



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

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## DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)



<b>BEDS Code</b>	081200050000
<b>District</b>	Norwich City School District
<b>District Address</b>	89 Midland Drive, Norwich, NY 13815
<b>Superintendent</b>	Gerard O'Sullivan
<b>Date(s) of Review</b>	May 27-28, 2015

District Information Sheet			
<b>Grade Configuration</b>	PK-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-12	<b>Total Enrollment</b>	1963
		<b>Number of Schools</b>	4
<b>District Composition (most recent data)</b>			
<b>% Title I Population</b>	56	<b>% Attendance Rate</b>	95
<b>% Free Lunch</b>	48	<b>% Reduced Lunch</b>	6
<b>% Limited English Proficient</b>	0	<b>% Students with Disabilities</b>	17
<b>Racial/Ethnic Origin (most recent data)</b>			
<b>% American Indian or Alaska Native</b>	0	<b>% Black or African American</b>	3
<b>% Hispanic or Latino</b>	3	<b>% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</b>	1
<b>% White</b>	92	<b>% Multi-Racial</b>	1
<b>Personnel (most recent data)</b>			
<b>Years Superintendent Assigned to District</b>	10	<b># of Deputy/Assistant Superintendents</b>	1
<b># of Principals</b>	5	<b># of Assistant Principals</b>	3
<b># of Teachers</b>	172	<b>Avg. Class Size</b>	19
<b>% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate</b>	1	<b>% Teaching Out of Certification</b>	1
<b>% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience</b>	6	<b>Average Teacher Absences</b>	8
<b>Teacher Turnover Rate – Teachers &lt; 5 years exp.</b>	6	<b>Teacher Turnover Rate – All Teachers</b>	10
<b>Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2013-14)</b>			
<b>ELA Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4</b>	21	<b>Mathematics Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4</b>	18
<b>Science Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4 (4th Grade)</b>	87	<b>Science Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4 (8th Grade)</b>	63
<b>Student Performance for High Schools (2013-14)</b>			
<b>ELA Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4</b>	81	<b>Mathematics Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4</b>	86
<b>Credit Accumulation High Schools Only (2013-14)</b>			
<b>4 Year Graduation Rate</b>	81	<b>6 Year Graduation Rate (5 year)</b>	80
<b>% of earning Regents Diploma w/ Advanced Des.</b>	31		
<b>Current NYSED Accountability Status</b>			
<b># of Reward Schools</b>	0	<b># of Priority Schools</b>	0
<b># of Schools In Good Standing</b>	2	<b># of Focus Schools</b>	1
<b># of LAP Schools</b>	1		

### District Accountability Status

Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in ELA (indicate Y / N / N-A)			
<b>American Indian or Alaska Native</b>	N/A	<b>Black or African American</b>	N/A
<b>Hispanic or Latino</b>	N/A	<b>Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander</b>	N/A
<b>White</b>	N	<b>Multi-Racial</b>	N/A
<b>Students with Disabilities</b>	N	<b>Limited English Proficient</b>	N/A
<b>Economically Disadvantaged</b>	N		
Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Mathematics (indicate Y / N / N-A)			
<b>American Indian or Alaska Native</b>	N/A	<b>Black or African American</b>	N/A
<b>Hispanic or Latino</b>	N/A	<b>Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander</b>	N/A
<b>White</b>	N	<b>Multi-Racial</b>	N/A
<b>Students with Disabilities</b>	N	<b>Limited English Proficient</b>	N/A
<b>Economically Disadvantaged</b>	N		
Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Science (indicate Y / N / N-A)			
<b>American Indian or Alaska Native</b>	N/A	<b>Black or African American</b>	N/A
<b>Hispanic or Latino</b>	N/A	<b>Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander</b>	N/A
<b>White</b>	N	<b>Multi-Racial</b>	N/A
<b>Students with Disabilities</b>	N	<b>Limited English Proficient</b>	N/A
<b>Economically Disadvantaged</b>	N		

#### DISTRICT PRIORITIES AS WRITTEN BY THE DISTRICT:

Increase student achievement through improved instructional practices.

## **Information about the review**

- The review of the district was conducted by an Outside Educational Expert (OEE), a representative from the New York State Education Department, and a Special Education School Improvement Specialist (SEIS) representative.
- The Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) review of one school in the district also informed the district review.
- During IIT school reviews in the district, reviewers visited 57 classrooms across the school and IIT reviewers conducted focus group interviews with students, staff, and parents.
- District reviewers conducted interviews with district leadership, central office staff, and a focus group of school leaders.

**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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	<b>OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 1:</b>				<b>X</b>

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

	Readiness skills in all content areas and provides fiscal and human resources for implementation.				
<b>Tenet 4 - Teacher Practices and Decisions:</b> 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	<b>Stage 4</b>	<b>Stage 3</b>	<b>Stage 2</b>	<b>Stage 1</b>
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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Tenet 5 - Student Social and Emotional Developmental Health:</b> 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	<b>Stage 4</b>	<b>Stage 3</b>	<b>Stage 2</b>	<b>Stage 1</b>
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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Tenet 6 - Family and Community Engagement:</b> 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	<b>Stage 4</b>	<b>Stage 3</b>	<b>Stage 2</b>	<b>Stage 1</b>
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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**District Review – Findings, Evidence, Impact and Recommendations:**

<p><b>Tenet 1 - District Leadership and Capacity:</b> 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><b>Overall Tenet Rating</b></p>	<p><b>Stage 1</b></p>
<p><b>Statement of Practice 1.1:</b> 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><b>Tenet Rating</b></p>	<p><b>Stage 2</b></p>
<p><b>Overall Finding:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The district has made a number of staffing changes to foster improvement and has allowed individual school leaders significant discretion over their school’s personnel to develop best instructional practices. However, the district does not have a comprehensive approach to recruitment and development of personnel that is driven by data and by strategic planning to meet the needs of their community. Moreover, the district does not have a consistent definition of high-quality effective instruction to inform personnel decisions.</li> </ul> <p><b>Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The district leader has introduced LINKS, a regional strategic planning process supported by the Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), to inform personnel decisions at the school level and to support some district appointments. The district leader shared that he hired a curriculum consultant and a special education coordinator shared with another district to replace two key district leadership positions, a director of special education and a director of curriculum and instruction. These two appointments are bringing new perspectives and expertise, and they are starting to evaluate current programs and to chart a new course. The district has appointed additional instructional leadership positions to increase evaluation capacity, including a district principal position and an assistant principal (AP) position at each elementary building. However, the district does not have clear job descriptions for all of these positions. In addition, while it has expanded recruiting strategies, according to the district leader and human resources staff, the district does not have a clear vision for hiring teachers focused on effective instructional practices and on meeting identified student needs</li> <li>While the district has no data-driven, strategic planning process to inform staffing decisions, it does give school leaders some discretion in hiring staff. Individual schools have created some innovative positions, such as a literacy specialist position at the middle school designed to enhance instructional practices. Individual school leaders typically make their case during one-on-one discussions with the district leader, but shared that they are not clear about why some requests are approved and others rejected. Though district and school leaders meet weekly at Administrative Council meetings, there are no standing agenda items to discuss, such as personnel. As a result, although the district is aware of critical needs, such as appropriate staffing for special education, it does not have a systematic approach to needs assessment and decision-making. The district leader believes the district must hire</li> </ul>		

additional special education staff, but special education staff is hired with little school leader input and without a clearly defined model to inform hiring and placement. In addition, both the middle and high school leaders would like lead teacher positions to facilitate staff development, but there is no process or timeline in place to identify best practices, create job descriptions, select candidates, and allocate resources for this initiative.

**Impact Statement:**

- The lack of a systematic approach to personnel hinders the district from creating and realizing a high-quality and effective staff that addresses 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:

- create and disseminate a district-wide definition of teaching excellence related to student achievement and use it to inform hiring and placement decisions;
- implement a district-wide strategic personnel planning process that involves ongoing collective discussions among district and school leaders;
- make personnel a standing agenda item for Administrative Council meetings to identify needs, consider options, inform district decisions, and evaluate impact on student performance and well-being; and
- develop a personnel plan for implementation of a full continuum of services for students in special education that addresses staff hiring, placement, supervision, clinical support, and evaluation.

**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.

**Tenet Rating**

**Stage 1**

**Overall Finding:**

- While there is a general district-wide focus on literacy and character development, the district has not established a clear theory of action that defines high expectations aligned to academic and social and emotional developmental health outcomes. The district facilitates a planning process, LINKS, for schools to design individual school improvement efforts, but it has not developed a coherent and comprehensive approach to meet the needs of at-risk students.

**Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:**

- The district does not have short- and long-term Specific, Measurable, Ambitious, Results-oriented, and Timely (SMART) goals pertaining to student performance with which to foster high expectations and inform planning and decision-making. The district has embraced an annual LINKS process, resulting in specific improvement initiatives in each school this year. However, the district goal that is driving plans within LINKS is simply to “increase achievement through improved instructional practices.” As a result, the district does not articulate a sense of urgency regarding student growth and achievement. Instead, schools are focused primarily on implementation goals related to actions in their respective LINKS plan

rather than on academic and social-emotional outcomes.

- There is a common thread across the school plans, namely literacy and character education, which takes the place of a district theory of action, but there is little ongoing guidance to help schools translate this thread into specific goals and actions besides an experienced curriculum consultant currently facilitating the process. According to district and school leaders, each school has a unique set of initiatives with a clear sense of purpose. However, while schools are piloting and expanding strategies to implement these initiatives, the strategies are not driven by assessments of student achievement and needs, or designed to vertically align across campuses.
- The district does not have a clear vision for a continuum of services for its special education program. The district website states, “A full continuum of program options is available to meet the needs of individuals with exceptional needs in the least restrictive environment.” However, the district currently only offers self-contained and resource classrooms, and individualized education programs (IEPs), which the district leader shared are driven more by program availability than identified student needs. The district special education coordinator is beginning to assess needs and the district is awaiting results of a state audit before making decisions regarding programming and hiring for next year. However, the district does not have a process in place to systematically assess the needs of its students with disabilities, identify the most appropriate placements, and then create the programs, positions, training, and support necessary to effectively serve its students.

**Impact Statement:**

- Without explicit goals for student achievement and consensus around a vision for serving at-risk students, the district has not established a sense of urgency and direction for meeting 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:

- establish and disseminate district SMART goals for student performance;
- enhance the LINKS process by developing 3-5 year plans and use explicit goals to design and evaluate LINKS plan initiatives; and
- obtain training for district and school leaders to develop a deep understanding of continuum of services for students with disabilities and interventions for other at-risk students to inform program planning and implementation.

**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 1**

**Overall Finding:**

- The district is generally responsive to school leaders’ requests, but does not have a systematic

approach to assessing needs and allocating resources. The district does not have a data-driven culture for evaluating resource allocation and impact on student achievement.

**Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:**

- The district provides school leaders with significant autonomy but little guidance for program design and implementation. Under the aegis of their individual LINKS plans, each school is developing their own strategies for resourcing critical areas, such as academic intervention, special education, and parent engagement. District and school leaders meet weekly in Administrative Council meetings, but agendas are generally reactive to school leader concerns and function area reports by district directors rather than on proactive strategic planning. Resource needs are raised at these meetings, but proposed solutions are often discussed between district and individual school leaders rather than collectively weighed. District leaders indicated that they trust school leaders to make professional judgements in their requests for resources to support each school's planned initiatives and actions and there is little expectation to justify requests for resources with data-supported evidence of need or impact. As a result, the district does not have a systematic approach to allocating resources and does not always adequately communicate its rationale for decisions.
- There is little emphasis on implementation and impact analysis to inform decision-making. District and school leaders described a tendency to try strategies and then drop them without fully analyzing the effort and assessing impact. For example, the district has taken multiple approaches to resource rooms for special education students, but leaders did not describe why changes were made based on any program evaluation or an understanding of why each iteration was deemed to be not working. Similarly, the high school is considering implementation of a consultant-teaching model and 15:1:1 classes next year, but does not have a clear sense of program requirements and goals. Individual schools are doing some progress monitoring of some of their LINKS plan initiatives based on their own assessment systems, but the district does not expect or have a consistent approach to goal-setting and impact analysis.

**Impact Statement:**

- By not allocating resources based on consistent analysis of specific needs and regularly evaluating the impact of resource-related decisions, the district is not effectively supporting school improvement and 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:

- have Administrative Council meetings regularly review requests for resources that include specific rationales based on student and teacher data; and
- develop a shared-decision making process that aligns with an explicit long-term LINKS plan and goals.

**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 increased the opportunities for professional development (PD) and is beginning to organize PD around priorities set by individual schools. However, there is limited support for providing staff with formative feedback and follow-up aligned to a clear vision for effective teaching that results in improved student outcomes.

**Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:**

- PD is primarily coordinated and provided by individual schools in alignment with their LINKS plan. Schools rely heavily on in-house resources to deliver school-directed PD. There is limited guidance from the district, except for special education, which is supervised by the district rather than school leaders. However, while the district is exploring a more inclusionary approach to special education and considering the implementation of a consultant teacher model, it does not have a clear plan for providing both special education and general education teachers with the training and ongoing support necessary to make this approach effective.
- The district returned this year to using BOCES to enhance staff access to additional resources for PD. In addition, the district is beginning to enhance instructional leadership through the district principal who is helping school leaders with their Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) responsibilities and refining mentoring for new teachers by replacing a check-list oriented three-year program with a more flexible and differentiated approach. In addition, the AP positions at the elementary schools are designed to increase capacity for staff development and evaluation, though these AP positions were just recently filled.
- The district does not have an effective approach for monitoring teacher performance, directing support, and holding teachers accountable for student success. The vast majority of teachers in the district are rated either effective or highly effective, yet only about one in five students are proficient in English language arts (ELA) and in math. The district is beginning to encourage instructional leaders to more accurately assess teacher practices. However, there is limited training for them to enhance their evaluation skills, and reliability of ratings was raised as a concern by both district and school leaders. Interviewed school and district staff stated that the APPR process is not driving instructional improvement and the district chose not to use teacher improvement plans (TIPs) this year out of capacity concerns. In addition, leaders felt constrained by a district-labor contract that limits their ability to provide formative feedback outside of the formal evaluation process.

**Impact Statement:**

- While the district goal is to raise student achievement through improved instructional practices, teachers are not provided with regular and ongoing critical feedback with which to improve their practice and raise student achievement.

**Recommendation:**

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

- develop an ongoing PD plan for district and school instructional leaders focused on common language and expectations for teaching excellence and valid and reliable assessment of teaching practices; and
- identify resources for schools that foster understanding of best instructional practices and promote a culture of formative feedback for continuous improvement.

**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 1**

**Overall Finding:**

- The district has not articulated and adopted clear expectations for the use of data to drive decision-making. In addition, the district has not established clear and measurable student performance goals against which to measure progress and programmatic impact.

**Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:**

- The district's participation in the regional LINKS process supported by the BOCES and curriculum consultant has resulted in clear priorities for each school that are widely known. Moreover, there are systems for monitoring implementation and reviewing and revising the school plans, as evidenced by presentations at and agendas for LINKS team meetings. However, the use of data in this process is limited, as data is not used to provide a strategic approach to school improvement. For example, while the district is tracking the performance of students with disabilities as a subgroup, it has not conducted a comprehensive analysis of needs for these students or the other students who are not meeting grade-level standards. As a result, it is developing special education and intervention programs without a clear understanding of need based on data.
- The district has not established SMART goals to drive improvement efforts at the district and school levels. Most district and school staff could not articulate how they measure success other than anecdotal information about student improvement or intuition about program efficacy. Interviewed staff referred to the strategies established in their LINKS plans as their goals, indicating a focus on implementation rather than outcomes. A notable exception was an elementary school that has established reading-level goals for each grade.
- The district is not examining and addressing discrepancies between teacher evaluation ratings, internal assessment results and grades, and student performance on state assessments. Interviews with school leaders and district staff during the district review and teachers and support staff during the school review indicated that student performance data is not regularly reviewed at building- or district-level meetings to drive discussions about instructional practices or the deployment of resources. For example, the district does not analyze its APPR results for trends that might inform allocation of

resources for PD or staffing decisions. Similarly, the district does not review student performance data to assess the efficacy of the various intervention strategies employed at individual schools.

**Impact Statement:**

- Without a data-driven culture, the district’s focus on implementation of improvement strategies does not foster strategic decision-making or result in continuous improvement.

**Recommendation:**

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

- adopt district and school protocols for regularly monitoring progress and evaluating impact of improvement efforts and personnel decisions, using data aligned to district and school SMART goals for student achievement.

This section provides a narrative that communicates how school communities perceive the support provided by the district.

<p><b>Statement of Practice 2.1 - School Leader Practices and Decisions:</b> 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.</p>	<p><b>Tenet Rating</b></p>	<p><b>Stage 2</b></p>
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**Overall Finding:**

- While school leaders report generally having access to resources, such as curriculum materials and staff, and the ability to shape their school program, including schedule and intervention strategies, schools function relatively autonomously from the district and independently from each other.

**Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:**

- School leaders have primary responsibility for developing their own school improvement strategies, coordinating PD, and problem solving in their buildings. The district is beginning to provide some training and support in the area of instructional leadership with a district principal position, access to BOCES resources, and the LINKS process. Nevertheless, school leaders described how they were operating in a system of silos, despite improvement in communication with the district through weekly Administrative Council meetings and the LINKS process. While school leaders appreciate the opportunity to share with their peers and raise issues with district leaders, their meetings do not have standing agenda items to ensure ongoing monitoring and follow-up in critical areas, such as special education and personnel. Moreover, these meetings are not used to collectively review academic and social-emotional data and inform problem solving and decision-making. School leaders indicated that district staff members are accessible and they frequently participate in informal one-on-one conversations with the district leadership about areas of concerns. However, school leaders felt that the district does not always communicate decisions in a clear and timely fashion. For example, schools

expect there to be significant changes in special education next year, but are unaware of a planning process. Similarly, school leaders understand the district is going to implement a character education program next year, but school leaders shared that they had no information about implementation requirements for themselves or their staff members.

**Impact Statement:**

- While the district is beginning to increase communication with school leaders, it does not have in place a collaborative approach to school improvement that results in substantial student achievement gains.

**Recommendation:**

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

- conduct regular collaborative reviews of student data, disaggregating results to examine the needs of various subgroups, schools, and programs; and
- develop a strategic planning process for the Administrative Council meetings that includes standing agenda items and a timeline for follow-up and evaluation of decisions.

**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 1**

**Overall Finding:**

- The district has provided schools with resources to implement CCLS-aligned modules and other curriculum, but little guidance on how to implement the modules.

**Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:**

- The district is just beginning to fully implement CCLS-aligned modules and customize curriculum to meet student needs. An experienced curriculum consultant has begun to work with the district and school leaders on curriculum planning this year. However, the district has not established clear goals and a sense of urgency in this area despite student relatively low overall performance on standards-aligned assessments. School leaders indicated that they have adequate resources for curriculum, including printed state module materials and leveled texts for reading interventions, but beyond that, they are generally on their own to help their staff develop and customize curriculum to meet the needs of their students. This is the first year that teachers have been expected to complete all of the modules. As a result, teachers are just beginning to understand and customize the curriculum.
- While the district has been supportive of individual school efforts to foster collaborative planning, it has not pro-actively supported and guided schools in developing strategies to ensure collaborative planning takes place or promoted a data-driven culture. School leaders felt hampered by the district-labor contract to schedule staff collaborative planning that resulted in effective curriculum. In addition, there is very little coordination of curriculum across schools to ensure coherent vertical

alignment between buildings and prevent gaps in student learning. There are no clear expectations for the use of data and no consistent assessment systems. According to school leaders, schools use their own assessment systems. The district leader did not describe availability of resources as an obstacle; rather, the lack of a strategic approach to analyzing needs and coordinating support to and among schools.

**Impact Statement:**

- A lack of guidance and support from the district for curriculum development and implementation, and the lack of cohesive curriculum, limits the district and school’s ability 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:

- make collaborative planning for curriculum and instruction a priority topic for the Administrative Council meetings;
- develop a plan to foster collaborative planning at each school, including necessary time, training, and funding for both teachers and for instructional leaders; and
- establish systems to ensure vertical alignment of curriculum across buildings, as schools begin to customize curriculum based on the identified needs of their students.

**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 1**

**Overall Finding:**

- The extent of the district’s involvement in instructional improvement is primarily the LINKS planning process, which leaves school leaders on their own to try to develop and implement effective strategies to improve instructional practice.

**Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:**

- The district has promoted some broad strategies to improve instructional practice, but the district leaves the implementation details to each school. For example, the district provided every instructional staff member with a copy of the book “Teach like a Champion,” but has not provided any training to either teachers or instructional leaders in its approach. As a result, school leaders selected to work with their staff on a couple of individual strategies from the book with which they are familiar and believed would benefit their school. The district has no plan for monitoring implementation or impact.
- The district does not have a comprehensive approach to special education. School leaders do not supervise special education and support staff in their buildings and indicated inconsistent communication regarding placement of students and staff. For example, aides and teaching assistants

are changed without clear communication to schools regarding timing and rationale.

- Each school is developing its own approach to intervention for struggling students, with the elementary schools focused on refining academic intervention services (AIS) and the middle school implementing the new “Fast and Furious” program this year to prepare students to access CCLS-aligned curriculum in ELA and math. While there is discussion on expanding piloted initiatives to other campuses, there is no coordinated planning to ensure optimal fit and support for implementation in other schools.

**Impact Statement:**

- The district’s lack of a comprehensive and consistent approach for improving instructional practice results in schools not providing their students with consistently rigorous and engaging learning opportunities that meet their individual needs.

**Recommendation:**

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

- provide instructional leaders with additional training on evaluating instructional practices and using results to inform differentiated PD through formative feedback on planning and delivery of instruction; and
- explore theory and practice of professional learning communities and foster teacher leadership to improve instructional practice.

**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 1**

**Overall Finding:**

- The district has not played an active role in supporting student social and emotional developmental health.

**Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:**

- While many interviewed stakeholders, including school leaders, support staff, and parents noted an increased need for support within the student population, there are few district initiatives related to student social and emotional developmental health. Each school has a student achievement team, which is expected to identify students of concern, review pertinent data, and plan and monitor interventions to meet their needs. Each school also has its own character education program identified through their LINKS plan. The district leader shared district plans to introduce the Olweus bullying prevention program next year and will let each school customize it. However, school leaders are unaware of the implementation plan and their role in it. While there is some mandatory PD for staff related to social and emotional developmental health, such as mandated reporting of suspected child

abuse, school leaders and PD plans indicated that PD in the district is primarily devoted to implementation of CLLS aligned curriculum and instructional shifts.

- School leaders state they have felt supported in some individual school initiatives. For example, the high school is creating a Fresh Start program for a small group of struggling students and adding 15:1:1 special education classes. However, this support is not aligned with a well-defined strategic social-emotional plan based on identified needs. Moreover, the district does not consistently review social and emotional developmental health-related data to inform planning and decision-making.
- School staff stated the district is not leveraging community resources to support students and their families. The district leader stated that the schools used to have clinics providing health and social services and that the district is in talks with a local provider to reintroduce this resource, but has not finalized any plans yet. In addition, interviewed staff noted that the district also does not actively pursue grant opportunities that might support social and emotional developmental health initiatives.

**Impact Statement:**

- The district does not have a coherent approach to addressing the social and emotional developmental health needs of its 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:

- regularly review data and indicators of student social and emotional developmental health and identify specific needs;
- develop a plan for the roll-out of the Olweus program that specifies district and school responsibilities and establishes measurable goals that define success; and
- conduct a community asset mapping exercise and identify community resources that the district could leverage for the benefit of schools and their students and families.

**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 1**

**Overall Finding:**

- The district does not have a comprehensive and effective approach to family and community engagement.

**Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:**

- District and school leaders acknowledged that family engagement has been a challenge, but did not describe a clear plan for addressing the lack of parent involvement. The district has some basic

initiatives to promote family communication and engagement. Communication with families is promoted through newsletters and a website, but the district does little to pro-actively support schools in this area. For example, the district maintains an online portal that provides parents with access to course grades, but the portal is not designed to support the standards-based reporting used by some schools. Parent teacher associations (PTAs) experienced little parent participation and lost their national charters, so the district formed the Purple Tornado Community Team, a district-wide entity that district and school leaders described as about ten active parents involved in coordinating fundraising events at each building. However, according to school leaders, the district primarily expects individual schools to address parent engagement. Individual schools have developed their own parent engagement strategies. Each school has a site-based team including parents and staff that plans events, but parent attendance varies by event and schools. For example, a technology safety night was well attended at one school while a book club held at another garnered minimal attendance. The district does not facilitate strategic discussions about parent engagement among school leaders and district staff to analyze whether events meets families' specific needs, or to share ideas and develop best practices.

**Impact Statement:**

- The district has not consistently fostered effective school-family partnerships to support all students' 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:

- identify PD for district and school leaders focused on building effective family and community engagement, such as inter-visitations with similar schools and districts that have been successful in this area; and
- make family engagement a regular agenda topic at Administrative Council meetings to set goals, pilot strategies, evaluate impact, and share lessons learned across schools.