



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

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)



BEDS Code	441600010012
School Name	Vails Gate STEAM Academy
School Address	400 Old Forge Hill Road, New Windsor, NY 12553
District Name	Newburgh Enlarged City School District
School Leader	Ebony Green
Dates of Review	November 1-3, 2016
School Accountability Status	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Focus School
Type of Review	<input type="checkbox"/> SED Integrated Intervention Team (IIT)

School Information Sheet for Vails Gate Steam Academy Elementary School

School Configuration (2016-17 data)					
Grade Configuration	K-5	Total Enrollment	582	SIG Recipient	No
Types and Number of English Language Learner Classes (2016-17)					
# Transitional Bilingual	3	# Dual Language	3	# Self-Contained English as a Second Language	0
Types and Number of Special Education Classes (2016-17)					
# Special Classes	4	# SETSS	0	# Integrated Collaborative Teaching	5
Types and Number of Special Classes (2016-17)					
# Visual Arts	1	# Music	2	# Drama	0
# Foreign Language	0	# Dance	0	# CTE	0
School Composition (2015-16)					
% Title I Population		100	% Attendance Rate		94
% Free Lunch		77	% Reduced Lunch		5
% Limited English Proficient		27	% Students with Disabilities		19
Racial/Ethnic Origin (2015-16)					
% American Indian or Alaska Native		0	% Black or African American		26
% Hispanic or Latino		54	% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander		4
% White		13	% Multi-Racial		3
Personnel (2016-17)					
Years Principal Assigned to School		4	# of Assistant Principals		1
% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate		0	% Teaching Out of Certification		0
% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience		3	% Teacher Absences		95
Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2015-16)					
ELA Performance at levels 3 & 4		11	Mathematics Performance at levels 3 & 4		15
Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (4th Grade)		61	Science Performance at levels 3 & 4 (8th Grade)		NA
Overall NYSED Accountability Status					
Priority School		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Local Assistance Plan		
Focus School (indicate subgroups identified below)		X	In Good Standing		
Focus School Identified Subgroups		African American			
SCHOOL PRIORITIES AS WRITTEN BY THE SCHOOL:					
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Analyzing student data using at least 2 data points at a time in order to plan and deliver instruction 2. Implementing an inquiry based model incorporating STEAM in all disciplinary areas 3. Implementing a school wide behavior plan that is consistent in all classrooms 4. Implementing an after- school program that will further support our level 2 students 					

Purpose of the visit

Due to its accountability status as a focus school, Vails Gate Steam Academy was required to participate in a District-led Review.

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 two NYSED certified lead reviewers. The team also included a district representative from the Division of Exceptional Learners.
- The review team visited a total of 29 classrooms during the two-day review.
- The principal participated in classrooms visits throughout 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.
- NYS assessment and teacher observation data was also examined.
- Survey data from 39 parents, 40 instructional staff and 160 students was reviewed.

The Review Team concluded that the school's current systems and practices most closely align with Stage 2 on the DTSDE Rubric.

SUCCESSSES WITHIN THE SCHOOL THAT THE SCHOOL SHOULD BUILD UPON:

1. The school leadership team has developed and implemented protocols for sharing effective practices learned through engaging in professional development opportunities. As a result, follow-up support and the next level of professional development is being informed based classroom evidence.
2. The school leader was able to secure a part time family and community engagement liaison and redirect the responsibilities of existing staff to offer translation services (English/Spanish) throughout the school day and as well as at all school events.
3. The school leader has worked with the faculty to analyze removal and suspension data and has implemented a school-wide positive behavior management system tied directly to the data determined needs.

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:

By December 2016, the school leader should collaborate with teacher leaders to design and implement teacher led professional development, extending the learning opportunities from the summer.

- Conduct classroom walkthroughs to assess the implementation of the summer professional development and school-wide instructional expectations.
- Provide targeted support to those classrooms in need of assistance.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- During the interview of the school leader, the school leader shared that the school is in the second year of transformation to a Science Technology Engineering, Arts and Math (STEAM) Academy magnet theme. Working with the school leadership team, the school leader, facilitated the development of a revised mission and vision and core values that represents the intention of the magnet theme while being respectful of the district mission and vision.
- Teachers participating in the vertical team meeting shared that the school leader has worked closely with faculty leaders throughout the school to develop a shared understanding of school wide expectations for teaching and learning. A teacher led, summer professional development model, was implemented to build faculty capacity to meet school-wide expectations. During the grade level teacher meeting and the horizontal team meeting, staff consistently applauded the summer professional development model and as a result believe it was the reason for a smooth opening of school with a greater focus on standards based teaching than in the past.
- As explained during the interview of the school leader, a school based curriculum has been developed collaboratively with teacher teams to incorporate STEAM activities into the district curriculum units. As a result of analyzing data, such as teacher observations and evidence from walkthroughs, the school leader shared that a “mind shift” was needed to help the faculty understand that the curriculum modules were not the district curriculum. The school leader worked with teachers to unpack the modules and to adapt them to meet the data determined needs of the student population while maintaining the integrity of the standards being taught.
- During classroom visits, a large percentage of the classrooms had posted learning targets or objectives. One classroom had a main learning target posted for the whole class instruction and individual learning targets for each of four small group centers. The school leader shared during the school leader interview that she is extremely proud of the improvements made to the posting of learning targets and shared that her faculty understands the impact they have on a student’s opportunity to acquire the learning.
- During a review of student work, posted on bulletin boards, it was clear that authentic student work was a school-wide priority. It was also noted that the samples were aligned to the curriculum scope and sequence. During the school leader interview the leader shared that the school leadership team had developed a guidance document for bulletin board expectations.

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:

Starting January 2017, learning targets for whole class instruction and small group work should be written in child appropriate relatable language.

- The school leader should work with the faculty to adopt a common term for the focus of instruction, consider either learning target or learning objective.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- As a result of conducting classroom walkthroughs, learning targets for instructional lessons were found to be posted in most rooms. However, the language used to communicate learning targets varied. Examples of learning target language copied directly from the Common Core Learning Standards or ELA/math modules were prevalent across the school and across all grade levels. When students in these classrooms were asked what they were doing, most could not fully explain the lesson’s main objective. Some students, primarily at the primary level, could not read the posted learning target. Some, though very few, only pointed to where the target was posted, providing no explanation.
- There was little evidence of posted learning targets for small group instruction, whether it be guided reading or math groups or students working in centers. Most students who were involved in small group work could not explain when asked what their learning target was or what precise skills they were working on.
- In classrooms where learning targets were reworded or synthesized into age appropriate, child-friendly language and posted where all seated students could easily reference, children who were asked about the learning target most often gave clear and accurate explanations. Similarly, when a learning target was written on a wipe-board or posted at a learning center, children working at these stations could most often provide clear and meaningful explanations as to purpose of their learning.

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 December 2016, teachers should communicate and stress the “why” of the learning targets and lesson objectives to their students, in order for the students to learn the purpose and application of their learning experience.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- Through the analysis of the K12 Insight Survey data, 95% of teachers that responded that written feedback is provided to students. However, one in five students responded they receive little or no written feedback. Additionally, students were aware of the Stars and Steps protocol, however, reviewers found no evidence of it in student work reviewed.
- Evidence related to how the written STEAM curriculum has been embedded into the ELA and math modules and domains was apparent during document review. However, when conversing with

students, they were unable to make connections between skills learned in STEAM activities and content and skills learned in the core academic areas.

- When conducting student focus groups, students were unable to share the connection between what they were learning in the classroom and personal experiences and prior learning.

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:

By December 2016, the school leader should work with the newly developed SEL team to establish monitoring outcomes for: the school wide behavior system, classroom star program, school pledge, morning meetings, character education, grade 5 safety patrol, student advisory, and Ruler, for the purpose of ensuing student SEDH is positively impacted.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- During the principal interview and social-emotional learning team (SEL) meeting, the principal and SEL team members described the process the building faculty went through to create the star pledge that made the school’s vision and mission statements in student friendly language. Throughout the small and large group student interviews, students described what the star pledge meant to them personally. Student reflections included, “Today I will learn and tomorrow I will lead and be able to teach others,” “This is my school and proud of it,” and “This is a family and we look out for each other. The pledge tells us how to treat our family here.”
- During the principal interview and the vertical team meeting, the principal and teachers described the process the school leadership team used to determine the need for and implementation of a school-wide positive behavior plan. The team reviewed behavioral referral data to create a baseline. Using the data collected, the team revised the behavioral chart system, created universal school-wide expectations and trained faculty on those expectations. As a result of the implementation of the school-wide behavior charts, behavior referrals have decreased suspensions from 6 to 0 and referrals from 90 to 23. All students in the student focus groups were able to articulate the behavior expectations in the building and described the positive reward systems for personal rewards in their classes as well as whole class rewards.
- During the vertical team meeting, members described the process for creating the membership of the building leadership team using a representative from each school-wide subcommittee. They described that this approach enables the school leadership team to move effectively monitor to work of each sub-committee. In addition, each sub-committee is aware of the ongoing work of the school leadership team and is able to align the committee work to the school-wide work. Teams/committees have refined work responsibilities to ensue efficient efforts and limit redundancy. Teams have point persons that attend and report to the leadership team. Staff meetings are used for report outs to the entire school.

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:

By January 2017, the parent liaison should work with representatives of the school staff and parents to identify specific behavioral strategies that are taught in the school and can be reinforced at home, resulting in consistent

expectations between home and school that will lead to growth in student social and emotional developmental health.

Rationale that led to the recommendation:

- During the parent meeting, parents described that some teachers utilize the app Class DoJo, a reciprocal communication tool that provides readily available information to parents and teachers. The app also has a translation function. Parents in the focus groups stated that some teachers have used this to inform parents of positive behaviors and getting the notification is appreciated.
- During the principal interview, the principal described the role of the newly hired parent liaison. She indicated the focus of the parent liaison will be on creating workshops for parents on how to help with homework and consistent behavior expectations. During parent interviews, parents of students newly arrived to the building stated they were unaware of the school expectations and supports available.

ADDITIONAL AREAS TO ADDRESS

- During the parent focus group meeting, concerns regarding safety during student arrival and dismissal were presented. The school leader should work with the Buildings and Grounds staff to assess the traffic pattern and present recommended improvements.
- The school leader should continue to communicate the technology infrastructure needs to the technology department.