



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

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)



BEDS Code	662300010029
School Name	Westchester Hills School 29
School Address	47 Croydon Road, Yonkers, NY 10710
District Name	Yonkers
School Leader	Steven Murphy
Dates of Review	March 17-18, 2015
School Accountability Status	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Focus School
Type of Review	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SED Integrated Intervention Team (IIT)

School Information Sheet

School Configuration (2014-15 data)			
Grade Configuration	PreK-8	Total Enrollment	617
		SIG Recipient	No
Types and Number of English Language Learner Classes (2014-15)			
# Transitional Bilingual	0	# Dual Language	0
		# Self-Contained English as a Second Language	0
Types and Number of Special Education Classes (2014-15)			
# Special Classes	16	# SETSS	
		# Integrated Collaborative Teaching	
Types and Number of Special Classes (2014-15)			
# Visual Arts	1.5	# Music	1.5
# Foreign Language	0.5	# Dance	0
		# Drama	0
		# CTE	0
School Composition (most recent data)			
% Title I Population	43%	% Attendance Rate	91.9%
% Free Lunch	62%	% Reduced Lunch	8.9%
% Limited English Proficient	9.1%	% Students with Disabilities	28.3%
Racial/Ethnic Origin (most recent data)			
% American Indian or Alaska Native	1%	% Black or African American	28%
% Hispanic or Latino	42%	% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	12%
% White	17%	% Multi-Racial	3%
Personnel (most recent data)			
Years Principal Assigned to School	Less than 1 year	# of Assistant Principals	2
# of Deans	0	# of Counselors/Social Workers	1
% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate	0	% Teaching Out of Certification	0
% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience	0	Average Teacher Absences	6%
Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2013-14)			
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	10.5%	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4	9.8%
Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (4th Grade)	80%	Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (8th Grade)	
Student Performance for High Schools (2013-14)			
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4		Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4	
Credit Accumulation High Schools Only (2013-14)			
% of 1st year students who earned 10+ credits		% of 2nd year students who earned 10+ credits	
% of 3rd year students who earned 10+ credits		4 Year Graduation Rate	
6 Year Graduation Rate			
Overall NYSED Accountability Status (2013-14)			
Reward		Recognition	
In Good Standing		Local Assistance Plan	
Focus District		Focus School Identified by a Focus District	X
Priority School			

Accountability Status – Elementary and Middle Schools

Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in ELA (2012-13)			
American Indian or Alaska Native	X	Black or African American	X
Hispanic or Latino		Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	X
White	X	Multi-Racial	X
Students with Disabilities	X	Limited English Proficient	
Economically Disadvantaged			
Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Mathematics (2012-13)			
American Indian or Alaska Native	X	Black or African American	
Hispanic or Latino		Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	
White	X	Multi-Racial	X
Students with Disabilities	X	Limited English Proficient	
Economically Disadvantaged			
Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Science (2012-13)			
American Indian or Alaska Native		Black or African American	
Hispanic or Latino		Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	X
White		Multi-Racial	X
Students with Disabilities		Limited English Proficient	
Economically Disadvantaged			

SCHOOL PRIORITIES AS WRITTEN BY THE SCHOOL:

1. To increase the use of rubrics, standards and New York State (NYS) modules in each classroom by June 2015
2. To increase purposeful feedback for student work, data analysis and data driven instructional planning
3. To increase collegial planning and daily communication

Information about the review

- The review was co-led by an Outside Educational Expert (OEE) and a representative from the New York State Education Department. The team also included a district representative, a district-selected Outside Educational Expert, and a Special Education School Improvement Specialist (SEIS) representative.
- The review team visited a total of 62 classrooms during the two-day review.
- Reviewers conducted focus groups with students, staff, and parents.
- Reviewers examined documents provided by the school, including curriculum maps, lesson plans, school-wide data, teacher feedback, and student work.
- The school provided results of a student survey that 345 (56 percent) completed.
- The school provided results of a staff survey that 25 (39 percent) completed.
- The school provided results of a parent survey that 364 (30 percent) completed.
- The school leader was only assigned to the school in August 2014. He appointed one of the Assistant Principals (AP), who took up her assignment in October. Despite this appointment, the leadership team has only two APs, when they are eligible for three. Consequently, the one AP has taken responsibility for Grades 4-8 and the other PreK-3 and special education classes.

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	H	E	D	I
2.2	The school leader ensures that the school community shares the Specific, Measurable, Ambitious, Results-oriented, and Timely (SMART) goals/mission, and long-term vision inclusive of core values that address the priorities outlined in the School Comprehensive Educational Plan (SCEP).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.3	Leaders make strategic decisions to organize programmatic, human, and fiscal capital resources.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.4	The school leader has a fully functional system in place aligned to the district's Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) to conduct targeted and frequent observation and track progress of teacher practices based on student data and feedback.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.5	Leaders effectively use evidence-based systems and structures to examine and improve critical individual and school-wide practices as defined in the SCEP (student achievement, curriculum and teacher practices; leadership development; community/family engagement; and student social and emotional developmental health).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 2:				D	

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	H	E	D	I
3.2	The school leader ensures and supports the quality implementation of a systematic plan of rigorous and coherent curricula appropriately aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) that is monitored and adapted to meet the needs of students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3.3	Teachers develop and ensure that unit and lesson plans used include data-driven instruction (DDI) protocols that are appropriately aligned to the CCLS and NYS content standards and address student achievement needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.4	The school leader and teachers have developed a comprehensive plan for teachers to partner within and across all grades and subjects to create interdisciplinary curricula targeting the arts, technology, and other enrichment opportunities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.5	Teachers implement a comprehensive system for using formative and summative assessments for strategic short and long-range curriculum planning that involves student reflection, tracking of, and ownership of learning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 3:				D	

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	H	E	D	I
4.2	School and teacher leaders ensure that instructional practices and strategies are organized around annual, unit, and daily lesson plans that address all student goals and needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.3	Teachers provide coherent, and appropriately aligned Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS)-based instruction that leads to multiple points of access for all students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.4	Teachers and students work together to implement a program/plan to create a learning environment that is responsive to students' varied experiences and tailored to the strengths and needs of all students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.5	Teachers inform planning and foster student participation in their own learning process by using a variety of summative and formative data sources (e.g., screening, interim measures, and progress monitoring).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 4:				D	

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	H	E	D	I
5.2	The school leader establishes overarching systems and understandings of how to support and sustain student social and emotional developmental health and academic success.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.3	The school articulates and systematically promotes a vision for social and emotional developmental health that is aligned to a curriculum or program that provides learning experiences and a safe and healthy school environment for families, teachers, and students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.4	All school stakeholders work together to develop a common understanding of the importance of their contributions in creating a school community that is safe, conducive to learning, and fostering of a sense of ownership for providing social and emotional developmental health supports tied to the school's vision.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.5	The school leader and student support staff work together with teachers to establish structures to support the use of data to respond to student social and emotional developmental health needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 5:			D	
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	H	E	D	I
6.2	The school leader ensures that regular communication with students and families fosters their high expectations for student academic achievement.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.3	The school engages in effective planning and reciprocal communication with family and community stakeholders so that student strength and needs are identified and used to augment learning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.4	The school community partners with families and community agencies to promote and provide training across all areas (academic and social and emotional developmental health) to support student success.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.5	The school shares data in a way that promotes dialogue among parents, students, and school community members centered on student learning and success and encourages and empowers families to understand and use data to advocate for appropriate support services for their children.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 6:			D	

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.	Tenet Rating	D
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The school has received a rating of ***Developing*** for Tenet 2 – School Leader Practices and Decisions.

- The school leader, despite being assigned to the school only since August 2014, is making a positive difference in the school’s day-to-day functioning. His open-door policy enables all staff, students, and parents to feel valued and to have a voice in the decision-making process. Parents and staff reported to the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT or review team) that his strong leadership has changed attitudes, making staff want to do more and students want to attend classes and complete homework. He has implemented systems and structures that unite the staff as a team, set clear expectations, and establish common goals. In addition, a district leader stated that the school leader has reduced the number of students with disabilities excluded from the school and improved behavioral standards. Discussions with staff, students, and parents indicated that they know the school’s mission, goals, and its key areas for improvement. In addition, the school leader has explained their roles in fulfilling these goals.
- The school leader reported that he has based strategic decisions about resources on discussions with staff and secured resources by effective communication with district personnel. As a result, the leader has refurbished the therapy room and hired an additional math teacher to improve the quality of teaching by monitoring and supporting weaker staff. The review team examined observation data and found some improvements already in evidence. The review team noted that the school leader has employed additional security personnel to improve student routines for entering and leaving at the start and end of the day. The review team observed these transitions to be calm and orderly. Students and parents in focus groups acknowledged that these improvements have led to better understanding of, and support for, student needs.
- The leader and assistant principals reported that they work together to implement daily walkthroughs and monthly formal pre- and post-observations to provide feedback, to celebrate strengths, and to establish practices that will support school improvement. Feedback is immediate and, for most teachers, clearly focuses on improving practice. However, examination of surveys indicated that feedback does not consistently identify weaknesses and how they should be addressed. The review team observed that feedback is not consistently leading to improvements in instructional practices, impeding more rapid school development.
- Evidence from focus group meetings confirmed that the school leader has initiated formal and informal assessments to gather data about student achievement and progress. The school leader reported that he has directed teachers to keep data binders; however, teachers do not consistently analyze the data they contain. In only four of the 39 classes visited on day one of the review, teachers used data to inform and modify instructional practice. Although discussions with school leaders demonstrated a focus upon generating data to improve instructional practice, leaders and teachers have not developed systems for achieving continuous and sustainable school improvement.

Recommendation:

- To ensure consistency in instructional practice across all grades and in all subject areas, the school leader should:
- maintain and embed walkthroughs and one-to-one conferences to ensure feedback focuses on consistency in practice to strengthen good practice and eradicate weaknesses;
- continue to use assistant principals and skilled teachers in key roles as mentors to support less strong practitioners and to drive consistently good practice; and
- monitor the ways in which data are being used to inform instruction, to support individual student need, and to work towards consistency in practice across the school.

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.

Tenet Rating

D

The school has received a rating of **Developing** for Tenet 3 – Curriculum Development and Support.

- A review of school leader’s Professional Development Plan (PDP) emphasizes the need to align the curriculum to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). He has put resources in place to support English language arts (ELA) and math curricula. Teachers have access to training from school-based workshops and external courses provided by the district. Skilled colleagues provide teachers who have missed training with assistance on delivering the curriculum and supporting the CCLS. However, the PDP does not systematically guide the application of training and resources to facilitate student learning, develop higher-order thinking skills, and meet a range of student needs. The review team’s observations of classrooms indicated that, as a result, teachers frequently organize the curriculum for whole-class delivery and do not provide for individual or subgroup needs.
- Teachers have access to a range of data sources including State assessments for grades three through eight and class tests and assessments. However, a review of teachers’ planning indicated that teachers do not use data analysis effectively to develop curricula that support the CCLS and meet student needs. As a result, in classrooms, the review team observed that instruction and assignments did not match individual student needs. Teachers confirmed that the new leadership has increased expectations that teachers should engage in conversations about the use of data to inform planning and instruction. However, teachers also stated that there is still work to be done in this domain. Discussions with students indicated that only a small number of teachers are using data to provide feedback on how they could improve academic achievement. Consequently, the review team concluded that school instruction could not yet be described as being data-driven.
- The review team’s evaluation indicated that lesson plans do not consistently support the CCLS and do not consistently include complex learning materials or higher-order thinking skills to ensure that they meet the needs of all students.
- A review of documents indicated that there is no school-wide, cohesive approach to providing an interdisciplinary curricula. Although the school leader has provided opportunities for teachers to plan

together, teachers confirmed that this time is not used to facilitate interdisciplinary planning or discussions. The school leader confirmed that he is developing a plan to promote a more integrated approach to learning across all grades, but he has not yet enacted this plan. Classroom observations showed occasional lessons where teachers promoted the use of core skills in other content areas, such as social studies and science, but these were as a result of individual teachers' actions rather than part of a school-wide focus. Although some teachers were observed using technology to support and enhance student learning, such practice was not widespread.

Recommendation:

- The leadership team should revisit the current PDP to specify a time line and include success criteria to sharpen its focus on increasing the pace of student achievement through:
- teacher curriculum planning that encourages a personalized approach by analyzing student data to adapt the Journeys and enVisions programs to suit individual student needs;
- the inclusion of documented strategies to target higher-order thinking and questioning, designed to meet the needs of all student subgroups; and
- Interdisciplinary curricula themes across subject areas encompassing science, technology, English, art, and math (STEAM).

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.

Tenet Rating

D

The school has received a rating of **Developing** for Tenet 4 – Teacher Practices and Decisions.

- Although many teachers post learning objectives, they do not encourage students to focus on them and do not tailor objectives to meet the needs of all subgroups, particularly the able and those with learning difficulties. Teachers referenced the learning objective in only three out of the 62 lessons observed by the review team. Because not all teachers post and refer to appropriate learning objectives, many students undertake learning activities without understanding the objective. The absence of understood objectives diminishes engagement in learning.
- Teachers and the school leader stated in interviews that teachers have access to a range of data sources, namely, North West Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), Diagnostic Reading Assessment (DRA), Children’s Progress Measures, classroom response systems (clickers), speech and language assessments, and developmental checklists. Teachers use DRA data to form graded-reading groups and use clickers to monitor student responses to the curriculum delivered. On day two, the review team saw evidence that some teachers used data to organize reading groups with differentiated instructional tasks. The review team found no evidence that teachers consistently analyzed data to provide differentiated instruction for subgroups and to enable multiple points of access for student learning.
- In one effective math lesson visited, the teacher built on the school leader’s initiative that challenged students to read 99 books by the end of the academic year. In this lesson, students graphed their

progress in meeting this challenge to understand why dips in achievement outcomes had taken place. These students, when questioned, reported being fully engaged in their learning and setting goals for themselves, guided skillfully by their teacher. The students confirmed that this enhanced their learning experiences and enabled greater achievement.

- In classrooms visited by the review team, teachers and aides support their students in ways that are patient and nurturing and promote learning. Some teachers, observed by the review team, use rubrics as a tool to provide feedback. Students reported that they appreciate feedback and acknowledge it is helpful in correcting their mistakes. However, the review team saw little evidence that teachers across all grades and subjects consistently provide next steps to encourage students to take ownership of their learning.

Recommendation:

- Leaders should facilitate the provision of consistent high-quality instruction, which includes a clear focus for learning, with an identified purpose that is shared with the students, and uses best practices and strategies to support all subgroups by:
 - collecting evidence of instructional planning weekly, agreed to as part of the APPR process;
 - analyzing the evidence to sharpen the focus of feedback shared during weekly staff meetings;
 - using the evidence to inform the structure and focus of professional development (PD), congruence meetings, and one-on-one conferences; and
 - monitoring that instruction is data-driven so that students are provided with opportunities to engage with and take ownership of the learning process.

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.

Tenet Rating

D

The school has received a rating of **Developing** for Tenet 5 – Student Social and Emotional Developmental Health.

- Parents, in focus groups, described this as a caring school, where all staff members know, and have established positive relationships with, students and families to support student social and emotional developmental health. The school leader, with his counseling background, models a positive leadership style that reassures and nurtures all community stakeholders. The review team noted this leadership style in classroom visits and focus group discussions. As a result, students confirmed that they feel supported and safe both intellectually and emotionally. Discussions with the school leader and support staff and a review of documents show that staff know and follow systems and protocols for student referral and support. Discussions with students indicated that a system is in place that allows each student to be known by a designated adult.
- The school has part-time support staff, a psychologist and social worker, who have difficulty finding time to meet the needs of staff, students, and their families. Focus group discussions confirmed that

school staff and leaders recognize the need for more trained specialist personnel.

- The school leader has improved student behavior and calmed the start and ending of each day by designating clear entry and exit procedures for students and by assigning two security guards to monitor student behavior. The review team observed these routines at the start and end of the day and noted a sense of order and structure to which all students respond positively. As a result, student behavior throughout the day is good. Students and parents reported that they appreciate the guards and feel the school is safe and secure.
- Discussions with staff confirmed that the school leader provided opportunities for staff to receive PD in the Dignity for All curriculum and uses assemblies to address topics such as Good Touch, Bad Touch and to highlight sensitive issues. However, focus group discussions and survey evidence suggested that teachers need additional PD on student social and emotional developmental health to support all students, particularly those with disabilities. Special education teachers reported that they need specific, targeted training with their aides to learn strategies to support students with disabilities. The absence of sufficient PD, particularly for special education teachers and aides, limits the staff's ability to build a safe, respectful environment that is conducive to learning for all constituents.
- When interviewed by the review team, staff, students, and parents commented on the significant difference the school leader has made in strengthening relationships across the school. Parents and students in focus groups described the school leader's initiative in which student volunteers work with students with disabilities. This initiative has been successful in building relationships, mutual respect, and understanding among students. The parent focus group stated that it would welcome more opportunities for strengthening the support for students with disabilities and achieving greater inclusivity and integration of all subgroups school wide.
- A review of documents indicated that the school leader collects data on suspensions and attendance and that he has surveyed teachers, parents, and students about the school's programs for student social and emotional developmental health. The review team noted that the survey findings were very positive. However, staff has not developed a school-wide, strategic plan for collecting and analyzing a range of data to monitor social and emotional developmental health and promote an environment that is conducive to learning for all constituents.

Recommendations:

- In order to build capacity in the support of student social and emotional developmental health, the school leader should meet with a core of teachers of students with disabilities (special education, autism and multiple disabled) to plan and organize a day for them and school aides to participate in PD that will:
 - improve the level of skill in supporting students with disabilities;
 - develop partnerships between the teachers and their aides and a mutual understanding of what is effective support and how students can be offered multiple opportunities to learn.
- Review existing data systems that relate to the support of student social and emotional developmental health with the objective of developing a whole school system that:

- gathers data on a wider range of social and emotional issues;
- monitors the data to determine patterns of student behavior;
- organizes targeted support to resolve and support student need; and
- monitors student response to the targeted support to evaluate effectiveness and determine next steps to be taken.

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.

Tenet Rating

D

The school has received a rating of ***Developing*** for Tenet 6 – Family and Community Engagement.

- All focus groups interviewed by the review team confirmed that relationships between home and school are positive. The partnerships created between staff, parents, and students encourage an open dialogue that actively promotes and supports student growth. Parents reported that teachers share their expectations about individual students’ achievement and they are very positive about their collaboration with teachers. This on-going dialogue, evidenced in focus group discussions, focuses upon promoting student academic growth.
- All focus groups confirmed that staff has strengthened communication between home and school to support student academic, social, and emotional developmental health. Staff uses a variety of methods, including emails, memos, and communication logs, to keep parents informed about their children’s progress and encourage their on-going support. In 315 out of 348 completed surveys, parents stated that they receive timely and regular communication about up-coming events at school. They feel welcome and supported in their efforts to make the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) active during the school year.
- A review of documents indicated that the school leader and teachers share data through emails, report cards, memos, and notebooks to keep parents informed of student achievement and progress. However, parents interviewed by the review team reported that they do not always feel equipped to ask specific questions to enable them to support their children. Some parents, particularly parents of students with disabilities, reported that they would like more opportunities to develop skills targeted at supporting their children. Focus groups and a review of documentation confirmed that staff does not provide formal training, workshops, or support groups for parents. The absence of parent education programs limits parents’ ability to share in the responsibility for student academic progress and social-emotional growth and well-being.

Recommendation:

- To build upon the existing inclusivity and integration of all subgroups, school leaders should identify and designate, by the end of the academic year, a knowledgeable staff member to work with the PTA president to plan several events. These should include presentations/workshops facilitated by staff members with appropriate levels of expertise or community-based organization representatives or district representatives to focus on:
- coping skills for parents of students with disabilities;

- highlighting ways parents can identify and support the strengths and needs of their children;
- effective ways to further strengthen and sustain the home-school partnership that leads to increased student achievement and success ; and
- the formation of parent support groups.