



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

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



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| <b>BEDS Code</b>         | 641301060000                                |
| <b>District</b>          | Hudson Falls Central School District        |
| <b>District Address</b>  | 1153 Burgoyne Avenue, Fort Edward, NY 12828 |
| <b>Superintendent</b>    | Mark Doody                                  |
| <b>Date(s) of Review</b> | April 13-14, 2015                           |

| District Information Sheet   |      |  |       |                          |   |
|--|------|--|-------|--------------------------|---|
| <b>Grade Configuration</b>   | K-12 | <b>Total Enrollment</b>                                    | 2464  | <b>Number of Schools</b> | 5 |
| <b>District Composition (most recent data)</b>                         |      |  |       |                          |   |
| <b>% Title I Population</b>  | 18   | <b>% Attendance Rate</b>                                   | 94.63 |                          |   |
| <b>% Free Lunch</b>  | 47   | <b>% Reduced Lunch</b>                                     | 7     |                          |   |
| <b>% Limited English Proficient</b>                                    | 0.3  | <b>% Students with Disabilities</b>                        | 14    |                          |   |
| <b>Racial/Ethnic Origin (most recent data)</b>                         |      |  |       |                          |   |
| <b>% American Indian or Alaska Native</b>                              | 0.1  | <b>% Black or African American</b>                         | 0.6   |                          |   |
| <b>% Hispanic or Latino</b>  | 1.3  | <b>% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</b>         | 1.3   |                          |   |
| <b>% White</b>   | 95.6 | <b>% Multi-Racial</b>                                      | 0.3   |                          |   |
| <b>Personnel (most recent data)</b>                                    |      |  |       |                          |   |
| <b>Years Superintendent Assigned to District</b>                       | 14   | <b># of Deputy/Assistant Superintendents</b>               | 2     |                          |   |
| <b># of Principals</b>   | 4    | <b># of Assistant Principals</b>                           | 3     |                          |   |
| <b># of Teachers</b>   | 180  | <b>Avg. Class Size</b>                                     | 21    |                          |   |
| <b>% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate</b>                | 0    | <b>% Teaching Out of Certification</b>                     | 0     |                          |   |
| <b>% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience</b>                | 4.4  | <b>Average Teacher Absences</b>                            | 10    |                          |   |
| <b>Teacher Turnover Rate – Teachers &lt; 5 years exp.</b>              | 0    | <b>Teacher Turnover Rate – All Teachers</b>                | 13    |                          |   |
| <b>Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2013-14)</b> |      |  |       |                          |   |
| <b>ELA Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4</b>                             | 209  | <b>Mathematics Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4</b>         | 243   |                          |   |
| <b>Science Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4 (4th Grade)</b>             | 161  | <b>Science Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4 (8th Grade)</b> | 116   |                          |   |
| <b>Student Performance for High Schools (2013-14)</b>                  |      |  |       |                          |   |
| <b>ELA Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4</b>                             | 79   | <b>Mathematics Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4</b>         | 81    |                          |   |
| <b>Credit Accumulation High Schools Only (2013-14)</b>                 |      |  |       |                          |   |
| <b>4 Year Graduation Rate</b>  | 81   | <b>6 Year Graduation Rate</b>                              |       |                          |   |
| <b>% of earning Regents Diploma w/ Advanced Des.</b>                   | 26   |  |       |                          |   |
| <b>Current NYSED Accountability Status</b>                             |      |  |       |                          |   |
| <b># of Reward Schools</b>   | 0    | <b># of Priority Schools</b>                               | 0     |                          |   |
| <b># of Schools In Good Standing</b>                                   | 4    | <b># of Focus Schools</b>                                  | 0     |                          |   |
| <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>                       | N/A |
| <b>Hispanic or Latino</b>  | N/A | <b>Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander</b> | N/A |
| <b>White</b>   | NO  | <b>Multi-Racial</b>                                    | N/A |
| <b>Students with Disabilities</b>  | NO  | <b>Limited English Proficient</b>                      | N/A |
| <b>Economically Disadvantaged</b>  | NO  |  |     |
| 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>                       | N/A |
| <b>Hispanic or Latino</b>  | N/A | <b>Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander</b> | N/A |
| <b>White</b>   | YES | <b>Multi-Racial</b>                                    | N/A |
| <b>Students with Disabilities</b>  |     | <b>Limited English Proficient</b>                      | N/A |
| <b>Economically Disadvantaged</b>  |     |  |     |
| 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>  | N/A | <b>Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander</b> | N/A |
| <b>White</b>   | NO  | <b>Multi-Racial</b>                                    | N/A |
| <b>Students with Disabilities</b>  | NO  | <b>Limited English Proficient</b>                      | N/A |
| <b>Economically Disadvantaged</b>  |     |  |     |

Describe the district's top priorities (no more than 5):

**DISTRICT PRIORITIES AS WRITTEN BY THE DISTRICT:**

1. Increase student achievement as indicated by district-wide SMART goals in all curriculum areas for all students as measured by NYS assessments and grade level assessments.
2. Increase District graduation rate from 80.9% by 3% by August 2015 to meet and/or exceed NYS graduation requirements.
3. Implement Common Core State Standards district-wide for 100% of all students.
4. Utilize data driven instructional strategies by all teachers district-wide.

### **Information about the review**

- The review of the district was conducted by an Outside Educational Expert (OEE), a representative from the New York State Education Department, a Special Education School Improvement Specialist (SESIS) and a district representative.
- The Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) review of one school in the district also informed the district review.
- During IIT school reviews in the district, reviewers visited 45 classrooms across one school, and IIT reviewers conducted focus group interviews with students, staff and parents.
- Reviewers conducted interviews with district leadership, central office staff and a focus group of principals.
- The district did not provide results of student, staff or parent surveys.

**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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 1:</b> |  |                          | <b>3</b>                            |                          |                          |

**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 2                  |
|-----|--|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

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

|   |                                    |                       |
|---|------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| <p><b>Tenet 1 - District Leadership and Capacity:</b> The district examines school systems and makes intentional decisions to identify and provide critical expectations, supports and structures in all areas of need so that schools are able to respond to their community and ensure that all students are successful.</p>  | <p><b>Overall Tenet Rating</b></p> | <p><b>Stage 3</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 3</b></p> |
| <p><b>Overall Finding:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The district has effective hiring and evaluation practices in place that help to ensure that school leaders and staff are equipped with the skills to address program and student needs.</li> </ul> <p><b>Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discussions with district personnel indicate that the district has developed a hiring process that is rigorously adhered to by school and district personnel. District leadership reported that the recruitment and hiring process is shared with all school leaders. Documents examined by the review team showed that interview guidelines include the protocols to be used, questions to be asked of candidates, and forms to be completed by the interview team members who evaluate each candidate. District leaders stated that professional development (PD) is provided for all interview team members, which covers the procedures to be followed during the interview process. This consistent system leads to hiring an adequate number of candidates who are suited to the staffing needs and priorities of the district. School leaders state that school needs are taken into account during the hiring process. For example, the focus in all schools is on literacy and supporting special education students; therefore, candidates with dual certification in either reading or special education are given priority during the hiring process as long as they meet all other requirements. Discussions with district leaders and documents examined by the review team also indicated that the district has established partnerships with area institutions of higher learning, including the State University of New York (SUNY) campuses at Plattsburgh, Adirondack, Albany, Oneonta, and Potsdam as well as the College of Saint Rose, Castleton College, and St. Joseph’s College. These partnerships facilitate the placement of student teachers and interns and PD offerings as well as providing recruitment and hiring opportunities. The district also advertises openings in many local and regional newspapers.</li> <li>Discussions with district and school leaders indicate that a teacher evaluation procedure is in place and that the district follows the Danielson evaluation model. Teachers reported that school leaders conduct pre- and post- observation conferences with teachers before formal evaluations and provide constructive, frequent, and actionable verbal and written feedback, which is accessible through the Observation and Appraisal Management System (OASYS). District and school staff noted that evaluations highlight areas of improvement for teachers and inform PD offerings, such as the use of</li> </ul> |                                    |                       |

higher order questioning and instructional shifts in the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). Teachers and staff shared with the review team that the wide variety of PD offerings, opportunities for teachers to develop leadership skills, instructional support through coaching, adequate materials to support teaching, and supportive school leaders are all factors that contribute positively to teacher retention rates across the district.

**Impact Statement:**

- Coordinated efforts to recruit, evaluate, and retain high quality staff result in personnel with the experience and expertise to address student needs.

**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 3**

**Overall Finding:**

- The district’s theory of action, in the form of its mission statement and goals, is widely disseminated and understood throughout the district. School, department, and student goals are based on the district’s theory of action.

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

- The district’s mission statement, which focuses on providing a “carefully planned and challenging educational program,” is displayed in all classrooms and district buildings. District goals include increasing student achievement in all content areas, increasing the graduation rate, implementing the CCLS, and using data driven instruction (DDI). Discussions with district and school leaders indicate that the district’s shared decision making team as well as each building team focus on the theory of action to establish building, department, and student goals, which are specific, measurable, ambitious, results-oriented, and timely (SMART), and are specifically aimed at raising student achievement and outcomes. Both the district’s shared decision making team and the building teams are comprised of representatives from constituent groups, including teachers, school leaders, parents, and community members. The review team noted that minutes of meetings are distributed to all staff to ensure everyone understands the importance of high expectations for all students. Although there are very few families in the community for whom English is a second language, district documents are translated into other languages as needed.
- Since increasing graduation rate is an intended outcome of the district’s focus on high expectations for all, district and school staff ensure that the school community understands that the process of increasing the graduation rate begins in kindergarten. School and district leaders stated that one way this is accomplished is through new teacher orientation. District and school leaders confirmed that all new teachers have an extensive orientation program that focuses on the theory of action along with other district commitments, including DDI, effective classroom management, and the principles of Understanding by Design, as the underpinning of all unit and lesson development. New teachers are

also provided with mentors to support them on their road to success. School leaders confirmed that the district makes clear to schools its academic expectations and sets challenging goals to help ensure these expectations are met. The district’s commitment to holding high expectations for all students has resulted in staff implementing a consistent, data driven program in which graduation rates have increased from 62 percent in 2011 to 80.9 percent in 2014.

**Impact Statement:**

- The district’s commitment to holding high expectations for all students, has promoted higher levels of academic success.

**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 3**

**Overall Finding:**

- The district’s allocation of resources addresses the district’s goals and meets the needs of the school community.

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

- Discussions with district and school leaders indicate that the district has established district-wide criteria for budget decision making. The district holds meetings with all school leaders during the budget process to ensure that resource decisions are supported by data and are responsive to the expressed needs of differing school communities. School leaders report they work closely with the district leaders to use their funds effectively and that they are held accountable through regular meetings with district leaders for evaluating how spending decisions impact student achievement.
- Reviewers found through discussions with district leaders and examination of budgetary data that spending is aligned to school and district goals. For example, one goal is to raise attendance rates. To track attendance of all students, the district reviews chronic absences in a variety of areas, including grade, gender, special need status, and free and reduced price lunch status. School leaders reported that chronic absence rates have declined. School and district staff, including the district’s shared decision-making team and the schools’ child study teams, are using this information to reach out to more families and to plan strategic interventions. These interventions have resulted, according to school leaders, in a higher level of parental engagement in schools. District leaders stated that raising the graduation rate for special education students is a district priority. The review team found that resources have been spent to revamp the special education program based on the results and recommendations of a study conducted by an outside agency. The district has adopted a co-teaching model across schools, adjusted schedules to allow for common planning time for co-teachers, and provided on-going PD for general and special education teachers. These decisions have resulted in the elimination of several self-contained classes, which did not always facilitate students’ access to the CCLS, and the inclusion of special education students into 15 co-taught classes at the high school. School and district leaders state that these initiatives have contributed to the rise in graduation rates,

which reached 81 percent in 2014.

**Impact Statement:**

- Strategic and effective allocation of resources by district leaders is contributing to school improvement and success.

**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 3**

**Overall Finding:**

- The district has developed a three year PD plan to address district and school goals. PD is offered to leaders, teachers, and support staff to improve instructional practice and student achievement.

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

- District and school leaders reported that a three year PD plan was developed by the district’s shared decision-making team to address district and school goals. The plan is used as a tool to drive and support school improvements. Teachers and school leaders indicated that staff surveys and information from classroom observations were some of the data used to develop the PD plan. Teachers noted they are able to attend conferences and workshops aligned with their improvement needs in different content areas and are expected to turnkey the information they have learned to their colleagues. School leaders reported and teachers confirmed that school leaders monitor PD by looking for the impact of PD during their classroom visits, walk-throughs, and observations. School leaders stated that their observations indicate that PD offerings are often implemented by staff in many classes, which leads to improvements in instruction and student achievement. Much of the PD has focused on implementing the CCLS and incorporating instructional shifts. A review of Regents data between 2012 and 2014 indicates improvements in student achievement. For example, the percentage of students passing examinations in integrated algebra has risen from 75 percent to 82 percent, in geometry from 88 percent to 92 percent, in algebra II from 66 percent to 77 percent, in chemistry from 89 percent to 92 percent, and in physics from 77 percent to 92 percent. Data also indicated that results for the current year continue to rise, with school leaders stating that they continue to assess the impact of PD undertaken by teachers when they carry out classroom observations and visits.
- District and school leaders stated that the district, in partnership with four neighboring districts, received a grant for leadership development. The grant, “Strengthening Teacher and Leader Effectiveness” (STLE), provides for 16 teachers and two administrators to participate in regional PD to build leadership capacity. The program, which has just started, includes building professional learning communities. Documentation provided to the review team indicated that a requirement of the grant is that participants return to their schools and support district initiatives through 15 hours of service, such as coaching and/or workshops, during the 2015-16 school year.
- In 2014, school and district leaders joined with leaders from neighboring districts to plan and attend a

summer retreat that focused on supporting instructional excellence through rigor, relevance, and relationships. School and district leaders noted they have seen through classroom observations, improvements in instruction that has led to higher levels of student achievement. In addition, the district planned and executed a regional PD experience in the fall, which featured presenters on a variety of instructional and curricular topics. Over 700 teachers and administrators attended, including a significant number of participants from Hudson Falls. Sessions covered a wide variety of topics, including CCLS implementation, technology, and classroom management strategies. School leaders stated that they have observed improvements in instruction in these areas. Through systems in place in schools in which teachers can reflect on and assess the quality of PD provided, teachers indicated that this PD along with PD provided or facilitated by the district has been beneficial and has led to improvements in their instruction.

**Impact Statement:**

- PD, planned around school and district goals, has resulted in improved teacher practices and increased student achievement.

**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 3**

**Overall Finding:**

- The district has adopted a data driven culture that is evidenced by the implementation of a system by which teachers monitor all students’ academic progress using formal and informal assessment methods and adjust their instruction accordingly.

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

- Discussions with district and school leaders indicate that the district sets high expectations regarding the use of data by schools and teachers to drive instruction, develop challenging goals, and improve student achievement. Interviews with teachers and school leaders and classroom observations indicate that grade level and content area teachers across the district have developed formative and summative assessments based on the CCLS and content area standards. Students are assessed regularly. Elementary school students are assessed using a variety of methods including Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessments, STAR reading and STAR math. A universal screening tool is used at the elementary level to ensure correct placement of students in intervention programs, as needed. Secondary school students are assessed using unit and benchmark examinations developed by each department. All secondary school teachers are using a progress monitoring tool developed by the science department to record and analyze benchmark assessment data, which is shared with students and are the basis for developing and/or adjusting each student’s individual SMART goals. School leaders stated that department SMART goals are determined using a district-developed template and process in which teachers use data to establish the goal and then are required to defend it by explaining the benefits, action steps, possible obstacles, and solutions. As a result of the district’s

insistence on high expectations for all students, every grade eleven student took the English language arts (ELA) Regents examination halfway through the course in January 2015, and 85 percent of the students received a score between 55 and 100., with 64 percent of students scoring between 65 and 100 and 18 percent between 85 and 100. These figures are with six months of classes still left.

- Examination of documents by the review team and discussions with school leaders and teachers indicate that with district guidance and support teachers have developed curricula for their grade level and content areas using the CCLS. They use data from the regularly administered assessments to make short and long-term revisions to the curriculum based on test results and the feedback they receive during classroom instruction. Teachers stated that school leaders regularly monitor how the impact of these revisions are leading to more rapid student progress and improved student achievement.

**Impact Statement:**

- The use of data in a systematic way has promoted improved instruction and increased student achievement.

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 3</b></p> |
|---|----------------------------|-----------------------|

**Strengths:**

**Overall Finding:**

- School leaders engage with the district leadership to further their vision for improving student achievement. All schools’ SMART goals are based on the district goals for student achievement, and the district provides support to enable schools’ visions to be realized.

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

- School leaders report they are supported by the district leadership through regular communication on a one-on-one basis as well as during monthly administrative cabinet meetings. District leaders develop the meeting agendas with input from school leaders. The agendas are shared prior to the meetings, and minutes are distributed afterwards. School leaders state that the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction meets monthly with school leaders to discuss issues such as curriculum, instruction, and the special education program, in particular. The high school leader reported to the review team that the district was especially supportive of the revision of the special education program based on the review by the Capital Area School Development Association (CASDA). Based on recommendations from the review and further testing of the skills and abilities of students with disabilities, an extensive co-teaching program is now in place with 15 co-taught classes and accompanying PD and common planning time for the co-teachers. Data presented by school leaders

show that the scores of special education students have increased and instructional practices of special education teachers have improved, as evidenced during classroom observations.

- The high school leader indicated that through data analysis he found that many grade nine students were entering high school without age appropriate reading and writing skills. School leaders state that the district has also recognized the weaknesses in the ELA program in elementary and middle school and has focused its PD in grades kindergarten through twelve on literacy. The district has provided embedded coaching as well as peer coaching and targeted PD from BOCES and the Teacher Center, which is a regional center that provides PD. School leaders reported they have observed implementation of these strategies in classrooms they visit. They also stated that the district has been supportive in establishing a freshman seminar through the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center Program. Along with tutoring in reading and writing, freshmen are learning how to make positive life choices, such as taking responsibility for their actions, and making more positive choices. For example, students indicate they are better at standing up for what they believe in and making healthier choices about tobacco, alcohol, and drug use.
- School leaders shared that the various PD opportunities provided by the district, especially those targeted to challenges faced by struggling teachers, such as classroom management and differentiating instruction through grouping, have helped strengthen instructional practices of teachers.

**Impact Statement:**

- The mission and goals of the district are well-known to the school community. SMART goals at the building and department levels are developed directly from the district’s goals, and the shared vision supports positive 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 3**

**Overall Finding:**

- The district has worked with the schools to develop CCLS aligned curriculum, including regular opportunities to review and revise the curriculum.

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

- School leaders reported that through a coordinated PD plan, time for teachers to attend conferences or to observe colleagues’ classes, summer curriculum projects, and common planning time for teachers, the district has effectively supported curriculum development work. School leaders indicated that with district support teachers in all content areas in the high school have developed curriculum plans based on the principles of Understanding by Design. Mathematics and ELA courses are aligned with the CCLS. School leaders stated that they have worked with the district to ensure that other content areas have curricula aligned to existing content standards. The science and mathematics departments have piloted the uploading of their curricula into Rubicon Atlas, the curriculum

development software program. Foreign language teachers, along with their curriculum development, have been refining their minimal oral competency benchmarks, which are aligned to their content standards. When queried by the review team, school leaders indicated that the variety and quality of PD provided to staff by the district has strengthened instruction in their schools.

- School leaders reported they appreciate the efforts and resources that the district has provided in content areas such as mathematics and ELA. The district has supplied consultants to work with and coach teachers monthly and to share best practices. School leaders stated this has promoted improvements in instruction. Other PD opportunities facilitated by the district and valued by schools, include the New York State Education Department’s Network Team Institutes to help teachers better understand the CCLS instructional shifts. Teachers stated that they now share an increased understanding of CCLS instruction.

**Impact Statement:**

- The district’s systematic and school supportive approach to curriculum development across content areas enables teachers to plan and deliver instruction that is aligned to the CCLS and other content area standards.

**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 3**

**Overall Finding:**

- The district’s PD plan is comprehensive and based on district and school goals for increased student achievement.

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

- School leaders and teachers report they appreciate that the district’s shared decision making team has worked collaboratively with representatives from all schools to develop a comprehensive three year PD plan. The plan outlines strategies to achieve school and district goals, including tasks or activities, when these activities will occur, individuals responsible for the delivery and implementation, and the evidence that is needed to show success. School leaders state they fully support the district’s intended outcome of the plan, which is to increase student achievement in all areas. School leaders and teachers confirm that the strategy agreed upon is the use of data-driven and differentiated instructional practices. Tasks or activities include: grade level common planning time, opportunities for teachers to work together across grades and content areas, collaboration between general education and special education teachers, sharing best practices, small group leveled instruction with classroom and reading teachers, and the use of individual student performance folders to monitor progress. The target deadline is June 2015, and the evidence of success will be measured by increased scores on ELA and mathematics, quarterly and benchmark assessments, and running records. Mid-year test results examined by the review team indicate that most scores in mathematics and ELA are improving.

- School leaders indicate that the district supports efforts to improve the process of providing interventions for students who are not performing at grade level or are failing in class. Some teachers and school leaders are participating in the Response to Intervention (RTI) Statewide Personnel Project sponsored by the New York State Education Department. Through this program, school leaders stated that district staff reviews the district’s RTI process to better align practices, protocols, and supports available to students in grades kindergarten through twelve.
- School leaders shared their positive perspectives concerning the district’s commitment to provide a comprehensive special education program across grades kindergarten to twelve. Common planning time has been built into the schedule so that co-teachers can meet daily to plan their instruction and target supports for both the special education and general education students in their classes. As a result of district support, school leaders state that special education students are more appropriately placed and have the advantage of accessing the general education curriculum, including CCLS-aligned instruction, which provides more opportunities for students to become college and career ready.

**Impact Statement:**

- Careful planning and delivery of PD, embedded coaching support, sharing of best practices across grade levels and content areas and multiple collaboration opportunities enable teachers to work together to provide rigorous learning opportunities for all students.

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

**Tenet Rating**

**Stage 3**

**Overall Finding:**

- School leaders indicate that district leadership is committed to supporting the social and emotional developmental health of all students and have established and maintained district-wide programs, partnerships, and PD for schools to address student needs.

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

- School leaders and teachers state that at the core of the district’s support of students’ social and emotional developmental health needs is the School Health Advisory Committee, which began in 2002. It is comprised of representatives from the district’s student support staff, school leaders, community representatives, teachers, and members of the board of education. The role of the committee is to develop and maintain partnerships with community agencies and to provide continuous PD to teachers, staff, and the school community to enable them to support students’ social and emotional needs. School leaders and staff speak positively about the PD provided, which includes training in identifying chronic childhood health conditions, tackling absenteeism, and examining the adverse impact of these factors on student learning and achievement. School leaders indicated that the district’s social and emotional developmental health program has had a positive impact and that staff

are better able to recognize signs of stress in their students and to access appropriate supports.

- School leaders reported that through a grant, the district also supports the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center Program, which is a partnership between the high school and St. Anne Institute. The program is in its second year and provides a freshman seminar to help students develop emotional, cognitive, and interpersonal skills. An evaluation of the program by the College of Saint Rose, which included student surveys, indicated that students felt the program was helpful and they were strongly connected to the staff.
- School leaders and teachers state that the district provides social workers at most schools and guidance counselors at the middle school and high school to support both students and their families. Based on increased student need, district leadership indicated the district is adding two social worker associates, one for the middle school and one for the intermediate school. School leaders also reported that the district employs a community outreach nurse to support connections with families and that local resources and agencies and a school nurse teacher help to support families in crisis and/or in need of economic, emotional, and mental health support. They noted a backpack program, which supplies food to children over the weekends when they would not be able to access free breakfast or lunch at school.

**Impact Statement:**

- The district’s comprehensive policy of providing student support staff in all buildings as well as fostering collaboration with community agencies to identify needs, results in students’ social and emotional needs being met.

**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 3**

**Overall Finding:**

- The district has established a welcoming environment for parents and families and communicates its expectations to the individual schools. District and school staff recognize the importance of nurturing a home-district partnership.

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

- School leaders reported they welcome the district’s requirement that all schools conduct open houses at the beginning of each school year as well as parent-teacher conferences following report card distribution. Teachers and school leaders stated that these events are well attended, with open houses, for example, drawing approximately 90 percent of the parents. Reviewers found that the district has developed a comprehensive family and community engagement plan in which each school is expected to create and sustain a welcoming environment for parents, families, and community members. School leaders reported to the review team that they welcome this initiative, and in turn, expect their staff to be responsive to parents and families and to keep them well informed about student progress and challenges. School leaders indicated the district has updated and revised its

website to make it more user friendly and that it provides a wealth of information for parents, families, and community members. From the beginning of the 2014-15 school year to the time of the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) review, there were 18,267,236 hits to the district's website, with the number of visitors each day averaging 2,440.

- The school leaders reported they were proud of the district's efforts to continue to support the implementation of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Center Program. A family resource center is a component of this program at the high school. It was designed to provide on-going opportunities for literacy and educational development for parents, training to better help them understand their child's learning experiences, and foster a strong link between home and school. During the 2013-14 school year, 101 parents were assisted by the 21<sup>st</sup> Century staff. There is one year left for this grant but school leaders reported that the district is planning how they will sustain the program in the event the grant is not renewed.
- District and school leaders noted that in an effort to bring the community closer together and provide recreation for families who might not otherwise be able to afford it, the district purchased the community pool for use by the community free of charge. School leaders also indicated that the district making its athletic fields available to the community, including for Little League teams, had a positive impact on the district and school and community relationships-

**Impact Statement:**

- The district's commitment to building and maintaining strong partnerships with parents, families, and the community results in students being supported in their learning.