



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

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)



BEDS Code	421800010000
District	Syracuse City School District
District Address	725 Harrison Street Syracuse, New York 13210
Superintendent	Dr. Sharon L. Contreras
Date(s) of Review	June 2-3, 2014
Schools Discussed in this Report	Dr. Weeks ES, Clary MS, Franklin ES, HW Smith MS, Lincoln MS, Dr. King ES

District Information Sheet											
District Grade Configuration	PK-12	Total Student Enrollment	21,069	Title 1 Population	77%	Attendance Rate	91.7%				
Free Lunch	70.7%	Reduced Lunch	6.3%	Student Sustainability	96%	Limited English Proficient	12.7%	Students with Disabilities	20.7%		
Racial/Ethnic Origin of District Student Population											
American Indian or Alaska Native	1.4%	Black or African American	50.1%	Hispanic or Latino	12.9%	Asian or Native Hawaiian /Other Pacific Islander	6.9%	White	24.8%	Multi-racial	4.0%
Personnel											
Number Years Superintendent Assigned/Appointed to District	3	Number of Deputy Superintendents	5	Average Years Dep. Superintendents in Role in the District	4.6	# of Directors of Programs	18				
% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate in District	0	% Teaching Out of Certification in District	1	% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Yrs. of Exp. in District	3	Average Teacher Absences in District	8.2				
Overall State Accountability Status (Mark applicable box with an X)											
District in Good Standing		Focus District	X	Number of Focus School Identified by District	1	Number of SIG Recipient Schools	11	Number of Schools in Status	30		
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	8.7	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4	6.9	Science Performance at levels 3 & 4	50.3	4 yr. Graduation Rate (for HS only)	48.8	6 yr. Graduation Rate (for HS only)	58.1		

Did Not Meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in ELA			
X	American Indian or Alaska Native	X	Black or African American
X	Hispanic or Latino	X	Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander
X	White	X	Multi-racial
X	Students with Disabilities	X	Limited English Proficient
X	Economically Disadvantaged		All Students
Did Not Meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Mathematics			
X	American Indian or Alaska Native	X	Black or African American
X	Hispanic or Latino	X	Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander
X	White	X	Multi-racial
X	Students with Disabilities	X	Limited English Proficient
X	Economically Disadvantaged		All Students
Did Not Meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Science			
	American Indian or Alaska Native	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
X	Economically Disadvantaged		All Students
Did Not Meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for Effective Annual Measurable Achievement Objective			
	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 leadership has a comprehensive and explicit theory of action about school culture that communicates high expectations for addressing the needs of all constituents.			X	
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 school community.			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
	OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 1: DEVELOPING			D	

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 effective planning and account for student data, needs, goals, and levels of engagement.			X	

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>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.</p>	<p>Overall Tenet Rating</p>	<p>D</p>
<p>Statement of Practice 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.</p>	<p>Tenet Rating</p>	<p>D</p>

Debriefing Statement: The school district is developing protocols and processes to increase the number of quality applicants to meet the needs of its learners. While there are multiple support mechanisms to promote teacher and leadership effectiveness, they have yet to have the desired impact on student achievement.

Areas for Improvement:

Overall Finding:

The district has implemented several new systems to improve the quality and quantity of teacher applicants, though there is no evidence that these new processes are having an impact on student achievement.

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.)*

- A member of the school district’s human resource team stated, “We are in the developing stage, because we are currently implementing things that are new from a year ago, such as a recruitment and selection team, an education effectiveness team, and an employee services team.” The human resource team agreed that their department was focused on more “traditional” human resource issues last year and is now looking to take a “strategic” look at the process. According to the group, this means that the team is looking to incorporate their Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) process and evaluation systems with professional development (PD), strategic planning, staff retention, and career ladders along with compensation. The limited time in which these new systems have been implemented precludes their effectiveness from being measured.
- Members of the human resource team conceded that they were not doing enough to expand the district’s recruitment areas. In February 2014, the district launched a new website. The team also detailed their new online application system and partnership with Teachermatch, which pairs applicants and school districts based on a set of criteria. The online application system was the result of the district having been accused of losing applications and materials in the past. The district admitted, “It was hard to keep organized and to track data... it is now much easier to organize and track documents electronically.” The human resource team believes that because of

the new web-based systems, the applications have doubled in the past year. However, as they did not have “great data” in past years, they cannot determine if what they have now is better than what they have had in the past.

- The district leader stated that she is “not happy with the majority of principals,” and believes that there is a “culture of the district,” which leads to the central office handling “lots of issues” that the school leaders should handle, such as “lots of calls and emails from parents.” She stated that she “should not have to sit with them (school leaders) to help them write a counseling memo.” She also stated that there is “no concern at the school leader level once they have tenure... that anything can happen with them.” As school leaders carry out the district leader’s vision in their schools, her lack of confidence in their performance limits schools’ ability to ensure that quality programming is consistently carried out at a high level.

Impact Statement:

A lack of data and evaluative systems limits the district’s ability to determine if their new human resources processes are having a positive impact on both the quality and quantity of teacher candidates. In addition, the district has yet to put the processes in place to develop and sustain high-quality personnel equipped to meet the needs of the district.

Recommendation:

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

- Develop a means to evaluate its new human resources processes to ensure that they are having the desired impact on teacher and leader recruitment and effectiveness, as well as supports provided to all stakeholders.

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

Tenet Rating

D

Debriefing Statement: Though the school district has undertaken multiple initiatives with several partners, guided by their strategic plan, the communication of many of these initiatives and their corresponding goals and evaluation systems are not fully developed, well known, or carried out effectively. This has resulted in inconsistent implementation of these activities, and there is no evidence to show whether any of these initiatives is having a positive impact.

Areas for Improvement:

Overall Finding:

The school district is developing its theory of action, though there are still inconsistent expectations concerning the quality of practices that lead to high levels of student success.

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.)

- According to the human resources team, the district does not have a common walkthrough document, which would define common expectations for each classroom. A human resources representative expressed that the district has not identified a common set of expectations that should exist in classrooms throughout the district. The curriculum and instruction team stated that they have embarked on instructional rounds this year because they believe “that it provides a better understanding of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS).” They conceded that the rounds are “currently in their infancy” and that they “do not have a component of effective practice” in which to measure what they see against common expectations.
- The district leader reported that a strategic plan was created in collaboration with family and other community stakeholders. The process began with a listening tour, two years ago, in her first 100 days as district leader. She then convened a strategic planning group to create a draft strategic plan which was then taken to the community for feedback. The final strategic plan was created after receiving feedback on the draft plan from 200 constituents. She reported that she learned from her listening tour that there is a history of distrust in the district and she added, “I don’t think we are getting to enough parents. They don’t know the good work we are doing in the district.” She acknowledged that urban districts need to invest in communication, and that the district’s communication strategy needs to be revisited to better communicate with the school community.
- The district leader stated that there is no written policy or district expectation about parent and community involvement. She conceded that while there are some areas to work in partnership with parents, “it is not comprehensive.” The lack of an expressed view on processes to engage stakeholders limits the school district’s ability to consistently propagate best practices.
- The school leader said that while there is a district-wide communication plan, there is not a central person with the responsibility to carry it out. She believes that “everyone thinks that it is someone else’s job” and acknowledges that it is not an effective means to promote what the district is doing. According to the district leader, the communication plan and process will be re-evaluated. The lack of a well-known communication protocol limits the school district’s ability to communicate their vision, mission, and corresponding activities to all stakeholders consistently and effectively.

Impact Statement:

The lack of common expectations and practices across many areas of the district operations limits the district’s ability to provide a cohesive program to ensure high levels of success 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:

- Set explicit expectations for all of its programs relating to staff’s roles, responsibilities, and desired

practices corresponding to the program’s objectives and measurements of success.

Statement of Practice 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 school community.

Tenet Rating

D

Debriefing Statement: The district has a centralized process for allocating general funds with input from all district level departments, but with limited input at school level. In addition to general funds, the district seeks many specialized grant and improvement funds, based on school needs. Though the district is developing and testing new processes to improve their allocation system, the impact on student achievement is not yet evident.

Areas for Improvement:

Overall Finding:

There is a lack of support and input at the school level to effectively drive district initiatives.

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.)*

- According to members of the fiscal team, the district “does not do as good a job as we should” to determine the allocation of resources. This assertion is based on the practice of basing allocations mainly on the number of students in a school, and from there, determining the number of teachers and support staff. In interviews, members of the fiscal team expressed that the district has had challenges ensuring that the data these allocations are based on are accurate and up to date. As a result, the district has just put in place a central registration system, and believes that this new process will help with accurately forecasting enrollment in each school. However, it is too early to determine whether this new process will lead to better allocation, and eventually lead to increased student achievement.
- According to members of the fiscal team, the development of the budget is “Central-office driven,” although one fiscal team member expressed that this is “not the way we want it to be.” She expressed that moving forward, she wanted school leaders to become more involved because, as she said, “who knows better than school leaders what their school needs to do better.” The fiscal team member stated that the district is including five school leaders in the budget process and is starting to allow schools to change their staffing model (the number of teachers, coaches, and teacher assistants) to best meet the needs of their school.
- District cabinet members reported that the guiding principal is the strategic plan. They indicated that they look at the five goals from the strategic plan when making resource allocation decisions. However, the district leader acknowledged in interviews that the district faces challenges ensuring that there is enough support for programming. For example, the district leader expressed that there is not someone identified to support Career and Technical Education (CTE) in schools. The district

leader shared that she believes that when the CTE program is overseen by the school leader, it is very difficult to run both the school and the CTE program, resulting in school leaders who are overwhelmed. She believes that having a district point person would be a quality support measure, which would improve the programs offered, and in turn allow the district to develop more internships and community supports, and while also ensuring that literacy and English Language Learner programs across the district are effectively administered.

Impact Statement:

The resources in the district are not effectively allocated or administered to promote school improvement and success.

Recommendation:

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

- Promote a flexible resource allocation system to meet the needs of all schools, even if their student population or needs change; gain feedback from school leaders throughout the budget development process.

Statement of Practice 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: Though the district has developed a Professional Development (PD) plan that focuses on the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and teacher effectiveness systems, teacher attendance at PD is primarily voluntary, resulting in inconsistent implementation of the plan across the district. The district is still trying to identify effective monitoring mechanisms and they are, therefore, unable to note impact of PD on teacher effectiveness.

Areas for Improvement:

Overall Finding:

The school district does not have a systematic approach to linking PD to increased student achievement.

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 members of the Professional Development (PD) Team do not currently have a comprehensive system to evaluate their PD plan or connect student outcomes to PD. Currently, the district monitors the effectiveness of PD by looking at teacher participation and engagement in PD events and looking for evidence of implementation in classrooms. However, there is no formal system to measure the fidelity in which teachers use strategies and resources in their classrooms. The lack of processes to tie PD to student achievement and teacher effectiveness limit the district's ability to

determine if their PD is having the desired impact on student achievement.

- Each school receives two instructional coaches, regardless of the school’s population, according to interviews with the curriculum and instruction team. The caseload of each instructional coach may vary, with some coaches having 20 teachers and others having 40 teachers they support. This discrepancy in caseloads limits the ability of the coaches in larger schools to provide the same level of support as counterparts in smaller schools.
- The human resources team stated in interviews that they use the district’s APPR to inform PD, in terms of what is provided and to whom it is offered. Developing and ineffective teachers are directed to specific PD to work on their areas of need. The teacher observation data is analyzed through Teachscape, and the district can use the program to group teachers by areas of need. The human resources team expressed in interviews that the APPR process is more “rigorous and calibrated” this year, as teacher feedback appears to be in closer alignment with test data from previous years. However, the team conceded that they will not know this for sure until the annual New York State test scores come in. The majority of schools do not administer interim assessments and therefore, there is not a clear way to monitor teacher effectiveness across the district using data on student progress.
- According to the PD team, most PD offered to teachers is voluntary, whether it is related to the district’s instructional coaching support or workshops offered after school and on weekends. As a result, the review team noted that the lack of uniformly attended PD sessions has resulted in the inconsistent application of instructional strategies that align with the CCLS.

Impact Statement:

The lack of a systematic and equitable PD plan, which regularly engages all instructional staff in consistently using best practices, limits the school district’s ability to improve teacher effectiveness.

Recommendation:

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

- Tie the PD plan to district goals and ensure that there are rigorous systems to collect and analyze data in order to measure teacher effectiveness and impact on student achievement; provide instructional coaches based on a specific teacher caseload, not per school.

Statement of Practice 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.

Tenet Rating

I

Debriefing Statement: Data is not collected, analyzed and acted upon in a systematic manner. This lack of process limits the regular and on-going evaluations of systems meant to support increased student achievement.

Areas for Improvement:

Overall Finding:

The school district does not regularly use data to drive effective actions towards its stated mission and vision.

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.)*

- Though the district's vision is "to become the most improved urban district in America," there is no metric in the district comprehensive improvement plan (DCIP) that would enable the district to monitor progress toward its stated vision.
- The DCIP contains the "Pathways to Success" with seven milestones, including having students begin "reading to learn at the end of third grade" and making sure that students are "on track to graduate at the end of ninth grade." However, there are no quantifiable goals linked to each milestone to determine what percentage of students succeeding at each grade level would indicate that the school district is moving in the right direction. The lack of specific, quantifiable goals limits the school district's ability to communicate with and galvanize its stakeholders in working towards specific measurements of success, linked to the district's vision, mission and activities.
- Though the district leader noted that there have been improvements in several areas, such as increasing the quality of teacher evaluations, she conceded that the advancements are "not dramatic enough" to turn the system around. "It is incremental, though not enough in a district which is dramatically underperforming. We have to do more." The lack of adequate progress toward important measures of school district improvement limits the district's ability to make the gains necessary to effectively meet the needs of all of its stakeholders.
- The school leaders discussed the district's new Leadership Academy, whose goal is to develop teachers who want to be school leaders in the district. However, there is no current data on the success of the academy "until the student performance data comes in and some of these people are put into leadership positions." The lack of a comprehensive district-wide data system results in the district needing to wait for statewide test data to be released before it can gauge the effectiveness of its decisions and its personnel. The lack of regular and ongoing monitoring of the district's Leadership Academy limits its ability to properly identify potential leaders before they are placed in leadership positions throughout the district.
- The curriculum and instruction team members stated that there is no system using interim data to drive instruction and curriculum development, although a member of the team believes that most teachers use data to make instructional decisions. Though the district has a new teacher induction process, and believes that it is an effective orientation system, curriculum and instruction team members were unable to cite data or evidence to show whether this process is effective or not. The lack of a system to regularly monitor the use of data limits the school district's ability to measure the

effectiveness of its implementation of data driven instruction (DDI) in the schools.

Impact Statement:

The lack of a systematic approach to data usage limits the school district in its efforts to effectively monitor its current processes, as well as to inform all stakeholder groups in the district about school and student progress as measured against its stated goals.

Recommendation:

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

- Quantify all goals listed in the DCIP so that progress towards them can be monitored and evaluated regularly and timely adjustments made to accelerate student progress.
- Develop data-based evaluation systems to monitor the effectiveness of all of its programs in order to take the most effective actions to benefit all stakeholders.

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

Statement of Practice 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.	Tenet Rating	D
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Areas for Improvement:

Overall Finding:

While the school district provides opportunities for school leaders to consult and engage with the district, it is inconsistently able to provide the supports to meet specific needs within the school community.

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 school leaders in several schools noted that they receive feedback from their supervisors, and that “the district supports the initiatives that they roll out.” All of the school leaders whose schools were visited by the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) reported that the district provides monthly PD for principals, and English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics instructional coaches for every school. Additionally, the school leaders cited that their staff have been trained in APPR, as well as in other areas related to curriculum, instruction, and Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS). One middle school leader reported that she works with the Executive Director of middle schools for the district, stating that “she keeps us up on middle school initiatives.” The school leader indicated that the executive director comes to observe her, and following her observations, she is provided with useful feedback and follow-up support. She also indicated that during the monthly PD

provided to school leaders there are opportunities to ask questions. The school leader added that if she has content specific concerns, she can get support from the mathematics or ELA coordinators for the district.

- A new school leader stated that he has not received training on the rubric for evaluating school leaders or any feedback about his performance against the expectations contained in the rubric. He also stated that, to date, he has received no feedback on any facets of his job performance from the school district, and that there is a lack of reciprocal communication, hindering his ability to understand the district's expectations.
- The district leader noted that it took longer than anticipated to adopt and implement the school leader's APPR model for this school year and, as a result, the district had started the evaluation process of principals "later than we wanted." She indicated that she is seeing a change in disciplinary practice and with teacher evaluations, though she noted that the change is incremental, and is not enough to dramatically turn things around. She reported that they would have better data on principals if the process had not been slowed down due to extended negotiations with the union. She anticipates that the process "will be on track for next year," adding, "we have an excellent tool."

Impact Statement:

While many school leaders are receiving the necessary feedback and support they need to create a school environment that is responsive to its constituents, there remain some school leaders who are unclear of what is expected of them and are therefore limited in their ability to carry forth the district's vision and mission at school level.

Recommendation:

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

- Tie in the support provided by the district to measures that gauge progress towards meeting the vision and mission of the district.
- Ensure that all newly appointed school leaders receive the necessary induction and support to enable them to fulfill their role and responsibilities and to ensure that what happens in school supports the district's vision, mission, and goals.
- Ensure that school leaders have clear understanding of the Teacher Improvement Plan (TIP) process and the district's expectations for teacher accountability.

Statement of Practice 3.1 - Curriculum Development and Support: 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.

Tenet Rating

D

Areas for Improvement:

Overall Finding:

The school district provides training on the CCLS, though implementation across the district is inconsistent.

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 school district’s curriculum and instruction team stated that the district does not have a system of interim data to drive instruction and curriculum, but believes that “75 per cent of the district’s teachers use data to make curricular and instructional decisions.” Team members reported that to ensure this, lesson plans are reviewed regularly. Additionally, the district provides teachers with an induction process, consisting of two days to work with new teachers on curriculum work and digital resources. However, curriculum and instruction personnel were unable to state whether the induction process is effective. In one of the schools visited, DDI was not found in any of the 17 lesson plans reviewed and was absent in 72 per cent of the classrooms visited by the review team. The discrepancy between the district’s believed use of DDI and the actual use in schools limits the district’s ability to understand exactly what is happening in its schools in order to narrow the gap between expectations and practice.
- The district leader believes the implementation of the CCLS to be “inconsistent.” Though she sees that teachers are “making an attempt” at the elementary and middle school levels, and “even some teachers at the high schools,” she believes that “the higher you go, the less CCLS you see. Because there is no systematic means of ensuring that the CCLS is implemented with fidelity district wide, students have inconsistent learning experiences.
- The school leaders and teachers whose schools were visited by the IIT stated that they believe that the district is doing a better job of providing PD and support for the implementation of the CCLS than they had in the past. One school leader reporting on district PD said that “in regards to the ELA curriculum, we use those strategies taught and have our teachers develop their teaching points from them. I think what the district has rolled out is satisfactory.” Staff at another school noted that the PD this year has been better organized and more specific to their needs. A school leader at another school reported that the district “has a solid plan; however, the curriculum units are still being developed.”
- Teachers at one school reported that they have received Smartboards as part of the additional resources they received as a pilot school. However, the group also reported that teachers did not have the training to use them, and that “most have learned on their own.” The lack of training on

Smartboards limits their effectiveness in engaging all learners.

Impact Statement:

Though the district support for the implementation of the CCLS is in process, teachers’ planning and classroom adoption of the CCLS is inconsistent, which limits the ability of the district to provide a challenging learning experience for every student.

Recommendation:

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

- Provide CCLS aligned PD on a regular and on-going basis, with follow up support from the district and school staff, to ensure the fidelity of its classroom implementation.

Statement of Practice 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 and addresses effective planning and account for student data, needs, goals, and levels of engagement.

Tenet Rating

Developing

Areas for Improvement:

Overall Finding:

While the district provides voluntary PD opportunities throughout the school year and summer, and provides instructional coaches for every building in the district to develop teachers’ use of effective practices, there is the lack of systems and structures to monitor implementation and effectiveness of PD and to provide the proper follow-up support that is targeted to teacher needs.

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.)*

- Teachers at one middle school reported that the district PD has been more specific to their needs this year. They indicated that teachers are coming back from the PD excited by what they have learned. They also reported that the APPR is pushing more people to sign up for PD opportunities as the Saturday Academies and summer PD are voluntary. In addition, teachers reported that the district is offering more online PD, which is ideal for teachers who cannot leave their kids for a full day of PD during the summer. Teachers are using the Teachscape platform for the online PD.
- Teachers at another school reported that the district provides Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) training once a month. Social studies teachers reported they have the opportunity to meet with other social studies teachers in the district. They also indicated that the district provided textbook roll-out on reading and writing like an historian which has helped them to tie the social studies curriculum to the CCLS; to connect the writing piece with the ELA Common Core.
- The district’s curriculum and instruction team reported in interviews that they created a multi-year PD plan so that they could look at research and maximize their resources. They indicated that they

realized they needed on the ground support so that teachers could get up to speed quickly with the CCLS, which is why they decided to put coaches in every building. They indicated that they get feedback from teachers following PD sessions on superintendent's conference day, in summer PD and Saturday Academy PD that helps them better meet the needs of teachers.

- The majority of school leaders and teachers interviewed reported that the instructional coaches provided by the district to each school have been an important support in improving teacher effectiveness. Teachers in one school reported that the district provides the school with mathematics and ELA coaches who meet with teachers once a week in content meetings. In the words of one teacher, "Coaches tell us about anything new that is being rolled out. They supply us with resources and assist with lesson plans. They will come to the room and co-teach or model for you." In addition, coaches help teachers to plan, set up pacing calendars, and plan assessments. In another school, which was visited, the teachers interviewed also had positive things to say about the school's two instructional coaches. However, the coaches noted that they have not seen the consistency in the classroom implementation of the CCLS, DDI, or the differentiation, which they had expected. The use of the instructional coaches as a support for teacher effectiveness has not yet demonstrated that it is having its desired impact in classroom practice.
- In interviews with the district professional development team, members reported that they do classroom observations to assess PD needs of teachers. They also provide monthly coaches academies and "pop-in" on coaches to observe their work in schools. When questioned about how they measure the effectiveness of the coaches in changing teacher practice, district staff reported that they do observation in all the schools and receive reports from coaches on what they are seeing. They reported that since initiating the coaching model two years ago, they have "made huge gains." When asked by the IIT what that assessment was based on, district staff reported that, for example, teachers are now all using small student groups during instruction. They indicated that in the first year of coaches in the buildings, teachers were not complying. They said the focus going forward is to get at the quality of the instructional delivery. While the district is monitoring for changes in teacher practices, it is not yet monitoring the quality of instructional delivery and connecting it with school or student data.
- Teachers in one school with a very large population of English language learners (ELLs) reported that the district provided assistance to the English as Second Language (ESL) teachers on conference days. However, teachers indicated that they need more PD in this area as the school has 200 ELLs who make up 75% of the school's population and speak 20 different languages.
- One school leader reported that they are "inundated" with data from the district. She indicated that the district has leadership academies to tell school leaders how to use the data. She reported that they take the data that is useful to their school and share it with teachers. Another school leader reported that the district has provided PD for school leaders on how to have data conversations with staff. However, the review team did not find consistent use of data by teachers to drive instructional decisions during reviews of district schools.

- One school leader reported, “The district is not very responsive” because she is still awaiting the status of the TIPs she submitted. She also stated that she had questions regarding which teachers should be put on TIPs, but she has to yet to hear from the district on this matter. She went on to report that the district’s ability to “eliminate bad teachers does not exist.” The lack of follow up by the district to address issues of low performing teachers limits the effectiveness of the school’s instructional program.
- Teachers in one school reported that instructional rounds are a district-wide initiative that helps teachers see what is expected at different grade levels. During instructional rounds, teams of teachers go into classrooms to see different grade levels. Teachers at one school reported that it helps teachers see, “where kids are coming from and where they are going.”

Impact Statement:

While the district provides numerous PD opportunities for teaching staff to improve teacher effectiveness, the lack of systems for providing follow-up support that addresses areas of instructional practices identified through analysis of school and student data, limits schools’ ability to provide students with consistently rigorous learning opportunities that foster improved student performance.

Recommendation:

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

- Adopt a model of monitoring the district’s PD and coaching process using school and student performance data to determine PD and coaching effectiveness in meeting the needs of all teachers and learners. Provide the necessary follow-up support where indicated through this process.

Statement of Practice 5.1 - Student Social and Emotional Developmental Health: The district creates policy and works collaboratively with the school to provide opportunities and resources that positively support students’ social and emotional developmental health.

Tenet Rating

I

Areas for Improvement:

Overall Finding:

The district provides on-going PD for student support services staff. However, student support staff have been reduced across the district and many schools are struggling to meet the social and emotional needs of their students and to ensure school safety. While the school district lacks systems and processes that would ensure schools are providing consistent support for student social and emotional developmental health support, the district is in the process of re-evaluating its processes and procedures for ensuring a safe and secure environment that is conducive to learning for 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.)*

- School leaders and staff at several schools reviewed by the IIT reported that PBIS is a district-wide initiative and that all schools are provided with a PBIS coordinator who supports PBIS teams in the schools. One school's student support team member reported that while the district provides some training and staff development on PBIS, it is 'scattered' with no clear direction of where they need to go. The IIT found during school reviews that PBIS is embraced and implemented more consistently in some schools than in others.
- Student support staff members in several schools reported the district provides on-going PD to counselors and social workers at monthly district-wide sessions. Staff members at one school reported that during these sessions they are made aware of community supports. They added that the district does "lots of trainings." Staff members reported they went to Baltimore to learn the Pax good behavior game, an incentive-based program to promote positive behavior. They were also trained in trauma therapy and Student Targeted Aggression Replacement Therapy (START).
- Student support staff members interviewed in one elementary school indicated that the district provides funding for the Primary Project through Contact Community Services, play therapy for 60 students in grades kindergarten and first grade who are identified through the use of a screening tool as having school adjustment issues. Staff reported that the program is effective for ELLs who may have come from war-torn countries or withdrawn students who may have experienced trauma in their homes. Staff were able to show data on the effectiveness of this program. While this program has pre and post testing embedded in the program to determine program effectiveness, student support staff in one school indicated that they could not rely on district data to help them track student and school progress. They stated that data on ESchool and Cognos is not accurate. This limits schools ability to monitor the effectiveness of programs and processes.
- According to one school's student support team member, there "seems to be confusion over how to handle emergencies, psychological or behavioral, within the district." A contracted vendor stated that "Outside of the sessions we have with students, we are unclear of district provider roles." The lack of clear roles with regards to unanticipated student crises limits the school's ability to effectively assign roles to staff or meet the social and emotional developmental health needs of all its students.
- One member of the district's student support team stated that the district "does not have a district-wide program" in reference to students' behavioral expectations or consequences. One school leader expressed the need to have a consistent code of conduct and a need to "clearly define bullying." The district leader reported that the district was cited in a civil liberties report for being in the top 100 schools in the country for suspension rates and the disproportional rates of suspension among sub-group populations, which are as high as 70 percent for sub-groups in some schools. She indicated that the rate has begun to decline. After this report came out, the Attorney General started investigating the use of suspensions in the district, culminating in a report that found, in the words of the district leader, "egregious violations." In response to the findings, the district created a 50-member task force and hired an external organization to work with the task force. Based on this work, the district has begun moving from a punitive to a restorative form of social justice in the

schools and is rewriting the code of conduct using the restorative process. Teachers will be required to attend mandatory training this summer about this process. The district leader added that the district leadership will be setting goals with the Board of Education. The lack of a well-known and centralized code of conduct limits the school’s ability to consistently provide all students with a safe and secure learning environment.

- A school’s student support team member reported that while the district “talks about” student social and emotional developmental health as a priority, they have actually cut resources, which challenges the school to provide needed services. The student support team indicated that the district cut their guidance secretary position. One school leader reported that an outside vendor has reduced their caseload from 30 to 15 students this year and another vendor has not provided the school with “a suitable social worker” in the current school year. In some cases, a lack of resources limits those schools’ ability to effectively provide social and emotional developmental health services to all students who need them.

Impact Statement:

While the district provides resources and PD opportunities for staff to support student social and emotional developmental health, it lacks the systems to monitor where increased PD should be required or where follow-up support is necessary to ensure all school environments consistently promote student social and emotional developmental health, safety and well-being.

Recommendation:

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

- Develop a written system of protocols for identifying students who may have social and emotional developmental health needs, and provide training to all staff on this process.
- Develop a protocol for schools on how to effectively handle crisis situations with at risk students, and define the roles and responsibilities for student support services personnel during crises.
- Develop, communicate, and train all staff on the district’s updated code of conduct, outlining roles, responsibilities, and desired outcomes through its implementation.

Statement of Practice 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.

Tenet Rating

D

Areas for Improvement:

Overall Finding:

While the district is taking steps to promote a welcoming environment in its schools, there is no comprehensive plan to ensure that effective reciprocal communication with its families is occurring consistently throughout

the district.

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 leader stated that while there are some areas where the district and schools work in partnership with parents, these are neither common nor comprehensive. She added that there is no written policy or district expectation on parent and community involvement. The lack of a systematic plan to engage families at the district and school level limits the district's ability to maximize partnerships with parents.
- Teachers reported in interviews that the district offers classes for parents on a number of topics related to personal development and strategies to help children through their Parent University. Teachers in one school also indicated that General Educational Development (GED) classes for parents are offered in their school by the district. A school leader reported that parents and principals are surveyed to ensure that parent classes are meeting the needs and wants of parents and schools. He also indicated that the district makes robo calls to remind parents about the offerings provided at Parent University. When district leaders were asked by the IIT how they engage ELL parents, they reported that they go to them stating, "We go the refugee center, we go to the mosques, etc. Every class in Parent University is offered in native languages." They indicated that participation has grown from 1000 to 3600 in a very short time. They added that 14 percent of participants at Parent University are parents of ELLs.
- The school leader in one of the schools visited stated that they do not send home translated documents to families of ELL students, despite having more than a dozen languages spoken at their schools. In another school, the school leader reported that they have sent home only one translated document all year. Several school leaders reported that the district communicates directly with parents through a monthly newsletter and robo-calls. The district maintains "school messenger" which houses family email and phone numbers and sends notifications home when school is delayed and/or canceled. However much of the district communication is in English only, which impedes reciprocal communication with non-English speaking families. The limited use of translated oral and written communication tools limits the district's non-English speaking families from becoming partners in their child's success.
- The district leader stated that based on information gleaned from her meetings with several families in the district, she believes that many schools could be more welcoming to families. As a result, the district has done "significant training" on customer service, and how to effectively communicate with parents. The district hired a company, which provided mystery shoppers, who came to schools and scored them on how they were treated. The school leaders were given this information, and training was provided for them, their assistant principals and secretaries. "Shopping" was done again, though this data has not yet been made available to her. The district's decision to review its own processes on how it treats families, and train its front line staff in proper protocols opens up

the channels of effective communication for all groups of stakeholders to positively engage with the families.

Impact Statement:

The school district's lack of a systematic, strategic process to facilitate a reciprocal communication model with its stakeholders limits its ability to engage its families as full partners in supporting their child's success at school, home, and in the community, socially, emotionally, and academically.

Recommendation:

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

- Develop a long-term district plan for community engagement, including and collaborating with members of the community, to foster mutual trust and high levels of stakeholder engagement. Incorporate Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely (SMART) goals, with specific actions and quantitative indicators of success.
- Send home translated documents to non-English speaking families.