



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

**DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)**



<b>BEDS Code</b>	421800010011
<b>School Name</b>	Meachem Elementary School
<b>School Address</b>	171 Spaulding Avenue, Syracuse, NY 13205
<b>District Name</b>	Syracuse City School District
<b>School Leader</b>	Melissa S. Evans
<b>Dates of Review</b>	September 30, 2014 – October 1, 2014
<b>School Accountability Status</b>	Focus School
<b>Type of Review</b>	SED Integrated Intervention Team (IIT)

## School Information Sheet

School Configuration (2014-15 data)					
Grade Configuration	PreK-5	Total Enrollment	480	SIG Recipient	Yes
Types and Number of English Language Learner Classes (2014-15)					
# Transitional Bilingual	NA	# Dual Language	NA	# Self-Contained English as a Second Language	NA
Types and Number of Special Education Classes (2014-15)					
# Special Classes	2	# SETSS	0	# Integrated Collaborative Teaching	6
Types and Number of Special Classes (2014-15)					
# Visual Arts	1	# Music	1.4	# Drama	0
# Foreign Language	0	# Dance	0	# CTE	0
School Composition (most recent data)					
% Title I Population	66%	% Attendance Rate	95%		
% Free Lunch	57%	% Reduced Lunch	4%		
% Limited English Proficient	<1%	% Students with Disabilities	16%		
Racial/Ethnic Origin (most recent data)					
% American Indian or Alaska Native	2%	% Black or African American	60%		
% Hispanic or Latino	5%	% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	1%		
% White	22%	% Multi-Racial	9%		
Personnel (most recent data)					
Years Principal Assigned to School	3	# of Assistant Principals	1		
# of Deans	0	# of Counselors/Social Workers	6		
% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate	0	% Teaching Out of Certification	0		
% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience	0	Average Teacher Absences	7		
Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2013-14)					
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	5.3%	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4	4.4%		
Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (4th Grade)	80.8%	Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (8th Grade)	80.8%		
Student Performance for High Schools (2013-14)					
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4		Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4			
Credit Accumulation High Schools Only (2013-14)					
% of 1st year students who earned 10+ credits		% of 2nd year students who earned 10+ credits			
% of 3rd year students who earned 10+ credits		4 Year Graduation Rate			
6 Year Graduation Rate					
Overall NYSED Accountability Status (2013-14)					
Reward		Recognition			
In Good Standing		Local Assistance Plan			
Focus District	X	Focus School Identified by a Focus District	X		
Priority School					

### Accountability Status – Elementary and Middle Schools

Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in ELA (2012-13)			
American Indian or Alaska Native		Black or African American	
Hispanic or Latino		Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	
White		Multi-Racial	
Students with Disabilities		Limited English Proficient	
Economically Disadvantaged			
Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Mathematics (2012-13)			
American Indian or Alaska Native		Black or African American	
Hispanic or Latino		Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	
White		Multi-Racial	
Students with Disabilities		Limited English Proficient	
Economically Disadvantaged			
Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Science (2012-13)			
American Indian or Alaska Native		Black or African American	
Hispanic or Latino		Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	
White		Multi-Racial	
Students with Disabilities		Limited English Proficient	
Economically Disadvantaged			

#### SCHOOL PRIORITIES AS WRITTEN BY THE SCHOOL:

- Increase teachers'/administrators' knowledge of the Common Core Learning Standards and implement rigorous and engaging lessons that lead to increased student achievement for all students
- Decrease the number of days lost to instruction due to in-school and out of school suspensions by incorporating PBIS, The Nurtured Heart Approach and PAX strategies into the day
- Increase parent involvement for the tier 3 and 4 level students

## Information about the review

- The review was co-led by an Outside Educational Expert (OEE) and a representative from the New York State Education Department. The team also included a district representative, a district-selected Outside Educational Expert and a Special Education School Improvement Specialist (SESIS).
- The review team visited a total of 37 classrooms during the two day review.
- Reviewers conducted focus groups with students, staff and parents.
- Reviewers examined documents provided by the school, including curriculum maps, lesson plans, school-wide data, teacher feedback, and student work.

### 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	
<b>OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 2:</b>				<b>D</b>	

### 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
<b>OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 3:</b>				<b>D</b>	

**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
<b>OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 4:</b>					<b>I</b>

**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	
<b>OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 5:</b>				<b>D</b>	

**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	
	<b>OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 6:</b>			<b>D</b>	

**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**

**D**

The school has received a rating of *Developing* for Tenet 2 – School Leader Practices and Decisions.

- The school leader reported that the goals, mission, and vision were developed with the school community and are promoted in the school. However, the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT or review team) found that the school goals are not Specific, Measurable, Ambitious, Results-oriented, and Timely (SMART) and do not specifically focus on the aspects of the school’s performance in most need of improvement. Additionally, the school’s targets for improvement in state test scores lack challenge. While results of recently published tests showed improvement by some groups of students in their reading and mathematics, the school’s projection of a 2.5 percent annual increase in state test scores is not high enough to achieve and sustain overall improvement for all students. The IIT found minimal evidence of how the school leader ensures that staff monitors progress towards goals regularly and rigorously. Additionally, the school leader has not put in place strategies to consistently address shortcomings and hold staff accountable in areas where progress is not sufficient.
- The school leader is beginning to use programmatic, human, and fiscal resources strategically to address school need. However, many decisions concerning resources are too recent to impact upon increases in student achievement and overall school improvement. The school leader reported that he has made targeted staffing changes to support improved instruction and student achievement. The school leader has assigned teaching assistants within grade levels this term to target the students and content areas most in need. Additionally, he appointed an experienced vice principal to replace an administrative Intern. The school leader identified and secured instructional coaches to work with teachers to implement Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). During class visits, the review team found limited evidence of the impact of this support in teachers’ instructional strategies. Reviewers found that teachers inconsistently implement the CCLS, which limits opportunities for students to develop the critical skills necessary to demonstrate academic growth. Evidence from staff interviews and class visits reflected that the school leader provided resources to support the PAX good behavior game, which is also supported by the district. According to the school leader, most teachers have implemented the program and initial feedback suggests that the number of classroom disruptions has decreased. Although resources have been also allocated to support technology use in the classroom, reviewers found minimal evidence of teachers using and incorporating technology into their lessons.
- The school leader provides frequent and targeted classroom observations. However, the impact of the school leader’s actions are not yet leading to sustained academic achievement over time or resulting in consistent instruction because strategies to address weaknesses are not embedded or consistently applied by all staff. The school leader reported that he reviews observation and classroom data to provide feedback to teachers. A review of documents and interviews with teachers confirmed that the school leader provides timely and actionable feedback as part of the process to monitor and evaluate the quality of instruction and learning. During classroom visits, reviewers noted examples of some, but not enough teachers implementing the feedback from their observations in their instructional strategies. However, the IIT found that many teachers do not consistently implement the actionable feedback they receive from observations.
- The school leader has recently established an electronic system to gain knowledge and awareness of

what is happening in the school. The system allows staff to collect a range of academic, instructional, and behavioral data to evaluate individual and school-wide performance. However, the system is at an early stage of implementation and therefore, does not yet include consistent monitoring protocols. Evidence from interviews with the school leader and a review of statistical data demonstrated that staff has analyzed and used some data on behavior to identify the grades and classes that have the highest incidences of behavioral issues to develop intervention strategies. The staff reported using an early analysis of the data to implement processes such as co-teaching in smaller selected groups in ELA and math, and that recent results from commercial tests show some small but positive improvements in student achievement.

**Recommendations:**

- The school leader should establish, with the school community, SMART goals that focus on improving instructional practices and raising student achievement. Staff should monitor and evaluate progress towards these, goals, regularly and rigorously. The school leader should put in place remedial strategies, where progress is not fast enough so that school leaders and staff are held accountable for the performance of the school.

**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**

**D**

The school has received a rating of *Developing* for Tenet 3 – Curriculum Development and Support.

- The school leader has begun efforts to ensure that the CCLS are being implemented and that the curriculum takes into account student needs. However, the monitoring of curriculum implementation by school leaders does not consistently ensure the rigor expected in CCLS. School leaders do not ensure that curriculum planning and delivery are aligned in a way that supports student learning and academic progress. Although CCLS aligned district curricula are in place as a planning vehicle, during classroom visits the review team found that teachers inconsistently implemented CCLS aligned lessons. While the IIT found some evidence of differentiated strategies in lesson and curriculum plans, teachers minimally included these strategies in enacted lesson, which did not meet the needs of individual students.
- Some teachers, in collaboration with ELA and mathematics coaches, consultant teachers, and school leadership, have identified achievement targets and goals for some students. Furthermore, some of these students are making progress as measured by formative assessment; however, they are still performing far below proficiency level on New York State (NYS) assessments in ELA and mathematics. While some lesson and unit plans reviewed by the IIT aligned to CCLS, teachers inconsistently plan and deliver lessons that include Data Driven Instruction, (DDI), reflect individual or sub-group needs, and include complex materials and higher-order questioning. A review of teacher binders and lesson plans reflected some individual student data collection; however, the review team did not find clear evidence of how teachers use this data to drive daily planning. During classroom visits, the review team saw several examples of teachers using "Exit Tickets"; however, in some cases the "Exit Tickets" did not align with the posted lesson objective. Additionally, the review team noticed that few teachers

used data to adjust instruction mid-lesson.

- While teachers meet and plan regularly in grade level and vertical teams, the outcome does not consistently lead to a connection of the curriculum across subjects in a way that increases students’ engagement and promotes better opportunities for student success. Although the afterschool program provides some opportunities for project-based and interdisciplinary learning, is the school staff lacks an overall school strategy for interdisciplinary curricular planning and delivery in the classroom.
- Teachers are using limited assessments to guide and inform their curriculum planning and students are not consistently given the quality and frequency of feedback based on data that they need to ensure ownership of learning. In addition, students are not provided with the exact steps they need to take to put them on a higher trajectory to achieve more challenging learning goals. Evidence from a review of documents, interviews, and classroom visits demonstrated that the curriculum does not align with assessments, which limits students from showing growth in meeting the demands of CCLS to improve their overall academic achievement.

**Recommendations:**

- School leaders should hold teachers accountable for delivering a range of challenging learning activities for all students based on curriculum planning that is CCLS aligned; provide opportunities for students to learn through activities that are planned around data-driven instruction, collaborative and interdisciplinary learning, higher-order questioning, and data based feedback that together provide a platform for increased student success.

**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**

The school has received a rating of *Ineffective* for Tenet 4 – Teacher Practices and Decisions.

- Expectations for lesson planning are communicated in the school staff handbook and from the school leadership regularly, but these expectations are not reflected in instructional practices in the classroom. An evaluation of lesson plans by reviewers showed varying levels of detail as well as inconsistent references to data and individual student needs. Additionally the lesson plans reviewed during classroom visits did not include provisions for further understanding or the meeting of student individual needs. Reviewers found that teachers minimally provided CCLS-aligned instruction. Most of the instruction observed was delivered in whole group settings, with limited differentiation and scaffolding, and instruction was often low level and provided little opportunity for students to be challenged by complex texts or problem solving. Although sample lesson plans included questioning that builds to greater complexity, during classroom visits, reviewers found that most teachers asked low-levels questions that required to students to recall basic facts, only.
- Student choice or voice was rarely evident during instruction and there were seldom opportunities for students to share their views and opinions or to look at issues from different perspectives. Reviewers witnessed some behavior challenges in classrooms and some students interviewed by the review team shared concerns about bullying. While many teachers demonstrated sufficient classroom management

skills, during discussions with the IIT some teachers expressed concerns about their capacity to cope with challenging behavior.

- Students do not have sufficient opportunities to take ownership and responsibility for their own learning. Reviewers found that academic feedback provided by teachers is general and does little to help students improve. While some teachers provided oral feedback to students, most of the comments were general such as “good job” and did not provide guidance to help students plot their next learning steps. This also held true for the feedback provided by teachers in students’ notebooks. Reviewers found that teachers’ comments were generic, and did not consistently outline the precise actions students needed to take to reach goals or higher academic levels. Discussions with students confirmed that this practice was a common trend across different grades and content areas.
- Although there are protocols for teachers to discuss student data during team planning meetings, a review of lesson plans and as well as classroom visits demonstrated that teachers minimally use data to guide and implement instruction based on addressing students’ specific and evolving learning needs. The lack of differentiation and student choice observed in instruction resulted in decreased student engagement as well as some unmet student need.

**Recommendations:**

- The school leader should work with teachers to develop a common approach for teachers’ to use data to plan and implement instruction. The school leaders should monitor teachers’ lessons to ensure they use student progress data to meet individual students’ needs, make provision for formative assessment, incorporate high-level questioning, and deliver quality feedback so that students are aware of the progress they are making as well as what they need to do to achieve at a higher level.

**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**

**D**

The school has received a rating of **Developing** for Tenet 5 – Student Social and Emotional Developmental Health.

- Although the school staff has some structures in place to provide some supports to students such as Academic Intervention Services (AIS) and counseling, the school staff lacks a fully developed system to identify and respond to the social and emotional developmental health needs of all students. The school leader reported that staff recently established an analytical on-line survey system to identify social and emotional developmental health needs for all students in the lower grades, and that the student support team (SST) identifies student needs and provides additional support by counselling and referral. The school leader shared that, the school started using Primary Project last year, to assess all children from grades kindergarten to three to determine if they might require social emotional developmental health support and subsequently provided support to Tier 2 – 4 students. The students interviewed by the IIT, reported that they are well known by several staff, including SST members, school leaders, teachers, and the school nurse and felt confident going to staff if they had a problem. The SST members reported that they have a referral system for students needing social emotional developmental health support to ensure that identified students have access to a range of resources.

However, the review team found limited evidence of staff using data to identify, monitor, and address all students' need.

- The school staff used the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) to develop school-wide expectations for behavior and social emotional developmental health. However, reviewers found limited evidence of how the staff monitors the program to ensure that the activities are addressing the needs of all students. Since the start of the school year the school staff has implemented a school-wide system called the PAX good behavior game to promote classroom management and development of positive social skills, which is beginning to have a positive impact. All staff, including recently hired teachers, has received PD in the PAX good behavior game. The IIT found evidence that the curricula and programs PBIS and PAX are used throughout the building and fully supported by staff, students, and parents. While the system is being widely used, and referral data year to date shows some reduction in referrals in the same month as last year, students and parents shared that some bullying still persists and that some students behavior disrupts instruction.
- There is a school plan to collect data on behavioral and academic needs to respond to students social and emotional developmental health needs. The school recently implemented a screening process that identifies student social emotional and academic needs and where appropriate, the school shares data with stakeholders. The SST meets weekly to discuss individual student needs and share data with appropriate providers, including counselors, clinicians and outside agencies. However, it is too early to assess the impact that this plan is having on improving student behavior and academic success. When interviewed by the IIT, members of the staff shared that this year they have begun to enter data into an electronic Educator handbook to analyze, track, and use data relating to behavior. The review team found minimal evidence to show that staff is collecting and tracking academic data, consistently.

**Recommendations:**

- School leaders should review the processes for monitoring student social data to ensure that all staff members use data effectively to help identify students who may be experiencing or are vulnerable to social and emotional concerns. Additionally, incorporate academic data into the processes so that leaders and teachers have a holistic view of student need and all staff is equipped with the necessary skills to make effective use of the data to address the academic, social, and emotional needs of all students.

**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**

**D**

The school has received a rating of **Developing** for Tenet 6 – Family and Community Engagement.

- The school does not sufficiently communicate its expectations for student success to all students and families, which limits parents in their ability to help their children to achieve at higher levels. Parents interviewed by the IIT reported that the school regularly shares academic data with parents; however, most parents expressed that they did not understand all information sent home. Teachers reported that they send progress sheets home weekly; however, a review of documents demonstrated that the sheets do not provide specific information to help parents support their children’s learning, especially

for tier 3 and 4 students. At quarterly family nights, teachers provide parents with information about the curriculum but during discussions with the IIT, some parents expressed that the forums do not provide detailed information on what parents can do to address their children's specific needs. In addition, because the school does not set individual goals for students, parents are not aware of the school's expectations for their child's academic success.

- The school provides some opportunities, including school social events, information meetings and opportunities for one to one consultation meetings, to involve staff and families. The school leader reported that generally, school meetings and functions are well attended by parents but acknowledged that staff members have had limited success in engaging parents of tier 3 and 4 students. The initiatives to involve teachers in parent organizations and parents on school committees are too recent to assess their impact on increasing staff and families' understanding about student needs.
- While the school provides some information for families in a variety of media forms, it is not accessible to all families. During discussions with the review team, some parents shared that families with no internet capacity have limited opportunities to access the information provided via the web and electronic formats.
- The school is providing some training to families but during discussions with the IIT parents expressed that the training is not sufficient to enable them to support their children fully. Although the school has scheduled literacy nights and sent home written communication about academic focus areas, parents report those opportunities don't fully meet their needs in terms of fully understanding what is being taught or how well their children are doing. Parents shared that they needed more opportunities to meet regularly with teachers to discuss strategies for helping students with coursework, especially in CCLS math.

**Recommendations:**

- The school leader should collaborate with students, parents, and teachers to develop a plan for families and staff to share a commitment to high academic achievement. This plan should include trainings to increase staff and parents' knowledge and skills to forge strong and sustainable partnerships that support students' chances of academic success. Staff should monitor students' progress, regularly and share outcomes with families in easily understood formats to encourage parents' engagement in their child's learning.