



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

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)



BEDS Code	421800010035
School Name	Grant Middle School
School Address	2400 Grant Blvd, Syracuse, NY 13208
District Name	Syracuse City School District
School Leader	Pamela Odom
Dates of Review	October 15-16, 2014
School Accountability Status	Priority School
Type of Review	SED Integrated Intervention Team (IIT)

School Information Sheet

School Configuration (2014-15 data)					
Grade Configuration	6-8	Total Enrollment	667	SIG Recipient	Yes
Types and Number of English Language Learner Classes (2014-15)					
# Transitional Bilingual	138	# Dual Language	0	# Self-Contained English as a Second Language	0
Types and Number of Special Education Classes (2014-15)					
# Special Classes	4	# SETSS	0	# Integrated Collaborative Teaching	15
Types and Number of Special Classes (2014-15)					
# Visual Arts	20	# Music	10	# Drama	0
# Foreign Language	5	# Dance	0	# CTE	15
School Composition (most recent data)					
% Title I Population	82	% Attendance Rate		94	
% Free Lunch	78	% Reduced Lunch		7	
% Limited English Proficient	22	% Students with Disabilities		20	
Racial/Ethnic Origin (most recent data)					
% American Indian or Alaska Native	1	% Black or African American		37	
% Hispanic or Latino	11	% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander		15	
% White	33	% Multi-Racial		4	
Personnel (most recent data)					
Years Principal Assigned to School	3 months	# of Assistant Principals		1	
# of Deans	0	# of Counselors/Social Workers		10	
% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate	0	% Teaching Out of Certification		0	
% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience	4	Average Teacher Absences		.66	
Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2013-14)					
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	5.7	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4		5.1	
Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (4th Grade)	N/A	Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (8th Grade)		11.8	
Student Performance for High Schools (2013-14)					
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4		Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4			
Credit Accumulation High Schools Only (2013-14)					
% of 1st year students who earned 10+ credits		% of 2nd year students who earned 10+ credits			
% of 3rd year students who earned 10+ credits		4 Year Graduation Rate			
6 Year Graduation Rate					
Overall NYSED Accountability Status (2013-14)					
Reward		Recognition			
In Good Standing		Local Assistance Plan			
Focus District		Focus School Identified by a Focus District			
Priority School	X				

Accountability Status – Elementary and Middle Schools

Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in ELA (2012-13)				
American Indian or Alaska Native	-	Black or African American		
Hispanic or Latino		Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander		X
White		Multi-Racial		-
Students with Disabilities		Limited English Proficient		
Economically Disadvantaged				
Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Mathematics (2012-13)				
American Indian or Alaska Native	-	Black or African American		
Hispanic or Latino	X	Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander		X
White	X	Multi-Racial		-
Students with Disabilities		Limited English Proficient		
Economically Disadvantaged				
Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Science (2012-13)				
American Indian or Alaska Native		Black or African American		
Hispanic or Latino		Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander		
White		Multi-Racial		
Students with Disabilities		Limited English Proficient		
Economically Disadvantaged				

SCHOOL PRIORITIES AS WRITTEN BY THE SCHOOL:

1. Establish and implement a shared vision for success to promote a safe and orderly school climate and environment.
2. Using data to provide specific individualized interventions for struggling learners.
3. Increasing classroom rigor to engage students in meaningful lessons.
4. Increasing the use of higher order thinking/questioning when checking for understanding and delivering feedback.
5. Writing and delivering lesson plans that promote the shifts in the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS).

Information about the review

- The review was co-led by an Outside Educational Expert (OEE) and a representative from the New York State Education Department. The team also included a district representative, a district-selected Outside Educational Expert, a Special Education School Improvement Specialist (SEIS) representative and a representative from the Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (RBERN)
- The review team visited a total of 48 classrooms during the two-day review.
- Reviewers conducted focus groups with students, staff and parents
- Reviewers examined documents provided by the school, including curriculum maps, lesson plans, school-wide data, teacher feedback, and student work.
- On the date of the review, the principal had been in post six weeks.

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,				X

	technology, and other enrichment opportunities.				
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:				D	

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	

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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The school has received a rating of ***Developing for Tenet 2*** – School Leader Practices and Decisions.

- The leader has developed the school vision and mission with input from a small number of parents and staff. The vision, “To be the most improved urban school,” is shared with students daily through announcements. The school leader has identified five major priorities related to promoting an orderly environment and improving instructional practices. Teachers say they support these priorities, but they do not consistently model them in classrooms. The long-term vision does not currently contribute to the achievement of the school’s priorities, because it has been in place a very short time.
- The school leader makes strategic decisions to organize programmatic, human, and fiscal capital resources that align to priorities in the school self-evaluation. The school leader has developed an extended and revised learning program, with a more academic focus; however, the program has yet to start. She has also employed coaches to model and promote effective instructional practice. A reflection room has been developed to support the implementation of a new Code of Conduct for students. The school leader uses available resources to address the immediate needs of the school; however, some resource allocations are too recent to determine their impact on school improvement.
- The school leader has started to implement the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) process through regularly observing teacher practice. The school leader said that the school leaders have conducted walkthroughs to develop an understanding of the quality of instruction throughout the school. In addition, the school shared that multi-classroom leaders (MCLs) and coaches work with the school leader and staff to improve the quality of instruction. A review of documents showed that school leaders provide feedback to teachers, but the quality of feedback varied. Reviewers found that some comments included specific and clear steps for improvement and other comments lacked focus and did not provide clear directions for improvement.
- The school leaders have systems and procedures for collecting and collating data about student achievement, attendance, suspensions, and referrals for specific support for individual students. However, the systems are not regularly monitored to check that subsequent actions are making the planned difference to student achievement, attendance, and behavior. School leaders and staff are beginning to connect evidence-based systems to examine and improve practices to respond to students’ social and emotional developmental health issues. For example, the student support staff use data on individual student referrals, attendance, and response to incentives collated in the Educators Handbook to monitor student behavior and plan additional supports. Evidence from a review of documents and staff interviews demonstrate that staff are in the early stages of analyzing data to evaluate the impact of school-wide practices on achieving school goals, such as improving instructional practices. The lack of in-depth monitoring and evaluation of school-wide practices impedes progress towards achieving the school-wide specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-sensitive (SMART) goals.

Recommendation:
 Improve progress towards school-wide goals by ensuring that:

- school leaders and staff monitor and evaluate progress towards the school’s major priorities each semester to check on the impact that new systems are having;
- school staff seek views from parent and student representatives at small and large group meetings each semester and incorporate them into the monitoring process;
- school leaders monitor the quality of instruction in line with the APPR, providing specific feedback on areas for improvement and arranging follow-up sessions after each visit to check that agreed improvements are being implemented; and
- school staff at all levels use information from evidence-based systems to inform their evaluations.

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

D

The school has received a rating of **Developing** for Tenet 3 – Curriculum Development and Support.

- The school leader stated that she has not developed a plan or formal partnerships to create interdisciplinary curricula across subjects and grades, because she does not regard this as a priority at this stage. Although some physical education and art teachers incorporate English language arts (ELA) and mathematics into lessons, reviewers did not see examples of the arts, technology and enrichment opportunities included in core lessons. Consequently, students have minimal opportunities to experience cross-curricula activities that increase their ability to use the skills, knowledge, and understanding developed in one subject to improve their performance in another.
- The school leader has recently introduced support, training, materials and guidance for the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) aligned curricula. She encourages the incorporation of CCLS shifts in non-core subjects through a newly developed common lesson plan approach, and provides training in its use. Teachers are beginning to align curricula to CCLS; however, during classroom instruction, teachers’ inconsistently incorporate the CCLS shifts or adapt lessons to meet the needs of individuals or sub-groups. As a result, students do not receive curricula that lead to college and career readiness.
- A review of unit and lesson plans showed that teachers’ plans reflect the content of the CCLS. However, the lesson plans do not consistently align to CCLS shifts in ways that students can access. Although teachers include some complex texts in plans, teachers do not uniformly plan work scaffolded to match students’ varied skills and ability levels. Teachers minimally include activities in their plans that promote students’ creativity and inquiry skills. Lessons are the same for all students, regardless of performance in previous assessments. As a result, student achievement is not consistently improving as measured by school and state assessments.
- Teachers are developing a system for using formative and summative assessments for planning. A schedule is in place for the analysis of data, with support from coaches on its use. However, classroom visits showed that most plans did not take sufficient account of the range of abilities within each class and students completed the same tasks regardless of prior learning and/or ability. Some re-teaching does occur in response to information from teachers’ formative assessments, but teachers inconsistently modify planning to include additional supports or scaffolded activities when students encounter difficulties.

- Teachers have recently implemented a system to set goals for individual students. However, evidence gathered from the small and large teacher group meetings show that knowledge and understanding of these goals is varied. Students interviewed by the IIT confirm that they have individual goals, but students expressed different levels of understanding about how their goals will help them to improve academically. The quality of feedback observed in many lessons varied. While reviewers saw a few examples of constructive feedback, most of the feedback provided included limited comments such as “good,” and, “correct,” and did not give specific advice to students to help them improve their learning. Opportunities for students to show their learning in their own way, for example through exhibitions or projects, are rare, which limits ownership of learning. The alignment between the curriculum and assessment is not leading to improved student achievement.

Recommendation:

Improve the quality of curriculum planning and raise teacher and student expectation of achievement by having school leaders, MCLs, and coaches:

- work with teachers at weekly coaching sessions, using for example their lesson plans or assessment data, to reflect on how to match curriculum and tasks to the needs of students of all abilities in the following lessons;
- through meetings, feedback or training activities, encourage and support teachers in planning a wider variety of tasks and assessment opportunities, which engage students’ interest and give them opportunities to make decisions, for example on how to demonstrate their learning and how to develop higher-level skills;
- provide further guidance to teachers on how to set and use targeted goals for students; and
- monitor through walkthroughs teachers’ provision of feedback to students.

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

The school has received a rating of **Developing** for Tenet 4 – Teacher Practices and Decisions.

- School and teacher leaders are beginning to engage teachers in dialogue about aligning plans to data through weekly meetings with MCLs and coaches. However, the impact is not yet apparent in most classrooms. Teacher leaders are beginning to work with staff to establish goals for students, with varying levels of success. Most students are not clear what their goals are or how goals can influence their achievement. Currently, the school’s instructional practices do not enable students to reach their goals. Teachers organize work around unit and lesson plans, but planning lacks detail of what different groups of students are expected to learn. Evidence from meetings with the MCL indicates that when teachers’ reflect on their lesson, they do not provide information about the progress of individuals or groups of students. Scrutiny of planning and evidence from classroom observations demonstrate that student activities and preferred learning styles are not given sufficient attention and teachers implement lessons that cater to a narrow range of mainly passive learning styles. Consequently, students become bored and disengaged.

- A review of lesson plans and classroom observations show that most teachers do not plan instruction that meets the range of student abilities and learning needs. Reviewers noted that while lesson plans included new vocabulary for each lessons, during class instruction, students had few opportunities to use the new vocabulary. Most lessons required students to complete the same task regardless of prior learning and achievement. In a few classrooms, teachers asked higher-level questions that required students to think and extend their learning but this was not the norm. Lesson observations showed that most students struggled to complete the work and tasks assigned.
- Students do not work in a learning environment that is intellectually safe and meets their needs. For example, students report that they are laughed at and are called names when they answer questions incorrectly. Teacher expectation of student behavior and responsibility to engage with the lesson is too low and the pace at which students are required to work is still too slow. For example, during class visits, reviewers noted incidents of students playing around or sleeping without intervention. Students report that disrespect for others frequently slows the learning of the whole class. Some teachers of English language learners (ELL) classes, grouped students based on their languages spoken and language ability. However, this is the exception as reviewers found that few teachers used strategies to acknowledge diverse groups of students and their needs. The learning environment is usually not responsive to students’ varied experiences.
- Teachers inconsistently use summative and formative data sources to inform instructional decisions. During class visits, the IIT found few examples of teacher grouping students. In addition, reviewers noticed that when students could not grasp concepts teachers did not routinely check for student understanding or used formative assessment to modify instruction. In class, students do not often receive feedback based on data that outlines the next steps to take to move them forward in their learning. Some teacher comments on students’ assignments provide students with specific pointers on improvement but this is not typical. Consequently, students become disengaged and are not clear about how to improve their work when working on their own.

Recommendation:

Improve the quality of instruction and raise teacher and student expectations of achievement by ensuring that teachers:

- consistently implement the Code of Conduct across all classrooms so that students are clear on the both academic and behavior expectations;
- teach lessons that provide students with consistent opportunities to ask questions, make decisions and engage with one another;
- check during every lesson that all students have work that is manageable but challenging for their differing needs and levels; and
- set goals every few weeks that students understand, refer to the goals regularly during lessons and provide guidance to students through ongoing feedback on how to reach their goals.

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

The school has received a rating of **Developing** for Tenet 5 – Student Social and Emotional Developmental Health.

- The school leader is working with staff to develop a program called, “We all belong” to promote school pride among students as well as to ensure that students are well known to an adult. Only the first meeting has taken place so it is too early to judge the impact. Not all students say they have someone to talk to if they have a problem. A system of referral and interventions for students with social and emotional developmental problems is in place. Members of the staff use and share some data, such as attendance, referral, and incentives between those providing supports to individuals. However, staff members do not sufficiently analyze and monitor data to identify what is working and what is not. Consequently, the implemented systems do not consistently address barriers to social and emotional developmental health and academic success.
- The school staff has started various initiatives to address students’ social and emotional developmental health. However, there is no school-wide approach to developing a vision of social and emotional developmental health for all students. The school leader and staff reported that a number of incentives that target specific groups such as the Building Men after-school program are beginning to have some positive impact on student behavior, especially in public areas. The partnership with external agencies such as Promise Zone is providing support for some students identified as having social and emotional problems.
- Students say that the school is a much safer place than last academic year. During discussions, students said that the behavior intervention classroom (BIC), opportunities for redemption when they misbehave, and incentives for good behavior are positive moves forward and are all making a difference. However, because of incidences of bullying, the learning environment is not intellectually and emotionally safe for all students. Few school constituents are able to articulate how the school is a safe learning environment that meets the social and emotional developmental health needs of all students.
- During discussions with the IIT, staff shared that they received some training in developing their skills in social and emotional developmental health. However, during class visits, reviewers saw few examples of teachers demonstrating the strategies and skills from the PD sessions. The school is not closely monitoring professional development (PD) to check that staff members use the acquired skills and behaviors effectively to support students’ social and emotional developmental health.
- Evidence gathered from interviews with the school leader and support staff showed that school staff have and use an action plan for sharing data with teachers to use to support students with various social and emotional developmental health needs, particularly for students referred for behavioral issues. During discussions with the IIT, the support staff shared that teachers receive Individual education plans (IEPs) as well as a list of students with disabilities. However, classroom observations show that reviewers saw few examples of teachers using this information to adjust instruction. The manner in which staff uses data has not resulted in increased opportunities for students to become academically and socially successful.

Recommendation:

Maintain the drive to improve student social and emotional developmental health and make sure all students

feel intellectually safe by ensuring that:

- school leaders, support staff, and teachers use data along with student and parental views to plan interventions that align to student needs, and support students' goals;
- school leaders, support staff, and teachers hold regular formal consultations each semester with parent and student representatives to gather their feedback and views through discussion and/or surveys to check that changes to school policies and practice reflect their priorities; and
- school leaders monitor the implementation of the Code of Conduct to check that teacher expectations are consistent throughout the school and to provide additional support to teachers and students as necessary to clarify expectations and how they can be met.

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

The school has received a rating of **Developing** for Tenet 6 – Family and Community Engagement.

- Students do not benefit from a robust and focused home-school connection. The school leader is aware there is no long-term strategic plan to teach parents how to support student learning and growth. In addition, there is no systematic, planned, whole-school professional development (PD) to support school staff in developing the skills for partnerships with parents. Although not yet implemented, members of the staff have planned a short-term series of workshops on topics such as CCLS, and New York State (NYS) ELA. Discussions with parent representatives affirm that the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) has had difficulties gaining parental support for the school although recent events have been significantly better attended.
- The school leader acknowledges that the school does not have effective systems in place to communicate with families so that student needs and strengths are identified to augment their learning. Although the school contacts families in a variety of ways, for example through parent-teacher conference, the Parent Portal, emails, and occasional newsletters, communications are almost entirely written and only in English. As a result, information is not available to parents who speak, read, or write in another language or presented in a format other than the written word. Teachers of ELLs say that the school does not maintain an up-to-date parental contact list. At this stage, the school is not reflecting on its strategies for communicating with parents, especially from a wide range of different cultures and with different language needs. As a result, many families cannot support effectively their child's academic achievement and social-emotional growth.
- The school shares some data with parents linked to academic achievement and social and emotional developmental health, such as weekly checks on behavior. Student-specific data is shared with parents four times a year in reports. Parents say that when asked for clarification the school leader replies in a timely fashion. There is some sharing of data and other information on the parent portal but parents say it is not routinely up to date. Consequently, the school community does not empower all families to take the action necessary to lead to higher student achievement.

Recommendation:

School leaders should :

- work closely with school staff and parents to establish accurate family contact information and to identify a preferred language and mode of communication for all parents;
- provide information and guidance to school staff on how to communicate and work with parents from a range of backgrounds and cultures; and
- develop a long-term communication plan that enables parents to understand what the school is trying to achieve and how they can support the process at home.