



# 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>	131500010000
<b>District</b>	Poughkeepsie City School District
<b>District Address</b>	11 College Avenue, Poughkeepsie, New York 12603
<b>Superintendent</b>	Nicole Williams
<b>Date(s) of Review</b>	June 2-3, 2015

District Information Sheet			
<b>Grade Configuration</b>	PreK-12	<b>Total Enrollment</b>	4240
		<b>Number of Schools</b>	7
<b>District Composition (most recent data)</b>			
<b>% Title I Population</b>	80%	<b>% Attendance Rate</b>	91%
<b>% Free Lunch</b>	78%	<b>% Reduced Lunch</b>	8%
<b>% Limited English Proficient</b>	10%	<b>% Students with Disabilities</b>	16%
<b>Racial/Ethnic Origin (most recent data)</b>			
<b>% American Indian or Alaska Native</b>	0%	<b>% Black or African American</b>	55%
<b>% Hispanic or Latino</b>	30%	<b>% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</b>	1%
<b>% White</b>	10%	<b>% Multi-Racial</b>	4%
<b>Personnel (most recent data)</b>			
<b>Years Superintendent Assigned to District</b>	1	<b># of Deputy/Assistant Superintendents</b>	3
<b># of Principals</b>	7	<b># of Assistant Principals</b>	7
<b># of Teachers</b>	327	<b>Avg. Class Size</b>	25
<b>% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate</b>	0	<b>% Teaching Out of Certification</b>	0
<b>% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience</b>	16%	<b>Average Teacher Absences</b>	28
<b>Teacher Turnover Rate – Teachers &lt; 5 years exp.</b>	19%	<b>Teacher Turnover Rate – All Teachers</b>	16%
<b>Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2013-14)</b>			
<b>ELA Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4</b>	10%	<b>Mathematics Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4</b>	7%
<b>Science Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4 (4th Grade)</b>	62%	<b>Science Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4 (8th Grade)</b>	17%
<b>Student Performance for High Schools (2013-14)</b>			
<b>ELA Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4</b>	65%	<b>Mathematics Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4</b>	72%
<b>Credit Accumulation High Schools Only (2013-14)</b>			
<b>4 Year Graduation Rate</b>	57%	<b>6 Year Graduation Rate</b>	63%
<b>% of earning Regents Diploma w/ Advanced Des.</b>	6%		
<b>Current NYSED Accountability Status</b>			
<b># of Reward Schools</b>	0	<b># of Priority Schools</b>	2
<b># of Schools In Good Standing</b>	1	<b># of Focus Schools</b>	4
<b># of LAP Schools</b>	0		0

### 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
<b>Hispanic or Latino</b>	N	<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
<b>Hispanic or Latino</b>	N	<b>Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander</b>	N-A
<b>White</b>	N	<b>Multi-Racial</b>	N
<b>Students with Disabilities</b>	N	<b>Limited English Proficient</b>	N
<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
<b>Hispanic or Latino</b>	N	<b>Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander</b>	N
<b>White</b>	N	<b>Multi-Racial</b>	N-A
<b>Students with Disabilities</b>	N	<b>Limited English Proficient</b>	N
<b>Economically Disadvantaged</b>	N		

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

To advance student learning districtwide, the Poughkeepsie City School District organizes its work around five strategic priorities that include:

- ensuring that all students are on track to graduate college and career ready;
- educating all students in safe, secure, respectful learning environments;
- engaging families and the community as partners in a “collective responsibility” framework;
- implementing a performance management and talent development approach to developing school leaders and highly qualified staff members at every level of the organization; and
- ensuring organizational efficiency and accountability in a coherent system focused on the core belief that the district will deliver on the promise of a high quality, world-class education for every child, every day, in every classroom.

## Information about the review

- An Outside Educational Expert (OEE), a representative from the New York State Education Department (NYSED), a Special Education School Improvement Specialist (SEIS) representative, and a representative from the Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (RBERN) conducted the review of the district.
- The Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) reviews of three schools in the district also informed the district review.
- During IIT school reviews in the district, reviewers visited 134 classrooms across the three schools 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 principals.
- The district provided the results of surveys administered during the 2013-14 school year. Surveys for the 2014-15 school year were unavailable to reviewers as they were being administered at the time of the IIT district review.

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

	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	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"/>
<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	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"/>
<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	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><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 2</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 procedures to recruit, evaluate, and provide frequent feedback to teachers. District staff frequently use sustainability and retention strategies, such as providing some professional development (PD) and formal improvement plans, as well as removal procedures. However, all students, particularly English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, do not have their needs fully addressed.</li> </ul> <p><b>Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>District staff provided reviewers with a handbook outlining the district’s approach to recruitment, evaluation, and retention; and data points collected to inform the staffing needs of the district, such as teacher attendance rates, annual staff retention rates, candidates per certificated opening, and percentage of completed employee evaluations, were provided to reviewers as well. District recruitment policies dictate that district and school leaders assess staffing needs based on enrollment and choose candidates based on their ability to provide requisite skills. School leaders stated that there is sometimes a lack of clarity between the roles played by district and school leaders in the recruitment and interviewing process, which at times leads to a duplication of efforts in narrowing down suitable candidates for interview and in preparations for the interview process. District-level human resources (HR) staff access partnerships with teacher preparation programs at local colleges, network with neighboring HR officials, and attend recruiting fairs to seek ethnically diverse candidates that have the licensure and potential to serve the student needs and demographics in the district. Despite systemic written procedures and a district priority to hire diverse staff with the specific skills needed to serve the demographic subgroups of the community, district leaders stated that efforts have continued to result in inadequate numbers of staff with the appropriate skills to provide high-quality teaching for all ELLs and student with disabilities. The district plans to expand recruitment strategies for the 2015-16 school year to attempt to address this shortcoming that district officials believe has had an adverse impact on student achievement. District leaders stated that the district has no specific strategies to incentivize effective teachers to remain in the district and no exit surveys to determine why some personnel chose to leave the district.</li> <li>The district’s formal Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) agreement outlines the evaluation process for teachers and school leaders. Reviewers learned that leaders evaluated 100 percent of the district’s teachers in 2014-15, which represents a 15 percent increase over the 2013-14</li> </ul>		

completion rate. District and school leaders stated that calculation methods used in the current APPR plan have tended to provide overinflated rating results for some teachers, which has complicated leaders' ability to formally provide additional supports when needed. Even so, HR staff and school leaders described multiple instances of teacher and principal improvement plans and discontinuation of employment notices issued to teachers and administrators with unsatisfactory performances in the evaluation process. Since the formal APPR agreement requires observations of teachers and school leaders only one to two times per year, the district adopted formal focused instructional learning walks to provide frequent feedback to teachers at least five times yearly. However, school leaders stated that they did not receive adequate PD from the district on how to provide constructive, actionable, and timely feedback to teachers. As a result, teachers and school and district leaders agreed that the feedback process is not leading to quantifiable improvements in instructional practices for new or more long-standing teachers. District staff recognized weaknesses in the evaluation of impact of PD provided for schools and is seeking to develop more stringent evaluation procedures so that PD becomes a more potent tool in increasing teacher effectiveness.

**Impact Statement:**

- The district has prioritized the staffing of qualified personnel in schools, but recruitment procedures have not ensured that all staff have specialized expertise in meeting the needs of ELLs and students with disabilities.

**Recommendation:**

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

- revise and widen recruitment strategies to target prospective teachers who have the necessary skills to consistently meet the needs of ELLs and students with disabilities; and
- equip all school leaders with the training and skills needed to provide actionable feedback to teachers that leads to demonstrated improvements in instructional practices and student outcomes.

<p><b>Statement of Practice 1.2.:</b> 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><b>Tenet Rating</b></p>	<p><b>Stage 2</b></p>
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**Overall Finding:**

- The district's stated theory of action describes district priorities and establishes expectations for best professional practices with a goal of increased student achievement. Some staff have made the connection between district priorities and expectations by assimilating district priorities into their practices, but this is not yet the norm for many school staff.

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

- During Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) interview, the district leader clearly described the district's theory of action and stated that many of the district's written materials, such as the PD plan, incorporate its elements. The district leader communicates the theory of action in public forums and

learning community meetings with district staff, community members, school leaders, teachers, and students. Reviewers found little evidence available, however, to show how district leaders communicate the theory of action directly to families or whether translations are available in all pertinent languages.

- According to district and school leaders, the core of the district theory of action involves increased achievement and a high quality education for all students, accomplished through the alignment of resources and systemic processes, targeted support and data-driven accountability, high quality PD, and rigorous instruction and Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) aligned curricula. However, while discussions with school and district leaders confirmed that many school staff can describe the thrust of the district’s theory of action, many teachers are not yet making the connection that improved student achievement will only come about through improved, consistently effective instructional practices. This obstacle, in conjunction with a lack of rigorous monitoring and evaluation of instruction, impedes progress toward the fulfillment of district goals.
- The district has just begun to make statistically significant improvements in student achievement, as the passing rates for January 2015 Regents exams in English language arts (ELA), geometry, global history, living environment, chemistry, and United States history all increased over 2014 rates; however, the increases varied widely and at times from low previous attainment. For example, US history increased from nine percent to 39 percent, chemistry from 40 percent to 67 percent, geometry from 15 percent to 19 percent, and ELA from 67 percent to 72 percent. However, 2013-14 district growth rates calculated for students in the New York State (NYS) assessment program were still hovering at the 16<sup>th</sup> percentile as compared to other districts in their peer group; consequently, students performing at high levels of success across the district are low, especially those in the identified subgroups of students with disabilities, ELLs, and economically disadvantaged students.

**Impact Statement:**

- Implementation of the district’s theory of action has led to a limited alignment of professional practices with student outcomes; therefore, many students do not achieve at high levels of 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:

- use existing meeting structures between district and school leaders to clarify and communicate explicit connections between the district’s theory of action and the development of improvement plans at each school. Align the roles and responsibilities of each district staff member to the support of improvement plans at each school, so that connections between professional practices and overall district improvement outcomes are evident.

<p><b>Statement of Practice 1.3:</b> 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.</p>	<p><b>Tenet Rating</b></p>	<p><b>Stage 2</b></p>
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**Overall Finding:**

- The district is in the process of reprioritizing available resources and revising protocols and procedures for aligning district resources with the needs of school and district leaders. District staff have begun PD for school leaders to increase their capacity to strategically deploy the resources available to their school community, but student needs have not yet been fully addressed.

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

- The newly appointed fiscal leader reported that senior district cabinet staff regularly collaborate with all other district leaders to make responsive financial decisions, manage efficiencies, and prepare the budget. The fiscal leader has focused the budget development process on the district mission of “Every Child, Every Day, Every Classroom,” but stated that district- and school-level practices have not yet embedded the district’s three guiding principles, which include academic return on investment, cost effectiveness, and mission critical budgeting. Other district leaders confirmed that the district has no explicit procedures in place to guide district and school staff in aligning spending decisions to improvements in student outcomes. Therefore, reviewers found that the district is unable to judge which resource allocations are successful and which are not. The fiscal leader pointed out that due to decreases in revenues, comptroller decisions, and contractual obligations in the 2014-15 fiscal year, a balanced budget did not ensue and 29 instructional positions were eliminated to finalize the voter-approved spending plan.
- District fiscal leaders reported that school leaders have not historically had authority, understanding, or accountability for managing the resources allocated to their school by the district. Interviewed school leaders confirmed that they did not have an understanding of how the district prioritizes or allocates resources to their school and were not aware of any district expectations for managing resources. To address this lack of knowledge, the fiscal leader recently provided PD and direct support to school leaders that covered areas such as understanding allocations, making decisions consistent with school and district priorities, and preparing school-based requests for the 2015-16 school year.
- Discussions with the district leader revealed that the district has ample data available; and reviewers learned that the district leader maintains a timely snapshot of each school’s data that includes attendance, discipline, and progress monitoring measures, as well as a district devised “Evidence of Success” document designed to track each school’s progress toward the district improvement targets. District staff stated that in addition to school demographic factors such as enrollment and percentages of ELLs, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students, they also consider academic, attendance, and discipline data when making resource decisions. However, during further IIT discussion, many district decision makers could not explain the nature of the demographics or needs of students, staff, and families in different schools or give examples of situations in which district personnel prioritized resources to meet specific school or student needs that had resulted in improved student achievement.

**Impact Statement:**

- A lack of school leader involvement in the resource allocation process combined with a lack of stringent procedures for aligning spending with improved student outcomes slows the district’s efforts to consistently meet the needs and priorities of individual 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:

- convene regular planning meetings with the senior district cabinet and each school leader to review and precisely analyze the needs of all students, staff, and families at each school;
- continue to provide PD and support for school leaders to build their capacity and accountability for school-based resource management; and
- put in place clearly defined measures for determining the effectiveness of resource decisions on improving student achievement.

**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:**

- A districtwide PD plan is in place for the 2014-16 school years and includes plans for the delivery of PD on various topics; however, the district has not communicated a full calendar of district-sponsored PD to all staff and leaders inconsistently apply strategies to evaluate the impact of PD.

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

- Reviewers learned that the district PD committee meets bi-weekly, during which time a comprehensive PD plan based on several data sources of student achievement, such as the preliminary analysis of the 2013-14 grades three to eight NYS assessments was developed. The district leadership stated that they need a more detailed analysis of test and assessment data to better align PD priorities to individual schools or subgroups of students. In addition, school and district leaders concurred that they must place more focus on teacher effectiveness data when establishing district PD priorities. Several school leaders reported that they have repurposed staff meetings and professional time to provide PD opportunities not addressed through district provided PD that are related to individual school priorities and improvement needs identified through focused instructional learning walks and surveys. District leaders stated that the district recently adopted My Learning Plan, a PD management system, but have not fully communicated a comprehensive calendar of offerings to all schools and staff yet. Some school leaders reported that the district does not always provide PD information in a timely manner, and that district leaders frequently expect school leaders to lead PD in their schools during district conference days without adequate planning opportunities or clear district PD objectives.
- The district deploys an academic instructional coach and senior district leader to each school to provide

onsite support and embedded PD. However, school and district leaders stated that variability in the expertise of coaches has led to the inconsistent implementation of several district initiatives that include cognitive coaching, data walls, mission literacy, accurate identification of student needs, and focused instructional learning walks. In addition, district leaders reported the elimination of the coach position at each school for the 2015-16 school year, and, at the time of the review, district leaders had developed no plan to replace these supports.

- District leaders reported that focused instructional learning walks are the primary strategy used to monitor the degree of implementation and impact of any district or school leader provided PD. However, through a review of the focused instructional learning walk instrument and an interview with the school leaders, reviewers learned that learning walk criteria and procedures do not explicitly monitor the targeted skills and objectives of provided PD and do not explicitly evaluate specific improvements in student learning or instructional practices. Consequently, the evaluation process does not provide district or school leaders with relevant information on which to make strategic decisions about the success of PD, which prevents leaders from making beneficial adjustments to PD or determining and disseminating best practices.

**Impact Statement:**

- The district has not made best use of all data sources to identify PD needs and priorities; consequently, district leaders have missed opportunities to more specifically target PD to meet school and staff 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:

- adapt the existing structure of focused instructional learning walks to include targeted, measurable criteria derived from the key objectives and skills presented in district- and school-based PD; through instructional learning walks, use this criteria to identify the strengths and weaknesses that PD brings to instructional practices and student learning; and
- use assessment data, teacher evaluation data, surveys, and other feedback to identify PD priorities at the district, school, and teacher level.

**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 implemented data inquiry teams at each school to review academic, discipline, and attendance data. However, district officials have implemented data analysis and planning protocols to varying degrees, which has limited some school and district staff in fully understanding student performance and adjusting practices to meet specific student needs.

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

- The district’s theory of action communicates a clear expectation that school and district staff will use data-driven processes to ensure accountability and statistically significant improvements in achievement. To this end, the district added a district-level director of data analysis and accountability position in January 2015 to facilitate the development of procedures and protocols for district staff to use to understand student data and improve achievement. Additionally, school and district staff reported that academic instructional coaches and school leaders facilitate school-based data inquiry team reviews of student academic, attendance, and discipline data. School leaders and coaches stated that they also support district expectations by providing PD and working with teachers to create and review data walls showing student academic, discipline, and attendance data.
- Evidentiary documents showed that 100 percent of all school leaders are using data reviews to provide concrete action plans and feedback about school improvement to district leaders. However, school leaders reported, and the district leader confirmed, that school teams and teachers are at variable depths of understanding data, meet with varying frequency, and are still learning how to use data to alter teaching practices. IIT reviewers at three of the district’s grade schools reported ineffective and developing practices in using databased evidence to make school-wide decisions, adjust curricula, and modify instruction relative to specific student needs, which illustrates that district expectations and protocols have not yet accomplished deep understanding and a data-driven culture with all staff.

**Impact Statement:**

- Staff across the district have an inconsistent understanding of using specific student data to adjust professional practices; therefore, student needs are not fully understood and addressed in each school and district office.

**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 each teacher and team with embedded protocols, targeted follow-up PD, and facilitation to assist them in analyzing specific student data, generating hypotheses, and developing relevant, best-practice action plans to improve data usage practices and student performance.

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

<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.	<b>Tenet Rating</b>	<b>Stage 2</b>
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**Overall Finding:**

- The district seeks to collaborate with school leaders to identify and respond to challenges in improving leader effectiveness and increasing student achievement, but obstacles in the areas of communication, shared vision, follow-up for PD, and data management have resulted in unmet student and staff needs.

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

- The district communicates a cogent theory of action to support the schools, but school leaders reported that not all staff understand how to connect their improvement work to the priorities of the district or how to fully implement the district's theory of action. Although one or two leaders expressed that they have established an aspirational vision for their school, most leaders reported that the district has provided little guidance or direct support in establishing a school vision aligned with the district vision. IIT 2014-15 school review ratings suggested confirmation of this statement, as all reviewed schools were rated ineffective in the area of accomplishing school goals through a uniformly seen, heard, and known long-term vision for school improvement.
- Although district leaders described formal procedures for recruiting and hiring, some school leaders reported inconsistencies in how officials implement protocols across the district. Some school leaders reported that they do a majority of the recruiting, resume review, reference checking, and interviewing of potential candidates for their school, only to have some of their hiring recommendations overridden at the district level. This sometimes results in duplications of effort, inconsistencies in hiring priorities, and potentially prevents school leaders from meeting the district leader's expectation that they spend 75 percent of the instructional day in classrooms. In addition, school and district leaders reported that the negotiated APPR plan results in overinflated ratings of effectiveness for some teachers in the district.
- The district leader assigns select members of the senior district staff to each school with the intention of providing intensive support, PD, coaching, and intervention in any area of school need. School leaders reported that this has expedited resolutions to some challenges and improved the responsiveness of the district office to school needs, but several district leaders could not provide detailed goals or action plans for the assorted school leaders they support. Review evidence showed that due to their diverse expertise, senior cabinet members are not equally proficient in areas of school need such as ELLs, curricula, and data analysis, which makes the quality of support variable and limits its effectiveness in removing barriers to increased student achievement.
- While the district has formalized a comprehensive PD plan, this does not yet fully integrate with the needs of the teachers, staff, and leaders at each school. School leaders reported that they conduct some of their own PD for teachers and staff based on the urgencies they see in their schools and apart from any district priorities or PD plans. Although the district has implemented some large-scale initiatives with corresponding PD, such as Mission Literacy and the data-driven instructional (DDI) framework, school leaders stated that insufficient monitoring and follow-up support for PD and a lack of timely communication hinders the effectiveness of training to improve teacher practices, especially in the areas of the CCLS instructional shifts.

- School leaders reported several concerns about the implementation of focused instructional learning walks that included large team sizes, inconvenient timing, lack of adequate PD, and inconsistent practices across reviewers. School leaders anecdotally reported, though, that due to the structured use of this mechanism, teacher and leader understanding of district expectations for quality instruction are improving. However, since the district has not provided a specifically detailed tool that includes the skills and strategies introduced in targeted PD sessions, empirical data for demonstrating teacher improvements or planning additional PD has not been collected.
- District and school leaders reported that coaches and district leaders are assigned to schools as embedded PD providers and data facilitators; however, because the coaches and school leaders possess different levels of expertise with the data analysis procedures used to improve instruction, teacher improvements have been variable. Reviewers learned that district expectations for staff to maintain data walls and hold data inquiry team meetings have been implemented inconsistently at each of the schools. Three school leaders specifically stated that the data walls in their schools are not having the intended impact of informing instructional adjustments because staff have not received adequate PD for data analysis and management.

**Impact Statement:**

- While the district recognizes and embraces the intensive needs of schools, district leaders have not fully implemented collaborative and expert supports for removing barriers to excellent teaching and learning, delaying the ability of schools 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:

- build detailed work plans, in alignment with the district’s theory of action and each school’s vision, describing how each district leader will specifically serve assigned schools to remove the barriers to increasing student achievement. Each school leader and the full senior cabinet should collaboratively develop a plan, which should include goals, detailed activities, timelines, resources, PD, and monitoring procedures for the cabinet to use on a weekly basis. The school and assigned district leader should ensure that all school staff understand not only the work plan, but also how their individual professional practices contribute to the achievement of the outcomes.

**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 provides materials and funding for select curricular projects, but does not have a comprehensive plan for implementing fully aligned, rigorous curricula in all content areas, adapted to the needs of all students.

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

- District leaders reported that the district does not have a system or protocols for prioritizing district funding for curriculum work. A districtwide curriculum committee sends out requests for proposals, reviews them, and makes recommendations to the district cabinet for the approval of proposed projects; however, this has not translated into a proactive, district-organized plan for the implementation of CCLS-aligned curricula.
- School leaders described several concerns about the lack of coherent and aligned district curricula for all subjects, but in particular, ELA and math. District, school, and teacher leaders reported that in the absence of district-provided curriculum maps for all subjects across all grades, many teachers have adapted EngageNY modules as resources in providing students with CCLS learning opportunities. IIT reviewers at visited schools noted that individual teachers create their own scope and sequence, resulting in little consistency in pacing across classes in the same grade. The district recently purchased and implemented the math textbook series, *GO Math!*, but school leaders stated that alignment with the EngageNY modules has not yet been completed. District curriculum leaders further reported that due to a delay in guidance from the NYS Education Department (NYSED), a curricular development plan for science and social studies is not yet in place.
- IIT review teams at three schools during the 2014-15 school year found that 10 out of 12 practices related to CCLS-aligned curricular implementation were producing an ineffective level of impact on student achievement, and IIT review teams rated the remaining two practices developing. Reviewers found that while the district makes some curricular resources available, cogent CCLS-aligned curricula is not evident in practice. IIT reviewers at the schools interviewed parents who stated they could not adequately support their children at home due to the lack of CCLS-aligned instructional resources available to them.

**Impact Statement:**

- Absence of a district-led comprehensive plan for implementing CCLS-aligned curricula across all grades and subjects has hindered teachers from providing rigorous learning opportunities and has delayed students in demonstrating college and career readiness.

**Recommendation:**

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

- immediately prioritize the development of an multi-phase plan with targets, objectives, timelines, personnel, resources, and PD to implement the phase one goal of ensuring that all ELA and math classrooms have fully developed, horizontally-aligned CCLS curricular maps, pacing guides, units, materials, and assessments for the 2015-16 school year;
- hold district and school leaders accountable for using a targeted and detailed plan to monitor the implementation of ELA and math curricula and assessments for the 2015-16 school year; and

- develop the phase two goal of developing and implementing CCLS-aligned interdisciplinary curricular maps, pacing guides, units, materials, and assessments for the remaining core subjects of science and social studies, and relevant electives.

**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 provides limited opportunities for teachers to increase their capacity to plan for and provide rigorous learning experiences that meet the needs of all students.

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

- District leaders stated that several teacher and school leaders attended Network Team Institute (NTI) training to gain knowledge of the CCLS and share the information with peers; however, some teachers in IIT school reviews reported there had been no opportunities to turnkey information for colleagues. District and school leaders reported that the district provides common time for teachers to meet three times each month, but this time is not directed to ensure that it addresses student needs and district targets for improved achievement. A PD plan is intact within the district; however, district officials have not fully aligned the schedule, course offerings menu, and formal follow-up support to the data-determined needs of staff or students. District staff reported that school and district leaders require more intensive follow-up to assess the impact of the provided PD. District and school leaders reported using focused instructional learning walks, the district’s mechanism for frequent observation, to ensure that PD and follow-up support address teacher needs. However, leaders do not formally record comprehensive data collected during these walks to show patterns and trends in teacher performance.
- School and district leaders reported that a districtwide coordinator for ELLs meets regularly with teachers and leaders to support planning, scheduling, and compliance issues involving the district’s ELL population. However, school leaders reported that due to staff availability and expertise limitations and a lack of coherent, adaptive CCLS curricula, schools are unable to fully meet the needs of ELLs, as well as students with disabilities. The 2014-15 priority and focus school IIT reviews revealed that instruction is generally not accomplishing the CCLS pedagogical shifts; therefore district support is not having the intended outcome of improving instructional rigor and engagement for all students. At all levels, reviewers observed mostly teacher-directed lessons; and a lack of accurate and formal systematic analyses of available data led to few adaptations in both written and enacted plans to account for differences in student needs, abilities, or experiences. IIT class visits showed that teachers presented few rigorous lessons that incorporated higher order questioning, text complexity, and multiple access points.

**Impact Statement:**

- While the district has begun to provide supports for improving the quality of instruction, rigorous learning opportunities aligned with the CCLS are not yet fully implemented or evident in many

classrooms 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:

- analyze existing summaries of focused instructional learning walks to identify patterns and trends related to teacher needs in the area of providing rigorous instructional opportunities reflective of the pedagogical shifts. Prioritize these needs when selecting and scheduling timely, regular PD opportunities that are required for all staff. Ensure that all PD providers and materials model best practice strategies and provide teachers with expert embedded follow-up support to ensure accurate implementation of the strategies.

**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 does not have a comprehensive plan or approach to lead the schools in supporting the social-emotional developmental health of all students, but has provided materials and resources for some interventions that meet select student needs.

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

- District leaders stated that the district does not have a comprehensive plan for collaborating with schools to proactively meet the social-emotional developmental health needs of all students. School leaders also stated that they did not know of any districtwide expectations for attending to the social-emotional needs of students. However, reviewers learned that the district supports some programs, such as the grades K-6 Second Step program featuring a classroom-based social skills curriculum, activities to support National Bullying Prevention Month, and implementation of Dignity for all Students Act (DASA) regulations. Despite the PD provided for grades K-6 staff to support Second Step program implementation, some school leaders reported there is little staff buy-in for the initiative, which is off to a slow start and not yet proactively meeting the social-emotional developmental health needs of each student.
- The district provides a coordinator for instructional support teams who travels to each school to facilitate intervention team meetings. As needed, the instructional support team coordinator provides select school personnel with PD and data analysis support to identify patterns and trends in student needs and recommend interventions for addressing them. Some schools use Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) activities and the development of behavioral intervention plans to teach and remediate student behaviors; however, school staff reported that these activities are not coordinated by the district or instructional support teams. The district also remains identified for disproportionately suspending students with disabilities and by race or ethnicity. School leaders reported that discipline and misbehavior are a great concern in schools and that limited district support

to resolve these issues has hindered the academic progress of some students.

- School leaders and support staff reported that social workers and school psychologists regularly attend PD to keep current on strategies to support students. Nevertheless, school leaders reported that they know of little PD offered by the district to support other school staff and leaders in understanding or supporting the social-emotional developmental health of students.

**Impact Statement:**

- Because the district has not yet made a concerted effort to develop a vision or plan for building staff capacity and attending to the social-emotional needs of all students, student needs persist and the achievement of most students is not increasing at a fast enough rate.

**Recommendation:**

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

- expand district targets for increasing student achievement and graduation rates to include indicators of social-emotional developmental health; and develop a comprehensive districtwide plan that outlines improvement efforts in the targeted areas. Provide PD to all staff to build their capacity to meet the social-emotional developmental needs of students. Collect and analyze relevant data to determine the degree to which the districtwide plan meets students' social-emotional developmental health needs.

**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.

<b>Tenet Rating</b>	<b>Stage 2</b>
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**Overall Finding:**

- The district has launched strategic efforts to plan and implement strategies and support for families and schools to increase collaboration; however, this has not yet translated to strong home-school partnerships and increased student achievement.

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

- District leaders and evidentiary documents confirmed that the district used their standing Board of Education (BOE) committee, the Parent and Community Engagement Taskforce, proactively to re-define the role of parent involvement in the district. The district has provided opportunities, such as Parent University, to provide relevant skills and strategies to parents, and introduced Citizens' Corner, a section on the district's website reserved for the community and parents to log their comments, concerns, and complaints. School leaders stated that the district leader has communicated relevant comments from the Citizen's Corner to them with the expectation that school personnel address any comments, concerns, or complaints within 24 hours. District data showed that school constituents made 356 complaints in 2013-14; however, at the time of the June 2014-15 district review, the number of complaints had decreased to just 46. The adoption of a new student management system, Infinite Campus, will supply district parents with access to a parent portal, which once implemented will

enhance schools' ability to communicate with parents and families regarding student progress.

- School leaders stated that all written communications to parents and families are available in English and Spanish and that the district updates the website regularly with pertinent school and district information. The district uses a robotic calling tool to send widespread phone messages to families, and fosters multiple partnerships with organizations and agencies within the community, such as the local chamber of commerce, food pantry, mental health organizations, and medical services clinics.
- Although the district has increased urgency and targeted strategies for improving relations with families, school and district leaders stated that the district has not yet provided professional learning opportunities for teachers or established strategic plans that show schools and staff how to collaborate to build robust, reciprocal partnerships between home and school. In the 2014-15 IIT reviews carried out at three district schools, school efforts to build home-school partnerships in support of increased student achievement received predominantly ineffective ratings, which was primarily due to school leaders not fully addressing the disconnect between what teachers provide, what parents want, and what students need.

**Impact Statement:**

- Although the district has begun to implement structures to address parental concerns and resolve some targeted issues, partnerships between the district and families is not strong enough to consistently support academic success 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:

Establish a comprehensive plan for collaborating with schools to build robust home-school partnerships. The plan should include:

- a thorough needs assessment that includes focus group feedback from all members of the school community and an analysis of survey data;
- goals and Specific, Measurable, Ambitious, Results-oriented, and Timely (SMART) targets for each grade level and demographic category in the district;
- explicit best-practice activities that will lead to the accomplishment of the goals and targets;
- PD for all staff in best-practice strategies to build their capacity to meet the goals and SMART targets;
- procedures for school leaders to use to ensure that PD is fully implemented in their schools; and
- monitoring mechanisms to measure the degree of implementation and effectiveness of the comprehensive plan.