



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

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)



BEDS Code	661500010009
School Name	Peekskill High School
School Address	1072 Elm Street, Peekskill, NY 10566
District Name	Peekskill City School District
School Leader	Cassandra Hyacinthe
Dates of Review	April 5 – 6, 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 Peekskill High School

School Configuration (2015-16 data)					
Grade Configuration	9 – 12	Total Enrollment	897	SIG Recipient	No
Types and Number of English Language Learner Classes (2015-16)					
# Transitional Bilingual	0	# Dual Language	0	# Self-Contained English as a Second Language	0
Types and Number of Special Education Classes (2015-16)					
# Special Classes	16	# SETSS	0	# Integrated Collaborative Teaching	25
Types and Number of Special Classes (2015-16)					
# Visual Arts	6	# Music	5	# Drama	2
# Foreign Language	7	# Dance	1	# CTE	1
School Composition (most recent data)					
% Title I Population		74%	% Attendance Rate		90%
% Free Lunch		61%	% Reduced Lunch		19%
% Limited English Proficient		12%	% Students with Disabilities		19%
Racial/Ethnic Origin (most recent data)					
% American Indian or Alaska Native		0	% Black or African American		32%
% Hispanic or Latino		55%	% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander		2%
% White		10%	% Multi-Racial		1%
Personnel (most recent data)					
Years Principal Assigned to School		2	# of Assistant Principals		2
% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate		0	% Teaching Out of Certification		0
% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience		23%	Average Teacher Absences (ANNUAL)		35 /monthly
Student Performance for High Schools (2014-15)					
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4		73%	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4		81%
Global History Performance at levels 3 & 4		65%	US History Performance at levels 3 & 4		72%
4-Year Graduation Rate		66%	6-Year Graduation Rate		78%
Regents Diploma w/ Advanced Designation		11%	% ELA/Math Aspirational Performance Measures		17%
Overall NYSED Accountability Status					
In Good Standing			Local Assistance Plan		
Priority School			Focus School		X
SCHOOL PRIORITIES AS WRITTEN BY THE SCHOOL:					
1. None provided.					

School Identification Status		
The school was identified for not meeting the subgroup performance minimum cut point for the following subgroups in 2014-15:		
Subgroup	School's Performance	Minimum Cut point
Economically Disadvantaged	114	116.5

Purpose of the visit

This school was visited by the New York State Education Department (NYSED) Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) because of its low performance.

The purpose of this review is to provide the school with feedback regarding the practices across the school and to provide a number of actionable recommendations to direct the school's work in the immediate future.

This report is being provided as a feedback tool to assist the school and to help identify areas for improvement. These areas can address the subgroups identified or they may be broader and cover additional subgroups or the entire school. NYSED recognizes that there are dedicated staff members at the school committed to the success of the students. The report below provides a critical lens to help the school best focus its efforts.

Information about the review

- The review was co-led by an Outside Educational Expert (OEE) and a representative from NYSED. The team also included a district representative and a representative from the Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (RBERN).
- The review team visited 54 classrooms during the two-day review.
- The OEE visited 18 classrooms with the school leader during the 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 did not provide the results of student, staff, or parent surveys.

The Review Team concluded that the school's current systems and practices are a combination of Stage One and Stage Two on the DTSDE Rubric.

SUCCESSSES WITHIN THE SCHOOL THAT THE SCHOOL SHOULD BUILD UPON:

1. School leaders expanded course offerings to ensure all students have additional opportunities for credit accumulation and access to the arts. The school now offers drama, studio art, and instrumental and vocal music. The school has created a studio where students use state-of-the-art technology to compose music, and the school has developed partnerships with the Copeland House and the Hudson Valley Contemporary Arts Center to support its programs.
2. Leaders are increasing opportunities for stakeholders to use technology in areas linked to the school improvement efforts. The use of the online student information tool, Infinite Campus, provides students with real-time access to their grades and assignments and helps parents track their child's progress. Teachers use Google Classroom to simplify the creation, distribution, and grading of assignments. School staff provide supports such as Castle Learning, an online tool, and OC21, a virtual high school, to help students meet graduation requirements through opportunities for blended learning. Students also use the online tool Naviance to support college and career planning. Teachers are beginning to use Atlas Rubicon to create online curriculum maps.
3. Leaders are beginning to implement differentiated programming to support the academic needs of

targeted sub-groups. The school has developed the Freshman Academy, which leaders have housed in one wing of the school building and designed to support ninth graders transitioning from the middle school. All Freshman Academy students have a period at the end of each day when additional support with projects and assignments is available. Summit Academy is an alternative program for students who are over-age and under-credited. Leaders have located the academy off-campus and designed it to offer students more personalized support and blended learning opportunities. Leaders are tracking the progress of students in each academy to determine the effectiveness of the models.

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.

Recommendation for Tenet 2 – School Leader Practices and Decisions:

To support the district goal of integrating literacy instruction with content area instruction, by April 25 2016, school leaders should establish a team of leaders who will conduct a series of bimonthly walkthroughs focused on:

- identifying the learning and language objectives that support the linguistic demands of content objectives;
- monitoring the implementation of strategic higher-order questioning that supports the essential learning question of content; and
- assessing the effectiveness of the literacy activities that support the learning and language objectives.

The team should collaboratively provide feedback in the form of one or two targeted recommendations to improve teacher practice.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- The school district has a formalized Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) plan to evaluate teacher performance using the Danielson Framework (2007). School leaders create a calendar of scheduled visits that building administrators, district administrators, or administrators from other schools in the district then conduct. The IIT’s review of teacher observations showed that while teachers received some actionable feedback, typically feedback was not targeted and varied from administrator to administrator. Observation narratives frequently showed misalignment between ratings and feedback. For example, feedback from one observation stated that “few questions were posed to students,” yet the teacher received a proficient rating for questioning and discussion. In addition, school leaders reported they conduct limited follow-up to monitor the implementation of feedback. Reviewers found that school leaders do not have a system for conducting informal observations or joint walkthroughs to ensure all leaders share a common set of expectations for and understandings of best practices; and leaders do not consistently look for evidence of lessons aligning to schoolwide goals or student needs.
- School leaders reported that 54 percent of the student body is Hispanic and the number of English language learner (ELL) students is steadily increasing. In response, for the last two years the district has identified literacy as a districtwide focus and has provided training for teachers on teaching reading

in content areas. However, the IIT found that school leaders do not monitor teachers' planning or practice to ensure all teachers are implementing appropriate strategies aligned to the initiative. While the school administers i-Ready assessments that provide Lexile data and a breakdown of students' skills deficiencies, classroom visits and reviewed documents provided little evidence that most teachers design or deliver lessons that address students' literacy gaps. Reviewers found that teachers' planning and practice did not incorporate Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS)-aligned language progressions. Most learning objectives and activities were content based and lacking in strategies to support language acquisition. Observation feedback examined by reviewers showed that few recommendations addressed the need for multiple entry points or scaffolds for ELLs.

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.

Recommendation for Tenet 3 – Curriculum Development and Support:

- To support teachers in planning effectively, by April 25, 2016, school leaders should develop a system to collect and review lesson plans on a regular basis. In keeping with the district's literacy initiative, plans should include not only a content objective, but also an additional language objective that addresses the linguistic demand of the content. Teachers should create checks for understanding for each objective to assess student growth in knowledge and skills.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- The review team visited 54 classrooms. The majority of teachers did not provide reviewers with a copy of their lesson plan when requested during class visits; instead, most teachers gave reviewers copies of the handouts and work packets that students used during the lesson. School leaders supplied reviewers with the district-provided lesson-planning template that includes objectives, activities, and assessments; however, reviewers found that most teachers did not use the recommended template and lessons typically did not include all elements outlined in the format. School leaders reported that they do not regularly collect or review lesson plans to ensure that teachers plan lessons that are consistent with the recommended format and include student-centered tasks.
- The IIT found in their review of submitted lesson plans that most learning objectives were not clearly stated or measurable. Most objectives did not align to grade-level standards. Despite the district's "teaching reading in content areas" literacy initiative, reviewed plans did not contain a language objective or activities to support literacy development.
- The review team found that few teachers used data to inform lesson plans. Although some teachers used student data from "Do Now" activities or exit tickets to adjust their planning, most plans did not reference data or contain evidence of differentiation. Plans typically contained one objective, one activity, and no evidence of purposeful groupings. The school administers i-Ready assessments to identify reading levels and learning gaps, and New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners (NYSITELL) levels are available upon teacher request for ELL students. However, despite the range of reading and language abilities in many classrooms, reviewed lesson plans did not include

multiple materials or strategies to reflect varied student needs.

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.

Recommendation for Tenet 4 – Teacher Practices and Decisions:

By April 25, 2016, teachers should begin to develop more student-centered practice. All teachers should begin to:

- create seating arrangements that support student conversation and cooperative learning;
- pose more open-ended questions and develop learning tasks to promote deeper thinking and student discussion;
- ensure that all questions are followed by wait time before rephrasing or answering a question;
- ask students to restate questions; and
- ask two or more students to expand on classmates' responses before moving on.

School leaders should monitor and support the implementation of these strategies through walkthroughs, informal observations, and feedback.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- The school leader reported her instructional goals for the current school year include creating a culture for learning and student-centered classrooms. During classroom visits, however, the review team found that most teachers' instructional practice did not reflect these goals. Reviewers observed little project-based learning and little collaboration or conversation among students. Most lessons were teacher directed, lacking an instructional strategy, and not rigorous or engaging. In the majority of classrooms visited, students were given worksheets containing low-level tasks, true or false statements, fill in the blank statements, and/or multiple-choice questions; students worked independently on the worksheets, while having little communication with classmates or the teacher.
- In most observed classrooms, students sat in rows and engaged in few partnering activities. Reviewers saw little group work, student discussion, or other strategies encouraging student voice. Few teachers assessed student learning throughout lessons or modified a lesson based on student need. Students in most classrooms were compliant, but the lack of rigor, engagement, and differentiation sometimes resulted in off-task behaviors. For example, when students struggled with an assignment or were done and had nothing else to do, reviewers observed students playing with their phones, wearing headphones, or laying their heads on their desks.
- The IIT observed some challenging Advanced Placement (AP) classes in which teachers presented rigorous material and asked higher-order questions. Although more students were engaged in these classes, reviewers noted that authentic student discussion was still limited. In most of these classes, participation was limited to less than one-third of the students. Teachers continued to dominate the lessons. Although some teachers asked students to respond to or build on a classmate's answer, most dialogue was filtered through the teacher. Teachers rarely incorporated wait time and instead offered hints or partially answered their own questions if students did not instantly respond. While students

reported that AP courses are challenging and interesting, they stated that they do not believe most other classes are preparing them for college.

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.

Recommendation for Tenet 5 – Student Social and Emotional Developmental Health:

By April 25, 2016, the school leader should identify a data team comprised of a cross section of school personnel who will:

- assess the capacity of Infinite Campus to generate data reports that track academic, behavioral, and social and emotional interventions for all students;
- introduce and roll out a protocol to coordinate student’s social and emotional health needs and interventions;
- periodically check data entries in Infinite Campus and disaggregate the data to identify social and emotional trends; and
- track and evaluate the impact of interventions on students’ social and emotional development and academic achievement.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- Although the school uses a variety of interventions to address the social and emotional health needs of students, school leaders have not yet developed formal systems to coordinate services or monitor the impact of existing supports in removing barriers to learning. School leaders collect attendance, suspension, and referral data. School leaders reported that recent data shows suspensions have declined over the last two years; however, rates are still higher than the state average. Students shared that they attend some classes where the same students frequently disrupt learning. Leaders have not analyzed trends and patterns, such as recidivism rates or locations that generate the most behavioral incidents, and the school does not have a data team that could perform this work to identify needs and inform decisions. School staff use the Infinite Campus student information management system to maintain students’ academic and attendance data. Although the system has the capacity to maintain behavioral data and teachers are beginning to enter some referral data into the system, school leaders and staff do not currently monitor consequences and interventions in a centralized manner.
- The IIT found that school leaders do not work collaboratively to amass and evaluate data to inform decisions related to student social and emotional development initiatives. School guidance counselors, the social worker, and psychologists provide school-based counseling services, and Andrus, a community-based organization, provides additional counseling both in and out of school. The school has a relationship with Westchester Jewish Community Services, which runs a pregnancy and parenting support program and supports the school’s Restorative Practices Mediation Program. School leaders have created the Freshman Academy, Summit Academy, PACE Academy, and Newcomers Academy in an attempt to address the varied needs of different student populations. The Positive Behavioral

Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program used by staff in the PACE Academy is being expanded schoolwide next year. Although school leaders spoke intuitively about the success of these interventions to the review team, they have not yet developed a system to track the impact of intervention services on student achievement.

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.

Recommendation for Tenet 6 – Family and Community Engagement:

By April 25, 2016, school leaders should develop a plan to support family engagement and foster reciprocal communication for the growing number of second language families who are part of the school community. Leaders should:

- research and accommodate for simultaneous translation services to be used for all meetings;
- create a committee to translate and upload translations of all school and student data in Infinite Campus; and
- ensure all school correspondence is translated into the most prevalent home languages.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- School leaders and teachers communicate with families in a variety of ways. The school has a website, provides phone blasts through Campus Messenger, and conducts Back to School nights and parent-teacher conferences. The school leader writes a Principal’s Newsletter to provide families with information about school programs, events, and initiatives. The Infinite Campus system has a parent portal that enables families to see student grades, assignments, and attendance data. The district is attempting to move to paperless communication and has recently stopped printing report cards and progress reports; parents now access this information through the parent portal. Families who want a paper copy must request one from the school. School leaders reported that the district technology office is tracking parent logins and slightly more than 50 percent of families are using the portal. However, the school leader did not have data regarding the percentage of families without internet access.
- The school has a steadily growing Hispanic population, which currently comprises more than half the student body. Leaders reported that they have hired bilingual guidance counselors and teachers to meet the needs of the large number of ELL students. However, despite the growing ELL population, the school does not translate most school communications into Spanish. Generally, leaders ensure that translations of paper communications such as the newsletter and flyers are available for families. However, school leaders reported that although the Infinite Campus parent portal is now a primary source for progress reports and report cards, it is not equipped to provide translations. Reviewers learned that Campus Messenger also does not provide translations. In addition, translation services are not always available at public meetings. Reviewers found that a lack of translated communications hinders the school’s ability to communicate student and school data with all families and not all parents have the information necessary to support their child’s learning.

ADDITIONAL AREAS TO ADDRESS

- The school does not have a common grading policy. During individual and focus group interviews, students and parents expressed uncertainty about teacher expectations and the actions students need to take to achieve better grades. In the future, school leaders should establish a committee to create a schoolwide grading policy.
- Due to historically low parent participation at most district schools, the district discontinued school-based parent organizations. School leaders and parents both expressed concerns about a breakdown in communication and a decrease in parental knowledge and support of school initiatives. In the future, school leaders should meet with parents to create a plan to reinstitute a building-level parent club.