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

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)

BEDS Code	660900010014
School Name	Grimes Elementary School
School Address	58 South 10th Avenue, Mount Vernon, NY 10550
District Name	Mount Vernon City School District
School Leader	Frances-Ann Lightsy
Dates of Review	February 10-11, 2015
School Accountability Status	☒Focus School
Type of Review	☒SED Integrated Intervention Team (IIT)

School Information Sheet

School Configuration *(2014-15 data)*					
Grade Configuration	K - 6	**Total Enrollment**	407	**SIG Recipient**	Yes
Types and Number of English Language Learner Classes *(2014-15)*					
# Transitional Bilingual	0	**# Dual Language**	1	**# Self-Contained English as a Second Language**	0
Types and Number of Special Education Classes *(2014-15)*					
# Special Classes	3	**# SETSS**	1	**# Integrated Collaborative Teaching**	0
Types and Number of Special Classes *(2014-15)*					
# Visual Arts	1	**# Music**	1	**# Drama**	0
# Foreign Language	0	**# Dance**	0	**# CTE**	0

School Composition *(most recent data)*			
% Title I Population		**% Attendance Rate**	93.0
% Free Lunch	74.5	**% Reduced Lunch**	3.7
% Limited English Proficient	5.4	**% Students with Disabilities**	10.3
Racial/Ethnic Origin *(most recent data)*			
% American Indian or Alaska Native	0	**% Black or African American**	85.3
% Hispanic or Latino	12.2	**% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander**	0.2
% White	0.7	**% Multi-Racial**	0
Personnel *(most recent data)*			
Years Principal Assigned to School	12	**# of Assistant Principals**	1
# of Deans	0	**# of Counselors/Social Workers**	2
% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate	0	**% Teaching Out of Certification**	0
% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience	5.88%	**Average Teacher Absences**	28.2
Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools *(2013-14)*			
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	7%	**Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4**	10%
Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (4th Grade)	88.24%	**Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (8th Grade)**	
Student Performance for High Schools *(2013-14)*			
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4		**Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4**	
Credit Accumulation High Schools Only *(2013-14)*			
% of 1st year students who earned 10+ credits		**% of 2nd year students who earned 10+ credits**	
% of 3rd year students who earned 10+ credits		**4 Year Graduation Rate**	
6 Year Graduation Rate			
Overall NYSED Accountability Status *(2013-14)*			
Reward		**Recognition**	
In Good Standing		**Local Assistance Plan**	
Focus District		**Focus School Identified by a Focus District**	X
Priority School			

Accountability Status – Elementary and Middle Schools

Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in ELA *(2012-13)*			
American Indian or Alaska Native	-	**Black or African American**	Yes
Hispanic or Latino	-	**Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander**	-
White	-	**Multi-Racial**	-
Students with Disabilities	Yes	**Limited English Proficient**	-
Economically Disadvantaged	Yes		
Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Mathematics *(2012-13)*			
American Indian or Alaska Native	-	**Black or African American**	Yes
Hispanic or Latino	-	**Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander**	-
White	-	**Multi-Racial**	-
Students with Disabilities	Yes	**Limited English Proficient**	-
Economically Disadvantaged	No		
Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Science *(2012-13)*			
American Indian or Alaska Native	-	**Black or African American**	Yes
Hispanic or Latino	-	**Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander**	-
White	-	**Multi-Racial**	-
Students with Disabilities	-	**Limited English Proficient**	-
Economically Disadvantaged	Yes		

SCHOOL PRIORITIES AS WRITTEN BY THE SCHOOL:

1. Develop and implement an extended day learning academy that includes parents.
2. Develop and implement a student academic and behavioral incentive program.
3. Provide professional development for teachers to support Common Core teaching and data informed/driven instruction.
4. Develop incentives for parents to attend school-sponsored activities.
5. Provide informational academic materials for parents to support the student academic experience.

Information about the review

- The review was co-led by an Outside Educational Expert (OEE) and a representative from the New York State Education Department (NYSED). The team also included a district representative, a district-selected OEE, and a Special Education School Improvement Specialist (SESIS) representative.
- The review team visited a total of 23 classrooms during the two-day review.
- Reviewers conducted focus groups with students, staff, and parents.
- Reviewers examined documents provided by the school, including curriculum maps, unit and lesson plans, school-wide data, teacher feedback, and student work.

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	H	E	D	I
2.2	The school leader ensures that the school community shares the Specific, Measurable, Ambitious, Results-oriented, and Timely (SMART) goals/mission, and long-term vision inclusive of core values that address the priorities outlined in the School Comprehensive Educational Plan (SCEP).	☐	☐	☐	☒
2.3	Leaders make strategic decisions to organize programmatic, human, and fiscal capital resources.	☐	☐	☒	☐
2.4	The school leader has a fully functional system in place aligned to the district's Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) to conduct targeted and frequent observation and track progress of teacher practices based on student data and feedback.	☐	☐	☐	☒
2.5	Leaders effectively use evidence-based systems and structures to examine and improve critical individual and school-wide practices as defined in the SCEP (student achievement, curriculum and teacher practices; leadership development; community/family engagement; and student social and emotional developmental health).	☐	☐	☐	☒
	OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 2:				**I**

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	H	E	D	I
3.2	The school leader ensures and supports the quality implementation of a systematic plan of rigorous and coherent curricula appropriately aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) that is monitored and adapted to meet the needs of students.	☐	☐	☐	☒
3.3	Teachers develop and ensure that unit and lesson plans used include data-driven instruction (DDI) protocols that are appropriately aligned to the CCLS and NYS content standards and address student achievement needs.	☐	☐	☒	☐
3.4	The school leader and teachers have developed a comprehensive plan for teachers to partner within and across all grades and subjects to create interdisciplinary curricula targeting the arts, technology, and other enrichment opportunities.	☐	☐	☐	☒

3.5	Teachers implement a comprehensive system for using formative and summative assessments for strategic short and long-range curriculum planning that involves student reflection, tracking of, and ownership of learning.	☐	☐	☒	☐
	OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 3:			**D**	

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	H	E	D	I
4.2	School and teacher leaders ensure that instructional practices and strategies are organized around annual, unit, and daily lesson plans that address all student goals and needs.	☐	☐	☐	☒
4.3	Teachers provide coherent, and appropriately aligned Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS)-based instruction that leads to multiple points of access for all students.	☐	☐	☒	☐
4.4	Teachers and students work together to implement a program/plan to create a learning environment that is responsive to students' varied experiences and tailored to the strengths and needs of all students.	☐	☐	☒	☐
4.5	Teachers inform planning and foster student participation in their own learning process by using a variety of summative and formative data sources (e.g., screening, interim measures, and progress monitoring).	☐	☐	☐	☒
	OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 4:			**D**	

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	H	E	D	I
5.2	The school leader establishes overarching systems and understandings of how to support and sustain student social and emotional developmental health and academic success.	☐	☐	☒	☐
5.3	The school articulates and systematically promotes a vision for social and emotional developmental health that is aligned to a curriculum or program that provides learning experiences and a safe and healthy school environment for families, teachers, and students.	☐	☐	☒	☐
5.4	All school stakeholders work together to develop a common understanding of the importance of their contributions in creating a school community that is safe, conducive to learning, and fostering of a sense of ownership for providing social and emotional developmental health supports tied to the school's vision.	☐	☒	☐	☐
5.5	The school leader and student support staff work together with teachers to establish structures to support the use of data to respond to student social and emotional developmental health needs.	☐	☐	☒	☐
	OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 5:			**D**	

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	H	E	D	I
6.2	The school leader ensures that regular communication with students and families fosters their high expectations for student academic achievement.	☐	☐	☒	☐
6.3	The school engages in effective planning and reciprocal communication with family and community stakeholders so that student strength and needs are identified and used to augment learning.	☐	☐	☒	☐
6.4	The school community partners with families and community agencies to promote and provide training across all areas (academic and social and emotional developmental health) to support student success.	☐	☐	☒	☐
6.5	The school shares data in a way that promotes dialogue among parents, students, and school community members centered on student learning and success and encourages and empowers families to understand and use data to advocate for appropriate support services for their children.	☐	☐	☒	☐
	OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 6:			**D**	

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.	**Tenet Rating**	**I**

The school has received a rating of ***Ineffective*** for Tenet 2 – School Leader Practices and Decisions.

- The school leader has not created a whole school mission for raising student academic achievement and there are no Specific, Measurable, Ambitious, Results-oriented, and Timely (SMART) goals to connect the work of the school in achieving this end. Teachers and parents told reviewers that they measure success in different ways with some aiming for percentage increases in student achievement and others for an incremental grade increase each year. The lack of clarity in goal setting means there is no coordinated effort to improve student achievement, which remains very low.
- The school leader has made some appropriate decisions allocating available personnel, but school leaders' deployment of their own time does not include instructional leadership to prioritize improvements to student academic outcomes. The school leader reported that additional staff have been appointed to develop the reading skills of students in kindergarten and grade one and has agreed to allow some teachers to teach specialist subjects in grades five and six. These strategies have little impact on student achievement, however, because the literacy specialists are assigned to cover classes for the high levels of staff absence. Teachers reported that a few efforts have been made to coordinate planning with specialists, which includes planning for the school's small number of English language learners (ELLs). However, student achievement continues to be limited because resource and staffing decisions do not routinely support student academic success
- The school leader has not implemented systematic checks on the quality of instruction and training is not provided to improve the quality of instruction. The school leader reported that there are no records of informal classroom visitations, so it is not possible to analyze any evidence gathered and identify areas of instruction that need improvement. Teachers commented that some of them have received actionable feedback from district administrators and feedback through conversations, emails and notes following informal observations. However, formal records kept as part of the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) process and seen by the review team had little actionable feedback and made no reference to the impact of instruction on student achievement during lessons. The district provides professional development (PD) workshops for teachers. However, these are mandatory and often occur during the school day, so attendance at these sessions has caused teacher attendance to fall to 77 percent, resulting in considerable disruption to instruction and student learning.
- The school leader does not implement timely checks to ensure that the work of the school is effective. The school leader reported that she does not interpret available data from a whole-school perspective or consider it in relation to student performance on State tests. She relies on district administrators to analyze the information, which means she does not have immediate access to information to advocate timely strategies for particular groups of students, especially those with disabilities. Other accountability checks are too infrequent to sustain effectiveness. For example, teachers told the review team they meet only once formally with the school leader at the end of the school year. As a result of a lack of oversight of student achievement data, the school leader does not respond quickly to any dips in performance or slowing of progress.

Recommendation:

- The school leader should develop an academic mission aligned to the data systems already in the school and assign a designated academic leadership team to take responsibility for setting SMART academic targets, monitoring the impact of curriculum implementation and instructional practice toward achieving these targets, and making timely actions in response to signs that student achievement is not improving rapidly.

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.	**Tenet Rating**	**D**

The school has received a rating of ***Developing*** for Tenet 3 – Curriculum Development and Support.

- The school leader provides minimal guidance to teachers about how they should align the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) to student needs. She reported a reliance on teachers to deliver the same modules for all students, including the small number of ELLs and students with disabilities, since all students will be assessed in the same way. As a result, teachers told the review team that they felt under pressure to keep up with mapping documents and pacing calendars, which left them little time to modify plans for identified student subgroups. Reviewers found in a review of planning documents a lack of depth and accuracy in planning to address student specific intellectual needs.
- A review of planning documents and discussions with teachers showed that when teachers meet in grade-level professional learning communities (PLCs) to plan, most teachers do not plan to address the gaps in student learning in meeting the CCLS. Reviewers found variability in teachers' interpretation of how to use assessment data to plan activities and materials that account for students' differing needs and address gaps in their learning. Some teachers told the review team that they are beginning to identify learning targets based on the CCLS, which is helping them to consider how to use data to plan for individual students and subgroups, including students with disabilities and ELLs. Other teachers said that their priority was to deliver material to meet CCLS learning targets, rather than develop student skills. Classroom visits by the review team showed that students with disabilities are given the same materials as those prepared for all other students. Although some special education teachers were observed taking time to explain new ideas, this was often rushed as they aimed to meet the requirements of the pacing calendar.
- Specials teachers meet together in their own PLC to plan collaboratively, but do not meet with core teachers to plan interdisciplinary curricula. The school leader reported that teachers invited to lead the PLCs are selected based on the time they have available for planning. These teacher leaders agree on topics for the agenda, but reported receiving no guidance about leading or influencing the outcome of teacher discussions about how to develop fundamental skills, such as literacy skills in all subjects. In their discussions with teachers, reviewers found confusion among teachers about how to teach fundamental literacy skills, such as phonological knowledge, across the curriculum. Evidence from classroom visitations also showed that teachers do not adapt the curriculum as students mature. For example, the same lesson on the solar system was taught to students in grades one and four limiting students' capacity to build on knowledge year on year.

- An increasing number of teachers are using the school's assessment data to measure student achievement, but are not using the information to plan and adapt curricula to meet the different learning needs of individuals and student subgroups. Most teachers told the review team that because classroom teaching is not effective for all students during lessons, they expect to reteach lessons and that students will have to attend intervention classes. According to teachers, assessment information is used to identify students for intervention sessions; and students who attend Saturday Academy and the resource room told the review team that the support they receive is beneficial. Students also stated that some teachers use rubrics to help students understand how to fulfill assessment criteria, but a review of student notebooks showed the quality of feedback provided to students is not helping them learn how to improve.

Recommendation:

- The school leader should make sure that grade-level PLCs meet to agree on the common language and protocols necessary to create learning sequences and scaffolds through units of study that help students close the gaps in their achievement and fulfill the CCLS. The school leader should develop a system for checking the accuracy of these plans, their impact in meeting the needs of individual students and student subgroups, and respond quickly to sustain growth toward meeting student goals for improved school-wide academic achievement.

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.	**Tenet Rating**	**D**

The school has received a rating of ***Developing*** for Tenet 4 – Teacher Practices and Decisions.

- The school leader does not analyze and interpret school data, so she cannot assure the accuracy of teacher plans in relation to student needs. The school leader reported that teachers are required to submit their plans to ensure that the document has been completed in a suitable format. However, the leader explained that she deferred to teachers' expertise and conducted no further checks to ensure that the intended materials and activities reflect available student data. Reviewers found a lack of leadership direction and monitoring, with no action taken if plans did not incorporate students' needs and goals.
- Reviewers found that most teachers provided lessons that incorporate the CCLS shifts, but only a few included the quality of activities and materials necessary to sustain student learning throughout lessons. For example, a review of student notebooks revealed that teachers inconsistently set mathematical activities to promote student knowledge of number facts and fluency. Evidence from classroom observations showed that some teachers use close reading techniques to identify key vocabulary and students are occasionally asked to justify answers by quoting from sources and explaining their solutions to math problems. However, reviewers found that teachers planned too few of these activities throughout all classrooms. Reviewers noted that often students were expected to remain on the same task for too long, which caused their concentration to wane and responses to be superficial.

- The Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) discovered a learning environment sufficiently positive for students to ask questions when they did not understand what they had been asked to do, but fraught with repetitive tasks and an infrequent use of stimulating intellectual activities. Evidence from classroom observations showed that students are rarely challenged to extend their ideas. Parents who spoke to reviewers agreed they were concerned that abler students were not given appropriate extension activities during lessons. Students who met with the review team said that they often spent time copying work to ensure accuracy, rather than working on tasks to develop and challenge their learning.
- Most teachers do not use data, assessments, and student answers to adjust instructional strategies during lessons. Evidence from classroom visitations revealed that teachers ask some students undemanding questions with few attempts to provide student answers with follow up by asking for more clarity or posing additional questions that promote deeper understanding. The school leader reported that there has been an increased emphasis on small group instruction in lessons, but teachers told reviewers that they often only placed students in social groupings to reduce the likelihood of disruption when students were not being closely supervised. Students told reviewers that they had become accustomed to inferring areas for improvement based on repeated test questions presented by electronic assessment packages, rather than from routine dialogue with their teachers.

Recommendation:

- The school leader should check through daily walkthroughs that teachers use instructional strategies with questioning that enable them to assess student learning during lessons. Teachers should use this information to make timely accommodations that enable students to more quickly take the next planned steps in learning. Teachers should use actionable feedback in dialogue with students, so that students learn to make independent decisions about learning.

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.	**Tenet Rating**	**D**

The school has received a rating of ***Developing*** for Tenet 5 – Student Social and Emotional Developmental Health.

- The school leader has implemented some communication systems between teachers and support staff that promote students' social and emotional developmental health. Systems are in place for referral, but support staff reported that teachers do not consistently follow these systems. Reviewers found that teachers and staff responsible for supporting students' social and emotional health talk to one another, often informally, about potential concerns; however, formal recording protocols are not consistently followed. For example, when teachers make referrals to student support staff there is often no follow up to determine what positive outcomes, if any, have occurred. Inconsistent measures for recording, and therefore analyzing, information about students' social and emotional developmental health needs mean there is less of a focus on identifying how to apply potential benefits to promote students' academic achievement.

- School partnerships with external agencies, such as the Montefiore Medical Center and the Andrus Organization, support adult capacity to address the social and emotional developmental health needs of students. Staff training to implement the Andrus Sanctuary Model has had a positive impact on creating a safe school and classroom environment; reviewers found that the opportunity to discuss social and emotional issues and concerns each morning during community meetings helps students develop strategies to deal with emotional situations. Teachers told the review team that the school's Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) strategy is not fully implemented because training is intermittent. Evidence from classroom visitations revealed that teachers use PBIS strategies inconsistently, although reviewers noted a positive impact on helping kindergarten students understand school routines.
- The school's work to meet the social and emotional developmental health needs of vulnerable students is well organized. Reviewers found that teams of teachers work effectively with parents and health professionals. Parents of individual students with particular social and emotional developmental health needs told the review team that teachers communicate well with them to sustain support and guidance for their children. In addition, the school leader has made useful links in the community, such as working with a local church and food bank to support family needs. Reviewers met students appointed as members of the school's Safety Patrol who said they were happy to take on the responsibility for contributing to an orderly school environment at transition times. Students also told the review team that they feel safe in school and that the school creates an environment conducive to learning.
- Data is collected to support students' social and emotional developmental health needs. Teachers showed the review team how data on attendance, discipline, and suspensions are analyzed to identify how the behavior of students attending interventions is improving. Reviewers found that information and issues raised during child study meetings about individuals and groups of students are followed up in presentations to students on themes such as managing friendships. However, the school leader reported that there are fewer checks on the impact of these types of interventions, versus behavioral interventions, on students' academic success; therefore, opportunities are missed to give students clear guidance in areas such as time management and learning organizational skills.

Recommendation:

- The school leader should formalize a process for linking the social and emotional developmental health supports already in place with the impact they have on student academic achievement. Student academic goals should be connected to discussions occurring during daily community meetings, so students make a commitment to academic, as well as social learning. The assistant principal should regularly monitor, evaluate, and respond to findings about the effectiveness of this strategy in raising student achievement.

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.	**Tenet Rating**	**D**

The school has received a rating of ***Developing*** for Tenet 6 – Family and Community Engagement.

- The school leader has started to organize events to share information with families. She has reframed parent-teacher conferences to provide more of an emphasis on group discussion, with several families setting learning pledges, such as agreeing to sit and read with their children for ten minutes a night. However, parents who met with the review team said that they did not find this format helpful. These parents said pledges were not specific to their child, and therefore, they were unclear as to how the pledges impacted their child's measurable academic improvement. As a result, most families are not sufficiently aware of how to support students' academic success.
- The school generates a range of communications, but this effort is not engaging parents in understanding how to support their children's academic achievement. The school leader described various forms of communication available to parents, such as a handbook and DVD about the kindergarten, but parents who met with the review team said they were not aware of either the handbook or the DVD. Reviewers learned that translated documents are available for families who speak languages other than English at home. Parents stated that communication with individual families about their children's social and emotional developmental health needs is often more effective than the communication of academic data. For example, parents spoke of the texts and emails they received to help their child organize homework tasks; however, they reported that although they receive student grades in report cards, they are not clear about how to support their children's learning at home.
- Training to create effective home-school partnerships is inconsistent throughout the school. Some parents who attend the Saturday Academy with their children told the review team that the intervention is helping families understand how to support their children's learning. Other parents told reviewers that they were aware of changes to the curricula, but did not know how to complement this work at home. Too many parents said they were making independent decisions about learning strategies, which have sometimes contradicted the CCLS. Training is available to parents about the Sanctuary Model; however, attendance at these sessions is low.
- Data are shared inconsistently with families, providing no clear link to addressing student academic needs. Parents who met with reviewers said that they understood their child's report card because the grades were clear and there was some information about skill deficiencies. However, parents added that they were unable to help their children address learning gaps because they often lack the skills and the guidance they receive during parent-teacher conferences does not provide this type of information. Students who met with reviewers corroborated this evidence saying that they were aware of their scores, but were not sure how the scores reflect their skill competencies and what they need to do to improve. As a result, parents who met with reviewers felt they were not able to advocate the supports necessary to meet the academic needs of their children.

Recommendation:

- The school leader must develop a system for sustaining communication with parents about their children's academic goals and the school's academic mission. The school should support this information by inviting parents to visit the school for brief periods, so they can find out about learning strategies they can use at home. These visits should include a variety of activities, such as family learning tasks, student presentations about what they have been learning in school, and training sessions led by teachers and school leaders about CCLS and student learning strategies.