



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

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)



BEDS Code	491700010000
District	Troy City School District
District Address	475 First Street, Troy, New York
Superintendent	John Carmello
Date(s) of Review	May 12 – 13, 2015

District Information Sheet					
Grade Configuration	PK-12	Total Enrollment	4107	Number of Schools	7
District Composition (<i>most recent data</i>)					
% Title I Population	53%	% Attendance Rate	91%		
% Free Lunch	63%	% Reduced Lunch	5%		
% Limited English Proficient	2%	% Students with Disabilities	19%		
Racial/Ethnic Origin (<i>most recent data</i>)					
% American Indian or Alaska Native	0%	% Black or African American	35%		
% Hispanic or Latino	12%	% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	2%		
% White	45%	% Multi-Racial	6%		
Personnel (<i>most recent data</i>)					
Years Superintendent Assigned to District	1	# of Deputy/Assistant Superintendents	2		
# of Principals	8	# of Assistant Principals	4		
# of Teachers	359	Avg. Class Size	20		
% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate	0%	% Teaching Out of Certification	0%		
% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience	21%	Average Teacher Absences	14days		
Teacher Turnover Rate – Teachers < 5 years exp.	1.6%	Teacher Turnover Rate – All Teachers	3.9%		
Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2013-14)					
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	16%	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4	15%		
Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (4th Grade)	72%	Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (8th Grade)	41%		
Student Performance for High Schools (2013-14)					
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	51%	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4	34%		
Credit Accumulation High Schools Only (2013-14)					
4 Year Graduation Rate	74%	6 Year Graduation Rate	80%		
% of earning Regents Diploma w/ Advanced Des.	24%				
Current NYSED Accountability Status					
# of Reward Schools	0	# of Priority Schools	1		
# of Schools In Good Standing	3	# of Focus Schools	1		
# of LAP Schools	2				

District Accountability Status

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

DISTRICT PRIORITIES AS WRITTEN BY THE DISTRICT

1. The number of students overall and for each sub-group measured for accountability achieving proficiency on Grades 3-8 ELA and Math scores will increase as follows, for the next five years:

- 20% of our students who score at Level 1 will improve to levels 2, 3 and 4 the following year;
- 20% of our students who score at Level 2 will improve to Levels 3 and 4 the following year.

2. Through improved student engagement in learning, development of citizenship values and use of behavioral interventions, violations of the student Code of Conduct will decline in each school by 5% each year, for the next five years.

3. The Regents diploma graduation rate from Troy High School will increase by 3% for each school year until it exceeds 90% and the number of students obtaining a Regents Diploma with Distinction will increase by 5% each year.

4. The Troy City School District will establish student achievement data analysis and data-driven instruction as a condition for new employment in a teaching or leadership position in the District effective January 2012. All existing teachers and leaders will be trained in student achievement data analysis and data-driven instruction by December 2013. Beginning in the 2014-2015 school year, the district will enhance the use of data to inform our decision-making at all levels throughout the district.

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) review of one school in the district also informed the district review.
- During IIT school reviews in the district, reviewers visited 54 classrooms within one school and IIT reviewers conducted focus group interviews with students, staff and parents.
- District reviewers conducted interviews with district leadership, central office staff and a focus group of principals.
- The district provided results of a student survey that 1,639 (40 percent) completed.
- The district provided results of a staff survey that 286 (79 percent) 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 1:				X	

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

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

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

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

	implementation.				
Tenet 4 - Teacher Practices and Decisions: Teachers engage in strategic practices and decision-making in order to address the gap between what students know and need to learn, so that all students and pertinent subgroups experience consistent high levels of engagement, thinking, and achievement.					
#	Statement of Practice	Stage 4	Stage 3	Stage 2	Stage 1
4.1	The district works collaboratively with the school to provide opportunities and supports for teachers to develop strategies and practices and addresses effective planning and account for student data, needs, goals, and levels of engagement.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input 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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Tenet 6 - Family and Community Engagement: The school creates a culture of partnership where families, community members, and school staff work together to share in the responsibility for student academic progress and social-emotional growth and well-being.					
#	Statement of Practice	Stage 4	Stage 3	Stage 2	Stage 1
6.1	The district has a comprehensive family and community engagement strategic plan that states the expectations around creating and sustaining a welcoming environment for families, reciprocal communication, and establishing partnerships with community organizations and families.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

District Review – Findings, Evidence, Impact and Recommendations:

<p>Tenet 1 - District Leadership and Capacity: The district examines school systems and makes intentional decisions to identify and provide critical expectations, supports and structures in all areas of need so that schools are able to respond to their community and ensure that all students are successful.</p>	<p>Overall Tenet Rating</p>	<p>Stage 2</p>
<p>Statement of Practice 1.1: The district has a comprehensive approach for recruiting, evaluating, and sustaining high-quality personnel that affords schools the ability to ensure success by addressing the needs of their community.</p>	<p>Tenet Rating</p>	<p>Stage 2</p>
<p>Overall Finding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The district has revised its recruitment approach to hire highly qualified staff by including school leaders in the process. However, weaknesses in the recruiting process for high need areas, limited evaluation of staff and of targeting and monitoring professional development (PD) minimize efforts to meet the needs of all students. <p>Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The district, which is situated adjacent to major universities including the University at Albany and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, mainly seeks to recruit teacher candidates from these institutions and at times from other universities in the State. The district leaders states that the district also places advertisements in newspapers and attends job fairs in the State to attract more potential teaching recruits to the district. The district leader reported that the hiring process has recently been revised from the practices used by the prior district leadership to provide for tiers of interviews with all school leaders in the district who supervise the area in which there is an opening. District staff noted that although a candidate will be hired to serve in one school, over time the teacher may choose to transfer to another school. This process and structure align with the trend in the district for teachers to remain on staff for their entire careers. However, according to district area specialists interviewed by the review team, the process for hiring general education and content area teachers does not include the input of district leaders who have expertise in areas relating to students with disabilities, English language learners (ELLs), or social and emotional developmental health. The district leadership reported that there is little turnover in staffing, apart from when teachers retire from the profession, with teachers usually entering the district directly from college programs and remaining with the district until they retire. However, the district has not yet canvassed the views of personnel to determine if working conditions or other factors contribute to retention factors, and the district has not conducted exit interviews. The systems, including the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) for evaluating district personnel, once hired, are not systematic or consistently effective. The district leader indicated that school leaders, because of contractual obligations, are limited in the use of walk-throughs to provide frequent, multiple documented descriptions of the progress of instruction over time. For example, the district leader noted that school and district leaders may not produce written documentation of their 		

walk-throughs that indicate if teachers responded to district initiatives aimed at instructional practices and actionable feedback provided during earlier observations. District and school leaders report that the high percentage of teachers rated as highly effective and effective, which is 93 percent, may be due to over-reliance on the limited number of Danielson-based announced observations and may not be an accurate picture of actual performance. The review team did not find evidence that the district provided support or guidance to assist school leaders in formulating specific, actionable feedback on the formal written observations. School leaders reported a lack of clear guidelines and expectations from the district of the informal monitoring of the degree of implementation of district initiatives and its theory of action.

- Weaknesses in how professional development (PD) is targeted to meet the needs of individual schools or teachers and how it is consistently implemented and monitored for its impact on raising student achievement act as a barrier to fully supporting teachers in their quest to become more effective practitioners, meeting the needs of the students they teach.

Impact Statement:

- While the district has revised its recruitment process to include the input of specialists in some areas, the district’s lack of a systematic approach to evaluating personnel and providing targeted PD, minimizes efforts at improvement of teacher practices and students outcomes.

Recommendation:

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

- refine its current process for selecting high quality personnel from the pool of available candidates by expanding the range of professional input in the selection process by providing opportunities for district leaders in areas such as students with disabilities, (ELLs), and social and emotional developmental health to participate in the selection of final candidates for general education or content area teachers;
- review and reconsider the parameters of the APPR program currently in place while providing school leaders with clear sets of guidelines and expectations for providing teachers with the feedback needed to improve instructional practice and follow-up of targeted observations where deficiencies have been noted; and
- work with schools to identify the PD and support needed for individual schools and teachers so that they are better prepared and equipped to meet the needs of all students.

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:

- Although the district has developed its theory of action, it is not communicated effectively so that the

whole community can work together to meet the expectations. In addition, there is a lack of monitoring of implementation and specific, measurable goals, aligned with the expectations of the theory of action.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- The district leader indicated that the district has established a theory of action with three main tenets that espouse its high expectations, but school leaders state that there is a disconnect with some schools and staff as to how the realization of the district's theory of action is to happen in practical terms. District leaders state that the district has communicated its theory of action through meetings and by prominently referring to it in articles in local newspapers, correspondence sent to schools, on the district website, and parent mailings. Discussions with school leaders indicate that a lack of clarity in the theory of action means that school staff and parents do not always understand how the district intends to meet its goals, and district and school leaders acknowledge that without buy in from all constituents and clearly defined quantifiable goals and success criteria for intended outcomes, the needed improvements to student achievement and professional practices will not be forthcoming.
- According to district leadership, at the core of the district's theory of action is the concept that all personnel must accept the responsibility for ensuring that they do not blame the culture, socio-economic status of children, or individual students for shortfalls in performance. However, district leaders acknowledge that work is needed to break down barriers between the concept and the successful implementation of effective strategies to tackle underachievement and behavioral challenges. In addition, this aspect of the theory of action is not linked, through a strategic plan, to specific, measurable goals that clearly plot a path as to how strategies introduced will incrementally lead to higher student achievement. The second tenet commits the district to providing leaders and teachers with the resources they need to succeed. The district leader reported that the district has shown its ongoing commitment to this tenet by recently redirecting the district budget to hire additional social-emotional support personnel, instructional and literacy coaches, and purchasing significant amounts of computer equipment. However, these personnel and technology resources have been added without reference to a strategic plan or expectation for schools to achieve comprehensive improvement goals based on improving student outcomes or professional practices.
- The final element of the theory of action is that that data analysis should drive all of the decisions of the district, the school, and teachers. The district leader reported that the district is gathering data on a variety of student and teacher performance parameters. However, school leaders noted and the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) found during their reviews that data in its current form is not easily disaggregated to provide guidance for educational decisions. In addition, district and school leaders expressed a concern about the accuracy of formative performance data. For example, while formative Fountas and Pinnell reading score assessments at the elementary level indicate improvement, that improvement is not reflected in the scores of students on State summative assessments.

Impact Statement:

- The district’s theory of action is not aligned to a long-range strategic plan complete with specific, measurable, actionable, results-oriented (SMART) goals and a comprehensive system for monitoring implementation of programs, policies, and practices, which limits school progress and high levels of student achievement across the district.

Recommendation:

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

- refocus the theory of action to drive instructional decision-making within each school while holding school leaders and teachers accountable for changes in current practice by providing on-going feedback and additional training to teachers as they progress toward meeting those expectations;
- link a comprehensive plan about resource allocations to specific, collaboratively developed SMART goals that include improvements to professional practices and student outcomes; and
- make sure that all data collected is accessible, accurate and used to inform instructional and administrative decision making so that it fulfills the intention of the district’s theory of action.

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
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Overall Finding:

- The district has just begun to organize and allocate resources in a way that aligns appropriate levels of support for schools based on needs. However, the district has not created a formal, written plan to ensure that the allocation of resources is tied to the achievement of specific goals geared to raising student achievement and improving teacher practices.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- The district under the new district leadership team has recently begun to respond to requests by school leaders for the equitable allocation of resources based on school need and for the recruitment and deployment of additional staff in the areas of student social and emotional developmental health, ELLs, and literacy. Although some appointments have taken place, district and school leaders indicate that more appointments are yet to occur. The district is also adding computer technology in all classrooms. The district leader reported that these decisions are the result of student enrollments, informal assessments of school needs within the district, and newly available funding resources. The necessity for the recruitment and appointment of additional personnel grew out of the informal assessment of school leaders who met with district leaders and reported that some children of poverty and those with limited English language ability perform less well than their peers on State mathematics and English Language Arts (ELA) tests. However, the review team did not find evidence that plans are

in place that directly link any significant spending and resource decisions made by the district to quantifiable improvements in student outcomes and professional practices.

- District and school leaders indicate that the district does have rigorous procedures for the analysis of needs assessments of individual schools in order to determine the level of resources that is needed. The review team also found a lack of procedures to promote collaboration between school and district leaders to examine the demographics of schools in terms of needs of students with disabilities or ELLs in order to make strategic resource allocations that address the diverse needs of differing schools. District and school leaders indicated that when the district appoints new staff to schools, there is no comprehensive plan indicating how new personnel will work to address defined district goals in this area. In one school that recently was provided with new support staff to address student social and emotional developmental health and to engage families, the district leader reported that the staff within that building are drawing up priorities and plans for the upcoming year instead of addressing defined district strategic goals and following a district-defined plan for successful implementation linked to student achievement. Evidence from school reviews indicate that resource allocations in areas such as PD, social and emotional developmental health, use of data, and technology have not led to sustained improvements in instruction or student learning.
- The district has also begun to reassign teachers and support staff to better match their skills and abilities to the needs of students. However, these decisions are not part of a strategic plan for human resource allocation that has a well-developed process that uses data to generate a needs assessment, a systematic review of available resources, and follow-up assessments of impact on student performance.

Impact Statement:

- As a consequence of resources not being allocated in ways that reflect long-range strategic goals or a comprehensive assessment of needs over time, improvements in student achievement are not realized.

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 comprehensive strategic plan for allocating resources that aligns with improvements in curriculum planning, instruction, social and emotional developmental health, and family and community engagement to improve student performance outcomes in all schools;
- assess the levels of need for each school correlated to each aspect of the plan;
- make resource allocations in concert with the degree of need determined for each school; and
- assess the impact of those allocations on student outcomes, making adaptations where necessary.

Statement of Practice 1.4: The district has a comprehensive plan to create, deliver and monitor professional development in all pertinent areas that is adaptive and tailored to the needs of individual schools.

Tenet Rating

Stage 2

Overall Finding:

- The district is currently in its second year of a three-year plan to create and deliver on-going PD intended to improve professional practices. However, the plan is not on course to meet its intended outcome of significantly raising student achievement and improving teacher practices.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- Evidence from PD planning documentation and from discussions with school and district leaders indicate that the district’s PD program has not been developed from a strategic planning process that includes student data, a review of district priorities, defined follow-up support activities or opportunities for re-teaching where initial PD has not been successful. District leaders and school leaders stated that while a range of PD opportunities are provided, which are communicated through the district’s PD calendar, they are not tailored to meet the needs of individual schools. District leaders stated that too little emphasis is placed on student and school performance data to identify PD priorities. School reviews indicate that PD that has taken place in key areas such as the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), differentiation, and data driven instruction (DDI) for teachers new to the district. However, the PD has not proven effective in consistently improving instructional practices and student outcomes although there have been some exceptions in PD aimed at the development of writing skills in some classes in both elementary and secondary schools.
- The district reported that its Professional Development Plan (PDP) was developed after conducting a limited needs assessment drawn from a review of the ratings of teachers as reported on the APPR Danielson Framework observation reports. In addition, a committee of school and teacher leaders collaboratively decided on some priorities based on their experiences within their schools. In addition, some of the PD activities were mandated trainings in areas such as safety and security. However, district and school leaders report that weaknesses in the APPR system have sometimes resulted in an inaccurate picture of teacher performance and that strengths and weaknesses identified in the process are not strong indicators alone, on which to base PD.
- District staff indicated the district does not consistently collect data on the impact of PD in the classroom. School leaders noted this hampers the district’s and schools’ ability to assess the value and impact of particular PD offerings in raising student achievement and to determine where re-training or coaching can be directed to particular buildings or groups of teachers as part of a program of follow-up and reinforcement for limitations in the implementation of initial training. School and district leaders state that this follow-up feedback and support process is impeded to some extent by the limitations on performance data collection imposed by the contractual limitations on documentation of unannounced observations and written walk-through data as well as the absence of a practice of learning walks to inventory the presence of new instructional practices within buildings.

Impact Statement:

- Professional development provided by the district has not resulted in sustained improvements in student outcomes. The lack of a comprehensive strategic planning process to meet the differing PD needs of schools and limited data collection on the impact of training opportunities minimizes the district’s ability to improve teacher practices and student outcomes.

Recommendation:

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

- expand the range of data available to assess school performance and staff practices in order to better determine the nature and levels of PD needed;
- establish procedures to evaluate the success of the PD opportunities in terms of improvements to student learning and teacher practices; and
- use the information based on the feedback that is provided to disseminate best practices and eradicate weaknesses.

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

Tenet Rating

Stage 2

Overall Finding:

- The district has not established a data driven culture that enables schools and its staff to have a firm understanding of how well students are performing and what they need to do to improve. Although the district articulates its commitment to a data-driven culture, its efforts at data analysis to inform decisions and promote student achievement and classroom outcomes are limited.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- District leaders state that the district systems and procedures for collecting data have weaknesses because the collected data is not easily accessible to either district or school staff. District leaders stated and the IIT found during reviews, that the district collects a variety of data relating to academic performance, attendance, behavior, teacher performance, and staff skills. However, the district leader and staff noted that difficulties in how users access, disaggregate or cross reference the data that is available, prevent personnel from using the data in an effective way to make informed decisions about school performance, social and emotional needs, resource allocation, teacher performance or instructional practices. In addition, the district has not strategically determined what information is essential to collect or store and which data should be available to different school personnel such as teachers and school leaders. School leaders also question the accuracy of some of the formative student data, as at times it conflicts with summative State test results. In addition, at the secondary level, mid-term examinations are the only common forms of assessment utilized by departments.

While the district articulates its commitment to data use in its theory of action, the review team found that it remains a theory in certain respects because of the practical difficulties that school and district staff experience in accessing and utilizing all the available data.

- While district staff indicated that the district has instituted a computerized system for collecting teacher performance data drawn from periodic teacher formal observations, district leaders stated that the system relies on a limited sample size. Also, as noted by the district leader, the data on teacher performances in a few lessons observed with advance notification using the Danielson framework may not accurately reflect the complete range of teacher strengths and weaknesses. This data is then compiled through computer software and used to make judgments about overall teacher performance, a process predicated at times on an inaccurate presumption of the accuracy of that data.
- Evidence from school reviews and discussions with school leaders and teachers indicate that the analysis and use of data at school, grade, content and classroom level is in need of improvement. Issues with how leaders use data to evaluate the performance of schools and how teachers use data to drive instruction were areas of identified weakness in school reviews. District and school leaders also state that school performance data is not used as a tool for identifying PD priorities for the district or for individual or clusters of schools.

Impact Statement:

- Difficulties in accessing centrally held data combined with gaps in knowledge and skills to rigorously analyze and use data, limit the ability of district leaders to assess the impact of efforts focused on school improvement and student achievement in schools across the district.

Recommendation:

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

- reassess the value of the data currently collected to determine what data should continue to be collected and what data needs to be collected in order to provide an accurate assessment of school, teacher, and student performance, and ensure that the data is readily accessible to identified users; and
- determine the accuracy of the current formative assessment data that is collected to predict the summative performance of students, and find more accurate forms of measurement if that data does not provide accurate formative assessment.

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

<p>Statement of Practice 2.1 - School Leader Practices and Decisions: The district works collaboratively with the school to provide opportunities and supports for the school leader to create, develop and nurture a school environment that is responsive to the needs of the entire school community.</p>	<p>Tenet Rating</p>	<p>Stage 2</p>
<p>Overall Finding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although the district has provided supports for school leaders to create, develop, and nurture a responsive school environment, those supports have not always resulted in success because they are not consistently aligned to a comprehensive district-wide strategy to achieve collaboratively agreed upon challenging short and long-range goals. The district works with schools to help them implement some of their goals and those of the district. However, the district does not have effective procedures in place to monitor the impact of improvement efforts so that they make a difference to professional practice or student outcomes. <p>Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School leaders report that the current district leadership has committed itself to its theory of action by responding to school leaders requests for resources that they feel will lead to school improvement. In their lowest performing school, the district worked with the school leaders to replace eighteen teaching staff through retirement and transfers as well as augmenting the teaching faculty with four additional reading teachers, an instructional literacy coach, an instructional coach for each grade level in the school, and five special education consultant teachers. However, school leaders stated that no district procedures are in place to monitor the impact of these initiatives or to hold schools accountable for these or other significant resource and spending allocations on improving student outcomes or professional practices. School leaders state that the district negotiated APPR plan hampers the ability of school leaders to monitor the success and challenges of district-wide initiatives by limiting the capacity of school leaders to document the degree of successful implementation of programs such as the Culturally Responsive Classroom initiative. In addition, school leaders noted that the limitations on the supervisory and teacher evaluation functions of school leaders limits their ability to provide actionable feedback, target follow-up observations, direct teachers to accept coaching, and require teachers to attend follow-up trainings on district PD initiatives. School leaders state the district does not provide consistent support to them in overcoming the inherent difficulties of the observation process or in monitoring initiatives, such as the Culturally Responsive Classroom, and that this lack of support hinders their role as effective instructional leaders. School leaders reported varying levels of district support in helping them implement the district’s theory of action or shape their vision and goals and in identifying priorities for improvement. School leaders state that the district’s goals are not always SMART goals and do not consistently align with the goals sought by different schools across the district. According to school leaders interviewed by the 		

review team, the autonomy granted to school leaders to shape and implement programs in ways most suitable for their school community has led in some cases to significant variations in the degree of successful adoption of district priorities. Some school leaders report that the support of district initiatives has been a top priority while other school leaders indicate that they have made their own school initiatives a top priority. One school leader reported that she successfully completed a school initiative in support of her commitment to the Culturally Responsive Classroom by contacting 100 percent of the parents in her school through a process of multiple points of access. Other schools did not report similar school led efforts.

- School leaders report that more work needs to be done by the district to better match PD to the needs of schools as the district does not take sufficient account of school performance data when identifying priorities for the PDP. School leaders indicate that a lack of district accountability for ensuring that the investment of time, effort and money in PD results in improvement in student outcomes hinders the advancement of school improvement at a faster pace. School leaders acknowledge the expectations that the district has in emphasizing the importance of data use in all aspects of school life. However, they cite difficulties in accessing district data, the lack of training in using data, and questions concerning the accuracy of some of the data as reasons why the district's expectations are not always met.
- School leaders state that the district is in the process of restructuring its hiring process to expand the role played by school leaders and district personnel responsible for students with disabilities, the social and emotional health needs of students, and ELLs in the selection process of general education and subject area teachers. School leaders interviewed by the review team view this as evidence of the district's commitment to a partnership with school and teacher leaders in the process of district and school improvement in order to increase student achievement.

Impact Statement:

- Although the district works with schools to support their vision of improvement and district goals, the lack of targeted PD, effective use of data, and monitoring of outcomes limits efforts to ensure a learning environment that promotes success for all students.

Recommendation:

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

- establish more strategic short and long-range SMART goals for increasing student achievement, which are embraced within the district's theory of action; and
- support school leaders to enable them to better monitor instructional practices and to provide actionable feedback that results in improvements in practices and a learning environment that is both responsive to the needs of its stakeholders and supportive of the district's theory of action.

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

Tenet Rating

Stage 2

Overall Finding:

- The district has made efforts to work collaboratively with schools to ensure that the CCLS is implemented in schools in the district. However, school leaders and teachers indicate that PD and support for implementation has not been consistent at all levels and in all areas.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- School leaders reported that the district has collaborated with them and teachers through some PD opportunities and through some in-class support to help implement the CCLS. School leaders also state that the district adopted a reading and writing curriculum that support the CCLS for the elementary schools and also created a district-wide assessment program to measure student progress in reading using the Fountas and Pinnell program. The district has provided PD to staff on the use of this program to monitor student progress in reading. However, there has not been a corresponding process of PD and district-wide formative assessment expectations for the new commercially produced writing curriculum. In addition, according to teacher leaders, expectations and PD for reading and writing, and other content areas at the secondary level have not been consistently implemented.
- School leaders reported that the district is in the second year of a four-year program of converting existing curriculum maps to a comprehensive format in a computer software program that will allow teachers easy access to those maps and digital connections to instructional resources keyed to each unit of instruction in different content areas. According to school leaders, the impact of this process, which includes a revision of the curriculum to better align it to the CCLS, has not been measured by the district to determine the degree to which this curriculum revision process has impacted teacher instructional practices and student performance or how it meets the needs of all learners, including ELLs and students with disabilities.
- While mandated times at the elementary level for teacher delivery of curriculum are established by the district, the review team found during interviews and observations that teachers often modify the curriculum to incorporate social studies, science, and health within the English language arts (ELA) block. However, school leaders confirm that the district does not provide sufficient support to schools in devising and implementing a comprehensive and strategic plan for an interdisciplinary curriculum targeted at improving student engagement and learning. At the elementary level, the mathematics and ELA curricula are mainly complete; however, curricula for other subjects are still under development.

Impact Statement:

- The district's inconsistent support to ensure the implementation of curricula aligned with the CCLS in

all grades and all content areas minimizes efforts to deliver instruction that promotes student learning and 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:

- rigorously review and modify curriculum maps for all subject and grade levels while establishing expectations for the implementation that includes clarity of purpose, process/procedures, and formal opportunities for teachers and teacher leaders to communicate challenges and solutions to successful implementation;
- provide a data based feedback mechanism to teachers and district personnel concerning the quality of CCLS implementation in schools correlating that data to student achievement outcomes; and
- use the results of that feedback process to modify, adjust, and re-address appropriate elements of the curriculum being used.

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:

- While the district works with schools to provide some opportunities and support for teachers to develop effective strategies and instructional practices, those efforts have not yielded consistent results in producing planning and practices that account for student data, needs, goals, and levels of engagement and produce rigorous learning opportunities.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- School leaders report that the district has made understanding and using data to inform instructional practices a requirement for all newly hired teachers, but there are weaknesses throughout the district in how well teachers and schools use data to drive instruction and to raise student achievement. Examination of the district's PDP calendar by the review team indicates that training in the fall 2015 is intended to ensure that all staff benefit from the same training as newly hired teachers so that there is a shared understanding of the importance of using data to drive instruction. However, reviewers' observations and school leader interviews indicate variability in teachers' understanding and proficiency concerning the use of data, including a lack of meetings for teachers to discuss data and how the district expects schools and teachers to use data to set challenging goals for students. School leaders reported that the district does not have a system in place for gauging the levels of understanding for each teacher and mandating follow-up training when needed.
- Despite training and support provided by the district in areas such as writing, the implementation of

CCLS and differentiation, school leaders state that there are weaknesses in teachers' instructional practices and levels of student engagement in many classrooms. School leaders report that procedures to monitor and evaluate instruction and curriculum implementation from district and school leaders lack rigor and feedback to drive improvements in professional practices. Classroom observations by the review team indicate that the district's commitment to ensuring that schools provide a challenging and engaging curriculum that meet the needs of individual students, in practice sometimes falls short of the district's intentions. While some lessons observed by the IIT at the priority school included higher order thinking questions, in other classrooms, students were using the same materials in the same manner, and were working to complete the same level of work.

- School leaders stated the district has established a set of PD goals designed to improve instructional practice and support, which includes training with coaches designated to increase literacy and reading skills instruction. However, school leaders report and observations by reviewers indicate that the impact of the training in the classroom has been limited. The review team did not find evidence of systems to formally evaluate the impact of PD and support in the classrooms, and school leaders indicated that the skills of coaches and reading teachers vary. In addition, there is no clear expectation that teachers whose performance in the classroom does not reflect the training that they have received through PD , instructional coaches, or from their school leader will be required to receive remediation to improve their performance.

Impact Statement:

- The district's collaborative work with schools to provide opportunities and supports for teachers has not led to teachers and instructional staff consistently providing rigorous learning opportunities.

Recommendation:

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

- enforce through closer monitoring, targeted actionable feedback, and a defined set of follow-up activities, the expectations of improvements to instructional practices as a result of PD attended by teachers;
- make sure all teachers are equipped with the skills to enable them to use data to drive instruction;
- evaluate the quality of PD and the support provided by coaches by assessing the impact and improvement it brings to student achievement and instructional practices; and
- create systems to provide comprehensive follow-up support for teacher development in those best practices that have been identified through the Professional Development Plan and to re-address the needs of teachers identified as having difficulty improving their practices.

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

Tenet Rating

Stage 1

Overall Finding:

- The district's does not provide schools with adequate resources and guidance to address the social and emotional developmental health needs of all students.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- School leaders report that the district does not have a district-wide strategic plan to identify the social and emotional developmental needs of students in each school. There are elements of Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) existing in some schools but not in others. School leaders state that each individual school leader or support staff members decide whether to use programs such as PBIS, based on their own sense of what might or might not work within their school. School leaders reported to the review team that support personnel are developing their own plans and goals for addressing the social and emotional developmental needs of students, but there is no district-wide set of expectations for outcomes to guide those plans. School leaders indicated there is no defined system for collecting data, outside of attendance and disciplinary referrals, which can provide a comprehensive measurement of the success or failure of plans school-based staff develop.
- District leadership indicated the district has increased the number of staff to support the social and emotional developmental health needs of students in the priority elementary school in the district. It has also hired a parent coordinator for the district and has budgeted for increased support staff for every school in the district. However, school leaders report that there has been no impact from these initial steps to address the students' social and emotional needs. They also note that the district has not made expectations clear if schools should or will be monitoring the impact of these spending and resource decisions on addressing students' needs so that they are better prepared both academically and socially.
- The district has conducted PD in using the Culturally Responsive Classroom program, which attempts to address the social and emotional needs of children as well as to provide teachers with practices and responses to behavior that are appropriate to the culture of the children they teach. However, school leaders stated teachers do not always implement the program with fidelity because they feel that the training has not adequately equipped them with the requisite and ongoing skills they need. In addition, school leaders state that there is no data to determine the status of implementation of this program or how it has impacted student performance, and the district has not provided support or guidance to assist them in these efforts. Teachers also reported that they would welcome more PD to enable them to better meet the needs of students.

Impact Statement:

- The lack of ongoing and follow up PD and a comprehensive strategy for identifying, addressing, and

gathering social and emotional data , impedes the ability of schools to address the social and emotional needs of students, which hinders students’ opportunities for 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:

- develop a comprehensive strategy for identifying, addressing, and gathering data as a means of monitoring the efficacy of a range of recommended approaches to improving students’ social and emotional developmental health needs; and
- support the Culturally Responsive Classroom initiative by providing follow-up training to teachers and school leaders as needed and setting clear expectations for faithful implementation of the district priority practice.

Statement of Practice 6.1 - Family and Community Engagement: The district has a comprehensive family and community engagement strategic plan that states the expectations around creating and sustaining a welcoming environment for families, reciprocal communication, and establishing partnerships with community organizations and families.

Tenet Rating	Stage 1
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Overall Finding:

- The district does not have a comprehensive family and community engagement strategic plan that states expectations around creating and sustaining a welcoming environment for families, reciprocal communication, and establishing partnerships with community organizations and families.

Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:

- Parents stated in interviews that communication with the district is not reciprocal and indicated that they felt disconnected from district decisions. School leaders reported that individual schools are relying on their own initiatives to attempt to connect with families, and they receive little support and guidance from the district. One school leader reported that her school initiated a campaign at the start of the 2014-15 school year to ensure that a teacher or school official contacted 100 percent of the parents of children in her school before December 2014. While this goal, which was intended to encourage parents to maintain communication with the school was achieved, the school leader indicated that the district has not helped her to put measurements in place to determine the impact this process had on student achievement. Although the district has recently hired a part-time parent coordinator for the district, there is no comprehensive, strategic plan, goals, or measurements of success to guide the work of that coordinator. School leaders and parents both stated that they were unsure of the district’s policy for promoting family engagement in schools or the role that the district would play in promoting and facilitating this engagement. Parents indicated they did not know if there was a district vision for parent and family engagement or if that vision was part of the district’s theory of action.
- According to the school leader, the priority school visited by the review team has been able to extend community partnerships with agencies such as the Rensselaer County Mental Health Department,

which has established a satellite office within the school so that parents can come to the office for family services on site. Other partnerships include the Economic Opportunity Center, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and Sage College. These partnerships provide that school with interns and PD for teachers; focus on character education building, college and career readiness, health needs; and building capacity for additional student academic support. However, the school leader reported to reviewers that these partnerships are due in large measure to the initiative of the leader of that school rather than as a response to any district plan or policy of support. This is also reflected in discussions with other school leaders who state that the district does little to support them in establishing links with the community and agencies, which could build stronger partnerships and increase the chances of academic success for all students.

Impact Statement:

- The lack of a comprehensive district communication and parental engagement plan hampers the ability of schools to develop a strong home-school partnership to improve student achievement.

Recommendation:

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

- develop a communication and family engagement plan and strategy that identifies desired outcomes for communication and engagement with families linked to improved student achievement, incorporates best practices that have developed in individual schools in the district, provides guidelines to schools, identifies tools for fostering reciprocal communication with families, including translation services, and includes multiple points of access for families to engage with school leaders and teachers; and
- explore the scope and range of available community resources, including the neighboring colleges and community based organizations, to match those resources with the needs identified within the district;