



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

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)



BEDS Code	610501040000
District	Groton Central School District
District Address	400 Peru Road, Groton, NY 13073
Superintendent	James Abrams
Date(s) of Review	April 24, 2014
Schools Discussed in this Report	Groton Junior-Senior High School

District Information Sheet											
District Grade Configuration	P-12	Total Student Enrollment	842	Title 1 Population	% NP	Attendance Rate	96%				
Free Lunch	34%	Reduced Lunch	9%	Student Sustainability	%	Limited English Proficient	%	Students with Disabilities	19%		
Racial/Ethnic Origin of District Student Population											
American Indian or Alaska Native	0%	Black or African American	2%	Hispanic or Latino	1%	Asian or Native Hawaiian /Other Pacific Islander	0%	White	94.5%	Multi-racial	2%
Personnel											
Number Years Superintendent Assigned/Appointed to District	3	Number of Deputy Superintendents	0	Average Years Dep. Superintendents in Role in the District	0	# of Directors of Programs	0				
% 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	1	Average Teacher Absences in District	5 days				
Overall State Accountability Status (Mark applicable box with an X)											
District in Good Standing		Focus District		Number of Focus School Identified by District	2	Number of SIG Recipient Schools	2	Number of Schools in Status	2		
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	20%	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4	11%	Science Performance at levels 3 & 4	62%	4 yr. Graduation Rate (for HS only)	74%	6 yr. Graduation Rate (for HS only)	82%		

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		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
X	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>
<p><u>Debriefing Statement:</u> The district has an approach to recruitment that includes input from school leaders and partnerships with nearby colleges and universities. It has strategies for support, evaluation, and retention of staff. However, feedback to school leaders and personnel has not always translated into practices that are raising staff expectations of high student achievement. Without highly effective personnel, the district and schools are not able to address adequately student needs, especially in consideration of the requirements of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). As a result, the capacity of the district to achieve success and attain goals is limited.</p> <p><u>Areas for Improvement:</u></p> <p>Overall Finding: Although policies and procedures are in place for recruiting and retaining teachers and for evaluating teachers, they are not effective at bringing sustained improvements to student achievement.</p> <p>Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding: <i>(Note: the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) gathered evidence from a review of documents and interviews with district leaders, principals, staff, parents and students.)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence from discussions with district leaders indicated that the district draws on the views of school leaders and has established relationships with nearby colleges and universities as part of its recruitment strategy. Documentation shows that policies are in place for the support, evaluation, and retention of teachers. However, there has been limited impact on student achievement because discussions with school leaders and documentation indicate that the quality of communication between district and schools has not been effective. Consequently, the policies have not been implemented consistently at school level. The district leader is too reliant on notions that teacher self-improvement is an indicator of effectiveness in the classroom. Teachers who were interviewed by the review team said that the district recruits new teachers from a variety of colleges and universities. Teachers indicated that staff tends to stay on and continue their careers at the elementary school. The junior-senior high school does not have the same rate of retention of new staff. 		

- The district leader and his human resources manager indicated that the district’s approach to hiring teachers for vacant positions is mainly the use of local and regional newspapers to post vacant positions in addition to approaching colleges and universities. The district leader illustrated the success of this approach by citing the 80 applications received for the recent social studies vacancy. The school leader indicated that the hiring process did not involve reference to student performance, stating, “If we hire people who are committed to their own improvement, students will improve.”
- The district leader listed the ability to work with others, continue their own learning, and make an immediate contribution, as his view of what constituted a high quality teacher. The review team noted that a current knowledge of the CCLS and associated shifts was not mentioned as one of the factors for consideration.

Impact Statement:

The lack of high quality teachers with a thorough and current knowledge of the Common Core is preventing the district and schools from meeting student needs adequately. Consequently, the capacity of the district to drive improvement and raise standards is limited.

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 future recruitment campaigns focus on selecting candidates who can demonstrate an up-to-date knowledge of the CCLS in addition to other characteristics of high quality teaching.
- Ensure that district staff closely monitor the implementation of district recruitment policies in schools and take appropriate action to ensure consistency across the two district schools.

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

Debriefing Statement: The district does not have a clear, comprehensive plan. Members of the school community do not have an understanding of the strategic direction, goals, and key work of the organization. Expectations are perceived as changing and variable. Additionally, goals are communicated in a manner that is global and sporadic. As result, stakeholders are unclear on the direction of the organization, which negatively influences their capacity to maximize contributions.

Areas for Improvement:

Overall Finding:

The district lacks an effective plan for communication of high expectations to and with schools.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding: *(Note: the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) gathered*

evidence from a review of documents and interviews with district leaders, principals, staff, parents and students.)

- Discussions with district leaders indicated that they do not create a sense of urgency about the need for improvement; their expectations of staff are too low. Discussions with stakeholders indicated that they do not understand the key purpose of the district or where its leaders intend to take development in the future. Discussions suggested that the district cabinet does not have a suitable focus on educational matters and is not having any noticeable impact on setting or communicating high expectations. The frequently changing goals create tension between leaders and prevent rapid improvement.
- The district leader said that the district was in a better place than three years earlier, when he was appointed. He illustrated this with the example of having better labor relations now. Additionally, he felt that school staffs were working to improve the graduation rate, which is currently around 80 per cent.
- The district leader stated that he felt the district was working towards a destination, rather than having arrived at one. He indicated that his message to school leaders is that they should not “spend all their energy on the ten per cent of staff that is resistant to change.” In a different interview, the district leader reported that he has many conversations with school leaders. He indicated that school leaders are responsible for getting their staff to attend trainings, however, he conceded, “we have to be more aggressive in terms of getting them there.”
- The district leader also stated that the financial cuts that had been necessary over the past few years, extending to around 25 percent, had led to a restructuring of administrative staff and contributed to a high turnover of school leaders.
- Speaking about the impact of the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), the district leader indicated that he expected the results to change, but at a slower rate than in other districts. He did not give any indication that he had plans to accelerate the process and achieve faster improvement. The district leader also stated during one interview, “We have nice people, but this gets in the way of having higher expectations.” The review team noted little intention on the part of the district leader to promote a faster rate of development through communicating higher expectations.
- The district cabinet was unable to communicate its understanding of the district’s educational approach. It had views, opinions, and information about operational matters, speaking about replacing grass-cutting tractors, for example. The lack of awareness was further demonstrated by comments such as “there have been lots of changes, but not really any challenges”, when asked about changes in leadership and the associated challenges that came with those circumstances.

Impact Statement:

The frequently changing goals and unclear communication of expectations have made it difficult for school leaders to focus on the most important priorities for improvement. The lack of urgency has led to staff taking a

slow-paced approach to improving their own practice, particularly in taking on the CCLS and the associated shifts. As a result, instructional practice is not developing as rapidly as it needs to and student outcomes are not improving quickly enough.

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, in all communication with stakeholders, a clear and unequivocal message is given that the improvement of the quality of instruction and student achievement is urgent and important.
- Ensure that the district avoids making frequent changes to goals and allows the schools to focus for an extended period on the three main areas of improvement that they have identified. Any changes to goals must have a more positive or more rapid impact on improving instructional practice or student achievement than the one it is replacing and must be given enough time to show impact.
- Ensure that the district cabinet is fully focused on the goal of improving student achievement and understands what needs to be done by personnel in all roles to achieve this objective.

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 established structures and systems that allow for the deployment of resources throughout the organization. Protocols are in place for responding to the needs identified by staff to support the academic and physical needs of the organization. However, procedures for assessing evolving needs of stakeholders are not proactive. The district is maximizing resources through using BOCES services and grant funding. Currently, the district is organizing its fiscal management strategies in order to better accommodate needs and respond more appropriately over time.

Areas for Improvement:

Overall Finding:

The district has some systems that allow for the deployment of resources, although financial cut backs have reduced the range and scope of these over recent years. The district is reactive to school leaders’ requests for resources; there is little forward planning to ensure that resources will be in place when students and teachers need them in the future. The district makes appropriate use of BOCES services and the associated funding arrangements.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding: *(Note: the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) gathered evidence from a review of documents and interviews with district leaders, principals, staff, parents and students.)*

- The district leader stated that he realized resources currently fell short of the levels that were available

back in 2008. He said that he evaluated the needs of schools mainly through anecdotal data obtained “by walking around” and listening to the ideas brought to him by school leaders.

- The district leader gave some examples of how the district had responded to identified needs, including the provision of Raspberry Pi computers to help students learn to write code during after-school enrichment activities in the senior high school. He mentioned that the district had written grants to support literacy needs identified through the Response to Intervention (RtI) program.
- The district leader reported that the availability of technology was “robust”. This was contradictory to the observations of the review team during classroom visitations. While the district leader indicated that technological resources were available to students on almost a one-to-one ratio, the review team saw use of these resources in classrooms on only two occasions.
- The district leader indicated that BOCES services were paid for through the district budget, which received an 83 per cent financial return on that investment in the following year.

Impact Statement:

The reactive allocation of resources is not promoting school improvement or better achievement for students effectively enough.

Recommendation:

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

- Establish formal systems for the allocation of resources, which are based upon data-driven analyses of both student and staff needs and take the full implementation of the CCLS into account.
- Monitor teachers’ use of educational technology in classrooms to ensure that staff is making comprehensive use of the extensive resources made available by the district. Where necessary, take action to ensure that staff is equipped to utilize these resources effectively to improve instructional practice and student achievement.

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 developed a general professional development (PD) plan that accounts for staff days throughout the school year and has provided funding for teams to develop the curriculum. There are few ongoing or embedded PD activities where teachers can learn from one another. Decisions about professional development are not based on a needs assessment. The district has developed minimal structures to monitor, prioritize, or evaluate the impact of PD on instructional practices and student outcomes. As a result, teachers are not provided with structured opportunities to increase their evidence-based instructional techniques with purposeful follow up from the district. Consequently, the diverse academic, social, emotional, and behavioral needs of learners are not met consistently well.

Areas for Improvement:

Overall Finding:

The district has a professional development plan which allocates time for staff meetings. However, this and other PD activities are not fully focused on implementing the CCLS or developing instructional practices.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding: *(Note: the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) gathered evidence from a review of documents and interviews with district leaders, principals, staff, parents and students.)*

- Discussions with the district leader indicated that the district has provided funding for teams to work together on developing materials in preparation for making changes to the curriculum. However, evidence from school leaders and teachers indicated that opportunities for teachers to learn from one another are limited. Professional development priorities are not established because needs assessments have not been conducted. Evidence from school reviews demonstrated that systems for monitoring the impact of teachers' ongoing training are underdeveloped.
- Teachers who were interviewed by members of the review team said that special education teachers had been able to attend two conferences. Mathematics teachers had attended a network team institute (NTI) training. All teachers interviewed indicated that they were informed about the range of professional development opportunities provided by BOCES. However, they also said that the time available in staff meetings was insufficient to have a purposeful impact on curriculum development.
- The district leader shared with the review team that the PD program included a range of activities. The review team noted that some of the PD activities were of a general and introductory nature with little emphasis on the strategic priorities of improving instructional practice and raising student achievement.
- The district leader explained that there were opportunities for staff to participate in voluntary paid PD over the summer. Evidence from school reviews indicated that the impact of PD on improving collaboration between teachers and on improving instructional practices was inconsistent between departments.

Impact Statement:

Teachers do not have sufficient structured opportunities to develop their instructional practices. Curriculum development is inconsistent across different departments. As a result, student needs are not being met and achievement is not improving.

Recommendation:

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

- Increase use of performance management systems to determine teachers’ professional development needs, particularly with regard to implementation of the CCLS and associated shifts in instructional practice.
- Ensure that the district PD plan is focused on the strategic priorities of meeting identified staff training needs, improving instructional capability, and accelerating students’ learning and progress.
- Establish minimum expectations of participation in voluntary PD activity, especially when appointing new teachers, to secure greater consistency in curriculum development among departments.

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: The district does not have a culture that understands the value of data. The school communities do not demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of components such as data-driven instruction (DDI), structured collective inquiry during common planning time, protocols for analyzing data (formative and summative), and research-based practices to support improved student achievement. Expectations for collecting, analyzing, and utilizing data are not explicitly communicated to school leaders or staff. The district has not established clear assessments or schedules throughout the schools as data check points. As a result, the district is not able to monitor the progress of district accomplishments, culture, or student achievement in a way that encourages continuous improvement.

Areas for Improvement:

Overall Finding:

The district has not established a positive culture that is adaptable to an effective teaching philosophy and accepting of continuous professional development among staff in schools. Some teachers remain averse to improving their practice. There is no significant use of data to guide teaching or drive improvement.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding: *(Note: the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) gathered evidence from a review of documents and interviews with district leaders, principals, staff, parents and students.)*

- Teachers who were interviewed by members of the review team stated that leadership had less influence on instructional practice than previously because of a reduction in the number of administrators and the move away from having department heads in charge of curriculum areas. This reduced opportunities to have constructive discussions about pedagogy.
- The same group of teachers said that the PD plan “looked good on paper but did not come through in reality.” They said, “It doesn’t make sense for us to sit together and talk about it. We seek what we need. We’re experienced teachers and we don’t want someone coming into our lessons.” They were adamant that their experience was all they needed and that professional development, particularly about the use of data, would not help learning to be better. The district leader, in an interview with members of the review team, said, “At the end of the day, the teachers are responsible.” This

placement of all responsibility on teachers points to a lack of decisive leadership at the district level.

- The district leader indicated that data was available through the regional information center at the school level. He reported that his analysis of this data showed that schools are consistently below average standards in writing. In response, he asked the school leaders to “tell staff they have to do more writing.” Comments such as these indicate the district leader has a superficial understanding of the underlying problems in schools and no coherent plan to deal with them.
- In an interview with members of the review team, the district leader commented that while the school leaders understand formative assessment, this has not been communicated yet to staff. He also reported that there is no established system for assessment between Grades 6 and 12.
- A school leader representing the student support administration within the district indicated that the use of data had never been part of the conversations held at the district. She said that conversations around data were expected to happen at the building level, and noted they did take place at the elementary school, but only occasionally at the high school.

Impact Statement:

Because of a lack of direction from the district, teachers neither have, nor see the need for, a good understanding of how to use data about student learning and progress as a key driver in improving educational attainment. Consequently, students are provided with instruction that does not meet their needs adequately and restricts the progress they make.

Recommendation:

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

- Communicate, and follow up through performance management protocols, a clear expectation that all teachers will use DDI methodologies in planning and delivering their lessons.
- Establish a schedule of data checkpoints, aligned to CCLS expectations, to enable teachers, as well as school and district leaders, to maintain a clear overview of the progress students are making in each class, department, and school.
- Ensure that teachers are held accountable for planning to improve the achievement of students in all classes through practicing data-driven instruction.

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>I</p>
<p><u>Areas for Improvement:</u></p> <p>Overall Finding:</p> <p>The support provided to school leaders by the district is not having a positive impact on improving student achievement. Changing goals makes it difficult for school leaders to focus their efforts and those of their team on the most important improvement priorities. Leadership time is poorly used at district level when repeating the work of school leaders unnecessarily. The district’s implementation of supportive leadership development programs is undermined by the excessive turnover of school leaders.</p> <p>Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding: <i>(Note: the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) gathered evidence from a review of documents and interviews with district leaders, principals, staff, parents and students.)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A school leader reported that the district liked to introduce new initiatives. He indicated that the district’s continuous changing of goals, which were not aligned to the schools’ main priorities, was not leading to strong relationships between the district and schools. Conversely, the district leader reported that there was an open relationship with school leaders, and that they “did not hold things back.” • Similarly, while a school leader described the relationship with the district as professional, he also reported that he felt micro-managed by the district leader’s actions. This was contradicted by the district leader’s view that he expected school leaders to lead themselves. This evidence indicated to the review team that the relationship between school and district leaders was not conducive to creating responsive school environments. • A school leader stated that the district leader’s approach to developing the environment and culture of the school was guided by information obtained through meetings with other supervisors in different districts. • A representative group of teachers who were interviewed by the review team said a mentoring program existed for new teachers within the district. This started with a one-and-a-half day program in the summer and was followed with monthly support, including inter-visitations to other teachers’ classes. They also indicated that the district organized a leadership retreat in conjunction with other districts, although this involved a limited number of staff from each school. The district leader confirmed that this was a partnership with two other small, poor, rural districts and that no evaluation of the impact of this work had been carried out in respect of student achievement or 		

improvements in pedagogy.

- An administrative intern cited excessive turnover of school and district leaders as a key reason why change initiatives have not previously been seen through to completion. The district leader confirmed that regular restructuring in recent years due to staff changes had impeded leadership development of school leaders.

Impact Statement:

The work of the district is not effective in supporting the school leaders to focus on a small number of significant improvement priorities. Consequently, school leaders allow themselves to be distracted by relatively minor issues, while instructional practice remains poor and student achievement fails to improve.

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 school leaders are fully supported in concentrating on priorities for improvement, including the implementation of the CCLS and the improvement of instructional practice, by avoiding overloading them with insignificant and constantly changing objectives.

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

I

Areas for Improvement:

Overall Finding:

The district does not successfully ensure that teachers are planning and delivering CCLS-aligned programs. Excessive reliance is placed on teachers making improvements without clear expectations or guidance, particularly on the use of professional development time. Expectations set by the district are open to interpretation and teachers take advantage of this.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding: *(Note: the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) gathered evidence from a review of documents and interviews with district leaders, principals, staff, parents and students.)*

- A school leader stated that he felt the school was one-and-a-half years behind where it should be in terms of implementing the CCLS and the associated shifts. He said that BOCES had been very helpful, particularly in providing support for English language arts. He did not ask for support from the district in this area, but neither did the district offer support.
- Teachers interviewed by the review team stated that the implementation of the CCLS and the associated shifts had been slowed down because the district had not provided enough time for departments to collaborate and make appropriate preparations. They said that the district direction

was to “do what you can.” Teachers expressed some concerns that because the district is small, collaboration with colleagues to develop CCLS aligned plans and resources was difficult, particularly in curriculum areas with fewer teachers..

- An administrative intern indicated that despite voluntary stipended PD hours being available for individuals or departments to work on developing the CCLS, there was no consistent plan or practice in place and those teachers worked in isolation. He reported that no focused efforts had been made to encourage cross-curricular planning and development.
- The district leader said that while access to PD is available, there is no full time administrative coordination of this provision. He stated that he brought in an external consultant to provide training to school leaders about the CCLS. His evaluation was that this person was able “to get things across” better than he could.
- The district leader said that, from his observation of department meetings held in the morning, that conversations and collaboration were “better.” He was not able to qualify why this was the case. He expressed the opinion that improvements will happen “if you put smart people in the same room.” This comment aligned with his assertion that they have not brought in outside experts because he believes in the competence of the personnel the schools already have. The district leaders did not reflect a realistic understanding of the quality of teaching in the district or of the capacity teachers have demonstrated in promoting improvement.

Impact Statement:

The lack of clear direction from the district has contributed strongly to teachers’ lack of commitment to plan for and implement a Common Core aligned curriculum in the schools. Consequently, students are not receiving instruction in a way that meets their needs and their achievement is not improving.

Recommendation:

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

- Establish an expectation of compliance and a sense of urgency about the implementation of the CCLS and the associated instructional shifts among teachers in both schools.
- In collaboration with school leaders, monitor teachers’ responses to more stringent expectations, and provide support to school leaders when action is necessary to secure teachers’ full and urgent cooperation.

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

I

Areas for Improvement:

Overall Finding:

The district's approach to professional development for teachers is unfocused. There is a distinct lack of alignment with the importance of implementing the CCLS and the associated instructional shifts, including DDI. Systems to identify teachers' professional development needs are not well established.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding: *(Note: the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) gathered evidence from a review of documents and interviews with district leaders, principals, staff, parents and students.)*

- The IIT noted from a review of the curriculum that the schools do not have a curriculum that is responsive to student needs. A review of teacher plans indicated that teachers are not able to set up assessments and use the data they generate to ensure that full consideration is given to student needs and abilities when planning. Consequently, the curriculum that is in place is not adapted to meet student needs adequately and achievement remains below the expected standard. In lessons, the lack of challenge often leaves students uninterested and disengaged.
- A school leader said that PD support for teachers was offered by BOCES, not by the district. The district leader indicated that BOCES PD services were paid for through the district budget, which received an 83 per cent financial return on that investment in the following year.
- The district leader, during a cabinet member interview with the IIT, stated that staff was intimidated by new technology. He indicated that he was not a proponent of interactive whiteboards with his stated reason, "because they just become whiteboards." He did not demonstrate an understanding of the need for teachers to be trained through PD activities in how to use them effectively.
- Teachers who were interviewed by members of the review team said that special education teachers had been able to attend two conferences. Mathematics teachers had attended a network team institute (NTI) training. Teachers all reported they were informed about the range of professional development opportunities provided by BOCES. However, they also said that the time available in staff meetings was insufficient to have a purposeful impact on curriculum development.
- The program of PD shared with the review team by the district leader included a range of activities. Some of these were of a general and introductory nature and there was an insufficient emphasis on the strategic priorities of improving instructional practice and student achievement.

Impact Statement:

Teachers have not been provided with the necessary training to successfully plan for and implement the CCLS.

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 high quality PD is provided that enables teachers to implement CCLS and associated instructional strategies effectively; school leaders and the district should work together to monitor the impact of this PD in the classroom in bringing sustained improvements to the quality of instruction to improve student learning and achievement.

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
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Areas for Improvement:

Overall Finding:

The district collaborates with schools to ensure there is some provision of resources to support student social and emotional developmental health. Mental health professionals are on staff and providing a reactionary service in schools that lacks systematic planning. Some positive initiatives have been implemented with anecdotal evidence of their success. However, there is a lack of established formal evaluation processes to confirm this.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding: *(Note: the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) gathered evidence from a review of documents and interviews with district leaders, principals, staff, parents and students.)*

- A school leader said that the financial support of the district had enabled him to maintain two psychologist positions on the school staff. The district leader confirmed that this was the case.
- Teachers interviewed by the review team felt that students brought issues to staff based on whom they trusted. They were aware of the team of mental health professionals available on the school site. They were able to speak in detail about the more formal approach taken to promote an anti-bullying culture in the school over the past year. Teachers reported that anecdotal evidence has suggested to them that actions taken to combat bullying in the past six to eight weeks have begun to have an impact, although there has been little formal evaluation so far.
- Members of the student support team reported that the district had provided support for student social and emotional developmental health through maintaining positions for mental health professionals on the team in their school. The district leader confirmed that this was the case, particularly for psychologist posts.
- The district leader was not able to provide examples of support the district was currently providing, but outlined some of his plans for the future, such as a school-based family navigator to help point out the availability of different services to families. The review team noted that these plans

demonstrated that the district leader had some understanding of the needs of parents in respect of students' social and emotional developmental health.

- A school leader, representing the student support services staff administration within the district, indicated that arrangements for the coordination of social and emotional developmental health support was more reactive to issues rather than proactive in planning for future situations.

Impact Statement:

Students are able to access mental health professionals in school in times of crisis. This is supportive of their social and emotional developmental health. However, the lack of proactive planning means that not all students at risk have the same quality of access to these staff.

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 access to mental health professionals in schools is coordinated and consistent across the district through establishing common planning, identification, and referral systems.

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:

The district does not have a strategic plan for family and community engagement. The development of such a plan is in the very early stages. While the district leader could outline some of his intentions, drawing on information from a personal book study, nothing had been established, either formally or informally.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding: *(Note: the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) gathered evidence from a review of documents and interviews with district leaders, principals, staff, parents and students.)*

- A school leader said that the frequently changing goals set by the district leader led to some confusion among parents as to the exact goals and academic expectations of the district.
- The school leader indicated that the building leadership team was given no budgetary authority by the district leader.
- The district leader was unable to cite any ways in which the district promotes collaboration with parents and the community. He demonstrated that he had conducted some research about parental engagement and had intentions about what he might like to achieve, but this was

unfocused and lacked substance.

Impact Statement:

The district is having very little impact on securing the support of families and the community in meaningful and purposeful ways. Families are mostly unaware of the urgent need to improve the quality of instruction, implement the CCLS, and 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:

- Establish and communicate a clear written plan that establishes how the district will guide and contribute to the efforts made by the two schools to inform parents of school improvement priorities and developments; engage their support in promoting better student achievement, and establishing purposeful relationships with community organizations.