



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

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



<b>BEDS Code</b>	17050010000
<b>District</b>	Gloversville Enlarged School District
<b>District Address</b>	234 Lincoln Street, Gloversville, NY 12078
<b>Superintendent</b>	Michael Vanyo
<b>Date(s) of Review</b>	May 26-27, 2015

District Information Sheet			
<b>Grade Configuration</b>	PreK-12	<b>Total Enrollment</b>	2836
		<b>Number of Schools</b>	6
<b>District Composition (most recent data)</b>			
<b>% Title I Population</b>	100%	<b>% Attendance Rate</b>	91%
<b>% Free Lunch</b>	52%	<b>% Reduced Lunch</b>	8%
<b>% Limited English Proficient</b>	0%	<b>% Students with Disabilities</b>	17%
<b>Racial/Ethnic Origin (most recent data)</b>			
<b>% American Indian or Alaska Native</b>	0%	<b>% Black or African American</b>	5%
<b>% Hispanic or Latino</b>	4%	<b>% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</b>	1%
<b>% White</b>	88%	<b>% Multi-Racial</b>	3%
<b>Personnel (most recent data)</b>			
<b>Years Superintendent Assigned to District</b>	3	<b># of Deputy/Assistant Superintendents</b>	1
<b># of Principals</b>	6	<b># of Assistant Principals</b>	2
<b># of Teachers</b>	233	<b>Avg. Class Size</b>	22
<b>% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate</b>	0%	<b>% Teaching Out of Certification</b>	1%
<b>% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience</b>	33%	<b>Average Teacher Absences</b>	15.77
<b>Teacher Turnover Rate – Teachers &lt; 5 years exp.</b>	2%	<b>Teacher Turnover Rate – All Teachers</b>	5%
<b>Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2013-14)</b>			
<b>ELA Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4</b>	14%	<b>Mathematics Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4</b>	17%
<b>Science Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4 (4th Grade)</b>	77%	<b>Science Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4 (8th Grade)</b>	59%
<b>Student Performance for High Schools (2013-14)</b>			
<b>ELA Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4</b>	62%	<b>Mathematics Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4</b>	67%
<b>Credit Accumulation High Schools Only (2013-14)</b>			
<b>4 Year Graduation Rate</b>	61%	<b>6 Year Graduation Rate</b>	67%
<b>% of earning Regents Diploma w/ Advanced Des.</b>	19%		
<b>Current NYSED Accountability Status</b>			
<b># of Reward Schools</b>	0	<b># of Priority Schools</b>	0
<b># of Schools In Good Standing</b>	1	<b># of Focus Schools</b>	5
<b># of LAP Schools</b>			

### District Accountability Status

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

#### DISTRICT PRIORITIES AS WRITTEN BY THE DISTRICT:

1. Increase graduation rate by 3%.
2. Increase the number of students reading at or above grade level by 5%.
3. Increase the number of students scoring a Level 3 or 4 on NYS 3-8 assessments and NYS Regents Examinations by 5%.
4. Reduce the number of students with 20 or more absences by 20%.
5. Reduce course failures by 10%.

## **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) reviews of two schools in the district also informed the district review.
- During IIT school reviews in the district, reviewers visited 72 classrooms across the two schools, and IIT reviewers conducted focus group interviews with students, staff and parents.
- District reviewers conducted interviews with district leadership, central office staff and a focus group of principals.

**Tenet 1 - District Leadership and Capacity:** The district examines school systems and makes intentional decisions to identify and provide critical expectations, supports and structures in all areas of need so that schools are able to respond to their community and ensure that all students are successful.

#	Statement of Practice	Stage 4	Stage 3	Stage 2	Stage 1
1.1	The district has a comprehensive approach for recruiting, evaluating, and sustaining high-quality personnel that affords schools the ability to ensure success by addressing the needs of their community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.2	The district leadership has a comprehensive and explicit theory of action about school culture that communicates high expectations for addressing the needs of all constituents.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.3	The district is organized and allocates resources (financial, staff support, materials, etc.) in a way that aligns appropriate levels of support for schools based on the needs of the school community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.4	The district has a comprehensive plan to create, deliver and monitor professional development in all pertinent areas that is adaptive and tailored to the needs of individual schools.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.5	The district promotes a data-driven culture by providing strategies connected to best practices that all staff members and school communities are expected to be held accountable for implementing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 1:</b>				2	

**Tenet 2 - School Leader Practices and Decisions:** Visionary leaders create a school community and culture that lead to success, well-being and high academic outcomes for all students via systems of continuous and sustainable school improvement.

#	Statement of Practice	Stage 4	Stage 3	Stage 2	Stage 1
2.1	The district works collaboratively with the school to provide opportunities and supports for the school leader to create, develop and nurture a school environment that is responsive to the needs of the entire school community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Tenet 3 - Curriculum Development and Support:** The school has rigorous and coherent curricula and assessments that are appropriately aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) for all students and are modified for identified subgroups in order to maximize teacher instructional practices and student-learning outcomes.

#	Statement of Practice	Stage 4	Stage 3	Stage 2	Stage 1
3.1	The district works collaboratively with the school(s) to ensure CCLS curriculum that provide 21st Century and College and Career Readiness skills in all content areas and provides fiscal and human resources for implementation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Tenet 4 - Teacher Practices and Decisions:** Teachers engage in strategic practices and decision-making in order to address the gap between what students know and need to learn, so that all students and pertinent subgroups experience consistent high levels of engagement, thinking, and achievement.

#	Statement of Practice	Stage 4	Stage 3	Stage 2	Stage 1
4.1	The district works collaboratively with the school to provide opportunities and supports for teachers to develop strategies and practices and addresses effective planning and account for student data, needs, goals, and levels of engagement.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Tenet 5 - Student Social and Emotional Developmental Health:** The school community identifies, promotes, and supports social and emotional development by designing systems and experiences that lead to healthy relationships and a safe, respectful environment that is conducive to learning for all constituents.

#	Statement of Practice	Stage 4	Stage 3	Stage 2	Stage 1
5.1	The district creates policy and works collaboratively with the school to provide opportunities and resources that positively support students' social and emotional developmental health.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Tenet 6 - Family and Community Engagement:** The school creates a culture of partnership where families, community members, and school staff work together to share in the responsibility for student academic progress and social-emotional growth and well-being.

#	Statement of Practice	Stage 4	Stage 3	Stage 2	Stage 1
6.1	The district has a comprehensive family and community engagement strategic plan that states the expectations around creating and sustaining a welcoming environment for families, reciprocal communication, and establishing partnerships with community organizations and families.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**District Review – Findings, Evidence, Impact and Recommendations:**

<p><b>Tenet 1 - District Leadership and Capacity:</b> The district examines school systems and makes intentional decisions to identify and provide critical expectations, supports and structures in all areas of need so that schools are able to respond to their community and ensure that all students are successful.</p>	<p><b>Overall Tenet Rating</b></p>	<p><b>Stage 2</b></p>
<p><b>Statement of Practice 1.1:</b> The district has a comprehensive approach for recruiting, evaluating, and sustaining high-quality personnel that affords schools the ability to ensure success by addressing the needs of their community.</p>	<p><b>Tenet Rating</b></p>	<p><b>Stage 2</b></p>
<p><b>Overall Finding:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The district has developed a comprehensive approach for recruiting candidates and interviewing them, which is understood by all participants. While the district has some structures in place for supporting teachers and school leaders they have hired, weaknesses in the evaluation system and monitoring the impact of professional development (PD) minimize efforts to address instructional improvement and student needs.</li> </ul> <p><b>Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>During interviews, district and school leaders reported to the review team that the district has a systematic hiring process based on openings and needs identified to meet the targets outlined in their “Results First” initiative, which is aimed at driving district and school improvement. The district uses the Online Application System (OLAS), which is housed at the Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), to identify potential candidates. The district also has partnerships with area colleges such as the University of Albany and Fulton Montgomery Community College and professional networks such as the regional superintendents’ group for its recruitment efforts. District and school leaders review resumes against a rubric they have created and follow a district-developed hiring manual. Interview teams meet with potential candidates, who have dual certification in their grade or content area as well as in reading or special education. The district leader stated that elementary school candidates do not interview for a particular school or grade level and often have dual certification in areas such as reading or special education so that they are better prepared and suited for assignment wherever the need or fit is best. Potential hires meet with the district leader for a final interview and decision. District leadership reported that new staff members are assigned a mentor who supports their work with guidance and suggestions. The mentor visits the classrooms of teachers new to the district and provides support and guidance on aspects such as effective instructional strategies or behavior management. District leadership stated that with low turnover rates, incentives are not needed to keep personnel working in the district. However, staff indicated that the district does not carry out exit interviews for determining reasons why personnel leave the district.</li> <li>Teachers are evaluated by district and school staff using the Danielson framework. The observation process includes pre- and post-observation discussions as well as written feedback for teachers. District leadership stated findings are discussed by school and district leaders at monthly</li> </ul>		

administrative cabinet meetings in order to identify areas that need improvement and to determine areas for continued PD. However, the review team found there is no formal process in place for leaders to target follow-up visits to ensure that feedback from observations has been acted upon by teachers to improve instructional strategies and practices. Reviewers examined a district professional development plan (PDP), which was developed in April 2014 and updated for the 2014-15 school year. While the plan is aligned to the district’s goals, district leaders stated that they have no evidence to substantiate how PD is directly impacting student achievement or improving teacher practices of both tenured teachers and teachers new to the district.

**Impact Statement:**

- A rigorous recruitment and hiring process is in place to ensure new hires are highly qualified and meet the needs of the district. However, weaknesses in monitoring the teacher evaluation system to ensure that feedback has been implemented and that PD has improved teacher practices and student achievement, limit efforts at progress 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:

- develop and implement a process to ensure that feedback given to teachers during the post-observation conference and after walk-throughs is implemented in the classroom, and implement strategies to evaluate the impact that PD brings to teachers’ practices in the classroom to improve instructional practices and student learning.

**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 has communicated the theory of action and vision of high expectations, which is embodied in the “Results First” initiative, to school leaders, teachers, staff, and parents. However, “Results First” target goals are not being met for all students.

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

- The district leaders reported to the review team that their explicit theory of action is outlined in the “Results First” initiative. Documents provided to the review team indicate that district leaders have connected their expectations for increased student achievement to improvement of teacher instructional practices. “Results First” targets include: 1) increasing the graduation rate by three percent; 2) increasing the number of students reading at grade level; 3) increasing the number of students scoring three or four on the New York State assessments in grades three to eight and passing Regents examinations in grades eight to twelve; 4) reducing the number of students with 20 or more absences by 20 percent; and 5) reducing the number of course failures by 10 percent. District

leadership reported they have shared these targets with all schools and teachers and with families through community newsletters, the district website, and presentations at the board of education meetings. There is a small Hispanic population in the district, but the review team found that the mission, vision, and goals of the “Results First” initiative are not translated into Spanish on the website or in written documentation. District and school leaders reported that through retreats, continued PD about the initiative, and bi-weekly meetings between school and district leaders, school leaders recognize and seek to ensure that their schools’ own goals are driven by the district’s targets. School leaders interviewed by the review team indicated they are focused on the district goals and feel supported by the district and each other as they seek to achieve the targets in their own schools. However, school leaders report their challenge is ensuring that all teachers throughout their respective schools understand the targets and work individually and collectively with colleagues to achieve them. District leaders acknowledged that more work needs to be done through rigorous monitoring and evaluation and raising awareness that all staff must set high expectations for all students.

- Document reviews and discussions with focus groups of school leaders indicate that the district and the schools are focusing on data collection to monitor the progress they are making towards their goals. District leadership indicated that they and school leaders meet regularly to discuss data and identify the progress in each school. Document reviews indicated that data collection and analysis of formative assessments as well as other areas covered by the targets, such as attendance and course failures are now done on a regular basis. However, the district leadership acknowledged a weakness in not consistently using and analyzing available data to drive instruction and ensure that the needs of all students are addressed. In most elementary schools, for example, the numbers of students reading at grade level are increasing, but there are still a substantial number of students, including students with disabilities, who are not at grade level. Additionally, data, particularly at the secondary school level, are not disaggregated by sub-groups, such as students with disabilities and economically disadvantaged students, in order to identify and monitor root causes and plan appropriate actions and remedies. In addition, school reviews indicate that the goals of the “Results First” initiative are not yet reflected in best teaching practices. The review team did not find evidence that the district has effectively addressed these issues.

**Impact Statement:**

- While the district has an explicit theory of action in the form of its “Results First” initiative, the limited connection in practice between the goals, the use of data, and the improvement of teacher practices, minimizes student achievement for some groups of 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:

- focus on linking instructional practices with student performance by consistently monitoring activities in the classroom with data; and

- disaggregate data by sub-group, especially at the secondary schools, to ensure that the achievement of students with disabilities and economically disadvantaged students is monitored and adjusted as needed.

**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 is beginning to make strategic decisions to support the target goals of its “Results First” initiative. While the resources are aligned with the goals of the district and school improvement, increases in student achievement are not district-wide due to the lack of rigor in monitoring and evaluating if spending is linked to improved outcomes.

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

- District leaders explained that they use the “Results First” targets to guide their allocation of resources. This is in addition to allocating basic budgets to schools based on students on roll and taking into account other factors such as economic disadvantage, students with disabilities, and English language learners (ELLs). School leaders state that they feel involved in resource allocation decision making because they are given an opportunity to request additional resources when needed through the regular meetings with district leaders. For example, to address the goals of increasing reading levels and the number of students proficient at State assessments, school leaders requested additional progress monitoring tools and additional leveled readers for each elementary school. The district provided benchmarking assessments to monitor progress and revamped the school libraries, discarding outdated books and replacing them with books at all guided reading levels. The district provided data to reviewers that indicated that many students have increased their reading levels. However, district leaders acknowledged that there are no rigorous procedures in place to link spending decisions to an expected improvement in student outcomes or instructional practices. Although resources, when the budget allows, are allocated to schools to meet their needs, expectations are not made clear that the use of resources should be evaluated and that schools are accountable for demonstrating a quantifiable impact so that value for money is readily demonstrated.
- District leaders stated that they have made a number of human resource decisions aimed at improving schools in the district; however, there has not been a systematic approach to consistently checking and ensuring that these decisions are leading to more positive outcomes for all students. For example, an attendance officer was hired to make home visits and monitor student attendance. Data show that while the numbers of absences at the high school, for example, have gone down from last school year for the same period, 161 to 134 respectively, the target of 129 was not met, and no evaluation was carried out to determine the reasons. District leadership reported that they added two critical staff positions this school year, the directors of elementary and secondary curriculum and instruction. These district leaders have established systems to support the use of data from formative and

summative assessments to guide instructional practice, identify and provide PD, and create curriculum documents to ensure alignment with the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). District staff noted that due to their efforts, teachers, especially at the elementary schools, are meeting and planning together and students across the district are learning from the same curriculum in each grade. However, no formalized procedures are in place to evaluate the impact that this investment is having in raising academic standards, instructional practices or student outcomes.

**Impact Statement:**

- The allocation of resources by the district to specific areas of need has not consistently led to a corresponding improvement in instructional practices or 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 and implement a system to determine the direct impact of the resources being expended on achieving the goals as outlined in the “Results First” initiative, including raising the number of students reading at grade level, scoring proficient on State assessments, passing Regents examinations, and graduating as well as reducing the number of absences. In addition, the overall impact of resource expenditure should lead to sustained improvements in teacher instructional practices

**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 a comprehensive plan to identify and deliver PD priorities to all staff. However, there is a lack of monitoring to ensure that the content learned in PD is being implemented effectively in classrooms and resulting in student growth.

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

- The district’s PD plan document was shared with the reviewers. District leadership indicated that the plan was developed by the district shared decision-making team and the PD team, which include district and school leaders and school staff. As outlined in the document, these teams had representation from all the schools in the district. The plan provided to the review team reflects the five goals of the “Results First” initiative. Each goal includes strategies/action steps, PD/resources, timelines, and evaluation methods. While the district has outlined the overarching plan, district leadership noted there is also an opportunity for school leaders to identify PD needs that are specific to their particular school. However, district leaders shared with the reviewers that school leaders had differing levels of expertise in determining the needs of the teachers in their buildings.
- The directors of elementary and secondary curriculum and instruction shared with reviewers that data from many sources, including student reading levels, benchmark assessment results, and quarterly

grades, for example, were the basis for some of the priorities identified for PD. Elementary grade staff have bi-weekly data meetings where they review results and make instructional and/or curricular modifications for the grade level. Each grade level meeting in the elementary schools is attended, via teleconference, by all teachers in schools across the district. District and school leaders and teachers report that this as an important part of ongoing PD because it allows teachers to learn from others' practices. The district director of curriculum, who provides training on topics such as modeling, analyzing data, and making decisions on next steps, also provides input at these meetings. At the secondary level, the director attends department meetings and discusses the use of data and how to modify instruction based on assessment results. District leadership also noted that they hire outside consultants to work with teachers to enable them to better align their instruction with the CCLS. Despite these efforts, the review team found that the district has little knowledge of the impact of these sessions or of any PD sessions that are provided because there are no systems to regularly or rigorously make the connection between PD and the difference that it makes in all classrooms to student learning and outcomes. District leaders state that there is no specific lens during lesson observations that focuses on the effectiveness of PD as a tool for driving improvements in student achievement.

- District leadership noted that recommendations from last year's district review included aligning the PD plan more closely with district goals and evaluating its effect. With the implementation of the "Results First" initiative, the district has aligned its plan with its targets. However, both district and school leaders indicated that neither the district nor schools have systems in place to check that teachers consistently implement what they have learned in PD into their instructional practices.

**Impact Statement:**

- The lack of monitoring and evaluating procedures by the district to gauge the success of PD in raising academic standards limits the ability of the district to promote school improvement and student outcomes 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:

- establish and communicate ways for district and school leaders to monitor how PD practices are implemented in the classroom; and
- develop strategies to ensure that teachers are held accountable for employing best practices to support student growth for every student.

<p><b>Statement of Practice 1.5:</b> The district promotes a data-driven culture by providing strategies connected to best practices that all staff members and school communities are expected to be held accountable for implementing.</p>	<p><b>Tenet Rating</b></p>	<p><b>Stage 2</b></p>
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**Overall Finding:**

- While the district is focusing more attention on using and analyzing data to drive school improvement, efforts to implement a data-driven culture district-wide are limited, which minimizes progress in improving classroom practices and academic growth for all students.

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

- District leadership noted that they are in the process of establishing a data-driven culture in order to reach the five target goals of the “Results First” Initiative. However, the district has not fully met the recommendation from the last district review to ensure that all staff are effective at using and analyzing data to drive instructional and curriculum planning throughout the district. District and school leaders state that systems are being put in place to collect, analyze, and monitor data, including academic, behavioral, attendance, and graduation rates. District leadership indicated that district and school staff meet regularly to analyze data and use that information when guiding teachers towards instructional decisions to increase student success. Data from all schools are shared at meetings between school and district leaders, who also provide quarterly data reports to the board of education. However, district and school leaders report that more work needs to be done to ensure that this data is analyzed for patterns and trends and to target specific areas in need of improvement. Additional analysis of data is needed at the school and classroom level, particularly in relation to tracking the performance of different sub-groups, such as economically disadvantaged students, English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, and identifying strategies and PD that is needed to accelerate student progress to close the achievement gap.
- District leaders reported that for the 2014-15 school year, district and school leaders have a better sense of how students are progressing throughout the year and what additional supports should be put in place. They indicated that the district is in the process of helping teachers set goals for students. For example, district leaders shared data documents with reviewers that showed that of the 200 students who entered grade six in September 2014, only 34 were reading at grade level. Fifty-one of those were reading below grade three. Currently, the data reviewed indicated that 120 of those 200 are reading at grade level. They also noted that 18 percent of the incoming kindergarten students were reading at grade level, and by midyear, that number had increased to 47 percent of the students. District leaders used this type of evidence to determine the need for a better transition plan from grade five to six and to provide more attention to pre-kindergarten programs within the district. Effective data utilization practice is not yet replicated in all classrooms across the district. School and district leaders as well as evidence from school reviews indicate that Data-Driven Instruction (DDI) remains an ongoing weakness in schools throughout the district. While the district indicates it makes clear the expectation as to how data should be used to guide and modify instructional practices, many teachers in both elementary and secondary schools reported they still do not understand how to analyze the data themselves or how to decide the next steps to take for individual students or their class. District leaders acknowledged that the district needs to do more to identify data-driven practices in the classroom that are worthy of

dissemination across all schools.

**Impact Statement:**

- Limited monitoring of the use of data to improve classroom practices and student outcomes inhibits sustained academic growth and school improvement.

**Recommendation:**

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

- work collaboratively with school leaders and school staff to develop and implement a system that requires teachers to analyze their own student data, adjust their instruction accordingly, and provide ways in which they will evaluate the effectiveness of their classroom practice.

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

<b>Statement of Practice 2.1 - School Leader Practices and Decisions:</b> 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.	<b>Tenet Rating</b>	<b>Stage 2</b>
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**Areas for Improvement:**

**Overall Finding:**

- The district is working with the schools to help them implement their vision and the district’s goals. However, the district does not provide sufficient support and monitoring so that improvement efforts make a difference in academic outcomes for all students.

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

- District and school leaders indicated that the district has communicated its goals and aspirations to school leaders and the wider community. School leaders reported to the review team that although they have their own vision and goals, the district works with them to help align their school goals with those of the district’s “Results First” initiative. School leaders indicated that the district provides support for school leaders through retreats, quarterly “Results First” meetings with progress monitoring between meetings, cabinet meetings, and the option to take part in a leadership academy sponsored by the State University of New York (SUNY) at Plattsburgh and/or the Leadership Academy at BOCES. School leaders report that these meetings help them stay focused on the goals, and that the communication between the district and the schools helps guide them in their work and brings consistency to the programs, especially across the four elementary schools. However, school leaders indicated that their requested attendance at many district committee and administrative meetings, limits the amount of time they can be in classrooms guiding teachers.
- School leaders state that the district has created several new positions, which support the work of the school leaders and help them focus on the target goals. However, they note that the district does not

always provide information concerning the overall impact of initiatives across the district. The attendance officer, for example, works directly with secondary school leaders and the student support team to increase student attendance by visiting homes, and two behavioral specialists have been hired to serve all schools in the district. However, school leaders shared that they are concerned about the mental health challenges among their students and how the district will fully meet these challenges moving forward, particularly if the number of at-risk students increases. School leaders and teachers state that the directors of elementary and secondary curriculum and instruction are instrumental in helping teachers modify their curriculum and instructional practices through the collection and analysis of formative and summative assessment data. While teachers and school leaders are given this information, they report they are at various stages in the process of being able to analyze it themselves. School leaders state that some teachers do not share the same urgency for improvement as outlined in the district's "Results First" improvement initiative. In addition, walk-throughs showed that both general education and special education teachers need additional support in checking for understanding throughout the lesson, explicitly teaching strategies for students to respond to higher order questions, and in differentiating instruction to ensure students work in groups of various sizes.

- School leaders and teachers state that they welcome the support that the district provides through PD for both the curriculum and instructional strategies, but school leaders indicate that they are unclear about the impact that PD is bringing to improvements to student achievement other than through anecdotal observations or feedback provided by district staff and their own observations. They noted that this is a weakness on the part of the district and expressed the desire to collaborate with the district to gain a better overview of the impact of PD. Middle school and high school leaders have shared that the district has supported them through the analysis of data, in changing secondary programming. For example, they note that because the district recognized that some grade eight students are not well prepared to enter the high school, district and school leaders created a freshman academy to ensure a more supportive environment for the students. The limited success of Academic Intervention Services (AIS) prompted the decision to have the high school move to a block schedule to allow more opportunity for additional academic support through extended lab periods for mathematics and ELA. School leaders indicated they are appreciative of the district's efforts but would welcome more guidance on how to assess the impact of these decisions and the modifications that may be needed to set a pathway for sustained student success.

**Impact Statement:**

- Although the district works collaboratively with the schools, limited monitoring of the impact of initiatives and support to promote the skills of teachers regarding the use of data and a sense of urgency for improvement minimizes efforts to promote student success.

**Recommendation:**

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

- assess the level of understanding held by school leaders and provide additional support and training where needed so that all school leaders are enabled to:
  - guide teachers to use data to make strategic decisions about their instruction and assessment to ensure student success; and
  - monitor the effectiveness of the decisions teachers have made.

**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:**

- With the creation of the directors of elementary and secondary curriculum and instruction positions to guide them, teachers across the district are focusing more on curriculum aligned to the CCLS. However, the impact on delivering a curriculum that meets the needs of all students is not yet consistently established.

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

- School leaders and teachers state that the district directors of elementary and secondary curriculum and instruction play a pivotal role in seeking to establish data-driven decision making and aligning the curriculum with the CCLS. The elementary and secondary directors explained to the review team that much of the 2014-15 school year has been spent reviewing any curricula that was in place. In most cases, teachers used the *Engage NY* modules. School leaders state that some teachers struggle to provide a challenging curriculum that engages all students and that they need additional support from the district in monitoring curriculum implementation so that they can provide feedback to teachers and to the directors of curriculum and instruction on the aspects of planning and implementation that need further refinement.
- School leaders reported that the secondary school teachers, particularly in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics, are reviewing the modules they have been using and making decisions about pacing and content. School and district leaders explained to the reviewers that the process of curriculum adjustment is moving slowly in the middle and high school because of a lack of more focused PD and support. District leadership stated that they are committed to supporting this work, and plans have been made for curriculum development sessions this summer. The district has also committed to the implementation of the curriculum software program, *Rubicon Atlas*, which will allow teachers to access each other's maps and assessments. Teachers are in the process of being trained on the program. They told reviewers that they are planning to upload the work they accomplish in the summer curriculum sessions to *Rubicon Atlas*, and there are plans to continue to revise curriculum based on data during the grade level meetings. School leaders pointed out the necessity of follow up observations from all these activities to ensure that the time and money invested in these and other training activities reap consistent and sustained gains in the classroom, and they indicated that additional support is needed from the district.

**Impact Statement:**

- Although efforts are taking place to ensure the implementation of an engaging curriculum aligned to the CCLS, a lack of rigor in monitoring the impact of these efforts limits the acceleration of improvements to 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:

- work with school leaders to monitor the impact and effectiveness of all its efforts in supporting the implementation of a challenging and engaging curriculum; and
- identify and disseminate best practices and adjust practices in need of improvement.

**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 works with the schools to provide PD for teachers to develop strategies and practices to increase their effectiveness. However, the district has not provided effective support to ensure that instructional practices are monitored by school leaders in a way that holds teachers accountable for implementing what they have learned through PD to improve student achievement.

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

- The district leader, cabinet, curriculum and instruction and PD teams noted the PD opportunities teachers have across all grades. School leaders and teachers both agreed that the district puts much effort into providing PD sessions on a wide variety of areas and also that district staff provide support in school at grade level and assessment meetings to help teachers develop strategies to use data to guide their instruction. However, both school leaders and teachers state that some teachers still lack the confidence and skills to analyze and use data effectively so that it makes a difference to the quality of their instruction and to student learning. Some teachers interviewed by the review team state that at times the PD and support that is provided does not take account of the differences in competencies of individual teachers to use data, and a lack of differentiated training or follow up results in teachers' needs not being met.
- School leaders state that they welcome the district's efforts to provide PD for schools and teachers but also note that teachers are not held accountable by the district for implementing into their daily instructional practices, strategies, skills and knowledge learned in PD sessions. This weakness, school leader's state, lessens the impact of PD as a tool for driving school improvement. School leaders also report that not enough is done to evaluate the quality of the delivery of PD and the styles and content that are most effective with teachers. School and district leaders indicated that there is no formalized method for them to monitor PD implementation and effectiveness in classrooms. District and school leaders also noted, in keeping with findings of reviewers who visited the schools, that higher order

questioning and other rigorous opportunities for students to learn were not consistently evident during classroom visitations. School leaders informed reviewers that they would welcome the opportunity to spend more time in classrooms evaluating the impact of PD but that administrative duties and in some cases in the elementary schools, lack of an assistant principal, minimize opportunities for them to visit classes.

**Impact Statement:**

- The district provides PD opportunities and other forms of support to teachers. However, limited evaluation of the impact of PD and inadequate targeted training for teachers limit its ability to determine follow-up action that is needed to improve teacher practices and to ensure rigorous learning opportunities for 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:

- create a process for district and school leaders to visit classrooms to monitor the effectiveness of PD and other teacher supports; and
- ensure that school leaders specifically focus on those practices addressed during PD to determine its value as well as how instruction is modified based on data, and the level of higher order questioning and assignments given to students, which increase learning opportunities for all students.

**Statement of Practice 5.1 - Student Social and Emotional Developmental Health:** The district creates policy and works collaboratively with the school to provide opportunities and resources that positively support students' social and emotional developmental health.

**Tenet Rating**

**Stage 2**

**Overall Finding:**

- The district has not yet fully implemented systems, PD or the usage of data to fully meet the social and emotional needs of all students.

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

- During interviews with the review team, some school leaders shared positive comments about the district's support for meeting students' social and emotional needs; however, others reported that there is still a way to go to ensure that the district and schools make best use of data to identify and meet the needs of students and to ensure that PD equips school staff with the capacity to address student needs. The school leaders who were interviewed stated that the district has increased personnel to better meet the needs of schools. Along with four district family community educators, school leaders and support staff noted that the district has also created positions for two behavior specialists who serve on the school and district student based support teams (SBSTs). Participants in the student support focus groups explained to reviewers that the district developed a student referral procedure. Teacher referrals are reviewed by each school's SBST who then plan appropriate interventions for students. The SBST members also monitor the district's Positive Behavioral

Interventions and Supports (PBIS) initiative. In the two years PBIS has been in place, school leaders state that referrals district-wide have diminished by 400 over this same two year period. As part of school leaders' individual goals developed under the "Results First" initiative, school leaders shared that they have identified a group of students at risk of failing academically and/or having potentially serious behavior problems. However, further discussions with school leaders indicate that this initiative is only targeted to students with the severest level of need and is not identifying and supporting students who may have a lesser but no less important need. School leaders state that the district does not do enough to help them support these other students or to equip them and their school staff with the skills to make best use of data to identify at an early stage students who may be or are likely to experience social and/or academic difficulties. Interviews with school leaders indicated that the district and schools do not work closely together in rigorously analyzing attendance, behavioral, and other data that could adversely impact the academic performance of students. School leaders state they would welcome greater district support in this area.

- School leaders and support staff indicated that the district continues to offer limited PD to teachers in PBIS strategies and through conferences. School leaders stated that they engaged in book studies focused on engaging students in poverty, but that these studies occurred more than two years ago. School leaders and school staff report that there is insufficient PD provided by the district to help staff identify signs of behavior that could lead to referrals or the strategies that could be used for students in need of interventions. Without such PD, school leaders state that staff are not consistently equipped to deal with the challenging needs that some students display. Although there is not a wealth of services available in the area, district leaders reported that they work closely with some social service agencies.

**Impact Statement:**

- The lack of PD that focuses on students' social and emotional health means that adults in schools are not equipped with the skills to identify and meet the needs of all students, which limits student growth and 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:

- develop and implement procedures to consistently collect and analyze data from all schools that address the social and developmental health needs of students; and
- provide PD, including follow-up support, to all staff, in conjunction with community agencies, to ensure students' needs are addressed.

**Statement of Practice 6.1 - Family and Community Engagement:** The district has a comprehensive family and community engagement strategic plan that states the expectations around creating and sustaining a welcoming environment for families, reciprocal communication, and establishing partnerships with community organizations and families.

**Tenet Rating**

**Stage 2**

**Overall Finding:**

- While the district provides four family community educators to promote family engagement, it lacks a formal comprehensive communication plan that educates parents about how they can become partners with the schools or the district in their child's learning.

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

- District and school leaders reported that the district's two elementary school family community educators serve two schools each while at the middle school and high school the position is full-time in each school. The family educators organize school and community events in attempts to build bridges between the schools, the district, and the families in the community; however, school leaders report they are not always successful in these efforts. Reviewers found during interviews with school leaders and student support staff at district and school reviews, that there are a number of events for families scheduled throughout the school year but participation is often low. Teachers and school leaders noted that this is often the case when events are focused on academic issues such as explanations of the CCLS or State assessment results, but the district has not made any formal attempts to ascertain why this is the case. Family community educators plan "Family Fun Nights," which are monthly events that provide opportunities for students and families to come to school and partake in activities such as playing games together. These events rotate to different schools in the district throughout the year in attempts to increase parental engagement and participation, but district data indicates that limited numbers of families attend events if they are not held at the neighborhood school.
- School leaders state that the district communicates with families through newsletters and the district website, which has links to other sites to help support parental engagement, including information about the requirements for parent support through Title I funding. However, reviewers found that systems are not securely in place to gauge how many families access the website, and both school and district leaders stated that more work needs to be done to train school staff in building and sustaining partnerships with parents and families and to provide parents with guidance on how they can best support their child's learning at home. Four percent of the district's population is Hispanic but the district does not provide translations of documents on the website or provide translators at school or district events. The middle school and high school maintain parent portals to enable parents to monitor students' grades and assignments, but no records are kept as to how many parents access the portals. School leaders indicated that all schools hold parent teacher conferences, and the elementary schools devote five half days each year for the conferences. Apart from these conferences, which school leaders note are well attended, the district and schools do not work collaboratively to devise innovative strategies to better engage parents in supporting their child's education and the schools' success.

**Impact Statement:**

- While the district provides some support for the development of partnerships between schools and families, the lack of a comprehensive communication and parental engagement plan and a system for evaluation limits the ability of the district and the schools to work together to optimize 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:

- collaborate with schools and families to develop and implement a comprehensive communication plan, which maps out strategies to engage parents as partners in the success of schools and students; analyze more fully the data already collected to determine which events, including topic, venue, and time of year, are most well attended. Using this information, school and district leaders, working in collaboration with family community educators, should plan and implement more innovative ways of supporting school/family partnerships.