



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

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)



BEDS Code	141800010000
District	Lackawanna City School District
District Address	245 South Shore Blvd. Lackawanna, New York 14218
Superintendent	Anne G. Spadone
Date(s) of Review	April 29-30, 2015

District Information Sheet			
Grade Configuration	PK-12	Total Enrollment	1615
		Number of Schools	4
District Composition (most recent data)			
% Title I Population	100	% Attendance Rate	91
% Free Lunch	68	% Reduced Lunch	10
% Limited English Proficient	13	% Students with Disabilities	22
Racial/Ethnic Origin (most recent data)			
% American Indian or Alaska Native	1	% Black or African American	18
% Hispanic or Latino	13	% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	1
% White (Includes Large Arabic ELL Population)	67	% Multi-Racial	1
Personnel (most recent data)			
Years Superintendent Assigned to District	2	# of Deputy/Assistant Superintendents	1
# of Principals	8	# of Assistant Principals	2
# of Teachers	159	Avg. Class Size	23
% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate	0	% Teaching Out of Certification	0
% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience	2	Average Teacher Absences	
Teacher Turnover Rate – Teachers < 5 years exp.	0	Teacher Turnover Rate – All Teachers	27
Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2013-14)			
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	11	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4	17
Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (4th Grade)	75	Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (8th Grade)	42
		Science 8 Taking a Regents Exam	100
Student Performance for High Schools (2013-14)			
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	74	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4	78
Credit Accumulation High Schools Only (2013-14)			
4 Year Graduation Rate	79	5 Year Graduation Rate	65
% of earning Regents Diploma w/ Advanced Des.	12		
Current NYSED Accountability Status			
# of Reward Schools	0	# of Priority Schools	0
# of Schools In Good Standing	2	# of Focus Schools	2
# of LAP Schools	0		

District Accountability Status

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

DISTRICT PRIORITIES AS WRITTEN BY THE DISTRICT:

1. Reading Improvement.
2. Data-Driven Decision Making.
3. Administrative Capacity Building.
4. Building Conditions Assessment and Capital Improvement Planning.

Information about the review

- The review of the district was conducted by an Outside Educational Expert (OEE), a representative from the New York State Education Department, and a representative from the Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (RBERN).
- The Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) review of one school in the district also informed the district review.
- During IIT school reviews in the district in 2014-15, reviewers visited 48 classrooms across the one school and IIT reviewers conducted focus group interviews with students, staff, and parents.
- District reviewers conducted interviews with district leadership, central office staff, and a focus group of school leaders.
- The district provided results of a student survey from the two schools that have been reviewed over the previous two years that 279 (57 percent) of the elementary school students and 212 (59 percent) of the middle school students completed.
- The district provided results of a staff survey from the 2013-14 review of the elementary school that 33 staff (92 percent) completed.
- The district provided results of a parent survey from the 2014-15 review of the middle school that eight parents (2 percent) completed.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#	Statement of Practice	Stage 4	Stage 3	Stage 2	Stage 1
5.1	The district creates policy and works collaboratively with the school to provide opportunities and resources that positively support students' social and emotional developmental health.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input 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>Tenet 1 - District Leadership and Capacity: The district examines school systems and makes intentional decisions to identify and provide critical expectations, supports and structures in all areas of need so that schools are able to respond to their community and ensure that all students are successful.</p>	<p>Overall Tenet Rating</p>	<p>Stage 1</p>
<p>Statement of Practice 1.1: The district has a comprehensive approach for recruiting, evaluating, and sustaining high-quality personnel that affords schools the ability to ensure success by addressing the needs of their community.</p>	<p>Tenet Rating</p>	<p>Stage 1</p>
<p>Overall Finding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The district does not have a system for evaluating all staff that provides actionable feedback that enables staff to improve their practices. The district’s systems for deployment and evaluation of teachers and school leaders are further constrained by personnel contracts, which limit their ability to provide each school with the highly effective staff necessary to address students’ academic and social emotional developmental health needs. <p>Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual Professional Performance Reviews (APPR) conducted by school leaders across the district rate 94 percent of teachers as “highly effective,” a finding inconsistent with student outcomes on state assessments that are stagnant and four-year graduation rates well below the state average. The district leader shared that she conducts the required formal evaluations of school leaders, but reported to the review team that she relies on informal teacher feedback and observations during school visits to judge whether school leaders are performing well in their assigned positions. The district leader shared that the strategy for sustaining high quality personnel is to provide training to teachers and school leaders. The district leaders cited continuing poor academic performance as evidence that the training has not resulted in improved instructional or leadership practices. The district provided a PD calendar to the review team, which listed the training provided to school leaders. District leaders confirmed that the trainings are identical for all school leaders and are determined by the district. District leaders explained that they have not put systems in place to provide consistent, regular follow-up support that is differentiated for each school leader’s needs. According to school leaders, district training allows insufficient time to learn new programs in order to oversee their effective implementation. The district reported that only those personnel accountable under the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) process, specifically teachers and school leaders, are evaluated regularly. The district leader reported that non-teaching staff, along with district-level directors of curriculum and instruction, PD, special education, and information technology have not been evaluated during her two years as district leader. 		

- District leaders explained that decisions about deployment and assignment of teachers and administrators are constrained by personnel contracts that limit their flexibility in ensuring that appropriate personnel are in place. The district leader reported that she has chosen to reassign tenured teachers and school leaders rather than pursue complicated dismissal proceedings if individuals are not meeting performance expectations. Thus, there is limited evidence of the district using recruitment as a means to improve instruction and student achievement.

Impact Statement:

- The district’s strategies for identifying and supporting teacher and school leadership have not been effective, which hinders student achievement and graduation rates.

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 research-based best practices for the support of adult learners and, aligned with existing evaluation processes, provide training to district-level personnel and school leaders that are focused on the district’s vision of excellence. The district leader must establish and regularly monitor short-term improvement benchmarks and measurable outcomes to ensure training is meeting the needs of each district and school leader responsible for oversight of the academic program and, in turn, contributing to improved student academic achievement.

Statement of Practice 1.2.: The district leadership has a comprehensive and explicit theory of action about school culture that communicates high expectations for addressing the needs of all constituents.

Tenet Rating

Stage 1

Overall Finding:

- The district theory of action describes procedures to follow, but does not specify district expectations related to the quality of staff performance or student outcomes. The theory of action is not communicated widely and does not serve as a guide for district, school, or classroom improvement efforts.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- While the theory of action explains how the district chooses to operate, it does not state the district’s expectations for staff or school leader performance, or the intended impact on student outcomes. The district provides some PD directly to teachers based on their interests, but the district theory of action for PD states that the district will train school leaders on the areas required for improving teacher effectiveness who will then turnkey the training to their teachers. However, the district does not follow up to ensure school leaders do this effectively.
- When asked who was responsible and accountable for improving student performance across the district, district staff was unable to specify the responsibilities or consequences for staff performance. School leaders stated that roles and responsibilities are in the process of being defined by the district.

The district’s comprehensive improvement plan (DCIP) lists activities to be implemented, but does not state goals that are specific, measurable, ambitious, results oriented, or timely (SMART), and most of the action items in the plan repeat strategies similar to those already in place.

- According to district leaders, neither the district cabinet nor the full district administrative team, which includes school leaders, regularly review data to identify the specific needs of each school community. The district cabinet reported that data, such as discipline data and academic performance data are not reviewed in a systematic way by the district administrative team to monitor progress toward district goals.

Impact Statement:

- In the absence of a comprehensive theory of action that defines expectations for district leaders, school leaders, and teachers, district and school staff do not follow a common, coherent plan aimed at improving student outcomes, which hinders 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:

- Convene a work group consisting of the district administrative team and a teacher representative from each building to draft a comprehensive theory of action that defines the best practices in leadership at the district and school levels and clear expectations for professional performance. School and district improvement plans must be aligned with the theory of action so that SMART goals and plans specify leadership and instructional practices that can help students meet grade-level standards and accumulate credits toward on-time graduation. The theory of action work group must define progress benchmarks listing the evidence to be collected to measure the quality of implementation and the degree of impact on academic achievement and credit accumulation. Regular review of the progress benchmarks should be included in the monthly district administrative team agenda.

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 1

Overall Finding:

- While some district allocations are based on the needs of school communities, overall the district bases financial decisions on historical formulas and available funds. The district does not have a strategic approach to determining where resources are needed based on identified root causes and to evaluate whether resources are yielding the desired outcomes. As a result, resources are not being maximized to meet the needs of every school community.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- Staffing decisions are not guided by performance measures. The district director of special education makes staff assignments guided by the needs of students with disabilities and English language learners (ELLs) at the elementary level. School leaders make staffing requests to the district based on course

offerings at the high school and middle school levels. District leaders explained that teacher layoffs due to shrinking enrollment are based on seniority and not guided by performance measures. School leaders are assigned based on the district leader’s formal and informal assessments of their strengths and building needs.

- School leaders and district staff reported that while the district provides training, it provides no follow-up support and does not collect reliable evidence to measure whether the training produces positive changes to instruction. As a result, the district cannot determine whether the costs of the training results in worthwhile benefits to staff.
- The district leader does not require the district information office to present data collected to district staff, school leaders, and teachers in ways to help them understand and use this information to identify student needs and advocate for and allocate resources.
- District staff explained that budgets are developed based on historical use and needs, and not on contemporary evidence of staff capacity or skill. Evidence from surveys and interviews with school leader and district staff demonstrate significant discipline issues at the middle and high school that have not been adequately addressed by additional supports for the staff and students in these buildings.
- The New York State Office of the Comptroller found that the district has not generated sufficient revenue to cover its expenses, and has had to rely on its financial reserves the past several years. To improve its financial stability, the district has made numerous budget cuts. Meanwhile, the district gave up a \$1.1 million grant to lengthen the middle school day.

Impact Statement:

- In the absence of a crucial analysis of individual school strengths and challenges, and without an assessment of the impact of resources on school performance, the district cannot verify that each school is receiving sufficient support to enable students to improve academically and for school leaders to improve school climate.

Recommendation:

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

- Select one area of concern for each of its schools and collaborate with the district administrative team to conduct a root-cause analysis using data from internal and external reviews, state and local assessments, as well as relevant climate and culture data. The analysis should result in the identification of the factors having the greatest influence on the area of concern that are within the scope of the district’s control. The team should devise an action plan to take meaningful steps to remedy each school’s unique challenge and monitor progress toward improved outcomes.

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 1

Overall Finding:

- While the district offers PD to school leaders and some PD sessions based on teacher interests, it does not take into account data on teacher or student learning needs to decide what training to offer. The district does not provide follow-up support to monitor whether the professional learning results in changes in practice that lead to improved student outcomes.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- According to district staff, the district conducts no regular monitoring of the impact of PD and relies on school leaders to monitor implementation and provide follow-up support to teachers. However, school leaders say that their responsibilities for school management and discipline leaves little time for providing the expected turnkey training or for monitoring changes in teaching practices beyond the requirements of the APPR system. As a result, implementation is not monitored with rigor, and follow-up support to teachers is not provided.
- The district leader responsible for PD explained that the catalogue of PD sessions offered at the Teacher Center is based on a survey of teachers. The district leader indicated that attendance at specific workshops is optional for teachers and school leaders and is not dictated by their individual evaluation findings. As a result, the district PD program does not guarantee alignment of the skills and abilities of school leaders and teachers with the needs of their students.
- District leaders shared that they do not regularly examine data from formal and informal evaluations to inform decisions about PD needs. District leaders cited their perception of the variability in the quality of school leader evaluations of teachers as a reason for omitting evaluation findings from its PD decisions.
- According to the district leader, the district provides mentors to school leaders to build their leadership capacity. However, the district leader reported that the mentorship relationship is broadly defined, with mentors serving as advisors and working on skills and practices of school leaders' own choosing. The district leader has not specified explicit outcomes for the mentorship nor are there progress benchmarks to determine if the mentors are having an impact on leadership capacity.

Impact Statement:

- The district's PD is not leading to improved leader or teacher effectiveness, which hinders 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:

- Redesign the PD for school leaders and teachers to align the needs identified by formal and informal observations with clear, consistent expectations for the implementation of new programs and practices. The delivery of PD must adhere to best practices in adult learning, including providing sufficient time to understand and practice the content under the guidance of skilled facilitators. In addition, district leaders must design and implement an efficient method for monitoring improvements in leadership and instructional practice resulting from PD activities. District leaders should include an

evaluation of the costs and benefits of its PD program, eliminating those PD activities that are not producing the desired impact.

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

Tenet Rating

Stage 1

Overall Finding:

- The district does not have a common data-based decision-making protocol that is used regularly to monitor progress and adjust programs and practices at the district, school, and classroom levels in order to strengthen staff capacity and improve student outcomes.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- District leaders stated that there is no common data-driven instruction protocol in regular use for district, building, or classroom-level decision making. The review team examined samples of feedback from district leaders on the minutes from grade-level team meetings in which teachers are expected to use the Results Oriented Protocol, a data analysis protocol. The district feedback evaluates compliance with the protocol but does not suggest strategies to improve its usefulness in the classroom. In their interviews, school leaders stated that feedback from district leaders states whether the data analysis is correct or incorrect, but it does not help school leaders or their teachers improve their skill in using data. Neither the district cabinet nor the district administrative team regularly examine district-level data and the district leader stated that they have not adopted a specific protocol for data review.
- The district leader shared that there is no common set of expectations across the district offices. With multiple initiatives and priorities in place, district staff generally works independently of each other to accomplish their tasks. District cabinet members reported they consult with the district leader whenever needed with questions or information about their particular areas of responsibility in order to manage multiple tasks in a timely manner. As a result, no one has the complete picture of the scope of the district’s work in part due to the one-on-one approach to managing district activities.
- District leaders conduct monthly administrative team meetings attended by district staff and school leaders to share information. District leaders and school leaders reported that there are only occasional reviews of district-wide or school-level data during the monthly meetings. School leaders indicated that the administrative team meetings are not used for problem solving or strategic planning. The district DCIP proposes a monthly progress review to assess DCIP goals, but this has not been implemented. In addition, district leaders stated that they did not conduct the six-month review of the DCIP data mentioned in the plan.

Impact Statement:

- As a result of the absence of a common approach to the collection, use, and analysis of data to inform decisions across all levels of the organization, the district is unclear in regard to the effectiveness of activities and practices, which hinders student success. Data and evidence are not used to revise and refine district allocations, school leader decisions, teacher practices, or the educational program in order 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:

- Select a data-based decision-making protocol and establish expectations for its use at all levels of the organization. Begin by modeling the use of the protocol at the district level to examine decisions around PD for school leaders, using data from surveys, formal and informal observations, academic performance, school climate, and student behavior. Engage all members of the district administrative team to provide practice and strengthen the skills of district staff in the application of the data analysis protocol to an authentic problem.

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

Statement of Practice 2.1 - School Leader Practices and Decisions: The district works collaboratively with the school to provide opportunities and supports for the school leader to create, develop and nurture a school environment that is responsive to the needs of the entire school community.	Tenet Rating	Stage 1
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Areas for Improvement:

Overall Finding:

- The approach chosen by the district to support school leaders has not led to improved leadership skills or enhanced school leader capacity to build a productive school culture that fosters strong student achievement. The district continues to adhere to its theory of action, which expects school leaders to take on the primary role of training staff and monitoring instructional practices, despite evidence and feedback indicating that the strategy is not producing the desired changes and improvement.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- District-provided PD for school leaders for improving instructional practice in schools, which they are then expected to turnkey to school staff, is determined by district priorities. For school leaders, the PD calendar lists at least six sessions on Response to Intervention (RtI); two days of DTSDE training; three days of Community Schools training; and two sessions to review new State Part 154 regulations. Single sessions are listed to address differentiation, data-driven instruction, formative assessment, and leadership strategies. However, while all are worthy topics, the wide scope and breadth of the training challenges the capacity of each school leader to follow up on all of the ideas learned at each session into their work.
- Feedback to school leaders from the district on the quality of the work of grade-level team meetings rates teachers' work against the expectations presented in training for school leaders, but provides little guidance on how to improve.

- According to school leaders, school leader turnover at the elementary, middle, and high schools over the previous years has resulted in instability around the expectations for professional practice and student outcomes. Further, the teacher survey shared with the review team confirmed that staff felt expectations were unclear. District leaders explained they chose to change school leaders based on informal teacher feedback and district leaders' perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of the individuals.
- District decisions on deployment of personnel and allocation of resources is based on generalized needs, such as the replacement and updating of curriculum materials and training on new state regulations, which do not clearly connect to current school conditions. For example, despite the low enrollment in some high school courses, these courses continue to be offered. School leaders express concern that district resources are not allocated to address critical needs, such as instructional coaching, and stated that district support is insufficient to enable them to move their schools forward.
- School leaders applauded the district leader's decision to hold monthly administrative team meetings. However, the meetings consist of information-sharing between district and school leaders with few opportunities for problem solving and decision making. School leaders raised concerns that while their input is invited and their concerns expressed, generally, little action is undertaken by district leaders to resolve ongoing issues. School leaders shared that they voiced their concerns with the district's new approach to handling disruptive students, but the district did not respond to their feedback. The monthly meetings do not follow a formal agenda aligned with stated district priorities and do not regularly examine district-level data to assess progress toward district-defined improvement goals.
- District leaders repeated concerns that there are insufficient funds to provide the staff needed by each school. Currently there are no assistant principals at the elementary schools, leaving the school leaders with the responsibility to manage operations, oversee instruction, and handle discipline. School leaders raised concerns about their need for instructional coaches, in part because school leaders are unable to allocate sufficient time to monitor instruction across their buildings. While the district recognizes the needs identified by school leaders, in the absence of a structured approach to assess the effectiveness of district staffing and resource allocation decisions, the district cannot determine if available funds are being effectively used to improve student achievement.

Impact Statement:

- While the district makes the decisions and sets expectations for school leaders to implement new programs and practices, the district provides insufficient support to enable school leaders to carry out district expectations. As a result, leadership and teaching practices are not improving, which hinders 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:

- Require that the existing district outside educational experts (OEE) engage each school in conducting a school-level needs assessment as part of the process to create its School Comprehensive Education

Plan (SCEP). The OEE, with the school leader and school leadership team, must examine all existing data from teacher, student, and parent surveys, academic performance, student behavior, and school climate to create a vision of success that takes into account the skills and knowledge of the staff and school leaders. From the needs assessment, school leaders should present to the district a data-informed and evidence-supported proposal for staffing, training, and resource allocation needs to inform district decisions for the coming school year. District staffing and resource decisions should be guided by a review of the needs-assessments of each building across the district in association with a critical evaluation of existing district resource allocation practices.

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

Tenet Rating

Stage 1

Overall Finding:

- The district assigns responsibility to school leaders to monitor the planning and delivery of CCLS-aligned curriculum. The lack of systematic district supervision and effective support for school leaders contributes to wide variations in the content and quality of the curriculum for students.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- District and school leaders stated that they examine lesson plans only occasionally and do not conduct a systematic review to determine if a CCLS-aligned curriculum is being planned and taught.
- District leaders stated they provide some training to support the quality of school leader feedback to teachers, but that the district does not systematically monitor the quality of this feedback or any improvement in school leader practices. District leaders said they do not offer feedback directly to teachers following lesson plan reviews or visits to classrooms to improve the alignment between planned lessons and the expectations of the CCLS.
- According to district leaders, while CCLS curriculum materials are provided by the district, some teachers exercise flexibility in using programs or materials of their own choosing. The district does not require teachers to use a specific curriculum, which results in variable learning opportunities for students.
- According to the district leader, teachers have limited time to engage in cross-curricular planning. Daily common planning for the elementary schools is scheduled for the first half-hour of the day, which, district leaders note, is a challenge because teachers are focused on preparing for their teaching day.

Impact Statement:

- The district does not have a systematic approach to assessing the quality of instructional planning and delivery or a process to hold staff accountable for the content of the curriculum, which hinders student academic achievement.

Recommendation:

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

- Collaborate with school leaders to create walk-through tools with at least three essential lesson elements that will be used in lesson plans across the district. Set an agenda item on monthly district administrative team meetings to review the aggregated findings from at least 10 walkthroughs per week per school. Use the aggregated findings to inform PD decisions.

Statement of Practice 4.1 - Teacher Practices and Decisions: The district works collaboratively with the school to provide opportunities and supports for teachers to develop strategies and practices and addresses effective planning and account for student data, needs, goals, and levels of engagement.

Tenet Rating

Stage 1

Overall Finding:

- While the district supports high quality instructional practices through training offered through the Teacher Center, along with PD for school leaders to turnkey to staff, these offerings are optional for teachers and are not directly aligned with identified teacher needs. As a result, training does not lead to improved instruction and varies widely within each building and across the district.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- The district theory of action sets the expectation that school leaders will provide training and oversight to ensure high quality instructional practices. However, school leaders explained that most of their time in the middle school and high school is taken up with managing discipline rather than monitoring instructional quality. School leaders shared they do not provide training on all the topics expected by the district, nor do they monitor whether teachers are employing practices consistent with the CCLS instructional shifts. District leaders expressed an understanding of the time challenges faced by school leaders, but reiterated that school leaders are responsible for instructional monitoring and oversight.
- District leaders report that topics offered at the Teacher Center are chosen based in part on a teacher survey; however, the review team found that the district does not always respond to the training needs identified. For example, on the teacher survey, 50 percent of the teachers rated differentiation of instruction as “extremely important,” and 56 percent indicated that training on engaging learners is also “extremely important.” Yet, the Teacher Center catalog for 2014-15 lists one course on differentiated instruction and no specific course on engaging learners. Despite their concern that school leaders are inconsistent in their ratings of teacher practices, district leaders have not engaged in a structured, systematic evaluation of instruction independent of school leaders’ evaluations to identify the professional development needs of the district.

Impact Statement:

- The training provided by the district to school leaders and teachers does not target needs identified in evaluation reports or teacher surveys, and has not resulted in positive changes in school leader and teacher instructional skills and abilities. As a result, students do not receive consistently rigorous learning opportunities that challenge them to reach high standards.

Recommendation:

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

- Integrate the PD needs assessment into the comprehensive school needs assessment process recommended under SOP 2.1 and ensure that the Teacher Center catalog includes sessions directly aligned with the needs identified in the assessment. The district information office should provide reports on staff participation in PD as a regular item on the agenda for monthly district administrative team meetings, which can be examined in light of the findings of classroom walkthroughs to monitor the impact of PD on teaching. The administrative team should modify the PD strategies used by the district to better target the needs of teachers and school leaders.

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 1

Overall Finding:

- The district provides inadequate guidance, staffing, training, and support to schools to promote student social and emotional developmental health.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- Beyond the district's coordination of required services for students with disabilities and those identified with psychological or behavioral needs, there is no central office staff member assigned to coordinate services to address student social and emotional developmental health. According to the district leader responsible for special education, services are prioritized to reduce the disproportional suspension of African-American and Hispanic students in response to an external review.
- The district provided four days of training for middle school and high school staff to launch a Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program to improve school culture. However, according to district and school staff, PBIS was never implemented. Meanwhile, a review of surveys and interviews with district and school leaders demonstrate persistent discipline issues.
- According to members of the student support staff, services and supports to address student social and emotional developmental health needs are delivered at the school level and the district leader does not monitor the quality or impact of these services. Enrollment data and descriptions of

responsibilities by the student support staff show caseloads across the district are high, with priority given to providing mandated services for students with disabilities. Student support staff including counselors, social workers, and psychologists report inadequate time to develop, coordinate, or maintain school-wide programs to support the social and emotional developmental health needs of all students.

- The district leader reported that the district has not developed a structured plan to provide for the social and emotional developmental health needs of all students. The district leader cited staffing shortages due to insufficient funds as the reason for no district level coordination of programs to ensure student social and emotional well-being.

Impact Statement:

- In the absence of a plan to address the social and emotional developmental health needs of students across the district, only some students receive services, and this hinders 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:

- District leaders must include student social and emotional developmental health needs as an integral part of the comprehensive school needs assessment described under SOP 2.1. Conduct a critical analysis of the factors leading to the termination of the implementation of the PBIS program and, if remedies exist, restart the program. Examine staffing needs for counselors, social workers, and psychologists and allocate sufficient resources to address the needs of all students, not just a select subset.

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

Tenet Rating

Stage 1

Overall Finding:

- While the district recently hired a Parent Family Community Liaison to build stronger home-school relationships, the district has not yet established a systematic plan that aligns with the district’s vision to create and sustain those relationships.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- The newly hired Parent Family Community Liaison has visited community organizations, presented to neighborhood groups, and met with social service agencies to begin to build relationships with families and the community. The liaison stated she has identified several key issues, such as communication between the district and the community, communication between the school/teachers and families, communication that is timely, and families not feeling welcomed in the school.

- When asked who at the district was responsible for home-school relationships and communication, district cabinet and student support staff reported that they did not know who was in charge and the district leaders stated there is no district staff assigned to coordinate home-school relationships.
- According to the PD calendar, the district has provided only one training for school leaders on home-school partnerships. The Teacher Center catalog lists one session for teachers on the use of mail merge to improve communication with families.

Impact Statement:

- Without the commitment of district staff to a strategic plan to build strong partnerships with families and the community that defines specific outcomes, measurable progress benchmarks, and a process for continuous refinement and improvement, families in the district remain unaware of how they can make meaningful contributions 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:

- Use evidence gathered from the Parent Family Community Liaison, parent surveys from the Title I program, and school-level DTSDE reviews to create a strategic plan to address barriers to meaningful home-school relationships that specifies desired outcomes, action steps, measurable progress benchmarks, and a process to collect evidence on both (a) implementation of the action steps and (b) impact of the actions on family-school relationships.