



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

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)



BEDS Code	53-06-00-01-0008
School Name	Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Magnet School
School Address	918 Stanley Street, Schenectady, NY 12307
District Name	Schenectady City School District
School Leader	Nicola DiLeva
Dates of Review	April 7-9, 2014
School Accountability Status	Focus School
Type of Review	SED Integrated Intervention Team (IIT)

School Information Sheet													
Grade Configuration	K-8	Total Enrollment	661	SIG Recipient	100 3	Title 1 Population	100%	Attendance Rate	91%				
Free Lunch	100%	Reduced Lunch	0%			Limited English Proficient	18	Students with Disabilities	71				
Number of English Language Learner Classes													
#Transitional Bilingual	0		#Dual Language		0								
Number of Special Education Classes													
#Self-Contained	3		#Consultant Teaching		1		#Integrated Collaborative Teaching			2			
#Resource Room	1												
Number of Special Classes													
#Visual Arts	27	#Music	31	#Drama	0		#Foreign Language	6	#Dance	0	#CTE	29	
Racial/Ethnic Origin													
American Indian or Alaska Native	0%	Black or African American	48%	Hispanic or Latino	14%	Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	21%	White	15%	Multi-racial	2%		
Personnel													
Years Principal Assigned to School	4		# of Assistant Principals		1		# of Deans		0		# of Counselors / Social Workers		4
Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate	0%		Teaching Out of Certification		0%		Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Yrs. of Exp.		%		Average Teacher Absences		%
Credit Accumulation (High School Only) and Performance Rates													
% of 1 st yr. students who earned 10+ credits			% of 2 nd yr. students who earned 10+ credits				% of 3 rd yr. students who earned 10+ credits				4 Year Graduation Rate		
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	13%		Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4		11%		Science Performance at levels 3 & 4		4 th grade 72% 8 th grade 57%		6 Year Graduation Rate		

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

SCHOOL PRIORITIES AS DESCRIBED BY THE SCHOOL:

1. 95% of all teaching staff will demonstrate 10% growth from September 2013 to June 2014 on the Student Learning Objective Assessments.
2. 95% of all teaching staff who instruct in the NYS exam grade levels and content areas will increase their student proficiency by 10%.
3. 95% of the staff will identify Common Core Learning Standards in daily lesson plans.
4. 95% of our staff will collaborate with and utilize our school personnel staff to promote the social growth and well-being of our students as needed throughout the school year.
5. 95% of all students who are achieving significantly below grade level according to district cut points will receive additional supports, monitored via data wall.

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

#	Statement of Practice	H	E	D	I
2.2	The school leader ensures that the school community shares the Specific, Measurable, Ambitious, Results-oriented, and Timely (SMART) goals/mission, and long-term vision inclusive of core values that address the priorities outlined in the School Comprehensive Educational Plan (SCEP).		X		
2.3	Leaders make strategic decisions to organize programmatic, human, and fiscal capital resources.		X		
2.4	The school leader has a fully functional system in place aligned to the district's Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) to conduct targeted and frequent observation and track progress of teacher practices based on student data and feedback.			X	
2.5	Leaders effectively use evidence-based systems and structures to examine and improve critical individual and school-wide practices as defined in the SCEP (student achievement, curriculum and teacher practices; leadership development; community/family engagement; and student social and emotional developmental health).			X	
OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 2:				D	

Tenet 3 - Curriculum Development and Support: The school has rigorous and coherent curricula and assessments that are appropriately aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) for all students and are modified for identified subgroups in order to maximize teacher instructional practices and student-learning outcomes.

#	Statement of Practice	H	E	D	I
3.2	The school leader ensures and supports the quality implementation of a systematic plan of rigorous and coherent curricula appropriately aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) that is monitored and adapted to meet the needs of students.			X	
3.3	Teachers develop and ensure that unit and lesson plans used include data-driven instruction (DDI) protocols that are appropriately aligned to the CCLS and NYS content standards and address student achievement needs.				X
3.4	The school leader and teachers have developed a comprehensive plan for teachers to partner within and across all grades and subjects to create interdisciplinary curricula targeting the arts, technology, and other enrichment opportunities.				X
3.5	Teachers implement a comprehensive system for using formative and summative assessments for strategic short and long-range curriculum planning that involves student reflection, tracking of, and ownership of learning.			X	
OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 3:					I

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

#	Statement of Practice	H	E	D	I
4.2	School and teacher leaders ensure that instructional practices and strategies are organized around annual, unit, and daily lesson plans that address all student goals and needs.			X	

4.3	Teachers provide coherent, and appropriately aligned Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS)-based instruction that leads to multiple points of access for all students.			X	
4.4	Teachers and students work together to implement a program/plan to create a learning environment that is responsive to students' varied experiences and tailored to the strengths and needs of all students.			X	
4.5	Teachers inform planning and foster student participation in their own learning process by using a variety of summative and formative data sources (e.g., screening, interim measures, and progress monitoring).			X	
	OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 4:			D	

Tenet 5 - Student Social and Emotional Developmental Health: The school community identifies, promotes, and supports social and emotional development by designing systems and experiences that lead to healthy relationships and a safe, respectful environment that is conducive to learning for all constituents.

#	Statement of Practice	H	E	D	I
5.2	The school leader establishes overarching systems and understandings of how to support and sustain student social and emotional developmental health and academic success.			X	
5.3	The school articulates and systematically promotes a vision for social and emotional developmental health that is aligned to a curriculum or program that provides learning experiences and a safe and healthy school environment for families, teachers, and students.			X	
5.4	All school stakeholders work together to develop a common understanding of the importance of their contributions in creating a school community that is safe, conducive to learning, and fostering of a sense of ownership for providing social and emotional developmental health supports tied to the school's vision.			X	
5.5	The school leader and student support staff work together with teachers to establish structures to support the use of data to respond to student social and emotional developmental health needs.			X	
	OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 5:			D	

Tenet 6 - Family and Community Engagement: The school creates a culture of partnership where families, community members, and school staff work together to share in the responsibility for student academic progress and social-emotional growth and well-being.

#	Statement of Practice	H	E	D	I
6.2	The school leader ensures that regular communication with students and families fosters their high expectations for student academic achievement.			X	
6.3	The school engages in effective planning and reciprocal communication with family and community stakeholders so that student strength and needs are identified and used to augment learning.				X
6.4	The school community partners with families and community agencies to promote and provide training across all areas (academic and social and emotional developmental health) to support student success.			X	
6.5	The school shares data in a way that promotes dialogue among parents, students, and school community members centered on student learning and success and encourages and empowers families to understand and use data to advocate for appropriate support services for their children.			X	
	OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 6:			D	

School Review – Findings, Evidence, Impact and Recommendations:

Tenet 2 - School Leader Practices and Decisions: Visionary leaders create a school community and culture that lead to success, well-being, and high academic outcomes for all students via systems of continuous and sustainable school improvement.	Tenet Rating	D
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Debriefing Statement: The school leader has established a vision for the school, which is prominently displayed around the entire building. Decisions regarding acquisition and use of resources are made with the school’s vision in mind. Staff members understand the school leader’s mission to use data to ensure academic success and student well-being. The school leader is in the process of establishing a system to use multiple forms of data to monitor the academic progress of each student. However, the system is not completely functional across the grades so not all instruction is geared to sustainable school improvement.

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).

Overall Finding:

The school leader shares the SMART goals, has articulated the school’s vision, and is in the process of addressing the priorities as outlined in the SCEP.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- The school leader assembled a representative group of stakeholders to develop the SCEP and has made the plan available to the school community. Implementing the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and focusing on data are two important areas addressed in the SCEP. The school leader has organized regularly scheduled meetings of school staff to focus on these areas. They include Building Leadership Team (BLT) meetings to periodically review the SCEP, weekly literacy team meetings, Response To Intervention (RTI) meetings to review individual student progress, and monthly faculty meetings. The school vision, which is aligned to the SCEP, states that “academics is our road to college and career-readiness.” The vision statement is prominently displayed throughout the building.
- The strategic actions outlined in the SCEP are supported by a set of SMART goals that focus on increasing student academic achievement, improving students’ social and emotional well-being, and increasing the quality of teaching and learning. Some goals are measured by improvements in the quality of instructional and curriculum planning in order to improve student growth.

Impact Statement:

The school leader ensures that stakeholders know and understand the vision and SMART goals aligned to the school’s SCEP, which promotes student success.

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

Overall Finding:

The school leader understands the needs of the school and advocates to acquire the resources necessary to achieve the school's vision.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- Many of the fiscal decisions that affect the school are made by the district to ensure consistency across the many schools in the system. However, the school leader articulates the school's needs to the district office when hiring decisions are being made. She is a member of the hiring committee and has contributed to the recruitment and hiring plan for the district.
- For those decisions that are left to the school leader, resources are used strategically. For example, a crisis intervention team has been formed to support at-risk students within the school, an additional social worker has been hired, and the school psychologist has been equipped with a new series of tests to help diagnose students. In addition, a teaching and learning coach (TLC) as well as an intervention specialist (IS) are on staff to support teachers in analyzing data, supporting students, and implementing the CCLS.
- Partnerships with community agencies/organizations continue to grow with volunteers from area colleges, Boys and Girls Clubs, and mentors from General Electric and Knolls Atomic Power Lab (KAPL) to help foster the science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) focus of this magnet school. Funds from the 21st Century grant are used to provide an extended-day program for students.
- The school leader periodically reviews resources available and strategically chooses opportune times to make purchases in order to maximize savings.

Impact Statement:

The school leader makes strategic decisions regarding human, fiscal, and programmatic resources, which address the immediate and long-term needs of the school community, which promote student achievement.

Areas for Improvement:

2.4 **The school has received a rating of *Developing* for this Statement of Practice:** The school leader has a fully functional system in place aligned to the district's Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) to conduct targeted and frequent observation and track progress of teacher practices based on student data and feedback.

Overall Finding:

While school leaders observe teachers as required, limited monitoring of feedback and the lack of PD focused on instructional weaknesses limit continuous improvement.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- School leaders follow the district protocol for teacher observations. The protocol includes a pre-observation conference, the observation itself, and a post-observation conference, with written feedback

within ten days. The district has set target dates for the completion of observations. In addition to observations, walk-throughs are conducted. Teachers in the vertical teacher focus group reported that “walk-throughs are offered,” and “sometimes they do walk-throughs.” The school leader shared that she is “in the classrooms all the time.” The middle school, special education, and reading teachers shared that sometimes central office staff and/or coordinators sit in their classrooms. Teachers explained that they can use a form to share with the school leader what they are attempting to accomplish in the class. In this way, they can ask the school leader to focus on a particular aspect of their teaching and give feedback concerning their success.

- Several teachers are part of a Teacher Improvement Plan (TIP) based on the test scores of their students. However, the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) found no evidence that school leaders were monitoring these teachers or any others to ensure that feedback provided during observations or walk-throughs was being acted upon.
- Although professional development (PD) is offered, in-house, and on a voluntary basis, there was little evidence that the PD offered was focused on and responds to instructional weaknesses discovered during classroom observations or visits.

Impact Statement:

Inconsistent monitoring of feedback given to teachers and the lack of PD focused on instructional weakness, limits staff accountability for continuous and hinders student achievement.

Recommendation:

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

- Establish a schedule for observations and walkthroughs, and provide actionable feedback and focused PD; monitor improvement to teaching throughout the year.

2.5 **The school has received a rating of *Developing* for this Statement of Practice:** Leaders effectively use evidence-based systems and structures to examine and improve critical individual and school-wide practices as defined in the SCEP (student achievement, curriculum and teacher practices; leadership development; community/family engagement; and student social and emotional developmental health).

Overall Finding:

The school leader has many support groups in place, all of which use data to inform their work. However, practices are not interconnected or systemic.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- In an effort to implement the CCLS and raise test scores, groups and teams have been put in place in the school. They include, but are not limited to, a school-based support team (SBST), a literacy team, the RTI team to review at-risk students, the crisis intervention team, and the professional learning communities (PLCs), which provide PD for teachers. The teams all use data and address areas outlined in the SCEP. For example, the SBST addresses social and emotional developmental health during their weekly meetings. The work in each group is focused. However, there is little evidence that the groups interact, share, and use their data to support and further the goals in other areas of the SCEP.

- Although procedures are in place for monitoring and evaluating the quality of instruction, the impact on significantly raising student achievement is not yet evident. In the same way, school leaders espouse a commitment to a data- driven school culture, but these aspirations are not reflected in the practices of teachers. The weaknesses in these systems diminish a concerted approach to improving individual and school-wide practices and student achievement.

Impact Statement:

The lack of evidenced-based systems within the school that are interconnected, adaptive, and dynamic limits the school’s ability to make progress toward achieving school-wide goals, which hinders student achievement.

Recommendation:

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

- Ensure that structures are established that provide the school with an accurate grasp of the performance of the school; ensure that the systems are adhered to by leaders and staff and are closely monitored to assess the impact on raising student outcomes and achieving stated school-wide goals.

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

I

Debriefing Statement: The school leader has available district–developed, cohesive, and comprehensive curricula that include descriptive units of study aligned to the CCLS standards. However, school leaders have not yet fully implemented these curricula across all grade levels. Teachers do not consistently use lesson plans aligned to these standards or that focus on higher-order thinking skills. Teachers are given time to meet weekly to plan and analyze data. Formative, summative, and interim assessment data are collected and shared with the staff. However, the use of data to map out a clear path for growth and progress for all students, specifically the identified subgroups, is not consistent.

Strengths:

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

Areas for Improvement:

3.2 **The school has received a rating of *Developing* for this Statement of Practice:** The school leader ensures and supports the quality implementation of a systematic plan of rigorous and coherent curricula appropriately aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) that is monitored and adapted to meet the needs of students.

Overall Finding:

The school leader does not consistently ensure that the CCLS are being implemented and that the students with diverse learning needs are taken into account in all classrooms.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- Curricula are district-developed with the expectation that schools will implement the curricula with fidelity. However, the IIT found little evidence that a systematic plan was in place to monitor implementation consistently and provide adaptations where appropriate. During classroom visits by the review team, the majority of lessons showed limited evidence of adjustment or differentiation to support students who are struggling with the content. In addition, there was little evidence of rigor in the classrooms or the instructional shifts required by the CCLS.
- The school leader provides weekly opportunities after school for PD addressing a variety of topics, including the CCLS. She reported to the IIT that approximately fifteen teachers attend the sessions and act as representatives for their team; they subsequently share the information with their teams during planning times. During interviews with the IIT teachers confirmed that these practices take place. Discussions also indicated that adequate resources and materials are provided to the staff to support implementation of CCLS. Reviewers also learned that instructional supervisors and coaches are on hand to provide guidance and support for teachers in the classroom. However, these combined efforts and resources are not directly leading to curriculum and lesson planning reflective of the CCLS. In addition, school leaders are not monitoring the intended implementation of CCLS with sufficient rigor to ensure a consistent approach in meeting the needs of all students.

Impact Statement:

Because of inconsistent support for the implementation of the CCLS, curricula do not meet the needs of all students, including subgroups, and therefore limits students' college and career readiness.

Recommendation:

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

- Develop a systematic plan to implement rigorous curricula, including regular monitoring of instruction and curriculum planning; ensure all teachers make best use of available planning time and resources to implement the CCLS.

3.3 **The school has received a rating of *Ineffective* 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.

Overall Finding: Only about half of the lesson plans were aligned to the CCLS. They did not use data protocols and lacked higher-order questioning and thinking. They did not consistently incorporate supports to meet individual student needs.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- The collection and use of data are noted as school priorities. There is a data wall in the school leader's office that represents where students are in terms of State and interim assessments. While these data are

collected and analyzed, there is little evidence in either classroom visits or document reviews that the data lead to the implementation of a structured approach to instruction that is a sequenced progression of skills. The IIT found limited evidence that teachers are using assessment information from lessons to monitor and adjust curriculum planning or instructional practices.

- In five out of the five special education classrooms visited by the IIT, there was no evidence of higher-order thinking. In four of those five, there was no evidence of lesson plans that targeted sequenced skills for students who struggled with basic reading and mathematics skills. Students were working on mathematics worksheets. In the majority of the general education classrooms visited by the IIT, the instruction was teacher directed and the same for the whole class. There was little evidence of grouping students to differentiate their instruction based on data.

Impact Statement:

Teachers' inconsistent use of lesson plans based on data and aligned to the CCLS across all classrooms, does not address individual student needs, especially for students with disabilities, which hinders student academic progress.

Recommendation:

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

- Ensure that staff understand how to analyze the data collected and translate that information into curriculum planning that consistently meets the demands of CCLS and DDI protocols, and include the use of a variety of materials in classroom instruction; monitor the use of unit and lesson plans to ensure that they include progressions of sequenced content and skills across all grades and subjects.

3.4 **The school has received a rating of *Ineffective* for this Statement of Practice:** The school leader and teachers have developed a comprehensive plan for teachers to partner within and across all grades and subjects to create interdisciplinary curricula targeting the arts, technology, and other enrichment opportunities.

Overall Finding:

The school does not have a comprehensive plan to create interdisciplinary curricula, and there is no informal collaboration between staff to provide cross-curricular activities for students.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- The school leader has established a weekly common grade level planning period for elementary school teachers. For middle school teachers, there is a vertical common planning period available daily. In both grade and subject teacher groups observed by the IIT, the discussion centered on analyzing test results. There was no discussion around interdisciplinary curricula, and, no special art, music, technology, or enrichment teachers were in attendance.
- Although this is a STEM school and there is a STEM magnet coordinator on staff, there was little or no evidence of interdisciplinary work involving science, technology, engineering, and mathematics in classrooms visited by the IIT. Many classrooms had projectors and SMART Boards; however, if the SMART Boards were in use, it was only as overhead projector screens and not as teaching and learning tools.

Discussions with teachers confirmed that there is no structured strategy or expectations that interdisciplinary learning activities are an integral part of student learning. Any opportunities that are capitalized on are ad hoc and as a result of the efforts of individual teachers.

Impact Statement:

Because there is no comprehensive plan for interdisciplinary opportunities that incorporate the arts, music, technology and other enrichment areas, students' are limited in their ability to be academically successful.

Recommendation:

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

- Develop a comprehensive plan to ensure teachers collaborate to create interdisciplinary curricula targeting the arts, technology, and other enrichment areas; monitor and evaluate the implementation of the interdisciplinary curricula and instruction to ensure multiple, robust opportunities for students.

3.5 **The school has received a rating of *Developing* for this Statement of Practice:** Teachers implement a comprehensive system for using formative and summative assessments for strategic short and long-range curriculum planning that involves student reflection, tracking of, and ownership of learning.

Overall Finding:

While teachers use multiple assessments, including some provided by the district, they do not use the data consistently to inform planning or involve students in ownership of their learning.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- Teachers are using formative and summative assessments including pre- and post-tests, interim assessments prepared by the district, unit tests, and student learning objective (SLO) assessments. In the elementary grades, students take benchmark exams from Fountas and Pinnell three times each year. Student progress is monitored by teachers, on a data wall in the school leader's office. During two grade-level teacher meetings, one for grade two and one for middle level, the TLC led discussions around student responses to short answer questions on assessments. Teachers analyzed the responses and identified some reasons why students were not successful, such as not having sufficient background knowledge or not having the stamina to stay focused throughout the exam.
- Data are collected and some analysis is taking place. However, there was little evidence that this information is being applied to curricula and the adjustments needed to make long-range improvements in student achievement. The focus is on preparing students for assessments by providing practice in test taking strategies.
- Both teachers and students in their respective focus groups mentioned rubrics as a means to provide feedback and next steps for improvement. There were writing rubrics in the documents assembled for the review team. However, although students mentioned rubrics, there was no evidence of students using rubrics in the classrooms visited by reviewers nor in the work students shared during their small focus group. Teachers reported that they conference with students about their writing, but students indicated they did not receive feedback on their progress nor are they encouraged to set academic goals for

themselves with the exception of scoring higher grades on assessments. There was no evidence of progress monitoring specifically for students with disabilities who were not meeting benchmarks.

Impact Statement:

Teachers are not consistently using data from assessments and classroom work to align instruction and curriculum or to target individual student strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, increases in student achievement are limited.

Recommendation:

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

- Develop and implement a process for adapting curricula based on the analysis of student data; provide regular feedback to students on their progress in order for them to take ownership of their learning and to improve their work.

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

Tenet Rating

D

Debriefing Statement: Teachers’ examination of their own instructional practices and the use of data to drive instruction are inconsistent. Strategies to address diverse student needs are not constant across the school. Most teachers’ lesson plans lack specificity in regards to multiple points of access for different learners. The learning environment is positive and intellectually safe. However, the use of complex materials, higher-order questioning, rigorous and enriching tasks, interactive technology, and student ownership of learning was not uniform throughout the school. Therefore, students have inconsistent opportunities for high levels of engagement and achievement.

Strengths:

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

Areas for Improvement:

4.2 **The school has received a rating of *Developing* for this Statement of Practice:** School and teacher leaders ensure that instructional practices and strategies are organized around annual, unit, and daily lesson plans that address all student goals and needs.

Overall Finding:

The school leaders have placed heavy emphasis on the use of data to improve instruction. However, review of lesson plans and classroom visitations provided little evidence that instruction is focused on addressing the needs of all students.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- The school leader has provided opportunities for teachers to collaborate during common planning time, including PLCs, and RTI meetings every six weeks during which time they review at-risk student data. Teachers are able to access student assessment information on Performance Plus, the district's online student record keeping system. Although data are available and teachers are encouraged to use this information, the IIT found that lesson plans were not designed around student needs. In addition, there was limited evidence of the uniform use of data by all teachers to align plans to data. Plans usually listed the CCLS but did not specify intervention strategies for at-risk students or enrichment opportunities for advanced students.
- During classroom visitations, reviewers noted that learning objectives were not always posted for the students. If they were posted, the methods were not consistent across the school. Some teachers had "I can" statements displayed, others had "SWBAT," students will be able to..., and others listed instructional shifts. The different formats do not give students a consistency in knowing for themselves precisely what they are learning and why. Interviews with school leaders by the IIT indicate that they have placed an emphasis on teachers setting long and short-term goals for students. However, discussions with students and an evaluation of student work and other documentation indicate that goal setting is not an established feature of student learning.

Impact Statement:

Because teachers' do not consistently develop lesson plans and organize instruction, as identified by data, to reflect the needs of all students, student engagement and academic achievement is limited.

Recommendation:

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

- Provide a common lesson plan template that includes areas to identify specific strategies for interventions for at-risk students and enrichment opportunities for advanced students; ensure that data is consistently used to inform and drive instructional planning and delivery and that challenging academic goals are developed for all students.

4.3 **The school has received a rating of *Developing* for this Statement of Practice:** Teachers provide coherent, and appropriately aligned Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS)-based instruction that leads to multiple points of access for all students.

Overall Finding:

Teachers are aware of the CCLS. However, not all teachers are engaging students with higher -order questions, tasks, or thinking.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- Teachers are attempting to use active strategies to engage students. In eight of the classrooms visited by the IIT, teachers used the "turn and talk" strategy. However, only about half of the students followed the

directions. In half of the classes visited, the instruction was CCLS-aligned, with students expected to use text-based evidence and engage in close reading. This was particularly noted in grades six and eight classrooms, where students were expected to make inferences and support their answers. In most classes, however, the activities were teacher-led and there was whole class instruction, with little or no differentiation for students. In the 30 classes visited by the IIT, higher-order questions were asked in about 25 percent of the classes.

- In some classes, there were multiple opportunities for students to respond to questions, but students were not provided ample wait time to formulate their answers. English language learners (ELLs) were provided multiple points of access in some classes but the questions and expectations were low level. When asked by the IIT, one English as a second language (ESL) teacher indicated that she was not aware of the language proficiency level of the students. There was little evidence of engagement for students with disabilities. In a resource room, students were not asked to write beyond responding to pre-typed question packets related to a novel they were reading. Despite special education students being identified for reading disabilities, there was no specialized instruction or support observed to assist the students in reading or comprehending the novel.

Impact Statement:

Because instructional practices do not consistently reflect the CCLS or provide multiple points of access for all students, especially for identified subgroups, student engagement and academic achievement are negatively impacted.

Recommendation:

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

- Ensure that teachers have and use a variety of instructional strategies to engage all groups of students, including students with disabilities and ELLs; foster a culture of high expectations for all students and ensure that higher-order questioning, high-level texts and content complexity give all students opportunities to explain and provide reasons for their responses.

4.4 **The school has received a rating of *Developing* for this Statement of Practice:** Teachers and students work together to implement a program/plan to create a learning environment that is responsive to students' varied experiences and tailored to the strengths and needs of all students.

Overall Finding:

Teachers and leaders work together to plan the implementation of a learning environment that is intellectually and physically safe for students. However, teachers do not consistently provide a learning environment that is intellectually engaging for students.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- The school leader has provided all staff with the book, "The Behavior Code," which addresses positive behaviors and outlines plans for success. Teachers have read the book and now have a common vocabulary to use when discussing behavior issues. In most of the classrooms visited by the IIT, behavior

expectations were posted as a reminder for students. Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is used as a Tier 1 intervention for behavioral issues, and there is a behavior specialist available to work with teachers, parents, and students to develop a behavior management plan for those students who act out in class.

- Teachers do not use a range of instructional methods to engage students throughout lessons. In a number of lessons, the activities provided were not challenging or matched to the abilities or needs of students. As a result, in some classes students were not engaged but rather had their heads down on the desk, were having off topic-conversations with other students, banging pencils on the desks, or writing on their own or other students' hands.
- Parents and teachers, when interviewed, agreed that students feel safe in the school. Students reported that their classroom environment is non-threatening. They feel comfortable raising their hands and asking questions if they do not understand something. One student shared, "if another student is bothering me, I tell the teacher and she takes care of it or she says ignore it." In either case, the issue is resolved. When asked if students had anyone in school they felt comfortable going to if they needed help, they were quick to agree on a list: their teacher, another teacher standing near their class, the social workers, or the school leaders.

Impact Statement:

Although teachers create an environment that is physically safe, they do not consistently provide a learning environment that is responsive to the varied strengths and experiences of students, which limits students' academic achievement.

Recommendation:

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

- Include in lessons planning instructional strategies to engage students and ensure they remain on task throughout the lessons.

4.5 **The school has received a rating of *Developing* for this Statement of Practice:** Teachers inform planning and foster student participation in their own learning process by using a variety of summative and formative data sources (e.g., screening, interim measures, and progress monitoring).

Overall Finding:

While teachers are collecting assessment data, they are not consistently using the information to adjust student groups and to provide targeted strategies to promote student participation in their learning process.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- Teachers use a variety of assessments throughout the year, including State and district assessments, benchmarking examinations, and running records to determine the levels of each student. Observations by the IIT indicated that teachers do not routinely use information from on-going assessments to adjust their instructional practices or strategies or to amend learning on the basis of what students do or do not know. While staff indicated to reviewers that teachers conference with students often, particularly with

regard to their writing, there was little evidence of this during classroom visits. Some teachers were using exit tickets after a lesson; however, there was little evidence that teachers overall, were using robust, formative assessment techniques to identify strategies to help students learn the depth at which they needed to understand the material. Sample rubrics were available to reviewers during the document review. Although teachers and students mentioned rubrics, the IIT did not find the use of rubrics during the classroom visits.

- When students were asked if their teachers talk with them about their grades, the responses were mixed. Some students reported their teachers provided progress reports or they were asked to come to the teacher’s desk for a conversation. Other students shared that they only know how they are doing when interim reports are sent home. There was some evidence in ELA and mathematics classes that students were grouped and regrouped based on proficiency. For some ELLs, however, the groupings were dictated by the teacher’s schedule and not by the needs of the students.

Impact Statement:

Teachers do not consistently use data sources to inform their planning and involve students in their own learning process, which limits high levels of student achievement.

Recommendation:

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

- Ensure consistent use of formative and summative assessment data to inform instructional decision-making, including the use of data to adjust student work and groups; provide opportunities for students to understand their personal data to enable them to monitor their own progress and be involved in planning precise next steps.

Tenet 5 - Student Social and Emotional Developmental Health: The school community identifies, promotes, and supports social and emotional development by designing systems and experiences that lead to healthy relationships and a safe, respectful environment that is conducive to learning for all constituents.

Tenet Rating

D

Debriefing Statement: The school has established a culture that allows each child to be known by many adults in the school, but not all systems that address the social and emotional developmental health and academic needs of students are clearly defined, unified, or consistent. Students, teachers, and parents see the school as being generally safe. Although the school leader and staff have expectations for student behavior, these expectations are not consistent across the building to ensure that the school environment is conducive to learning.

Strengths:

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

Areas for Improvement:

5.2 **The school has received a rating of *Developing* for this Statement of Practice:** The school leader establishes

overarching systems and understandings of how to support and sustain student social and emotional developmental health and academic success.

Overall Finding:

The school leader has many supports in place to address the social and emotional developmental health needs of students. However, an overarching system that coordinates the work of the student support team, teachers, parents, and students is lacking.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- During their focus group interview, the student support team (SST), which includes two social workers, the school psychologist, the school nurse and the guidance counselor, who did not attend the meeting, outlined their work and the programs and services they offer. This work also involves the SBST, which meets weekly, and the crisis management team, with participation on a rotating schedule each day. The team can be called upon multiple times on a daily basis. The school also has mandated counseling for some classified students and on call Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI) for students. The SST provides explicit teaching about acceptable social behaviors, support the implementation of PBIS, and explain how to hold student group sessions on various topics. However, the school leader and SST shared that often the group sessions are cancelled because of one crisis or another during the day. They reported that the number of crisis situations this school year, especially with the younger elementary students, has reached an all-time high. However, students interviewed indicated that there is always an adult to turn to if they have worries or concerns.
- The documents shared with the review team contained the student handbook, incident and crisis protocols, the referral process and data, and materials for the RTI meetings, which occur every six to eight weeks. The behavioral and academic progress of individual students is discussed at the meetings. Some protocols and systems are in place, but the SST shared that any time a teacher has a concern they all sit down and talk about it. The team indicated they are responsive. However, both teachers and staff reported they were unclear about how to more effectively systematize their support systems.

Impact Statement:

Although the school has several programs and processes in place, the lack of an overarching system to address barriers to students' social and emotional health limits students' academic success.

Recommendation:

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

- Review existing programs and services available to determine gaps and overlaps and revise, as appropriate, to develop a systematic, comprehensive system to address students' social and emotional development health needs; determine root causes of behavior issues and use additional instructional strategies to engage students and reduce classroom management incidents.

5.3 The school has received a rating of *Developing* for this Statement of Practice: The school articulates and systematically promotes a vision for social and emotional developmental health that is aligned to a curriculum or

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

Overall Finding:

The school does not have a consistent structured curriculum to address students' social and emotional developmental health needs. There was little evidence that the school is targeting PD to address the needs of the students.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- The school has several programs to address the social and emotional developmental health needs of students. Although the vision for social and emotional developmental health is that students should feel safe in school, there is little evidence that any one program is implemented with fidelity. The school has PBIS in place. Although the students could say this meant they should “be respectful and be responsible,” there was little evidence of the reward system, the implementation of the curriculum at regular times in each class, or on-going PD for the teachers focusing on this program.
- Some teachers mentioned “DOJO,” an online program that allows teachers to target and track student behavior and to communicate with parents automatically. Additionally, the “Second Step” program has been instituted at the primary level. One part of the program includes a “social skills group.” However, when asked about this group, one teacher indicated that the group does not usually meet.
- Teachers have opportunities for PD but most of the sessions address academic topics, such as the collection of data and test preparation, or take the form of one-on-one or small group sessions with the TLC and/or the IS. The SST is available to help teachers with behavior management plans or to offer support for individual student crises. The social worker is holding periodic PD sessions on TCI to help teachers learn how to de-escalate and manage crisis situations with students. However, there is no PD offered, on a large-scale basis, which addresses what skills and behaviors teachers can use to support the social and emotional developmental health of all students.

Impact Statement:

The lack of a research-based curriculum focused on student social and emotional developmental health and inconsistent training for staff, limits the development of a safe and healthy school community and student success.

Recommendation:

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

- Investigate and choose a research-based curriculum or program that supports the social and emotional developmental health vision of the school, and implement it with fidelity; provide PD for all staff to ensure consistent implementation of the chosen curriculum or program across grades.

5.4 **The school has received a rating of *Developing* for this Statement of Practice:** All school stakeholders work together to develop a common understanding of the importance of their contributions in creating a school community that is safe, conducive to learning, and fostering of a sense of ownership for providing social and emotional developmental health supports tied to the school's vision.

Overall Finding:

Stakeholders, including school leaders, teachers, and SST take an active role in providing a school environment that addresses the social and emotional needs of students. While stakeholders have a general knowledge of their roles, there is no plan in place that incorporates protocols and processes to identify these roles specifically.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- The SST, especially the social workers, collaborates with teachers and families to support students' social and emotional health. They have flexibility in their daily schedules, which allow them to address issues and crises throughout the day. Social workers, as well as the school psychologist, meet student groups during lunch and after school. The nurse implements a backpack program, which provides food for students to bring home over weekends. The IIT found no evidence of an explicit plan that delineated these tasks or roles but rather an intrinsic motivation on the part of individuals to support student well-being.
- Parents, during their focus group, shared ways in which many of them are involved with creating a safe and positive learning environment. Examples they reported included volunteering in the school, particularly in the lower grades, attending dances as chaperones, implementing "picture day" so teachers did not have to organize the event, and teaching French to students at the school by one parent volunteer. However, there was no plan to identify specific roles. Nevertheless, the activities did provide an opportunity for parents to be part of the school community.

Impact Statement:

The lack of a plan delineating specific stakeholder roles in building a safe learning environment limits the ability of the school to meet the social and emotional developmental health needs of students, which hinders student success.

Recommendation:

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

- Revisit the school's vision of a safe learning environment and develop a plan to ensure that all stakeholders understand their specific role in achieving that vision and in consistently meeting the needs of students.

5.5 **The school has received a rating of *Developing* for this Statement of Practice:** The school leader and student support staff work together with teachers to establish structures to support the use of data to respond to student social and emotional developmental health needs.

Overall Finding:

The school leader and student support staff have developed a plan to collect, analyze, and use data to identify and meet the social and emotional developmental health needs of students. However, the plan is not fully operational and/or coordinated in order to effectively meet the needs of all students.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- The documents provided to the review team included examples of intervention documents used by the

SST, such as functional behavior assessments (FBAs), behavior improvement plans (BIPs), crisis management plans, and student support and response records. These plans use data to address student needs. However, the SST indicated that they are not always implemented with fidelity.

- The SST uses baseline data from teachers to develop different interventions for students. Other sources of data used to inform intervention plans and provide supports, include attendance records, discipline reports, and parent meeting minutes. The team works with teachers to help them analyze behaviors and to complete a tally sheet, which asks questions about the frequency and duration of the behavior. The difficulty in analyzing the data arises because of the inconsistencies in classroom management expectations from one teacher to another.
- The SST shared that if PBIS were a robust program in this school, it could yield valuable data to address student needs. Information from several focus groups indicated that PBIS is not a school-wide initiative. Likewise, if the DOJO system were used throughout the school, valuable data about individual students could be captured. However, this system is inconsistently implemented on a teacher by teacher basis.

Impact Statement:

The school’s inconsistent use of structures to support the use of data to identify and respond to student social and emotional development health needs, limits students’ opportunities to be academically and socially successful.

Recommendation:

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

- Strengthen existing structures for data collection around the social and emotional developmental health needs of students, and monitor the use of these structures to ensure consistent implementation of intervention plans by all staff.

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 open-door policy with families. Staff communicate with the home, and opportunities for family participation are available. While the school distributes academic and behavioral data to parents, there are limited opportunities for parents to recognize the implications of the data on their child’s success. Without a thorough understanding of the data, parents are limited in the ways they can support their children’s education and advocate for their success.

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

Overall Finding:

There is some communication with families via phone, texts, emails, or if the parents take advantage of the open door policy and come to the school. The school leader utilizes the auto-call system to alert all families to events, school closure, or as a reminder for upcoming state assessments. In addition, student achievement is communicated by interim reports, report cards, and progress reports from teachers. However, regular communications regarding high expectations for student achievement are limited.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- Communications from the school leader focus on behavior, discipline, and management rather than on communicating high expectations for success. The welcome letter sent as school began in the fall of 2013 noted “high quality educational experience” as the only reference to academic expectations. An additional document shared with the reviewers was to inform parents that their child had been placed into “Tier 2 intervention.” However, no information was included regarding how or why the child was at Tier 2, what types of interventions were being implemented, or for what duration.
- Families can access the district website to find out about activities and events at the school, and there is some reference to academic expectations. But the school no longer sends a newsletter to parents on a regular basis to keep them informed or to reinforce the school’s commitment to improving academic outcomes. The school leader and staff indicated to the IIT that the school intends to evaluate the effectiveness of its efforts in establishing relationships with parents.

Impact Statement:

The lack of regular communication with parents, particularly with regard to high expectations, results in limited partnerships with families to share in fostering the academic success students need for college and career readiness.

Recommendation:

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

- Establish multiple means of regular communication with parents that reinforce the school’s commitment to high academic expectations; evaluate the school’s efforts to establish productive relationships with parents.

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

Overall Finding:

Although there are opportunities for parents to be informed about their child’s instructional experience, communication is predominantly unidirectional and not reciprocal, limiting opportunities for parents to become active participants in their child’s education.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- Evidence provided to the reviewers included communication logs between parents and teachers, such as behavior sign-offs and reading log sign-offs, volunteer applications, classroom parent response surveys, home school agreements, behavior plans, progress reports, and permission slips. All documents were prepared by the school and required little more than parent sign-offs. There was no evidence of planning with parents to develop effective ways to foster two-way communication between the school and parents and community stakeholders.
- The IIT found no evidence of routine translation of any documents into languages represented in the school. If letters or other documents needed translating into Spanish, a teaching assistant was asked to do that translation. If some communication had to be translated into a different language, reviewers were told that either someone within the district who spoke and/or wrote that language would be found or “Google translator” would be used. As a result, the school cannot be sure that families who speak a language other than English understand the communications sent home. In addition, the school has not evaluated how effectively parents feel the school communicates with them.
- The school staff relies on their open-door policy to serve as an invitation for parents and families to bring any issues or concerns to the school to be discussed and addressed. Staff reported to reviewers that parents are frequently in the school, volunteering, sharing experiences, and supporting their child’s academic growth. However, during the time reviewers were on- site, there were no parents in the classrooms. A random review of the school’s visitor sign in sheets showed that parents often came to pick up their child but rarely stayed for any length of time to visit classes.

Impact Statement:

The lack of reciprocal communication with parents and families about the strengths and needs of their children, limits parents’ ability to support their children’s progress, which hinders student success.

Recommendation:

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

- Develop a plan to ensure two-way communication, in all pertinent languages, between the school and families about the strengths and needs of each child; monitor the success of the various types of communication to determine the most effective ways to reach parents and families.

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

Overall Finding:

Some opportunities exist for parents to become informed about school policies, rules, and expectations. However, there is little evidence of a concerted effort to provide explicit training for parents on ways to support their children’s learning and growth.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- The school provides some opportunities to share information with parents. For example, at back to school night parents learn about grading policies, school rules, and what will be expected of their child. In addition, some workshops are offered on ways parents might help prepare their child for State assessments. Other events in which parents participate are of a more social nature, such as picture day, roller skating, dances, or “Dad’s Day.”
- Social workers have worked with parents to develop more effective parenting skills, and teachers are available to answer specific questions from parents on how they might support their child academically. There is little evidence, however, of a plan in which a series of parent workshops is offered to help them accomplish this task. In addition, the IIT found that the school did not have formal PD for teachers to help them build and sustain family engagement.
- The school partners with many community agencies and organizations, including Child Guidance, Four Winds, Knolls Atomic Power Laboratory volunteers, Boys and Girls Club, and Union College that offer support and mentoring for students. However, there is no evidence that any of these groups currently provide training for parents on ways that they can support their child’s success.

Impact Statement:

Parents are not consistently engaged by the school in learning ways they can support their child academically and socially, and the school provides limited PD provided to staff for the home-school connection. Consequently, students’ opportunities for academic success and growth are limited.

Recommendation:

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

- Develop a plan to engage parents in ways that they can support their child’s learning and growth; provide PD to staff focused on ways to engage parents who represent the demographics of the school to support the learning and growth of all students.

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.

Overall Finding:

Data are shared with parents, but the school provides insufficient guidance to parents to enable them to interpret and better understand what the data indicates about their children’s needs.

Evidence/Information that Lead to this Finding:

- Parents receive data in the form of interim progress reports and report cards. During parent-teacher conferences (PTA), there is a discussion about student work and student progress. Also, on Back to School night in the fall, parents learn about the State assessments. School leaders and staff noted frequently the

open-door policy in effect at the school. Additionally, parents can phone the school. Since parents are “always welcome,” teachers and school leaders are open and willing to discuss student progress with parents. Although teachers are encouraged to make phone calls to parents to report both positive and negative events, the IIT found that usually parents need to initiate meetings about their children’s progress.

- A few parents in the focus group reported that they accessed data on the school website, eSchool Plus. Several of these parents were employed by the district so were familiar with the system. There was no evidence to determine if this website was widely used by other parents at the school. There was no evidence from the focus group discussions and the document review that there are meetings or workshops for parents to review data and understand the implications to enable them to advocate for services to support their children’s learning.

Impact Statement:

Because data is not shared consistently in a way to enable parents to identify and advocate for their children’s needs, student achievement is limited.

Recommendation:

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

- Plan, implement, and monitor the success of regularly scheduled parent meetings and workshops to share the types of data available, discuss what the data mean, identify supports and services available, and promote parent advocacy on behalf of their child.