



# 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>	440901040000
<b>District</b>	Highland Falls-Fort Montgomery Central School District
<b>District Address</b>	21 Morgan Road, Highland Falls, NY 10928
<b>Superintendent</b>	Frank Sheboy
<b>Date(s) of Review</b>	June 9-10, 2015

District Information Sheet					
<b>Grade</b>	K-12	<b>Total Enrollment</b>	1,001	<b>Number of Schools</b>	3
District Composition ( <i>most recent data</i> )					
<b>% Title I Population</b>	39	<b>% Attendance Rate</b>	94.37		
<b>% Free Lunch</b>	27	<b>% Reduced Lunch</b>	6		
<b>% Limited English Proficient</b>	5	<b>% Students with Disabilities</b>	14		
Racial/Ethnic Origin ( <i>most recent data</i> )					
<b>% American Indian or Alaska Native</b>	.01	<b>% Black or African American</b>	12		
<b>% Hispanic or Latino</b>	20	<b>% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</b>	3		
<b>% White</b>	55	<b>% Multi-Racial</b>	3		
Personnel ( <i>most recent data</i> )					
<b>Years Superintendent Assigned to District</b>	1 month	<b># of Deputy/Assistant Superintendents</b>	0		
<b># of Principals</b>	3	<b># of Assistant Principals</b>	2		
<b># of Teachers</b>	85	<b>Avg. Class Size</b>	18		
<b>% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate</b>	0	<b>% Teaching Out of Certification</b>	.01		
<b>% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience</b>	15	<b>Average Teacher Absences</b>	11.23		
<b>Teacher Turnover Rate – Teachers &lt; 5 years exp.</b>	20	<b>Teacher Turnover Rate – All Teachers</b>	10		
Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2013-14)					
<b>ELA Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4</b>	21	<b>Mathematics Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4</b>	23		
<b>Science Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4 (4th Grade)</b>	81	<b>Science Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4 (8th Grade)</b>	37		
Student Performance for High Schools (2013-14)					
<b>ELA Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4</b>	85	<b>Mathematics Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4</b>	89		
Credit Accumulation High Schools Only (2013-14)					
<b>4 Year Graduation Rate</b>	90	<b>6 Year Graduation Rate</b>	97		
<b>% earning Regents Diploma w/ Advanced Designation</b>	37				
Current NYSED Accountability Status					
<b># of Reward Schools</b>	0	<b># of Priority Schools</b>	0		
<b># of Schools In Good Standing</b>	2	<b># of Focus Schools</b>	1		
<b># of LAP Schools</b>	0				

### District Accountability Status

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

### DISTRICT PRIORITIES AS WRITTEN BY THE DISTRICT

- Wellness
- Strategic Planning in the areas of curriculum and instruction, personnel and human resources and finances.
- Cultural Responsiveness
- Professional Development
- Systematized Data Analysis and Use
- Curriculum Alignment

## Information about the review

- An Outside Educational Expert (OEE), a representative from the New York State Education Department (NYSED), and a representative from the Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (RBERN) conducted the district review.
- The Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) review of one school in the district also informed the district review.
- During the IIT school review in the district, reviewers visited 31 classrooms within 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 1437 students (154 percent) completed. Please note that the data on this survey is unreliable because at the time of the survey the district stated that there were only 934 students in the district. The district could not provide an explanation for the discrepancy.
- On the date of the review, the superintendent had been in position for 29 days.

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

#	Statement of Practice	Stage 4	Stage 3	Stage 2	Stage 1
1.1	The district has a comprehensive approach for recruiting, evaluating, and sustaining high-quality personnel that affords schools the ability to ensure success by addressing the needs of their community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
1.2	The district leadership has a comprehensive and explicit theory of action about school culture that communicates high expectations for addressing the needs of all constituents.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
1.3	The district is organized and allocates resources (financial, staff support, materials, etc.) in a way that aligns appropriate levels of support for schools based on the needs of the school community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input 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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 1:</b>					X

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

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

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

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

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

<p><b>Tenet 1 - District Leadership and Capacity:</b> The district examines school systems and makes intentional decisions to identify and provide critical expectations, supports and structures in all areas of need so that schools are able to respond to their community and ensure that all students are successful.</p>	<p><b>Overall Tenet Rating</b></p>	<p><b>Stage 1</b></p>
<p><b>Statement of Practice 1.1:</b> The district has a comprehensive approach for recruiting, evaluating, and sustaining high-quality personnel that affords schools the ability to ensure success by addressing the needs of their community.</p>	<p><b>Tenet Rating</b></p>	<p><b>Stage 1</b></p>
<p><b>Overall Finding:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Because there is no comprehensive, strategic plan delineating consistent hiring practices and no prioritized professional development (PD) plan targeting assessed needs and providing for monitoring, accountability, and follow-up supports, the district’s ability to consistently provide and sustain high quality personnel is ineffective.</li> </ul> <p><b>Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The district leader reported that the district does not have a formal selection process to ensure that hiring committees use a consistent set of practices to recruit and interview the best available candidates; and that current hiring practices have not expanded the range of applicants because the district has not advertised widely enough. As a result, the district is not attracting candidates best suited to meeting the needs of schools or the district goals. For example, the district has not developed or applied formal protocols for involving district specialists in special education or English language learner (ELL) instruction when interviewing prospective teachers of these groups of students. The district has established some partnerships with local colleges and universities and hosts student teachers in district schools during their practicums and internships. However, the district has not developed a reciprocal relationship with those colleges and universities to make clear to these institutions the skills required for student teachers to become effective educators. In addition, the district leader stated that there are no retention procedures in place, such as a process to conduct exit interviews when personnel leave the district or gain feedback by surveying staff on district work environment attributes.</li> <li>Districtwide classroom observation protocols include the practice of instructional rounds; all school and district leaders take part in observations and discuss their outcomes in an effort to improve inter-rater reliability and ensure evaluation accuracy. However, the success of this evaluation initiative was questioned by district leaders given that 2013-14 data showed 92 percent of all teachers rated as effective or highly effective in a district in which only 21 percent of students in grades three to eight achieved proficiency in English language arts (ELA) and 23 percent were proficient in math. In addition, evidence from evaluations reviewed onsite during the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) school review showed that leaders do not consistently provide actionable feedback to teachers and teachers receive little guidance on steps they need to take to improve their practices. An evaluation of the district’s PD</li> </ul>		

program revealed that leaders do not base training priorities on student performance or teacher evaluation data. There are no checks in place to determine how well district staff implement PD and no parameters set to measure success in improving instructional practices or student achievement. Reviewers found that weaknesses in the observation process combined with those in PD hinder teachers’ ability to become effective classroom practitioners.

**Impact Statement:**

- Without a comprehensive plan and system for recruiting, evaluating, and retaining teachers, the district cannot fully meet the needs of students and schools.

**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 to develop and implement a strategic plan to consistently recruit, train, and retain a workforce that meets the identified needs of schools and students; and
- design and implement an accurate, reliable system for evaluating teacher proficiency that includes actionable feedback, follow-up support, and retraining opportunities.

**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 1**

**Overall Finding:**

- The district does not have a formal theory of action or clearly defined goals and strategies for driving improvements to address low achievement in the district.

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

- The district leader stated that the district has not developed a cohesive, focused theory of action that clearly defines how schools and the district should work together to drive forward urgent reforms and improvement strategies that address the low student achievement embedded throughout the district. Reviewers learned that the district has created a vision statement that calls on the district and schools to inspire, guide, and challenge each student through all-encompassing, rigorous learning experiences empowering them to connect and compete in an ever-changing global community. However, the district self-assessment document identifies, as a “next step,” the need to create a districtwide leadership team to translate the vision into strategic action plans encompassing wellness, cultural responsiveness, and PD. District leaders acknowledged that in its current format the district mission fails to serve as a cohesive agenda for rapid and sustained improvement. Reviewers found that the mission statement does not reflect a set of common beliefs that translate into challenging, quantifiable goals linked to prioritized strategies based on needs assessments, monitoring events, and follow-up activities to ensure accountability.

- Discussions with district leaders revealed few attempts to communicate the district vision to schools and the wider community, primarily because it lacks concrete measures or strategies for detailing how school communities will accomplish the vision. As a result, neither schools nor parents have secure understanding of the district’s plan for raising academic standards. District and school leaders confirmed that the district has formed a series of committees composed of school, district, and teacher leaders to promote conversations about how the district might collectively drive improvements to student achievement. The IIT learned that these conversations have set the stage for the creation of a theory of action and strategic plan for achieving academic excellence, but currently the district and schools are a long way from this goal. In the interim, district and school leaders reported that individual schools have practices and expectations keyed to their individual beliefs about instructional models and improvement strategies. This results in an approach that precludes a unified direction for improvement efforts and contributes to practices, policies, and goals that are not in districtwide alignment and do little to improve professional practices and student outcomes.

**Impact Statement:**

- The absence of a theory of action and a comprehensive strategic plan for raising academic standards results in a fragmented and ineffective approach to school and district 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:

- develop a theory of action linked to a strategic plan that is characterized by a rigorous needs assessment of student and teacher performance, the setting of quantifiable goals, the identification of those responsible for achieving the goals, and a program of rigorous evaluation to measure the theory of action’s impact in securing improvements to student outcomes.

**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 does not consistently allocate resources to meet the needs of schools and their students, which adversely influences student academic growth.

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

- Discussions with district and school leaders revealed that district officials engage in little strategic planning related to resource allocation to meet the needs of schools and their students. District leaders reportedly take some account of student population data and factors such as the percentage of ELLs and students with disabilities. However, discussions showed that leaders do not factor a careful analysis of school needs based on student performance and teacher evaluations into the resource allocation process. School leaders stated that they are not actively involved in resource allocation activities. Although school leaders can request additional resources, they reported having little

awareness of the criteria used to determine if district leaders will grant requests, citing instead that district officials often make decisions based on their perception of school need. District leaders confirmed that they do not consistently apply procedures to compare and evaluate how different allocations of resources have led to identified improvements in student outcomes. Although district leaders referred to this as a “return on investment” model, leaders offered no evidence to show that the district adheres to such a policy.

- The district is proactive in allocating resources to designated programs or initiatives; however, a lack of follow up to assess efforts, or establish “value for money” protocols, prevents the district from gaining knowledge and insight into programs that deserve to be expanded and those in need of adjustment or replacement. The district recently initiated a culturally responsive classroom program, intending to respond to the needs of all students, but particularly to those of limited English proficient (LEP) students, as well as economically disadvantaged students. However, reviewers learned that the district performed no follow up to determine program success. School leaders reported that the district provided an instructional coach in response to the interim intermediate school leader’s request for one. However, leaders offered no clear performance expectations for the coach and no means for measuring student progress. The district technology plan, which drove the district’s decision to provide all classrooms with interactive technology boards, identifies expected improved student outcomes and methods for evaluation. However, the IIT review of the intermediate school revealed that teachers do not typically use these boards as more than projection screens for PowerPoint presentations. When asked about the status of evaluation procedures for this plan, district leaders reported that they have not yet implemented them.

**Impact Statement:**

- As district leaders fail to match resources to the individual needs of schools and evaluate the impact of spending, the academic progress of students is limited.

**Recommendation:**

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

- develop a strategic plan that aligns available resources to a comprehensive needs assessment of schools and students. Rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of spending decisions in raising student achievement, and make adjustments in light of the evaluations. Align the plan to the intended district policy of considering the return on investment for expenditures.

**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.

<b>Tenet Rating</b>	<b>Stage 2</b>
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**Overall Finding:**

- The district’s PD program does not include an integral planning process that incorporates a needs assessment of schools, a review of district priorities and goals, and defined follow-up support activities

intended to raise student achievement.

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

- District leaders reported that teachers and school leaders provided input and feedback in the development phase of the district PD plan; however, IIT reviewers found that leaders do not base PD priorities on data from student and school assessment data or on teacher evaluations. School and district leaders stated that the district distributes PD options to schools and teachers select PD choices using MyLearningPlan, an online PD management tool. District leaders stated that there are no formalized tools for checking on the implementation or impact of PD in the classroom or for checking on the status of district initiative implementation so that school and district leaders can direct retraining or coaching to particular schools or groups of teachers if initial training efforts have not proved successful. District leaders stated that they intend to use instructional rounds as a tool for gauging the impact of PD in classrooms; however, these intentions have not yet translated into embedded actions.
- The district's PD plan does not have an embedded assessment system that allows school leaders to monitor the implementation and impact of PD. The district has offered PD to support implementation of the Responsive Classroom model in an attempt to address the poor performance of ELLs, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students. However, the district has not yet analyzed data showing the program's impact on student achievement. The district also introduced the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) during the 2014-15 school year to address the poor performance of ELLs and ELLs with disabilities. However, although the district provided SIOP training for all teachers across the district that covered lesson preparation, comprehensible input, and strategies for implementation, IIT classroom visits at the middle school did not show evidence of these components of SIOP. The district leader of the PD team shared that during instructional rounds evaluators use no specific system or lens through which to assess whether teachers are implementing the three targeted areas of SIOP. Without information on the success of PD, the district is restricted in how it can strategically plan future PD activities for areas of professional practices in need of additional support.

**Impact Statement:**

As district leaders do not consistently match PD to school need or monitor it for the impact it brings to raising student achievement, its effectiveness is limited.

**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 PD plan based on school and student data that is reflective of individual school needs and incorporates robust procedures for checking that teachers implement PD in classrooms that leads to improvements in instruction and learning. When follow up does not show improvement, closer monitoring of teacher performance should ensue with additional support provided through mandated

re-training, coaching, and mentoring.

**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 1**

**Overall Finding:**

- The district has not yet integrated data into a readily accessible format to allow for cross-referencing or disaggregating in ways that will guide district, school, and teacher decision-making efforts. The district has not consistently provided guidance to schools and teachers on how to use available data; and teachers are not consistently using data to differentiate instruction.

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

- District leaders stated there is no clear district policy for how it expects schools and staff to use data at the school and classroom levels to drive instruction, track student progress, or make improvement decisions. District leaders also acknowledged that the district has not established a cohesive system and structure for analyzing data such as student achievement, attendance, special needs, and behavioral data. The district leadership confirmed a recent decision to review the availability of data, determine additional data items that need to be collected, and structure data use in ways that will permit evaluation of district, school, and teacher work. Reviewers found that where data does exist, the district has not disaggregated it in ways that facilitate teacher, school, and district leader decision-making, as data resides in a variety of data banks throughout the district with no guidelines established for use.
- The IIT found that district staff are not consistently using readily accessible data to improve student achievement. For example, the district has begun to gather Fountas and Pinnell reading scores, as well as Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) data on student reading ability. However, classroom observations during the IIT school review showed that teachers are not consistently using this data to differentiate instruction. District leaders reported that teachers are aware of formative assessment practices, but are not consistently using these practices to monitor and modify instruction or curricula. Discussions also revealed that school and district leaders do not use data at the whole school level to analyze and track the performance of different groups of students or to identify the areas of student performance most in need of improvement.
- District and school leaders acknowledged that data collection and data use as a means of standardizing the pacing of instruction and encouraging collaborative unit planning is only just beginning. Leaders stated that the district has not yet formalized the use of student data and academic growth measures as a tool to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction and learning. In addition, despite a stated desire to make resource allocation decisions using a return on investment model, district leaders use few data points to gather the feedback needed to assess the impact of personnel and resource allocations on

student achievement. For example, the IIT found district and school leaders unable to substantiate the value of district investments in coaches or technology.

**Impact Statement:**

- Not all school leaders and teachers are routinely able to use data to improve practices and sustain student achievement.

**Recommendation:**

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

- make sure all relevant data is accessible to schools and that teachers and school leaders consistently apply accessible data to differentiate instruction, modify curricula, and inform decision making.

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

<p><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.</p>	<p><b>Tenet Rating</b></p>	<p><b>Stage 1</b></p>
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**Overall Finding:**

- The district has not worked collaboratively with schools to develop school environments, goals, and practices that are consistent districtwide and sequentially lead students through a coordinated program of instruction that builds on prior learning.

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

- District and school leaders agreed that there have been general discussions between the district and schools around topics of school improvement, but very little has translated into programs, policies, and consistent activities that set a unified agenda for increasing student achievement. School leaders reported that during the summer of 2014, the district conducted a first-time leadership retreat to create a forum for district and school leaders to discuss areas needing improvement. However, school leaders stated that the district has yet to devise a strategic plan, a theory of action, or district goals aimed at unifying schools and the district in a concerted push on improving academic standards, and including a system to hold schools and the district accountable for ensuring that professional practices lead to improvements in student outcomes.
- School leaders stated that the district does not work collaboratively with schools to help them establish school specific goals and visions geared toward prioritizing higher academic standards and identifying improvement strategies that promote excellence and better meet the needs of the schools and communities they serve. School and district leaders agreed that without specific district goals and a distinct theory of action that all stakeholders know and aspire to steps forward are slow. School

leaders stated that relationships between schools and district officials are cordial, but the district does not strategically plan supports and is often more dependent on school requests than detailed needs analyses of schools. IIT discussions with school leaders revealed that the district has responded to requests that include providing additional math coaching, technology resources, and PD in areas such as the Responsive Classroom program. However, reviewers found that the district has very limited, and sometimes, no systems in place to monitor the impact of these and other decisions, providing no information on which to judge the success of district efforts to support schools. In addition, weaknesses in how district and school leaders evaluate instruction and implement curricula that meet the needs of all students significantly slows efforts to address the ongoing low achievement occurring in schools.

**Impact Statement:**

- Although the district responds to specific requests from school leaders, efforts are not part of a strategic plan, vision, or goals to address identified weaknesses; as a result, student achievement remains low.

**Recommendation:**

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

- collaboratively develop with school and teacher leaders a strategic plan that links resource allocations, prioritized instructional training in best practices, and measurable outcomes to a program of monitoring, feedback, follow-up support, and accountability to improve student achievement.

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

**Tenet Rating**

**Stage 1**

**Overall Finding:**

- The district provides poor monitoring and follow-up procedures when supervising the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) curricula, offering little assurance that curricula are CCLS-aligned and challenging for every student.

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

- School leaders stated that a lack of strategic and coordinated district support and adequate PD, combined with inadequate CCLS implementation monitoring protocols, has resulted in school curricula that does not consistently meet the needs of all students or help all students become career and college ready. School and district leaders expressed concern that the “planned” curricula is not always the “delivered” curricula because previous district leaders had provided teachers with latitude in making decisions about the faithful implementation of curricula. In addition, the district has not established a lesson planning template for teachers.

- School leaders stated that the district has provided some PD to support teachers with CCLS implementation. District-level curriculum and instruction and PD interviews revealed that the district adopted the EngageNY modules during the 2013-14 school year and began adapting CCLS materials and modules during the 2014-15 school year. However, district and school leaders reported that although some teachers were struggling with CCLS concepts, the district did not always provide additional or follow-up PD. District leaders provided the services of an instructional coach to support teachers in some schools in the district, but school and district leaders acknowledged there is an inadequate system of accountability districtwide. For example, district and school leaders reported that follow-up and targeted observations and walkthroughs seldom occur to check CCLS implementation or evaluate the value that added personnel, such as instructional coaches, bring to classrooms and gains in student achievement.
- District leaders reported, and IIT classroom observations conducted at the focus school confirmed, that teachers seldom differentiate lessons. Classroom observations substantiated that students infrequently experience lessons that provide opportunities for enrichment or address the needs of lower performing students, ELLs, and students with disabilities in meaningful ways. According to district staff, district and school leaders have provided teachers with a basic awareness of the nature of increased rigor; for example, the district is in the early stages of providing training in the Depth of Knowledge (DoK) model. The school review team observed 31 classes and reported a lack of CCLS implementation. The IIT reported inconsistent evidence of data analysis to identify and review trends to inform and guide curriculum planning and modifications. In addition, IIT reviewers did not observe teachers using data-driven instruction (DDI) during the grade-level observation meeting at that school.
- School leaders reported that district decisions do not always support the continuity of instruction. For example, the district sometimes reassigns teachers from one grade level to another to accommodate the movement of large student populations into a particular grade. School leaders reported that district leaders often make such moves without appropriate consideration given to the potential impact on teacher prowess as they adjust to address curriculum and strategies unique to a new grade level.

**Impact Statement:**

- Due to the district's lack of an adapted CCLS curriculum, the early stage implementation status of the instructional shifts and the acknowledged gap between the planned and delivered instruction limit the ability of teachers to deliver CCLS-aligned, challenging instruction to all students.

**Recommendation:**

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

- develop a comprehensive plan for the alignment of curricula to the CCLS, complete with pacing guides;
- provide PD in the use of formative and summative data to drive DDI; and

- implement a program of monitoring targeted to the priorities of the aligned curricula, complete with follow-up retraining, mentoring, and coaching, as needed.

**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:**

- Although the district is responsive to some school leader requests for resources to address the needs of students and teachers, the district has provided limited direction for instructional improvements. Instructional plans and practices are not adaptive, monitored, or informed by data.

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

- Discussions with school and district leaders revealed an absence of a comprehensive plan to set priorities and expectations to guide the development of teachers’ instructional strategies and practices aimed at improving student learning and achievement. Although the district responds to some teacher or school requests for PD, evidence showed that district leaders do not prioritize PD based on the academic performance of schools, nor is PD evaluated for its impact on bringing improvements to student learning. School leaders stated that the district has not worked collaboratively with schools to define a model and practices associated with academic rigor for use across all schools. Without a shared understanding of the principles and criteria that account for effective teaching and learning, school and district leaders do not reach a common consensus on effective teacher performance.
- Discussions with school leaders and teachers and evidence from IIT classroom observations showed that the use of data to drive instruction, inform planning, and make curricular modifications is a long-standing issue in schools districtwide. During IIT classroom observations, reviewers noted inconsistent practices in the areas of higher order questioning and rigorous learning tasks. The review team also noted a lack of progress monitoring and little evidence of teachers adjusting student groupings as a result of formative assessments. School leaders stated that the district had not provided adequate PD in this key area and that not all school leaders and teachers were confident in their skills and abilities to use data to make decisions either in the classroom or at school level. School leaders also stated that the district has not identified examples of DDI strategies that teachers and leaders could put to use in schools across the district.

**Impact Statement:**

- The district approach to instructional improvement has been piecemeal with resulting inconsistencies in the ability of teachers to provide challenging 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:

- aggregate and disaggregate available formative and summative data to determine areas where instructional growth is needed;
- identify district best practices aimed at improving identified areas;
- train teachers in those best practices;
- monitor the implementation of those best practices;
- provide support through coaching, re-training, and mentoring, as required; and
- periodically review the results of common forms of assessment to ensure that teacher performance translates into student achievement.

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

**Tenet Rating**

**Stage 2**

**Overall Finding:**

- During the past year, the district has initiated several programs and activities to support students' social and emotional developmental health; however, the district has put no systems in place to monitor the impact and effectiveness of the selected programs.

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

- School and district leaders confirmed that the district has not developed a strategic plan to analyze data to identify students' social and emotional developmental needs, although they have organized programs to address the needs of some groups of students. For example, the district experiences a large annual influx of high school students who are children of military personnel stationed at the nearby United States (US) Military Academy. These students attend elementary and middle schools provided by the US Department of Defense and often attend many schools as they follow a parent through various military bases. The district provides a unique orientation and support activities for these students; however, there is no data collection process to monitor program success.
- The district provided teachers with PD during the 2014-15 school year to broaden their awareness of cultural differences among students through a program entitled, The Culturally Responsive Classroom. The district provided teachers with two days of training at the start of the current school year. However, school and district officials could not point to any indicators of success or failure of the program. School and district leaders also could not demonstrate how the program has improved the performance or attendance of targeted students. In addition, school leaders stated that the district-sponsored Olweus anti-bullying program for schools provides students, teachers, support staff, and administrators with tips and tools for addressing bullying in school. However, the district does not have significant, disaggregated data to document the number of districtwide bullying incidents that

have occurred or a way to determine whether the Olweus program has led to a decrease in these types of incidents.

- The district recently created an outreach counselor position with a goal of improving school culture and identifying initiatives that support students’ social and emotional developmental health. The district has charged the new counselor with developing a comprehensive plan to assess the level of student needs and then selecting programs and strategies to address those needs. However, the district has not identified a manner of implementation, monitoring, modification, and accountability for any of the proposed strategies or practices.

**Impact Statement:**

- Without data and evaluations to assess the impact of the programs it introduces, the district has difficulty in gauging whether implemented programs meet the social and emotional needs 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:

- assess the level of students’ social and emotional health needs;
- identify programs and strategies that have proven to be best practice solutions to the identified needs;
- implement selected social and emotional health needs programs and strategies; and
- monitor, support, and adjust the implementation as needed.

**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 1**

**Overall Finding:**

- The district does not have a strategic plan for family and community engagement.

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

- District and school leaders reported that they conduct a number of distinct activities intended to better engage parents in student learning. Leaders reported that the district has begun to conduct activities that provide a welcoming environment for families, and activities such as family fun nights. These Many parents have attended these events, which have provided opportunities for parents to meet teachers and school leaders. However, district and school leaders reported that schools have had limited success in engaging parents in activities that allow them to better understand school and student learning because the district has not yet provided schools with a strategic plan to devise and implement a range of strategies for engaging parents as partners in the education of their children.

- School leaders reported recent, limited district connections with community-based organizations. Reviewers learned that a local bank recently sent representatives to provide instruction linked to real world applications in a math class and local businesses were co-sponsors of some school-family activities. However, these connections are not the result of a district analysis showing how community resources might best support student achievement, but instead rely on the initiative of school leaders or school staff. Current links to community-based organizations are not part of a strategic and coordinated district effort to engender greater community involvement to increase opportunities of success for all students.
- District leaders have made some decisions to address the need for improved parental engagement. School leaders reported that the district provides a district-level parent group; however, district officials could not identify how this group serves to improve parental engagement or partnerships with schools. The district registered a team of support staff members to attend a conference to learn ideas and strategies for making parents partners in supporting student achievement. However, district leaders acknowledged that the district’s website needs updating to make it accessible to parents with limited English abilities and to provide a more welcoming and usable interface.

**Impact Statement:**

- Without a strategic plan to develop partnerships with parents, families have not been engaged in close enough connections with schools to provide the supports needed to improve student achievement.

**Recommendation:**

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

- develop a strategic plan to address the need for greater family and community involvement by exploring multiple and innovative approaches, including setting clear expectations for teacher and school leader communications with families in the school community and providing a district website that is both welcoming and accessible to all parents and families.