



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

---

## DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)



<b>BEDS Code</b>	030200010000
<b>District</b>	Binghamton City School District
<b>District Address</b>	164 Hawley Street, Binghamton, New York 13902
<b>Superintendent</b>	Marion Martinez, Ed. D.
<b>Date(s) of Review</b>	June 4-5, 2015

District Information Sheet			
<b>Grade Configuration</b>	PreK -12	<b>Total Enrollment</b>	5,617
		<b>Number of Schools</b>	10
District Composition ( <i>most recent data</i> )			
<b>% Title I Population</b>	66	<b>% Attendance Rate</b>	91
<b>% Free Lunch</b>	58	<b>% Reduced Lunch</b>	8
<b>% Limited English Proficient</b>	4	<b>% Students with Disabilities</b>	14
Racial/Ethnic Origin ( <i>most recent data</i> )			
<b>% American Indian or Alaska Native</b>	0	<b>% Black or African American</b>	24
<b>% Hispanic or Latino</b>	13	<b>% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</b>	3
<b>% White</b>	52	<b>% Multi-Racial</b>	8
Personnel ( <i>most recent data</i> )			
<b>Years Superintendent Assigned to District</b>	2.5	<b># of Deputy/Assistant Superintendents</b>	2
<b># of Principals</b>	11	<b># of Assistant Principals</b>	6
<b># of Teachers</b>	507	<b>Avg. Class Size</b>	20
<b>% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate</b>	0	<b>% Teaching Out of Certification</b>	1
<b>% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience</b>	3	<b>Average Teacher Absences</b>	2.6
<b>Teacher Turnover Rate – Teachers &lt; 5 years exp.</b>	27	<b>Teacher Turnover Rate – All Teachers</b>	11
Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2013-14)			
<b>ELA Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4</b>	37	<b>Mathematics Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4</b>	51
<b>Science Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4 (4th Grade)</b>	72	<b>Science Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4 (8th Grade)</b>	60
Student Performance for High Schools (2013-14)			
<b>ELA Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4</b>		<b>Mathematics Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4</b>	
Credit Accumulation High Schools Only (2013-14)			
<b>4 Year Graduation Rate</b>	31	<b>6 Year Graduation Rate</b>	NA
<b>% of earning Regents Diploma w/ Advanced Des.</b>			
Current NYSED Accountability Status			
<b># of Reward Schools</b>		<b># of Priority Schools</b>	
<b># of Schools In Good Standing</b>		<b># of Focus Schools</b>	10
<b># of LAP Schools</b>			

### District Accountability Status

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

### DISTRICT PRIORITIES AS WRITTEN BY THE DISTRICT

1. Develop a plan to engage parents and community to support student achievement.
2. Develop an effective technology-based data system to inform curriculum and instruction and to evaluate instructional programs.
3. Implement all aspects of the high school restructuring plan and regularly monitor its progress.
4. Strive to achieve class sizes conducive to optimal achievement at all levels.
5. Assess staff needs and deliver appropriate professional development to improve student achievement.

### **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, and a Special Education School Improvement Specialist (SEIS).
- The Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) reviews of two schools in the district also informed the district review.
- During IIT school reviews in the district, reviewers visited 40 classrooms across the two 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 principals.
- The district did not submit the results of any surveys.

**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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input 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"/>
<b>OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 1:</b>				2	

**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 entire school community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input 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><b>Tenet 1 - District Leadership and Capacity:</b> 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><b>Overall Tenet Rating</b></p>	<p><b>Stage 2</b></p>
<p><b>Statement of Practice 1.1:</b> 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><b>Tenet Rating</b></p>	<p><b>Stage 2</b></p>
<p><b>Overall Finding:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The district has recently revised its approach to recruiting high quality staff. However, challenges to evaluating and sustaining teachers limit efforts to meet the needs of the community.</li> </ul> <p><b>Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The district leader stated that this year the district updated its recruitment materials and rebranded all communications, including “The Pulse,” a magazine that advertises different teaching positions that are available in the district. The district also re-established relationships with nearby teacher colleges and with the College of Saint Rose and the State University of New York (SUNY) at Binghamton to generate a link to recruit potential student teachers. The district leader reported the district recruited, hired, and supported through its new teacher mentor program over 50 teachers this year. However, district staff indicated that the district still struggles to retain high quality staff but does little to offer financial or other incentives for teachers to stay longer in the district. Although the district may attract new or experienced teachers, the district leader stated that finding their partners/family employment was difficult, despite the district's efforts to help.</li> <li>The district uses the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) processes to observe and evaluate teachers. The information is stored in MyLearningPlan, an online tool, which enables multiple observers to access the feedback given to staff. The district leader indicated school leaders receive ongoing coaching from the district on how to conduct evaluative conferences with teachers and give constructive, actionable feedback following observations. However, discussions with teachers and a sample of classroom observation documents indicates that this feedback varies in quality, and only anecdotal evidence was provided to the review team of the impact of this feedback in improving instructional practices and student achievement. The district leader states, and examination of documents indicates that Teacher Improvement Plans (TIPs) are used where needed and the district has also terminated contracts, when necessary. The district leaders stated that the district provides professional development (PD) opportunities for teachers. However, the impact of PD in enabling teachers to become effective practitioners is hindered by the fact that attendance is not mandatory, and offerings are not consistently targeted to the needs of schools. Although district leaders gave some anecdotal accounts of the success of PD, quantifiable data was not provided to the review team.</li> </ul>		

**Impact Statement:**

- Although the district has improved its efforts to recruit high quality personnel, weaknesses in the evaluation process and in sustaining staff, minimize efforts to improve teacher practices and 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:

- build on the processes for attracting and retaining high quality personnel and find ways to encourage all teachers to attend PD; and
- refine the systems for evaluating teacher effectiveness by building on the skills of school leaders so that feedback is focused on the aspects of instruction that are in most need of improvement and schedule follow up to ensure that these have been addressed.

<b>Statement of Practice 1.2.:</b> 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.	<b>Tenet Rating</b>	<b>Stage 2</b>
---	---------------------	----------------

**Overall Finding:**

- The district communicates its theory of action and expectations for district and school success to the school community. However, the district's high expectations for school and academic improvement are not translated into practice that leads to rapid improvement.

**Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:**

- The district leader reported to reviewers that the district has expectations for success at both district and school levels and that the district is committed to improving instructional practices as a driving force in raising the bar of academic success for all students. However, reviewers found that the intentions of the district leadership are not fully reflected in its theory of action, the goals associated with it, or the steps and strategies to be used to achieve the stated goals.
- The district's theory of action is posted on the district's website and is translated into different languages for ease of access for speakers of languages other than English. District and school leaders confirm that the theory of action is included as a mantra in correspondence that is sent out from the district and is reinforced at meetings between district and school leaders and staff and at meetings held throughout the community. However, the review team found that the theory of action is not consistently translating into practices and actions in schools that are leading to rapid and sustained improvements in professional practices and student outcomes. The key foci of the theory of action are based on shared, distributive leadership and accountability, effective use of data, and proven research strategies based on school and student improvement. However, discussions with school leaders and staff indicate that there is not a clear understanding of how the goals that underpin the main foci of the theory of action are to be achieved, the interim steps that need to be taken, or the quantifiable data that will indicate if progress towards the intended outcomes is or is not being made. Although a

main thrust of the theory of action is the effective use of data, school leaders report that this is an ongoing weakness across many schools. Despite the district’s commitment to providing intervention programs, available test and assessment data indicates that student growth is in decline and not in the ascendancy. The last two years' of growth data put the district in the 15 percentile in the State. The data indicates that English language arts (ELA) and mathematics performance levels on State assessments are well both below the State average for the last two years, and the district's expectations are not meeting the needs of all constituents, including students with high needs such as English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities.

- In the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) interviews, various school and district leaders stated teachers are working more collaboratively than before and are sharing best practices in efforts to meet the district’s goal of a distributive leadership and accountability model. School leaders have conducted school reviews of each other’s schools and reported this was useful in terms of learning about different practices. In these respects, the theory of action is more successful, but the overarching issue remains. There is a lack of collective accountability for ensuring that the district’s and schools’ actions and efforts are strategic, evaluated, and rigorous enough to bring about sustainable improvements in the key areas of teacher effectiveness or student achievement.

**Impact Statement:**

- The disconnect between the district’s high expectations for student success and the strategies and actions that are used to achieve this goal result in a stagnation of student progress.

**Recommendation:**

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

- make sure that all district and school staff and leaders fully understand the priorities and goals that underpin the successful implementation of the theory of action and how they are to be achieved; and
- ensure that there is a district-wide overview of the different initiatives being used, and collect measurable data to show their effectiveness so that the impact can be measured.

**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 systems and structures in place that are used to seek and deploy resources to meet the needs of school communities. However, the district does not have effective systems to monitor the impact of resource allocation to drive student achievement.

**Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:**

- The district leader stated that this fiscal year the district has secured several grants, enabling it to maintain services to schools, to extend PD offerings, and to create an additional 14 full time teaching

and support staff positions in addition to replacing 36 teachers who left or retired. District and school leaders state that structures and processes are in place to allocate resources in an equitable and adequate manner. School leaders stated that the allocation of resources takes account of factors such as the number and nature of students on roll, the need level of academic interventions in different schools, and the amount of behavioral support and maintenance needed in different schools. This needs analysis, school leaders confirm, is conducted by school leaders and the central office cabinet. School leaders reported they had sufficient resources given the current financial constraints, and that they could request additional resources if needed. District leaders responsible for fiscal issues state that once funds are allocated, each school runs its own budget, but school leaders indicated that at times they are in need of additional district support in managing their budgets and in ensuring that they are making best use of available resources to gain the biggest return for the monies invested. The district leader reported that the district posts the budget on the web and invites parent to “online chats” and to vote on the proposed school budget. However, data examined by reviewers indicates that parental involvement is low, with just one or two parents responding to the invitation.

- The district leader stated that the district has expanded resources and training programs to support staff and students. In January 2015, the district hired a Response to Intervention (RtI) coordinator who observed and identified PD needs for addressing student behavior. A social worker was placed at each of the district's middle schools to support the services of the Student Support Team. The district revamped the position of Curriculum Specialist to Collaborative Coaches to help teachers to adjust their practices. In addition, the district appointed full time resource officers in each middle school and has provided instructional coaches to support ELA, guided reading, and mathematics. District and school leaders confirm that despite this commitment to increasing resources to meet the needs of students, there are no systems currently in place, or planned to be put in place, to measure the effectiveness of these or other spending decisions that the district has made in securing improvements to student outcomes. The district has limited evidence that shows any significant impact on improving teacher effectiveness and raising student achievement as a result of the monies it has spent and is unable to demonstrate positive returns of investment.

**Impact Statement:**

- As the district does not rigorously evaluate the impact of its spending on student outcomes, it is not able to assess the success of its allocations, which limits its efforts to improve professional practices and 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 robust systems with clear criteria to evaluate the impact of spending on staff, initiatives and programs, student interventions, and material resources.

**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 is beginning to develop more PD to help school leaders become effective instructional leaders. However, PD is not systematically focused to ensure that the specific PD needs of teachers are met, and the impact of PD in raising student achievement is not consistently evaluated.

**Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:**

- Discussions with school and district leaders indicate that the priorities for PD are drawn up using a variety of data and information points. District leaders state that these include the district’s priorities, feedback from teachers, and discussions with school leaders. The district states that it is beginning to take more account of student and school performance data when identifying PD needs but recognizes that more work needs to be done in this area and in using teacher performance data so that PD offerings consistently match the needs of individual schools and teachers. School leaders and teachers state that this is not yet the case as some PD offerings remain generic in nature and do not take into account the varying starting points and expertise of different teachers.
- Once PD priorities are decided they are distributed to schools and staff. District leaders state that procedures are not embedded to check that teachers implement what they have learned in PD sessions or to evaluate improvements in teacher practices and student learning as a result of any PD implemented in classrooms. Schools confirm that they use the Tripod surveys to gauge teacher feedback on the quality of PD they receive from the district, but this information is not cross-checked for improvements to practices that teachers perceive have come about as a result of attending a particular PD session or sessions.
- The district continues to train school leaders to support them in classroom observations, walk-throughs, and staff conferencing. The district works with Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) to support school leaders and uses the APPR rubric during observations, follow up and feedback for teachers. The district reports school leaders are now better able to recognize effective instructional practices, discuss growth areas in practice, and develop targeted plans to support staff. District data also shows a decrease in the number of teachers on improvement plans. However, district and school leaders acknowledge that more PD and support is needed for school leaders to become effective instructional evaluators because at the present time improvements to instructional practices as a result of the observation and feedback protocols are limited and are not impacting with sufficient pace or rigor academic standards, which remain low.

**Impact Statement:**

- Although the district has made efforts to improve its PD program, inconsistent monitoring of the impact on improving teacher practices, limits improvements in teacher effectiveness and 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:

- continue to build the leadership capacities of school leaders to support effective teacher practices; and
- develop the PD program to take greater account of individual teacher needs, and use follow up and teacher evaluations more robustly to ensure that the best practices are consistently applied in instruction and that teachers apply the skills learned in PD.

**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 establish systems to collect data on student performance and discuss its implications for instructional practice; however, this is a relatively new process and there has been little impact on improving student achievement.

**Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:**

- The district leader states that a central pillar of the district’s theory of action is the use of data to drive instruction and decision making at school and district levels. However, discussions with school leaders and school staff indicate that the district’s expectations regarding data use are not always clearly articulated nor is there clear guidance on the strategies that should be used at different levels to make the best use of data to drive school and district improvements.
- Evidence from discussions with district leaders and an evaluation of the district’s available data show that the district is beginning to collect measurable data in schools on behavior, students reading levels, writing tasks, and ELA and mathematics assessments. Systems are in place for discussions to take place focused on collected data. For example, coaches and school leaders meet three times a year to review and analyze school data. Trained teachers and department leaders lead data-driven instruction (DDI) discussions with other school staff to analyze student data. School leaders state that they are improving their skills at using data to drive school improvement but recognize that there is still a way to go. Currently, evidence from school reviews, data analysis information, and district and school improvement plans show that data is not used rigorously in analyzing the performance of schools or the performance of different subgroups within schools. School and district leaders do not have sufficiently detailed information to identify the areas of performance, either by content area or subgroups that are most in need of improvement. This limits their ability to set challenging targets or strategies to tackle the underachievement that exists in numerous classrooms in the district.
- Evidence from district and school leaders and from school reviews indicate that the use of data to drive instruction in classrooms is still at an early stage of development. School leaders report that too many teachers do not have the necessary skills to analyze and use data to make instructional and curricular decisions. As a result, teaching and learning opportunities are not closely matched to the abilities of

different students. Too little use is made of data to set student goals, to track academic progress or to provide feedback to students on the weaknesses they need to address in order to achieve at a higher level. Both teachers and school leaders identify the necessity for high quality PD tailored to the needs of schools, to better enable them to work comfortably with data in guiding and informing both instructional planning and delivery. The district leader states that the district is seeking to identify best practices in the use of data to drive instruction and school-wide improvement but such practices have yet to be shared across schools.

**Impact Statement:**

- The use of data to inform decision making is developing. The district does not consistently articulate its expectations or provide effective support or monitoring focused on data use, which minimizes initiatives to improve teacher practices and 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:

- make use of all available data to track student progress, set challenging goals, and make accurate evaluations of the data usage practices that lead to accelerated gains in student growth; then use this information to share the best practices and ensure that teachers consistently apply them to accelerate district and school improvement.

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**

**Overall Finding:**

- The district’s theory of action and associated plans for improvement are not resulting in rapid and sustained gains in students’ academic achievement. While the district is working collaboratively with school leaders, the district does not provide adequate direction concerning district goals and how they are to be achieved while meeting the unique visions and needs of each school.

**Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:**

- School leaders state the district leader and the assistant district leader are accessible and supportive and that they are ready to respond to requests for additional guidance and support when asked, because of the positive relationships that are being developed between school and district leaders. School leaders state that although the district’s theory of action is communicated to them and the school communities, there is a lack of strategic direction in the plan as to how the goals are to be

achieved or the roles different stakeholders are to play in making the goals a reality. School leaders state that without this sense of leadership and direction, the district's commitment to high expectations and achievement are diluted. School leaders state that each school generates a school plan aligned to the district goals, but the specificity of schools' goals are hindered by the lack of clarity in understanding the district's goals. School leaders are required to submit monthly and annually to the Board of Education information concerning student performance and achievement, but school leaders noted that expectations are not made clear by the district for school leaders to demonstrate the impact of their actions in addressing the legacy of underachievement in schools. School leaders also indicated that district support is not always at its strongest in helping them deal with pockets of resistance to positive change that are exhibited by some teachers in schools.

- Although, the district provides a PD program, interviews with school leaders and teachers indicate it is not specifically or consistently tailored to meet the different needs of teachers in the elementary school and some middle schools. School leaders stated that where the district's efforts are more targeted, improvements have been seen. For example, they note that the district has provided more emphasis in school support on the middle school rather than the high school. As a result, there are some reported improvements in reading, in student attendance and behavior, and there are fewer absences and suspensions in the middle school. School leaders report that more support and guidance is needed from the district in the use of data and to differentiate instruction. This assessment is also noted in school reviews, which indicated the need to improve teachers' understanding of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). The district shared that it is aware that the curriculum and resources are not fully accessible to students' diverse needs and that this contributes to students' lower achievement gains. In several of the ITT interviews, school leaders referred to the highly mobile population, extreme poverty, and challenges that students and families faced. During interviews, district leaders did not always recognize that these changes are not unique from those presented in other school districts, where difficulties are overcome, and where students achieve successfully. The review team did not find evidence that the district adequately provided guidance and support that focused on these concerns of the staff and school leaders.

**Impact Statement:**

- Although the district is working with the schools on the district's vision for improvement, the lack of district strategies to provide clear direction about how to accomplish district goals and its inconsistent efforts to address the unique needs of different schools limits efforts intended to address the long-standing pattern of student underachievement.

**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 clear direction for schools to implement strategies to achieve district goals, ensure that support for schools is in keeping with their differing needs, and hold all stakeholders accountable for contributing to increased academic success for all students.

**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 2**

**Overall Finding:**

- Although the district collaborates with schools to assist them in delivering a curriculum that is aligned to the CCLS, this process is still in its early stages and is not yet having the required impact on improving students' learning experiences.

**Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:**

- School and district leaders state that some efforts and supports have been provided by the district to support the implementation of CCLS and the associated shifts but recognize that there is still work to be done to ensure that the curriculum meets the diverse needs of all students. The district has identified the need to provide greater reading materials and resources to better support curriculum implementation. School leaders and teachers reported that although the district has provided some PD to support teachers, it is developing a more strategic and longer-term program, which aims to deepen teachers' understanding of expectations of CCLS modules and standards. Coaches have also been utilized by the district to support teachers in creating curriculum maps. However, evidence from school reviews indicates that implementation of CCLS is proving problematic in a number of classrooms. Reviewers noted that curriculum materials and teachers' instructional planning and practices did not take account of students' different learning styles and needs, and learning tasks were not differentiated. In several of the IIT interviews, it was reported by school leaders and teachers that the biggest issue for students in accessing the curriculum was reading levels. To address this issue, the district adopted a district-wide reading strategy and guided reading sessions and offered PD on how to teach reading. The impact, from test data and school assessments shown to reviewers, is that Kindergarten, grades one, and two reading levels are showing some limited improvement. But both teachers and school leaders stated that further support and training is needed if these first initial indicators of success are to be built on and sustained as students move through the grade levels.
- Interviews with teachers and school leaders indicated that there are weaknesses in teachers' ability to use data to identify the gaps in students' learning and to cross-check these with modifications that are needed to the planning and pacing in the curriculum to enable teachers to adequately address the gaps in students' understanding and skills. The IIT found that this assessment was also supported by school review findings. District and school leaders stated that they do not carry out enough monitoring of teachers' efforts in the classroom to successfully implement CCLS. Without such knowledge, leaders are limited in their ability to identify the specific areas of weakness where teachers need additional coaching or where more targeted PD could offer a solution.

**Impact Statement:**

- Although the district is working with the schools to implement the CCLS, support to differentiate instruction and to ensure effective instructional planning is not consistent, which minimizes efforts to promote student success.

**Recommendation:**

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

- make sure that the district and school leaders rigorously monitor and evaluate teachers implementation of the CCLS so that all student needs are met; and
- continue to develop the reading strategies so that all students can more easily access the curriculum and develop college and career readiness skills.

**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 district has provided multiple PD opportunities for teachers. However, it has not effectively evaluated its impact on instructional practice and its effect on providing rigorous learning opportunities for students in the classrooms.

**Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:**

- School leaders state that the district has developed a PD program that offers many different opportunities for teacher learning. However, school leaders point out that the program is not always reflective of the actual needs of their schools or teachers. Discussions with school leaders indicated that the district does not always make clear to teachers the expectation that attendance at PD will lead to its implementation in the classroom. School leaders also noted that neither they nor district leaders check to see if PD is having a positive impact on instructional practices. School leaders concurred that without this information they do not know if PD and the associated money spent on it is providing a good return of the investment.
- Reviewers found that there were some discrepancies between intended outcomes and actual practices. School leaders and teachers report that the district sets targets for improving aspects of instruction and state that the district evaluations of teacher practices indicate that these targets have been met or exceeded in many schools. However, school leaders and reviewers question the validity of these district evaluations, as there has been limited or no student growth in classrooms and grade levels where targets were set by the district. School leaders stated that some teachers had attended PD on Effective Teaching and the Responsive Classroom and received collaborative coaching support. Both school and district leaders offered anecdotal evidence of improvements as a result of teachers attending this training but no hard data was provided to support the assertion of improvement. Further discussions with school leaders indicates that little quantifiable evidence was available to demonstrate that PD efforts in, for example, improving lesson planning, using data, or goal setting have resulted in sustained improvement in student outcomes.

**Impact Statement:**

- Too few students experience rigorous learning opportunities despite the numerous PD opportunities provided by the district to improve instruction.

**Recommendation:**

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

- better evaluate the PD that it provides to schools so that it matches teachers' and schools' needs and that all school leaders and teachers are held accountable for ensuring that the time and money invested in PD leads to sustained improvements in student achievement.

**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 has some interventions and programs for supporting students' social and emotional developmental health needs. However, procedures to assess their impact are limited, and the supports are not sufficient to address the multitude of student needs.

**Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:**

- School leaders state that the district is working with them to promote some opportunities and resources that support students' social and emotional developmental health. One of the goals is to decrease the number of discipline referrals by staff by 50 percent during the 2014-15 school year. School leaders stated that the district had developed new discipline structures and that schools had developed a student code of conduct. They also reported that the district provided PD on the Responsive Classroom to elementary school teachers and PD on Guided Discipline to secondary school staff. School leaders stated student engagement and behavior had improved as a result of this training, but they did not provide appropriate data as evidence to substantiate this perspective. IIT examination of the data regarding the number of discipline referrals from September 2014 to June 2015 shows no reduction overall in either the elementary, middle or high schools.
- Support staff reported that the district had appropriated resources for a full time social worker for each of the middle schools to tackle the increase in caseloads. In the IIT interviews with different teachers and support staff, various initiatives were identified that had been deployed to support students at risk. These included a youth mentoring program, counseling, mental health services, and in school services. However, no one interviewed was able to identify the staff member who had a complete overview of each student and their needs, the support mechanisms they were accessing, and which strategies or supports had or had not been successful. Further discussions with school leaders and support staff indicate that schools receive limited PD from the district in developing adult capacity to identify and meet the social and emotional needs of students. In addition, they state that the district provides limited support in helping them to use attendance, referral, suspension and behavioral data,

combined with academic data to gain an holistic overview of student needs in order to better match support to where the need is greatest. At the present time, the work to reduce discipline referrals and student suspensions are having minimal impact, and schools and the district lack insight into the root causes of students' social and emotional needs.

**Impact Statement:**

- Although the district is providing some support to address students' social and emotional needs, the lack of a clear understanding of the procedures that are having the most success in the schools and the inconsistent use of data to evaluate the impact of strategies and supports limits the ability of schools to meet the needs of all students.

**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 procedures to assess the different strategies and supports that are being used to meet students' social and emotional needs, provide focused PD for staff, and use data to evaluate the impact on students' well-being and success in the district and the schools.

**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:**

- While the district has provided some support to create stronger home-school connections, the district does not have a comprehensive plan to engage families, and parental engagement across the district is limited.

**Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:**

- District leadership noted that the district's goal is to increase families' and community members' engagement and involvement in their child's or neighborhood school, but school leaders state that there is no formalized strategic parental engagement and communication plan. School leaders indicate they use different communication vehicles to encourage families and the community to be partners in their child's learning. The district has an e-BLAST emailing system, which highlights news and information. It currently reaches 2,000 families, and the goal is to increase circulation by 1,000 more. Other efforts at communication include advertisements, publications of school and district performance and events, a video, and a website where parents can find out about school and district policies, events, and up to date news about happenings in schools and the district. However, the IIT reviews indicated that school leaders and the district did not use events that were of interest to families or that drew large parent participation to get parents more involved in their child's education.

School leaders reported several families attended an arts partners program where parents and children created projects together and a grandparent program, which provided support and information on social media issues and drug abuse. But school leaders stated that the district did not reach out to families who did not attend these activities to warn them about the dangers for children of drug abuse.

- School leaders indicate that the district holds events such as Community Partners Meetings, Budget roundtables, and Mentor Now programs to alert families to available social and medical services and to seek their views on how the district's budget is spent. However, school leaders reported that the district does not offer sufficient support to schools to help them reach out to parents and families who do not attend these events but nonetheless would benefit from the information and activities provided. The district is also working with Promise Zone and Binghamton University to reach out to parents and families in crisis. School leaders noted they are working in partnership with the district to explore more parent-based support and have developed a partnership with the America Civic Association to provide parents of English language learners (ELLs) with support for resuming their own education. The district also has partnerships with immigration services, refugee resettlement, and housing departments to support families. However, despite these outreach efforts, school leaders report that parental engagement in school life remains low and that the district has not worked collaboratively with them to address the low levels of parental engagement. In addition, school and district leaders acknowledge that not enough effort has been made to reach out to parents and canvass their views and opinions as to the difficulties and obstacles parents see in becoming more engaged with schools. Parents interviewed during school reviews indicated that they would welcome more guidance and support on how to support their child's learning at home and how to better understand the data that schools send home relating to student academic achievement. School leaders interviewed reiterated their concern that the district has not worked closely with schools to devise innovative strategies by which together the schools and district could better inform parents of their child's progress and form stronger partnerships with parents to promote academic success and career and college readiness for all students.

**Impact Statement:**

- The lack of a comprehensive district plan to engage parents in their child's education limits the ability of schools and the district to develop a strong home-school partnership 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:

- regularly canvass the views and opinions of parents as to the activities, events, sources of help, and information schools should provide that would encourage them to become more involved in the school as a community; ensure schools act on these suggestions as a matter of urgency.