



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

---

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



<b>BEDS Code</b>	140600010000
<b>District</b>	Buffalo Public Schools
<b>District Address</b>	65 Niagara Square, City Hall, Room 712, Buffalo, New York 14202
<b>Superintendent</b>	Donald Ogilvie
<b>Date(s) of Review</b>	April 28-29, 2015

District Information Sheet			
<b>Grade Configuration</b>	PK-12	<b>Total Enrollment</b>	34039
		<b>Number of Schools</b>	59
<b>District Composition (most recent data)</b>			
<b>% Title I Population</b>	80.2	<b>% Attendance Rate</b>	88.5
<b>% Free Lunch</b>	77.6	<b>% Reduced Lunch</b>	2.6
<b>% Limited English Proficient</b>	13.6	<b>% Students with Disabilities</b>	19.8
<b>Racial/Ethnic Origin (most recent data)</b>			
<b>% American Indian or Alaska Native</b>	1	<b>% Black or African American</b>	49.3
<b>% Hispanic or Latino</b>	17.9	<b>% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</b>	8.2
<b>% White</b>	20.5	<b>% Multi-Racial</b>	3.2
<b>Personnel (most recent data)</b>			
<b>Years Superintendent Assigned to District</b>	0	<b># of Deputy/Assistant Superintendents</b>	0/4
<b># of Principals</b>	59	<b># of Assistant Principals</b>	79
<b># of Teachers</b>	2882	<b>Avg. Class Size</b>	24
<b>% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate</b>	1	<b>% Teaching Out of Certification</b>	3
<b>% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience</b>	4	<b>Average Teacher Absences</b>	11.1
<b>Teacher Turnover Rate – Teachers &lt; 5 years exp.</b>	22	<b>Teacher Turnover Rate – All Teachers</b>	16
<b>Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2013-14)</b>			
<b>ELA Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4</b>	12	<b>Mathematics Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4</b>	13
<b>Science Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4 (4th Grade)</b>	63.2	<b>Science Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4 (8th Grade)</b>	36.8
<b>Student Performance for High Schools (2013-14)</b>			
<b>ELA Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4</b>	42.9	<b>Mathematics Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4</b>	21.4
<b>Credit Accumulation High Schools Only (2013-14)</b>			
<b>4 Year Graduation Rate</b>	52.8	<b>6 Year Graduation Rate</b>	55
<b>% of earning Regents Diploma w/ Advanced Des.</b>	7.3		
<b>Current NYSED Accountability Status</b>			
<b># of Reward Schools</b>	0	<b># of Priority Schools</b>	26
<b># of Schools In Good Standing</b>	15	<b># of Focus Schools</b>	15
<b># of LAP Schools</b>	0		

### District Accountability Status

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

Describe the district's top priorities (no more than 5):

**DISTRICT PRIORITIES AS WRITTEN BY THE DISTRICT:**

1. Visiting classrooms daily and providing teachers with feedback.
2. Leading effective grade level/subject common planning meetings.
3. Using data to drive instructional practices.

## Information about the review

- The review of the district was conducted by two Outside Educational Experts (OEE), a representative from the New York State Education Department, a Special Education School Improvement Specialist (SEIS) representative, and a representative from the Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (RBERN).
- The Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) reviews of seven schools in the district also informed the district review.
- District reviewers conducted interviews with district leadership, central office staff and a focus group of principals.
- The district provided school surveys several weeks prior to the on-site review but did not submit a district level composite survey until several weeks after the review.
- The interim district leader has been in post nine months and is leaving at the end of the academic year.

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

**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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

	implementation.				
<b>Tenet 4 - Teacher Practices and Decisions:</b> 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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Tenet 5 - Student Social and Emotional Developmental Health:</b> 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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Tenet 6 - Family and Community Engagement:</b> 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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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 1</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>SOP Rating</b></p>	<p><b>Stage 1</b></p>
<p><b>Overall Finding:</b></p> <p>The district’s approach to recruiting, evaluating, and retaining high quality staff is not effective and hinders the ability of schools to meet the needs of the communities they serve.</p> <p><b>Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The district leader stated the district has made rigorous attempts to attract quality personnel to the district, but despite these efforts it has had difficulty in recruiting teachers in shortage areas such as English language arts (ELA), science, and special education. A recruitment drive with Teach for America only produced eight teachers. The review team found no evidence that the district has analyzed reasons why it is experiencing difficulties in recruitment efforts. District leadership confirmed that partnerships with universities and colleges are minimal, which limits a rich source for staff recruitment. District leaders reported that they have appointed a Director of Employment Services and a Human Resources manager, but there is limited evidence to indicate that these appointments improved the recruitment stream to meet the needs of schools and the district. District leaders outlined a priority to develop a data based system to make connections between the quality of teachers recruited to the district and the impact they have on student achievement; however, no evidence or data was provided to the review team to suggest that this initiative has commenced.</li> <li>• The district leader acknowledged that the district’s Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) process has weaknesses because the system sometimes grades teachers’ performance too highly and does not lead to improvements in instructional practices. During the 2013-2014 school year, although a significant number of teachers were rated as effective or highly effective using the APPR process, observations by review teams in schools and data concerning student academic growth and achievement does not align with these ratings. A similar picture emerges in the 2014-2015 year as New York State Education Department (NYSED) staff questioned the accuracy of the district’s evaluation of teachers when the district rated many teachers as effective or highly effective. School reviews also indicate that although some teachers are graded highly effective, instructional practices have significant weakness and student progress and performance are low. During school reviews, school leaders stated that observations and learning walk-throughs by district staff are rarely carried out, and any feedback provided is minimal and does little to identify areas in need of improvement. District staff also stated that approximately 20 principals were not adequately prepared for aspects of</li> </ul>		

their role, such as instructional leadership and school-wide behavior management. District leadership provided no evidence to the review team indicating what has been done to remedy these problems. Additionally, the APPR Monitoring team raised similar concerns contributing to the misalignment between observation ratings and student performance in the district. The concerns raised during these site visits included a lack of district-level processes in place to monitor the quality of Student Learning Objective (SLO) target setting, observations, and calibration levels of evaluators.

- The district leader stated that part of the difficulty of retaining new staff was budgetary. He noted that when positions are eliminated, the most senior staff are retained in accordance with the teacher contract. In addition, when new posts become vacant, senior leadership stated that the most senior teacher who applies has first refusal regardless of whether they meet the criteria for the particular position. No evidence was provided to the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) of regular or sustained efforts the district has made to assess why teachers or school leaders leave the district other than for the budgetary reasons. Human resources personnel indicate that two out of the three externally recruited school leaders appointed last academic year have left. During school reviews, several teachers shared concerns about working conditions in the district, such as large class sizes and student behavior. The district cabinet stated that there has also been instability in senior leadership of the district, demonstrated by the number of superintendents over the last few years. Without data to evaluate why personnel leave or are dissatisfied with working conditions, the district's ability to implement successful retention strategies is hindered.

**Impact Statement:**

- The district's lack of a comprehensive and strategic strategy for recruiting, evaluating, and sustaining high quality staff results in the needs of schools not being met and student achievement remaining low.

**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 the teacher evaluation system accurately identifies teachers' strengths and areas for improvement;
- provide teachers and principals with training around the SLO target setting process, with emphasis on developing targets that represent one year of grade level growth;
- provide teachers with actionable feedback that allows them to improve their practice—specifically, provide evaluators with professional development designed to improve the quality of post-observation feedback;
- make sure that human resources staff establish a data driven system that aligns teacher and school leader recruitment to the impact on student achievement and growth; and
- conduct exit surveys to ascertain personnel's reasons for leaving the district.

**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.

**SOP Rating**

**Stage 1**

**Overall Finding:**

Although the district has a theory of action, it does not include detailed expectations for high achievement and specific goals to drive school improvement. The district’s methods of communication of its vision and the monitoring and evaluation of practices hinder school improvement across the district.

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

- District leadership indicated that much of the district’s vision and theory of action to drive school improvement is based on the “Three Rocks.” These elements include the importance of visiting teachers daily and providing teachers with feedback, leading effective grade level/subject common planning meetings, and using data to drive instructional practices in classrooms. During discussions with reviewers, school leaders indicated that although they understand the importance of these strands, the district has provided little support to establish the ‘Three Rocks’ as fundamental professional practices. School reviews indicate that these three components are identified as weaknesses in many schools across the district.
- The district leader stated that the District Comprehensive Improvement Plan (DCIP) is intended to be the tool and strategy to bring together the district and schools to tackle the continuing legacy of low student achievement. However, an examination of the plan indicates a lack of specific goals that are data driven and focused on student achievement, unrealistic time scales for tackling identified weaknesses, and a lack of identification of high quality staff to oversee implemented strategies. This lack of oversight is also evidenced in SLO samples that included targets set below student baseline scores. The monitoring process described to the APPR monitoring team during a site visit only addressed target scores of 0 that were flagged and sent back to educators for revision.
- Information concerning the DCIP and the vision for academic excellence has not been communicated through meetings and correspondence to school leaders and staff in a coherent and convincing manner. One Principal meeting is scheduled for May 2015 to showcase the DCIP for the past school year in order to prepare for the 2015-16. This meeting was to show Principals the outline of the 2015-16 DCIP with an eye toward school leaders preparing SCEPs in a similar manner. During the 2014-15 school year, there continued to be complaints from the District Parent Coordinating Council (DPCC) because of a lack of parental involvement in developing the DCIP. Discussions with school leaders and teachers indicate that they are aware that the district is generally pursuing academic excellence, but the DCIP does not make clear how this is to be achieved through strategic, goal oriented achievement objectives, high quality support in implementing curricula, and effective systems for developing professional practices. In addition, the DCIP does not focus sufficiently on the achievement of subgroups, such as English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, which is partly because systems for tracking the academic progress of different groups of students do not identify trends and patterns or weaknesses that could be targeted for improvement.

**Impact Statement:**

- The lack of specific, data-driven goals for school improvement and high student achievement that are connected to professional practice and are effectively communicated to the school community impedes school progress and 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:

- revise the DCIP so that it promotes high expectations through the setting of challenging but achievable data driven goals, clear success criteria, realistic time lines, and clear lines of accountability and progress monitoring for personnel charged with improvement;
- district-wide expectations should align with, and enhance, the SLO target setting process set out in the district’s APPR plan, establishing a consistent protocol to promote rigor and comparability across the district;
- provide staff in all schools with guidance and support that links theory to practice to enable staff to operationalize and implement the ‘Three Rocks’ with fidelity so that they culminate in raising student achievement;
- monitor, analyze, and evaluate priorities identified for school improvement to identify what is working and where additional support is needed; and
- regularly communicate and reinforce the theory of action and high expectations to all constituents.

**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.

**SOP Rating**

**Stage 1**

**Overall Finding:**

The district has moved toward a school-based budgeting system; however, the district has not developed systems that hold schools accountable for their spending, assess how strategically resources are deployed, or how spending aligns with improved student outcomes.

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

- Discussions with district staff and a review of budget documentation shows that the 2014-15 school year is the first year the district has adopted school based budgeting, which takes into account the numbers of students on roll and the numbers of ELLs and students with disabilities. District leadership reported that school communities have autonomy in the way they spend the resources that are allocated to each building and can make additional requests for resources; however, limited evidence was available to ascertain if these requests have to meet certain criteria or if requests are accepted. The review team found that the district has not implemented procedures to determine how schools are allocating their resources, if resource allocation is strategically aligned to key student achievement priorities, or the impact that spending decisions have had on improving student outcomes.
- School leaders confirmed that the district has provided some training on the mechanics of school based budgeting and provided guidance on funding streams. However, the district has not made clear to

school leaders its high expectations or how school leaders are to be held accountable for the funds they spend in efforts to drive school improvement. School reviews indicate there is a lack of strategic planning as to how school leaders allocate resources, and spending does not often match priorities identified in school improvement plans. In addition, very few schools have established procedures to demonstrate value for money principles by showing a close alignment between spending patterns and quantifiable improvement. The review team found no evidence that the district works with school leaders to support leaders in meeting the needs of their constituents.

- The budget for students with disabilities and ELLs remains centrally administered. Interviews with district staff indicated that expenditures for students with disabilities are high, partly because of the need to support co-teaching. When questioned by reviewers, district staff stated that there are no systems whereby the district evaluates how well the money has been spent or used to ensure that the needs of these students are met. An analysis of the 2013-2014 test results in ELA and mathematics for example, indicates that despite the high spending costs, there has been no improvement in the academic achievement of students overall. District staff also confirmed that there are no data driven mechanisms in place to align spending and student outcomes in relation to addressing the needs of ELLs.
- District staff stated that considerable funds have been allocated for professional development (PD) both now and in previous years for the APPR process, and more recently for the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). However, discussions with school leaders and examination of school reviews indicate that although funds have been invested in these important areas, there is little evidence to indicate that they have brought sustained improvements to the quality of instruction, increased student learning and engagement, or raised academic outcomes. Furthermore, during APPR monitoring site visits, district leaders expressed specific areas in need of improvement, such as SLO target setting. In addition, IIT reviewers and NYSED staff have observed classroom instruction that was not aligned with the CCLS during visits to district schools. There is limited evidence that professional development provided to address these areas has made marked improvements in the work.
- The Special Education Audit completed by the Council of Great City Schools in 2014 was not shared with the review team.

**Impact Statement:**

- As a result of little formal monitoring of the impact of budgetary spending, district staff have little awareness of resource decisions and associated strategies that are effective in promoting school improvement and success 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:

- Insist and check that district and school leaders establish and implement procedures that ensure spending decisions are aligned to identified priorities;
- require district and school leaders to evaluate the impact of spending on school improvement in all

schools, each quarter; and

- take account of information gathered from the audits and evaluations of the impact of spending decisions and identify the decisions that have resulted in improvements, and examine why other decisions have not impacted positively on student outcomes.

**Statement of Practice 1.4:** The district has a comprehensive plan to create, deliver and monitor professional development in all pertinent areas that is adaptive and tailored to the needs of individual schools.

**SOP Rating**

**Stage 1**

**Overall Finding:**

Although the district communicates PD opportunities to schools, there are no systems in place to measure the effectiveness of the PD and no quantifiable data available to indicate that PD has led to gains in student achievement or improvements to instructional practices.

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

- The district leader noted that the PD provided by the district is not meeting the needs of schools or teachers because it is not leading to improvements in professional practices and is not tailored to the individual needs of schools. Professional development, district leaders state, is based in part on what their observations in schools reveal. However, the APPR and other observations have not proven to be an accurate tool in identifying strengths and weaknesses in teacher practices. Based on conversations with district leaders during APPR Monitoring visits, although target setting and observation feedback are areas in need of improvement for the district, PD has not been tailored to address these specific concerns. For example, although the district has transitioned from using pre-assessments to historical data to set SLO targets, PD has not been provided to educators on how to choose or utilize the best sources of baseline data. The district leader also stated that even when a need is identified for further or extended PD, the district does not always respond to such requests. School leaders and teachers confirmed this observation. The district leader stated that despite a greater number of PD opportunities being offered this year than in previous years, the number of teachers attending courses has declined. District leadership indicated this is partly due to the bargaining unit's current agreement with the district, which stipulates that teachers have to be paid to attend PD that takes place after school.
- School leaders stated that the district organizes an online calendar of approved PD for teachers and school leaders to enroll in courses they wish to attend. However, school leaders stated that the PD is the same for all schools and is not differentiated in any way to better meet the needs of schools or individual teachers. District staff confirmed that they do not consult with school leaders to better identify PD needs of individual schools, and that they do not use test and assessment results to identify district wide priorities or cluster school priorities that could be addressed through targeted and focused PD. Similarly, principals are not receiving targeted support based on their areas of need, especially concerning the accurate use of observation tools as part of the APPR system. During monitoring visits by the state, officials had concerns that feedback to principals on their work with teachers is minimal to non-existent. There was no evidence that PD has been tailored to address this area of weakness.

- Discussions with the district leader indicated that there are no procedures in place to monitor the effectiveness of the PD that is provided. District staff does not carry out observations or walk-throughs in schools or consult with school leaders to determine the effectiveness of any PD provided on improving instructional practices or student achievement. School leaders echoed these comments, and teachers further state that school leaders do not regularly check up on the impact of PD in their observations. Although district staff indicated that there is informal monitoring and follow up of some PD, not all school leaders share this view. While a small number of school leaders spoke positively about follow up PD, most leaders provided negative responses, particularly in relation to the implementation of CCLS aligned curriculum and how to use data to inform instruction, when requested follow up PD had not been provided.
- District leadership has not provided guidance to Principals on Master Schedule development that would allow on ways to build in grade level and content level PD within the 6 day cycle.

**Impact Statement:**

- The district’s lack of strategic planning for PD and systems to monitor the quality and impact of PD hinders its ability to provide PD to meet district-wide needs and to raise 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 strategic plan that aligns school and teacher training needs with the PD the district intends to provide;
- provide follow-up and additional training where necessary; and
- provide guidance on Master Schedule development for the purpose of building in PD opportunities,
- monitor and evaluate the impact that professional development has on increasing teacher effectiveness and raising student achievement.

<p><b>Statement of Practice 1.5:</b> 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.</p>	<p><b>SOP Rating</b></p>	<p><b>Stage 1</b></p>
--	--------------------------	-----------------------

**Overall Finding:**

- Data is not organized in a centralized, easily accessible system, and there is little evidence that data is analyzed to inform decisions and adjust practices to promote student achievement.

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

- Reviewers found that the district does not have an integrated system for the collection of multiple sources of data. School leaders state that the data stored in the system is difficult to access and that the data is often inaccurate and out of date. As a result, school leaders do not access the data regularly. School leaders state they feel frustrated in their attempts to use data as a tool for driving

school improvement. The district leader states that expectations have been made clear as to how data should be used to guide and inform instruction and to track the performance of schools and individuals within the schools. The district leader also states that schools have received some initial training on the use of data. However, a number of school leaders state that guidance from the district has been unclear and unhelpful, training has been ineffective, and the district has not responded to requests for support. The lack of a centralized system has also contributed to non-compliance with regards to the SLO target setting process for APPR. While the district has made progress such as transitioning from using pre-assessments to historical data for target setting and was able to provide the APPR monitoring team with completed SLO samples, the quality of targets is still in need of improvement as evidenced by SLO targets that do not demonstrate one year of grade level growth and targets that are set below students' baseline scores. While multiple data points (a minimum of three to five) are used to set SLO targets, the district lacks a system to set consistent targets using these data points. District leaders were unable to articulate how educators were taught to use the historical data and multiple baseline assessments in a consistent process. As a result, the district struggles with using its evaluation system as a tool that accurately provides insight into the effectiveness of its staff.

- District staff indicates that there are no procedures in place to evaluate how effectively schools and school leaders access and use data to drive instruction or to monitor and track the performance of schools or individual students. School leaders state that any conversations with the district about data are recent and that district staff are not forthcoming with support and guidance. School leaders indicate they would be more likely to consult with a fellow school leader than the district about the effective use of data. The district leader acknowledges that there is a way to go in schools working in tandem with the district on the use of data to raise student achievement and the level of professional practices. The district leader recognizes that a great deal more training is needed for both teachers and school leaders in the analysis and use of data. The district leader stated that school leaders lack the skills needed to carry out sophisticated analyses of academic, behavioral, and attendance data.
- The district expressed concerns about the ability of teachers to use data to make curricular and instructional adjustments. School leaders concurred with this view but highlighted a lack of training from the district. School reviews indicated that the use of data at both school-wide and classroom levels is an area of particular concern and that data is not used effectively in enough schools to monitor the performance of the school, content areas, or different grades. In the classroom, differentiation is rare and the curriculum is not modified to better match the needs and abilities of different groups of students. For example, SLO targets do not represent one-year of grade level growth for all students and in some cases were set lower than the particular student's baseline scores. Targets of this caliber do not reflect high expectations for students and do not lend themselves to targeted instructional practices based on student needs. In addition, too little attention is focused on data that could provide a greater insight into how to improve the learning of ELLs and students with disabilities. Until issues are resolved in how district personnel are trained in the use of data, how data is accessed, and how the district and schools work in unison to develop a data driven learning culture in which all constituents play their part, student achievement will not be positively affected by data driven decision making.

**Impact Statement:**

- The lack of accessible data systems and district support for schools to develop effective data analysis skills that impact on school and teacher practices significantly hinder efforts for rapid and sustained school improvement.

**Recommendation:**

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

- introduce a single/integrated data based system with clear collection protocols that is known and used by all schools;
- provide guidance to all school staff in how to access, analyze, and use data in day to day work;
- monitor and evaluate on a regular basis whether the use of data and the changes in practice are having a positive impact on student achievement; and
- continue to analyze APPR components to ensure a stronger correlation between the evaluation components as well as ensure that the evaluation system is rigorous and continues to improve educator effectiveness and student learning outcomes.

**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.

**SOP Rating**

**Stage 1**

**Areas for Improvement:**

**Overall Finding:**

- The district does not work collaboratively with schools to provide supports for school leaders to promote learning environments that address the needs of all students, including ELLs and students with disabilities.

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

- During interviews with the review team, most school leaders spoke negatively about their relationships with district staff and the level and quality of support they receive from the district in meeting the needs of students, including ELLs and students with disabilities. A smaller number of school leaders indicated that they would only contact the district in extreme circumstances. There were few positive comments from school leaders about guidance the district provided in helping them to set and achieve a challenging, aspirational school vision. School leaders were particularly negative about the help they receive from the district in meeting the needs of students with disabilities or ELLs and state that support options provided are not tailored to the specific needs or demographics of individual schools. They stated PD for special education teachers has made little or no difference to teacher practices in the classrooms, and although the number of ELLs in the district is growing, there has been no increase in the number of Elementary Bilingual programs.

- Although school leaders state that district staff are responsive to school leaders' requests to train struggling teachers and provide opportunities to view model teachers, support, guidance, and training in other key areas of school life are limited and contribute little to improving student achievement. School leaders and teachers indicated limited district support to implement CCLS effectively, although district leaders state that they believe they provide adequate support to schools in this area. They also noted weaknesses in the APPR system because it failed to provide timely, constructive, actionable feedback, and teachers recognize that their weaknesses in the use of data to guide and inform instruction remained unaddressed. The district has begun to successfully implement the use of independent validators in the district to provide targeted one-on-one coaching and support to principals completing teacher evaluations; however, the district was unable to articulate specific metrics that would be used to monitor progress and impact of these coaches. Support was not yet tailored to meet particular principal's needs; rather, coaches were implemented in same way across each building piloting their use. School leaders stated that these major weaknesses are the three areas that the district states are the 'rocks' on which student success should be built. School reviews also confirm that these key areas continue to be weaknesses in schools and the strategies to improve them are not proving successful. There is little evidence to indicate that the district is providing support to change this picture.
- Many school leaders report that the district does not support them in building a positive learning culture or in articulating a school vision committed to academic and social success, although district leaders disagreed. A few school leaders shared that they feel they are on their own, isolated and unable to approach the district leadership. School leaders indicate that district staff transfers students from other schools where they have been a problem with no consideration of the impact this has on the learning environment of the receiving school. There is no plan in place to address over aged, under credited students that are transfer between and enroll in the district.

**Impact Statement:**

- The district does not provide guidance and support that enables school leaders to develop learning environments that meet the needs of the school communities, which negatively impacts 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:

- identify each school's needs more specifically, particularly in relation to needs of subgroups such as ELLS and students with disabilities, and over-aged, under-credited at the high school level;
- tailor supports to meet school specific needs by holding regular meetings with school leaders to gain a deeper understanding of individual school needs and aspirations; and
- monitor quarterly the impact the district's actions are having on supporting school leaders to develop a school environment that is responsive to the needs of the community and positively promotes student achievement.

**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.

**SOP Rating**

**Stage 1**

**Overall Finding:**

- The district does not collaborate effectively with school leaders and teachers to enable them to plan and deliver a curriculum that is aligned to the CCLS and that ensures that every student is sufficiently challenged.

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

- The district staff state that they provide support to help schools implement the CCLS; however, school leaders and teachers, and findings from reviews, indicate that the level and quality of support is insufficient to address the needs and abilities of all students. The district stated that it has provided schools with training on implementing the ELA and mathematics modules and supports teachers in the implementation of the Journeys reading program. School leaders indicate that the district has chosen a language arts program that reflects the CCLS and has differentiated texts for the school to use. However, school leaders report that district staff does not provide focused PD to enable teachers to understand the components of the program and, consequently, teachers struggle with using materials to challenge the students. School leaders note any support and training has been limited, and classroom observations indicate that many teachers are struggling to implement CCLS in a way that is challenging, engaging, and meeting the diverse needs of all students. For example, the APPR monitoring team observed classrooms where there was limited student engagement and interaction, questions and activities were not producing higher level thinking, and questioning techniques were mainly teacher-to-one-student and closed-ended. School reviews indicate that in many classrooms across the district, a CCLS aligned curriculum is not securely in place and learning opportunities do little to ensure that students are college and career-ready. School leaders indicate that follow up and more focused training is needed for their teachers but that the district has not been responsive to their requests. Although district staff acknowledge that there is more work to be done in supporting schools in the implementation of CCLS, information provided by district staff indicate that the district is only working on curriculum support with approximately one-quarter of its schools.
- District staff stated and school leaders confirmed that procedures to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of CCLS implementation in classrooms are ineffective. District staff do not regularly visit classrooms with a specific focus on how the curriculum is helping students become college- and career-ready. Teachers noted that school leaders also do not have a strong enough lens on this key aspect of student learning, and too little guidance and feedback is offered to teachers to help them improve their professional practices. School leaders stated that the district has provided minimal support on how data can be used to make curricula adjustments and modifications. While the district has begun to use independent validators to provide coaching and support to principals who observe teachers, there is a concern that the independent validators may not be approaching this with a lens on college- and career- readiness. When the APPR monitoring team observed feedback sessions between an

independent validator and principal, the questioning and feedback provided by the coach did not push the principal to use evidence to support the teacher ratings. A structured protocol was not used and the conversation did not involve reference to the Common Core Learning Standards. Furthermore, the conversation did not result in providing the principal with actionable feedback for his own practice or the teacher's practice.

**Impact Statement:**

- The limited support provided for the implementation of a CCLS aligned curriculum in all classrooms impedes the ability of teachers to deliver instruction that enables students to make academic progress and to be college and career ready.

**Recommendation:**

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

- work with and support schools to build a CCLS aligned curriculum in all schools;
- regularly monitor curriculum implementation in schools, and provide constructive, actionable feedback to teachers to help them improve their professional practices; and
- suggest and help schools implement modifications to the curriculum where needed so that all students are engaged, active participants in the learning process and are equipped with skills to help them be successful beyond school.

**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.

**SOP Rating**

**Stage 1**

**Overall Finding:**

- The district does not work effectively with schools to provide PD opportunities for teachers to develop their professional practices and has not put in place procedures to evaluate the impact that any PD has had on improving the quality of instruction or student achievement.

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

- Discussions with school leaders and district staff show that the schools are provided with a PD menu, and teachers choose which courses they wish to attend. Professional development courses are not mandatory and, as a result, attendance at PD offerings is voluntary. School leaders state that teachers and other staff members who attend courses are not always the ones most in need of additional training. District staff state that they do not have systems in place for recording the names of individual staff members that attend or the number of teachers at sessions. School leaders state that the PD catalogue that is provided has serious limitations because it is too generic and the offerings do not address the unique needs of individual schools or the staff that work in these schools. In addition, the district does not consider academic, behavioral or other data from schools to identify PD needs that could be school specific or a trend in a number of schools. School leaders note that this one size

fits all approach results in PD that is not matched to teachers' differing starting points, strengths, and areas for development. Similarly, PD offered to principals is not tailored to their areas in need of improvement. Conversations with district staff during APPR monitoring visits identified feedback as an area of weakness. The district has yet to establish baseline levels for principal evaluator calibration. Without these metrics, quality and improvement cannot be assessed and further areas of weakness cannot be identified and targeted for future PD sessions.

- District leaders acknowledge and school leaders confirm that there are no systems for monitoring and evaluating the PD that is provided. District staff do not monitor the quality of PD that is delivered, and no data is collected to assess the impact that it has on improving instruction or student achievement. District staff do not regularly carry out lesson observations to focus specifically on how PD offerings may have brought about changes and improvements to teacher practices in the classrooms. School leaders noted that the district does not consult with school leaders about the quality and impact of the PD that it provides, and reviews indicate that too few school leaders focus on the impact that PD brings to the classroom. Without data and evidence to assess the benefit that PD has on instruction and student learning, neither the district nor schools are in a position to judge the quality or value of PD and the adjustments that may be needed so that there is a more strategic approach to the planning and effectiveness of future PD. Through conversations with principals during APPR monitoring visits, even where principals used a tool aligned to the NYSUT rubric to rate teachers, specific and actionable steps were not identified for the teacher to improve instruction. Alternatively, it was explained that feedback to the teacher would be in the form of asking questions related to why instructional decisions had been made, with no indication of this conversation leading to specific, actionable feedback that would be monitored in subsequent observations.
- School leaders report that teachers within their schools struggle to use student data to inform curriculum planning and to set meaningful student goals. They also state that in many classes, inappropriate behavior adversely affects students' levels of engagement and learning and that the social and emotional needs of many students are not met. School leaders report that the district has not addressed these issues sufficiently through PD and that the follow-up has been inadequate. School reviews and interviews with teachers indicate that although some PD on improving effective teaching strategies has been provided, it has had little impact on classroom practices and the quality of instruction, student behavior, and use of data. In addition, school leaders report that there is little PD to challenge schools in good standing to perform better and to share best practices.

**Impact Statement:**

- A lack of PD that meets the needs of teachers and schools together with inadequate protocols for assessing the quality and impact of PD result in learning experiences for students that significantly hamper their opportunities for academic 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:

- design and implement a differentiated professional development program in each school that is based on a close analysis of student data and teacher needs;
- establish baseline metrics of calibration and quality of principals who complete teacher evaluations in order to design and implement PD targeting identified areas of weakness;
- regularly monitor and evaluate the impact of PD on teacher practices and student achievement on a quarterly basis, and adjust the program in the light of findings; and
- support building leadership in their learning, knowledge and ability to support the implementation of differentiated professional development within their respective schools.

**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.

**SOP Rating**

**Stage 1**

**Overall Finding:**

- District staff do not work collaboratively with the schools to provide opportunities and resources that positively support students’ social and emotional developmental health. School leaders indicate PD and any follow-up opportunities for addressing student social-emotional needs have not been effective.

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

- School leaders expressed generally negative views about the support that the district provides for schools to address the social and emotional needs of all students. They were particularly critical of the PD that the district provides. A number of school leaders indicated that despite its importance to their particular schools, the district did not deliver high quality PD to meet student needs. One school leader reported that although there was some training on how to de-escalate conflicts related to the high number of suspensions in the district and some school staff felt that their needs were not met. The district has instituted a new “Code of Conduct” to reduce the types of offenses that result in suspension. Students are no longer suspended for non-violent offenses, such as using cell phones and smoking, in an effort by the district to make sure that students do not fall behind academically as a result of being suspended. While school leaders do not have the option to suspend for certain offenses now, and this may result in the suspension rate declining, it is unclear whether this has resulted in improved behavior within schools. During discussions with reviewers, district staff stated that behavior in a number of schools continued to be a particular challenge. School reviews also highlighted that behavior was an issue in a number of schools, and some teachers reported that PD had not been beneficial in helping them address the daily challenges they faced. District staff were not able to provide information that indicated whether PD that focused on student behavior had been successful because they did not have clear systems in place to monitor the impact of any PD in meeting student needs.
- School leaders acknowledge that the district tries to make clear the importance of meeting the social and emotional developmental health needs of students but that these expectations and good intentions are not reflected in well-established and effective support mechanisms. School leaders

noted that district initiatives and spending do not result in improved student outcomes. For example, district staff and school leaders indicate that financial resources and time have been spent on implementing strategies to raise student attendance, but the impact has been limited, with attendance in some high schools no greater than 80 percent.

**Impact Statement:**

- The district’s limited support for schools to address students’ social and emotional developmental health needs and a lack of PD that meets the needs of individual schools results in the social and emotional developmental health needs of students not being met.

**Recommendation:**

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

- devise a coherent and coordinated system that identifies student social and emotional developmental health needs in all schools and plan suitable supports that meet the identified needs; and
- regularly monitor the impact of the plan quarterly, and on the basis of the findings adjust actions accordingly.

**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.

**SOP Rating**

**Stage 1**

**Overall Finding:**

- The district has not established an effective family engagement plan and communication strategy that enables parents to better understand what is happening at their child’s school or in the district or to be more actively involved in supporting their child’s learning.

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

- School leaders state that the district’s efforts to promote community engagement are not effective, and parents are not empowered to be active participants in the work of schools or supporters of their child’s learning. The district leader reports that the district attempts to keep parents informed through newsletters and other more specific correspondence relating to the curriculum and academic progress. However, the district leader acknowledged that the district does not know how effective its communication strategies are because the district has not canvassed parental views or sought to make any suggested adjustments to its efforts. Although the district leader feels that much has been done to reach out to parents and families, there are no mechanisms in place to measure the district’s intended impact. The district leader stated much work is needed in communicating the district’s vision to parents and families so that they can work in a more cohesive manner to meet the needs of students

and drive up academic standards. Some parents have complained to the district because they were not consulted or invited to participate when the district was drawing up its DCIP.

- The district leader stated that day-to-day communication with parents and families is “hit and miss.” For example, the district has a rapidly growing number of families who speak English as an additional language. Although a few frequently used district documents have been translated into other main languages, school leaders note they have little support from the district in translating their own school documents. As a result, a significant number of families are disconnected and disenfranchised from school partnerships. School leaders report that the district provides them with minimal support or PD on how to establish productive partnerships with families or in providing parents with support, guidance, or tips on how they can support their child’s learning at home. The district leader stated that support is provided by a number of organizations, such as Say Yes, Buffalo and Family Support Services but that the quality of this support is variable. District leadership was not able to provide the review team with an analysis of how effective support has been and where it is most needed. School leaders state that the district has provided schools with parent facilitators but neither the district nor schools has evaluated the work of these personnel, and so they are not able to determine the strategies that are or are not successful in enhancing parental engagement.

**Impact Statement:**

- The district’s lack of monitoring and analysis of efforts to engage parents hinders the ability of families to work in close partnership with schools to improve their child’s learning.

**Recommendation:**

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

- provide a clear analysis of each schools strengths and areas for development in relation to parent partnerships;
- analyze the impact of the work of parent facilitators;
- work with schools to develop a plan, which enables parents to be fully involved in their children’s education; and
- then monitor and evaluate the impact that parent partnership has on student achievement.