



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

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)



BEDS Code	511301040002
School Name	Hermon-DeKalb Central School
School Address	709 East DeKalb Road, DeKalb Junction, NY 13630
District Name	Hermon-DeKalb Central School District
School Leader	Megan Foster
Dates of Review	June 7-9, 2016
School Accountability Status	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Focus School

School Information Sheet for Hermon-DeKalb Central School

School Configuration (2015-16 data)					
Grade Configuration	PK-12	Total Enrollment	434	SIG Recipient	Yes
Types and Number of English Language Learner Classes (2015-16)					
# 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	2	# SETSS	0	# Integrated Collaborative Teaching	0
Types and Number of Special Classes (2015-16)					
# Visual Arts	12	# Music	10	# Drama	1
# Foreign Language	5	# Dance	0	# CTE	0
School Composition (most recent data)					
% Title I Population	100	% Attendance Rate	95		
% Free Lunch	57	% Reduced Lunch	8		
% Limited English Proficient	0	% Students with Disabilities	19		
Racial/Ethnic Origin (most recent data)					
% American Indian or Alaska Native	0	% Black or African American	2		
% Hispanic or Latino	1	% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0		
% White	97	% Multi-Racial	0		
Personnel (most recent data)					
Years Principal Assigned to School	1	# of Assistant Principals	0		
% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate	0	% Teaching Out of Certification	2		
% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience	3	Average Teacher Absences	11		
Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2014-15)					
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	22	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4	17		
Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (Grade 4)	100	Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (Grade 8)	69		
Student Performance for High Schools (2014-15)					
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4	92	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4	100		
Global History Performance at levels 3 & 4	83	US History Performance at levels 3 & 4	92		
4-Year Graduation Rate	80	6 Year Graduation Rate	86		
Regents Diploma w/ Advanced Designation	31	% ELA/Math Aspirational Performance Measures	18		
Overall NYSED Accountability Status					
In Good Standing		Local Assistance Plan			
Priority School		Focus School	X		
SCHOOL PRIORITIES AS WRITTEN BY THE SCHOOL:					
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Vertically align the curriculum and implement supplemental resources to fill gaps in current modules. 2. Create a clear vision and mission statement and share this with all stakeholders. 3. Increase staffing to better meet the needs of students. 					

School Identification Status		
The school was identified for not meeting the subgroup performance minimum cut point for the following subgroups in 2014-15:		
Subgroup	School's Performance	Minimum Cut point
Economically Disadvantaged Students	57.5	64

Purpose of the visit

This school was visited by the New York State Education Department (NYSED) Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) because of its low performance.

The purpose of this review is to provide the school with feedback regarding the practices across the school and to provide a number of actionable recommendations to direct the school's work in the immediate future.

This report is being provided as a feedback tool to assist the school and to help identify areas for improvement. These areas can address the subgroups identified or they may be broader and cover additional subgroups or the entire school. NYSED recognizes that there are dedicated staff members at the school committed to the success of the students. The report below provides a critical lens to help the school best focus its efforts.

Information about the review

- The review was co-led by an Outside Educational Expert (OEE) and a representative from NYSED. The team also included a district representative and a district-selected OEE.
- The review team visited a total of 43 classrooms during the two-day review.
- The OEE visited five classrooms with the school leader during the review.
- Reviewers conducted focus groups with students, staff, and parents.
- Reviewers examined documents provided by the school, including curriculum maps, lesson plans, school wide data, teacher feedback, and student work.

The review team concluded that the school's current systems and practices are generally aligned with Stage Two or Stage One on the DTSDE Rubric, with the majority of Statements of Practice aligning with Stage Two.

SUCCESSSES WITHIN THE SCHOOL THAT THE SCHOOL SHOULD BUILD UPON:

1. School leaders collaborated with the teachers association's Cares Committee and the parent-led Booster Club to provide various supports for students, including hearing aids, sneakers for physical education, eyeglasses, funds for Advanced Placement (AP) examinations, and take-home reading books for all kindergarten students. Staff reported that these supports have helped removed some barriers to learning for many students.
2. The teachers of English language arts (ELA) in grades pre-kindergarten to six use a wide range of assessments including running records and STAR assessments to track the progress of students receiving Academic Intervention Services (AIS). Teachers indicated that the AIS team and classroom teachers use data from assessments to adjust instruction and set individual goals for students, and they noted that these students ELA test scores have increased.
3. School leaders and teachers promote close social links with the local community. Parents Interviewed by the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT) reported that the social programs supported by the school have had a positive impact throughout the local community.

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.

Recommendation for Tenet 2 – School Leader Practices and Decisions:

- Beginning June 13, 2016, the school leader should work with staff, families, and stakeholders to create clearly written vision and mission statements that articulate high expectations of success, well-being, and academic achievement. These documents should be written and communicated to all stakeholders by the end of September 2016.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- The school leader indicated, during her first year at the school, she spent time becoming familiar with different areas of the school including the instructional programs, extra-curricular activities for students, staff use of data, home-school connections, and community relationships. The school self-reflection document indicated and the school leader acknowledged during interviews that although she has a vision, she has not yet worked with staff, families, and other stakeholders to share her vision for improvement or to write mission statements to articulate that vision. In discussions with the IIT, students, staff, and families expressed that the school leader has high expectations for student achievement, but the school leader’s long-term vision is not commonly understood. Although the school leaders indicated that they plan to complete the School Comprehensive Educational Plan (SCEP) in the next month, the school currently does not have established specific, measurable, ambitious, results-oriented, and timely (SMART) goals to drive school improvement.
- In interviews, the school leader identified the key factors that she believes will move the school forward; however the IIT found that the lack of a data-driven mission hinders overall school improvement. Although there are some data available to track and monitor schoolwide practices, the school leader does not yet have protocols in place to ensure that staff consistently use and analyze data to inform decisions and adjust practices. The IIT learned through discussions with the school leader, students, and teachers as well as the observation of classes that inconsistencies exist within schoolwide systems and between practices among staff. For example, the school leader shared that not all teachers use assessment information in the same way or administer the same assessments. During class visits, the IIT found little evidence that teachers use data to adapt lessons to meet students’ varying learning needs. Observation reports reviewed by the IIT showed that feedback to teachers on their instructional practices is not consistently detailed. The review team also noted that school leaders do not consistently use data to provide on-going and targeted professional development opportunities for staff that are linked to specific school priorities, which limit opportunities for improved instructional practices.

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.

Recommendation for Tenet 3 – Curriculum Development and Support:

- Beginning Monday, June 13, 2016, the school leader and teachers should plan a coherent curriculum for core subjects to be implemented in September 2016. The curriculum should be aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and should incorporate appropriate links across subjects to

improve students' basic literacy skills, especially writing skills. The school leader should monitor planning meetings beginning in September 2016 to ensure that they are focused on adapting the curriculum to meet the needs of all students.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- Although the school leader indicated that she is in the process of developing a vision and strategy for teachers to develop and implement a coherent curricula, currently not all teachers plan and implement lessons that align to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). The school self-reflection document indicated and the school leader reported in interviews that teachers in grades three to eight use lesson plans based on the CCLS modules for English language arts (ELA) and mathematics, but teachers for several subjects at the High School have not yet aligned their lessons to the CCLS. The school leader indicated that the school formerly had professional learning communities (PLCs) in place to develop CCLS-aligned curricula, but the PLCs were discontinued in 2015. The school leader acknowledged that she does not regularly monitor curricular planning meetings.
- Reviewers found in their examination of curriculum and lesson plans that teachers make very little use of data to adjust the curriculum to better match student needs. In discussions with the school leader and teachers, the IIT also learned that teachers do not consistently work together to connect the curriculum across subjects. In about half of the classes observed by the IIT, levels of student engagement were low. In addition, students interviewed by the IIT reported that they were bored in classes because they did not see the relevance of the subject matter. While the IIT noted that a few teachers' included questions in their plans designed to engage students in discussions about the learning objectives, most teachers did not plan and implement lessons that ensured students understand the purpose of their lesson.
- The school leader reported that in the elementary school there has been a decrease in teacher collaboration in developing interdisciplinary curricular material due to the lack of planned formal meeting time. Teachers shared that students' writing skills were poorly developed and that this has had a negative impact on their ability to communicate in several subjects. In the high school, for example, mathematics teachers reported that students' poor writing skills prevented them from adequately explaining their work in solving problems. In their examination of samples of student work, the review team found that students' writing was typically well below grade-level expectations.

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.

Recommendation for Tenet 4 – Teacher Practices and Decisions:

- Beginning September 12, 2016, the school leaders and instructional coaches should plan and conduct weekly visits to classes to monitor instructional practice, with an initial focus on student engagement and the use of higher-order questioning to probe students' understanding of the material presented. Immediate feedback should be given to teachers by school leaders.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- The school leader reported in the school self-reflection document that although she conducts formal visits to classes to evaluate teachers, there has been little monitoring of teachers’ instructional practices to ensure that the gap between what students know and what they need to learn is being closed. The IIT observed that the instructional capacity of staff is variable across the school, and the school leader had not yet developed a plan to consistently provide targeted feedback to ensure continuous improvement. Although the school leader indicated that she provides feedback to staff that is aligned to an established rubric, teachers reported that this feedback is not always helpful in addressing the needs of students. A review of observations reports showed that the feedback provided to teachers did not provide specific details to help teachers improve their practice. Class visits showed that teachers inconsistently implement lessons that meet students varying needs.
- The school leader reported in the school self-reflection document that elementary school teachers attended training on creating manipulatives to improve student engagement in mathematics, and teachers now use these strategies during instruction. She also reported that the mathematics coach has modeled several lessons for elementary teachers focused on improving students’ fluency with numbers. The IIT observed teachers implementing some of these instructional strategies in mathematics classes resulting in most students being engaged in learning, but this is not typical across the school. Classroom visits showed that most teachers’ instructional practices, especially those in the middle and high school, did not promote high levels of student engagement. In three-fourths of observed classes, teachers did not engage students by asking higher-order questions that required students to think deeply and demonstrate their understanding of the lesson content. In one social studies class, for example, nearly all the questions required only simple factual recall, and most did not require more than a single-word answer. In one class, reviewers noted that the teacher engaged with only a few students at the front of the class while some students discussed their previous evening’s social activities and other students doodled on their papers. In the student focus group meeting, middle school students stated that they did not engage in class because they felt that other students might ridicule them. Students in the high school reported that they did not engage in discussions because the material was boring.

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.

Recommendation for Tenet 5 – Student Social and Emotional Developmental Health:

- Beginning June 13, 2016, the school leader should work with support staff to plan a consistent school wide system for gathering and analyzing information about students’ social and emotional developmental health needs and subsequently using this information to target support to remove barriers to learning. The system should be implemented no later than September 12, 2016 and monitored quarterly to ensure fidelity to the plan.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- The school leader and staff reported that there are some programs in place to support students’ social and emotional developmental health needs, including the student-based intervention team, the character education program, and partnerships with community agencies that provide tutoring and dropout prevention services. However, staff indicated these programs are not sufficiently coordinated to ensure consistency throughout the school. As a result, there remain barriers to learning, especially in the middle school grades.
- During classroom visits, the review team noted that many teachers in the elementary school effectively used the “Bucket Filling” character education program to promote positive behavior; however, reviewers found no equivalent support for students in the middle school. In interviews, students reported incidents of verbal bullying and disruption of lessons by students. In some classes observed by the IIT in the middle school, students were not respectful of teachers or each other, and in half of the observed classes, instruction was interrupted by negative student behavior issues. Although a few teachers have effective strategies, many do not, so that behavior issues in lessons are a major barrier to learning.
- The school leader shared that there is no strategic plan to collect, analyze, and use data to identify and address all students’ social and emotional developmental health needs. The school leader reported that although some data are collected, they are not analyzed to measure the effectiveness of programs in removing barriers to learning. The record of infractions collected by the school shows that disrespect to staff members is one of the top three reasons students are excluded from classes; students are also removed for inappropriate behavior and language. The IIT found no evidence of how the staff use this data to plan interventions or programs address these concerns. Support staff reported that there are on-going discussions about how to help teachers understand how to use data to address students’ social and emotional developmental health needs; however, staff indicated that this is at an early stage of development.

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.

Recommendation for Tenet 6 – Family and Community Engagement:

- Beginning June 13, 2016, the school leader should plan training to provide staff with the necessary skills to promote effective two-way relationships with families and thereby enable families to advocate for the support their children need to succeed. This plan should be implemented no later than October 1, 2016 and monitored quarterly to ensure fidelity to the plan.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- The school leader reported in the school self-reflection document that although parental attendance is good at social events, two-way communications with families are inconsistent and are not currently helping parents advocate for the support they need to help their children succeed. The school leader acknowledged that opportunities for two-way communications with families are limited and rely on individual teachers’ initiatives. In discussions with teachers, the IIT learned that teachers in the elementary school have implemented some good practices for communicating with parents, such as sending out surveys to discover which methods are best to communicate with parents. Teachers in

grade three also use a communications program to correspond with parents daily about students' academic progress as well as social and emotional issues. However, parents interviewed stated that two-way communication varies greatly by teacher and grade level, and some parents of middle and high school students said that they do not receive sufficient information from staff about how to support their children's learning. They also stated that they do not understand the grades that teachers give their children or what they can do to help with homework.

- The school leader reported there has been no recent training to parents or staff on creating and sustaining home-school partnerships, and as a result staff and parents do not work together to support student achievement. Both the school leader and teachers reported that staff need more training on developing strategies to communicate with parents, particularly those who have difficulty with reading and writing. Parents reported that there has been a decrease in parental involvement in the school, and the parent-teacher organization was closed because of lack of interest. However, they also reported that the new school leader is making efforts to increase parental involvement. For example, parents reported that with the school leader's endorsement, a group of parents worked together to refurbish the gymnasium, and the parent-led Booster Club raised funds for extra-curricular activities.

ADDITIONAL AREAS TO ADDRESS

- Although there are effective practices in the elementary school to support students with disabilities through the AIS program, in the middle school and high school the support for students with disabilities is fragmented and poorly coordinated. In the future, the school leaders will need to address this shortcoming by providing training for all teachers on planning and adapting instruction to meet the needs of students with disabilities.
- Students reported that their access to computers was limited. During class visits, the IIT notice teachers minimally integrated computers and other technology to support students' learning. In future, the school leader will need to ensure that teachers are trained to make greater use the available technology as part of their overall instructional strategies. In addition, consideration should be given to improving and broadening the range of technologies available in the school for both staff and students.