



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

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)



BEDS Code	26160001000
District	Rochester City School District
District Address	131 West Broad Street, Rochester, NY, 14613
Superintendent	Bolgen Vargas
Date(s) of Review	May 13-14, 2015

District Information Sheet			
Grade Configuration	PK - 12	Total Enrollment	28893
		Number of Schools	53
District Composition (<i>most recent data</i>)			
% Title I Population	100	% Attendance Rate	87
% Free Lunch	81	% Reduced Lunch	4
% Limited English Proficient	12.4	% Students with Disabilities	17.6
Racial/Ethnic Origin (<i>most recent data</i>)			
% American Indian or Alaska Native	0.2	% Black or African American	59.3
% Hispanic or Latino	26.5	% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	3.8
% White	9.9	% Multi-Racial	0.1
Personnel (<i>most recent data</i>)			
Years Superintendent Assigned to District	3	# of Deputy/Assistant Superintendents	2
# of Principals	58	# of Assistant Principals	97
# of Teachers	2657	Avg. Class Size	21
% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate	0	% Teaching Out of Certification	2
% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience	5	Average Teacher Absences	14
Teacher Turnover Rate – Teachers < 5 years exp.	39	Teacher Turnover Rate – All Teachers	25
Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2013-14)			
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	5.5	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4	7.2
Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (4th Grade)	62	Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (8th Grade)	19
Student Performance for High Schools (2013-14)			
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	57.4	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4	37.3
Credit Accumulation High Schools Only (2013-14)			
4 Year Graduation Rate	51	6 Year Graduation Rate	54.1
% of earning Regents Diploma w/ Advanced Des.	4.9		
Current NYSED Accountability Status			
# of Reward Schools	0	# of Priority Schools	15
# of Schools In Good Standing	10	# of Focus Schools	27
# of LAP Schools	1		

District Accountability Status

Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in ELA (indicate Y / N / N-A)			
American Indian or Alaska Native	NO-EM	Black or African American	NO
Hispanic or Latino	n/a	Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	NO
White	NO	Multi-Racial	n/a
Students with Disabilities	NO	Limited English Proficient	NO
Economically Disadvantaged	NO		
Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Mathematics (indicate Y / N / N-A)			
American Indian or Alaska Native	NO-EM	Black or African American	NO
Hispanic or Latino	NO	Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	NO
White	NO	Multi-Racial	n/a
Students with Disabilities	NO	Limited English Proficient	NO
Economically Disadvantaged	NO		
Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Science (indicate Y / N / N-A)			
American Indian or Alaska Native	n/a	Black or African American	NO
Hispanic or Latino	NO	Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	NO
White	NO	Multi-Racial	n/a
Students with Disabilities	NO	Limited English Proficient	NO
Economically Disadvantaged	NO		

THE DISTRICT'S PRIORITIES AS WRITTEN BY THE DISTRICT:

1. Student achievement and growth
2. Effective and efficient allocation of resources
3. Communication and customer service
4. Parent family and community involvement
5. Management systems.

Information about the review

- The review of the district was conducted by two Outside Educational Experts (OEE), a representative from the New York State Education Department, a Special Education School Improvement Specialist (SEIS) representative, and a representative from the Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (RBERN).
- The Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) reviews of eight schools in the district also informed the district review.
- In preparation for the district review, reviewers analyzed district-level data and consulted with various departments within NYSED to help inform reviewers' questioning and their understanding of the district.
- During IIT school reviews in the district, reviewers made 294 visits to classrooms across the eight 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 staff did not provide student, staff, or parent surveys for the review team to analyze.

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

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

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

	skills in all content areas and provides fiscal and human resources for implementation.				
Tenet 4 - Teacher Practices and Decisions: Teachers engage in strategic practices and decision-making in order to address the gap between what students know and need to learn, so that all students and pertinent subgroups experience consistent high levels of engagement, thinking, and achievement.					
#	Statement of Practice	Stage 4	Stage 3	Stage 2	Stage 1
4.1	The district works collaboratively with the school to provide opportunities and supports for teachers to develop strategies and practices and addresses effective planning and account for student data, needs, goals, and levels of engagement.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Tenet 5 - Student Social and Emotional Developmental Health: The school community identifies, promotes, and supports social and emotional development by designing systems and experiences that lead to healthy relationships and a safe, respectful environment that is conducive to learning for all constituents.					
#	Statement of Practice	Stage 4	Stage 3	Stage 2	Stage 1
5.1	The district creates policy and works collaboratively with the school to provide opportunities and resources that positively support students' social and emotional developmental health.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Tenet 6 - Family and Community Engagement: The school creates a culture of partnership where families, community members, and school staff work together to share in the responsibility for student academic progress and social-emotional growth and well-being.					
#	Statement of Practice	Stage 4	Stage 3	Stage 2	Stage 1
6.1	The district has a comprehensive family and community engagement strategic plan that states the expectations around creating and sustaining a welcoming environment for families, reciprocal communication, and establishing partnerships with community organizations and families.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

District Review – Findings, Evidence, Impact and Recommendations:

<p>Tenet 1 - District Leadership and Capacity: The district examines school systems and makes intentional decisions to identify and provide critical expectations, supports and structures in all areas of need so that schools are able to respond to their community and ensure that all students are successful.</p>	<p>Overall Tenet Rating</p>	<p>Stage 1</p>
<p>Statement of Practice 1.1: The district has a comprehensive approach for recruiting, evaluating, and sustaining high-quality personnel that affords schools the ability to ensure success by addressing the needs of their community.</p>	<p>Tenet Rating</p>	<p>Stage 1</p>
<p>Overall Finding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> While there is an established policy for recruitment, the timing of the base budget as well as certain provisions of the current teacher contract are reported by district staff to negatively affect the district’s ability to recruit and retain highly qualified personnel. The process to evaluate staff does not provide an accurate assessment of the instructional competencies of teachers and school leaders. <p>Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although the district has an established policy for recruitment of personnel, the process has not resulted in district staff hiring personnel that meet the needs of the district. District staff reported that the main barrier to beginning the recruitment process is the late approval of the budget. The district leader said that the timeline for appointing staff is a problem because the district’s internal systems do not allow district staff to identify the number of positions needed prior to the beginning of the new academic year. As a result, when the district receives approval to offer positions, the top candidates have accepted jobs offers from other neighboring districts. Evidence gathered from interviews with district staff indicates that the district’s recruitment and retention efforts are perceived by district staff as being negatively impacted by the teacher contract. The district leaders stated that teachers with seniority have priority in filling vacant positions over teachers who may be better qualified. In addition, district staff stated that the late issuance of contracts has had an impact on their ability to recruit teachers. District staff reported that the district has both formal and informal partnerships, including a partnership with The University of Rochester, that enable teacher candidates to receive reduced tuition fees to pursue courses that lead to bilingual certification. District leaders indicated that this initiative has resulted in some new hires, but there are still staffing shortages in some content areas. Through the Strengthening Teacher and Leader Effectiveness (STLE) 1 grant, the district partnered with Nazareth College to offer teachers the opportunity to pursue bilingual certification. Seventeen (17) candidates successfully completed this program, which allowed the district to surpass its goal of increasing by 10 percent the number of educators with bilingual certification. However, the district subsequently changed partnerships during the STLE 2 grant, which led to a lack of programmatic continuity and a delay in implementation. The district leader commented that almost 40 percent of school leaders have problems in leading and 		

managing their schools. However, a review of evaluation reports demonstrates that district staff provided minimal evaluative comments, constructive guidance, or actionable feedback to school leaders that would address their areas of weakness as school leaders and provide them with the appropriate guidance to help them improve. While the district has identified training and collaboration as a priority to support school leaders in improving teacher evaluation, data from the 2013-2014 Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) shows that nearly all teachers were rated either effective or highly effective by their school leaders, in spite of the low achievement in the district. The district leader acknowledged that the criteria used to evaluate teachers were not sufficiently robust and that teacher evaluation ratings were inflated. One step the district has made to address this has been to utilize funds through the Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) during the 2014-15 school year to work with an outside consultant to provide training and support to administrators and teaching staff in areas such as transforming school culture, instituting professional conversations that improve practice, improving classroom observation skills, and improving reliability and consistency in evaluation. However during school reviews, the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) found that school leaders did not consistently provide teachers with evaluative comments and the actionable feedback necessary to improve teachers' instructional practices. During class visits, the IIT also noted significant weaknesses in teachers' instructional practices. In addition, a review of data shows that the percentage of students achieving proficiency and passing Regents exams is low throughout the district.

- Through the STLE and TIF grants, 42 instructional coaches participated in year-long professional learning on differentiating instruction. According to the district's recent reporting for the grants, the analysis of student and teacher performance data for the 13-14 school year indicates that working with an instructional coach has had a positive and significant impact on teacher performance scores. According to teacher performance data of 1,137 teachers across the district, teachers who collaborated with an instructional coach performed 2.5 points higher on their APPR score than those who did not work with an instructional coach.
- A review of staff retention data shows that the district has an overall teacher turnover rate of 25 percent and a teacher turnover rate of 39 percent for teachers with fewer than five years' experience. The IIT found no evidence of systems in place to survey personnel as to why they have left the district or for canvassing views about working conditions in the district. As a result, district leaders are limited in their ability to identify and address personnel issues and concerns that may be contributing to staff turnover and put in place strategies to raise retention rates across the district.

Impact Statement:

- The district's difficulties recruiting and retaining high quality personnel, combined with weaknesses in the staff evaluation process, results in the needs of schools and students not being met.

Recommendation:

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

- investigate the timeline for the acceptance of the budget and change the way the budget is planned;
- renegotiate the teacher contract to ensure that the most appropriate candidate is appointed to every position rather than on the basis of seniority;
- work with the unions representative teachers and school leaders to establish more accurate teacher and school leader evaluation systems and provide actionable feedback for all and additional support for those who are not effective;
- leverage Teacher and Principal Leaders, as developed through the STLE and TIF grants, as tools for supporting high quality implementation of District evaluation systems.
- establish a system for conducting exit interviews and identifying why teachers leave the district; and
- analyze information from exit interviews and address the reasons why teachers leave the district in order to provide detailed feedback to address areas of concern as they pertain to retaining the district’s most effective educators and improve upon the district’s ability to identify and address personnel issues.

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:

The district has a theory of action, but it is not known and understood by all constituents, which minimizes its impact on driving improvements in student outcomes and professional practices.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- The district has sought to communicate high expectations for student achievement as well as teacher and school leader practices through the dissemination of the theory of action. The district has shared its theory of action at principal, parent, and public budget meetings; however, discussions with school leaders, staff, and parents indicate that most school stakeholders do not have a clear understanding of the theory of action or of how the district will support schools to achieve the district’s expectations for professional practices and student outcomes. Although the theory of action is translated into Spanish, the document is not translated into other common languages spoken by families in the district. As a result, some members of the school community are limited in their ability to support their children. During discussions with the IIT, district staff acknowledged that school staff and communities have not openly embraced or embodied the theory of action.
- Evidence gathered from the IIT’s school reviews indicates that the theory of action incorporated in the District Comprehensive Education Plan (DCIP) is not having an impact on improving professional practices and student outcomes. The IIT found limited evidence of high expectations in schools and in classrooms. For example, most teachers’ instructional practices lacked the rigor and challenge necessary to promote increased student achievement, and teachers minimally differentiated lessons to meet students’ varying ability levels. Members of the district staff reported that during their visits to

schools and classrooms, staff saw minimal examples of improvements in instruction and curriculum that would lead to higher achievement for students. Further, during the STLE and TIF site visits by the state, it was observed that coaching and feedback sessions with teachers often lacked concrete actionable feedback, a clear connection to the instructional shifts of the Common Core Learning Standards, as well as an explicit focus on student outcomes. Instead, the coaching and feedback sessions observed mainly focused on acknowledging what went well. The district leader said that he believes that the School Comprehensive Education Plans (SCEPs) need to be more closely aligned to the district’s vision. District staff stated and the school IIT reviews confirmed that further support and communication is required to help school staff align their SCEPs to the district’s theory of action to promote a cohesive drive for school improvement throughout the district.

Impact Statement:

- The district’s expectation for the theory of action has not been realized in daily professional practice, which limits opportunities for students to achieve at high levels.

Recommendation:

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

- communicate the core messages of the theory of action so that all constituents have a deep understanding of what the theory means and of its importance to student outcomes;
- collaborate with schools to align the key priorities in their school SCEPs to the district’s theory of action;
- develop structured protocols aligned with district’s theory of action that can be used to collect evidence aligned with the instructional shifts associated with Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) in order to provide targeted, actionable feedback to educators that is centered on measurable impact on student learning; and
- support schools in developing their SMART goals and implementing activities to achieve them.

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 lacks structures to ensure that allocated resources address the specific needs of school communities. Monitoring and evaluation systems are not in place to determine whether spending decisions result in desired school improvement.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- The budget is based on a formula that is driven by student enrollment. The district leader stated that declining student enrollments has led to decreases in the base budget over the last few years. As a result, the district decided to centralize the budget to save money and to re-direct resources toward the district's major priorities, such as increasing the number of students who are proficient in reading by grade 3. Most school leaders interviewed by the IIT expressed dissatisfaction with the centralized school budget, which they said did not meet the specific needs of their school community. The district acknowledged that the budget is not differentiated to support the individual needs of schools and their communities. Although district leaders reported that they are considering developing a process of earned autonomy, which will allow school leaders to organize the budget based on the specific needs of their school, such an initiative has not yet gone beyond the discussion stage.
- District staff stated in interviews that two Deputy Superintendents had been hired to improve the quality of communication with schools and to provide support, for example, in helping staff understand how the budget process works. A review of documents and school leader interviews show that the district minimally communicates with schools regarding the allocation of resources. District staff shared that they recognize that many school leaders' budget management skills need improvement. However, during discussions with the IIT, district staff indicated that although they have had conversations with school leaders to explain how budget decisions are made, the district has not provided formal training to school leaders.
- According to district staff, the district has allocated a considerable amount of funding to develop and implement curricula across all schools that align to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), including the purchase of teaching resources and training for school staff. In addition, instructional coaches have been placed in schools to improve instruction. The IIT found that the district has no procedures or systems in place to determine if these resource allocations are resulting in improved student outcomes, and district leaders did not provide data to demonstrate the impact of the resource allocations. The district has conducted an analysis of evaluation data for 1,137 teachers, which found that teachers who collaborated with an instructional coach performed 2.5 points higher on their APPR score than those who did not work with an instructional coach. However, the district has not developed systems to ensure that similar analyses are done for other initiatives, and the district has not provided evidence that further analysis has occurred that could point at the characteristics and circumstances that might allow some instructional coaches to be more effective than others, so that initiatives such as this can be improved and replicated.
- Some district staff reported that grant funding sometimes is not used because the timelines for spending the money are too short. District staff also reported that previously the district did not have structures in place to consistently monitor grant funds. This is evidenced through work in both STLE and TIF. The district was required to return approximately \$170,000 from the STLE 2 grant due to discrepancies in the number of eligible educators for career ladder stipends. In addition, the district was also required to return close to \$150,000 from the TIF grant due to the payment of more than one instructional coach's salary per TIF building, which was not allowable under the terms of the TIF contract. Additionally, the district has struggled with submitting complete and accurate TIF vouchers

throughout the grant period. However, district staff said they have recently put systems in place to ensure that district staff monitor grant money monthly.

- As part of the district's special education reforms, the district sought to reduce the reliance on students with disabilities being placed in full-time integrated co-teaching classrooms, and instead have some of these students serviced by pull-out resource room teachers. In addition to diversifying the options available for students with disabilities, this initiative was also intended to result in a cost savings to the district. The district built its 2014-15 budget anticipating this shift in how students receive services; however, the district's projections fell significantly short, in part because those responsible for placing students with disabilities continued to refer students to co-teaching settings. The cost savings associated with this shift did not materialize, and the district had to access several million dollars set aside for unplanned expenses to maintain its budget.
- The district reduced the number of Career and Technical Education (CTE) classes offered in the 2014-15 school year. Since the state aid provided for CTE classes is more than the state aid for typical classes, the district understood that the reduction in CTE classes would result in the district receiving less aid from the state for 2014-15. However the district did not incorporate this reduction in funding when developing its budget for 2014-15. As a result, the amount of state aid received was more than \$4 million less than had been outlined in the budget. Because the district had used its contingency funds to cover the gap in special education expenses that resulted from incorrectly projecting the number of students who would move from full-time co-teaching settings to pull-out supports, the district had to institute a number of immediate cost-saving measures to address this budget shortfall.
- The district has provided some training to support the introduction of a district-wide Code of Conduct to address the behavior issues prevalent in schools. However, most school leaders interviewed by the IIT reported that the training provided has been inadequate and that it has not helped teachers to develop the necessary skills to manage student behavior more effectively. During school reviews, the IIT saw instances of students exhibiting disruptive behaviors. District staff acknowledged that the current level of support provided is not sufficient to address the range of behavior problems present in some schools. In addition, the district staff lack mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating spending in this area to determine if the resources are meeting the needs of schools.
- District staff reported that each school is allocated a parent liaison coordinator and a small part of the budget is allocated to promoting parental and community engagement. IIT school reviews show that these allocations have had limited impact in creating and sustaining a welcome environment that enable families to work in close partnerships with schools to improve student achievement and behavior.

Impact Statement:

- Current resource allocations do not closely match the needs of individual schools, which hinder school improvement and 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:

- work with school leaders so that they develop the skills needed to allocate the budget in a way that addresses the main priorities of the district but is also tailored to the needs of their school community; and
- monitor and evaluate spending to ensure school needs are addressed and adjust or re-allocate resources, where necessary.

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:

- Although all staff members have access to professional development (PD) opportunities, training is voluntary, and there are no mechanisms in place to ensure that teachers participate in the professional opportunities they need to improve practices. In addition, district and school leaders do not have structures in place to monitor the impact of PD on student outcomes or for teachers to be held accountable for incorporating what they have learned in PD into their daily classroom practices.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- The district staff reported that weaknesses in the PD provided are contributing to low student achievement. In response to identified weakness, a district PD plan was designed. District staff reported that PD topics now focus on seven areas that link with the district’s priorities, including CCLS, common assessment, differentiation, and school culture. The district leader shared that school staff are expected to align their choice of PD to the goals and priorities listed in the school’s SCEP. The district leader also shared that the extent to which this occurs depends on the skill level of the school leader, as some school leaders are more successful in motivating school staff to attend appropriate courses and training than others.
- District staff indicated that most PD remains voluntary because of provisions in the teacher contract. District staff shared that little progress has been made in negotiations with the unions to ensure that training is mandatory for all staff. District staff stated that approximately 80 percent of teachers attend PD, for which they receive a stipend; however, not all staff members complete the courses for which they register and therefore do not receive the full benefits of the PD. In addition, district staff reported that teachers choose the courses they attend, and the courses most teachers select do not consistently align to the areas in which the teachers need most to improve their practice. During discussions with the IIT, district staff reported that there has been a reduction in mandatory PD across the district. For example, superintendent conference days, previously used for PD, are now used for other purposes.
- Evidence from school reviews shows that the PD plan and its offerings have not resulted in teachers having the necessary skills and guidance to improve instructional practices. While the district has invested in PD, including hosting three days of intensive professional development on CCLS implementation and data-driven instruction for two consecutive summers, training has not consistently

resulted in desired practices being implemented within schools. During school visits, the IIT noted that teachers inconsistently delivered CCLS-aligned instruction that provided challenging opportunities for students of all abilities to learn. The district staff acknowledged that they are not providing adequate professional support to teachers to meet the needs of all students, particularly students with disabilities and English language learners (ELLs). The district has provided PD for teachers in the implementation of the Code of Conduct, but during school reviews, the IIT found that examples of staff struggling to manage student behavior, and reviewers also found that staff across schools unevenly implement the Code of Conduct.

- Discussions with school and district leaders indicate that no systems are in place to monitor and evaluate the impact of PD on improving student achievement and instructional practices. School and district leaders stated that they do not formally hold teachers accountable for implementing in their teaching what they have learned in PD. District staff stated that there are weaknesses in how the district identifies and provides follow-up PD when initial efforts have proved inadequate. School leaders indicated that follow-up training is needed in areas such as use of data, CCLS implementation, and behavior management. The IIT did not find evidence to show that the district has strategies in place to ensure teachers receive the appropriate level of training.

Impact Statement:

- A lack of targeted, high quality and rigorously monitored PD results in a continuance of instructional practices that do not meet students’ need and do little to raise student achievement.

Recommendation:

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

- negotiate agreements so that teachers take PD courses that are matched to their specific needs;
- work with school leaders to ensure that teachers are accountable for the implementation of what they have acquired from PD;
- leverage Teacher and Principal Leaders to provide teachers with ongoing, job-embedded support to further their understanding of how to translate theory into practice; and
- expand the evaluative efforts begun under the TIF and STLE grants to further design and implement a system to evaluate quarterly the impact of PD on outcomes for students.

<p>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.</p>	<p>Tenet Rating</p>	<p>Stage 1</p>
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Overall Finding:

- The district has not sufficiently established and promoted a data-driven culture that supports staff’s capacity to analyze and use data to inform lesson and curricular planning, to improve teacher practice, or to monitor and evaluate students’ progress. In addition, the district staff has not analyzed current data initiatives to monitor the impact these initiatives have upon student achievement. As a result, not

all teachers and school leaders use data regularly to modify instructional practices and, therefore, student achievement remains low in schools.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- During discussions with the IIT, members of the district staff reported that they have communicated their expectations to school staff of how data is to be used to adjust curricular planning, to inform instructional practices, and to set SMART goals. The district leader said that one of his highest priorities is to make all professional dialogue data-driven. However, most school leaders interviewed by the IIT reported that their schools do not reflect a data-driven culture, and that teachers lack the confidence and requisite skills to drive improvement through the analysis and use of data. Through the STLE grants and the use of protocols developed by the Office of Professional Learning, the district has made some shifts in how grade-level and department meetings are used to focus on student work and data analysis, which the district claims has resulted in time spent on collaborative learning increasing by 50 percent. However during school reviews, the IIT found that most teachers were not using data to adjust the curriculum to meet the needs of the students, and most teachers minimally differentiated instruction to provide an appropriate level of challenge for all subgroups of students, particularly for students with disabilities, and ELLs. Some school leaders shared that the lack of district support and of quality PD impact staff's ability to meet the district's expectations regarding the analysis and use of data.
- The district has put a data dashboard in each school along with data-driven inquiry protocols to record absences and formative assessment data. Although the district staff reported that they provided training to school planning teams on data usage, evidence from school reviews show little impact of this training, as most school staff insufficiently uses data to guide, inform, and drive instructional planning. District staff reported that they are working with school leaders to improve their data skills to support them in their preparation of the school's SCEP to guide their school improvement planning. Evidence from school reviews indicate that few school leaders use data to closely monitor school or student performance or to drive evaluation systems such as the APPR.
- A review of documents indicates that the use of district-wide interim assessments to measure students' progress is in the early stages of development, and the district needs to develop a more rigorous approach in using data to inform lesson planning. During discussions with the IIT, district staff reported that teachers' assessments are not consistently accurate, but also acknowledged that the district is not providing adequate support in the calibration of school assessments.

Impact Statement:

- The district has not ensured that all staff understand and use data. As a result, school staff across the district minimally use data to adjust instruction to meet students' needs, and to address consistently low levels of achievement and academic progress.

Recommendation:

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

should:

- develop in school leaders, teachers, and other school staff greater understanding of how to use data to adjust curriculum planning and to inform instructional practices; and
- train staff to use data to monitor the impact of their work and to make adjustments where necessary.

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

Tenet Rating

Stage 1

Overall Finding:

- The district’s efforts to support schools and leaders in raising student achievement have limited impact upon improving the environments in schools. Many school leaders indicate that district staff only minimally supported the development and implementation of their school vision.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- During discussions with the review team, the district leader shared that the district’s goal is to have excellent teachers in every classroom and an excellent school leader in every building supported by high quality, central district staff. However, discussions with district staff and school leaders indicate that the district’s efforts have had very limited impact on improving teacher practices and outcomes for students. School leaders reported that the district does not help to create a responsive school environment. The lack of autonomy in making decisions about staff structure and appointments are of concern for most school leaders.
- Evidence gathered from school leader interviews indicates that many school leaders do not believe that district staff support their school vision. Some school leaders stated that the district staff was not sufficiently aware of their school vision. The IIT found that most school leaders had concerns about the quality of support from as well as communication with the district leadership and the district staff. Some school leaders reported that they believe the district leadership made decisions that did not address the specific needs of schools. For example, one school leader reported that the district did not provide adequate guidance on how to set SMART goals to drive school improvement planning. Comments made by school leaders reflect that partnerships with the district staff are perceived by school leaders as ‘strained.’
- All school leaders expressed frustration about the centralized decision-making process, which they believe does not meet the specific needs of schools and their communities. For example, school leaders interviewed expressed frustration with problems that have arisen as a result of the district’s centralization of scheduling and programming for schools. School leaders also shared that district staff sometimes make decisions “late in the day” without adequate consultation with schools, which adversely affects students and disregards the wishes of parents. One such example cited by a school

leader was when the district made a decision to move certain grades out of one building and place them in another without input from the schools. School leaders gave particular instances where a lack of autonomy adversely affected the schools' abilities to meet the needs of the school community. For example, recent changes in the suspension policy eliminated in-house suspension, and some school leaders indicated that this decision affected school staff's ability to manage behavior within some buildings and make suitable provision for their students.

- School leaders shared that the district's selection of staff and placement of students sometimes negatively impacts school operations. For example, school leaders were not allowed to decide on the way the budget was spent in relation to staffing their schools. In addition, some school leaders said contractual provisions limited the ability to select teachers that school leaders believed would have met the needs of students. School leaders reported that the district transferred students, especially those with behavior difficulties, into schools without notification or records. Some school leaders reported that their requests for essential support were ignored, and that some promises made to school leaders were not honored. IIT school reviews identified examples of when student behavior interfered with learning in lessons. School leaders confirmed that behavior management is an area where they need additional support from the district. Members of the district staff shared that they need to provide better support for students with behavior difficulties.
- During discussions with the IIT, school leaders indicated that the needs of students with disabilities were not being met. Additionally, school leaders indicated that students' diverse and high-level needs were not addressed because the district lacked trained personnel to guide and inform school staff on how to deal with students who had specific learning needs. District staff reported having difficulty recruiting staff for high need areas, such as bilingual education.

Impact Statement:

- District staff does not support the unique vision of each school community. As a result, the district has had limited impact in helping schools to improve student achievement.

Recommendation:

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

- work closely with school leaders to identify each school's needs;
- ensure that each school is provided with the supports to meet their specific needs; and
- monitor and evaluate quarterly the impact of the support provided by the district in terms of improving student achievement.

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

Tenet Rating

Stage 2

Overall Finding:

- The district has initiated support for curriculum development and implementation; however, there is limited evidence that the district staff is monitoring curricula to ensure teachers in all schools are consistently implementing the curricula.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- School leaders stated that district leaders have directed all teachers to use CCLS-aligned curriculum, and the district has provided some support for its implementation. During discussions with the IIT, school leaders shared that teachers do not sufficiently attend PD sessions, as most workshops occur after school and are voluntary. Teachers interviewed during the school reviews told the IIT that PD is available on-line, but teachers said that few of their colleagues choose this option. The district provides school-based instructional coaches, but school leaders stated that these efforts and PD in general has had limited noticeable impact on the quality of instruction because of inconsistencies in the quality of PD or the skill level of personnel selected to lead support strategies. School leaders reported that the district staff provides school staff with PD in unpacking CCLS and in training teachers to adjust the curriculum to meet student needs. The IIT did not find evidence to indicate that district staff monitors the curriculum that is offered across the district or the impact of any training provided by the district.
- Many teachers were not aligning curricula to CCLS or sufficiently incorporating the CCLS instructional shifts into lessons observed during IIT school reviews. Reviewers also found that there is minimal follow-up from district or school leaders specifically designed to hold teachers accountable for implementing the CCLS or curriculum initiatives learned through PD. School leaders shared that staff received directives about the CCLS that have affected the teachers' ability to implement the CCLS. For example, some school leaders shared that last year teachers were instructed to use the Engage NY Framework as the curriculum and to implement the Framework exactly as it was presented, instead of modifying the modules presented online to best suit the needs of the students.

Impact Statement:

- The district has provided some support to teachers to plan and implement a CCLS aligned curriculum. However, the district does not sufficiently monitor supports offered to ensure teachers consistently implement the CCLS.

Recommendation:

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

- work with all school leaders to ensure that all staff understand how to align curriculum to CCLS in a way that provides challenge for all students; and
- monitor and evaluate curricula delivery in each school to ensure that district staff have an understanding of the effectiveness of the PD initiatives concerning curriculum implementation and are

aware of how closely the curriculum is meeting the needs of students; and

- provide further training, ongoing support and monitoring, as well as evaluative feedback to instructional coaches to ensure maximum impact and a return on investment.

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:

- Communication between the schools and district staff regarding PD has not resulted in the development of a program that motivates all teachers to attend the training that they need to improve their practice. PD provided has not resulted in improvements to teacher practices in managing student behavior, providing challenging CCLS-aligned curriculum opportunities, and using data to inform and adjust instruction.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- Most school leaders interviewed by the IIT said that the quality of the communication and support between the school and district staff regarding PD is not sufficient. Some school leaders reported that while the district maintains academic and other data on schools and students, the district has not provided adequate PD to guide teachers and school leaders on how to analyze and use this data to help drive instruction and school improvement. The school leaders reported that the support provided by the district's instructional coaches has not helped teachers improve their instructional practices. School leaders interviewed expressed a desire for the district to improve collaboration with teachers and school leaders to develop a PD program in which school staff will want to participate.
- School leaders identified that district staff do not always take account of school data or know schools well. Only one school leader said she had regular conversations with a district leader about the needs of the school based on data about student achievement and teachers' performance. District staff confirmed school leaders' views that there is not enough collaboration between schools and the district to plan PD that focuses on how data can be used to drive instruction, inform curriculum planning, and set goals for different groups of students.
- School leaders stated that PD is not mandatory and that the district has made few attempts to be innovative in the way that it attracts staff to attend PD offerings. As a result, teachers' participation in training events remains consistently low and improvements to instructional practices remain a constant challenge. Some school leaders also reported that the district does not provide follow up training after PD events, particularly pertaining to meeting student social and emotional developmental health needs. Some school leaders identified behavior management as a key area for more follow-up as a preventative measure to avoid the frequent disruptions to learning in many classrooms.

Impact Statement:

- District staff do not provide adequate guidance to school leaders and staff to support implementation of what has been learned through PD. Consequently, not all students receive rigorous learning opportunities.

Recommendation:

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

- ensure that district staff work with each school leader to analyze teacher needs and student data to inform the district's PD plan;
- leverage the expertise and support of Principal Leaders to provide differentiated support to colleagues in analyzing data, aligning strategies, and ensuring high quality classroom instruction; and
- monitor and evaluate the impact of the district's PD plan each quarter and adjust it accordingly based upon district-wide successes and need.

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 does not collaborate with schools to build school staff capacity to successfully support students' social and emotional developmental health and to ensure that learning takes place in a safe and supportive environment.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- The district has adopted the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program to address student social and emotional development health needs and has provided some staff with PD. However, some school leaders reported that their staff members do not attend district-led PD pertaining to meeting student social and emotional developmental health needs because the level of the training does not match staff's levels of skill, experience, and knowledge. School reviews and discussions with school leaders indicated that district support for PD to address the social and emotional needs of students, in particular student behavior, is minimal. During school visits, the IIT found that behavior in classrooms and corridors was an issue in a number of buildings. In a few schools, some students stated that at times they felt their school was too unsafe to attend.
- School leaders stated that they have lost funding to maintain valuable anti-bullying programs and for programs to address students' social, emotional and developmental health needs. School leaders reported to reviewers that many teachers still do not know how to deal with classroom disruptions, as teachers do not have the skills to address poor behavior in classrooms, which results in a loss of learning time. School reviewers also found that not all teachers possessed adequate classroom

management skills. District staff recognized that this need is especially acute in relation to some student subgroups, such as students with disabilities, as a disproportionate number are suspended for behavioral issues.

- School leaders reported that follow-up on social and emotional developmental health PD is inadequate. They report that district staff have provided minimal support to help school staff who lack classroom management skills to address disruptive student behavior. The school leaders also said that referrals to external partners, such as psychologists and the crisis team, are frequently too slow to be useful and that district-employed experts in areas such as mental health do not provide sufficient guidance to help staff proactively address social and mental health issues.

Impact Statement:

- District staff do not provide appropriate PD to staff, particularly related to behavior, which often has a negative effect on learning. As a result, students do not receive the appropriate supports to address their 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:

- complete a detailed assessment in each school of student social and emotional developmental needs that incorporates the views of families;
- develop a district wide action plan and identify individual school priorities; and
- monitor the district plan and school implementation each quarter and make adjustments where necessary.

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 and schools have had limited success in creating a welcoming learning environment for families. Much of the communication to families from the district and the school is not reciprocal, as families have few opportunities to express their views. The district has formed some partnerships and provides some supports, but the impact has been minimal.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- School leaders interviewed indicated that the district has a policy for parent engagement and a parent advisory group that includes representatives from each school. However, the district and schools have had limited success in creating a welcoming learning environment for families. Although parent coordinators organize parent programs in schools, including those for fathers, most school leaders reported that attendance at school events is low, including for School Open House. There has been no

analysis by the district of why parents and families do not attend these events.

- School leaders reported that parents are not aware of key issues that affect their children. At many schools, parent participation in events focusing on topics such as the CCLS and data is low, and the school staff has been unsuccessful in increasing parent attendance at these events. When interviewed by the IIT, parents did not articulate a clear understanding of the school's performance in relation to Adequate Yearly Progress or overall school achievement.
- School leaders reported that district events do not meet the needs of the diverse parent population. Although events are presented in different geographical locations, these events are not presented in ways that meet the needs of diverse populations. For example, translators are not provided for the different languages spoken by families. In addition, school leaders said that although the district focuses on family fun events, the school leaders have not analyzed what works best and why when presenting information to parents. During discussions with the review team, school leaders reported that no district support or efforts have resulted in increased parent engagement. School leaders told the review team that parent attendance is poor at district-sponsored events unless they are student-led or include exhibitions of student created projects. In addition, the district's Parent Engagement Office has recently downsized, and many parents and school staff are not aware of the resources and the programs available through this office.
- Most school leaders reported that communication with families is not reciprocal, with information going to families from the district and the school, with no opportunities for parents to voice an opinion. School leaders also said that not all parents like or listen to robocalls, preferring to speak person to person. School leaders reported that district staff provides some translation of school and district documents in Spanish, but not for information about achievement data, such as report cards. During discussions with the IIT, some school leaders said that resources for translation into languages other than Spanish were rare. Some school leaders expressed concern that translators, who provided valuable support during school visits to families, are not replaced when they leave.
- The district has formed a number of partnerships, but has not monitored or evaluated these partnerships to determine the impact on family engagement. The district and schools do provide a coordinated response to working with families to improve attendance. This includes seeking to remove barriers to students' attendance through referrals to other agencies, such as mental health clinics. Although data provided by the district shows increases in attendance at some elementary schools, absenteeism remains a concern as attendance rates have not increased at all grade levels. There is also a Parent University, which was created to help parents strengthen their skills in supporting their children's education. However, school leaders said that not all parents and staff are aware of this resource or know its function. In addition, school leaders interviewed were concerned that partnerships with external agencies were not yet efficient in responding to the immediate needs of students.

Impact Statement:

- District staff do not collect and analyze information to determine how well they are developing partnerships with families. Consequently, they do not develop welcoming environments for families

that provide supports necessary to improve student achievement.

Recommendation:

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

- collect information relating to family engagement at the district and the individual school level to identify strengths and areas for improvement;
- analyze the information and develop a district-wide action plan;
- work with school leaders and the parent liaison coordinators to identify priorities at the school level; and
- monitor and adjust the plan accordingly, at both the district level and the school level, to enable district staff to get an accurate picture of how well they are providing the supports needed to improve student achievement.