



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

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)



BEDS Code	610501040001
School Name	Groton Junior-Senior High School
School Address	400 Peru Road, Groton, New York, 13073
District Name	Groton Central School District (GCSD)
School Leader	Jeffrey Evener
Dates of Review	April 22 - 23, 2014
School Accountability Status	Focus School
Type of Review	SED Integrated Intervention Team (IIT)

School Information Sheet												
Grade Configuration	6-12	Total Enrollment	446	SIG Recipient	<input type="checkbox"/>	Title 1 Population	0%	Attendance Rate	95%			
Free Lunch	28%	Reduced Lunch	12%			Limited English Proficient	0%	Students with Disabilities	24%			
Number of English Language Learner Classes												
#Transitional Bilingual	0		#Dual Language	0								
Number of Special Education Classes												
#Self-Contained	8		#Consultant Teaching	13		#Integrated Collaborative Teaching	0					
#Resource Room	14											
Number of Special Classes												
#Visual Arts	7.5	#Music	10	#Drama	0		#Foreign Language	11	#Dance	0	#CTE	0
Racial/Ethnic Origin												
American Indian or Alaska Native	0%	Black or African American	2%	Hispanic or Latino	1%	Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	White	96%	Multi-racial	1%	
Personnel												
Years Principal Assigned to School	3		# of Assistant Principals	0.5		# of Deans	0		# of Counselors / Social Workers	2		
Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate	0%		Teaching Out of Certification	0%		Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Yrs. of Exp.	1%		Average Teacher Absences	NP%		
Credit Accumulation (High School Only) and Performance Rates												
% of 1 st yr. students who earned 10+ credits	0		% of 2 nd yr. students who earned 10+ credits	95		% of 3 rd yr. students who earned 10+ credits	100		4 Year Graduation Rate	83		
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	19.1%		Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4	7.3%		Science Performance at levels 3 & 4	62%		6 Year Graduation Rate	92		
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 Math												
	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												
N/A	Limited English Proficiency											
SCHOOL PRIORITIES AS DESCRIBED BY THE SCHOOL:												
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Build capacity of principals and teacher to implement the curriculum changes necessitated by the common core standards. 2. Raise expectations for student academic performance of teachers, parents, and the community. 3. Strategically engage parents in the educational process and build their capacity to partner with the school in assuring success of their children. 4. Improve the delivery of special education services through targeted staff development. 												

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

#	Statement of Practice	H	E	D	I
2.2	The school leader ensures that the school community shares the Specific, Measurable, Ambitious, Results-oriented, and Timely (SMART) goals/mission, and long-term vision inclusive of core values that address the priorities outlined in the School Comprehensive Educational Plan (SCEP).				X
2.3	Leaders make strategic decisions to organize programmatic, human, and fiscal capital resources.			X	
2.4	The school leader has a fully functional system in place aligned to the district's Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) to conduct targeted and frequent observation and track progress of teacher practices based on student data and feedback.			X	
2.5	Leaders effectively use evidence-based systems and structures to examine and improve critical individual and school-wide practices as defined in the SCEP (student achievement, curriculum and teacher practices; leadership development; community/family engagement; and student social and emotional developmental health).				X
	OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 2:				I

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

#	Statement of Practice	H	E	D	I
3.2	The school leader ensures and supports the quality implementation of a systematic plan of rigorous and coherent curricula appropriately aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) that is monitored and adapted to meet the needs of students.			X	
3.3	Teachers develop and ensure that unit and lesson plans used include data-driven instruction (DDI) protocols that are appropriately aligned to the CCLS and NYS content standards and address student achievement needs.				X
3.4	The school leader and teachers have developed a comprehensive plan for teachers to partner within and across all grades and subjects to create interdisciplinary curricula targeting the arts, technology, and other enrichment opportunities.				X
3.5	Teachers implement a comprehensive system for using formative and summative assessments for strategic short and long-range curriculum planning that involves student reflection, tracking of, and ownership of learning.				X
	OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 3:				I

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

#	Statement of Practice	H	E	D	I
4.2	School and teacher leaders ensure that instructional practices and strategies are organized around annual, unit, and daily lesson plans that address all student goals and needs.				X
4.3	Teachers provide coherent, and appropriately aligned Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS)-based instruction that leads to multiple points of access for all students.				X
4.4	Teachers and students work together to implement a program/plan to create a learning environment that is responsive to students' varied experiences and tailored to the strengths and needs of all students.			X	
4.5	Teachers inform planning and foster student participation in their own learning process by using a variety of summative and formative data sources (e.g., screening, interim measures, and progress monitoring).				X
OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 4:					I

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

#	Statement of Practice	H	E	D	I
5.2	The school leader establishes overarching systems and understandings of how to support and sustain student social and emotional developmental health and academic success.			X	
5.3	The school articulates and systematically promotes a vision for social and emotional developmental health that is aligned to a curriculum or program that provides learning experiences and a safe and healthy school environment for families, teachers, and students.			X	
5.4	All school stakeholders work together to develop a common understanding of the importance of their contributions in creating a school community that is safe, conducive to learning, and fostering of a sense of ownership for providing social and emotional developmental health supports tied to the school's vision.				X
5.5	The school leader and student support staff work together with teachers to establish structures to support the use of data to respond to student social and emotional developmental health needs.				X
OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 5:					I

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

#	Statement of Practice	H	E	D	I
---	-----------------------	---	---	---	---

6.2	The school leader ensures that regular communication with students and families fosters their high expectations for student academic achievement.			X	
6.3	The school engages in effective planning and reciprocal communication with family and community stakeholders so that student strength and needs are identified and used to augment learning.			X	
6.4	The school community partners with families and community agencies to promote and provide training across all areas (academic and social and emotional developmental health) to support student success.				X
6.5	The school shares data in a way that promotes dialogue among parents, students, and school community members centered on student learning and success and encourages and empowers families to understand and use data to advocate for appropriate support services for their children.				X
OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 6:					I

School Review – Findings, Evidence, Impact and Recommendations:

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

Debriefing Statement: The school does not have a vision that reflects specific, measurable, ambitious, realistic and timely goals. Staff, students and parents cannot articulate the direction of the school’s work because the school leader has not collaborated with school stakeholders to formulate and communicate a school vision and mission. The allocation of fiscal resources is not driven by instructional priorities. Arrangements for monitoring the quality of instruction and providing developmental guidance are informal and lack impact because feedback to teachers is not timely. Strategic and operational decisions made by leaders are not based upon a comprehensive understanding and analysis of data. As a result, leaders have not established an infrastructure for improvement.

Strengths:

All ratings for this Tenet are either **Developing** or **Ineffective** and therefore, comments are listed under **Areas for Improvement**.

Areas for Improvement:

2.2 **The school has received a rating of *Ineffective* for this Statement of Practice:** The school leader ensures that the school community shares the Specific, Measurable, Ambitious, Results-oriented, and Timely (SMART) goals/mission, and long-term vision inclusive of core values that address the priorities outlined in the School Comprehensive Educational Plan (SCEP).

Overall Finding:

The mission of the school is unclear to the majority of staff, students and parents. The school leader has not established SMART goals that reflect his view of the future of the school, and there is no sense of urgency to establish and communicate these goals.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- The school leader’s vision for the school’s future direction is based on his identification of the need to improve expectations of student achievement, communication with parents and the quality of interventions for students. However, members of staff, parents and students who were interviewed during the review were not able to articulate a school vision or otherwise indicate an understanding of the school leader’s priorities for the school. Only about a fifth of staff survey respondents agreed with the statement, “We have clear, strong, core beliefs.”
- Staff has written mission statements for their departments that share some common features. However, they are not based upon an overall school mission, nor have they been used to contribute to the formulation of one.
- The school leader stated that SMART goals related to his vision for the school’s direction have not yet been established. This was confirmed by staff responses to the survey, where less than 15 per cent agreed that they used a school-based plan with SMART goals to guide their work. In interviews

with various stakeholders, the review team noted the lack of a sense of urgency about the need to establish and share these goals as a matter of priority.

- Both students and parents expressed concern that there is a lack of pride in the school among students and local community members. Stakeholders have not been consulted nor have they been given opportunities to express the range and intensity of their views. As a result, the SCEP does not reflect the importance parents and students place on this as underpinning the future success of the school.

Impact Statement:

- The lack of a common understanding about the direction of the school is preventing all stakeholders from making a full contribution to school improvement. They are not fully aware of what the school leader is aiming to achieve. Without clearly defined SMART goals, the school leader is not able to evaluate the progress being made towards achieving his long-term objectives and there is no sense of urgency throughout the school community about the need to drive rapid improvement.

Recommendation:

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

- Create, and disseminate to all stakeholders, a small number of SMART goals, based upon the three identified key areas of development (expectations, parent communication and interventions) that will address the top one or two priority improvements in each area; use the existing department mission statements to draw up an interim, whole-school mission statement, in collaboration with representatives from the school community, that can be shared with stakeholders so that they understand the direction and intentions of school improvement activities.
- Communicate and model a sense of urgency about the pace of change among staff.

2.3 **The school has received a rating of *Developing* for this Statement of Practice:** Leaders make strategic decisions to organize programmatic, human, and fiscal capital resources.

Overall Finding:

Budgetary decisions are not driven by instructional needs. The school does not have formal systems to prioritize the deployment of human, fiscal and programmatic resources. Although the availability of resources in classrooms generally meets day-to-day needs, the availability of modern technological instructional equipment is insufficient to deliver the CCLS effectively.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- No discussions about fiscal decisions are held between the district leader and the school leader. Discussions between the school leader and teachers about budgets only happen in response to requests. For example, new novels have been purchased for grade six in response to teachers' requests to order materials to support the CCLS shifts. While the school leader reported that he asks teachers about how requested resources ensure alignment with the CCLS, the school has not implemented a formal system to check this or to prioritize the use of the budget. Resource allocation occurs on a "first-come, first-served" basis.

- Classrooms are not equipped with a broad range of instructional technology. While some classrooms are equipped with data projectors, there are only two SMART boards in the school. The lack of internet connectivity in classrooms means that teachers are unable to stream video for display or access internet-based resources. Students reported in interviews that while teachers are using technology more than used previously during lessons, they often have difficulty accessing websites that are useful for learning.
- The information technology resources, such as iPads and laptop computers that are available to staff and students, are not used extensively. Although the school leader indicated that the resources are enough to provide an electronic device for each student, the review team observed their use in only two lessons.
- The appointment of teaching staff is relatively infrequent as many staff are well established and have worked at the school for decades. When making new appointments, the school leader indicated that he makes decisions based upon the experience of the candidates. However, the school leader did not mention candidates' level of expertise with implementation of the CCLS shifts as an area of particular importance.
- The school leader has begun to implement a policy of assigning content area teachers across grades seven to twelve, rather than across only one or two grade levels. The school leader reported that this decision was made to address a concern about teachers' lack of understanding of the importance of linking curriculum delivery across grades. The school leader said that many teachers had previously only been concerned with completing the program for the grade they were teaching and not the impact that the quality of their instruction would have on learning and progress in future grades.
- The school has implemented an expanded learning time program, providing staff before and after school to work with students. This provides additional time for teachers to work with students who have failed their five or ten week report cards.

Impact Statement:

Resources are meeting the needs of the current methods of teaching. However, students are not engaged in deep learning because teachers are not delivering the CCLS in an exciting and engaging way, making best use of the wide range of resources available through modern technology.

Recommendation:

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

- Establish formal systems for prioritizing the use of fiscal resources that are strongly aligned to the school's mission and main improvement priorities. These systems should fully involve district and school leaders as well as department heads and teachers.
- Ensure that all teachers can access a broad range of stimulating resources, including internet sources, to support the delivery of the CCLS.
- Ensure that the appointment of new teaching staff prioritizes the need to accelerate the

implementation of the CCLS.

2.4 **The school has received a rating of *Developing* for this Statement of Practice:** The school leader has a fully functional system in place, aligned to the district's Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR), to conduct targeted and frequent observation, and track progress of teacher practices based on student data and feedback.

Overall Finding:

The school leader has established and operates a performance review system that is aligned to the required procedures. This system lacks rigor because it is arranged informally and does not consistently lead to actions that promote improvements in teacher performance.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- The school leader has ensured that an APPR system is in place that broadly follows required procedures. However, it is an informal process where teachers get to choose when they are observed. Staff survey responses indicated that only about half of the staff considered formal, APPR-aligned reviews to be conducted effectively. The school leader was not able to tell the review team whether the current program of observations was on track. The school leader reported in interviews with the integrated intervention team (IIT) that some teachers are receiving targeted support to help them improve the quality of their instruction and he provided an example of one teacher who demonstrated improvements in planning and questioning techniques.
- Staff from a range of different levels of responsibility and experience told the review team that school leaders do not give feedback consistently in a timely manner following performance review observations. For example, some staff that were observed in January 2014 have not yet had a post observation conference. The majority of staff responding to the survey were not satisfied with the frequency of informal visits to classrooms by school leaders. However, the school leader stated that visits were made daily to classrooms and that the response of about half the staff is to stop teaching when visits are made.
- The school leader reported in interviews that no staff member is currently on a teacher improvement plan. However, some teachers regularly demonstrate poor performance and attitudes that show an unwillingness to make necessary changes to their instructional approach.
- The school leader does not collect and use data from the performance review process to assist in identifying teachers' professional development (PD) needs.

Impact Statement:

Systems for classroom observations are not having a positive impact on improving the quality of instruction. The school leader's efforts to monitor the quality of teaching do not promote teacher professional engagement to improve instructional practice, which impedes student achievement. The school leader's choice to not implement teacher improvement plans is sending a confusing message to staff about the need for, and importance of, rapid improvement in the quality of teaching. PD for teachers is not aligned to their identified needs, which prevents them from making the necessary improvements.

Recommendation:

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

- Ensure that staff benefit in a timely way from the performance review process by ensuring all follow up conferences are completed within a short time of observations taking place; establish and consistently implement a policy for initiating teacher improvement plans for use where teachers do not demonstrate acceptable levels of performance in delivering the CCLS.
- Ensure that PD for teachers is more effectively aligned to their identified needs by collating and analyzing data about teachers' performance collected through the review processes.

2.5 **The school has received a rating of *Ineffective* for this Statement of Practice:** Leaders effectively use evidence-based systems and structures to examine and improve critical individual and school-wide practices as defined in the SCEP (student achievement, curriculum and teacher practices; leadership development; community/family engagement; and student social and emotional developmental health).

Overall Finding:

There are no established systems in place to gather information regularly about school performance. Decisions made to move the school forward are largely based on anecdotal evidence.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- The school leader stated that the school was not using data and evidence-based systems and structures to help the school achieve its goals. The review team noted that this assertion accurately reflected the current situation in the school. The school does not have effective systems for collecting summative assessment data. The school leader described the process of receiving data from staff as "taking forever." The review team did not observe teachers using data as part of their everyday work. The school leader confirmed that this is typical of what is seen day-to-day within the school.
- The school schedules three full day and four-and-a-half early release PD days for teachers. However, this training is often generic and not focused on the school's development priorities. Leaders have sent teachers of mathematics and English language arts to National Teaching Institute (NTI) trainings. The school has not yet evaluated the impact of this training. Procedures for monitoring teaching and learning are not leading to improvements in instruction, student learning or student achievement.
- The review team noted from interviews and observations that the culture of the school is not one of high expectations. The school leader has established his goal of improving this aspect of the school's work based on anecdotal evidence.

Impact Statement:

Decisions made by the school leader are not based upon evidence and data analysis. Methods of evaluation are not structured or sufficiently analytical. As a result, the most important and specific improvement priorities have not been clearly identified or prioritized.

Recommendation:

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

- Establish an evidence- and data-based system of monitoring the quality of instruction and outcomes for students as well as the impact of the PD opportunities given to staff.
- Widely communicate the goal of improving expectations to all stakeholders and identify key priorities, with benchmarks that will enable the school to measure success towards securing this improvement.

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

Tenet Rating

I

Debriefing Statement: The design of the curriculum lacks rigor. Teachers make few modifications that take into account students' different learning needs. The implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) lacks leadership and coordination. Teachers do not demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the Common Core. Teacher collaboration during short, weekly department meetings is not sufficient to ensure that they have the necessary skills and understanding to develop and implement a CCLS-aligned curriculum. Unit and lesson plans do not align well with the expected standards, preventing students from reaching appropriate levels of college and career readiness.

Strengths:

All ratings for this Tenet are either **Developing** or **Ineffective** and therefore, comments are listed under **Areas for Improvement**.

Areas for Improvement:

3.2 **The school has received a rating of *Developing* for this Statement of Practice:** The school leader ensures and supports the quality implementation of a systematic plan of rigorous and coherent curricula appropriately aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) that is monitored and adapted to meet the needs of students.

Overall Finding:

The quality of implementation of the CCLS is inconsistent and far behind the intended schedule. Few staff are meeting the school leader's expectation that teachers will follow the CCLS. Although staff meets regularly in their department teams, the duration of these sessions is short and only focused on CCLS shifts when led by one of the school leaders.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- The school leader stated that the school is one-and-a-half years behind where it should be in the implementation of the CCLS. The IIT found, based on interview, observations and document review that the development of CCLS practice may be even further behind than this. For example,

reviewers did not see lessons that required students to engage in close reads or to provide text-based evidence during the classes they observed.

- Teachers explained that their main focus is ensuring that students are prepared for the external examinations such as the Regents Comprehensive Examinations in English and mathematics. The principal confirmed that there is little evidence during informal observations that the CCLS shifts are being applied in lessons. Staff and the school leader reported in interviews that the mathematics department has made progress at a slightly faster rate than other departments. The school leader indicated that some of the mathematics department staff uses mid- and post-module assessments to plan instruction.
- The school leader reported that he does not have faculty meetings because the Superintendent has given a directive that all school concerns can be addressed during the 20 minute department meetings. Team meetings do not drive the effective and efficient implementation of the CCLS. During a department meeting, the review team observed that school leaders were inconsistently ensuring that the meeting time was used constructively to promote improvement. Teachers who attended a meeting with reviewers reported that they do not have enough time to work on CCLS during these short weekly meetings.
- During department meetings, the review team observed that teachers regularly referred to traditional styles of instruction and made no mention of ensuring that work given to students was matched to their learning needs. In one such meeting, teachers did not demonstrate an appreciation of the need to adapt resources drawn from sources external to the school to meet the specific needs of their own students. However, teachers at this meeting did discuss how staff might address an identified issue with students' work, in this case that they were not citing outside sources when answering document-based questions.
- Students reported in interviews that they have noticed recently a greater emphasis on the use of informational texts. For example, one grade eight student mentioned there has been a shift from reading fiction to informational text. Their negative view of this change may reflect the attitudes of some teachers to making the shifts demanded under the CCLS. Students and parents who participated in interviews with the review team did not mention the CCLS. The school leader reported that he has not yet held a meeting for parents about the CCLS because he wants teachers to be fully familiar with the standards and shifts first.
- The school leader has ensured that departments are able to obtain the resources they need for implementing the CCLS by increasing the budget available to them. Training for teachers, provided during release time, is said by teachers and school leaders to have contributed to increased knowledge of the CCLS among teachers, but has not yet had an impact on the planning and delivery of lessons.

Impact Statement:

Student achievement is not improving because the school has not consistently adopted the CCLS and the associated shifts in instructional practice. Teachers are not making best use of the available meeting time because school leaders are not providing clear guidance about their expectations.

Recommendation:

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

- Ensure meeting times are used to facilitate the implementation the CCLS, for example, by scheduling time for staff to deconstruct the standards; establish monitoring procedures so that school leaders have an accurate picture of the progress being made towards full implementation of the CCLS, including modifications and strategies to meet the needs of all students, and can hold teachers accountable.

3.3 **The school has received a rating of *Ineffective* for this Statement of Practice:** Teachers develop and ensure that unit and lesson plans used include data-driven instruction (DDI) protocols that are appropriately aligned to the CCLS and NYS content standards and address student achievement needs.

Overall Finding:

Teaching staff do not understand the concept of data-driven instruction (DDI). The limited data about student performance that is available in the school is not used to inform lesson planning or delivery.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- Lessons observed by the review team rarely met the range of student needs in each class. The type of work and level of demand placed on students was typically the same for everyone during the classes that were seen.
- A review of lesson plans by the IIT indicated that teachers are inconsistently using CCLS-aligned lessons. There is greater alignment with the standards in English language arts (ELA) and algebra than in other areas.
- There are no staff on Teacher Improvement Plans (TIPs), although there is at least one teacher who is refusing to teach CCLS. Most teachers interviewed reported that they believe their extensive experience as teachers over many decades was the only necessary tool for building deep conceptual understanding. There was no recognition that data-driven instruction was an expectation within the school.
- The review team observed many classes where teachers made extensive use of resource packets, so that all students were given identical work irrespective of their needs or abilities. Reviewers noted limited evidence of planning that included the use of rubrics or higher order questioning.

Impact Statement:

Students are not making the progress of which they are capable because teacher planning does not consider what students already know, understand and can do.

Recommendation:

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

- Provide training for staff in the use of data to drive instruction aligned with the CCLS shifts including the use of DDI protocols, rubrics and higher order questioning so that the different needs of

students in each class can be met comprehensively.

- Ensure school leaders monitor the quality of planning frequently and regularly to check that teachers are using data to modify work so that it is suitable for the range of different needs in the class.

3.4 **The school has received a rating of *Ineffective* for this Statement of Practice:** The school leader and teachers have developed a comprehensive plan for teachers to partner within and across all grades and subjects to create interdisciplinary curricula targeting the arts, technology, and other enrichment opportunities.

Overall Finding:

There is no organized collaboration between departments. Although morning planning time is available for staff, it is not used in a collaborative way. The special education department has very limited involvement in the planning and organization of other departments and so can offer very little support in planning for the needs of students with disabilities.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- Teachers who were interviewed by the review team indicated that there is no common planning time available to them. They stated that department time is too short to be useful for this purpose. When departments have planning time, part-time teachers (such as those in technology, art and family and consumer science) are not involved if they are not working on those particular days.
- There is no articulated and formalized plan for the introduction of interdisciplinary curricula and no plans for such an approach to be implemented across the school in the near future.
- Special education teachers meet as a department. They attend the meetings of other departments three or four times a year with a focus on assessments, not curriculum.

Impact Statement:

Because of limited department staff meeting time, the implementation of the CCLS and cross-curricular planning are underdeveloped. This is preventing students from accessing a more challenging curriculum and acquiring the associated skills and knowledge. Because curriculum teams have infrequent access to the support of their special education colleagues during planning time, the progress of students with disabilities is negatively impacted.

Recommendation:

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

- Provide sufficient time for departments to meet and collaborate to ensure the implementation of CCLS can be planned comprehensively with strong links between subjects; ensure departments have sufficient time allocated to meet frequently and regularly with their special education colleagues to discuss the steps they need to take to enable students with disabilities to access their courses.

3.5 **The school has received a rating of *Ineffective* for this Statement of Practice:** Teachers implement a comprehensive system for using formative and summative assessments for strategic short and long-range

curriculum planning that involves student reflection, tracking of, and ownership of learning.

Overall Finding:

The system of curriculum planning includes assessment practices which are mainly summative in nature. Formative assessment is unfamiliar to teachers. Teachers' plans do not include student involvement in assessment.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- A review of curriculum documents by the review team indicated that most aspects of the curriculum include final examinations and tests so that students can be given grades and progress reports. In interviews, teachers showed little awareness of a range of assessment practices, and spoke primarily of summative assessments used in isolation. The IIT noted during classroom visitations, and confirmed in interviews with teachers, that teachers do not use assessment data to inform curricular decisions. There was limited evidence of teachers using on-going assessments to modify or adjust curriculum planning.
- According to student survey data, student ownership of learning is low. During classroom visitations, the review team did not observe students involved in the assessment of their own work. However, during an interview with members of the review team, students stated that they have positive relationships with teachers, receive some feedback on their work, receive report cards and have access to their grades if they ask for them. There was a lack of evidence to indicate that test and teachers regularly use assessment data to make clear to students what is needed to achieve at a higher level.

Impact Statement:

The reliance on summative feedback as the primary source of information about the quality of students' learning is preventing students from making more rapid progress in improving their skills, knowledge and understanding. Students have little involvement in the assessment process and feel little ownership of their learning, which discourages them from being excited by, and engaged with, learning.

Recommendation:

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

- Ensure that curriculum planning builds-in frequent and regular opportunities for formative assessment, including that which involves and supports students to evaluate and improve their own work and learning.

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.

Tenet Rating

I

Debriefing Statement: Appropriate structures and pedagogy to engage and meet the needs of all students are not present. Teachers do not utilize research-based practices such as learning targets, formative assessments, higher-order questions or differentiated grouping. Lesson plans typically lack detail and do not identify complex texts, activities and materials. Common planning time is limited and not conducive to implementing

data-driven instruction. Classrooms are both intellectually and physically safe; behavior does not interfere with learning and students are comfortable in asking questions. Current structures and instructional practices do not facilitate the engagement of students in learning that meets the requirements of the CCLS, and impedes the school's ability to close the achievement gap.

Strengths:

All ratings for this Tenet are either **Developing** or **Ineffective** and therefore, comments are listed under **Areas for Improvement**.

Areas for Improvement:

4.2 **The school has received a rating of *Ineffective* for this Statement of Practice:** School and teacher leaders ensure that instructional practices and strategies are organized around annual, unit, and daily lesson plans that address all student goals and needs.

Overall Finding:

There is no use of data in lesson planning. The quality of lesson planning is inconsistent within and between different departments. Teachers' underpinning knowledge of assessment practice is weak.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- The school leader reported that a system for using data is not established in the school. He confirmed that teachers have not had training in data-driven instruction. There is no standard lesson planning template in consistent use across the school and evidence from a review of planning documentation and interviews with teachers indicated that teachers seldom have conversations about data and its use in planning, informing and driving instruction.
- Most teachers did not demonstrate a comprehensive working knowledge of testing, assessment and feedback. For example, when interviewed, teachers' lack of knowledge about the use of formative assessments indicated to the review team that they did not use or understand this strategy. This prevents them from generating information about the goals and needs of individuals and subgroups of students. Consequently, no differentiation based on data was observed in any of the classroom visitations conducted by the review team. In one class, a teacher did refer to IEP goals.
- In most lessons observed by the IIT, students did not demonstrate an awareness of what they were aiming to achieve, indicating that teachers do not set challenging, specific and achievable long and short-term goals for them. However, a few special education students could speak generally about goals related to reading and writing. In addition, students reported in interviews that there is inconsistency in the quality of teachers' knowledge about different learning styles.

Impact Statement:

Assessment of student progress and their reaching of classroom standards is lacking. As a result, instruction is not well matched to student abilities so their needs are rarely met comprehensively. This also leads to low levels of student engagement with learning in many classes.

Recommendation:

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

- Require all staff to use a common format when planning their lessons; provide training for teachers in using a range of assessment practices that produce data that can be used to track students' learning and progress through the year.
- Establish a requirement for all staff to communicate the intended learning outcomes for each lesson clearly to students and to set long and short-term academic goals with students.

4.3 **The school has received a rating of *Ineffective* for this Statement of Practice:** Teachers provide coherent, and appropriately aligned Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS)-based instruction that leads to multiple points of access for all students.

Overall Finding:

Teachers have a limited range of delivery and instruction skills that do not actively engage students in learning. Their expectations of students are typically too low. Few teachers are delivering lessons that demonstrate any elements of CCLS-aligned instructional practices.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- In lessons observed by the IIT, students were typically passive and compliant. Some lessons were predominantly teacher-led, with teachers speaking at length to the students without checking their learning or understanding. Some lessons were conducted completely without questioning from the teacher; higher-order questions that challenged students to reflect, evaluate and respond were seen only rarely during the review. Teachers rarely used discourse or prompted students to find evidence to support a claim during the lessons that members of the review team observed. Better practice of discourse was occasionally seen in some social studies and English language arts (ELA) classes.
- The review team noted during classroom visitations that special education students had stories read to them that were well below the expected level for their grade. The review team could find little evidence of formal reading instruction for these students, despite their literacy difficulties. Teachers did not have knowledge of how to ensure the levels of texts were appropriately suited to students' reading abilities. When questioned by the IIT, teachers could not demonstrate an understanding of text complexity.

Impact Statement:

Students are capable of making more rapid progress in lessons but are being held back by teaching that makes infrequent checks on learning, and incorporates low-level questioning, tasks and materials that fail to challenge thinking.

Recommendation:

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

- Share the best practice seen in some classes through peer observation so that weaker teachers can see how to engage students and check their learning through high quality questioning and complex

materials.

4.4 **The school has received a rating of *Developing* for this Statement of Practice:** Teachers and students work together to implement a program/plan to create a learning environment that is responsive to students' varied experiences and tailored to the strengths and needs of all students.

Overall Finding:

Students have positive relationships with their teachers and most feel safe at school. However, there is significant variability in the quality of classroom management and the checks made on learning. There are few opportunities for students to make choices about their learning.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- Most students who took part in interviews with the review team reported that they feel physically and intellectually safe in most classrooms. They said that they normally have positive relationships with their teachers. However, they identified significant inconsistency in the quality of behavior management in different teachers' classrooms across the school. Many of these students said that, at some point, they had experienced feeling embarrassed or uncomfortable in a class because of the actions or inactions of a teacher.
- In interviews with the IIT, students demonstrated that they were ready and prepared to learn. For example, one student said, "I like it when I get it wrong and it gets explained to me." While they were clear that the majority of teachers were helpful, the quality of the feedback was also described as "very teacher dependent." Students used this phrase frequently during the interview, indicating that there is significant inconsistency in how effectively teachers ensure that students have understood the intended learning. Teachers do not routinely involve students in setting goals for their learning, either individually or collectively during lessons.
- Teachers have a limited repertoire of skills for checking on learning. During an interview with a representative group of staff, teachers confused signs of engagement, such as students making eye contact with the teacher, with indications that learning was taking place. Classroom visitations confirmed the school leader's view that most teachers spend significant proportions of lessons just talking to the class. While teachers responded to questions asked by students, many teachers did not check for understanding by asking probing questions of their own.
- Students often worked on the single specific task set by the teacher for everyone in the class. The review team only observed opportunities for students to make choices about their learning in one art class. There were few opportunities in lessons for students to move around the classroom while they learned or to collaborate with others in small groups.

Impact Statement:

Most students feel safe at school. Students have limited opportunities to play a full part in lessons because teachers often spend much of the lesson speaking. Teachers confuse attentiveness with student cognition. This is giving them an inaccurate view of the effectiveness of their lessons. Teachers' limited assessment skills mean that students often do not receive feedback about their work which would help them to improve.

Recommendation:

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

should:

- Train teachers in using a wide range of student-centered approaches to learning and formative assessment strategies that increase student engagement in lessons and their own learning.
- Ensure school leaders frequently monitor the use and impact of this training in lessons, especially where teachers had previously shown reluctance to make changes to their practice.

4.5 **The school has received a rating of *Ineffective* for this Statement of Practice:** Teachers inform planning and foster student participation in their own learning process by using a variety of summative and formative data sources (e.g., screening, interim measures, and progress monitoring).

Overall Finding:

Objectives are not communicated to students, preventing purposeful assessment from taking place. The school has very limited data about students' learning and progress. Almost all data collection is focused on achievement in end of year examinations.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- The review team observed during classroom visitations that teachers typically start instruction without setting or communicating lesson goals and learning objectives for the students. As a result, students do not understand the purpose of lessons and teachers have no benchmark against which to measure progress.
- Teachers have some knowledge of students who are in need of support. When interviewed they reported using New York State Assessments and report card data. However, by the time students come to teachers' attention through the review of this data they are already failing. Students, teachers and parents told the review team that the school's reactive response to this situation is to provide tutoring before school, during lunch and after school.
- A representative group of teachers who attended an interview with the review team reported that they are not using formative assessment practices, which are designed to identify which aspects of student learning could be improved and how this could be achieved. Consequently, students are rarely receiving routine advice that helps them overcome difficulties and make better progress. Further discussions with students and reviews of their work indicated that they are not regularly provided with a level and quality of feedback that provides them with clear guidance on what they need to do to improve. This hinders their academic progress and prevents them from taking some ownership of their own learning.

Impact Statement:

Students do not understand the purpose of lessons which prevents them taking responsibility for monitoring their own learning and progress. The lack of objectives also prevents students receiving useful feedback about how well they have made progress towards achieving the aims of the lesson.

Recommendation:

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

- Ensure that teachers set SMART learning objectives in every lesson and communicate them clearly

to students; ensure that all teachers provide constructive feedback to help students make strides in their learning.

- Provide training for teachers in using a range of assessment practices that produce data that can be used to track students' learning and progress through the year.

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.

Tenet Rating

I

Debriefing Statement: The school has some systems and protocols in place, mostly informal, to support the social and emotional developmental health needs of students. The school is beginning to use documented systems of referral but tiered support for at-risk students or students with disabilities is not in place. The school's use of information and data from a limited range of stakeholders is not sufficient to ensure that students' needs are being met at an appropriate level. The lack of formal systems interferes with the school's ability to measure the effectiveness of interventions and make appropriate programmatic adjustments.

Strengths:

All ratings for this Tenet are either *Developing* or *Ineffective* and therefore, comments are listed under *Areas for Improvement*.

Areas for Improvement:

5.2 **The school has received a rating of *Developing* for this Statement of Practice:** The school leader establishes overarching systems and understandings of how to support and sustain student social and emotional developmental health and academic success.

Overall Finding:

The school makes limited use of data and only identifies surface areas of need connected to the social and emotional developmental health of students. The school does not have an effective system of referral and support in place for at-risk students or students with disabilities. Individual education plans (IEPs) do not always identify appropriate interventions, in particular, by placing an over-reliance on counseling.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- The school leader indicated that this is the first year that there has been concerted and sustained work around student social and emotional developmental health. The school leader stated that the school's mental health providers (two counselors and a psychologist) attend Committee on Special Education (CSE) meetings, which are chaired by the school leaders on the direction of the district leader. They also liaise with school leaders on a bi-monthly basis to discuss students causing concern and communicate with teachers frequently to discuss issues and share updates informally. The student support team also indicated that they meet as student study teams when the need arises, which had been approximately three times at the time of the review.
- During a meeting with the review team, student support staff indicated that an informal process is in place to identify students in need of help or special education support. They reported that a

referral form has been developed and shown to some teachers, but that it has not been shared with the school as a whole. As a result, its use is not yet embedded in practice. Staff survey responses indicated that only 25 per cent agreed with the statement, “Our school has definitive procedures in place for students who are chronic offenders and/or experiencing ongoing difficulties.” School counseling staff stated during their interview that there is not a specific referral process for special education and they used the word “triage” to describe the school’s response when behavioral concerns arise, rather than having a proactive system in place.

- The school leader explained that some policies exist in the areas of bullying, harassment and hazing. He also reported that many students use Dignity for All Students Act (DASA) forms when they perceive they have been bullied or harassed. Student support services staff said that cyber bullying is a problem at the school. Six out of the eight students who were interviewed by the review team identified discipline as the one thing they would want to improve about their school.
- School counseling staff indicated that teachers are willing to prioritize health and safety concerns when they arise. They also stated that morning meeting time can be devoted to discussion of student social and emotional needs when needed. The use of informal systems help teachers, students and parents know who to turn to for support and guidance; 72 per cent of student survey respondents indicated there is someone to go to if they need advice, while 66 per cent indicated that they feel safe at school.
- More than 25 per cent of students have an IEP. In addition, a significant number of other students have 504 plans. Many of the IEPs reviewed by the IIT have inappropriate references to counseling on them. For example, one plan identified a student with a mathematics learning disability and listed counseling as the intervention of choice.

Impact Statement:

School leaders are not able to use their time to best effect because they are spending some of it chairing meetings where more appropriately qualified staff are available. The lack of formal overarching systems and structures to support social emotional and behavioral development leads to individual student needs not being addressed appropriately and without input from all stakeholders. Students are not always getting the quality of support they need because IEPs are placing excessive demand on the school’s counseling service.

Recommendation:

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

- Establish a formal system of referral to the student support team and clearly communicate the expectation of its use to all staff; make more appropriate use of the counselor who is qualified and trained to act as CSE chair so that school leaders can dedicate more time to the strategic leadership of the school.
- Seek PD regarding planning more appropriate interventions on the IEPs for students with disabilities.

5.3 The school has received a rating of *Developing* for this Statement of Practice: The school articulates and systematically promotes a vision for social and emotional developmental health that is aligned to a curriculum or program that provides learning experiences and a safe and healthy school environment for

families, teachers, and students.

Overall Finding:

The school does not have a shared vision for social and emotional developmental health. Student support services staff are able to articulate an individual vision that is connected to the skills and behaviors connected to academic and social and emotional developmental health. The school does not have clear school-wide expectations of student behavior. While the school recognizes some of the issues related to student social and emotional health and takes some action, school policy is not comprehensive and does not involve all staff. Minimal steps have been taken to develop adult capacity to address social and emotional developmental health issues.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- The school leader indicated that school counselors and the probation office have introduced the “Second Step” character education program into the junior high school. This program has been implemented in grades six and seven routinely and grade eight by referral. The student support services staff indicated that there are no school-wide behavior expectations, but the school has an anti-bullying procedure in line with DASA.
- During an interview with the review team, a group of staff identified that bullying between students is an issue at the school. In response to this, the teachers have received training from Tompkins Seneca Tioga (TST) BOCES, and they have subsequently taken firmer action in grades six, seven and eight in dealing with bullying issues. Staff reported that the attitudes of grade eight students changed in response to the video that they were shown. Just 29 per cent of students who responded to the survey reported that bullying is not a problem.
- Student support services staff identified one classroom in the school that uses a behavior system based upon rewards available in a school store. They indicated that teachers use behavior interventions such as the movement of classroom seating and self-monitoring. However, school documentation does not include a formal policy or set of expectations for managing classroom behaviour consistently across the school.
- The staff in the student support team has attended a range of appropriate PD. For example, one counselor has been to positive behavior intervention and support (PBIS) training and attended Tompkins Area Counselors’ Association meetings. However, other school staff do not benefit from a range of relevant training to support student social and emotional well-being. This has led to the creation of IEPs reflecting student behavioral needs which may be better dealt with by general training for teachers.
- During an interview with the review team, students with disabilities were clear that the school is a physically safe environment. However, concern was expressed that different teachers handled discipline issues inconsistently. Students gave examples of their diverse experiences which ranged from removal from the room for brief off-task behavior to teachers completely ignoring students. Of the students who responded to the survey, only 39 per cent agreed that the school is an upbeat, positive place.

Impact Statement:

Most students feel safe at school because they feel they have access to staff that will help them. The

inconsistent management of behavior is confusing for students and interferes with them making more rapid progress. The counseling service is being used excessively for managing student behavior where better training for teachers and a greater sense of responsibility for what happens in their own classrooms may be more appropriate. The lack of a commonly understood and shared vision results in a lack of alignment between belief and practice amongst stakeholders. This is having a negative impact on the climate and culture of the school.

Recommendation:

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

- Establish school-wide specific expectations of student behavior and communicate them in writing to staff and students, ensuring that they are clearly on display in every classroom; identify staff who find managing student behavior difficult and provide targeted PD to address their needs; monitor the impact of this training on the effectiveness of their instruction.
- Ensure that school leaders hold teachers accountable for maintaining discipline in their classrooms so that learning can take place.

5.4 **The school has received a rating of *Ineffective* for this Statement of Practice:** All school stakeholders work together to develop a common understanding of the importance of their contributions in creating a school community that is safe, conducive to learning, and fostering a sense of ownership for providing social and emotional developmental health supports tied to the school's vision.

Overall Finding:

Partnerships between professionals are reactionary rather than preventative. They are not driven by a strategic plan. Student support staff articulate individual visions for social and emotional developmental health. School staff place excessive reliance on students identifying themselves as needing help or support.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- During an interview with the review team, a representative group of staff made clear that they are not pro-active in identifying students who may be in need of help. Instead, staff relies on students to self-refer to the counseling team when they believe they need support. Interviews with stakeholders indicated that they are unclear as to the role each should play in meeting the needs of students.
- Support is only available for students at a single level of intervention. A tiered structure of support, which allows students with more significant needs to be referred to more specialized services, is not in place. For example, the school counselor indicated that it is common to support students for prolonged periods of time, without keeping records or evaluating the impact of the interventions being provided.
- The school leader indicated that the school has recently established a student study team approach to planning and implementing interventions for students with disabilities. However, this study team only meets in reaction to significant behavioral events and is not pro-active in identifying students who may be at risk.
- Teachers' understanding of the support services they are providing is not in alignment with the

school leader's. During an interview with a representative group of teachers, staff indicated that they used the 40 minutes of "morning time" each day for response to intervention (RTI). However, the school leader was clear that the school is not doing RTI.

Impact Statement:

Teachers' lack of awareness of how to identify students in need, and of the scope and sequence of support services, means that students are not able to access support at a level appropriate to their needs. Students spend time out of the classroom on unfocused interventions because there is no system to evaluate the effectiveness of student support. This prevents students from making better progress.

Recommendation:

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

- Establish and implement a formal system of referral to student support services, which allows tiered access to focused and time-limited interventions that have clear success and escalation criteria; provide training for staff in recognizing and actively referring students in need so that reliance on student self-referral is reduced significantly.
- Ensure that all stakeholders are informed and held accountable for the role each should play in meeting the social and emotional developmental health needs of students.

5.5 **The school has received a rating of *Ineffective* for this Statement of Practice:** The school leader and student support staff work together with teachers to establish structures to support the use of data to respond to student social and emotional developmental health needs.

Overall Finding:

The collection, analysis and use of student social and emotional developmental health and behavioral data is reactive and limited in scope. There is no system in place to review this data or make findings available to staff, so it has no impact on planning.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- The school leader reported that the school collects student data related to demographics, attendance and discipline referrals. Data about student academic achievement is limited to report card grades and the results of Regents Comprehensive Examinations and tests in English language arts and mathematics.
- Student support staff indicated that they review transcripts, Regents Comprehensive Examinations results and New York State Assessment results as a starting place when a student is referred to them because they give a snapshot of students' strengths and needs. However, teachers do not use this data because they do not have a comprehensive knowledge of what data is available to them or how to use it to guide their planning.
- School counseling staff indicated that there are no formalized processes, documentation or communication structures for creating functional behavior assessments (FBAs) or behavior intervention plans (BIPs). As a result, behavior interventions are not communicated, taught, monitored, adjusted, or used to promote better student access to instruction.

- The review team found no evidence of regularly scheduled meetings for school teams to review school-wide or individual student data. Similarly, they found no evidence of regularly scheduled meetings for general education teachers, special education teachers and student support staff to discuss and document the needs of students with disabilities.

Impact Statement:

Lesson planning and support interventions do not meet student needs well because decisions by teachers, the student support team and school leaders are not well informed by data as data use is limited in scope. The ability of teachers to measure the effectiveness of interventions, and make necessary and appropriate adjustments, is hindered by informal decision-making processes and poor documentation.

Recommendation:

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

- Establish systems for collecting and using data about students' learning and progress so that teachers, the student support services team and school leaders can plan lessons, interventions and other support, and monitor their effectiveness to meet student needs.

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

Tenet Rating

I

Debriefing Statement: The school has established a welcoming environment in which families feel comfortable. Communication with parents is increasing in frequency. Families can participate in a range of arts, sports, and social activities in the school. However, there are limited opportunities for parents to learn about supporting their child academically and socially. The school does not provide training for staff on family and community engagement. The school shares traditional forms of data such as report cards with parents, but does not have a systematic way of providing clear, regular guidance to help parents support their child. As a result, a culture where families and staff share the responsibility of preparing students for college and career is not in place.

Strengths:

All ratings for this Tenet are either **Developing** or **Ineffective** and therefore, comments are listed under **Areas for Improvement**.

Areas for Improvement:

6.2 **The school has received a rating of *Developing* for this Statement of Practice:** The school leader ensures that regular communication with students and families fosters their high expectations for student academic achievement.

Overall Finding:

The school regards improved communication with families as one of its three main priorities. As such, the

school leader has begun to implement a few new initiatives which are beginning to promote better home-school communication. Parents of at-risk students are more involved in their child's education than in the past. Some previously effective practices have been reinstated and adapted to make use of communication technology.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- During an interview with the review team, a group of parents were not able to recall being informed of the school leader's goal of raising expectations for achievement as part of the wider vision of the future of the school. Parents did not mention the concepts of the CCLS or whether the school had promoted college and career readiness. They indicated they were aware that the school was not performing well, but did not relate this to expectations of student achievement. Individual parents reported that communication with staff about their children's special needs had led to satisfactory improvements in the provision of services for them by the school.
- The same group of parents indicated that the frequent recent changes in school leadership have had a negative effect on the effectiveness of communication which has eroded the trust they previously had in school staff. They pointed to a lack of communication between the two schools in the district as the reason that events were scheduled at both schools simultaneously, which prevented those parents with children in both schools from supporting the activities of all their children. One parent gave an example of parent-teacher conferences being held at one school while a concert was performed at the other. Parents also expressed that the lack of a parent-teacher organization was limiting communication and parental involvement.
- The school leader reported a few recent improvements in communication with parents. For example, he outlined work currently being done to involve parents of seniors at risk of not graduating, such as meeting with parents in person and by other methods of communication. A similar process is in the early stages of development for grade eight students who may not be ready for moving on with their cohort. The school leader indicated that a recent initiative to allow teachers to only make a discipline referral if they had previously made contact with the parents had increased the frequency with which staff spoke with parents.
- Staff and parents reported, in interviews with the review team, that parents are invited to orientation meetings as their children enter grades six and nine. However, the school leader told the team that a meeting for parents about the CCLS had not yet been held because he wanted staff to be well prepared and ready to deliver the standards beforehand. A review of the school's website by the review team indicated that the school has placed little pertinent information about the CCLS in the public domain.
- Of the staff survey respondents, only a minority had positive views about the impact of communication with parents. For example, just 12 per cent indicated that the school communicates high expectations to the home.
- The school leader explained how the previous principle's postcard campaign for recognizing positive events had been re-instituted using electronic mail. He indicated that this had recently helped to establish e-mail as the primary method of communication between staff and parents. However, parents do not receive a newsletter from either the school or the district.

Impact Statement:

- With the exception of those whose children have very specific needs, parents have little communication with teachers about the progress that students are making. This is preventing parents from having enough knowledge about student learning to participate fully as partners in their children's education. Parents are unaware of the high standards demanded by the CCLS. This hinders the quality of support they are providing at home, helps to perpetuate a culture of low expectations, and reduces the likelihood of students leaving school college and career ready.

Recommendation:

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

- Prepare and disseminate clear information about the links between the CCLS and the school's drive to establish a culture of high expectations; monitor the impact of the recent improvements in communication systems on securing more active involvement of parents in promoting high standards, for example in ensuring the completion of homework.

6.3 **The school has received a rating of *Developing* for this Statement of Practice:** The school engages in effective planning and reciprocal communication with family and community stakeholders so that student strength and needs are identified and used to augment learning.

Overall Finding:

Parents are generally satisfied with communication between school and home. The school has established some essential forms of communication. In particular, the school leader has established an expectation that teachers communicate regularly with parents via e-mail. However, the school has not formed a functional parent association.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- The school leader has established expectations that teachers communicate regularly with parents by email. Staff representatives confirmed that this is the case during an interview with the review team. However, the school leader is currently only monitoring the frequency of parent communication in relation to student discipline referrals. While the school leader keeps a log of parents they call, teachers do not.
- In order to improve the quality of communication about student achievement and progress, changes have been made to the timing of parent-teacher conferences. These were moved to between 12 p.m. and 6 p.m. on the day after the Super bowl. Parents indicated their satisfaction with this arrangement as it allowed those who work to attend where they were unable to previously. The school also cited a much higher rate of parental attendance after the change. Additional information is available via the school's website, where parents can see grades and receive regular report cards and progress reports. Communication is often in home languages.
- Parents who met with the review team reported that they are free to walk in and meet with staff at all levels. They also are confident that they will get their call returned should they telephone the school and initially be unable to speak with the desired member of staff. The student support services team stated that they often act as intermediaries between teachers and parents.

- While many parents actively participate in supporting school activities such as sports, they do not formally have a voice through an organized parent association. Similarly, the school has not conducted its own survey of parents to establish their views.

Impact Statement:

Families have confidence to approach the school with their concerns. However, parents' views are only gathered informally from those who voluntarily contact the school. This means that parents do not play an active part in setting the strategic direction of the school.

Recommendation:

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

- Conduct a regular and frequent survey of parents' views regarding how well the school communicates with parents; ensure that the data generated is analyzed in a timely way and used to identify where improvements need to be made.

6.4 **The school has received a rating of *Ineffective* for this Statement of Practice:** The school community partners with families and community agencies to promote and provide training across all areas (academic and social and emotional developmental health) to support student success.

Overall Finding:

The school does not make any provision for parents to receive training in supporting their children. A range of direct support is provided but it is not a substitute for training which empowers parents. A number of parents provide voluntary assistance at school events, although the group is typically the same for prom organization, fundraising, field trips and sports. The school provides strong social support to families in need.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- The school leader stated that there is no training available for parents, nor is there a comprehensive plan to provide it. Other staff, such as those on the student support services team, explained that they provide direct support themselves and point out access to other services. However, this is designed to provide expert help to parents rather than empower them to take action themselves.
- Members of the student support team stated that there was little communication between grade teachers or between the elementary and junior-senior high schools. As a result, there is a lack of continuity as students' progress through the school. Parents who participated in the interview spoke warmly of the support they were offered because of their family circumstances or students' medical needs.
- A plan is not in place to provide PD for staff on how to build strong relationships and partnerships with parents and families.

Impact Statement:

Parents have no opportunities for learning about curricula shifts and other aspects of learning and are not in a strong position to prevent their children from falling further behind in their learning.

Recommendation:

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

should:

- Devise and implement a program of training which can be offered to parents to enable them to support the academic and social and emotional developmental health of their children; ensure that staff is provided with PD to help them build productive and lasting partnerships and collaborations with parents and families.

6.5 **The school has received a rating of *Ineffective* for this Statement of Practice:** The school shares data in a way that promotes dialogue among parents, students, and school community members centered on student learning and success, and encourages and empowers families to understand and use data to advocate for appropriate support services for their children.

Overall Finding:

The school collects and analyzes a limited range of data about student learning and progress. Staff has little understanding about how to make best use of the available data. This prevents them from sharing the information with parents and using it to initiate conversations with them about their children’s achievements and needs.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- The lack of cohesive and robust data collection and analysis systems means that considerations for students with disabilities and their families are very underdeveloped. For example, the Special Education School Improvement Specialist (SEIS) has brought resources to the school’s attention, such as Adult Career and Continuing Education Services - Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCESS-VR) and the Commission on Visually Handicapped, but parents indicated they were unaware of them. The school does not have an understanding from data of who may benefit and therefore does not communicate the potential for support to parents.
- The most comprehensive use of data at the school is to maintain lists of students who are restricted or ineligible to participate in extra-curricular activities. This does not influence participation in structured programs or lead to identification of students who may be at risk. The school provides limited data to parents on how well their child is progressing.

Impact Statement:

Identification of those in need is not well coordinated and students, especially those with special needs, are at times, not receiving the support services and assistance they need. Parents’ awareness of their children’s needs is not based on rigorous analysis of data about their learning and progress.

Recommendation:

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

- Ensure that data is used to comprehensively identify students who may be at risk so that their parents can be directed to appropriate resources and support; ensure that parents are provided with access and explanations as to the academic progress of their child.