



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

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)



BEDS Code	091402060007
School Name	Saranac Middle School
School Address	70 Picketts Corners Road, Saranac, NY 12981
District Name	Saranac Central School District
School Leader	Katie McNeil
Dates of Review	June 3 - 4, 2014
School Accountability Status	Focus School
Type of Review	SED Integrated Intervention Team (IIT)

School Information Sheet													
Grade Configuration	6.7	Total Enrollment	329	SIG Recipient	Yes	Title 1 Population	38.6%	Attendance Rate	93.3 %				
Free Lunch	31%	Reduced Lunch	7 %			Limited English Proficient	0%	Students with Disabilities	21%				
Number of English Language Learner Classes													
#Transitional Bilingual	0		#Dual Language		0								
Number of Special Education Classes													
#Self-Contained	2		#Consultant Teaching		0		#Integrated Collaborative Teaching		15				
#Resource Room													
Number of Special Classes													
#Visual Arts	17	#Music	16	#Drama	0		#Foreign Language	18	#Dance	0	#CTE	10	
Racial/Ethnic Origin													
American Indian or Alaska Native	%	Black or African American	1%	Hispanic or Latino	≥1%		Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	≥1%		White	98%	Multi-racial	0%
Personnel													
Years Principal Assigned to School	1		# of Assistant Principals		1		# of Deans		0		# of Counselors / Social Workers		3
Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate	0%		Teaching Out of Certification		0%		Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Yrs. of Exp.		3%		Average Teacher Absences		3.7%
Credit Accumulation (High School Only) and Performance Rates													
% of 1 st yr. students who earned 10+ credits			% of 2 nd yr. students who earned 10+ credits				% of 3 rd yr. students who earned 10+ credits				4 Year Graduation Rate		
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4			Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4				Science Performance at levels 3 & 4				6 Year Graduation Rate		

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
	Economically Disadvantaged		All Students
Did Not Meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Mathematics			
	American Indian or Alaska Native		Black or African American
	Hispanic or Latino		Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander
X	White		Multi-racial
X	Students with Disabilities		Limited English Proficient
	Economically Disadvantaged		All Students
Did Not Meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Science			
	American Indian or Alaska Native		Black or African American
	Hispanic or Latino		Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander
	White		Multi-racial
	Students with Disabilities		Limited English Proficient
	Economically Disadvantaged		All Students
Did Not Meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for Effective Annual Measurable Achievement Objective			
	Limited English Proficiency		

SCHOOL PRIORITIES AS DESCRIBED BY THE SCHOOL:

1. Understand, implement, and follow all RTTT initiatives

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:				D	

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:				D	

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:				D	

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:				D	

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			X	

	achievement.				
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:			D	

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	D
---	---------------------	----------

Debriefing Statement: The school had no specific school vision or mission at the time of the review, but had adopted the district policy, as well as school specific goals developed by the newly revived school decision-making committee. The new leader, strongly supported by district staff, has implemented new systems and initiatives, resulting in school improvement in some areas. However, the systems and initiatives are not yet embedded and no concrete evidence of sustained improvement was available. The school leader has made some strategic use of resources to bring about a degree of school improvement. The school leader frequently observes lessons, formally and informally, and provides feedback to teachers. Although, this process has led to some modifications in instructional practices, teaching and learning has not improved enough to secure higher student achievement.

Strengths:

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

Overall Finding:

The recently appointed school leader has made some strategic use of resources to bring about a degree of school improvement and increased opportunities.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- The draft School Comprehensive Educational Plan (SCEP) outlined a proposal to explore modification of the master schedule to allocate a minimum of one planning period for each grade to review vertical and horizontal alignment of the curriculum. The school leader stated that this proposal was due to be operational in the following academic year.
- The school leader arranged to use half of the scheduled lunch period to offer additional academic support for students. Stakeholders spoke positively about the wide range of post-school activities, which the school leader had organized for two days each week. These well-attended offerings included a homework club and several recreational activities aimed at students not participating in sports or music activities.
- Strategic decisions made by the school leader include the phase out of one assessment tool and the adoption of a tool better aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), and reallocation of a supplies budget for the purchase of books for English language arts (ELA). The school leader also developed a plan to provide common planning time for the first time in 2014-15 for all special education and core teachers.

Impact Statement:

The school leader achieved many of these initiatives in a short time, which resulted in increased opportunities for student success both during and after the school day.

Areas for Improvement:

2.2 **The school has received a rating of *Developing* 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 the long-term vision inclusive of core values that address the priorities outlined in the School Comprehensive Educational Plan (SCEP).

Overall Finding:

The school had no specific middle school vision or mission, but adopted the district policy and school specific goals developed by the newly revived school decision-making committee. The new school leader, with the support of district staff, has implemented initiatives that have resulted in some school improvement; however, there was no concrete evidence of sustained improvement at the time of the review.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- From an examination of documentation and interviews with staff, it was clear that the previous school leader and district officials wrote the school self-assessment document and the SCEP. The school self-assessment was largely descriptive, not evaluative, and did not identify priorities.
- The new school leader ensured that the school decision-making committee developed school goals under the umbrella of the district vision, and based on student needs as identified in a Tripod survey. This process ensured school community involvement that included school leaders, staff, families, and students.
- The district identified four goals that included the improvement in the areas of technology, facilities, student safety, and raising achievement in mathematics and communication skills. There was evidence that the school was beginning to adapt district goals to make them school specific. The school was also in the early stages of implementing its goals through a variety of strategies. All stakeholders spoke positively about the impact the new school leader has had in changing school structures and culture in a short time period, but recognized the need for improvements to become embedded.

Impact Statement:

The school has begun to make progress toward reaching its newly established goals and bringing about some school improvement; however, school leaders must ensure sustained progress toward improvement goals.

Recommendation:

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

- Pursue with rigor all of the schools proposed priorities and closely monitor their impact to ensure that they result in sustained progress.

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:

School leaders frequently observe lessons and provide feedback to teachers. This process is leading to some modifications in instructional practices, but there is still a need for teaching and learning to improve further to ensure higher student achievement.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- Interviews with school leaders, teachers, student support staff, and students and an examination of the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) documentation revealed that the school is implementing the district's APPR policy. School leaders frequently observe lessons, both formally and informally, and provide feedback to teachers. This process is leading to some modifications in instructional practices, but there is still a need for further improvements in teaching and learning to ensure increased student achievement.
- Most teachers reported that they found the APPR process time consuming and unproductive; however, some teachers reported that post-observation feedback was useful and focused on areas of strengths and areas for growth, and included recommendations on how to improve planning and professional practices. However, many teachers, especially those teaching classes including students with special educational needs, stated that feedback did not necessarily lead them to change their instructional practices.
- An observation of lesson plans revealed that many were CCLS-aligned. However, in many lessons observed during classroom visitations, reviewers found that teachers had not implemented the feedback from lesson observations and some of their instructional practices remained unchanged. Additionally, there was inconsistent evidence of the CCLS instructional shifts in lessons observed, even though much of the lesson planning examined was CCLS-aligned.

Impact Statement:

Some teachers' instructional practices have improved because of APPR; however, many teachers are not delivering CCLS-aligned lessons. Consequently, higher student achievement is not ensured.

Recommendation:

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

- Continue to monitor instructional practices using a tool that focuses on the CCLS shifts to highlight

required instructional changes.

2.5 The school has received a rating of *Developing* 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:

The school leader has recently established a variety of data systems and started to use this data to make decisions to move the school forward. These systems are not embedded, however, and consequently not yet fully effective.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- At the start of the 2013-14 school year, there were no coordinated systems in place for handling school data. However, the new school leader introduced a number of initiatives, such as a Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program and systems for tracking student progress and achievement. Informal and formal visitations conducted by the school leader provide additional school information.
- Stakeholders commented that the newly introduced web-based student information system, "SchoolTool", was proving to be an effective tool for accessing a wide range of student data. This includes attendance, disciplinary and academic information. As part of the school leader's lobby revitalization initiative, the school set up a computer stand where students can regularly check their grades upon their arrival in the morning. The school decision-making committee and school based inquiry team have started to review school data on a regular basis. The school decision-making committee also revised the student handbook and disseminated the results of the Tripod survey. Some systems for monitoring the quality of instruction and curriculum implementation are in place.
- All systems are not fully embedded, and are consequently not yet having full potential impact.

Impact Statement:

The newly implemented systems and practices are beginning to yield information that can be used to form a picture about what is happening in the school. However, the systems are at an early stage of development and just beginning to inform decisions that can be used to move the school forward.

Recommendation:

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

- Continue to implement and monitor the recently established systems to ensure that they are providing an accurate and easily accessible database that facilitates school 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	D
--	---------------------	----------

Debriefing Statement: The school leader ensures implementation of the CCLS in unit and lesson planning, but this is not consistently reflected in classroom practices. Some teachers plan effective lessons that include data-driven instruction (DDI) aligned to the CCLS and incorporate student needs. However, the implementation of this work is inconsistently evident in classrooms. Although, there are several examples of teachers collaborating on interdisciplinary lessons, there is no whole school plan to drive this interdisciplinary work. Teachers use assessments to guide and inform curriculum planning, but there is limited evidence of feedback on student work to ensure ownership and improvement of student achievement.

Strengths:

All ratings for this Tenet are **Developing** 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 school leader monitors unit and lesson planning for CCLS implementation, but this does not always translate into effective classroom practices.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- A review of documents showed that the school’s curriculum was CCLS-aligned and that professional development (PD) on the CCLS had been provided to ELA, mathematics, and special education teachers. In addition, some staff members were attending PD on college and career readiness. The school leader has established and worked with a school based inquiry team to support the use of DDI. Data is being used to drive Academic Intervention Services (AIS) instruction in the classroom. AIS teachers effectively use the universal screening, progress monitoring, and data management system, “AIMSweb,” to support instruction.
- At the time of the review, all ELA, mathematics, and some special education teachers had received PD on the common core aligned ELA and mathematics modules. A PD survey was administered and the results were analyzed to identify future PD needs. The 2014-15 PD plan was based on the analysis of this survey and focused on effective instructional practices linked to the CCLS.
- However, classroom visitations showed that the support mechanisms and provided training are not leading to the consistent implementation of CCLS across all grades and subjects. Procedures to

monitor the transfer of planning to classroom delivery are not rigorous enough and this results in a curriculum that is not always tailored to the needs of all students.

Impact Statement:

The school has a systematic plan for ensuring that the curricula are aligned to the CCLS and staff is appropriately prepared to deliver the curricula. However, this plan is not fully embedded and implemented, and therefore does not yet meet the needs of students leading to college and career readiness.

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 school leaders rigorously monitor classroom practices to ensure that curriculum planning consistently translates into instructional practices that meet the needs of all students.

3.3 **The school has received a rating of *Developing* 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 New York State (NYS) content standards and address student achievement needs.

Overall Finding:

Some teachers plan effective CLS-aligned lessons that include DDI and incorporate student needs. However, the implementation of this work is inconsistent.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- The review team examined documentation that showed CCLS-aligned curricula incorporating DDI was being used in planning. For example, during document review, the review team evaluated a binder containing a grade six ELA curriculum map, a Common Core mathematics curriculum map from EngageNY, and CCLS reading standards for literature listed in lesson plans. Additionally, the review team examined an interim assessment, an analysis of student work, and a teacher's action plan that addressed areas in need of improvement in mathematics.
- However, the implementation of this work was not consistently evident in classrooms visited during the review and consequently, did not fully impact on student learning. Most lessons observed were not tailored to meet the needs of individuals or subgroups of students and did not consistently use complex materials and higher-order questioning. There was limited evidence that teachers consistently used formative and summative assessments, student work, or rubrics to plan and evaluate how well students were progressing, and then adjusted curriculum planning using this information.

Impact Statement:

Most lessons are not tailored to student needs, and students have limited opportunities to build deep conceptual understanding and knowledge through higher-order questioning. As a result, not all students achieve their full potential.

Recommendation:

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

- Monitor and ensure that the planned curricula and intended lesson outcomes are consistently implemented in the classroom.

3.4 **The school has received a rating of *Developing* 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:

Although there are several examples of teachers collaborating on interdisciplinary lessons, there is no overall school plan to drive this interdisciplinary work.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- There is no common planning time devoted specifically to interdisciplinary work and no whole school plan to promote cross-curricular collaboration between teachers. In the vertical teachers' interview, it was stated that all planning time was related to the CCLS.
- There are, however, numerous examples of teachers collaborating with colleagues to create interdisciplinary lessons. A science teacher spoke about collaborating with ELA teachers and including supportive writing in science topics. A music teacher mentioned music and drama collaboration, and a physical education teacher described incorporating some science topics into classes. Other teachers spoke of the cross-curricular benefit of many school trips.
- Reviewers found limited evidence of teachers using technology to support instruction and student learning during class visitations.

Impact Statement:

The lack of a whole school plan to promote interdisciplinary instruction, results in a fragmentary and piecemeal approach to learning. Students are offered few opportunities to engage in thoughtful cross-curricular activities. As a result, their ability to be academically successful is impeded.

Recommendation:

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

- Develop a comprehensive plan to drive cross-curricular initiatives and the use of technology in a coordinated way.

3.5 **The school has received a rating of *Developing* 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:

Teachers use some assessments to guide and inform curriculum planning. However, there is limited evidence of feedback on student work to ensure ownership and improvements in achievement.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- Multiple documents showed that teachers have access to a considerable amount of test and assessment data. School leaders encourage and expect the use of assessments to guide and inform curriculum planning. For example, reviewers examined a mathematics assessment that listed the standard being assessed and showed an analysis of student work that identified areas needing further effort. Reviewers also found evidence of meetings held to analyze and discuss data. However, classroom visits revealed that teachers do not uniformly use the planning documentation to drive instructional practices or make curriculum adjustments.
- In nearly all lessons visited during the review, reviewers found that there was limited oral feedback given to students. Students commented that teachers wrote very few comments and gave few steps showing a pathway for progress on their written work. Very few useful written comments were seen on students' folders during a review of written work. Additionally, only a limited number of rubrics were seen in use during lessons.

Impact Statement:

A lack of consistent alignment between the curriculum and assessments impedes student achievement.

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 all teachers consistently use a range of assessments to drive instruction and to make curriculum adjustments when needed; provide students with the oral and written feedback they need to ensure ownership of learning and improve achievement.

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

D

Debriefing Statement: The school leader promotes the school-wide expectation that teachers should inform their lesson planning and instructional practices with data. Teachers inconsistently meet this expectation, and therefore, do not always address student needs. Many teachers do not consistently provide engaging, CCLS-aligned lessons that incorporate higher-order questions and contain high levels of text and content complexity. The learning environment is not always intellectually safe and responsive to student experiences and needs. Teachers do not consistently use data and assessments to inform and adjust their instructional strategies. Consequently, the use of data and assessments to provide oral and written feedback to help students increase

achievement is inconsistent.

Strengths:

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

Areas for Improvement:

4.2 **The school has received a rating of *Developing* 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:

The school leader expects teachers to inform their lesson plans and instructional practices with data; however, teachers inconsistently meet this expectation. Consequently, teachers do not always address all student needs.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- School leaders provide opportunities for teachers to have regularly scheduled opportunities to plan and organize instructional practices and strategies to address all student goals and needs. Reviewer observations of classes, however, showed that most teaching was primarily whole-class instruction with limited opportunities for collaborative group work. In many classes, all students worked on the same tasks, and differentiation was achieved only by outcome. Reviewers also found a lack of consistency in the approach to student goal setting where all students set specific academic goals to which they are expected to aspire.
- However, reviewers observed some good examples of DDI resulting in scaffolding, collaborative group work, and differentiation. For example, in a grade seven mathematics class, the teacher used previous student performance on surface area to drive the current day's review. In addition, the teacher used mini-white boards for immediate student feedback and assessment that helped identify student understanding of the assigned problems. Furthermore, the teacher used this information to form clarifying questions on the topic and students were then grouped to complete the assigned problems. However, this practice was not replicated in a sufficient number of classrooms to guarantee consistent student progress.

Impact Statement:

Most instructional planning has begun to include elements of the CCLS, but an inconsistent use of data-driven differentiated instruction reduces the ability of some students to attain high levels of achievement.

Recommendation:

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

- Provide PD opportunities that include follow-up coaching to enable all teachers to implement data-driven differentiated instruction and set subject specific goals that ensure sustained school

improvement and high student achievement.

4.3 **The school has received a rating of *Developing* 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:

Many teachers do not consistently provide engaging CCLS-aligned lessons that incorporate higher-order questions and contain high levels of text and content complexity.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- Higher-order questioning and inquiry were evident in a minority of classes visited. Reviewers found that many of the examples of good practice were observed in AIS classrooms or during co-taught lessons including students with disabilities. In the majority of lessons, however, teachers generally focused their questioning on basic comprehension and factual recall, and did little to extend students' thinking skills.
- Teachers used explicit instructional practices aligned to the CCLS instructional shifts in about two-fifths of classes visited during the review. In these lessons, teachers provided students with opportunities to read and analyze challenging texts. Some examples of good instructional practices included the use of probing questions on a complex text on the Holocaust in an AIS lesson, and some creative collaborative work on a challenging task in a mathematics class. However, in a number of other classes the instructional materials offered low levels of text and content complexity.

Impact Statement:

A minority of students have opportunities to experience lessons that provide rigor and require them to respond to higher-order questions and work with complex texts.

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 all teachers have good quality support, monitoring, and feedback to ensure engaging CCLS-aligned lessons across all content areas and grades that include the use of higher-order thinking skills and challenging instructional 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:

The learning environment is not always intellectually safe and responsive to students' experiences and needs.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- When interviewed by the review team, stakeholders stated that behavioral expectations were based on the school-wide PBIS system that stipulated expected student behavior both in and out of the classroom. Assemblies, class projects, PBIS posters, and student-produced displays focus on school expectations. Although, PBIS posters were well displayed, reviewers found that not all staff supported PBIS, which resulted in an inconsistent distribution of PBIS tickets to students for good behavior.
- Behavior observed in all classes and around the school was consistently safe, but students, parents, and teachers interviewed all stated that many lessons, especially in grade seven, were disrupted by the poor behavior of a significant number of students. Several students also stated that they did not feel comfortable asking or answering questions in some lessons because of negative comments from either the teacher or fellow students.
- Parents indicated that occasionally there was some low-level bullying, but that the school dealt speedily and efficiently with any problems. When interviewed by the review team, students in the large student group said they often preferred to support a fellow student individually, rather than refer a bullying issue to an adult.

Impact Statement:

The learning environment is not always intellectually and physically safe which reduces learning opportunities for students and hinders academic achievement.

Recommendation:

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

- Devise strategies to improve the attitude and behavior of disruptive students; create an intellectually safe learning environment in all classrooms.

4.5 **The school has received a rating of *Developing* 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:

Teachers did not generally use data and assessments to inform and adjust their instructional strategies during classroom visitations by the team.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- During lessons, the review team rarely saw teachers use data and assessments to provide students with oral and written feedback. The use of progress monitoring and interim assessments was also inconsistent. Discussions with students showed that teachers were inconsistent in the quality of feedback that they provided for students. This was confirmed in analyses of student work where feedback was often directed toward effort, rather than a systematic and diagnostic approach to

highlighting the areas that were in need of improvement and the steps necessary to address the identified weaknesses.

- Reviewers found very few lessons in which teachers used data and assessments to inform and adjust their instructional strategies or group students in very few lessons. Similarly, very few teachers used the outcomes of assessments to determine the intensity and time allocated to future lessons. Teachers also did not routinely adjust instruction if assessments showed mastery, or gaps in student learning or conceptual understanding.

Impact Statement:

The failure to use an analysis of assessment data to help inform instructional practices and planning hinders targeted differentiation. Consequently, the needs of all students are not met, and any gaps in their achievement are not addressed.

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 provide frequent and appropriate feedback to students based on the analysis of data acquired during lessons and from written assignments; help students use the feedback to reflect upon and judge their own progress.

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

Debriefing Statement: The school leader has introduced new systems and revitalized existing ones to support students' social and emotional developmental health. Opportunities for the school community to create and contribute to a safe and responsive environment conducive to learning are being established. However, program development and implementation is inconsistent and not linked to a cohesive vision. Some systems exist to collect, analyze, and use data to identify student needs, but are inconsistently applied across the school community. As a result, the school environment does not fully support the social and emotional developmental health needs of all students.

Strengths:

All ratings for this Tenet are **Developing** 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 leader has established or revitalized systems to support students' social and emotional developmental health and academic success. Although research based programs and practices that are currently in place promote improvement, they are not fully embedded and have yet to secure and sustain success in student outcomes.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- The school leader reported that not all teachers accept the recently introduced PBIS program and therefore, it is not fully successful. Nevertheless, all students have at least one daily point of contact, and reported having someone to go to when they experience a problem at school or at home, such as a guidance counselor or teacher. Parents and student support staff also confirmed that all students are known as individuals, but some support staff commented that they do not have a relationship with a large number of students because they have few opportunities to contribute in classrooms.
- Daily progress reports are compiled for a small group of students who need a higher level of support. The AIS program helps students who need additional support with learning, and other student support programs provide support to students, both with and without individualized educational plans, when required.
- A number of students who are underachieving are on an ineligibility list and required to spend part of their lunch break in a study hall under the supervision of a teacher. Some students who fail to make progress continue on this list for lengthy amounts of time. Some staff identified this practice as inappropriate in some cases, and the school leader is working on the problem with the school's shared decision-making committee to find a solution.

Impact Statement:

The systems in place are not having full impact, which results in some individuals or subgroups of students not achieving their full potential.

Recommendation:

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

- Fully implement school systems to support students' social and emotional health and closely monitor the impact on improving student achievement.

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 has a PBIS system in place to address student behavioral expectations; yet, students, teachers, and parents reported some instances of bullying. There is no classroom curriculum to teach social and emotional health. Student support staff and teachers are provided with little PD dedicated to helping them understand how best to meet students' social and emotional developmental health needs.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- The PBIS system is a district model and each school is expected to use the program and fit it to their needs. The school leader reported, however, that not all teachers follow the program and consequently it was not implemented consistently. For example, some teachers did not give out slips for good behavior.
- The school leader reported that staff development days are geared toward 21st century learning and the Common Core. Everyone receives the same PD, but occasionally staff members have the opportunity to seek out their own PD opportunities or organize in-house PD with counselors. However, staff confirmed that the amount of PD they received in the area of social and emotional developmental health is limited and that they collectively do not have the requisite skills to meet fully student needs. Student support staff reported that they do not frequently go into classrooms and, as a result, they are not well known to all students. One counselor said, "If we were in classes, say monthly, we would build more of a connection with students and they would seek us out."
- In interviews, parents, teachers, and students spoke about the problem of poor behavior in some classes, especially in grade seven. A group of special education teachers commented that they encountered, "real behavioral issues with every grade," and some teachers expressed the view that grade seven was generally a difficult group of students. On a more positive note, however, teachers felt that the new school leader was consistently supportive in helping them deal with these issues.

Impact Statement:

The lack of an overarching system to support student social and emotional developmental health needs, means that students needs are not always well met or understood. Learning experiences and staff expectations do not always ensure good student behavior. Additionally, the poor behavior of some students during some lessons is not consistently addressed, which has a negative impact on student achievement.

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 the student support staff have more contact with students in the classroom to help them establish closer relationships with a broader range of students.
- Ensure that a program to teach and support social and emotional developmental health is implemented, and that all staff are provided with PD to enable them to acquire the skills to teach the program and meet the needs of students.

5.4 **The school has received a rating of *Developing* 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 of a sense of ownership for providing social and emotional developmental health supports tied to the school's vision.

Overall Finding:

Opportunities for the school community to create and contribute to a safe and responsive environment conducive to learning are not fully established. Program development and implementation are inconsistently applied, and are not tied to a cohesive vision for student social and emotional developmental health.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- The school leader reported that the school was in the process of developing a protocol for assemblies through the school decision-making committee, which is a representative body comprising parent volunteers, school leaders, teachers, and the school nurse. This protocol is based on student need as identified in the Tripod survey conducted at the beginning of the school year.
- Scheduled meetings for different groups of teachers to discuss student needs are held with varying frequencies ranging from three times a week to a few times a month. Support staff do not regularly attend, but school leaders reported firm plans to include them next year. Discussions with school leaders, staff, and students revealed that there is no school vision in place that clearly outlines the school's commitment or expectations in meeting the social and emotional needs of all students. Therefore, stakeholders are uncertain as to the role they should play in helping to create a safe and secure learning environment for all students and adults.

Impact Statement:

Not all school stakeholders are able to describe how the school community is a safe learning environment or how they can support and meet students' social and emotional developmental health needs.

Recommendation:

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

- Develop a cohesive vision for students' social and emotional developmental health needs and ensure that school programs are closely linked to it.

5.5 **The school has received a rating of *Developing* 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:

Some systems exist to collect, analyze, and use data to identify student social and emotional developmental health needs. However, data use and analysis across the school community is inconsistently applied.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- The school shared decision-making committee revised the student handbook, disseminated the Tripod survey, and monitored the ineligible list identifying students failing two or more courses who were assigned to a structured study hall supervised by a teacher. However, it was unclear if students who were trying their best to achieve, but still failing, were taken off the list.
- The school leader commented that the school based inquiry team, the Response To Intervention (RtI) team, the shared decision-making committee, and other groups were up and running, with students able to log on to "SchoolTool" to check their grades and social-emotional developmental health data, such as absences and tardiness information. Additionally, the school had recently provided training to parents on use of the parent portal. The school generally uses attendance and disciplinary data for meetings with parents and student support staff to enable them to decide on suitable behavioral plans and Persons in Need of Supervision programs.
- Discussions with school leaders and staff revealed, however, that these initiatives are in the early stages of development, and are not fully functional. School leaders conceded that they are not making the best use of data to identify and meet the social and emotional needs of all students.

Impact Statement:

New systems and structures and the use of data to inform support for students' social and emotional developmental health are at the early stages of development and inconsistently applied. As a result, not all students have opportunities to become academically and socially successful.

Recommendation:

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

- Develop a plan to ensure that data and information about students' social and emotional health needs are consistently applied school-wide to identify and address the 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

Debriefing Statement: Most staff members are knowledgeable about the expectations for student achievement. However, these expectations are not always made clear to parents, nor are the mechanisms by which staff assist parents to help their children. There is evidence of some school collaboration with families and community agencies to promote and provide training across all areas to support student success, but this is still evolving. The sharing of data is developing in a way that allows stakeholders to understand both student and family needs and advocate for services that address those needs.

Strengths:

6.3 **The school has received a rating of *Effective* 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:

The school is providing multiple opportunities for reciprocal communication to increase staff and family understanding of student needs and provide further support for student achievement.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- The school uses multiple tools to communicate with families about student issues and concerns, and responds to family feedback. A large number of students benefit from AIS and the school sends AIS “contracts” to families at the beginning of the school year for a parent signature. These contracts alert families to their child’s needs and expectations for participation in the AIS program.
- Grade level newsletters containing information about cross-curricular topics studied across the grade level are periodically sent home to parents so that they can support their child's learning. Additionally, parents receive emails from the school leaders, teachers, and support staff highlighting successes and areas for improvement. Other effective tools, which encourage communication between the school and families, are surveys that are administered and used to identify issues and concerns.

Impact Statement:

Because of the developing strong partnership between home and school, and the increased communication exchanged, a substantial number of families are better able to support their child’s academic achievement and social emotional growth.

6.5 **The school has received a rating of *Effective* 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:

Data is shared in a way that allows stakeholders to understand both student and family needs, and advocate for services that address those needs.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- The “SchoolTool” portal allows parents to access student data. Students, staff members, and parents have access to academic and behavioral data that can be used to support the achievement of students. This portal is an additional mechanism for directly contacting staff members to communicate questions and concerns. Additionally, there is a link to the parent portal on the

district website. Parents stated that the school provides guidance and support to enable them to analyze, interpret, and understand the data that is provided.

- The school shares New York State (NYS) assessment data, transitional data at grades five, six, eight, and nine, and other student specific data. Ineligible list data is shared with families and staff members weekly.
- The school emails student profile reports to families containing performance, and explanations of that performance, on the NYS grades three to eight assessments. Additionally, items such as free and reduced lunch applications and media release statements are made available to families to assist them with decision making.

Impact Statement:

The school community has empowered families to take action to support their children’s learning, which has increased the opportunities that lead to higher student achievement.

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:

There is evidence that the school leader has communicated the school’s high expectations to students and families and has strived to equip parents to help students reach those expectations. However, these expectations are not always clear to parents, nor are the mechanisms apparent, by which parents can help their children.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- The middle school website links parents to behavioral expectations within the PBIS matrix and academic expectations are shared with families in the Code of Conduct handbook. Additionally, mailings to incoming students share pertinent information about middle school expectations. Furthermore, newsletters from the school communicate a wide range of information to parents on assessments and upcoming school and community events.
- In spite of the school's attempts to communicate with parents using the described tools, when interviewed by the review team, parents stated that they were not always clear about expectations and did not always know how to support their children, especially in mathematics. Parents suggested that they would value the opportunity to be better equipped to help their children and suggested that teachers post work and homework assignments on the school website and share access to Webinar tutorials on “how to” complete various tasks with them. Parents also stated that they would welcome the opportunity to make suggestions on how relationships between school and home could be further strengthened.

Impact Statement:

Parents do not fully understand the school's expectations and feel unable to support fully their children. This hinders students in achieving the academic success required to become 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:

- Urge teachers to communicate directly with parents and students by posting upcoming tasks and homework assignments on the school website, so that parents can more easily understand school expectations and support their children more effectively.
- Gather parental opinion on how relationships between school and home could be improved.

6.4 **The school has received a rating of *Developing* 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:

There is evidence of some school collaboration with families and community agencies to promote and provide training across all areas to support student success, but it is still in the early stages of development.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- The school leader is in the process of developing a plan to teach parents ways to support student learning and growth. The school has held parent forums on topics such as technology that included a session on how to navigate through the "SchoolTool" portal to access student data. An autism awareness night presented parents with strategies for working with students who have this disability, although attendance was limited.
- The school leader has identified the need for further development in the area of PD for school staff on how to improve partnerships with families and the community, but this had not been implemented at the time of the review.
- Training also took the form of provision of resources to parents and families, such as the provision of links to resources from EngageNY, but it is unclear how many parents took advantage of this.
- Additionally, some parents were given strategies to access the county's Department of Social Services for additional counseling and support. This instruction is in the form of face-to-face conversations or caseworkers visiting the home at the school's request. However, this did not have an impact on a significant number of families.

Impact Statement:

A significant proportion of students are not benefitting from a focused connection between home and school.

Recommendation:

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

- Develop and implement a plan that ensures that staff members benefit from PD on building partnerships with parents; and that parents are provided with workshops and guidance on how to support their child's learning.