Review Protocol:
District Systems and Practices Addressing the Differentiated Needs of All Students

Spring 2011

Spring 2009 Reviews place emphasis on students with disabilities
Spring 2010 Reviews place emphasis on students with limited English proficiency
Spring 2011 Reviews place emphasis on low-income students
Spring 2012 Reviews may consider racial and ethnic minorities

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Produced January 31, 2011

Overview

Purpose:

The Center for District and School Accountability (CDSA) in the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) is undertaking a series of reviews of school districts to determine how well district systems and practices support groups of students for whom there is a significant proficiency gap. ("Proficiency gap" is defined as a measure of the shortfall in academic performance by an identifiable population group relative to an appropriate standard held for all.)[1] The reviews will focus in turn on how district systems and practices affect each of four groups of students: students with disabilities, English language learners, low-income students (defined as students who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch), and students who are members of racial minorities. Spring 2011 reviews aim to identify district and school factors contributing to improvement in achievement for students living in poverty (low-income students) in selected schools, to provide recommendations for improvement on district and school levels to maintain or accelerate the improvement in student achievement, and to promote the dissemination of promising practices among Massachusetts public schools. This review complies with the requirement of Chapter 15, Section 55A to conduct district reviews and is part of ESE's program to recognize schools as "distinguished schools" under section 1117(b) of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which allows states to use Title I funds to reward schools that are narrowing proficiency gaps. Exemplary district and school practices identified through the reviews will be described in a report summarizing this set of reviews.

Key Questions:

Two key questions guide the work of the review team:

Key Question 1: To what extent are the following conditions for school effectiveness in place at the school or schools where the performance of low-income students has substantially improved?

1. School Leadership (CSE #2): *Each school takes action to attract, develop, and retain an effective school leadership team that obtains staff commitment to improving student learning and implements a well-designed strategy for accomplishing a clearly defined mission and set of goals, in part by leveraging resources. Each school leadership team a) ensures staff understanding of and commitment to the school's mission and strategies, b) supports teacher leadership and a collaborative learning culture, c) uses supervision and evaluation practices that assist teacher development, and d) focuses staff time and resources on instructional improvement and student learning through effective management of operations and use of data for improvement planning and management.*

2. Consistent Delivery of an Aligned Curriculum (CSE #3): *Each school's taught curricula a) are aligned to state curriculum frameworks and to the MCAS performance level descriptions, and b) are also aligned vertically (between grades) and horizontally (across classrooms at the same grade level and across sections of the same course).*

[1]The term "proficiency gap," originally coined by Jeff Howard, a member of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, was adopted in 2010 by the Board's Proficiency Gap Task Force. BESE Proficiency Gap Taskforce. April 2010. *A Roadmap to Closing the Proficiency Gap*.

3. Effective Instruction (CSE #4): *Instructional practices are based on evidence from a body of high quality research and on high expectations for all students and include use of appropriate research-based reading and mathematics programs. It also ensures that instruction focuses on clear objectives, uses appropriate educational materials, and includes a) a range of strategies, technologies, and supplemental materials aligned with students' developmental levels and learning needs; b) instructional practices and activities that build a respectful climate and enable students to assume increasing responsibility for their own learning; and c) use of class time that maximizes student learning. Each school staff has a common understanding of high-quality evidence-based instruction and a system for monitoring instructional practice.*

4. Tiered Instruction and Adequate Learning Time (CSE #8): *Each school schedule is designed to provide adequate learning time for all students in core subjects. For students not yet on track to proficiency in English language arts or mathematics, the district ensures that each school provides additional time and support for individualized instruction through tiered instruction, a data-driven approach to prevention, early detection, and support for students who experience learning or behavioral challenges, including but not limited to students with disabilities and English language learners.*

5. Social and Emotional Support (CSE #9): *Each school creates a safe school environment and makes effective use of a system for addressing the social, emotional, and health needs of its students that reflects the behavioral health and public schools framework.[2] Students' needs are met in part through a) the provision of coordinated student support services and universal breakfast (if eligible); b) the implementation of a systems approach to establishing a productive social culture that minimizes problem behavior for all students; and c) the use of consistent schoolwide attendance and discipline practices and effective classroom management techniques that enable students to assume increasing responsibility for their own behavior and learning.*

Key Question 2: How do the district's systems for support and intervention affect the school or schools where the performance of low-income students has substantially improved?

In other words, the team will seek to discover whether the district is having a positive, negative or null effect on the identified school's ability to improve or sustain the above conditions. It will look at how well a school is supported and granted the necessary autonomy. The review will consider whether district oversight (its Leadership and Governance, Curriculum and Instruction, Assessment, Human Resources and Professional Development, Student Support, and/or Financial and Asset Management) is a key factor in the school's success).

Methodology:

To focus the analysis, reviews will explore six areas: **Leadership and Governance, Curriculum and Instruction, Assessment, Human Resources and Professional Development, Student Support, and Financial and Asset Management.** The reviews will seek to identify those systems and practices that are most likely to be contributing to positive results, as well as those that may be impeding rapid improvement. Reviews are evidence-based and data-driven. A four-to-six-member review team, usually six-member, will preview

[2] The behavioral health and public schools framework was developed by the Task Force on Behavioral Health and Public Schools pursuant to c. 321, s. 19, of the Massachusetts Acts of 2008.

selected documents and ESE data and reports before conducting a four-day site visit in the district, spending about two to three days in the central office and one to two days at the selected school. The team will consist of independent consultants with expertise in each of the six areas listed above.

Reports:

Reports will include a description of the **district context and background**, **demographic and student achievement data**, and **findings and recommendations**.

The Review Process

Selection of districts:
ESE identified 28 Title I schools in 18 districts where the performance of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch has recently improved. These districts had Title I schools which substantially narrowed proficiency gaps for these low-income students over a two-year period: schools where the performance of low-income students improved from 2008 to 2009 and from 2009 to 2010 in English language arts or mathematics both in terms of low-income students' Composite Performance Index (increased CPI in the same subject both years and a gain over the two years of at least 5 points) and in terms of the percentage of low-income students scoring Proficient or Advanced (at least one percentage point gained in the same subject each year).[3] As a result of having these "gap-closer" schools, districts from this group were invited to participate in this set of reviews aimed at identifying district and school practices associated with stronger performance for low-income students.

Review team:
The review team will be made up of four to six independent consultants. The consultants will have expertise in the areas of **Leadership and Governance, Curriculum and Instruction, Assessment, Human Resources and Professional Development, Student Support, and Financial and Asset Management**. All team members will receive training in the protocol.

Preparation for the review:
Before the site visit, the team will review documents provided by the district and information on the district provided by ESE. This will help them prepare thoughtful questions for interviews and focus groups. On two days before each site visit, the team will meet at ESE to review documents, sort evidence, and prepare questions.

Site visits:
- Days 1 and 2 will focus primarily on district interviews and document review.
- Days 3 and 4 will be used to finish up district interviews and then will focus on school visits, classroom observations, teacher team meetings, and focus groups with teachers and parents.

The review team coordinator will work collaboratively with the district liaison to establish a specific schedule for the site visit that meets district and school needs, to the extent possible. What works for one district may not work for another.

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[3]To be considered, a school had to be a Title I school and had to have been recognized as a 2010-2011Commendation School (for narrowing proficiency gaps, high growth, or exiting NCLB accountability status). In addition to having an increase in CPI and proficiency rate in English language arts or mathematics both years, the school could not have experienced a decline in CPI or proficiency rate either year in either subject; had to meet the 2010 AYP participation rate and attendance or graduation rate requirements; and had to have had at least 40 low-income students tested each year from 2007-2008 through 2009-2010. For a complete description of the criteria for identifying "gap-closers" for low-income students, see Appendix M.

The site visit will begin with an introductory meeting with key district leaders. At this meeting the leaders will provide the review team with an overview of their approach to supporting students and their families, particularly those living in poverty. The site visit will culminate with a final meeting that will provide the district with an overview of the team's evidence and emerging themes—not findings—from the visit.

During the site visit the team will review documents and files and conduct a series of interviews and focus groups to gather information. The various interviews and focus groups are listed on the Draft Site Visit Schedule, below; questions are based on indicators in each area (see Appendix L). The purpose of interviews and focus groups at a school is to understand the impact of district systems and practices on its staff, students, and parents.

The district liaison will work to establish an appropriate schedule for school visits and set up focus groups that are appropriately composed. The liaison should work with principals to schedule times for principal interviews and teacher team meetings. The school may propose a classroom observation schedule; in any case, some observations may be random. The district liaison should not share the schedule with other district personnel until the review team coordinator informs the liaison that the schedule is final: schedules undergo numerous changes in the course of preparing for a review.

As the site visit progresses, the review team may request additional documents as well as follow-up interviews to ask questions that emerge after focus groups, classroom observations, etc. This will be the team's opportunity to make sure that the evidence it gathers is complete.

After the site visit:

- A survey link will be sent to the district to obtain feedback from district staff on the review.
- The team will develop and refine its findings.
- The draft report will be sent to the superintendent for factual correction.
- The final report reflecting the superintendent's factual correction and including recommendations will be posted to the ESE website at http://www.doe.mass.edu/sda/review/district/.

Draft Site Visit Schedule:

Notes: 1. Arrangements may be made on site to "test" payroll and purchasing. 2. Team members may use laptops to take notes during interviews, focus groups, etc. 3. With the exception of meetings with leadership teams, supervising staff should not be scheduled in focus groups with those under their supervision.

Time	Day 1	Day 2	Time	Day 3	Day 4
7:30-8:00 **8:00-8:30**	**Team Arrival** **Orientation Meeting with District Leaders and Principals**	**Team meeting and Document Review**	**7:30-11:30**	**Additional District Interviews (for instance Town or City Financial Personnel, School Committee members) and/or School Visit:** Interviews with school leaders, beginning with the principal and site liaison Classroom visits Teacher team meetings	**School Visit:** Interviews with school leaders Classroom visits Teacher team meetings **Follow-up Interviews**
8:30-9:45	**Interview with Superintendent** **Interview with Curriculum Director**	**Interview with Superintendent** **Interview with K-8 Curriculum & Instruction Leaders**			
10:00-11:15	**Interview with Title I, Pupil Personnel Services, McKinney-Vento, and Student Support Directors** **Document Review**	**Interview with Human Resources Director and key team members** **Document Review**			
11:30-12:30: LUNCH AND TEAM MEETING					
12:30-1:15	**Interview with Professional Development Director and key team members** **Document Review**	**Interview with ELL and Special Education Directors** **Document Review**	**12:30-3:00**	**Additional District Interviews and/or School Visit:** Interviews with school leaders Classroom visits Teacher team meetings	**Team Meeting**
1:30-2:45	**Interview with Student Assessment and Program Evaluation staff** **Principal interviews**	**Interview with 9-12 Department Heads** **Interview with Teachers' Union Representatives**			
3-4	**Team Meeting**	**Team Meeting**	**3-4**	**Teacher and Parent Focus Groups**	**Emerging Themes Meeting with District Leaders**

Review Team Activities during District and School Visits:

Activities	Description
Orientation meeting	District will have a chance, informally, to give an overview of its approach to meeting the needs of its students, especially its low-income students.
Document review	The team will review materials that the district provides on site, including a) teacher personnel files randomly selected by the team; b) all administrator evaluations and certifications; c) access to K-12 ELA, mathematics, and science curriculum documents; d) policy manual; and e) other documents requested by the team. The review team will review teacher personnel files and administrator evaluations for the purpose of assessing Human Resources and Professional Development Indicator 2, Supervision and Evaluation.
Interviews with district leaders	Superintendent, assistant superintendent(s), curriculum and instruction supervisors at the district and department levels, chief financial officer, controller or purchasing director, HR director, Title I director, and/or ELL director or director of pupil personnel services, special education director, student support directors, and student assessment and program evaluation staff.
Interviews with school leaders	School leaders include the principal and may also include, e.g., assistant principals, coaches, and/or lead teachers.
Other interviews	Leadership may identify other interviewees who could inform the review.
Teacher focus group	Groups of teachers, typically representing all grade levels, make up focus groups. The focus group(s) will be scheduled so that invited teachers may attend after school hours.
Parent focus group	Parents from the school council(s) should be invited.
Classroom visits	Classroom visits will be conducted throughout the school visit. Classroom visits are designed to understand instructional practices and improvement efforts across the school; they are not evaluations of individual teachers. More information is provided in Appendices H and I.
Teacher team meetings	The team may observe regularly scheduled teacher team meetings. Team members will ask questions only if invited to do so.
Emerging themes meeting	The review team coordinator will share with the district what the team has learned on site and what the team is still sorting out.

Evidence collection:
Using a researcher's perspective, the team will gather evidence from multiple sources among the data, documents, interviews, focus groups, observed teacher team meetings, and classroom visits. The evidence should be triangulated: it should come from more than one source. This ensures that the finding is based on sufficient evidence. It is important for team members to suspend their judgment about the district and its schools until after the evidence is triangulated. Notes of interviews, classroom observations, etc., should be objective; subjective notes are not useful. The team will look at the evidence collectively, as each team member has focused on a particular set of indicators within the set of standards. It is important for the team to check for mutual understanding by summarizing, restating, and asking follow-up questions, especially when evidence appears contradictory. The researcher is curious, not skeptical. The researcher endeavors to ensure accuracy and mutual understanding, not to discover a "gotcha." The evidence that the researcher has gathered may or may not contradict district perceptions of district conditions. In the event that such a contradiction presents itself, the review team member has the responsibility to share the evidence collected by the review team and ask the district for its interpretation. The team will endeavor to develop a shared understanding of diverging interpretations. If unable to do so, the team will at least be transparent in acknowledging the difference between district and team perspectives (on site as well as in relevant findings).

Analysis of evidence:
The team collectively analyzes the data gathered by each team member and makes connections among evidence gathered for each standard. The team considers the body of evidence in analyzing to what extent the conditions for school effectiveness listed above are in place and what impact the district's systems have on the selected school and its students, especially students in poverty. The team uses its professional judgment as to the quality of district systems and practices and the existence of these conditions.

Emerging themes:
From this analysis, the team develops emerging themes to share with the district at the end of Day 4. The team should be sure to remind the district that the themes are *not* equivalent to "findings." The team has not yet had sufficient time to sort through all the evidence for each standard and consider the full analysis from each team member in order to determine the final set of findings that will appear in the written report. However, in order to ensure transparency, in the emerging themes meeting at the end of the site visit the review team coordinator will share with the district what the team has learned on site and what the team is still sorting out.

Writing the Report

Process for the report:

- At the end of the site visit, the review team shares emerging themes with the district; it uses these themes as a basis for preliminary findings.
- After the site visit, the review team completes the analysis of information collected during the review and develops preliminary findings, at least one for each standard.
- Using the report template and report template guidance, each review team member takes responsibility for drafting the full text of a set of preliminary findings, based on all notes taken and evidence collected by the entire team during the site visit.
- Each team member brings hard copies of the full text of this set of preliminary findings to the written findings review team meeting following the onsite review; before doing so, they should post their drafts, labeled with version and date, in the CDSA review team dropbox. Each finding is refined with team feedback to ensure accuracy, consensus, and fulfillment of the requirements for findings stated in the next section. Using the requirements for recommendations two sections below, the team considers each finding to determine whether to make a recommendation based on it and develops recommendations based on the findings.
- Team members revise the drafts as agreed at the written findings review team meeting, adding the recommendations; they post the revised versions in the CDSA dropbox by the time requested.
- The review team coordinator compiles members' drafts into one document before putting it, properly labeled, in the dropbox by the due date. In compiling the drafts into one document, the review team coordinator makes sure that findings and recommendations written by different members of the team are not unduly repetitive (some overlap is acceptable). Usually reports will be 20-30 pages.
- The Department reviews the draft—drafts that do not meet requirements will be returned to the review team coordinator for revision—and clarifies any questions with the review team coordinator. The Department then sends the draft, without the recommendations, to the district to review for factual errors. Team members should be available after the district's review in case there are any questions about their parts of the report.
- The Department finalizes the report, including the recommendations, sends it to the appropriate personnel in the district and to the appropriate District and School Assistance Center, and posts it on its website at http://www.doe.mass.edu/sda/review/district/.

Findings:

- Finding statements should make a single point.
- The number of findings should be determined by the evidence; usually, there should be one finding for each of the conditions for school effectiveness considered under Key Question 1 and two to three findings for Key Question 2.
- Findings should be priority findings: that is, those that highlight significant strengths or challenges, especially those that have had the greatest impact on the identified school's ability to address the needs of students living in poverty.

- Findings do not need to be listed in priority (rank) order. The strength of the language used in finding statements should be used to demonstrate significance/importance. Instead, the findings should be in a logical sequence determined by their subject matter. Placement of findings may also be affected by whether they are positive or negative.
- **Each finding statement should be supported by an analysis describing the team's evidence, the impact of the finding, and the team's judgment.**
  - **Evidence** from multiple sources among the data, documents, interviews, focus groups, observed teacher team meetings, and classroom visits. Sources of evidence should be indicated in the written finding. **The analysis** should make connections among the different pieces of evidence used to support the finding statement.
  - **Impact** and significance of the finding for education in the district. The analysis should explain to the reader why this finding is important.
  - Professional **judgment.** The team's judgment as to the extent that the conditions for school effectiveness listed in the Overview above are in place and what impact the district's systems have on the selected school and its students, especially low-income students.

Recommendations:

- The review team develops recommendations based on the district's strengths and challenges and contextual factors identified by the findings.
- Recommendations are limited to those with the highest priority; they do not necessarily address all the actions a district might take in response to the findings in the report.
- Recommendations must be based on the findings and evidence included in the report; describing the evidence leading to the recommendation (see next bullet) will help to ensure that they are.
- For each recommendation, the report will provide a brief explanation, describing the evidence leading to the recommendation and how next steps could build greater capacity to support student learning. Recommendations may be considered by the district:
  - as a possible way to build greater capacity to support student learning;
  - as validation for continuing its current systems and practices; or
  - as a further reason to adopt planned changes to those systems and practices.
- If the team makes recommendations for new initiatives, it should consider prioritizing them.
- Recommendations may be used by districts and schools to enhance their capacity to support the learning of students at all economic levels and by the Department to inform the assistance and monitoring activities it will implement in the future to help districts and schools build their capacity to support all students' learning.

Expectations for the Team and District

The review places a value on engaging the district in understanding its own systems and practices as they relate to serving the needs of students living in poverty. The process is evidence-based and designed to promote learning and improvement. Clear communication among the district, the selected school, and the review team is essential to the process. All review team members have extensive experience in the area they are reviewing, are governed by a Code of Conduct (see Appendix G), are objective, and minimize disruption to teaching and learning.

Expectations for the review team coordinator:

- Exhibit the highest professional standards and be responsible for ensuring that the team does so, as well.
- As the review begins, make sure that all review team members are scheduled for the interviews they need.
- Maintain and post daily team meeting notes.
- Conduct a daily review of the schedule with the team and ensure that all interviews, focus groups and classroom visits are attended and go smoothly.
- Maintain good channels of communication with the district and schools at all times.
- On the first day of the site visit, provide the district with a randomly selected list of teachers whose personnel files the district is to provide, along with administrator files, for the purposes described in Appendix J.
- Take responsibility for facilitating all team meetings on site.
- Schedule school and classroom visits on site.
- Take responsibility for organizing the team and keeping copies of team notes.
- Keep district and school leaders informed of the team's progress and developing themes throughout the visit.
- Take appropriate actions to follow up on any questions by the team.
- Present the team's emerging themes to district leadership at the end of the visit.
- Write a section of the review report and oversee the writing of the entire report.

Expectations for review team members:

- Before the site visit, read district and school documents and participate in document review and question preparation; visit the website for the district and the schools being visited, as well as parts of the ESE website, a list of which will be provided. During the document review, fill out electronic document/data sheets; after the document review, place these in the CDSA dropbox.
- Arrive punctually for all team meetings and appointments in the district. See outline of review team activities below.
- Participate fully and collegially on teams, take direction from the review team coordinator, and make requests to the district, e.g. for further documentation, through the review team coordinator.
- Organize notes and additional evidence to share with other team members by the end of each site visit day; make sure the coordinator has all notes and other evidence by the end of the site visit.
- Complete assigned section of report according to report template guidance and checklists for findings and recommendations.

- Participate in refining the draft of the report, ensuring that it contains sufficient evidence, is accurate, and reflects the consensus of the team.
- Abide by the Code of Conduct for Reviewers in Appendix G.
- Abide by the Guidelines for Classroom Visits (see Appendix H).
- Adhere to deadlines.

Outline of Review Team Activities:
- Document review and question development meeting (two days)
- Site days in district (four days)
- Findings development team meeting (one day)
- Recommendations development review team meeting (one day)

Expectations for the district:
- Explain the purpose and process of the review to all staff.
- Before the site visit, send the documents requested and work with the coordinator to finalize the schedule.
- Provide confidential team meeting space with Internet access and access to a copier during each day on site.
- Provide a space for each interview (not the team room).
- Welcome the review team and recognize that its efforts are on behalf of its students.
- Work with the review team to ensure that the visit runs smoothly.
- Engage faculty and other stakeholders to reflect on district systems and practices and their impact.
- Provide the review team coordinator with any additional documents requested.
- Maintain good communication with the review team coordinator throughout the review, conveying any concerns or other feedback from staff.
- Respond frankly to the review team's developing themes and provide additional evidence when necessary.
- After the site visit, invite all participants in the review to complete a brief online survey (to be supplied) to give the Department feedback on the review process.

Appendix A: Checklist of Data/Documents Provided by ESE

(including information previously submitted to ESE by the district)

Documents to be provided by ESE before the site visit	
1. District Profile Data (to be used by the review team if there is a discrepancy with other ESE data)	
2. Data from District Analysis and Review tool (DART) (See definition in Appendix K)	
3. Data from the Education Data Warehouse (EDW)	
4. Latest Coordinated Program Review Report (even if not published within the last two years) and the follow-up Mid-cycle Report if one has been published since the latest CPR Report	
5. Most recent NEASC report	
6. Any District or School Accountability Report produced by Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA) or ESE in the past three years	
7. Teacher's Contract, including the Teacher Evaluation Tool	
8. Staff Report (Highly Qualified)	
9. Long Term Enrollment Trends	
10. End-of-Year Report	
11. List of Federal and State Grants	
12. Municipal Profile	

Appendix B: District Task Checklist

(to be used by the district to prepare for the review)

PLEASE NOTE:

- *Electronic documents are preferred if available. If documents are on the district website, please provided URL. If not, please send on a CD or download to Security Portal.*
- *Please indicate if any of these documents are unavailable.*
- *Other pertinent information about the district that might inform the review team is welcome.*

Documents and data to be provided by the district before the site visit	
1. Organization chart	
2. District Improvement Plan and School Improvement Plans	
3. School committee minutes for past year	
4. Most recent budget proposal with accompanying narrative or presentation; and most recent approved budget.	
5. Curriculum guide overview	
6. High school program of studies	
7. Matrix of assessments (Appendix D)	
8. Copies of data analyses/reports used in schools	
9. Descriptions of student support programs	
10. Program evaluations	
11. Student and Family Handbooks	
12. Faculty Handbook	
13. Professional Development Plan and current program/schedule/courses if available	
14. Teacher certification and qualification attachment (Appendix E)	
15. Teacher planning time schedules	
16. Evaluation tools for central office administrators and principals	
17. Classroom observation tools not used in the teacher evaluation process	
18. Job descriptions for central office and school administrators and instructional staff	
19. Numbered list of teachers	
20. Teacher attendance data (Appendix F)	
To be arranged by the district before the site visit	
1. All administrators, faculty, and staff made aware of the visit, its purpose, and the review schedule	
2. Private meeting space for review team secured for days in the district office	
3. Access to copier, printer, and Internet	
4. Private meeting space secured for district level interviews (different from team room)	
5. Lunch arrangements for the review team made (the team can reimburse)	
6. District prepared to provide a) teacher personnel files randomly selected by the team; b) all administrator evaluations and certifications; c) access to K-12 ELA, math, and science curriculum documents; d) policy manual; and e) other documents requested by the team.	
7. School schedules, directions to schools, maps, and parking arrangements	
After the site visit: A survey link will be sent to the district to seek feedback on the review.	

Appendix C: School Task Checklist

This checklist may be used by a school being visited in this set of differentiated needs reviews to prepare for the visit. The following documents would be helpful to the review team, if not previously provided with other district documents, and the arrangements listed for the school visit will help it run smoothly:

School-specific documents	
1. School Improvement Plan	
2. Calendar of formative and summative assessments for the school	
3. Copies of data analyses/reports used in the school	
4. Descriptions of student support programs at the school	
5. Student and Family Handbooks for the school	
6. Teacher planning time/meeting schedules at the school	
7. Classroom observation tools/Learning walk tools used at the school	
8. Any other components/examples of its instructional model that the school would like to provide	
9. School schedule and description of parking arrangements if needed	
Arrangements by the school for the school visit	
1. All administrators, faculty, and staff made aware of the visit and its purpose	
2. Private meeting space for review team members secured for the duration of the site visit	
3. Access to copier, printer, and Internet provided	
4. Meeting space secured for interviews (different from team room)	
5. Lunch arrangements planned with the review team coordinator	
6. School prepared to provide documents requested during the school visit	

Appendix D: Assessment Matrix

Please note that special education and ELL assessments need not be included.

A Subject	B Assessment	C School(s) Where Used	D Grades Used	E Number of Times Given Per Year

SAT I Data (for previous school year):	Number and percentage of **juniors** who took the SAT I at least once: Number (%)	Number and percentage of **seniors** who took the SAT I at least once: Number (%)	Average SAT I scores for **juniors**: Reading: Math: Writing:	Average SAT I scores for **seniors**: Reading: Math: Writing:

Prepared by_______________________________________ _______________________________________ Date__________

(print name) (signature)

Appendix E: Teacher Certification and Training

A School Name	B Total Number of Teachers	C Total # of Teachers with Special Education Certification	D # of Teachers with Dual Certification Including Special Education Certification	E Total # of Teachers with ESL Certification	F # of Teachers with Dual Certification Including ESL Certification	G # of Teachers Trained in Each of the ELL Categories and in all Four				
						1	2	3	4	All 4
DISTRICT TOTAL										

Prepared by______________________________ ______________________________ Date__________

(print name) (signature)

Appendix F: Report of Instructional Staff Attendance

Directions: Please complete the report for all teachers in the previous school year. CDSA assumes a 180-day work year for teachers; if this is not the case, please indicate that on the line above the chart below. Please count each teacher, not FTEs, in column B. For columns C, D, E, F, G, and H, indicate partial days actually absent in terms of decimals (one-half day = 0.5 days, e.g.). Long-term illness (column C) is absence for 10 or more consecutive workdays and includes use of sick leave for catastrophic illness and maternity leave, as well as Worker's Compensation. Short-term illness (column D) is absence for less than 10 consecutive workdays and may also include use of sick leave for family illness. Column E includes days absent from teaching duties, whether paid or unpaid, approved or unapproved, due to attendance at conferences, seminars, workshops, to serve on professional committees, and for sabbatical. Please include bereavement, parental, adoptive, and extended maternity leaves, as well as leaves for religious reasons in column H. Please indicate if the data is not applicable (na), unattainable (un), or irretrievable (ir) in the appropriate cell below. All cells should be filled.

Days in School Year (if other than 180) ___________

A School Name	B Number of Teachers	C Days Absent for Long-Term Illness	D Days Absent for Short-term Illness Days	E Days Absent for Professional Development	F Days Absent for Jury Duty or Military Service	G Personal Days	H Days Absent for Other Reasons

Prepared by_______________________________________ _______________________________________ Date__________

(print name) (signature)

Appendix G: Code of Conduct for Reviewers

1. **Carry out work with integrity**.
   a. Treat all those you meet with courtesy and sensitivity. Try to minimize stress.
   b. Allay anxiety through mutual respect and valuing opinions. Show an interest in what is said.
   c. Focus attention and questions on topics that will reveal how well students are learning.
   d. Protect sensitive and confidential information.

2. **Act in the best interests of students and staff.**
   a. Emphasize that students come first and are at the center of the review.
   b. As much as possible, minimize disruption to teaching and learning.
   c. Do not criticize the work of a teacher or anyone else involved with the school.
   d. Classroom visits are used only to understand instruction at the school. Classroom visits are not evaluations. Specific feedback and information about individual teachers will not be shared with any school personnel.
   e. All teacher interviews are anonymous. Only the superintendent will be identified by name; other individuals will be identified by position only, where appropriate, in both oral and written reports.
   f. Try to understand what leaders and teachers are doing and why.

3. **Base findings on evidence.**
   a. Findings must be robust, fully supported by evidence, and defensible.
   b. Findings must be reliable in that others would make the same finding from the same evidence.
   c. Be prepared to ask questions to establish whether a view is based on evidence.
      This applies, as well, to review team members' findings.
   d. Discussion with staff and review team members is part of the process to create a validated and reliable evidence base from which findings are made.

Appendix H: Guidelines for Classroom Visits

GENERAL GUIDANCE

Classroom visits are one source of information for the review team on instruction in the district. The team will visit a representative range of grade levels, focusing on core academic areas, especially ELA, mathematics, and science. It is expected that classrooms will be visited for no less than 20 minutes to allow the team to derive an understanding of the lesson and the classroom climate. Visits may be scheduled or spontaneous.

Classroom visits should reflect a typical experience for students and teachers. Teachers do not need to address the classroom visitor or provide an explanation of the lesson. The classroom visitor may walk around the classroom to review student work or classroom postings, if appropriate.

Classroom visits are NOT evaluations of individual teachers. Specific information about individual teachers will not be shared with any school personnel. Review team members will not provide feedback to individual teachers.

Guidelines for the review team for classroom visits:

- Record factual data on the Instructional Inventory Record (Appendix I) using quotes, tallies, or descriptions.
- Label Instructional Inventory Record with descriptive characteristics, not identifiers such as teacher names.
- Avoid distractions to the class.
- Review samples of student work in folders, portfolios, or displays.
- Talk to students (if appropriate): *What are you learning? Why are you learning it? How do you know if your work is good? What do you do if you need help?*
- Talk to teachers (if appropriate): *What did you hope your students would learn? Why? What do you look for to know if your students met lesson objectives?*
- Make sure that each class visit is for about the same amount of time.

Guidelines for discussion during team meetings (all to occur in the team meeting room):

- All team members share evidence related to each characteristic.
- They state factual evidence and do not make judgmental or subjective statements.
- The team shares and tallies the evidence (No Evidence, Partial Evidence, Solid Evidence) for all classes/characteristics using the Instructional Inventory Spreadsheet.
- The team shares highlights (big ideas, trends, areas of strong practice, areas of need) from the aggregated evidence they collected.
- The team discusses overarching trends, strengths, and challenges observed.
- The team reaches consensus on the trends across classroom visits.
- No data identifying individual classes is distributed to teachers.
- A team member enters data into the Instructional Inventory Spreadsheet and shares it with the team.

Appendix I: Instructional Inventory Record

District: _______________________School:____________________________ Observer:______________
Date: __________Time in: ____ Time out: ____ Total time: ____ (min.) Part of Lesson: Beginning Middle End
Subject:___________________ If applicable: ELL SPED Grade: ________# students: ____ G: ___ B:____
teachers: ____ # assistants: ___ Key: **N**=No **P**=Partial **S**=Solid Evidence observed directly in the lesson

N	*P*	*S*	*Characteristic*	*Comments*
			Organization of the Classroom	
			1. Classroom **climate** is characterized by respectful behaviors, routines, tone, and discourse.	
			2. A learning **objective** (not simply an agenda or an activity description) for the day's lesson is evident. Applicable language objectives are evident and aligned to the ELPBO for ELL students.	
			3. Available class **time** is maximized for learning.	
			Total for section (3 characteristics)	
			Instructional Design and Delivery—General	
			4. Instruction links academic concepts to students' **prior knowledge** and experience.	
			5. Instructional **materials** are aligned with students' **developmental level** and level of English proficiency	
			6. Presentation of **content** is within the students' English proficiency and **developmental level**.	
			7. Depth of **teacher's content knowledge** is evident throughout the presentation of the lesson.	

N	*P*	*S*	*Characteristic*	*Comments*
			8. **Instruction** includes a **range of techniques** such as direct instruction, facilitating, and modeling.	
			9. The teacher **paces** the lesson to ensure that all students are actively engaged.	
			10. On-the-spot formative assessments **check for understanding** to inform instruction.	
			Total for section (7 characteristics)	
Instructional Design and Delivery: Higher-Order Thinking				
			11. **Questions require** students to engage in a process of **application, analysis, synthesis, and/or evaluation**.	
			12. Students **articulate** their **thinking and reasoning**.	
			13. Students are **inquiring, exploring,** or **problem solving** together, in pairs, or in small groups.	
			14. Opportunities for students to **apply new knowledge** and content are embedded in the lesson.	
			Total for section (4 characteristics)	
			Total tally (14 characteristics)	

Appendix J: Review of District Personnel Files

The purpose of the review of district personnel files is to verify that the district is using appropriately licensed teachers, highly qualified according to the requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, who are adequately supervised and actively engaged in well-selected professional development activities. There are several steps involved in conducting this review with adequate attention to the security of personal information.

<u>Selection of a statistically representative sample</u>
The district will be asked to provide the review team with a numbered list of faculty members. Review team coordinators will determine the number of folders to review using the formula
Files = 20 + (√number of teachers). The coordinator will then use the web site www.random.org to generate a list of random numbers that will be used to choose the personnel files from the numbered list provided by the district.

<u>Review of the Files</u>
Administrator files: Review of principal and other administrator personnel files will focus on licensure or waiver status as described in state regulations, the presence of annual personnel evaluations, any communications from the superintendent, whether positive or negative, and the characteristics of evaluations, including whether they are aligned with the Principles of Effective Administrative Leadership and are informative, instructive, and conducive to professional development. Notes on the review of administrator files will be kept on an "Administrator Evaluation Spreadsheet" that has been placed for the district's information and the team's use in the district's dropbox.

Teacher files: Review of teacher files will focus on licensure or waiver status, the presence or absence of evaluations, and the characteristics of the evaluations, including whether they are aligned with the Principles of Effective Teaching and are informative, instructive, and conducive to professional development. Teachers who have not attained professional teacher status should be evaluated annually according to regulations. Teachers who have attained professional teacher status may be evaluated during alternate years. Those who review personnel files will use a "Teacher Evaluation Spreadsheet" to record the characteristics of the evaluations. This spreadsheet has been placed for the district's information and the team's use in the district's dropbox.

Districts are not required to maintain teacher professional development plans in personnel folders. There may be a reference to such documents, or not. If referenced the reference should be noted, but the lack of such references should not be interpreted negatively. Similarly, teacher files containing improvement plans or disciplinary actions should also be noted.

It is important to stress that medical files belonging to any staff members are private and should not be reviewed by team members. They should be kept in a separate file from evaluation and licensure documents, but if not, they should be ignored by review team members. It is also important to recognize that professional development files contain sensitive information, and districts are required to maintain them securely. Teams are expected to ensure that district expectations regarding the security of all personnel files are respected; they will undergo training before the site visit on keeping them secure.

Appendix K: Definitions of Terms Used in this Protocol

Benchmark assessment: an assessment that is given at regular and specified intervals throughout the school year, is designed to evaluate students' knowledge and skills relative to a specific set of academic standards, and produces results that can be aggregated (e.g., by course, grade level, school, or district) in order to inform teachers and administrators at the student, classroom, school, and district levels.

District Analysis and Review Tool (DART): a form of assistance to districts and schools developed by the Department, available at http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/dart/default.html. The DART includes multiple data elements and allows districts to compare themselves with similar districts or other districts of their choice and schools to compare themselves with similar schools or other schools of their choice.

Formative assessment: assessment questions, tools, and processes that are embedded in instruction and are used by teachers and students to provide timely feedback for purposes of adjusting instruction to improve learning.

Tiered instruction: a data-driven prevention, early detection, and support system that guides the allocation of school and district resources with the aim of providing high quality core educational experiences for all students and targeted interventions to struggling students who experience learning or behavioral challenges.

Appendix L: District Standards and Indicators

Note: Conditions for School Effectiveness (CSEs) are in bold italics.

Leadership and Governance

1. Focused School Committee Governance
2. Effective District and School Leadership
3. District and School Improvement Planning
4. Educationally Sound Budget Development
5. Effective District Systems for School Support and Intervention

Curriculum and Instruction

1. Aligned, Consistently Delivered, and Continuously Improving Curriculum
2. Strong Instructional Leadership and Effective Instruction
3. Sufficient Instructional Time

Assessment

1. Data Collection and Dissemination
2. Data-Based Decision-Making
3. Student Assessment

Human Resources and Professional Development

1. Staff Recruitment, Selection, Assignment
2. Supervision and Evaluation
3. Professional Development

Student Support

1. Academic Support
2. Access and Equity
3. Educational Continuity and Student Participation
4. Services and Partnerships to Support Learning
5. Safety

Financial and Asset Management

1. Comprehensive and Transparent Budget Process
2. Adequate Budget
3. Financial Tracking, Forecasting, Controls, and Audits
4. Cost-Effective Resource Management
5. Capital Planning and Facility Maintenance

<u>Leadership and Governance</u>: School committee and district and school leaders establish, implement, and continuously evaluate the effectiveness of policies and procedures that are standards-based, driven by student achievement data, and designed to promote continuous improvement of instructional practice and high achievement for all students. Leadership decisions and actions related to the attainment of district and school goals are routinely communicated to the community and promote the public confidence, community support, and financial commitment needed to achieve high performance by students and staff.

1. **Focused School Committee Governance:** School committee members are informed and knowledgeable about their responsibilities under the Education Reform Act. In their policy-making and decision-making they are guided by improvement plan goals and informed by student achievement data and other educationally relevant data. The performance of the superintendent is annually evaluated based on the attainment of the goals in the district improvement plan, MCAS results, and other student achievement data. Together with the superintendent, the school committee creates a culture of collaboration and develops contracts and agreements which encourage all stakeholders to work together to support higher levels of student achievement.

2. **Effective District and School Leadership**: The superintendent promotes a culture of transparency, accountability, public confidence, collaboration, and joint responsibility for student learning within the district and broader community. The superintendent effectively delegates educational and operational leadership to principals, program leaders, and administrators, and annually evaluates their performance in their roles based on the goals in the district and school improvement plans, MCAS results, and other relevant data. ***The district and each school take action to attract, develop, and retain an effective school leadership team that obtains staff commitment to improving student learning and implements a well-designed strategy for accomplishing a clearly defined mission and set of goals, in part by leveraging resources. Each school leadership team a) ensures staff understanding of and commitment to the school's mission and strategies, b) supports teacher leadership and a collaborative learning culture, c) uses supervision and evaluation practices that assist teacher development, and d) focuses staff time and resources on instructional improvement and student learning through effective management of operations and use of data for improvement planning and management (CSE #2).***

3. **District and School Improvement Planning:** The district and school leaders have a well-understood vision or mission, goals, and priorities for action that are outlined in a District Improvement Plan. The plan's performance goals for students and its analysis of student achievement data drive the development, implementation, and modification of educational programs. Each school uses an approved School Improvement Plan that is aligned with the district's plan and based on an analysis of student achievement data. District and school plans are developed and refined through an iterative process that includes input from staff, families, and partners on district goals, initiatives, policies, and programs. District and school leaders periodically report to the school committee, staff, families, and community on the extent of the attainment of the goals in the plans, particularly regarding student achievement.

4. **Educationally Sound Budget Development:** The superintendent annually recommends to the school committee educationally sound budgets based primarily on its improvement planning and analysis of data. The budget is developed and resources are allocated based on the ongoing analysis of aggregated and disaggregated student assessment data to assure the budget's effectiveness in supporting improved achievement for all student populations. District leaders promote equity by distinguishing among the needs of individual schools' populations and allocating adequate resources to the schools and students with greater needs. Each school's administrators are actively involved in the development of its budget.

5. **Effective District Systems for School Support and Intervention***:* ***The district has systems and processes for anticipating and addressing school staffing, instructional, and operational needs in timely, efficient, and effective ways. Using these, it monitors the performance of students and conditions in each school. The district also identifies any persistently low-achieving and/or struggling schools; makes any needed changes in staffing, schedule and/or governance; and supports an ambitious, yet realistic plan for school improvement, including goals, timelines, and benchmarks, with explicit consequences for not meeting benchmarks. The district provides its lowest achieving and struggling schools with additional monitoring and effective support for improvement. (CSE #1)***

<u>Curriculum and Instruction</u>: The curricula and instructional practices in the district are developed and implemented to attain high levels of achievement for all students. They are aligned with components of the state curriculum frameworks and revised to promote higher levels of student achievement.

1. **Aligned, Consistently Delivered, and Continuously Improving Curriculum**: The district and each of its schools have curriculum leadership that ensures consistent use, alignment, and effective delivery of the district's curricula. Teachers and other staff make effective use of curriculum guides for all content areas that include objectives, resources, instructional strategies, timelines, and assessments. The district has an established, documented process for the regular and timely review and revision of curricula based on valid research, the analysis of MCAS results and other assessments, and input from professional staff. ***The district ensures that each school's taught curricula a) are aligned to state curriculum frameworks and to the MCAS performance level descriptions, and b) are also aligned vertically (between grades) and horizontally (across classrooms at the same grade level and across sections of the same course). (CSE #3).***

2. **Strong Instructional Leadership and Effective Instruction:** The district and each of its schools have leadership and support for effective instruction. District and school leaders address instructional needs and strengths that are identified through active monitoring of instruction and ongoing use of formative and summative student assessment data. ***The district ensures that instructional practices are based on evidence from a body of high quality research and on high expectations for all students and include use of appropriate research-based reading and mathematics programs. It also ensures that instruction focuses on clear objectives, uses appropriate educational materials, and includes a) a range of strategies, technologies, and supplemental materials aligned with students' developmental levels and learning needs; b) instructional practices and activities that build a respectful climate and enable students to assume increasing responsibility for their own learning; and c) use of class time that maximizes student learning. Each school staff has a common understanding of high-quality evidence-based instruction and a system for monitoring instructional practice. (CSE #4)***

3. **Sufficient Instructional Time:** The district allocates sufficient instructional time for all students in core content areas. The allocation of time is based on analyses of student achievement data and focused on improving proficiency.

<u>Assessment</u>: District and school leadership use student assessment results, local benchmarks, and other pertinent data to improve student achievement and inform all aspects of its decision-making including: policy development and implementation, instructional programs, assessment practices, procedures, and supervision.

1. **Data Collection and Dissemination:** District assessment policies and practices are characterized by the continuous collection and timely dissemination of data. District and school staff members have access to user-friendly, district-wide and school-based reports on student achievement and other relevant data. All appropriate staff and community members are made aware of internal reports and external review findings.

2. **Data-Based Decision-Making**: The district is highly effective at analyzing and using data to drive decision-making. District and school leadership annually review student assessment results, external and internal reviews, and other pertinent data to prioritize goals, maximize effectiveness in allocating human and financial resources, and to initiate, modify, or discontinue programs and services. District and school leaders monitor student achievement data throughout the year in order to ascertain progress towards goals identified in the district and school plans, and to make needed adjustments to programs, policies, services, or supervision practices. All professional staff members are supported and expected to use aggregated and disaggregated student achievement data regularly to improve performance.

3. **Student Assessment:** ***The district ensures that each school uses a balanced system of formative and benchmark assessments to guide instruction and determine individual remedial and enrichment requirements. Benchmark assessments are given 4 – 8 times per year. (CSE #5)***

<u>Human Resources and Professional Development</u>: The district identifies, attracts, and recruits effective personnel, and structures its environment to support, develop, improve, promote, and retain qualified and effective professional staff who are successful in advancing achievement for all students.

1. **Staff Recruitment, Selection, and Assignment:** The district has policies and practices to secure candidates who are committed and qualified to meet student needs, contribute to a professional learning community, and in the case of teachers, provide high quality instruction in their content area. The district attracts quality candidates by appropriately compensating staff and by developing varied incentives and other strategies for recruiting and ensuring a diverse pool of high-quality candidates in hard-to-staff positions. Hiring and placement timelines, policies, and practices allow districts to recruit high-quality candidates in a competitive time frame. Hiring processes include input from appropriate district stakeholders. During the hiring process, the district assesses candidates' proficiency in domains of the common core of professional knowledge and skills. All members of the professional staff have appropriate Massachusetts licensure. In the event of unfilled professional positions, individuals are hired on waivers and provided mentoring and support to attain the standard of substantial annual progress toward appropriate licensure. The district places a high priority on retaining and maximizing the impact of effective professional staff by providing new roles and opportunities for growth and a career ladder. The district provides administrators with guidance and support to make effective decisions regarding the selection and assignment of staff. ***The district ensures that each principal has the authority, guidance, and assistance needed to make staffing decisions based on the school's improvement plan and student needs. (CSE#6)***

2. **Supervision and Evaluation:** The district promotes a culture of growth-oriented supervision through a combination of formal evaluations and ongoing, informal instructional feedback. The district's evaluation procedure for administrators' performance meets the requirements of state law and regulation and is informative, instructive, and used to promote individual growth and overall effectiveness. Compensation and continued employment for administrators are linked to evidence of effectiveness, as assessed by improvement in student performance and other relevant school data. Through effective supervision practices, administrators identify the strengths and needs of assigned staff in order to plan effective implementation of district and school initiatives, assess the application of skills and practices learned from professional development, provide struggling staff with opportunities for additional professional development and support and provide frequent, high-quality feedback focused on professional growth. The district ensures that school leaders regularly use evidence-based supervision processes to monitor and support teachers to meet instructional and program expectations based on high standards of performance aligned to the common core of professional knowledge and skills. The district's evaluation procedure for teachers' performance is aligned to the supervision process, incorporates multiple sources of data including student achievement results, effectively implemented by trained administrators, and fulfills the requirements of state law and regulation. The district has identified variegated strategies for supporting and developing struggling teachers and has dismissed or demoted educators who do not meet evaluation criteria over time. The district ensures that school administrators receive the guidance and support to effectively use the formal evaluation process to hold staff accountable to high professional expectations for performance.

3. **Professional Development:** District and school organization, culture and structures create a climate conducive to adult learning through effective communication, ongoing professional improvement and joint responsibility for student learning. The district maintains a strong commitment to creating and sustaining a professional development program that supports educators at all stages in their careers. Professional development programs and services are based on district priorities, information about staff needs, student achievement data, and assessments of instructional practices and programs at each school. Programs progress developmentally and differentiate for educators' different areas of responsibility and levels of expertise and experience. The district supports teacher leadership and growth by creating opportunities for exemplary teachers to have responsibility for instructional leadership and mentoring. ***Professional development includes a) both job-embedded and individually pursued learning, including content-based learning, that enhances a teacher's knowledge and skills and b) structures for collaboration that enable teachers to have regular, frequent department and/or grade-level common planning and meeting time that is used to improve implementation of the curriculum and instructional practice. (CSE #7)***

Student Support: The district provides quality programs for all students that are comprehensive, accessible and rigorous. Student academic support services and district discipline and behavior practices address the needs of all students. The district is effective in maintaining high rates of attendance for students and staff and retains the participation of students through graduation.

1. **Academic Support:** The district has policies, procedures, and practices that promote student high achievement, support course completion, reduce grade retention, and encourage on-time graduation. ***The district has an effective system for identifying all students who are not performing at grade level. Each school schedule is designed to provide adequate learning time for all students in core subjects. For students not yet on track to proficiency in English language arts or mathematics, the district ensures that each school provides additional time and support for individualized instruction through tiered instruction, a data-driven approach to prevention, early detection, and support for students who experience learning or behavioral challenges, including but not limited to students with disabilities and English language learners. (CSE #8)***

2. **Access and Equity:** District and school staff members work to close proficiency gaps by using aggregated and disaggregated data on student participation and achievement to adjust policies and practices and to provide additional programs or supports. Inclusive classrooms and programs that use an integrated services model minimize separation of special populations from the mainstream of school activity. The district and its schools work to promote equity through such means as increasing the proportion of underrepresented subgroups in advanced and accelerated programs. Beginning at the middle school level, leaders actively create pathways to ensure that all students are prepared for post-secondary education and career opportunities upon graduation.

3. **Educational Continuity and Student Participation:** District and school policies and practices promote student attendance, which is continuously monitored, reported, and acted upon. They also promote and track staff attendance and participation, and appropriate provisions are made to ensure continuity for students. District and school policies and practices also help all students make effective transitions from one school, grade level, or program. Entering and mobile students are promptly placed in educationally appropriate settings using information from skill and other assessments when prior school records are not accessible. Transient and homeless students have timely and equitable access to quality programs supported by district oversight, policies and practices to address their needs. Fair and equitable policies, procedures, and practices are implemented to reduce suspensions, exclusions, and other discipline referrals. Policies and practices are implemented to reduce or minimize dropping out, and the district has practices to recover dropouts and return them to an educationally appropriate placement.

4. **Partnerships and Services to Support Learning:** ***The district ensures that each school creates a safe school environment and makes effective use of a system for addressing the social, emotional, and health needs of its students that reflects the behavioral health and public schools framework.[4] Students' needs are met in part through a) the provision of coordinated student support services and universal breakfast (if eligible); b) the implementation of a systems approach to establishing a productive social culture that minimizes problem behavior for all students; and c) the use of consistent schoolwide attendance and discipline practices and effective classroom management techniques that enable students to assume increasing responsibility for their own behavior and learning. (CSE #9) The district ensures that each school develops strong working relationships with families and appropriate community partners and providers in order to support students' academic progress and social and emotional well-being (CSE #10);*** such community partners and providers as human service agencies, corporate and civic sponsors, and higher education give students and families access to health, social, recreational, and supplemental educational services.

5. **Safety:** The district supports schools to maintain safe environments for students. The district has a comprehensive safety plan that is reviewed annually with local police and fire departments and is used to create aligned school plans. The district provides ongoing training for appropriate staff in dealing with crises and emergencies, as well as opportunities for all staff and students to practice safety procedures.

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[4] The behavioral health and public schools framework was developed by the Task Force on Behavioral Health and Public Schools pursuant to c. 321, s. 19, of the Massachusetts Acts of 2008.

<u>Financial and Asset Management</u>: The district engages in a participative, well-documented, and transparent budget process that uses student achievement as a factor in the overall budget. The district acquires and uses financial, physical, and competitive capital resources to provide for and sustain the advancement of achievement for all students enrolled in the district. The district regularly assesses the effectiveness and efficiency of its financial and capital assets and has the ability to meet reasonable changes and unanticipated events.

1. **Comprehensive and Transparent Budget Process:** The district's budget is developed through an open, participatory process, and the resulting document is clear, comprehensive, complete, current, and understandable. The budget provides accurate information on all fund sources, as well as budgetary history and trends. The district and community have appropriate written agreements and memoranda related to 603 CMR 10.0 that detail the manner for calculating and the amounts to be used in calculating indirect charges levied on the school district budget by the community. Regular, timely, accurate, and complete financial reports are made to the school committee, appropriate administrators and staff, and the public. Required local, state, and federal financial reports and statements are accurate and filed on time.

2. **Adequate Budget:** The community annually provides sufficient financial resources to ensure educationally sound programs and quality facilities, with a sufficient district revenue levy and level of local spending for education. The combination of Chapter 70 Aid and local revenues, considering justified indirect charges, meets or exceeds Net School Spending (NSS) requirements of the education reform formula. The district's budget and supplemental funding are adequate to provide for effective instructional practices and adequate operational resources.

3. **Cost-Effective Resource Management:** As part of its budget development, the district implements a review process to determine the cost-effectiveness of its programs, initiatives, and activities. This process is based, in part, on student performance data and needs. ***The district ensures that each principal makes effective and strategic use of district and school resources and has sufficient budget authority to do so. (CSE #11)*** The district has a system in place to pursue, acquire, monitor, and coordinate all local, state, federal, and private competitive grants. The district implements an effective system to monitor special revenue funds, revolving accounts, and the fees related to them to ensure that they are managed efficiently and used effectively for the purposes intended and to advance the district's improvement plan. The district actively seeks ways to leverage resources and expand capacity through collaboration with such external partners as educational collaboratives and institutions of higher education.

4. **Financial Tracking, Forecasting, Controls, and Audits:** District administrators are able to regularly and accurately track spending and other financial transactions. The district uses forecast mechanisms and control procedures to ensure that spending is within budget limits. It uses efficient accounting technology to facilitate tracking, forecasting, and control procedures, and to integrate the district-level financial information of each school and program. All procurement, tracking, and monitoring systems and external audits are accurate, current, and timely. The district has a system in place to ensure that state procurement laws are followed, that staff are qualified to manage their fiscal responsibilities, and that all assets and expenditures are monitored and tracked to attain the most efficient and effective utilization. The district competitively procures independent financial auditing services at least every five years, shares the results of these audits, and consistently implements their recommendations.

5. **Capital Planning and Facility Maintenance:** The district has a formal preventive maintenance program to maximize and prolong the effective use of the district's capital and major facility assets, as well as to ensure that educational and program facilities are clean, safe, secure, well-lit, well-maintained, and conducive to student learning. The district has a long-term capital plan that clearly and accurately reflects future capital development and improvement needs, including the need for educational and program facilities of adequate size. The plan is reviewed and revised as needed with input from all appropriate stakeholders.

Appendix M: Identification of Gap Closers

For the 2010-2011 Reviews of District Systems and Practices Addressing the Differentiated Needs of Low-Income Students, the criteria for identifying schools that were "gap-closers" for low-income students (students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch) were as follows. The schools had to be non-charter Title I schools that substantially narrowed proficiency gaps for low-income students over a two-year period. They had to:

a. Be recognized as a 2010-2011 Commendation School (for narrowing proficiency gaps, high growth, or exiting NCLB accountability status);
b. Have a positive Composite Performance Index (CPI) change for low-income students (students receiving free or reduced-price lunch) from 2008 to 2009 and from 2009 to 2010 in either English language arts or mathematics and have an overall CPI change for low-income students of 5 points or greater from 2008 to 2010 in the same subject(s);
c. Increase the percentage of low-income students scoring Proficient and Advanced by one or more percentage points from 2008 to 2009 and 2009 to 2010 in one or both subjects;
d. Demonstrate no decline in CPI or percent Proficient and Advanced for low-income students in both subjects from 2008 to 2009 and 2009 to 2010;
e. Meet the 2010 AYP participation rate and additional indicator (attendance / graduation rate) requirement for all reportable student groups in both subjects; and
f. Carry same school code from 2007-2008 through 2009-2010, assess 40 or more low-income students each year from 2007-2008 through 2009-2010, and serve one or more tested grades each year from 2007-2008 through 2009-2010.