



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

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



|                          |                                     |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>BEDS Code</b>         | 061700010000                        |
| <b>District</b>          | Jamestown City School District      |
| <b>District Address</b>  | 197 Martin Road, Jamestown NY 14701 |
| <b>Superintendent</b>    | Tim O. Mains                        |
| <b>Date(s) of Review</b> | May 20-21, 2015                     |

**District Information Sheet for: Jamestown City School District**

| District Information Sheet                                      |      |  |      |
|---|------|--|------|
| <b>Grade Configuration</b>                                      | P-12 | <b>Total Enrollment</b>                                    | 5172 |
|   |      | <b>Number of Schools</b>                                   | 9    |
| District Composition ( <i>most recent data</i> )                |      |  |      |
| <b>% Title I Population</b>                                     | 67%  | <b>% Attendance Rate</b>                                   | 93%  |
| <b>% Free Lunch</b>   | 57%  | <b>% Reduced Lunch</b>                                     | 4%   |
| <b>% Limited English Proficient</b>                             | 5%   | <b>% Students with Disabilities</b>                        | 12%  |
| Racial/Ethnic Origin ( <i>most recent data</i> )                |      |  |      |
| <b>% American Indian or Alaska Native</b>                       | 0%   | <b>% Black or African American</b>                         | 4%   |
| <b>% Hispanic or Latino</b>                                     | 19%  | <b>% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</b>         | 0%   |
| <b>% White</b>  | 67%  | <b>% Multi-Racial</b>                                      | 9%   |
| Personnel ( <i>most recent data</i> )                           |      |  |      |
| <b>Years Superintendent Assigned to District</b>                | 2    | <b># of Deputy/Assistant Superintendents</b>               | 0    |
| <b># of Principals</b>  | 9    | <b># of Assistant Principals</b>                           | 6    |
| <b># of Teachers</b>  | 429  | <b>Avg. Class Size</b>                                     | 19   |
| <b>% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate</b>         | 0%   | <b>% Teaching Out of Certification</b>                     | 1%   |
| <b>% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience</b>         | 3%   | <b>Average Teacher Absences</b>                            | 12.5 |
| <b>Teacher Turnover Rate – Teachers &lt; 5 years exp.</b>       | 0.5% | <b>Teacher Turnover Rate – All Teachers</b>                | 1.4% |
| Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2013-14) |      |  |      |
| <b>ELA Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4</b>                      | 20%  | <b>Mathematics Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4</b>         | 22%  |
| <b>Science Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4 (4th Grade)</b>      | 78%  | <b>Science Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4 (8th Grade)</b> | 70%  |
| Student Performance for High Schools (2013-14)                  |      |  |      |
| <b>ELA Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4</b>                      |      | <b>Mathematics Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4</b>         |      |
| Credit Accumulation High Schools Only (2013-14)                 |      |  |      |
| <b>4 Year Graduation Rate</b>                                   | 72%  | <b>6 Year Graduation Rate</b>                              | 77%  |
| <b>% of earning Regents Diploma w/ Advanced Des.</b>            | 33%  |  |      |
| Current NYSED Accountability Status                             |      |  |      |
| <b># of Reward Schools</b>                                      | 0    | <b># of Priority Schools</b>                               | 0    |
| <b># of Schools In Good Standing</b>                            | 0    | <b># of Focus Schools</b>                                  | 9    |
| <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>                                  | NA | <b>Black or African American</b>                       | N  |
| <b>Hispanic or Latino</b>  | N  | <b>Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander</b> | NA |
| <b>White</b>   | N  | <b>Multi-Racial</b>                                    | N  |
| <b>Students with Disabilities</b>  | N  | <b>Limited English Proficient</b>                      | N  |
| <b>Economically Disadvantaged</b>  | N  |  |    |
| Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Mathematics (indicate Y / N / N-A) |    |  |    |
| <b>American Indian or Alaska Native</b>                                  | NA | <b>Black or African American</b>                       | N  |
| <b>Hispanic or Latino</b>  | N  | <b>Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander</b> | NA |
| <b>White</b>   | N  | <b>Multi-Racial</b>                                    | Y  |
| <b>Students with Disabilities</b>  | N  | <b>Limited English Proficient</b>                      | N  |
| <b>Economically Disadvantaged</b>  | N  |  |    |
| Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Science (indicate Y / N / N-A)     |    |  |    |
| <b>American Indian or Alaska Native</b>                                  | NA | <b>Black or African American</b>                       | Y  |
| <b>Hispanic or Latino</b>  | N  | <b>Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander</b> | NA |
| <b>White</b>   | Y  | <b>Multi-Racial</b>                                    | N  |
| <b>Students with Disabilities</b>  | N  | <b>Limited English Proficient</b>                      | N  |
| <b>Economically Disadvantaged</b>  | Y  |  |    |

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

- Strategic Plan Goal 1: Ensure academic excellence and equity for every student.
- Strategic Plan Goal 2: Create an engaging and nurturing environment in and outside the classroom.
- Strategic Plan Goal 3: Improve communication and deepen engagement for both families and the broader community.
- Strategic Plan Goal 4: Implement operational standards and practices that improve, support, and measure student success.

## Information about the review

- The review of the district was conducted by an Outside Educational Expert (OEE), a representative from the New York State Education Department, a Special Education School Improvement Specialist (SESIS) representative and a representative from the Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (RBERN).
- The Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) reviews of two schools in the district also informed the district review.
- During IIT school reviews in the district, reviewers visited 73 classrooms across the two schools and IIT reviewers conducted focus group interviews with students, staff and parents.
- District reviewers conducted interviews with district leadership, central office staff and a focus group of principals.
- The district provided results of a student survey completed in May 2014 that 371 elementary students (12 percent) and 488 secondary students (23 percent) completed.
- The district provided results of a staff survey completed in May 2014 that 90 staff (21 percent) completed.
- The district did not provide results of a parent survey.

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

| #                                  | Statement of Practice  | Stage 4                  | Stage 3                  | Stage 2                             | Stage 1                  |
|------------------------------------|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1.1                                | The district has a comprehensive approach for recruiting, evaluating, and sustaining high-quality personnel that affords schools the ability to ensure success by addressing the needs of their community. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 1.2                                | The district leadership has a comprehensive and explicit theory of action about school culture that communicates high expectations for addressing the needs of all constituents.                           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 1.3                                | The district is organized and allocates resources (financial, staff support, materials, etc.) in a way that aligns appropriate levels of support for schools based on the needs of the school community.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 1.4                                | The district has a comprehensive plan to create, deliver and monitor professional development in all pertinent areas that is adaptive and tailored to the needs of individual schools.                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 1.5                                | The district promotes a data-driven culture by providing strategies connected to best practices that all staff members and school communities are expected to be held accountable for implementing.        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 1:</b> |  |                          |                          | <b>X</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 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 2                  | Stage 2                  | Stage 1                             |
|-----|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 5.1 | The district creates policy and works collaboratively with the school to provide opportunities and resources that positively support students' social and emotional developmental health. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

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

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

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

|  |                                    |                       |
|--|------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| <p><b>Tenet 1 - District Leadership and Capacity:</b> The district examines school systems and makes intentional decisions to identify and provide critical expectations, supports and structures in all areas of need so that schools are able to respond to their community and ensure that all students are successful.</p> | <p><b>Overall Tenet Rating</b></p> | <p><b>Stage 2</b></p> |
| <p><b>Statement of Practice 1.1:</b> The district has a comprehensive approach for recruiting, evaluating, and sustaining high-quality personnel that affords schools the ability to ensure success by addressing the needs of their community.</p>  | <p><b>SOP Rating</b></p>           | <p><b>Stage 2</b></p> |

**Overall Finding:**

- While the district takes steps to recruit high quality staff, responsibility for evaluating and sustaining school staff is assigned primarily to school leaders. District support to school leaders has not strengthened all school leaders’ skills to monitor teachers’ progress, improve teachers’ capacity, and sustain improvement to serve the needs of all students.

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

- District staff reported that through retirements, voluntary attrition, early retirement and other financial incentives, they have been able to reduce the number of staff to meet budget limitations without implementing layoffs. According to the district leader, the district has recruited candidates for the few positions that are available through existing relationships with universities that place pre-service teachers in the district. Candidates are known to school leaders through their pre-service teaching, and recommendations are forwarded to district leaders for review and approval. The district leader indicated that the district requires probationary teachers and long term substitutes to participate in regular training with district staff to support their implementation of district programs, and the district provides them with mentors to support them through their first year. Prior to receiving tenure, probationary teachers are evaluated to determine if they will be offered continuation contracts. District leadership indicated that seven of 54 teachers in their first three years of teaching were not recommended for continuation. District leaders reported that the district has not implemented strategies to actively retain teachers because few teachers leave the district. However, the district has not carried out exit surveys to determine staff reasons for leaving.
- Each school leader is assigned responsibility for evaluating and sustaining teacher quality in their building by conducting required observations using the district’s approved Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) process. Although the academic achievement of students across the district remains well below the State average, 98 percent of teachers in the district were rated effective or highly effective by their school leaders. In interviews, school leaders confirmed the district leaders’ explanation that the primary objective this year has been to complete the number of evaluations required by the contract. District staff indicated the professional development (PD) provided to school leaders this year focused on accurately identifying effective instructional practices, and school leaders stated that they felt their observational skills are improving. However, district leaders noted that

while greater accuracy and consistency in observations is evident during calibration sessions, broad variations among school leader’s interpretations of the APPR rubric persist. School and district leaders both report that further training and PD is planned to better support the consistent implementation of the Danielson evaluation framework and to enable school leaders to gain the best impact from instructional walk-throughs. At the current time school and district leaders’ observational practices are not leading to sustained improvements in instructional practices. This is further exacerbated by the confirmation from district leaders that there has been insufficient PD provided for school leaders in how to provide actionable feedback to teachers so that improvements in instructional practices regularly occur.

**Impact Statement:**

- The district makes efforts to recruit and retain highly qualified personnel, especially through its relationships with universities. However, the lack of systematic monitoring of the effectiveness of its evaluation process, supports to school leaders and staff, and PD offerings minimizes the district’s 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:

- use the APPR process and interim student achievement data to conduct an analysis that demonstrates the link between instructional leadership and changes in teaching practices that produce improved student achievement. Use the findings of the analysis to generate action research projects for school leadership teams to deepen their appreciation of the direct relationship between strong instructional practices and positive student outcomes.

**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.

**SOP Rating**

**Stage 2**

**Overall Finding:**

- The district’s high expectations for student performance and professional practice are stated in broad terms in its theory of action.. The district’s lack of effective strategies for communicating its theory and the limited actions that have been taken to enact its strategic plan have not generated commitment from all staff or promoted unified efforts across the district that lead to high levels of student success.

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

- According to the district leader, the district’s theory of action includes three priorities: rigorous academics for all students; operating collaboratively with schools and the wider school community; and using data to measure and track the academic performance and progress of schools and the different student groups within schools. These priorities create the framework of the district’s five year strategic plan. District staff noted that the five year action plans include activities such as refining

the delivery of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) modules in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics, strengthening teaching, and engaging students with disabilities and underachieving students. However, the review team found no evidence in the plans that indicate how these activities will be carried out and how each member of the school community will contribute to the efforts. The action plans omit explicit quantifiable and intended outcomes, expectations of how professional practices need to improve, and measures to assess progress toward the strategic goal. Discussions with district leaders indicate that plans are not in hand to address these omissions as a matter of urgency.

- The district leader stated that reports from previous Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) and district-led reviews of two schools indicate that the district theory of action is not reflected at the school or classroom level. He also noted that he anticipates resistance to implementation because some staff are reluctant to change and tend to avoid disruptions to existing routines. Evidence from discussions with district and school leaders indicate that while strategies to address this reluctance are planned, no concrete actions have yet been initiated. During interviews with school and district staff, the IIT found that the district's theory is known to and embraced by district staff but the same is not the case for school leaders, staff, and parents. Discussions with school leaders, staff, and parents indicated that they were only generally familiar with the goals of the district plan, and school leaders confirmed they have not received a high level of district support to help them use the theory of action to guide strategic decisions or academic goal setting in their school. The review team found no evidence that the district's strategic plan is published in correspondence between the district and schools or families, on the district website or communicated in detail in any other way, except to the Board of Education and among district leaders and staff who served on the planning committee.
- Both school leaders and district staff confirm that many responsibilities for enacting the district's theory of action are assigned to schools, and school leaders explained the challenge of implementing district initiatives with limited district support. The district leader stated the lack of support for district initiatives is due to past district practices that fostered a lack of collaboration and unity among staff and administrators, which the district leader states are proving difficult to overcome. He indicated that he recognizes that more has to be done to communicate and enact the district's theory of action in a way that unifies the district community. School leaders, on the other hand, reported that lack of buy-in for district initiatives arises because teachers and school leaders are not included in meaningful ways in district decisions, and the district does not provide adequate guidance and support for implementation in the schools.

**Impact Statement:**

- The district's theory of action has not been widely communicated throughout the district, and the monitoring and guidance for implementation is limited, which impedes efforts to improve student outcomes, particularly for students with disabilities and ELLs.

**Recommendation:**

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

- Build a strong collaborative professional culture across the district focused on a common vision of excellence informed by an agreed-upon theory of action by:
  - engaging school leaders, teachers, and families in frequent, regular facilitated conversations about the district’s theory of action;
  - recruiting participants from across the school community to define the explicit actions required of each school to enact the strategic plan;
  - publishing the district’s plan, as well as the detailed action plans generated by the constituent groups, in every appropriate medium; and
  - reporting progress toward the ultimate goal of improving student achievement at least quarterly, by providing updates on district-wide student performance, such as benchmark assessments, in family-friendly language using social media, public meetings, community events, and school events.

**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.

**SOP Rating**

**Stage 2**

**Overall Finding:**

- The district allocates resources according to general needs across the district and the goals of its theory of action. However, it does not adequately take into account the unique needs of each school and lacks a formal system to determine the impact of allocation decisions on school improvement.

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

- District leaders indicated that they review anticipated enrollment, particularly the number of students with disabilities and ELLs, State report card data, and annual surveys to identify general needs across the district. In addition, they noted that resource allocation decisions are guided by goals of the district’s theory of action. However, the district cabinet acknowledged it does not have a structured process for identifying the more specific needs of each school community beyond conversations with each school leader and anecdotal input from district staff, curriculum coordinators, and program managers. District leaders stated that the district does not yet have procedures for assessing how well resource and spending decisions meet the needs of schools and students.
- The district leader stated that the district assigns students with disabilities, ELLs, and students with behavioral problems to selected schools, which results in a variation in staffing and resource needs. District leadership noted that schools are provided the number of staff needed to comply with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Title III regulations; however, the review team found no evidence that the district has determined if current staffing numbers or the skills of the assigned staff are sufficient to address the persistently low achievement and graduation rate of students with disabilities and ELLs. District staff and school leaders reported that the allocation of staff responsible for students’ social and emotional well-being, such as psychologists, social workers,

and mental health providers, is based primarily on available funds and is only moderately differentiated for those schools with special programs. For example, the school educating students with behavioral problems does not have an assistant school leader to help with behavior management. In another school, the district leader indicated the district, because of a lack of available funds, will not be replacing a psychologist, which the district leader confirmed leaves an elementary school without services, except on a contracted basis, to address students' social and emotional needs. School leaders reported that students' unaddressed social and emotional factors disrupt their school climate and create a barrier to academic success in their schools.

**Impact Statement:**

- Although the district is allocating some resources to meet the needs of the school community, the lack of procedures to identify the unique needs of each school and to monitor the impact of resource allocation decisions, limit district-wide school improvement efforts and student success.

**Recommendation:**

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

- engage school leaders in a collaborative process to prepare a consensus recommendation to district leaders on the allocation of staff and resources;
- conduct a comprehensive school level needs assessment to provide evidence school leaders must use to inform their requests; and
- facilitate a consensus-building process in which school leaders work within budget limitations to present their proposals to their colleagues and reach agreement on staffing and resource recommendations to the district.

**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.

**SOP Rating**

**Stage 2**

**Overall Finding:**

- While the district has an extensive professional development plan (PDP) to address its initiatives, the district allocates the same training for all schools rather than differentiating PD according to individual school needs. As a result, the district's PD plan does not adequately support the educational programs across the district. The district has not established systems to measure the impact of PD on instructional or leadership practices in order to move schools forward.

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

- The review team's examination of the district's PDP indicates the district offers multiple PD opportunities for teachers and school leaders. However, district and school leaders confirm that the

same training opportunities are offered for all schools and staff, irrespective of need, circumstances, demographics or context in which individual schools function. School leaders report they are invited to offer suggestions, but decisions about PD are made by the district. Participation in most of the PD sessions is optional, and teachers receive stipends or are provided substitutes for their classes, which increases participation. District leaders indicate there are repeat sessions during the school year, and they ask school leaders to encourage teachers to attend. District leadership indicates the district has not used the data from the recent IIT reviews or the recommendation from a previous district review to individualize the PD offerings, expressing the belief that all schools are equally in need of training to address the gaps noted by the IIT. While district leaders report they examine benchmark assessment data and samples of teacher evaluations, they use these data sources to select district level PD needs, but not to develop PD plans designed to address the specific strengths and needs of each school.

- The primary approach cited by district leaders to improve the quality of instruction is to strengthen instructional leadership. The district provided four calibration instructional sessions with Danielson group consultants, three observer coaching sessions, and three instructional coaching sessions with consultants from Expeditionary Learning. School leaders who participated in these sessions reported they have improved their ability to carry out the required number of APPR evaluations. However, neither they nor the district was able to verify whether the increase in the number of teacher observations has led to measurable improvement in instructional practices in schools.
- The district has not defined specific, measurable outcomes for each of its PD activities and does not have systems to monitor whether teachers bring PD learning into their classrooms or if it results in improved student outcomes. School leaders reported that the district has not yet provided tools or strategies to determine if PD is leading to improvement in teachers' practices as recommended by the 2013-2014 IIT District Review. Although district leaders described their plan to make use of the "Go Sign Me Up" tool to determine if teachers are implementing the professional learning from PD in the classroom, the system is not yet in use, making it difficult for district leaders to know if students are benefiting from teachers' participation in PD.

**Impact Statement:**

- Although the district provides PD to improve teacher effectiveness and the skills of school leaders, the lack of strategies or systems to determine the impact of PD and to align PD with the unique needs of each school limits the district's ability to make appropriate adaptations to the PD plan to improve professional practice 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:

- improve the rigor and quality of district PD by establishing clear outcomes for each PD session and monitoring whether those outcomes have been met. Use participant reports, PLC meetings, and informal walk-throughs by district coordinators, mentors, coaches, and other district staff to assess the

degree of adoption of PD practices. Share the information with school leaders and with the district cabinet, so that evidence of the impact of the district’s PD plan is known by all. Refine and revise the PD options to eliminate those that are not producing positive results.

- meet fully the recommendation from the precious district review to individualize PD based on the unique needs of each school. Engage each school in assessing the skills and capacity of the professional staff and the needs of its students. Provide a menu of PD options linked to staff and student needs. Identify the intended outcomes of each option and define a process for the school staff to collaborate with district leaders to monitor whether the outcomes have been attained.

**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.

**SOP Rating**

**Stage 2**

**Overall Finding:**

- The district is in the beginning stages of using data to inform district, school, and classroom instructional decisions. While some grade level teams are making use of student data to modify instruction, instructional practices are not consistently leading to improved student achievement. District and school leaders rely primarily on informal and anecdotal evidence to assess the impact of their own priority initiatives.

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

- District leadership reported that the district sets the expectation that teachers will examine student data at weekly Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings and use that data to modify curriculum planning or instructional delivery. District staff noted PD was provided to school leaders on strategies for data review and analysis, and school leaders are accountable for training their teacher teams. According to the district staff, two instructional coaches help facilitate data meetings, but school leaders indicated that coaches are not always available when teams meet. Both district and school leaders agreed that grade level teams demonstrate varying levels of skill in using data. The 2013-2014 IIT district review recommended that the district provide additional coaching and mentoring to PLCs in the use of data, reflecting the finding that the level of district support is insufficient to ensure a data-focused mindset into the professional culture of the district. However, the district leader acknowledges that there is still a way to go to ensure that the use of data to drive improvement at classroom, school, and district level is effective and plays a significant role in helping to raise student achievement.
- While the district collects a variety of academic data, including benchmark assessments, progress monitoring data, classroom tests and quizzes, as well as attendance and behavior data, the district has not defined a specific set of data analysis practices that all school and district teams are held accountable for adopting to embed a universal data- driven culture. When the review team asked district leaders about their own data use practices, they stated that data review is not a regular part of weekly cabinet meetings. District leaders noted they examine academic, behavior, and survey data when available; however, the district’s multiple data systems makes it difficult to retrieve information

from different sources in formats that can be displayed to show trends and patterns. As a result, district level decisions about the quality and impact of programs, such as Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and Response To Intervention (RtI) are not always informed by a comprehensive picture of school or district performance. Similarly, school leaders reported that while their leadership teams often examine data, it is generally in response to an event such as an increase in discipline referrals or the end of a marking period, and their data review does not follow a specific set of practices. School and district leaders confirmed that there is variability in how well teachers use data to drive instruction and to make curricula adjustments. Both school and district leaders indicated they recognize the necessity for greater support and training in this area so that the potential of data as a tool for driving improvement is realized.

**Impact Statement:**

- Limited procedures and protocols to ensure the effective use and analysis of data at the classroom, school, and district levels, minimizes the ability of district leaders to evaluate district or school initiatives 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:

- model best practices in data use and analysis at the district level by implementing a specific data use protocol as a regular agenda item for weekly cabinet meetings. Use the protocol to examine district level, school level or classroom level data so that each member of the district cabinet builds their own skills in applying data to inform adjustments to district level programs and practices. Deploy district staff to introduce and train school leaders and teachers in the designated protocol, and monitor progress in the use of the tools through monthly surveys, making adjustments in the training process as the survey evidence indicates.

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>SOP Rating</b></p> | <p><b>Stage 2</b></p> |
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**Areas for Improvement:**

**Overall Finding:**

- District leadership directs school leaders to implement the district’s programs, policies, and vision statement and assigns responsibility for establishing, maintaining, and supporting organizational and instructional aspects of each school to the school leaders with limited consultation, collaboration, and

support.

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

- School leaders report that the district leader and cabinet make decisions about staffing, resource allocation, PD, and policies and inform school leaders when decisions have been made, but they do not collaborate with them in the decision-making process. District leaders confirmed that decisions about programs including PBIS, RtI, PLCs, APPR, implementation of the CCLS modules, policies, staffing, and supports are made at the district level. The eight school leaders interviewed by the IIT confirmed that school leaders are instructed that their responsibilities are to provide training, oversight, management, and monitoring of each district initiative supported by summer and school year PD, which school leaders are expected to convey to their staff. The district leaders expressed their expectation that school leaders will develop systems to manage the work. However, school leaders noted that the district has not provided adequate time and support with the design of systems so that district programs can be implemented effectively.
- School leaders reported that they do not have unique school visions or missions. They agreed that the district leader advised them to use the district mission as their own rather than spend time developing a statement that reflects the unique character of each school. The review team found that some of the school leaders retained existing missions, mottos, and belief statements while also posting the district statements.
- The district indicated that it provides support to school leaders and teachers through grant-funded instructional coaches to help improve instruction and curriculum planning. However, secondary school leaders reported that both coaches are elementary school teachers and have not been helpful on the secondary level. While the district reported that coaches provide support to non-tenured teachers, to teachers on improvement plans, and to PLCs learning how to use data, school leaders indicated that coaches are shared among nine buildings, are not readily available, and are not providing adequate PD and support that consistently results in improvements to professional practices and student outcomes.
- School leaders acknowledged that school environments are not uniformly positive and that district actions have not produced improvement. School leaders stated that the district's decision to replace a mandatory evening alternative education program with an optional day program has resulted in greater building-level discipline problems at the secondary level. During interviews, the IIT found that school leaders were unified in their concern that students' misbehavior originates at least in part from a lack of services to ensure their social and emotional well-being and that the district lacks a uniform program and adequate staff to address widespread needs. While the district instructed all school leaders to implement PBIS, and the district provided some PD on establishing PBIS teams, school leaders stated that the lack of staff buy-in has thwarted efforts at the secondary level to put the framework into operation. School leaders reported that the district has reminded school leaders of their responsibility but provided no additional support to promote staff acceptance.

**Impact Statement:**

- Limited collaboration and support for the implementation of district initiatives, policies, and vision for improvement hinders school leaders' efforts to lead their staff to provide a high quality educational

program, which minimizes 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:

- make sure district and school leaders collaborate on an assessment of the impact of existing district supports, including PD, instructional coaches, PBIS, Rtl, PLCs, and APPR on student performance, teaching practices, and school climate at the individual school level. Expand the theory of action to state the expectations of district leaders, district staff, school leaders, teachers, school staff, and families to carry out the plan's activities. Include realistic timelines, interim benchmarks, and measurable outcomes. Collect the achievement, behavior, and survey data needed to monitor whether the strategic plan is promoting high levels of achievement for all 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.

**SOP Rating**

**Stage 2**

**Overall Finding:**

- While the district offers a number of PD opportunities to teachers and school leaders focused on the implementation of the CCLS, there is limited evidence that indicates PD opportunities and other supports are producing positive changes in curriculum alignment or the quality of instruction.

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

- School leaders reported that the district makes curriculum decisions and assigns responsibility for overseeing CCLS-alignment to school leaders through the APPR process. While the district funds curriculum coordinators and two instructional coaches who meet weekly with elementary PLCs to discuss curriculum implementation, school leaders indicated most of the time is used for PBIS and Rtl discussions, rather than curriculum work. School leaders noted that teachers vary in their skill in making best use of the modules and student achievement results generally reflect similar variations. They stated that for those teachers who can attend summer PD on the modules provided by the district, implementation has been smoother.
- District and school leaders indicated that teachers of students with disabilities and teachers of ELLs are invited to attend the same trainings as general education teachers. However, school leaders noted that since the PD sessions are optional and occur in the summer, not all special educators can participate. In addition, scheduling conflicts prevent some special educators and English as a second language (ESL) teachers from joining their colleagues regularly to engage in curriculum work. School leaders attributed the poor performance of students with disabilities and ELLs is due in part to the limited training opportunities for teachers to use the EngageNY modules effectively.
- School leaders report that the district does not have a formalized process or evaluation system in place to check that the curriculum is being implemented as designed, beyond the APPR observations of the

school leaders and the “small scale curriculum audits” mentioned in the district’s self-assessment. Reviewers found that the quality of these APPR evaluations vary and provide too little feedback on the effectiveness of the curriculum being implemented in schools. Reviewers also found that the mini-audits were either too informal or not consistently implemented. An effective collaborative system between schools and the district to ensure that the curriculum is meeting the needs of all students is not yet in place, and student progress remains a cause of concern.

**Impact Statement:**

- The district’s lack of a system to consistently monitor curriculum implementation to determine both alignment of lessons to CCLS expectations and the impact of PD on instructional practices, minimizes the ability of teachers to plan rigorous instruction that enables all students, especially student subgroups, to make academic progress.

**Recommendation:**

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

- formalize the district’s “small scale curriculum audits” mentioned in the district self-assessment into a structured process for school leaders, teacher teams, and district staff to use quarterly to gather evidence on the successes and challenges faced by each grade level team in implementing the EngageNY modules. Use the results of the audits to devise timely and differentiated training with in-district or external presenters to help teachers overcome the barriers to success for them and for their students.

**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.

**SOP Rating**

**Stage 2**

**Overall Finding:**

- District opportunities for teachers to improve their instructional practices have not yielded changes in professional practice that provide rigorous learning opportunities for all students. Academic achievement remains low, particularly for students with disabilities and ELLs.

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

- School leaders reported and the review team’s examination of the district’s PDP indicated that the district provides support to improve instructional practice through PD sessions for teachers but relies primarily on the school leader to monitor, evaluate, and motivate teachers to improve their practice. School leaders expressed growing confidence in their ability to evaluate instruction through the district APPR process; however, they expressed less confidence in their ability to influence teachers to improve. School leaders reported that the district does not carry out analyses of individual school needs by using academic performance data or contextual and demographic data and tailor PD and support to match these specific school needs. They state that this often results in a PD and support model that is generic, and it limits the ability of school leaders to address the continuing legacy of low

achievement.

- Evidence from 2013-2014 teacher and student surveys indicates that many students find lessons less than engaging, and many teachers have difficulty in ensuring that their teaching meets the needs of all students. These findings were supported by school reviews, which indicated that much of the instruction observed was developing or ineffective and lacked challenge, differentiation, and engagement. Discussions with school leaders indicate that they are aware of these weaknesses but that support and PD from the district has not been focused enough on identified weaknesses to bring about improvements. School leaders state that follow up PD is not always provided. Discussions with teachers and teachers' ratings of the quality of professional learning, both in the PD sessions as well as the PLC meetings, were the lowest of the ten categories on the 2014 survey shared with the IIT. Only 32 percent of teachers agreed that PD helped them better meet the learning needs of their students, and the same percentage agreed that the PD helped them build new skills that have increased their effectiveness. The survey results correlate with the IIT findings and indicate that the district's support for quality instruction has not yet generated the desired changes in teacher practice or student engagement. District leaders stated that there is still much work to be done by the district to ensure that money and time invested in PD leads to sustained improvements in professional practices and student outcomes

**Impact Statement:**

- While the district provides opportunities for teachers to improve their instructional practice and offers support through the school leaders' APPR activities, these strategies have not resulted in instruction that consistently aligns with the shifts expected in the CCLS. As a result, students have limited opportunities to acquire the skills and knowledge to be college and career ready.

**Recommendation:**

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

- use a process parallel to the "small scale curriculum audit" in the district DTSDE Self-Assessment, and engage school leaders and representative teachers in conducting an instructional audit facilitated by district leaders and staff. Develop a menu of PD options, including peer observations and visits to exemplar classrooms in neighboring districts, and invite teachers and school leaders to create a personal PD plan with explicit outcomes and measurable progress benchmarks. Allocate time on the district cabinet agenda to review and provide meaningful feedback on teachers' personal progress.

**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.

**SOP Rating**

**Stage 1**

**Overall Finding:**

- The district has not implemented a comprehensive plan to address the social and emotional

developmental health needs of students. While the district directed school leaders to implement PBIS as a tool for character development and positive school culture, not all buildings have been successful in generating the required level of staff commitment needed for the program to produce its intended outcomes. Reports from school leaders and Board of Education minutes indicate continuing behavior problems that are detrimental to school climate, particularly at the secondary level.

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

- District and school leaders stated that while they are working on finalizing a strategic district plan to ensure that the social and emotional developmental health needs of all students are met, the plan is not yet operational. District leaders stated that they selected PBIS to serve as a district-wide approach to building student character and promoting a positive school climate. Both school leaders and district leaders reported that PBIS is well established at the elementary schools, with some schools participating in training to develop procedures to provide a level of interventions and supports beyond the core program. At the middle schools, district leaders through observations and discussions with school leaders, rated PBIS implementation as mixed, with some buildings skillfully adopting the program's practices and others not yet well established. While district staff indicated they provided PD to school leaders and PBIS leadership teams to adopt the framework, both school and district leaders agreed that PBIS has yet to be embraced at the high school, and district leaders suggest that continuing discipline problems are the result of the absence of consistent building-wide practices.
- School leaders observed that the district's elimination of the existing alternative program for students at the start of this school year has not been effective. While the previous program had failings in consistently meeting students' needs, students were mandated to attend so that they retained their connection to the school, and the school could monitor their progress. The district's new program is optional for students, with the result that, according to school leaders, returning students exhibit worse behavior than prior to suspension. In addition to these changes in the alternative program, school leaders state that the district has introduced a revised Code of Conduct and a new approach to student suspension, which raised concerns among stakeholders, with a large group of parents and staff members bringing their criticisms to the Board of Education in the fall of 2014. District leaders reported they have convened a committee to review the Code of Conduct and suggest revisions to address parent and staff concerns. However, their work has not been completed.
- School leaders interviewed during the on-site review suggest that many of the discipline problems at the secondary level are related to challenges in students' lives. The district offers access to community mental health agencies, including one housed in one of the middle school buildings, but school leaders reported that there is often a lag between a traumatic event and services to the affected students. School leaders indicated that while community agencies provide well-needed assistance, everyday supports for the general student population and their families are limited by an insufficient number of district psychologists, social workers, and counselors. School leaders reported that they do not have enough counselors to run the Second Step violence prevention program in their schools, and some school leaders have chosen to lead the program themselves rather than abandon it. School leaders also reported that more PD is needed for school staff because there is not sufficient skilled capacity in school staff to adequately meet the social, emotional and behavioral needs of all students. District

leaders state that more targeted PD to better equip staff with the skills to address student needs is required but has not yet been formally embedded within the district’s PD calendar.

**Impact Statement:**

- Although the district has selected PBIS to support a positive school climate, inconsistent implementation in the schools, inadequate systems to identify and address behavior problems, particularly on the secondary level, and the lack of a comprehensive policy and plan for social and emotional developmental health needs hinders students’ opportunities for 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:

- act, with a sense of urgency, to implement the district strategic plan for addressing student social and emotional developmental health, re-examine the district budget and identify funds to provide for trained behavior interventionists in each building, particularly the middle and high schools, separate from school leaders and assistant principals, to begin no later than the start of the 2015-2016 school year. Make sure that behavior interventionists serve as mentors to elementary school PBIS teams to train staff in the implementation of intensive (Tier II and Tier III) interventions. In schools without a PBIS initiative, ensure that the interventionist models used include approaches that facilitate students staying in the school, and recruit staff members to become student mentors and advocates.
- develop a positive professional relationship between district leaders and school staff in order to continue to promote the adoption of PBIS in those schools without full implementation. Schedule monthly focus groups with teachers to share concerns and ideas, engage in reciprocal communication and collaborative problem solving to address common issues.

**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.

**SOP Rating**

**Stage 1**

**Overall Finding:**

- While the district continues developing a district-wide family and community engagement plan scheduled to launch in the 2015-16 school year, it has not undertaken any district-level family and community engagement activities for the 2014-15 school year. Family and community engagement is carried out by each school independently, with varying levels of success.

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

- Although the 2013-2014 IIT district review recommended development of a comprehensive family and community engagement strategic plan, district leaders delayed action on that recommendation and have included family engagement in the recently adopted strategic plan. The family engagement component is proposed to launch in the 2015-2016 school year. In the interim, the district leader directed each school leader to establish a site-based decision making team that includes parent

members to ensure that school activities are informed by the perspective of families. School leaders reported that while they have initially found it difficult to recruit parents to serve on the team because of work and other commitments, they have benefited from the viewpoint of the parent at their monthly meetings. District leaders reported that all but one school has been able to involve at least one parent member.

- School leaders reported that the district directive for family and community engagement is basic, provides little direction and support, and states no more than for schools to do the best they can to bring families into the school. Activities such as an open house, ELA and mathematics nights, orientation for newcomers, and a Common Core night are designed by school leaders and carried out at the school level but with no district support. The schools' efforts, school leaders state, have resulted in consistently low attendance at academically focused events. Several school leaders reported that they have revived their Parent Teacher Association (PTA) to bring more parents into the school but participation is minimal at most schools. District leaders reported that they encourage PTAs to engage with the school as partners in the education of their children, but most PTA activities remain focused on social events.
- The IIT reports of two schools visited by review teams during 2014-2015 year rate the schools' efforts to engage families in meaningful ways in the education of their children as ineffective, citing a major gap in the schools' ability to communicate with families about the support parents can provide to improve their child's success. The districts' strategic plan includes objectives to strengthen the communication about academics with families. However, while the district's website contains descriptive information about the school's academic programs, the links posted on the website to the district's academic performance brings the viewer to outdated State report cards from the 2011-2012 school year. No other academic performance or outcome information is provided on the district website.
- School and district leaders report that they rely on outside agencies to engage with families of students with disabilities, ELLs, and ethnic subgroups. However, the district has not gathered information to determine if the agencies' efforts have helped these families better access or navigate essential educational supports for their children. To assist with families whose native language is not English, the district provides a link to Google translate on its website but provides no other support for translation of documents

**Impact Statement:**

- The district's lack of implementation of a comprehensive plan for parental engagement and communication hinders the ability of schools to develop strong home-school partnerships 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:

- follow through with previous IIT recommendations and take action to strengthen communication and

guidance to families aimed at building their skill in enhancing their child's academic success. Include teaching tips and excerpts from the module assessments in the monthly district newsletter.

- continue to add detailed work plans to the district strategic plan in the area of family engagement, stating specific outcomes and measurable targets for each objective. Collaborate with schools to develop a school-specific work plan that adapts district objectives suited to each unique school community.
- conduct an inventory of family involvement activities at each school, examining participation rates and family surveys to identify those that have had a positive impact on family involvement. Publicize effective strategies and invite other schools to borrow and adapt them to promote their own school's interests needs.
- ensure that the district website exemplifies the district's focus on academics by posting accurate and timely student performance information, including but going beyond State data, in family-friendly formats, such as by using visually appealing trend graphs and charts.