



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

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)



BEDS Code	140600010043
School Name	Lovejoy Discovery School 43
School Address	161 Benzinger Street, Buffalo, NY 14206
District Name	Buffalo Public Schools
School Leader	Dr. Maria Miller
Dates of Review	February 9-10, 2016
School Accountability Status	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Focus School
Type of Review	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SED Integrated Intervention Team (IIT)

School Information Sheet for Lovejoy Discovery School 43

School Configuration (2015-16 data)					
Grade Configuration	PK-8	Total Enrollment	730	SIG Recipient	N/A
Types and Number of English Language Learner Classes (2015-16)					
# Transitional Bilingual	6	# Dual Language	N/A	# Self-Contained English as a Second Language	N/A
Types and Number of Special Education Classes (2015-16)					
# Special Classes	7	# SETSS	0	# Integrated Collaborative Teaching	5
Types and Number of Special Classes (2015-16)					
# Visual Arts	28	# Music	45	# Drama	0
# Foreign Language	3	# Dance	0	# CTE	0
School Composition (most recent data)					
% Title I Population		86	% Attendance Rate		89
% Free Lunch		79	% Reduced Lunch		6
% Limited English Proficient		0.5	% Students with Disabilities		24
Racial/Ethnic Origin (most recent data)					
% American Indian or Alaska Native		0	% Black or African American		24
% Hispanic or Latino		15	% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander		2
% White		51	% Multi-Racial		8
Personnel (most recent data)					
Years Principal Assigned to School		3	# of Assistant Principals		1
% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate		0	% Teaching Out of Certification		0
% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience		9	Average Teacher Absences		9
Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2014-15)					
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4		11	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4		21
Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (4th Grade)		86	Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (8th Grade)		100
Student Performance for High Schools (2014-15)					
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4			Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4		
Global History Performance at levels 3 & 4			US History Performance at levels 3 & 4		
4 Year Graduation Rate			6 Year Graduation Rate		
Regents Diploma w/ Advanced Designation			% ELA/Math Aspirational Performance Measures		
Overall NYSED Accountability Status (2014-15)					
Reward			Recognition		
In Good Standing			Local Assistance Plan		
Focus District			Focus School Identified by a Focus District		X
Priority School					

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)

DID NOT MEET Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in ELA (2013-14)				
American Indian or Alaska Native			Black or African American	X
Hispanic or Latino			Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	
White	X		Multi-Racial	
Students with Disabilities			Limited English Proficient	
Economically Disadvantaged			ALL STUDENTS	
DID NOT MEET Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Mathematics (2013-14)				
American Indian or Alaska Native			Black or African American	
Hispanic or Latino			Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	
White			Multi-Racial	
Students with Disabilities			Limited English Proficient	
Economically Disadvantaged			ALL STUDENTS	
DID NOT MEET Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Science (2013-14)				
American Indian or Alaska Native			Black or African American	
Hispanic or Latino			Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	
White			Multi-Racial	
Students with Disabilities			Limited English Proficient	
Economically Disadvantaged			ALL STUDENTS	

SCHOOL PRIORITIES AS WRITTEN BY THE SCHOOL:

1. Early literacy instruction to provide a solid foundation through alignment of resources toward this priority.
2. Continued PD work with writing: "Problem Solving through Literacy and Writing."
3. Work with MTSS-B grant to strengthen student support systems in Tiers I and II, including attendance, through development of cohesive systems to address universal school needs at especially Tier I to build internal capacity.
4. Build student/school relationships through integration of restorative justice practice structures

(i.e., Circles and Town Hall Meetings) to increase sense of connection with adults and peers at school.

5. Continue to build teachers' internal capacity to access and analyze data to develop and implement instructional interventions and determine efficacy of those interventions.

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 and a Special Education School Improvement Specialist (SEIS) representative.
- The review team visited a total of 47 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 230 students (63 percent) completed.
- The school provided results of a staff survey that 45 members of staff (71 percent) completed.

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
2.2	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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.3	Leaders make strategic decisions to organize programmatic, human, and fiscal capital resources.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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"/>
TENET 2 OVERALL STAGE:				2	

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
3.2	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"/>
TENET 3 OVERALL STAGE:				2	

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
4.2	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 type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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"/>
TENET 4 OVERALL STAGE:				2	

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
5.2	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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5.5	The school leader and student support staff work together with teachers to establish structures to	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	support the use of data to respond to student social and emotional developmental health needs.				
	TENET 5 OVERALL STAGE:			2	
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
6.2	The school leader ensures that regular communication with students and families fosters their high expectations for student academic achievement.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	TENET 6 OVERALL STAGE:				1

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 Stage

2

The school is at **Two** for Tenet 2 – School Leader Practices and Decisions.

- The school leader reported that she created the school vision, which focuses on student achievement and lifelong learning, with input from some staff members, families, and community partners. The school leader acknowledged that the vision is not widely known by the school community and that she is currently addressing this issue. The vision statement does not emphasize student social and emotional developmental health needs, which is a problem issue for the school. The school leader stated that she shared school goals with parents, staff, and students, but the review team found that not all the goals are specific, measurable, ambitious, results-oriented, and timely (SMART). The school leader noted that recent initiatives have begun to show an impact on school improvement. For example, she reported that the early literacy intervention program has led to improved student achievement in kindergarten. The Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) found little evidence that the school leader monitors progress toward and evaluates the goals.
- The school leader reported she has allocated some resources and instituted programs and procedures to increase student success. She directed the reading specialists to focus on improving early literacy in pre-kindergarten to grade one and stated that school data show that student achievement at the end of kindergarten was improving. The school leader also noted that she and staff members have used data to group students with disabilities for some of their lessons, and the expertise of staff in meeting the needs of students with disabilities has led to improved achievement of this subgroup on State assessments. The school leader also shared that she implemented an after-school program that focuses on improving academic success, healthy lifestyles, and character building, which provides opportunities for over 100 students in pre-kindergarten to grade eight. Although students reported they enjoy this program, school leaders provided no evidence to indicate how students benefitted from the program. The school leader reported she scheduled professional development (PD) sessions to train staff, particularly in relation to supporting student social and emotional developmental health needs. However, she provided little evidence of how this effort had a positive impact on student success.
- Although the school leader conducts formal observations, she stated she does not regularly visit classrooms to monitor instruction through informal walk-throughs, which was also reported by teachers. Some teachers noted that any feedback they receive from formal observations or walk-throughs does not show them how to improve their practices. During classroom visitations, the IIT observed much variation in the quality of instructional practices. The school leader stated that teachers are expected to give students opportunities to collaborate with each other and to work together in groups; teachers are also expected to modify the curriculum to meet students' varied needs. However, school leaders do not regularly monitor the implementation of these expectations through walk-throughs, and the IIT did not observe many of these practices during classroom visits. The school leader's limited targeted, actionable feedback and monitoring of implementation of instructional expectations minimizes teachers' ability to improve instructional practices and meet the needs of all learners.

- School leaders reported that they are in the process of developing systems to monitor all aspects of school life and to inform their decision-making. For example, school leaders noted that they are currently reviewing the referral system after a recent analysis of data showed that staff were overusing the system and referring students unnecessarily because teacher expectations regarding student behavior were inconsistent. Because an analysis of the early literacy program in kindergarten showed an improvement in student achievement, school leaders have introduced aspects of the program into grades one and two. The IIT found that school leaders are developing monitoring systems to enable them to make informed decisions about improving student achievement and addressing student social-emotional needs.

Recommendation:

- The school leaders should immediately devise an informal walk-through schedule to monitor the implementation of instructional and behavioral expectations. Some instructional expectations to consider include sharing a clear learning objective, checking for student understanding, planning for students to work in groups, and asking higher-order questions to reinforce and deepen student learning.

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 Stage

2

The school is at **Stage Two** for Tenet 3 – Curriculum Development and Support.

- The school leader reported that she has provided teachers with mathematics and English language arts (ELA) curriculum modules aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), but she stated that the curriculum does not consistently address the needs of all students. The IIT found in classroom visits that the school leader has not monitored teachers’ implementation of curriculum to ensure it is modified across all grade levels in all subject areas. The school leader reported she has helped teachers to develop their understanding of how to modify the curriculum through grade-level meetings where they are supported by a coach. The review team observed one of these grade-level meetings in which a backward planning template was introduced by the coach to enable teachers to develop a better understanding of how to modify mathematics modules. During discussions with the review team, teachers stated they are not sure of how well they adapt curriculum to address student needs because of little targeted, actionable feedback from school leaders.
- The review team found that unit and lesson plans were generally aligned to the CCLS; however, teachers inconsistently modified the curriculum to meet the needs of all students. Teachers shared that they often find it difficult to modify the curriculum, especially for students who are performing below grade level or those in need of enrichment, and that they receive little support to accomplish this adaptation. The IIT found that teachers used data to develop ability-level groups during the academic intervention mathematics and ELA differentiation classes. However, although reviewers noted that activities sometimes were different, students usually rotated around the same activities and ended up having similar experiences. The review team found that lesson plans did not often include

complex materials or higher-order questions to extend and deepen student understanding.

- School leaders reported they have not allocated time for teachers to develop interdisciplinary curriculum due to scheduling constraints. Although school leaders developed a plan to incorporate writing across the content areas, they did not establish formal partnerships to enable non-core subject area teachers to collaborate with each other. Initiatives to develop interdisciplinary curricula are generally informal and through efforts by individual teachers. The review team observed teachers make some links between science, art, and ELA in kindergarten classes in which students were learning about the life cycle of a butterfly. Some teachers identified connections between subjects in a few lessons, but generally, these links were ad hoc and did not appear to deepen students’ understanding across content areas.
- Teachers in all grades administer assessments, particularly in ELA and mathematics, and use data to group students for intervention classes. However, the IIT found that the way teachers use assessment data to inform curriculum planning is variable from class to class. During interviews, a few teachers stated that it is difficult to balance meeting the needs of all students while addressing the CCLS. Although teachers stated they use a common rubric for student feedback, reviewers saw few rubrics used during classroom visits. Most student work posted in classrooms showed that feedback generally consisted of generic comments.

Recommendation:

- The school leaders and instructional coach should immediately start to work with teachers to identify data points and collection tools to assess student understanding (Backwards Planning Template) in all math and ELA lessons.
- Data should be analyzed daily, both during and after instruction, to immediately adjust instructional practice and inform future planning.

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 Stage

2

The school is at **Stage Two** Tenet 4 – Teacher Practices and Decisions.

- School leaders reported that they provide teachers with specialist support in early literacy intervention classes and ensure that teachers provide specially designed instruction and accommodations to address the needs of student with disabilities in most self-contained and integrated co-teaching (ICT) classes. They noted that this has led to increased achievement for students in kindergarten and for students with disabilities. The IIT found, however, that the school leaders lack of monitoring teachers’ implementation of the school’s instructional expectations in many other classrooms minimized student learning. Reviewers noted during classroom visitations that teachers did not often analyze student performance data deeply enough to inform the delivery of their lessons, which limited high levels of student engagement and achievement in many classes.
- With the exception of early literacy and special education settings, the IIT’s classroom visits showed that teachers’ instructional practices did not typically promote higher-order thinking nor did they

regularly provide students with multiple points of access. In most special education classes, the review team observed that teachers provided accommodations and specifically designed instruction to support students with disabilities. However, the review team observed and students reported that during most lessons students do the same activity, and when they finish their work they help other students, read a book, or do work they had previously not finished. The review team often observed a lack of targeted instruction for students performing below the State average on assessments.

- During discussions with the IIT, teachers identified the diverse needs of the students in their classes and stated that some students perform above grade level and others below. However, the review team found that the work given to students typically did not reflect adaptation to meet student needs. For example, some students stated that the work assigned to them was easy, and the review team noted during classroom visits that teachers’ activities and questioning did not typically encourage rigorous thinking. In many instances, teachers asked questions that did not stretch students’ thinking by requiring them to elaborate on their answers although students stated that they feel comfortable asking questions to clarify content. While reviewers did not observe any poor student behavior in classrooms that interfered with instruction, parents, teachers, and students reported that student misconduct, including bullying, sometimes interrupts student learning.
- Teachers reported that they administer a range of assessments and collect achievement data for all students. The IIT observed that teachers used data to adjust student groupings for the ELA differentiation classes and the academic intervention mathematics classes. In most other classes, however, teachers did not typically use data to modify instruction despite different student strengths and needs, and students often performed the same activity. Teachers did not regularly check for student understanding as the lesson progressed. Most feedback to students during instruction was minimal and did not reinforce and deepen their understanding to promote their growth. Teachers rarely provided students ways in which they could become engaged in self-evaluation. Data, which the school collects on individual students, shows student growth, but this is not yet apparent on State assessments.

Recommendation:

- Through regular classroom visits, lesson plan reviews, and data-driven instruction conversations during grade- level meetings, the school leaders should begin to identify effective instructional practices that have resulted in increased student achievement and create opportunities to share these practices with teaching staff. Some instructional practices school leaders should consider include sharing of a clear learning objective, checking for student understanding, planning for students to work in groups, and asking higher-order questions to reinforce and deepen student learning.

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 Stage

2

The school is at **Stage Two** for Tenet 5 – Social and Emotional Developmental Health.

- The school leader reported that she is developing systems to address student social and emotional developmental health needs. She noted that there is a referral system that staff use to respond to students in need of interventions and that staff have been trained in this process. However, the school leader acknowledged that some teachers struggle to implement interventions in the classroom such as de-escalating student behavior, which was also reported by the student support staff. The school leader stated she is currently reviewing the intervention system that was initially implemented. The school leader indicated that if students have a problem and need to talk to an adult, their teacher is their first point of contact. Staff, parents, and students articulated that there is not a consistent approach to address students' social-emotional needs or behavioral incidents. The student support staff noted and the school leader acknowledged that the school does not have a clear vision to guide their work. The lack of a vision for students' social and emotional growth and a comprehensive school-wide system with consistent practices limits the ability of school leaders and staff to identify and address the needs of all students.
- Student support staff stated that school leaders implemented a positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) approach in all grades, and teachers were provided with a behavior matrix, training, and a PBIS handbook that includes lesson plans to teach expected behavior. Students, parents, school leaders, and student support staff reported, however, that behavior expectations are not consistently implemented, and bullying is an issue. The school leader and the student support team acknowledged they need to revisit the implementation of PBIS. Although school leaders introduced circle sessions in which teachers discuss issues that address student needs, both the school leader and student support staff stated that there are no formalized curriculum themes for teachers to focus on during these sessions. The school leader stated that they do not monitor implementation of these strategies to see how well students benefit from them. The IIT found little evidence that the program and any PD are increasing skills for students or are removing barriers to learning.
- The lack of a clear vision for addressing student social and emotional developmental health needs hinders efforts of the school to strategically organize its work with stakeholders. School leaders reported they established committees such as the PBIS problem-solving committee, which deals with specific students who are struggling to meet their goals, and the systems committee, which focuses on analysis of intervention data to support staff in addressing students' social-emotional needs. However, the practices the committees support are not being implemented with fidelity in classrooms, and parents reported that their concerns regarding students' social and emotional needs are not addressed. The review team did not find evidence of a strategic plan to coordinate efforts of all members of the school community-- student support staff, teachers, and parents-- to ensure that they understand their roles and that all students receive the support they need to develop social and emotional learning skills.
- The student support staff stated that they collect and analyze multiple forms of data such as attendance, behavior, and interventions to support student social and emotional developmental health needs. Support staff stated they share these data with teachers during grade-level meetings, faculty meetings, and PBIS problem-solving and systems committee meetings. The school leader articulated the need to spend additional time discussing behavioral and attendance data at grade-level meetings to involve teachers more in this process. Although staff collect and analyze data, they do not always use the data to make timely decisions to enable students to develop social and emotional learning

skills.

Recommendation:

- By the end of the third quarter, the school leader, in collaboration with student support staff, including but not limited to the student support team, all PBIS teams, and community partners, should revisit the behavioral expectations in the PBIS matrix with all staff and students to clarify acceptable behavior expectations for students and consistent implementation of procedures for staff.

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 Stage

1

The school is at **Stage One** for Tenet 6 – Family and Community Engagement.

- The school leader acknowledged that communications and relationships with parents are in need of strengthening, but she stated that the school has many established channels that enable parents to communicate with staff. The school leader stated that parents are informed of the high expectations for student achievement through organized events such as those held at the beginning of the school year, newsletters, and the school website. Parents, however, were not able to articulate any high expectations that had been communicated by the school leader for student success. Some parents also noted that the school leader does not consider their concerns, especially about safety and the social-emotional needs of their children and its impact on student learning. The IIT did not find evidence of a parent engagement plan or that the school leader has successfully communicated high expectations for the academic success of all students.
- The school leader, teachers, student support staff, and parents stated that the school uses several forms of reciprocal communication between home and school such as report cards, newsletters, the parent portal, robo calls, and ClassDojo. However, parents and staff reported that there was an inconsistent approach regarding the use of these communication vehicles. Parents interviewed expressed the perspective that ClassDojo is an effective mode of communication, but not all teachers use it and that there is no uniform approach across the school to promote reciprocal communication. They also noted that classroom newsletters are not sent home regularly. Some parents reported that the school leader is not often available to discuss their concerns and that many of their concerns are not addressed. The school's lack of developing effective two-way communication hinders the ability of families to support their child's academic and social needs.
- Teachers reported that school leaders have offered few PD opportunities for staff to learn how to develop home-school partnerships. Parents stated and staff confirmed that the school rarely offered workshops to parents and that those that were offered were not well attended. During interviews, some parents indicated they did not understand the curriculum, and stated that they have difficulty supporting their child's learning needs as a result. Other parents reported they need training on how to use the parent portal. The lack of training for parents and for staff to create and sustain home-school partnerships limits opportunities for staff and families to work together to support student achievement.

- The school leader and staff reported that the school provides parents with information on how well their children are progressing academically through progress reports, report cards, and the parent portal. They also noted that additional information is provided at parent conferences. Student support staff stated they share some behavior intervention data with parents of children who were referred for support, but teachers and student support staff reported that meetings they arrange are not well attended. The review team found no evidence that the school offers workshops to parents to decipher data or to interpret information the school provides to better enable them to advocate for appropriate services for their children.

Recommendation:

- At parent teacher conferences on February 25, 2016, the school should survey parents in attendance to identify what modes of communication the school is implementing that are meeting their needs. The school leadership team should analyze this data to identify next steps to increase parent communication.