



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

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)



Name of principal:	Rria Cruz-Soto
Name/number of school:	Seymour Dual Language Academy
School address:	108 Shonnard Street Syracuse NY 13204
School telephone number:	315-435-4645
Principal's direct phone number:	315-435-6218
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School Information Sheet

School Configuration (2014-15 data)					
Grade	PK-5	Total Enrollment	608	SIG Recipient	Yes
Types and Number of English Language Learner Classes (2014-15)					
# Transitional Bilingual		# Dual Language		# Self-Contained English as a Second	0
Types and Number of Special Education Classes (2014-15)					
# Special Classes	3	# SETSS		# Integrated Collaborative Teaching	0
Types and Number of Special Classes (2014-15)					
# Visual Arts	1	# Music	1	# Drama	0
# Foreign Language	1	# Dance	0	# CTE	0
School Composition (most recent data)					
% Title I Population	76%	% Attendance Rate	86.7%		
% Free Lunch	76%	% Reduced Lunch	0%		
% Limited English Proficient	32%	% Students with Disabilities	21%		
Racial/Ethnic Origin (most recent data)					
% American Indian or Alaska Native	1%	% Black or African American	37%		
% Hispanic or Latino	49%	% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0%		
% White	8%	% Multi-Racial	5%		
Personnel (most recent data)					
Years Principal Assigned to School	1	# of Assistant Principals	1		
# of Deans	0	# of Counselors/Social Workers	2		
% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate	0	% Teaching Out of Certification	0		
% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience	36%	Average Teacher Absences			
Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2013-14)					
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	4.4%	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4	4.3%		
Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (4th Grade)	35.3%	Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (8th Grade)	N/A		
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	X	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	X
Hispanic or Latino	X	Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	-
White	-	Multi-Racial	-
Students with Disabilities	X	Limited English Proficient	X
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	-
White	-	Multi-Racial	-
Students with Disabilities	X	Limited English Proficient	X
Economically Disadvantaged	✓		
Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Science (2012-13)			
American Indian or Alaska Native	-	Black or African American	-
Hispanic or Latino	X	Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	-
White	-	Multi-Racial	-
Students with Disabilities	-	Limited English Proficient	-
Economically Disadvantaged	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.

#	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:			E		

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:				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:			E		

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:			E		

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

E

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

- The school leader is carrying out a data-driven plan, created collaboratively with a representative group of staff and community stakeholders and periodically monitored, to improve student achievement and well-being. In interview, the school leader reported that the school revised its vision/mission statement (in collaboration with teacher leaders) to prioritize the school’s social-emotional developmental health work and make it an explicit area of focus. The school leader also reported that this priority—and progress toward its achievement—is communicated to staff and teachers through the ‘Seymour Bulletin,’ a communication distributed every Sunday. This mission and vision, along with the ‘Seymour Four’ (a PBIS-based set of principles to define positive behavior expectations for students and provide consistent language for teachers) is also posted in all school classrooms. In interview, the school leader reported that SMART goals about improvement strategies and academic proficiency levels were developed as a result of last year’s school review, and that the Turnaround School Team (TST) joined these efforts to create better alignment between the school’s professional development plan, the CCLS, a single best-practice resource used to consistently define preferred instructional practices (*Explicit Direct Instruction*, by Hollingsworth and Ybarra), and the district’s Teaching & Learning Framework. She reported that the goals articulated in this aligned plan dictate the pacing of these plans and that she and her leadership (including Vice Principal and instructional coaches) monitor the progress accordingly. The school’s proficiency-level SMART goals are based on year-end proficiency exams, and thorough, accurate ways of monitoring progress toward such proficiency goals have not been established. Several evidence sources (vertical teacher group, student support staff, document review resources) reported an awareness and understanding of the school’s goals and long-term vision. The vertical teacher focus group, in particular, noted that the school leader has created a consistent routine—in communications, professional development, and planning—of tying all actions back to the school’s main goals and vision for students’ academic and social-emotional developmental success. The school’s stakeholders share a uniform awareness of the school leader’s long-term vision and the SMART goals in place to work toward this vision.
- The school leader makes strategic decisions with staffing and funding to support the school’s need areas and is, based on emerging and persisting trends, making necessary plans for the succeeding school year. In interview, the school leader explained the deliberation involved in staffing various positions (Behavior Intervention room [BIC], Guided Prevention Strategies [GPS] classroom, building sentry), viewing each as crucial to her overall goals for school culture and climate. Though issues in the GPS classroom are still being worked through as it is not fully staffed, the school leader reported that the thought that went into each position—as well as the school’s Promise Zone staff—is paying off in how all coordinate efforts to better respond to student behavior concerns. New BIC room procedures have been established and are continually managed by the BIC room staffer, for example, to provide both a ‘reset’ space for students and a ‘reward’ space for students with patterns of repetitive disruptive behavior, an adjustment the school leader reported has yielded positive impacts on school-wide behavior data and individual students’ intensities of behaviors. (This report of the school leader, incidentally, can be confirmed by student discipline data: with a third of the school year left, the number of BIC room visits is roughly a third of last year’s totals.) In interview, the principal reported

that she has also managed a partnership with Public Impact to build an Opportunity Culture grade-level teaming model with her third and fourth grades, as well as to strategically schedule building personnel to enable the model's collaboration and support structures. As these grades are showing higher growth rates than those grades without (4th grade results on an interim ANet assessment, for instance, showed students outpacing ANet's network schools in overall performance and on most standards-based test items), the school leader is working on securing funding for other grade levels. The school leader also reported her incorporation of an outside enrichment partner (Red House) to the daily schedule, both for students' academic enrichment and to provide common planning times for teachers focused on data-driven instruction. In interview the school leader also discussed how, to meet the professional development needs of her staff around the school's vision and goals, she designed the year's professional development plan. Review of provided documents showed this plan to have specific allotments of time, from August 2014-June 2015, used toward staff's learning regarding Effective Instruction, Co-Teaching, PBIS (behavior strategies), SCSD's revised Code of Conduct, Data-Driven Instruction planning, and others. The vertical teacher team also commented consistently that the collaborative, strengths-leveraging approach of the school leader has been appreciated—both for how it helps teachers learn more about effective practices (the school leader regularly has teachers strong in one area present to the full staff about things that are working in their classrooms) and for how it recognizes professionals for their efforts. The school leader organizes—and acquires, as necessary—available resources to meet the school community's needs.

- The school leader has developed and carries out an APPR- and turnaround-aligned plan for observing teachers and providing teachers timely, ongoing, evidence-based, and actionable performance feedback. In interview, the school leader shared her separate formal and informal observation schedules and feedback protocols: the formal plan aligned to district APPR requirements, and informal walkthroughs aligned to building-prioritized improvement actions (per *EDI* book, see above). All formal observations were complete by November (before her maternity leave), and the school leader met individually with all teachers to identify areas for growth. The school leverages consultant visits from outside sources, including a math consultant from Pearson—designers of the school's math curriculum, to bring additional feedback to teachers on practice and use of resources. A focus group with a vertical team of teachers confirmed all these reported protocols and processes, adding information about the school leader's structures for collaborative team planning and feedback-providing roles for instructional coaches, who are utilized to provide coaching clinics and other job-embedded professional development to teachers (collaborative lesson planning, model lessons, lesson debriefing, data analysis & re-teaching, and classroom management). The teacher focus group also reported feeling that the school leader's informal walk-through processes, used to augment the state's evaluation system and attendant observation processes, are much more useful to improving and reflecting on practice than the state observation systems. Through these observation-feedback-learning cycles, the school leader has created a professional culture where all staff are held accountable for continuous improvement.
- The school leader is working to develop an evidence-based system to monitor and revise practices used by staff members. As evidenced in the school's professional development plan for the school year (provided for document review), the academic areas of this plan were outlined according to standards of effective instruction in mind first, with prescribed focus areas framing each month's professional development-related activity. Though detailed and organized in terms of professional learning to be accomplished—and though the school leader uses the focus areas to build criteria for her informal

classroom walkthrough system, the plan does not include indicators of success with regard to effectiveness of implementation, depth of teacher knowledge, or subsequent student outcomes. The vertical teacher focus group, parent focus group, student support staff focus group, and interview with the school leader all reported that the school leader is using evidence-based systems and data to examine and improve school operations related to family engagement and student social developmental health: parent surveys, for example, have informed the school's next steps in creating events and learning experiences that are better suited to families' availabilities and interests, and student behavior/BIC room data are routinely reviewed to determine best next steps with emerging behavior concerns. Though some measurable progress has been observed on critical school-wide goals, particularly in areas of student behavior and family engagement, current evidence-based systems do not allow for a robust, accurate monitoring of the school's academic goals.

Recommendation:

- **Improve systems of teachers' professional development to be more evidence-based. Revise professional development plan to include more detailed and specific outcome goals (beginning with PD plan's 'Evaluations – How will you know you are successful?' column indicators), and reserve time/structure for occasions and professionals who need further professional support, learning, and/or follow-up with regard to the revised success indicators.**

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 is beginning to provide appropriate access to pedagogical support, materials, and training to teachers that can provide CCLS- and NYS-required levels of academic rigor for students. In interview, the school leader reported that the school is in the first year of transitioning from Pearson's Reading Street to the Syracuse City School District's reportedly CLS-aligned ELA curriculum in an effort to raise rigor. According to the school leader, this decision was based on information and data that students' needs were not previously being met and a lack of alignment to CCLS. Multiple teachers familiar with both curriculum platforms in the vertical teacher focus group—especially those in early grades (K-2)—reported a marked difference between their students' progress in literacy this year and progress recorded in previous years. One first-grade teacher said, 'Where my kids are right now, it took us until the end of the year to get there with Reading Street...and even then lots of them weren't at the level Reading Street ended the year at.' These teachers believed the curriculum switch engineered by the school leader helps them toward being more responsive to student needs, as, in addition to allowing 'for teachers to know exactly where [students] are', the SCSD curriculum's less-scripted design gives teachers 'more leeway to teach and co-teach'. Via the school leader's year-long professional development plan (viewed as part of provided school documentation package and referred to in interviews with school leader and vertical teacher focus group), pedagogical supports, materials, and training are being provided to teachers to ensure that CCLS-based instructional shifts are being made effectively in accord with the curriculum change in ELA. Still, teacher leaders within the vertical teacher

focus group pointed out that some teachers are still struggling with the new curriculum, suggesting its lack of a prescriptive format. Document review, school leader interview, and vertical teacher team also explained that for math instruction, pedagogical and curricular supports offered through instructional coaches and collaborative team structures are aided additionally by support from a consultant from Pearson (provider of the EnVision math curriculum resources being utilized) and, as necessary, professional development from district-level personnel. Classroom observations and document review provided evidence that common lesson planning templates were being used across grades K-5, though not in Pre-K. Plus, multiple sources (principal interview, teacher focus group, document review) referred to the school's routines around re-teaching plans/days and intervention blocks; these are scheduled and aligned to needs of students as indicated by student results on interim assessments (ANet, Running Records, AIMSweb) in order to keep students on track with regard to CCLS criteria. Several structures are being built to ensure that the school's foundation curricula provide able vehicles toward students' college and career readiness, but some are still in transition toward full effectiveness.

- Teachers collaborate to develop unit and lesson plans based on student data to meet the demands of CCLS and grade level DDI protocols, but inconsistently monitor and adjust curricula across the school. Observations of classroom settings showed that data is routinely and consistently recorded on students' academic and behavioral progress, and this data is filed in student binders/folders and displayed visibly in classrooms in the forms of interactive progress charts (e.g., 'running man' charts where students can move their figure across levels when completing reading levels, a 'reading tree' where students are represented by paper leaves or birds, etc.). School leader interview and vertical teacher team focus group both reported teachers' creation of re-teaching and intervention plans according to studies of various interim standardized assessment results like ANet, AIMSweb, and running records of reading ability. In interview, the school leader reported that the creation of these re-teaching and intervention plans follow a consistent protocol adapted from the data review protocols provided and modeled by ANet for their periodic assessments. She reported that in these team planning times, teachers review students' progress toward goals and use the progress information to design plans for subsequent action and intervention, but that these protocols are working more effectively—and yielding higher measurable growth on measurements like ANet assessments—at third and fourth grades, where the Multi-Classroom Leader model is in effect. The teacher focus group confirmed the protocols referenced by the school leader, reporting that targeted interventions are distributed through each week at rates of two days of math and three days of ELA interventions. One member of this group, however, represented this collective impression, noting that these 'interventions need to be tweaked...we have to figure out how to better utilize the staff we have.' In a majority of the review team's classroom observations, teachers were observed providing the same materials and activities to the entire class, inconsistently providing a variety of complex materials and/or activities differentiated to individual students' needs. Across ten PK-3 classrooms, for example, only one classroom's provided lesson plan acknowledged and articulated differentiated plans for select students. Students, though, feel that the challenge is consistent: in the large student focus group, respondents reported feeling like they were being prepared for college and careers, in that it was difficult. The school leader's and teachers' focus on meeting the demands of CCLS and using data to inform attendant instructional actions is creating notable student growth, but not uniformly across all grade levels or subject areas.
- Teachers are beginning to collaborate and discuss ways to deliver interdisciplinary curricula that

incorporate the arts, technology, and other enrichment opportunities. In interview, the school leader reported that teams' collaboration and planning are academic in focus; special-areas teachers (music, art, physical education, media) 'jump in to grade-level meetings to plan occasionally, but this is a fairly new thing,' she said. 'When they do, they don't do so to create interdisciplinary lessons with regular ed teachers.' The school leader also discussed how Community Based Organization partners (Red House) are contributing enriching experiences to overall school programming, but not in an integrated-to-academics, interdisciplinary way. The school leader and 4th grade MCL reported that specials area teachers are generally disconnected from the academic work and collaboration. They have their own collaborative structures, but they are not generally part of the larger collaborative structures. In the parent focus group as well, parents reported that specials and content areas were not connected, with one guardian expressing a preference that the two were, in fact, better connected: 'Those with artistic abilities—art, music, and dance—should be built into the classroom experience. Even technology should be incorporated within the classroom, not a separate class.' Discussing such disconnection, the vertical teacher team reported that they are hoping to see greater interdisciplinary connection, perhaps aided by other community partners; they mentioned the school's efforts to identify appropriate interdisciplinary enrichment partners, and shared how the school has begun appealing to school community families and urging them to express preferences (the school held an interest fair, with organizations presenting themselves and parents recording interests via a gallery walk). Though interdisciplinary and various arts- and technology-based enrichment opportunities are growing for students at the school, the number of intentionally cross-curricular activities is at this point limited.

- The use of and variety of assessments, as well as teachers' provision of direct feedback to students toward mastery, is inconsistent throughout the school. A majority of lesson plans observed (in document review and provided by teachers in classroom observations) indicate that teachers consistently plan, and integrate into their lesson deliveries, checks for student understanding of content concepts. The quality of these planned checks-for-understanding (as described in provided lesson plans) are inconsistent, however, especially with regard to accurately portraying students' levels of understanding or the natures of/reasons behind students' misunderstandings. Though observers saw teachers regularly checking students' understanding in classrooms, the nature of these checks were most times large-group and verbal/visual in nature. The review team observed a strong consistency of systems, however, with regard to students' opportunities to track their current and aspirational states, both academically and behaviorally. In interview, the school leader confirmed that quality feedback from teachers is still a work in progress. In her own walk-through, the school leader reported, 'I went specifically looking for teachers' feedback. I just wanted to see where we were at on that. And maybe it was just the day, but I could not produce anything meaningful or high-quality on the day I did.' Overall, the alignment between assessments and curricular adjustments, as well as the provision of high-quality, timely feedback to students for guiding toward mastery of concepts, must be strengthened to enable greater increases in student achievement.

Recommendation:

- **Create a professional development and follow-up support/accountability plan that (1) deepens teachers' understanding of effective assessment-to-feedback cycles and (2) creates space and opportunity for teachers to plan the implementation and ongoing integration of such cycles into their classroom practice.**

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

- School and teacher leaders ensure that teachers use an instructional plan that is informed by data and goals for all students, and students track progress toward goals according to various benchmark data. Teachers in the vertical-grades focus group reported that plans for re-teaching are constructed according to student achievement data, but that there are still challenges to be overcome regarding kids with higher or specialized needs. Evidence gathered from classroom observations showed that accommodations for students with special needs are inconsistent across classrooms, but the variety of teaching modes observed (e.g., multiple sensory inputs were observed in teachers’ lessons: video, movement, music, tactile [math manipulatives], small-group instruction settings, interactive whiteboard-based activities, paper-and-pencil, etc.) produced a great majority of classrooms with notable levels of student engagement to task. Classroom observations also consistently showed that the school’s students are kept aware of goals via visible progress monitoring strategies in classrooms: these progress-monitors were observed in most classrooms and in a variety of formats; as were individual progress-monitoring mechanisms like data binders/folders, which are regularly updated with students’ most recent assessment results. The student focus group spoke to these progress-monitoring systems and structures, reporting that they are kept aware of goals—knowing where they are currently, and where they hope to reach. Additionally, the parent focus group reported that ClassDojo information (another progress monitor, enabled through teachers’ handheld devices for immediate input and recorded to a class-specific database of student information) is helpful, as it helps them know where their children are with regard to their academic behavior goals. In interview, the school leader shared such goal-progress information is reinforced through communications home: five-week progress reports with updated student data goes out to each family in the middle of each marking period in addition to weekly class newsletters. For school-wide progress data updates, observers noted that the school’s achievement goals are posted near front office; also, a data wall near the school’s cafeteria displays student progress information—and was constructed by a team of school parents, a project the school leader reported as a way to become more familiar with the types of data being reviewed by teachers and students at the school. With regard to teachers’ use of student goals in informing practices and strategies, the school leader, in interview, reported that she holds teachers accountable to instructional focus areas’ non-negotiables via walkthroughs and mobile app-aided (the mobile app Classroom-Walkthrough, which the school leader customizes with current and previous instructional focus area criteria) generation of feedback to teachers. The school’s instructional practices and routinized emphasis on students reaching goals promote high levels of students’ engagement to learning activities.
- Teachers are beginning to develop lesson plans that are appropriately aligned to the rigor outlined in the CCLS, and a consistency around higher-level-thinking questioning and activity has not yet been developed. In classroom observations, the review team observed some misalignment between learning standards/objectives and learning activities. In some places where the lesson’s targeted standards were clear for students, the corresponding learning activity and/or content did not always provide a clear pathway toward mastering the standard. In a third grade math classroom, for example, the

fractions-related objective did not match the lesson itself, where the teacher was interchangeably teaching fractions of a set and fractions of a whole. In another third-grade classroom, the objective for a writing assignment was unclear for observers, who also saw no evidence of success criteria, exemplary samples, or other resources to guide students' writing projects. Cognitive rigor was observed as low in roughly half of the classrooms, with students largely answering teacher inquiries in choral, call-and-response fashions. Interview with school leader, document review, and teacher focus group alluded to professional development focus areas to build better instructional practices (the school leader in particular mentioned that many staff, though improving, are still planning lessons and student activities that stay in the 'recall' stage), but a consistency of adjusted, CCLS-aligned practices was not observed across classrooms. Students, though, feel that the challenge is consistent: in the large student focus group, respondents reported feeling like they were being prepared for college and careers, in that the expectations of them are high. Though some improvement is being seen across classrooms as a result of targeted, focused professional development and administration's means of following up on this professional learning, instructional practices to accelerate students' achievement are as yet inconsistent across the school.

- Teachers use a program/plan that promotes common understandings of students' classroom expectations and environment, and teachers work together with students to use strategies that acknowledge students' diverse needs. Throughout the duration of the review, no high-intensity student behavior issues (meaning: no behavior issues requiring [1] additional adult support to resolve and/or [2] considerable classroom learning time to be lost in resolving) were observed in any classrooms. In a brief observation of the BIC (Behavior Intervention Center) room—the school's 'reset' room for high-intensity behaviors—a visibly upset/agitated student was escorted in by a teacher, walked immediately to a directed spot after being greeted by the BIC supervisor, and calmed to a classroom-ready level after five minutes (at one point in these five minutes, he was reminded by the BIC supervisor that he'd have to stop his kicking—which made noise, but was not violent—at the file cabinet if he wished to stand there while he calmed down; the student ceased kicking immediately and did not resist or respond to the BIC supervisor's reminder). In interview, the school leader mentioned that steps have been taken to address some safety issues within the school. They are continually working on emerging incidences of bullying, she said, but they've also instituted measures like onsite laundry appliances and reserve clothing to help students with visible clothing issues that might make them targets of bullies. In the parent focus group, meanwhile, 10 of 10 parents participating felt that the school was a safe, healthy learning environment. Students in focus group also reported that they felt safe—generally in school and also with regard to asking questions in class and being called on by teachers in classes. In interview, the school leader reported that building this 'intellectual safety' has been a professional-development point for teachers all year long. Teachers have all been trained in and expected to use a specific Teach-and-Ask protocol [TAPPLE] to ensure all students are brought into engagement with classroom activities in non-threatening, fair ways. This protocol was observed in use across most classrooms, as well as its basic points posted for students' understanding. Classroom observations showed teachers providing high-quality feedback to students about preferred behaviors, as well as evidence (in students' data binders) that students track and set behavior-related goals in addition to academic ones. In addition to teachers' work with individual students that was observed, systematic plans for defining and reinforcing desired student behaviors and minimizing the number of disruptive or learning-detrimental behaviors were observed across classrooms, the school hallways, over the school announcements, and reported in multiple conversations with focus groups. The

‘Seymour Four’ (Be Prepared, Give Your Best Effort, Be Respectful, Be Safe), for example, is a set of school values that was observed as repeatedly and consistently referenced—through in-class postings, over the PA- and TV-delivered school announcements, by teachers to students, etc.—to commonly define and reinforce desired student behaviors and dispositions. In interview, the school leader reported that she has also made it a non-negotiable expectation that teachers re-direct—and never simply ignore or look past—all off-task behaviors by students. To assist teachers with how to do this safely and respectfully, the school leader has included regular work with No-Nonsense Nurturer principles in the building’s professional development plan. The school’s learning environment is, on average and in the perception of a large majority of the school’s stakeholders, intellectually and physically safe for students.

- Teachers are in the process of using summative and formative assessments that inform instructional decision-making, and teachers’ data-based feedback is limited. With regard to data being used to make instructional decisions, several evidence sources (vertical teacher focus group, school leader interview, professional development documentation) showed that the school uses a variety of summative and formative assessments to inform instructional decision-making. According to these evidence sources, data produced from standardized assessment instruments like ANet, AIMSweb, and SRI (as well as students’ running reading records) are routinely reviewed toward teachers’ planning of concept re-teaching (as necessary) and student intervention groups. Classroom observations showed ample evidence of students’ awareness of current academic states and their goal states (evidence included student progress binders/folders and students’ demonstrations that they understood their contents) in a large majority of classrooms, but feedback to students from teachers that could guide students toward mastery of standards and concepts was not readily evident. Also, little evidence existed, across observed lesson plans and classroom instructional sessions that teachers are using high-quality, accurate formative checks for understanding on reliable, consistent bases to provide actionable student information between these large-grained standardized assessment opportunities. Effective, high-quality, and specific feedback to students about precisely what to do toward improvement—and in light of each student’s specific learning needs—was observed in only a minority of classrooms. Some opportunities for self-reflection and monitoring (based on rubrics) were observed in classroom visits, but rubric objectives were too broad to specifically describe next steps of growth and provide students with optimal understandings of what would be necessary to reach mastery. In interview, the school leader reported that her main instructional focus for 2015-16 will be building teachers’ abilities around providing feedback to students. This choice is based on data she’s gathered from her classroom observations of teachers, where she reported seeing very little feedback of substance being given to students that could move them toward mastery of standards-articulated content and skills. Though data-based instruction habits and routines have been established, the feedback they produce to move students toward mastery is not yet timely or specific enough to move significant numbers of students to significantly higher levels of achievement.

Recommendation:

- **Improve overall quality (timeliness, specificity, and individual-customization) of feedback teachers give students toward mastery of CCLS-articulated content and skills. Toward providing such improved-quality feedback, ensure that feedback is informed by useful information about students’ progress: commit to designing and administering formative assessments that produce accurate, actionable, and narrowly focused information about individual students’ progress toward mastery.**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	E
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The school has received a rating of **EFFECTIVE** for Tenet 5 – Student Social and Emotional Developmental Health.

- The school leader and staff provide an environment where all the school’s adults support students, and the staff members use data to identify and effectively act on areas of need regarding students’ social and emotional developmental health. Asked which adult they’d go to if they had a need, students in focus group said, ‘Any adult. The one closest to me.’ According to an interview with the school leader and the focus group with the school’s support staff, the school has adopted a simple, straightforward approach when it comes to dealing with and supporting students who are struggling socio-emotionally: ‘We do not suspend.’ In interview, the school leader reported, based on her previous work at the school (she served as Vice Principal prior to being named principal) and last year’s school review, the social-emotional developmental health issues should be prioritized pieces of the school’s improvement vision. As such, she worked with her team at the school year’s outset to revise school vision and mission statements to include students’ social-emotional developmental health. In interview, the school leader reported that they have systems in place (Discipline Team, School Climate Team) to identify students: these teams regularly review BIC room data and discuss/plan interventions. In the student support team focus group, the team reported the processes of the Individual Consultation Intervention (ICI) Team, which helps inform necessary steps with students identified. In this identification-to-action process, the BIC room supervisor is also involved to problem-solve around specific students and to design actions for them. In regard to the systems established by the school leader and the student support team, several examples of evidence-based decision-making systems were reported and observed as in operation: Check-In-Check-Out system, punch system (which positively reinforces preferred student behaviors), qualitative and quantitative BIC room data, etc. All such systems guide decision-making around subsequent actions with students. These systems, their executions, and their responsible parties are kept organized via the progression of the school’s organization chart maps progression, which detail the hierarchy of decision-making and responsible personnel (these org charts were provided for the observation team’s document review). In all, multiple systems are in place to provide for the social and emotional developmental health of the school’s students; barriers between students and their ultimate social and emotional developmental health are accounted for and addressed through these various systems.
- The school staff receives professional development support to build adult capacity in using skills and behaviors to address the social and emotional developmental health needs of students and promote the school community’s vision of a safe and healthy environment. In their focus group interview, the student support staff reported that the school leader has provided professional development to staff about Level 1 behaviors to ensure appropriate disciplinary reactions to such behaviors. The school’s vision of students’ social and emotional developmental health is aligned to explicit learning experiences for the school’s students, and evidence of these learning experiences was observed in classroom observations, in discussion with the school leader, and in focus group with the vertical

teacher team. The above evidence sources (school leader interview, vertical teacher focus group, and classroom observations) also reported that ‘morning meeting’ protocols are utilized in classrooms to build community and clearly outline the day’s expectations, explicitly teach and multiply reinforce the school’s ‘Seymour Four’ principles, etc. According to the student support focus group and interview with the school leader, these social-emotional developmental learning supports are planned for and professionally developed in half-day PD sessions, with the PBIS team adding to teachers’ learning by presenting to the full staff monthly. Based on an interview with the school leader and as observed in school observations (via postings outside each classroom and PA-broadcast school announcements), the school is currently, acting on mid-year attendance data, attempting to improve attendance figures and promote the connection between attendance rates and achievement: each class’s daily attendance is taken and posted on the outside of every door; this data is being tracked by administration and running numbers—and successes—are being reported via the school announcements; at the end of the marking period, the school leader will reward the most-improved-attending classroom with an ice cream party. Also during this ‘contest’ period, the school’s Social Workers are accelerating calls home to absent students to further spur attendance. The overall impact of such professional development and cross-functional school reactions to student data is that they create a safe, healthy school community for students to learn within.

- The school community is developing protocols and processes for monitoring and responding to students’ social and emotional developmental health needs. Several evidence sources confirmed the community-wide efforts for responding to students’ social and emotional developmental health needs. In the student focus group, for example, when students were asked which adult they’d go to if they had a need, respondents said, ‘Any adult. The one closest to me.’ Also, the parent focus group reported confidence that their children would be appropriately cared for if they requested help in a certain area; one parent commented that this is an area that has improved in recent years: ‘Every year the progress and identification of student needs gets quicker—and I’ve been here a long time [nine years].’ Participants in focus groups with the student support team and vertical teacher group described these processes and systems, saying that coordination of outside support agencies (mental health resources, for example) is effective for the most part but largely informal and lacking some definition and clear outlining of steps. Though students’ social-emotional needs get met well on average, the vertical teacher group reported that the uncertainty around some processes to obtain support has caused some inconsistency and pathways to support that are not always clear to understand or access. As this relates to students with more profound mental health needs, the vertical teacher group in particular reported feeling a little under-resourced and unable to truly help some students. ‘We are being asked to keep kids in school,’ one teacher remarked, ‘but we don’t have enough support to do so.’ In all, the school constituents are able to articulate how the school community is a safe learning environment, but some structures could be made cleaner to better meet all students’ social and emotional developmental health needs.
- The school leader, in collaboration with student support staff, has a plan with structures to use data toward addressing student academic and social and emotional developmental health needs. According to student support focus group, all teams designing and implementing actions do so based on multiple sources of current behavior data (attendance, referrals, BIC room data, etc.). In interview, school leader confirmed how data drives plans and strategies, but expressed a need for additional student data/information to enable more intense, individualized support to students: ‘I eventually want these

teams to know and work with a lot more data, as different data would be relevant to students’ social-emotional health. How many kids actually live with their birth families, for example? Or how about with their grandmothers or who is currently homeless? This kind of information could help us support kids a whole lot of other ways.’ In the school climate and culture-related meetings that are held, however (with discipline team and school climate team—weekly and biweekly, respectively), the school leader interview and student support team focus group both shared that BIC room and Educator’s Handbook data are reviewed, and that plans are constructed for students accordingly. Some similar data was provided to the review team by the school leader, and showed that student visits to the BIC room are down considerably from 2013-14 (2227 overall in 2013, compared to 954 to date in 2014 with a third of the year remaining). Overall, the data study routines and subsequent adjustments are creating a school where students’ issues are being addressed more efficiently and systematically over time.

Recommendation:

- **Improve and articulate processes and operations for accessing support resources, and communicate accordingly to school community.**
 - **Conduct a needs/gaps assessment related to resource-access for students needing additional social-emotional developmental health support (surveying/focus-grouping teachers, support staff, parents, etc.) to better understand the system gaps as they exist.**
 - **Based on the above assessment information, design feasible, fair, and effective processes to improve current operations.**

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

E

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

- The school community implements proactively the plan to create diverse and meaningful opportunities for engaging students, families, and community stakeholders in the conversation regarding high expectations for student academic achievement and uses multiple points of entry to provide tips and tools focused on student learning and development. According to multiple evidence sources (vertical teacher team, interview with school leader, parent focus group), family-facing events are increasing in participation over the course of the year as a result of the school’s continued drive to meet families’ needs. For example, these evidence resources all mentioned how the school has separated family-facing events into ‘business’ and ‘fun’ to increase buy-in and participation. Families were able to respond by survey regarding which offerings they would like to see. Additionally: in interview, the school leader reported that she and her leadership team (1) changed times of curriculum talks to better accommodate community needs and (2) tasked the school’s instructional coaches with delivering the learning to parents in these sessions. Though attendance at these curriculum talks has been down throughout the year (from 32 participants in September, then steadily down to 16 participants in January), the large increases in family night participation (from 76 attendants for Spaghetti Dinner to 107 in attendance at Bingo Night) are viewed by school leadership and staff as

encouraging signs. Another source of parent learning, provided by local organization Say Yes (Parent University), offers coursework to parents to help support academic help at home. In focus group, parents reported feeling comfortable and welcome in the school. Parents, support staff, and teacher focus groups all reported an improvement in relationship with families and community. School leader also reported that parents are much more able to discuss their children's current academic place and their goal levels, which the parent focus group confirmed. In order to build this heightened awareness of their students' expectations and academic progress, the school leader has outlined specific expectations and routines about communications to families and made innovative attempts at further engaging parents in the discussion about student expectations (a data wall outside the cafeteria, for instance, was built by a team of parents—an opportunity the school leader designed both to get a data wall and to build the participating parents' awareness of students' use of classroom data). Overall, the relationship between families and the school contributes to student needs being met and students growing academically.

- The school staff uses a plan to communicate with parents—translated as necessary into other languages besides English—concerning student progress, achievement, and needs. Multiple evidence sources (school leader interview, parent focus group) reported that multiple tools exist to communicate with families about school and student issues and concerns. Some examples of these tools include the following: robocalls, correspondences from classrooms (weekly, with school leader's additions incorporated when necessary), Raz Kits, ClassDojo data, formal parent-teacher conferences, five-week progress reports, and in-school postings on walls of public areas. To meet the needs of the school's significant number of Spanish-speaking families, several of these school communications (the robocalls, the Seymour Four, signage in various building spots, classroom rules) are translated into Spanish, which was observed throughout the building and in the provided review documentation. Additionally, most school events (including Parent University courses) also regularly feature translation resources. The teacher focus group and school-leader interview also included conversation confirming that, in the interest of better meeting families' needs with regard to family-facing events and services, the school's parents are surveyed to monitor effectiveness of communications and to ascertain how the school can provide options to better meet families' needs. In the parent focus group, parents expressed satisfaction with school's communications in terms of content and frequency. Overall, the school's communications to its families give them the information and background necessary to support their child's academic achievement and social emotional growth.
- The school community partners with families and community agencies to promote and provide training across all areas toward supporting student success. According to multiple evidence sources (support staff, teacher focus groups; school leader interview), community partners are involved to aid school in promoting and providing training across all areas to support student success. Earlier this year, the school sponsored an interest fair for parents in which a number of invited local organizations (examples included Syracuse University Literacy Corps, Huntington Family Center, Brownell Center for Behavioral Health, YMCA and YWCA, Southwest Community Center, etc.) appeared onsite to display their specialty areas and learning opportunities. Participating parents were able to walk through groups as though on a gallery walk and identify groups they'd like to see sponsoring learning activities of some kind through the school. According to interviews with the school leader and the vertical teacher team, the results of these family surveys—in addition to parents' feedback throughout the year—have informed the school leadership about programming for parents all year long. In full, the school's

students benefit from a focused—but open and adapting—home-school connection.

- The school community ensures that student data is shared in a way in which families can understand student learning needs and successes and are encouraged to advocate for student support. According to multiple evidence sources (the school leader’s interview, teacher team focus group), the school administers and analyzes surveys of families to determine needs and subsequently designs/revises planned events and engagement strategies. The school leader reported that data goes home with students in multiple forms (weekly from classrooms, every-five-weekly progress reports, Raz kits, etc.) to inform families of progress toward academic and behavior goals. The school leader also shared an innovative strategy she used to engage parents and help them understand their students’ achievement data: the construction of a data wall outside the cafeteria, done by a team of 50 parents. Additionally, in their focus group, the parent group reported satisfaction with the types of data shared with families, singling out in particular the class dojo data and communications handouts sent from teachers. Overall, the school is empowering families to support their children who are students at the school by (1) engaging them in understanding students’ academic growth objectively through harvested data and (2) sharpening their tools to provide necessary support and advocacy.

Recommendation:

- **Monitor the communications systems in place to determine necessary adjustments, revisions, etc. In particular, leverage positive reactions from parents and routinely observed familial enthusiasm to obtain even more information about audience preferences. Consider creating surveys and/or focus groups that provide even more and deeper information around which to build subsequent family engagement and student achievement action.**

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):

- The recommendations for Tenet 5 (which concern cleaning, clarifying, and communicating certain support processes after fully understanding their current limitations) may be the quickest fixes suggested of all the recommendations herein, and thus could be a good choice for a top prioritization. Also, understanding the nature of any related obstacles may be useful information before the school begins budget/resource planning for 2015-16. In the event that additional or re-purposed staff are necessary after your needs assessment, understanding this as quickly as possible may be of great benefit to the school’s longer-term success in this area.
- Similarly, the recommendations for Tenet 6 (concerning a better monitoring of the communications in place toward future improvement) may be wise to tackle in the space remaining in 2014-15. As the year is wrapping up fairly quickly, this may be a great time to solicit families’ input on the communications they receive—what’s worked, what’s missing, what needs adjustment (and how & why), etc. As with Tenet 5’s recommendation, the information gained here could assist you in resource planning for 2015-16.
- As highly effective formative assessment (Tenet 3) leading to more effective and specific feedback to students (Tenet 4) is a *process* more than it is a new kind of artifact or technique, and as it’s usually a fairly

major paradigm shift for many practitioners, you may consider delaying a deep dive into substantively improving these practices for the remainder of this school year. (Also, doing so would shift emphasis away from the professional development plan already well in motion.) By all means: continue promoting ideas of what effective formative assessment looks like, and by all means continue challenging teachers to reconsider current practice. Consider also, however, making the training and continual improvement of (with administrative follow-up on) sound, productive formative assessment processes a central improvement peg for 2015-16.

- Relatedly: For reinforcement in the above messages around formative assessment processes and to best build school leaders' capacity as formative assessment process 'field experts', consider seeking training—with 2-3 other building-leading teachers and/or instructional coaches—in the principles of sound formative assessment before planning the initiative's implementation arc.
- Tenet 2: This is not a prioritization recommendation as much as it is a framing of two possible approaches, which could affect your ultimate prioritization. On the one hand, you could prioritize this very highly and infuse a stronger evidence and progress-to-goal basis into your existing professional development plan. This could work well, but, in order to create the necessary time and space in the plan (for infusing the follow-up and check-in on the success indicators you design), you may have to sacrifice some of the originally planned activity/focus areas for your staff. On the other hand, you could take the other approach: prioritize this lower and think of ways to build these evidence-based emphases into next year's PD plans.