



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

**DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE) CONCEPTUAL FRAME 4 REVIEW**



**2018-19 School Year**

<b>BEDS Code</b>	<b>660900010009</b>	
<b>School Name</b>	Pennington School	
<b>School Address</b>	20 Fairway St, Mt. Vernon, NY 10552	
<b>District Name</b>	Mount Vernon School District	
<b>School Leader</b>	Daniel Brady	
<b>Dates of Review</b>	February 27, 2019	
<b>School Accountability Status</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Priority School <input type="checkbox"/> Focus School	
<b>Type of Review</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Conceptual Frame 4 Review (A district-led review of SOPs 2.3, 3.2, 3.3, 3.5, 4.2, 4.3, and 4.5)	
<b>Review Team</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation/Title</b>
<b>School Leader</b>	Daniel Brady	Principal
<b>District Representative</b>	Dr. Waveline Bennett-Conroy	Assistant Superintendent
<b>Additional Team Members</b>	Dr. Karren Dunkley	Lead Reviewer
	Roxie Johnson	Math Specialist
	Michael Selkis	Special Education Specialist
	Lana Flemming-Thomas	English Language Arts Specialist

**School Information Sheet for Pennington School**

School Configuration (2017-18 data)					
Grade Configuration	Pre-K-8	Total Enrollment	331	SIG Recipient	Yes
Types and Number of English Language Learner Classes (2017-18)					
# Transitional Bilingual	0	# Dual Language	0	# Self-Contained English as a Second Language	0
Types and Number of Special Education Classes (2015-16)					
# Special Classes		# SETSS		# Integrated Collaborative Teaching	0
Types and Number of Special Classes (2015-16)					
# Visual Arts	1	# Music	2	# Drama	0
# Foreign Language	2	# Dance	0	# CTE	0
School Composition (most recent data)					
% Title I Population	52.62%	% Attendance Rate			92.04%
% Free Lunch	45.64%	% Reduced Lunch			6.98%
% Limited English Proficient	4.07%	% Students with Disabilities			12.79%
Racial/Ethnic Origin (most recent data)					
% American Indian or Alaska Native	0	% Black or African American			57%
% Hispanic or Latino	22%	% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander			3%
% White	15%	% Multi-Racial			2%
Personnel (most recent data)					
Years Principal Assigned to School	1	# of Assistant Principals			1
# of Deans	0	# of Counselors/Social Workers			2.5
% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate	0	% Teaching Out of Certification			0
% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience	0	Average Teacher Absences			3.5
Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2017-18 or most recent data available)					
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	32%	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4			26 %
Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (4th Grade)	89%	Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (8th Grade)			82%
Student Performance for High Schools (2017-18 or most recent data available)					
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4		Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4			
Credit Accumulation High Schools Only (2017-18 or most recent data available)					
% 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 (2017-18 or most recent data available)					
Reward		Recognition			
In Good Standing		Local Assistance Plan			
Focus District		Focus School Identified by a Focus District			X
Priority School					

**Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)**

Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in ELA (2014-15 or most recent data available)			
American Indian or Alaska Native		Black or African American	X
Hispanic or Latino		Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	
White		Multi-Racial	
Students with Disabilities		Limited English Proficient	X
Economically Disadvantaged			
Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Mathematics (2014-15 or most recent data available)			
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		Limited English Proficient	X
Economically Disadvantaged	X		
Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Science (2014-15 or most recent data available)			
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.):			
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"> <li>1. Data Driven Instruction</li> <li>2. Assessing for understanding</li> <li>3. Small Group Instruction</li> </ol>			

## Information about the review

Dr. Karren Dunkley, led the review in collaboration with Dr. Waveline Bennett-Conroy, Assistant Superintendent.

- The review team visited a total of 39 classrooms during the review.
- Reviewers conducted interviews with the principal/assistant principal, teachers and students, respectively.
- Reviewers examined documents provided by the school, including lesson plans, instructional artifacts such as the data binders, student portfolios, and snapshots of schoolwide data.

**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.

Mark an "X" in the box below the appropriate designation for each Statement of Practice. Provide the letter rating in the OVERALL RATING row as the final overall tenet rating.

	Statement of Practice	Stage 4	Stage 3	Stage 2	Stage 1
2.3	Leaders make strategic decisions to organize programmatic, human, and fiscal capital resources.			X	

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

	Statement of Practice	Stage 4	Stage 3	Stage 2	Stage 1
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	
3.5	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	

**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	Stage 4	Stage 3	Stage 2	Stage 1
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	
4.5	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	

**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**

**2**

2.3 **The school is in Stage 2 for this Statement of Practice:** Leaders make strategic decisions to organize programmatic, human, and fiscal capital resources.

**Debriefing Statement**

The school leader stated that he began the 2018-2019 school year as the Acting Principal. He was officially appointed in December 2018 and maintained the operational systems previously put in place. The school leader shared that he had to tweak the schedule to provide common planning time and professional learning community (PLC) time for teachers to meet vertically and horizontally. The school leader expressed that the middle school schedule has been in flux due to the challenge of scheduling students to ensure they meet the New York State's regulations for Physical Education and Health.

The school leader emphasized that he developed a relationship with teachers, and consulted with teachers to determine what resources they needed and where to allocate funds. For example, the school leader provided funds for teachers to participate in professional development or purchase curriculum materials.

The school leader shared that he implemented several iterations of the master schedule to maximize learning time based on the travel schedule of the itinerant teachers assigned to Pennington School.

The principal also shared that he requested a new Special Education Resource Teacher to support the needs of his students with disabilities (SWDs). The school leader also articulated that the Carbone Clinic provided professional development for teachers, noting that this collaboration was critical to support the four cohorts of special education classes. Additionally, the school leader emphasized that the learning community received consultant support to help with the implementation of guided reading.

The school leader stated that the learning community extends learning time for students by: 1) identifying students in grades 3-8 in need of targeted instruction, and 2) implementing an Academic Power Hour (APH) program funded by Title I funds, three times per week on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays in English Language Arts, Math, and Science from 3:10 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

The school leader emphasized that the learning community was about to embark on an early literacy program focused on students in grades one to two. The program will provide enrichment in ELA, Math, and Science for identified students on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 7:25 a.m. to 8:25 a.m. The school leader also noted that the middle school staff tutored students during the students' lunch hours.

The school leader discussed the implementation of collaborative structures to accelerate learning outcomes. Specifically, the principal described how the learning community activated structures such as: 1) instituting a PLC to provide teachers with an opportunity to analyze student work and to align tiered supports based on the

different levels of learners on track, intermediate, or advanced, 2) solidifying the use of the response to intervention (RTI) protocols, and, 3) making referrals to the RTI Committee to support the personalization of services for students.

The principal expressed that he interacted with the PLC as a participant-observer, although ensuring they had autonomy, he requested notes, records, and agendas to ensure that the PLC remained focused on scaling promising instructional practices. During PLC time, teachers examine exemplary work to analyze trends and to inform daily instruction.

The principal also stated that the PLC uses data to highlight students in need of additional intervention and to inform lesson planning to determine the focus standards for re-teaching and spiraling. The school leader shared that for the 2018-2019 school year, the instructional foci of the PLC include: 1) small group instruction, 2) use of manipulatives, visuals, and graphic organizers, 3) a myriad of tools to promote student engagement such as jigsaw and carousel, 4) guided reading support for select students, and 5) the use of technology such as computers and Smartboards within Envisions Math lessons. The principal emphasized that during classroom visits, the reviewers should observe: 1) literacy across all content areas, 2) math problem-solving strategies, 3) flexible student groupings based on data (noting that the learning community amends groups throughout the year), and 4) teachers using assessments to gauge students' mastery of content.

### **Commendations**

- Evidence of a culturally responsive learning environment as students expressed excitement and enthusiasm about participating in a Black History Month Project
- Solid teaching and learning foundation exists to advance rigorous instructional expectations
- In the self-contained classes, students' academic and social-emotional needs are met. Adults are deeply engaged in the learning with students, and aides are a critical part of the instructional team and not merely bystanders
- Positive tone exists in classrooms
- Students seamlessly use instructional technology embedded within the learning cycle as they proficiently maneuver PPT presentations
- In some instances, especially in content-based classes such as Science and Social Studies, students appear deeply engaged in the learning process
- Visible evidence of early literacy taking hold in pre-k classes. Students asked the right questions and used academic language above grade level
- A clear culture of readiness to learn exists as students demonstrate eagerness for more rigorous

teaching and learning.

### Recommendations

- Develop an intentional middle school culture that focuses on high school preparedness, college and career readiness and students' social and emotional development.
- Build instructional coherence across the entire learning community. Align the school's educational philosophy to lesson planning, lesson delivery, instructional walkthroughs, teacher feedback and the PLC professional learning strands.
- Maximize students' readiness to engage in challenging learning tasks and productive academic struggle. Implement a rigor study and companion action plan across all grades and content. Differentiate rigorous teaching and learning expectations for the primary and middle grades.
- Revamp the master schedule for the 2019-2020 school year and use it as a lever for school improvement in both the primary and middle grades. Convene a master schedule committee to explore how best to roster all students to ensure students' access to expanded course choices- especially in the middle grades.

The results of these programs demonstrate that ample evidence exists to show that the school leader utilizes systems, including a professional learning community structure and expanded learning time, to organize operations and appropriate resources to advance student achievement.

**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**

**2**

**3.2 The school is in Stage 2 for this Statement of Practice:** The school leader ensures and supports the quality implementation of a systematic plan of rigorous and coherent curricula. All curricula are appropriately aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), which teachers monitor and adapt to meet the needs of students.

### Debriefing Statement

During the interviews, the school leader and staff discussed how the school develops and offers a rigorous Common Core-aligned curriculum that addresses the needs of all learners. During the review, the teachers and school leader described how the school meets the diverse needs of students through: 1) the guided reading program, 2) the implementation of the district's common core aligned curriculum maps and pacing calendars for the Envisions Math and Journeys ELA curricula, 3) personalized learning accommodations for all students based on specially designed instruction (SDI) and, 4) differentiated groups designated as on track (O), intervention (I) or accelerated (A) based on the beginning of the year (BOY) baseline assessment data. Notably, the school leader emphasized that the instructional leadership team ensures that teachers do not dedicate

unnecessary time to teaching one specific standard.

The teachers articulated that the PLC meets once every six days to address emerging themes in the achievement data. One teacher mentioned that they used the iReady and Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) assessments to inform lesson planning and to develop individualized student goals. The teachers shared that they communicated learning goals with the students, telling them, “This will be your goal for the next couple of months.” Explicitly, during cycled PLC and curriculum meetings, teachers discuss effective strategies to scaffold learning to ensure lessons build upon each other and to isolate skills to determine where deficits exist. To provide an example, one teacher stated that if students were “learning to add and subtract fractions, they would have to know how to rename fractions” so that the computation was all aligned.

The PLC also uses common planning time during preps to analyze data, and discuss promising practices. One teacher stated that many of the support staff members collaborate with classroom teachers to regroup students based on iReady and Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) data. This teacher emphasized that the goal is to “look at children who are borderline to see if they test out of a particular intervention group.”

During the review, teachers described specific ways in which they modified the curriculum to ensure students with individual education programs (IEPs) have access to a rigorous CCLS-aligned curriculum. Several examples of these practices include: 1) providing pullout and push-in services with instructional specialists and the resource room teacher, 2) providing targeted support during RTI periods to meet the students' needs, i.e., remediation or acceleration, 3) meeting weekly, and daily if necessary, to integrate specially designed instruction (SDI) in daily lessons through a myriad of accommodations and modifications. The teachers also emphasized that the special education and general education teachers work in close collaboration at each grade level to support the learning needs of the SWDs.

The school leader emphasized that based on student needs, teachers receive ongoing professional development in guided reading with technical support from an external consultant. During the review, the teachers stated that they ensured students' access to a rigorous curriculum through the use of a myriad of techniques to advance students' mastery of the standards. Specifically, teachers mentioned that they target specific skills to get students prepared for the NYS exams, 2) implement the RACES writing strategy, 3) implement peer tutoring where the fifth-grade students tutor students in the younger grades. One teacher described how she used data from the past years' NYS exams to determine which skills require focused attention. For example, this teacher shared that upon realizing that students struggled with point of view, she discussed with the reading specialist how to align support with the leveled literacy intervention.

Several teachers discussed specific strategies and learning tasks that they utilized to ensure that they exposed students to a rigorous CCLS-aligned curriculum. For example, teachers discussed how they, 1) employ real-life experiences to have students connect to the concepts taught, 2) utilize Advancement via Individual



Determination (AVID)-related Math problem-solving strategies such as Q-TIPS and CUBES, 3) give students an opportunity to practice previous NYS assessment questions as the Do Now, 4) implement the Envisions Math re-teaching guide or provide advanced work for accelerated students, and 5) organize small group instruction to simplify complex concepts.

Additionally, teachers expressed how they differentiated resources for Multilingual Learners (MLLs) to expose them to a curriculum that prepares them for college and career. For example, teachers shared that the English as a New Language (ENL) teacher provided pullout services to provide targeted support for MLLs. One teacher stated that the ENL teacher closely collaborated with the classroom teacher “to meet students where they were.” Teachers also shared that they partnered with the two reading specialists to identify strategies and skills for particular lessons and to find multi-modal resources on the MLLs’ level so that they can master the required skill and strategy as their counterparts. Several teachers also highlighted the role of the two reading specialists in helping to build their capacity in using visual cues, to scaffold for students based on their reading level.

### **Areas for Improvement**

Although the school leader and teachers described how they institute distinct structures and practices to offer rigorous and coherent curricula to all students, the cohesiveness of the academic program provided to all students requires targeted attention. Concretely, teachers need professional development and support in executing structured small group instruction during the regular school day, at pivotal points during the lesson. Furthermore, teachers did not report receiving feedback on their lesson plans thus strengthening teachers’ planning practices. Importantly, providing feedback to teachers consistently on lesson planning supports high expectations for teachers and students. <sup>1</sup><sub>SEP</sub>

Based on the examination of student portfolios coupled with the classroom visits, reviewers concluded that an uneven pattern of teachers monitoring and adapting the curriculum emerged. A review of the lesson plans provided by teachers did not consistently reflect an acceptable level of content and scope of instructional strategies to meet the needs of all learners. For instance, one reviewer noted that while some lessons identified particular differentiated strategies for SWDs and MLLs, other lesson plans included only the learning targets and reminder notes for the teacher. The lack of uniformity regarding how teachers support the diverse learners in their classes makes it challenging for all students to receive access to rigorous curricula that leads them towards a common expectation of college and career readiness.

During the debriefing session, one of the reviewers reported that in the portfolios of two of the sixth graders, they examined scored formative assessments in Social Studies. However, this reviewer noted that the portfolios did not contain any written work in ELA showing evidence of CCLS-aligned content in this area. Additionally, although the fourth-grade portfolios contained evidence of CCLS ELA work, the absence of a rubric made it challenging to assess how teachers provide feedback and foster student ownership of learning to achieve standards of mastery. Importantly, one observer reported that in the self-contained classrooms,

teachers tended to demonstrate ownership of a few specific students, and not the entire class. This observer also concluded that a lack of collaboration existed between the consultant teacher, resource teacher and classroom teacher in the self-contained classrooms.

Generally, students shared the SMART goals that they created at the beginning of the year based on the iReady data. However, the learning community does not monitor or track students' progress. The school leader acknowledged that the school must implement a more robust and consistent plan to communicate students' individual learning goals with them and their families.

Based on the majority of the 39 lessons that the team observed, reviewers concurred that: 1) lessons were primarily delivered using whole class instruction, and 2) there was a distinct pattern of high student engagement in some classrooms and low student engagement in others. In several instances when observers noted student groupings, it did not appear that teachers used discernable data to place students.

### **Recommendations**

- Amplify the school's educational philosophy through learning conversations and collegial inquiry during PLC time. Integrate this philosophy and establish instructional coherence by having teachers collaboratively plan lessons, provide feedback to lesson plans, and determine a repertoire of instructional strategies for each teaching and learning experience differentiated by grade and content.
- Teachers should receive feedback on their lesson plans, such as refining learning targets to be more concise, using exit slips to inform the next lesson, and providing differentiation.
- Scale AVID-related questioning and discussion language across the learning community. Promote student ownership of this language and provide spaces for students to demonstrate mastery during daily classroom interactions with their peers.
- Develop model classrooms and schedule interclass visitation and walkthroughs focused on specific standards and the companion instructional practices.
- Clarify the expectations between the consultant teacher, resource teacher and classroom teacher in special education classrooms regarding collaboration and in-class support for students.
- Provide clarity and support for the PLC by developing protocols, goals and learning cycles to increase academic achievement and to target learning for each subgroup of students.
- Develop a 15-30 day Instructional Action Plan aligned to the gradual release model of instruction. Teachers should script the higher-order questions and assessments that they plan to include in each lesson across the PLC horizontally and vertically.
- Create a PLC-focused strand on data-informed instruction, i.e., the instructional staff should triangulate data from the multiple formative and summative sources to form reading groups and develop a weekly reading group schedule based on the data. Teachers should submit their small group schedule to the school administrators, and have it posted in a visible area in the classroom. The administrative team should follow up to make sure teachers implement structured small groups and provide frequent feedback and support.

3.3 **The school is in Stage 2 for this Statement of Practice:** Teachers develop and ensure that unit and lesson plans they use include data-driven instruction (DDI) protocols that are appropriately aligned to the CCLS and NYS content standards and address student achievement needs.

#### **Debriefing Statement**

Limited evidence exists to demonstrate that teachers attempt to develop collaborative unit and lesson plans, which use data-driven protocols. The delivery of observed lessons revealed that in some instances, lessons do not fully incorporate data-driven instructional protocols that the learning community uses to complement curricula materials. Both the teachers and school leader shared that the learning community implements a data tracker to provide a tiered system of support to learners identified as on track, intermediate and advanced. During the 39 classrooms the team visited during the review, the majority of teachers presented data binders that consisted of different data sets including iReady and DIBELS. The teachers stated that they used the various data points to identify students' academic levels, and provide tiered instruction during RTI and align lessons for teaching and re-teaching. One teacher mentioned that she was able to determine which students were on track to passing the NYS exam based on the scores in the math data tracker.

During the interviews, the staff stated that they use a multi-pronged approach to implement data-driven protocols. Explicitly, teachers described: 1) the use of the iReady diagnostic online reading comprehension and Math data as a BOY baseline assessment to inform tiered instructional supports during RTI, 2) the implementation of formative, interim, and summative data (i.e., the LLI and Running Records to make sure that students can meet the required behaviors at each level, the use of DIBELS as a phonemic assessment in the primary grades, information garnered from graphs to benchmark students' proximity to key benchmarks), 3) the use of the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) to determine the instructional level for MLLs, and 4) the Text Reading Comprehension (TRC) assessments to measure the development of students' reading skills.

Both the school leader and teachers described how the learning community examines student data during PLC time to modify texts and apply evidence-based instructional strategies.

#### **Areas for Improvement**

Although the learning community referenced school-wide data-driven instructional (DDI) protocols, aligned to the NYS assessments, the review team concluded that the learning community unevenly implements DDI protocols. The review team discussed the disparity exhibited by students regarding their comprehension of rubrics and their inability to explain their individual learning goals. The review team reported that data binders lacked consistency in content and timeliness regarding the pieces of data. For example, some data binders were carefully sequenced with itemized data sheets for each student and included sections such as recording charts, reading levels, reading goals, reading comprehension goals and close reading strategies. Other data binders only had the aggregate snapshot of students' performance levels but not any individual data set for

each student.

Additionally, limited evidence exists to support the learning community's use of rubrics as an instructional tool aligned with a system of giving students feedback in a systematic manner. In some instances, reviewers saw evidence of the RACES rubrics used to grade writing samples. Although the RACES rubric aligns to the NYS curricula, it did not result in consistent and actionable feedback to students. Primarily, teacher feedback consisted of numerical scores or superlative compliments such as "great job." As a result, across the learning community feedback appears limited and does not provide a gateway for students to improve performance on future tasks.

During the interview, a third grade student stated that she "never heard of [rubrics]." Another student stated that due to a long-term teacher absence, they switched classes in January and did not have any experiences using rubrics. A different student who had a rubric shared that "The teacher doesn't go over rubrics in class but puts it in folders. So we know what we are writing and can look at it, so we know what we are doing."

Students also expressed that their teacher provided them with mainly verbal feedback encouraging them "to struggle with it ... think through it....giving little clues... help in a way that is not actually telling the answer." When reviewers asked students to talk about the work in their student portfolios, one student remarked, "I actually just got the work back because I am getting interviewed." This student's portfolio had a writing sample with a post-it note that instructed the student to use "a different piece of evidence." The student was not aware of this piece of feedback.

Students revealed they knew of the beginning of the year (BOY) assessment scores, but conversations regarding their progress did not continue throughout the school year. Students expressed that they would have liked to have regular discussions with their teachers regarding their academic achievement.

Generally, methods of using DDI protocols to drive teaching and learning were not consistent across the PLC. Summarily, the level of inconsistency regarding DDI, coupled with the lack of rubrics as an instructional tool and construct for feedback, makes it challenging to lead students towards a common expectation of college and career readiness.

### **Recommendations**

- Streamline Data protocols- Teachers should triangulate data from the various sources including data warehouse. Use the triangulated data to organize data binders, academic power hour, the early literacy enrichment program, and the RTI schedule to plan flexible groups for SGI.
- Establish a plan to communicate and discuss students' individual learning goals aligned with the data cycles. During these discussions, the teachers should explain students' learning goals and share the progress that students need to achieve mastery. The learning goals discussions should include clear benchmarks so that students know what they need to focus on to improve learning outcomes.

- Introduce the use of rubrics more evenly across the PLC and frontload rubrics at the beginning of projects and units to set expectations for work products. Use the rubric as a self-assessment tool for students during conferencing and as an end-of-unity or project activity for students to track and reflect on their learning. Teachers should provide detailed assignment rubrics, standard NYS rubrics and provide feedback aligned to these rubrics so that students have a clearer understanding of shared expectations for learning.
- Develop standards for Data Binders to establish uniformity in the way that binders are set up and maintained. The learning community should organize binders in a similar manner. Teachers should engage in data analysis using the contents of their data binders and ensure that they update binders periodically. Data Binders should include reflection from students illustrating that they understand their assessment scores and what they need to demonstrate academic improvement.

3.5 **The school is in Stage 2 for this Statement of Practice:** 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.

#### **Debriefing Statement**

The school utilizes data from multiple sources to identify patterns and to tier instructional support for students. The school leader and teachers described how they: 1) employed the DIBELS benchmark to determine interventions for students in the lower grades, 2) wrote conferring notes to progress monitor students on a daily basis, 3) implemented Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID) strategies, 4) cross-fertilized beginning- and middle-of-the-year Running Records data with LLI to examine convergence and divergence trends, and 5) implemented high-leverage intervention strategies during the RTI block.

Several teachers mentioned how the learning community uses the iReady benchmark data at different points during the year to provide appropriate interventions for students. The pre-DTSDE self-assessment document noted that teachers focus on a different weekly standard during APH.

The school leader and teachers described how the learning community uses multiple types of formative and summative assessments to inform short- and long-range curriculum planning. Examples of these assessments include: 1) beginning-of-year and middle-of-year data to roster students for the early literacy enrichment program, academic power hour, and RTI, 2) the use of end-of-unit quick checks and checking for understanding to identify students that may need help, 3) accuracy of responses to teacher-made assessments such as quizzes and exit tickets during class time, 4) designing lesson plans based on the data tracker to address students' learning gaps. Teachers highlighted the use of data from summative assessments such as: 1) iReady, 2) District mock ELA and Math exams, and 3) end-of-unit assessments in the Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA) to check for students' mastery of content. Teachers shared that the PLC differentiated instruction by modifying

texts, and learning tasks for SWDs, MLLs and all students based on specially designed instruction principles.

### **Areas for Improvement**

During the debriefing session, the review team concluded that the PLC inconsistently utilized checks for understanding (CFU) during the thirty-nine classes observed. Several reviewers noted the teachers' checks for understanding primarily consisted of lower-level-thinking questions and the fist to five strategies. Concretely, in some classes, teachers circulated throughout the room to check in with students during the lesson; however, this practice did not yield adjustments.

In a fourth grade class, the teacher asked students to indicate their understanding of adding fractions. The students did not explain how to add fractions but shared with the teacher "that a fraction is when you have a pizza cut in one half and the more pieces you have the less pizza you get." While students provided a mathematical example, they failed to accurately identify the steps necessary in adding fractions. The teacher accepted this answer and moved on to the next question. Several students who demonstrated a more advanced ability to add fractions solved the assigned problems correctly. Some students used fraction strips to help them to determine the correct answer.

Additionally, one reviewer reported that in two of the six classes visited, only two classrooms demonstrated visible evidence of teachers: 1) having CCLS-aligned student goals, 2) rubrics, or 3) student reflection. Several reviewers shared that teachers needed to challenge students' thinking through higher-order-thinking questions and extend class discussion through AVID-related inquiry and collaboration techniques.

The lesson observations – coupled with the lack of coherent lesson planning -- revealed limited evidence of teachers using multiple types of formative assessments or in-depth checks for understanding.

Although students mentioned taking the iReady assessments, a significant number of students stated that they were unable to explain their current academic levels. One student expressed, "We have not been on iReady in a long time because we have been busy." When reviewers asked him to elucidate on "what being busy" meant, the student did not share concrete activities but stated, "The class had a lot of things to do." Notably, teachers shared iReady data upon request. However, the evidence did not support that the learning community utilized the data with fidelity in lesson planning for differentiated groups or to target daily instruction.

The reviewers acknowledged that there were pockets of teachers using data and providing feedback to students. However, the examination of student learning artifacts coupled with the responses during the interviews and classroom visits showed an irregular pattern of feedback across the learning community. To provide an example, one reviewer shared that the fourth-grade portfolios included multiple pieces of work, which the students explained included the final draft because they had to "rewrite and revise it." However, none of the final essays had evidence of teacher feedback, including the use of rubrics or student reflection.

Additionally, a fourth grade student pointed to her test score that was in her portfolio, but she did not know what the score meant, i.e., on grade level, above grade level or below grade level. Based on the conversations with students, it was difficult to detect how teachers regularly use feedback data to improve learning outcomes.

Importantly, the pre-DTSDE self-assessment acknowledged that the PLC should “strengthen a system for using formative and summative assessments across all grades that focus on short- and long-term goals ensuring students receive and can articulate teacher feedback and collaborative goals above and beyond district expectations.”

The recognition of this next step by the learning community is significant since, taken together, the inconsistent or ineffective use of checks for understanding created barriers to learning. These issues were compounded by the uneven practice of providing regular feedback to students, resulting in fewer opportunities to engage students in appropriately challenging tasks that result in a common expectation of college and career readiness.

### Recommendations

- The PLC should identify select techniques to check for understanding that they will implement with fidelity to help students approach content mastery. Refer to the “Tools for Formative Assessment,” compiled by K. Lambert as a guide to frame the PLC’s thinking and action plan. Actively model and discuss these tools during PLC time.
- Organize formative assessment lab classrooms and pair teachers across the grade levels horizontally and vertically to strengthen the use of formative assessments across the PLC.
- Align the formative and summative assessment processes with clear protocols to develop individual student learning goals and provide ongoing and direct rubric-based feedback to students on these goals and learning tasks.

**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**

**2**

4.2 **The school is in Stage 2 for this Statement of Practice:** 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.

### **Debriefing Statement**

The school leader and staff described how the learning community implements practices and strategies to organize annual, unit, and daily lesson plans that address student goals and needs. Specifically, teachers discussed the specific use of strategies such as: 1) Silent conversations that allow students to rotate around the room to give each other feedback, 2) targeted AVID-aligned strategies such as turn and talks, think/pair/shares, accountable talk stems to increase student voice, and reading visuals to monitor comprehension, and 3) the use of Cornell Notes in the middle school.

One teacher highlighted that the learning community adhered to the district's curriculum maps and pacing guides. Additionally, several teachers stated that they promoted intellectual engagement by doing modeling and think alouds, especially when solving Math word problems. One teacher reported that they required students to cite details and share what they liked about a story. In some cases, teachers addressed students' goals and needs by asking students to "generate their own questions to assess if they have a deep understanding of the text."

A teacher also stated that they attempt to make learning activities as engaging as possible and provided an example of students creating individual word jars based on the story, "Donovan's word jar." One teacher referenced that she utilizes multisensory instructional methods such as word works, Smartboards, and having students draw pictures or add background knowledge to comprehend the language of a story or concepts under study.

Both the teachers and school leader shared that the PLC focused on using academic vocabulary and creating opportunities for writing during daily instruction. During the review, teachers emphasized that they used common planning time to structure RTI. One teacher shared that she modified the curriculum for SWDs by leveraging their areas of strengths to engage them in learning. Reviewers shared that they observed visible evidence of teachers scaffolding instruction during the majority of classes that they had seen.

Summarily, the teachers shared that they incorporated writing across the curriculum and applied close-reading strategies such as annotating texts in daily instruction, noting that these two components were a part of the instructional program for the 2018-2019 school year.

Teachers also articulated that the two reading specialists provided support to bolster students' reading comprehension and skills. Explicitly, the reading specialists assisted teachers with: 1) providing small group support for learners in need of interventions and 2) implementing SDI protocols to remediate literacy skills.



### **Areas for Improvement**

During the review, observers reported limited evidence of high-impact instructional strategies within daily instruction to promote student inquiry and collaboration. Also, reviewers indicated that they observed minimal evidence of students applying close-reading strategies or writing across the curriculum.

Notably, the review team identified a model sixth grade classroom that demonstrated the teacher expertly engaging with students in a fun and rigorous manner through higher-order questioning, hands-on activities and powerful use of academic language to express thinking. To provide an additional example, in co-teaching classrooms, observers witnessed students using above-grade-level vocabulary to describe the difference between a question and a statement.

In the majority of classes that reviewers visited, the reviewers reported that teachers provided modeling and guided practice. However, the learning cycles appeared incomplete as students had insufficient time to engage in independent practice and lesson closure. In eight of the classes that reviewers visited, one observer reported that only two classes had students participate in independent practice and complete a lesson summary activity such as exit tickets. Although the use of a myriad instructional materials such as classroom libraries and manipulatives were visible in the majority of classrooms, reviewers were unsure if instructors organized libraries according to students' reading levels because, in many instances, the book baskets did not indicate any reading level or genre. Additionally, in many of the classes that reviewers saw, they did not observe the discussed AVID-related inquiry and collaboration tools.

Despite the PLC's vigorous discussion on engaging all students as learners and fostering authentic inquiry, the high frequency of incomplete lesson cycles negated the quality of evidence-based instructional practices that promote high levels of student inquiry and collaboration.

### **Recommendations**

- Implement a gradual release model of instruction coupled with the organized lesson flow differentiated by the elementary and middle grades.
- Focus a PLC learning strand on embedding inquiry and collaboration (IC) in daily instruction and have teachers develop specific questions to ask during each lesson based on Costa's levels of questioning.

4.3 **The school is in Stage 2 for this Statement of Practice:** Teachers provide coherent, and appropriately aligned Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS)-based instruction that leads to multiple points of access for all students.

### **Debriefing Statement**

The instructional staff discussed how they developed intentional structures to provide instruction that is: 1)

coherent, 2) appropriately aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLCs), and 3) demonstrative of multiple points of access for all students. Primarily, the school leader and teachers expressed that the following strategies and protocols lead to multiple points of access for all students: 1) using a myriad of formative and summative assessments such as DIBELS, TRC, NYSELAT and iReady, 2) implementing AVID-related instructional strategies that promote inquiry and collaboration in the elementary and middle grades, and 3) increasing academic vocabulary through close reading and writing across the curriculum.

To share an example, one teacher discussed how she ensured multiple points of access to the curriculum by utilizing Costa's level of questions and having students utilize individual whiteboards to personalize instruction. Teachers also emphasized that they provide targeted accommodations and modifications for all students through specially designed instruction. For example, one SDI checklist stated that a particular student received small group instruction and study guides as academic modifications.

During the interviews, teachers mentioned that they used checks for understanding such as quick writes, thumbs up and thumbs down, and exit tickets during daily lessons to ensure multiple entry points and ensure content access for all subgroups of learners.

Teachers stated that students access rigorous instruction through: 1) close reading and writing across the curriculum, 2) building academic vocabulary and creating spaces for students to apply new vocabulary, and 3) integrating technology to increase engagement in learning tasks.

One teacher explained how they ensured multiple points of access for students with special needs through modified instruction, and co-teaching partnerships with the resource room teachers. Teachers also emphasized that the Envisions Math curriculum provided a built-in re-teaching plan for learners designated as OIA.

### **Areas for Improvement**

Although the PLC articulated how teachers ensured multiple points of access for students, the review team discussed the lack of evidence of deep student interaction with concepts under study. For example, in several classrooms, students were unable to explain the learning target but could provide examples of work at hand. In the primary grades, one observer also documented that students could not always convey conceptual understanding as in the case of comparing and contrasting fractions.

Reviewers also saw strong evidence of teachers primarily relying on whole class instruction as the core instructional strategy. In one class of fourteen students, all students completed the same reading exercise and responded to the same question regarding why a character made certain decisions. Significantly, several of the students completed their tasks ahead of time and waited for the teacher to call time for the other students. This scenario presented a perfect opportunity for the teacher to provide the students who finished early with differentiated learning tasks. Overall, the instructional strategies were mostly geared toward a single learning

style, leading to uneven engagement in challenging tasks and resulting in a lack of meaningful products of work.

However, in some classrooms, teachers provided opportunities for student choice. For example, during one lesson- students worked with partners and in small groups to compare and contrast schools in different countries.

Significantly, the self-contained classes were exemplary in using technology and having all adults support personalization and differentiation. In one self-contained classroom, a student solved a problem on the Smartboard, a second student worked with his adult partner to respond to the problem and a third student relied on one of his peers as he progressed through the lesson sequence of activities.

The review team shared that teachers mainly taught whole group lessons that showed minimal differentiation that resulted in limited multiple points of access for students. These instructional practices impede students' ability to participate in intellectual discovery and rigorous thinking.

### **Recommendations**

- Teachers should create learning tasks that reflect various modalities and use Costa's levels of questions to push students to demonstrate higher-order-, collaborative-, and critical-thinking skills.
- Discriminate the AVID instructional strategies by grade and content. Agree on a shared repertoire of instructional strategies, and apply these strategies in daily instruction. These practices would build automaticity among all learners, while digging deeper and pushing the students toward mastery.

### **Focus on the Middle Grades**

- Integrate student choice in the middle grades for specific content areas. Refer to the Southern Regional Education Board's Report entitled: "Improved Middle Grades Schools for Improved High School Readiness: Ten Best Practices in the Middle Grades."
- Provide differentiated professional development for teachers who teach in the middle grades.
- Create a middle school PLC for the teachers and staff who support the middle grades to address students' developmental needs and align key strategies that promote high school and college/career readiness.

4.5 **The school is in Stage 2 for this Statement of Practice:** 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).

### **Debriefing Statement**

Both the school leader and teachers described how they used a myriad of formative and summative data sources to progress monitor and promote student ownership of learning. During the interview, the PLC members shared that they use, TRC, DIBELS, iReady, NYSELAT, CKLA, LLI and Waterford to assess students' progress. Teachers also articulated that they used teacher-made formative assessments, and of end-of-unit quick checks to provide tiered support for different levels of learners. The Math Envisions assessments group students according to the following designations: on track (O), intermediate (I) and advanced (A). Teachers expressed that the PLC organized RTI based on these three levels.

One reporter noted that a first grade classroom had a visible tracking board that showed students' mastery of ELA and Math standards. The school leader and teachers stated that they maintain data binders and input required data into a district data tracker to inform teaching and reteaching strategies for students who demonstrate learning gaps or who are at risk of scoring below proficiency on the NYS assessments. During the review, teachers described how students received actionable feedback to improve work products and learning outcomes. Several teachers highlighted that the PLC also examines data to inform social and emotional support for students. One teacher noted that the guidance staff provided tremendous support to middle school students and teachers as both adjusted to middle school and students prepared for high school.

### **Areas for Improvement**

The learning community uses a variety of formative and summative data. However, it is difficult to detect how the PLC uses the data to inform student groupings and small group instruction, deepen lesson planning, and determine individual learning goals. Consequently, the PLC must create explicit strategies to help teachers use formative and summative data to promote student participation in--and ownership of--learning. During the student interviews, the majority of students struggled to explain their academic progress and found it challenging to describe a particular learning goal. Additionally, since observers noted an irregular system of feedback to students, many students shared that "they did not speak to their teachers regarding their academic progress throughout the year." Several students expressed that they would like an opportunity to converse with their teachers about their learning goals and academic progress.

Based on these observations, the learning community needs to urgently address how teachers provide students with meaningful feedback in a manner that is accessible and consistent to strengthen students' ownership of learning. Also, it is crucial for teachers to propel the learning experience in a new direction based on the formative assessment data during daily instruction.

Although teachers discussed the use of multiple assessments, many students were not aware of how these assessments contributed to their learning goals and academic progress. Furthermore, many students stated that they did not routinely use rubrics or apply teacher feedback to establish and benchmark learning goals. Importantly, the students took pride in their work and were excited to share the experiences related to their

participation in various classroom projects.

**Recommendations**

- Amplify the use of data to inform student groupings and implement clear differentiation strategies for diverse learners during daily instruction based on patterns and trends.
- Regularly engage students in conversations regarding their individual learning goals and benchmarks so that students know and can describe what they need to focus on to increase achievement.

**Report Quality Assurance from the District**

I certify that I have led this review on behalf of the district and assert that this District-led Review aligns with NYSED expectations and protocols.

Name	Karren Dunkley, Ed.D.
Title	Lead Reviewer
District Lead Credential status  (choose one)	<p>X Issued by NYSED on _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Pending -- The requirements have been fulfilled, but I have yet to receive word from NYSED</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Pending -- I have not yet fulfilled the requirements, but plan on doing so by the June 30, 2019.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> N/A This is the only School Review with District Oversight and District-led review I am responsible for.</p>