



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

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)



BEDS Code	6623000110055
School Name	Yonkers Middle School
School Address	150, Rockland Avenue, Yonkers, NY 10705
District Name	Yonkers City School District
School Leader	Jane Wermuth
Dates of Review	December 3 - 5, 2013
School Accountability Status	Focus School
Type of Review	SED Integrated Intervention Team (IIT)

School Information Sheet											
Grade Configuration	7 - 8	Total Enrollment	570	SIG Recipient		Title 1 Population	89.47 %	Attendance Rate	97.3%		
Free Lunch	84.4 %	Reduced Lunch	5.4%	Student Sustainability	%	Limited English Proficient	10 %	Students with Disabilities	21.9 %		
Number of English Language Learner Classes											
#Transitional Bilingual	0	#Dual Language	0	#Self-Contained English as a Second Language			0				
Number of Special Education Classes											
#Special Classes	7	#Consultant Teaching		#Integrated Collaborative Teaching							
# Resource Room	2										
Number Special Classes											
#Visual Arts	3	#Music	0	#Drama	0	#Foreign Language	2	#Dance		#CTE	
Racial/Ethnic Origin											
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.6%	Black or African American	20.5 %	Hispanic or Latino	60.1 %	Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	6.2 %	White	12.3 %	Multi-racial	0.2 %
Personnel											
Years Principal Assigned to School	4 yrs.	# of Assistant Principals	2	# of Deans	0	# of Counselors / Social Workers		1			
Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate	None	Teaching Out of Certification	None	Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Yrs. of Exp.		2%	Average Teacher Absences		6%		
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		N/A		
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	N/A	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4	N/A	Science Performance at levels 3 & 4		N/A	6 Year Graduation Rate		N/A		

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

Describe the school's top priorities (no more than 5) based on the school's comprehensive plans (SCEP, SIG, DCIP, etc.):

SCHOOL PRIORITIES AS DESCRIBED BY THE SCHOOL:

1. Lower student-teacher ratios and increase support staff.
2. Increase venues for teacher collaboration and planning.
3. Increase access to diagnostic instruments to support individual needs.
4. Create an environment where students are held to high behavioral and academic expectations.
5. Increase opportunities for parental involvement.

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.

Mark an "X" in the box below the appropriate designation for each tenet, and mark in the 'OVERALL RATING' row the final designation for the overall tenet.

#	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:			E		

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:			E		

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:			E		
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 strengths 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 Narrative

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	E
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Debriefing Statement: The new school vision, mission statement and Specific, Measurable, Ambitious, Results-orientated and Timely (SMART) goals were created collectively by school constituents and are well known throughout the entire school community. There are systems for school improvement, which are implemented across the school. The school uses human and fiscal resources effectively to promote student achievement and well-being. Data is now incorporated into many decision making processes. The vision and goals have a positive impact on students’ academic achievement and social and emotional well-being.

All ratings for this tenet are **Highly Effective** or **Effective** and therefore comments are listed under **Strengths**.

Strengths:

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

- The school leader stated to the review team that the school community shares the SMART goals/mission, as well as a long-term vision inclusive of core values that address the priorities outlined in the School Comprehensive Educational Plan (SCEP). There were opportunities for students to contribute to the formulation of the new school vision and SMART goals as stated by both teachers and students to the review team. The goals were on prominent display in classrooms and hallways and many students knew the vision and were able to explain its importance. The vision and goals are also stated in the SCEP and in documentation sent to parents and on the school website. The vision and goals communicate the culture of the school to the school community and articulate the school’s commitment to high achievement. As reported by the school leader and teachers, and as observed in horizontal data meetings of teachers of core subjects in grades seven and eight, there is a strong school culture regarding data collection and teacher collaboration that enables the school to progress towards its long-term vision and goals. The SCEP outlines that the school leaders meet daily with instructional teams and administrators to review instructional decisions and make informed changes based on multiple forms of data, including Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs); student behavior plans; formative, diagnostic, and summative assessments; attendance; student classroom performance; and information learned in parent meetings. These meetings between the school leader and instructional teams were referred to by the school leader and also observed by the review team. Additionally, as reported by the school leader and supported by document review, other community stakeholders routinely monitor and evaluate the school’s progress toward the vision. This results in the school community being accountable for realizing the long-term vision and achieving the school’s SMART goals.

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.

- The school leader and teachers stated in interviews that there is close collaboration to develop systems for creating flexible programs and strategies, such as expanded learning time, that are focused on improving student learning and achievement. For example, the school benefits from intervention by the Nepperhan Community Center on academic and enrichment programs. An intern from Mercy College was observed enhancing instruction in grade seven math classes. Other activities include class visits to local museums and other places of interest. The school leaders have introduced a Peer Mentoring Program in which Yonkers High School students provide reading support to more than 70 middle school students. The school leader uses partnerships and fiscal funds creatively and strategically to recruit additional staff to meet the academic and social needs of students in extended learning time. Twenty-First Century funding provides students with several afterschool activities, including academic units of study with core area teachers, environmental investigations focused on the ecosystem of the Hudson River provided by Groundwork Hudson Valley and Westchester, and an internet workshop for students. The school leader stated that while the district makes staffing decisions subject to Gateway processes, the school interviews prospective candidates and provides feedback to the district. The school leader targets available funds towards the priorities identified in the SCEP and then the school evaluates the impact of those spending decisions on how much closer it brings the school to achieving its stated goals. As a result of the above initiatives, the immediate needs of the school community are met and students have more opportunities to achieve academic success.

2.4 The school has received a rating of *Effective* 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.

- Interviews with the school leader and administrators and a close examination of the SCEP and other written records indicate that school leaders adhere to a detailed plan to conduct teacher observations on a monthly basis. These observations are carried out systematically and walk-through observations are likewise conducted regularly. The observation schedules reveal the school leader and other identified staff conduct observations in a manner that conforms to the district's APPR plan. The feedback to teachers on the professional performance review forms is practical, based on evidence of classroom practices, and conforms to established and agreed criteria. The school leader stated that observations and subsequent feedback are leading to gradual improvements in instruction and student learning. Observations conducted by the review team confirmed these statements. Teachers stated in interviews that the school leaders keep the observation system under constant review and are open to suggestions and feedback from teachers. School leaders organize Professional Development (PD) based on the data gained from observation of individuals and groups of teachers. The written feedback to teachers includes the recommendation of specific PD needed based on observation, as well as other recommendations. This organized teacher evaluation plan and its systematic implementation result in staff members who are prepared to improve their instructional roles and school leaders who are aware of the

strengths and weaknesses in instructional practices. This system means that administrators and staff are held responsible for continuous improvement of instructional practices and their impact on student achievement.

2.5 The school has received a rating of *Effective* 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).

- The school leader stated to the review team that staff members use dynamic and flexible evidence-based systems to focus on improving individual and school-wide practices. The review team observed one of the daily monitoring meetings of the school leaders and attended the grade seven and grade eight data committee meeting, which occurs during the school day. The review team examined agendas and minutes of meetings and the evidence from these sources indicated that the school leader stresses and enforces the importance of a data-driven culture of shared accountability and responsibility. The guiding principles connected to the identified needs of the school include monitoring the progress of individual students and subgroups; developing student learning objectives that align to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS); creating and giving uniform assessments every quarter to track student progress and student achievement; and meeting daily in instructional teams to plan changes based on data. The IIT observed that school leaders monitor the data teams closely and manage the team agendas. The work of the data teams is flexible and responsive to arising needs or emergencies while the roles and responsibilities are monitored and revised and extended appropriately by the school leaders when necessary. The impact of the school’s interconnected monitoring systems enables school leaders and teachers to measure progress towards the school-wide goals as defined in the SCEP.

Areas of Improvement:

All ratings for this Tenet are either **Highly Effective** or **Effective** and therefore, comments are listed under **Strengths**.

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 there that there is a plan for all core subjects, which creates close collaboration among some teachers. This results in the use of action planning based on data to develop common approaches and values in the core subjects, but this does not fully encompass the instruction and learning of other subgroups, because teachers of ESL and students with disabilities are not currently involved in joint planning meetings. In addition, teachers are not consistent in providing specific targets or feedback to help students improve their work and to enable them to take greater ownership and responsibility for their own learning.

Strengths:

3.2 **The school has received a rating of *Effective* 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.

- From interviews with the school leader and teachers, observation of scheduled vertical and horizontal planning meetings, lesson observations in grades seven and eight, and the SCEP, it is clear the school leader ensures a plan with specific goals to address the needs of students. There is a PD program to support staff in implementing the CCLS curricula in core subjects. Teachers were observed planning how to adjust the curricula across math, ELA, science, and art to ensure common approaches and the development of higher-order thinking skills for students. Many lessons observed had a logical sequence of activities and use scaffolding to support learning. In both a grade seven and a grade eight classroom with students with disabilities, the planning and delivery were successful because work was challenging, engaging and matched closely to the needs of the students and led to accelerated student progress as evidenced in an evaluation of student work. The school leader and teachers stated in interviews that there is a systematic plan to provide pedagogical support materials and PD aligned to CCLS curricula and instructional shifts. Unit and lesson plans reviewed by the IIT made frequent reference to aligned material and teachers observed by the IIT also made these references in many lessons, especially in math, science, and ELA. The school leader and subject area leaders monitor to ensure that teachers use comprehensive and flexible curricula that include many units aligned to CCLS and NY standards across the curricula, including interventions and Academic Intervention Services (AIS). This results in the use of curricula that meets the needs of students and enables them to improve.

3.4 **The school has received a rating of *Effective* 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.

- The school leader and teachers have developed and implemented a plan to expose students to interdisciplinary curricula that targets especially the arts. Teachers collaborate daily in horizontal and vertical groups to plan innovative, cross-curricular approaches involving the core subject areas and art. From the agenda and minutes of grade and subject area meetings, it was evident that there is an ongoing and established process of collaboration to evaluate and modify cross-curricular initiatives. Animated discussions were observed in meetings where teachers checked that they had a common understanding of how and why they were advocating specific instructional practices to enhance an interdisciplinary curricula approach to learning. In a grade seven planning meeting, it was agreed that the art curricula would complement a science experiment by expressing it visually. Social studies teachers embed metaphorical drawings into their curriculum to clarify complex concepts. In one grade seven lesson students were observed drawing their own metaphorical drawings. There was, however, less evidence of involving technology in cross-curricular initiatives.

Staff has created afterschool programs that include academic and enrichment activities in the arts, technology, and sport and leisure. In general, because of the cross-curricular planning initiatives in the school in both grades seven and eight, students have opportunities to engage in multidisciplinary activities that challenge them, help them consolidate key skills, and enhance the quality of their learning experiences.

Areas for Improvement:

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 NYS content standards and address student achievement needs.

- The review team observed that teachers collaborate to develop unit and lesson plans that include data-driven instruction (DDI) protocols to meet the demands of CCLS, but this planning is not always consistent. Time during the school day is scheduled for core teachers to meet in horizontal teacher groups to plan collaboratively. The IIT observed two of these groups, in which core teachers and art teachers were involved in developing lesson plans that conformed to CCLS standards and requirements. The atmosphere in the groups was positive and led to some innovative collaboration. Teachers of students with disabilities and teachers of English language learners (ELLs) hold their own meetings to share data and ideas but these are not scheduled during the school day and opportunities are not provided to collaborate with core area teachers. This reduces the potential to develop school-wide common practices for targeted subgroups and prevents instruction for these students from being more effective. From lesson observations, it is clear that some teachers in grades seven and eight plan their lessons to include a logical progression and provide a variety of activities with appropriate scaffolding, such as word walls to consolidate specialized vocabulary and kinesthetic approaches for students needing more support. Some teachers use a range of text types, some of which are challenging; for example, in one grade eight class students with disabilities were able to access a text about the American government when provided with appropriate scaffolding. ELA teachers also employ scaffolding techniques by using supplementary material including online translation services. In some math classes, additional support was offered through peer mentoring. A number of lessons, however, were largely teacher-centered and offered little opportunity for students to work independently. Students in small and large group interviews stated that they did not understand the term CCLS or core curricula but they were clear that their teachers now regularly asked more demanding questions that made them think, which was corroborated by the observation of some lessons in ELA and math. Students also commented that the texts they read are challenging. In horizontal and vertical groups, teachers were sometimes observed monitoring and adjusting curricula to ensure materials were of an appropriate level and that students were engaged in activities that developed higher-order thinking skills. While students are coming to terms with the demands of the CCLS across grades and subject areas, a lack of collaborative planning among all teachers reduces the potential to accelerate student achievement at a faster rate, specifically in subgroups who have failed to meet the Annual Yearly Progress (AYP).

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.

- Teachers are beginning to develop a system to analyze and use data to make decisions about the curricula. Some teachers have acquired skills in data analysis and assessment, based on a document review, which indicated that some teachers attended the District Data Institute on testing. Most teachers have received training on CCLS and the instructional shifts with district partners. All teachers use data as evidenced by instructional binders. A data team meets daily to focus on interdisciplinary support and assessment. During a horizontal grade meeting, it was evident that teachers are starting to use data, including pre-and post- assessments to inform planning to improve student achievement and to align the curriculum and assessment. In the student interviews, several students said that although teachers did assess their work, they were not always clear what their level of achievement was or what they needed to do next in order to improve their work. An evaluation of students’ folders in a grade seven ELA class confirmed these statements. Observations of lessons and of Data Team meetings indicated that teachers are developing techniques and strategies to provide feedback based on data to individual students. However, feedback given by some teachers is not specific enough to help all students identify and reflect on exactly what they need to do to improve. This has a negative impact on student achievement and prevents students from taking greater ownership of and responsibility for their own learning.

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

Tenet Rating

E

Debriefing Statement: The school and teacher leaders ensure that instructional practices are consistent across most subject areas and that they support the CCLS and instructional shifts, leading to high student motivation and engagement along with the development of students’ critical thinking skills.

Strengths:

4.2 **The school has received a rating of *Effective* 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.

- There is an overall structure in place to ensure the teachers plan using data and set general grade-level goals for all students. This is evidenced by the SCEP, discussions with teachers and school leaders, and the provision of planning time allocated for teachers to meet in vertical and horizontal core subject areas. There is also joint planning based on data between ELL teachers and teachers of students with disabilities, who inform each other about student achievement and progress. This planning results in the development of common goals. However, as mentioned above, teachers of students with disabilities and ELL teachers are not included in the planning meetings with core area

teachers. School leaders expect core subject area teachers to use instructional practices aligned to plans that include differentiated instruction, peer tutoring, group work, and elbow buddies to support individual and whole class studies. Some supports are offered for ELLs and students with disabilities through scaffolding and word walls. There was evidence of the use of a translation on a computer to enable ELLs to access a novel being read in class. Students with disabilities and ELL students are mainly taught in separate groups, where instruction is largely conducted by the teacher from the front of the class. In one grade eight class ELLs confidently answered challenging questions about the American government and appeared to understand concepts such as the Bill of Rights and freedom of speech. The teacher also related the lesson to real world current events to make it possible for students to understand difficult concepts. In a grade eight math class for students with disabilities, one student who had recently transferred from a general class taught part of the lesson on the scientific notation of higher numbers and students later worked collaboratively in pairs to consolidate their learning. Teacher leaders have daily meetings monitored by the school leaders with their subject areas or horizontal teams of core subject teachers in which they establish long- and short-term goals for classes and individual students. Student data is used effectively to establish grade level benchmarks. In a grade seven horizontal meeting, teachers from core subjects established common approaches to writing tasks, which required students to form hypotheses or predictions and write conclusions, thus adopting an innovative and collegiate approach across math, ELA, science, and social studies. The school's instructional practices, monitored and evaluated by school leaders, encourage student engagement and inquiry in many lessons, which has a positive impact on meeting identified achievement goals.

4.3 The school has received a rating of *Effective* 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.

- Many teachers were observed by the review team using rigorous instructional practices aligned to CCLS and the CCLS shifts. Many lessons follow a logical sequence, are appropriately scaffolded, ensure multiple points of access for all students, and offer opportunities for students to work individually and collaboratively in pairs or groups. In an ELA lesson in grade seven, the class worked collaboratively in groups on analyzing a reading text in detail. Each group had a leader who had been briefed by the teacher on the task. The leaders ensured that students identified specific information in the text to support a claim. All groups were focused and fully engaged and worked efficiently. In a grade seven math lesson the teacher asked probing questions on ratios to elicit answers that required higher-order thinking. The teacher also encouraged students to ask questions for clarification or explanation. In a grade seven science lesson students were required to define difficult concepts in written form and then orally. They were then encouraged to express their personal opinions and say whether they agreed or disagreed with the definitions, supporting their answers with a reason. Evidence from lesson observations and documentation indicated that instructional practice is consistently aligned school-wide to CCLS and the instructional shifts. In many general classes in both grades, teachers asked thought-provoking questions and organized their teaching to ensure that different subgroups were appropriately challenged. For example, in a grade eight math lesson students were using Engage 8 material and were required to answer

challenging questions and explain or justify their answers. In a grade seven science lesson students were observed explaining scientific concepts to their peers. Some group work in English involved leaders supporting group members and leading them through tasks step by step. Sound instructional practices in many lessons lead to students being motivated and task-focused, which contributes positively to improvements in academic outcomes for these students.

4.4 **The school has received a rating of *Effective* 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.

- The school has initiated a school-wide behavioral program called BARK (Be Prepared, Act Responsibly, Respect Others, Keep Safe), which is designed to foster positive behavior based on a common understanding of the classroom environment and a common recognition of acceptable and safe behaviors. The details of the BARK philosophy are displayed prominently in classrooms and hallways. Students made it clear in the focus group interviews that they understand and respect the behavior rules. Students reported that their learning was rarely interrupted by poor behavior. Students in these groups also said that their classrooms and hallways are safe places and that they feel safe to express their views and ask questions in lessons. There were no significant behavioral issues in any lessons observed, although the IIT observed a teacher in one class for students with disabilities have some issues, which were resolved. Teachers acknowledged that students learn in different ways and create an environment in which students feel safe and confident to ask and answer complex questions. They sometimes pair students with different levels of ability so that they can offer mutual support. Students also work in collaborative groups so that they can express their opinions securely in a small setting. This results in active participation and engagement. Lesson observations made clear that teachers strive to ensure that students understand the content of lessons and change learning approaches if required. In social studies lessons for ELLs, teachers provide word walls to assist students in learning key specialized vocabulary and concepts. In grade seven science lessons, teachers used scaffolding to support understanding of key concepts. Teachers in a grade eight meeting recognized the changing needs of a student as a result of issues in his personal life and agreed to a common plan and approach to help the student. The impact of the school's behavioral policy and expectations, and the way they are implemented by teachers and adhered to by students, results in a learning environment that is intellectually and physically safe for all students.

4.5 **The school has received a rating of *Effective* 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).

- Teachers use data to create specific plans and adjust instructional strategies to match different students' needs. There are scheduled grade level data meetings for grade seven and eight teachers. The IIT observed one of these meetings, in which teachers create specific plans and develop their approaches to the delivery of the CCLS curriculum. The Assistant Principals (APs) chair the meetings and provide stimulating opportunities for teachers to plan instructional strategies based on student

data. In the meeting observed by the IIT, teachers discussed strategies for encouraging students to evaluate their own goals based on benchmark data and to take a more active and participatory role in their own learning. Teachers regularly assess and evaluate student achievement based on formative and summative data. For instance, teachers make use of end of unit tests and quizzes to inform their instructional approaches. In a grade eight ELA class the instruction was personalized and related to students' personal memories during a discussion on how the passing of time affects memory. Teachers used metaphorical drawings in an observed social studies classroom to help make difficult concepts more concrete. Interviews with teachers and students made it clear that student groups are often changed based on the outcomes of assessments to inform better learning. One math teacher said, "I do 'read alouds' for the class and then have the groups read to each other to ensure that instructions are clearly understood." In one grade seven class an intern created an elbow buddy for a student who was experiencing difficulties. The IIT learned from the document review and interviews with teachers that there are monthly assessments and teachers use this data to inform planning, including instructional differentiation. Teacher interviews and meetings provided evidence that teachers are developing concise individual goals for students. Most teachers give verbal feedback to students in lessons and many offer feedback at lunchtime or after school. A review of grade seven journals showed that some teachers write detailed feedback to help students identify weakness and give support in how to progress to the next level. While this practice is not consistent enough across the school, evidence clearly indicates that instructional practices are data-driven and contributing to improvements in student learning.

Areas of Improvement:

All ratings for this Tenet are either **Highly Effective** or **Effective** and therefore, comments are listed under **Strengths**.

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

E

Debriefing Statement: The school has developed clear strategies for promoting the social and emotional development of all students and in doing so involves the school community in identifying and addressing barriers to students' social and emotional developmental health. Students benefit from the creation of an environment that is conducive to learning and helps promote academic success.

Strengths:

5.2 **The school has received a rating of Effective 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.

- During interviews with teachers, students, and parents, all stakeholders said that there is a system of house teams in place that allows students to be known personally by one or more teachers.

Students were confident they could go to a specific person who understands their individual needs and concerns. Research-based approaches guide the school's referral and support system as stated by the school leader and supported by document review. The PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support) program is a resource to enhance the school environment and student management. Additionally the school uses its own BARK approach. There are BARK posters around the school in classrooms, hallways, and the cafeteria. The school leader indicated that staff uses and analyzes data to identify and meet student social and emotional developmental health needs; document review supported this. The school leader and teachers reported that there are daily updates with instructional teams and administrators to track student progress and make changes shown in data charts relating to behavioral and social issues. Based on review team observations, the implemented systems create a safe and risk-free environment in classrooms and hallways where students are orderly and respectful. This creates an environment that enhances student performance and helps promote student social and emotional developmental health.

5.4 The school has received a rating of *Effective* 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.

- Interviews with the school leader, staff, and students demonstrated that the entire school community understands and embraces the school mission statement and goals that relate to students' social and emotional health. The various school partners who offer support to individuals and different groups of students understand their roles. Discussions with parents made it clear that parents appreciate that teachers and that the other support staff fully support their children emotionally and socially. One parent spoke about how teachers support her child when he faces any emotional issues or problems relating to interpersonal relationships with his peers, saying, "This school was a big change for my child and when he occasionally encountered a problem, he was fully supported by his teachers." In a grade eight horizontal meeting, teachers shared information about a student who was experiencing emotional difficulties because his mother was in the hospital, in order to determine ways to ease the situation for him. There are daily "informal plus" scheduled meetings for a wide range of teachers and administrators to discuss academic planning and track students' progress. Specific strategies arise from these meetings to tackle any identified issues. Support teachers hold frequent monitoring meetings and the crisis intervention teacher intervenes before, during, and then after issues to ensure follow-up of any concerns raised. Key staff members, such as the guidance counselor and the school psychologist, and school partners, such as the local hospital, and the Jewish Community Center of Yonkers are involved in monitoring and evaluating students' student social and emotional developmental health. The impact of these combined activities and initiatives reflect the commitment of the school community to provide a safe learning environment that meets the social and emotional needs of students.

5.5 The school has received a rating of *Effective* 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.

- The school leader stated that the school has a plan developed with the student support staff to use accumulated behavioral and social data to address students’ needs and the SCEP supported this statement. An assistant principal and a guidance counselor have scheduled meetings with the student support team to discuss and address the individual needs of students. These staff members create charts and graphs that track individual student infractions and plan what strategies to use to help the student improve. Daily behavioral logs are also shared with staff and communicated to parents. There is a plan based on data to better support students at certain times of the day or week. For example, one student support staff member stated “we deploy more staff at certain times of the day when infractions are at a high.” The impact of the use of data to strategically plan interventions results in the school offering a safe learning environment that meets students’ social and emotional development health needs.

Areas for Improvement:

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 curricula or program that provides learning experiences and a safe and healthy school environment for families, teachers, and students.

- The school utilizes two programs to facilitate the teaching of student social and emotional developmental health. These programs, PBIS and BARK, are both new to the school and are not yet having a significant impact on student social and emotional development. From student interviews it is clear they take ownership of BARK, as it was student-generated. Students are motivated to improve their academic performance in order to be accepted into Yonkers High School and realize academic success is closely linked to social and emotional stability. One grade eight student said, “I want to get into the high school. I’m on 78 now and I need 85 and I know what to do to get it.” The school leader reported that all staff members have received PD relating to BARK and PBIS and understand the principles behind the two approaches, which are designed to promote a safe and healthy environment. However, observations during the review indicated that there were inconsistencies in how staff applied and implemented the programs. Students are working on an anti-bullying initiative and there are “Bully Rules” posters displayed around the school. There is no evidence of a plan to monitor or review the recently introduced PBIS and BARK programs, or to provide further PD for staff to strengthen the effectiveness of the programs. This limits the potential of the programs to have a sustained and significant impact on further improving students’ behavior

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: The school has a welcoming and risk-free environment. It endeavors to develop family links in a number of ways. However, the response from parents is generally limited and there are no formal

structures for building strong and sustainable family programs and community partnerships. In addition, the school does not review and adjust its strategies regarding the involvement of parents in order to build a stronger and more effective partnership between school and the home, which would benefit students' academic and social and emotional progress.

Strengths:

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

Areas for Improvement:

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

- It is clear from the SCEP and from interviews with all stakeholders that the school prioritizes communicating the school's mission statement, goals, and expectations to all parents and students. All letters sent to families are in English and in Spanish. Multiple languages are spoken by leaders and teachers. This helps the school communicate directly to families. The school has an open-door policy and parents reported they feel welcome. In student interviews, students expressed the strong desire to continue into the high school and all students knew the academic requirements to do so. The school has a plan to foster conversations with parents and students about high expectations but this not been put into place. In the large student meeting a grade seven student said, "I prepare myself for lessons by going through the PowerPoint slides on eChalk before I go into class. That means I have time to prepare questions about things I don't understand and my parents can check what homework I have to do." The student support team reported that parents respond positively to requests to attend meetings concerning their children's social and emotional development and academic progress. Despite these efforts, the school is aware that there is little parental involvement in the work of the school, but the school is not proactive in reviewing and adjusting its efforts to promote more formal and effective structures for building family programs and community partnerships that contribute to student success and raising parental awareness of the school's expectations.

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

- The school uses multiple tools to communicate with families, including the school brochure, the website, and eChalk, but these are mainly in English and Spanish and therefore do not reach out effectively in other languages spoken in the school community, which impedes communication about students' progress, achievement, and needs. One member of the student support staff stated that communication with parents would be more effective if she learned Spanish and that that was a personal development need. The school does not consistently monitor documentation in order to identify priorities for translation into other languages. The school mission and goals, for

example are only in English on the school website. The impact of not having documents and information in languages other than English and Spanish contributes to the limited parental involvement with the school and restricts the opportunities for parents to play a more active role in supporting their children's academic and social and emotional development.

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

- The team found no evidence that the school leader is formulating and implementing a plan to better inform and support parents so they can help their children learn and improve. The school does not offer opportunities for school staff to learn how to engage parents to support student learning and progress. The interview with parents revealed that the school does try to engage key parents, such as the head of the PTSA, to encourage parents to support school activities and actions, but there was no evidence that this had any impact. Student support teachers stated in group interviews that there are no opportunities for teachers and support staff to receive PD on how to sustain links and partnerships with families and community agencies to promote student growth and success, and document review supported this claim. As a result, the majority of students do not benefit from well-developed home-school links that could contribute to their college and career readiness.

6.5 **The school has received a rating of *Developing* 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.

- The IIT review of the SCEP found that it outlines attempts the school has made to share data with parents to encourage their active participation in their children's learning and progress. The grade seven data team explained eChalk to parents during an evening session and the school leader has made numerous attempts to establish links with parents through participation at religious ceremonies and other cultural events in the community. However, there is no evidence of a coordinated attempt to use data to identify family needs and target strategies to address them. The school leaders reported that the school shares some data on student learning needs and success by sending reports home, by publishing information on the website, and at evening meetings, but there has been no consistent strategy and parental attendance at meetings is minimal. The school does not consistently share student data in ways that all families can access and understand, which has a detrimental impact on school-home partnerships that could enhance student achievement.

Recommendations:

Tenet 3: Curriculum Development and Support

In order for the school's strategy and practices to align with the concepts in the Effective column of Tenet 3 the school should:

- 3.3: Ensure that the teachers consistently use plans that are aligned to CCLS and include teachers of ELLs and students with disabilities in joint curricula planning meetings with the teachers of core areas. Measure the impact of these activities on improving learning in all classrooms, focusing on subgroups.
- 3.5: Ensure that all teachers provide specific academic goals for students and provide formative feedback rubrics so students know precisely what is needed to achieve and become more actively engaged in their learning

Tenet 5: Student Social and Emotional Developmental Health

In order for the school's strategy and practices to align with the concepts in the Effective column of Tenet 5 the school should:

- 5.3: Develop a formal plan to monitor and review the PBIS and BARK programs and the impact that they are having across the school. Ensure that good practices are disseminated and any inconsistencies or weaknesses are addressed with rigor.

Tenet 6: Family and Community Engagement

In order for the school's strategy and practices to align with the concepts in the Effective column of Tenet 6 the school should:

- 6.2: Develop a formal structure for identifying programs and community partnerships that improve on the collaboration between the school and home. Embed identified effective practices and review and adjust school efforts that are not having the desired effect on improving student outcomes.
- 6.3: Ensure that essential school information is translated into all pertinent languages so that all parents have access to information and are better informed to support their children's learning at school and at home.
- 6.4: Develop a PD plan to ensure that teachers and support staff implement strategies to create and sustain family engagement. Empower parents by providing the necessary information for them to be proactive in supporting their child's learning. Review the agendas of parent meetings and identify areas of interest to the parents, targeting subgroups.
- 6.5: Develop strategies for sharing school and student data consistently in ways all parents can understand. Provide workshops for families to learn to interpret data. Embed good practice consistently across the school and review and adjust practices that do not prove successful.