



# 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>	530600010000
<b>District</b>	Schenectady City School District
<b>District Address</b>	108 Education Drive, Schenectady, New York, 12303
<b>Superintendent</b>	Laurence T. Spring
<b>Date(s) of Review</b>	May 27-28, 2015

District Information Sheet			
<b>Grade Configuration</b>	Prek-12	<b>Total Enrollment</b>	10858
		<b>Number of Schools</b>	17
<b>District Composition (most recent data)</b>			
<b>% Title I Population</b>	79	<b>% Attendance Rate</b>	91
<b>% Free Lunch</b>	70	<b>% Reduced Lunch</b>	7
<b>% Limited English Proficient</b>	3	<b>% Students with Disabilities</b>	17%
<b>Racial/Ethnic Origin (most recent data)</b>			
<b>% American Indian or Alaska Native</b>	0	<b>% Black or African American</b>	34
<b>% Hispanic or Latino</b>	19	<b>% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</b>	15
<b>% White</b>	27	<b>% Multi-Racial</b>	4
<b>Personnel (most recent data)</b>			
<b>Years Superintendent Assigned to District</b>	3	<b># of Deputy/Assistant Superintendents</b>	0
<b># of Principals</b>	22	<b># of Assistant Principals</b>	9
<b># of Teachers</b>	743	<b>Avg. Class Size</b>	27
<b>% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate</b>	0	<b>% Teaching Out of Certification</b>	0
<b>% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience</b>	9.4	<b>Average Teacher Absences</b>	8
<b>Teacher Turnover Rate – Teachers &lt; 5 years exp.</b>	15.5	<b>Teacher Turnover Rate – All Teachers</b>	5.2
<b>Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2013-14)</b>			
<b>ELA Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4</b>	14	<b>Mathematics Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4</b>	10
<b>Science Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4 (4th Grade)</b>	67	<b>Science Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4 (8th Grade)</b>	141
<b>Student Performance for High Schools (2013-14)</b>			
<b>ELA Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4</b>	66	<b>Mathematics Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4</b>	244
<b>Credit Accumulation High Schools Only (2013-14)</b>			
<b>4 Year Graduation Rate</b>	56	<b>6 Year Graduation Rate</b>	62
<b>% of earning Regents Diploma w/ Advanced Des.</b>	10		
<b>Current NYSED Accountability Status</b>			
<b># of Reward Schools</b>	0	<b># of Priority Schools</b>	3
<b># of Schools In Good Standing</b>	0	<b># of Focus Schools</b>	14
<b># of LAP Schools</b>	1		

### District Accountability Status

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

**District priorities as written by the district:**

1. Promoting growth in the ability for principals to become more effective instructional leaders in their buildings.
2. Ensuring high quality initial instruction in all classrooms.
3. Ensuring curriculum is aligned to CCLS.
4. Increasing the number of students reading on grade level.
5. Meeting the social and emotional needs of all students.

## **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 2 schools in the district also informed the district review.
- During IIT school reviews in the district, reviewers visited 60 classrooms across the two 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 school leaders. Three school leaders, who had not had IIT reviews this year, were also interviewed in their schools.
- No surveys were submitted to the IIT.

**Tenet 1 - District Leadership and Capacity:** The district examines school systems and makes intentional decisions to identify and provide critical expectations, supports and structures in all areas of need so that schools are able to respond to their community and ensure that all students are successful.

#	Statement of Practice	Stage 4	Stage 3	Stage 2	Stage 1
1.1	The district has a comprehensive approach for recruiting, evaluating, and sustaining high-quality personnel that affords schools the ability to ensure success by addressing the needs of their community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.2	The district leadership has a comprehensive and explicit theory of action about school culture that communicates high expectations for addressing the needs of all constituents.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.3	The district is organized and allocates resources (financial, staff support, materials, etc.) in a way that aligns appropriate levels of support for schools based on the needs of the school community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.4	The district has a comprehensive plan to create, deliver and monitor professional development in all pertinent areas that is adaptive and tailored to the needs of individual schools.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.5	The district promotes a data-driven culture by providing strategies connected to best practices that all staff members and school communities are expected to be held accountable for implementing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 1:</b>				X	

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

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

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

#	Statement of Practice	Stage 4	Stage 3	Stage 2	Stage 1
3.1	The district works collaboratively with the school(s) to ensure CCLS curriculum that provide 21st Century and College and Career Readiness skills in all content areas and provides fiscal and human resources for implementation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

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

<p><b>Tenet 1 - District Leadership and Capacity:</b> The district examines school systems and makes intentional decisions to identify and provide critical expectations, supports and structures in all areas of need so that schools are able to respond to their community and ensure that all students are successful.</p>	<p><b>Overall Tenet Rating</b></p>	<p><b>Stage 2</b></p>
<p><b>Statement of Practice 1.1:</b> The district has a comprehensive approach for recruiting, evaluating, and sustaining high-quality personnel that affords schools the ability to ensure success by addressing the needs of their community.</p>	<p><b>Tenet Rating</b></p>	<p><b>Stage 2</b></p>
<p><b>Overall Finding:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The district has established a system for recruitment with a commitment to attracting highly qualified applicants with a strong belief that all students can achieve. There is no formal system to show that district staff are focusing on how well new teachers are addressing the needs of students. The district does not have a formalized exit procedure so has no clear understanding as to why teachers leave. Information reported to the New York State Education Department (NYSED) regarding the evaluation system for teachers is not reflected in student academic outcomes across the district.</li> </ul> <p><b>Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The district self-assessment document states that the online system for recruitment strategies and structures includes steps to ensure that the district attracts highly qualified and diverse applicants who are committed to inclusive education, advocacy for students with disabilities, and the strong belief that all students can achieve. The district has connections with universities and colleges to further expand its recruitment pool; however, these are not well established. School leaders spoke enthusiastically to the review team about their involvement in the district’s recruiting process. In addition, school leaders spoke of advocating for new positions in their schools, such as instructional supervisors who have been appointed to focus on teacher evaluations. While district leaders shared many positive things to the review team about the recruitment process, not all district leaders agreed that there are sufficient social workers to address the needs of the entire district. In addition, it was also noted that there is no formal system established where district staff focus on the performance of newly licensed teachers to see how well they are addressing student needs. Information from NYSED shows that the district has a teacher turnover rate of five percent and a teacher turnover rate for those with less than five years teaching experience of almost 16 percent. However, the district has no formal system for exit interviews to show why teachers leave.</li> <li>Data from the 2013-14 Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) ratings shows that most teachers were rated either effective or highly effective. Reviewers noted this data does not match the districts’ most recent state assessment scores, which show low student growth. Discussions with district staff show that teachers receive professional development (PD) and feedback to improve their practice, but district staff told reviewers PD practices are not always implemented in the classroom and as a result, instruction is not consistently effective at improving student achievement. One of the district’s main priorities is to work with school leaders to improve their leadership skills. However, a document review shows that district staff evaluates school leaders, but there is little evidence of clear,</li> </ul>		

actionable feedback that is given to them to help them become more effective leaders. The superintendent has produced a comprehensive manual to guide school leaders in their leadership roles and many school leaders stated that the manual provided an effective reference point, but that they still needed face-to-face support with district leaders when dealing with issues of concern.

**Impact Statement:**

- The district has developed a system for recruiting highly qualified staff; however, the recruiting process is not consistently thorough. In addition, district and school leaders are not accurately evaluating how effectively teachers are meeting the needs of students. Consequently, this prevents all students from achieving at high levels.

**Recommendation:**

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

- monitor the effectiveness of all newly appointed teachers in relation to meeting the needs of students;
- ensure that school leader evaluations provide frequent constructive feedback that lead to improvements in leadership practices; and
- complete exit interviews to identify why teachers leave the district and use the information to address the reasons why teachers leave.

<p><b>Statement of Practice 1.2.:</b> The district leadership has a comprehensive and explicit theory of action about school culture that communicates high expectations for addressing the needs of all constituents.</p>	<p><b>Tenet Rating</b></p>	<p><b>Stage 2</b></p>
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**Overall Finding:**

- The district has identified five priorities that set out high expectations for aligning professional practices to student outcomes. However, district staff have not successfully supported and engaged schools in understanding and implementing these priorities so that students achieve at high levels of success.

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

- The district leader stated that the district’s five priorities are linked to the need for staff to align their professional practices to student outcomes. The summer PD program promotes the district’s high expectations and priorities, as do meetings such as Management Professional Performance Reviews, and the written leadership guidance that school leaders have been provided with from the district. Discussions with district staff confirm that the district focuses on improving the effectiveness of school leaders and uses consultants to improve the quality of instructional practices and ensure curriculum is Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) aligned. An additional priority is to increase the number of children who read at grade level, so the district has hired more reading teachers. Despite the efforts of district staff and consultants working with teachers to develop their practices, district staff acknowledges that instructional practices are not positively impacting student achievement. Discussions with school staff indicate that this is in part due to the fact that the district’s priorities are not clearly articulated or communicated to schools and their staff and as a result, there is a lack of

clarity as to the district’s priorities and the steps and strategies needed to ensure their successful completion. In addition, district staff has difficulty speaking about where improvements have been made because systems to accurately monitor and evaluate instruction and the work of consultants or school leaders are not well established.

- District leaders state that some district documents are translated, into the most pertinent languages of families in the district to meet the needs of families and students who do not speak English as their main language. However, school leaders state that families do not always receive translated documents from the district and there is limited evidence to indicate that families fully understand the district’s priorities, the steps needed to achieve these priorities, or the district’s academic performance overall. The district leader stated that more work is needed to develop processes that better communicate its vision and goals to the whole school community, so that a unified strategy for success is known and understood by all constituents.

**Impact Statement:**

- The district’s priorities and vision for success are not articulated clearly enough. Not everyone in the school community knows the district’s priorities and because of a lack of systems to monitor and evaluate the work of the district, support has not led to district priorities being achieved, particularly in relation to improving teacher instructional practices. Consequently, students do not achieve at high levels of success.

**Recommendation:**

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

- work with all constituents to enable them to develop a deep understanding of the district priorities and of their importance on student outcomes; and
- monitor and evaluate district priorities to identify what is working and where additional support is needed.

<p><b>Statement of Practice 1.3:</b> The district is organized and allocates resources (financial, staff support, materials, etc.) in a way that aligns appropriate levels of support for schools based on the needs of the school community.</p>	<p><b>Tenet Rating</b></p>	<p><b>Stage 2</b></p>
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**Overall Finding:**

- The district has moved from a centralized budget to a school-based budget and district staff monitors school leader spending. However, procedures to monitor the impact of resource allocation are not securely in place. This adds to the barriers hindering academic success for all students.

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

- District staff report that they have moved from a centralized budget to a school-based budget and that funding is allocated according to the number of students in each school. Students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs) are funded separately depending on their individual needs. School leaders spoke of their involvement in this process and stated they are all asked for budgetary proposals linked to district and school priorities. School leaders reported that some discussions with district staff focus on how the allocation of resources should impact on student outcomes, but both school and

district leaders state that these discussions are informal. District leaders acknowledge that there are no formalized district-wide procedures to monitor the impact of resource allocation to check the value added it provides in terms of improving student achievement and professional practices. This contributes to the barriers hindering academic success for all students.

- District staff stated during discussions with reviewers that the budget for students with disabilities is always driven by student need via their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). However, there was little evidence of any specific resources allocated to meet the needs of other subgroups of students that have been highlighted in the district, such as African-Americans and Hispanic/Latino students. During further discussions, district staff stated that resources for student social and emotional health do not consistently address the needs of all students because of a lack of social workers to cope with the needs of students.

**Impact Statement:**

- There is little formal monitoring and evaluation of the impact of district spending. Consequently, district staff cannot tell how resource decisions promote school improvement and success.

**Recommendation:**

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

- work with school leaders to develop systems for evaluating the impact of the allocation of resources in all schools; and
- hold school leaders and staff accountable for where spending does not align with improvement, and make appropriate amendments 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.

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

- The district’s PD program is communicated to all schools and there is some evidence of district staff providing follow-up support. However, although the district has a rubric for monitoring the quality and impact of PD, there is little evidence of it being used.

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

- District staff state that the PD plan is mainly based on district priorities, such as to develop ways to improve instructional practices by focusing more on differentiated instruction and allowing teachers to develop their understanding and expertise in the teaching of reading. School leaders reported that there has also been much PD based on developing curricula and instruction to improve teacher instructional practices. District staff and school leaders report that over a period of time school staff have had a wide range of PD offered to them. In addition, district staff state that an administration team meets regularly to identify PD that is relevant to the needs of the district’s schools, which include strands related to race, poverty, and disability. School leaders and district leaders confirm that PD is

communicated via the instructional coaches through Friday memos and the district’s internal e-mail. However, not all school leaders say that these channels of communication are effective.

- There is some evidence of district staff providing follow-up support. For example, district staff stated that a phonics program was implemented following staff training in grades kindergarten through two and walkthroughs by district staff identified that more PD was needed to support phonics instruction. As a result, district leaders state they are currently discussing how to proceed with the phonics program for next year. However, discussions with district and school leaders indicate that the practice of follow-up PD is not consistent across schools or the district.
- There is a rubric for monitoring the PD program, which includes an evaluation of the reactions and learning of participants and their thoughts on the organization, support, and challenge of the PD they receive. The rubric also includes an evaluation of participants’ use of knowledge and skills in the classroom along with the impact on student learning outcomes. However, there is little evidence of this rubric being used or that PD is monitored and evaluated by district staff to quantify improvements to instructional practices or student outcomes. District leaders stated the rubric is difficult to administer, although it was included in the comprehensive PD plan that was submitted to reviewers.

**Impact Statement:**

- Although PD is available and focused on the district’s priorities, the program is not rigorously evaluated and does not lead to increased teacher effectiveness.

**Recommendation:**

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

- evaluate the impact PD is having on improving student achievement and teacher instructional practices; and
- make consistent use of the evaluation rubric in existence to gauge the views of school staff regarding the quality and effectiveness of the PD provided and use this information to contribute to the planning of future PD.

<p><b>Statement of Practice 1.5:</b> 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><b>Tenet Rating</b></p>	<p><b>Stage 2</b></p>
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**Overall Finding:**

- Data is shared with schools, but not all school staff members understand the data they receive and staff are unsure how to use data to inform and adjust their instructional practices to promote further student achievement.

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

- The district has a number of systems to collect data. However, school leaders state that some staff members find the different systems confusing. For example, there are five different systems the

district uses to collect student data related to academic performance, attendance, discipline, suspension, and other general information. This makes access to the different data systems difficult, and some school leaders state that this leads to a lack of confidence in using the data systems. This is reflected in school reviews, which demonstrated that many school staff, including some school leaders, lack the skills to use data to ensure that student needs are met or to use data to drive instruction, make curricular modifications and adjustments, or rigorously track student progress. School leaders identified a lack of district support and high quality training for school staff as reasons contributing to the absence of adequate skills at the school level to use data effectively. In addition, the district acknowledges that it does not disseminate best practices for using data observed in some schools to set a benchmark for all schools to emulate.

- District staff stated that they are unclear why some assessment data is collected. Further, during discussions with reviewers, district staff reported that when they validated teacher assessments they found that only approximately 70 percent were accurate.
- School leaders state that teachers of students with disabilities receive guidance from district staff in writing goals for IEPs. In relation to goals for all students, district staff reported that every school leader has been told that each teacher must move two students up to proficient to increase outcomes overall; however, there was no evidence to show how successful this has been.

**Impact Statement:**

- The lack of consistent analysis and use of data across the district hinders student academic achievement.

**Recommendation:**

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

- check that all school leaders and teachers understand how to use the data systems in schools; and
- develop school leader and teacher understanding of using data to inform planning and delivery of lessons.

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>
<p><b>Overall Finding:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District staff does not consistently work with schools to provide opportunities and supports to create, develop, and nurture a school environment where students achieve and receive the supports they need to develop socially and emotionally.</li> </ul>		

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

- All school leaders spoke of how relationships between their school and the district had improved recently. Further, school leaders stated that they are listened to and are included in the district's systems for recruiting staff and the allocation of resources. However, school leaders stated that they are not all supported particularly well in relation to curriculum development. Most school leaders mentioned the English Language Arts (ELA) support they received from the consultants, which has focused on improving teacher effectiveness. Improvements identified were related to teacher and student confidence when working with different texts in ELA, but school leaders did not make positive comments in relation to the wider impact of this work on teacher effectiveness or student outcomes.
- School leaders acknowledge that there are some programs to support student social and emotional development health needs in areas such as behavior and crisis management, but reported that support or PD from the district did not consistently address the social and emotional developmental needs of students. In addition, few school leaders spoke positively about PD that focused on helping them to become more effective instructional leaders, as a number of school leaders had difficulty identifying PD they had recently taken part in.
- School leaders state that the district provides some support to them on establishing individual school goals aligned to the district's priorities. However, school leaders also state that the district does not do enough to communicate its priorities in a clear and systematic way to all members of the school community. This, combined with a lack of rigor in which the district monitors its progress towards completion of its priorities, makes it difficult for the district and all stakeholders to gauge how the district is performing and make adjustments. Some school leaders added that there is little district focus on subgroups, such as, African-Americans, Latinos, and students with disabilities. While reviewers noted that it is clear that everyone at the district level is aware of the district's vision to create, nurture, and sustain school communities that are responsive to the needs of all stakeholders, many district staff acknowledge that there is still a way to go to enable all students to be successful.
- The review team found limited evidence that the district curricula and teacher instructional practices consistently contain content or strategies specifically aimed at meeting the individual needs of students, particularly for students with disabilities. School staff were not seen using data to inform their work when focusing on students' academic and social needs. Further, the review team found that systems to support student social and emotional developmental health needs were limited.

**Impact Statement:**

- The district does not rigorously monitor the support it provides to schools, which limits the ability of the district to evaluate the impact of its supports and hinders student success.

**Recommendation:**

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

- identify each school's needs more specifically, particularly in relation to the needs of subgroups;
- develop systems to monitor and evaluate how well these subgroups achieve both academically and socially; and

- monitor quarterly to establish the impact the districts’ actions are having on supporting school leaders in developing a school environment that is responsive to the needs of all students.

**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 is beginning to collaborate with teachers to enable them to deliver a curriculum that is aligned to the CCLS, but the lack of consistent systems to monitor and evaluate the impact of the district’s work hinder efforts toward sustained improvement.

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

- School leaders state that district staff is working with consultants who are focusing on improving teacher planning in ELA. These consultants show teachers how to write and deliver units and then how to teach using scaffolds, questioning, and building vocabulary. This work has focused on developing student thinking and accountable talk, which involves developing student listening and speaking skills across the district. When school leaders were asked by reviewers how successful the work of the consultants has been, they stated that the district had no formal procedures for monitoring this work and schools and the district were waiting for the state assessment results to find out.
- School leaders state that the curriculum used in all schools is approved at the district level. The school leaders report that consultants take part in walkthroughs with them and they discuss what they have observed in relation to aligning curricula to the CCLS and meeting the needs of all students. In addition, school leaders report that discussions take place between district staff and themselves with regard to how well students are able to cite evidence from texts and how they cope when given more complex texts. Despite this, a few school leaders indicate that they need further support in aligning curricula to the CCLS. Some teachers state they have difficulty implementing CCLS aligned curriculum despite the support from district staff, consultants, and PD because they do not fully understand the process of what they have to do.
- School leaders report that district staff do not routinely monitor or evaluate the implementation and outcomes of the CCLS curriculum or provide schools with feedback in relation to the effectiveness of schools’ implementation of the CCLS curriculum. During discussions, district staff spoke of much funding recently spent on developing curricula and improving instructional practices. However, district staff acknowledge that they are unsure if there will be a return on their investment because they are waiting for this year’s student outcome data. Reviewers noted that there is minimal evidence to suggest that district staff check that all students are challenged. During discussions with district staff, reviewers noted, that the monitoring and evaluation of the impact of how well curriculum challenges students, including those subgroups that the district has been identified for, are not established.

**Impact Statement:**

- While all curricula used in schools are approved at the district level, it is not routinely monitored and evaluated to ensure CCLS alignment and that all students, including subgroups, are sufficiently challenged.

**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 and staff to check that lessons are consistently aligned to the CCLS while ensuring that all students are adequately challenged; and
- monitor and evaluate curricula delivery in each school to check that all student needs are met, including subgroups.

**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:**

- Although the district staff provides some professional opportunities for teachers, school leaders report that the PD offered does not consistently lead to improvements in instructional practices and student outcomes.

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

- School leaders report that the PD provided by the district does not always focus clearly enough on the specific needs of individual schools. In addition, school leaders reported that the impact and effectiveness of knowledge and skills learned in PD is not evaluated by the district to assess what has worked or to hold teachers accountable for ensuring time and money invested in PD leads to improvements in instructional practices and student learning. For example, although school and district leaders confirm that there has been PD provided to assist teachers in understanding how to use the data from formative and summative assessments to inform classroom instruction, evidence from school leaders and school reviews indicate that teachers lack the required skills in this key area.
- School leaders indicate that at times there are not strong and reciprocal channels of communication between schools and the district regarding the identification of the precise support and training that is needed. Discussions with school leaders indicate that although district staff identifies issues related to weaknesses in instructional practices, there is little focus on setting goals for students or their levels of engagement, which is what school leaders want. School leaders state that they are not all provided with adequate support to improve teacher instructional practices regarding curricula alignment with the CCLS. Some school leaders stated that PD was sometimes reactionary rather than based on teacher or school leader needs and school and district leaders confirmed that systems are not in place to disseminate instructional best practices across schools. Additionally, district leaders acknowledge the need to develop reciprocal communication between district and school staff for decision making around PD needs and for sharing best practices.

- Discussions with school leaders indicate that they would welcome more support from the district in providing follow-up PD. School leaders state that because PD is not evaluated for its quality and impact, both they and district leaders lack clarity on how much difference PD is making in the classroom. Consequently, there are times when additional PD is needed because initial efforts do not appear to have been successful. Requests for additional PD, school leaders state, are not always forthcoming and so weaknesses in instructional practices remain. The lack of systems to monitor the impact of PD hinder the district from determining the effectiveness of PD or any next steps needed to improve practice.

**Impact Statement:**

- The district does not consistently determine PD priorities or monitor the effectiveness of PD, which hinders student success.

**Recommendation:**

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

- improve the two way communication links between the schools and the district to enable successful decision making around PD; and
- monitor and evaluate the impact of PD on student performance data, student needs, student goals, and levels of engagement.

**Statement of Practice 5.1 - Student Social and Emotional Developmental Health:** The district creates policy and works collaboratively with the school to provide opportunities and resources that positively support students' social and emotional developmental health.

**Tenet Rating**

**Stage 2**

**Overall Finding:**

- The district staff are developing supports to address student social and emotional developmental health needs. However, district staff acknowledge that there is more work to do to ensure that the needs of all students are consistently met.

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

- School and district leaders stated that the district is examining policies and working to establish a vision for student social and emotional developmental health, but that there is currently no a cohesive, well-articulated vision in place that has been communicated to all schools and the communities that they serve. Discussions with district staff suggest that there have been a number of PD programs covering topics such as behavior, substance abuse, and students in crisis. However, almost all school leaders stated that there had been little or no evaluations carried out by the district to ascertain the success of PD or if it had changed practices in any school. Thus, the district as a whole had difficulty describing the impact and effectiveness of its efforts to meet the social and emotional developmental health needs of all students.
- School leaders stated that the district is providing more resources than in previous years. For example, the district has appointed additional psychologists and counselors, but school leaders make the point that it still does not provide sufficient resources to fully address the problems that schools face,

particularly in the areas of mental health and poverty. School review evidence indicates that school staff does not have the capacity to identify and meet the diverse needs of students and this together with a lack of shared understanding of referral systems and how to use data to target available resources where the need is greatest, results in limited student success.

**Impact Statement:**

- The district does not consistently monitor or evaluate the PD it offers to support student social and emotional developmental health needs, which hinders student success.

**Recommendation:**

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

- clearly document and implement a PD program for student social and emotional developmental health needs and make sure it is shared with all school leaders and staff; and
- monitor and evaluate the PD plan for student social and emotional developmental health needs to ensure that all student needs are addressed.

**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 2**

**Overall Finding:**

- The district is developing ways to supports families in helping them understand how to support their children’s education and achievement.

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

- Some school leaders stated that district staff have recently put a booklet together that contains resources to help schools engage better with families, but both district and school leaders stated that this is not part of a more coordinated and unified approach to engaging families, as there is no district-wide family engagement policy. School leaders report that all schools have a Parent Partnership Team, which is grant funded and consists of parents, school leaders, teachers, and community school coordinators. The focus of each team is to encourage parents to be actively involved in their children’s education, but no evidence was submitted to show any impact of these teams. Parent Partnership Team meetings give families opportunities to discuss issues, such as state funding, but school leaders shared that these meetings provide few opportunities for families to discuss how well the district and schools are doing in meeting the needs of their children.
- School leaders report that the district leaders are open to listening to complaints or initiatives that families wish to discuss. School leaders stated that district information is shared district-wide via newsletters, social media, and the district web site; however only some district documents are sent out in the district’s most pertinent languages, such as Spanish.

- School reviews identify that parents are not kept regularly informed by schools as to what their children are learning or how well they are doing. For example, parents do not provided regular information regarding the curriculum their children are taught. The review team found that the schools and the district do not do enough to help parents understand what they can do to support and enhance their children’s learning, or to help parents interpret data that is sent home regarding their children’s achievement.

**Impact Statement:**

- The district staff has not developed strong channels of communication and engagement with all families.

**Recommendation:**

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

- identify the impact of the Parent Partnership Team in each school;
- provide a clear analysis of each school’s strengths and areas for development in relation to parent partnerships;
- work with schools to develop a plan that enables parents to be fully involved in their children’s education; and
- monitor and evaluate the impact that parent partnerships have on student achievement.