



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

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)



BEDS Code	010100010000
District	Albany City School District
District Address	1 Academy Park, Albany, New York 11207
Superintendent	Dr. Marguerite Vanden Wyngaard
Date(s) of Review	April 14-15, 2015

District Information Sheet					
Grade Configuration	K-12	Total Enrollment	9234	Number of Schools	15
District Composition (<i>most recent data</i>)					
% Title I Population			% Attendance Rate		95.5
% Free Lunch		62	% Reduced Lunch		8
% Limited English Proficient		8.4	% Students with Disabilities		12.9
Racial/Ethnic Origin (<i>most recent data</i>)					
% American Indian or Alaska Native		0	% Black or African American		49.3
% Hispanic or Latino		16.2	% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander		9.1
% White		20.7	% Multi-Racial		4.7
Personnel (<i>most recent data</i>)					
Years Superintendent Assigned to District		3	# of Deputy/Assistant Superintendents		2
# of Principals		12	# of Assistant Principals		
# of Teachers			Avg. Class Size		
% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate			% Teaching Out of Certification		
% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience			Average Teacher Absences		
Teacher Turnover Rate – Teachers < 5 years exp.		18	Teacher Turnover Rate – All Teachers		16
Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2013-14)					
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4		14	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4		12
Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (4th Grade)		53	Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (8th Grade)		
Student Performance for High Schools (2013-14)					
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4			Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4		
Credit Accumulation High Schools Only (2013-14)					
4 Year Graduation Rate		52	6 Year Graduation Rate		59
% of earning Regents Diploma w/ Advanced Des.					
Current NYSED Accountability Status					
# of Reward Schools			# of Priority Schools		
# of Schools In Good Standing			# of Focus Schools		12
# of LAP Schools					

District Accountability Status

Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in ELA (indicate Y / N / N-A)			
American Indian or Alaska Native	Y	Black or African American	N
Hispanic or Latino	N	Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	Y
White	Y	Multi-Racial	N
Students with Disabilities		Limited English Proficient	
Economically Disadvantaged	N		
Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Mathematics (indicate Y / N / N-A)			
American Indian or Alaska Native	Y	Black or African American	N
Hispanic or Latino	N	Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	N
White	Y	Multi-Racial	N
Students with Disabilities		Limited English Proficient	
Economically Disadvantaged	N		
Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Science (indicate Y / N / N-A)			
American Indian or Alaska Native	N	Black or African American	N
Hispanic or Latino	N	Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	N
White	N	Multi-Racial	
Students with Disabilities	N	Limited English Proficient	N
Economically Disadvantaged	N		

DISTRICT PRIORITIES AS WRITTEN BY THE DISTRICT:

1. Increase learning for all students and dramatically narrow the achievement gap.
2. Provide a comprehensive P – 12 educational program with personalization, academic and core life skills development, choice and quality.
3. Increase family and community engagement, connection, ownership and partnership.
4. Increase life-long educational opportunities through community partnerships and investments with clear impact and value.
5. Provide a recognized educational leadership system with excellence in governance, management and consultation.

Information about the review

- The review of the district was conducted by an Outside Educational Expert (OEE), a representative from the New York State Education Department, a Special Education School Improvement Specialist (SESIS) representative, and a representative from the Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (RBERN).
- The Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) reviews of three schools in the district also informed the district review.
- During IIT school reviews in the district, reviewers visited classrooms across the three schools and IIT reviewers conducted focus group interviews with students, staff, and parents.
- District reviewers conducted interviews with district leadership, central office staff, and a focus group of school leaders.

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.

#	Statement of Practice	Stage 4	Stage 3	Stage 2	Stage 1
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.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.2	The district leadership has a comprehensive and explicit theory of action about school culture that communicates high expectations for addressing the needs of all constituents.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
1.3	The district is organized and allocates resources (financial, staff support, materials, etc.) in a way that aligns appropriate levels of support for schools based on the needs of the school community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	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	Stage 4	Stage 3	Stage 2	Stage 1
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	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	entire school community.				
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	Stage 4	Stage 3	Stage 2	Stage 1
3.1	The district works collaboratively with the school(s) to ensure CCLS curriculum that provide 21st Century and College and Career Readiness skills in all content areas and provides fiscal and human resources for implementation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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	Stage 4	Stage 3	Stage 2	Stage 1
4.1	The district works collaboratively with the school to provide opportunities and supports for teachers to develop strategies and practices and addresses effective planning and account for student data, needs, goals, and levels of engagement.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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	Stage 4	Stage 3	Stage 2	Stage 1
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.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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	Stage 4	Stage 3	Stage 2	Stage 1
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.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

District Review – Findings, Evidence, Impact and Recommendations:

<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>Stage 2</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>Tenet Rating</p>	<p>Stage 2</p>
<p>Overall Finding:</p> <p>The district has focused on the recruitment of high quality personnel but has not defined what high quality means to ensure that the needs of its diverse student population are met. In addition, the district has not used the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) process and data to inform evaluation and retention efforts.</p> <p>Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The district has strategies in place to recruit staff and in particular candidates who are “culturally competent.” District criteria for candidates include passion, heart and soul, and cultural competency described as love for urban education, experience, and an understanding of students’ backgrounds in order to provide relevant instruction. The district is also keen to recruit a diverse teacher population that reflects the student body. The human resources team works collaboratively with school leaders to determine each school’s specific staffing needs and to recruit staff, and has plans to attend a number of job fairs this spring. The human resources team has also established relationships with neighboring colleges, including Union College and Hunter College. • Given the district’s experience that it is difficult to attract teachers and school leaders, the district has set a goal to retain 90 percent of its staff. The district leader has had limited opportunity to hire school leaders, and so not been fully able to fulfill the district’s recruitment vision. The human resource director is advocating for the addition of assistant principal positions so that the district can hire leaders from within who have attended relevant training and who meet the district’s recruitment criteria. • The human resources team has conducted general training for school leaders on how to improve teacher capacity, on how to ensure that non-tenured teachers are evaluated properly, and how to document unsatisfactory performance. • There is an APPR committee, but district leadership could not explain how the APPR is implemented, and shared that the APPR process is followed but does not connect the quality of instruction to student outcomes. 		

Impact Statement:

The district has devised, but not fully implemented, a plan to recruit and retain high quality staff that has the mindset and the appropriate training to accelerate student achievement. However, the district has not used existing resources, such as the APPR process, to support the retention of quality staff.

Recommendation:

In order for the district's strategy and practices to align with the Stage 3 rating on the DTSDE rubric, the district should:

- develop a clear definition for a quality teachers, leaders, and staff for Albany City Schools. The definition should include a conceptualization of cultural competence, accelerating student learning, and closing the achievement gap; and
- integrate this definition into the district vision for APPR and use it to inform all recruitment, evaluation, and retention efforts.

Statement of Practice 1.2.: The district leadership has a comprehensive and explicit theory of action about school culture that communicates high expectations for addressing the needs of all constituents.	Tenet Rating	Stage 1
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Overall Finding:

The district has a theory of action that has been distributed in print to teachers, school leaders, and some parent groups and is posted online. However, the theory of action does not explicitly include detailed high expectations and Specific, Measurable, Ambitious, Results-oriented, and Timely (SMART) goals that address all constituents’ needs directly or address the district-wide need for equity and culturally responsive practice.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- The district’s theory of action is general and does not include a clear statement of high expectations to guide teachers and school leaders. It comprises of “what if” statements which do not state actual district needs or include specific action plans to improve student achievement. The district leader met with the whole district staff at the Opening Day convocation and has developed a protocol for school leaders to share the theory of action and vision with staff; however, the district leader shared she has not yet developed a strategy to communicate with staff beyond the meeting at the beginning of the year and expressed that the urgency and constant messaging around her expectations has not saturated the district.
- The Community School District of Albany’s Operational Plan for 2013-16 reviewed by the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) includes eight overarching streams of work, but no specific timelines, responsibilities, benchmarks, or outcomes. In interviews between the IIT and district leaders, leaders referred to only being in a position for a short period of time, and to strategies or efforts just being started or about to happen when asked to discuss the progress made to address needs raised in the prior DTSDE review and the areas that the district has been cited for. District leaders made no reference to immediate, short-term, or time-specific long-term plans. Further, there was no reference

to urgency or to immediate work needed to accelerate student achievement.

- In a meeting with the review team, when asked to identify the number one priority for the district, each cabinet member noted a different priority and did not link these priorities to the district theory of action. Priorities included home-school partnership, construction and renovations in 13 buildings, hiring 150-200 teachers, increasing teacher diversity, building school leader capacity as instructional leaders, math and English language arts (ELA) curriculum for grades K-five, supporting school leaders with cycles of inquiry, developing a central registration system, and keeping parents and communities informed.
- The district leadership team has not established a system to provide consistent translation services for the increasing number of non-English speaking families who live across the district so that all parents understand the theory of action and the written strategic roadmap.

Impact Statement:

The lack of urgency and formally shared expectations across the district with school leaders, teachers, and parents for high quality teaching and leadership limit student achievement.

Recommendation:

In order for the district's strategy and practices to align with the Stage 3 rating on the DTSDE rubric, the district should:

- rewrite the theory of action to include a definitive statement of what will be accomplished to effect quality student learning and success, and ensure that each component of the theory of action has a direct link to student achievement and SMART goals with monthly benchmarks; and
- communicate the sense of urgency for increased student achievement and progress toward the SMART goals several times each year to ensure that the entire district population utilizes multiple communication strategies and provides translation in all pertinent languages.

Statement of Practice 1.3: The district is organized and allocates resources (financial, staff support, materials, etc.) in a way that aligns appropriate levels of support for schools based on the needs of the school community.

Tenet Rating

Stage 2

Overall Finding:

The district has developed its capacity to leverage grants to support the general budget and meet some student needs and has developed a system to allocate resources based on needs identified by individual school leaders. However, the district has not developed a system to review data to identify district-wide needs, or to analyze the impact of deployed human and fiscal resources.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- The IIT learned from their interviews with various members of the cabinet that the district has not

developed a system for formally reviewing data in order to assess district needs and deploy resources at the individual school level or across the district. The business office team stated that members work closely with school leaders to assess staffing needs and to ensure that mandated services are provided based on student enrollment. Further, the business team stated that school leaders present additional resource requests and the cabinet consider these requests taking into account the overall strategic plan, available grant funds, and the general budget. School leaders stated that some of their resource requests were met by the district.

- The business office team described multiple district priorities in response to feedback and requests from school leaders including building renovations, early childhood, curriculum development, and professional development (PD). Based on district demographics and the need to meet the social and emotional developmental health needs of students, the district has recently hired a new English as a second language (ESL) director, a director for community engagement, and additional social workers for each school. Plans to add an additional seven ESL teachers, Spanish teachers, and vocational education teachers, as well as to provide additional translation services are in the pipeline. The director of business also shared that there are too many priorities and that fewer priorities would allow for more effective deployment of resources.
- The business team highlighted the work of some schools and initiatives that they deemed indicative of resources being used well. One example was a middle school's use of its School Improvement Grant (SIG) to focus its academic intervention services and to cultivate a highly functional school improvement team. The district has also expanded the cadre of instructional coaches and invested in Studio Classrooms, a "model classroom" training approach to give teachers the opportunity to observe coaches and colleagues teach and apply best practices to their own instructional practices. The IIT learned that the district has a plan to sustain Studio Classrooms through the general operating budget even though the business team shared that there is no formal process to assess these efforts, replicate best practices, and/or accelerate the rollout of the model to support district-wide impact on improving the quality of instruction.

Impact Statement:

The organization and administration of resources is based on individual school requests and a multitude of district initiatives, but lacks a well-defined or targeted district improvement strategy and the assessment of effective practice to support K-12 student learning across the district.

Recommendation:

In order for the district's strategy and practices to align with the Stage 3 rating on the DTSDE rubric, the district should:

- schedule planning sessions with the cabinet to prioritize one high impact goal for each of the following areas: curriculum, PD, social and emotional developmental health, family and community engagement,

and high quality school and district leadership;

- deploy the director of business to lead additional resource allocation sessions to mobilize resources toward a smaller number of goals and initiatives; and
- deploy the director of data and the director of business to work together to develop a tool to outline how each resource is contributing to the improvement of student learning and to monitor short-term and long-term impact.

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.

Tenet Rating

Stage 2

Overall Finding:

The district has PD practices in place, but it does not have a unified system to determine the precise PD needs of teachers and leaders, or to evaluate the relevance and measure the impact of PD that does exist.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- The PD committee includes representatives from all district departments. The director of English as a New Language (ENL) stated that as a result of being part of the PD committee, ENL teachers have recently been trained in balanced literacy. The PD committee shared plans to include special education, ENL, and culturally relevant teaching and learning strategies into 2015-16 Studio Classrooms so that general education and special area teachers receive training to enable them to meet the needs of all students. Members shared that the district’s focus was on developing an adult learning culture with teacher input. A teacher survey to assess interests for content and approach identified student engagement and in-class coaching as top interests. As a result, both of these have been areas of focus in school learning walks and in the Studio Classroom activities.
- School leaders shared that they have the opportunity to plan school-specific PD. The district PD team stated that they are developing a protocol to require school leaders to outline and submit plans for 2015-16 for central office feedback and approval. However, the IIT learned that the high school has its own PD committee with no active district leadership role. One district cabinet member noted that she had attended the high school professional committee for the first time the day prior to the IIT visit.
- While some data is starting to be used to plan PD, the district leader noted that student achievement data is not yet used to determine the content or impact of needed PD. District and school leaders shared that feedback from teachers indicate that the Studio Classroom and the coaching initiatives are improving teacher perception that PD is helpful and related to their daily work. However, these initiatives do not reach the majority of teachers because of funding constraints, the assignment of coaches to other duties such as curriculum writing, and the voluntary nature of PD. In response to the question of how they knew if PD meets the needs of the teachers, a member of the PD committee noted that they have yet to receive a complaint and that they have now implemented an exit ticket evaluation at the end of each PD session.

Impact Statement:

Although there are promising practices in development, the district has not mobilized resources to provide the opportunity for all teachers to participate in needed professional learning or to use data to determine district-wide PD needs and priorities.

Recommendation:

In order for the district's strategy and practices to align with the Stage 3 rating on the DTSDE rubric, the district should:

- determine instructional priorities across the elementary, middle, and high schools and ensure that all PD provided by the district or by individual schools includes attention to those strategies. Based upon the perspectives shared during the IIT visit, these priorities should be:
 - rigorous and relevant teacher and student questioning and extended responses;
 - student engagement and relationship building with and among students, families, and the whole school community;
 - culturally relevant pedagogy; and
 - student literacy strategies across content areas and school levels.
- use data to monitor the work of the coaches, school leaders, and outside partners in supporting the ongoing capacity building around these strategies and the classroom implementation of these strategies.

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.

Tenet Rating

Stage 2

Overall Finding:

The district has begun to develop expectations and systems for data collection, data-driven decision-making, and data-driven instruction. However, the myriad of initiatives, the interruptions and delays during the implementation of many of these initiatives, and the inconsistent analysis of data prevent stakeholders from having a deep understanding of student achievement.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- The district is in the process of implementing its Vision Card Performance Management System; a process designed to progress monitor the work of all district departments in achieving the district vision and theory of action. The vision cards include data about the schools, such as achievement data; however, the IIT did not see any evidence of specific goals or action plans being developed in response to the data on the cards. Operational departments received vision cards that included data about district population, its employment rate, graduation rate, and its performance on state tests in 2013-14 and school leaders have just recently received their vision cards for their schools. The IIT interviews with district staff and school leaders demonstrated that the Vision Card Performance Management System was still in development and school leaders expressed a lack of clarity on how they were to be used to increase student achievement.

- The district has recently hired a director of data and two district data coaches. The district leadership team and the school leaders explained that monthly data snapshots based on formative assessments are shared with schools and the data coaches have begun to work with building data teams at the elementary school level. The district leadership team has also asked school leaders to identify and provide additional support to “students who are on the cusp of proficiency.”
- District leaders stated there is a renewed focus on Response to Intervention (RTI) and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) across the district and the district RTI and PBIS district coordinators are beginning to look at academic intervention and social and emotional developmental health data together to support teams of teachers and the coaches who support each elementary school. These teacher teams are focused on learning how to use data to modify instruction to support both academics and behavior.
- Student achievement, suspension, and graduation data highlight achievement gaps and disparities across many indicators and many district and school leaders stated that there are a number of barriers to student success across schools. The district leader shared that she is developing an Equity Agenda focused on closing the achievement gap between subgroups of students. However, the IIT found limited evidence of a specific data-based plan to address the achievement gap.

Impact Statement:

The use of data to inform decision-making is developing. The district is starting to use its Vision Card Performance Management System to align collective efforts to close the achievement gap and support student achievement for all student subgroups.

Recommendation:

In order for the district's strategy and practices to align with the Stage 3 rating on the DTSDE rubric, the district should:

- complete the development and full implementation of the Vision Card Performance Management System;
- review pertinent student achievement data together monthly and use the data analysis as the frame for sharing and adjusting work in progress aligned to a smaller number of district priorities, goals, and action steps; and
- complete the Equity Agenda and integrate the Equity Agenda into the Vision Card Performance Management System.

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

Statement of Practice 2.1 - School Leader Practices and Decisions: 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.	Tenet Rating	Stage 2
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Overall Finding:

While the district has a process in place to work with school leaders to support budget allocation, implement PBIS, and support teacher recruitment and feedback, the school district does not partner closely with all schools, particularly the secondary schools, to ensure that the district is fully aware of all individual school and district-wide needs.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- The district leader has developed a central leadership team to lead district improvement with defined roles and responsibilities. However, the review team found the district leader has not developed or implemented a plan to monitor the work of all team members in this effort. As a result, the district leader stated she sees a need to more consistently communicate the vision and expectations for high quality instruction and school leadership and to monitor implementation across the district.
- School leaders shared that they could pick up the phone and easily reach the district leader and central office team if they have a question or need. However, interviews with both school and district leaders revealed minimal central office direct involvement or physical presence in schools. School leaders shared a need for the central office to get to know what goes on at the school level.
- School leaders shared that the two assistant superintendents have a new dual role to provide instructional leadership coaching and formal school leader evaluation. The assistant superintendents and each school leader will now use a cycle of inquiry model to collaboratively analyze each school’s data and develop a learning cycle to build the school leader’s capacity to improve teacher performance. A few school leaders stated that this work had begun, others shared that they had not had any visits connected to the cycle of inquiry. District and school leaders also expressed a concern about the capacity of the assistant superintendents to fulfill this dual role due to the many other responsibilities assigned to them.
- The district leadership shared that it has given targeted support at the elementary and middle school level, but confirmed the IIT finding that there has been no specific support or a plan for district intervention and support for the high school to improve teaching and learning and the graduation rate. School leaders shared that they visit each other’s schools and have developed a culture of sharing across buildings in order to support one another in their work.

Impact Statement:

The district leadership team does not have a consistent and aligned plan to engage and support all schools in targeted transformation efforts tied to SMART goals to ensure student achievement.

Recommendation:

In order for the district's strategy and practices to align with the Stage 3 rating on the DTSDE rubric, district should:

- allocate two days per month to conduct school visits and learning walks as a district cabinet team with each school leader;
- review with the school leader during these monthly visits the monthly data snapshots and determine specific action steps for the district and school leadership teams; and
- focus the assistant superintendents' role exclusively on the development and evaluation of instructional leadership, so that they can provide each school leader with the support they will need to improve teacher practice and student learning.

Statement of Practice 3.1 - Curriculum Development and Support: The district works collaboratively with the school(s) to ensure CCLS curriculum that provide 21st Century and College and Career Readiness skills in all content areas and provides fiscal and human resources for implementation.

Tenet Rating

Stage 1

Overall Finding:

School leaders do not have a vertically aligned common core curriculum and associated student learning resources or adequate support to implement a curriculum to prepare all students for college- and career-readiness.

Evidence:

- IIT interviews with school leaders and the district curriculum team, and a review of curriculum materials demonstrate there is no curriculum that is readily accessible to all teachers and school leaders. Although district staff shared that curriculum development is underway for both ELA and mathematics, school leaders indicated that they did not have a comprehensive curriculum or adequate curriculum resources for their students.
- School leaders shared that they had been provided with pieces of the curriculum, but that they did not have the entire curriculum at once. One school leader noted that it would be better if they had the full curriculum in the summer so they could study it and plan appropriately. School leaders also noted that the curriculum was continually being developed and that the instructional and data coaches were pulled from their coaching duties to support the writing of the curriculum. While the IIT found that curriculum materials included teacher resources and instructional and learning strategies compiled

from multiple sources, clear guidelines for implementation and strategies to differentiate and assess student learning were not present in the curriculum materials reviewed

- School leaders shared that they had participated in work with the National Urban Alliance that included attention to culturally relevant learning approaches, but that this work still needed to be integrated into the curriculum, as the curriculum and resources are not accessible to the diverse range of learners in their schools. Further, school leaders shared that cultural competency, content, strategies, and resources that target the needs of different subgroups of students were not part of any of the curriculum materials received so far this year from the district. Although the district team stated that the curriculum contained differentiated learning opportunities, the review team found the curriculum needed to be further differentiated to meet the needs of diverse groups of learners including ELLs and students with disabilities.

Impact Statement:

The lack of a vertically aligned curriculum for ELA, math, and all content areas prevents school leaders from adequately addressing common-core-aligned student learning and achievement.

Recommendation:

In order for the district's strategy and practices to align with the Stage 3 rating on the DTSDE rubric, the district should:

- adopt an established CCLS-vertically-aligned curriculum with associated resources for all grades, content areas, and student subgroups. Include materials and strategies for all levels of ENL learners and for students with disabilities that will address equity, diversity, and social justice, and will promote the positive identity development of all cultures represented in Albany City Schools including students below, at, or above grade-level proficiency;
- deploy coaches to support implementation and district leadership to monitor the fidelity of curriculum implementation; and
- communicate with all stakeholders, teachers, school leaders, support staff, district leaders, students, parents, and community members a message about the urgency of improving student achievement, and the reality that the district has to adopt existing curriculum materials so that all students can engage in common-core learning immediately.

Statement of Practice 4.1 - Teacher Practices and Decisions: The district works collaboratively with the school to provide opportunities and supports for teachers to develop strategies and practices and addresses effective planning and account for student data, needs, goals, and levels of engagement.

Tenet Rating

Stage 2

Overall Finding:

The school district has implemented an embedded PD model including the Studio Classroom and the development of a cadre of district-wide coaches to support teaching practice at the classroom level. However, the district has not yet articulated a clear vision for effective teaching and rigor or adopted common protocols

to plan for and analyze effective teaching to support schools' work to improve student achievement.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- School leaders stated that the district is moving towards a district-wide definition of effective teaching through the work of the Studio Classroom, the APPR process, and the school leader learning walks. School leaders shared that the district is moving away from a menu of PD options to an embedded PD model, which involves in-classroom support for teachers utilizing the district coaches. Further, school leaders stated that they are beginning to see a shift toward more student-centered classrooms and described an increased openness to sharing among teachers and school leaders.
- School leaders expressed satisfaction with the work of the instructional coaches, but shared that the coaching staff was not sufficient to meet everyone's needs. School leaders shared that the district provided data coaches to work with building data teams to begin the process of analyzing data to revise and adjust teaching and learning practices. However, school leaders stated that these coaches did not have enough time to fully address the needs of their teachers because coaches were often pulled to complete other work at the district. Further, school leaders also noted that some school leaders had to share coaches with other schools.
- Some school leaders are involved in the Studio Classroom and explained how they were using the Studio Classroom PD, the work of their coaches, and their own leadership to support teacher improvement. Other school leaders shared that their teachers were not yet fully involved with the Studio Classroom due to the need for sub-coverage or not being in the cohort scheduled for this year.
- School leaders shared that the district provided opportunities for subject-based PD and best teaching practices, but explained that teacher participation is voluntary unless a teacher has a Teacher Improvement Plan. The high school leader explained that staff PD is based on a teacher's own inquiry and on areas of need based on walkthroughs and formal lessons during the APPR.

Impact Statement:

The district is not effectively supporting the development of a district-wide adult learning culture and targeted professional learning through district and school offerings to improve teacher practice in the service of accelerated student learning.

Recommendation:

In order for the district's strategy and practices to align with the Stage 3 rating on the DTSDE rubric, the district should:

- provide the opportunity for all teachers to participate in the Studio Classroom learning experience by June 2016;
- fund additional coaching positions to provide at least two full time coaches per building; and
- deploy coaches to provide follow up in-class instructional coaching with all teachers after their Studio Classroom experience.

Statement of Practice 5.1 - Student Social and Emotional Developmental Health: The district creates policy and works collaboratively with the school to provide opportunities and resources that positively support students' social and emotional developmental health.

Tenet Rating

Stage 2

Overall Finding:

The district's work to address student social and emotional developmental health is beginning to show some improvement in student outcomes. However, the district has not yet communicated a sense of urgency or targeted resources to positively support student social and emotional developmental health, particularly for subgroups, such as African-American males.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- School leaders noted that the district has created a PBIS program, a new code of conduct, and a character education program called Second Steps, and is in the process of funding crisis intervention teams or a clinical suite in each building. School leaders shared that the goal was to redirect the behavior and actions of students and staff in order to promote positive student behavior leading to students' ability to stay in class and learn. School leaders at the elementary and middle school level shared that teams of teachers and support staff had received PBIS training and that teacher assistants and security monitors have received Therapeutic Crisis Intervention Training. The district has not developed systems to monitor the impact of these initiatives.
- A middle school leader stated that the district has supported a full service model for her building including a health center and extended-day programming to meet the academic and social-emotional needs of students. The high school leader shared that the district funded an operations school leader position to focus on addressing the social and emotional developmental health needs of students. Both school leaders noted some improvement to student social and emotional developmental health, although they also noted that African American males are still disproportionately suspended.
- School leaders stated that the number one need in the district was addressing student social and emotional developmental health within the framework of the cultural experiences of students, and stated that the district is not consistently supporting schools with this work.
- School leaders noted that they are beginning to see the positive effect of PBIS and restorative justice and point to a small reduction in student suspensions, but they shared that these programs are not comprehensive enough to meet the needs of their diverse student populations. School leaders shared that they are beginning to adopt a common language around student social and emotional developmental health and to collect data on attendance and suspensions, but that the district does not have a system to collect and share data on all student social and emotional developmental health in order to monitor impact.

Impact Statement:

Existing social and emotional developmental health programs are not adequately monitored for school-wide and district impact. Students and staff do not consistently receive the supports they need to ensure social and emotional developmental health.

Recommendation:

In order for the district's strategy and practices to align with the Stage 3 rating on the DTSDE rubric, the district should:

- conduct an assessment of the social and emotional developmental health needs of the students at each building and work in collaboration with school leaders, community-based organizations (CBOs), students, and parents to develop a plan to proactively support the individual students and the subgroups of students who are at risk of failure; and
- provide resources to analyze the impact of funded and other initiatives and to gather information on the best social and emotional developmental health practices that can serve students throughout the district.

Statement of Practice 6.1 - Family and Community Engagement: 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.

Tenet Rating

Stage 2

Overall Finding:

Although the district has hired a family and community engagement director, the district does not have a comprehensive family and community engagement plan that states clear expectations on partnering with families and community members to support district-wide student achievement.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- The district has taken some steps to improve communication with families, such as updating its website, starting a quarterly newsletter, and preparing budget flyers to invite families and community members to budget meetings. However, most of the communication tools are in English and not comprehensive enough to reach all parents so that they can support their children’s development and achievement. Through discussion with the district leadership team, the IIT learned that the district has recently hired a family and community engagement director who has held two community events since November, but attendance at the events was low.
- School leaders shared that the district does not have a policy for family and community engagement and that they were not aware of PD for staff to enable them to improve family and community partnerships. School leaders also shared that they have partnerships with CBOs to support their schools and extended programming activities, but stated that these are not sufficient to meet the needs of all of families.

- School leaders shared that they worked with their school staff to increase parent engagement and described parent and community engagement as a major challenge in their schools and across the district. School leaders also shared that due to limited materials and district translation services, schools had to enlist the support of students and adults who spoke the languages represented in their parent population in order to communicate with many parents. The school leader of the high school shared that ESL teachers act as translators for students and families on a day-to-day basis.
- School leaders shared that the district had not yet provided support to engage the entire community around equity and educational achievement for all.

Impact Statement:

The lack of a comprehensive family and community engagement strategy targeted to the specific needs of the district population and the lack of a district-wide Community Engagement Campaign to tackle the divisions in the city and schools prevent all families from being able to work in close partnership with schools to provide the supports needed to improve student achievement.

Recommendation:

In order for the district's strategy and practices to align with the Stage 3 rating on the DTSDE rubric, the district should:

- develop a community engagement campaign to address the need for equitable involvement of all parents and community members in the work to improve student achievement across the district. Partner with two or three key CBOs to develop and implement the prioritized activities of the campaign;
- ensure that all communications are disseminated in all pertinent languages; and
- develop a clear role and responsibilities for the new district family and community engagement director and ensure that she works closely with school leaders to develop strategies that meet the needs of each distinct school community.