



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

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)



Name of principal:	Dean DeSantis
Name/number of school:	HW Smith PreK-8 School
School address:	1130 Salt Springs Road, Syracuse NY 13224
School telephone number:	(315) 435 – 4490
Principal's direct phone number:	(315) 435 – 4317
Principal's e-mail:	ddesantis@scsd.us

School Information Sheet

School Configuration (2014-15 data)					
Grade	PreK – 8	Total Enrollment	918	SIG Recipient	Yes
Types and Number of English Language Learner Classes (2014-15)					
# Transitional Bilingual	0	# Dual Language	0	# Self-Contained English as a Second	0
Types and Number of Special Education Classes (2014-15)					
# Special Classes	2	# SETSS	2	# Integrated Collaborative Teaching	9
Types and Number of Special Classes (2014-15)					
# Visual Arts	2	# Music	2	# Drama	0
# Foreign Language	2	# Dance	0	# CTE	1
School Composition (most recent data)					
% Title I Population	74	% Attendance Rate	94.4		
% Free Lunch	73	% Reduced Lunch	1		
% Limited English Proficient	19	% Students with Disabilities	19		
Racial/Ethnic Origin (most recent data)					
% American Indian or Alaska Native	0	% Black or African American	63		
% Hispanic or Latino	7	% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	9		
% White	17	% Multi-Racial	3		
Personnel (most recent data)					
Years Principal Assigned to School	1	# of Assistant Principals	2		
# of Deans	0	# of Counselors/Social Workers	3		
% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate	0	% Teaching Out of Certification	0		
% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience	5	Average Teacher Absences	5%		
Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2013-14)					
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	12.3	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4	11.1		
Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (4th Grade)	70.8	Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (8th Grade)	48.9		
Student Performance for High Schools (2013-14)					
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	N/A	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4	N/A		
Credit Accumulation High Schools Only (2013-14)					
% of 1st year students who earned 10+ credits	N/A	% of 2nd year students who earned 10+ credits	N/A		
% of 3rd year students who earned 10+ credits	N/A	4 Year Graduation Rate	N/A		
6 Year Graduation Rate	N/A				
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	✓				

Accountability Status

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	–
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	✓	Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	–
White	✓	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	✓		

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

	based instruction that leads to multiple points of access for all students.				
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:				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
5.2	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:				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
6.2	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:				X	

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

Developing

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

- The school’s SMART goals, mission and vision were created with input from some stakeholders and the leadership team is in the process of adapting the SMART goals, mission and vision so that they better align to the priorities of the school. The school leader stated that the vision and mission statement are from the previous school year and that, as the interim principal, he intentionally left it as written. He explained that the academic leadership team is currently vetting the mission and vision to determine if it fits the school’s needs and work or if it needs to be adjusted for the following school year. The mission and vision statements were visible in every classroom, included in the school leader’s weekly memo to faculty, and heard on the daily announcements. Interviewed teachers and the school leader mentioned how, in the middle school grades, they talk with students about what it means to be college and career ready and that they are starting to share the school-wide instructional focus areas with all students. Interviewed parents stated that the goals of the school are unclear. While a vision, mission, and SMART goals do exist at HW Smith, critical stakeholders have a limited understanding of what these are and their role in achieving them. Given this and the absence of a data-driven plan to achieve the school’s vision, the school community’s ability to work together to achieve necessary progress is limited.
- The school leader has made strategic decisions that have improved programming for students and teachers, as well as hired and sustained personnel that allow staff to focus on meeting the needs of students. Both the school leader and district assigned executive director noted that they are in constant communication regarding the needs of the school. In an interview the school leader mentioned that when he first stepped in as principal, the majority of his time was spent on addressing discipline issues. He recognized the need for being an instructional leader and worked with the district to secure a dean of students. The addition of this role allowed him to step away from dealing with behavior in a reactive manner and, instead, spend time in classrooms and attend team meetings. The school leader provided two additional examples of strategic decisions he made shortly after the transition as principal: The existing schedule had students in the middle school grades going from lunch to specials to time with the community-based organizations, creating a two-hour stretch with no core academic instruction and more than anticipated behavior referrals in both the morning and afternoon. The school leader changed the schedule to spread out the special area and enrichment classes so that students had both a break from back-to-back core academic classes and greater structure throughout the day. He noted that, at the end of the second quarter, there was an increase in the amount of time students spent in class and a decrease in the number of students failing two or more classes. The second example provided was changing the way students in the middle school transition between classes. Shifting from a student-owned transition to one that teachers facilitated has decreased the number of referrals in the hallway and during the first ten minutes of class. The review team noted smooth transitions in the middle school hallways. The allocation of fiscal, human, and programmatic resources ensures that the immediate needs of the school community are met during the current school year.

- Using the Teaching and Learning Rubric aligned to the district’s APPR, the school leader and administrative team have created a system to conduct weekly walkthroughs of classrooms, track progress of teacher practices and provide feedback through conferences. In an interview the school leader shared that zero teacher evaluations had been completed prior to his arrival in November, nor were the members of the administrative team certified to complete formal observations. While in the process of becoming certified (and recertified in the school leader’s case), he created a schedule to ensure completion of all observations and post-conferences that is in compliance with the district’s timeline for the remainder of the year. He explained that each member of the leadership team has a specific day of the week assigned for being in classrooms and that this planning allows for fidelity to the schedule. The school leader and teachers noted that, since this system was put in place, walk-throughs, informal and formal observations occur on a regular basis and that feedback is provided in a timely manner through post-observation conferences. Interviewed teachers stated that the observation and evaluation process has been more positive and comfortable this year, in comparison to other years at HW Smith. They noted that the process includes an emphasis on a teacher’s strengths and that feedback is actionable and aligned to identified areas of growth. The school leader and teachers spoke to professional development opportunities or meetings with coaches being adjusted, when necessary, to respond to trends observed during walk-throughs. Through the structure of observations and debriefs, as well as professional development offered as a result of observed trends, the administrators and staff are being held to participation in the district’s Annual Professional Performance Review process and are accountable for continuous improvement.
- The school leader is beginning to think through systems to track and monitor individual and school-wide practices related to improvements in key areas such as student achievement, behavior, and instruction; however, these systems are not yet in place. In an interview, the school leader stated that the school uses Achievement Network assessment data to measure academic performance and adjust practices accordingly. Interviewed teachers also spoke of using AIMS web and running record data to assess student progress and that the Student Intervention Team looks at Educators’ Handbook data to determine effectiveness of interventions. The school leader reflected that he is unable to attend each instructional and intervention meeting, but that he has regularly scheduled check-ins with support staff and instructional coaches in order to stay up to date on priorities and progress. As current systems are in development and are not being used to consistently modify practices, measurable progress towards school goals is only partially achieved.

Recommendation:

- The school leader should develop a system to progress monitor identified priorities.

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

- HW Smith is employing several structures to support the implementation and monitoring of rigorous CCLS aligned curricula. The school uses the district’s ELA and math curriculum, which are aligned to

CCLS. The school leader and teachers noted that time has been built into the master schedule for teachers to collaborate around planning. Teachers in the middle school grades meet in vertical teams, while elementary teachers meet in horizontal grade-level teams. A professional development calendar for the entire school year was provided, including assessment dates, data meetings, and district and school-based opportunities for professional development. The school leader shared that he uses walk-through data to determine if any changes need to be made to the professional development calendar. Both he and interviewed teachers stated that the instructional coaches use team meeting time to model and assist teachers with unpacking units and adapting the curriculum to meet the needs of students, using Achievement Network assessment data as the baseline. The structures in place for use of the curricula are supporting teachers in meeting the needs of all students.

- With the support of the school's instructional coaches, teachers develop unit and lesson plans to meet the demands of CCLS and data-driven instruction; however, lesson plans inconsistently use complex materials to scaffold and sequence the development of such skills. While no unit plans were observed, the CCLS was noted in one hundred percent of plans seen during classroom observations, as well as all of the provided lesson plans. Four out of the twenty-eight lesson plans seen during classroom observations included notes on differentiation for sub-groups of students, either by specific students or levels of rigor; however, there was inconsistent evidence of how skills would be sequenced to meet that end. Five out of the twenty-eight reviewed lesson plans indicated pre-planned questions for students to respond to; and of those lessons that did include pre-planned questions, most were low-level who, what, and when questions. Although the school has developed some systems to gather and utilize data for instructional planning, there is not a clear and continuous process in place to follow this system regularly. For example, the school leader and teachers indicated that they use the results of Achievement Network testing (given every ten weeks) to determine what standards they will reteach. Likewise, teachers mentioned using AIMS web and running record data; however, in an interview, teachers were unable to speak to an on-going practice for formative assessments to be reviewed and used to modify or adjust planning. Instructional plans do not yet consistently demonstrate data-informed instruction designed to meet the demands of CCLS instructional shifts, and teachers are missing key opportunities to plan for the needs of all students.
- Interdisciplinary planning is practiced in only a few grades and subject areas. The school leader and interviewed teachers reported that math and science teachers in the middle school grades collaborate, and the art teacher works with the instructional coaches to create interdisciplinary units; however these efforts are generated by the individual teachers and there is not an established structure nor expectation to do so. In the absence of an in-house plan, the school leader stated that they have established partnerships with Baltimore Woods and Peaceful Schools to provide students with interdisciplinary enrichment opportunities. Students have limited opportunities to engage in meaningful, cross-curricula activities that increase their ability to be academically successful.
- Teachers analyze data mainly from summative assessments to gather information on student progress and make curricular decisions. In teacher and principal interviews, it was noted that staff use summative and standardized data from AIMS web, Achievement Network assessments, SRI testing and running records to make overarching decisions about instruction and adjust groupings. The use of data from formative and teacher-created assessments was not observed across grade levels and subject areas. During an interview, teachers reported using formative assessments inconsistently, as well as not always providing students with meaningful feedback; they were unable to speak to an on-going practice for formative assessments to be reviewed and used to modify or adjust planning. Teachers

and students both stated that feedback is provided for summative and standardized assessments, but not on a daily basis. Although summative assessments are used, the lack of formative assessments and quality feedback given to students is hindering the impact that strongly aligned curriculum and assessments would have to improve student achievement and build student ownership of learning.

Recommendation:

- Under the guidance of the instructional leadership team, teachers should continue with existing planning structures to dig further into the rigors of the CCLS and the higher-level activities/complex materials required for students to access the curriculum and meet the learning standard.

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

Developing

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

- School and instructional coaches are starting to engage teachers in a conversation about aligning instructional plans and strategies to data. In an interview, the school leader noted that the facilitation of grade level meetings has pulled instructional coaches away from classroom observations and modeling of best practices. Teachers indicated that they use SRI and running record data to create individual student goals, but there is no standard school or grade-specific goals aside from continually making progress. The school leader and teachers stated that data from Achievement Network assessments is used for data analysis; they follow the prescribed ANet protocol for analysis and creating a reteach plan. As they currently stand, the school’s instructional practices have a minimal impact on promoting high levels of student engagement and inquiry and, as a result, student achievement.
- Lesson plans are appropriately aligned to CCLS; however, focus on the CCLS shifts and instructional practices to promote these are inconsistent, as well as the use of higher-order thinking questions. During observations, reviewers noted that most students were participating in the lesson, but that the learning activities were neither complex nor rigorous, and were not presented in multiple ways for students to access the knowledge and/or demonstrate mastery. In eight of fifty-two observed classrooms, higher-order questioning was heard at some point in the lesson. However, the majority of questions observed were recall or procedural, seldom requiring students to justify their answers. With the absence of instructional strategies and materials aligned to the rigor in the CCLS shifts, there is a minimal impact on high levels of student engagement and achievement.
- The school has structures in place to communicate school-wide and classroom expectations, though it is largely absent in classroom implementation. Reviewers observed inconsistent and, specific to the upper grades, students not meeting school-wide expectations. Interviewed students commented that intellectual safety varies from classroom to classroom, “some teachers say it’s your fault if you make a mistake, but others will help you,” and that “the good kids (defined by a student who gets good grades) get called on.” Reviewers observed that only students who raised their hands were called on. Interviewed parents noted that their students feel safe to participate and make mistakes in the classroom.

- Teachers use summative assessment data to periodically adjust student groupings and plans, though there is minimal feedback provided to students and no indication that instructional strategies are adjusted in response to data. Most data sources referred to by the school leader and teachers were district-required assessments, including SRI, AIMS web and Achievement Network benchmark tests. Teachers stated that they use these assessments, as well as running records, to inform groupings and re-teaching. In an interview, they mentioned how they “could” use formative assessments to provide quick feedback and make short-term adjustments to their plans; however, they were unable to speak to how they use data to drive or adjust daily or weekly instruction as a regular practice. The review team did not observe any formative assessments in practice nor were any strategic groupings visible. Some students were able to articulate their reading goals; however, most were unable to speak to other academic goals. Both interviewed students and parents noted that, aside from grade reports, the feedback they receive regarding academic progress is primarily a result of an academic gap or perceived lack of effort. The current use of assessment data to inform instructional decisions as well as the limited amount of timely and meaningful feedback of those results is not adequately driving data-driven instruction to promote greater student achievement.

Recommendation:

- In collaboration with the instructional coaches, the school leader should set the expectation and put necessary structures in place for teachers to use daily formative assessment data to inform and adjust instruction.

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

Developing

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

- The school leader has established a system that allows some students to be known by an adult, ensures that staff use research-based practices for referral and support and data to identify areas of need, as well as leverage its resources to promote student social and emotional behavioral development. In interviews, the school leader and teachers mentioned that the Student Intervention Team (SIT) has established a referral process for staff to use. Provided meeting agendas indicated that the SIT meets weekly to discuss current interventions and progress towards established goals. Educator’s Handbook data is reviewed, and progress-monitoring data is collected to determine the effectiveness of interventions. The SIT explained that this data is used to adjust interventions when necessary. SIT meeting minutes, provided to the review team, included targeted behaviors, specific interventions, a follow-up date, and the name of an adult who “owns” the student’s progress. The school leader and schedules indicated that a member of the SIT meets with each grade level team weekly to pass along relevant information and receive feedback on interventions from classroom teachers. In an interview, the school leader noted that he tries to attend SIT meetings whenever possible but does connect with the a member of the team at least one time a week so that he is aware of their priorities and progress.

He stated that he has a lot of confidence in the work that the social workers, guidance counselor and school psychologist are doing. Provided agendas noted that Support Staff conduct professional development with the school's staff. The implemented systems effectively address barriers to the social and emotional developmental health needs of students and their academic success.

- The school utilizes some structures to address the social emotional and developmental health needs of students and they are developing ways to support staff's capacity to meet these needs. The Student Intervention Team stated that the school does not use a specific program or curriculum to address students' social emotional and developmental health needs, however they have a PBIS program in place. The review team was provided with the PBIS plan, however no evidence of the plan's existence was seen visually throughout the school nor reflected in student-teacher interactions. The school leader mentioned that the PBIS incentives include a restorative element, "if a student did not earn the incentive because of work completion, they still have the opportunity to complete the work and participate in the incentive. If they did not earn it because of too many behavior referrals, they must do some reflections to earn the incentive," that he feels has been motivating for students. The Student Intervention Team has conducted professional development with staff however, in interviews, both members of the team and the school leader have questioned the effectiveness of these sessions, as they are short and delivered late in the day, when they have observed staff not being focused. The school leader and schedules indicated that a member of the SIT meets with each grade level team weekly to pass along relevant information and receive feedback on interventions from classroom teachers; teachers expressed that they are always informed of what the plan is to support specific students, as well as their own role. Interviewed students commented that their comfort level in the classroom varies from room to room, "some teachers say it's your fault if you make a mistake, but others will help you," and that "the good kids (defined by a student who gets good grades) get called on." Therefore, only some students are learning in a safe and healthy environment and the school would benefit from continuing to provide learning experiences for staff.
- Protocols and processes for stakeholders to understand their individual role and contribute towards providing students' social and emotional developmental health are beginning to be implemented. In interviews, the school leader and teachers mentioned that the Student Intervention Team (SIT) has established a referral process for staff to use. Provided meeting agendas indicated that the SIT meets weekly to discuss current interventions and progress towards established goals. Educator's Handbook data is reviewed, and progress-monitoring data is collected to determine the effectiveness of interventions. The SIT explained that this data is used to adjust interventions when necessary. SIT meeting minutes, provided to the review team, included targeted behaviors, specific interventions, a follow-up date, and the name of an adult who "owns" the student's progress. The school leader and schedules indicated that a member of the SIT meets with each grade level team weekly to pass along relevant information and receive feedback on interventions from classroom teachers. Parents were unaware of the supports available for social emotional and developmental health and how to access them. Not all school stakeholders are able to articulate how the school meets the social and emotional development health needs of students and, as a result, cannot fully contribute towards achieving this vision.
- The school is using data to respond to some students' social and emotional developmental health needs. The school leader has assigned one of the vice principals to sit on the Student Intervention Team and interviewed members of the team spoke to her regular presence and facilitation of meetings. Support staff stated that they use academic and behavioral data when looking at a referral

and determining appropriate interventions. The Student Intervention Team and classroom teachers noted that, after interventions are put in place, regular progress monitoring takes place and interventions are adjusted if needed; these adjustments were seen documented in Student Intervention Team meeting minutes. As a result of the school's use of data, some students have increased opportunities to become academically and socially successful.

Recommendation:

- Identify and implement consistent and appropriate program(s) for sub-groups of grade levels and students that facilitate the teaching and reinforcement of social and emotional developmental health.

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

Developing

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

- The school communicates with parents about student behavior, and is beginning efforts on informing them about academic expectations for students. In an interview, the school leader identified parent communication as an area that he personally has not invested much time in given the past and upcoming changes in school leadership. He noted the various methods of communication that the school uses: monthly newsletters from the school leader, automated calls regarding certain events, progress reports for the upper grades, and teacher-specific outreach. Interviewed parents stated that school-wide goals for academics were unclear to them, however they do receive information on how their students are performing. Parents of students in the middle school grades said that they receive progress reports every five weeks and have access to E-School, though not all teachers update it regularly. Parents of students in the elementary grades said that they receive more qualitative feedback (“student is doing well,” for example) or focused on behavior, and receive more specific information on academic progress at parent-teacher conferences. The interviewed parents identified their students as strong students and felt that, as a result of this, they do not receive the same time and attention that parents of students who are struggling do. Interviewed teachers stated that communication, both in frequency and method, varies by teacher and that they’ve started to reflect on which students may benefit from greater communication. Relations between school and family are starting to develop, however the current relationship and communication focused mainly on behavior does not contribute to students’ academic success to become college and career ready.
- The school occasionally considers translation needs for the whole school community when communicating with families about school and student issues and is starting to reflect on strategies to reach more families. The school leader and teachers noted that school communication is primarily in English, despite a large non-English speaking population, given the large number of other languages spoken in the community due to a lack of resources and capacity to translate on a regular basis. Certain documents, such as fliers for school-wide events are translated into a few chosen languages. While the school is reaching some parents using the most prevalent languages, not all families are being leveraged to support their child’s academic achievement and social emotional growth.

- The school has not yet provided professional development or strategies to establish and sustain a home-school connection to enable parents to support students' academic success. In an interview, the school leader articulated what parent engagement should look like but identified this as an area that he personally has not invested much time in given the past and upcoming changes in school leadership. Interviewed parents noted that support was provided on an individual basis and when initiated by the parent. Both parents and teachers spoke to opportunities for parent engagement that existed in previous years, and pointed to the leadership changes as the reason that the partnership is not as strong this year. While the school is in the process of creating more strategic partnerships with families most strategies only reach a small sub-group of parents and, as a result, are not building a strong home-school connection for students.
- The school shares some data with families in a way that they can access. Interviewed teachers said that some teachers send SRI data sheets, that include a student's current level of performance and desired benchmark, home. Interviewed parents said that, in the middle school grades, they have access to E-school however it is not always up to date. Parents of students in all grade levels mentioned that they can contact the teacher if they have a question or concern about their student's progress, however the sharing of academic data is not a regular practice across the school. Parents expressed that the school's academic goals, as well as progress towards them, are unknown. Communication with academic data is currently one-directional, not always specific, and only reaches a small sub-group of parents; therefore, the school community is not empowering families to support student achievement.

Recommendation:

- Analyze current communication practices to determine effectiveness and/or areas to develop to maximize communication. Create a concise plan that outlines school-wide expectations for communicating academic and SEDH needs/progress with families.

Remarks on How to Prioritize the Recommendations:

Though there is no single way to approach school improvement, in order to achieve optimal results efficiently, here is how the Outside Educational Experts would have thought about prioritizing the provided recommendations (note: you will have to put some thought into which of these recommendations can be implemented concurrently, and which may only be able to be addressed partially for the time being given your available time and capacity):

- Under the guidance of the instructional leadership team, teachers should continue with existing planning structures to dig further into the rigors of the CCLS and the higher-level activities/complex materials required for students to access the curriculum and meet the learning standard. Set the expectation that lesson plans should include scripted/pre-planned questions that target various levels of learning and (mis) understandings. The instructional leadership team should provide professional development and practice to all teachers (including special areas) on developing questions that truly assess a students' level of understanding. While going through this process, ensure scaffolding is used so that content meets the access point of all learners and include complex materials and activities that require higher-order thinking in order to engage students at the level of rigor noted in the CCLS.

- In collaboration with the instructional coaches, the school leader should set the expectation and put necessary structures in place for teachers to use daily formative assessment data to inform and adjust instruction. Provide professional development and support to teachers on how to increase the frequency and quality of formative assessment practices in order to assess mastery, provide meaningful academic feedback to students and build student ownership of learning. Teachers need to develop effective mechanisms to regularly collect data and ensure that it provides concrete evidence of whether or not students are able to complete the skill aligned with the stated objective. Frequent opportunities for students to practice and demonstrate their learning are necessary in each class period, and will provide teachers with a clear picture of where students are on the continuum of learning. Formative assessments should be written throughout and/or included with the daily lesson plans so that it is evident that these areas have been intentionally thought through and planned for in every class period. Teachers, perhaps by grade level, should establish processes and systems for communicating this data with students on a regular basis and in a way that will invest them in their own learning. Once teachers have concrete student achievement data, provide professional development and support on how to use the data to make short-range adjustments to the curriculum, and inform differentiated instructional practices and student groupings. Modifications to the content should be made for students who have demonstrated mastery of certain skills in order to further their learning, as well as for students who are struggling but have no formal modification or accommodation plan. Using data to adjust instructional practices and content will ensure that students have multiple access points to the learning and are able to take the appropriate steps to make progress.
- Identify and implement consistent and appropriate program(s) for sub-groups of grade levels and students that facilitate the teaching and reinforcement of social and emotional developmental health. Once programs are chosen, provide professional development to teachers around how to execute it with fidelity and offer feedback during walkthroughs. A component of this action step should also include a method of having families become familiar with and understand how the program operates.
- Analyze current communication practices to determine effectiveness and/or areas to develop to maximize communication. With the School Turnaround Team, create a concise family engagement plan that outlines school-wide expectations for communicating academic and SEDH needs/progress with families. This plan should include expectations for regular written and verbal communication, a means that allows parents to communicate back with the school, and a method for teachers to log their outreach and/or conversations with families.
- The school leader should develop a system to progress monitor identified priorities. The school leader needs to track and monitor school-wide practices in order to determine their effectiveness, and use this data to make any necessary changes. A mechanism and consistent time and space for monitoring the progress towards each of the school's SMART goals should be established, posted in a visible space for staff, and communicated to all stakeholders.