



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

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)



BEDS Code/DBN	660900010000
District	Mount Vernon City School District
District Address	165 North Columbus Avenue, Mount Vernon, New York 10562
Superintendent	Judith Johnson
Date(s) of Review	May 20, 2013
Schools Discussed in this Report	A.B. Davis Middle School Grimes Elementary School Nellie A.Thornton High School

District Information Sheet											
District Grade Configuration	PreK-12	Total Student Enrollment	8745	% Title 1 Population	75%	% Attendance Rate	91%				
% Free Lunch	63%	% Reduced Lunch	10%	% Student Sustainability	0	% Limited English Proficient	9%	% Students with Disabilities	18.3%		
Racial/Ethnic Origin of District Student Population											
% American Indian or Alaska Native	0%	% Black or African American	80%	% Hispanic or Latino	12%	% Asian, Native Hawaiian /Other Pacific Islander	1%	% White	7%	% Multi-racial	1%
Personnel											
Number Years Superintendent Assigned/ Appointed to District	7 months	Number of Deputy Superintendents	3	Average Years Deputy Superintendents in Role in the District	2@4 months 1@6yrs	# of Directors of Programs	3				
% 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	1%	Average Teacher Absences in District	10 days				
Overall State Accountability Status (Mark applicable box with an X)											
District in Good Standing		Focus District	X	Number of Focus Schools Identified by District	7	Number of SIG (a) Recipient Schools	0	Number of SIG (g) Recipient Schools		Number of Schools in Status	8
% ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	42%	% Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4	48%	% Science Performance at levels 3 & 4	70%	% 4 yr. Graduation Rate (for HS only)	63%	% 5 yr. Graduation Rate (for HS only)	74%		

Did Not Meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in ELA			
	American Indian or Alaska Native	X	Black or African American
X	Hispanic or Latino	X	Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander
X	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	X	Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander
X	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	X	Black or African American
X	Hispanic or Latino		Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander
X	White		Multi-racial
X	Students with Disabilities	X	Limited English Proficient
X	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:			D	

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 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>E</p>
<p><u>Debriefing Statement:</u> The district has a robust recruiting plan created to fill open positions with highly qualified, certified staff. The district plans for recruiting, evaluating and sustaining personnel affords schools the ability to provide a learning environment that has qualified staff.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The district shared its plan for recruitment of nationally highly qualified, certified individuals to fill open teaching positions. Documents reviewed found a comprehensive recruitment plan, which sets forth a process for recruitment and appointment practices. The HR leader noted that the plan involves district staff, school leadership, and school staff in the interview and selection process. The review team noted that the stated top priority is to hire highly qualified staff with experience in the areas of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and working with high poverty populations. Open positions are publicized locally in <i>The Journal News</i>, as well as on the district and school websites. To demonstrate the importance of attracting potential candidates nationally, the district placed a \$10,000 display advertisement in <i>The New York Times</i>. Interviews with HR staff clarified that the recruitment process involves extensive collaboration between the leadership cabinet and various school and district interview committees, allowing the superintendent to participate at any stage of the interview and selection process. The focus is to look at staffing critically, analyzing strengths, and aligning program and curriculum requirements with staffing levels. Once hired, the district implements an APPR plan, using the Danielson Framework for Teaching, to evaluate staff implementation of the CCLS and identify the need for individual professional development (PD). To assist in the implementation of this plan, the superintendent stated that the district trains experienced people to act as mentors for both instructional staff and school leaders. Documents reviewed found that the district provides monthly meetings for new teachers; these meetings offer new teachers and their mentors the opportunity to discuss daily routines, district policies, as well as share best practices relevant to their certification area. The district has implemented a mentoring program for all probationary school leaders. Probationary school leaders are assigned a mentor for support during the initial years in their position. In addition, HR staff noted that the evaluation for school leaders is both formal and informal, but always documented. Finally, the district has created partnerships with Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) and the Annenberg Institute for School Reform (AISR) to improve school instructional leadership and district capacity. The district plans for recruiting, evaluating and sustaining personnel affords schools the ability to provide a learning environment that has qualified staff. 		

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 allocates general funds on an enrollment basis. While Title I funds are allocated by a formula, the district’s allocation of funding does not consider all subgroups of students. As a result, the uneven budget allocation to support all groups of students limits student achievement and school improvement.

Area for Improvement:

- The district has not engaged in strategic fiscal decision making to meet the needs of all students. For example, in allocating funding to schools, the district considers the needs of students with disabilities and English language learners (ELLs), but not economically disadvantaged students. District leaders collaborate with school leaders to determine school needs and work with school leaders three times a year to identify and assess critical needs, at which point school leaders’ advocate for their own budgets containing staffing, instructional materials, and Title I afterschool program monies. However, the district leaders reported that school funding for staff is allocated according to student enrollment in categories such as ELLs and students with disabilities but not according to economic needs. According to district leaders, Title II monies are used for PD, the special education budget is a standard budget, and the allocation for Title I monies are based on student population. The district leadership also stated that Title III monies are used to fund Saturday literacy programs for students and parents. In addition, district staff reported that schools are free to design and implement their own programs, such as extended day or extended year programming. Documents reviewed found that the district focuses resources on the improvement of instruction based on assessment results, and implementation of the CCLS but the economic needs of the students and families are not a part of the fiscal plan. Because the district does not consider the enrollment of students from economically disadvantaged families when allocating resources, some schools do not receive sufficient support 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 district leadership has set high student achievement targets that are clearly communicated in plans and activities developed at the district level. However, the curricula developed and instructional practices necessary to attain this academic level have yet to transition fully to all classrooms within the school communities. As a result, the lack of implementing the full plan limits the schools abilities to improve academic achievement.

Area for Improvement:

- The district leadership has a theory of action and high student achievement targets communicated in district plans; however, the action plan was not fully implemented in the schools. In addition,

written plans were not translated into all pertinent languages used throughout the district community. For example, the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) reviewed documents that contained a districtwide focus on increasing student performance while raising curriculum and instruction standards to meet CCLS requirements. However, according to district leaders, schools have not fully implemented curricula and instructional practices supporting the CCLS. In addition, although the district home page offers *Google Translate* for French, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, and Spanish translations of the website content, at the time of the visit, the plans shared for implementing the expectations were not available to families in their native languages. The lack of awareness and support by all school communities for the theory of action concerning school culture impedes all stakeholders' ability to participate in a culture of high expectations for addressing the district and schools improvement needs.

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 has established a professional development (PD) plan for all staff that includes instructional coaching. However, PD attendance is not monitored on a continuous basis. The lack of a PD plan with interim assessment goals and strategies to measure success decreases the rate of teacher professional growth, student achievement, and school improvement.

Area for Improvement:

- The district has a published calendar of PD opportunities for school staff focused on implementing the CCLS; however, no mechanisms for follow-up support were in place. According to district leaders, PD opportunities aligned with the CCLS are offered to all staff through My Learning Plan, an online program for PD management. District leaders also reported that PD on the use of *Thinking Maps* was provided for English as a second language (ESL) and special education teachers. In addition, McREL, Bank Street College of Education, and the Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) provided PD for all teachers and school leaders. The district provided training in SMART Board technology and 28 of the 75 teachers, who selected to participate, became turnkey trainers in their own schools, with two staff members participating from each school in the district. District leaders reported that the district has identified 26 teacher leaders, 13 in English language arts (ELA) and 13 in mathematics, to receive intensive PD to equip them to serve as instructional coaches to school staff in support of CCLS implementation. The district self-assessment noted that a cadre of 22 teacher leaders, also known as instructional coaches, had been put in place to provide teachers with the leadership and support needed to improve instructional practices in critical areas, as identified by the APPR process. However, based on interviews and documents reviewed, the district plans to deploy teacher leaders throughout the elementary and middle schools in the next school year, to provide instructional assistance to staff. Therefore, at the time of the visit, this plan was not fully implemented yet. In addition, although opportunities for PD exist, there is no district plan established to monitor and provide follow-up assistance to staff. As a result, the absence of follow-up support for staff who participates in PD diminishes the district's ability to meet the PD needs of school staff.

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	D
<p>Debriefing Statement: The district is still working to develop a data-driven culture. It has a data-driven instruction (DDI) team supported by outside consultants in each school. The lack of a plan to use data as the vehicle to inform instruction, supports, and interventions limits the district’s ability to create immediate and sustainable change to hold staff and schools accountable.</p> <p>Area for Improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> District leaders expect staff to use data to inform instruction; however, the district is in the process of identifying best practices for using data. Based on documents reviewed and interviews with district leaders, the district-wide DDI team has met with McREL to examine its model for data-driven decision-making. District leaders explained that data from report cards and other relevant summative and formative assessment results are the tools instructional staff are expected to use to inform effective lesson planning. However, the district has Data Warehouse Level 1 access and the DDI school teams have begun BOCES training in the use of Level 1 data. According to district leaders, the district DDI team bears the responsibility for providing staff with PD on using data, with a focus on ensuring that staff becomes aware of the different levels of data access. The IIT determined that the best practices for using data were not fully developed and communicated. For example, district leaders noted that school DDI teams are trained to look at data with an emphasis on literacy trends and results; however, at the time of the visit, these teams were learning to disaggregate data by student group and do benchmark analyses comparing individual performance to the learning standards. Because the district lacks strategies connected to appropriately using data, the district delays its ability to hold staff members and school communities accountable for implementing the strategies, thereby diminishing the effects of a data-driven culture. 		

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	E
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> District leaders meet monthly with school leaders to discuss concerns and joint programs. Based on documents reviewed and interviews with school leaders, the IIT determined that the district leadership team holds monthly meetings that focus on PD, district business, and the sharing of district-wide concerns. PD topics discussed in these meetings include special education systems, CCLS, ELA instruction, and APPR training by Bank Street College of Education. According to district leaders, the district designated a portion of the funds from a three-year grant for the salaries of three mental health counselors. District leaders also expressed support for the Positive Behavioral 		

Intervention and Supports (PBIS) program in the district middle and high schools. District leaders stated that the K-12 school leadership supports the district vision by creating and hosting *Parent Universities* where parents can take classes, technology courses, and webinars on how to advocate for their children in multiple languages, such as Spanish, English, Portuguese, and Haitian Creole. District leaders stated that they are looking at incorporating *Guidance into Technology* into the curricula to help with the integration of technology. The district's homepage is now an active system where parents who have passwords can access student report cards and homework assignments. The district leadership team indicated that they are collaborating with school leaders to identify the appropriate agency(s) to provide families and schools with support for student needs related to student suspensions, at-risk and homeless students. The district leadership team reported that the court system, mental health agencies, and other partners such as *The Guidance Center of Westchester*, make a coordinated effort to support the district with prevention services for at-risk students and to transition juvenile offenders back into their home schools and communities. School leaders play a vital role in identifying students in need or at risk. The monthly meetings and district programs provide supports for school leaders to create, develop, and nurture a school environment 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

D

- District leaders hold regular meetings with school leaders to identify needs and assess progress using data, and as a result district leaders have school plans to address the technology needs and the incorporation of music and art in the curricula. District leaders reported that schools' comprehensive education plan (SCEP) are based on achievement data only. School staff explained that at the end of each school year, each school determines if its academic goals were met through pre- and post-surveys. The expectation of the district and school leaders has been to share visions through monthly meetings, using assessment data to evaluate progress in implementing programs. School leaders reported that scheduled monthly meetings with district leaders include opportunities for discussions on the curriculum needs of each school. The district leadership team found that schools need better technology, including more SMARTBoards and computers, faster technology, and technology related resources to support the CCLS. In an attempt to increase teacher expertise on using technology, the district leadership reported that it had surveyed teachers regarding their interest in technology and selected 75 teachers to receive 15 hours of technology training. Currently, the district supports the READ 180 reading intervention software and Achieve 3000 on-line instruction support program. However, district leaders reported plans are still being developed to realign the curriculum to meet CCLS requirements to incorporate the arts. In addition, at the time of the visit, the district was working to recruit four art and two music teachers, so that every school would be able to have art and music. As a result, the lack of implementation of a comprehensive curriculum supporting the CCLS and including the arts, technology, and other enrichment subjects limits student access to challenging curricula.

<p>Tenet 4 - Teacher Practices and Decisions</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>SOP Rating</p>	<p>D</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school district provides PD opportunities based on identified teacher needs and plans to provide each school with teacher leaders to serve as instructional coaches; however, not all staff receives PD opportunities consistently. For example, the district has not fully implemented the instructional coaches to support CCLS, and although a district DDI teams provide in-house PD to school level DDI teams the school level staff have not received PD on best practices for data usage. According to district leaders, teachers meet with school leaders to unpack CCLS instructional shifts and identify PD needs; the district then plans its PD offerings around those identified needs. However, district leaders stated there is still a need to motivate more instructional staff to enroll in PD that focuses on implementing instructional strategies and learning shifts for CCLS, since plans for meeting school goals emphasize reading closely, thinking maps, higher-order questioning techniques and reciprocal teaching. As a result, the lack of all instructional staff participating in PD on instructional strategies and practices to implement the CCLS limits the effective planning and delivery of quality instruction to meet students' needs and goals. 		
<p>Tenet 5- Student Social and Emotional Developmental Health</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>SOP Rating</p>	<p>D</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The district collaborates with outside agencies to provide services related to social and emotional health. However, at the time of the visit, the district was still planning to codify these relations to ensure that these agencies provide PD that meets the needs of staff. District leaders reported that the district has a mental health clinic, and homeless liaison personnel; it works closely with the court system, homeless shelter, and youth shelter. District leaders reported they are working to codify and strengthen these relationships to ensure that the agencies provide PD that addresses student social and emotional developmental health needs. District guidance and counseling leaders stated that PBIS and other behavior management programs are in place; however, documents reviewed found that these interventions are just beginning to improve the quality of student life within the realm of school since truancy was reduced by 19 percent since the last school year. The guidance plan was not fully in place at the time of the visit. The district leaders were in the midst of dealing with cyber bullying and ensuring that staff and students are aware of the Dignity for All Students Act (DASA). Because the district did not fully develop policies for providing opportunities and resources for supporting students' social and emotional developmental health and do not ensure PD follow-up to support for implementation of strategies, the district limits its ability to meet student needs. 		

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**

- District leaders have adopted an online program that allows families access to individual student data and have expanded the district website to provide more information to families. The district leadership reported that district and school leaders aspire to be readily available to parents to address issues concerning students. Documents reviewed found that the district encourages school leaders and staff to meet regularly with parent leaders to develop plans and procedures that encourage all parents to participate in school activities and events. District leaders stated that they, along with school leaders, were committed to reciprocal communication with family and community stakeholders in a multi-cultural city. District leaders reported that the district website is evolving into a useful tool for such engagement. The district DDI team reported that the district has adopted eSchoolData, a program that allows parents to access their child's grades and assignments. In addition to offering *Parent University*, district leaders reported that training is provided to school leaders in community-relations models, marketing strategies, data based decision making, and communications theory to enable them to create frameworks for school, family, business, community, government, and higher education partnerships. However, at the time of the visit, the district did not have a system to equip all staff members with a fuller understanding of the district's diversity and the importance of purposeful and meaningful dialogue with all families. School leaders and staff that attended were provided PD on this topic. In addition, the district was still developing strategies to encourage family participation with schools. The lack of a comprehensive strategic plan for family and community engagement limits the district's ability to create and sustain a welcoming environment for families, reciprocal communication, and partnerships with community organizations and families.

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:

- 1.2: Ensure that student enrollment and economic needs are primary considerations when allocating resources to all schools. Ensure that each school receives sufficient support given its population, intervention needs, and staff support to promote school improvement and success.
- 1.3: Ensure that all stakeholders know and understand the district's theory of action. Translate all written plans addressing the district and schools improvement needs into languages other than English and communicated in the respective school constituency native languages.
- 1.4: Ensure that the district has established mechanisms for providing follow-up support to PD.
- 1.5: Ensure, through PD and monitoring, that the district develops, communicates, and enforces best practices for teacher's use of data. Create a system to support feedback loops at the school-level that interconnect PD offered, PD attendance, school-wide practices observed, supports provided based on follow up, and accountability for immediate positive change to improve teaching and learning experiences.
- 3.1: Ensure that the district creates and implements a plan for a comprehensive curriculum that aligns to the CCLS and incorporates the arts, technology, and other enrichment subjects. Ensure the curriculum provides a data-driven feedback system that engages students in discovery, inquiry, and establishing learning goals, so they can have access to challenging curricula.
- 4.1: Ensure that all teachers receive PD and follow-up support on identifying best practices and strategies aligned student needs and data results.
- 5.1: Ensure that the district's policies for providing opportunities and resources for supporting students' social and emotional developmental health are developed and implemented. Ensure that staff receives follow-up support for implementing strategies learned in PD.
- 6.1: Ensure that the district and schools develop and implement a comprehensive strategic plan for family and community engagement. Ensure that the district and schools communicate in formats and languages that are accessible to all families.