



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

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)



BEDS Code	150901040000
District	Moriah Central School District
District Address	39 Viking Lane, Port Henry, New York 12974
Superintendent	William J. Larrow
Date(s) of Review	June 2-3, 2015

District Information Sheet for: Moriah Central School District

District Information Sheet			
Grade Configuration	Pre-K-12	Total Enrollment	707
		Number of Schools	2
District Composition (<i>most recent data</i>)			
% Title I Population	100	% Attendance Rate	94
% Free Lunch	43	% Reduced Lunch	13
% Limited English Proficient	0	% Students with Disabilities	24
% American Indian or Alaska Native	0	% Black or African American	1
% Hispanic or Latino	1	% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0
% White	97	% Multi-Racial	1
Personnel (<i>most recent data</i>)			
Years Superintendent Assigned to District	9	# of Deputy/Assistant Superintendents	0
# of Principals	2	# of Assistant Principals	1
# of Teachers	69	Avg. Class Size	17
% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate	0	% Teaching Out of Certification	0
% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience	7	Average Teacher Absences	3
Teacher Turnover Rate – Teachers < 5 years exp.	0	Teacher Turnover Rate – All Teachers	6
Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2013-14)			
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	34	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4	34
Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (4th Grade)	95	Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (8th Grade)	77
Student Performance for High Schools (2013-14)			
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	29	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4	12
Credit Accumulation High Schools Only (2013-14)			
4 Year Graduation Rate	84	6 Year Graduation Rate	89
% of earning Regents Diploma w/ Advanced Des.	31		
Current NYSED Accountability Status			
# of Reward Schools	0	# of Priority Schools	0
# of Schools In Good Standing	1	# of Focus Schools	1
# of LAP Schools	0		
District Accountability Status			
Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in ELA (indicate Y / N / N-A)			
American Indian or Alaska Native	NA	Black or African American	NA
Hispanic or Latino	NA	Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	NA
White	N	Multi-Racial	NA
Students with Disabilities	N	Limited English Proficient	NA
Economically Disadvantaged	Y		
Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Mathematics (indicate Y / N / N-A)			
American Indian or Alaska Native	NA	Black or African American	NA
Hispanic or Latino	NA	Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	NA
White	Y	Multi-Racial	NA
Students with Disabilities	Y	Limited English Proficient	NA
Economically Disadvantaged	Y		
Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Science (indicate Y / N / N-A)			
American Indian or Alaska Native	NA	Black or African American	NA
Hispanic or Latino	NA	Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	NA
White	Y	Multi-Racial	NA
Students with Disabilities	NA	Limited English Proficient	NA
Economically Disadvantaged	Y		
DISTRICT PRIORITIES AS WRITTEN BY THE DISTRICT			
1.Continue to work on meeting AYP in all areas			
2.Continue to increase the number of 3 and 4's on the state assessments in all areas			
3.Continue to increase graduation rate for all students			
4.Continue to strive for more students receiving an advanced degree diploma			
5. Continue to provide additional AIS/RTI services to lower District special education numbers.			

Information about the review

- The review of the district was conducted by an Outside Educational Expert (OEE) and a representative from the New York State Education Department.
- The Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) reviews of one school in the district also informed the district review.
- During IIT school review in the district, reviewers visited 32 classrooms across the school and IIT reviewers conducted focus group interviews with students, staff, and parents.
- District reviewers conducted interviews with district leadership, central office staff, and a focus group of principals.
- The district provided results of a survey that eight students (one percent) completed.
- The district provided results of a survey that 19 staff members (28 percent) completed.
- The district provided results of a survey that 44 parents and 20 community members completed.
- The middle and high school function as one, encompassing grades 7 -12. The middle school (grades 7 and 8) is considered part of the elementary school by the State with respect to curriculum and professional development (PD), all designed for grades K-8.

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

#	Statement of Practice	Stage 4	Stage 3	Stage 2	Stage 1
1.1	The district has a comprehensive approach for recruiting, evaluating, and sustaining high-quality personnel that affords schools the ability to ensure success by addressing the needs of their community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.2	The district leadership has a comprehensive and explicit theory of action about school culture that communicates high expectations for addressing the needs of all constituents.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.4	The district has a comprehensive plan to create, deliver and monitor professional development in all pertinent areas that is adaptive and tailored to the needs of individual schools.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.5	The district promotes a data-driven culture by providing strategies connected to best practices that all staff members and school communities are expected to be held accountable for implementing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 1:		X		

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#	Statement of Practice	Stage 4	Stage 3	Stage 2	Stage 1
5.1	The district creates policy and works collaboratively with the school to provide opportunities and resources that positively support students' social and emotional developmental health.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

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

District Review – Findings, Evidence, Impact and Recommendations:

<p>Tenet 1 - District Leadership and Capacity: The district examines school systems and makes intentional decisions to identify and provide critical expectations, supports and structures in all areas of need so that schools are able to respond to their community and ensure that all students are successful.</p>	<p>Overall Tenet Rating</p>	<p>Stage 3</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>SOP Rating</p>	<p>Stage 3</p>

Overall Finding:

- The district conducts a collaborative process to hire new staff and identify the unique professional development (PD) needs of each school community. The district offers targeted PD and direct support to school leaders that enable school staff to effectively implement school and district initiatives.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- To fill the few open staff positions in recent years, the district advertised openings in regional websites and publications and conducted targeted outreach to colleges recognized for their expertise in the specific fields, such as Russell Sage College for a health teacher and SUNY Oswego for technology. The district prioritizes applications based on dual certification and demonstrated expertise, and a list of candidates is then reviewed by school leaders and a committee of staff members. Prospective hires are invited to schools to interview in person and to present a demonstration lesson. Once hired, new teachers participate in a structured mentoring program to acquaint them with the school’s curriculum and instructional expectations.
- The district has been able to fill most openings due to retirements or resignations through internal shifts and reassignment. The district retains staff at a high rate, with only one recent departure due to relocation and one resignation to pursue other career opportunities.
- The district’s strategy for sustaining high quality personnel involves a combination of targeting and monitoring PD support. School leaders monitor instruction by completing a minimum of two formal and two informal evaluations of each teacher using the district’s Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) process. To strengthen their evaluation skills and calibrate ratings against the instructional performance standards, school leaders meet monthly with regional colleagues for PD. The district leader reviews all formal and informal evaluations and confers with school leaders to address patterns of weakness. When needed, the district leader mentors school leaders in providing actionable feedback to teachers and visits classes to see that recommended changes are being implemented. To guarantee a consistent vision of evaluation practices, the district leader and the school leaders attend state training on the APPR process. Through their close working relationship, school leaders and the district leader share responsibility and accountability for quality instruction.
- In addition to building school leaders’ capacity to support high quality personnel, the district contracts with PD providers who model effective instruction and coach teachers in their classrooms. The PD

providers document and share their observations of teachers’ challenges and successes with school leaders and the district leader. The district leader and school leaders jointly determine adjustments to the PD support for teachers. School and district leaders attribute gains in student achievement to the district’s targeted approach to PD, citing increases in English language arts (ELA) assessment scores from 12 percent to 15 percent at levels 3 & 4, and a rise in math from 11 percent to 19 percent between 2013 and 2014.

Impact Statement:

- The consultation among district leaders, school leaders, and PD providers allows for timely feedback and the adaptation of supports for teachers, which contribute to improved student 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.

SOP Rating

Stage 2

Overall Finding:

- The district’s theory of action explicitly links teaching practices to student outcomes and guides decisions around resource allocation and support for teachers and school leaders. However, the district has not yet communicated the actions required of all constituents to fully implement this theory of action.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- The district leader stated that the theory of action underlying district and school level decisions is for teachers to adapt their lessons to the needs of all students in order for all students be college and career ready. School leaders confirmed that the theory sets an expectation that all students will achieve at grade level or beyond, and that teachers will modify their instruction to take students from where they are to where they need to be according to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS).
- The district’s expectation that all students will achieve at grade level or above is promoted through district-wide programs, such as Response to Intervention (RtI), and academic intervention services (AIS). The district’s RtI program is in its second year of implementation and defines the procedures for identifying struggling students and referring them for targeted support. The district provides AIS both during the school day and after school and provides transportation home following the after school sessions.
- The district’s theory of action sets the expectation that teachers modify their practices. This serves as the rationale for the district’s PD program. Guided by a common set of best practices, PD providers, as well as district and school leaders, provide training, feedback, and ongoing reinforcement to help teachers enact best practices in their classrooms. District and school leaders confirmed the findings of the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) review of the elementary school that found that not all teachers are equally skilled in the new practices and that support and training will continue to be necessary.
- At the elementary school, the newly adopted standards-based report cards reflect aspects of the district’s theory of action. According to school and district leaders, teachers enhanced their

understanding of the CCLS in order to document what they taught and whether students progressed toward mastery. While both school and district leaders reported that implementation of the new report cards has been a challenge, these report cards show clearly which standards have been addressed and which have yet to be mastered.

- The district is nearing the end of a yearlong process to develop a new mission statement and the theory of action is incorporated into this new statement of belief. In response to a recommendation of the recent IIT review of the elementary school, the school leader convened a task force to develop a vision statement that captures the district’s expectations for student outcomes and educator practices. Currently, both the district and the elementary school are in the process of defining the specific actions required of teachers and leaders, and the supports needed from families and the community to realize the mission and vision.

Impact Statement:

- While the district’s theory of action is embedded in a new mission and vision statement, the specific responsibilities and actions required of teachers, families, and the community are not clearly defined and have not yet been communicated to enable each member of the school community to contribute to the success of 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:

- Building on the elementary school vision process, engage a representative task force including families, teachers, administrators, and students to create a statement of commitments for each stakeholder group that defines the expectations of each. Enlist the support of the Board of Education to promote and publicize the importance of each group’s contributions to student success.

Statement of Practice 1.3: The district is organized and allocates resources (financial, staff support, materials, etc.) in a way that aligns appropriate levels of support for schools based on the needs of the school community.

SOP Rating

Stage 3

Overall Finding:

- The district allocates staff and provides resources and PD to refine and strengthen the core elements of the educational program based on the needs of each school community to enable them to support school improvement and improve student outcomes.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- The district leader works hand in hand with the two school leaders to identify needs and provide supports to address those needs. At the secondary school, the small staff limits options for building instructional expertise using collaborative teaming, which means that teachers take responsibility for providing additional supports to their own students. To ensure students receive adequate support, the district provides stipends for teachers to meet with students during the day, forgoing their preparation time. In addition, the district funded two special educators to work as co-teachers in the high school to

provide specific targeted services to students with disabilities. The district leader cited a graduation rate above the state average and a dramatic increase in the graduation rate for students with disabilities from 44 to 59 percent, as an indication that provision of support is adequate. As a result of reduced fuel costs and lower benefits obligations, the district had funds to hire two half-time teachers, one for English and one for mathematics, for the coming school year to offer additional AIS services for struggling students.

- In consultation with the school leader, the district identified the need for individualized support for implementation and adaptation of the EngageNY modules as the primary focus for grade K-8 teachers. These teachers are completing their second full year with the modules, and school leaders identified inconsistency in teachers’ skills in differentiating module content and instructional practices as an area of concern. The district directed the PD providers to focus their training on instructional strategies that can be applied in all classrooms and content areas. According to school leaders, evidence from summaries of class visits by PD providers and informal walkthroughs indicate that teachers are showing varying rates of progress toward consistent use of the recommended instructional practices.
- In addition to support for curriculum implementation, the district provides three reading specialists and two math specialists to help elementary teachers modify instruction in appropriate ways. One grade four class is co-taught by a general education teacher and a special educator, and district leaders attribute the slow but measurable improvement in grade four-math achievement to this co-teaching approach.
- The district provides support to struggling elementary students identified through the district’s RtI program. In its second year of implementation, the RtI team reviews referrals from grade level teams who examine classroom and benchmark data, and identifies those needing AIS services. Some AIS is provided during the school day, with additional support provided by classroom teachers after school, and the district provides transportation for participating students.
- The district provides space for a branch of the county mental health agency as a resource for families and students facing challenges. Anecdotal reports from school and district leaders indicated that agency services complement the work of counselors, psychologists, and social workers hired by the district to contribute to a productive learning environment.

Impact Statement:

- As a result of the district’s close working relationship with the schools, the district is able to identify and respond to school needs in a timely manner, which is leading to improved student achievement.

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 3

Overall Finding:

- The district provides extensive PD to support CCLS implementation and to address identified needs for improved practice. The district and school leaders monitor changes in teaching practices and offer

feedback and follow-up training to improve instructional planning and delivery.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- The district leader collaborates with school leaders in identifying staff and student needs, and defining the objectives for PD support unique to each school. State assessments and a review of teacher evaluations inform decisions about PD aimed at improving the implementation of CCLS-aligned curriculum and the instructional shifts. To ensure that PD is targeted to district-specific goals and objectives, the district contracts with consultants to offer PD that is delivered in grade level teams and modeled in individual classrooms. The district leader is working with the elementary school leader to modify the PD schedule to integrate the recommendations of the recent IIT school review into the PD plan. High school teachers participate in the instructional practice training provided by the external experts and attend workshops to build their expertise in implementing the EngageNY modules. At both elementary and secondary school training, special educators participate alongside their general education colleagues to ensure that all students have access to the full CCLS-aligned curriculum. School and district leaders attribute improving academic achievement and graduation rates to improvements in teacher implementation of the EngageNY modules.
- In addition to PD for classroom teachers, the district provides training for school leaders to enhance their skills in monitoring and improving teacher practices. School leaders participate in state-led training, calibration workshops, and principal institutes sponsored by regional agencies. School leaders reported that while they are still overwhelmed by the number of school leader responsibilities, improvements in their own skill sets are having a positive impact on teaching practices and student outcomes.
- The individualized approach to PD enables the district to respond to emerging evidence from walkthroughs and assessments in order to adapt the schedule or content of PD support. District leaders reported that while teachers choose to attend some PD scheduled outside the district, at least 75 percent of PD is offered in-district. District and school leaders confer daily to share information about the work underway in the schools and when patterns or trends emerge suggesting the need for change, the district leader can request specific topics from the PD providers.
- The district uses the APPR process to monitor the implementation of instructional practices presented in PD sessions. The consultants share the observations and suggestions they document to guide school leaders on the practices expected of teachers to inform follow-up. Despite contractual restrictions on documenting informal observations, school and district leaders agreed that many teachers are attempting to use new strategies with varying levels of proficiency.

Impact Statement:

- By targeting PD to the unique needs of each school around the core academic areas of curriculum and instruction, the district reinforces its expectations for professional practices expressed in its theory of action, which is impacting student growth.

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 sets expectations that teachers use available data to identify patterns and trends in student performance and adjust instruction accordingly. However, data is not regularly disaggregated and used by district and school leaders to evaluate the impact of programs and initiatives on all students.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- The district has provided guidance and PD to grade level teams over the past two years to examine assessment data in order to look for patterns and trends that indicate which instructional methods are producing the strongest positive impact on student learning. Elementary and middle school teacher teams analyze AIMSweb, curriculum-based measures, exit tickets, and mid- and end-of-module assessments to identify student strengths and gaps. Students not progressing are referred to the RtI team who design an intervention to address individual weaknesses. The district's RtI process specifies common procedures for the RtI team to track student progress over the course of a six-week intervention. While the RtI team follows specific data analysis protocols, teacher teams are able to use methods of their own design to look for trends and patterns to inform instructional decisions and RtI referral.
- At the high school level, teachers of each course use curriculum-based measures, such as classroom tests, quizzes, and exit tickets, to identify struggling students and recommend AIS support. Similar to the elementary and middle schools, the district does not specify particular data analysis and allows high school teachers to choose their own methods for identifying patterns in student assessments. While high school teachers' data use practices are informal and variable, the school leader reported strong results on the January English Regents exam, with 85 percent of the 45 students scoring 65 or better, and with three of the four students with disabilities taking the exam earning a passing grade.
- While the district sets expectations that teachers regularly use student data to adapt instruction to meet their needs, data use is not a regular part of district practices. The district leader reported that the leadership team, consisting of the two school leaders, the director of student services, and the Title I director, review state data approximately twice per year, but do not regularly review local data from benchmark assessments or curriculum-based measures to track student progress throughout the year. The district leadership team examines behavior data when issues arise, but does not regularly review general patterns and trends.

Impact Statement:

- While the district sets broad expectations for teachers to analyze and use data to inform decisions to modify planning and instruction, teachers are not required to follow common data use practices, 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-

- Model best practices in data use at the district and school leadership team levels by adopting key practices to regularly examine academic and behavior data and then use this data to meet student needs.

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.	SOP Rating	Stage 3
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Strengths:

Overall Finding:

- The collaborative relationship between the school and district leaders and the decision-making model employed by the district reinforces the school leaders’ efforts to provide an educational program that is improving student achievement outcomes.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- School leaders describe their relationship with the district leader as collaborative and collegial. The district leader confers with school leaders daily, and provides them with mentoring and coaching. While the district leader is a regular presence in schools, school leaders reported that he respects their roles and decision-making authority. School leaders noted that while supportive, the district leader does not hesitate to provide alternative approaches to resolving issues for school leaders to consider.
- School leaders reported their close involvement in district-level decisions, particularly around PD, as the district leader relies on their insight and evidence to determine what PD is needed and its impact on instruction. School leaders explained how the district leader guides problem-solving discussions, soliciting input from school leaders and others with relevant information, in order to make choices not only about PD, but also about staffing and interventions. School leaders indicated that their requests for materials or PD are seldom denied. For example, the district leader recognized school leader concerns about current limits to AIS support for high school students and chose to use funds to add two half-time teachers for ELA and math to support teachers.
- School leaders agreed that the district’s intense focus on providing PD and materials to them and to their teachers in key areas to support CCLS-aligned curriculum implementation contribute to improved student outcomes.

Impact Statement:

- As a result of the district leaders’ collaborative relationship with school leaders and responsiveness to

school needs, each school leader receives the support needed to make steady progress toward its vision of student and staff excellence.

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:

- Although the district provides PD and curriculum development support to the schools, implementation of a CCLS-aligned curriculum is not consistent across classrooms.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- Beginning in 2012-13, the district conferred with school leaders and select teachers to develop a CCLS-aligned curriculum. The district selected to use the EngageNY modules for ELA and math and schools chose to implement all of the modules at once. However, school leaders recognized the task was overwhelming for teachers and convinced district leaders to allow a gradual implementation. Now in the second full year of implementation, the district has provided teachers with summer curriculum development work and ongoing PD to refine the implementation and begin adapting the modules to better suit student needs. High school teachers attended regional training seminars and elementary school teachers received PD both in-house and at external sites.
- School leaders confirmed the findings of the recent IIT review of the elementary school that curriculum planning and the delivery of high quality CCLS-aligned curriculum is a work in progress. School leaders reported that grade level teams are beginning to use assessment data to group students according to needs, but that they are in the process of building a repertoire of strategies to differentiate instruction to meet those needs. School leaders applauded their staff for taking the district theory of action to heart and recognizing their responsibility to modify planning and delivery to accommodate their students. The school leader indicated that the standards-based report card initiative launched this year at the elementary school is moving teachers toward an even stronger understanding of the standards and the skills learners need to meet those standards.
- School and district leaders agreed that the focus of district curriculum development has been on ELA and math, with science and social studies teachers attending meetings in order to learn about the cross-disciplinary nature of the ELA standards. The district leader cited examples of writing assignments in math and technology classes as evidence that the CCLS is infiltrating other content areas. At the high school, social studies teachers attended regional workshops on aligning their curriculum to new standards that reflect the CCLS instructional shifts.

Impact Statement:

- The district is working to align curriculum and instruction to the CCLS in order to continue to improve student achievement across schools.

Recommendation:

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

- Establish a system to monitor the alignment between lesson plans and the CCLS. Train grade level teams to apply a selected depth of knowledge measure to assess whether lessons adapted from the modules or modified for struggling students retain the level of challenge and difficulty defined in the CCLS.
- Engage teachers of science, social studies, foreign languages, art, music, and physical education to identify areas where their curriculum connects with the ELA and math curricula.

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:

- Through targeted PD, the district is beginning to build teachers’ capacity to provide students with rich and engaging learning opportunities. However, district supports are not yielding consistently strong instruction that promotes the success of all students.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- The district PD program is specifically targeted to the curriculum and instructional needs of teachers as determined by a review of assessment data, evaluation reports, walkthrough observations, and summaries of consultants’ class visits. Now in the second year of using the EngageNY modules, school and district leaders report that while grades K-8 teachers are expressing more confidence in their understanding of the requirements of the standards, the quality of lessons continues to vary widely. As a result, district leaders plan to shift the focus of PD from curriculum implementation to instructional practices for the current year.
- According to district leaders, grade level teams meet weekly to assess not only the content of their lessons, but also the impact of the instructional strategies they use. School leaders and the PD consultants report from their observations that teachers continue to struggle with differentiating instruction. School leaders confirm that while some teachers skillfully orchestrate student-focused lessons, most, particularly at the high school, are in the early stages of being able to shift their practices to facilitate learning rather than merely deliver content.
- While grade level teams are beginning to analyze the impact of their own practices on student learning, the district does not have a regular process to collect evidence of the impact of teaching practices on student learning. For elementary teachers, completing the standards-based report cards requires them to document what they taught and how well their students had mastered topics. Walkthrough observations and consultant summaries serve as data to identify follow-up support for individual teachers or grade level teams. However, summaries are not available for the middle or high school teachers or for teachers of subjects other than ELA and math.

- The district PD program focuses on strategies recommended for students in poverty based on the work of Eric Jensen and chosen in part because the district was identified for its economically disadvantaged population through Title 1 funding. However, the 24 percent of the student population identified as students with disabilities are only showing very modest gains. For example, no students in this subgroup achieved levels 3 or 4 on state assessments, with the exception of one percent of the students in grade four for ELA.

Impact Statement:

- Without a structured process to track teacher instructional strategies and their impact on student learning, school and district leaders do not have adequate information to determine what PD supports teachers need.

Recommendation:

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

- Adapt the existing “look-fors” checklist to include specially designed explicit instructional practices known to be valuable for students with disabilities. Consult with regional providers who specialize in students with disabilities to provide in-house PD to complement the Eric Jensen strategies already in the PD plan

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 2

Overall Finding:

- While individual students and families are served on an as-needed basis, the district has not developed a comprehensive plan or established systems to address the social and emotional developmental health needs of all students.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- While the district provides social and emotional developmental services to students and their families on an as-needed basis, both district and school leaders confirmed that these services are not connected to a guiding vision to support student social and emotional developmental health. Staff stated that the district typically provides services to individual students and families upon referral by teachers or school leaders. In addition to the individual supports provided by counselors, the psychologist, and the social worker, every student with disabilities is assigned a caseworker, who maintains contact with each student and serves as a point of contact for the student and families. The district provides space for a satellite office for the county mental health agency, which reduces travel costs for families. While these individual supports are valuable, the district does not collect data to show whether the supports meet their intended objectives and enable students to succeed.
- District and school leaders listed a number of programs that address special topics for small groups of

students. These include a Driving while Intoxicated (DWI) presentation at the high school, the Upstanders Union student drama group that provides anti-gambling and anti-bullying skits to school groups, the Girl Power group to build the self-esteem of grade four girls, and a sources of strength workshop for grades seven and eight students. However, the district does not coordinate these activities under a centralized plan and does not collect data to determine if they have been effective in achieving their objectives.

- While there was a drop in the graduation rate for economically disadvantaged students between 2013 2014, and the district determined that the decrease was due to a lack of social and emotional developmental health support in the high school, the district did not share plans or a system to support these students going forward to ensure that they graduate.

Impact Statement:

- Without a coherent plan or common vision to coordinate the services of staff members and agencies and to collect evidence of their effectiveness, the district lacks the information needed to determine if programs are meeting student social and emotional developmental health needs.

Recommendation:

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

- Direct the student support staff to create a vision and structure for collecting evidence of the success of student support programs.
- Devise a training calendar of monthly workshops for parents and teachers around topics of common interest and needs, such as bullying and Internet safety.
- Develop a process to identify at-risk youth in order to ensure student needs are met.

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

SOP Rating

Stage 2

Overall Finding:

- The district does not have a system to communicate with parents to build their capacity to support their children’s academic success. While elementary teachers are beginning to communicate with parents around specific academic strengths and weaknesses through the new standards-based report card, middle and high school teachers do not have similar structures to foster meaningful academic communication.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- The district communicates with parents via a biannual newsletter, by sharing samples of student work during meetings, and through sports and student recognition events. The newsletter also includes

information about the district's partnership with the county mental health agency and invites parents to make contact if they need assistance. In addition, the district website holds information about district calendars, policies, and Board of Education meetings and minutes. The district also posts information onto school Facebook pages and provides reminders and special alerts on the all-call telephone system. These forms of district communication are primarily one-way, with limited options for parent response or feedback. The district invited parent input on the recent mission statement survey. However, there is no regular collection of input from families or efforts to determine if communication tools are effective.

- At the secondary level, school leaders use targeted email distribution lists to communicate with parents of a particular grade level or of those with children involved in a particular club or activity. According to the high school leader, parents respond actively to the emails, engaging in back and forth communication with the school about their children's involvement in school activities.
- Elementary parents received information packets about the new standards-based report card in the first marking period. The school leader reported that she receives feedback from families about the new reporting system, but in her view, better communication from both the school and district is needed before parents fully accept the new system.
- School and district leaders reported continuing challenges in getting parents to attend school events aimed at building their understanding of their children's academic needs. Parents of students with disabilities attend yearly reviews of their children's Individualized Education Programs (IEPs); however, the district does not provide a summary of critical documents in parent-friendly language to make it easier for parents to understand their children's services and supports.

Impact Statement:

- The lack of consistent reciprocal communication between the home and schools across the district limits 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:

- Conduct a district-wide needs assessment to identify family preferences for the mode of communication, the form of home-school collaboration, and the times of day and formats for parent training workshops to support student academic and social emotional developmental health needs.