



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

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)



BEDS Code	300000010000
District	New York City – Department of Education
District Address	52 Chambers Street, New York, NY
Superintendent	Carmen Fariña
Date(s) of Review	May 19-20, 2015

School Configuration (2014-15) *Source: Internal NYCDOE					
Grade Configuration	PK-12	Total Enrollment	1,122,783	# of SIG Recipients	68
Types and Number of English Language Learner Classes (2013-14) *Source: Internal NYCDOE					
# Transitional Bilingual	2,252	# Dual Language	2,377	# Self-Contained English as a Second Language	503
Types and Number of Special Education Classes (2013-14) *Source: Internal NYCDOE					
# Special Classes	23,294	# SETSS	5,188	# Integrated Collaborative Teaching	41,741
Types and Number of Special Classes (2013-14) *Source: Internal NYCDOE					
# Visual Arts	23,383	# Music	15,270	# Drama	3,973
# Foreign Language	18,252	# Dance	3,797	# CTE	3,555
School Composition (2013-14) *Source: SED Report Card					
% Economically Disadvantaged Students	70.8%	% Reduced Lunch		5.6%	
% Free Lunch	65.2%	% Students with Disabilities		18.2%	
% Limited English Proficient	14.5%				
Attendance Rate (2013-14) *Source: School Quality Guide					
Elementary	93.05%	Middle		92.35%	
K-8	92.85%	High School		86.28%	
Racial/Ethnic Origin (2013-14) *Source: SED Report Card					
% American Indian or Alaska Native	0.9%	% Black or African American		27.8%	
% Hispanic or Latino	40.4%	% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander		15.3%	
% White	14.7%	% Multi-Racial		0.7%	
Personnel (2014-15) *Source: Internal NYCDOE					
Years Principal Assigned to School (2014-15)	5.75	# of Assistant Principals (2014-15)		3,214	
# of Deans (2014-15)	297	# of Counselors/Social Workers (2014-15)		3,565	
Personnel (2013-14) *Source: SED Report Card					
% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate (2013-14)	0.6%	% Teaching Out of Certification (2013-14)		10.6%	
% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience (2013-14)	12.0%	Average Teacher Absences (2013-14)		6.94	
Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2013-14) *Source: NYCDOE					
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	28.4%	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4		34.2%	
Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (4th Grade)	82.5%	Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (8th Grade)		49.9%	
Student Performance for High Schools (2012-13)					
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	73.6%	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4		61.0%	
Credit Accumulation High Schools Only (2013-14) *Source: SED Report Card					
% of 1st year students who earned 10+ credits	81.67%	% of 2nd year students who earned 10+ credits		76.91%	
% of 3rd year students who earned 10+ credits	74.47%	4 Year Graduation Rate		68.4%	
6 Year Graduation Rate	72.7%				
Overall NYSED Accountability Status (2014-15) *Source: ESEA Accountability Reports					
Reward	103	Recognition		0	
In Good Standing	1197	Local Assistance Plan		67	
Focus District	209	Focus School Identified by a Focus District		31	
Priority School	91				

Information about the review

- The review of the district was conducted by three Outside Educational Experts (OEEs) and representatives from the New York State Education Department (NYSED).
- The Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) reviews of 32 schools in the district also informed the district review.
- During IIT school reviews in the district, reviewers visited classrooms 1,423 times across the 32 schools and IIT reviewers conducted focus group interviews with students, staff, and parents.
- District reviewers conducted interviews with district leadership and central office staff.
- The district provided results of a student survey that 431,863 (83%) of students grades 6-12 completed.
- The district provided results of a teacher survey that 63,694 (81%) of teachers completed.
- The district provided results of a parent survey that 485,696 (53%) of parents completed.
- The NYC DOE is currently in the process of restructuring the school system. The current structure of clusters and networks will be replaced beginning on July 1, 2015, with a system that provides more power to community local district superintendents to provide support and supervision for the schools within the 32 community school districts. However, at the time of the district review, clusters and networks still provided support for schools in the district.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#	Statement of Practice	Stage 4	Stage 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 2</p>
<p>Statement of Practice 1.1: The district has a comprehensive approach for recruiting, evaluating, and sustaining high-quality personnel that affords schools the ability to ensure success by addressing the needs of their community.</p>	<p>Tenet Rating</p>	<p>Stage 2</p>
<p>Overall Finding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over the last eight months, the district has begun to use a more systematic approach to recruiting staff that is better able to address the needs of all schools and the community. While the district has introduced and is using clear planning and selection procedures with provisions to improve sustainability, the district has not yet met the staffing needs of some schools. <p>Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At the time of this review, the district (New York City Department of Education) had recently completed a comprehensive analysis of the current support structure designed by the former administration in a publication entitled, <i>Strong Schools, Strong Communities: A new approach to Supporting New York City's Public Schools and All of Our Students</i>. The district engaged nearly two thousand stakeholders from communities across the city, including representatives from universities and educational researchers, to uncover gaps in the ways the former structures supported schools, especially the support being provided to the district's struggling schools. The results of this yearlong study shaped the Chancellor's new vision. The district has begun implementing strategies and structures to create a pool of highly qualified candidates to implement this new vision for schools by addressing the need for clear lines of authority and accountability so all schools can improve. In addition, the district has revised its supervisory support structure so that schools receive supervision and support from a unified system under the direction of a superintendent who is held accountable for helping school leaders address the Chancellor's vision. To ensure that the district was well positioned to support school leaders throughout the city, all sitting superintendents were re-interviewed for their positions, resulting in a significant percent of the community school district superintendents being replaced. At the school level, the district has taken steps to address staffing issues and shortages in qualified and certified personnel for teaching English language learners (ELLs), students with disabilities, and for low achieving schools in high-needs areas. These include nationwide recruitment efforts such as the Teaching Fellows program, which provides opportunities for professionals to change careers to become teachers; however, district leadership recognized that shortages remain and the needs of schools are not consistently met. For example, according to the most recent (2013-14) New York State Report Cards for the 32 community school districts, teachers without appropriate certification teach more than ten percent of classes offered in the district. According to the district's 		

Part 154 data submission, approximately 3,000 teachers of ELLs are not appropriately certified to teach these students. In addition, teacher certification is an area of focus for the district's current Part 154 Corrective Action Plan (CAP) for 2015. The district has developed multiple partnerships with universities, as well as financial incentives, including a salary differential for all teachers not rated ineffective in schools designated as hard-to-staff by the district and the teachers' union, in order to recruit teachers in high-needs areas. District staff also related in interviews with the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) that all teachers in the TeachNYC Select Recruits program are assigned to high-need schools in The Bronx and that more teachers from the program are planned to be deployed in the future. While the district indicated that it is awaiting additional student achievement data before conducting an analysis of the effectiveness of this program, reviewers noted that the district has proceeded with this program to staff schools for the 2013-14, 2014-15, and 2015-16 school years.

- The district recruits and provides support for prospective school leaders through the Leaders in Education Apprenticeship Program (LEAP), the Bank Street Principals Institute, the Emerging Leaders Program, the Aspiring Principals Program, the Teachers College Summer Principals Academy, and the Executive Leadership Institute. In addition, through the Strengthening Teacher and Leader Effectiveness (STLE) grant, New Principal Intensive Facilitators (formerly Advanced Principal Mentors) facilitated the New Principal Intensive (NPI) from July 21, 2014 to August 1, 2014. The NPI helped prepare new principals to become leaders of their schools, and offered facilitators the opportunity to share expertise and best practices, as well as gain additional leadership experience by facilitating these sessions. However, the district was still in the process of gathering data to assess the impact that participation in these programs has had on raising student achievement and to compare the performance of schools where school leaders have attended these programs to those that have not. Without this information, the district is unable to assess if the resources allocated for such programs are bringing the intended outcomes. The review team found that in some Focus and Priority schools visited, the use of targeted observations of teachers and actionable feedback has had limited impact despite training from the district and support from talent coaches who work with school leaders to develop accurate and effective teacher evaluations and to provide constructive and actionable feedback. The district cited during the interviews the need to ensure that school leaders have the instructional expertise and experience to fully develop the skills of their staff when it increased the requirements for new principals. As a result, under this new vision for schools, new principals now must have at least seven years' experience, instead of three years, the previous requirement. The newly negotiated teacher contract repurposed time previously dedicated toward small group instruction to allow for 80-minute weekly professional development (PD) sessions. School leaders are responsible for arranging these sessions, and the district acknowledged that there are varied levels of oversight to ensure that these sessions are high quality and result in improved practices. The district intends to increase the oversight of school leaders by increasing monitoring through structures such as the Quality Review (QR), Principal Practice Observation (PPO), Measures of Student Learning (MOSL), and Measures of Teaching Practice (MOTP) as outlined in the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) process.
- A report issued by the New York City Independent Budget Office last year found that teacher attrition

rates have gradually declined since 2001. However, the district still faces challenges with the rate at which teachers leave the system, as nearly one out of every five teachers with five years or less experience leave the district. The review team noted that some attrition could be expected for reasons that may be beyond the district’s control, such as geographic and economic reasons. However, reviewers found little evidence that the district has conducted a detailed analysis of areas that may be within the control of the district, such as class size, principal effectiveness, school performance, or working conditions to look for patterns or trends that might be affecting retention rates. Because the district is still collecting evidence to determine the reasons why teachers leave, the district is limited in its ability to proactively address factors that may contribute to attrition. In addition, the district is hindered in fully assessing the impact of current recruitment and retention strategies aimed specifically at keeping the most effective teachers and other school staff.

Impact Statement:

- The district’s approach toward recruiting, evaluating, and sustaining high-quality personnel is not consistently accelerating sufficient improvements to reach appropriate levels of student success in most low performing schools and for student subgroup populations. The early stages of the district’s staffing and school leadership initiatives have not yet resulted in providing all schools with highly qualified staff in order to meet the needs 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:

- improve the process of hiring, recruiting, and evaluating staff by assessing the effectiveness of initiatives for hiring school leaders and teachers, expand those programs proven to have the greatest impact, and develop new ones where necessary;
- rigorously monitor the procedures for improving teacher effectiveness so that observations lead to accurate evaluations of teacher performance and result in actionable feedback that lead to growth in student outcomes and improved instructional practices; and
- continue to analyze the reasons why teachers and other staff leave the district and implement strategies to retain staff and use the results of this analysis to address factors that may contribute to teacher attrition.

<p>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.</p>	<p>Tenet Rating</p>	<p>Stage 2</p>
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Overall Finding:

- The district leadership has adopted the Framework for Great Schools as a comprehensive and explicit theory of action about school culture that communicates high expectations for addressing the needs of all constituents. The district has also identified a vision for school improvement that describes the process for applying this framework. However, the framework and its supporting vision are new and

have not yet been fully implemented across all schools.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- During the review, district leaders reported that the district is in the initial stages of using the Framework for Great Schools as its theory of action to drive transformation throughout the district. This theory identifies the new administration's values and represents a shift from the work of the previous administration. For example, the district concluded that previous reforms under the former administration created a system where school leaders were given a great deal of autonomy with the expectation that this would help them produce results. However, the new district leaders determined that some school leaders were not equipped to succeed with the autonomy provided, and the previous administration's structures for support and supervision were not cohesive enough to ensure that all schools were positioned for success. Further, under the current support system set to expire at the end of the 2014-15 school year, school leaders independently identified a non-profit "network" to provide them with resources and supports. However, the district determined that this approach was not consistently effective and that this structure led community superintendents, who are responsible for evaluating school leaders, not to be fully engaged in supporting the activities at the school.
- The district's special education reforms, called the "Shared Path to Success," put more emphasis on integrating students with disabilities in their neighborhood schools to work alongside their general education peers than was done in the past; however, the lack of a strong accountability system meant that principals and the networks they selected were responsible for ensuring that the needs of these students were being met. Beginning in 2013, NYSED has required the district to submit an action plan and provide regular updates for four areas of longstanding non-compliance within special education. These areas include providing special education programs and services in the least restrictive environment; implementing positive behavioral supports and interventions to support schools to take proactive steps to address behavioral problems and reduce reliance on suspension or removal; developing and implementing quality individualized education programs (IEPs); and conducting transition planning to ensure students with disabilities have opportunities after graduation to pursue college, begin careers, and transition toward independent living. The data supplied by the district showed improvement in each of the four areas as the district implemented its action plans. To strengthen the support and oversight across the district, including efforts to sustain the work of the district's "Shared Path to Success" special education reforms, the district will shift responsibilities from networks to community and high school superintendents and Borough Field Support Centers (BFSCs) beginning next school year.
- District leaders stated that in some cases, communication between the district, community and high school superintendents, and school leaders has been hampered due to the cluster and network design of the current support structure and the atmosphere of increased autonomy for schools. Further, the district leaders interviewed stated they perceived a lack of professional trust among teachers, school leaders, and the district, as well as inconsistent leadership of community and high school superintendents and school leaders, and a lack of clearly defined leadership structures for the 32 community school districts. The district's intention is for the new theory of action to play a central part

in addressing these perceived areas of weakness. District leaders stated they have also begun to communicate high expectations for excellence in education to all schools through community meetings and correspondence with school leaders, staff, and parents.

- The new theory of action prioritizes several qualities valued by the new administration, including rigorous instruction, a supportive environment, collaborative teachers, effective school leaders, improved family-community ties, and trust across all schools. District leaders articulated that they specifically want to create an environment that values trust and collaboration among staff. As part of this, the district has moved away from the previous administration's approach of providing an annual letter grade for each school. The district has also placed a moratorium on closing low-performing schools, an approach popular with the previous administration. Instead, the district has opted to handle low-performing schools by providing an infusion of resources, PD, and staff. Currently 94 schools have been designated as "Renewal Schools." Significant additional funds and resources have been set aside for these schools. The Renewal Schools are expected to provide an hour of additional instruction each day, along with partnering with a community organization to provide additional services under the community schools model. The district has identified targets that these schools in this program must meet. If these targets are not met, then the district may intervene and institute a change in leadership, a change in staff, or a possible reorganization of the school. The program is in its first year, and it remains to be seen if the infusion of resources will result in improved student outcomes and improved educational experiences. During a school visit to a Renewal School that has been an early focus of the administration's new approach; the review team noted that at the time of the visit, changes at the school had been primarily administrative. The review team found limited evidence to show that the adjustments made have resulted in significant improvements to practices or improvements to the quality of the education the students receive. While Renewal Schools will have limits on the number of students admitted mid-year, the district is in the process of determining the resources that will be needed for other schools not in the Renewal program to absorb the students who are seeking enrollment in the middle of the school year. In addition, many of the schools identified as Renewal Schools are schools that have experienced enrollment declines. A report from the New York City Independent Budget Office (IBO) found that the 2014-15 enrollment in these schools had declined by 11% since the previous year and 21% since 2012-13, with 14 of the 94 schools having lost a third or more of their students in the past three years. The IBO concluded that since many families have chosen not to send their children to some of these schools, these schools might be more likely to end up with higher concentrations of students with greater needs. At the time of the review, it was too early to determine if the Renewal program approach will be sufficient to address the significant needs of these schools.
- While the district has promoted parent choice and created a system that allows students to apply to middle schools, high schools, and some elementary schools, the review team found that this appears to benefit some students more than others. Many of the highest achieving schools in the state are in the district, and these schools often have admissions criteria that allow them to identify the students most likely to succeed. On the other hand, the district also has some schools with high concentrations of low performing and over-age students. The district has historically struggled with improving these schools.

In addition, the racial diversity of the city is not typically reflected in the composition of its schools, with the district having some of the most segregated schools in the country. While some of this, particularly at the elementary school level where students attend their neighborhood school, is a reflection of geographic segregation among neighborhoods, a comprehensive study by the UCLA Civil Rights Project found that the district's school choice program was responsible for "exacerbating racial isolation." Though some community school boards and City Council members have been trying to address this issue, the district has not proactively instituted measures to counter the lack of diversity among its schools, and as a result, the district continues to have schools with high concentrations of students with high needs.

- The theory of action in the Framework for Great Schools articulates the use of a consistent, comprehensive process for assessing needs at different levels of instruction; setting goals based on those needs; engaging in cycles of learning that include planning, implementation, and reflection on the impact of the planned changes; making adjustments in plans or strategies based on impact data; and sharing lessons learned in order to reassess needs and establish new goals. The district has begun the promulgation of this vision; however, reviewers who visited Priority and Focus schools in the district found that there is more to be done to ensure that the district's vision becomes embedded in the daily practices of schools and classrooms. Despite the district's view of the impact the new vision is having on schools and the district, reviewers found significant room for improvement in the professional practices reviewers witnessed during school reviews.
- Although the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) is required for all ELLs, several thousand students were not tested during the previous school year in NYC according to data submitted by the district. In addition, the Part 154 CAP for 2015 did not provide details or timelines on how NYSESLAT testing issues would be addressed and requests for clarification were not provided during the review. Without the data generated from these tests, city educators are unable to measure progress and ensure that their responses to ELL students meet their needs.
- District officials repeatedly reported that the current status of the reform of the district structure and initiatives are a "work in progress." The district has begun to communicate the Framework for Great Schools to district staff and to school leaders through processes that included a voluntary Saturday principal's conference open to all principals that was conducted in the spring to discuss the theory of action and its potential for raising student achievement. District and school leaders stated that the participants of this conference are now collaboratively planning for and applying the vision to the work of their schools. Earlier in the school year, the framework was shared with school leaders through district communications, such as the Principal's Weekly. District leaders also stated and shared evidence that they have completed a plan for how the theory of action is to be promoted in all schools going forward, through activities such as the review of School Comprehensive Education Plans (SCEPs), which are aligned to the framework and the district's Quality Reviews. However, the district's initiatives were often based on disseminating information, and reviewers found limited evidence that the district had developed benchmark targets connected to student outcomes that would allow the district to monitor the effectiveness of the Framework and its ability to improve professional practices

and increase student outcomes.

Impact Statement:

- As the Framework for Great Schools has not been fully implemented across all schools due to the newness of the reforms, some of which will not be implemented until July, the district is in the early stages of collecting evidence that its theory of action has resulted in widespread improvement of practices or increased student outcomes across the district.

Recommendation:

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

- continue plans to ensure that Renewal Schools meet assigned targets and intervene when targets are not met;
- monitor system-wide data to ensure that the additional attention given to Renewal Schools is not creating new sets of schools with low achievement;
- analyze system-wide data and review school assignment procedures to ensure that educational opportunities exist for all students;
- further leverage the STLE teacher and principal leaders to support and mentor educators in the Renewal Schools;
- monitor the feedback provided to school leaders from community superintendents to ensure that community superintendents are closely monitoring the feedback school leaders provide to teachers and have a strong understanding of the dynamics of each school in their district;
- use the Learning Environment Survey to monitor the district’s ability to meet its goals of increased trust and collaboration and make adjustments when progress is not made; and
- monitor student achievement outcomes to determine the ability of the new theory of action to improve achievement.

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

Tenet Rating

Stage 2

Overall Finding:

- The district is in the process of reorganizing and allocating resources in ways that align appropriate levels of support for schools based on the needs of the school communities, but the district has not yet completed the process due to the on-going changes to the district structure.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- While the district has permitted school leaders to have autonomy over which network they choose and how certain resources are used, the district recognized that some schools have benefitted from this autonomy, while other school leaders have not consistently used resources strategically to improve student achievement. The district stated that this is due to issues concerning how school leaders are held accountable. At the time of this review, the district was in the early stages of implementing a new

school support structure. Superintendents continued to evaluate school leaders; however, networks, which were chosen by principals, remained the primary source of support for schools and, as a result, networks were positioned to have much greater insight into the schools, their needs, and the effectiveness of the school leadership. As a result, accountability for how school leaders use their resources was limited. In addition, during state-led Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness (DTSDE) reviews, reviewers found inconsistencies in how PD was used as a tool to improve practices. While some school staff spoke of a lack of follow-up support provided by networks following PD, others reported strong systems of support. In order to address the variety of ways schools experienced support, the district will depart from the network structure in 2015-16 in order to allow community superintendents to work more closely with school leaders to utilize resources to address school and community needs.

- Through STLE, Teacher Development Coaches (Teacher Leaders) provided non-evaluative feedback, worked with principals to leverage teacher leadership to improve student outcomes, and developed teacher practice by disseminating examples/evidence of best practice. Master Teachers (Teacher Leaders) both opened up their classrooms for other teachers as well as bridged the gap between the Teacher Development Coaches and Model Teachers.
- The district has been looking for ways to ensure that it has staff capable of making sufficient improvements in schools, though the needs in all schools have yet to be met. District staff reported they have begun the implementation of the Ambassador Principal Program, which allows effective principals to take a one-year absence from their own schools and bring an assistant principal with them to address the leadership needs of Renewal Schools. At the end of the year, the principals will be given the choice of staying at the Renewal School or returning to their own school. The district leadership related that formative data has shown improved student outcomes in some of the twenty Renewal Schools that have changed leaders during the 2014-15 school year. However, the district has not yet been successful in meeting staffing needs in some schools due to a shortage of effective teachers in certain certification areas.
- The district is implementing a plan to address the funding needs of all Renewal Schools and persistently struggling schools through Fair Student Funding and additional financial resources, with a focus on serving ELLs, students with disabilities, and other students who need extra help. According to district leaders and the district budgetary team, Renewal Schools are scheduled to receive additional funding this year and next year. This money is being allocated to provide an additional hour of instruction each school day for all students and additional resources, and to establish more partnerships with community based organizations (CBOs) to meet the social and emotional developmental health needs of all students and families. Additionally, these schools will work with AmeriCorps to provide mentoring for students and outreach to parents. However, despite the additional funding allocation across the district, rigorous procedures are not fully in place to ensure that funding results in raising the academic achievement of all groups of students. While the district requires that SCEPs are approved by superintendents and that spending is aligned to the SCEP, at the time of this review, the district has not fully developed a system that provides sufficient accountability for the autonomy

principals are allowed regarding allocating discretionary funds. The district does monitor the activities identified to ensure that they are connected to school-level goals. While superintendents may use the QR and the principal evaluation process as an opportunity to look at the impact of the initiatives and activities the school has begun, the different roles of the networks and the community superintendents result in an approach that may not lead to an understanding of why some initiatives have been more successful than others. For example, under the network support structure, the school leader would be expected to use the network to help identify the activities aligned with the SCEP. While the superintendent may provide some level of accountability when these activities do not result in their intended improvements, this approach does not allow for reflection as to the reasons why an activity was unsuccessful, such as the appropriateness of the activity for the school or the quality of the school's implementation. Additionally, in the 2014-15 school year, the quality of the SCEPs submitted to NYSED across the district often varied. While some SCEPs articulated clear goals based around clear strategies with identifiable benchmarks, others lacked strong progress monitoring indicators, clear evidence that the areas of focus were based on an analysis of available data, and detailed action plans that identified research-based best practices. The district intends to increase the oversight of school leaders through its shift from the network support system to the community school districts, and by increasing monitoring through structures such as the QR, PPO, MOSL, and MOTP as outlined in the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) process.

- District leaders confirmed that the considerable investment in PD is not always rigorously evaluated by leaders for its ability to improve instructional practices or student achievement. In limited instances, like through the STLE grant, the district utilized surveys as a method to gather perceived impact by those who have participated in PD. However, during visits to Focus and Priority schools in the district, reviewers often found that leaders were not consistently reinforcing PD through their supervisory practices following PD sessions, and as a result, it was not uncommon for PD activities to result in little change to professional practices.
- This district has divided a number of large high schools into smaller high schools, each with its own school leader. While some evidence suggests that students who attend the smaller high schools are more likely to continue their education beyond high school, a number of the Renewal Schools are small schools, including 26 schools that have fewer than 250 students. In addition, the small and specialized schools have fewer staff members, and as a result may not be adequately equipped to service the specific needs of some students, such as students with disabilities and ELLs, to ensure they can fully benefit from these schools. The district's current plan does not explicitly indicate the planned changes to admissions policies and does not provide specific measurable targets to ensure that ELL representation is comparable to citywide percentages in ELL school enrollment. While smaller high schools may provide a smaller learning environment, reviewers had concerns that turning a large public school into several different small schools may result in increased administrative costs, since the district will now be responsible for having multiple principals in a school site that used to be managed by one school leader, and that the move to having multiple small schools where there used to be one large school may contribute to overcrowding, since each small school will need its own administrative office. In addition, reviewers had concerns that the size of the smaller schools may result in fewer

instructional and extracurricular activities for students and may result in the school and teacher leaders at the school being less likely to have the instructional expertise or content knowledge to provide adequate instructional leadership to the staff. Reviewers also had questions about how small schools could adequately serve the same population of the large school it replaced, since smaller schools would seem to be less likely to be able to address unique, specific student needs since their staff would be smaller than the large school. While some small schools share resources with other small schools in a co-located building, including allowing students to attend classes taught by teachers of the co-located school, school leaders during IIT visits acknowledged that they found it difficult to hold these teachers outside of their supervision accountable, even though they were teaching the school leader's students. On the other hand, reviewers also recognized that breaking large schools into multiple small schools might result in cost savings if the smaller environment reduces the length of time it takes for students to graduate. While the district has school-specific data that may indicate how successful specific small schools have been, at the time of this review, the district was in the early stages of conducting a district wide evaluation of the small school initiative to learn what factors may have contributed to success at some small schools and what factors may have kept other small schools from being successful. Similarly, the district was also in early stages of conducting its own internal analysis of whether the investment in smaller schools has proved cost effective.

- According to reports, approximately 44 percent of schools have a utilization rate above 100 percent and a third of elementary schools operate at 138 percent capacity or higher. These space limitations result in less than ideal conditions for learning, such as students taught in trailers, cluster rooms turned into classrooms, and staggered lunch schedules with some students eating lunch before 10 a.m. While the district has opened new seats in recent years and has plans to expand its capacity based on enrollment projections, a senior official from the Independent Budget Office testified before the City Council in March that the current expansion plans will not be enough to alleviate overcrowding in some districts.
- Previously submitted reports from the district indicated plans to provide ELLs meaningful access to the full range of programs offered by the district, including, but not limited to specialized high schools, small schools, Young Adult Borough Centers (YABCs), and Career Technical Education (CTE) programs. The district reported that it intends to open or expand 40 new Dual Language (DL) programs in 2015-16 to serve its ELL population. The publicized plans indicated thirteen of these DL programs are open, with no additional information provided to the team on the opening or expansion of the remaining 27 programs.
- The newly negotiated teacher contract removed 150 minutes a week that had been set aside for small group instruction beyond the school day in the previous contract and added an additional 80 minutes a week for PD, 35 minutes for staff collaboration, and 40 minutes for parent outreach. District leaders acknowledged that in spite of efforts to provide oversight and support for these initiatives, the implementation of these activities has been inconsistent. During visits to Focus and Priority schools, reviewers found similar inconsistencies regarding how these activities were implemented.

Impact Statement:

- The district is in the early stages of implementing newly identified resources and has not yet been able to ensure that its resource decisions are resulting in continuous improvement to teacher practices and student outcomes.

Recommendation:

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

- rigorously evaluate the effectiveness and impact of resources, including fiscal, programmatic, and staffing supports to address the needs of schools and to evaluate the alignment between spending and student outcomes. Once assessments have been completed and the degree of success in improving student achievement and teacher effectiveness has been determined, expand the most effective approaches to encompass a larger percentage of schools in the district;
- review the work of, and further capitalize on, the use of the Teacher Development Coach and Master Teachers, as developed through the STLE grant, as tools for supporting increased effectiveness through the blend of open classrooms, dissemination of best practices, and one-on-one mentoring support;
- reassess the capital plan to ensure that school construction is aligned to enrollment projections so that no student attends a school that is overcrowded; and
- ensure that school leaders are setting clear expectations for staff collaboration time and parent outreach. Ensure that superintendents can monitor the PD delivered weekly and provide feedback to school leaders. Ensure that school leaders have clear plans to follow-up with ideas presented during weekly PD so that the time invested can result in improved practices.

Statement of Practice 1.4: The district has a comprehensive plan to create, deliver and monitor professional development in all pertinent areas that is adaptive and tailored to the needs of individual schools.

Tenet Rating

Stage 2

Overall Finding:

- The district has not yet fully established and embedded a process for PD that is effectively planned, delivered, and monitored and leads to rapid and sustained improvements in student achievement, particularly for those in low performing schools.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- The district PD team reported that in December 2014, the district enacted new structures for gathering feedback on PD delivery and needs. For example, the district PD team related that based on feedback they are working to provide a series of PD sessions rather than one-time workshops so that the PD team can better understand how well participants are acquiring the intended learning outcomes of the PD. However, the district acknowledged that procedures are not fully in place to ensure that district and school leaders hold teachers accountable for implementing in their daily instructional practices what teachers have learned in PD sessions. In addition, district leaders stated that structures are being developed so that school leaders will be able to assess and evaluate the impact that PD has brought to

classrooms in terms of improving professional practices and driving up academic standards. Without this information, the district is unable to fully judge which PD is making a difference and which is in need of adaptation.

- A comprehensive schedule of PD is offered and available for all teachers through the Teacher Professional Development and Student Opportunities website; however, most offerings are voluntary. Through the STLE grant, Teacher Leaders (both Master Teachers and Teacher Development Coaches) support colleagues, and preliminary reporting indicates a positive response from those involved. However, this scaffolded support and mentoring currently benefit a limited number of teachers and schools. Additionally, district leaders acknowledged that effective planning for PD has been hindered because PD supports given by the different networks through achievement coaches are variable in quality and do not always meet the varying needs and starting points of teachers. School leaders have the responsibility for providing PD to staff weekly, but the district PD team confirmed that the impact of this PD is not consistently followed up on at the school-level to check if it is making any discernible difference to student learning. District leaders acknowledged that there are difficulties in aligning the time and resources invested in PD to quantifiable improvements in student achievement in the classroom. However, district leaders stated that this is to be addressed through community superintendents working directly with school leaders to target PD to better address specific needs of schools and to closely monitor implementation through the observation process.
- District leaders informed reviewers that at times there are inconsistencies between how school leaders view and evaluate teacher practices. District leaders indicated that PD is provided for school leaders on how to assess teacher performance through talent coaches, who visit schools at least twice a year to norm and calibrate the classroom observation process, through central office offerings that include mandatory training on the Advance system to monitor teacher practices and student achievement, and through network offerings. However, during visits to Priority and Focus Schools in the district, reviewers sometimes found that school leaders did not consistently provide targeted, actionable feedback to teachers that offered clear and helpful guidance on what aspects of their practice was most in need of improvement. School leaders who struggle with identifying effective practices and providing quality feedback even after being provided targeted supports are less likely to be able to ensure that the right PD is provided to staff.

Impact Statement:

- PD activities have not consistently resulted in improved practices or improved results in low performing 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:

- utilize frequent targeted observations and the Advance system to determine the PD that has had the most beneficial impact on improving instructional practices in the classroom and promote these practices across different PD programs;

- leverage the expertise and support of teacher and principal leaders to provide differentiated support to colleagues;
- hold superintendents accountable for ensuring that they in turn hold school leaders accountable for ensuring the implementation of the new learning that leads to improvements in student outcomes and professional practices from PD; and
- monitor the assessments of superintendents as they review school leaders' evaluation of teacher practices to ensure consistency in the quality of actionable feedback, and the presence of timely, targeted follow-up observations to ensure improved outcomes.

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

Tenet Rating

Stage 2

Overall Finding:

- The district has a variety of systems, structures, and frameworks to promote a data-driven culture, including expectations for how data is to be used by specific staff members; however, despite PD by the district and networks, the use of data by school leaders and teachers is limited.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- Although most school leaders of the 32 Focus and Priority Schools visited by the IIT closely monitored data for attendance, referrals, incidents, suspensions, and overall school performance, school leaders reported that they need greater district support in analyzing the data to address the needs of individuals and groups of students. During school reviews, school leaders stated that they welcomed the data that is provided by the district. School leaders also stated that although they received some training in data usage, not all school leaders felt they were equipped with the skills necessary to use available data to monitor the performance of their school rigorously or to identify patterns or trends in performance by subgroups or content areas. Without this analysis, school leaders stated that they are hindered in their efforts to identify school-wide practices that are most in need of improvement to accelerate the academic growth of all students. Discussions with school leaders and teachers and evidence from reviews demonstrated that data-driven instruction is not established in all classrooms. There is inconsistent use of student work and rubric-based evaluation in collegial conversations among teacher leaders and their peers around increasing effective instruction and student achievement. Without additional support and a clear identification of school-wide and classroom data usage strategies that have proved effective in successful schools, opportunities are missed to provide exemplars of good practice for all schools to replicate.
- The district has created systems and structures for data on attendance, incidents, suspensions, school progress, and student achievement to be uploaded and analyzed. Advance, Automate the Schools (ATS), Students Transcript and Recording System (STARS), the Special Education Student Information System, and other systems are available for district leaders, school leaders, and teachers to use. However, there have been technological glitches that have limited the effectiveness of the various data

systems the district has developed. In addition, some databases are currently not integrated so that all relevant data can be accessed at one time. To address this, the district has recently instituted two data systems to integrate all relevant data: Progress to Graduation Tracker and School Performance Data Explorer. Additionally, district leaders reported that they are working on a dashboard that will make data more easily accessible.

Impact Statement:

- Not all school leaders and teachers effectively use data to improve instructional practices and student achievement.

Recommendation:

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

- have school leaders use data to inform strategic decision-making by providing support to staff in their understanding of data; and
- continue to pursue methods to ensure that data is integrated in one, accessible, user-friendly location.

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

Tenet Rating

Stage 2

Overall Finding:

The district has sought to increase achievement by initiating a transformational process to build stronger structures and frameworks for delivering resources; however, many of the new initiatives are in the early stages of implementation and the existing structures have not resulted in schools receiving supports to meet their varying needs.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- School leaders stated that the district is implementing a series of frameworks, systems, and practices to address inconsistencies and inefficiencies in the ways that the district has historically supported school leaders. However, in DTSDE reviews of Priority and Focus Schools during the 2014-15 school year, most school leaders from the 32 Priority and Focus schools visited stated that they received limited support in creating and sustaining a vision that supported the needs of the entire school community. School leaders interviewed by the IIT stated that they welcomed the intentions behind the district’s new theory of action, and some voiced approval of the move away from networks. School

leaders indicated that current support from networks has been inconsistent. The school leaders also reported that school leaders who made numerous requests for support under the cluster/network structure were more likely to receive it; however, this support was not part of a strategic plan by the district to provide support based on greatest need or priority.

- The sample of school leaders stated during interviews that the district, under the cluster and network structure, has not been proactive in consistently ensuring that resources or PD have been accurately matched to the differing needs of schools or that systems and programs for evaluating teacher effectiveness have resulted in sustained improvements in instruction or student learning. Some school leaders raised concerns about the efforts that have been made to support schools in implementing the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). For example, school leaders cited insufficient guidance in helping teachers use data to make curricular adjustments or in providing feedback to teachers on precisely what is needed in individual schools to help students become college- and career-ready. In addition, Model and Master Teachers in the STLE schools did not articulate a specific focus on implementing the CCLS in their work of supporting and mentoring their colleagues on increased instructional effectiveness. School leaders also reported that the district's programs and policies to meet the social and emotional needs of students were often insufficient considering the daily challenges presented by some students.
- School leaders spoke to the variability in the level, quality, and impact of district support under the cluster and network structure. Some school leaders reported that networks did not have ELL or special education specialists to assist schools or that these specialists joined teams later in the school year. Other school leaders noted that the network had not worked with them to set Specific, Measureable, Ambitious, Results-oriented, and Timely (SMART) goals, or to help them implement, monitor, or assess the achievement of goals. Yet, other school leaders reported that the networks have been responsive to the school and helped support the school. Additionally, some school leaders related that the Learning Partners Program has supported improved instructional practices by allowing teachers to work with host schools that model successful instructional practices.

Impact Statement:

- While school leader autonomy and choice has been successful with some schools, other schools have not benefitted from a system that depends greatly on the skill, expertise, and initiative of the school leader.

Recommendation:

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

- monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of programs, such as the Learning Partners for success and the improvement of instructional practices in partner schools, and expand the use of successful programs;
- rigorously monitor the transition from networks to community superintendents to ensure that the schools that need the most support are receiving the most support; and
- ensure that schools and the district can work collaboratively to set clear improvement goals and

priorities that lead to academic excellence for all schools.

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

Tenet Rating

Stage 2

Overall Finding:

- Although the district has made attempts to prioritize curriculum development and support, some schools are not yet providing all students with a curriculum that is CCLS-aligned and challenging.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- School leaders from the 32 Priority and Focus schools visited stated that the district currently provides PD to network achievement coaches and teachers to address curriculum development and implementation and that follow-up support is provided through the networks. The district has developed modules to address CCLS aligned units; however, evidence from Priority and Focus school reviews indicates that not all teachers have effectively adapted these units to create comprehensive unit and lesson plans that address differentiation, multiple points of access, and higher-order thinking skills. School leaders of the low-performing schools visited during the 2014-15 school year indicate that a contributing factor to these weaknesses is the inconsistencies in network support. School leader interviews, classroom visits, and document reviews by the IIT showed that many teachers in these schools do not regularly provide instruction aligned with the CCLS and the accompanying instructional shifts, especially for ELLs. Some school leaders stated that the network provided limited support to develop CCLS-aligned curriculum and that there is a lack of teacher collaboration at schools, a lack of support for teachers on how to analyze data, limited support for ELL instruction, and lack of monitoring and assessing for effectiveness by networks of the PD they provide.
- While the district has established career pathways for teacher leaders in a number of schools through the STLE grant, during visits to these schools, identified teacher leaders did not specifically focus on CCLS-aligned curriculum when opening up their classroom to disseminate best practices. Additionally, there no was evidence of a clear alignment to CCLS when the STLE team observed a non-evaluative feedback session from a Teacher Development Coach (Teacher Leader).
- The size of the district and the varying needs of its students continue to present challenges ensuring that services are consistently provided and that these students receive curriculum and supports to address their needs. The “Shared Path for Success” initiative has emphasized the importance of allowing students with disabilities to remain at their local school and including these students with their general education peers as often as possible. In the past, students with very specific needs were often placed at a school that might have the resources to meet that need. Now the student’s zoned school is responsible for providing the resources and expertise, which not all schools were initially prepared to handle. The district intends to further ensure that schools are able to meet these needs through its reorganization beginning July 2015. In addition, the percent of students in need of special education services has increased over the past several years, presenting further challenges. The

district has made efforts to address this increased demand, such as incentivizing teaching students with disabilities in traditionally underserved areas. The district has also attempted to address the time it takes for students to receive evaluations through efforts, such as allowing speech evaluations to be done internally rather than through outside contractors. While more than 90 percent of evaluations are completed within the appropriate time, the district's expectation is that its new reorganization and the establishment of BFSCs will further streamline the evaluation system so that all students in need of services can be identified.

- The district repurposed time in the new teacher contract to ensure that teachers can collaborate at least once a week. School leaders reported that the district provides fiscal resources for school leaders to utilize for curriculum development. In IIT visits, most schools implemented common planning time for curriculum development; however, school leaders indicated that these meetings often occurred without clear protocols.
- The district reviewed various curricula materials for elementary and middle schools and developed a list of approved curricula. School leaders in schools with grades kindergarten to eight have the option to choose the curriculum the school leaders wish to implement from an approved list or to choose their own. Some school leaders interviewed welcomed this flexibility. However, at the time of this review, the district had not created a list of approved curricula for high schools; instead, these teachers are given even broader flexibility in selecting curricula, including the use of EngageNY. District leaders acknowledged that perhaps too much autonomy had been given to schools and school leaders under the previous administration, and it is unclear the extent to which this autonomy may also have created challenges ensuring that all students are receiving a curriculum that prepares them to be college- and career-ready. During visits to Priority and Focus Schools, reviewers frequently found that the curriculum offered limited opportunities for student discussion and for higher-order thinking. In addition, many of the teachers that relied on the EngageNY modules had not made any adjustments or modifications to tailor the lessons to the needs of the students. Reviewers were unclear as to how small schools intended to provide a variety of curricular offerings to meet the needs of all students, particularly when school leaders admitted that they struggled with providing oversight to the staff of other schools who provide instruction to students in their the schools. While the district's intention to give autonomy to schools in choosing and implementing the curriculum has the potential to ensure more ownership of the curriculum at the school level, it may also result in an array of curricula, which can prove a challenge to monitor and evaluate. In addition, this approach may provide limited opportunities for the dissemination of best practices or the identification of common weaknesses that could be addressed through targeted PD. The district envisions the transition to the BFSCs as a means of providing more oversight and more support to schools in curriculum development.

Impact Statement:

- Although the district provides some curriculum support, a lack of strategic and well thought out processes to fully support schools in the implementation of the CCLS results in schools being unprepared and in some instances unable to provide learning opportunities that enable all students to

be college- and career-ready.

Recommendation:

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

- make sure community and high school superintendents work directly with school leaders to ensure that protocols are in place to use common planning time and other resources to create CCLS-aligned unit and lesson plans, including adaptations to CCLS-aligned modules;
- review how the district intends to provide high-quality monitoring and evaluation of curriculum implementation if schools choose to implement a wide range of different curricula, including leveraging teacher leaders to further support CCLS-aligned curriculum; and
- identify and support follow-up activities, including instructional coaching and re-training for teachers and school leaders who are identified as not using effective planning and strategies for the implementation of the CCLS.

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

Tenet Rating

Stage 2

Overall Finding:

- The district seeks to provide opportunities for teachers to create rigorous learning opportunities through PD and on-site coaching. However, under the network and cluster system, this approach relies too often on the varying levels of professional insight of the leaders and the decisions of networks and clusters in providing appropriate supports to improve instructional practices and raise student achievement. During visits to Priority and Focus schools, reviewers found that this results in inconsistencies in the ability of the district to ensure that effective instructional practices are in place.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- School leaders of Priority and Focus schools interviewed indicated that there are limited systems in place to assess how effective specific PD opportunities and initiatives have been in bringing about improvements to instruction or student learning. Although the district has historically provided PD in areas such as curriculum alignment and the use of higher-order questioning, reviewers who visited Priority Schools and Focus Schools in the district found that these were areas in need of improvement. The district has also emphasized PD on differentiated instruction, in conjunction with the increased integration of special education students in general education settings that has accompanied the “Shared Path to Success” special education reforms. Reviewers who visited Priority and Focus Schools found that although PD has been provided to Integrated Co-teaching (ICT) teachers in differentiated instruction, such instruction was generally lacking in schools visited, and district officials acknowledged in interviews that this is an area in need of improvement. Further, district leaders stated that much training has been provided in the use of data for teachers and school leaders. However, the review team found through school reviews and interviews with teachers and school leaders that schools are in

need of further training, as staff did not feel skilled in analyzing and using data to set school or classroom goals. School and district leaders concurred and acknowledged that because there is not frequent monitoring of how PD has resulted in improvements in classrooms and in student outcomes, there can be a lack of accountability for teachers to improve professional practices. Similarly, the STLE grant required the district to create measurable goals and outcomes for both student achievement and talent management needs for grant-supported work and activities. While numerous goals were created, the instruments for measuring impact data through this grant were mostly limited to survey responses from involved stakeholder groups, which is narrow in its ability to inform the work moving forward.

- The district's PD handbook identifies the need for varied opportunities and for different methodologies in supporting and training teachers if improvements to instruction are to be achieved. The district uses a variety of methods to deliver PD, such as the train the trainer model, achievement coaches, and other supports from networks and the Learning Partners Program, where one host school with strong practices in a particular area supports two partner schools seeking to strengthen their own practices in that area. However, during IIT visits, many school leaders stated they did not believe that these methods have been consistent in effectively changing instructional practices. In addition, school leaders stated that where coaches were designated to schools to work with teachers in different content areas, the quality of support varied and, as a result, resources allocated may not result in improvements.
- Evidence of oversight for teacher and principal leaders and the dissemination of best practices varied during STLE site visits, due, in part, to the various offices involved in promoting effective practices such as Teacher Effectiveness, Teacher Recruitment and Quality, Office of Periodic Assessment, Office of Leadership, and Office of School Quality. It was not until the last third of the grant that all offices involved in the oversight of grant activities met regularly in support of a common goal.

Impact Statement:

- The limited follow-up and support following PD, and the limited monitoring of its impact on improving student outcomes and instructional practices, has resulted in some schools not regularly providing rigorous instruction for all students.

Recommendation:

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

- collaborate with school leaders to ensure that PD takes account of school needs, is delivered to a high standard, and leads to quantifiable improvements in student outcomes;
- evaluate the methodologies for in-school training, such as the Learning Partners Program, identify best practices for wider use in schools, create a systematic method for disseminating these best practices by leveraging teacher and principal leaders, and address weaknesses where they are found so that there is a demonstrable impact for all training methodologies used; and
- evaluate the quality of support provided by coaches and consultants by creating measurable goals and

outcomes that are school-specific and directly tied to identified student achievement and talent management needs to ensure an equitable service for all schools that leads to improvement in student achievement.

Statement of Practice 5.1 - Student Social and Emotional Developmental Health: The district creates policy and works collaboratively with the school to provide opportunities and resources that positively support students’ social and emotional developmental health.

Tenet Rating

Stage 2

Overall Finding:

- The district is working closely with local district and school leaders to address gaps in supporting student social and emotional developmental health needs. However, adequate supports for some schools, especially some Priority and Focus Schools, have not yet been fully implemented due to the early stages of new structures to ensure that comprehensive systems are in place.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- District personnel reported that the system of clusters and networks does not focus on social and emotional developmental health as a high priority. District and school leaders reported that these systems do not make clear the responsibilities for addressing the social and emotional developmental health needs of students and do not provide adequate levels of response to the identified needs of students or link social and emotional developmental health to instructional priorities in an integrated way. School leaders stated that intervention programs typically have solely focused on addressing academic needs without giving sufficient focus and attention to the social and emotional needs of students that may constitute barriers to academic success. The move toward a community school approach is intended to address this; however, this model is being introduced to a limited number of targeted schools that service a small percentage of the students in the district. Most school leaders interviewed during DTSDE reviews this school year indicated that the district and its cluster and network supports have provided very limited support for addressing the social and emotional developmental health needs of all students.
- School leaders stated that the district analyzed suspension data and provided training to school leaders around Restorative Practices as an alternative to suspension. After training the staff in 100 schools with high numbers of suspensions, the district reported that there was an 11 percent reduction in the rates of suspension for these schools after one month. The district did not provide any further data for subsequent months for these schools. The district plans to introduce this program into more schools. A few school leaders interviewed reported that they had received support in Restorative Circles, but noted that although this has been helpful in reducing incidents, there has been a lack of monitoring by either the school or the district of the implementation of the program to ensure that it is being done with fidelity.
- In February 2015, the district revised its discipline policy. School leaders now must request permission before suspending a child for “defying authority,” or for engaging in a minor physical altercation. No confirmed data is yet available to demonstrate the difference the new policy has made to student

behavior in schools.

- Although there is plenty of data provided on school attendance, school leaders indicated that not enough support is provided by the district on how to improve attendance rates, particularly for chronic absentees and those students who face emotional difficulties and obstacles in attending school. School leaders also expressed concerns about limited support from the district in selecting a program or curriculum to support the teaching of social and emotional developmental health and in equipping teachers and support staff with the skills to deliver such a program. The combination of these issues, school leaders believed, limits the ability of school staff to meet student needs.

Impact Statement:

- District support has not resulted in the social emotional developmental health needs of students being consistently met, 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:

- evaluate how well the district provides support to schools in meeting the social and emotional needs of all students, paying particular attention to the impact of the new discipline policy and how it equips teachers and support staff with the skills to teach social and emotional developmental health and to improve attendance rates in some schools; and
- make sure that there is sufficient expertise in the BFSCs to meet the social emotional developmental health needs of students.

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

Tenet Rating

Stage 2

Overall Finding:

- The district has begun work to provide more supports to allow parents to both understand what is happening in schools with their children and to understand how to support their children in order to increase student achievement and advocate for services. However, presently, the district has not fully developed partnerships with parents to promote increased student achievement.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- Reviewers noted that the district has made efforts to create an inclusive climate for families and communities. For example, the Chancellor has held multiple town hall meetings with parents since the spring of 2014. District leaders also reported an increase of 43 percent in parents applying for Community Education Council seats this year. As part of the new teacher contract, the district has instituted a 40-minute period each week for teachers to devote toward increased parent involvement. However, in IIT visits, school leaders and parents interviewed indicated that these efforts have not

consistently resulted in increased parent engagement or involvement in schools.

- The district has implemented policies to ensure that families receive communications families in pertinent languages. For example, the district website and parent links provide multiple translations, and schools are provided with the resources to ensure the translation of documents into languages other than English. However, the wide variety of languages spoken across the district and the limited number of staff available to provide translation services have presented some challenges in ensuring that parents who do not speak English are kept up-to-date regarding their children’s school and education. For example, in the fall, the district’s Middle School Application guide was released in English several weeks before it was released in Spanish. By the time the Middle School guide was released in Spanish, some schools had already begun Middle School tours.
- The district has begun to hire family support coordinators for each community and high school superintendent’s office in addition to the district family advocates who are already in place. Although schools are reported to have parent coordinators in place, a few schools visited by IIT reviewers did not have parent coordinators. In addition, during visits to Priority and Focus Schools in the district, teachers indicated that they had received little or no training in how to develop home-school partnerships.
- The district gathers feedback from parents through an annual survey. This is the ninth year the survey has been administered, and on the most recent survey, nearly 53 percent of parents responded to provide their perceptions of the district. The survey results indicated strong approval among parents, with 94 percent of parents indicating they were either satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of the education their children receive. However, while parents reported positive experiences regarding the education at their child’s school, the district has not fully utilized the survey as a tool for reciprocal communication to learn from the parents. For example, in each of the first eight years the survey was administered, the top response from parents to the question “Which of the following improvements would you most like your school to make?” has been smaller class sizes. However, during the years the district has received this feedback from parents, class sizes have steadily increased according to district data. In the most recent annual survey, the question “Which of the following improvements would you most like your school to make?” was removed, and there is no longer a question on the survey that allows parents to identify their priorities.
- The current network and cluster support and accountability structure has prompted concerns that the community school district’s role in supporting families has declined. The district will move away from this structure following this school year and plans to centralize support in BFSCs in order to streamline the communication and supports provided to families. However, the opportunities for parent and community input into decision-making at the school level remain limited, in part because of the district’s decision to prohibit the public from attending School Leadership Team (SLT) meetings. The SLT structure was created to incorporate involvement and input from the community, and to promote shared decision-making, particularly with the development of school-based budgets and schools’ annual plans. The district’s decision to deny the public access to these meetings prompted lawsuits from a teacher, community members, and the Public Advocate and resulted in a judge declaring that

the meetings are subject to an Open Meeting Law and open to the public. However, at the time of the review, the district was appealing this decision and reportedly letting school leaders know that the meetings were still not open to the public.

Impact Statement:

- The district has taken steps to increase parent involvement; however, in most of the schools visited by the review team, evidence of parent involvement is limited and full partnerships with parents have yet to be achieved.

Recommendation:

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

- have community and high school superintendents work directly with school leaders to create structures and protocols in all schools to effectively utilize the Tuesday parent teacher time, and monitor parental involvement and contacts during this time period;
- have the family support coordinators and the district family advocates work in conjunction with school leaders and parent coordinators, under the supervision of the community and high school superintendents, to plan events centering around student achievement and performance to increase parent involvement and provide parents with important information; and
- utilize the parent survey and the SLT process to allow opportunities for parent voice to be heard. Use feedback from families to strengthen the educational opportunities provided to students.