



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

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



<b>BEDS Code</b>	190401060000
<b>District</b>	Catskill Central School District
<b>District Address</b>	343 West Main Street, Catskill, New York
<b>Superintendent</b>	Dr. Kathleen Farrell
<b>Date(s) of Review</b>	April 10, 2014
<b>Schools Discussed in this Report</b>	Middle School

District Information Sheet												
District Grade Configuration	PK-12	Total Student Enrollment	1,615	Title 1 Population	57%	Attendance Rate			93%			
Free Lunch	46%	Reduced Lunch	3%	Student Sustainability	10%	Limited English Proficient	2%	Students with Disabilities		15%		
Racial/Ethnic Origin of District Student Population												
American Indian or Alaska Native	0%	Black or African American	13%	Hispanic or Latino	10%	Asian or Native Hawaiian /Other Pacific Islander	2%	White	73%	Multi-racial	3%	
Personnel												
Number Years Superintendent Assigned/Appointed to District	8	Number of Deputy Superintendents	0	Average Years Dep. Superintendents in Role in the District	0	# of Directors of Programs	5					
% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate in District	0	% Teaching Out of Certification in District	0	% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Yrs. of Exp. in District	1%	Average Teacher Absences in District	9.5%					
Overall State Accountability Status (Mark applicable box with an X)												
District in Good Standing		Focus District		Number of Focus School Identified by District	3	Number of SIG Recipient Schools		Number of Schools in Status				
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	15.3%	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4	17.8%	Science Performance at levels 3 & 4		4 yr. Graduation Rate (for HS only)	77%	6 yr. Graduation Rate (for HS only)	72%			

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

**Tenet 1 - District Leadership and Capacity:** The district examines school systems and makes intentional decisions to identify and provide critical expectations, supports and structures in all areas of need so that schools are able to respond to their community and ensure that all students are successful.

#	Statement of Practice	H	E	D	I
1.1	The district has a comprehensive approach for recruiting, evaluating and sustaining high-quality personnel that affords schools the ability to ensure success by addressing the needs of their community.		X		
1.2	The district is organized and allocates resources (financial, staff support, materials, etc.) in a way that leads to appropriate levels of support for schools based on the needs of the school community, which promotes school improvement and success.			X	
1.3	The district leadership has a comprehensive explicit theory of action about school culture that robustly communicates high expectations for addressing the needs of all constituents.			X	
1.4	The district has a comprehensive plan to create, deliver and monitor professional development in all pertinent areas that is adaptive and tailored to the needs of individual schools.			X	
1.5	The district promotes a data-driven culture by providing strategies connected to best practices that all staff members and school communities are expected to be held accountable for implementing.			X	
<b>OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 1: DEVELOPING</b>				<b>D</b>	

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

#	Statement of Practice	H	E	D	I
2.1	The district works collaboratively with the school to provide opportunities and supports for the school leader to create, develop and nurture a school environment that is responsive to the needs of the entire school community.				X

**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
3.1	The district works collaboratively with the school(s) to ensure CCLS curriculum that provide 21st Century and College and Career Readiness skills in all content areas and provides fiscal and human resources for implementation.			X	

**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
4.1	The district works collaboratively with the school to provide opportunities and supports for teachers to develop strategies and practices and addresses			X	

	effective planning and account for student data, needs, goals, and levels of engagement.				
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**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
5.1	The district creates policy and works collaboratively with the school to provide opportunities and resources that positively support students' social and emotional developmental health.			X	

**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
6.1	The district has a comprehensive family and community engagement strategic plan that states the expectations around creating and sustaining a welcoming environment for families, reciprocal communication, and establishing partnerships with community organizations and families.			X	

**District Review – Findings, Evidence, Impact and Recommendations:**

<p><b>Tenet 1 - District Leadership and Capacity:</b> The district examines school systems and makes intentional decisions to identify and provide critical expectations, supports and structures in all areas of need so that schools are able to respond to their community and ensure that all students are successful.</p>	<p><b>Overall Tenet Rating</b></p>	<p><b>D</b></p>
<p><b>Tenet 1.1:</b> The district has a comprehensive approach for recruiting, evaluating and sustaining high-quality personnel that affords schools the ability to ensure success by addressing the needs of their community.</p>	<p><b>Tenet Rating</b></p>	<p><b>E</b></p>

**Debriefing Statement:** The district has a plan to recruit, evaluate and attract quality personnel who they retain long term. The district fosters and uses relationships with neighboring colleges, universities, and professional organizations to fill positions when rare vacancies do occur.

**Strengths:**

**Overall Finding:**

The district has processes in place to hire and evaluate school leaders and teaching staff.

**Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:**

- Because of an extremely high retention rate among the district’s personnel, over the last nine years that the present superintendent has held that role, there have been very few positions that needed to be filled. Longevity is a characteristic of the work history of the district and school stakeholders. Everyone, except two people that the members of the ITT met with, stated that they were employees of the district for between 25 and 38 years, and many of them were second and third generation staff members. Within the last four years, there has been only one full-time position to fill and that was the reading teacher in the elementary school. Applicants have to follow a clearly defined process that includes the completion of a letter of interest, submission of a resume and certification documents, the completion of an on-line application, and an interview with a committee composed of representatives of the various groups of stakeholders. In addition, the candidates for the reading position had to create a data-driven plan of action to successfully address the issues of a fictitious student with reading problems. After the successful completion of the interview process, the chairperson of the committee makes the recommendation to the Board of Education who votes to accept the nominee or re-open the search process.
- The superintendent’s approach to recruitment is both formal and informal. The superintendent, who is very active in the community and sits on a number of civic and professional boards, such as the Chamber of Commerce, has also developed a working partnership with local institutions of higher learning such as St. Rose College and SUNY Albany. She utilizes these connections, as well as Questar, to actively recruit qualified personnel who will bring diversity into the schools. However, the few positions that become vacant are usually filled by individuals who lost their position due to budget cuts and want to come back to work in the district. Once a person is hired, the new employee is provided with information about the district’s strategic plan, the Success 4 All: Catskill Achieving Targets Successfully goals, Professional Development (PD) and vision. All teachers are also provided with a mentor. Presently, there are three mentors in the elementary school, one for a

science teacher in the middle school, and one for a special education teacher in the high school.

- Additionally, all district and school leaders must write goals in June for the next school year. The superintendent reviews, monitors, and revises these goals with the individual twice a year to ensure their achievement. The superintendent formally and informally observes all principals using the Kim Marshall Principal Evaluation Rubric and assistant principals and the district’s Director of Instructional Improvement formally observe all teachers using the Danielson framework, which focuses on planning and preparation, classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities. The superintendent stated, in her meeting with the ITT members, that she has an “Open Door” policy; she wants employees to know that they are all a valued part of a team who has the important job of educating children and achieving the district’s mission which is to provide all children with the opportunity to fully develop their academic and creative potential and to assist them in becoming mature, humane, responsible and productive members of society. As a result, students learn in a stable environment where they are known, heard and valued.

**Impact Statement:** Schools have access to appropriate staff to meet the needs of students.

**Tenet 1.2:** The district leadership has a comprehensive explicit theory of action about school culture that robustly communicates high expectations for addressing the needs of all constituents.

**Tenet Rating**

**D**

**Debriefing Statement:** There are inconsistent measures put in place to support high expectations across the district. However, the district-wide goals “Success 4 All: Catskill Achieving Targets Successfully” is seen and evident throughout the district and is an attempt to create consistent practices. School leadership has not personalized targeted support for schools to meet their unique needs. Resources are not effectively monitored to promote sustained school improvement and success in all district schools. Inconsistency and lack of “buy in” by all stakeholders have resulted in a significant gap between protocol and practice.

**Areas of Improvement:**

**Overall finding:**

Members of the district leadership team have not articulated a clear plan of action, which embraces all stakeholders in order to create a healthy school and district culture. There is an apparent lack of collegiality between the district and schools that results in different perceptions about what constitutes high expectations and which has a negative impact on sustained success and the creation of a healthy environment for all stakeholders.

**Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:**

- The district created a committee that included central office personnel and school leadership to work with an outside consultant to help write district-wide goals. Neither parents nor students were represented on this committee and the middle school leader indicated in her meeting with the ITT that she was not included. However, in discussion with various stakeholders, her comment could not be substantiated since there was evidence that both the elementary and high school leaders were involved. The fact that representatives of all groups of stakeholders did not have a

part in the development of the goals undermines their success. Other than central office personnel, everyone knew that they existed and that the school data team posted them in the office and classrooms, around the campus, and on the website. The impact of the goals is updated at all of the Board of Education meetings, but no one could actually speak about them in anything other than very general terms. The fact that a school leader feels excluded is problematic, not only because she does not know the goals, but also because she has made no documented attempt to adapt them to meet the specific needs of her student population.

- In each of the meetings with the district's administrative team, members consistently stated that they respected the students and believed in their ability to be successful. However, while there is well-developed district SCEP plan, the middle school leader did not adapt or use the plan to ensure that the particular needs of her building were met. The district's plan has allocated funds for a reading specialist and an English language arts (ELA) teacher to be used to provide intervention for Tier III students in grades seven and eight who are identified by the data collected from the STAR assessments. Further, the grade six staff was divided into two teams and their schedule was reconfigured into a block format. Each team was composed of one science, one social studies, two ELA and two math teachers. The purpose of this reorganization was to double the amount of time that the students had in ELA and math and reduce by half the number of students the ELA and math teachers had to work with at one time. In the meetings that the ITT had with leadership, it was indicated that this format might be extended into grades seven and eight. Additionally, the district has provided the school leader with a coach from BOCES in order to help the principal develop in instructional leadership.
- The Director of Instructional Improvement and the school leader co-observe classroom instruction at least twice a year in order to model appropriate observation techniques, encourage an open and collegial relationship and ensure that students' needs are being met and actionable feedback is provided. A positive working relationship has not developed, as evidenced by the fact that the school leader has filed a grievance against the Director of Instructional Improvement. This has resulted in the inability to work together to ensure that all teachers receive the appropriate support and documented feedback that can translate into sustained academic success for every student.

**Impact Statement:**

A lack of cohesion between the district and schools, articulated in an explicit theory of action, prevents a shared commitment and drive for sustained school improvement.

**Recommendation:**

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

- Provide on-going PD on team building which involves central office and school leadership and personnel so that all stakeholders can work together to develop and support systems that support all students academically, emotionally and socially; ensure that all stakeholders know and can speak with authenticity about the district-wide goals and provide instruction that supports them

**Tenet 1.3:** The district is organized and allocates resources (financial, staff support, materials etc.) in a way that aligns appropriate levels of support for schools based on the needs of the community.

**Tenet Rating**

**D**

**Debriefing Statement:** Equitable resource allocation is achieved through collaboration between the district and its schools. Students benefit from good levels of technological resources that provide access to a wider curriculum. However, recent budgetary decisions at district level mean that the district will no longer be in a position to monitor and support instructional improvement across the district.

**Areas for Improvement:**

**Overall finding:**

Best use is not made of all available resources to drive improvements, particularly in instruction and student achievement.

**Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:**

- The process of allocating resources in the Catskill School District is one of collaboration. The superintendent reported, and it was verified by both the Director of Instructional Improvement and Director of Human Resources and Business, that there is a process in place that looks to allocate resources in a fair and equitable manner. Classroom observations indicated that this is a technology rich district that allows students to have access to Smart boards, laptops, I-Pads, and a MAC lab where they can take online courses, such as Mandarin Chinese.
- The business manager meets individually with school leaders in December to discuss their fiscal needs and they provide a “wish list” of both human and material resources that they feel is necessary in order to achieve the district’s and their building’s goals. The manager does not evaluate the goals or the requests, but prepares a report that she shares with the superintendent who then presents the budgetary requests of the schools and other departments to the Board of Education who makes the final decision about allocations. The business and human resources director has no input in terms of program allocations and does not make fiscal suggestions, but is charged with payroll, overseeing health insurance, personnel files and monitoring sick and personal time. They attested that the board has voted to use a portion of the fund balance this year in order to preserve as many of the schools’ programs as possible. The superintendent, in an effort to provide all of the fiscal support that the schools require in order to support their school comprehensive education plan (SCEP), works with BOCES specialists to find grants that will supplement the budget and target specific needs. However, the board has proposed to balance the budget for the next year by eliminating the central office position of Director of Instructional Improvement, cutting stipends for clubs and activities, and not filling a kindergarten position. This decision, according to both school and central office personnel will have a serious impact on the district. The Director of Instructional Improvement is a key figure in the development, implementation, and monitoring of not only the SCEP, but also professional development, and the use of data to support the SMART goals. Further, the loss of the stipends for clubs and activities could possibly result in personnel not wanting to take these positions, which will have an impact on

the social and emotional well-being of the students by decreasing the number of healthy and positive opportunities for the students to be engaged in after school activities.

**Impact Statement:**

The district's allocation of resources although considering the needs of the school communities is not yet leading to sustained improvements in student outcomes.

**Recommendation:**

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

- Ensure that the utilization of resources is carried out in a way that leads to improvements in student outcomes; monitor the impact of resource allocation and the linkage to student outcomes and make adjustments and adaptations when and where needed.

**Tenet 1.4:** The district has a comprehensive plan to create, deliver and monitor professional development in all pertinent areas that is adaptive and tailored to the needs of individual schools.

**Tenet Rating**

**D**

**Debriefing Statement:** The district has a professional development (PD) plan to create, implement, and evaluate professional growth opportunities for all stakeholders but it is not yet leading to sustained improvements in the quality of instruction or student achievement and social and emotional well-being.

**Areas for Improvement:**

**Overall Finding:**

There is a disconnect between the PD that is provided and sustained improvements in student outcomes.

**Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:**

- The district, through collaboration with school stakeholders, has established and published a comprehensive PD plan. This provides a range of training opportunities that recognize the individual needs of students and the necessity to use data to support instruction and accomplish goals. The district PD team is comprised of the Superintendent, Director of instructional improvement, Director of Special Education, Director of Technology, all three school leaders, an administrative assistant, the speech therapist, four teachers, one teaching assistant and three parents. However, there is a developing system of actionable instructional feedback, which is based on data, but is not consistently monitored. This sometimes results in a disconnect between PD and student data outcomes. Professional development does not always increase teacher effectiveness and the district is cognizant that the plan must allow for adjustments to be made in order to meet the individual needs of teachers, taking them from where they are to where they need to be.
- The district uses My Learning Plan to record attendance in PD activities. The PD plan uses a variety of outside resources such as Teachscape, EPIC, STAR, Catskill Connect, Questar, Results First, BOCES

and Fountas & Pinnell to provide experts, data, and hands-on learning opportunities to improve instruction and student outcomes. A review of the budget indicates that the Catskill District Board of Education has made a fiscal commitment to providing a wide range of PD opportunities for all stakeholders, using technology to increase offerings and participation. However, systems are not in place to consistently monitor the impact of PD offerings on improvements in the classroom.

- In order to make appropriate use of this resource, on-line workshops are available. The district also provides PD in the use of eDoctrina (a web-based software that can prioritize State standards), creates curriculum maps and standards-based lessons, tracks student goals, and manages teacher observations. Also, workshops have been given on how to integrate technology into the content areas to enhance student engagement; however, there was limited and inconsistent observation of its use during classroom observations.
- EPIC consultants are used to formulate a Parent Involvement/Engagement Plan for the district and to work with staff members to develop strategies to improve communication with the parents of their students. The district uses Fountas & Pinnell assessments to provide benchmark data for students with special disabilities and STAR assessments for ELA and math students. PD is centered on how to use the data that is collected and reported every five weeks to individualize instruction and support student growth but evidence from classroom observations show that not all teachers are effective at using data to drive instruction or to make instructional and curriculum adjustments.

**Impact Statement:**

Although there are multiple PD opportunities provided for schools the impact of these activities are not uniformly in evidence in classrooms in driving improvements to instruction and student learning.

**Recommendation:**

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

- Ensure that the many PD opportunities that the district provides are reflected in improvements in student achievement and learning in all classrooms and that school and district leaders monitor instruction rigorously to ensure this is the case.

**Tenet 1.5:** The district promotes a data-driven culture by providing strategies connected to best practices that all staff members and school communities are expected to be held accountable for implementing.

<b>Tenet Rating</b>	<b>D</b>
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**Debriefing Statement:** The district has created a system to collect, share and analyze school-wide and district-wide data in ELA and math. The STAR assessments and NYS exams allow stakeholders access to various data points. This is starting to create a data-driven culture where there are established data teams with staff members and school communities held accountable for student achievement and progress. Ongoing support adjusted to identified best practices leading to high levels of student achievement and engagement is not uniformly optimized. Stakeholders across the district do not have a deep understanding of how students are performing because these systems are not effectively monitored. Consequently, stakeholders do not consistently adjust their practices and this impedes student achievement.

## **Areas for Improvement:**

### **Overall Finding:**

The district is seeking to create a data driven culture but there is work still to be done to ensure that it is embedded across all schools.

### **Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:**

- The district is promoting a data-driven culture by creating data teams and providing regular PD that promotes its effective use in order to achieve the Success 4 All CATS goals. This has resulted in a three percent increase in cohort graduation rate per year; a five percent increase in proficiency in NYSTP grades three to eight ELA and math tests per year and Regents CCR results; a five percent increase in STAR reading and math grade level proficiency in year I and a ten percent increase decrease in course failures every quarter compared to the previous year. However, this project is a work in progress and much more work needs to be done to ensure that the utilization of data to drive instruction and school improvements is an established and effective strategy in every classroom in every school.
- District-wide and school-wide data teams have been created, and the district team meets in October, January and March with Results First to monitor student progress. The building data teams, facilitated by the school leaders, meet bi-weekly and quarterly with the district team to share data as it relates to the goals. Questar consultants provide PD on data and work with teachers to enable them to use this information to adjust instructional practices in order to better address individual students' needs and align lessons with CCLS. However, teachers were not observed consistently using data to drive instruction or to inform student groupings.
- The Director of Special Education discussed that the teachers are using IEP Direct, which is an online program that provides teachers with current data on every student with disabilities. Testing for students with individualized education programs (IEPs) is done in the fall, winter, and spring by using the Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessments. General education teachers have been trained to use Catskill Direct, which is a web-based program that allows them to log into their course and review all current data on each of their students. This program is also in the initial stages of being used by two teachers in the middle school as a virtual classroom. Teachers can also use eDoctrina to post tests, answer papers, and scores. The ELA and math teachers use the STAR assessments every quarter to track goal 3 which is to increase student proficiency levels. Students who are receiving Tier 3 interventions have their progress monitored every five weeks in order to closely determine the effectiveness of the support and make all necessary adjustments. The district is beginning to create an environment where teachers are able to understand data and develop or adjust their instructional practices to reflect it. Evidence is based on a review of lesson plans, classroom observations, and discussions with stakeholders. However, there is inconclusive evidence that data is used to differentiate instruction or to achieve the district-wide goals, which although clearly posted, do not seem to be known by the stakeholders including the middle school leader. Therefore, this inconsistent use of data has resulted in all students' needs not being met to achieve

and sustain academic success.

**Impact Statement:**

The disconnect between the district’s intention to create a data driven culture and practices in schools means that advances in student achievement are not occurring at a fast enough rate.

**Recommendation:**

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

- Require that data is used consistently to drive instruction in all classes; provide PD for school leaders that will help them provide actionable feedback based on data.

This section provides a narrative that communicates how school communities perceive the support provided by the district.

**Tenet 2.1 - School Leader Practices and Decisions:** The district works collaboratively with the school to provide opportunities and supports for the school leader to create, develop and nurture a school environment that is responsive to the needs of the entire school community.

<b>Tenet Rating</b>	<b>I</b>
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**Area for Improvement:**

**Overall Finding:**

Relationships between the district and some schools are not effective and do not promote a cohesive approach to improvement.

**Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:** *(Note: the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) gathered evidence from a review of documents and interviews with district leaders, principals, staff, parents and students.)*

- Members of the IIT observed the superintendent walking through the middle school and around campus several times a day and because of her accessibility, students appear comfortable talking with her. Based on interviews with the district and middle school leadership, there is a difference of opinion about the district’s vision and the steps that are being taken to accomplish it. The superintendent said that she wanted to move the district forward by using data to substantiate success, individualize instruction in order to meet the needs of all of the students, and confirm and address areas of weakness.
- The district is providing on-going opportunities for many staff members and the school leaders, including the administrator of the middle school, to work with consultants from Questar to plan and support the math and ELA teachers as they work effectively to implement CCLS and use data to drive instruction. The superintendent believes in the effectiveness of the CCLS and APPR and is currently in negotiations with the union about how they can be implemented and accepted by its membership. The school leader stated that she does not feel supported by the superintendent

because, even though both the district’s and the schools’ budgets have been cut, she believes that the district should be able to allocate money for an AP and an additional social worker for the middle school. As a result of a focus review, the middle school leader was given a mentor, a retired superintendent, to work directly with her in the building and serve as a resource to help her learn how to transition into the role of academic leader and less as the school’s disciplinarian. Despite these efforts, when the school leader was asked to describe her relationship with the superintendent and the support that she gets from the district she stated, “I can summarize it in one word, awful.” The school leader added that she feels as if she is not supported and has “no control” over staffing, personnel, or budgets. It is evident that the superintendent and middle school leader voice very different messages and that this creates what several district and school personnel identified as a “power struggle.” This in turn has a negative impact on the implementation of goals and policies that are designed to improve instruction and provide opportunities for all students to succeed academically in a healthy and respectful atmosphere.

**Impact Statement:**

The lack of unity between some schools and the district impacts adversely on student chances for academic and social success.

**Recommendation:**

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

- Provide on-going PD on team building that includes both central office and school leadership and personnel; provide school leaders with coaching regarding how to write actionable feedback as part of an evaluation

**Tenet 3.1 - Curriculum Development and Support:** The district works collaboratively with the school to provide opportunities and supports that are connected to the implementation of a comprehensive curriculum appropriately aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and are inclusive of the arts, technology and other enrichment subjects in a data-driven culture.

**Tenet Rating**

**D**

**Area for Improvement:**

**Overall Finding:**

Although the district has provided some supports for the implementation of CCLS, practices in the classroom are not providing a curriculum that is tailored to the needs and abilities of all students.

**Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:** *(Note: the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) gathered evidence from a review of documents and interviews with district leaders, principals, staff, parents and students.)*

- The district has a written and published a PD plan that provides teachers with the support to effectively implement CCLS and a SCEP that underscores the commitment and recognizes the importance of the new learning standards in making students ready to meet the challenges of the

21<sup>st</sup> century. The district uses fiscal resources to hire consultants from Questar to work for twenty days each with the ELA and math teachers to help them develop and implement a CCLS curricula and units of study. Questar also assists the teachers in the use of data to inform instruction and provide differentiation and scaffolding that supports the CCLS. In addition, BOCES also supplies a coach/mentor to work with the middle school leader on a variety of issues including the evaluation of CCLS lessons. Mentors are also provided for new and struggling teachers to work with them on CCLS implementation.

- A review of the district’s PD plan showed there are ongoing workshops on CCLS and both the superintendent and the director of instructional improvement stated that the effective use of CCLS is a priority. However, there is a difference of opinion about the value of CCLS between the district and the middle school leader, and this limits the ability of the district to secure the implementation of CCLS district-wide.
- The district has provided every classroom with a Smart board and every student with access to a laptop or iPad; this technology is supported by a full-time Director of Technology. There is an evident commitment on the part of the district to provide the materials and the support that should enable teachers to infuse technology into instruction. However, although the schools are technology rich, there was little evidence during classroom visits or discussions with stakeholders that these tools are used effectively or even used at all. Instead, what the IIT observed were teachers using Smart boards as a whiteboards or to display a power point that the students were required to copy; there was no use of the Smart board as the inter-active multi-media tool that it is designed to be.
- There was no evidence of the infusion of the arts into any lesson that was observed or any lesson plan or PD plan that was reviewed. As a result of the lack of commitment to support the implementation of the CCLS on the part of the middle school leader and the inconsistent and ineffective use of technology and the arts as a means of engaging students and providing an integrated learning experience, students are not challenged to work to their potential.

**Impact Statement:**

A CCLS aligned curricula that challenged and engages all students is not in evidence in all classrooms. This hinders students’ college and career readiness.

**Recommendation:**

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

- Ensure that there is shared agreement between the district and school as to effective implementation of all aspects of CCLS that leads to improved student achievement and engagement and a curriculum that meets the needs of all students.

**Tenet 4.1 - Teacher Practices and Decisions:** The district works collaboratively with the school to provide opportunities and supports for teachers to develop strategies and practices that lead to effective planning and account for student data, needs, goals, and

**Tenet Rating**

**D**

**Areas for Improvement:****Overall Finding:**

The impact of PD is not always evident in improved instructional practices or increased student achievement. The effectiveness of PD is not monitored rigorously enough by the district or school leaders.

**Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:** *(Note: the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) gathered evidence from a review of documents and interviews with district leaders, principals, staff, parents and students.)*

- The district has a clear, well-defined, and published SCEP that includes four goals. To support the SCEP, the district has also created a PD plan that includes training on a wide variety of topics, such as data interpretation, project-based learning, parent involvement, and implementation of CCLS. Evidence of this can be seen in the published booklet entitled “Catskill School District Professional Development Plan,” January 2014.
- The middle school leader stated that she was not included in the development of this plan and that it does not always address the specific needs of her building because she told the members of the IIT several times that too much time is spent on CCLS and the use of test data. However, she did add, when questioned about the ability to revise the plan, that it could be adjusted to provide a PD opportunity on a topic of her choosing. The Superintendent and Director of Instructional Improvement agree that changes are made to the plan in order to ensure that the PD is timely, meets specific needs, and supports the district-wide Success 4 All goals. The school leader also has a portion of discretionary money in her budget that can pay for workshops. Additionally, based on interviews with the district, the IIT found that the Director of Instructional Improvement works with the school leader to co-observe classes at least twice a year in order to model the writing of effective actionable feedback that would help to improve instruction and learning. However, leadership stated that the observations that the district writes are so lengthy that some members of the staff tell her that they do not read them. A review of an observation that the school leader wrote indicated a lack of substantive feedback that teachers could use to support the district-wide goals. Her comments such as, “good lesson” did not contain definitive “next steps.” Leadership has also been provided with a mentor from the BOCES program who the school leader stated was, “very nice and easy to work with” although she had not seen him in several months. The District confirmed that he was in the middle school just one month before the review and because there was no documentation that indicated how their time together is being used, it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of this linkage.
- The district ensures that all classrooms have a broad range of technology available for the students to use in order to support a variety of learning and teaching modalities such as online courses. The district has provided specialists from Questar to work with the ELA and math teachers to assist in the implementation and alignment of lessons to CCLS. Mentors are also provided for new professional staff members, and the process for the mentoring program is fully discussed in the PD guide. Although the District provides schools with PD and coaching to address a broad range of

topics and needs such as the implementation of the CCLS, they are still in the process of developing and monitoring a plan that integrates art, technology, and other enrichment resources into the implementation of the CCLS. In addition, evidence from classroom observations indicates that the learnings from PD are not routinely implemented. In addition, the district and school leaders do not monitor teaching and learning rigorously enough to ensure that PD offerings are put to best use to improve student achievement and the quality of instruction.

**Impact Statement:**

Instructional strategies are not leading to challenging and engaging learning opportunities for all students.

**Recommendation:**

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

- Ensure that the school and district work in unison in improving the quality of instruction; ensure that the district and school are in unison in rigorously implementing strategies for effectively monitoring instruction; ensure that the school and district work in unison to make clear to all staff that PD offerings should be effectively implemented in all classrooms and lead to improvements in student achievement.

**Tenet 5.1** The district creates a policy and works collaboratively with the school to provide opportunities and resources that positively support students’ social and emotional developmental health.

**Tenet Rating**

**D**

**Areas for Improvement:**

**Overall Finding:**

There is a lack of clear and cohesive district or school-wide plans to ensure that the social and emotional needs of all students are met.

**Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:** *(Note: the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) gathered evidence from a review of documents and interviews with district leaders, principals, staff, parents and students.)*

- The district has a variety of policies, programs, and partnerships that are designed to support students’ emotional and social developmental health. However, it is unclear if there is a cohesive plan that integrates all resources in order for them to provide the necessary support and intervention services. In meetings with both the district and the school, personnel stated that PD was provided on bullying and the school leader gave a book entitled, *The Bully, the Bullied and the Bystander—How Parents and Teachers can help break the Cycle* by Barbara Coloroso to every staff member. Further, the health and physical education teachers participated in an anti-bullying training and acted as turnkey facilitators.
- The curriculum that is associated with this training is being taught in the PE classes. The district has

a contract with Every Person Influences Children (EPIC) to provided PD for the school counselors to enhance their understanding of how to better understand and support the emotional and social developmental issues of the middle school student. The school initiated a program called, “Caught Being Kind,” which rewards students who act appropriately and sensitively when interacting with classmates. The Director of Special Education provides support for teachers and facilitates PD on strategies that teachers can use to better understand the IEPs.

- The district introduced the “Too Good for Violence” initiative, which is a character education program that teaches conflict resolution, anger management skills, respect, and effective communication. The district and the school have formed partnerships with a number of community agencies, such as the Department of Social Services, the Catskill Police Department, Columbia Green Partnership, and the Tri-County program. Through the Columbia Green Partnership, the Bridge Program in Hudson, New York was established. It is designed to provide academic, and social and emotional help to students who are not succeeding in a traditional school setting. Forty-five students attend this program from Catskill, Hudson, and the Berkshire Schools Districts. There is also a day program for special education student that saves the district money, since these students do not have to be bused to the Berkshire District for services. However, although the IIT members did not witness any altercations, all the students with whom the team met stated that they did not always feel safe in the building and that there are too many students who disrupt their learning because they do not follow class rules and that nothing is done about it by the school leader. Therefore, although there are a variety of resources in use in the district and some of them have met with success, because there is no cohesive plan that holds every adult accountable for its implementation, the ability to support student social and emotional needs is limited, which negatively impacts on student achievement.

**Impact Statement:**

The lack of strategic planning to ensure that all available resources are used effectively to meet the social and emotional developmental health needs of students reduces their chances for academic and social success.

**Recommendation:**

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

- Develop and monitor for effectiveness a comprehensive written plan centered on the emotional and social well-being of the students that holds every adult accountable for its implementation.

**Tenet 6.1 - Family and Community Engagement:** The district has a comprehensive family and community engagement strategic plan that states the expectations around creating and sustaining a welcoming environment for families, reciprocal communication, and establishing partnerships with community organizations and families.

<b>Tenet Rating</b>	<b>D</b>
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**Areas for Improvement:**

**Overall Finding:**

Despite some efforts by the district and schools to engage parents these efforts are not proving successful in

building up a strong partnership between school and home for the benefit of all students.

**Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:** *(Note: the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) gathered evidence from a review of documents and interviews with district leaders, principals, staff, parents and students.)*

- The Superintendent stated during her meetings with the IIT that there is an awareness on the part of the district that much more has to be done to engage parents and develop partnerships with this group of critical stakeholders in order to ensure that all students meet their potential. The district utilizes many methods to involve parents, families, and the community in providing the necessary supports if student achievement is to improve. These methods include a Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), an information-rich, user-friendly website that is monitored and updated regularly, Alert Now a program that is designed to provide parents with important information as it is happening, and a monthly district magazine. Further, the district leader said that she sits on eight community boards and continually works to develop a positive and honest relationship with the local press so that they recognize the accomplishments of the students and give these positive stories coverage in the media. The district has a partnership with The Tri-County Initiative, a community-based agency that provides housing, mental health assistance, food and drug intervention services to families who are in need. The school sponsors a Career Day, Perfect Attendance ceremony, and the Greater Sense of Place initiative, which provides students with an opportunity to learn about their community and possible career choices by working for the day in a job of their choice.
- Despite all of these linkages and resources, parents in their meeting stated that they did not feel welcomed in the middle school building and they are worried about some of the stories their children tell them regarding safety issues and school management. They also expressed their concern that certain students and families are given preferential treatment and that the rules are not applied equitably. This perception of unfairness on the part of the school leader, in particular, and the Superintendent is a consistent theme among all of the stakeholders. Additionally, parents stated that they are not invited to volunteer in the school, and are not asked for input regarding possible topics for meetings.
- Only two parents, both of whom are members of the Catskill School Board, understood anything about the CCLS. Instead, several parents stated that they only knew what they read in the newspaper or what they learned when they “googled” the term. They stated they would welcome the opportunity to learn about important topics so that they can be better informed and therefore, be better able to work in partnership with the school to support their children. The District has hired EPIC (Every Person Influences a Child) to work with school and district representatives to develop a cohesive and integrated plan to engage parents. EPIC is also providing PD for teachers regarding how to develop a partnership with the parents of their students so that they work as a team to support the academic success of the children. Without a comprehensive plan that holds all school leaders and personnel responsible for working collaboratively with parents, families, and community constituents, students do not receive the unified support needed to ensure real academic success that translates into college and career readiness.

**Impact Statement:**

A lack of partnership between the home, school and the district is adversely impacting on students' college and career readiness.

**Recommendation:**

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

- Provide parents with opportunities to volunteer in order to ensure that they feel part of the school and are recognized as an integral part of the team; develop and monitor a comprehensive plan that is centered on parent involvement and engagement that holds all school leaders and personnel responsible for working collaboratively with families.