

Syracuse City



School District



Assurance of Discontinuance Report September – February 2016

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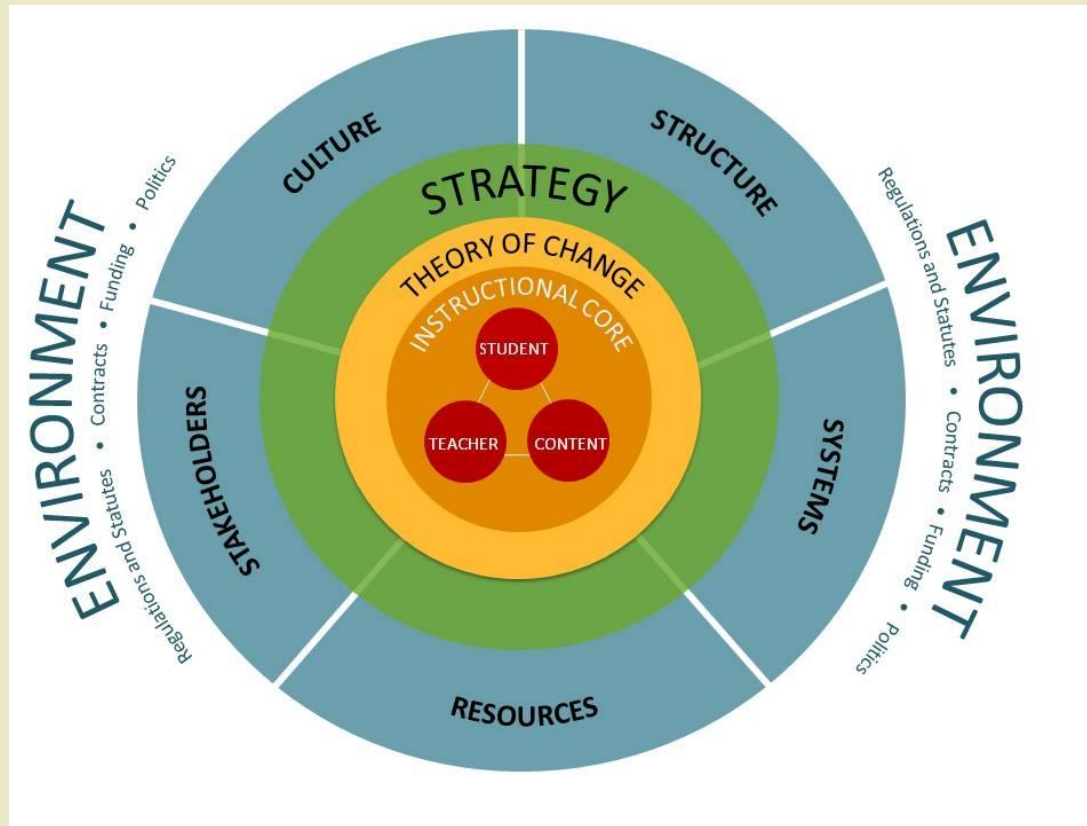
Independent Monitor

June 8, 2016

Methodology

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“Putting a District-wide strategy into practice requires building a coherent organization that connects to teachers’ work in classrooms and enables people at all levels to carry out their part of the strategy.”



Context

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The District has established clear Board policies that ensure due process for students and implemented central office structures to address the provisions outlined in the Assurance of Discontinuance. Now the District should focus on strengthening the delivery of school-based interventions and reinforcing professional development strategies through job-embedded supports to principals, teachers and other staff.

Report Highlights

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Provision #	Highlight	Recommended Next Steps
<p>33 Designation of Internal Ombudsman</p>	<p>The Ombudsman position has been vacant since October 2015. According to the Office of Talent Management, the District has been actively recruiting and interviewing potential candidates.</p>	<p>According to the Assurance, the Internal Ombudsman position is responsible for communicating with students, parents, and staff about issues related to the District’s discipline policies. Currently, the Executive Director of Student Support has taken on this role.</p>
<p>35- Adequate Staffing</p>	<p>To date, the Board of Education has approved 12 new positions at the central office to support implementation of the Assurance.</p> <p>The Director of School Culture & Climate has been hired and will begin working on June 13, 2016.</p>	<p>The Director of School Culture & Climate should play a critical role in supporting the implementation of school-based preventive strategies plans. Increased support and monitoring will ensure schools receive the feedback needed to build capacity of School Intervention and Discipline School Climate Teams.</p>
<p>37-39 Preventive Strategies</p>	<p>SY15/16 was the first year that the District required schools to develop Preventive Strategies Plans (PSP). In March, the Independent Monitor began visiting schools to observe the implementation of the plans.</p>	<p>The Executive Director of Student Support has worked with central office and external stakeholders to improve the guidance to schools. SY16/17 plans are due June 30. School visits and monitoring activities should begin early in the school year. Schools need ongoing feedback and support in order to better implement their PSPs.</p>
<p>44 Policies & Procedures: Progressive Discipline System</p>	<p>Due to the adoption of the revised Code of Conduct, there has been a record decline in the number of K-5 suspensions in Syracuse City School District. In 2012-2013, SCS D reported 2,652 suspensions of students in grades K-5. In 2013-2014, K-5 suspensions totaled 1,507. The number of K-5 suspensions in 2014-2015 decreased significantly as a result of the guidelines outlined in the Code of Conduct, Character and Support. However, during the first semester of school year 2016, there was a total of 209 K-5 suspensions, which is a 61% increase from the same time last year. The increase in suspensions may be related to the Districts change in the oversight/approval of K-5 suspensions</p>	<p>Further review of the K-5 suspensions should be conducted to ensure all incidents meet the “pervasive or serious aggressive acts” standard and to determine if intervention plans are being developed. The District may need to re-establish the ED approval/consultation before suspending K-3 students. Targeted training and professional development should be provided to early childhood teachers in schools where there are high K-5 suspensions so they are better equipped to provide age appropriate classroom-based intervention strategies.</p>

Report Highlights

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Provision #	Highlight	Recommended Next Steps
<p>47 SROs & Law Enforcement</p>	<p>From September-March 2106, fifty-four (54) students had involvement with SROs/law enforcement in a school-based discipline incident.</p>	<p>The Independent Monitor will review student discipline files where a SRO or law enforcement personnel was called to intervene in a school-based incident. Upon completion of the review, the Independent Monitor will provide feedback to the Superintendent and the Office of the Attorney General for consideration to inform future revisions to the Code of Conduct.</p>
<p>57-63 Staff Training</p>	<p>Since the inception of the AOD, the District has increased its professional development related to understanding discipline policy and procedures, The Code of Conduct, classroom management, responsive practices and culturally relevant pedagogy. The Code of Conduct training has a high-level of staff participation and the District has extended training to support staff. There is far less staff participation in the support and capacity building areas.</p>	<p>Overall, there are high participation rates in The Code of Conduct training sessions. Conversely, the classroom management, restorative practices, and culturally responsive education sessions have significantly less staff participation rates. The Independent Monitor is conducting an in-depth review of the District’s training plan.</p> <p>Additionally, it is recommended that SCSD use the Teachscape system to better track staff participation.</p>
<p>76 Data Collection & Review</p>	<p>The District launched an online Behavior Intervention Center (BIC) Intake Form. According to the Code of Conduct (pg. 31), “...School Intervention Teams will engage in weekly meetings to review data, identify students most in need of immediate on-going interventions...” The electronic intake form allows school-based and central office staff to better monitor if the BIC intervention strategy is an effective resource for students and teachers.</p>	<p>Now that the District is collecting real-time information regarding student referrals to BIC, School Intervention Teams (SIT) are better equipped to problem-solve around the needs of high-risk students. The Office of Student Support Services including the Special Education Team should closely monitor the BIC intake data and the SIT process to determine what supports schools need to effectively implement the Code of Conduct and Assurance of Discontinuance requirements.</p>

Next Reporting Period

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- The SY16 End-of-Year Report will focus on the following areas:
 - AOD# 37-39 Preventive Strategies Implementation
 - AOD #57-Staff Training/Professional Development
 - AOD #79-School-level Data Review Protocols-Discipline School Climate and School Intervention Teams

Comments & Questions

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