



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

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)



BEDS Code	11-02-00-01-0000
District	Cortland Enlarged City School District
District Address	1 Valley View Drive, Cortland, NY 13045
Superintendent	Michael J. Hoose
Date(s) of Review	April 17, 2014
Schools Discussed in this Report	Cortland Junior-Senior High School Alton B. Parker Elementary School

District Information Sheet											
District Grade Configuration	K-12	Total Student Enrollment	2581	Title 1 Population	94%	Attendance Rate	90.74%				
Free Lunch	42%	Reduced Lunch	9%	Student Sustainability	92.79%	Limited English Proficient	0.39%	Students with Disabilities	10.97%		
Racial/Ethnic Origin of District Student Population											
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.12%	Black or African American	3.84%	Hispanic or Latino	3.68%	Asian or Native Hawaiian /Other Pacific Islander	0.93%	White	88.25%	Multi-racial	3.18%
Personnel											
Number Years Superintendent Assigned/Appointed to District	3	Number of Deputy Superintendents	1	Average Years Dep. Superintendents in Role in the District	13	# of Directors of Programs	2				
% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate in District	0	% Teaching Out of Certification in District	0	% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Yrs. of Exp. in District	18%	Average Teacher Absences in District	7.05 Avg.				
Overall State Accountability Status (Mark applicable box with an X)											
District in Good Standing		Focus District	X	Number of Focus School Identified by District		Number of SIG Recipient Schools	2	Number of Schools in Status	2		
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	26%	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4	18.4%	Science Performance at levels 3 & 4	86%	4 yr. Graduation Rate (for HS only)	79%	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
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	X	Black or African American
	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 Science			
	American Indian or Alaska Native		Black or African American
	Hispanic or Latino		Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander
X	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>
<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>

Debriefing Statement: The district has ensured that schools are fully staffed and has resolved a range of contractual employment issues that have prevented effective personnel management in the past. Recruitment strategies are systematic and utilize a range of partnerships to ensure a quality candidate pool. There is a focus on professional development (PD), but the implementation of new learning is not having sufficient impact on raising the academic standards of all subgroups of students.

Areas for Improvement:

Overall Finding: Recruitment strategies are proactive and reliable with contractual difficulties of the past resolved. Processes and actions to evaluate the quality of performance and effectiveness of staff in order to bring improvement and match staffing to meet student needs are neither comprehensive nor effective.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- Effective systems are in place across the district to ensure staffing levels are appropriate with qualified personnel in place. The district cabinet team provided a convincing and systematic account of the reliability of the current recruitment and employment procedures. However, data is not readily available from monitoring the impact of performance. Cortland Junior-Senior High (JSHS) School and Alton B. Parker Elementary School, for example, do not have clear systems in place that intentionally provide a significant level of accountability or information about the effectiveness of their personnel.
- Although the district has a structured and prominent system in place for performance review in the form of the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR), its effectiveness is very limited in improving instruction. Members of the school community typically expressed dissatisfaction with the heavily bureaucratic nature of the process, and reviewers saw evidence of unfocused APPR activities where aggregated results from wide-ranging observation criteria produced only generalized outcomes of little specific value for bringing about improvement. Members of the district team and school staff indicated that the district lacks a feedback interface to understand actions in the classrooms at each school, the strengths and weaknesses of current personnel, what interventions are needed to raise standards, and how school leaders might implement such moves.
- District cabinet members reported that staff retention levels are high and staffing numbers across

schools are relatively stable year-on-year. The challenge reported is in equipping and sustaining high-quality skill levels across district personnel to ensure that the contemporary needs of the community and New York State standards are successfully met. Contractual employment rules are described as giving little opportunity to select and maintain the best teachers should staff reductions become necessary.

Impact Statement:

The work of personnel is not consistently evaluated, and priorities for improvements are not systematically addressed in ways that effectively meet students’ learning needs, which limits 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:

- Improve the performance of school personnel by specifically accelerating moves towards achieving the district goals of transition to a Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) aligned curriculum and data-driven instruction (DDI).
- Negotiate changes to sharpen performance measures, including APPR, and use feedback to modify more directly the practices of leaders, teachers, school support staff, and students.

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	I
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Debriefing Statement: The district’s theory of action about raising student achievement is neither comprehensive nor systematically communicated. While the district team verbalizes high expectations, there are few opportunities or mechanisms to connect professional practices to improvements in school outcomes. Consequently, students are not progressing at a rate to achieve the expected learning standards.

Area for Improvement:

Overall Finding:

Leadership at the district level has not communicated or set a high precedent for action. Limited practices from staff do not align actions to achieve the outcomes theoretically expected.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- The district did not respond in any detail to this statement of practice in the appropriate section of the Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness (DTSDE) district self-assessment, beyond its grading as ineffective. The superintendent identified that present action in this area is ineffective. Cortland JSHS leaders, for example, reported receiving little direction related to theory or action for addressing the learning needs of all constituents. Reviewers saw and heard evidence that formative

assessments, central to any effective instructional and learning program, are not consistently used in classrooms. Where such assessments and feedback do occur, they are not set within any system of comparability across classrooms and grade levels in the district.

- The district vision statement for 2013-14 reads well in the present tense. As such, it tends to project a somewhat misleading picture of the district’s current situation. For example, it states, “Our instructional environment is relevant and reflects the best practices in instructional design and delivery, including 21st century skills.” Such commitment, to reaching high professional practices and standards of skill, is acknowledged as needed in the vision statement to lead to better student outcomes. However, stated in the present tense, the message is not necessarily perceived by stakeholders as a future ambition. The urgent need for change now, and in the immediate future, is not visible or posted clearly enough in the district’s documentation or communications systems.

Impact Statement:

Instructional design, delivery, and formative assessment are not reflecting effective practices or being perceived as relevant by many students, so high levels of student achievement are not being reached.

Recommendation:

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

- Urgently identify and agree upon district expectations, using all available data to specify curriculum relevance and differentiated approaches linked to formative assessment, demonstrating clearly the way forward for subgroups of students at all levels.
- Communicate these expectations to all groups of constituents using necessary consultation and feedback strategies to gain more community involvement in actions to break cycles of underachievement and raise attainment.

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 has effective advocacy to secure the budget and well-embedded structures for deploying qualified staff to school vacancies and providing necessary educational materials. It is responsive to requests from schools and has a developing system to evaluate where differing needs are required. Resources are allocated on an equitable basis; however, the distribution takes insufficient account of the differentiated needs of students.

Areas for Improvement:

Overall Finding:

The district secures the budget efficiently and allocates relatively limited resources carefully, largely to meet

standing overheads, mainly staffing. Allocations are equitably based on student enrollment, rather than differentiated student need, and the ratio of instructional cost to instructional effectiveness is too wide.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- The district is careful in managing its limited resources. Its structure for resource allocation addresses the needs of schools through a necessarily stringent system, though based on student numbers rather than perceived needs. The superintendent reported a shift toward allocation based more on analysis of need. The current method of determining allocations results in a “fair” and equitable split based on operational capacity of its schools. Many constituents report allocations as not ensuring that all students have the resources required to meet their educational needs or to reach their potential levels of achievement. However, even acknowledging the low funding base, the “instructional-resource input to the instructional-effectiveness output” as judged by reviewers is not giving a fair return. This is especially the case given the amount of common planning time provided to teaching teams. There is too little accountability for the impact of this allocation of time on creating consistent and commonly effective approaches across grade and subject teams, and vertically from grade to grade.
- Staffing resources represent over 80 percent of the budget. Due to budgetary limitations, the district team has thoughtfully given elementary school leaders cross-district responsibility at the elementary level for leading subjects aligned to their particular expertise. However, school leaders reported that because of budgetary limits, they are not supported in ways that consider their different schools’ needs sufficiently into account. Schools are treated too similarly when their needs are different. For example, staff and families at Cortland JSH School reported that the school is allocated resources based on a “theoretical approach” and not with school and student needs taken fully into the equation for distribution. At the meeting of reviewers with district-level curriculum and instructional leaders, a similar message was communicated with concerns expressed about the lack of flexibility caused by the low funding base for all schools across the district.

Impact Statement:

Resource allocation results in less than effective improvement in schools. Collectively, the high proportion of resourcing spent on instruction is not used in ways that consistently deliver learning experiences in line with the high expectations expressed by district leaders.

Recommendation:

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

- Gather data on the use of available resources and how these are utilized across schools to assess what needs addressing most urgently and where more resources could be obtained.
- Analyze the use of existing resources and how these might be shared or distributed differently to meet the needs of all students more efficiently and effectively.

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 has a PD planning committee with representation from relevant stakeholder groups. A comprehensive PD plan is in place to 2016. This plan has three overarching goals and sub-objectives that address salient issues for school staff, with an appropriate emphasis on transition to the CCLS-aligned curriculum and New York State assessments. Multiple sources for PD delivery are carefully identified locally and regionally. The plan contains an implementation section with stated intentions for monitoring and evaluation. However, there is no evaluation of the impact of PD on the quality of instruction and on student achievement.

Area for Improvement:

Overall Finding:

The district has a PD team (PDT) comprised of school building staff, the community, parents, and families that provides opportunities communicated in the PD plan. Monitoring program attendance by staff through the electronic portal, "My Learning Plan" (MLP), is developing; however, this is not used to assist in evaluating any impact of increased teacher effectiveness on student outcomes.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- With members of the elementary schools and a school leader from Cortland JSH School on the PDT, the composition of the team is well set to bring change and improvement through well-focused PD. The PDT's analysis of questionnaires from staff is a prime example of this developing program. The district uses MLP to communicate opportunities available to staff. District staff and the PDT reported that the MLP is used to monitor opportunities offered to staff and allows for a level of follow-up support to be provided to staff participants. During discussion, it was apparent that this approach suffers the dangers of meeting perceived wants, rather than actual and central needs.
- Review team members heard the PDT describe scenarios where allocated resources are available "upfront," but used more as a "reactive" measure, instead of within coordinated and focused programming by the schools and district. The discussion revealed some good practices and useful acceptance of high quality opportunities. However, it also confirmed that the PDT had not considered the importance of systematic evaluation of the impact of the PD program in classrooms, for re-shaping offerings, determining the main learning priorities, raising student achievement and improving advocacy for funding.

Impact Statement:

The targeted PD offered by the district and its PDT does not consistently result in teacher effectiveness being increased or student outcomes improved.

Recommendation:

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

- Analyze the PD needs of all groups of staff throughout the district and drive a variety of targeted interventions and supports that coordinate effective differentiated instruction and continuous formative assessment for students linked to academics and social and emotional developmental health. Use resulting data about student performance from continuous assessment to adjust practices where the impact on student progress is not adequate.

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

I

Debriefing Statement: One of the district goals is to lead the transition to DDI and for district personnel to have an understanding of what needs to be achieved. Efforts to promote the use of data in connecting best practices form part of the PD requirement. However, support is inconsistent and systems of accountability are not in place to ensure DDI is developed in practice.

Areas for Improvement:

Overall Finding:

There is a lack of data-driven strategies connected to best practices that all staff and schools within the school community should be held accountable for implementing.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- The district did not respond in any detail to this statement of practice in the appropriate section of the DTSDE district self-assessment, beyond its grading as ineffective. The district identified inadequate practices with explanations about recent signs of improvement following historical instability.
- Communications from the district about DDI expectations and data to support differentiated instruction and goal setting for students are not in place. There is a lack of discernible alignment between instruction and what performance data shows because strategic approaches are weak, as described by a range of stakeholder groups.

Impact Statement:

The lack of understanding across the district about performance measurement and how adjusting practices using salient performance information and DDI, as both a leadership and instructional tool, is hindering 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:

- Provide a framework to engage the professional school community in consistent data collection, collation, and classification of student outcomes; use this framework to shape differentiated instructional groups, styles, skills, and practices, to raise student motivation and increase the rate of student progress at all levels of performance.

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	I
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Areas for Improvement:

Overall Finding:

The district lacks consistently planned opportunities and support for school leaders to ensure school environments are created, developed, and nurtured to elevate student learning attitudes and levels of achievement.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- District leaders reported that current structures provide inconsistent collaborative support for school leadership and are not responsive to the needs of entire school communities. School leaders stated that there is a lack of direction and choice about the allocation of district resources in support of school decisions and needs, although bidding opportunities do exist. Reviewers found that elementary schools and Cortland JSH School, for example, have not been allocated significant proportions of differing resources based on their specific needs.
- District planning does not take into account the need to change the culture of low achievement, nor does it look closely at individual school requirements or the creative use of resources by groups of schools to maximize limited resources. School and district team members did not convincingly detail how allocated resources could best be used to shift underperformance. Reviewers found that district leaders use limited data and input from school leaders to inform their decisions about resource allocations concerning staff and students. Unintentionally, the district is not supportive of strategic decisions that school leaders may wish to take.

Impact Statement:

Efforts to achieve the vision of the school community lack the support necessary and available for district and school staff to realize positive movement in 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:

- In collaboration with school leaders, identify ways to group together schools' planning intentions and operational practices to combat resource shortages when individual schools have similar needs.
- Match schools' specific needs and focus school leaders' and teachers' tangible involvement on precisely targeted cross-school achievement-raising projects directly linked to the CCLS and associated formative assessment, to best utilize all resources and improve student outcomes.

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

Area for Improvement:

Overall Finding:

Improved collaborations are forming between the district, school leaders, and teachers to provide opportunities for PD directed at the implementation of the CCLS. While these are limited in securing all students' college and career readiness, they represent a shift in the right direction.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- School leaders confirmed that the district is working collaboratively with them and teachers to develop a viable curriculum aligned with the CCLS and the associated shifts. The district PD plan demonstrates district steps to create long- and short-term plans to bring about curricular alignment, as well as inclusion of the technologies, arts, and other enriching subjects, such as physical education, music, and Spanish. Evidence showed that Cortland JSH School and Alton B. Parker Elementary School have many examples of CCLS being aligned well with their curricula. However, without a deliberate direction and forceful implementation, this is being only partly achieved. Efforts are randomly supported by varied levels of use of available lesson templates and other resources by teaching teams. There is little basis for teacher accountability when the priority is not being undertaken with sufficient urgency.
- School leaders stated that the district has plans in place for reviewing the curricula every three years, as stated in its planning documents. It created the PDT to emphasize collaboration and initiate the sharing culture needed to best develop and implement curricula. Fiscal support is given to the PDT to allow its representatives release time. This effort is defined by district leaders, but not data-driven. School leaders stated, and reviewers confirmed, that the district does not have a measure of the correlation between specific investments in PD and educational outcomes in a data-ready format that could better inform future district direction and developments.

Impact Statement:

The slow pace and weak measurement of CCLS implementation rates and levels of resource allocation limit students' ability to become college or career ready.

Recommendation:

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

- Bring all leaders together to collaborate in driving for a district curricular model aligned with the CCLS, that is adaptable and flexible enough to accelerate actions intended to meet the needs of all students; revisit the timetable for reviewing curricula and normalize the act of adjusting and amending plans to suit the differentiated learning needs of groups of students.
- Engage with students and families, as well as with schools, to identify needs, as they perceive them, so that over time the curriculum is viewed as increasingly relevant, dynamic, and valuable for all stakeholders.

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
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Areas for Improvement:

Overall Finding:

Communication about PD, from both the district and schools, is not data-driven and lacks follow-up support.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- District leaders described many of their collaborative actions with school leaders and teachers as inconsistent, which hinders the process of differentiating staff PD needs to accelerate improved student outcomes. Discussions with school leaders and teachers, and a document review, revealed that learning opportunities are not strongly linked to the identified needs of teachers or to best practices. Cortland JSH School leaders expressed some frustration over their lack of influence in shaping the specific and targeted practices that some of their staff require. Similarly, the Alton B. Parker Elementary School review report documented some program disconnects and inconsistencies, and a lack of accountability within the process. The district provides follow-up support, through MLP, on implementing improved instructional practices, but its relevance to specific staff and school circumstances and wider accountabilities is not precise enough.

Impact Statement:

The analysis of need and implementation of new learning are too loosely considered to bring the rapid improvement needed to boost 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:

- Follow up on feedback received from PD participants; use this follow up to measure changes in the

effectiveness of classroom practices. Engage with deliverers of best practices to better understand and share models for other staff to put into action.

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:

Social and emotional developmental health opportunities are developing through a range of initiatives and partnerships; although, the district's plan and practices for meeting student needs are reactive, rather than proactive, and do not provide a common and reliable approach to addressing the varied needs of students.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- Discussions with the district leader, district team members, and school leaders revealed that the district is working collaboratively with community partners, school leaders, and teachers to develop systemic resources that support student social-emotional developmental health needs. Activities undertaken by instructional support teams demonstrated how changes to mainstream practices are being tackled, but little information on program impact was available. Reviewers found that the described efforts were initiated in response to instructional circumstances, rather than proactively and systematically planned for district-wide use.
- Discussions with school leaders and documented evidence showed that Response to Intervention (RTI) initiatives are carefully considered and delivered by schools across the district. Counselors, psychologists, and teachers across the district, and district team members, described some working examples of such responses. However, there was a consensus among school and district staff that policies and systems needed refinement that could, and should, produce better and more effective practices. For example, efforts currently do not include greater opportunities for community agencies to provide school-centered services that encourage families to engage more actively with providers.

Impact Statement:

Approaches that are mainly reactive, and reflective of a "single-platform structure" across the district, are not meeting the needs of all groups of students.

Recommendation:

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

- Engage with school leaders to provide a curriculum experience that fosters students' social and emotional developmental health; provide an evaluation process to identify successes and relative rates of progress to bring needed improvements to practices. Use the outcomes of evaluations to identify ranges of social and emotional developmental health needs and the potential for accessing

external partnership support, both school-centered and offsite, to inform instructional support team and RTI decisions and refine actions to make them more timely and efficient.

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

I

Areas for Improvement:

Overall Finding:

A district policy for family and community engagement does not exist and district communication channels are reactive and inconsistent across schools.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- The district did not respond in any detail to this statement of practice in the DTSDE district self-assessment, beyond its rating of ineffective. The district leader acknowledged the lack of a strategic district level plan. Any communications relate only to district level information. Parents with children at Cortland JSH School expressed their appreciation of the openness and availability of school staff, should parents initiate contact, but typically reported they were disappointed in the lack of community involvement the parent body has, even though there is a functioning PTAG.
- Partnerships have been formed to help respond to the district-wide needs of families and students, but fundamental communication systems, such as the district website, are inadequate and out-of-date.

Impact Statement:

Families are not close to the schools, there are no partnerships in place, and these are not encouraged or supported by the district.

Recommendation:

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

- Develop, as a matter of urgency, a district policy around home-school partnerships. Improve communication systems and look proactively to the community to make effective links, both formally and informally, to make better use of available resources and partnerships with parents and other community stakeholders, to support systematically students in their learning and development.