



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

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)



BEDS Code	130502020000
District	Dover Union Free School District
District Address	2368 Route 22, Dover Plains, New York, 12522
Superintendent	Michael Tierney
Date(s) of Review	May 27-28, 2015

District Information Sheet					
Grade Configuration	K-12	Total Enrollment	1373	Number of Schools	4
District Composition (most recent data)					
% Title I Population	13	% Attendance Rate	94		
% Free Lunch	41	% Reduced Lunch	11		
% Limited English Proficient	3	% Students with Disabilities	12		
Racial/Ethnic Origin (most recent data)					
% American Indian or Alaska Native	0	% Black or African American	6		
% Hispanic or Latino	19	% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	2		
% White	77	% Multi-Racial	2		
Personnel (most recent data)					
Years Superintendent Assigned to District	5	# of Deputy/Assistant Superintendents	2		
# of Principals	4	# of Assistant Principals	1		
# of Teachers	98	Avg. Class Size	14		
% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate	0	% Teaching Out of Certification	.5		
% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience	17	Average Teacher Absences	7		
Teacher Turnover Rate – Teachers < 5 years exp.	0	Teacher Turnover Rate – All Teachers	2		
Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2013-14)					
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	28	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4	25		
Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (4th Grade)	90	Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (8th Grade)	88		
Student Performance for High Schools (2013-14)					
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	96	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4	82		
Credit Accumulation High Schools Only (2013-14)					
4 Year Graduation Rate	85	6 Year Graduation Rate	81		
% of earning Regents Diploma w/ Advanced Des.	28				
Current NYSED Accountability Status					
# of Reward Schools	0	# of Priority Schools	0		
# of Schools In Good Standing	3	# of Focus Schools	1		
# of LAP Schools	0				

District Accountability Status

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

DISTRICT PRIORITIES AS WRITTEN BY THE DISTRICT:

- Increase student achievement in identified sub-groups.
- Continue working to ensure systems are developed or revised in the areas of curriculum alignment and professional development.
- Improve literacy in the early grades.
- Improve pedagogy in the areas of differentiation and student engagement.

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) representative.
- The Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) review of one school in the district also informed the district review.
- During IIT school reviews in the district, reviewers visited a range of classrooms across the school 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 provided results of a student survey that 806 (59 percent) completed.
- The district provided results of a staff survey that 128 (100 percent) completed.
- The district did not provide results of any parent survey.

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

	implementation.				
Tenet 4 - Teacher Practices and Decisions: Teachers engage in strategic practices and decision-making in order to address the gap between what students know and need to learn, so that all students and pertinent subgroups experience consistent high levels of engagement, thinking, and achievement.					
#	Statement of Practice	Stage 4	Stage 3	Stage 2	Stage 1
4.1	The district works collaboratively with the school to provide opportunities and supports for teachers to develop strategies and practices and addresses effective planning and account for student data, needs, goals, and levels of engagement.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tenet 5 - Student Social and Emotional Developmental Health: The school community identifies, promotes, and supports social and emotional development by designing systems and experiences that lead to healthy relationships and a safe, respectful environment that is conducive to learning for all constituents.					
#	Statement of Practice	Stage 4	Stage 3	Stage 2	Stage 1
5.1	The district creates policy and works collaboratively with the school to provide opportunities and resources that positively support students' social and emotional developmental health.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tenet 6 - Family and Community Engagement: The school creates a culture of partnership where families, community members, and school staff work together to share in the responsibility for student academic progress and social-emotional growth and well-being.					
#	Statement of Practice	Stage 4	Stage 3	Stage 2	Stage 1
6.1	The district has a comprehensive family and community engagement strategic plan that states the expectations around creating and sustaining a welcoming environment for families, reciprocal communication, and establishing partnerships with community organizations and families.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

District Review – Findings, Evidence, Impact and Recommendations:

<p>Tenet 1 - District Leadership and Capacity: The district examines school systems and makes intentional decisions to identify and provide critical expectations, supports and structures in all areas of need so that schools are able to respond to their community and ensure that all students are successful.</p>	<p>Overall Tenet Rating</p>	<p>Stage 2</p>
<p>Statement of Practice 1.1: The district has a comprehensive approach for recruiting, evaluating, and sustaining high-quality personnel that affords schools the ability to ensure success by addressing the needs of their community.</p>	<p>Tenet Rating</p>	<p>Stage 2</p>
<p>Overall Finding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The district has some structures in place to recruit and sustain high quality personnel. However, weaknesses in the evaluation system limit efforts to improve teacher practices and address student needs. <p>Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> District leadership stated that the district uses the Danielson rubric for teacher evaluation. They noted that the district is also required to use a scoring technique, which is in keeping with a negotiated agreement with the local union. District leadership reported that for teachers to be judged developing, they need to score below 60 out of the 100 points available. All teachers are given a score of 55 as a starting point, and only five points are required from the criteria set to be judged effective overall. A teacher needs an additional ten points to be judged highly effective. These points can be achieved from the remaining twenty points available from the outcomes of New York State Education Department (NYSED) assessment scores or the twenty points from the outcomes of the Northwest Evaluation Association’s Measures of Academic Progress (MAP). District and school leaders expressed concern over the accuracy of the negotiated rating system. However, there was limited evidence of the district providing consistent monitoring and support to school leaders to ensure that targeted, actionable feedback was provided to teachers to improve their instructional practice as a means to improve instruction and student achievement. The district leader indicated that budget constraints have sometimes necessitated reorganizing or reassigning internal staff in the district rather than hiring new staff to fill vacancies. District leadership reported that they plan to reduce the four psychologist positions to three and appoint a social worker to the support team to address students’ social needs. When vacancies occur and they are not able to fill the positions from staff within the district, they recruit candidates from higher education institutions locally and in New York City. District leadership reported that retention rates, at 98 percent, are high. The district leader and school leaders reported that teachers are given incentives to stay and grow professionally through strategies such as the “Teacher of Tomorrow” grant, which provides incentives for retention and support for filling hard to place areas such as technology and science. New teachers are provided mentors who 		

understand the district philosophy. In addition, re-training opportunities are offered to widen teacher certification in order to fill vacancies, which arise for certain specific roles. District staff noted that this has been the case in the district's efforts to address the requirements of the English New Language initiative. To meet these requirements, a foreign language teacher and a general classroom teacher have agreed to be trained to fill the new posts. However, the review team did not find evidence that the district conducts exit interviews to determine why teachers leave their positions in the district.

Impact Statement:

- Although the district has taken steps to recruit and retain qualified staff, its efforts to evaluate and support school leaders and teachers have not been consistently effective, which minimizes efforts at improving professional practice 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:

- Provide targeted support to school leaders in order to ensure that the feedback given to teachers is specific and actionable, and monitor the impact.

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

Tenet Rating

Stage 2

Overall Finding:

- The district leader is working towards the development of a school and district improvement model, which is based on setting targeted goals. The theory of action and expectations for high achievement have been shared with school leaders and staff. However, success criteria and a timeline are not built into the theory of action goals at a district level to guide monitoring and evaluation.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- District leadership indicated the district's theory of action focuses on raising student achievement by sharing high expectations and improving support, resources, and training, considering students' social and emotional development, and developing partnerships with families. School leaders report that these goals, which form the foundation of theory of action plan, have been shared with teachers, support staff, and parents, and that they are understood and supported by the school community.. However, the review team found that the plan lacks success criteria and a timeline to guide monitoring and to measure success at the district level. The mechanism for driving these district goals has been the regular meetings between the district leader and school leaders and the close working relationship that is developing between schools and the district. Although school leaders perspectives were varied, some school leaders indicated that there have been positive changes in the way they are supported to operate strategically at a building level through professional development (PD) and support from district staff. One school leader shared the example of receiving training to evaluate instructional

practice to ensure judgments were accurate and robust, using data points to identify areas of need.

- District staff indicated that there is an administrator professional learning community (PLC) for school leaders to evaluate and develop goals for pre- and post-observations to improve practice. School leaders noted that this initiative has helped them to focus on one specific area for improvement. This work has been shared through meetings with school leaders and the district leader, where available data is used to evaluate how effectively their actions were leading to achieving their goals and the next steps to be taken. While district and school leaders indicate that this process is improving the way school leaders are functioning, the goal setting process lacks rigor and has only been implemented over the past year. The review team found there is limited data to indicate any positive impact on student achievement.

Impact Statement:

- District goals, in their current form, are not specific, measurable, ambitious, results-oriented, and timely (SMART). The absence of success criteria and a timeline is minimizing the impact of decisions and actions that the district is making to improve student learning.

Recommendation:

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

- Revisit the theory of action to ensure the goals set have success criteria and timelines with clear strategies for monitoring and evaluating practice at a district and school level in order to ensure improvement can be measured and plans revised to raise the standard of student achievement and meet student needs district-wide.

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’s approach to resource allocation reflects a growing appreciation of the needs of schools at a district and school level. However, the district has not developed a system to assess the impact of resource allocation decisions on student achievement.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- District leadership reported that fiscal planning starts in November and is done annually. School leaders receive the budget packet to complete, which informs the district about their needs in relation to materials and supplies along with contractual costs and PD requests. Since 2013, there has been federal and State grant funds to support the development of teacher and leader effectiveness, which has been directed to schools. Staying within the financial tax cap is an expectation at both district and school level. The district leader stated that the district uses all funds that are available to build a budget on a building-based level of need. He indicated the needs of each school are determined

through discussions between school and district leaders and other school personnel. The district involves parents and records parental and community attendance for voting on the budget, but the number of parents attending the meetings has been low. The review team found limited evidence that student and staff data are explicitly used by the district to determine district-wide spending and resource allocation patterns and the root causes of problems concerning student achievement.

- The district determined a need for updated technology resources in the district schools. District staff indicated that this year the district purchased mobile carts and Chromebooks, which had been requested by teachers at the start of the year. Through the “Smart Schools Bond,” 1.1 million dollars has been allocated and is managed by a committee, which includes teachers and community members. A three-year strategic plan has been submitted on the use of the money covering the 2014-17 period. The plan aims to account for aging technology; to establish model classrooms using Chromebooks and other technological supports for student learning in grades six to twelve; to roll out more model classrooms across the other grades; and to support PD for teachers and support for students linked to the technological initiatives.
- The district leaders reported that students with disabilities with the severest needs are served outside the district. As this support is very costly, the district monitors and requests data on out-of-district placements. The district leader indicated that he and his key staff have been mapping out and evaluating personnel resources to inform decisions about extending co-teaching and retaining or reducing self-contained classrooms for the coming year. The school leader reported he has worked collaboratively with school leaders and teachers to determine resources needed to support the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). This process resulted in a decision to introduce Journeys, a literacy program at the elementary school level. The district leader noted that resources have been purchased, and a Journeys implementation committee has been established to target PD and determine timelines and criteria for success. However, the review team did not find evidence of formal protocols, clear timelines, and consistent monitoring to assess the impact of spending decisions on student achievement across the district for the current school year.

Impact Statement:

- The district has allocated some resources to meet the needs of schools in the district. However, the lack of a coordinated strategy and inconsistent monitoring limit the district’s ability to evaluate the impact of its decisions on academic performance and the learning environments in schools district-wide.

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 coordinated strategy for prioritizing resource allocation with formal protocols to assess the unique needs of each school, set clear criteria for success, and monitor and evaluate the impact of

allocations on professional practices and student success.

- Provide targeted PD and support for school leaders and school personnel from discussions and observations, setting clear success criteria and monitoring improvement against a timeline to determine the impact of interventions on teacher/leader skill levels and student achievement.
- Monitor the work of the Journeys committee and technology initiatives, and evaluate their impact against the success criteria agreed upon, embedding evaluation practices, in order to guide further actions in targeting additional resources and PD to support student and school need.

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

Tenet Rating

Stage 2

Overall Finding:

- The district has worked with school leaders and teachers at a building level to identify PD needs. However, the lack of a coordinated approach to develop, implement, and assess the impact of initiatives limits efforts for school improvement district-wide.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- District staff reported that the assistant district leader has undertaken surveys of staff at the building level to determine PD needs, which was appreciated by school leaders. According to district leadership, follow up discussions with teachers and school leaders help to encourage a strategic understanding of “needs” rather than “wants,” at a building level, which is clarified through observations and school visits to gather information to substantiate the need.
- The district leader indicated that current PD focuses on safety issues, pedagogy, and the district goals to raise student achievement, improve instructional practice, school leadership, and accountability. Each school’s response has varied depending on which aspect of the district’s goals they have chosen to focus on. For instance, the high school leader indicated that PD, which was focused on peer coaching, encouraged teachers to share practices and support each other to improve the quality of teaching practices. However, the review team did not find evidence of formal monitoring and evaluation that ensured the effectiveness of PD in improving instructional practice or raising student achievement.
- District and school staff reported that some support staff have identified the need for more training in speech and occupational therapy so that they could apply strategies learned to the classroom, when supporting increasing numbers of students displaying speech difficulties and physical disabilities. The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) training has also taken place to enable teachers to recognize characteristics of depression. The review team did not find evidence that the impact of this training has been monitored and evaluated in relation to its impact on improving student achievement.

- The district leader reported that the district supported release time for grade two and three teachers to meet to assess current initiatives and to discuss ways of ensuring information about successful student learning is passed on vertically. The teachers who participated reported that the process had been useful, but it is not clear what difference the discussions have had on the students' progress.

Impact Statement:

- District leadership has taken some steps to provide collaboration between the district and the schools to develop PD targeted to school needs. However, the absence of success criteria district-wide and pre-and post-intervention data minimizes the ability of district and school leaders to measure the impact of PD to address the needs of staff and to improve student growth.

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 and implement a system of collecting pre- and post-intervention data to measure and evaluate training/initiatives completed to determine what difference they have made to the level of student understanding and engagement and instructional expertise. Use these evaluation outcomes to plan for next steps, to build on successes achieved, and to create a cycle of improvement that is strategic and measured.

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 focused on achieving its goal to develop a data-driven culture through the work of the PLCs, Academic Intervention Services (AIS), and Response to Intervention (RtI) implementation to build a climate where the importance of data is understood and used to analyze student progress. The response to the district focus has varied at a building level as school leaders have freedom to choose their individual school path. The lack of a clear model for how data is to be used and inconsistent monitoring to assess student performance hampers efforts at accountability and progress district-wide.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- District leadership reported that all PLCs generate agendas and minutes, and their aim is to facilitate discussions to work towards district/school goals. PLC minutes that were shared with the review team indicated that some discussions are focused on data at a low level, and the work of the PLCs is inconsistent in influencing the use of data district-wide. District and school leaders reported that the PLC meetings are also a vehicle for discussing a wide range of other topics including organizational issues, instructional approaches, and curricular and behavioral issues, although there is evidence that data is being discussed in some context on a daily/weekly basis in schools in the district.

- District and school leaders explained ways in which a data-driven culture is being developed. In the elementary school, the district has emphasized the use of data to measure student progress in skills in AIS, using the CCLS. These supported groups, which sometimes include students with special needs, were formed to focus on the use of “Foundations” for decoding, two hours daily. District and school leaders indicated Dibels assessment outcomes showed increased scores for the students who were targeted, and the Gallistel- Ellis test, which focuses on phonemic awareness also showed improved student progress. Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) data helped teachers group students and align instruction to learning needs. Students have also tracked themselves, with the support of their teachers and the district leadership team, using the CCLS in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics.
- District leadership indicated the district used the Phelps Kindergarten Readiness program to screen pre-K students in verbal reasoning and auditory processing and to target intervention. Fifteen pupils have been selected and an upcoming summer school program is in place to help fill the gaps to improve student success on entry to kindergarten. Another assessment was used to test students completing kindergarten to determine their readiness for entering grade one in respect to their ELA skills. The students with gaps in their ELA skills are to be placed in a “Bridge” class in September, which will operate parallel to the other first grade class and will offer the students small group instruction to fill those gaps, so that they will be able to rejoin the grade two class the following September.
- District leadership reported that last year, the district “Summer Book Giveaway” targeted students in grades kindergarten to five to highlight to parents the importance of their support in maintaining their children’s daily reading throughout the summer to sustain reading levels of individual students. Last year’s program was not followed with fidelity, and no reading level data was collected pre- and post-summer to monitor progress and measure the impact of reading regularly at home during the summer. District leadership indicated that the district plans to gather data to measure the impact of parents’ support in reading with their children at home.

Impact Statement:

- The district has made known its expectations for the use of data to drive instruction and measure student progress and has given schools freedom to choose appropriate paths. However, reliance on the PLCs and inconsistent monitoring minimize the ability of the district to inform decisions and measure teacher practices and student outcomes.

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 common decision-making protocol that is used by all.

- Establish ways of using district staff to monitor the PLCs to ensure that the time spent focuses on the analysis of data to determine next steps to improve student achievement.
- Share the lessons learned through the initiatives targeting student achievement and AIS approaches in the elementary school with all schools in the district. Ensure student achievement data from initiatives, such as the “Summer Book Giveaway,” is measured pre- and post- initiative to determine the program’s impact.

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

Statement of Practice 2.1 - School Leader Practices and Decisions: The district works collaboratively with the school to provide opportunities and supports for the school leader to create, develop and nurture a school environment that is responsive to the needs of the entire school community.	Tenet Rating	Stage 2
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<p>Overall Finding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The district leader supports school leaders and their school vision by providing them with freedom to choose their own paths and with resources to help them achieve their goals. However, the district’s monitoring of improvement efforts is inconsistent, which minimizes the success of efforts to improve student outcomes. <p>Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The “Release of Responsibility” focus driven by the district leaders is designed for school leaders to have more autonomy for their schools, for teachers to be more responsible for their classes, and for students to be more responsible for their learning. Some school leaders reported a positive impact from the district’s coaching and PD in guiding their judgments of the quality of instructional practice in their schools. School leaders reported that networking with Dutchess Community Colleges and the work with the local colleges and environmental groups has helped to build confidence and a deeper understanding of data analysis to support them in their efforts to become better leaders. School leaders spoke positively about improvements while acknowledging the need for quantifiable measures and guidance from the district of the impact on practice. • School leaders reported that they and the district leader met and developed goals for improving student achievement through focusing on the NYSED district rubric. These discussions led to school leaders developing a new school focus of action for each goal, such as improving instruction through peer mentoring and using data to move towards providing a quality learning environment for students and teachers. The high school leader indicated that targeting improvement of the standards in algebra for students in grade nine led to the scheduling of double periods for algebra to provide more time to bring about improvement. In addition, AIS and a district graduation coach who works in the school provided help and data for teachers that focused on two Regents examinations that students had previously failed. However, some preliminary reports of improvements of student performance on assessments have not been verified by State data, and the lack of measurable outcomes for all
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initiatives and of SMART goals limits efforts of the district to gauge improvement with any certainty.

- School leaders indicated that goal setting has helped them to focus on improving students’ ability to read at the elementary level. According to school leaders, data from the Wilson reading assessment indicates progress was made by students through targeted interventions, and AIS support shows individual student improvement in reading. The leader for grades three to five explained that he visited Fordham University and the College of Mount Saint Vincent for help with the instructional needs of his school, and the leader for grades kindergarten through two has had the district director of special education work closely and pro-actively with the school to address identified weaknesses.

Impact Statement:

- The district works with the schools to develop their own goals and those of the district, and provides them with freedom to choose their own paths. However, the district’s inconsistent monitoring of the effectiveness of initiatives limits efforts to produce the desired results for school improvement district-wide.

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 all initiatives planned and undertaken have measurable student outcomes, and develop SMART goals with success criteria and a timeline, in order to evaluate the impact of the actions taken.
- Build in more opportunities at a district level to monitor the school goals against the district measures in order to evaluate rigorously and accurately the outcomes of actions undertaken at a school and district level to build consistency district-wide.

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:

- The district has worked with teacher committees to identify curricular needs and with school leaders through the administrators’ PLC to discuss how CCLS has been implemented in their individual schools. PLCs have been established at a grade and department level in each school to improve the use of data as a tool and as a vehicle for discussion and evaluation of curricular practices, strategies, and interventions. However, there has been inconsistent monitoring of implementation to ensure a positive impact on students’ academic growth.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- School leaders reported the district leader, assistant district leader, and director of special education

are working with them to resolve issues relating to implementation of the CCLS. School and district leaders noted the initial use of EngageNY materials to supplement work in grades kindergarten to eight in the delivery of the CCLS curriculum. Evaluation of these practices led to the selection of the Journeys program and the formation of a Journeys implementation committee. The committee has planned PD for next year and how the process should be monitored. For mathematics, the district is in year four of a roll out in kindergarten to grade eight, and that committee discussed vertical alignment and how best to achieve this effort.

- District and school leaders indicate PLCs review the building level assessments that measure reading levels, language, and mathematical skills and to identify students that are still struggling. They also highlight successful curricular practices and encourage teachers to use them in their classrooms. The impact of this work is monitored through walk-throughs. Groups of teachers that are not in PLCs meet vertically to offer each other support, such as middle and high school art teachers. However, school leaders acknowledge issues concerning the validity of teacher evaluations and reliance on the work of the PLCs, which leads to inconsistency in outcomes from school to school.

Impact Statement:

- The district has provided some support for the implementation of the CCLS in schools across the district. However, as the work of the PLCs is individualized at a school level, measuring the impact of the work across the district is difficult to determine. Consequently, the impact on student outcomes is varied and inconsistent and limits efforts to promote student learning and achievement.

Recommendation:

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

- Ensure that PLCs connect with specific goals to improve the focus and productivity of the meetings.
- Build opportunities to monitor the work of the PLCs in a more focused way by using the district leadership team’s coaching visits, which are planned to support school leaders, to include shared observations and the work of the PLC meetings on a regular basis, in order to build rigor and consistency.

4.1 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 some support to teachers in implementing differentiation in the classroom through funding teacher release time to participate in peer coaching and peer observation to raise levels of classroom instruction and to improve understanding of the use of assessments. However,

observations undertaken through teacher evaluation practices and walk-throughs are not sufficiently focused to generate meaningful data in order to target areas of weaknesses accurately in instructional practices to produce positive learning opportunities for all students.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- District leadership reported that the district-wide goal to enable teachers to engage in strategic instructional practices and decision-making so that all students experience consistently high levels of engagement and achievement has been shared with school leaders. In response to this goal, the high school leader stated the high school has focused on ELA and mathematics and through work with the assistant district leader, agreed upon a plan for adjusting current instructional practices to align more closely with CCLS expectations. The plan, which was developed last summer, offered staff the opportunity to train voluntarily on improving the quality of student writing, and other training opportunities have followed through district-led and external training sources, which have focused on the teaching of algebra.
- District and school leaders shared an example of the district's efforts to link PD to the impact on classroom instruction through the differentiation coach who was hired for 10 sessions. Only two sessions were completed, which included a presentation on strategies, and this was followed up with the coach working with teachers to direct and improve practice. Consequently, this has had limited impact, measured through walk-throughs of classroom practice reflecting the learning and guidance.
- School leaders reported all schools are moving to co-teaching models in grades kindergarten to eight; however, there are still self-contained classes planned for the coming year. They noted that early intervention work is occurring in grades pre-kindergarten to five to target weaknesses, to offer additional support to address gaps in knowledge, understanding, and skills, and to improve student success in ELA. They noted that the "Bridge" class is another way of supporting students moving from kindergarten to grade one with a 15 to one teacher ratio to provide students with challenges at a pace that is more likely to promote success.
- School leaders report they appreciate the partnership that is developing between their schools and the district. They note that the peer observation and peer mentoring strategies have helped to develop a culture of self-help and peer support, with assistance from district staff. However, the systems that are developing across schools have not had time to embed or to share the good practice through dissemination, and raise the challenge for students consistently. The district has not provided adequate monitoring of classroom practices to ensure rigorous learning opportunities for all students.

Impact Statement:

- The district has provided some targeted professional learning to school leaders and staff. However, inconsistent monitoring of practices district-wide minimizes opportunities for improved instructional practices and goals for student success in schools 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:

- Share and embed the good practice that is developing through the focus of improving classroom instruction by using peer observation and peer mentoring, differentiation strategies, and assessments to group students, and provide targeted support across all district schools to build more consistency in practice. In addition, support the co-teaching model that is being implemented across the schools with targeted training to enable strong teaching partnerships to develop that support student needs.

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 leader is encouraging the involvement of school leaders, teachers, and support staff in meeting student social and emotional developmental health needs. However, the district has not communicated a comprehensive plan to the school community, and there is a lack of consistent monitoring of programs and procedures, which limit efforts to promote student social and emotional development.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- The district leader reported that the appointment of a district director of special education has strengthened the level of expertise available for schools, which had been judged to be inadequate. Referrals for support have shown increasing need for social worker support rather than psychological intervention for students and their families. To address this need identified by school leaders, one of the psychologists will be replaced with a social worker in September 2015.
- District leadership indicated the director of special education has also worked closely with school leaders to implement RtI across schools in the district. However, discussions with school leaders and school support staff indicate that although RtI meetings are taking place regularly in schools, scheduling issues are interfering with the process in some schools, and the district has not provided consistent monitoring and guidance to ensure effective implementation.
- While support staff shared some available protocols to provide support for students' differing social and emotional developmental health needs, the review team did not find evidence of a comprehensive strategic plan that addressed the needs of all students.
- School leaders indicated that weekly RtI meetings involve individual students, their parents, a guidance

counselor, and teachers. During these meetings, students’ needs are discussed holistically to provide support from a range of sources. Information about the student is recorded, and goals are set to target improvement.

- District leadership indicated students entering the district from other parts of the State are screened for reading and language levels; if they already have an individualized education program (IEP), they will be supported by a psychologist. School leaders reported that they use cabinet meetings with the district leader to communicate how they are supporting student social and emotional developmental health. However, school leaders and support teams indicated they need additional support and guidance to address the needs of struggling students.
- School and district leaders indicated the director of special education is involved in the RtI process and monitors the work of the school support teams. PLCs track student attendance weekly and academic progress is reviewed every five weeks. Counselors carry out their own progress monitoring of student behavior and response to supports and retain data in binders for other support staff to access. However, there is no comprehensive, formal system to integrate data and to monitor progress. School leaders indicated that AIS is also used to support students, but that it is organized differently from school to school.

Impact Statement:

- The lack of a strategic district plan, encompassing support for all areas of social and emotional developmental health, limits the impact and influence of the RtI procedures, AIS support, and the work of the student support team, that all function at a building level to support students and their families, which minimizes 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:

- Revisit existing systems and mechanisms that direct the support for student social and emotional developmental health to rationalize current practices into an approach that is strategic, consistent, and pro-active.

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:

- The district communicates district and school information to parents in a range of ways. However, data indicates that parent responses are low and attendance inconsistent despite efforts by both the

district and individual schools. While the district is considering ways of reviewing its current communication systems to make them strategic and expanding its outreach to parents, currently the district does not have a comprehensive communication and family engagement plan to help schools build stronger home-school connections.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- School leaders report that the district uses a variety of communication methods to engage parents. These include the Parent Portal, which provides’ parents access to student grades and attendance; SchoolReach, which is a telephone system to call parents; workshops; and letters that are sent home to families. During the IIT review, parents from one of the district schools reported that the school and district offer some opportunities for communication but that some of the information is difficult to understand, and the timing of events is problematic when both parents are working. School leaders noted that individual teachers call parents, particularly when there is an urgent need to do so. School leaders stated that the SchoolReach system also allows the use of texting, but the district does not use this option currently. Some school leaders reported they would like to see the texting option implemented to address the needs of families. They noted that not all parents have computers; however, the vast majority of parents have mobile phones.
- School staff reported they recently attended “Hard to Reach” district workshops to discover ways they could involve parents that were difficult to reach. District and school leaders indicated parent data evenings are planned at the district and school level for the coming academic year, and teachers have been trained in preparation for the program. However, the review team did not find evidence of district sponsorship of these events at the time of the on-site reviews.
- Currently, the district does not measure how many parents are being reached through the portal or how they feel about it as a means of communication, even though individual school websites enable frequency of portal access to be gathered. Individual schools have developed additional ways of communicating with parents through report cards, progress reports, agenda books, and the classroom Dojo, an electronic daily journal. Some schools are gathering data to measure the numbers of parents attending parent teacher conferences. Others offer parent teacher evening meetings for those unable to attend during the day because of work commitments. Parents of students with disabilities receive progress reports four times a year. However, school leaders indicated additional assistance and guidance from the district are needed to develop reciprocal communication and home-school partnerships more effectively.

Impact Statement:

- The district supports schools and encourages them to be creative in the ways they involve parents, although a number of parents remain disengaged at both grade and school levels. The district’s lack of a formal communication and parental engagement plan minimizes the ability of families to work in close partnership with the schools to participate in their child’s education.

Recommendation:

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

- Review existing systems of communicating and reaching out to parents in order to develop a comprehensive communication and parental engagement policy that is communicated to the school community.
- Support schools in developing more opportunities to engage parents and create reciprocal communication.