



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

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)



BEDS Code	541102060000
District	Cobleskill-Richmondville Central School District
District Address	155 Washington Avenue, Cobleskill, NY 12043
Superintendent	Lynn Macan
Date(s) of Review	May 12, 2014
Schools Discussed in this Report	William H. Golding Middle School

District Information Sheet											
District Grade Configuration	PK-12	Total Student Enrollment	1806	Title 1 Population	43%	Attendance Rate	95%				
Free Lunch	34%	Reduced Lunch	8%	Student Sustainability	%	Limited English Proficient	<1%	Students with Disabilities	9.2%		
Racial/Ethnic Origin of District Student Population											
American Indian or Alaska Native	<1%	Black or African American	1%	Hispanic or Latino	3%	Asian or Native Hawaiian /Other Pacific Islander	0%	White	94%	Multi-racial	1%
Personnel											
Number Years Superintendent Assigned/Appointed to District	7	Number of Deputy Superintendents	0	Average Years Dep. Superintendents in Role in the District	n/a	# of Directors of Programs	1				
% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate in District	1%	% Teaching Out of Certification in District	2%	% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Yrs. of Exp. in District	4%	Average Teacher Absences in District	NP				
Overall State Accountability Status (Mark applicable box with an X)											
District in Good Standing		Focus District	x	Number of Focus School Identified by District	0	Number of SIG Recipient Schools	1	Number of Schools in Status	1		
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	54 (av. 3-8)	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4	61 (av. 3-8)	Science Performance at levels 3 & 4	87 (av. 4&8)	4 yr. Graduation Rate (for HS only)	77	6 yr. Graduation Rate (for HS only)	82		

NP = Not Provided

Did Not Meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in ELA			
	American Indian or Alaska Native		Black or African American
x	Hispanic or Latino		Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander
x	White		Multi-racial
x	Students with Disabilities		Limited English Proficient
x	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
x	Students with Disabilities		Limited English Proficient
x	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
x	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 – Findings, Evidence, Impact and Recommendations:

<p>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.</p>	<p>Overall Tenet Rating</p>	<p>D</p>
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<p>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.</p>	<p>Tenet Rating</p>	<p>D</p>
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Debriefing Statement: The district has ensured that the schools are adequately staffed, having successfully managed a process of significant contraction in personnel levels due to budgetary constraints during 2010-11. Although recruitment is not a current priority for the district as vacancies are few, district leaders have established partnerships and strategies to ensure ready access to properly qualified teachers and staff when required. Due to the stability of personnel across the district, there is currently a focus on providing professional development (PD) to set protocols for change and the sharing of best practices across classrooms and schools. Successful implementation of new learning is dependent upon staff acceptance of these protocols; therefore, the district is working with teachers to reach an understanding of their roles in this process, both as individuals and teams. At this point, the impact on raising the achievement of all groups of students and addressing their differentiated needs is less than effective.

Areas for Improvement:

Overall Finding:

Recruiting, evaluating, and sustaining high-quality personnel is central to the district’s agenda and practices; however, with significant contraction in personnel levels over recent years, recruitment priorities have shifted to a realignment of personnel and ongoing PD to assist schools in meeting the demands to serve students across the community. Practices are developing, but the impact of actions is not ensuring sufficient educational success across the community.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- The Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness (DTSDE) District Self-Assessment document identified a district-wide use of systematic recruitment strategies and structures that are inclusive of partnerships and focused on ensuring qualified and appropriate personnel in all schools. Stated partnerships included those with the State University of New York (SUNY) at Albany, SUNY Oneonta, and the Capital Area School Development Association (CASDA). The district publishes job postings using the Online Application System for Educators (OLAS) and participates in the Capital Area

recruitment fair circuit when necessary. District staff described a comprehensive approach to recruitment. Reviewers found that district and school staff recognized that recruitment is not a pressing issue and that, of more concern, is a reluctance to change within some school buildings, which is having an adverse impact on efforts to drive improvements aimed at raising student achievement.

- The district has implemented strategies focused on staff retention, which include a contractual incentive that provides staff with a three percent salary bonus for ten years of service, monthly workshops funded by the Leadership Grant 1003(a), and a collaborative effort with schools to survey teachers when determining approaches to staff realignment within and between buildings. The district administrative team, which meets biannually, conducts a poll of teachers to ascertain their level of interest in staffing changes, such as moving to new grade levels, which assists in determining personnel placement across the district. Implementation of these strategies has brought some development to a staffing situation in contraction, but has had a limited impact on improving district-wide educational effectiveness in practice.
- The district leadership team acknowledged that varied levels of school performance preclude district initiatives from being judged effective. Methods of holding staff accountable for ensuring improvement outcomes are not consistently established or in evidence beyond Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) reporting. Through discussions with school leaders and the district leader, reviewers found evidence of considerable district-level support for school staff needs. There have been successes in establishing better systems for the evaluation of teacher performance through APPR, and in sharpening the focus of PD to strengthen teacher effectiveness; however, there is a recognition from both the district and schools that more needs to be done to further improve instructional quality and, in turn, student achievement. The Board of Education (BOE) has created district goals, and outside facilitators have worked with school staff to link these goals with building goals, teacher goals, and student outcomes. The district administrative team has worked within the Teachscape system to calibrate instructional performance on the Danielson rubric. Although this initiative was not completed, the training was reported as having provided helpful insights. The district has used grant funding to gain the services of a Board of Cooperative Education Services (BOCES) presenter and an expert retired principal to work with school-based teams to connect initiatives. This work has focused on harnessing data and using knowledge of personnel and performance outcomes to generate better results.

Impact Statement:

Despite the efforts of the district leader and key personnel to create goals and instigate systems to bring improved performance across the district, student needs are not always adequately addressed.

Recommendation:

In order for the district's strategy and practices to align with the Effective rating on the DTSDE rubric, the district should:

- Given the stability of staffing, task school leaders with identifying barriers to change within schools,

and collectively take action to remove them, with the unambiguous goal of accelerating students' academic progress and personal development in line with Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and New York State (NYS) standards.

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

Debriefing Statement: The district team, as identified in the district organizational chart, expresses a theory of action about raising student outcomes, which is rooted in proven research and strategy. Many funding streams and grants are sought and secured to further improvement efforts. However, the theory and action is not consistently communicated across the district to communities of students, teachers, and parents. Practical exemplars of the process and the results of effective actions in schools and classrooms are not readily known or understood. While the district team has high expectations, there are too few tangible mechanisms to ensure the connection of desired professional practices from school to school and classroom to classroom, in order to improve student achievement and social and emotional developmental health. Consequently, students are not progressing as quickly as they should in reaching higher standards in their learning and development.

Areas for Improvement:

Overall Finding:

The district leader is driving a theory of action beyond mere compliance; however, this theory of action has not been communicated effectively enough district-wide to allow school staff and stakeholders a practical understanding of how it translates into actual, routine practices.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- The district leader and district team members described their theory of action to reviewers. It is broadly based on the concept that support for the learning and growth of adults working within the school community, consequently stimulates improved student achievement and growth. However, targets and goals across the schools are not clearly aligned to this theory of action, which is expressed in terms of the CCLS and a continuum of improved student achievement and growth from kindergarten through grade twelve. The district leader stated that the district team is working on closer alignment through collaboration across the district; however, reviewers found little intentional action showing congruence between the district's educational provision and student achievement and personal development.
- Reviewers found the District Comprehensive Improvement Plan (DCIP) limited for the purpose of accelerating improvement. The DCIP is a lengthy, 59-page document that includes the rough empirical workings of the groups involved in producing it. The overview begins on page 33, and includes a background reflection on earlier planning, with a useful assessment of what has and has not been accomplished. The goals for the 2013-14 academic year are not described in Specific,

Measurable, Ambitious, Results-oriented, and Timely (SMART) terms, and are sometimes expressed with confusing, overly detailed procedures, such as in the tasks around setting a calendar for action. The “tenet order” layout is helpful, and some priorities, such as “Implement the Plan-Do-Study-Act Cycle” with all building teams by September 30, 2013,” are clear and to the point; however, methods for rigorous monitoring and evaluation of implementation, and corresponding corrective actions are lacking.

- Use of the district’s C-R Connect electronic data dashboard is the primary method of communication used for dissemination of district-wide information, data, and the theory of action. The district has ensured that all personnel are trained in using the system and have added PD opportunities, offered both in and out of district, to it. It also contains research articles and webinar information. However, the district team acknowledged that it is not explicit in communicating information about the high expectations the district holds for addressing the needs of all groups of students and stakeholders across the community.

Impact Statement:

High expectations are not clearly communicated to all stakeholders and consequently, awareness of district expectations is limited. This hinders a concerted and unified effort to increase academic standards.

Recommendation:

In order for the district's strategy and practices to align with the Effective rating on the DTSDE rubric, the district should:

- Produce a sharply focused and succinct DCIP for the 2014-15 school year that communicates the high expectations of the district and the tangible actions required of schools to reach them. Actions must include frequent, scheduled monitoring and evaluation of practices to gauge the rates of progress of different groups of students and accelerate them.

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

Debriefing Statement: The district has structures for allocating resources to address the needs of the school community, but has limited resources to distribute these resources. The district makes appropriate financial decisions as a group based on building needs, and supports students and programs through various grants and partnerships. However, the district has not been able to respond quickly to school needs in significant areas, which has limited efforts to achieve school improvement and accelerate the rate of student success in academic performance and social and emotional development.

Areas for Improvement:

Overall Finding:

Resources are aligned to the basic needs of the schools within the district; however, resource deployment is not precisely targeted, nor is impact sufficiently evaluated to ensure that buildings are meeting their priorities

and goals in bringing about school improvement and student success.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- Reviewers learned that the Cobleskill-Richmondville BOE has demonstrated confidence in district leaders and the decision-making procedures used to determine resource allocations. Structures are in place for deploying resources that address school community needs; and school leaders reported receiving district support in the form of meeting time, and in some cases reported working together on grant applications. However, in the district self-assessment document, district staff acknowledged they are not currently able to respond to all needs identified by the schools. District team members recognized that the district is falling behind with the delivery of up-to-date technology, which includes teachers directly teaching technology skills to students.
- When allocating resources, district team members reported that staffing and student performance data are taken into account, and resource sharing is taken advantage of for greater efficiency. Reviewers learned that the district leader spends a significant amount of time “bartering” for resources and applying for grants, which has resulted in considerable success. The district leader explained that a loss of resources in 2010-11 necessitated gap elimination and adjustment; class sizes are increasing and some programs have been discontinued. The district leader reported working with district team members and the schools to create savings and build efficiency. However, savings in the education budget are reclaimed to compensate for funding aid received, so cost-cutting measures do not necessarily result in a redistribution of resource and educational benefit. Staff acknowledged that while significant funding pressures are being managed, overall the district is not doing well enough for its students.
- The district has tight control of its budget processes and spending. District staff members use a range of relevant sources and methods to collect data to inform decision-making and deploy funds. Because of the low funding base, though, core programs and electives have been lost in areas such as reading support and business. The district leader uses partnerships with SUNY Albany, CASDA, and SUNY Oneonta for executive coaching and curriculum support in ELA and mathematics. While this is positive, an insufficient expectation has been placed on buildings to use available funding to identify student needs, secure improved instructional programs, and track impact and achievement outcomes for all groups of students.

Impact Statement:

District resources are administered to maintain school functions; however, they are not sufficiently targeted and deployed to promote the necessary school improvements and success.

Recommendation:

In order for the district's strategy and practices to align with the Effective rating on the DTSDE rubric, the district should:

- Ensure that the limited resources available are directed toward deliberate actions that bring the

necessary school improvements; establish built-in accountability measures for all staff to demonstrate tangible progress and success for 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 is working to create a common culture of expectations, supports, and structures, and to provide a continuum of expectations to ensure student success. Although the district does not have a comprehensive plan to create, deliver, and monitor adaptive PD in all pertinent areas to meet the needs of individual schools, it is attempting to identify and differentiate the level and mode of support services provided to each school based on school needs. There are differences in perceptions over who has the responsibility for assessing and monitoring PD results in classroom practice. Consequently, while pockets of progressive PD exist, they are not on a clear continuum of implementation that complements, builds, and shares information to ensure that all students are successful.

Areas for Improvement:

Overall Finding:

Although the district provides a range of staff training and development opportunities, it does not have a comprehensive PD plan that creates, delivers, and monitors PD in all areas, evaluates its impact on changing staff practices, and is sufficiently variable and targeted to fulfill the different needs of schools.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- Reviewers found evidence to support the fact that the district offers many PD opportunities to staff across the district, such as CCLS training with targeted follow up to meet staff needs in different schools. For example, district staff and school leaders indicated that PD is aligned to the CCLS, literacy development, best teaching practices, and the use of data-driven instruction (DDI). Following staff feedback, further PD is provided to address the specific needs of teachers in particular schools and subject areas. The process is reportedly working well, but not consistently. The monitoring and evaluation of impact on instruction and learning falls short, particularly in regard to a district-wide understanding of properly differentiated instruction in classrooms.
- District staff reported that the Professional Growth Committee meets to identify PD needs, and add training opportunities to the annual PD calendar. The committee uses C-R Connect, and school leaders work with the district leader to arrange for release time so teachers can participate in relevant PD. However, consistent classroom implementation of professional learning is not followed through with sufficient rigor. Reviewers found little to indicate that the Professional Growth Committee is sufficiently active in monitoring and evaluating the impact of PD on instruction and learning practices across district classrooms. There are some systems in place to provide follow-up support in identified areas, such as in CCLS coaching and literacy coaching; however, systems are not

in place to hold staff properly accountable for consistently implementing what they have learned.

Impact Statement:

While many opportunities for teacher PD exist, is not wholly effective in creating opportunities and outcomes that consistently increase teacher effectiveness in the areas of raising student achievement.

Recommendation:

In order for the district's strategy and practices to align with the Effective rating on the DTSDE rubric, the district should:

- Establish focused PD opportunities that are based on an assessment of school staff practices; secure high levels of participation and engagement to bring about changes to the routine work of teachers in classrooms, and increase the rate of student progress and standards of 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

Debriefing Statement: The district is beginning to create a system for collecting, analyzing, and using data to guide instructional practices. The district team has secured several grants, including the Strengthening Teacher and Leader Effectiveness (STLE) Grant and the Demonstration and Replication Grants, which have supplemented the PD work of the Education and Learning Trust (ELT) organization. The district has hired a data coach to work with teachers to establish protocols for analyzing and using student data. Across the district, teachers and school leaders are using benchmark data to develop a common language and establish a starting point for conversations. The district recognizes that this is in the early stages of development and therefore, data use is not consistently making a significant impact on student achievement and personal development. However, the district has a stated goal of establishing a system-wide protocol to show student progress and to determine the effectiveness of PD on improving teacher practices.

Areas for improvements:

Overall Finding:

The district is beginning to promote a data-driven culture and staff members have started to create strategies connected to sharing best practices. The district communicates both general and specific expectations for staff data use, and identifies data practices that inform how teachers instruct students; however, the lines of accountability to ensure further development and use are weak.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- The district communicates expectations for data use by specific staff members. Staff stated that the district collaborated with a BOCES team to develop a specific and intentional progression for William H. Golding Middle School. The school received support in data use from a number of specialists provided through the district, which was made possible through grant funding secured by district staff and the school leader. Review evidence showed that the district leader drove much of this

process, and that work by the school leader and staff had created preliminary norms for further collaboration, protocols, and purpose across the district.

- Northwest Evaluation Association’s (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) data have been used for a number of years to measure progress and inform priorities in instructional practices for different groups of students. The district has provided multiple training opportunities supporting building-level use of this information and to ensure its implementation in sharpening targets. However, observations of differentiated practice based on this data were not sufficiently evident in classroom visitations. In discussions with school leaders across the district, reviewers were unconvinced of the degree to which this information was influencing differentiated practice in classrooms, especially in the upper grades.
- The district has begun to identify ways to improve staff education in the use of data-driven decision making and has started to provide PD for teachers and other staff to reflect this urgent priority; however, district team members acknowledged there is more work to be done. Consequently, district staff members have hired a data coach through Capital Region BOCES to work with teachers on effective ways to use data to guide instruction. District staff has also secured a number of grants to secure the work of the ELT in this area, primarily the STLE and the Demonstration and Replication grants, and are working in collaboration with Capital Region BOCES and The College of Saint Rose.

Impact Statement:

Stakeholder understanding of student performance as represented by data is developing, and data-informed adjustments are beginning to be made to practices; however, more work needs to be done to raise student achievement.

Recommendation:

In order for the district's strategy and practices to align with the Effective rating on the DTSDE rubric, the district should:

- Strengthen the lines of accountability for using data and data-driven processes in both the implementation of new learning from PD programs and in teachers’ instructional practices to raise the level of student achievement.

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

<p>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.</p>	<p>Tenet Rating</p>	<p>D</p>
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Areas for Improvement:

Overall Finding:

The district supports its school communities and collaboration is helping to provide opportunities for school leaders to address specific needs; however, significant district-wide improvements in student achievement are

taking too long.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- The district organizes a number of regular meetings with school leaders. District team meetings convene every two weeks, and district staff meetings with individual school leaders occur monthly to look at community needs, as well as the needs of the individual schools, their leaders, staff, and students. District staff described the meetings as productive and reviewers noted meeting agendas moving forward the issues facing schools, such as overarching and specific curriculum challenges.
- The relationship between the district team and school leaders is closely interwoven; for example, the four school leaders represent the main tier of curriculum leadership alongside the district leader. These relationships are positive and encouraging, but reviewers found school level actions toward developments, such as CCLS implementation have been slow and reactive, rather than based on the observed practices and proactivity required to deal with the dynamic agenda facing schools across NYS and beyond. In other aspects, such as the sports and music curriculum, and extra-curricular activities, the relationship proves to be more explicitly productive.
- The district leader described a reciprocal relationship with school leaders; however, reviewers found little evidence of actions by school level staff in response to guidance from the district. An example of this comes from a school response to the findings of a June 2013 District-led School Review. Recommendations emerging from this review were only partially addressed in the school's resulting School Comprehensive Education Plan (SCEP) for the 2013-14 academic year. The school leader confirmed the redundancy of the SCEP because progress had already outstripped the partial planning it contained. District staff reported sensitivity to the views and professional autonomy of school leaders, and stated that they consider these factors when making district-wide decisions. However, there was evidence that the school leaders act in "silos," rather than taking on district-wide practices that would drive continuity from kindergarten to grade twelve. An example reported to reviewers was the inconsistent philosophical approach and organization around differentiated instruction from classroom to classroom and school to school.

Impact Statement:

A district-wide vision and organizational philosophy, encompassing kindergarten through grade twelve, is not expressed with clarity or consistently implemented by the district's central team or school staff, which leads to limited support for student achievement.

Recommendation:

In order for the district's strategy and practices to align with the Effective rating on the DTSDE rubric, the district should:

- Explicitly state a district-wide vision and organizational philosophy for schools and student achievement for all groups of students from kindergarten to grade twelve; secure a commitment to common features of instruction and learning, while accommodating adaptations as students move

through the different levels of schooling.

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

D

Areas for Improvement:

Overall Finding:

The district has initiated curriculum development and CCLS implementation in each of its schools, and collaborative efforts to further develop this process are under way; however, students are not adequately challenged or supported to raise their academic performance and personal development to effective levels.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- School leaders stated that the district has arranged training across the school community to ensure understanding of the CCLS and inform curriculum planning. The district has followed up with coaching for some content areas and provided teachers time to work together to gather and develop resource materials. However, review evidence showed that implementation is inconsistent within and across schools, with fiscal support tightly stretched to support the processes in each school. The district leader acknowledged that the district has been unable to provide adequate financial resources to reinforce a more systematic approach to developing the curriculum, although it has resourcefully tapped into available grants to reduce the adverse effects the limited base budget is causing. The middle school leader reported a funding request for a curriculum-mapping tool that he believes would create efficiencies and better student outcomes; however, the district acknowledged this is not possible within current budget constraints.
- School leaders stated that the district has not undertaken systematic and formal curriculum reviews across its schools since the launch of the CCLS. From meeting records, reviewers found that district team members draw on feedback from each other and from teachers; feedback is garnered from a range of channels that include APPR and informal observations, and is used to inform biweekly district team meetings and monthly district staff meetings. District team members and school leaders acknowledged that the curriculum created and used by teachers was not achieving consistent alignment with the CCLS and not providing students with college- and career-readiness skills.

Impact Statement:

District support to schools for the development of a curriculum aligned to the CCLS is inconsistent, which limits teachers' ability to deliver instruction that challenges every student.

Recommendation:

In order for the district's strategy and practices to align with the Effective rating on the DTSDE rubric, the

district should:

- Improve short- and long-term planning for CCLS curriculum development to ensure more effective resource use. Additionally, monitor and evaluate practices to secure and ensure the fidelity of implementation and appropriate challenge for students.

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

D

Areas for Improvement:

Overall Finding:

School and student data are not adequately taken into account in determining school and teacher supports. The district recognizes the need for differentiated training for groups of teachers; however, theories discussed and understood by teachers are not consistently put into practice and the district is not taking firm measures to address this matter.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- School leaders and teachers confirmed that the district provides many PD opportunities. Many are school-based and delivered in appropriate groupings, such as grade and phase level groupings, subject groups, and one-on-one coaching sessions. These opportunities are offered at frequent and regular intervals. School leaders reported the freedom to flex and tailor training opportunities throughout the school year, as it is widely acknowledged that the “one-size-fits-all” approach is generally not effective. However, interviews and associated document review showed data that includes teachers’ actual instructional practice is seldom used to inform training needs, and teachers’ PD needs are often generalized by team discussions.
- The Demonstration and Replication Grants have provided additional resources that are beginning to have an impact on APPR processes. School leaders confirmed that teachers have been encouraged to develop new ideas and methodologies, and some teachers have moved beyond “their comfort zones.” Developing practices include the use of more video-clips and visual aids in lessons, including power-point presentations. The district provides access to peer observations, webinars, the Model Schools Program offered through Capital Region BOCES, and teacher center resources. The district also provides BOCES instructional coaches and the release time required for teachers to work with them. My Learning Plan, a PD management system, provides the district with a profile of the PD teachers have taken and an outline of their future training intentions. The district enables weekend, evening, and holiday collaborative work through grant funding; a school leader confirmed this practice by recounting the summer 2013 work of a school inquiry team on developing the instructional dimensions of the SCEP and other planning documentation. However, evidence from lessons and other school observations, showed that these are developing activities and resources are not having a sufficient impact on raising the rigor in student learning or the levels at which

students achieve.

- School leaders stated that the district provides follow-up support to PD in the form of information on shared drives and standardized recording templates. Reviewers found that the district has created positive school-to-school relationships and is providing school staff with insight into how data-driven decision-making can be extended from its presently limited practices. Additionally, coaches for core subjects and data use are tasked with assisting in the setting of student learning goals, monitoring of these goals, reviewing mid-year data, and advising on instructional adjustments.

Impact Statement:

Collaboration between the district and schools is close; however, the relationship is not sufficiently objective in identifying what needs to be done across schools to ensure appropriately rigorous learning opportunities for all students.

Recommendation:

In order for the district's strategy and practices to align with the Effective rating on the DTSDE rubric, the district should:

- Communicate explicit PD expectations to schools and teachers; illustrate what classroom and instructional changes should be visible because of PD; ensure monitoring and evaluation of instructional changes as a result of student learning and achievement results.

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

D

Areas for Improvement:

Overall Finding:

The district and schools have established partnerships and collaborations that are at various stages of development. District-wide protocols are being developed with the goal of producing a change in student behaviors and increasing the effectiveness of the community's contribution to ensuring student social and emotional growth; however, at the time of the review, the needs of all students were not being sufficiently met to produce increased academic and personal success.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- The district has established partnerships with outside consultants to plan for and implement various protocols to collect, analyze, and use data to guide district-wide practices involving student social and emotional developmental health issues. School leaders and teachers confirmed that the district has provided PD related to a number of relevant topics, including issues involving the use of social media and the dangers of substance abuse. A number of district personnel serve on committees representing many community agencies, and are able to both formally and informally share their

knowledge and understanding across the community of schools.

- The persistent threat of bullying around the school community and on school buses was a recurring topic of concern during the middle school review, and an issue raised by students and parents alike. Some district personnel offered that such problems are widespread around schools in general; however, it was the view of most parents that the district or schools did too little to change school culture. Parents viewed the problem as widespread and prevalent in communal areas of the schools and on buses. The school buses transport children as young as five years of age to maturing teenaged students in grades eleven and twelve. Reviewers found little evidence that this matter was being given sufficient priority by the district and schools for it to be effectively addressed.
- Training, follow-up, and retraining are provided by the district and attempts are made to ensure that this occurs for all levels of staffing, including teacher assistants and school support staff. School leaders on the district team explained that this is a stated priority within the SCEPs aligned to a priority formed in the DCIP; however, implementation is limited. Members of the district team reported training on “autism” and work on “poverty simulation,” which staff described as particularly beneficial; staff also stated that they welcomed further targeted opportunities such as these.

Impact Statement:

At the time the review, the district did not ensure that all students receive consistent support that appropriately addresses their needs, takes their different circumstances into account, and actively supports their social and emotional development.

Recommendation:

In order for the district's strategy and practices to align with the Effective rating on the DTSDE rubric, the district should:

- Drive collaborative partnerships across schools and agencies to address the social and emotional needs of all students in tangible ways; include coordinated PD and deliberate practical action for staff at all levels to remove from the educational environment any prevalent fear of bullying and to generate an educational culture of high aspiration and student success.

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

D

Areas for Improvement:

Overall Finding:

A variety of policies, systems, and structures that set the expectations for school-family-community relations are in place district-wide. These efforts have not combined with the deployment of resources in ways that engage families and community agencies to raise student achievement and improve personal development.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- The district has funded a staffed “family room” in kindergarten classrooms to provide parenting support programming, as well as a pre-school story hour. District team members reported that parents expressed appreciation for these supports and stated they can approach elementary school staff with any questions or issues. Similarly, at the other elementary school and the middle school, parents stated that open door policies are welcoming and that staff are responsive to parental overtures. At the high school, school leaders stated that forums take place where parents can request updates on their children’s progress and raise any issues or concerns, which are then addressed and constructively resolved. Parents interviewed at the middle school reported that when parents are personally approached to become involved in activities, the response is generally favorable; however, this method is not sufficiently encouraged or modeled across the district. Parents stated that the more routinely used “blanket invitation letter” is far less successful in drawing parental support for schools.
- The district recognizes that technological advances abound, and communication is often most effective through the interface of social media, such as Facebook or Twitter. In addition, schools and parents view text messages, emails, phone calls, and printed correspondence as effective means of communication. Reviewers found that the district approach is focused on engaging parents in the educational support of their children; however, more work needs to be done in this area.
- Some partnerships and supports across the district are being developed; however, discussions with school leaders and district personnel confirmed that there is no strategic plan that points the way for schools, and alerts parents and community members, to the contributions they can make to the education of their young people. Individual efforts are positive, but without an overarching, deliberate plan, it was acknowledged that the community, as a whole, would remain an untapped resource.

Impact Statement:

Partnerships between the district, schools, and families are not as purposeful and established as they need to be to support and improve student achievement.

Recommendation:

In order for the district's strategy and practices to align with the Effective rating on the DTSDE rubric, the district should:

- Create a plan to develop family and community engagement; use a variety of approaches to gain a more targeted exposure to parents and incentivize their involvement; include personal face-to-face invitations and direct introductions from one parent to another, so that confidence is grown and a commitment to raising student achievement and improving students’ personal development is shared and developed.