



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

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)



BEDS Code	270100010000
District	Greater Amsterdam School District
District Address	11 Liberty Street, Amsterdam, New York
Superintendent	Thomas Perillo
Date(s) of Review	November 25, 2013
Schools Discussed in this Report	All schools in the District.

District Information Sheet											
District Grade Configuration		Total Student Enrollment		Title 1 Population	%	Attendance Rate		%			
Free Lunch	%	Reduced Lunch	%	Student Sustainability	%	Limited English Proficient	%	Students with Disabilities		%	
Racial/Ethnic Origin of District Student Population											
American Indian or Alaska Native	%	Black or African American	%	Hispanic or Latino	%	Asian or Native Hawaiian /Other Pacific Islander	%	White	%	Multi-racial	%
Personnel											
Number Years Superintendent Assigned/Appointed to District		Number of Deputy Superintendents		Average Years Dep. Superintendents in Role in the District		# of Directors of Programs					
% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate in District		% Teaching Out of Certification in District		% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Yrs. of Exp. in District		Average Teacher Absences in District					
Overall State Accountability Status (Mark applicable box with an X)											
District in Good Standing		Focus District		Number of Focus School Identified by District		Number of SIG Recipient Schools		Number of Schools in Status			
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4		Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4		Science Performance at levels 3 & 4		4 yr. Graduation Rate (for HS only)		6 yr. Graduation Rate (for HS only)			

Did Not Meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in ELA			
	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 Mathematics			
	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			
	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) for Effective Annual Measurable Achievement Objective			
	Limited English Proficiency		

Tenet 1 - District Leadership and Capacity: The district examines school systems and makes intentional decisions to identify and provide critical expectations, supports and structures in all areas of need so that schools are able to respond to their community and ensure that all students are successful.

#	Statement of Practice	H	E	D	I
1.1	The district has a comprehensive approach for recruiting, evaluating, and sustaining high-quality personnel that affords schools the ability to ensure success by addressing the needs of their community.			X	
1.2	The district leadership has a comprehensive and explicit theory of action about school culture that communicates high expectations for addressing the needs of all constituents.			X	
1.3	The district is organized and allocates resources (financial, staff support, materials, etc.) in a way that aligns appropriate levels of support for schools based on the needs of the school community.		X		
1.4	The district has a comprehensive plan to create, deliver and monitor professional development in all pertinent areas that is adaptive and tailored to the needs of individual schools.			X	
1.5	The district promotes a data-driven culture by providing strategies connected to best practices that all staff members and school communities are expected to be held accountable for implementing.			X	
OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 1:				D	

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

#	Statement of Practice	H	E	D	I
2.1	The district works collaboratively with the school to provide opportunities and supports for the school leader to create, develop and nurture a school environment that is responsive to the needs of the entire school community.		X		

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
3.1	The district works collaboratively with the school(s) to ensure CCLS curriculum that provide 21st Century and College and Career Readiness skills in all content areas and provides fiscal and human resources for implementation.		X		

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
4.1	The district works collaboratively with the school to provide opportunities and supports for teachers to develop strategies and practices and addresses effective planning and account for student data, needs, goals, and levels of engagement.		X		

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
5.1	The district creates policy and works collaboratively with the school to provide opportunities and resources that positively support students' social and emotional developmental health.		X		

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

#	Statement of Practice	H	E	D	I
6.1	The district has a comprehensive family and community engagement strategic plan that states the expectations around creating and sustaining a welcoming environment for families, reciprocal communication, and establishing partnerships with community organizations and families.		X		

District Review Narrative:

Greater Amsterdam School District
November 2013

Tenet 1 - District Leadership and Capacity: The district examines school systems and makes intentional decisions to identify and provide critical expectations, supports and structures in all areas of need so that schools are able to respond to their community and ensure that all students are successful.	Overall Tenet Rating	D
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Statement of Practice 1.1: The district has a comprehensive approach for recruiting, evaluating, and sustaining high-quality personnel that affords schools the ability to ensure success by addressing the needs of their community.	Tenet Rating	D
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Debriefing Statement: The district has a planned approach for recruiting and sustaining quality personnel. Although the school staff collaborates with community agencies to attract diverse candidates, the school staff has yet to increase the number of Spanish-speaking staff members to address the needs of particular subgroups of students.

Areas for Improvement:

- The district staff has a process for recruiting and sustaining personnel. However, the district recruitment strategies has not yet resulted in diverse applicants that meet the needs of the entire student body. During discussions with the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT), the district leader described his process for recruiting staff, which includes layered checks and filtering by stakeholders to select personnel for the positions available. The district staff has created a structure that supports and increases its human resource capacity. According to the district leader, he secured grants such as Teachers of Tomorrow, to support recruitment and retention of staff. Additionally, staff has partnered with teacher preparation programs at the University at Albany and Union College, to place student interns in high need schools. Last year the district placed seventeen interns from diverse backgrounds throughout the district. During discussions with the IIT, district leaders shared that many experienced teachers have retired and school leaders are filling vacancies with individuals whose backgrounds aligns with the district’s vision for school improvement. Additionally, leaders said that district staff has hired five school leaders in recent years who work closely with district staff to improve the performance of the schools throughout the district. The district leader told reviewers that he has noticed an increase in the number of highly qualified teachers applying for positions since the district began offering incentives such as stipends and competitive salaries. Although there is an increase in applicants, staff reported to reviewers that the district has yet to increase the number of bilingual personnel, particularly Spanish speaking individuals. The district staff told reviewers that less than one percent of the teaching force in the district is Hispanic but approximately 50 percent of the students in the schools are Hispanic. The district leader reported that staff is aware that greater instructional supports are needed for this particular subgroup of students, and therefore, the district leadership collaborates with Centro Civico, a local Hispanic community center in efforts to increase the pool of Hispanic applicants. The district has a plan for the recruitment and selection of staff; however, the plan is not resulting in candidates that meet the needs of all students in the district.

Statement of Practice 1.2.: The district leadership has a comprehensive and explicit theory of action about school culture that communicates high expectations for addressing the needs of all constituents.	Tenet Rating	D
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Debriefing Statement:

While the district has established a plan of action to raise standards and drive improvement efforts, the district has not consistently communicated the plan throughout the district to ensure all stakeholders understand and embrace the district’s drive for high expectations to address the needs of all constituents.

Areas for Improvement:

- The district has an action plan that includes articulated goals and priorities to raise the standard of education across the district. While the district staff has established goals and priorities, the district has not ensured that all stakeholders have a shared understanding of the district’s high expectations for addressing the needs of all constituents. The district leader shared that the Board of Education collaborated with the district leadership team to establish four goals including to increase students’ levels of achievement, to increase educational capacity by securing outside grants and using local educators, to implement the CCLS and to ensure that school leaders implement the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) with fidelity. The district also publishes a monthly calendar to share planned meeting and progress on district goals. The district leaders told reviewers that they have established a network, to foster teachers’ and school leaders’ ownership of the district’s priorities through focused discussions on topics such as the CCLS shifts and APPR. Although the district staff has established a Teacher Expectation & Student Achievement Team to focus on shifting the expectations in the teaching of English language arts and math, interviews with district staff indicate that some teachers, particularly those at the elementary levels are still need support in creating curricula that aligns to the CCLS. While the district has enacted several initiatives to address school improvement, the impact of these initiatives is uncertain as results from State tests indicate that the low test scores are still prevalent for both individual and groups of students across the district.

Statement of Practice 1.3: The district is organized and allocates resources (financial, staff support, materials, etc.) in a way that aligns appropriate levels of support for schools based on the needs of the school community.	Tenet Rating	D
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Debriefing Statement: The district allocates funds to meet the needs of the school community; however, some funding decisions have resulted in fewer resources to meet the needs of identified subgroups

Areas for Improvement:

- The district staff organizes and allocates resources to address the needs of the schools throughout the district; however, funding decisions have negatively affected the district staff’s ability to respond to the needs of specific subgroups of students. During discussions with the IIT, the district leader

told reviewers that the district leadership, together with input from school leaders, analyzes the needs of the schools and develops initiatives and strategies to address critical needs. For example, the district staff has allocated resources to address students' social and emotional developmental needs with programs like Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), Response To Intervention (RtI) and Alternative Education Programs. The district staff also has developed connections with Saint Mary's Children's Mental Health for responsive wrap-around care services. Although staff indicated to reviewers that student outcomes have improved over last year, reviewers did not find specific evidence of data that supports overall improvements across the district. District staff members reported that they constantly seek ways to increase funding and save money in the current "zero budget" climate. Staff members told reviewers that they applied for and won a grant to compensate for budget shortages. The grant supports staffing for teacher leaders and behavior specialists. The district leader reports that he targets funding following the advice from his leadership team, to achieve the goals. District leaders told reviewers that they reduced special education positions from directors to coordinators. In discussions with the IIT, members of the district leadership team said that although special education is a priority based on the student population, the Board of Education did not include specific references to special education in the 2013-14 priorities. The district staff also indicated that there are not enough resources to meet the level of special education needs in the district. The district has made decisions to allocate resources to support targeted student needs in the district; however, the reduction of funding has limited available resources to some sub-groups, which affects the schools staff's ability to fully meet the needs of all students.

Statement of Practice 1.4: The district has a comprehensive plan to create, deliver and monitor professional development in all pertinent areas that is adaptive and tailored to the needs of individual schools.

Tenet Rating

D

Debriefing Statement: The district staff has a plan to provide professional development (PD) to support staff based on common teaching needs. However, the district has not established consistent protocols to monitor and evaluate the quality of PD, which reduces the district staff's ability to ensure that the PD leads to increased teacher effectiveness.

Areas for Improvement:

- The district has a plan to deliver PD based on teachers' and staff members' professional needs. However, the district staff does not consistently monitor or evaluate the PD offered to assess its impact on student achievement. The district leader reported that staff uses a PD format that creates opportunities for teachers with multiple needs to be trained based on identified PD needs. For example, teachers who need to improve their questioning skills can link to other colleagues working on formative assessments, or those teachers who need to improve the quality of their classroom environment can be grouped with teachers working on the use of learning materials. Directors of Instruction indicated that they are building on past PD models and have had some

success. The members of the district leadership team expressed to reviewers that the PD program is dynamic and shifts in response to reported, observed, and evaluated needs, including those emerging from APPR. Interviews with staff indicate that the district has adopted varied “train the trainers” models to save money and to build capacity. Although members of the district leadership team told reviewers that they monitor the PD, reviewers found limited evidence that staff consistently monitors the PD model to ensure that the teachers who receive the training apply the skills they gain in instruction to benefit students. The lack of consistent monitoring limits the impact that PD has upon teacher effectiveness and student achievement.

Statement of Practice 1.5: The district promotes a data-driven culture by providing strategies connected to best practices that all staff members and school communities are expected to be held accountable for implementing.

Tenet Rating	D
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Debriefing Statement: The district communicates expectations for the development and collection of data, but has not yet provided consistent protocols for school staff to access and use data use to inform instructional decisions.

Areas for Improvement:

- The district staff encourages schools in the district to collect and use data. However, the district has not ensured that all stakeholders use a consistent approach to gathering and monitoring data. According to the district leader, the schools in the district use electronic systems such as Edvista to gather and track data, and to create reports on school performance. When interviewed by the IIT the Director of Data and Personnel, and the Directors of Instruction informed reviewers that while the district staff has made progress in supporting the schools’ use of data, district staff needs to ensure data is disseminated consistently. The high school staff uses Castle Learning and E-school to collect and analyze student data to improve instruction and the school learning environment. The elementary school staff uses structures such as RtI meetings to study the progress of students in ELA and math. The district leader told reviewers that the Directors of Instruction collaborate with school leaders and teachers from the middle and high schools to provide PD on writing, modifying, and implementing curricula maps using Rubicon Atlas and on developing lesson plans drawn from the Tri-State rubric. During discussions with the IIT, members of the district leadership team reported that although teachers at the elementary levels are beginning to use data to inform their work, they require additional support, as teachers are not using data from formative and summative assessments to monitor and evaluate students’ progress. While, the district staff told reviewers that they use data from need analysis to develop PD, reviewers found limited evidence that the district staff uses data to monitor or evaluate the quality of instruction and students’ progress. The district staff supports school staff in their use of data; however, the district has not ensured that all school staff consistently uses data to inform instruction and to support students. As a result, not all stakeholders in the district have a deep understanding of how students are performing, and can

adjust their practices accordingly to promote further student achievement.

This section provides a narrative that communicates how school communities perceive the support provided by the district.

Statement of Practice 2.1 - School Leader Practices and Decisions: The district works collaboratively with the school to provide opportunities and supports for the school leader to create, develop and nurture a school environment that is responsive to the needs of the entire school community.	Tenet Rating	E
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Strengths:

- The district staff fosters positive relationships with school leaders that allow school leaders to create, develop, and nurture school environments that are responsive to the needs of the entire school community. During discussions with the IIT, the district leader reported that the district leaders meet regularly with school leaders to discuss and address school operations and overall improvement initiatives. According to both the district leader and school leaders, the district staff is accessible to school leaders and responds quickly to school leaders’ inquiries. The district staff is proactive in providing and supporting school school-based trainings and PD based on requests from school leaders. The district provides opportunities for school leaders and school staff to participate in visits to other schools and attend state and national conferences and workshops. The district leader reported to reviewers that the district staff works collaboratively with school leaders to create unique School Comprehensive Education Plans (SCEPs), and school leaders spoke highly of the assistance district staff provided to develop Student Learning Objective (SLO) targets. Additionally, district leaders challenges and encourages school leaders to pursue and actualize the visions they established for their respective schools. District staff is active in seeking and securing resources to fund needed programs and support services in schools, such as advisory periods, translation services, and parent liaisons. In addition, the district staff works with school leaders in the district to ensure that school staff uses resources appropriately. School leaders also spoke highly of the district’s support of expanding technology across the district. As a result of district and school collaborations, the school leaders report that they are able to develop a school environment that is responsive to the school community’s needs.

Statement of Practice 3.1 - Curriculum Development and Support: The district works collaboratively with the school(s) to ensure CCLS curriculum that provide 21st Century and College and Career Readiness skills in all content areas and provides fiscal and human resources for implementation.	Tenet Rating	E
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Strengths:

- The district works collaboratively with the schools in establishing short- and long-term plans for curricula development and curricula implementation with its stakeholders. Interviews with district staff and evidence gathered from school visits by the IIT indicate that the high school staff uses Rubicon Atlas to create maps that reflect the CCLS. The district provides PD to support staff in

aligning their curricula to the CCLS. While evidence gathered by the IIT indicates that the elementary level schools are in the beginning stages of aligned mapping, the middle and high school teachers are further ahead in developing maps that align to the general curricula. The district staff told reviewers that a middle school teacher, with support from the district, is leading the collaborative mapping process. The district has regular sessions with teams of teachers and school leaders to discuss academic goals and areas of need, to determine ways to meet the identified areas of need. The CCLS-aligned report card for parents with children in grades kindergarten through five is an example of an outcome from the planning sessions. This report card provides parents with consistent information about their children’s progress and achievement. The district provides support and workshops for parents to increase their awareness and deepen their understanding of school expectations. The district obtained grant resources, such as the School Improvement Grant (SIG) to provide PD opportunities for teachers. The district uses funds from the Systematic Teacher and Leadership Effectiveness (STLE) grant to provide training for teacher leaders and coaches on establishing collaborative approaches across disciplines and schools. The district leadership team monitors and evaluates the CCLS curricula and program alignment, to improve academic standards. The result is that teachers have increased opportunities to use curricula and provide instruction that reflects the CCLS.

Statement of Practice 4.1 - Teacher Practices and Decisions: The district works collaboratively with the school to provide opportunities and supports for teachers to develop strategies and practices and addresses effective planning and account for student data, needs, goals, and levels of engagement.

Tenet Rating

E

Strengths:

- The district works with the school leaders to provide opportunities and supports for teachers to develop practices that lead to effective planning. According to the district leader, the district provides PD on CCLS for teacher leaders. The teacher leaders also have opportunities to attend workshops led by regional boards of cooperative educational services (BOCES). The district collaborates with school leaders to provide learning opportunities that help teachers to identify best practices and strategies. School staff spoke highly of the Literacy Action Team developed and facilitated by district staff to improve instructional practices across the district. The district leader reports that the district staff has advised school leaders to focus PD efforts on CCLS and differentiation, to meet the needs of all students, particularly students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs). The district has also developed partnerships to allow school-based staff to improve their professional knowledge. These partnerships include SUNY-Albany and Model Schools. As a result of the collaborative relationship between district-based and school-based personnel, the district is able to provide opportunities intended to increase professional understanding and improve instructional practices.

Statement of Practice 5.1 - Student Social and Emotional Developmental Health: The district creates policy and works collaboratively with the school to provide opportunities and resources that positively support students' social and emotional developmental health.	Tenet Rating	E
<p><u>Strengths:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The district creates policy and works collaboratively with the schools to provide opportunities and resources that support students' social and emotional developmental health. When interviewed by the IIT, the district leader shared that as part of the district's comprehensive plan, the district staff meet regularly with school guidance counselors, psychologists and social workers to plan and evaluate staff's PD needs. During these meetings, staff strategizes on securing resources to include seeking grant opportunities to support programs in the district. In addition, staff meet to evaluate existing social and developmental programs such as PBIS, "Leader in Me" and RtL. In addition, the district staff has adopted and implemented a wellness policy and new attendance plan for grades kindergarten to grade five. The district and school staff has collaborated with The Amsterdam Community Task Force committee to support the social, emotional developmental health of youth across the district through a range of social, behavioral, and mental health initiatives. The district staff works with charities such as Catholic Charities and St Mary's Hospital Mental Health Clinic to provide resources to support students' social and emotional developmental health. The district works with schools to develop, implement, and monitor programs that support students' social and developmental health, which ensures students receive services that meet their needs. 		
Statement of Practice 6.1 - Family and Community Engagement: The district has a comprehensive family and community engagement strategic plan that states the expectations around creating and sustaining a welcoming environment for families, reciprocal communication, and establishing partnerships with community organizations and families.	Tenet Rating	E
<p><u>Strengths:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The superintendent and his team promote a sense of community by creating and sustaining reciprocal communications with families and establishing partnerships to improve the opportunities for students in the district. According to district staff interviewed by the IIT, the district uses social media and mailings to communicate with families in the district. The district provides communications in pertinent languages to ensure reciprocal exchanges between the district and the community. The district also supports parent liaison positions in schools to strengthen communication between schools and home. The district staff collaborates with Centro Civico and other community agencies, including the City of Amsterdam, Mayor's Office, Tri county BOCES, and area colleges to provide local continuing education programs, and other academic and social support programs. The district's efforts to communicate with families and establish partnerships in support of schools address family and student needs, which increases opportunities for families to be involved in school improvement initiatives. 		

DISTRICT LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS:

In order for the District's strategy and practices to align with the concepts in the Effective column of the Tenets the District should:

Tenet 1: District Leadership and Capacity

- 1.1: Strengthen and expand outreach efforts to colleges and community organizations to increase the pool of Spanish speaking applicants necessary to meet the needs of the community. Provide a plan to orient, support, and retain new staff.
- 1.2: Communicate high expectations by highlighting examples of best practice from each of its schools in published literature. Ensure all stakeholders know and understand the district's theory of action.
- 1.3: Reassess the allocation of resources to ensure the needs of sub-groups are adequately met.
- 1.4: Ensure staff consistently monitors and evaluates PD models to determine if PD meets needs of school staff. Establish a method for determining the impact of PD on teaching and learning.
- 1.5: Communicate common expectations for how staff members are to use data for supporting, instructing, and establishing goals for students and the school. Provide ongoing PD support for staff on DDI instruction. Monitor staff's use of data throughout district.