



# 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>	411800001000000
<b>District</b>	Rome City School District
<b>District Address</b>	409 Bell Road, Rome, New York 13440
<b>Superintendent</b>	Jeffrey P. Simons
<b>Date(s) of Review</b>	May 19-20, 2015

District Information Sheet			
Grade Configuration	K-12	Total Enrollment	5209
		Number of Schools	9
District Composition ( <i>most recent data</i> )			
% Title I Population	96	% Attendance Rate	94
% Free Lunch	45	% Reduced Lunch	8
% Limited English Proficient	1	% Students with Disabilities	16
Racial/Ethnic Origin ( <i>most recent data</i> )			
% American Indian or Alaska Native	0	% Black or African American	9
% Hispanic or Latino	5	% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	1
% White	84	% Multi-Racial	0
Personnel ( <i>most recent data</i> )			
Years Superintendent Assigned to District	9	# of Deputy/Assistant Superintendents	3
# of Principals	9	# of Assistant Principals	7
# of Teachers	462	Avg. Class Size	23
% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate	0	% Teaching Out of Certification	1
% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience	6	Average Teacher Absences	7
Teacher Turnover Rate – Teachers < 5 years exp.	12	Teacher Turnover Rate – All Teachers	9
Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2013-14)			
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	20	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4	19
Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (4th Grade)	81	Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (8th Grade)	69
Student Performance for High Schools (2013-14)			
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	75	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4	76
Credit Accumulation High Schools Only (2013-14)			
4 Year Graduation Rate	73	5 Year Graduation Rate	75
% of earning Regents Diploma w/ Advanced Des.	25		
Current NYSED Accountability Status			
# of Reward Schools	0	# of Priority Schools	0
# of Schools In Good Standing	0	# of Focus Schools	9
# of LAP Schools	0		

### **District Accountability Status**

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

#### **DISTRICT PRIORITIES AS WRITTEN BY THE DISTRICT**

- Increase student achievement and academic growth for all students with an emphasis on communication and collaboration
- All students have the opportunity to be active participants in athletics, music, artistic and other co-curricular activities
- Strengthen parent and community engagement and partnership
- Continued exemplary fiscal and facilities planning

### Information about the review

- The review of the district was conducted by an Outside Educational Expert (OEE), a representative from the New York State Education Department and a representative from the Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (RBERN).
- The Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) reviews of two schools in the district also informed the district review.
- District reviewers conducted interviews with district leadership, central office staff, and a focus group of principals.
- The district provided results of a student survey that 2,840 students completed.
- The district provided results of a staff survey that 316 staff completed.
- The district provided results of a parent survey that 388 parents completed.

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

	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 3 - Curriculum Development and Support:</b> The school has rigorous and coherent curricula and assessments that are appropriately aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) for all students and are modified for identified subgroups in order to maximize teacher instructional practices and student-learning outcomes.					
#	Statement of Practice	Stage 4	Stage 3	Stage 2	Stage 1
3.1	The district works collaboratively with the school(s) to ensure CCLS curriculum that provide 21st Century and College and Career Readiness skills in all content areas and provides fiscal and human resources for implementation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Tenet 6 - Family and Community Engagement:</b> The school creates a culture of partnership where families, community members, and school staff work together to share in the responsibility for student academic progress and social-emotional growth and well-being.					
#	Statement of Practice	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 staff has established some recruitment priorities such as hiring more staff from diverse backgrounds. However, the district staff lacks an articulated definition of high quality teaching, leadership, and academic rigor to guide the recruitment, selection, and evaluation of personnel to ensure that the diverse needs of schools in the district are consistently met.</li> </ul> <p><b>Evidence</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The district leader and other district staff stated in interviews that the recruitment of diverse staff to meet critical areas of need is a priority. The district’s self-assessment document indicates that increase numbers of staff from diverse backgrounds, particularly staff who are bilingual is necessary to support student success. The district leader reported that district staff has sought to hire English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers to meet the needs of the growing English language learners (ELL) populations, to add crisis intervention prevention staff to respond to the growing social emotional developmental needs of students and to secure instructional coaches to support Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) aligned teacher practice. During discussions with the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT or review team) district staff shared that the district has recently established a relationship with the local National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), which resulted in the hiring of two staff members from diverse backgrounds. However, the district leader also stated that the district staff has not done enough to establish strong partnerships with community organizations such as the NAACP or with colleges and universities to attract candidates who are bilingual, which is a critical need in the district.</li> <li>The district leader and the Human Resources team reported that several central office administration positions had been cut including a director of curriculum, a district behavior specialist and several teaching positions. Although district leaders reported that that the elimination of these positions had not impacted services, school leaders reported in interviews that the reduction in certain staff positions such as teaching assistants hindered school staff in meeting the needs of all students.</li> <li>Data from the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) indicates that most teachers were rated as effective, and there was only one teacher in the district who was placed on a Teacher Improvement Plan (TIP). This is despite district wide low student performance. Evidence from the</li> </ul>		

school reviews indicated that weaknesses teachers’ instructional practices and that school leaders provided limited actionable feedback to teachers to help improve their instructional practices. During discussions with the IIT, district staff did not share a specific vision or plan to improve student achievement through a more rigorous approach to assessing teacher performance; a more thorough implementation of the APPR or a comprehensive professional development (PD) plan. Based on discussions with district and school leaders, the review team found that there is no cohesive understanding between schools and the district of what successful teaching and leadership practices should be consistently evident in schools to address low student achievement.

- The Human Resource team shared that the district has a high retention rate. During discussion with the IIT, district staff indicated that staff is retained at high levels because of the location of the district and favorable working conditions.

**Impact Statement:**

- Although the district has implemented some staffing changes to respond to student needs, the district has not framed its recruitment, support and evaluation efforts to effectively meet the needs of its increasingly diverse population and the district has not systematically used data to determine staffing needs and to ensure that each building has the staff needed to serve all students successfully.

**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 and adopt a district-wide definition for academic rigor, successful teaching, and successful leadership, and use these definitions to inform all district recruitment, PD, the APPR process and retention efforts;
- develop an APPR process that is rigorous and includes provisions for the school leader to craft a self-assessment that is informed by teaching and learning outcomes;
- establish partnerships with colleges and universities throughout the state as well as local organizations such as NAACP to assist in attracting and recruiting increase candidates from diverse backgrounds; and
- make sure the district human resource teams meet with each school leader and collaboratively assess staffing needs based on staff capacity, student enrollment, and the student achievement needs of each of the sub-groups represented in the building.

**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 2**

**Overall Finding:**

- The district has a theory of action, but has not ensured that all stakeholders have common an understanding of high expectations for all students. As a result, not all students’ needs are met, which

limits student achievement.

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

- The district leader described a theory of action that focuses on high expectations, common core learning, PD for all staff and improved communication and collaboration among all stakeholders to improve student achievement. Although the district leaders stated that there were high expectations for all students, district staff did not articulate commonly understood goals for how district staff would work collectively to ensure the realization of the theory of action. During discussions with the review team, the district leadership articulated higher expectations for those students who are on track for AP courses and top college matriculation than for other populations of students. The IIT found that the perspectives shared by the district staff indicate that expectations are not uniformly high for all students.
- The district leader stated that he has established various communication mechanisms including weekly meetings with his cabinet, monthly meetings with district and school leaders, monthly meetings with union officials, a yearly opening convocation with staff and periodic district newsletters. The district leader also reported that he tries to be visible during Superintendent Conference Days. Although the district leader described various channels of communication with all stakeholders, the district leader did not specify how well the district's theory of action had been communicated. Evidence gathered from a review of documents and IIT's focus group interviews indicate that the district leader's vision and goals are not widely communicated and commonly understood by parents, students, staff, and school leaders. In addition, the IIT found minimal evidence to show that the district leadership has articulated clear expectations for improvements in professional practices and student achievement or that the district has ensured information is district-wide translated to ensure that parents whose first language is other than English can be involved in school improvement.
- The district leader reported that he recently distributed an Executive Summary highlighting slight student achievement progress over a ten-year period. The IIT found that the summary did not provide details on specific assessments, on the correlation or lack of correlation between the assessments or of how the district or state expectations changed over this time frame. The district leader reported that he partners closely with BOCES, the Rome Chamber of Commerce, The Literacy Coalition and other organizations and stated that he had been successful in communicating Rome's challenge with low student achievement and with gathering support for the school district from the business community. The district leader also indicated that communication has improved with the school leaders because the assistant superintendents now work more closely with schools. However, school leaders indicated that more needs to be done to ensure communication between the schools and the district is consistent.

**Impact Statement:**

- The district theory of action does not adequately delineate what high expectations mean for all sub groups of students and therefore does not communicate the urgency and the action steps needed to

ensure every student's 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:

- solidify the theory of action utilizing the definitions of rigor and successful teaching and leadership;
- develop SMART goals with measurable benchmarks for subgroups aligned to the theory of action, and review targeted interventions, quarterly; and
- delineate specific district leadership roles and responsibilities for the monitoring and support of the implementation of all programs.

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

**Tenet Rating**

**Stage 2**

**Overall Finding:**

- The district staff has established Common Core curricula, PD, and responding to the resource needs of individual schools as priorities; however, the district staff lacks a system to consistently analyze the impact of resource decisions on raising academic standards and driving school improvement.

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

- The district leader stated that he changed the supervisory structure to include three assistant superintendents to provide support and guidance to school leaders in their development as instructional leaders and shared that; as a result, school leaders were shifting towards prioritizing instruction. The district leader and members of the Human Resources Team shared that as part of human resource decisions several district positions were eliminated and task associated with those positions were subsumed by existing positions. During discussions with the IIT, school leaders noted that although the assistant superintendents were focused on developing relationships and ongoing communication with schools; the elimination of so many central office positions added to the responsibilities of the assistant superintendents, which limited the amount of time the assistant superintendents spent in schools supporting instruction and school improvement.
- The district cabinet and the fiscal team shared that resource allocation was based on needs identified by the schools and on student enrollment. The IIT team learned through discussions with district staff, that the district cabinet meets weekly to discuss broad district goals and progress towards those goals. However, many questions posed during the curriculum, PD, and student support staff focus groups about the impact of initiatives discussed could not be answered, and the IIT found no evidence that the district cabinet meetings were used to support the effective mobilization of resources. School leaders expressed concern that, resources were not yet allocated to schools based on the unique needs of each school or on the changing demographics of the student population to ensure that staffing and other resources were adequate. The district leaders shared that one school had conducted a needs

assessment, which district staff found helpful in supporting this school’s request for resources. Yet, the district cabinet does not have a system to comprehensively assess the needs of all schools and some members of the district cabinet shared they did not frequently visit schools to monitor the impact of resource decisions.

- Discussions with the district leader and other district staff members indicates that there are no rigorous systems in place to assess the impact of resource decisions on improving professional practices or student achievement. The IIT found limited evidence that supports how district staff communicates clear expectations about how spending decisions should align with improvements to student learning or how the district will support schools in making the best use of delegated resources to drive forward school improvement at a faster rate.

**Impact Statement:**

- The district lacks an overarching system to identify and prioritize schools’ needs, and to align and allocate resources to meet the specific needs of the student population of each school.

**Recommendation:**

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

- assess each school’s needs, in collaboration with the school leader and develop a comprehensive plan to allocate resources effectively to serve the needs of each school;
- prioritize specific and unique goals for each school and institute ongoing planning sessions with the whole cabinet to help deploy resources to help schools achieve these prioritized goals; and
- develop a tool to outline how each resource is being used to contribute to the improvement of student learning and monitor the short-term (20 day) and long-term impact.

<b>Statement of Practice 1.4:</b> 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.	<b>Tenet Rating</b>	<b>Stage 2</b>
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**Overall Finding:**

- The district staff has prioritized PD, offers an array of professional learning sessions, and supports school-based improvement of teacher CCLS instructional practice. However, the district staff has not ensured that PD opportunities are differentiated to match the needs and performance levels of individuals or schools. In addition, the district staff has not evaluated the impact of PD offerings on improving student learning or teacher practices.

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

- The IIT reviewed the district’s three-year professional development plan (PDP) that included many proposed topics but lacked specific, prioritized targets and the PD team indicated that this plan was a

draft and not completed. The district leader shared that the PD priorities include teacher collaboration, the implementation of a student-writing program and of the ELA and Math modules. However, there was a lack of clarity as to how these priorities had been decided upon. During discussions with the IIT, members of the staff shared that the priorities arise out of feedback from schools and district staff but the IIT found no evidence to indicate that the district uses school, student, or teacher performance data to identify training needs of individual schools or clusters of schools. In addition, district and school leaders reported that there are no rigorous, measurable procedures in place to survey the quality of PD, to make certain that teachers implement what they have learned at training, or to ensure that follow up PD is provided where first efforts were not successful. The IIT found no evidence of a direct correlation between PD and improvements to instruction and student learning.

- The district leader explained that they have invested in instructional coaches who are responsible for developing relationships with teachers and school leaders to enable receptivity to in-class coaching to supplement districtwide and external training. The IIT learned that coaches are assigned to support schools based on school leader or teacher request. The PD focus group and the assistant superintendents for instruction shared their observations with the review team and offered anecdotal evidence of impact citing observations of increased student collaboration, increased student engagement and less teacher-directed practice as a result of the support provided by the coaches. However, the coaches or other district leaders provided quantifiable evidence to indicate that any of the PD offered has had an impact on teacher effectiveness or student achievement.
- The school leaders and the PD focus group shared that there had been some PD on teaching students of poverty since the district has over 60 percent of its students classified as economically disadvantaged and because school leaders have articulated this training need. The district contracted with an expert to train staff on the education of students of poverty; however, not all staff received this training, and the district did not share any work that is in progress to turnkey this PD or to develop internal capacity in this area so that all schools could receive the same type of training and support.

**Impact Statement:**

- While the district has deployed instructional coaches to support schools and teachers, the district does not have a comprehensive Professional Development Plan that includes specific, prioritized targets, action plans and evaluation mechanisms to ensure teacher effectiveness.

**Recommendation:**

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

- conduct a PD needs assessment that includes survey and interview components with teachers and the school leader in each school to assess student and teacher needs, and draw up and implement a PD plan that meets all identified needs. Develop district-wide instructional priorities and corresponding

professional development priorities, and share priorities with all staff members;

- monitor the quality of PD by distributing evaluation forms after each professional learning session and identify one central office staff person to analyze the results of the surveys and to make recommendations for improvement; and
- make sure that PD is implemented with fidelity in all classrooms and provide follow-up PD where weaknesses remain.

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

**Tenet Rating**

**Stage 1**

**Overall Finding:**

- The district has made data-driven decision making a priority, but does not yet have a comprehensive system to collect and analyze data and best practices to ensure ongoing student achievement.

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

- The district leader described data driven decision making and instruction as a district effort and shared that school leaders are to be supported with summer leadership development days to look at student achievement data, to assess annual progress, and to use data to plan for the following year. The district leader noted that there has been a significant effort to focus on data and he described the report he developed that outlined student achievement data over a 10 year period. However, The IIT noted this report only referenced very general data points and did not highlight student achievement progress throughout the past academic year. During discussions with the IIT, the district leader acknowledged that district staff does not yet have a comprehensive mechanism to collect and review data as a district or an integrated data system, but explained that he is in the process of working with BOCES to develop a system.
- The district leader and assistant superintendents noted that the instructional coaches have begun to work with teachers in several schools to analyze formative assessment data such as Aims Web quarterly data, the mid and end of module assessments and samples of student writing and to support teachers in the development of next steps to support student learning; yet there was no evidence that their work reached all teachers or that it supported teachers in disaggregating this data based on student sub-group. Evidence gathered from the Curriculum focus group, the PD focus group, the principal focus group and the district leader interviews demonstrated that the district staff is at an early stage of supporting schools in systemically collecting, analyzing, and monitoring data to inform school practice. In addition, school leaders and teachers need more training using data to guide instructional and student improvement.
- The district leadership noted that they tracked progress through many informal conversations and that district staff has begun to collect data differently as a result of the last year's district review. However, in the majority of interviews conducted but the IIT, district representatives were not able to describe

what they had learned from previous reviews or reports or identify any formalized systems they put in place to address data weaknesses, previously identified.

**Impact Statement:**

- The district does not have a comprehensive system for collecting and analyzing data and is therefore not able to effectively track and support 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:

- immediately develop or adopt a system to regularly collect and analyze student achievement data, curriculum implementation data, and program implementation data at least four times per year. District staff should ensure that data are analyzed according to each subgroup of students. Based upon data referenced during the IIT visit, these data points could include Engage NY mid and end of module assessments, AIMS web assessments, student writing prompts, afterschool programming, and AIS programming.
- share the quarterly analysis of data with every cabinet member and school leader and set the expectation that resources need to be mobilized each quarter to meet specific student achievement targets.

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

<p><b>Statement of Practice 2.1 - School Leader Practices and Decisions:</b> The district works collaboratively with the school to provide opportunities and supports for the school leader to create, develop and nurture a school environment that is responsive to the needs of the entire school community.</p>	<p><b>Tenet Rating</b></p>	<p><b>Stage 2</b></p>
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**Overall Finding:**

- Although the district leader has prioritized communication and collaboration with the school leaders by assigning an assistant superintendent for the elementary school, middle school, and high school, there is an absence of district-wide systems and supports to ensure school leader’s effectiveness.

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

- School leaders noted in interviews that they do not have the level of autonomy needed to make the best decisions for their schools. In addition, some school leaders reported that the district policy of splitting special area teachers’ time between schools limited the school leaders’ ability to plan effectively across content areas. One school leader indicated that having many shared special area teachers impacts negatively upon scheduling common planning times. The school leaders expressed concern about the elimination of several central office positions and teaching assistant positions.

- School leaders report that they are asked to identify the resources they need for their schools, but that district resources are not always provided when asked for regarding specific school needs. One example was that afterschool funding was not provided consistently throughout the year even though school leaders noted that almost every student could benefit from after school support. School leaders indicated that the district does not provide sufficient support in meeting its PD needs as training is not always prioritized to specific school needs. In addition, school leaders state that they have difficulties in accessing, analyzing and using data at both whole-school and classroom level, and that the district has not moved quickly enough in addressing data issues and concerns identified in previous district reviews.
- School leaders stated that although they felt communication had improved with the three assistant superintendents, they describe minimal ongoing communication and collaboration with the full district cabinet and limited district leadership presence in schools. Some school leaders commented that they do not have enough support from the district staff in devising and meeting of their school specific goals and visions. School leaders stated they attend monthly principal meetings but they noted that the district staff usually establishes those agendas and that, sometimes during meetings there is no time left for reciprocal communication between the district leaders and the school leaders.

**Impact Statement:**

- District and school leaders do not consistently collaborate on priority areas identified by school leaders, which limits the ability of the school leaders to meet the needs of their school community.

**Recommendation:**

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

- make sure that the district cabinet visits each school as a full team at least twice per year. These visits should include classroom walkthroughs and conversations with students, staff and parents
- make sure that the district leadership work together and reach decisions that are based on their collective assessment of school needs based on the data gathered during the school visits and based on other common data sets shared and used by all district cabinet members.

**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 staff has established expectation for aligning curricula and instruction to the CCLS; however, school leaders indicate that the district support is not comprehensive enough to staff in implementing the expectations fully.

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

- School leaders shared that the district is working to establish universal systems for curriculum implementation such as lesson plan formats, curriculum maps, and pacing guides but noted that this work was still new and not sufficiently supported in all schools by district staff. During discussions with the IIT, school leaders shared that the district provided CCLS modules to uniformly address the ELA and math curriculum. Writing program materials aligned with the Lucy Calkins Writing Program have also been supplied to teachers for their writing programs. However, school and teacher leaders reported, and class visits by the IIT confirmed that this universal approach to implement the EngageNY modules without modification had hindered efforts in implementing a curriculum that meet all the needs of student sub groups. Evidence from the school reviews supported school leaders' statements that the monitoring of curriculum implementation, through informal or formal observation, has been inconsistent and, therefore, does not ensure curriculum is implemented and differentiated effectively. School leaders informed reviewers that district staff do not provide regular feedback to teachers on how they could improve their curriculum planning and implementation or identify best practices that could be shared in schools across the district. The district curriculum focus group shared that the district recently conducted a curriculum audit to assess content area texts not reflected in the grades that use the ELA and math modules and will make needed text upgrades based on this audit. However, the IIT found no evidence of formal information or data being collected to ensure fidelity of curricula implementation or to inform needed modifications.
- During the school reviews, staff confirmed that the district supports data teams in each school. However, evidence from the school reviews indicate that school leaders and teachers reported that the staff has limited knowledge of data results and lacks confidence in how to use available data in inform planning and instruction. School leaders stated that data is only beginning to be collected but information is not yet being analyzed at the district level to provide schools with guidance and support on setting specific improvement goals directly linked to the performance of students, subgroups of students or aspects of different content areas.

**Impact Statement:**

- The district has begun to work with schools to implement CCLS curriculum and has provided curriculum materials in ELA, math and writing but this work does not yet reach all teachers and is not effectively evaluated to determine impact.

**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 a curriculum implementation and monitoring plan;
- include in the plan protocols to be used by all central office instructional staff and school leaders to

monitor the fidelity of curriculum implementation, to support curriculum development and adaptation as needed, and to provide supportive but direct feedback to teachers frequently throughout the year; and

- include in the plan ongoing professional development for instructional leaders and formal opportunities for collaboration across schools so that school leaders can build upon existing best practices in their work.

**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:**

District and schools are not working collaboratively to create appropriate and specific programs to provide rigorous learning opportunities

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

- School leaders note that the implementation of the ELA and math modules have supported only limited incorporation of rigor and engagement in classrooms, particularly in the areas of questioning and student collaboration. School leaders state that there is no district-wide definition of rigor to guide the development of rigorous learning opportunities throughout every grade level and content area. The district cabinet noted that they had recently participated in PD that asked them to describe their definition of rigor and shared that they each defined rigor differently. As a result staff evaluation of teacher practice is variable.
- The observations reports reviewed during school visits showed that most teachers were rated effective or highly effective on APPR observations and that there was no actionable feedback provided to teachers to help improve instruction. The instruction observed during school reviews did not align with the ratings of the observation reports as the IIT found weaknesses in instruction. Most lessons observed by the IIT were teacher-directed with few opportunities for students to think through problems and respond to questions. Instruction that met the special needs and interests of students, particularly those in subgroups, was not observed. School leaders indicate that there are weaknesses in instruction in their schools and that high quality PD is needed to address these weaknesses. School leaders also stated that the APPR is unrealistically painting a picture of positivity about the quality of instruction in schools that is in contradiction to the low student growth and achievement prevalent in schools.
- Teachers noted in interviews that PD often lacks the depth of information necessary to expand their understanding and teachers also reported that the planned July PD excluded all the elementary teachers who were involved in teaching summer school because it was offered during the work day. School leaders reported that although PD is focused on the CCLS, it is not differentiated based on teacher knowledge or student subgroup. There is currently no expectation for teachers to implement practices learned from district PD in classroom instruction. Although exit surveys are collected after

some PD session, the IIT found no evidence of the information being analyzed systematically to inform further PD planning.

**Impact Statement:**

- The lack of a district wide definition of rigor and differentiated PD to fully support schools and teachers prevents school leaders and teachers from receiving the support they need to plan collaboratively and effectively to accelerate 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:

- develop district wide definitions of rigor and student engagement and develop district-wide expectations that delineate the types of learning activities that should be a part of every class;
- prioritize ongoing and differentiated professional learning focused on rigor and student engagement for teachers and school leaders; and
- evaluate the effectiveness of the professional learning offered and develop clear expectations for school leader provision of ongoing and feedback and support to teachers beyond the formal evaluation process.

**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:**

- There is an absence of an overarching plan to meet the social, emotional developmental health needs of all students in the district and the district support of student social emotional developmental health is generic and is not based on specific student needs.

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

- School leaders reported that there is no district plan that outlines the district’s priorities in the area of social and emotional well-being or how it intends to meet the growing needs of students and their families in the district. One school leader reported that the main source of district support in the area of social emotional developmental health was in the form of guidance counselors and social workers but stated current staffing levels was not sufficient to meet the number and needs of students. Another school leader indicated that she is currently advocating for a full time guidance counselor based on her schools population needs but noted that the district has not yet accommodated that request. The school leaders confirmed an increasing number of social emotional developmental health needs, including mental health needs and described how they were individually developing partnerships with mental health agencies and other organizations to provide students and families with

counseling and support. The school leaders said that they need more support from the district to meet the needs of their student population. One school leader noted that the needs in her building differed from her colleagues and she felt that district allocation of resources should reflect the reality of her student population.

- Student Support staff shared that, during the current academic year, the number of student discipline referrals have increased and that students and families had increasing needs. One counselor was able to describe in detail the work at his school to address students’ positive development, the use of a curriculum on character development and the work that he and the school social worker engaged in to meet the needs of the students and the families in his building. However, the school support staff shared that most of the work in this area was building specific and not a part of wider district plan.
- School leaders, teachers, and support staff state that the district does not provide regular and targeted PD to equip staff with the skills to meet the increasing challenges that students present. School leaders also report that their requests for additional support and training for staff have not yet been met and this hinders their ability to fully address the needs of students.

**Impact Statement:**

- The district provides very limited support to schools and this contributes to schools’ inability to consistently 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:

- develop a district wide plan with specific and targeted action steps to proactively address all students’ needs. The plan should include PD strategies to support all staff in meeting the needs of students; the articulation of district wide partnerships with external agencies to work in collaboration with district and school leadership to provided additional support services for students including students in crisis as well as students who have age appropriate development 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.

**Stage 2**

**Overall Finding:**

- The district staff has some mechanisms in place to communicate with parents, but lacks a comprehensive plan to develop and sustain relationships with families.

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

- During discussions with the IIT, school leaders reported that the district has recently established multiple vehicles to communicate with families such as mass email systems and a district web site. The school leaders also discussed the district leader's vision to involve and embrace the diverse parent population and expressed concerns about the district Family Coordinator position that had been eliminated due to budget cuts. School leaders state that the district provides transportation for parents to attend Board of Education meetings, and the district staff has held more public meetings, specifically focus on the renovations in the district and the curriculum and testing transitions. Some school leaders stated that the district's communication initiatives have not yet been evaluated and that the outreach efforts are not part of a district-wide strategic plan to build and sustain partnerships and communications with families.
- School leaders note that the district has maintained support and contacts with the Refuge Center, hired translators and district level coaches to help with translations of documents to assist in supporting the ELL population. School leaders shared that some documents are translated by the district but that they often have to utilize internal staff to support translation efforts within schools. During discussions with the review team, school leaders described the sessions on the CCLS math modules provided to parents by the instructional coaches. School leaders also shared that teachers have not received PD on strategies to build and sustain partnerships with parents or to better engage parents in their child's education.

**Impact Statement:**

- The lack of a comprehensive strategy to develop strong partnerships with families hinders each school's ability to successfully mobilize their parents to support accelerated 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:

- develop a clear parent and community engagement plan inclusive of specific district initiatives and expectations and strategies for a targeted number of school-based initiatives; and
- make sure that all communication is translated into pertinent languages.