



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

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)



BEDS Code	10-13-00-01-0000
District	Hudson City School District
District Address	215 Harry Howard Avenue Hudson, NY 12534
Superintendent	Maria Suttmeier
Date(s) of Review	May 18-19, 2015

District Information Sheet			
Grade Configuration	PreK - 12	Total Enrollment	1817
		Number of Schools	3
District Composition (most recent data)			
% Title I Population	100	% Attendance Rate	93
% Free Lunch	52	% Reduced Lunch	10
% Limited English Proficient	7	% Students with Disabilities	10
Racial/Ethnic Origin (most recent data)			
% American Indian or Alaska Native	0	% Black or African American	24
% Hispanic or Latino	13	% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	10
% White	48	% Multi-Racial	5
Personnel (most recent data)			
Years Superintendent Assigned to District	3	# of Deputy/Assistant Superintendents	0
# of Principals	4	# of Assistant Principals	1
# of Teachers	157	Avg. Class Size	24
% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate	0	% Teaching Out of Certification	0
% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience	1	Average Teacher Absences	4.8
Teacher Turnover Rate – Teachers < 5 years exp.	29	Teacher Turnover Rate – All Teachers	17
Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2013-14)			
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	16	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4	12
Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (4th Grade)	64	Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (8th Grade)	55
Student Performance for High Schools (2013-14)			
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	79	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4	52
Credit Accumulation High Schools Only (2013-14)			
4 Year Graduation Rate	69	6 Year Graduation Rate	66.1
% of earning Regents Diploma w/ Advanced Des.	23		
Current NYSED Accountability Status			
# of Reward Schools	0	# of Priority Schools	0
# of Schools In Good Standing	0	# of Focus Schools	3
# of LAP Schools	0		

District Accountability Status

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

DISTRICT PRIORITIES AS WRITTEN BY THE DISTRICT:

- Develop and implement a clear district vision.
- Raise the bar for all students.
- Close the gap between all groups.
- Align curriculum and instruction with college and career readiness standards.

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 an additional Outside Educational Expert.
- The Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) reviews of one school in the district also informed the district review.
- During IIT school reviews in the district, reviewers visited 35 classrooms in 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 858 students (47.2 percent) completed.
- The district provided results of a staff survey that 151 teachers (99.3 percent) completed.
- The district provided results of a parent survey that 147 parents (8.1 percent) completed.

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

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

Areas for Improvement:

Overall Finding:

- The district is making increased efforts to recruit highly qualified personnel within a legacy backdrop of declining enrollments and limited fiscal resources. However, the district has not used the Annual Professional Review (APPR) process effectively to inform evaluation and staff support efforts. In addition, professional development (PD) to support best practices is insufficiently monitored to ensure consistent implementation in all schools to address the needs of all students.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- The district leader indicated that until recently the district has not had a need or much discretion in hiring new staff because of declining enrollments and limited financial resources. District leadership also noted that in recent years, when positions have become vacant, the district was contractually required to hire prior excessed staff in seniority order from a preferred eligibility list. However, the district has currently posted vacancies for teachers who have dual certification, which qualifies them to teach general education and special education students. Because of the need for such teachers, the district is able to go beyond the preferred eligibility list. The district collaborates with school leaders in helping to identify the recruitment needs of different schools and is in the process of widening its advertising and outreach strategies to attract a wider recruitment pool. To support their recruitment efforts, the district advertises locally and posts vacancies on the district website. The district has also established ongoing relationships with local colleges, such as Bard College, the University at Albany, and the College of Saint Rose, to facilitate the development of a cadre of student teachers, five in the 2014-15 school year, who can potentially become district teachers.
- The district has a 17 percent staff turnover rate for all teachers, and a recent survey completed by 99 percent of the district’s teachers indicated that the district provides an environment that is conducive to learning and working. However, the review team did not find evidence of a current process to determine the reasons why 29 percent of teachers with less than five years’ experience left their positions in the district.
- The district uses the Marzano rubric for the APPR process for teachers. The Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) reviewed a sample of observation reports; while some of the evaluations contained

actionable feedback and next steps to improve instructional practice, others did not. Both district leaders and school leaders stated that some of the teacher evaluation results for the 2013-14 school year were not aligned to student achievement. Of 152 teachers in the district, only three teachers received ineffective ratings and two were rated developing, although student growth and academic achievement in district schools remains low. District leaders stated that some ratings were skewed in part because ratings for instructional practices that were not used in the classroom were noted as “not observed” rather than “not used.” District leaders reported they are currently formulating strategies for the next round of negotiations with the union to improve the teacher evaluation process.

- The district’s leadership noted that the district coaches, consultants, and school leaders provide PD centered on different needs at different grade levels. The outcomes of teacher observations are sometimes used by district leaders to identify possible PD needs for the district. The PD focuses on Response to Intervention (RtI), developing students’ writing skills, establishing student goals, differentiating instruction, and increasing rigor. However, the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) did not find evidence of consistent monitoring of these efforts to ensure implementation with fidelity and a positive impact on student achievement. The percentages of students scoring at levels three and four in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics on the State assessments and Regents examinations remain low.

Impact Statement:

- The district has increased its efforts to recruit high quality staff that meet the needs of the school community. However, inconsistencies in its approach to evaluating and supporting staff and monitoring PD, minimize its ability to improve teacher practices and student achievement 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:

- in summer and fall 2015, collaboratively develop a list of components they wish to see in the new APPR plan; and
- provide targeted professional development for staff that includes weaknesses identified in classroom observations by school and district leaders to address the needs of all students on a continual basis, and ensure monitoring and evaluation by the school leader and coordination for coherence and fidelity by district staff.

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 established and communicated the district's theory of action, which is embedded in its "Destination Graduation" initiative. There has been some success in the initiative's goal to "raise the bar," as measured by increasing graduation rates. However, there has been less success in reducing the gap between the achievement of subgroups and overall achievement levels. In addition, goals for students' social and emotional growth and college and career readiness are not explicitly stated.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- The district's "Destination Graduation" initiative has focused the community on a shared vision with three specific goals: (1) "Raise the bar," as evidenced by student graduation and achievement rates; (2) "Close the gap" between graduation and achievement rates for all subgroups and the population at large; and (3) "Align curriculum and instruction" with a standard of rigor aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). The district leader stated that this is the first time in her 16 years in the district that there is a clear vision shared by all members of the district community. During discussions with the review team, school leaders, teachers, students, and parents indicated that the district, through its continued focus in meetings and correspondence regarding academic excellence, engendered similar perspectives for them about the district's vision of high expectations for all students. The district leader communicates her vision on the district website, at public gatherings, and during meetings with teachers and students and indicated she has made it the centerpiece of her leadership. However, the review team found that goals for students' social and emotional developmental health have been omitted, and the theory of action does not make explicitly clear the alignment needed between success and the continuous and sustained improvement of professional practices by all district personnel.
- Despite the communication of the district's theory of action to the school community, the district leader stated that the district is in the early stages of making it a consistent reality in all schools in terms of significantly improving student outcomes. She acknowledged a particular weakness in fully using available data to drive instruction and ensure that learning activities closely match the differing needs and abilities of all students. Although school leaders and teachers are increasingly guided by "Destination Graduation," students' college and career readiness is limited. While the four-year graduation rate rose from 67 percent to 71 percent from June 2013 to June 2014, overall improvements in student achievement levels and those of subgroups have been limited. School reviews indicate the goals of "Destination Graduation" are not yet reflected in best teaching practices that lead to academic success for all students.

Impact Statement:

- Although high expectations for all students are communicated via district goals, the limited explicit connection between the goals, the use of data, and the improvement of teacher practices limits school progress and high levels of student achievement 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:

- by school opening in September 2015, add additional goals to the “Destination Graduation” initiative regarding students’ social emotional developmental health and college and career readiness; and
- make the best use of data to closely track the academic performance and progress of all students, and put in place strategies to close the gaps in achievement of different subgroups of students.

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 allocates funds according to student enrollment and school needs and has emerged from several years of operating with a deficit to a stronger financial position. However, the lack of a formal system to oversee grant budgets and to determine the impact of allocation decisions limits consistent improvement across the district.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- The annual budget-building and approval process begins in November with discussions among district and school leaders to discuss the needs of different schools and culminates with the board of education’s public vetting and community vote in May. Despite limited discretionary funds, the district leader reported allocations are made equitably based on student enrollments and needs of individual schools and subgroups. District leaders stated that tax levy funds that comprise 58 percent of the total budget are limited by long-term tax abatements granted to new companies moving into the area, an economically depressed tax base, and debt service for school construction over the past decade. Nevertheless, district leadership noted that discretionary funds are allocated, for example, to assign coaches and consultants who provide district wide PD. However, the IIT found no evidence of a clear system for district leaders to determine the value received for discretionary expenditures and their impact on student achievement.
- The district leader reported, and school leaders confirmed, that the district has attempted to address district and school needs in consultation with school leaders who present their resource requests and a rationale for why they need the resource requests. District leadership noted that a Strengthening Teacher and Leader Effectiveness (STLE) grant allowed the district to create a lead evaluator position to monitor and evaluate implementation of the CCLS and instructional shifts and to provide an analysis of the district’s and schools’ initiatives. However, the review team found that rigorous procedures have not been put in place to assess the impact of this work in schools or to support schools in making the best use of the additional time and effort provided by these personnel. While the district seeks to allocate available funding from different sources in an equitable manner, the lack of information

concerning the impact and effectiveness of its decisions, limits the ability of the district to assess the strategies that need greater investment and those that need adjustment.

Impact Statement:

- Although the district is allocating some resources to address the needs of the school community, the lack of procedures to monitor and evaluate the impact of decisions limits district-wide school improvement efforts and student achievement.

Recommendation:

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

- develop a system to evaluate the impact of expenditures on school improvement and student achievement;
- oversee the development, management, and evaluation of grant budgets; and
- utilize relationships with local civic leaders to negotiate with companies who receive state and county tax abatements for in-kind services or contributions to the district's schools, such as internship opportunities and work-study programs.

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:

- A three-year professional development plan (PDP) has been developed by the district, and it guides the district wide continuum of PD services. Due to a lack of systematic monitoring, district staff has not established a uniform system to provide a “big picture” overview of PD needs in individual schools and departments. At times, common instructional needs have been identified to inform PD tailored to groups of teachers; however, the impact on student achievement has not yet been fully realized. Additionally, there is insufficient PD concerning students’ social and emotional developmental health needs.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- A three-year PD plan was developed for the 2013 – 2016 school years and is reflected in a catalogue that includes a timeline, a list of PD activities, and an evaluation format for assessing the quality of PD delivered. School and district leaders confirmed that the PDP is drawn up by coaches, school leaders, and district staff and is distributed to schools and teachers. School leaders stated that although some PD provided to schools is generic, other more targeted PD is offered to schools and groups of teachers based on their requests and feedback from school and district APPR evaluations and walk-throughs. However, no evidence was provided to the IIT indicating exactly which PD had taken place, the

outcome of the evaluations, and what adjustments, if any, were made as a result. The district leader stated that the school and district leaders conduct walk-throughs to observe implementation of best practices learned through PD and provide feedback to teachers. However, there was no evidence of an overarching system to aggregate this feedback on a district-wide level or to use the information to influence future PD offerings.

- Statements made during interviews concerning the curriculum, instruction, and PD indicated a disconnect between how well different personnel believed PD had facilitated the effective implementation of the CCLS. Discussions with teachers, school leaders, district leaders, and coaches ranged from just over 50 percent to almost one hundred percent of personnel indicating the successful implementation of CCLS. These varying perspectives highlight a weakness identified by the district leader when she confirmed that there is no system in place to evaluate the quality of PD across the district in terms of how it improves professional practices or student outcomes. School and district leaders also stated that procedures are not in place to provide follow up PD where initial efforts have not proved successful. Discussions with district leaders indicate that goals for meeting student social and emotional needs are not included in the district’s theory of action, and they acknowledge that there is only limited and ongoing PD provided to equip school and district personnel with the skills and capacity to identify and meet student needs.

Impact Statement:

- The lack of systems to monitor the quality of PD and its impact limits the district’s ability to identify strategies that are successful and those that are not in their quest to improve professional practices and student outcomes.

Recommendation:

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

- by November 2015 develop a tool to provide an overview of the quality of all PD going forward and put in place a strategy to measure the impact of PD activities on teacher effectiveness and student achievement; use the information collected from this evaluation to disseminate best practices and address weaknesses so that teacher practices improve.

Statement of Practice 1.5: The district promotes a data-driven culture by providing strategies connected to best practices that all staff members and school communities are expected to be held accountable for implementing.

Tenet Rating

Stage 2

Overall Finding:

- The district has begun to communicate expectations for the use of data to drive school improvement and student achievement, and coaches and school leaders are beginning to provide support to teachers in utilizing data. However, efforts to implement a data-driven culture are limited, which

minimizes the use of data to improve classroom practices and student success in schools in the district.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- The district leader stated that data is not yet effectively used to plan and adjust instruction throughout the district. The district's theory of action makes clear the district's expectations of the importance of using data to drive instruction and school improvement. However, the district leader acknowledges that there is much work to be done to ensure that all district personnel have access to data and are able to analyze and use it to drive the district forward. The district recently purchased eDoctrina software and online access for the Kindergarten to grade two building that is in the initial stages of being used to assess effectiveness of classroom practices in implementing CCLS and the instructional shifts. School and district personnel reported they are currently familiarizing themselves with how to access and understand what eDoctrina has to offer.
- In an effort to implement a data-driven culture, the district leader indicated that the lead evaluator position was created to continually analyze data to determine the impact of district initiatives on student achievement. The district leader noted she is attempting to fund this position for an additional year. However, the district leader also stated that she has not yet received sufficient evidence from the evaluator or schools to determine how well teachers use data in the classroom. Discussions with school leaders and findings from school reviews indicate that the implementation of data driven instruction is an ongoing issue in schools, and its inconsistent use often leads to work not being accurately matched to the needs and abilities of different students.
- Discussions with school and district leaders indicate that schools and teachers have access to much data covering academic performance and progress as well as sources of data relating to attendance, behavior and suspensions. However, district leadership recognize that the data is not being used effectively in all schools and classrooms to analyze school performance and progress by grade level, content area, or by subgroups of students. To address this issue, district leaders indicated they are collaborating with school leaders and the district's lead evaluator to identify and address the obstacles that are preventing data usage from being a key driver in school and classroom improvement. In addition, the review team found from discussions with school and district leaders that sufficient analysis is not carried out to align academic and social and emotional data to explore the connections between the different sets of data. School and district leaders are not able to consistently identify trends and patterns, prioritize improvement efforts, and allocate and invest resources to address student achievement, which remains low.

Impact Statement:

- Limited use of protocols and procedures to ensure effective use of data at district, school, and classroom levels, minimizes the ability of district leaders to assess the impact of its efforts focused on improving student achievement, which inhibits sustained growth 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:

- by November 2015, develop and embed an evaluation system to determine why data-driven instruction is not embedded in all classrooms; once the obstacles are identified, implement a strategic plan to overcome the obstacles as a matter of urgency; and
- collaborate with school leaders and provide high quality support and training to continually address instructional deficiencies revealed by data analysis to improve teaching and learning in individual classrooms.

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

Statement of Practice 2.1 - School Leader Practices and Decisions: The district works collaboratively with the school to provide opportunities and supports for the school leader to create, develop and nurture a school environment that is responsive to the needs of the entire school community.	Tenet Rating	Stage 2
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Areas for Improvement:

Overall Finding:

- The district is working collaboratively with schools to help them implement their vision and that of the district. However, the district does not provide sufficient support to the schools to embed the district’s vision and to rigorously monitor the impact of improvement efforts so that they make a difference to student outcomes.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- District and school leaders stated that there is open, reciprocal communication between them, which fosters a collaborative culture to address challenges. School leaders note they have established good relationships with district leaders. Discussions with school leaders indicate there is a commitment from schools to embrace the district’s “Destination Graduation” initiative, which established a unified vision and mission for the schools. However, school leaders report that the district needs to provide continued support and guidance to ensure that the key threads of the theory of action become embedded in all schools.
- During discussions with reviewers, school leaders shared they welcomed the support they received from district personnel in devising their school goals and how they would be achieved. School leaders noted that more needs to be done to strengthen the procedures for assessing how school and district decision-making impacts student outcomes and professional practices. School leaders state that neither they nor the district are sufficiently rigorous or consistent in carrying out observations to check

the quality of PD that is delivered and its impact in classrooms in terms of improving student outcomes. School leaders indicate the district has communicated the district's expectations on the use of data as a tool for helping drive improvements to instruction and school performance. However, some school leaders report weaknesses exist in how well teachers are supported and trained by the district in the skill of data analysis and usage and the impact that this has in the classroom on meeting the diverse needs of all students.

- School and district leaders spoke positively about the improved graduation rate, and the high school leader stated that with the support of the district, the goal of raising the June 2013 four-year graduation rate of 59 percent by 15 percentage points in three years will be achieved by June 2016. School leaders indicated the need for a greater focus on the part of the district on emphasizing the social and emotional needs of students to help the school foster resilience to enable students to be better equipped to face the demands of education beyond elementary school and high school.
- During the school visit, the IIT observed district initiatives, which have enabled the school leader to offer extended learning programs, character education programs, enrichment programs, and a “back pack” program for nutritional needs. The district initiatives include mentor volunteers, partnerships with community agencies, and local authors who come into schools to give talks and presentations. Over 170 students participate in the intermediate school's Extended Learning Time (ELT) program, which targets students who have not achieved proficiency in ELA and mathematics. Additionally, 100 students have relationships with mentors who read with them twice a week during the school day. An analysis of data, from local reading assessments, which was examined by reviewers, indicates that the students in the after school extended learning program have shown gains in their reading ability. However, school leaders in their focus group indicated that similar efforts are not yet having the desired impact on the achievement of student subgroups, such as ELLs and student with disabilities. School leaders stated that they are working with the district to ascertain the reasons for this problem.

Impact Statement:

- Although the schools and district share a vision of improvement, district strategies to provide consistently good practices in key areas such as PD, use of data, and social and emotional developmental health, are not yet securely in place to ensure academic and social success 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:

- provide targeted PD on using data to plan and deliver instruction; and
- make sure that all supports, strategies, and services are evaluated for the impact that they have on raising achievement for all subgroups of students.

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

Tenet Rating

Stage 2

Overall Finding:

- The district provides direct support to schools with literacy and mathematics coaches who help teachers develop CCLS-aligned lessons, but teachers and school leaders indicate that teachers need further assistance in developing adaptations in unit and lesson plans for sub-groups of students.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- School leaders report they welcome the support that the district provides in providing literacy and mathematics coaches to help teachers provide a CCLS- aligned curriculum. Based on classroom observations, school leaders estimated that 85 to 95 percent of all teachers are using curricula aligned to the CCLS. However, staff at the PD and curriculum and instruction interviews questioned these figures. Some participants expressed that the percentages were much less than those noted by the school leaders. Classroom observations by reviewers also indicated some inconsistency in providing a curriculum that fully meets the needs of all students, and this issue was identified as an area in need of improvement. School leaders reported that additional district support in curriculum development and implementation is needed to help teachers include adaptations to better address the needs of subgroups, such as ELLs and students with disabilities. School leaders stated that while they appreciate the district’s initiative of integrating writing into all content areas in grades three through eight, students’ writing skills have generally not yet improved as a result of this initiative. District and school leaders reported the need to develop, implement, and monitor differentiation in classroom instruction, particularly for subgroups; however, the district does not have a plan in place to identify and target the learning needs of the subgroups for which it was identified.
- School leaders reported during discussions with the IIT that they would welcome more district support in monitoring and evaluating the quality of curriculum provided to all students. As there are discrepancies between school and district staff regarding the effectiveness of curriculum planning and implementation, school leaders indicated they would welcome additional opportunities for school and district staff to collaborate in monitoring the range and quality of learning opportunities across the district. School leaders also report the lack of opportunities to identify good practices in different schools and then to set up procedures for disseminating these good practices so that a greater number of students have access to positive learning experiences and teachers have an opportunity to improve their professional practices.

Impact Statement:

- The district’s limited support to schools that is focused on curriculum adaptations for subgroups of

students minimizes teachers' ability to plan CCLS-aligned instruction for all students and promote student learning and achievement.

Recommendation:

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

- provide PD to teachers at all grade levels in developing adaptations for subgroups of students in lesson and unit plans.

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:

- Collaboration between the district and school communities on developing and implementing effective and challenging instructional practices does not produce consistently rigorous learning opportunities for all students.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- Coaches, PD consultants, school leaders, and district staff meet to identify PD needs of individual schools and then provide PD that focuses on instructional shifts, higher order questioning, discussion techniques, and active student engagement. However, school leaders stated that PD opportunities and their impact on teaching and learning is insufficiently monitored and evaluated by either themselves or district staff. Teachers have regular grade-level and department meetings with the literacy and mathematics coaches in which they analyze data to determine students' current levels and set targets, but school leaders state that this work does not always result in positive impacts in classrooms. Teachers reported that students are involved in academic goal setting and are aware of the specific targets for development for improved student literacy. However, based on samples of feedback of student work, focus group interviews, and classroom observations, reviewers found that while most students were aware that higher scores on local and State assessments was a goal, not all students were able to articulate the specific skills they needed to improve in order to raise their scores. School leaders stated that the district needs to provide teachers with additional support to better enable them to develop goals with their students.
- School and district leaders acknowledged that there is a need to develop, implement, and monitor differentiation in classroom instruction, but the district does not have a plan in place to identify and target the learning needs of student subgroups. Although some teachers have successfully differentiated instruction, due to a shortage of substitute teachers to cover teachers' classes, the district does not promote inter-visitation by their colleagues to view instructional best practices that are evident in other schools. The school leaders reported that although some teachers feel a sense of

urgency regarding student achievement, this is not a universal perspective and school leaders would welcome more support from the district in reinforcing through correspondence and at meetings the necessity to drive forward school and classroom improvements at a faster pace than is currently the case.

Impact Statement:

- The district is not effectively monitoring PD and providing support to improve teacher practices to ensure rigorous learning opportunities for all 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:

- implement a program of PD in differentiating instruction at all grade levels with follow up support and evaluations by coaches; and
- implement a program of inter-visitation followed by debriefing within elementary and secondary levels to promote replication of best practices already implemented by teachers within the district.

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’s work to address students’ social and emotional developmental health is limited. The district has not communicated a sense of urgency or provided sufficient resources or targeted PD to support students’ social and emotional needs.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- School leaders stated that the district does not provide sufficient attention to identifying and addressing students’ social and emotional developmental health needs. School leaders and the social and emotional support staff from schools reported that the district PD plan has most recently focused on the academic needs of students rather than their social and emotional developmental health. School leaders stated that with limited support from the district, some schools’ support staff members have reached out to some families to try to better understand the social and emotional needs of students, but school leaders indicate there is no evidence to show the impact they have had through their efforts. District staff stated that approximately 100 volunteers mentor students during the school day on a weekly basis, which creates a positive relationship with an adult. However, school leaders indicate that there is little quantifiable evidence to indicate the impact this work is having on addressing student needs. School leaders and school support staff members reported that a large number of the district’s students have been exposed to traumatic experiences in their lives. Yet, the district support staff stated that the district offers minimal PD offerings related to students’ social and

emotional well-being.

- District leadership indicates there is a Director of Student Services who has held this position for five years. School leaders state that the district’s Committee on Special Education (CSE) assesses the needs of referred students for special education services. The CSE meets at the individual school level but has no district-wide meetings that would provide an overview of district-wide efforts. The student support team indicated that upon admission to the district, some students are accurately identified for special education services and some are not. The district then has to provide services until students are re-evaluated and properly classified.

Impact Statement:

- The district has not made the social and emotional developmental health of students a significant priority, and any efforts to address students’ needs are not adequately monitored and evaluated for district and school-wide impact, which limits students’ opportunities for social and academic success.

Recommendation:

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

- conduct biweekly meetings of the student support staff to develop, monitor, and evaluate district wide initiatives to promote students’ social and emotional growth;
- by November 2015, collaboratively develop expectations for students’ social and emotional growth with benchmarks at the end of each grade level and culminating goals for graduates;
- develop a crisis plan that includes a crisis team to deploy to schools to provide support to students in times of crisis; and
- make full use of its student support staff to provide intervention services that may limit the referral of students for special education services.

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:

- Although the district has recently hired parent coordinators to create stronger home-school partnerships, the district does not have a comprehensive plan to engage parents. Reciprocal communication between the district and families is limited, and some parents feel disconnected from district decisions.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- While there is no district wide parent engagement plan, school leaders stated that school events are well attended by parents. To promote parent attendance at these events, the district provides interpreters for a number of languages and babysitting services for parents with infants. There is a parents' association in the elementary, intermediate and middle school; however, there is no parents' association at the high school. The recently awarded Community Schools Grant has allowed the district to hire three parent coordinators who will serve as liaisons between families and schools. However, some school leaders state that they are not aware of the development of specific job descriptions for parent coordinators in the schools, which limits their potential effectiveness.
- School leaders reported that there is an online portal for students and parents to access assessment, attendance, and anecdotal data. However, school leaders report that only 75 percent of teachers district wide, upload information on a continuous basis. School leaders stated that social media teasing and bullying that emanates in the community is a daily issue in the secondary schools. However, they indicate the district, despite contacting the families involved in this issue, has not been able to effectively address this issue with families, and incidents that begin outside the school have to be dealt with when they escalate within the school. School leaders state that the district has established some collaborative relationships with community- based organizations (CBOs), such as the Hudson Family Literacy Center and Bard College to provide mentoring and literacy services for students, but the review team found no evidence that indicates how the district has evaluated the quality of these partnerships in raising student achievement or aspirations.

Impact Statement:

- The lack of a cohesive district plan to engage parents and the community limits the ability of schools to develop a strong home-school partnership 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:

- collaboratively develop a parent coordinator job description that includes establishment of an active parents' association and presentation of parent workshops as core responsibilities;
- establish protocols for monitoring and evaluating parent coordinators' outreach efforts; and
- utilize well-attended parent events to piggyback academic, parenting and child development workshops for parents.