



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

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)



BEDS Code	010100010034
School Name	Albany High School
School Address	700 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY 12203
District Name	Albany CSD
School Leader	Ms. Cecily Wilson
Dates of Review	October 20-22, 2014
School Accountability Status	Priority School
Type of Review	SED Integrated Intervention Team (IIT)

School Information Sheet

School Configuration (2014-15 data)					
Grade Configuration	9-12	Total Enrollment	2288	SIG Recipient	x
Types and Number of English Language Learner Classes (2014-15)					
# Transitional Bilingual	45	# Dual Language	0	# Self-Contained English as a Second Language	45
Types and Number of Special Education Classes (2014-15)					
# Special Classes	168	# SETSS		# Integrated Collaborative Teaching	
Types and Number of Special Classes (2014-15)					
# Visual Arts	29	# Music	14	# Drama	5
# Foreign Language		# Dance		# CTE	24
School Composition (most recent data)					
% Title I Population	0	% Attendance Rate			91.6
% Free Lunch	57	% Reduced Lunch			6
% Limited English Proficient	11	% Students with Disabilities			16
Racial/Ethnic Origin (most recent data)					
% American Indian or Alaska Native	0.3	% Black or African American			53
% Hispanic or Latino	14	% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander			10
% White	22	% Multi-Racial			N/A
Personnel (most recent data)					
Years Principal Assigned to School	3	# of Assistant Principals			6
# of Deans	2	# of Counselors/Social Workers			16
% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate	0	% Teaching Out of Certification			0
% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience	20.3	Average Teacher Absences			5.1%
Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2013-14)					
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4		Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4			
Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (4th Grade)		Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (8th Grade)			
Student Performance for High Schools (2013-14)					
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	69.6	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4			31.4
Credit Accumulation High Schools Only (2013-14)					
% of 1st year students who earned 10+ credits	17	% of 2nd year students who earned 10+ credits			76
% of 3rd year students who earned 10+ credits	93	4 Year Graduation Rate			56
6 Year Graduation Rate	64				
Overall NYSED Accountability Status (2013-14)					
Reward		Recognition			
In Good Standing		Local Assistance Plan			
Focus District		Focus School Identified by a Focus District			
Priority School	X				

Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in ELA (2012-13)					
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					
Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Mathematics (2012-13)					
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					
Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Science (2012-13)					
American Indian or Alaska Native		Black or African American			
Hispanic or Latino		Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander			
White		Multi-Racial			
Students with Disabilities		Limited English Proficient			
Economically Disadvantaged					
SCHOOL PRIORITIES AS WRITTEN BY THE SCHOOL:					
1. Increase graduation rate to 95 percent and six college credits (Long Term Goal (2020) as determined by the District)					
2. The school community will ensure a positive culture and climate that is conducive to teaching and learning.					
3. The school community will provide highly effective instruction.					
4. The school community will provide high quality curriculum that is rigorous and relevant.					

Information about the review

- The review was co-led by an Outside Educational Expert (OEE) and a representative from the New York State Education Department. The team also included a district representative, a district-selected Outside Educational Expert, and a representative from the Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (RBERN).
- The review team visited a total of 54 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.

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

#	Statement of Practice	H	E	D	I
2.2	The school leader ensures that the school community shares the Specific, Measurable, Ambitious, Results-oriented, and Timely (SMART) goals/mission, and long-term vision inclusive of core values that address the priorities outlined in the School Comprehensive Educational Plan (SCEP).				X
2.3	Leaders make strategic decisions to organize programmatic, human, and fiscal capital resources.				X
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.			X	
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).				X
OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 2:					I

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

#	Statement of Practice	H	E	D	I
3.2	The school leader ensures and supports the quality implementation of a systematic plan of rigorous and coherent curricula appropriately aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) that is monitored and adapted to meet the needs of students.				X
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.				X
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.				X

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.				X
OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 3:					I

Tenet 4 - Teacher Practices and Decisions: Teachers engage in strategic practices and decision-making in order to address the gap between what students know and need to learn, so that all students and pertinent subgroups experience consistent high levels of engagement, thinking, and achievement.

#	Statement of Practice	H	E	D	I
4.2	School and teacher leaders ensure that instructional practices and strategies are organized around annual, unit, and daily lesson plans that address all student goals and needs.				X
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.				X
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.				X
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).				X
OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 4:					I

Tenet 5 - Student Social and Emotional Developmental Health: The school community identifies, promotes, and supports social and emotional development by designing systems and experiences that lead to healthy relationships and a safe, respectful environment that is conducive to learning for all constituents.

#	Statement of Practice	H	E	D	I
5.2	The school leader establishes overarching systems and understandings of how to support and sustain student social and emotional developmental health and academic success.				X
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.				X
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.				X
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.				X
OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 5:					I

Tenet 6 - Family and Community Engagement: The school creates a culture of partnership where families, community members, and school staff work together to share in the responsibility for student academic progress and social-emotional growth and well-being.

#	Statement of Practice	H	E	D	I
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6.2	The school leader ensures that regular communication with students and families fosters their high expectations for student academic achievement.				X
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.				X
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.				X
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.				X
	OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 6:				I

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

Tenet Rating

I

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

- Efforts by the school leader to build a school community and culture that contribute to high academic outcomes for students have so far proved ineffective. For example, the move to organize the school into four houses has not had an impact on raising student achievement. Although there was a small increase in the graduation rate last year, overall student graduation rates are low with nearly half the students not graduating at the end of four years.
- The school leader came into their position three years ago and set a graduation goal for 2013-14 of 65 percent, but the graduation rate were more than ten percent below this target. Although the district goal for high school graduation is 95 percent by the year 2020, the school leader only set a target for a five percent annual increase. Many of the school’s key stakeholders stated that they are not aware of the goals for increased graduation rates.
- The school leader is beginning to make strategic human resource decisions to meet student needs. For example, in order to provide more time for the school leader to concentrate on strategic management, the school leader appointed an operations principal to deal with behavior issues. However, there are fewer hall monitors this year to supervise the hallways when students are changing classes. As a result, parents, teachers, students, and staff stated to the review team that many students feel overwhelmed and intimidated during transitions between classes. The school leader has allocated resources from the overall budget to provide after-school support, but attendance during after-school is low.
- School leaders implement a structured process for observing teachers and providing feedback on instructional practices, which includes regular classroom walkthroughs. However, there is no systematic collation and analysis of the information gathered from the observations to produce a clear overview of instructional trends. Further, there is no process for following up on the feedback provided to staff to ensure that the required instructional improvements have been implemented.
- The school leader has not established systems for using evidence from assessments, classroom observations, and staff meetings to monitor the impact of school-wide practices on school goals and student achievement. While the school leader stated the building leadership team and other school-wide committee meetings focus on the school’s strengths and weaknesses, these discussions are not data-based. The school uses Measures of Academic Performance (MAP) assessments to measure student progress three times during the school year. However, assessment results are not used to monitor progress toward the school’s graduation goal or to inform strategic decision making and resource allocation.

Recommendation:

Implement evidence-based systems to monitor the impact of school-wide practices by:

- regularly checking that teachers analyze and use data to inform lesson plans and instruction;
- conducting classroom walkthroughs to monitor the implementation of recommendations from observations;
- monitoring student behavior in hallways during transitions; and

- analyzing the impact of the operational principal in improving student behavior.

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

Tenet Rating

I

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

- The monitoring of curriculum implementation aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) is not rigorous or comprehensive in ensuring that all teachers use the standards effectively. Most teachers do not use the CCLS to plan or provide challenging learning activities for all students. School leaders do not collate and analyze the information from walkthroughs to produce a clear overview of instructional trends and to determine the effectiveness of curriculum implementation.
- School leaders and teachers undertake curriculum mapping annually, but they subsequently do not adapt curriculum throughout the year to meet student needs. A review of documents demonstrates that curriculum mapping is not comprehensive with regard to vertical alignment across grades and subject areas to address the diverse needs of all student subgroups, including English language learners (ELLs). Further, the review team found insufficient differentiation of unit and lesson plans to meet the needs of students.
- Teachers do not use the CCLS to challenge students at all levels or to make them college and career ready. Students attending the career technical education (CTE) program at the school’s Abrookin Career and Technical Center indicate that they are enthusiastic about their studies, see the relevance of the courses, and the contribution these courses make to their career and life aspirations. However, this program is currently limited to a small percentage of the school’s students.
- Most teachers do not use the curriculum to provide students with real-world connections to enrich their learning. During only a few classroom visits was there evidence of interdisciplinary learning. For example, in one art lesson, the teacher introduced some choral reading to reinforce literacy skills, but this was limited across the school.
- Students are assessed regularly throughout the academic year, but the information provided by these assessments has little impact on short-term curriculum planning. Discussions with the school leader and staff demonstrated that teachers do not use data to inform instruction.

Recommendation:

Develop a common lesson plan format that includes:

- instructional alignment to the CCLS;
- evidence of planning to meet the needs of all students;
- a variety of complex, engaging, and rigorous materials; and
- a progression of sequenced and scaffolded skills that meet the instructional needs of all groups of students, including ELLs.

<p>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.</p>	<p>Tenet Rating</p>	<p>I</p>
<p>The school has received a rating of <i>Ineffective</i> for Tenet 4 – Teacher Practices and Decisions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching practices do not effectively meet the needs of all students, and there is little evidence that teachers use additional resources, other than those readily available, during lesson planning to challenge and motivate all students. Ninety percent of lessons observed were teacher directed with little student engagement or higher-order questioning to deepen student thinking. School leaders do not monitor instructional plans and practices to ensure that teachers adapt instruction to meet the needs of students. Assessment data is not used to plan or deliver instruction. Teachers do not consistently adjust or modify instructional practices in order to ensure all students have access to the curriculum. Teachers do not provide students with opportunities to explore different learning routes or pursue alternative pathways to the common learning objectives. Most teachers do not provide engaging lessons designed to capture the interest of students and instruction is generally teacher-centered, which requires little student engagement. Further, most teacher questions are low level and require factual recall. Students are rarely asked to evaluate their own performance or assess their peers. The SMARTBoards are not used in an interactive manner and few teachers inform students of the learning objectives at the start of lessons. Students receive little feedback in lessons, as teachers focus on managing disruptive behavior rather than learning. Teacher feedback on written work focuses on accuracy rather than providing guidance on how students might improve their performance. Students stated that learning is often disrupted by the behavior of others. As a result, students shared with the review team that they find it difficult to focus during instruction. <p>Recommendation:</p> <p>The school leader should develop a system to monitor that teacher instructional practices include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> modifications to ensure all students have access to the curriculum; use of clear learning objectives at the start of lessons as a way for teachers and students to measure learning; higher-order questions that require students to think at a deeper level; processes for students to actively engage with the content and each other; and methods to regularly check for student understanding and provide feedback. 		
<p>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.</p>	<p>Tenet Rating</p>	<p>I</p>
<p>The school has received a rating of <i>Ineffective</i> for Tenet 5 – Student Social and Emotional Developmental Health.</p>		

- The school does not have an overarching system to promote the social and emotional developmental health of all students. Parents and students shared with the review team that some students and families, such as ELLs, have difficulty accessing available supports because of language barriers.
- The school does not use a structured program to support student social and emotional developmental health and there is limited training for staff in this area. Although the school works with a wide range of external agencies, the review team found that the school does not have a clear plan to meet the social-emotional needs of students.
- Students in the large and small focus groups stated that they were unsure of how to approach staff members with an issue and that they did not believe adults would help them handle problems. Further, many students shared that they had experienced bullying or harassment in school.
- Classroom visits show there is a high level of inconsistency in the way that staff deals with disruptive incidents. In some classes, students were ignored while texting on their cell phones or listening to music during lessons, while in a limited number of other classes, teachers addressed students who were off task. While staff shared that there is a school-wide behavior plan, Falcon Pride, staff do not consistently implement this plan, which results in students not being clear on behavior expectations.
- Through a careful restructuring process, the school leader created the operations principal position to oversee the school climate and culture and monitor the Falcon Pride behavior expectations across the school. However, the school did not provide evidence for how this position is impacting student success.
- There was no evidence of how the school is using data to monitor and meet the social and emotional developmental health needs of students across the school.

Recommendation

- The school leader should work with the operations principal to implement the Falcon Pride plan consistently across all classrooms and monitor this implementation with regular walkthroughs. Develop systems to collect and analyze data to meet the social and emotional developmental health needs of students.

Tenet 6 - Family and Community Engagement: The school creates a culture of partnership where families, community members, and school staff work together to share in the responsibility for student academic progress and social-emotional growth and well-being.

Tenet Rating

I

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

- Many parents interviewed report they are confused by the new curriculum demands and they do not understand the information provided by the school about their children’s learning. Further, most parents report they have insufficient information on student learning objectives (SLO). A review of emails indicates that a few teachers communicate with parents and provide detailed information about student progress, but this is not consistent across the school. As a result, parents do not feel equipped to support student achievement, which contributes to low graduation rates.
- The school communicates with parents through newsletters, handbooks, and the school website, but parents state they find these difficult to navigate and understand, especially those parents whose first language is not English. A review of documents did not show any examples of communication

translated into languages for families that do not speak English. The school uses Power-school to allow students and their families to track individual student progress. However, this is not accessible to those families without the appropriate technology. Some parents stated to the review team that do not feel like parents have a voice.

- Parents praised the work of the school's parent engagement coordinator who they said is a reliable and easy point of contact. Parents also stated that they appreciate the opportunity to drop-in and meet in the parent lounge.
- The school provides limited opportunities for parents to be involved in productive partnerships that support student achievement. Few parents attend the school's Open House events and parents state that when they do attend events in the school it is difficult to understand important information due to the poor quality of the school's sound system.

Recommendation:

- The school leader should strengthen communication with parents by providing more easily understood information on curriculum expectations, the school's code of conduct, and student achievement and progress. The school should be mindful of the needs of parents whose first language is not English, by translating important information regularly into appropriate languages.