



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

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)



BEDS Code	4416000100012
School Name	Vails Gate High Tech Magnet School
School Address	400 Old Forge Hill, New Windsor, Newburgh, New York 12553
District Name	Newburgh Enlarged City School District (NECSD)
School Leader	Ms. Ebony Green
Dates of Review	October 15-17, 2014
School Accountability Status	Focus School
Type of Review	SED Integrated Intervention Team (IIT)

School Information Sheet for Vails Gate High Tech Magnet School

School Configuration (2014-15 data)					
Grade Configuration	K - 5	Total Enrollment	561	SIG Recipient	
Types and Number of English Language Learner Classes (2014-15)					
# Transitional Bilingual	4	# Dual Language	1	# Self-Contained English as a Second Language	0
Types and Number of Special Education Classes (2014-15)					
# Special Classes	5	# SETSS	0	# Integrated Collaborative Teaching	2
Types and Number of Special Classes (2014-15)					
# Visual Arts	1	# Music	2	# Drama	0
# Foreign Language	0	# Dance	0	# CTE	0
School Composition (most recent data)					
% Title I Population	83%	% Attendance Rate		94%	
% Free Lunch	71%	% Reduced Lunch		10%	
% Limited English Proficient	28%	% Students with Disabilities		17%	
Racial/Ethnic Origin (most recent data)					
% American Indian or Alaska Native	0	% Black or African American		25%	
% Hispanic or Latino	55%	% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander		3%	
% White	15%	% Multi-Racial		2%	
Personnel (most recent data)					
Years Principal Assigned to School	1	# of Assistant Principals		1	
# of Deans	0	# of Counselors/Social Workers		0.5	
% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate	0	% Teaching Out of Certification		2%	
% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience	2%	Average Teacher Absences			
Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2013-14)					
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	8%	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4		10%	
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			
6 Year Graduation Rate					
Overall NYSED Accountability Status (2013-14)					
Reward		Recognition			
In Good Standing		Local Assistance Plan			
Focus District	X	Focus School Identified by a Focus District			
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	x	Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander		
White	x	Multi-Racial		
Students with Disabilities		Limited English Proficient		x
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		x
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		x
Economically Disadvantaged				

Describe the school's top priorities (no more than 5) based on the school's comprehensive plans (SCEP, SIG, DIP, etc.):

SCHOOL PRIORITIES AS WRITTEN BY THE SCHOOL:

1. Language Development to support the development of syntax as well as general and domain-specific academic vocabulary across all content areas.
2. Analyzing and responding to student achievement data to increase reflection and goal setting.
3. Differentiating instruction to meet the needs of all students.

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 Special Education School Improvement Specialist (SESIS) representative, and a representative from the Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (RBE-RN).
- The review team visited a total of 44 classrooms during the two-day review.
- Reviewers conducted focus groups with students, staff, and parents.
- Reviewers examined documents provided by the school, including curriculum maps, lesson plans, school-wide data, teacher feedback, and student work.
- The school provided results of a student survey that 30 percent completed.
- The school provided results of a staff survey that 90 percent completed.
- The school provided results of a parent survey that five percent completed.

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).			X	
2.3	Leaders make strategic decisions to organize programmatic, human, and fiscal capital resources.				X
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.				X
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).			X	
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			X	

	(CCLS) that is monitored and adapted to meet the needs of students.				
3.3	Teachers develop and ensure that unit and lesson plans used include data-driven instruction (DDI) protocols that are appropriately aligned to the CCLS and NYS content standards and address student achievement needs.				X
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.			X	
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.				X
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.				X
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.				X
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.				X
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).				X
OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 4:					I

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.			X	
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.				X
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.			X	
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.				X

	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.			X	
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.				X
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.			X	
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.				X
	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.

- Although the school leaders have been at the school for less than a year, they have worked with the school community to promote a supportive educational climate across the school. Parents, staff, and students interviewed by the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT or review team) uniformly reported that the school leader’s “open door policy” enables them to express their views. Leaders have produced an overarching School Comprehensive Education Plan (SCEP) that includes three salient priorities pertaining to improving students’ language development and improving the quality of instruction to meet the differing needs of students. The SCEP for this academic year has Specific, Measurable, Ambitious, Results-oriented, and Timely (SMART) targets, an improvement from last year’s SCEP, which did not contain such targets.
- The vision and goals were updated to align with that of the District. Two information-sharing meetings have been held to promote improvement, held in both daytime and evening sessions to facilitate parent participation and to involve them more in contributing to that process. The mission is included in newsletters and posted on the website. During discussions with the review team, some of the staff, parents, and students articulated their understanding of the mission.
- Although some progress has been made, the school leader’s management of resources has not ensured that the needs of all students are met to lead to higher levels of academic achievement. The school leader has secured and organized staff to address academic and personal needs of students. The school leaders ensure that staff members are present at times of student movement to maintain the calm operation of the school. The program of lessons generally runs smoothly and on time, following a specified schedule. However, the delivery of curriculum for English language learners and the dual language program is not always followed as outlined in the school schedule. The school leader reported that he has targeted funds for professional development to align with the priorities agreed in the SCEP, such as literacy and English language arts. For example, teachers received training in guided reading to promote literacy instruction across the curriculum.
- School leaders conduct formal and informal observations aligned to the district’s Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR). However, the process has not yet resulted in improved instructional practices school-wide. The school leader shared that school leaders are highly present in classrooms and that they provide feedback to improve students’ learning behaviors. However, evidence from feedback reports and class visits by the IIT reflect that teachers’ instructional practices vary widely and do not consistently promote increased student achievement. While school leaders use information from the APPR to identify areas for targeted professional development, teachers interviewed by the IIT, shared that they have not received adequate training in differentiation, one of the school’s priority areas for improvement.
- Strategic systems are not guiding curriculum and instructional practices. Reviewers found limited evidence to support how the school leaders analyze and use available performance data to inform practices. There are few connected structures designed to systematically improve the school’s performance. As a result, measurable progress towards achieving individual, student group and

school-wide goals and improved student performance has not occurred.

Recommendation:

- Establish full commitment to the school’s vision and goals for raising student achievement by having:
 - teachers work collaboratively with school leaders, each other, and coaches to evaluate the difference instruction and curricula planning are making to student progress;
 - school leaders attend grade level and vertical team meetings, regularly to monitor and evaluate progress towards achieving the school’s goals;
 - school leaders seek views from parent and student representatives each semester and use information gathered in the decision-making process and
 - school leaders monitor the quality of instruction closely, in line with APPR, providing specific advice on areas for improvement and arranging follow-up sessions after each visit to check that agreed improvements are being implemented.

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

Tenet Rating

D

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

- Teachers have common meeting time to plan curricula and assessments. Staff members are using the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) modules for their planning. The school leaders’ expectations about this planning and the actual implementation by teachers differ widely. The IIT noted that unit and lesson planning sessions do not include how the needs of all groups of students, including the needs of students with disabilities and English language learners will be met. A review of lessons plans showed that teachers use the same curriculum materials for individuals and groups of students with widely differing abilities.
- A review of planning documents showed that teachers do not regularly use data to inform decision making about curriculum and lesson planning. For example, there was little evidence of planning specifically, for groups of students within classes. Furthermore, there is a lack of systematic infusion of rigor into the planning of the academic program of study. The monitoring of and adjustment to lesson plans was not evident in the teachers’ meetings attended by the IIT.
- Professional development and co-teaching with the school’s instructional coach is promoting the work on implementing the CCLS with some effective feedback emerging. Lesson plan books are aligned with the CCLS modules; however, reviewers found few examples of how teachers adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of different individuals or groups of students. Reviewers found evidence of adjustments to lessons that addressed differentiated needs in only about a quarter of the lesson plans reviewed.
- In the vertical teachers meeting, grade teams and special area teachers used common planning time to reflect on thematic connections to the CCLS. A review of documents showed that some teachers of art, music, and physical education have planned lessons linked to the content areas of English language arts and math. The interdisciplinary approaches planned by some special area and special education teachers to connect the curriculum has promoted student engagement and maintained their interests. For example, teachers reported that the majority of students taught to play a musical instrument in

grade four have continued their interest and study of that musical instrument in grade five. During class visits, reviewers saw minimal examples of teachers using technology during instruction.

- Teachers have access to, but do not uniformly use a variety of data sources to inform their curriculum planning. A review of documents showed assessment results from Dibels, Rigby Reading Test, Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI), Scholastic Math Inventory (SMI), specialist tests in music and curriculum module exit tickets are available, but reviewers did not find evidence of teachers consistently using this data to adjust curricular delivery for different groups of learners. Reviewers observed information being shared across teams of teachers about students’ work, but this did not result in swift decisions about consequent action to drive learning.
- Feedback to students is provided in self-review and home-to-school reports for younger students. However, teachers lack systems to use data to provide consistent specific feedback to students that encourages students to take sufficient ownership of their learning.

Recommendation:

- School leaders should collaborate with staff to create a protocol for using time in grade and vertical team meetings to review and use available data sources to:
 - plan curricula that meet students’ different abilities within classes , especially students with disabilities and English language learners;
 - incorporate materials and tasks in lessons that help students to understand what they are learning and
 - provide consistent feedback to students and hold students accountable for acting on the learning points given in feedback.

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

I

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

- Teachers have dedicated time in vertical and grade-level meetings to engage in conversations about planning for instruction and goal setting for students. Reviewers found the teacher meetings attended during the visit lacked consistent structure and protocols. Additionally the meetings did not have an identified facilitator or leader. As a result, the focus of discussions and planning for using different strategies and approaches to meet the needs of all students was lost. For example, teachers in the grade four meeting looked at the detail of why students had failed to grasp and use place-value accurately but spent so long on the discussions that there was not enough time left to plan for the following lessons. Although the instructional coach provides support to teachers on the CCLS, interviews with teachers and classroom visits demonstrated that teachers do not have a clear understanding of how to implement the CCLS curriculum into differentiated instructional practices. Although about a quarter of lesson plans and practices are adaptive and informed by data about students’ prior achievement, too many, about three-quarters, are not. Similarly, though the use of data is a key priority in the SCEP, teachers do not regularly use data to promote student engagement or

adjust instruction to meet the varying needs of different groups of students within each class.

- Of the 44 classes visited, the IIT found that in 34 or 77 percent teachers’ employed instructional practices that did not promote high levels of student engagement and inquiry needed to increase student achievement. Teachers did not provide multiple points of access for different groups of learners and therefore, some students struggled to complete task while others completed the tasks quickly and waited for other students to finish. Reviewers found that half of the lessons observed for math in grades kindergarten to two did not include a sufficient number of concrete illustrations to help students grasp the ideas quickly with sound understanding. Most lessons observed were teacher directed with few opportunities for students to problem-solve, think independently, or take initiative for learning.
- Visits to classrooms as well as interviews with students, reflected that students’ only responded to questions they understood well or knew was correct. While students are in a physically safe environment, some students said that they are often reluctant to offer ideas that might be perceived as incorrect. In classes observed, few students answered questions and appeared to be overly cautious in sharing ideas when they were not sure.
- Teachers inconsistently hold students accountable to apply routinely what they already know, understand, and can do. Although the written and verbal feedback provided to individual students is thoughtful, reviewers found that the feedback did not consistently provide students with clear next steps to improve their work. During classroom visits reviewers found few examples of teachers using data to check students’ levels of understanding. As a result, students were not clear how to improve their work.

Recommendation:

- Improve instruction by requiring teachers to:
 - use the range of assessment data to provide multiple points of access for students of different abilities;
 - check during classes whether students understand what they are learning and give support quickly when they do not or give more challenge when they do
 - provide materials and supports that deepen students’ understanding
 - Increase opportunities for students to talk about what they are learning and explain their thinking and methods they are using;
 - ask questions that challenge students to give detailed responses and
 - provide consistent and clear feedback to students and hold students accountable to act on feedback to-make improvements to their work.

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 staff is beginning to develop structures to promote and foster a supportive learning

environment for students. However, the school staff efforts to systemically respond to students combined academic and social and emotional developmental health needs is fragmented and does not involve the community of stakeholders enough in the wider priorities for learning and raising achievement, as set out in this year’s SCEP. The school staff is beginning to develop different components of the three tiers of the Response To Intervention (RTI) program. Teachers are not ensuring that the programs adopted so far are providing sufficient purpose for students to develop independence in learning through consistent practical experiences.

- The school environment is physically safe with staff being particularly diligent in their high presence around the school at times of student movement. The staff uses the gold coin system to reward and acknowledge positive behavior. Students’ positive behaviors are recorded on the prominent “Spy Chart.” The recently adopted Olweus Bullying Prevention Program and the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) align with the “gold coin system.” The assistant principal has led the promotion of school-wide behavioral expectations. The school staff displays these expectations in pictorial form on charts in the classrooms, hallways, gymnasium, cafeteria, and on buses. Students generally follow the expectations, which support a harmonious school community based on respect, personal organization, cooperation, kindness, and safety well. However, the expectations do not go far enough in terms of developing personal responsibility for learning, aspiration, and challenge. Although the chart illustrates 75 expectations, only three, “Be a good listener”, “Ears and eyes on the speaker” and “Keep your desk neat” address learning behaviors. Because the PBIS procedures are new staff has not uniformly implemented the program across the school. During class visits, the IIT noted that standards of student behavior varied in different grade levels and at different times of day.
- Reviewers found limited evidence of a systematic plan to identify what data staff will collect, who will collect the data, as well as how staff will analyze and use available data to meet the differing needs of students and promote improved achievement. Students’ success is limited because of the lack of strategic planning and consequent action to develop and coordinate the various strands of activities that should link improved social and emotional developmental health with increased levels of student achievement.

Recommendation:

- Develop a strategic plan for promoting students’ social and emotional developmental health to include:
 - professional development for all staff on how to implement a comprehensive RTI model at each of the three tiers of involvement and access and check that the model is being consistently followed;
 - high expectations for students’ developing personal responsibility for learning, aspiration, and challenge and
 - how the student support team and school leaders will monitor progress towards goals through closely analyzing data about rewards for good behavior to ensure consistency across grades and classes.

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

Tenet Rating

D

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

- The school’s culture and environment are welcoming to families and community members and promote mutual respect and cooperation. The recently held “Breakfast with the Principal” is an example of how the school is beginning to reach out and promote its popular “Open Door Policy.” The quality of relationship with the parents is positive. Increasing opportunities for parents to meet with school leaders have started, with translations in English and Spanish to support parents who are not confident English speakers, during both daytime and evening sessions.
- The school does not have a plan for training parents on how to support student learning and growth. Parents who met with the IIT indicated that they had information about the CCLS but shared that the sessions they attended did provide specific information to help parents support their children’s academic achievement. Parents are not adequately empowered to become involved in providing multiple and equitable opportunities to raise students’ academic standards.
- Parents have not been informed or helped to understand the comparative low performance of the school. Structured plans to cultivate improved home-school connections and to share an understanding of the school’s performance measured against local and state data are not in place. Apart from the basic data produced in the graphs produced by the state and district, the school website contains little about what these mean for the school and student achievement and progress.
- The school has an active Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) that provides some information sharing sessions. Although the school is developing communication channels, the school website is not up-to-date and contains only partial information, which limits parents’ access to timely information.
- The school does not promote professional development for staff on how to develop home-school partnerships that are focused on promoting and improving student achievement. The school is not providing a network of training and guidance to parents to create and sustain home-school-community partnerships to accelerate students’ success.

Recommendation:

- Raise parents’ ability to understand and support students’ achievement by:
 - implementing a plan to teach parents ways to support student learning and growth;
 - sharing information about student achievement and the school’s performance in ways that parents understand and
 - providing training to staff on how to develop effective home-school and community partnerships to facilitate student achievement.