



# 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>	412300010000
<b>District</b>	Utica City School District
<b>District Address</b>	106 Memorial Parkway, Utica, NY 13501
<b>Superintendent</b>	Bruce Karam
<b>Date(s) of Review</b>	May 27 – 28, 2015

District Information Sheet			
<b>Grade Configuration</b>	K - 12	<b>Total Enrollment</b>	9718
		<b>Number of Schools</b>	13
<b>District Composition (most recent data)</b>			
<b>% Title I Population</b>	51	<b>% Attendance Rate</b>	93
<b>% Free Lunch</b>	76	<b>% Reduced Lunch</b>	4
<b>% Limited English Proficient</b>	17	<b>% Students with Disabilities</b>	16
<b>Racial/Ethnic Origin (most recent data)</b>			
<b>% American Indian or Alaska Native</b>	<1	<b>% Black or African American</b>	25
<b>% Hispanic or Latino</b>	18	<b>% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</b>	17
<b>% White</b>	35	<b>% Multi-Racial</b>	5
<b>Personnel (most recent data)</b>			
<b>Years Superintendent Assigned to District</b>	7	<b># of Deputy/Assistant Superintendents</b>	0
<b># of Principals</b>	13	<b># of Assistant Principals</b>	6
<b># of Teachers</b>	712	<b>Avg. Class Size</b>	28-30
<b>% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate</b>	.04	<b>% Teaching Out of Certification</b>	0
<b>% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience</b>	8.4	<b>Average Teacher Absences</b>	4%
<b>Teacher Turnover Rate – Teachers &lt; 5 years exp.</b>	12	<b>Teacher Turnover Rate – All Teachers</b>	2%
<b>Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2013-14)</b>			
<b>ELA Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4</b>	15%	<b>Mathematics Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4</b>	19%
<b>Science Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4 (4th Grade)</b>	79%	<b>Science Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4 (8th Grade)</b>	47%
<b>Student Performance for High Schools (2013-14)</b>			
<b>ELA Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4</b>	40%	<b>Mathematics Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4</b>	24%
<b>Credit Accumulation High Schools Only (2013-14)</b>			
<b>4 Year Graduation Rate</b>	65%	<b>6 Year Graduation Rate</b>	70%
<b>% of earning Regents Diploma w/ Advanced Des.</b>	16%		
<b>Current NYSED Accountability Status</b>			
<b># of Reward Schools</b>	0	<b># of Priority Schools</b>	1
<b># of Schools In Good Standing</b>	3	<b># of Focus Schools</b>	9
<b># of LAP Schools</b>	0		

### District Accountability Status

Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in ELA (indicate Y / N / N-A)			
<b>American Indian or Alaska Native</b>	N-A	<b>Black or African American</b>	N
<b>Hispanic or Latino</b>	Y	<b>Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander</b>	N
<b>White</b>	Y	<b>Multi-Racial</b>	N-A
<b>Students with Disabilities</b>	N	<b>Limited English Proficient</b>	N
<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-A	<b>Black or African American</b>	N
<b>Hispanic or Latino</b>	Y	<b>Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander</b>	N
<b>White</b>	Y	<b>Multi-Racial</b>	N-A
<b>Students with Disabilities</b>	N	<b>Limited English Proficient</b>	N
<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-A	<b>Black or African American</b>	Y
<b>Hispanic or Latino</b>	N	<b>Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander</b>	Y
<b>White</b>	Y	<b>Multi-Racial</b>	N-A
<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. Improve student proficiency in English language arts (ELA) and math in grades three through twelve; increase the graduation rate.
2. Monitor teacher use of data to inform instruction.
3. Increase and monitor teacher use of differentiated instructional strategies.
4. Increase and monitor teacher use of higher order thinking skills.
5. Increase the amount of effective feedback given to principals, teachers, and 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 (NYSED), a Special Education School Improvement Specialist (SEIS) representative, and a representative from the Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (RBERN).
- The Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) reviews of two schools in the district also informed the district review.
- During IIT school reviews in the district, reviewers visited 84 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 principals.
- The district provided results of a student survey that 398 students (4%) completed.
- The district provided results of a staff survey that eighty-five staff members (12%) 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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
1.3	The district is organized and allocates resources (financial, staff support, materials, etc.) in a way that aligns appropriate levels of support for schools based on the needs of the school community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
1.4	The district has a comprehensive plan to create, deliver and monitor professional development in all pertinent areas that is adaptive and tailored to the needs of individual schools.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.5	The district promotes a data-driven culture by providing strategies connected to best practices that all staff members and school communities are expected to be held accountable for implementing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 1:</b>				X	

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

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

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

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

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

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

<p><b>Tenet 1 - District Leadership and Capacity:</b> The district examines school systems and makes intentional decisions to identify and provide critical expectations, supports and structures in all areas of need so that schools are able to respond to their community and ensure that all students are successful.</p>	<p><b>Overall Tenet Rating</b></p>	<p><b>Stage 2</b></p>
<p><b>Statement of Practice 1.1:</b> The district has a comprehensive approach for recruiting, evaluating, and sustaining high-quality personnel that affords schools the ability to ensure success by addressing the needs of their community.</p>	<p><b>Tenet Rating</b></p>	<p><b>Stage 2</b></p>
<p><b>Overall Finding:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recruitment decisions have been more closely aligned to financial considerations and significant changes to the composition of staff rather than changes in the demographics of the student population.</li> </ul> <p><b>Evidence/Information that Led to this Finding:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>District leaders reported that school leaders are appointed from within the district’s ranks of assistant principals, and this year new school leaders are leading 60 percent of district elementary schools. Mentors from the Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) and assigned district representatives are supporting these new leaders, but the district leader stated that there are no monitoring arrangements to evaluate the impact that school leaders have on raising student achievement. District leaders revealed that they often gauge success subjectively, through the quality of the learning environment, for example, rather than through academic success, which contributes to a lack of drive in pursuing school improvement. Reviewers found adequate systems to recruit new teachers; district leaders stated that teacher instructional practice is evaluated as part of the selection process, which involves vetting procedures to assess suitability, stringent interview processes, and the drawing of candidates from areas beyond the locality. District officials reported that from September 2014 to June 2015 the population of English language learners (ELLs) in the district increased from 16 percent to 18 percent; the district is currently in the process of leveraging its links with local colleges and universities to build a potential recruitment stream to respond to this change in demographics. In addition, with the exception of a specific exit protocol used when teachers leave the district due to layoffs, the district does not have procedures in place to monitor employee retention and satisfaction, such as exit surveys.</li> <li>In following with a recommendation stemming from the March 2014 New York State Education Department’s (NYSED) Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) review, a district plan to provide additional professional development (PD) addresses efforts to improve school leader skill in evaluating teacher performance in the classroom. However, records of school leader observations provided during the review showed that although school leaders identify observed weaknesses, actionable feedback is inconsistent and, at times, minimal.</li> </ul>		

- As a result of a sustained number of retirements in the last three years, many teachers in the district are untenured and newly graduated; the superintendent stated that a majority of teachers have been with the district less than seven years. These teachers are supported through school cluster groups where professional development (PD) is provided, but there are no checks by leaders to ensure that the quality of the PD is helping teachers to become high quality educators. In addition, IIT school reviews demonstrated that instructional practices are not consistently effective and not leading to continuous improvements in student achievement.

**Impact Statement:**

- Without protocols for monitoring the impact of recruitment decisions and a district plan to sustain staff, the district is not able to evaluate whether recruiting and retention decisions impact positively on raising 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:

- ensure district leadership monitor the impact of strategic recruitment and deployment decisions on student achievement and that recruitment consistently provides employees whose skills and attributes meet the needs of the schools in which they are deployed to teach.

**Statement of Practice 1.2:** The district leadership has a comprehensive and explicit theory of action about school culture that communicates high expectations for addressing the needs of all constituents.

**Tenet Rating**

**Stage 1**

**Overall Finding:**

- The district leadership lacks an explicit theory of action with focus and urgency directed toward school improvement initiatives.

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

- The district leadership describes the district theory of action as a focus on organizational efficiency for the benefit of student achievement; however, this has not been communicated as specific, measurable, ambitious, results-oriented, and timely (SMART) goals dedicated to improving student achievement and instructional practices. As a result, there is a lack of drive to advance school improvement. District leaders anticipate that new initiatives will require up to five years to yield impact; however, reviewers noted that this creates a lack of urgency in meeting the more immediate needs of the student population. The 2013-14 NYSED IIT district review team recommended district leaders ensure that school leaders develop clear links between professional practices and student outcomes; however, evidence from test scores and school reviews showed that this has not yet been achieved. In addition, some district leaders stated that it was inappropriate to make this linkage and that staff should not be held solely accountable for student performance on state tests.
- District leaders have implemented new data reporting procedures in which school leaders are required

to submit quarterly reports to the district about the performance of their schools. School leaders commented that the new reporting process has had a positive impact in promoting conversations about school performance among members of school building improvement teams. However, a review of these documents by the IIT showed that they are often merely a commentary on activities being undertaken in schools; reviewers found negligible references to the actual impact these activities had on student achievement or professional practices. As a result, this evidence showed that school leaders are not being held accountable for sharing the level of detailed information needed to perform a district-wide critical analysis toward achieving the theory of action.

- Documentary evidence and discussions with district leaders showed that the district has not specified a theory of action to address the needs of identified subgroups. A lack of awareness of the different needs of students among the district school population means there are no defined district expectations or goals to raise achievement and meet the social and emotional developmental health needs of these students. The IIT found that district leaders responsible for oversight of services and programs for ELLs have not developed a proactive strategy contained in a theory of action to improve the achievement of these students. Reviewers found that the district-level ELL leader’s dual responsibility for both ELLs and students with disabilities was a contributory factor, particularly since this leader had stated no specific experience or certification in the area of ELLs. During the review, district leaders were also unable to communicate high expectations for other identified student subgroups and acknowledged that the district has no defined strategy to support Black and Asian students or to improve the graduation rate of Hispanic students. School leaders stated that the absence of district direction around these student populations leaves some school leaders unaware of priority subgroups in their schools and some students without targeted support from the district. A New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU) lawsuit has been filed against the district on behalf of refugees who allege they have been excluded from the public high school.

**Impact Statement:**

- Without a comprehensive and explicit theory of action that regularly and consistently communicates high expectations for academic excellence for all students, school improvement is slow.

**Recommendation:**

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

- ensure district leadership create a coordinated, strategic theory of action that communicates high expectations for all students, and in particular identified subgroups, through the achievement of SMART goals, and ensure that school leaders are held accountable for meeting these SMART goals throughout the year.

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

**Tenet Rating**

**Stage 1**

**Overall Finding:**

- Budget cuts and continuing financial stress have left the district with extremely limited resources available for use; however, the district has no plan to ensure the strategic deployment of those resources toward areas focused on school improvement and student success.

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

- A January 2015 New York State (NYS) Comptroller's Report disclosed that the Utica City School District has been identified as a district under moderate fiscal stress because of long-term borrowing to avoid layoffs. In addition, the district is currently taking part in an education underfunding lawsuit against NYS. Reviewers learned that while most available finances are targeted to cover teaching costs, the district has no fiscal strategy in place to evaluate priorities or connect spending decisions to expected improvements in student achievement when allocating the remainder of the monies. School leaders reported that social workers are shared between buildings and community agencies fill in the gaps caused by a deficit in student support personnel. District leaders stated that they have not been able to sustain staffing levels of parent liaison officers and translators and described very limited resources to meet students' social and emotional developmental health needs and promote parent engagement.
- Fiscal cuts have led to a reduction in the number of leadership personnel at the district offices; according to leaders, this has resulted in a reduction of monitoring activities designed to track the impact of district strategies. Reviewers learned that district leaders recruit facilitators, such as data analysis staff, to cover gaps left by the administrative cuts; however, district leaders were unable to account for the impact of these external representatives because of a lack of rigorous monitoring.
- Documentary evidence provided by district leaders showed that significant cuts have been made in elementary schools and among reading teachers. Although there is no monitoring to determine the impact of these cuts, the 2013-14 NYS Report Card showed that only 15 percent of students in grades three to eight are proficient in English language arts (ELA).
- District leaders have allocated some resources to specific areas of need, but have not been able to fully substantiate the impact of these decisions. For example, instructional coaches with responsibility for data analysis, ELA, and math are deployed to support school improvement in the district's one priority school. Data showed that these students' Lexile scores have improved; however, growth in ELA and math could not be confirmed because current assessment data is not reliable, according to district leaders. School and district leaders reported with optimism that credit recovery and night school programs at the high school are successful for identified subgroup populations, such as the economically disadvantaged, but no data was available to verify this. The IIT found that consultants appointed by the district to support schools with data analysis are having an inconsistent impact; a summary of school leader and district OEE teacher evaluation reports, provided by the district, confirmed that teachers' ability to use data to inform accurate planning is still an area of weakness.
- The IIT found that district leaders provide generic support for student with disabilities. District leaders reported that they have made the decision to resource special education classes using supplemental curriculum materials, rather than invest in specialized PD for teachers. School leaders believe that this decision negatively impacts the rate of academic growth for these students and the state report card

shows that there has been negligible benefit in raising the proportion of students in grades three to eight achieving above a level 2 in ELA.

**Impact Statement:**

- District schools are slow to improve because the allocation of available resources does not always address all the students’ needs.

**Recommendation:**

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

- ensure district leaders monitor the impact of resource decisions and use the findings to create a strategic plan that allocates finances in a way that takes student subgroup needs into account.

**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’s PD plan does not result in an effective training program that meets the specific needs of school leaders and teachers.

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

- The IIT review showed that the district offers most PD as a reactive measure based on requests from school leaders and teachers and does not consistently prepare teachers and leaders to meet the needs of students. District leaders confirmed that insufficient account is taken of school and teacher data when identifying priorities for PD. District leaders added that mandated training is not based on specific priorities as identified through school leader observations and only 40 percent of staff has participated in voluntary Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) training, even though the ELL population has increased. School leaders reported that, although PD has been provided in areas such as differentiation, math, and ELA, observed instruction does not consistently reflect the input and investment, providing only a minority of examples where the needs of students are consistently being met.
- The March 2014 NYSED IIT Review produced a recommendation that the district begin to monitor the impact of training opportunities on observed improvements to instructional practices. District leaders stated that teachers use My Learning Plan, a professional learning data management system, to maintain a record of attendance and evaluate PD for the quality of delivery. However, district leaders stated that the teacher-provided information and feedback is not consistently used to evaluate the impact of training on instructional practices in the classroom; district leaders further stated that no procedures are in place for district or school leaders to visit classrooms with a specific focus on checking the impact of PD. School leaders stated that the district responds to school requests for training; however, schools are not held accountable for ensuring that PD is uniformly implemented or

its impact sustained. For example, one elementary school received PD on de-escalating conflict, but reviewers found that evaluations of the impact of this training were limited because they relied on anecdotal evidence rather than quantifiable data to demonstrate improvement.

- Two elementary schools in the district are involved in a math and science program that provides specialized PD within the buildings. This initiative is being closely monitored by school leaders who stated that data showed that most elementary students involved in the program are making better academic growth in math and science than those who are not.

**Impact Statement:**

- Without a rigorous procedure for monitoring the impact and effectiveness of provided PD, instructional practices are not improving at a fast enough rate to advance 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:

- make sure that district leaders hold school leaders accountable for analyzing the strengths and areas for improvement identified in schools throughout the year and for using this information to inform and monitor the district's strategic PD plan for 2015-16. This plan should be rigorously implemented and evaluated to ensure alignment between implemented PD and quantifiable improvements in instruction and student outcomes.

**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:**

- A lack of rigor in the analysis and aggregation of data means that strategic priorities are not being clearly identified.

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

- All school leaders are required to work with their school building improvement teams to produce and submit quarterly reports on school performance to district officials. However, templates created by district leaders do not encourage school leaders to align commentary and data to the theory of action or to more specific performance goals. Reviewers found considerable variation in the quality of these documents, primarily because there are no district expectations for data analysis or stated requirements for schools to explain differences in academic performance between different groups of students. In addition, school leaders are not asked to provide data that explains the impact of any activities or strategies in place in schools. Documents provided by school leaders provided little evidence that leaders are tracking trends in school performance by content area, grade level, or identified subgroup. As a result, district leaders are not alert to key areas of current district need, which leads to a lack of direction and momentum in raising student achievement.

- The March 2014 NYSED IIT Review produced a recommendation that the district ensure all teachers understand how to use data to adjust instructional practices. During interviews, school and district leaders stated that although some PD has been provided, the majority of teachers are still unable to accurately interpret data to identify gaps in student skills and there has been little districtwide improvement in adapting curricula to meet student needs. Through observations, district and school leaders are able to identify isolated incidents of good practice in which data is used well to carefully match work to the needs of different groups of students; however, district leaders acknowledged that these practices have not been disseminated across individual schools or the district.

**Impact Statement:**

- Without a deep understanding and clear district expectations of how to analyze student performance data and identify trends in schools and the district, decisions are not being made to effectively adjust instruction and further promote 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:

- make sure that district and school leaders and teachers are held accountable for making use of data to analyze academic performance at school, grade, content area, subgroup, and individual student levels and identify priority areas for improvement. District leaders, school leaders, and teachers should then use this information to implement and sustain improvements to instruction and student and school achievement.

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

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

District support is reactive and does not realize a vision for rapid improvements in student achievement in each school.

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

- School leaders reported a range of district administrative, supervisory, and financial supports; however, the IIT found them poorly targeted to the specific needs of each school. District and school leaders agreed that support is not always planned or strategic and the district often waits for requests from school leaders before offering support.
- School leaders confirmed that the district requires all schools, not only focus and priority schools, to

develop School Comprehensive Education Plans (SCEPs) and conduct pre-and post-evaluations for all leadership activities toward achieving school goals. However, quarterly reports submitted by school leaders showed that these evaluations lack rigor. March 2014 NYSED IIT Review recommendations suggested that district personnel work with school leaders to ensure weaknesses in the performance of schools are identified, with specific priorities and strategies targeted, to overcome the identified deficits. Reviewers found that this recommendation is not being fully met, though, because there remains a lack of data-driven objectivity in the identification of priorities and a lack of rationale and accountability in strategies the district has chosen to address shortcomings.

- School leaders and teachers are aware of the financial constraints the district operates under and recognize the adverse impact these limitations have on the ability of schools to meet the needs of students, particularly student subgroups. School leaders and support staff both stated that resource restrictions impact on the district’s ability to support students’ social-emotional developmental health, and cited, for example, the need for schools to share social workers, even though the demand to meet student needs far outweighs the amount of time they have available.

**Impact Statement:**

- Without a clearly defined vision for district improvement that is customized for the unique needs of each school and a sense of urgency on the part of all stakeholders, student achievement is not improving.

**Recommendation:**

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

- make sure that district leaders communicate a clearly defined, goal-orientated vision to schools that is sustained throughout the year with appropriate actions and reporting procedures. Ensure that district leaders use these systems to hold school leaders accountable for continuous improvement.

**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.

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

- The district has not introduced curricular systems with sufficient rigor, and as a result, efforts are slow to positively impact student achievement.

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

- School leaders and teachers agreed that district implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) has been slow. IIT school reviews showed that the district’s approach to developing curricula has been to provide schools with materials and PD; however, this has not ensured appropriately aligned curricula, implemented to challenge all students. At the time of the March 2014 NYSED IIT Review, the district was asked to monitor how successfully schools implement the CCLS, but

district efforts to do this have not been consistently successful.

- School leaders stated that district leaders promote school-based systems to monitor CCLS implementation, such as weekly scheduled common planning time for grade-level and vertical team meetings. School leaders and teachers reported that these collaborative meetings are beginning to be beneficial as teachers review data in relation to pacing guides. However, school and district leaders noted that lesson plan reviews demonstrated that many teachers inconsistently address the need for adaptation and accommodation for different subgroups of students. School leaders and teachers stated that there are weaknesses in how teachers and leaders interpret data. School and district leaders stated that, in part, this is because assessments are unreliable, but also because the quality of district support and training has not been of a quality that ensures school staff make best use of data to differentiate instruction, make curricular modifications, and track the performance of students, groups of students, or the school as a whole.
- School leaders stated the district provides some fiscal support for the implementation of curricula both in and outside of the school day. Data provided by the district showed that in the majority of grade levels, students who attend the extended day program provided by the district make more academic growth than their peers who do not. Similar positive trends were evident in the improved graduation rates of some students, including students with disabilities and ELLs, who were able to remain in school an additional year because of district efforts. Less successful efforts included support for curricular implementation, as evidenced by the PD plan made available during the review; and in particular, the fact that special education teachers have received little additional support to improve the quality of differentiated instruction for students with disabilities.

**Impact Statement:**

- Because of weaknesses in systems necessary to ensure that curricula is appropriately aligned and differentiated, the curriculum does not challenge 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:

- work collaboratively with school leaders and teachers to make sure that teachers use data and other relevant information to make adaptations, accommodations, and supportive materials available for subgroups in lesson planning.

**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:**

- PD does not fully address the specific needs of groups of teachers because it is not aligned to school

data, with insufficient follow up to ensure impact.

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

- School leaders reported that the district does not consistently use walkthrough records and school performance data to provide differentiated PD that meets the needs of individual schools and teachers. School leaders confirmed to the district review team that although the district offers extensive PD, it is not having a positive impact on creating rigorous learning opportunities for all students. According to school leaders, this occurs primarily because of the generic nature of the PD, which should be better tailored to fit the needs of individual schools or clusters of schools experiencing similar PD needs. In addition, school leaders and teachers stated that systems are not in place for teachers to be held accountable for implementing what they have learned in PD sessions; for example, lesson observations carried out by school and district leaders seldom focused on evaluating how effective PD has been in improving student learning. Some teachers described this as a missed opportunity to gain potentially valuable feedback.
- Implementation of PD into schoolwide and classroom practices is sometimes introduced using different timescales in different schools. For example, after receiving PD, a new protocol is being developed in the high school to analyze student math scores to identify individual student strengths and weaknesses on a 10-week cycle. However, following training, the decision to introduce formative assessment in an elementary school has been delayed because of a lack of appropriate district staff to support teachers, and as a result, teacher enthusiasm and optimism, according to the school leader, are wavering.
- In response to a recommendation from the March 2014 state review addressing the need for the district to better equip teachers with data analysis skills, the district deployed a Director of Testing to work in each school with designated data teams to improve the impact of data analysis in instructional planning. However, school leaders and teachers agreed that this is not having a consistent effect on improving teacher expertise, as school and district leaders and school review teams all concurred that data-driven instruction continues to be an area of weakness.

**Impact Statement:**

- Students do not have consistently rigorous learning opportunities because PD activities are not specifically targeted and followed up to secure widespread improvements in teacher practice.

**Recommendation:**

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

- make sure that school and district leaders offer PD that is responsive to teacher and school needs and based on an analysis of data. Follow up by evaluating its impact on improving instruction and student learning.

**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 student social and emotional developmental health.

**Tenet Rating**

**Stage 1**

**Overall Finding:**

- The district has not implemented coordinated PD opportunities that support students' social and emotional developmental health.

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

- Most of the interviewed school leaders, teachers, and support staff stated that the district has not responded to the recommendation stemming from the previous March 2014 district review suggesting that the district provide a sustained PD program in the area of student social and emotional developmental health. Only one school leader was able to identify training that had been provided in response to a request for de-escalation support; however, reviewers found that the impact of this PD has not been sufficiently evaluated in relation to improvements in student conduct.
- School leaders reported that apart from a behavioral code of conduct, the district has not explicitly stated a vision for a comprehensive and strategic plan to address students' social and emotional developmental health needs, and a limited number of programs for high needs students are embedded in schools. The IIT school review teams found that the district has provided limited support for students' social and emotional needs and that the targeted needs of subgroups are not specifically addressed. Survey responses showed that a lack of peer support and cooperative behavior among students were the areas of greatest concern expressed by students. School leaders confirmed that they routinely submit attendance data to the district, but have no systems in place to analyze the information for signs of at-risk students. School leaders and teachers stated that they are directed to follow Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) protocols, but have not been provided with specific training on customizing the program for each school building. School leaders stated that the district encourages them to access community resources for follow-up support; however, there are no accountability measures in place for community agency involvement with students in need and district leaders are unable to substantiate their impact.

**Impact Statement:**

- Since the district does not prioritize and provide training that sustains students' social and emotional developmental health, student needs are not being addressed.

**Recommendation:**

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

- make sure that district leaders implement a sustained approach to developing school leader and teacher capacity in all schools, so that they are able to address the range of student social and emotional developmental health needs.

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

**Tenet Rating**

**Stage 2**

**Overall Finding:**

- The district’s engagement plan has had some impact on promoting links between the community and district schools; however, there has been no targeted focus on ensuring that parents understand how to support improved student achievement.

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

- District and school leaders confirmed that the district is developing a policy that espouses a climate of belonging for families. The policy includes elements of personalized communication to reinforce partnerships between schools and families. Although reviewers learned that attendance at school events is variable, district representatives were able to provide documentary evidence that showed a gradual increase in the levels of parent participation, especially at elementary schools. However, IIT school review teams and school leaders agreed that there is no strategic plan to promote parent engagement. School leaders stated that they gather data on ten required events that are hosted annually to promote school-home partnerships, but do not analyze the information to determine how to better promote parent engagement.
- School leaders and support staff reported that the district is developing communication strategies with the families of ELLs. Nationality workers visit schools on a routine basis, which is having a positive impact on support for these families. Reviewers found an adequate sample of translated materials available during the district review. School leaders reported that communication via parent liaison officers is also having some impact on developing positive attitudes toward education within the community. However, district leaders stated they were unable to provide evidence of any particular strategy that had proved successful in increasing the involvement of parents of students with disabilities.

**Impact Statement:**

- Students in the district do not benefit from consistent, coordinated support between families and schools.

**Recommendation:**

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

- make sure district leaders establish systems to determine the impediments to improved family engagement, analyze the data this provides, and implement a relevant strategic plan in response to it. This plan must be monitored throughout the year, so that timely adjustments can be made to sustain impact.