



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

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)



BEDS Code	660900010013
School Name	Mount Vernon High School
School Address	100 California Road, Mount Vernon, NY 10552
District Name	Mount Vernon City School District
School Leader	Ronald Gonzalez
Dates of Review	March 17-19, 2015
School Accountability Status	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Focus School
Type of Review	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SED Integrated Intervention Team (IIT)

School Information Sheet

School Configuration (2014-15 data) - given				
Grade Configuration	9-12	Total Enrollment	1385	SIG Recipient
Types and Number of English Language Learner Classes (2014-15)				
# Transitional Bilingual		# Dual Language		# Self-Contained English as a Second Language
				71
Types and Number of Special Education Classes (2014-15)				
# Special Classes	24	# SETSS	16	# Integrated Collaborative Teaching
				41
Types and Number of Special Classes (2014-15)				
# Visual Arts		# Music	8	# Drama
# Foreign Language	25	# Dance	2	# CTE
				24
School Composition (most recent data)				
% Title I Population		% Attendance Rate		82.8
% Free Lunch		% Reduced Lunch		
% Limited English Proficient		% Students with Disabilities		22
Racial/Ethnic Origin (most recent data)				
% American Indian or Alaska Native		% Black or African American		79
% Hispanic or Latino		% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander		1
% White		% Multi-Racial		0
Personnel (most recent data)				
Years Principal Assigned to School		# of Assistant Principals		3
# of Deans		# of Counselors/Social Workers		5/2
% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate		% Teaching Out of Certification		0
% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience		Average Teacher Absences		3
Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2013-14)				
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4		Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4		
Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (4th Grade)		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		47%
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	
Hispanic or Latino		Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	
White		Multi-Racial	
Students with Disabilities		Limited English Proficient	
Economically Disadvantaged			
Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Mathematics (2012-13)			
American Indian or Alaska Native		Black or African American	
Hispanic or Latino		Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	
White		Multi-Racial	
Students with Disabilities		Limited English Proficient	
Economically Disadvantaged			
Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Science (2012-13)			
American Indian or Alaska Native		Black or African American	
Hispanic or Latino		Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	
White		Multi-Racial	
Students with Disabilities		Limited English Proficient	
Economically Disadvantaged			

SCHOOL PRIORITIES AS WRITTEN BY THE SCHOOL:

School priorities were not submitted by the school in this information sheet. The school priorities are listed comprehensively in the School Comprehensive Education Plan (SCEP).

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 33 classrooms during the three-day review.
- Reviewers conducted focus groups with students, staff, and parents.
- Reviewers examined documents provided by the school, including curriculum maps, lesson plans, school-wide data, teacher feedback, and student work.
- No survey information was available from staff, students, or parents.

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).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.3	Leaders make strategic decisions to organize programmatic, human, and fiscal capital resources.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 2:				D	

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.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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	D
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The school has received a rating of ***Developing*** for Tenet 2 – School Leader Practices and Decisions.

- The school leader’s vision, although collaboratively developed and communicated, has not been consistently embraced across the school community. The vision is translated into goals in the School Comprehensive Education Plan (SCEP), but reviewers found these goals are not pursued as effectively as they should be. This is partly because they are not Specific, Measurable, Ambitious, Results-oriented, and Timely (SMART) and include few expectations described in terms of specific outcomes for students. Consequently, they are not used systematically to drive the school leader’s work. Nevertheless, there is a pervading understanding across the school community that the school must raise the levels of academic performance, especially for underachieving groups.
- The school leader reported making strategic decisions to bring improvements to the deployment of staff, the alignment of curricula to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), and the condition of the physical environment. According to the school leader, some staff deployments matched teacher skills to student needs using data; and new courses have been introduced to address areas of student weakness, such as algebra survey and strategic reading classes for those students needing extra help to pass Regents exams. The school leader is re-establishing the school’s commitment to career and technical education (CTE) in line with new State initiatives. At this time, however, the impact of these decisions on student achievement is too limited.
- Administrative instability over the years, with many changes of school leader, has caused uncertainty among school staff. Reviewers found that the current leadership has brought a stabilizing policy direction, although implementation is often very patchy. The priority to provide better instructional leadership is recognized by school leaders and is an explicitly stated goal within the SCEP. To this end, a new assistant principal was appointed in March 2015 to take lead responsibility for driving this improvement.
- The school leader reported the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) process is designed to address the quality of teacher questioning, student engagement, and teacher use of assessments to guide instruction; reviewers learned that these domains have been the focus of APPR activity for the past two years. However, an Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) review of recorded evaluations showed questionable connections between teacher reviews and actual practice; during classroom visits, reviewers found inconsistent and often limited practice in these domains. Reviewers agreed that school leaders are not ensuring actionable feedback that brings required changes to teacher practices. Additionally, reviewers found school leaders are not using data from reliable observations to inform professional decisions enough.

- Leaders encourage staff to use school management systems in ways that connect different functions; however, in practice, reviewers found insufficient data available and only light analysis occurring to make this happen. Systems are established to track and monitor some school practices, such as attendance, behavioral referrals, suspensions, and credit accumulation toward graduation. However, in most cases, reviewers found they are not tied to actions that trigger interventions to improve student achievement and growth.
- School leaders know the school’s performance well, despite APPR limitations discovered by the IIT. Reviewers found the school-prepared self-assessment document accurately critical of many practices, especially in evaluating the impact of leadership, curriculum, and instruction. In these three tenets, senior school leaders were incisive in their analysis and produced a document of very high quality, a measure of the school leader’s insight and professionalism. Despite leaders’ analytical precision, however, synthesis and execution of corrective action is the comparative weakness. Consequently, too little action is being taken in consistently driving actual practice toward achieving the school’s vision.

Recommendation:

The school leader, three assistant principals, and two subject chairpersons, with the involvement of other teachers should immediately undertake learning walks, which systematically provide feedback on a regular basis to help teachers raise student achievement by improving their instructional strategies in:

- using formative assessment during instruction to inform students about their next steps of learning;
- engaging students’ interest and ownership of their learning; and
- implementing the “look-for points” in the recommendation in Tenet 4 below.

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

- The school leaders and staff have made some progress in the implementation of a CCLS curriculum geared toward meeting the needs of all students. School documents and conversations with teachers showed that they are in the initial stages of developing pedagogical supports for CCLS-aligned curricula, in particular for the EngageNY curriculum modules in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics.
- Many teachers reported that the EngageNY modules are difficult to implement as designed. In addition, teachers stated they are not confident they are allowed to adapt modules to suit the needs of their students due to what they perceive as firm messages from district staff. Reviewers learned the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) chairperson provides teachers with regular support to modify curriculum modules to accommodate appropriate levels of instruction for students. In an ELA class, reviewers observed a lesson on *Romeo and Juliet* designed to ensure freshmen arrived in the classroom familiar with a lesson structure allowing students eager to read parts of the play to immediately sign up for their chosen characters, while others were instead ready to ask searching

questions relevant to their own levels of understanding. Reviewers noted that this type of planning facilitated differentiated instruction that encouraged students to have ambition, coupled with the ability to control the level of demand they were prepared to take on.

- Leaders do not engage teachers enough in aligning plans to data. Leaders reported having begun to encourage teachers to increase the degree of challenge planned for students by using aspects of the Depth of Knowledge (DOK) framework. For example, “DOK Fridays” place an emphasis across the school on the use of higher order questioning. However, across the whole week, not enough challenging lessons are prepared using data about students’ prior learning. Classroom visits revealed that teachers’ planning for the starting points of lessons often do not elevate students’ critical thinking skills from the outset. Exemplars of good work are not being used effectively enough to steer decisions about appropriate instructional adjustments or to set aspirational standards for students. Reviewers found the variety of techniques planned is too narrow to suit the learning needs of different groups of students. Too often content is planned to be delivered through commentary by the teacher, punctuated by minimal responses from students, and simple worksheet activities.
- Interdisciplinary planning is occurring randomly across some subjects, notably across ELA, social studies and CTE, and STEM courses. Although the limited implementation is not occurring effectively overall, where cross-curricular planning is happening, it is sometimes highly effective. For example, almost 100 students are involved in television (TV) production and journalism elective programs. In these programs, interdisciplinary planning creates opportunities for activities where students are using their speaking, listening, writing, and presentational skills to high levels in collaborative group situations. The way the program is devised puts students in control and leads them to diligently rehearse and practice their skills in purposeful and creative contexts. The students themselves recognize the relevance and value of their planning, learning, and perseverance.
- Planned curricula, assessments, and feedback are not effectively securing the motivation needed to ensure students take consistent ownership of their learning. Reviewers found that curricula are not adjusted to encourage different groups of students to become independent in their learning. The IIT noted the use of data in planning instruction in less than 25 percent of the lessons visited. Reviewers found that teachers see the priority as covering areas of knowledge, rather than use of appropriate assessment and providing feedback to students.

Recommendation:

Before the end of the academic year 2014-15, school leaders and teachers should use their professional learning communities (PLCs) and common planning time to align curricula and assessments to the demands of the CCLS by:

- designing and managing lessons based on students’ prior achievement and assessment data as the consistent starting point for lessons;
- delineating active learning strategies to be used in the planning of lessons, such as encouraging student-to-student conversations and giving students choices about ways to approach their work;

- identifying and collecting exemplars of student work, which demonstrate varying levels of proficiency as aligned to CCLS, and using them to raise the benchmarks of expectations; and
- using formative assessment to align curriculum practices and the CCLS with student needs, especially for those in underperforming groups.

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.

- Teachers’ actions to strengthen instructional practices aligned to CCLS developments are too slow. This is partly because teachers are not sharing instructional techniques in their classrooms to bring about the necessary shifts. Reviewers frequently saw effective instruction in one classroom, but ineffective in the next similar class. Little action has been taken by leaders to close those gaps. Approximately 75 percent of lessons were judged by reviewers not to be adapted or informed by data about students’ prior levels of achievement. Students reported that, particularly in general education classes, teachers invariably attempt to keep all the students “on the same page.” Because of this practice, students who understand and grasp concepts more quickly are held back, while other students struggle to keep up and stay involved.
- Based on the review team’s classroom visits, too many teachers do not adjust instruction to suit the needs of different groups of students within their classes; however, reviewers also found significant, isolated exceptions to this. Well-conceived CTE sessions helped students see the immediate and practical applications of their learning. Students in the mechanical engineering workshop were shown how to work and progress at levels appropriate to their knowledge, skills, and understanding. Similarly, juniors working across TV production and journalism were operating at a complexity of levels and being assisted in advanced technical issues by a senior. Students in studio art and computer animation managed their on-going assignments and learning very capably themselves, with teachers skillfully guiding them as a group and individually, when needed.
- Both ineffective and effective instruction was observed by the IIT within most subjects. About 25 percent of lessons visited did not engage the interests of students, which resulted in a low level of student commitment. Questioning by teachers was usually low level with minimal answers expected from students. Where higher order questions were used, teachers still often accepted one-word or single-phrase answers and used subject specific and technical vocabulary themselves, rather than requiring it from the students. On the other hand, in a similar proportion of lessons, students were asked open-ended questions that stimulated thoughtful answers and were encouraged to use complex language to develop relevant points.
- Teachers were seen developing ideas for raising expectations and improving instructional strategies in PLCs and common planning time meetings. However, from class visits, reviewers found that the translation of this type of discussion into routine instruction is not happening quickly enough to create

an intellectually safe environment that meets student needs, especially those who are not in advanced classes. Nevertheless, some effective instruction is happening, but it is not practiced enough to create a springboard to spread good practice.

- Some ELA and history lessons contained similar successful characteristics, including a class in which students were enthusiastic English language learners (ELLs). Similarities spurring student achievement included a lively pace to instruction and student participation in their own learning through well-chosen content and resources. Despite these good features, almost 75 percent of lessons visited were less than effective. Reviewers found that instructional practices are not consistently gaining students' interest or providing an appropriate challenge, with the result that progress is too slow and achievement too low.

Recommendation:

Teachers and teacher leaders should immediately implement in all classrooms the school's existing planning to accelerate the progress of students by:

- asking students questions that require them to support and extend their answers, so avoiding invitation and acceptance of one word or single phrase responses;
- checking students' understanding throughout the lesson so that those students who are struggling can be helped and those who understand and complete tasks quickly do not waste time going over what they already know and can do;
- indicating clearly, in both verbal and written feedback, what students need to do to improve, checking that students use this feedback effectively, and taking time with students to make revisions and improvements to their work; and
- extending paired and group planning of lessons into collaborative delivery of instruction, so teachers can share their best practices directly with each other and with students.

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 leaders promote students' social and emotional developmental health with significant improvements in behavior being reported by parents, students, staff, and community members. However, systems are informal, rather than formal, which leads to inconsistent understanding across constituent groups. Necessary uniformity is lacking in the way basic procedures are exercised, with too much variation in the quality of academic and support staff's performance. Students and parents were quick to report that some staff members are constantly willing to "go the extra mile," and do so, while others are reluctant to go beyond the minimum required. The IIT discovered that most educators are

not systematically making connections between social and emotional developmental health and academic achievement. Therefore, the limited collaborative partnerships that do exist between groups of academic and student support staff are not going far enough in helping groups of students make the academic progress and emotional growth they should.

- At the root of the inconsistency is a lack of serious, uniform implementation of classroom, school, and district policies to raise standards. Teachers and support staff gave reviewers widely different responses to questions about the use of school-wide policies. Replies ranged from teachers saying they were unaware of some school policies, to others who said specific policies were not implemented or enforced, to more who said policies were useful in providing guidance. Reviewers learned that understanding and application of consistent expectations exists in pockets only.
- Teachers and student support team members interact well with students outside formal settings, which contributes positively to students' social and emotional growth. Around the cafeteria, for example, students and staff were seen to eat and chat together, which adds to the sense of well-being around the school. By contrast, however, student restrooms were observed to be in poor condition, while those for staff were kept locked as a serious priority.
- School staff have access to resources to address students' social and emotional developmental health. These include the career inventory tool, Naviance, for college preparation, the "Forging Alternatives to Suspension Transitions" (FAST) program, and results from behavioral and academic progress monitoring. Reviewers found few coordinated interventions for positive behavioral and academic supports, especially for students who may not be college bound. Training specific to the needs of school staff in social and emotional developmental health is sporadic. Staff simply sharing what they understand about existing policy guidance and how it can be implemented does not happen enough.
- Students are not given sufficient responsibility in the organization and running of the school. Interviewed staff regarded the majority of students as sensible and mature. Invariably students participating in focus groups shared reasonable and practical measures that could improve their learning, and personal and social experiences at school. The IIT learned that some student support staff members have excellent ideas to further this aim for students, but have not moved these ideas into action.
- Displayed charts and files made it clear to reviewers that data is being used more than previously by school leaders and staff to identify trends and track student growth and progress. However, in terms of impact, a lack of policy implementation and low expectations for student independence, coupled with too few opportunities for students to take on responsibility, leads to groups of students not being as academically and socially successful as they should be.

Recommendation:

Student support team members and teachers should immediately start working together to improve students' academic achievement in tandem with their social and emotional developmental health by:

- collectively determining responsibility for the consistent implementation of school and classroom policies; and
- increasing student’s roles and responsibilities in contributing to and shaping school procedures, such as through student-led peer mediation, school council leadership, and student-to-student mentorship.

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.

- Staff members are very aware of the school leaders’ expectations for raising student achievement and stated that community members they meet, including parents, invariably know this school priority as well. These constituents reported, however, that the processes through which the raising of standards is brought about, are ineffective. High expectations are not evident because simple resources, such as a directory of available services and information about college applications, for example, are not readily available. Some parents and students claimed that guidance counselors occasionally refer queries toward other parents rather than themselves becoming well informed. However, it was also claimed that, just as often, they “go the extra mile.” Discussions with the school support staff pointed to a piecemeal position with little that characterizes a coherent and coordinated approach; for example, support for transitioning from school to school and school to college and careers was viewed as particularly troublesome.
- In some parents’ opinion, families have trust in the school leader because they believe he embodies the school’s goals, describing him as hard working and promoting a sense of direction about improving students’ life chances. Parents shared that being “college bound” is a fairly well understood goal of the school. The parents, staff, and students stated they value the National Honor Society where top academic students are acclaimed. These perceptions contrasted with school leaders’ and teachers’ commitment to the importance of vocational and CTE programs. Some parents and staff raised the issue of the perceived value of these programs. They expressed a view that, while being extremely relevant and close to student interests, CTE programs sometimes lack credibility in the eyes of those seeking greater academic progress measures. Parents also stated they are not always aware of the credits available for student graduation from these programs.
- Members of the school’s Parent-Teacher-Student Association (PTSA) expressed a lack of clarity about the relative expectations of the school in the minds of some parents. PTSA events aimed at furthering understanding of the school’s goals are not well attended. This contrasts with the school’s success in 2013 in gaining The Good Apple New York State Award for PTSA involvement in setting high aspirations. Some teachers felt that this issue related to the expectations by school staff in making the shifts toward CCLS and the difficulties some freshmen face when they do not have the pre-requisite levels of knowledge, understanding, and skills to achieve well. They also said there are too few occasions for parents with children with disabilities to learn about their education. The IIT learned that school staff provide programs to assist parents in helping their children with their schoolwork and

more general parenting skills. These have included “Mom’s Day,” a “Focus on Fathers Award,” and encouraging parents to undertake classroom walk-throughs and partner with staff in reading activities. Reviewers found that little is coordinated on an ongoing basis, however. These events tend to be one-off occasions, unlike social and sporting events, which receive good support.

- Relationships and communications between families and the school community are not well developed. Consequently, this impedes the joint potential of the school staff and parents to ensure the personal and academic success of students.

Recommendation:

Student support team members and teachers should immediately and systematically clarify ways to help parents access reliable information by:

- providing community resources, such as a directory of services and supports;
- supplying information to assist parents in helping their children in their educational endeavors; and
- sharing detailed planning about students’ transition from school to school and school to college and careers.