



ALL ABOUT THE DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS

On May 29, 2012, the United States Education Department granted the New York State Education Department (NYSED) a waiver from specific provisions of No Child Left Behind (also known as ESEA—the Elementary & Secondary School Education Act). One of the primary focuses of NYSED’s successful waiver submission was to create a new, common, and robust school and district review process. This process compares a school and district’s practices to the optimal conditions of learning, as defined by the Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness (DTSDE) rubric.

Section 100.18 of Commissioner's Regulations requires that each Focus District participate annually in a diagnostic review using a diagnostic tool of quality indicators as prescribed by the Commissioner that shall focus on the accountability group(s) for each accountability performance criterion for which the school district and its schools have been identified as Priority and/or Focus. Each year, the Commissioner will appoint an Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) to conduct an on-site diagnostic district review and school reviews of selected Priority and/or Focus Schools within the district to inform the development of the District Comprehensive Improvement Plan and school Comprehensive Education Plan. For schools designated as Focus and Priority in the years in which an IIT does not conduct an on-site diagnostic review, the school district will be required to annually use the diagnostic tool, in the form prescribed by the Commissioner, to inform the development of the District Comprehensive Improvement Plan and the school Comprehensive Education Plan.

On-site School Review Process

The review will be carried out by an IIT composed of NYSED reviewers and/or consultant reviewers over a period of one, two or three days. In addition, the team has a district representative and an Outside Educational Expert selected by the district and approved by NYSED. The length of the review will depend on the accountability identification status and the size of the school. The review consists of six steps. The following is a summary of the essential components of the review that take place throughout the on-site review process:

- **Step 1: Pre-Review of Documentation**
 - Prior to the school review, the team will conduct a review of several documents, including but not limited to the school’s assessment data, teacher schedules, Comprehensive Educational Plan (or any other improvement plan that may be guiding the school’s goals) and the school’s completed *School Self-Assessment* document.

- Step 2: Surveys
 - Approximately six weeks before the IIT visits a school, members of the school community—specifically, students, teachers and parents—will respond to a survey. Reviewers will use the results of the surveys to understand the perceptions the respondents have about the school community. The survey results may be used to corroborate evidence of school findings gathered during the review process, but will not be used to make isolated conclusions about the school.
- Step 3: School Site Process
 - Principal interview and check-ins will be conducted throughout the review process.
 - Focus group interviews take place with students in both a large group setting (representing all grades in the school) and a small group with no more than five students (which may represent a subgroup of students that the State has identified as performing poorly). Students in the small group meeting will bring their work folders or portfolios to the meeting;
 - Teachers and Student Support Staff group interviews;
 - Interviews of student family members;
 - Observation of a grade/subject-level teacher meeting focused on student work where teachers discuss findings and create an action plan to address their findings; and,
 - Classroom visitations (each reviewer will conduct seven to ten class visits).

After the School Review

The school review ends with a structured 60-minute debriefing session facilitated by the lead reviewer(s). The debriefing session is an opportunity for the school leadership, district or support representatives, and reviewers to meet and discuss the preliminary findings for the school. At this point in the process, schools will not be informed of the ratings for individual tenets, points earned or be provided with an overall statement of practice ratings. This should be viewed as an opportunity to get a sense of the initial perceptions of the school. As demonstrated below, all formal school reports must go through a vetting stage and be approved by the Calibration Assurance Team (CAT). The specific components of this section of the review are:

- Step 4: School Effectiveness Report and Calibration Assurance Process
 - Using the HEDI scoring framework, the IIT will complete the score for each tenet statement of practice that will ultimately lead to an overall rating for a tenet that is either Highly Effective, Effective, Developing or Ineffective. Following the visit, the reviewer is responsible for producing a written report. Evidence or lack of evidence to support findings will be included for each of the tenets and the school will receive an overall rating for each tenet section. There is a calibration assurance process that must take place before any school or district community is informed of pending ratings. All reviewers will leave the school with five bullet points that align to the preliminary school overall tenet ratings.

- Step 5: School Verification
 - The report is forwarded to the school for verification of factual information. The verification process is not an opportunity for a school to counter a rating, finding statement or recommendation the team has made to the school. Instead, the school leader can verify the *School Information* sheet and other factual information that appears in the report about the school.
- Step 6: Final Publishing of Report
 - Once the verification process takes place at the school level, the report is returned to the CAT for a final approval before being published on the NYSED website.

On-site District Review Process

The review will be carried out by an IIT composed of NYSED reviewers over a period of one, two or three days. The length of the review will depend on the accountability identification status and the size of the district. The review consists of six steps. The following is a summary of the essential components of the review that take place throughout the on-site review process:

- Step 1: Pre-Review of Documentation
 - Prior to the district review, the team will conduct a review of several documents, including but not limited to the district's assessment data, District Comprehensive Improvement Plan (or any other improvement plan that may be guiding the district's goals) and the district's completed *District Self-Assessment* document.
- Step 2: District Site Process
 - Superintendent interview at the beginning of the first day to inquire about the vision for the district along with subsequent check-ins to clarify any information emerging from district events.
 - District cabinet focus group interview takes place with senior management so that they can convey how the district works collaboratively to support schools, students and parents.
 - Various interviews with staff in the following areas:
 - Human resources,
 - Fiscal management,
 - Student support,
 - Curriculum and instruction, and
 - Professional development.

After the District Review

The school review ends with a structured 60-minute debriefing session facilitated by the lead reviewer(s). The debriefing session is an opportunity for the school leadership, district or support representatives, and reviewers to meet and discuss the preliminary findings for the school. At this point in the process, schools will not be informed of the ratings for individual tenets, points earned or be provided with an overall statement of practice ratings. This should be viewed as an opportunity to get a sense of the initial perceptions of the school. As

demonstrated below, all formal school reports must go through a vetting stage and be approved by the Calibration Assurance Team (CAT). The specific components of this section of the review are:

- Step 3: Synthesis of School Findings
 - The lead reviewer, along with other reviewers who conducted the district review will synthesize the major findings of strengths and recommendations of the schools reviewed within the district. The reviewers will also include the synthesis of the schools' staff perceptions of how the district supports efforts to address student needs across each of the tenets.
- Step 4: District Effectiveness Report and Calibration Assurance Process
 - Using the HEDI scoring framework, the IIT will complete the score for each tenet statement of practice that will ultimately lead to an overall rating for a tenet that is either Highly Effective, Effective, Developing or Ineffective. Following the visit, the lead reviewer is responsible for producing a written report. Evidence or lack of evidence to support findings will be included for each of the tenets and the district will receive an overall rating for each tenet section. There is a calibration assurance process that must take place before any district community is informed of pending ratings. All reviewers will leave the district with six bullet points that align to the preliminary district overall tenet ratings.
- Step 5: District Verification
 - The report is forwarded to the district for verification of factual information. The verification process is not an opportunity for a district to counter a rating, finding statement or recommendation the team has made to the district. Instead, the district leader can verify the *District Information* sheet and other factual information that appears in the report about the district.
- Step 6: Final Publishing of Report
 - Once the verification process takes place at the district level, the report is returned to the CAT for a final approval before being published on the NYSED website.