



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

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)



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| Name of principal: | Alton B. Hicks |
| Name/number of school: | Westside Academy at Blodgett |
| School address: | 312 Oswego Street, Syracuse New York 13204 |
| School telephone number: | 315-435-4386 |
| Principal's direct phone number: | 315-435-4258 |
| Principal's e-mail: | ahicks@scsd.us |

School Information Sheet

| School Configuration (2014-15 data) | | | | | |
|---|------------|------------------|-----|---|-----|
| Grade Configuration | 6, 7, & 8 | Total Enrollment | 440 | SIG Recipient | Yes |
| Types and Number of English Language Learner Classes (2014-15) | | | | | |
| # Transitional Bilingual | | # Dual Language | | # Self-Contained English as a Second Language | |
| Types and Number of Special Education Classes (2014-15) | | | | | |
| # Special Classes | 1 – 12:1:1 | # SETSS | | # Integrated Collaborative Teaching | |
| Types and Number of Special Classes (2014-15) | | | | | |
| # Visual Arts | | # Music | | # Drama | |
| # Foreign Language | Spanish | # Dance | | # CTE | |
| School Composition (most recent data) | | | | | |
| % Title I Population | | | | % Attendance Rate | |
| % Free Lunch | | | | % Reduced Lunch | |
| % Limited English Proficient | | 28% | | % Students with Disabilities | |
| | | | | 16% | |
| Racial/Ethnic Origin (most recent data) | | | | | |
| % American Indian or Alaska Native | | 2% | | % Black or African American | |
| | | | | 37% | |
| % Hispanic or Latino | | 44% | | % Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander | |
| | | | | 3% | |
| % White | | 13% | | % Multi-Racial | |
| | | | | 1% | |
| Personnel (most recent data) | | | | | |
| Years Principal Assigned to School | | 3 | | # of Assistant Principals | |
| | | | | 2 | |
| # of Deans | | 0 | | # of Counselors/Social Workers | |
| | | | | 1 | |
| % of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate | | 0 | | % Teaching Out of Certification | |
| | | | | 0 | |
| % Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience | | 8 | | Average Teacher Absences | |
| | | | | | |
| Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2013-14) | | | | | |
| ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4 | | 6% | | Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4 | |
| | | | | 3% | |
| Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (4th Grade) | | n/a | | Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (8th Grade) | |
| | | | | | |
| Student Performance for High Schools (2013-14) | | | | | |
| ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4 | | | | Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4 | |
| | | | | | |
| Credit Accumulation High Schools Only (2013-14) | | | | | |
| % of 1st year students who earned 10+ credits | | | | % of 2nd year students who earned 10+ credits | |
| | | | | | |
| % of 3rd year students who earned 10+ credits | | | | 4 Year Graduation Rate | |
| | | | | | |
| 6 Year Graduation Rate | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| Overall NYSED Accountability Status (2013-14) | | | | | |
| Reward | | | | Recognition | |
| | | | | | |
| In Good Standing | | | | Local Assistance Plan | |
| | | | | | |
| Focus District | | | | Focus School Identified by a Focus District | |
| | | | | | |
| Priority School | | | | | |
| | | | | | |

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 | | | |
| Describe the school's top priorities (no more than 5) based on the school's comprehensive plans (SCEP, SIG, DIP, etc.): | | | |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve Academics 2. Improve Behavior | | | |

Tenet 2 - School Leader Practices and Decisions: Visionary leaders create a school community and culture that lead to success, well-being and high academic outcomes for all students via systems of continuous and sustainable school improvement.

| # | Statement of Practice | H | E | D | I |
|------------------------------------|--|---|---|----------|---|
| 2.2 | The school leader ensures that the school community shares the Specific, Measurable, Ambitious, Results-oriented, and Timely (SMART) goals/mission, and long-term vision inclusive of core values that address the priorities outlined in the School Comprehensive Educational Plan (SCEP). | | | X | |
| 2.3 | Leaders make strategic decisions to organize programmatic, human, and fiscal capital resources. | | | X | |
| 2.4 | The school leader has a fully functional system in place aligned to the district's Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) to conduct targeted and frequent observation and track progress of teacher practices based on student data and feedback. | | | X | |
| 2.5 | Leaders effectively use evidence-based systems and structures to examine and improve critical individual and school-wide practices as defined in the SCEP (student achievement, curriculum and teacher practices; leadership development; community/family engagement; and student social and emotional developmental health). | | | | X |
| OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 2: | | | | D | |

Tenet 3 - Curriculum Development and Support: The school has rigorous and coherent curricula and assessments that are appropriately aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) for all students and are modified for identified subgroups in order to maximize teacher instructional practices and student-learning outcomes.

| # | Statement of Practice | H | E | D | I |
|------------------------------------|---|---|---|----------|---|
| 3.2 | The school leader ensures and supports the quality implementation of a systematic plan of rigorous and coherent curricula appropriately aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) that is monitored and adapted to meet the needs of students. | | | X | |
| 3.3 | Teachers develop and ensure that unit and lesson plans used include data-driven instruction (DDI) protocols that are appropriately aligned to the CCLS and NYS content standards and address student achievement needs. | | | X | |
| 3.4 | The school leader and teachers have developed a comprehensive plan for teachers to partner within and across all grades and subjects to create interdisciplinary curricula targeting the arts, 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: | | | | D | |

Tenet 6 - Family and Community Engagement: The school creates a culture of partnership where families, community members, and school staff work together to share in the responsibility for student academic progress and social-emotional growth and well-being.

| # | Statement of Practice | H | E | D | I |
|------------------------------------|--|---|---|----------|---|
| 6.2 | The school leader ensures that regular communication with students and families fosters their high expectations for student academic achievement. | | | X | |
| 6.3 | The school engages in effective planning and reciprocal communication with family and community stakeholders so that student strength and needs are identified and used to augment learning. | | | X | |
| 6.4 | The school community partners with families and community agencies to promote and provide training across all areas (academic and social and emotional developmental health) to support student success. | | | X | |
| 6.5 | The school shares data in a way that promotes dialogue among parents, students, and school community members centered on student learning and success and encourages and empowers families to understand and use data to advocate for appropriate support services for their children. | | | X | |
| OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 6: | | | | D | |

Tenet 2 - School Leader Practices and Decisions: Visionary leaders create a school community and culture that lead to success, well-being, and high academic outcomes for all students via systems of continuous and sustainable school improvement.

Tenet Rating

D

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

- The school’s SMART goals, mission and vision have been created with some stakeholder input and the SMART goals are in the process of being shared and monitored, but are not yet being adapted. The school leader said that the school’s mission and vision were created by a group of staff, teachers, and community members and have been revised over the past three years and were observed posted in most classrooms, while Westside’s SMART goals were developed collaboratively with the Turnaround School Team. The school’s mission and vision is known inconsistently by the school community, however; while interviewed teachers could summarize the general mission and vision of the school, neither interviewed students nor the representative parent were able to speak to either the vision or mission. The school leader noted that time is set aside at during TST meetings to talk through progress towards the SMART goals; he mentioned that most SMART goals are measured by how many action items from the goal had been accomplished to date. The school leader indicated that he feels the school is on track to meet some of its goals; however, measurable progress towards each of the school’s five SMART goals was unclear in conversations with the school leader, teachers, and through document review. As a result, the school’s mission and vision are starting to be seen, heard and understood while progress towards accomplishing them are undetermined.
- The school leader is beginning to make strategic decisions to organize school resources through the use of systems and by communicating the school’s needs. Interviewed teachers indicated that the enrichment program (MOST – Museum of Science and Technology) has impacted the master schedule and provides for consistent grade-level collaboration, though teachers inconsistently use this time for planning due to behavioral concerns that must be addressed. Teachers also shared concerns about the lack of human resources available to address the school’s ELL population as well as to support students’ social and emotional development health needs, disruptive behaviors, and to transition students to the Behavior Intervention Center, though they noted being confident that the school leader has advocated for additional personnel to support these areas. Furthermore, the school leader indicated that in the absence of funding for a Behavior Intervention Specialist, he has used other available funding to hire a teaching assistant to cover this position, who will be provided basic training to fulfill the role, allowing for the In School Suspension rooms and Behavior Intervention Center to be managed separately and better addressing students’ needs. In terms of instructional resources, the school leader said that iPads had been purchased for all 7th grade students to use with the implementation of Amplify Live ELA curriculum and would eventually be available for all students at Westside. The school leader also explained that funding has gone towards purchasing books for school-wide development around student engagement strategies. Additionally, the school leader noted that he has allocated funding to support the school’s PBIS systems and student incentives, such as the holiday dance. Therefore, available resources meet some but not all immediate needs of the school community and spending is inconsistently aligned to the school’s SMART goals.
- The school has developed a plan for observing and providing feedback to teachers aligned to APPR criteria and is partially implementing and monitoring that plan and subsequent observation data to provide professional development and support to teachers. According to the school leader, the

leadership team (comprised of the school leader, two vice principals, and three coaches – ELA, math, and science) has a plan in place to provide weekly informal observations and feedback to teachers; however, he indicated that it has been difficult to implement the plan with consistency due to behavioral issues that arise in the building and need to be addressed. The school leader also said that when informal observations do take place, the focus and feedback are aligned to previous trends or issues noted in the classroom or across the school which also determines the professional development that will be offered. Furthermore, he noted that there has been a large focus on behavior management in observations, feedback, and provided professional development. Teachers reported that they have received few or no informal observations so far this school year and indicated that they know a plan for this exists but has been held up due to the administrative team being preoccupied with addressing student behaviors. Interviewed teachers who did receive an informal observation noted no similarities in the type or delivery of feedback they received; while some received an email, others received sticky notes or verbal feedback only. Teachers noted that informal feedback in past years had not followed a similar format. Document review indicated a memo to teachers regarding official announced observations for APPR as well as the process for the observations. The school leader noted that the biggest area of growth indicated by formal evaluation feedback has been around student engagement, but growth in this area has been “inconsistent across the school”. As a result, the school’s observation and feedback system is only partially effective at holding both administrators and staff accountable towards growth and 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. The school leader indicated that the primary means to accomplish this outcome is through the informal observation structure conducted by the leadership team, though these happen sporadically due to student behaviors. As part of this strategy, the school leader stated he has started to collect, analyze, and use data to inform the professional development that teachers receive. The school leader also encourages instructional coaches to support grade level teams in the analysis of data during team collaboration, though no formal schedule or routines for consistent data analysis were observed in document review or mentioned by the school leader or teachers. Thus, measurable progress toward critical school-wide goals is only partially achieved.

Recommendations:

- Create a coverage schedule that is communicated to supporting staff through which observers are given uninterrupted time to complete observations while another member of the leadership team addresses incidents that arise. In addition, pre-identify non-negotiable classroom observations for the week to use when having to prioritize which observations must take place given limited time due to unforeseen circumstances.
- Develop a tracking tool to use in capturing ongoing results of teacher informal and formal observations (based upon indicators from the school’s teacher evaluation rubric and/or agreed upon measures) and a common feedback template focused on instructional feedback. Use the common template while providing all feedback to teachers and update the tracker weekly based upon informal/formal observation schedules. Use these tools to drive regular decision-making, including focus for professional development, new focus areas for individual/school-wide observations, identifying peer-to-peer observations, etc.

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 working towards ensuring that professional development for staff, the students' class schedule, collaborative planning time and access to pedagogical support for teachers are in place to support the implementation of CCLS-aligned curricula. The school leader noted that the leadership team is working to implement an informal observation system wherein designated leaders visit classrooms and take note of the instructional and non-instructional techniques being used in the classroom. The school leader also noted that the leadership team meets to identify and discuss trends that were seen during the most recent round of observations, and those trends are then addressed in professional development offered to staff. Additionally, while lesson plans were observed in most classrooms, most lesson plans indicated only whole group and general instruction provided to all students. Furthermore, many lesson plans were merely agendas of how time would be spent during the class rather than describing the techniques that would be used to address the standard. In addition, the school leader noted that lesson plans are collected weekly and given written feedback. Additionally, both the school leader and teachers indicated that daily collaborative planning time and a newly added enrichment block where professional development is offered are built into the master schedule. In addition, the school leader said that pedagogical support is given to teachers through the instructional coaches, whom they meet with weekly as a team and also in 1:1 meetings as needed. As a result, while time does exist for teachers to meet to plan and receive support for implementing CCLS curricula, it is beginning to meet the needs of some but not all students.
- Teachers are beginning to develop unit and lessons plans that incorporate the CCLS instructional shifts and data-driven instruction into English Language Arts (ELA), math, and science curricula. While no unit plans were observed, lesson plans listed basic teaching points, the standard number, and in few cases, general modifications for groups of students and sometimes a description of the assessment for the lesson (though these were rarely aligned to the standard or true assessments of learning – for example, using the thumbs up/thumbs down strategy). Based upon lesson plan review, planning that adapts to meet the different learning needs of students or is in response to student data occurs infrequently. Few lesson plans indicated ELL-specific modifications or adaptations to the lesson, though the school has a high percentage of ELL students. Additionally, few lesson plans indicated pre-planned questions for students to respond to; 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 process regularly. For example, the school leader and teachers indicated that they use the results of A-Net testing (given every ten weeks) to determine what standards they will reteach. Likewise, teachers mentioned that most classes start with a Do It Now and end with a Ticket Out the Door, though they said there is no expectation or general practice that these formative assessment tools are regularly reviewed and used to modify or adjust planning. As a result, 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 occurs in some grade levels at the school through a limited number of teachers informally collaborating and implementing these opportunities, but a comprehensive plan for teachers to partner within and across all grades and subjects is absent. Discussions with teachers indicated that they are beginning to plan interdisciplinary CCLS units (notably in 7th grade ELA and social studies) that include the arts, technology, and enrichment to increase student engagement and promote student success, yet observed lesson plans and classroom instruction inconsistently included these opportunities. Additionally, teachers indicated that the MOST enrichment block provides an opportunity for more interdisciplinary learning, though teachers noted that one main lesson was being delivered to all students regardless of grade level. Thus, students have limited opportunities to engage in meaningful, cross-curricula activities that increase their abilities to be academically successful.
- Teachers use some assessments, those of which provide mostly summative data such as Regents exams, A-Net, and benchmark assessments, to gather information on student progress and inform curriculum planning, but feedback is not provided to all students based on this data. Although interviewed students indicated that their graded assignments usually include numerical scores, they reported that they did not receive specific feedback from teachers beyond those scores. A review of student work during student interviews indicated that much feedback received by students addressed for completion of work and/or effort rather than targeting students' mastery of the standard or ways to improve their understanding of the actual skill. Posted student work samples throughout the school and classrooms were minimal and of those, few had teacher feedback provided beyond a score. Additionally, lesson plans seldom indicated how or when students would be provided feedback on their performance or to what set of academic expectations/evidence of mastery that feedback should be aligned with. Furthermore, during classroom observations, assessments of any type were not consistently observed and those that were seen did not fully align with the stated objectives for the lesson. As a result, the alignment between the curriculum and assessment is weak and feedback does not adequately lead to increased student achievement.

Recommendations:

- Re-examine and shift the focus of informal walkthroughs to more deeply and intentionally target the CCLS/instructional shifts; provide specific, actionable feedback targeted at making improvements at reaching the CCLS/instructional shifts; ensure that specified professional development time is spent having teachers engage with and building a deeper understanding of how to plan instruction aligned to the CCLS and the instructional shifts.
- Provide professional development and ongoing support on how to design multiple types of assessments (specifically formative) to gather frequent, concrete data on student achievement aligned to a) the daily objective, b) how to track that data towards short and long-term goals, and c) how to then communicate progress to students for their own reflection and understanding of and engagement with their own learning. Provide teachers with development and models of how to then develop specific, actionable feedback to students aligned to the outcomes of the formative assessments.

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| 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.

- The school leader and instructional coaches are engaging teachers in some conversations about aligning plans to data and providing basic structures to support these conversations. According to the school’s master schedule, there is time built into the schedule for teams to meet weekly, during which they can conduct data analysis and discuss re-teaching needs. Interviewed teachers indicated that the primary source of student data analysis is A-Net test results for ELA and math, unit benchmarks for science, and DBQs for social studies; they said there is not a specific process or protocol for how data is analyzed and that next steps for individual students/subgroups as well as when re-teaching may take place is at the discretion of the teacher. In observations, almost all instruction was delivered to the class whole group with few instances of differentiation. Finally, the school’s SMART goal aligned to Tenet 4 is to provide teachers support with student goal setting, interviewed students were not able to speak to any personal academic goals. Thus, the school’s instructional practices minimally promote high levels of student engagement and inquiry leading to increased student achievement.
- Some teachers are beginning to develop instruction that reflects the CCLS shifts and higher-order thinking questions and learning activities. During observations, reviewers noted that most grade and subject level classes were engaged in learning activities that were not complex or rigorous (i.e. completing a worksheet independently, watching a teacher interact with a Eno Board without having to co-produce any evidence of learning, and many instances of lecture-style instruction). Likewise, while questions were posed to students, they seldom required higher-level thinking from students, though several teachers were heard asking students to “prove” their answers following the school-wide practice of “RAP” (read, answer, provide with text/examples). In many cases, the same student or small group of students engaged in the learning while oftentimes groups of off-task students were permitted to sit in the back of the classroom and not engage in learning. As a result, instructional practices inconsistently lead to high levels of engagement and achievement for all students.
- The school has several structures in place to communicate and support the learning expectations of the school, though they are inconsistently implemented where some teachers use and adjust strategies to acknowledge diverse groups of students. Westside expectations, voice level expectations, hand signals, and class rules were observed in almost all classrooms. However, while a common language around voice levels and attention-getting cues were observed in most classes, many student behaviors observed in classrooms (students yelling out in class, walking out of the classroom, repeatedly using profane language to teachers and other students, and pushing/shoving in the hallways) warranted redirection from adults but oftentimes went unaddressed. In addition, many classrooms seemed to be split into two groups of students – those trying to engage with the learning and sitting up front/near the teacher, and a separate group of students off-task and oftentimes participating in unsafe and disruptive behaviors, going mostly unaddressed in other spaces of the classroom (usually the back). One interviewed teacher indicated that this is the only way that learning can happen in the classroom is by separating the students who want to learn from those who do not. The school leader mentioned that all teachers receive training to implement AVID instructional techniques in the classroom to

increase student engagement and encourage students to think about their strengths and weaknesses. The school leader noted that there are not necessarily school-wide or grade-level wide AVID structures in place; rather AVID techniques are delivered to teachers based upon teacher interest or class-specific needs. As seen in classroom observations, teachers inconsistently handed out tickets to students, a component of earning PBIS-aligned incentives. While staff and the parent representative generally agreed that the school is working hard to make the school a positive and safe learning environment despite increasingly disruptive student behaviors, interviewed students indicated that they do not always feel safe at school, that bullying is an ongoing issue, and that students' misbehaviors take away a great deal of instructional time every day. Therefore, while some structures are in place to promote a positive and safe learning environment, additional work is needed here in order to provide an intellectually and physically safe space in which all students are held accountable for learning.

- Teachers use minimal strategies to gather data through summative assessments to inform instructional practices and student groupings, although they are seldom providing feedback to students on their achievement. Most data sources referred to by the school leader, teachers, and students were district-required assessments, including Regents, benchmark assessments, SRI, and A-Net. Outside of A-Net data, however, few teachers were able to speak specifically to how they use data to drive weekly or daily instructional planning adjustments and very few examples of formative assessments were observed in lesson plans or in practice. Moreover, students were not able to speak to their performance goals and there was no obvious use of grouping in observed classrooms (outside of some behavioral groupings). In addition, both students and the parent representative indicated that they do not receive consistent feedback regarding students' progress and that grade reports are the primary communication about student growth. Moreover, interviewed students indicated that their graded assignments mainly include numerical scores and the feedback that was given on assignments was general (i.e. "Good job", "Nice work," "Great!"). As a result, data-based instruction is being minimally implemented and a lack of purposeful feedback to students has yet to result in higher levels of student achievement or engagement.

Recommendation:

- Support teachers in gathering more frequent, relevant student achievement data (formative assessments) so that student groupings and targeted learning activities can be designed to meet various levels of need. Furthermore, design a plan or process in which student data will be shared with both students and families on a regular basis so that students can better understand, track and own their progress accurately.

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| Tenet 5 - Student Social and Emotional Developmental Health: The school community identifies, promotes, and supports social and emotional development by designing systems and experiences that lead to healthy relationships and a safe, respectful environment that is conducive to learning for all constituents. | Tenet Rating | D |
|---|---------------------|----------|

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

- The school is working to implement several structures and systems to address students’ social and emotional behavioral health needs. The school leader reported that the Student Support Team is led by one of the school’s vice principals and meets weekly to discuss student behaviors and needed supports, while the Student Intervention Team meets bi-weekly. Currently, these teams use data points from within Educator’s Handbook to identify students who need support. The SST team noted that they focus on occurrences of three main behaviors – verbal violations, physical aggression, and leaving the classroom without permission; students who have three or more violations in any of these areas are added to a list to receive interventions. The school leader noted that there are currently no formal systems in place for measuring students’ progress once they have been assigned to an agency or support; however, the agencies (School Based Health Clinic, Huntington, Hillside, Brownell, Peaceful Schools) talk informally about students’ progress as needed and developing a tracking tool is on the school leader’s list of tasks to accomplish. Furthermore, interviewed teachers indicated that while many students receive services, they are unsure of the process by which students are matched with a support. They also noted there are approximately 150 students on “the list” who need support, and there are not enough school personnel to address the growing number of SEDH issues at the school. The school leader said that there is an on-call schedule for members of the SST team so that there is always coverage for the ISS and BIC (Behavior Intervention Center) rooms. In addition, the school leader noted that some students receive individualized progress reports around their SEDH goals and progress, though this not a school-wide practice. Teachers explained that the school has also introduced ROAR’s cards to incentivize students for meeting the behavior expectations outlined but the school’s PBIS plan and a re-set pass system to allow students needing a break to go to another classroom setting. However, the SST, teachers and the school leader each indicated that these systems have not yet seen measurable improvements in addressing students’ behaviors and SEDH needs. Thus, the current systems are not yet effectively addressing SEDH barriers for all students at Westside.
- The school has school-wide expectations for students’ behavior as they relate to SEDH outlined by the PBIS system and professional development is offered to build adult capacity to meet these needs; however, the practices to promote and implement those expectations through the use of a formal curriculum are seen inconsistently throughout the school. The school leader indicated that they have not adopted a specific curriculum or program to address students’ social emotional and developmental health needs, though he noted they are looking to implement the ART (Anger Replacement Therapy) curriculum. Also, the school leader reported that they have worked to provide Code of Conduct-related lessons for students at every grade level. The SST said that they have received professional development on how to conduct the check-in/check-out system with students as well as responsive conferencing, though this protocol has not yet been implemented. In addition, the SST explained that they informally meet with teachers as needed to provide SEDH techniques for the classroom; they also meet regarding specific students’ needs. The SST reports that “teachers are 100 percent on board with

trying whatever it takes for students to be successful.” While the SST and teachers indicated that they do not have enough staffing to address all students’ SEDH needs, many staff collaborate to address students’ needs. For example, the school leader, SST, and teachers noted that the counselors and Promise Zone worked together to develop an anti-bullying session to deliver to all students in the school during a class period. The SST also reported that while there are many structures in place to support students’ SEDH needs and also to reward students’ behaviors aligned to PBIS, that in general the school’s practices are reactionary and they spend the majority of their time deescalating students’ behaviors. Furthermore, they noted feeling the school is not always a safe place for students, a sentiment also shared by students when interviewed. Therefore, while there are many pieces to the schools’ approach to begin addressing students’ SEDH needs, the school community is not consistently providing a safe and healthy learning environment.

- Protocols and processes for identifying students’ SEDH needs and engaging stakeholders in those procedures are beginning to be implemented. The school leader mainly noted the process by which a vice principal works with the SST team weekly to address students’ needs aligned to SEDH based upon data from the Educator’s Handbook. When asked about a process for referral to the SST team, teachers said they did not know of a specific vision at the school around students’ SEDH needs nor do they know the formal process for screening students; rather, they noted that they could send a referral to the SST team and that the team works hard to address all of those referrals. Additionally, both teachers and the SST teams said they need additional professional development and support (i.e. a BIC support specialist) in order to more effectively address students’ SEDH needs. As a result, not all school stakeholders are able to articulate the process for how the school community promotes and meets the SEDH needs of students or their role in that process.
- The school has begun to implement a plan to collect, analyze, and use data to identify and meet student social and emotional developmental health needs. The school leader reported that referral data is collected and assessed through Educator’s Handbook primarily by the SST, though they are also beginning to look at the percentage of engaging lessons and referrals as well as examining what time of the day is resulting in the highest number of referrals in order to draw connections between these variables. However, without all teachers and staff understanding the referral process as noted previously, the key data points that trigger student interventions, and missing a progress monitoring tool to track students’ growth with SEDH supports, the school is missing key opportunities to support the academic and social success of all students.

Recommendations:

- Create a specific school-wide vision and measurable goals for SEDH at your school and then identify and implement a whole-school and/or grade-level plan/program to support this vision and goals.
- Develop a detailed, specific written plan that includes roles for all stakeholders, processes and procedures for data collection (noting specific data), student referrals to services, progress monitoring of growth and strategic plan for professional development that addresses the unique SEDH needs of the Westside community.

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| Tenet 6 - Family and Community Engagement: The school creates a culture of partnership where families, community members, and school staff work together to share in the responsibility for student academic progress and social-emotional growth and well-being. | Tenet Rating | D |
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The school has received a rating of *Developing* for Tenet 6 – Family and Community Engagement.

- The school has started working to revise their efforts and plans to engage parents more effectively and inform them about the expectations for student achievement. Teachers stated that expectations were set with families at the beginning of the year through Open House, though attendance was low. The parent representative in the focus group shared that parents could use the school website to get some information, but their primary information source was newsletters sent home. The school leader stated that conversations about academic expectations take place through written letters, robo-calls, award ceremonies, and parent-teacher conferences. Interviewed teachers also said that they communicate primarily via robo-calls, texts and emails; however, there have been limited in-person engagements with parents and in the community. In an attempt to encourage increased communication with families, the school leader and teachers noted that teachers are required to make five positive phone calls home each week (academic or non-academic related) and keep a log of those calls. Interviewed teachers also noted that student expectations (primarily behavioral) are announced daily on the announcements and academic expectations are shared during report card nights and Family Fun nights centered on math, reading, and testing, although again, sparsely attended by families. Furthermore, they explained that as teachers, they receive a weekly Paw Print newsletter from the school leader on Fridays with the upcoming week’s instructional focus, expectations, and the week’s activities. Despite these efforts, the school leader, SST, teachers, and parent report that family engagement at Westside remains very low. Therefore, the relationship between families and the school must be re-established and strengthened to ensure that families know how to support their students and that all student needs are being met.
- The school communicates with families about school and student issues without considering translation needs for the whole school community and has begun to reflect upon more effective ways to foster communication. The school leader noted that the school communicates with families about school and student issues primarily in English and Spanish, although there are many families with other home languages. Interviewed teachers noted that it is increasingly difficult to connect with parents and that the SST team puts in substantial effort trying to support those connections being made. The school leader noted that securing accurate addresses for students is a challenge and teachers explained that many phone numbers are listed for students in E-School, though few are accurate. Moreover, several teachers also noted that when the primary attempts at communication are not effective, they have tried home visits in the past as well. The school leader commented several times that this is an area where they are examining new approaches to better communicate with Westside families, including looking for locations where events can be held in the community, though initial attempts with this strategy have been unsuccessful. As a result, all families are not able to fully support their child’s academic achievement and social emotional needs.
- The school is at the beginning stages of implementing strategies and professional development to create and sustain family/community engagement to enable parents to support students’ academic success. Document review indicated that parents have opportunities to attend the district’s Parent

University which offers free classes and workshops on pertinent topics to support their students; however, the school leader noted that while the Parent University classes for the district had been hosted at Westside, very few Westside parents were in attendance. While the school leader is currently rethinking their strategies to engage families, teachers indicated that they have not received training or direct support on how to engage with families. New teachers to the building, however, were given a community tour during the summer to get them familiarized with the community their students come from. As a result, because most communication strategies are one-directional and few parents attend in-person meetings with school staff, there is little opportunity for parents to share their thoughts and to deepen the partnership between school and home.

- School staff shares some data to communicate about student progress that families can access. The school leader indicated that the primary data sent home is report cards and benchmark data when available, and that teachers may spend time explaining the data with parents during parent teacher conferences, although these are not widely attended. The representative parent in the focus group noted that she has access to information about her grandchildren's academic progress in E-school, though it is not usually updated. In addition, the school leader said that training in E-School was offered to parents during Open House. Document review showed a November Breakfast Honor Roll Parent Sign-in sheet with 24 parents in attendance; the school leader noted that they may move to sharing academic information at events that traditionally draw a larger crowd of families, such as celebration events and sporting events. As a result, all families may not be able to fully support student learning in ways to maximize achievement.

Recommendations:

- Identify and set clear expectations for students' academic achievement (whole school, grade level, individual); determine a progress monitoring tool and schedule by which to monitor students' progress; track students' progress and share with students in conferencing; develop and share common template outlining students' goal and progress towards goal; share with families at set regular intervals. Communicate this formal plan to all school community members and build time into regular team meetings to address/prepare for steps in the process.
- Provide specific professional development to staff on how to foster meaningful relationships with families, taking into consideration the diverse population and cultural differences, and provide for opportunities for parents to engage in conversations with staff around how to support their students at home. Use both of these avenues to reinforce academic and behavioral expectations and provide student-specific academic progress data.

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):

- Recommendations for Tenet 2 focus on refining the informal observation process to become a true instructional support for teachers. Ensure that the core purpose of informal observations is to observe and provide actionable feedback around instruction. Create a common informal observation document to encourage a more refined focus on the CCLS instructional shifts. As a leadership team, commit to reviewing

feedback given to teachers at set intervals to norm on and ensure that high-quality feedback is being given regularly. Additionally, put into place a coverage schedule to ensure that informal observations take place while an on-call leader can address student issues that arise. The refining and faithful implementation of this structure will provide for ongoing monitoring of instructional planning and delivery, will bolster increased positive presence in classrooms by the leadership team, and will give leaders a tool through which to provide strategic development and teacher support. This initiative can serve as a foundation for the next set of recommendations.

- Moving into Tenet 5, there should be SMART benchmark targets created for the social and emotional developmental health of students. You may need to take a step back in this area to develop and/or clarify your vision for the school community to promote not only a safe environment that addresses students' social and emotional developmental health needs, but also one in which all stakeholders own their role, thrive on achievement and celebrate successes. Along the similar mindset stated above, if the school community does not clearly understand the ideal state that you are working to achieve, then the collective efforts to have that realized will likely be inconsistent and/or incongruent with the overall vision and strategy that should be in place. This is an opportunity to focus on investment and recognition to encourage positive reinforcement centered on growth and progress towards a universally understood and appreciated learning environment. Next, in order to fully execute a plan for achieving the vision around students' SEDH, there must be a detailed, specific, written plan that includes roles for all stakeholders, processes and procedures for data collection (noting specific data to gather), student referrals to services, progress monitoring of growth and a strategic plan for professional development that addresses the unique SEDH needs of the Westside community. This written plan should also include the mechanisms for collaborative communication between all outside agencies present at the school and the school's student support team (again, a concrete plan for communication (who communicates, when/frequency and specific dates or date intervals, where meetings take place, meeting goals and desired outcomes, who takes ownership of next steps, etc.). Every stakeholder involved in addressing students' SEDH needs should know or have easy access to a comprehensive list of all services the school offers and the qualifications of each services. This information needs to be strategically shared with teachers and parents as well. As with other processes and procedures, a mechanism for monitoring these processes and procedures should be implemented.
- The next suggested prioritized recommendation would fall into Tenet 3 and 4. Once the informal observation process (firm schedule, common feedback documents with focused, actionable feedback aligned to instructional strategies and CCLS/shifts) has been reset, the system will help the leadership team identify specific needs and supports for various groups of teachers and provide additional, aligned professional development accordingly. Specifically, differentiated professional development in how to design assessments, gather data and share academic feedback with students.
 - Instruction: Designing multiple types of assessments and gathering frequent student achievement data is the next area to prioritize in implementation. Once teachers understand the utility of data, they need to also develop the mechanisms that will allow for its regular collection and ensure that it will provide concrete evidence of whether or not students are able to complete the skill aligned with the stated objective and standard. Students must be given ample opportunities to practice and demonstrate their learning in each class period, and teachers should have a clear understanding of where students sit on the continuum of learning in order to know what interventions and lesson activities need to be developed for students at each level. In addition, establish processes for this data to be communicated with students in a manner in which will invest them in their own learning as well as their families in ways that are effective for various subgroups. While the practice of

student goal setting is a starting point in this area, it is critical that teachers know how to teach and monitor students' creation of goals to make sure that they address the relevant components of a SMART goal and move beyond general language of improvement.

- Finally, addressing Tenet 6, re-examine the structures and processes in place to communicate with families, specifically around students' individual academic progress. First, lead an effort to encourage families to update their address and contact numbers on file at school so that attempts to make phone calls and home visits can be more successful. Also, while teachers are now required to make positive phone calls home each week, consider including weekly calls (or via another method deemed more effective) that specifically communicate academic progress aligned to formative assessments or recent benchmark performance. Ensure that information about students' academic progress is the prioritized content of communication; provide support/training to teachers to model how academic progress conversations should sound, what information to provide to parents, how to communicate this information in an easy-to-understand and "growth-centered" manner, as well as how to have difficult conversations, that can arise when discussing a student who is struggling academically. Consider family incentives for coming to school for data nights or conferences. If E-School is the primary means of communicating students' progress, then ensure that teachers are inputting information regularly (create a school-wide expectation) and set a plan for monitoring this.