



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

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)



BEDS Code	010100010020
School Name	North Albany Academy
School Address	570 North Pearl Street, Albany NY 12204
District Name	Albany CSD
School Leader	Lesley Buff
Dates of Review	December 9-10, 2014
School Accountability Status	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Focus School
Type of Review	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SED Integrated Intervention Team (IIT)

School Information Sheet

School Configuration (2014-15 data)			
Grade Configuration	K-8	Total Enrollment	399
SIG Recipient		No	
Types and Number of English Language Learner Classes (2014-15)			
# Transitional Bilingual	0	# Dual Language	0
# Self-Contained English as a Second Language		0	
Types and Number of Special Education Classes (2014-15)			
# Special Classes	4	# SETSS	0
# Integrated Collaborative Teaching		1	
Types and Number of Special Classes (2014-15)			
# Visual Arts	0	# Music	0
# Foreign Language	0	# Dance	0
# Drama		0	
# CTE		0	
School Composition (most recent data)			
% Title I Population	100	% Attendance Rate	93
% Free Lunch	100	% Reduced Lunch	.5
% Limited English Proficient	4	% Students with Disabilities	14
Racial/Ethnic Origin (most recent data)			
% American Indian or Alaska Native	0	% Black or African American	93
% Hispanic or Latino	16	% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	3
% White	4	% Multi-Racial	0
Personnel (most recent data)			
Years Principal Assigned to School	5	# of Assistant Principals	0
# of Deans	0	# of Counselors/Social Workers	2
% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate	0	% Teaching Out of Certification	10
% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience	19	Average Teacher Absences	
Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2013-14)			
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	5	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4	4
Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (4th Grade)	68	Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (8th Grade)	16
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)			
% of 1st year students who earned 10+ credits		% of 2nd year students who earned 10+ credits	
% of 3rd year students who earned 10+ credits		4 Year Graduation Rate	
6 Year Graduation Rate			
Overall NYSED Accountability Status (2013-14)			
Reward		Recognition	
In Good Standing		Local Assistance Plan	
Focus District		Focus School Identified by a Focus District	X
Priority School			

Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in ELA (2012-13)			
American Indian or Alaska Native		Black or African American	X
Hispanic or Latino	X	Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	
White		Multi-Racial	
Students with Disabilities	X	Limited English Proficient	
Economically Disadvantaged			
Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Mathematics (2012-13)			
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	X	Limited English Proficient	
Economically Disadvantaged	X		
Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Science (2012-13)			
American Indian or Alaska Native		Black or African American	X
Hispanic or Latino		Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	
White		Multi-Racial	
Students with Disabilities		Limited English Proficient	
Economically Disadvantaged			
SCHOOL PRIORITIES AS WRITTEN BY THE SCHOOL:			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Structured professional development with the focus on higher-order questioning and differentiated instruction. 2. Create weekly grade level data team meetings, work collaboratively on improving instructional practices and using timely and relevant assessment data to target student achievement. 3. Create a formalized reporting system for Grade Level and Vertical Team Meetings monitored by Building Leadership Team. 4. Continue implementation of PBIS, reviewing classroom data sheets, monitor Tier 1 success and make referrals to the RTI team. 5. Increase parent involvement and engagement through school wide events allowing the school to share building goals in a welcoming atmosphere creating a feeling of trust that will lead to increased student success. 			

Information about the review

- The review was co-led by an Outside Educational Expert (OEE) and a representative from the New York State Education Department. The team also included a district representative and a Special Education School Improvement Specialist (SEIS) representative who had a reviewer shadowing her.
- The review team visited a total of 32 classrooms during the three-day review.
- Reviewers conducted focus groups with students, staff, and parents.
- Reviewers examined documents provided by the school, including curriculum maps, lesson plans, schoolwide data, teacher feedback, and student work.
- There were no surveys for the review team to examine.
- School data shows that student mobility is high in this school. Many students enter or leave the school at different times of the academic year. As a result, many students in grades six to eight were not in the school in the lower grades.

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
2.2	The school leader ensures that the school community shares the Specific, Measurable, Ambitious, Results-oriented, and Timely (SMART) goals/mission, and long-term vision inclusive of core values that address the priorities outlined in the School Comprehensive Educational Plan (SCEP).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2.3	Leaders make strategic decisions to organize programmatic, human, and fiscal capital resources.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.4	The school leader has a fully functional system in place aligned to the district's Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) to conduct targeted and frequent observation and track progress of teacher practices based on student data and feedback.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.5	Leaders effectively use evidence-based systems and structures to examine and improve critical individual and school-wide practices as defined in the SCEP (student achievement, curriculum and teacher practices; leadership development; community/family engagement; and student social and emotional developmental health).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 2:				D	

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
3.2	The school leader ensures and supports the quality implementation of a systematic plan of rigorous and coherent curricula appropriately aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	(CCLS) that is monitored and adapted to meet the needs of students.				
3.3	Teachers develop and ensure that unit and lesson plans used include data-driven instruction (DDI) protocols that are appropriately aligned to the CCLS and NYS content standards and address student achievement needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.4	The school leader and teachers have developed a comprehensive plan for teachers to partner within and across all grades and subjects to create interdisciplinary curricula targeting the arts, technology, and other enrichment opportunities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.5	Teachers implement a comprehensive system for using formative and summative assessments for strategic short and long-range curriculum planning that involves student reflection, tracking of, and ownership of learning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 3:				D	

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
4.2	School and teacher leaders ensure that instructional practices and strategies are organized around annual, unit, and daily lesson plans that address all student goals and needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.3	Teachers provide coherent, and appropriately aligned Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS)-based instruction that leads to multiple points of access for all students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.4	Teachers and students work together to implement a program/plan to create a learning environment that is responsive to students' varied experiences and tailored to the strengths and needs of all students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4.5	Teachers inform planning and foster student participation in their own learning process by using a variety of summative and formative data sources (e.g., screening, interim measures, and progress monitoring).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 4:				D	

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
5.2	The school leader establishes overarching systems and understandings of how to support and sustain student social and emotional developmental health and academic success.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.3	The school articulates and systematically promotes a vision for social and emotional developmental health that is aligned to a curriculum or program that provides learning experiences and a safe and healthy school environment for families, teachers, and students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.4	All school stakeholders work together to develop a common understanding of the importance of their contributions in creating a school community that is safe, conducive to learning, and fostering of a sense of ownership for providing social and emotional developmental health supports tied to the school's vision.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5.5	The school leader and student support staff work together with teachers to establish structures to support the use of data to respond to student social and emotional developmental health needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 5:				D	
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
6.2	The school leader ensures that regular communication with students and families fosters their high expectations for student academic achievement.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6.3	The school engages in effective planning and reciprocal communication with family and community stakeholders so that student strength and needs are identified and used to augment learning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6.4	The school community partners with families and community agencies to promote and provide training across all areas (academic and social and emotional developmental health) to support student success.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.5	The school shares data in a way that promotes dialogue among parents, students, and school community members centered on student learning and success and encourages and empowers families to understand and use data to advocate for appropriate support services for their children.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 6:				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.	Tenet Rating	D
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The school has received a rating of ***Developing*** for Tenet 2 – School Leader Practices and Decisions.

- The school has no Specific, Measurable, Ambitious, Results-oriented and Timely (SMART) goals. The school leader and the Building Leadership Team (BLT) have developed five top priorities that are broadly aligned to a long-term vision, but are not data-driven. Discussions show that not all staff, parents, and students are aware of the school’s priorities. Documents demonstrate that the school leader and BLT have recently reviewed the priorities. However, the review team identified that the priorities are not specific enough to move the school forward and do not adequately address student needs. Consequently, this limits the achievement of school improvement.
- The school leader’s use of available resources addresses some of the immediate needs of school community, but not all. The school leader has been successful in advocating for resources from the district that has led to the addition of Academic Intervention Support (AIS) in the middle school, a full-time music teacher, and curriculum coaches. This has resulted in more students receiving targeted intervention supports, more students participating in music programs, and every teacher having the opportunity to work with a coach. The daily expanded learning time program takes place after school; however the level of the work is low as it primarily consists of teaching assistants overseeing homework. Neither is it well attended, according to the school leader, and contributes little to raising student achievement. Parents did not speak highly of this provision.
- The school leader follows the district’s Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) plan, conducts additional classroom walkthroughs, and provides teachers with electronic or verbal feedback. Classroom visits and a review of documents indicate that the school leader does not provide teachers with feedback that is specific enough to bring about the necessary improvements in instructional practices. Recommendations do not identify the main issues that are limiting student achievement. All teachers are offered professional development (PD) that is connected to improving their practices; however, classroom visits demonstrated limited evidence that PD is improving instructional practices.
- Systems to improve practices across the school are not consistently monitored and are therefore not demonstrating an impact on achievement. For example, the review team observed a grade-level meeting where teachers discussed data, and the school leader stated the data team works with staff to enable them to understand the importance of using data. However, the review team did not find evidence for how the school leader is monitoring teacher use of data to improve student success. Further, while the school leader stated that data is used to identify students with disabilities for self-contained classes there is little evidence to show how this information is used to support student success in the classroom.

Recommendations:

The school leader must drive an agenda for school improvement that identifies SMART goals, which are known by all staff, parents, and students, and focuses on raising student achievement, including improving procedures

for monitoring the quality of instruction, by:

- identifying through observations and walkthroughs two actionable points for improvement for each teacher;
- checking, during feedback, that all teachers know what they need to do to improve;
- revisiting teachers, at a later date, to see if improvements result in higher student achievement; and
- providing targeted support for any teachers who do not improve their practice.

The school leader must ensure that data is used effectively by teachers to make decisions about instruction by:

- making sure that teachers implement what is agreed on in meetings where data is discussed and monitoring practices across the school consistently; and
- checking that students with disabilities in self-contained classes are receiving data driven instruction that enables them to experience success.

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.

Tenet Rating

D

The school has received a rating of **Developing** for Tenet 3 – Curriculum Development and Support.

- The school leader and the instructional coaches encourage teachers in the elementary grades to use the district-wide curriculum units for English language arts (ELA) and math that are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). Middle school teachers use the ELA and math New York State modules. In addition, the school leader reported that all teachers have received training from instructional coaches and district-level curriculum coaches, which has focused on developing their understanding of implementing CCLS-aligned curricular and meeting student needs. Classroom visits show that a few teachers are starting to implement the instructional shifts to meet student needs; however, this is limited to encouraging students to identify text in order to develop their answers when questioned. The school leader does not check that curricula are monitored and adapted to meet student needs.
- Although ELA and math lesson plans reviewed by the IIT mainly align to the CCLS, few teachers plan to meet student needs or to incorporate higher-order questioning. Classroom visits showed that teachers usually do not plan lessons based on student data. Further instruction is predominantly whole group and teachers do not give students opportunities to develop higher-order thinking skills through skillful questioning. Additionally, few teachers use a variety of complex materials that incorporate a progression of sequenced and scaffold skills. There is little evidence of the school leader monitoring curricula or of teachers adjusting curricula to incorporate the instructional shifts. As a result, not all students show growth in meeting the demands of CCLS across grades and subject areas.
- Teachers are beginning to collaborate at grade-level meetings to talk about interdisciplinary curricula. During interviews, teachers stated that they are beginning to develop a plan and to reflect where they can connect subjects in their curriculum planning. While there were a small number of examples of interdisciplinary curricula observed during classroom visits, students do not consistently have multiple opportunities to engage in thoughtful cross-curricular activities across the school.

- Teachers stated they collect a variety of assessment information, such as formal assessments in ELA and math. However, classroom visits demonstrate that teachers do not use assessment information to guide planning. Weekly data team meetings with teachers and data coaches are developing teachers' awareness of student data. However, classroom visits demonstrate little evidence of data being used to group students or adjust the curriculum. A review of the feedback that students receive from teachers demonstrates that it is not specific and does not inform students what they need to do to improve or to take ownership of their learning.

Recommendation:

Through monitoring all areas of the curriculum, school leaders and coaches must hold staff accountable for implementing a curriculum where:

- assessment information, particularly in ELA and math, is used to adjust curricula to meet the demands of the CCLS and the needs of all students.

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.

Tenet Rating

D

The school has received a rating of **Developing** for Tenet 4 – Teacher Practices and Decisions.

- Clear behavior expectations are posted in classes, but are not consistently enforced by all teachers. Students in grades seven and eight stated that lessons are regularly disrupted by the behavior of others and that when they ask for clarification during lessons other students sometimes laugh. Further, some students during interviews stated that they find schoolwork too hard while others stated it is too easy. The review team found little evidence of teachers meeting the needs of groups of students in classes, particularly students with disabilities. There is little evidence to suggest that teachers use strategies that address the changing needs of the student population and reflect student values and perspectives. School data shows that many students enter this school at different times of the year. Instructional practices do not reflect the wide range of needs in each class.
- The school leader does not check that teachers' instructional plans and practices are adaptive and informed by data to meet the needs of students and their learning styles. During discussions, the school leader stated that grade and vertical data team meetings are developing teacher awareness of assessment data. However, classroom visits showed little evidence of teachers using data to meet student needs. Teachers stated that they set student goals by looking at test scores and assigning students a higher score to reach.
- Teachers are beginning to align their instruction to the CCLS, but few teachers reference the instructional shifts. The review team found that few teachers ask higher-order questions while many teachers ask low-level recall questions. Teachers usually teach to the whole class and do not provide students multiple points of access to meet their needs, which limits student engagement and achievement.
- Teachers are beginning to collect and analyze data from assessments to group students; however, the

review team found that teachers are not consistently using data to inform and adjust instructional strategies and groupings across the school. Teachers do not consistently check for student understanding as the lesson progresses. There are limited opportunities for students to engage in self-evaluation through feedback based on data and shared goal setting.

Recommendation:

The school leader and the instructional coaches must make sure that all instructional practices lead to students feeling intellectually safe and displaying high levels of engagement and achievement by:

- checking that behavior expectations are consistent from class to class;
- showing teachers how to plan activities that are grade-level appropriate and address individual learning needs;
- informing teachers of the importance of checking that all students understand what they are learning and then adjusting instruction accordingly;
- giving students time to think and develop their higher-order thinking skills by asking questions which allow them to think more deeply and develop their answers by sharing ideas and debating the views of others; and
- using data to develop student goals that are connected to what they need to learn in order to move up to the next level of learning and refer to these goals during verbal and written feedback, so that all students achieve their goals.

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.

Tenet Rating

D

The school has received a rating of **Developing** for Tenet 5 – Student Social and Emotional Developmental Health.

- The school leader is developing systems to track and collect data to support student social and emotional developmental health and academic needs. A Response to Intervention (RtI) program tracks student academic progress and behavior throughout the school. This results in a few students using “check in and check out” support where an adult oversees their daily behavior. Some students have support plans, and a few students with more intensive needs have functional behavior assessment-based plans. Each student is known well by their classroom teacher and most students feel that there is an adult in the school whom they can talk to.
- Systems are developing to support students with identified needs. Recent initiatives include teachers tracking student behavior daily as they collect and analyze data on a student-tracking sheet. Students receive points for meeting behavior expectations and are invited to monthly celebrations. Teachers stated that if students do not meet their 80 percent target for good behavior, they receive support that is more intensive. These initiatives are beginning to address barriers to social and emotional developmental health and academic success, but it is too early for there to be measurable impact.
- The school staff is developing a program to promote the teaching of social and emotional developmental health. Support staff report they take part in courses at the school and district level to

develop their capacity to lead initiatives. A few students created a video to peer teach the school's behavior expectations, which has been used recently to inform other students and parents.

- Classroom visits show that behavior expectations are infrequently referenced or reinforced. Parents and students reported that some student behavior disrupts learning, particularly in grades seven and eight. Reviewers observed no behavior issues in the hallways where monitors maintained safety by supporting teachers and student safety. However, some younger students stated that they sometimes feel afraid when older students start misbehaving in the hallways. The school is a safe environment for most students to learn, but when behavior expectations are not reinforced, not all students feel safe.
- School leaders and staff are developing protocols and processes for Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS). The student support staff and the school leader work together with teachers to develop structures to support the use of data related to behavior, attendance, and suspensions. Data is collected as part of the RtI plan, with a three-tier system to address student needs, and improvements are beginning to be identified. Data is collected on this system for all areas of student social and emotional developmental health. PBIS team meetings are beginning to analyze data for attendance and behavior. The school leaders and teachers stated that there has been a reduction in the number of students being removed from classrooms and out- of-school suspensions.

Recommendation:

To meet the social and emotional developmental health needs of all students, school leaders and student support staff must :

- develop, plan, and implement a vision and goals for student social and emotional developmental health;
- analyze data and communicate findings so that all staff are aware of progress toward goals and improve current practices and procedures to address identified weaknesses; and
- monitor all procedures and practices through regular walkthroughs, especially those related to behavior, to ensure consistency of expectations in classrooms and common areas and make sure that the learning environment is always safe for all students.

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.

Tenet Rating

D

The school has received a rating of **Developing** for Tenet 6 – Family and Community Engagement.

- The school leader and staff shared they communicate with families through the newsletter, the parent portal, and parent-teacher conference days. During discussions, parents stated that communication with teachers is inconsistent and that although some events, such as the start-of-the-year barbeque and the fathers’ breakfast are well attended, parent attendance is low at most school events. The school leader and staff identified that the school needs to improve reciprocal communication with families, as the lack of regular reciprocal communication between parents and the school hinders student success. The school communicates with families in English, and staff has recently started to translate selected documents into Spanish.

- Discussions with staff show that, although parent-teacher conferences and Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings are organized, few parents attend. Further, a recent math night to provide parents with information on student learning had low attendance. Some parents stated during interviews that they feel frustrated that they do not know how to support their children in their learning. The school leader reported that there is no staff PD to enable them to improve family and community partnerships, which hinders student success.
- The school staff is beginning to share data with families, but parents say that not all staff use data systems to share this information with families consistently and that they are unclear on how to access appropriate services for their children. The RtI team collects and analyzes data in order to share appropriate services with parents. Support staff reported that most parents attend these sessions.

Recommendation:

- The school leader and staff must work together to find ways to engage with more families and to promote reciprocal communication to better enable parents to support their children’s learning by ensuring that:
 - all communication is available in languages spoken by the school community;
 - all staff share the responsibility for reaching out to parents and explaining what their children are learning and how well they are doing;
 - a program of PD is implemented to foster family and community partnerships; and
 - parent views and concerns are sought and built upon.