



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

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)



BEDS Code	060800010000
District	Dunkirk City School District
District Address	620 Marauder Drive, Dunkirk, New York 14048
Superintendent	Gary J. Cerne
Date(s) of Review	May 18-19, 2015

District Information Sheet			
Grade Configuration	Pre-K – 12	Total Enrollment	2026
		Number of Schools	6
District Composition (most recent data)			
% Title I Population	70	% Attendance Rate	94
% Free Lunch	64	% Reduced Lunch	6
% Limited English Proficient	11	% Students with Disabilities	9
Racial/Ethnic Origin (most recent data)			
% American Indian or Alaska Native	11	% Black or African American	8
% Hispanic or Latino	48	% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0
% White	41	% Multi-Racial	3
Personnel (most recent data)			
Years Superintendent Assigned to District	7.5	# of Deputy/Assistant Superintendents	0
# of Principals	6	# of Assistant Principals	2
# of Teachers	200	Avg. Class Size	19
% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate	0	% Teaching Out of Certification	0
% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience	2	Average Teacher Absences	14 %
Teacher Turnover Rate – Teachers < 5 years exp.	0	Teacher Turnover Rate – All Teachers	16 %
Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2013-14)			
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	15%	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4	13%
Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (4th Grade)	67%	Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (8th Grade)	62%
Student Performance for High Schools (2013-14)			
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	71	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4	78
Credit Accumulation High Schools Only (2013-14)			
4 Year Graduation Rate	68	6 Year Graduation Rate	74
% of earning Regents Diploma w/ Advanced Des.	18		
Current NYSED Accountability Status			
# of Reward Schools	0	# of Priority Schools	0
# of Schools In Good Standing	4	# of Focus Schools	1
# of LAP Schools	1		
District Accountability Status			
Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in ELA (indicate Y / N / N-A)			
American Indian or Alaska Native	N/A	Black or African American	N
Hispanic or Latino	N	Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	N/A
White	N	Multi-Racial	N/A
Students with Disabilities	N	Limited English Proficient	N
Economically Disadvantaged	N		
Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Mathematics (indicate Y / N / N-A)			
American Indian or Alaska Native	N/A	Black or African American	N
Hispanic or Latino	N	Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	N/A
White	N	Multi-Racial	N/A
Students with Disabilities	N	Limited English Proficient	N
Economically Disadvantaged	N		
Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Science (indicate Y / N / N-A)			
American Indian or Alaska Native	N/A	Black or African American	N/A
Hispanic or Latino	N	Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	N/A
White	Y	Multi-Racial	N/A
Students with Disabilities	N/A	Limited English Proficient	Y
Economically Disadvantaged	N		
DISTRICT PRIORITIES AS WRITTEN BY THE DISTRICT:			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> To promote our vision of preparing students for college and career. Use of data to drive instructional decision making. Common Core and NYS aligned curriculum and assessment. Atmosphere that fosters students' emotional and academic growth as well as teaching pedagogy centered on student engagement and ownership of their learning. Foster great community and parent 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, a Special Education School Improvement Specialist (SESIS) representative and a representative from the Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (RBERN).
- The Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) reviews of one school in the district also informed the district review.
- During IIT school reviews in the district, reviewers visited 48 classrooms across the one 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 424 out of 481 middle school students completed (88%).
- The school provided results of a staff survey that 54 out of 57 middle school staff members responded (95%).
- No parent survey was administered.

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

	skills in all content areas and provides fiscal and human resources for 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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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 2	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"/>
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"> Weaknesses in the district’s approach to recruiting, evaluating, and supporting high quality staff limit its efforts to provide personnel for schools that consistently meet the needs of all students. <p>Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school district recruits teacher candidates primarily through advertisements in the two local newspapers as well as through a relationship with the local university and recruitment fairs. However, while some Spanish-speaking teachers have been recruited, this strategy is not meeting the school’s target goal to recruit the needed number of Spanish-speaking teachers to help meet the needs of its growing English as a second language (ESL) population. The district has not engaged in wider outreach either statewide or nationally or through Spanish speaking community centers to enhance the candidate pool. The district leader acknowledges that the district needs to expand its search to find these candidates and to include school leaders more in the recruitment and interview process. The district leader noted that the school district has had low teacher turnover over the past several years for several reasons, including the lack of teaching jobs in other districts in the vicinity as well as a concerted effort by the district to recognize teachers at each board meeting, which he believes helps create a culture of celebrating success and hard work. The district does not carry out exit interviews to examine why personnel leave the district. Although the district has a high rate of teacher retention over the last several years, there is a lack of student performance data to demonstrate that the district’s retention of teachers produces improved student outcomes. The district leader indicated that the district’s current Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) process is flawed because it sometimes results in evaluations that are too high and does not lead to improvements in instructional practice. He notes that although the majority of students are at levels one and two on the New York State English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics assessments, over 99 percent of the teachers are rated effective or highly effective by the district. He reported that in accordance with the agreement between the district and the teacher’s union, teachers can get 60 out of 100 points “automatically,” as teachers can write their own Student Learning Objectives (SLOs). He expressed the viewpoint that because of this agreement the district is limited in its ability to put teachers on Teacher Improvement Plans (TIPS) in order to provide the weaker teachers with additional 		

supports to help improve their instructional practices and student outcomes.

- The professional development (PD) provided by the district is a centralized process, which includes a district wide team from across the district and its schools. The focus of PD is the implementation of Kagan, a teaching methodology, which emphasizes high levels of student engagement, primarily through student groupings in the classroom. The other major area related to PD is the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). According to the school district’s cabinet, the district has implemented a formalized classroom walk-through protocol in only one of its six schools to monitor the implementation of practices taught through the district PD. District cabinet members reported that in the school that uses this protocol, the information gathered by the school leader is primarily tracking classroom practices, with no analysis of the quality, impact or fidelity of these practices. In addition, the review team found that the majority of teacher feedback provided through this protocol and through formal observations is primarily descriptive rather than actionable, which limits the ability of teachers to use this feedback to improve their practice. The district has not yet identified strategies for addressing this issue.

Impact Statement:

- The district’s lack of a systematic approach to hiring, evaluating, and supporting high quality staff minimizes its ability to ensure that personnel have the experience and expertise to improve teacher practices and student achievement.

Recommendation:

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

- set up a system to provide regular, actionable feedback to all teachers on their instructional practices, and make sure that the feedback is implemented so that it contributes to increases in student achievement; and
- develop and implement a strategic plan and campaign to successfully recruit Spanish-speaking teachers to the district.

<p>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.</p>	<p>Tenet Rating</p>	<p>Stage 2</p>
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Overall Finding:

- Although the school district is currently developing its theory of action, it is not communicated effectively so that the whole community can work together to meet the expectations. In addition, there is a lack of monitoring of implementation of practices in classrooms to ensure that there are school improvement efforts aligned with the expectations of the theory of action across the district.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- The district leader stated that the district is developing a revised theory of action, which has at its core

key components that include the use of data to make strategic decisions, and instructional strategies to meet the CCLS expectations and the needs of all students. The plan sets high expectations and aims for academic excellence for students. However, it does not contain clearly articulated or challenging goals, and its impact on student achievement has yet to be demonstrated.

- The district leader indicated the district's theory of action is communicated to its schools through regularly scheduled meetings between the district leader, his cabinet, and school leaders. The school leaders communicate the theory of action with their staff through faculty meetings and the district's PD program. However, school and district leaders cited a lack of strategic follow through to ensure that the theory of action is consistently implemented in the classrooms. It was also noted by school and district leaders that the school district and schools lack a systematic process to ensure that these new practices were taking place. In addition, there was limited follow up from school or district leaders to ensure that staff who struggled with the implementation of these new initiatives were provided with actionable feedback and additional support to help guide their usage. According to the district leader, the district is developing a more formal communication process to share information with families and the wider community. Additionally, while the District's Comprehensive Improvement Plan (DCIP) contains goals, reviewers found that they are not specific, measurable, ambitious, results-oriented, and timely (SMART) goals, which limits the measurement of progress, as they are not generally quantifiable. The district leader states that DCIP has not been shared with families, and as a result families and community members are not aware of the priorities the district has set for the year or how their roles and actions could help the district meet their DCIP goals and student needs.

Impact Statement:

- The district's theory of action is not widely communicated throughout the district, and the monitoring of implementation is limited, which minimizes efforts to promote higher levels of academic success.

Recommendations:

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 formal communication plan, which engages all families and community members in the district's goals and indicates how the community can help the district meet these goals;
- communicate to families what they and their children will need to do to be successful in school and how the families can support their child's efforts; and
- revise the DCIP so that it contains SMART goals, progress towards these goals is monitored rigorously and regularly, and remediation strategies put in place where progress is too slow.

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

Tenet Rating

Stage 2

Overall Finding:

- The district has not developed a strategic system to ensure that the allocation of resources consistently meets the needs of individual schools and the wider community.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- The district leader stated that the district has some processes in place to allocate resources based on school and student subgroup needs; however, there is no formal system in place to determine if the budget development process and the allocation of resources are having a positive impact on student success.
- The district leader and director of finance stated that they begin the budget process in the fall and begin getting information on what the school's needs are at that time through regular meetings with school and district leaders. Both acknowledge, however, that the district has no long-term process in place to determine if the budget process and allocation of resources results in improvement in the schools district-wide. Performance on State assessments in grades three to eight has stayed stagnant over the past two years. The review team found that no formal procedures are in place to check if there is alignment between significant spending decisions and improved professional practices. The district leader indicated that schools are allocated resources and funding based on their individual needs. For example, in the 2014-2015 school year, the middle school received two new ESL teachers and an instructional coach, based on the increasing ESL population in its building. However, district leaders stated that school leaders have not been held accountable for providing subsequent evidence to quantify the difference these key hires bring to student outcomes. The district leader and director of finance detailed several strategic human resource decisions, which are intended to increase student achievement. One of these decisions is the addition of a full time ESL Director to provide greater focus on the ESL program. The other is the district agreement to partner with a neighboring district to provide special education services instead of sending students with specific learning difficulties to the local Board of Cooperative Education Services (BOCES). However, the review team found that neither decision has corresponding goals or systems in place to measure their impact.
- Both the district leader and director of finance stated a lack of participation by families and community members during the budget development process, although opportunities were provided by the district for community input. The district staff indicated that the district is administering a family survey to gather information about the community's perception of the district and schools. However, this survey will be administered after the budget development process has concluded, and will not inform the current process.

Impact Statement:

- The district's lack of formal systems to align resource allocation and spending decisions to

improvements in student achievement and professional practices limits its efforts for improvement of student learning across the district.

Recommendation:

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

- develop a means to engage the school community in the budget development and resource allocation process; and
- develop and implement systems to determine the impact of decisions relating to budget development and resource allocation on improvements to student achievement.

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 1

Overall Finding:

- Procedures for planning, providing, and monitoring the quality and impact of PD are not effective for needed improvements in professional practices.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- The school district has drawn up a professional development plan (PDP), which is distributed to schools and teachers across the district. The PD team interviewed by the reviewers stated that the PD plan is informed by teacher feedback through representatives from each school and by members of the district's instructional team. The district leader stated that student and individual school data are not considered when identifying priorities for PD. As a result, the PDP is generic in nature, offering the same training for schools and their staff, irrespective of the strength and weaknesses of personnel or student achievement.
- During interviews, members of the district's PD team stated that they have struggled with the issue of linking the PD plan to the district's APPR process. Members of the district's PD team indicated that the team does not link the PDP to teacher practices that are observed during formal or informal observations and confirmed that student achievement data is also not linked to the PDP. There is no formal follow up process to ensure that the strategies provided in the PDP are implemented with a high degree of fidelity or quality in the classrooms. In the one school, which formally tracks teacher practices-- the middle school-- the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) found that this is done through a checklist of items that the school leader notes, such as student engagement, differentiation, and rigor. However, this checklist is not used to differentiate the quality or effectiveness of implementation nor is it used to inform the PDP offerings. As a result, the PDP has had a minimal impact on both teacher practice and student achievement.

Impact Statement:

- The lack of data to develop the district’s professional plan, as well as the lack of systems to determine its success impedes the district’s ability to assess its PD plan and make appropriate adaptations to address the needs of its teachers and learners.

Recommendations:

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

- use student performance data as well as teacher practice data to develop the priorities in the district’s PDP; and
- develop systems to monitor the effectiveness of the PDP in bringing about improvements to student achievement and teacher practices.

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
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Overall Finding:

- Although the school district is striving to create a culture focused on the use of data to drive decisions in a systematic manner, its efforts at data analysis to inform decisions and promote student achievement are not yet successful.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- The district leader, members of the district cabinet, and all groups of school staff interviewed during both the district and school reviews stated that the use of data to make decisions at the district, school, and classroom levels is vitally important to the success of the organization. However, the district leader and district cabinet indicated that data is currently not rigorously collected, analyzed, and used in a manner that enables stakeholders to use the information to drive decisions and to monitor programs to determine their degree of impact on student progress and teacher practices. Although the district cabinet and school leaders articulate the various forms of data related to students that they have access to, such as the New York State assessment data, interim assessment data, and data related to student behavior, referrals, and attendance, they were not able to describe how this data is analyzed to develop challenging goals or to identify trends and patterns for targeted improvement. District and school leaders indicate that this is because the district has not provided sufficient training and support over time to equip teachers and school leaders with the skills to make best use of the data that is available. In addition, the district acknowledges that it has yet to identify best instructional practices in analyzing and using data that could be held up as benchmarks for all schools to reach.
- The DCIP’s goals are not formulated as SMART goals, which makes it is more difficult to measure progress or effectively communicate with schools and other stakeholders if it is on track to meet these goals. Additionally, in the school district’s self-assessment, the IIT found that there are limited

quantifiable measurements under the section that details the impact of its actions. As a result, the district is not able to clearly assess if its theory of action is having the desired impact on student success.

- The district leader stated that the district needs to do more to establish a data driven culture in all schools. While the district makes clear its expectations about the use of data to drive instructional and curriculum decisions as well as goals to monitor school-wide academic performance, discussions with school leaders and evidence from reviews indicate that such practices are not embedded in all schools. As a result, the district is not regularly able to cite quantifiable evidence, which informs whether decisions in the classrooms, schools or the district offices are having the greatest impact on student success.

Impact Statement:

- The lack of SMART goals and corresponding data systems to monitor school and district goals and activities limits the district’s ability to determine the impact of efforts to support student achievement.

Recommendations:

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

- develop SMART goals for its DCIP as well as each School Comprehensive Education Plans (SCEP) in order for it to be able to regularly track progress towards its initiatives; and
- set up systems to gather and analyze data to determine the effectiveness of its programs and district-wide decisions.

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

<p>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.</p>	<p>Tenet Rating</p>	<p>Stage 1</p>
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Areas for Improvement:

Overall Finding:

- The district does not work collaboratively with schools to ensure that the district is fully aware of school needs and to further school leaders’ visions for an environment that meets the needs of all students.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- School leaders reported that the school district does not provide adequate support to its schools in the

development of their goals and systems to monitor the effectiveness of initiatives and programs. School leaders informed reviewers that limited support is provided by the district in setting a school vision and how this may align with the district's efforts for improving student outcomes and professional practices. Although relationships between the district and schools are generally cordial, school leaders report that support to schools tends to be reactive rather than part of a strategic plan that ensures that collaboration and guidance with and from the district is targeted to the specific needs of individual schools. Although the school visited by the review team had a School Comprehensive Education Plan (SCEP) which contained goals, they were not SMART goals, hindering efforts to determine the school's progress in areas related to the school's vision and mission, the implementation of the CCLS, the social and emotional support of students, the successful implementation of strategies to engage and challenge all learners, and the engagement of families as partners in their child's learning. Additionally, school leaders stated that they do not regularly use systems to track progress related to their school goals, and the district leader stated that he has not provided sufficient support to ensure that each school has set up systems to track the effectiveness of their initiatives and programs.

- School leaders stated that they receive support from the district to enable teachers to implement CCLS, but school leaders state that follow up support where initial efforts have not been successful is limited. School leaders state that the district has not done enough to support them in the teacher evaluation process. Although school and district leaders recognize that the feedback to teachers is not leading to improvements in instructional practices, school leaders report that high quality guidance from the district has not been forthcoming in helping them to become effective teacher evaluators. School leaders also noted that although data is used at each school to inform school staff on how students are performing on the State assessments and on each school's interim assessments and benchmarks, the schools are not required by the district to set school-wide goals using this data or to monitor the effectiveness of their instructional program. Overall, school leaders perceive that the support provided by the district is not equipping them to perform well as instructional and strategic leaders and this adversely impacts on their ability to drive forward at a faster rate than is currently the case.

Impact Statement:

- The district's lack of support in enabling schools to set SMART goals, to measure progress towards key goals and to enable school leaders to effectively implement CCLS and to evaluate teachers, hinders efforts to raise academic standards across the district.

Recommendations:

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

- assist each school in the development of their SCEPs, SMART goals and systems to measure the success of school programs and decisions.

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

Tenet Rating

Stage 1

Overall Finding:

- The school district does not effectively collaborate with schools to ensure that each child is challenged and receiving instruction aligned to the CCLS.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- School leaders stated that the district is providing PD on the implementation of the CCLS. However, they indicated that teachers are not regularly implementing teaching strategies aligned to the CCLS, which was also noted by the review team that visited the middle school in May 2015. The district leader also reported that although the district is spending a considerable amount of money on PD to implement the CCLS, it has not been implemented on a consistent basis in the classrooms and that follow up PD or additional coaching support is not consistently provided where initial district efforts have been unsuccessful. He stated that while the school and district leaders stress the importance of CCLS, he and the district staff need to do a better job of monitoring its implementation. School leaders noted that the district is providing limited support from the district to remedy this issue. Teachers interviewed during the middle school review stated that while the teachers are becoming more familiar with the use of student performance data to determine how students are doing academically, they are still trying to find ways in which to use the data to make informed decisions on a daily basis to influence the modification of content, instructional strategies, student groupings, and differentiation to meet the needs of all learners. Teachers stated that support and training from the district to help them in their efforts has been limited, and this is a weakness recognized by the district leadership.
- The school district has not adopted a formal curriculum, which explicitly states the scope, sequence, pacing and strategies to be used to educate the district's students. According to the school leaders, teachers use the New York State mathematics and ELA modules, as well as several programs and online resources to assemble the content of what they teach, as well as a pacing calendar to determine when they are to cover certain content. However, school leaders state that a unified curriculum that includes the scope, sequence, assessments, rubrics, and resources to set expectations for all subjects and grades from kindergarten through grade 12 is lacking. This limits the ability of the school district to effectively communicate to all stakeholders the expectations it has concerning what is taught, how it is taught, and what high quality education looks like to its constituents.

Impact Statement:

- The limited support provided for the implementation of the CCLS hinders the ability of teachers to plan and provide rigorous instruction that challenges each student and enables students to make academic progress.

Recommendation:

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

- develop a culture that celebrates successful teacher practice related to the implementation of the CCLS; and
- work collaboratively with all schools to ensure that a CCLS aligned curriculum is built and implemented successfully in all classrooms.

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 1

Overall Finding:

- The district does not work effectively with schools to provide rigorous learning opportunities for all students. It does not provide adequate PD and targeted training for teachers to develop their professional practices and support the schools' work to improve student achievement.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- School leaders indicated that some teachers do not fully understand the level of rigor, which is required to successfully implement the CCLS. They cite a lack of targeted training from the district as one of the major contributing factors to this lack of rigor in classroom practices. School leaders also stated that instruction is not consistently adaptive to meet the needs of all learners and reported a lack of training and support by the district. They noted weaknesses in the systems for evaluating teacher performance and for providing actionable feedback, which are hampering improved instructional practices and student outcomes. School leaders as well as district leaders stated that while the district has provided PD and resources, there is little accountability for ensuring that training and resources are used in a way that impacts positively in the classroom and on schools' performance. This lack of accountability is reflected in the four year graduation rate for ESL students, which is only six percent, and the graduation rate for students with disabilities, which has fallen from 33 percent to 17 percent over the past two years. Additionally, over 90 percent of students with disabilities and ESL students are at level one on the grade three through grade eight New York State ELA and mathematics assessments over the past two years.
- Discussions with school leaders indicate that they would welcome more collaboration with the district in determining PD priorities and how offerings could be better matched to the needs of different schools. School leaders indicate that PD does not take account of school performance data or the individual strengths and weaknesses of staff members. In addition, school leaders indicate that the district does not work closely enough with them in monitoring and evaluating instruction and the curriculum and in working collaboratively to tackle weaknesses or disseminate best practices either within individual schools or across district schools.

Impact Statement:

- The district is not providing effective targeted professional learning through its offerings or adequate monitoring of classroom practices, which hampers opportunities for improved teacher practice and school goals for 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:

- provide all schools with strategies to increase student expectations as well as rigor in all classrooms;
- develop a means to provide formative and actionable feedback on a regular basis to all teachers to improve teaching and learning; and
- develop a system to monitor the implementation of teaching strategies, which were taught through the schools' district PD program.

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 1

Overall Finding:

- The district does not provide resources and guidance for the schools to positively support the social and emotional developmental health of all students.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- School leaders stated that the district does not provide the schools with a written protocol or a plan that describes the roles and responsibilities of the school or district staff in supporting the social-emotional health of the district's students. Members of the student support team (SST) stated that there is no system in place to ensure that families understand the social and emotional supports that are available in the district.
- School leaders state that new teachers are not trained to identify students who may have social or emotional issues. The middle school review team found that according to the school leader and members of the support staff, staff are not trained to identify signs of behavior, which could lead to referrals and the available supports for students who are in need of interventions. Parents interviewed by the review team also stated that they receive no training on the identification of triggers that may indicate that their child has some social and emotional concerns.
- Parents interviewed by the review team stated that there is no formal data collection by the district related to the social and emotional needs of students, nor is there formal analysis of student behavioral data at the schools in order to determine trends and make decisions in a proactive manner. During the on-site review of the middle school, the review team also found that the school leadership

did not collect and analyze school behavioral data in a systematic way to determine if the actions of the school and staff were having a positive impact on the social, emotional and behavioral health of its students. The review team did not find evidence that the district was providing support to assist and monitor school leaders to support the needs of students and their families. One school leader noted that his school has implemented a new student assistance plan committee to address students' individual social and emotional needs, although there is no data as of yet to prove its effectiveness. Although district leaders note the importance of meeting the social and emotional needs of students, this is not reflected in the in-school support that it provides to schools.

Impact Statement:

- The district's lack of support for schools to address students' social and emotional developmental health impedes the ability of schools to meet the needs of all students.

Recommendation:

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

- provide its schools with written guidance and training to support the district's social and emotional developmental health program.

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 school district's lack of a family communication plan has not provided families with adequate opportunities to become partners with the schools or district in their child's learning.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- According to the district leader and school leaders, the district lacks a comprehensive and formal communication plan that engages all of the school district's stakeholders, especially family and community members. Although the district has a website and sends out newsletters, it has limited systems in place to gauge how many parents use the website or how well messages and information sent through these mechanisms reach parents or provide parents with the information they require or need. School leaders and district leaders note that the district is not doing as well as it could in promoting parental engagement. The curriculum and instruction team stated that the district does not have a formal plan for promoting parental engagement and educating families on the district's initiatives in regards to the CCLS and how they can support their child's education plan at home. Some parents reported that the district's communication with parents is limited, and the district does not provide the schools with adequate support and monitoring to assist schools in the development of a

comprehensive communication plan.

- Although a school leader interviewed by the review team stated that his school has a Parent Teacher Organization (PTO), he indicated there was low parent turnout at PTO events. This was echoed by other school leaders interviewed by the review team. Some parents also reported low family participation at school-wide events, particularly those that are related to the support of the CCLS. Some participants indicated that this may relate to parents working several jobs, which makes attendance at meetings difficult, as well as a language barrier, as many families speak Spanish as a first language. However, the district and school leaders indicated that the district always provides schools with translators at school-wide events. Additionally, the school district translates all documents from the school district and school leadership. However, school leaders state that the school district does not regularly translate all documents or communications from teachers to families. The ESL Coordinator reported that this has caused a communication gap between some families and schools, limiting the ability of some families to become engaged members of the school community. As a result of this issue, the review team found that the school district has added a full time ESL Director to help the school district engage the Spanish speaking community to enable more parents to participate in their child's education. The review team found that the impact of this work has not yet been evaluated.

Impact Statement:

- The district's lack of a formal plan, corresponding goals, and systems to engage all families to actively participate in their child's education limits families from being able to work in close partnership with the schools to support the social and emotional development of each child and improve their child's 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:

- develop district and school-wide plans to engage all families in the district;
- develop SMART goals to correspond with these plans to ensure that regular and on-going progress is occurring; and
- develop systems to measure progress against these goals.