaders and assistant principals of the elementary, intermediate, and high schools. The school leader explained that issues related to the schools needs and/or district-wide issues are discussed at bi-weekly meetings. The school leader also shared that the district supports her funding needs to manage her school. Interview responses indicated the district approved the fiscal modifications requested for the school leader to provide extended learning opportunities for low-performing students. In addition, the district provided a retired professor from Fordham University to serve as the school leader’s mentor. Furthermore, documents reviewed by the IIT and interview responses indicate that the district provides the school leader with an array of PD offerings. The school leader attended the NYSED Network Team Institutes and DTSDE trainings to ensure the implementation of the CCLS, Data Driven Instruction Cycles, School Based Inquiry, and the Teacher Evaluation Systems. In addition, school leaders are trained on how to use the Danielson rubric, which is used in the teacher observation process and is incorporated into the My Learning Plan portal. Documents reviewed and responses obtained from district staff indicate the district creates small teams of teachers and administrators to perform teacher observations in order to evaluate instructional practices that inform the development of district-wide best practices to benefit each school. Because of the support provided by the district, school leaders are better able to ensure the instructional needs of the school community are met.

Areas for Improvement:

All ratings for this Tenet are either **Highly Effective** or **Effective** and therefore, comments are listed under **Strengths**.

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**E**

Debriefing Statement: The District uses multiple channels of communication and accountability with schools to collaborate about each school’s instructional needs and CCLS curricula. As a result, schools are able to better implement a more comprehensive curriculum aligned to the CCLS.

Strengths:

- The district has an open and reciprocal communication with the school staff, which leads to high levels of ownership and accountability. The school leader reported to the IIT and the PD plan indicated that the district is open and receptive to recommendations for improvements to the curriculum, staffing, PD, and instructional materials. The district has weekly meetings to discuss curriculum, resources, and accountability, for which potential modifications are considered. In addition, the school and district reported that they meet frequently, both formally and informally to discuss patterns of student learning. Interview responses indicate that these meetings consist of school leader discussions regarding data trends, assessments, findings, and requests for additional resources or budget modifications. The district provides support to the school community in aligning instructional needs and the use of the Common Core curricula, including the incorporation of the arts, technology, and other enrichment subjects. The superintendent and school leaders shared that the district supports performance-based arts programs and integration of technology across all subject areas. The school staff also reported that PD opportunities for art and technology instruction are available upon request. Documents reviewed indicate that the district’s leadership team attended the NYSED Network Team Institutes and the DTSDE training to ensure the effective implementation of the CCLS. The IIT found that both district-level and school-level leadership attended DTSDE trainings to gain an understanding of how to implement school reform expectations across all schools, and within all grades. The district collaboratively uses the NYSED CCLS modules with components of its existing curriculum, which school staff reported as a restructured Common Core curriculum. The district’s flexibility in providing a wide array of supports and resources to improve instruction with the use of data and a curriculum that supports the CCLS enhances students’ access to an educational experience that includes the arts, technology, and other enrichment opportunities.

Areas for Improvement:

All ratings for this Tenet are either **Highly Effective** or **Effective** and therefore, comments are listed under **Strengths**

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

E

Debriefing Statement: The district monitors PD needs through My Learning Plan and provides various PD opportunities. The provision of appropriate PD opportunities from the district leads to effective planning and accountability toward student engagement at the school-level.

Strengths:

- The district and schools communicate about PD needs of teachers, instructional practices, and decisions aligned to school data. The district collaborates with Harvard University Graduate School of Education Professional Programs to examine the district’s strategic initiatives. Documents reviewed indicate that the district analyzes the extent to which schools utilize the PD provided for Academic Intervention Services (AIS), Response to Intervention (RTI) services, and referrals to the Committee on Special Education (CSE) to address problems critical to student motivation and engagement. The district uses accountability systems to assess school-wide effectiveness, monitor school progress, and determine patterns in student learning, and shares its findings with the schools. The district leadership creates, schedules, and follows up on the PD needs and opportunities for all staff. According to the superintendent and personnel administrator, the district uses the My Learning Plan to schedule, monitor, and track the PD received by staff to ensure staff are working toward improving their instructional strategies. The superintendent reported, and school leaders confirmed, that the superintendent observes teachers in a formal observation during a teacher’s second year of employment by the district to monitor the effectiveness of teacher professional learning. In addition, on the day of the observation, teachers receive written feedback based on the superintendent’s observations. Further, the district maintains protocols to assess all teachers’ use of data to create plans that address the Common Core instructional shifts. Teachers shared that the PD opportunities cover topics such as Common Core Explorations, Student Data Inquiry Analysis, and Inquiry-Based Learning, which inform the expectations for daily planning. The district has a system for providing follow-up support based on its PD offerings to teachers that addresses areas of need related to instructional practices aligned to data. Documents reviewed and staff interview responses indicate that the district uses Survey Monkey to assess staff feedback on the PD. During interviews, school staff reported to the IIT that the PD opportunities are helpful in moving instructional practices forward. Because the district provides learning opportunities and follow-up support, staff is better able to effectively plan instruction that improves student engagement and learning experiences.

Areas for Improvement:

All ratings for this Tenet are either **Highly Effective** or **Effective** and therefore, comments are listed under **Strengths**.

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**

Debriefing Statement: The district provides limited PD opportunities and support related to student social and emotional developmental health to school staff, and does not have sufficient resources for the related student support services. As a result, staff is limited in its ability to apply the strategies needed to achieve positive academic and social developmental outcomes for all students.

Strengths:

All ratings for this Tenet are either **Developing** or **Ineffective** and therefore, comments are listed under **Areas for Improvement**.

Areas for Improvement:

- The district delivers limited PD and provides minimal resources to school staff to enhance their understanding of the varied social and emotional development health needs of all students. However, the district staff reported that they received an array of PD workshops to help teachers discover the value of their roles in student performance improvement. For example, the district provided support for social workers within the district to conduct presentations, discussion groups, and teacher trainings on suicide prevention, bullying, and date rape. The superintendent explained that the district maintains several support initiatives and programs for the schools, including Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), Response to Intervention (RTI), the Committee on Special Education (CSE), and Dignity for All Students (DASA). In addition, the district has a wellness committee to address the social and emotional issues of students. However, at the time of the IIT visit, none of the teachers were able to explain how they use the training content and materials in the classroom or in planning meetings. Students were only aware of the social activities but were not able to describe the specific training programs. The district provides follow-up support to school-level staff connected to district-level PD. The school leader reported, and staff confirmed, that all teachers play a role in tracking their respective PD plan through the My Learning Plan online system. The district has acquired a local cable TV channel (Channel 20), which broadcasts announcements and events in the district. During the district review, several external district partners (Garrison Central School District and the West Point Academy) were present to share the current relationships that are in place to support students, staff, and families throughout the district. However, at the time of the IIT visit the superintendent did not have a plan to either ensure the consistent access of resources for students' social and emotional development or to maintain and secure fiscal resources for related student support services. None of the documents reviewed by the IIT or staff interviews revealed a transitional system of communicating the systemic use of data and operations to connect the areas of academic need to the social and emotional development health of all students. The lack of a strategic district action plan and an expanded PD program for teachers limits the ability of schools to provide opportunities and resources that positively support students' 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**

Debriefing Statement: The district lacks a comprehensive plan to ensure family and community engagement and does not communicate to all constituents in their native languages. As a result, the insufficient efforts of reciprocal communication for diverse cultures, languages, and modalities concerning student progress and needs hinders certain students and families' ability to feel a sense of partnership that augments learning.

Strengths:

All ratings for this Tenet are either **Developing** or **Ineffective** and therefore, comments are listed under **Areas for Improvement**.

Areas for Improvement:

- At the time of the IIT visit, the district did not have a comprehensive district plan to establish and maintain communication in order to increase family and community engagement. District staff reported to the IIT that this is an area in development, and they anticipate having an articulated plan in the near future. District and school staff, as well as several students and parents, stated that the district is a family community that supports their needs. In addition, a board member, who is also a parent in the district, stated that the district and school staff provided a welcoming environment for all families. The district provides a high school guidance counselor, who also serves as a transitional counselor and liaison to schools, welcoming new students and meeting with families to ensure a successful transition. The high school guidance counselor also serves as a transitional counselor for the grade eight students in the intermediate school. Although the district does not have a formally written plan that articulates strategies for creating a climate of belonging for all families, school stakeholders reported that they feel connected to the school and that the school is supportive of student learning. District staff indicated some of the strategies that are in place for school-based leaders to communicate with the community and families. For example, the district disseminates information on its official website (www.hffmcsd.org), also on Alert Now (a rapid notification messaging services), the Parent Portal, and Channel 20, all of which are only in English. While this mode of communication is primarily based on technology, some families have limited access to a computer and therefore are hindered in their ability to access school and district information. During interviews, some parents reported that some teachers correspond with them via email and telephone; but these methods are usually inconsistent and do not consider the needs of all families, in particular, those who are non-English speaking. As a result of the district's inconsistent methods of communicating with all families and the lack of a sustained plan of support for school partnerships, the schools' ability to ensure family and community engagement in the schools and student success is limited.

DISTRICT LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS:

Tenet 1: District Leadership and Capacity

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

- 1.2: Follow through on the plan for the 2013-14 school year to provide schools with building-based funding allocations. Provide schools with greater autonomy and flexibility with the deployment of all resources that address the needs of the school community. Strategically direct resources to address schools' most pressing needs to raise academic achievement of the most at-risk students. Increase school allocations to expand translation services to address the needs of all students and their families in the district.
- 1.3: Share a common vision of high expectations for all groups of students and develop a strategic planning framework that enables school leaders, staff, and stakeholders to customize a set of strategic goals for actions for their schools. Hold district leaders and staff accountable for working collaboratively with the principals and their school leadership teams to implement a strategic plan, and hold principals accountable for creating excellent leadership teams.

Tenet 5- Student Social and Developmental Health

In order for the district's strategy and practices to fully align with the concepts in the Effective column of Tenet 5, the district should:

- 5.1: Create opportunities to engage community leaders in developing the common vision for the district, and for the district and individual school's strategic plans maintain ongoing communication with, involvement of, and feedback to, key stakeholders. Continue to support all schools in the district in their use of data to ensure continuous student improvement, connecting areas of academic and student social and emotional developmental health needs.

Tenet 6 - Family and Community Engagement

In order for the district's strategy and practices to fully align with the concepts in the Effective column of Tenet 6, the district should:

- 6.1: Maintain the Parent Portal system, but also identify alternate communication methods to increase family engagement to ensure consistent communication for all district and school families. Develop a defined plan of action to improve communication methods with district and school community stakeholders to include various languages through different modes of communication, such as via phone, group meetings, email, postal mail, newsletter, and the Parent Portal. Target communication support toward families without technology resources at home and/or who speak languages other than English. Ensure that all material is translated into all pertinent languages and that there is ongoing outreach to the community through workshops, access to technology, mailing of newsletters, public access, and the rapid phone messaging system.