



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

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)



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| BEDS Code | 320800011269 |
| School Name | Bronx Studio School for Writers and Artists 08X269 |
| School Address | 928 Simpson Street, Bronx, NY 10459 |
| District Name | New York City |
| School Leader | David J. Vasquez |
| Dates of Review | December 8-9, 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 for Bronx School for Writers and Artists

| School Configuration (2015-16) | | | |
|---|-------|---|--------|
| Grade Configuration | 6-12 | Total Enrollment | 478 |
| | | SIG Recipient | No |
| Types and Number of English Language Learner Classes (2014-15) | | | |
| # Transitional Bilingual | N/A | # Dual Language | N/A |
| | | # Self-Contained English as a Second Language | N/A |
| Types and Number of Special Education Classes (2014-15) | | | |
| # Special Classes | 20 | # SETSS | 15 |
| | | # Integrated Collaborative Teaching | 18 |
| Types and Number of Special Classes (2014-15) | | | |
| # Visual Arts | 18 | # Music | 2 |
| | | # Drama | 1 |
| # Foreign Language | 5 | # Dance | 8 |
| | | # CTE | N/A |
| School Composition (2014-15) | | | |
| % Title I Population | 77% | % Attendance Rate | 91.18% |
| % Free Lunch | 85.6% | % Reduced Lunch | N/A |
| % Limited English Proficient | 14% | % Students with Disabilities | 25.3% |
| Racial/Ethnic Origin (2015-16) | | | |
| % American Indian or Alaska Native | 0% | % Black or African American | 20.7% |
| % Hispanic or Latino | 77.7% | % Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander | 0.7% |
| % White | 0.5% | % Multi-Racial | 0% |
| Personnel (2015-16) | | | |
| Years Principal Assigned to School | 0 | # of Assistant Principals | 3 |
| % of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate | N/A | % Teaching Out of Certification | 29.6% |
| % Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience | 48.8% | Average Teacher Absences | 5.1 |
| Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2014-15) | | | |
| ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4 | 12.8 | Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4 | 8.6 |
| Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (4th Grade) | N/A | Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (8th Grade) | 38% |
| Student Performance for High Schools (2014-15) | | | |
| ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4 | 55% | Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4 | 48% |
| Global History Performance at levels 3 & 4 | 66% | US History Performance at Levels 3 & 4 | 78% |
| 4 Year Graduation Rate | 57.8% | 6 Year Graduation Rate | N/A |
| Regents Diploma w/ Advanced Designation | 0% | % ELA/Math Aspirational Performance Measures | 8% |
| Overall NYSED Accountability Status (2015-16) | | | |
| Reward | No | Recognition | N/A |
| In Good Standing | No | Local Assistance Plan | No |
| Focus District | Yes | Focus School Identified by a Focus District | Yes |
| Priority School | No | | |

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)

Elementary/Middle School

| Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in ELA (2014-15) | | | |
|---|-----|---|-----|
| American Indian or Alaska Native | N/A | Black or African American | NO |
| Hispanic or Latino | YES | Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander | N/A |
| White | N/A | Multi-Racial | N/A |
| Students with Disabilities | NO | Limited English Proficient | NO |
| Economically Disadvantaged | NO | ALL STUDENTS | NO |
| Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Mathematics (2014-15) | | | |
| American Indian or Alaska Native | N/A | Black or African American | YES |
| Hispanic or Latino | NO | Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander | N/A |
| White | N/A | Multi-Racial | N/A |
| Students with Disabilities | NO | Limited English Proficient | N/A |
| Economically Disadvantaged | NO | ALL STUDENTS | N/A |
| Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Science (2013-14) | | | |
| American Indian or Alaska Native | N/A | Black or African American | N/A |
| Hispanic or Latino | NO | Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander | N/A |
| White | N/A | Multi-Racial | N/A |
| Students with Disabilities | N/A | Limited English Proficient | N/A |
| Economically Disadvantaged | NO | ALL STUDENTS | NO |

High School

| Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in ELA (2013-14) | | | |
|---|-----|---|-----|
| American Indian or Alaska Native | N/A | Black or African American | N/A |
| Hispanic or Latino | YES | Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander | N/A |
| White | N/A | Multi-Racial | N/A |
| Students with Disabilities | N/A | Limited English Proficient | N/A |
| Economically Disadvantaged | YES | ALL STUDENTS | YES |
| Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Mathematics (2013-14) | | | |
| American Indian or Alaska Native | N/A | Black or African American | N/A |
| Hispanic or Latino | N/A | Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander | N/A |
| White | N/A | Multi-Racial | N/A |
| Students with Disabilities | N/A | Limited English Proficient | N/A |
| Economically Disadvantaged | N/A | ALL STUDENTS | N/A |
| Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Graduation (2013-14) | | | |
| American Indian or Alaska Native | N/A | Black or African American | N/A |
| Hispanic or Latino | YES | Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander | N/A |

| | | | |
|----------------------------|-----|----------------------------|-----|
| White | N/A | Multi-Racial | N/A |
| Students with Disabilities | N/A | Limited English Proficient | N/A |
| Economically Disadvantaged | YES | ALL STUDENTS | YES |

SCHOOL PRIORITIES AS WRITTEN BY THE SCHOOL:

1. **SCEP 5A, Rigorous instruction:** 90% of teachers will demonstrate improvement in the: (a) effective implementation of formative assessments i.e., multiple checks for understanding, (b) release of timely and targeted feedback to students, and (c) accurate and frequent monitoring of student progress (Danielson 3D) by June 2016 as evidenced by the following indicators:
 - Upward trending student performance on CCLS-aligned interim assessments.
 - Increased MS and HS course pass rates in Cycles II, III, and IV.
 - Improved overall Advance ratings for teachers.
2. **SCEP 5B, Supportive environment:** By increasing the number of student-centered, curricular and extra-curricular leadership activities for both MS and HS students, our learning community will cultivate greater numbers of authentic student leaders in the “Scholar-Activist” mold, strengthen student-to-student and teacher-to-student daily classroom interactions, and increase cognitive engagement as evidenced by improved overall student attendance and decreases in overall monthly student suspensions and daily referrals to the dean's office by June 2016.
3. **SCEP 5C, Collaborative teachers:** every teacher will strengthen her/his capacity to utilize data-driven scaffolds, supports, and extensions by June 2016as evidenced by increased course pass rates for IEP and ELL students and the thoughtful inclusion of such scaffolds, supports, and extensions in daily lesson plans.
4. **SCEP 5D, Effective school leadership:** Our instructional cabinet shall establish a “data dash board” designed to monitor the progress of students and school-wide instructional expectations initiatives AND study data the platform yields disaggregated by student and grade at the close of each quarter, or cycle, to inform data-driven instructional adjustments by the close of Cycle I (November 13).
5. **SCEP 5E, Strong Family and Community Ties:** Our Steering Committee, or SLT, and community school team, *Global Kids Inc.*, shall cultivate a reliable cohort of ten “caregiver leaders” that will gradually be charged with the shared responsibility of leading parent outreach campaigns, supporting ongoing attendance improvement initiatives with the Attendance Team and cluster teams, and co-facilitating four school-wide community-building events by the close of June 2016.

These school-wide goals demonstrate a commitment to strengthen **BSSWA’s instructional core** in line with CCLS instructional shifts. Equally important, they reflect a holistic approach to improving student performance. Every BSSWA stakeholder - faculty, staff, caregivers, CBO partners, and admin – recognizes the importance of presenting our young scholars highly rigorous and authentic tasks, constantly monitoring each student’s progress toward measurable and attainable goals, and providing every young scholar with **leadership opportunities, scaffolds, and supports** - academic and socio-emotional – and targeted feedback in and outside the classroom, in preparation for the increasingly complex and demanding work and college environments they will inevitably enter and be expected to successfully negotiate.

The successful execution of the action plans accompanying each of these goals should raise (1) our four-year **HS graduation rate** (thus far we have outperformed our HS counterparts in the Bronx since the school’s inception) (2) the number of **MS students scoring at proficient or better** on the NYS MS ELA and Math standardized exams, and, (c) **MS & HS average daily attendance**.

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 Special Education School Improvement Specialist (SEIS) representative, and a representative from the Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (RBERN).
- The review team visited a total of 52 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, schoolwide data, teacher feedback, and student work.
- The school provided results of a student survey that 412 students (76 percent) completed.
- The school provided results of a staff survey that 31 staff (74 percent) completed.
- The school provided results of a parent survey that 259 parents (51 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 type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 2.3 | Leaders make strategic decisions to organize programmatic, human, and fiscal capital resources. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| TENET 2 OVERALL STAGE: | | | | | 1 |

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

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|-------------------------------|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | student achievement needs. | | | | |
| 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 type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" 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: | | | | | 1 |

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 type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| TENET 4 OVERALL STAGE: | | | | | 1 |

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 type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" 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 support the use of data to respond to student social and emotional developmental health needs. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

| | TENET 5 OVERALL STAGE: | | | | 1 |
|--|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input 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 | 1 |
|---|--------------------|----------|

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

- The school leaders and the School Leadership Team (SLT), which is comprised of teachers, department heads, and parents, have set instruction that is more challenging and increased student engagement as instructional goals, and they have established a mission that encourages students to become scholar-activists. Although teachers and school leaders expressed awareness of the mission in interviews with the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT), parents and students did not. While the goals describe targets for improved achievement, they do not describe a clear sequence of steps to attain them. The IIT found that while the instructional improvement priorities are well known by teachers, the various initiatives introduced by school leaders to promote instructional improvement are not being implemented with fidelity. The review team found that school leaders do not always provide teachers with targeted, actionable feedback linked to those initiatives and the feedback this is provided is not always timely, nor have they established systems to monitor the degree to which teachers and staff are meeting the priorities and promoting attainment of the instructional improvement goals.
- The New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) has designated this school as a Community School as part of its new city-wide initiative to spark improved performance among the city’s lower-performing schools. Through this designation, the NYCDOE has provided the school with funds that enabled them to hire additional personnel, including two special education teachers, a full-time reading specialist, and part-time English language arts (ELA) and mathematics instructional coaches. The school has also used these additional funds to implement new programs to support student learning, including a student leadership program and advisory and peer mentoring programs. However, the review team found no evidence that the allocation of these resources was made based on an analysis of data. Furthermore, the school leader stated that he has no data available to measure the impact of these resources nor does the school leader monitor their effectiveness beyond a plan to create a currently undefined data dashboard.
- School leaders have set the stage for improving the quality of instruction by instituting common planning opportunities; introducing instructional coaches; increasing the number of classroom observations conducted by school leaders; and targeting formal observations on increasing student engagement, preparing more challenging instruction, and using ongoing measurements of student understanding throughout each lesson. However, the IIT observed in classroom visits that these initiatives have not resulted in teachers’ widespread use of practices identified as priorities. Furthermore, reviewers found that school leaders’ feedback on teachers’ lesson plans and observations and the professional development (PD) provided to teachers do not target all of the school’s instructional priorities, which the school leader confirmed.
- While school leaders reported that they collect and analyze data on many aspects of student achievement and behavior including attendance, disciplinary referrals, and graduation rates, they stated that they have not established systems to gauge the effectiveness of the training they have provided to teachers and staff related to the school’s goals. School leaders recognize the need for a data-driven process to support and guide their school improvement efforts, and they have set a goal to

develop a data dashboard to inform them about the status of ongoing initiatives and programs. However, they have not established protocols for the analysis of data or identified data dashboard parameters that will support their efforts to monitor teacher and student performance.

Recommendation:

Beginning immediately, school leaders should gather data monthly from reviews of teachers’ lesson plans and classroom walkthroughs and analyze this information to determine progress toward achieving the targeted school-wide instructional goals and to deploy resources appropriately.

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

1

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

- School leaders reported that they recently added a full time literacy coach, part time instructional coaches partnered with a teaching consultant service, and set the expectation that all teachers increase opportunities for students to be challenged through a Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS)-aligned curriculum. School leaders have provided teachers with commercially produced curricula and materials to support attainment of that goal. However, the IIT found that the curricula and materials are not modified to effectively address individual student needs or to adequately prepare all students for college or career. While the school leader has reassigned assistant principals and instructional coaches to assist teachers in curricular planning, he has not established a system for ongoing curriculum review and revision based on student assessment data. The school leader has also not established a system for coordinating the feedback and guidance provided by supervisors and coaches to teachers in their development of lesson plans and curricula. Forty percent of the teachers who responded to a district survey reported that curriculum, instruction, and learning materials are not well coordinated across the different grade levels by school leaders.
- Although many lesson plans reviewed by the IIT described interactive activities, in classroom visits the IIT found that teachers’ lessons were typically teacher-centered and often did not include the interactive activities described in the lesson plan. Teachers reported they have been provided with PD and a framework for developing lessons that align to the CCLS and incorporate data-driven instruction, complex materials, and higher-order questioning. However, the lesson plans reviewed by the IIT did not consistently reflect that training. For example, lesson plans sometimes required students to be placed in groups without reference to how the groupings would address students’ needs, especially for students with disabilities and English language learners (ELLs).
- The review team found little evidence in their examination of lesson plans that teachers plan interdisciplinary curricula to deepen students’ understanding of subject matters. In their classroom visits, reviewers saw lessons in which teachers did not take advantage of opportunities to connect the curriculum across subjects. For example, a grade 8 ELA lesson on school desegregation in Little Rock did not make a connection to the grade 8 social studies unit on the civil rights movement. School leaders reported that the school’s fine arts, dance, and physical education departments have just

begun to create opportunities for interdisciplinary units and performance tasks.

- Although teachers stated they have become aware of a range of formative assessments to gauge levels of student learning through PD activities during September through November 2015, both teachers and teacher leaders reported that teachers do not consistently modify their lesson plans based on assessment data. In an ELA planning meeting observed by the IIT, teachers focused on reviewing Measures of Student Learning (MOSL) results to determine possible student groupings and to set objectives and strategies for modifying curricular planning to address the needs of students with disabilities, as well as students who performed poorly on the MOSL activities.

Recommendation:

Beginning immediately, school leaders and instructional coaches should review teachers’ lesson plans and supporting materials to provide targeted feedback to teachers on how well they have planned lessons that promote higher levels of student involvement in their own learning and incorporate higher-order questioning and challenging activities.

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

1

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

- While school leaders have set increased student engagement and the inclusion of challenging performance tasks in each unit as priorities for teachers’ instructional practice, the IIT found that school leaders do not hold teachers accountable for meeting these expectations, resulting in a gap between expectations and practice. In classroom visits, the IIT typically observed teachers doing all of the talking with students generally listening quietly despite the training provided by school leaders for promoting student engagement. Students were not consistently encouraged to share their own ideas or relate their learning to their own experiences, and they were seldom engaged in meaningful discussion. Students shared that their most memorable lessons were those in which they had a role to play or had a project or presentation to make; however, they could not recall more than one or two times that they had such experiences at this school.
- Although teachers recently received training on how to engage students through the use of open-ended questions, the IIT found that this training has not resulted in teachers asking students to analyze, evaluate, synthesize, or creatively problem solve. During classroom visits, teachers did not ask students questions that encouraged them to engage in higher-order thinking. For example, in a science lesson a teacher asked if the Ice Age is important. After students responded “yes,” the teacher did not ask follow-up questions about why the Ice Age is important or extend the discussion into the current climate change debate. Twenty-seven percent of students who responded to the student survey reported that their teachers rarely or never ask difficult questions in class. In addition, the IIT noted that most lessons included worksheets and activities that were uniform for all students regardless of ability, and often were not complex or did not provide students opportunities to engage with the lesson.

- The IIT observed that teachers seldom met the diverse needs of students, provided opportunities for students to explore issues of their own interest, or challenged students through written activities or meaningful class discussion through which students might express their own voice and reflections. Students expressed the desire to have more opportunities to make choices in how they demonstrate their abilities to read, write, and perform mathematical tasks. Teachers did not provide students with enrichment opportunities to discover new ideas and concepts.
- Teachers reported they are aware of the need to use assessment data to adjust their teaching strategies and provide feedback to students so they may improve their learning. While teachers have been given training on the use of ongoing assessments to gather feedback during, and at the conclusion of lessons, teachers were seldom observed engaging in this practice. Further, when the IIT observed teachers using this practice, they did not make adjustments or re-teach based on these assessments. Although reviewers found that teachers have taken initial steps to have students use rubrics to evaluate their own performance, the rubrics typically were not written in student-friendly language to serve the needs of all students. Students shared they seldom receive feedback that explains the nature of errors or provides guidance on how to improve their work. Subsequently, while the IIT found that rubrics were sometimes attached to student work, the feedback teachers provided students was often generic, such as “great job,” and was not specific or actionable in order to guide students to improve their work.

Recommendation:

Beginning immediately, school leaders should conduct at least three walkthroughs per day to collect information on teachers’ progress toward promoting increased levels of student involvement in their own learning, as well as teachers’ use of higher-order questioning and challenging activities. School leaders should use this information to determine targeted support to be provided to teachers.

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

1

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

- School leaders have recently put into place a school-wide advisory program, a peer mentoring program, and programs involving community based organizations (CBOs) aimed at supporting students’ social and emotional health needs. However, they have not established systems to monitor the effectiveness of these programs, and they have not put into place a defined social and emotional developmental health curriculum to ensure that the social and emotional needs of every student are being met. School leaders reported that often the effectiveness of the advisory and peer mentoring programs depend too much on the personal initiative and ability of the advisors and mentors. Reviewers confirmed this in their observations of advisory sessions, which varied widely in effectiveness, with some used as study halls. Furthermore, the school’s organizational chart does not identify the roles and responsibilities of the various personnel who provide students with social-emotional developmental health services.

- Teachers serve as advisors to students in the advisory program to support student social and emotional health needs. Students reported that they view their advisor as the adult in the school whom they would contact if they experience a problem in school or at home, and parents reported that advisors often contact them about social and emotional issues their children may face. Both students and parents stated that they view this program as effective. Although a curriculum exists for the advisory classes, it focuses on character-building activities and does not provide direction to staff on how to support students’ academic achievement or social and emotional developmental health needs. Support staff reported that they do not obtain information about trends in the area of social and emotional developmental health from the many adult advisors in order to craft school-wide programs or curricula. The Peer Counseling Group provides grade six students with grade eight peer mentors and grade nine students with grade 12 mentors to help them adjust to middle and high school, respectively. Both mentors and mentees agreed that this program is beneficial. School leaders stated they provide advisors and mentors with training on how to implement these programs successfully.
- While the school has several key CBO partners, such as Elevate USA, Global Kids, and Casita Maria that provide support for students’ social and emotional developmental health needs, the review team found that these CBOs do not share information in a planned manner, and are not monitored for effectiveness in a systematic way.
- Although staff often learn about student social and emotional needs through conversations with students, parents, and various staff who provide social-emotional developmental health services to students and informally gather relevant data, school leaders do not formally collect and use this data to inform decisions in order to support student social and emotional developmental health. The school leader reported that the school has not yet developed a planned data dashboard described in the School Comprehensive Educational Plan (SCEP) to make social-emotional developmental health data accessible for analysis.

Recommendation:

Beginning immediately, school leaders should institute a system for collecting information bi-weekly on students’ social and emotional health needs from advisors, counselors, social workers, and attendance officers to guide the planning of school-wide and small-group responses to trends found in the data.

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.

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| Tenet Stage | 1 |
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The school is at **Stage One** for Tenet 6 – Family and Community Engagement.

- The school leader has established a set of core values that highlight expectations for student performance and are prominently displayed in the school. However, many parents who were interviewed were not aware of the school’s expectation that their children strive to attend prestigious colleges and universities or how they can help their children meet those expectations. For example, parents expressed confusion and misunderstandings about the requirements for a high school diploma. Parents also said that the trainings provided by the school leader to give them tools to support their

children's success were not well attended.

- The school does not provide consistent opportunities for reciprocal communication between school staff and families. School leaders and staff stated that they rely primarily on traditional methods of communication including letters in backpacks, postings on social media, telephone calls, and recently, an online gradebook program. The school leaders reported that they use the advisory program staff to contact parents; however, the program is new and does not yet have a set of protocols for parental contact, relies on the personal initiative of the advisors, and is not monitored for effectiveness. Many parents interviewed did not know that the school has guidance counselors and some were surprised that the advisory teachers were not the guidance counselors, as advisory teachers serve as the main contact between the home and school. When asked about the nature of personal contacts to parents, the predominant response was that staff informed them about their children's absences from school.
- The school leaders have not provided training to parents and staff on how to create home-school partnerships. School leaders reported that they have not yet given training to the teachers who serve as advisors in the advisory program on how best to use telephone contacts with parents to support student learning. A review of the telephone logs by the IIT revealed that the topics of calls to parents were dependent on the particular advisory teacher; some tended to call about topics related to classroom performance while others tended to call only about upcoming school events or school attendance.
- The school leaders regularly provide attendance and disciplinary data to parents. A digital school-parent reporting program, Skedula, was recently made available to parents to allow them to view teachers' electronic gradebooks and to send and receive digital messages. Students and parents reported that parents review information in the electronic gradebooks. Student performance data are typically reported to parents in traditional ways through progress reports and report cards. The school leader identified the school's open door policy as an encouragement for parents to come to the school to speak directly with school leaders about the grades and performance data they receive about their children. All parents reported that they had received at least one call from the school to tell them something positive about their child.

Recommendation:

Beginning immediately, the parent coordinator and new community director in consultation with the SLT should begin creating targeted bi-weekly, multi-lingual messages describing how parents can support the academic achievement of their children using a variety of modern communication methods including social media and YouTube to supplement the school's current parent outreach activities.