

# District Review Report

## South Middlesex RVTSD

Review conducted April 22-25, 2013

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Center for District and School Accountability  
Massachusetts Department of Elementary and  
Secondary Education

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# South Middlesex RVTSD District Review Overview

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## Purpose

Conducted under Chapter 15, Section 55A of the Massachusetts General Laws, district reviews support local school districts in establishing or strengthening a cycle of continuous improvement. Reviews consider carefully the effectiveness of system wide functions using the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (ESE) six district standards: leadership and governance, curriculum and instruction, assessment, human resources and professional development, student support, and financial and asset management. Reviews identify systems and practices that may be impeding improvement as well as those most likely to be contributing to positive results.

Districts reviewed in the 2012-2013 school year included those classified into Level 3<sup>1</sup> of ESE's framework for district accountability and assistance in each of the state's six regions: Greater Boston, Berkshires, Northeast, Southeast, Central, and Pioneer Valley. Review reports may be used by ESE and the district to establish priority for assistance and make resource allocation decisions.

## Methodology

Reviews collect evidence for each of the six district standards above. A district review team consisting of independent consultants with expertise in each of the district standards review documentation, data, and reports for two days before conducting a four-day district visit that includes visits to individual schools. The team conducts interviews and focus group sessions with such stakeholders as school committee members, teachers' association representatives, administrators, teachers, parents, and students. Team members also observe classroom instructional practice. Subsequent to the on-site review, the team meets for two days to develop findings and recommendations before submitting a draft report to ESE. *District review reports focus primarily on the system's most significant strengths and challenges, with an emphasis on identifying areas for improvement.*

## Site Visit

The site visit to the South Middlesex Regional Vocational Technical School District was conducted from April 22-25, 2013. The site visit included 33 hours of interviews and focus groups with approximately 61 stakeholders, including school committee members, district administrators, school staff, students, and teachers' association representatives. The review team conducted 2 focus groups with a total of 21 high school teachers.

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<sup>1</sup>Districts selected were in Level 3 in school year 2012-2013; all served one or more schools among the lowest 20 percent of schools statewide serving common grade levels pursuant to 603 CMR 2.05(2)(a). The districts with the lowest aggregate performance and least movement in Composite Performance Index (CPI) in their respective regions were selected for review from among those districts not exempt under Chapter 15, Section 55A. A district was exempt if another comprehensive review was completed or scheduled within nine months of the review window.

A list of review team members, information about review activities, and the site visit schedule are in Appendix A, and Appendix B provides information about enrollment, expenditures, and student performance. The team observed classroom instructional practice in 44 classrooms in the school. Of the 44 classes observed, 28 were academic classes and 16 were career/technical education classes. The team collected data using an instructional inventory, a tool for recording observed characteristics of standards-based teaching. This data is contained in Appendix C.

## District Profile

South Middlesex Regional Vocational Technical School District enrolls students from five member communities: Ashland, Framingham, Holliston, Hopkinton, and Natick. A sixteen-member regional school committee consists of eight members from Framingham (the largest and most urban of the member communities) and two from each of the other four communities. The committee elects the chair. The committee typically meets once a month with more meetings held during budget preparation. Subcommittees meet more frequently.

The current superintendent-director has been in the position since 2008 and has served in the district for 33 years, beginning as a teacher. The district leadership team includes the principal, dean of students, career/technical education coordinator, academic coordinator, director of guidance and admissions, special needs coordinator, business manager, facilities manager, and educational programs development coordinator. According to ESE data in 2013, there were 77 teachers in the district.

As of October 1, 2012, 710 students were enrolled in the district’s one school:

**Table 1: South Middlesex RVTSD  
Schools, Type, Grades Served, and Enrollment**

School Name	School Type	Grades Served	Enrollment
Joseph P. Keefe Technical High School	High School	9-12	710
*As of October 1, 2012			

Between 2008 and 2013 overall student enrollment increased by 6 percent. Enrollment figures by race/ethnicity and high needs populations (i.e., students with disabilities, students from low income families, and English language learners (ELLs) and former ELLs) as compared with the state are provided in Tables B1a and B1b in Appendix B.

Total in-district per-pupil expenditures were higher than the median in-district per pupil expenditures for 18 regional vocational school districts of similar size (less than 1,000 students) in fiscal year 2011: total in-district per-pupil expenditures were \$24,686 as compared with a median of \$20,018 (see [District Analysis and Review Tool Detail: Staffing and Finance](#)). Actual net school spending has been well above what is required under state law, as shown in Table B2 in Appendix B.

## Student Performance

Information about student performance includes: (1) the accountability and assistance level of the district, including the reason for the district’s level classification; (2) the progress the district and its schools are making toward narrowing proficiency gaps as measured by the Progress and Performance Index (PPI); (3) English language arts (ELA) performance and growth; (4) mathematics performance and growth; (5) science and technology/engineering (STE) performance; (6) annual dropout rates and cohort graduation rates; and (7) suspension rates. Data is reported for the district and for schools and student subgroups that have at least four years of sufficient data and are therefore eligible to be classified into an accountability and assistance level (1-5). “Sufficient data” means that at least 20 students in a district or school or at least 30 students in a subgroup were assessed on ELA and mathematics MCAS tests for the four years under review.

Four-and two-year trend data are provided when possible, in addition to areas in the district and/or its schools demonstrating potentially meaningful gains or declines over these periods. Data on student performance is also available in Appendix B. In both this section and Appendix B, the data reported is the most recent available.

### 1. The district is Level 2 at the 21<sup>st</sup> percentile.<sup>2</sup>

- A. The Joseph P. Keefe Technical High School is among the lowest performing 21 percent of high schools based on its four-year (2009-2012) achievement and improvement trends relative to other high schools.<sup>3</sup>

### 2. The school is not sufficiently narrowing proficiency gaps.

- A. The school as a whole is not considered to be making sufficient progress toward narrowing proficiency gaps. This is because the 2012 cumulative PPI for all students and for high needs<sup>4</sup> students is less than 75 for the school. The school’s cumulative PPI<sup>5 6</sup> is 75 for all students and 71 for high needs students. The district’s cumulative PPI

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<sup>2</sup> Due to the district’s Level 3 classification, it received a concurrent determination of need for special education technical assistance or intervention of “Needs Technical Assistance (NTA).” This serves as an indication that while areas of the district’s performance may be positive, one or more schools (or, in the case of a single school district, the district as a whole) may be experiencing poor outcomes for students with disabilities and/or are having compliance issues.

<sup>3</sup> A district is classified into the level of its lowest-performing school unless it has been placed in Level 4 or 5 by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education independent of the level of its schools.

<sup>4</sup> The high needs group is an unduplicated count of all students in a school or district belonging to at least one of the following individual subgroups: students with disabilities, English language learners (ELL) and Former ELL students, or low income students (eligible for free/reduced price school lunch).

<sup>5</sup> The PPI combines multiple measures of performance data (achievement, improvement, and graduation and dropout rates) over multiple years into a single number. All districts, schools, and student subgroups receive an *annual PPI* based on improvement from one year to the next and a *cumulative PPI* between 0 and 100 based on four years of data. A district’s, school’s or subgroup’s cumulative PPI is the average of its annual Progress and Performance Index scores over the four most recent MCAS administrations, weighting recent years the most (1-

for reportable subgroups are: 79 (low income students); 72 (students with disabilities); 68 (Hispanic/Latino students); and 86 (White students).

**3. The district's English language arts (ELA) performance is very low<sup>7</sup> relative to other districts and its growth<sup>8</sup> is moderate.<sup>9</sup>**

- A.** The school met its annual proficiency gap narrowing targets for all students, high needs students, low income students, ELL and former ELL students, and White students; the school did not meet its annual improvement targets for students with disabilities and Hispanic/Latino students.<sup>10</sup>
- B.** The school met its annual growth for all students, high needs students, low income students, students with disabilities, Hispanic/Latino students, and White students.

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2-3-4). A cumulative PPI is calculated for a group if it has at least three annual PPIs. If a group is missing an annual PPI for one year, that year is left out of the weighting (e.g., 1-X-3-4). While a group's annual PPI can exceed 100 points, the cumulative PPI is always reported on a 100-point scale.

<sup>6</sup>The cumulative PPI is a *criterion-referenced* measure of a district or school's performance relative to its own targets, irrespective of the performance of other districts or schools. Conversely, school percentiles are *norm-referenced* because schools are being compared to other schools across the state that serve the same or similar grades.

<sup>7</sup>All districts, schools, and subgroups are expected to halve the gap between their level of performance in the year 2011 and 100 percent proficient by the 2016-17 school year in ELA, mathematics, and STE. The Composite Performance Index (CPI), a measure of the extent to which a group of students has progressed towards proficiency, is the state's measure of progress towards this goal. In this report the 2012 CPI is used to compare the performance of districts, schools, and grades in a particular subject for a given year. For districts, for each level of school, and for each grade the CPIs are ordered from lowest to highest and then divided into five equal groups (quintiles) with the corresponding descriptions: "very high", "high", "moderate", "low" or "very low." In their assignment to quintiles single-school districts are treated as schools rather than districts. Quintiles for grades are calculated two ways: using a ranking of all districts' CPIs for a particular grade, and using a ranking of all schools' CPIs for a particular grade. CPI figures derive from the MCAS Report on the Department's School and District Profiles website: [http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/state\\_report/mcas.aspx](http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/state_report/mcas.aspx).

<sup>8</sup>Massachusetts uses student growth percentiles (SGP) to measure how much a student's or group of students' achievement has grown or changed over time. At the student level, student growth percentiles measure progress by comparing changes in a student's MCAS scores to changes in MCAS scores of other students with similar achievement profiles ("academic peers"). Growth at the district, school, and subgroup levels are reported as median SGPs - the middle score when the individual SGPs in a group are ranked from highest to lowest. Median SGPs are reported for ELA and mathematics. In contrast to the CPI, which describes a group's progress toward proficiency based on the group's current level of achievement, the median SGP describes a group's progress in terms of how the achievement of the students in the group changed relative to the prior year as compared to their academic peers. A group demonstrates "moderate" or "typical" growth if the group's median SGP is between the 41st and 60th percentiles.

<sup>9</sup>For ELA trends in the aggregate, see Table B4a in Appendix B; for selected subgroups, see Table B5a.

<sup>10</sup>A district, school, or subgroup is considered to have met its target when its CPI is within 1.5 CPI points of the target.

- C. The school earned extra credit toward its annual PPI for increasing the percentage of students scoring *Advanced* 10 percent or more between 2011 and 2012 for low income students. It also earned extra credit for decreasing the percentage of students scoring *Warning/Failing* 10 percent or more over this period for ELL and former ELL students and White students.
  - D. In 2012 the school demonstrated very low performance in grade 10 relative to other high schools.
  - E. In 2012 the school demonstrated moderate growth in grade 10.
  - F. Between 2009 and 2012 and more recently between 2011 and 2012, the district demonstrated potentially meaningful<sup>11</sup> gains in grade 10 in CPI, the percent of students scoring Proficient or Advanced, and SGP. These gains were attributable to its performance between 2009 and 2012.
- 4. The school's mathematics performance is very low relative to other high schools and its growth is moderate.<sup>12</sup>**
- A. The school met its annual proficiency gap narrowing targets for low income students, ELL and former ELL students, and White students; the district did not meet its annual improvement targets for all students, high needs students, students with disabilities and Hispanic/Latino students.
  - B. The school met its annual growth for all students, high needs students, low income students, students with disabilities, Hispanic/Latino students, and White students.
  - C. The school did not earn extra credit toward its annual PPI for increasing the percentage of students scoring *Advanced* 10 percent or more between 2011 and 2012 for any reportable group. It did earn extra credit for decreasing the percentage of students scoring *Warning/Failing* 10 percent or more over this period for all students, high needs students, low income students, ELL and former ELL students, Hispanic/Latino students, and White students.

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<sup>11</sup> The following changes in measures of achievement and growth, either positive or negative, are potentially meaningful, pending further inquiry: CPI (2.5 points); SGP (10 points); percent *Proficient* and *Advanced* (3 percentage points). Changes are more likely to be potentially meaningful for larger groups of students; higher performing groups tend to demonstrate fewer potentially meaningful changes than lower performing groups; and certain subjects and grade levels are more likely to demonstrate potentially meaningful changes than others. A consistent pattern of potentially meaningful change over several consecutive pairs of consecutive years is more likely to be meaningful than changes from one year to another, whether consecutive or not. In this report, a statement of potentially meaningful change is provided when a district, school, grade level, or subgroup demonstrates three or more instances of declines or gains of the amounts specified above in the CPI, SGP, and percent *Proficient* or *Advanced* over the last four years, the most recent two years, or both. Any instance of decline of one of the amounts specified above (or more) prevents three or more instances of gain from being considered potentially meaningful, and vice versa.

<sup>12</sup> For mathematics trends in the aggregate, see Table B4b in Appendix B; for selected subgroups, see Table B5b.

- D. In 2012 the school demonstrated very low performance in grade 10 relative to other high schools.
- E. In 2012 the school demonstrated moderate growth in grade 10.
- F. Between 2009 and 2012 and more recently between 2011 and 2012, the district did not demonstrate any potentially meaningful gains or declines.

**5. The school's science and technology/engineering (STE) performance is very low relative to other schools.<sup>13</sup>**

- A. The school met its annual proficiency gap narrowing targets for low income students; the district did not meet its annual improvement targets for all students, high needs students, students with disabilities, Hispanic/Latino students, and White students.
- B. The school earned extra credit toward its annual PPI for increasing the percentage of students scoring *Advanced* 10 percent or more and for decreasing the percentage of students scoring *Warning/Failing* 10 percent or more between 2011 and 2012 for all students, high needs students, low income students, students with disabilities, Hispanic/Latino students, , and White Students.
- C. In 2012 the school demonstrated very low performance in grade 10 relative to other high schools.
- D. Between 2009 and 2012 and more recently between 2011 and 2012, the school did not demonstrate potentially meaningful gains or declines.

**6. In 2012, the district met its annual improvement targets for all students for the four-year cohort graduation rate and the five-year cohort graduation rate, and did not meet its target for the annual grade 9-12 dropout rate.<sup>14</sup> Over the most recent three-year period for which data is available,<sup>15</sup> the four-year cohort graduation rate increased, the five-year cohort graduation rate declined, and the annual grade 9-12 dropout rate declined. Over**

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<sup>13</sup> For STE trends in the aggregate, see Table B4c in Appendix B; for selected subgroups, see Table B5c.

<sup>14</sup> All groups (districts, schools, and subgroups) are expected to make steady progress toward a goal of 90 percent for the four-year cohort graduation rate and 95 percent for the five-year rate by the 2016-17 school year. For accountability determinations in any given year, the cohort graduation rate from the prior school year is used. For example, 2012 accountability determinations for the four-year rate use data from 2011; determinations for the five-year rate use data from 2010. Districts, schools, and subgroups are considered to be on target if they meet the state's federally-approved annual targets in a given year for either the four-or five-year cohort graduation rate, whichever is higher.

<sup>15</sup> Note that the 2012 four-year graduation and dropout rates and the 2011 five-year graduation rate will be used in the 2013 accountability determination; the 2011 four-year graduation and dropout rates and the 2010 five-year graduation rate were used in the 2012 determination. See previous footnote.

**the most recent one-year period for which data is available, the four-year cohort graduation rate increased, the five-year cohort graduation rate increased, and the annual grade 9-12 dropout rate declined.**<sup>16</sup>

- A. Between 2009 and 2012 the four-year cohort graduation rate increased 6.2 percentage points, from 79.9% to 86.1%, an increase of 7.8 percent. Between 2011 and 2012 it increased 1.8 percentage points, from 84.3% to 86.1%, an increase of 2.1 percent.
- B. Between 2008 and 2011 the five-year cohort graduation rate declined 0.6 percentage points, from 89.3% to 88.7%, a decrease of 0.7 percent. Between 2010 and 2011 it increased 1.2 percentage points, from 87.5% to 88.7%, an increase of 1.4 percent.
- C. Between 2009 and 2012 the annual grade 9-12 dropout rate declined 0.1 percentage points, from 1.6% to 1.5%, a decrease of 6.9 percent. Between 2011 and 2012 it declined 0.1 percentage points, from 1.6% to 1.5%, a decrease of 6.9 percent.

**7. The district's rates of in-school suspensions and out-of-schools in 2011-2012 were not significantly different from the statewide rates for grades 9 through 12.**<sup>17</sup>

- A. The rate of in-school suspensions was 10.0 percent, compared to the state rate for grades 9-12 of 6.5 percent. The rate of out-of-school suspensions was 15.1 percent, compared to the state rate for grades 9-12 of 9.0 percent.
- B. There was not a significant difference among racial/ethnic groups for in-school suspensions and for out-of-school suspensions, although the rates of out-of-school suspensions were high.<sup>18</sup> The out-of-school-suspension rate was 9.7 percent for African-American/Black students, 16.7 percent for Asian students, 13.1 percent for Hispanic/Latino students, 16.7 percent for Multi-race (not Hispanic or Latino) students, and 18.0 percent for White students.
- C. There was a significant difference between the in-school suspension rates of students with disabilities and students without disabilities (13.0 percent compared to 7.6 percent). There were also high rates of in-school suspensions for high needs students and non high needs students (10.7 percent and 7.1 percent), low income students and non low income students (10.9 percent and 8.4 percent), and English language learners and non English language learners (10.0 percent for both).

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<sup>16</sup> For annual dropout rate trends from 2009 to 2012, see Table B6 in Appendix B. For cohort graduation rate trends for the last three years available, see Tables B7a and B7b.

<sup>17</sup> Statistical significance based on one sample T test.  $P \leq .05$

<sup>18</sup> Statistical significance for racial/ethnic groups and other subgroups based on Chi Square.  $P \leq .05$

- D.** There was were high rates of out-of-school suspensions for high needs students and non high needs students (15.7 percent and 12.6 percent), low income students and non low income students (15.2 percent and 14.9 percent), students with disabilities and students without disabilities (16.9 percent and 13.6 percent), and English language learners and non English language learners (11.3 percent and 15.6 percent).
- E.** On average students missed 2.7 days per disciplinary action,<sup>19</sup> lower than the state average of 3.1.

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<sup>19</sup> Disciplinary action refers to in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, permanent expulsion, removal by an impartial hearing officer to an alternative setting, or removal by school personnel to an alternative setting.

## South Middlesex RVTSD District Review Findings

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### Strengths

#### *Leadership and Governance*

- 1. The superintendent-director has cordial and productive working relationships with constituents and is highly regarded, both within the school and in the larger community. He has developed a differentiated and cohesive organizational structure and built capacity into the leadership team.**
  - A. Interviewees described the superintendent-director as honest, forthcoming, and approachable, and said that he was committed to improving student achievement, a good communicator, and a strong advocate for both academic and vocational education.
  - B. Administrators told the review team that the superintendent-director provided both direction and support, adding that he was accessible, familiar with their roles, and receptive to new ideas.
  - C. Administrators and school committee members said that the superintendent-director was not afraid to make hard decisions in order to bring student performance to higher levels.
    1. In response to a fiscal crisis in 2009 the superintendent-director opted to abolish the grade 9 exploratory program, rather than reduce the number of teachers by seniority. The exploratory program staff consisted of 6 teachers who provided introductory instruction in the vocational areas for grade 9 students. The superintendent-director told the review team that this action was progressive and in the best interest of the students.
      - a. Several exploratory program teachers filed grievances and one of these grievances was subsequently settled through arbitration.
      - b. Teachers' association representatives told the review team that although the abolition of the grade 9 exploratory program was initially unpopular, it ultimately produced a "positive result." Career/technical education teachers are now providing the exploratory program themselves and are "personally attracting students to their areas." In a focus group, teachers said that it was better for them to have earlier access to grade 9 students and better for the students as well.
2. The superintendent-director told the review team that three mathematics teachers without professional status in a department of seven teachers had not been renewed since 2010-2011 because of concerns about the quality of their instruction and persistently low MCAS tests scores in mathematics.

- a. Administrators said that the replacement mathematics teachers were using on-the-spot formative assessments to check student understanding and the review team saw evidence of this in classroom observations.
- D. School committee members said that the superintendent-director had earned the trust of the teachers and town officials because of his transparency, command of facts, and knowledge of law and regulation.
  - E. Town officials told the review team said that the superintendent-director had credibility with the town finance committees and town meeting members because his financial and programmatic presentations were clear and uncomplicated. They went on to say that that he answered questions honestly, directly, and succinctly.
  - F. Teachers' association representatives told the review team that the superintendent-director had an "open door policy" and was a good listener. They said that he was familiar with teacher concerns based on his service in the school as a teacher and teachers' association president. They added that because the school climate was positive grievances were rare and usually resolved at the lowest level. They also said that collective bargaining was conducted in a cordial manner and concluded in a timely manner.
  - G. The superintendent-director has developed an organizational structure that differentiates district from school functions and separates guidance and admissions from special education in order to maintain the integrity of both and not subordinate one to the other.
    1. In 2009 the superintendent-director created a new organizational structure. Under this structure, the superintendent-director supervises district leaders including the principal, business manager facilities director, technology director, and education program development specialist while the principal supervises school leaders including the career/technical education coordinator, the academic coordinator, the special needs coordinator, the director of guidance and admissions, and the dean of students. The three coordinators supervise the teachers within their respective departments and the director of guidance and admissions supervises the guidance counselors.
      - a. The superintendent-director explained that this structure was intended to differentiate district from school functions. He noted that separation of the functions of guidance and admissions from special education in 2009 was intended to enhance the admissions process and improve student recruitment.
    2. The superintendent-director meets monthly with district leaders. There is an agenda for each meeting and minutes are recorded. The agenda includes such topics as budget development, facilities needs, and personnel matters.
    3. The principal told the review team that he meets weekly with school leaders. There is an agenda for each meeting and minutes are recorded. According to the principal, the agenda includes topics such as student

handbook revisions, School Improvement Plan development and revision, and interventions for seniors at-risk of not graduating.

4. The superintendent director meets four to six times each year with all district and school leaders. Administrators said that the agendas include topics such as budget development and preparation for major school events, public presentations, and NEASC and ESE reviews. There is an agenda for each meeting and minutes are recorded.
  5. The superintendent-director said that he also holds an annual summer retreat with district and school leaders to assess school progress and needs and finalize plans for the upcoming school year.
  6. In interviews with the review team, district and school leaders said that this organizational structure was efficient and worked well. Many remarked on the superintendent-director's flexibility, noting that he never allowed procedures to become barriers to communication or to immediate resolution of urgent issues and problems.
- H. During the onsite visit administrators demonstrated a clear understanding of their roles and relationships. They told the review team that they worked well together and were energized by their colleagues. Four of the leaders worked in other districts before coming to South Middlesex and brought different perspectives to their roles.

**Impact:** Strong leadership is fundamental to organizational viability. According to town officials and school committee members, the reputation of the school has improved under the current administration following a period of declining enrollment. Since 2009, South Middlesex enrollment has increased by 12 percent, from 633 to 710 students, according to ESE data.

## ***Assessment***

### **2. South Middlesex has infrastructure for student assessment including personnel, multiple measures, and technology for data collection, dissemination, and analysis.**

- A. Personnel:** The district has personnel to collect and analyze student performance data from a wide range of academic and vocational assessments.
1. According to interviews and a review of district job descriptions, the academic coordinator, career/technical education coordinator, and assessment specialist are primarily responsible for student assessment.
    - a. The academic coordinator advises the principal on assessment technology, standards-based instruction, and assessment. The academic coordinator is responsible for overseeing data collection and analysis and communicating with the entire school community about the educational implications of the results.

- b. The career/technical education coordinator coordinates implementation of the CTE Frameworks and preparation for the local certificate of occupational proficiency assessments. The career/technical education coordinator also works closely with the academic coordinator on implementation of the senior project.
- c. The assessment specialist oversees the design and implementation of all school-based and standardized assessments. Additionally, the assessment specialist maintains an assessment calendar, works with departments and lead teachers on the development of benchmark assessments, and provides support for teachers in implementing the district's assessment program.

**B. Multiple assessments:** According to interviews and a review of documents, the district has a wide range of assessments.

- 1. Teachers in each academic department administer unit, trimester, and final exams. All the exams are common, except for singleton courses. Additionally, projects assigned in the content areas are evaluated with rubrics. Competency assessments, including senior projects, certification exams, qualifying exams, and final exams, are administered in CVTE courses.
- 2. The district curriculum documents reference an assessment for every instructional unit.
- 3. Teachers are beginning to use formative assessment strategies such as "exit tickets" and "turn and talk." Students were observed using white boards (portable Smart Boards) to display answers and clickers to answer questions and vote. These devices provide teachers instant feedback on student understanding.

**C. Data Collection, Dissemination, and Analysis:** According to interviews and a review of documents, the district has well-established processes for collecting, disseminating, and analyzing academic proficiency and vocational competency data.

- 1. The academic coordinator receives the Stanford 10 results from the assessment specialist and reports student results by teacher. In late September, teachers in each department receive student results. The academic coordinator then meets with individual teachers to review student achievement and growth.
- 2. The career/technical education coordinator uses Skills Plus software to analyze the CTE results and reviews these results with vocational teachers twice each year. The results demonstrate the rate of progress students are making towards competency. A review of student performance at regional competitions also helps teachers to plan their instruction.
- 3. The academic coordinator receives the results of school-based measures from the assessment specialist and reviews them with teachers. The reports include the results by grade, class, and individual student. The English department has developed an open response rubric to help students improve their writing, a need identified by an analysis of performance data.

4. The academic and career/technical education coordinators said that their departments were open to receiving performance data to help improve their curriculum.
5. Reports are generated and analyzed in a variety of formats including year-to-year comparisons of the MCAS tests in the aggregate and by subgroup in order to identify changes in student proficiency. The district also produces comparative class statistics on school-based measures and tracks academic courses by content area at regular intervals throughout the year in order to monitor student progress. These reports are discussed with departments and individual teachers and often provide a focus for learning walks.
6. Guidance counselors review these reports to identify and monitor students at risk. Teachers make referrals to the multi-disciplinary Student Assessment and Resource Team (START). In the 2012-2013 school year, students who were not succeeding were encouraged to attend three-day academies offered during school vacation weeks; these academies focused on ELA in February and on mathematics and biology in April.

**Impact:** The district has the capacity to use multiple school-based assessments to measure and monitor student achievement, guide curricular development and revision, and inform instruction. This positions the district to improve student achievement and narrow proficiency gaps.

### ***Human Resources and Professional Development***

3. **The South Middlesex school committee and teachers' association reached agreement on implementation of the Massachusetts model system for educator evaluation through a highly collaborative process, resulting in a memorandum of agreement (MOA) with minor changes to the model system. The district's new system is being implemented in accordance with ESE regulations, timelines, and procedures.**
  - A. According to the superintendent-director and teachers' association members, the school committee and the teachers' association engaged in a collaborative process resulting in a signed MOA to implement the Massachusetts model system for educator evaluation with two minor changes.
    1. The school committee and the teachers' association formed a 12-person committee to negotiate collective bargaining language in order to implement the new system during the 2012-2013 school year, as required by state regulations (at 603 CMR 35.11(1)(b)) for districts participating in the Race to the Top program, as is South Middlesex.
    2. The committee included eight teachers' association members and four administrators. The votes were weighted with each teacher's vote counting as one and each administrators' vote counting as two.
    3. The principal was the non-voting facilitator of the committee.

4. One of the principal's two goals for the 2012-2013 year was to ensure the implementation of the new system in the school.
  5. Teachers' association members said that the joint committee was to continue to meet to monitor the implementation process.
- B.** The district submitted its educator evaluation system to ESE for review. The district received a letter from ESE's office of Educator Preparation, Policy, and Leadership, dated December 28, 2012, stating that South Middlesex's educator evaluation system was consistent with ESE's Principles of Evaluation. Specifically, the system adequately addresses six key components of the evaluation framework set forth in state regulations and differs from the regulations in that it sets additional parameters that must be met for a teacher to receive an overall rating of proficient.
- C.** In 2012-2013, some district administrators, all teachers without professional status, and professional status teachers on the two-year cycle who were scheduled for evaluation in 2012-2013 were to be evaluated under the new system.
1. All personnel who were scheduled to be evaluated under the new system in 2012-2013 completed the self-evaluation and goal-setting on schedule, according to a review of documents.
    - a. The review team's examination of documents confirmed that data collection by evaluators was ongoing.
    - b. Formative evaluations were complete in the personnel files randomly examined by the review team.
- D.** Document review and interviews provided evidence of the implementation of the new system.
1. Teachers being reviewed under the new system in 2012-2013 told the review team that it was helpful to receive feedback from walkthroughs and observations by their supervisors.
  2. Administrators said that the collaborative process used to create the MOA had engendered trust and that there had been little teacher resistance to the new system.
  3. In a random review of personnel files, the review team found that evaluations produced under the new system team contained substantive suggestions for improving teachers' instruction.

**Impact:** With a collaborative process conducted by the school committee and teachers' association, agreement on the substance of the new educator evaluation system, and its smooth and timely implementation, the district is making steady progress toward an evaluation system that can be a very effective instrument of improvement. The new system can provide examples of promising instructional practice in both the academic and career/technical education areas and can inform professional development, leading to higher levels of student achievement.

### ***Student Support***

- 4. South Middlesex has a strong commitment to serving all students, including students with disabilities. Among comparable school districts the district has a relatively high proportion of students with disabilities and a relatively low drop-out rate.**
- A. Many interviewees referred to the school's commitment to students with disabilities.
  - B. School committee members told the review team that South Middlesex provided "many opportunities for all kinds of kids" and was "an essential part of the educational pattern in the region."
  - C. Administrators said that keeping students in school was their highest priority and that in enforcing school rules they assisted and encouraged rather than punished and discouraged students.
  - D. According to 2011-2012 ESE data (see Table 2 below), the school had the highest proportion of students with disabilities among 10 comparable vocational schools at 44.9 percent, exceeding the second highest proportion among these districts by 13.6 percentage points. The school's annual grade 9-12 dropout rate of 1.5 percent was just 0.1 percentage point higher than the median of 1.4 percent for this group of comparable vocational districts, and 1.0 percentage point lower than the rate statewide.<sup>20</sup> See Table 2 below.

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<sup>20</sup> The school's annual grade 9-12 dropout rate for students with disabilities was only 0.5 percentage point above the median for this group of districts of 1.5 percent.

**Table 2: Regional Vocational School Districts  
2011-2012 Enrollments of Students with Disabilities and Dropout Rates, All Students**

<b>Regional Vocational School District</b>	<b>Percentage Enrollment of Students with Disabilities</b>	<b>Annual Grade 9-12 Dropout Rate</b>	<b>Annual Grade 9-12 Dropout Rate for Students with Disabilities</b>
State	16.7	2.5	3.6
<b>South Middlesex</b>	<b>44.9</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>2.0</b>
Pathfinder	31.3	1.4	3.0
Assabet	27.9	1.4	1.4
Cape Cod	28.0	1.9	1.1
Northeast	26.1	0.8	1.5
Southeastern	24.5	1.4	3.3
Blue Hills	23.7	0.4	0.6
Franklin County	25.0	2.0	1.6
Greater Lowell	23.1	1.0	1.3
Greater Lawrence	22.5	2.1	4.2
Southern Worcester	20.8	1.1	0.0
Source: ESE data			

**Impact:** South Middlesex’s historical commitment to serving all students, including students with disabilities, has meant the opening of career/technical education opportunities to many students. Its commitment to keeping students in school and relatively low annual dropout rate mean, for most students, that those opportunities are not terminated.

***Finance and Asset Management***

- 5. An effective, collaborative budget development process among constituents of the five member communities and a clear budget document has helped ensure support for the district’s educational programs.**
  - A.** There is a strong collaborative relationship between school district leaders and the municipal officials of the five member towns.
    1. A member of the finance committee of each community serves as liaison to the district and participates in the school committee budget subcommittee meetings during detailed budget deliberations, according to municipal officials and district leaders.
    2. The superintendent-director communicates and meets with municipal officials to discuss financial issues. The superintendent-director discusses budget matters with town managers, finance committees, and town

meeting members whenever requested. Municipal officials and administrators said that the superintendent-director was regarded by stakeholders as trustworthy and informative.

3. District administrators meet with the full finance committees of the five member towns.
- B.** A review of recent budget documents by the visiting team showed that the budgets presented a clear and readily understood picture of the financial needs of the school district.
1. The fiscal year 2014 preliminary budget approved by the school committee, as well as the fiscal year 2013 adopted budget, was provided by function and detailed line item. The line items included salaries, supplies, text books, equipment, and services.
  2. Dollar differences and percentages between the 2013 and 2014 fiscal year budgets were provided by function and detailed line item.
  3. A ten-year (2005-2014) assessment review was provided.
  4. Saying that they received good communications from the superintendent-director, municipal officials expressed a trust in the district leadership as a result of the transparency in the budget document.
- C.** More than adequate resources have been provided by the member towns of the regional school district.
1. Required annual net school spending has been exceeded by percentages ranging from 22.4 to 38.0 percent from fiscal year 2007 through fiscal year 2012, according to ESE data.
  2. The fiscal year 2011 in-district per pupil cost from all funding sources (\$24,686), was 23 percent above the median (\$20,018) for 18 similar size vocational districts (less than 1,000 students), according to ESE data.
  3. School district leaders and municipal officials said that historically, consistent financial support had been provided by all member towns.

**Impact:** Predictable financial support from the community as a result of effective collaboration and a clear budget document has helped ensure more than sufficient resources for academic and career/technical education and support for programs to meet student needs.

## Challenges and Areas for Growth

It is important to note that district review reports prioritize identifying challenges and areas for growth in order to promote a cycle of continuous improvement; the report deliberately describes the district's challenges and concerns in greater detail than the strengths identified during the review.

### ***Leadership and Governance***

- 6. Although the district has a one-year School Improvement Plan (SIP), it does not have a multi-year District Improvement Plan (DIP) linked to educator evaluation, professional development, and budget planning, implementation of which is monitored by the school committee.**
- A.** The superintendent-director, the principal, and school committee members told the review team that the SIP was in effect the DIP. One administrator said, “If you ask us for the DIP, we refer you to the SIP.” A school committee member said, “They are one and the same,” and others in that interview agreed.
  - B.** The SIP current at the time of the review, dated 2012-2013, has five goals: alignment of the guidance curriculum to the Massachusetts Model for Comprehensive School Counseling; drop-out prevention; reduction of behaviors interfering with learning; improvement of summative and formative assessment; and full implementation of the new Massachusetts standards. Each goal statement is followed by columns with entries for current status, key actions, benchmarks, and responsible party. A column entitled “evidence of success” is intentionally left blank for completion at the end of the term of the plan.
  - C.** The superintendent-director and the principal said that the academic coordinator, career/technical education coordinator, and director of guidance and admissions created and compiled the SIP goals in the spring of 2012, working closely with the principal.
    - 1. Administrators told the review team that they conducted a needs assessment in the spring of 2012 to determine teacher priorities for the SIP.
    - 2. The SIP was then reviewed by the superintendent-director and the school council. According to the principal, the school council served primarily as a “sounding board.”
    - 3. The principal subsequently presented the SIP to the school committee; the school committee did not take a vote to approve it because SIPs do not need to be approved by the school committee.
  - D.** In interviews with the review team, administrators were well informed about the five SIP goals and related the current status of each. In focus groups, some teachers were aware of the SIP goals while others were not.
  - E.** Administrators told the review team that the school committee did not regularly track and monitor the SIP goals. They went on to say that they provided the school committee interim reports upon request, but such requests were unusual. They told the review team that the principal would report on the status of the current SIP at a meeting of the school committee in May 2013 before presenting the 2013-2014 SIP.
  - F.** There is no explicit reference to the SIP goals in the district budget document and little direct correspondence between the SIP goals and the topics of the professional development program.

**Impact:** A DIP is the central guiding document in the district. It directs purposeful, multi-year efforts to improve student achievement and provides accountability for results. A DIP provides the rationale for budget allocations, professional development, curricular revisions, and instructional improvements. In the absence of a fully articulated DIP adopted by the school committee and highly correlated with major district functions, there is little to align and drive the development, implementation, and modification of educational programs and to ensure accountability.

### ***Curriculum and Instruction***

- 7. South Middlesex has developed a comprehensive set of curriculum documents aligned to the Massachusetts Frameworks, including the Vocational Technical Education Frameworks. It has a review and revision process; however,**
- **special educators and ELL specialists do not participate in discussions about the implications of assessment results or curriculum development and revision; and**
  - **the academic program curriculum documents do not contain instructional strategies.**
- A.** The curriculum development work completed by each department results in curriculum guides including course overviews, major units of study, standards, objectives, assessments, pacing guides, and maps. Teachers in each department create these documents before submitting them to the academic coordinator or career/technical education coordinator for approval.
- B.** According to district and ESE data, in 2012-2013 44.8 percent of South Middlesex students were students with disabilities, 23.5 percent came from homes where English was not the first language, and 6.5 percent were English language learners.
- C.** According to administrators, special educators and ELL specialists do not participate directly in curriculum review and revision. Following the departmental curriculum development work, special educators and ELL teachers attempt to modify instruction in the moment to meet the needs of students with disabilities and English language learners in the regular education classes in which they assist.
- D.** According to interviews and documents, the curriculum review and revision process is informed by student performance data provided by the assessment specialist and others at meetings. Special educators and ELL specialists do not attend these meetings.
- E.** The academic program curriculum documents do not contain instructional strategies. The review team saw a limited repertoire of instructional strategies in observed academic classes. In more than two-thirds of these classes, clear and consistent evidence of differentiated instruction and varied instructional strategies to address students' diverse learning needs was not observed.

**Impact:**

- When special educators and ELL specialists participate in curriculum development and revision they contribute instructional strategies designed to improve the achievement of all students, including students with disabilities and English language learners. Using the expertise of special educators and ELL specialists in the moment rather than in the development and revision of the curriculum diminishes their effectiveness and under-serves all students.
- Not providing instructional strategies in the academic program curriculum documents means an opportunity has been missed to help teachers improve their instruction.

**8. Teachers' instructional strategies were too limited to address a broad range of student learning styles and needs in most observed classes. Instruction was teacher centered in many academic classes, particularly mathematics classes, and teachers used formative assessments to check student understanding in only half of observed classes.**

The team observed a total of 44 classes throughout the school: Team members visited 28 academic classes and 16 career/technical education classes. The team observed 11 ELA classes, 5 mathematics classes, 5 science classes, 4 social studies classes, 2 special education classes and 1 ELL class. The classroom observations were approximately 20 minutes in length with some longer. All review team members collected data using ESE's instructional inventory, a tool for recording observed characteristics of standards-based teaching. This data is presented separately for academic and career and technical education classes in Appendix C.

- A. There was clear and consistent evidence of teachers using varied strategies in their instruction to address students' diverse learning needs in only 32 percent of the academic classes and 50 percent of the career/technical education classes observed by the review team. In one career/technical education class, the teacher supplemented verbal instructions with diagrams and pictures of the intended project outcome, but in most observed classes teachers used only one approach.
- B. In the mathematics classes observed by the review team, teachers often worked the solutions to problems at the board without involving the students. Some posed and answered questions without waiting for student responses. The focus of the instruction in these classes was on getting to the right answer rather than on reasoning and strategies. For example, in one class observed by the review team students worked independently on problems as the teacher circulated among them. When students did not know what to do next, they stopped and waited for teacher direction because they did not have strategies. Some students called out to the teacher, "Is this right?" or "I'm not sure how you do this one and I need help."
- C. Teachers used formative assessments to check for understanding in only 50 percent of both the academic and career/technical education classes observed. In an algebra class, the students displayed their solutions on white slates and the teacher checked the answers to determine their instructional needs. In a plumbing class the

teacher played the role of a plumbing inspector to evaluate student work in progress according to codes and standards. But formative assessments such as these were infrequent in the classes observed.

**Impact:** Instruction that does not include varied strategies and frequent checks for understanding is sure to miss opportunities for focused instruction and enriched learning, particularly for students who have not achieved proficiency. Teacher-centered instruction in mathematics and a focus on right answers rather than reasoning is unlikely to result in improved student achievement in mathematics.

### ***Assessment***

**9. South Middlesex has infrastructure for assessment and a wide array of locally determined common assessments used primarily as summative measures. It does not have a data team and is in the early stages of identifying, acquiring, and using formative assessments that are highly correlated with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and have proven validity and reliability.**

- A.** While the district administers a wide array of common summative assessments, it is in the early stages of using formative assessments for instructional planning and progress monitoring.
  - 1. Formative assessments help teachers to differentiate instruction. In most academic classes observed by the review team students worked on the same tasks using the same materials and there was little evidence of differentiated instruction and fluid grouping practices (See the second Curriculum and Instruction finding above and the Instructional Inventory in Appendix C).
  - 2. School-based formative assessments are not highly correlated with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.
- B.** The district does not have a data team. The implementation of the new educator evaluation system, with its emphasis on frequent observation of teachers, has brought about an increased demand on the time of the coordinators. Interviewees told the review team that the creation of a schoolwide data team might provide additional support for the coordinators in determining benchmarks for each discipline and formative benchmark assessments.
- C.** As mentioned earlier, special educators and ELL specialists are not involved in discussions about the implications of assessment results.

**Impact:** The district does not have a data team to help determine benchmarks and select formative benchmark assessments highly correlated with the frameworks. In the absence of these formative assessments, teachers are less able to identify student needs, plan appropriate targeted instruction, and monitor student progress in order to narrow proficiency gaps and improve the achievement of all students.

### ***Human Resources and Professional Development***

**10. The district's professional development program is not based on district goals or an analysis of teacher evaluation results and is not flexible enough to provide "just in time" training to support the new educator evaluation system.**

- A.** The district's professional development program is driven by language in the collective bargaining agreement and has been successful in providing time for department meetings and various professional development topics each school year.
1. Two full days and portions of six additional school days are devoted to professional development under the collective bargaining agreement.
  2. Administrators said that a committee of teachers and administrators worked to identify, plan, and provide professional development that met the needs of the entire staff in the district. They said that they were not sure whether the TELL Mass survey results were used in determining professional development needs.
  3. A review of the 2012-2013 Professional Development Meetings calendar provided by the district showed that department needs and districtwide topics fill the time for professional development.
- B.** A review of the School Improvement Plan, randomly selected teacher evaluations, and the professional development calendar showed that the district's professional development program is not based on district goals or analysis of teacher evaluations and is not nimble enough to provide quick-response mentoring or coaching to support the new educator evaluation system.
1. The review team found little direct correspondence between the SIP goals and the topics of the professional development program, and the district does not have a District Improvement Plan to guide professional development. (See the Leadership and Governance challenge finding above.)
  2. The 32 randomly selected teacher personnel files reviewed by the team did not contain any reference to professional development activities to improve performance. Two references made by separate evaluators suggested that the teacher visit a colleague's class to observe another approach, but there was no written follow-up as to whether that suggestion was followed, or if followed whether instruction had improved.
  3. An examination by the review team of formative assessments in randomly selected teacher personnel files demonstrated the need for a quick-response method of transmitting job-embedded coaching, mentoring, peer assistance and providing easy access to other professional development opportunities. The current system is not flexible enough to provide a quick response to the professional development needs identified during an annual evaluation.

**Impact:** The district is missing the opportunity:

- to make professional development a focused means of achieving annual SIP goals and long-term DIP goals, and
- to make professional development work in close relationship with the district’s new educator evaluation system as a means of improving educator practice.

In addition, without the provision of quick-response, job-embedded professional development such as coaching, targeted mentoring, and peer assistance, it will be difficult for staff whose formative assessments show that they need help in meeting the high standards of the new educator evaluation system to improve by the end-of-year summative evaluations.

### ***Student Support***

**11. Interventions for struggling or high-risk students, students with disabilities, and English language learners (ELLs) in the academic and career/technical education programs are limited in range and quality. Support for ELLs and students with disabilities in career/technical education classes is inadequate and the career/technical education teachers are mostly responsible for making the appropriate modifications.**

- A. Tier I:** Differentiated instruction and fluid grouping practices were not widely evident in observed regular education classes.
1. South Middlesex offers classes at three levels: honors, college preparatory 1 (CP1), and college preparatory 2 (CP2). Administrators told the review team that there were more supports for English language learners and students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) requiring instructional modifications who were enrolled in the CP2 sections. In these sections, special educators, ELL specialists, and aides assist the classroom teachers in making provisions and accommodations in a “push-in” inclusion model. Some classroom teachers also assisted in CP2 sections for their subject in lieu of a duty assignment. Administrators said that they assigned the “best teachers” to CP2 sections. Changes do occur during the year in the level to which students are assigned, but the review team was told in a student support interview that re-scheduling could be a problem.
  2. Administrators told the review team that the support personnel assigned to CP2 classes varies, compromising continuity. They added that regular education teachers and specialists do not have designated meeting times to review student progress and plan instruction. In a focus group, teachers said that they meet informally with specialists whenever they can, sometimes “over lunch.” In some CP2 classes observed by the review team, specialists worked purposefully with individual students and groups of students, while in others specialists rarely interacted with students and silently watched the teacher.

3. In most academic classes observed by the review team students typically worked as a class, in small groups, or independently on the same tasks using the same materials.
  4. Administrators told the review team that special and regular educators do not meet regularly to discuss the educational implications of assessment results for students with disabilities, including MCAS results. South Middlesex teachers are at an early stage of using formative assessments for instructional planning and progress monitoring.
- B. Tier II:** Supplemental and remedial programs are limited in range and depth. Some programs have a learning component, but are primarily intended to serve another purpose, such as making up time. Most supplemental and remedial programs are optional, except for students who need to make up credits.
1. According to interviews with administrators and a review of documents, South Middlesex offers the following supplemental programs, including two acceleration academies new in 2013:
    - a. An after-school program offered three days each week from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m., with late bus transportation provided;
    - b. An ELA Acceleration Academy for grade 9 and 10 students offered on three days during the February vacation from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., with no transportation provided;
    - c. A STEM Acceleration Academy focusing on preparation for the mathematics and biology MCAS tests, offered on three days during the April vacation from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., with no transportation provided;
    - d. Saturday make-up sessions offered from 7:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m., with no transportation provided. (These sessions provide frequently suspended and absent students an opportunity to recover credit.);
    - e. A Summer Success program focusing on ELA, mathematics, and biology, offered over three weeks from 8:25 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., with breakfast, lunch, and transportation provided (Some grade 8 students are encouraged to attend the summer program before entering grade 9.);
  2. Administrators told the review team that the supplemental programs described above were optional, except for students assigned for credit recovery or where specified by the terms of students' IEPs. According to interviewees, students typically attend the after-school program to make up a test or assignment or to meet with a teacher for help in completing a current assignment or project.
- C. Tier III:** Specially designed instruction is not content-based, except for students with significant disabilities.
1. The special education department provides a substantially separate program (the Job Entry Training or JET Exploratory Program) for a small number of students with significant disabilities. There are also separate ELA, mathematics, science, and history classes for students with significant disabilities.

2. Most students with disabilities are fully enrolled in CP2 regular education academic classes where specialists provide support, as described above. Many receive additional support in Learning Strategies classes. In these classes, special educators help students complete regular education class assignments and develop time management and test-taking skills. They also provide accommodations such as extended testing time under the provisions of IEPs.
    - a. Administrators said that there was not enough teaching of content in Learning Strategies classes. They explained that some students needed specially designed content instruction to reach proficiency in ELA and mathematics. They said that the additional time resulting from the planned increase in period length from 42 to 57 minutes in 2013-2014 was to be devoted to “content delivery” in Learning Strategies classes.
  3. The special education department also offers developmental reading instruction during the school day for students with disabilities, according to the terms of their IEPs.
- D.** Administrators and teachers told the review team that support for students with disabilities and English language learners (ELLs) in career/ technical classes was intermittent and inadequate. One said that there were simply not enough special education and ELL personnel to assist all the students in need.
1. The review team saw few specialists assisting in observed career/technical classes. In one career/technical class, a bilingual student helped several newcomers with limited English proficiency interpret a manual. While this was helpful in the moment, using bilingual students is an unreliable method of service provision.
  2. In visited classrooms, career/technical education teachers were observed modifying materials and requirements, but this was not always done.

**Impact:** The range and scope of core, supplemental, and intensive instructional interventions in the district do not support rapid gains in student proficiency. Consequently, the district may not be able to meet its targets for narrowing proficiency gaps. The district does not sufficiently support students with disabilities and English language learners in career/technical education classes, jeopardizing their acquisition of necessary skills.

**12. Although the district’s attendance policy is stringent about the number of unexcused absences allowed, it is not strictly enforced and rates of chronic absence are high, especially in grades 11 and 12.**

- A.** According to ESE and district data for 2011-2012, 28.3 percent of South Middlesex students were chronically absent; chronic absence is defined as students not in attendance on 10 percent or more of the days they are enrolled. The chronic absence rates increased by grade level as follows: Grade 9: 16.1 percent; grade 10: 29.3 percent; grade 11: 30.6 percent; and grade 12: 38.9 percent.
1. Except in grade 9, these rates were substantially higher than 2011-2012 statewide chronic absence rates for these grades, which were 17.8 percent for grade 9, 17.3 percent for grade 10, 18.3 percent for grade 11, and 20.4 percent for grade 12.

- B.** The attendance policy in the student handbook allows no more than 12 unexcused absences during the school year. Students exceeding the limit are subject to loss of credit. Students reaching 8, 12, and 16 unexcused absences must use the appeals process in order to make up lost time by attending the Saturday program, the after-school program, or both.
- C.** Administrators told the review team that they send warning letters to parents when students reached 4, 8, 12, and 16 unexcused absences, in accordance with the policy, and also notified them by telephone. Counselors arrange to meet with these students and their families in order to identify the reasons for their excessive absence, remove the impediments to regular attendance, and develop improvement strategies.
- D.** Administrators and counselors said that each member of the Student Assessment and Resource Team (START)—composed of the school psychologist, psychology intern, substance abuse counselor, guidance counselors, director of guidance and admissions, school nurse, school resource officer, and special needs coordinator—takes a small caseload of chronically absent students and closely monitors them. Team members intervene when necessary by arranging family conferences at school and sometimes link families with local social services agencies and other community support services.
- E.** When administrators were asked about their implementation of the attendance policy, they said that they had perhaps given students “too many chances”; however, they emphasized that the intent was to improve students’ attendance and not discourage them from attending school. They added that because older students were emancipating themselves from parental and school control, they had targeted grade 9 students and made regular presentations to help them understand the importance of attendance and good work habits.
- F.** Students in a focus group told the review team that they knew “many kids” who did not come to school, and some who “come in just at attendance.” One student in the focus group said, and others agreed, that the attendance policy was a “false threat” because there were many ways to make up the time.
- G.** School committee members told the review team that the attendance policy was student centered rather than punitive. One asked, “What good can we do these kids if they leave school?” Another added, “We do everything we can to keep kids here.”

**Impact:** Excessive absences result in the loss of instructional time and are barriers to the acquisition of both academic and career/technical skills. The requirement to make up the time does not compensate for lost instruction. In addition, students are not forming work habits such as punctuality and consistent attendance that are critical to success in the world of work.

### ***Financial Management and Asset management***

**13. Although the budget development process is transparent and the budget presents a clear picture of financial allocations, the allocation of resources in the annual budget is not explicitly aligned with district priorities.**

- A. The budget development process is effective and collaborative and the district provides a clear picture of the financial allocations in the annual budget document (see the Finance and Asset Management Strength finding above).
- B. The district priorities in the SIP and in communications from the superintendent-director are not explicitly represented in the annual budget document.
  - 1. School committee members said that district priorities as represented in the SIP are part of the budget preparation discussion between the school committee and the superintendent-director.
  - 2. At cabinet meetings, at administrative meetings, and at administrative retreats, according to administrators, the superintendent-director communicates regularly about the district's priorities in a way that influences the budget process.
  - 3. SIP goals and other district priorities are not displayed in the annual budget document.
    - a. The review team did not find any references to school or district priorities in the fiscal year 2013 or fiscal year 2014 annual budget documents.
    - b. District and school administrators confirmed that SIP and other district priorities were not displayed in the annual budget document.

**Impact:** Alignment of funding with priorities strengthens the commitment of internal and external stakeholders by explicitly connecting resources to the improvement of student performance. The district's effectiveness in targeting limited resources to priorities and in strengthening stakeholders' commitment is diminished because of the absence of a clear link between the annual budget and district priorities.

## South Middlesex RVTSD District Review Recommendations

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### ***Leadership and Governance***

#### **1. The district should develop a fully articulated, multi-year DIP and should ensure that the SIP supports the DIP.**

- A. The district should engage in a broad-based, systematic planning process with internal and external constituency groups in order to develop the DIP.
1. The superintendent-director should form a representative long-range planning committee, including school committee members, regional town liaisons, administrators, teachers, school council members, general advisory council members, community representatives, and local employers.
  2. The planning committee should consider a range of data, including academic and vocational proficiency test results; licensure test results; and suspension, attendance, graduation, dropout, and successful placement rates, in order to identify areas of strength and relative weakness. (The data team, described in the first Assessment recommendation below, could organize and analyze this data for the planning committee.)
  3. The planning committee should complete a district self-assessment, using a tool such as the ESE *District Self-Assessment Tool* (available under Standards & Indicators at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/general>). This self-assessment can provide information about which successful practices are in place and which practices should be more fully developed.
  4. Based on an analysis of student data and the results of a self-assessment, the planning committee should develop a draft DIP containing general goals, specific objectives, benchmarks, persons responsible, timelines, resources, and outcome measures.
    - a. *Guiding Principles for Effective Benchmarks* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/sss/turnaround/level4/AIP-GuidingPrinciples.pdf>) provides information about different types of benchmarks to guide and measure district improvement efforts.
  5. The committee should present it to the faculty, general advisory council, and parent advisory council, and then use the comments and suggestions of constituency groups to revise the draft.
  6. The superintendent-director should finalize the draft and present it to the school committee.
  7. The school committee should vote on the draft DIP, and the approved version should be circulated to all constituency groups.
  8. The approved DIP should be monitored regularly by the school committee.

9. The district's budget allocations should be specifically, directly, and explicitly related to the accomplishment of the goals in the DIP (see Finance recommendation below).
- B.** The district should ensure that its SIP supports the DIP, and that both documents represent the input of multiple stakeholders.
1. The school council and a representative group of teachers should be involved in developing the SIP.
  2. The goals of the SIP should be aligned with those in the DIP.
  3. Teachers should be encouraged to align their educator evaluation goals with SIP goals.
  4. The district's professional development plan should be aligned with the DIP and the SIP.
  5. Progress on the SIP should be tracked and reported periodically to stakeholders, including parents and teachers.

**Benefits:** Implementing this recommendation will result in a DIP and SIP that ensure purposeful effort to improve student achievement, a shared understanding of goals and progress, and accountability for results. The approved DIP and the SIP will also inform decisions about budget allocations, professional development topics, educator evaluation goals, curriculum revision, and instructional improvement.

### ***Curriculum and Instruction***

- 2. South Middlesex should ensure that all students have access to the curriculum. The district's process of curriculum development and revision, as well as its assessments, should support all students and address the strengths and areas of concern identified by an analysis of student performance data.**
  - A.** The district's special educators and ELL specialists should play a key role in the development and revision of each department's curriculum, instructional strategies, and assessments.
  - B.** The district should conduct an historical, in-depth analysis of the performance of students with disabilities and English language learners to inform curriculum design, instruction, and assessment. This information will also help grade 9 and grade 10 instructors understand students' strengths and challenges.
  - C.** Once department members, including special educators and ELL specialists, have the results of this study of subgroup performance, they should examine the current curriculum and assessments in order to inform and strengthen them.
  - D.** The district should ensure that World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) standards are incorporated into curriculum and instruction in all grade levels and subject areas.

1. *WIDA Implementation Guidance, Part I* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/ell/wida/Guidance-p1.pdf>) provides general information about the WIDA ELD standards framework, expectations for district implementation, and available support.
2. The *WIDA Download Library* (<http://www.wida.us/downloadLibrary.aspx>) includes resources and materials for ELL educators, including standards, guiding principles, sample items, and CAN DO descriptors.
3. South Middlesex staff also may find *An Analysis of District Systems and Practices Addressing the Needs of English Language Learners* useful. This report provides the results of a study identifying four factors supporting English language learner achievement:  
[http://www.doe.mass.edu/boe/docs/0511/item8\\_analysis.pdf](http://www.doe.mass.edu/boe/docs/0511/item8_analysis.pdf)

**Benefits:** A curriculum that is informed by data and that addresses the needs of all learners will increase the likelihood of success for all students, including students with disabilities and English language learners. It will promote higher levels of student achievement for students who have not achieved proficiency.

- 3. In order to ensure that all students are appropriately challenged, administrators' and teachers' knowledge and use of effective instructional methods should be expanded.**
  - A. The district should use student performance data, other information such as trends observed in learning walkthroughs, and research on effective teaching strategies to develop a shared, schoolwide instructional focus.
  - B. Consideration of the need to acquire the identified, effective instructional methods should be evident in the goal setting phase of the new educator evaluation system; their acquisition could be aligned with each educator's individual professional development plan. This process will result in valuable information for the district's professional development planning committee.
  - C. The district should provide professional development to support teachers' growth in the identified areas. This could include embedded professional development opportunities, such as informal peer observations.
  - D. The learning walkthrough model that the district has implemented can be used as a way to identify promising examples of new instructional strategies and to look for trends that can inform areas in which the staff should receive additional support.

**Benefits:** All students will have a greater opportunity to learn to the best of their ability when teachers, with appropriate support, implement a range of instructional practices that are based on research and evidence of their effectiveness. A common understanding of effective instructional strategies can build consistency for students and facilitate sharing among teachers.

## **Assessment**

### **4. The review team recommends that the district identify and implement academic formative assessment instruments that are highly correlated with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and have proven validity and reliability.**

- A.** The district should identify and use formative assessments that have proven validity and reliability and are highly correlated with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. The results of these assessments will help differentiate and better inform instructional practices and will increase the likelihood of improving student achievement and narrowing proficiency gaps.
- B.** The district should ensure that special education and ELL educators are involved in discussions of the educational implications of both summative and formative assessment results.

**Benefits:** Implementing this recommendation will help the district establish a system of continuous progress monitoring, improved instructional planning, and improved instructional practices that will enable it to address the needs of all students.

### **5. The review team recommends that the district create a schoolwide data team.**

- A.** The data team should consist of a cross-section of staff members who are data literate and able to lead a cycle of inquiry at the school level. Representation should include teachers of students with disabilities and English language learners.
- B.** The team should be responsible for coordinating the analysis and dissemination of data, helping departments and individual teachers to develop action plans, and using data to monitor the progress of improvement initiatives.

1. ESE's *District Data Team Toolkit* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/ucd/ddtt/toolkit.pdf>) is a compilation of resources to help a district establish, grow, and maintain a culture of inquiry and data use through a District Data Team. In particular, the first module, *Getting Ready* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/ucd/ddtt/GettingReady.pdf>) provides guidance on forming a District Data Team and taking steps to build a solid foundation for building a culture of inquiry and systemic data use.

**Benefits:** Implementing this recommendation will help to establish a culture of data use throughout the district. The data team's work can inform the development of the DIP and SIP (see Leadership recommendation above), thus ensuring that the district uses thorough data analysis to establish goals and track progress. The team can also help determine benchmarks and select formative benchmark assessments, as well as supporting teachers as they continue to develop their ability to use data to drive instruction.

### ***Human Resources and Professional Development***

- 6. The district's joint committee and supervising administrators should work as a team to design professional development opportunities that are based on identified needs, promote the sharing of best practices among educators, and help the district to achieve its SIP and DIP goals.**
- A.** The review team recommends a new menu of offerings in the district's professional development program to promote best practices. The district should use information such as its internal professional development survey, the TELL Mass survey, and student performance data to identify topics and strategies that will address teachers' specific needs.
  - B.** While professional development in the district is adequate for traditional district and department training needs, it should be designed for the kind of flexible and rapid response that will be essential to address teacher needs identified through the new educator evaluation system.
    - 1. The district's "quick response" professional development program might include peer observations and assistance, targeted mentoring to augment the district's existing mentoring program, reviewing teaching videos, sharing artifacts of student work, or other high quality, locally practiced strategies or protocols.
    - 2. Professional development must be flexible enough to provide support in a timely way that does not interrupt instruction or add to contract time restrictions.
    - 3. ESE's *Quick Reference Guide: Educator Evaluation & Professional Development* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/eval/resources/QRG-ProfessionalDevelopment.pdf>) describes how educator evaluation and professional development can be used as mutually reinforcing systems to improve educator practice and student outcomes.
  - C.** To ensure that the educator evaluation system is supported by – and informs – professional development in the district, evaluators should develop a system to track the type of professional development recommended to educators, whether the educators participated, and what (if any) its effect was on their practice.
  - D.** The district's professional development program could also be enriched by using systematic protocols to support sharing of instructional strategies among educators.
    - 1. *Professional Learning Communities Guidance* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/ucd/PLCguidance.pdf>) is a reference tool to frame the work of developing and strengthening instructional teams at the school level.
  - E.** The district should ensure that its professional development priorities and strategies reflect short-term SIP goals and long-term DIP goals.

**Benefits:** Tailoring professional development to teachers' needs and implementing it in concert with the educator evaluation system will strengthen the district's efforts to support educators and improve teaching and learning for all

students. Creating opportunities within the school to regularly exchange ideas and practices that promote high standards of performance can help to build communities of practice among teachers. Ensuring alignment between the DIP, SIP, and professional development will help the district to leverage professional development as a means to achieve short- and long-term goals.

### ***Student Support***

#### **7. The district should enhance the learning supports available for students with disabilities, English language learners, and other students with specific learning needs.**

- A.** The district should ensure that class structures and instructional strategies are designed to meet students' needs.
  - 1. The district should provide job-embedded coaching to help regular education academic teachers, ELL teachers, and special educators differentiate instruction, administer and interpret the results of formative assessments, and use the results to plan and evaluate instruction.
  - 2. The district should investigate ways to make it easier for students to shift from one academic class level to another (for example, from CP2 to CP1) without major alteration of their other academic class placements or their career/ technical education programs.
  - 3. The specialists who assist in CP2 classes should have at least one planning period each week with the CP2 class teachers in whose classes they assist.
  - 4. The district should consider revising schedules to allow specialists to spend more time assisting or consulting in career/technical classes, to support students with disabilities and ELLs.
- B.** The district should identify ways to increase and enhance the supplemental and remedial programs available to students, and should consider making some supports mandatory.
  - 1. Student performance data should be used to determine which students would benefit from additional support and the type(s) of support that are needed.
  - 2. Supplemental and remedial programs should be designed to meet students' specific learning needs.
  - 3. Students' progress in these programs should be monitored regularly in order to determine effectiveness and to decide whether additional support is needed.
  - 4. The district should consider making some programs mandatory to ensure that all students receive the support they need.

- C. The district may wish to consult the *Massachusetts Tiered System of Support* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/mtss/>), which provides a blueprint for school improvement that focuses on systems, structures, and supports across the district, school, and classroom to meet the academic and non-academic needs of all students.

**Benefits:** Implementing this recommendation will help all students achieve proficiency and will help the district narrow proficiency gaps for all subgroups.

- 8. In order to reduce chronic absence, especially in grades 11 and 12, the district should provide incentives for regular attendance and improved attendance. It should also conduct an analysis to determine the underlying reasons for chronic absence.**
  - A. The district should establish a process for recognizing individual students and/or student groups (such as homerooms or grade levels) with perfect, excellent, or significantly improved attendance.
  - B. The district should analyze attendance data to determine patterns and trends. For example, it is important to determine whether chronically absent students are absent more frequently during academic or shop weeks, or whether there is no significant difference. It also may be useful to determine the days of the week when absences most frequently take place and the lengths of consecutive absences.
  - C. The district should conduct a root cause analysis to determine and rank the reasons why students do not come to school. The data might come from family questionnaires and from student focus groups conducted at each grade level.

**Benefits:** Implementing this recommendation will prevent the loss of instructional time and will help students to acquire academic and career/technical skills and form the critical work habits of punctuality and dependability.

### ***Finance and Asset Management***

- 9. The district should align its allocation of resources as delineated in the annual budget document with the district priorities developed and defined in the District Improvement Plan (DIP) recommended under the Leadership and Governance standard.**
  - A. The annual budget document should contain the district priority goals, objectives, and strategies or actions from the DIP and explain the rationale for funding in the annual budget in light of them.
  - B. District budget planning and program planning should be woven together.
    - 1. Budget requests should be considered in light of specific educational and support program priorities identified by the district.

2. Budget discussions and planning should be informed by the district's improvement plans, goals, and strategies.

**Benefits:** Implementing this recommendation will mean a more focused and effective allocation of resources for identified district priorities. There will also be a clearer link between funding and district priorities, which may lead to a stronger commitment to that funding on the part of internal and external stakeholders.

## Appendix A: Review Team, Activities, Schedule, Site Visit

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### **Review Team Members**

The review was conducted from April 22-25, 2013, by the following team of independent ESE consultants.

1. James McAuliffe, Ed.D., and Wilfrid Savoie, Leadership and Governance
2. Peter McGinn, Curriculum and Instruction
3. William Contreras, Ed.D. , Assessment
4. Thomas Johnson, Ed.D., Human Resources and Professional Development
5. James McAuliffe, Ed.D., Student Support, review team coordinator
6. Wilfrid Savoie, Financial and Asset management

### **District Review Activities**

The following activities were conducted during the review:

The team conducted interviews with the following financial personnel: business manager and accounting specialist.

The team conducted interviews with the following members of the school committee: chair, vice-chair, treasurer, and three members.

The review team conducted interviews with the following representatives of the teachers' association: president, chair of safety committee, chair of negotiations committee, and one member.

The team conducted interviews/focus groups with the following central office administrators: superintendent-director, principal, academic coordinator, career/technical coordinator, director of guidance and admissions, special needs coordinator, dean of students, education program development coordinator, facilities manager, business manager, and assessment specialist.

The team visited the following school: Joseph P. Keefe Technical High School (grades 9-12).

During the school visit, the team conducted interviews with the principal and 21 high school teachers in 2 focus groups.

The team observed a total of 44 classes in the district in: 28 academic classes and 16 career/technical education classes.

The review team analyzed multiple data sets and reviewed numerous documents before and during the site visit, including:

- Student and school performance data, including achievement and growth, enrollment, graduation, dropout, retention, suspension, and attendance rates.
- Data on the district’s staffing and finances.
- Published educational reports on the district by ESE, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), and the former Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA).
- District documents such as district and school improvement plans, school committee policies, curriculum documents, summaries of student assessments, job descriptions, collective bargaining agreements, evaluation tools for staff, handbooks, school schedules, and the district’s end-of-year financial reports.
- All completed program and administrator evaluations, and a random selection of completed teacher evaluations.

**Site Visit Schedule**

<b>Monday</b> 04-22-2013	<b>Tuesday</b> 04-23-2013	<b>Wednesday</b> 04-24-2013	<b>Thursday</b> 04-25-2013
Orientation with district leaders and principal; interviews with district staff; document reviews; interview with teachers’ association.	Interviews with district staff and principal; Interviews with town personnel; interview with teachers’ association. review of personnel files; student focus group; school council focus group; teacher focus groups; parent focus group; general advisory council focus group; classroom observations.	Interviews with school leaders; interviews with school committee members; classroom observations.	Interviews with school leaders; follow-up interviews; district review team meeting; classroom observations; emerging themes meeting with district leaders and principals.

## Appendix B: Enrollment, Expenditures, Performance

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**Table B1a: South Middlesex RVTSD  
2012-2013 Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity**

Student Group	District	Percent of Total	State	Percent of Total
Asian	8	1.1%	56,517	5.9%
Afr. Amer./Black	32	4.5%	81,806	8.6%
Hispanic/ Latino	360	50.7%	156,976	16.4%
Multi-race, Non-Hisp. /Lat.	16	2.3%	26,012	2.7%
Nat. Haw. Or Pacif. Isl.	--	--	1,020	0.1%
White	292	41.1%	630,150	66.0%
<b>All students</b>	<b>710</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>954,773</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Note: As of October 1, 2012

**Table B1b: South Middlesex RVTSD  
2012-2013 Student Enrollment by High Needs Populations**

Student Group	District			State		
	N	Percent of High Needs	Percent of District	N	Percent of High Needs	Percent of State
Students w/ disabilities	318	54.4%	44.8%	163,921	35.5%	17.0%
Low income	451	77.1%	63.5%	353,420	76.5%	37.0%
ELL and Former ELL	130	22.2%	18.3%	95,865	20.7%	10.0%
<b>All high needs students</b>	<b>585</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>82.4%</b>	<b>462,272</b>	<b>--%</b>	<b>47.9%</b>

Note: District and state numbers and percentages for students with disabilities and high needs students are calculated including students in out-of-district placements. Total state enrollment including students in out-of-district placement is 965,602.

**Table B2: South Middlesex RVTSD  
Expenditures, Chapter 70 State Aid, and Net School Spending  
Fiscal Years 2011–2013**

	FY11		FY12		FY13
	Estimated	Actual	Estimated	Actual	Estimated
<b>Expenditures</b>					
From school committee budget	15,092,770	14,926,754	15,506,373	15,118,302	16,026,528
From revolving funds and grants	---	2,738,253	---	2,401,802	---
Total expenditures	---	17,665,007	---	17,520,104	---
<b>Chapter 70 aid to education program</b>					
Chapter 70 state aid*	---	2,400,022	---	2,652,751	3,269,602
Required local contribution	---	7,492,557	---	7,892,246	7,883,290
Required net school spending**	---	9,892,579	---	10,544,997	11,152,892
Actual net school spending	---	13,522,881	---	13,864,394	14,625,834
Over/under required (\$)	---	3,630,302	---	3,319,397	3,472,942
Over/under required (%)	---	36.7	---	31.5	31.1

\*Chapter 70 state aid funds are deposited in the local general fund and spent as local appropriations.

\*\*Required net school spending is the total of Chapter 70 aid and required local contribution. Net school spending includes only expenditures from local appropriations, not revolving funds and grants. It includes expenditures for most administration, instruction, operations, and out-of-district tuitions. It does not include transportation, school lunches, debt, or capital.

Sources: FY11, FY12 District End-of-Year Reports; Chapter 70 Program information on ESE website.

Data retrieved December 10, 2013

**Table B3: South Middlesex RVTSD  
Expenditures Per In-District Pupil  
Fiscal Years 2010–2012**

<b>Expenditure Category</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>
Administration	\$1,630.77	\$1,652.26	\$1,367.49
Instructional leadership (district and school)	\$1,702.89	\$1,602.67	\$1,693.56
Teachers	\$9,206.36	\$8,062.55	\$7,922.44
Other teaching services	\$794.86	\$859.77	\$894.46
Professional development	\$69.76	\$82.36	\$94.23
Instructional materials, equipment and technology	\$1,623.16	\$1,573.02	\$1,351.38
Guidance, counseling and testing services	\$977.06	\$1,207.76	\$1,108.15
Pupil services	\$2,335.39	\$2,413.81	\$2,459.54
Operations and maintenance	\$3,405.95	\$3,389.75	\$3,463.46
Insurance, retirement and other fixed costs	\$3,250.95	\$3,841.90	\$4,241.90
<b>Total expenditures per in-district pupil</b>	<b>\$24,997</b>	<b>\$24,686</b>	<b>\$24,597</b>
Sources: <a href="#">Per-pupil expenditure reports on ESE website</a>			

**Table B4a: South Middlesex RVTSD  
English Language Arts Performance, 2009-2012**

Grade and Measure		Number Included (2012)	Spring MCAS Year				Gains and Declines			2012 Performance (CPI, SGP)
			2009	2010	2011	2012	4-Year Trend	2-Year Trend	Potentially Meaningful?	
10	CPI	168	78.1	81.4	88.9	89.1	11.0	0.2	Yes	Very Low
	P+	168	51%	45%	69%	70%	19	1		--
	SGP	139	43.0	54.0	50.0	56.0	13.0	6.0		Moderate

Notes: The number of students included in CPI and percent *Proficient* or *Advanced* (P+) calculations may differ from the number of students included in median SGP calculations. A median SGP is not calculated for students in grade 3 because they are participating in MCAS tests for the first time. The “2012 Performance” column shows the quintile into which the CPI for the grade (or all grades) falls in a ranking of all Massachusetts districts’ CPIs for that grade (or all grades). See footnote 7 in the Student Performance section above. The “2012 Performance” column also gives the level of the median SGP. Median SGPs from 0 to 20 are considered to be Very Low; from 21 to 40, Low; from 41 to 60, Moderate; from 61 to 80, High; and from 81 to 100, Very High.

**Table B4b: South Middlesex RVTSD  
Mathematics Performance, 2009-2012**

Grade and Measure		Number Included (2012)	Spring MCAS Year				Gains and Declines			2012 Performance (CPI, SGP)
			2009	2010	2011	2012	4-Year Trend	2-Year Trend	Potentially Meaningful?	
10	CPI	169	76.6	79.0	81.9	80.6	4.0	-1.3	--	Very Low
	P+	169	53%	50%	61%	56%	3	-5		--
	SGP	141	55.0	52.0	55.0	54.0	-1.0	-1.0		Moderate

Notes: The number of students included in CPI and percent *Proficient* or *Advanced* (P+) calculations may differ from the number of students included in median SGP calculations. A median SGP is not calculated for students in grade 3 because they are participating in MCAS tests for the first time. The “2012 Performance” column shows the quintile into which the CPI for the grade (or all grades) falls in a ranking of all Massachusetts districts’ CPIs for that grade (or all grades). See footnote 7 in the Student Performance section above. The “2012 Performance” column also gives the level of the median SGP. Median SGPs from 0 to 20 are considered to be Very Low; from 21 to 40, Low; from 41 to 60, Moderate; from 61 to 80, High; and from 81 to 100, Very High.

**Table B4c: South Middlesex RVTSD  
Science and Technology/Engineering Performance, 2009-2012**

Grade and Measure		Number Included (2012)	Spring MCAS Year				Gains and Declines			2012 Performance (CPI)
			2009	2010	2011	2012	4-Year Trend	2-Year Trend	Potentially Meaningful?	
10	CPI	149	69.5	74.8	80.0	74.8	5.3	-5.2	--	Very Low
	P+	149	40%	37%	54%	44%	4	-10	--	--

Notes: P+ = percent *Proficient* or *Advanced*. Students participate in STE MCAS tests in grades 5, 8, and 10 only. Median SGPs are not calculated for STE. The “2012 Performance” column shows the quintile into which the CPI for the grade (or all grades) falls in a ranking of all Massachusetts districts’ CPIs for that grade (or all grades). See footnote 7 in the Student Performance section above.

**Table B5a: South Middlesex RVTSD  
English Language Arts (Grade 10)  
Performance for Selected Subgroups Compared to State, 2009-2012**

Group and Measure			Number Included (2012)	Spring MCAS Year				Gains and Declines	
				2009	2010	2011	2012	4-Year Trend	2-Year Trend
High needs	District	CPI	145	72.5	78.8	86.3	87.6	15.1	1.3
		P+	145	40%	39%	63%	66%	26	3
		SGP	120	42.0	54.0	50.0	57.0	15	7
	State	CPI	29,809	83.2	83.3	86.9	91.0	7.8	4.1
		P+	29,809	60%	57%	67%	75%	15	8
		SGP	23,738	44.0	45.0	46.0	46.0	2.0	0.0
Low income	District	CPI	113	71.2	78.6	86.4	88.1	16.9	1.7
		P+	113	40%	41%	64%	66%	26	2
		SGP	91	46.0	54.0	49.5	58.0	12.0	8.5
	State	CPI	22,743	84.4	84.1	87.4	91.3	6.9	3.9
		P+	22,743	63%	60%	69%	77%	14	8
		SGP	18,051	45.0	46.0	46.0	45.0	0.0	-1.0
Students w/ disabilities	District	CPI	84	67.1	73.6	82.6	82.7	15.6	0.1
		P+	84	28%	25%	51%	51%	23	0
		SGP	71	32.0	55.5	53.0	51.0	19.0	-2.0
	State	CPI	11,604	76.0	75.7	80.2	85.8	9.8	5.6
		P+	11,604	43%	38%	50%	60%	17	10
		SGP	9,139	39.0	39.0	43.0	45.0	6.0	2.0
English language learners & Former ELL	District	CPI	33	60.0	70.8	80.0	85.6	25.6	5.6
		P+	33	20%	28%	47%	70%	50	23
		SGP	25	0.0	0.0	0.0	70.0	70.0	70.0
	State	CPI	3,909	65.7	65.9	69.7	77.0	11.3	7.3
		P+	3,909	31%	28%	37%	47%	16	10
		SGP	2,001	53.0	55.0	56.0	59.0	6.0	3.0
All students	District	CPI	168	78.1	81.4	88.9	89.1	11.0	0.2
		P+	168	51%	45%	69%	70%	19	1
		SGP	139	43.0	54.0	50.0	56.0	13.0	6.0
	State	CPI	69,059	92.9	91.9	93.9	95.8	3.6	1.9
		P+	69,059	80%	78%	84%	88%	8	4
		SGP	59,884	50.0	50.0	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0

Notes: The number of students included in CPI and percent *Proficient* or *Advanced* (P+) calculations may differ from the number of students included in median SGP calculation. State figures are provided for comparison purposes only and do not represent the standard that a particular group is expected to meet.

**Table B5b: South Middlesex RVTSD  
Mathematics (Grade 10)  
Performance for Selected Subgroups Compared to State, 2009-2012**

Group and Measure			Number Included (2012)	Spring MCAS Year				Gains and Declines	
				2009	2010	2011	2012	4-Year Trend	2-Year Trend
High needs	District	CPI	146	71.3	76.7	79.9	78.9	7.6	-1
		P+	146	43%	46%	58%	53%	10	-5
		SGP	122	53.0	53.0	56.5	55.0	2.0	-1.5
	State	CPI	29,800	76.8	77.8	79.1	80.4	3.6	1.3
		P+	29,800	52%	54%	57%	59%	7	2
		SGP	23,668	47.0	47.0	48.0	48.0	1.0	0.0
Low income	District	CPI	113	70.9	76.6	79.6	81.0	10.1	1.4
		P+	113	43%	47%	57%	57%	14	0
		SGP	92	47.0	51.5	55.0	56.5	9.5	1.5
	State	CPI	22,698	77.7	78.9	79.7	81.3	3.6	1.6
		P+	22,698	54%	56%	59%	62%	8	3
		SGP	18,006	46.0	47.0	48.0	47.0	1.0	-1.0
Students w/ disabilities	District	CPI	86	65.3	75.0	77.5	72.1	6.8	-5.4
		P+	86	32%	35%	49%	38%	6	-11
		SGP	73	47.0	66.5	63.5	62.0	15.0	-1.5
	State	CPI	11,646	69.4	69.4	70.1	71.4	2.0	1.3
		P+	11,646	37%	36%	39%	41%	4	2
		SGP	9,093	47.0	47.0	46.0	47.0	0.0	1.0
English language learners & Former ELL	District	CPI	33	69.2	67.6	67.2	78.0	8.8	10.8
		P+	33	35%	38%	44%	52%	17	8
		SGP	26	0.0	0.0	0.0	58.5	58.5	58.5
	State	CPI	3,969	65.2	64.5	66.2	67.5	2.3	1.3
		P+	3,969	38%	36%	40%	42%	4	2
		SGP	2,023	50.0	55.0	59.0	59.0	9.0	0.0
All students	District	CPI	169	76.6	79.0	81.9	80.6	4.0	-1.3
		P+	169	53%	50%	61%	56%	3	-5
		SGP	141	55.0	52.0	55.0	54.0	-1.0	-1.0
	State	CPI	69,015	88.1	88.8	89.4	90.0	1.9	0.6
		P+	69,015	74%	75%	77%	78%	4	1
		SGP	59,827	50.0	50.0	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0

Notes: The number of students included in CPI and percent *Proficient* or *Advanced* (P+) calculations may differ from the number of students included in median SGP calculation. State figures are provided for comparison purposes only and do not represent the standard that a particular group is expected to meet.

**Table B5c: South Middlesex RVTSD  
Science and Technology/Engineering (Grade 10)  
Performance for Selected Subgroups Compared to State, 2009-2012**

Group and Measure			Number Included (2012)	Spring MCAS Year				Gains and Declines	
				2009	2010	2011	2012	4-Year Trend	2-Year Trend
High needs	District	CPI	133	63.5	70.6	76.4	73.5	10	-2.9
		P+	133	29%	27%	47%	41%	12	-6
	State	CPI	29,090	69.1	71.7	73.9	76.0	6.9	2.1
		P+	29,090	35%	39%	43%	46%	11	3
Low income	District	CPI	103	66.0	69.4	75.0	76.5	10.5	1.5
		P+	103	33%	28%	47%	48%	15	1
	State	CPI	22,172	69.1	71.8	73.9	76.2	7.1	2.3
		P+	22,172	36%	41%	44%	47%	11	3
Students w/ disabilities	District	CPI	80	58.2	66.9	72.4	64.7	6.5	-7.7
		P+	80	20%	15%	39%	23%	3	-16
	State	CPI	11,665	63.9	65.2	67.1	68.8	4.9	1.7
		P+	11,665	25%	27%	30%	32%	7	2
English language learners & Former ELL	District	CPI	29	53.9	64.8	60.0	70.7	16.8	10.7
		P+	29	21%	23%	20%	38%	17	18
	State	CPI	3,304	54.5	55.8	59.3	61.8	7.3	2.5
		P+	3,304	18%	20%	23%	26%	8	3
All students	District	CPI	149	69.5	74.8	80.0	74.8	5.3	-5.2
		P+	149	40%	37%	54%	44%	4	-10
	State	CPI	67,556	83.1	84.6	85.7	87.0	3.9	1.3
		P+	67,556	62%	65%	67%	69%	7	2

Notes: Median SGPs are not calculated for STE. State figures are provided for comparison purposes only and do not represent the standard that a particular group is expected to meet.

**Table B6: South Middlesex RVTSD  
Annual Grade 9-12 Dropout Rates, 2009-2012**

	School Year Ending				Change 2009-2012		Change 2011-2012		State (2012)
	2009	2010	2011	2012	Percentage Points	Percent	Percentage Points	Percent	
<b>All students</b>	1.6%	1.2%	1.6%	1.5%	-0.1	-6.9%	-0.1	-6.9%	2.5%

Notes: The annual dropout rate is calculated by dividing the number of students who drop out over a one-year period by the October 1 grade 9–12 enrollment, multiplied by 100. Dropouts are those students who dropped out of school between July 1 and June 30 of a given year and who did not return to school, graduate, or receive a GED by the following October 1. Dropout rates have been rounded; percent change is based on unrounded numbers.

**Table B7a: South Middlesex RVTSD  
Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rates, 2009-2012**

Group	Number Included (2012)	School Year Ending				Change 2009-2012		Change 2011-2012		State (2012)
		2009	2010	2011	2012	Percentage Points	Percent	Percentage Points	Percent	
High needs	130	78.3%	85.0%	83.6%	85.4%	7.1	9.1%	1.8	2.2%	74.1%
Low income	109	79.5%	85.6%	81.9%	84.4%	4.9	6.2%	2.5	3.1%	72.4%
Students w/ disabilities	68	75.4%	84.3%	83.7%	86.8%	11.4	15.1%	3.1	3.7%	68.6%
English language learners (ELL) & Former ELL	14	72.2%	66.7%	71.4%	85.7%	13.5	18.7%	14.3	20.0%	61.1%
<b>All students</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>79.9%</b>	<b>85.5%</b>	<b>84.3%</b>	<b>86.1%</b>	<b>6.2</b>	<b>7.8%</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>2.1%</b>	<b>84.7%</b>

Notes: The four-year cohort graduation rate is calculated by dividing the number of students in a particular cohort who graduate in four years or less by the number of students in the cohort entering their freshman year four years earlier, minus transfers out and plus transfers in. Non-graduates include students still enrolled in high school, students who earned a GED or received a certificate of attainment rather than a diploma, and students who dropped out. Graduation rates have been rounded; percent change is based on unrounded numbers.

**Table B7b: South Middlesex RVTSD  
Five-Year Cohort Graduation Rates, 2008-2011**

Group	Number Included (2011)	School Year Ending				Change 2008-2011		Change 2010-2011		State (2011)
		2008	2009	2010	2011	Percentage Points	Percent	Percentage Points	Percent	
High needs	134	89.8%	84.0%	87.4%	88.8%	-1.0	-1.1%	1.4	1.6%	76.5%
Low income	105	90.5%	87.2%	88.7%	88.6%	-1.9	-2.1%	-0.1	-0.1%	75.0%
Students w/ disabilities	86	86.4%	80.7%	88.6%	88.4%	2.0	2.3%	-0.2	-0.2%	70.8%
English language learners (ELL) & Former ELL	14	100.0%	77.8%	66.7%	71.4%	-28.6	-28.6%	4.7	7.0%	64.2%
<b>All students</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>89.3%</b>	<b>84.3%</b>	<b>87.5%</b>	<b>88.7%</b>	<b>-0.6</b>	<b>-0.7%</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>1.4%</b>	<b>86.3%</b>

Notes: The five-year cohort graduation rate is calculated by dividing the number of students in a particular cohort who graduate in five years or less by the number of students in the cohort entering their freshman year five years earlier, minus transfers out and plus transfers in. Non-graduates include students still enrolled in high school, students who earned a GED or received a certificate of attainment rather than a diploma, and students who dropped out. Graduation rates have been rounded; percent change is based on unrounded numbers. Graduation rates have been rounded; percent change is based on unrounded numbers.

**Table B8: South Middlesex RVTSD  
Attendance Rates, 2009-2012**

	School Year Ending				Change 2009-2012		Change 2011-2012	
	2009	2010	2011	2012	Percentage Points	Percent	Percentage Points	Percent
<b>All Students</b>	<b>90.1%</b>	<b>91.2%</b>	<b>91.2%</b>	<b>90.9%</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>0.9%</b>	<b>-0.3</b>	<b>-0.3%</b>

Notes: The attendance rate is calculated by dividing the total number of days students attended school by the total number of days students were enrolled in a particular school year. A student's attendance rate is counted toward any district the student attended. In addition, district attendance rates included students who were out placed in public collaborative or private alternative schools/programs at public expense. Attendance rates have been rounded; percent change is based on unrounded numbers.

**Table B9: South Middlesex RVTSD  
Selected Disciplinary Measures, 2009-2012**

Group	School Year Ending				Change 2009-2012		Change 2011-2012		State Rates for High Schools (2012)
	2009	2010	2011	2012	Percentage Points	Percent	Percentage Points	Percent	
In-School Suspension Rate	0.0%	13.7%	15.5%	10.0%	10.0	--	-5.5	-35.5%	6.5%
Out-of-School Suspension Rate	14.4%	9.3%	12.1%	15.1%	0.7	4.9%	3.0	24.8%	9.0%

Note: This table reflects information reported by school districts at the end of the school year indicated. Suspension rates have been rounded; percent change is based on unrounded numbers.

## Appendix C: Instructional Inventory:

### Academic Classes (#=28)

Learning Environment	By Grade Span	Evidence					
		None	Partial	Clear & Consistent	Overall		
		(0)	(1)	(2)	#	%	
1. Interactions between teacher & students & among students are positive & respectful.	ES	0%	0%	0%	(0)	0	0%
	MS	0%	0%	0%	(1)	3	11%
	HS	0%	11%	89%	(2)	25	89%
2. Behavioral standards are clearly communicated. Disruptions, if present, are managed effectively & equitably.	ES	0%	0%	0%	(0)	4	14%
	MS	0%	0%	0%	(1)	3	11%
	HS	14%	11%	75%	(2)	21	75%
3. Classroom procedures are established & maintained to create a safe physical environment & promote smooth transitions among all classroom activities.	ES	0%	0%	0%	(0)	0	0%
	MS	0%	0%	0%	(1)	5	18%
	HS	0%	18%	82%	(2)	23	82%
4. Lesson reflects rigor & high expectations.	ES	0%	0%	0%	(0)	4	14%
	MS	0%	0%	0%	(1)	8	29%
	HS	14%	29%	57%	(2)	16	57%
5. Classroom rituals, routines & appropriate interactions create a safe intellectual environment in which students take academic risks & most behaviors that interfere with learning are prevented.	ES	0%	0%	0%	(0)	1	4%
	MS	0%	0%	0%	(1)	4	14%
	HS	4%	14%	82%	(2)	23	82%
6. Multiple resources are available to meet students' diverse learning needs.	ES	0%	0%	0%	(0)	13	46%
	MS	0%	0%	0%	(1)	4	14%
	HS	46%	14%	39%	(2)	11	39%
7. The physical arrangement of the classroom ensures a positive learning environment & provides all students with access to learning activities.	ES	0%	0%	0%	(0)	1	4%
	MS	0%	0%	0%	(1)	4	14%
	HS	4%	14%	82%	(2)	23	82%

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Teaching	By Grade Span	Evidence					
		None	Partial	Clear & Consistent	Overall		
		(0)	(1)	(2)	#	%	
8. Demonstrates knowledge of subject & content.	ES	0%	0%	0%	(0)	1	4%
	MS	0%	0%	0%	(1)	2	7%
	HS	4%	7%	89%	(2)	25	89%
9. Communicates clear grade-appropriate learning objectives aligned to state standards. Applicable ELL language objectives are evident.	ES	0%	0%	0%	(0)	3	11%
	MS	0%	0%	0%	(1)	7	25%
	HS	11%	25%	64%	(2)	18	64%
10. Uses appropriate & varied strategies matched to learning objectives & content.	ES	0%	0%	0%	(0)	6	21%
	MS	0%	0%	0%	(1)	3	11%
	HS	21%	11%	68%	(2)	19	68%
11. Requires inquiry, exploration, application, analysis, synthesis, &/or evaluation of concepts individually, in pairs or in groups to demonstrate higher-order thinking. (circle observed skills)	ES	0%	0%	0%	(0)	7	25%
	MS	0%	0%	0%	(1)	10	36%
	HS	25%	36%	39%	(2)	11	39%
12. Uses varied questioning techniques that require/seek thoughtful responses & promote deeper understanding.	ES	0%	0%	0%	(0)	7	25%
	MS	0%	0%	0%	(1)	5	18%
	HS	25%	18%	57%	(2)	16	57%
13. Implements appropriate & varied strategies that meet students' diverse learning needs.	ES	0%	0%	0%	(0)	10	36%
	MS	0%	0%	0%	(1)	9	32%
	HS	36%	32%	32%	(2)	9	32%
14. Paces lesson to engage all students & promote understanding.	ES	0%	0%	0%	(0)	3	11%
	MS	0%	0%	0%	(1)	3	11%
	HS	11%	11%	79%	(2)	22	79%
15. Conducts frequent formative assessments to check for understanding & inform instruction.	ES	0%	0%	0%	(0)	12	43%
	MS	0%	0%	0%	(1)	2	7%
	HS	43%	7%	50%	(2)	14	50%
16. Makes use of technology to enhance learning.	ES	0%	0%	0%	(0)	14	50%
	MS	0%	0%	0%	(1)	5	18%
	HS	50%	18%	32%	(2)	9	32%

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Learning	By Grade Span	Evidence					
		None	Partial	Clear & Consistent	Overall		
		(0)	(1)	(2)	#	%	
17. Students are engaged in productive learning routines.	ES	0%	0%	0%	(0)	5	18%
	MS	0%	0%	0%	(1)	5	18%
	HS	18%	18%	64%	(2)	18	64%
18. Students are engaged in challenging academic tasks.	ES	0%	0%	0%	(0)	7	25%
	MS	0%	0%	0%	(1)	8	29%
	HS	25%	29%	46%	(2)	13	46%
19. Students assume responsibility for their own learning.	ES	0%	0%	0%	(0)	8	29%
	MS	0%	0%	0%	(1)	4	14%
	HS	29%	14%	57%	(2)	16	57%
20. Students articulate their thinking or reasoning verbally or in writing either individually, in pairs or in groups.	ES	0%	0%	0%	(0)	10	36%
	MS	0%	0%	0%	(1)	3	11%
	HS	36%	11%	54%	(2)	15	54%
21. Students' responses to questions elaborate about content & ideas (not expected for all responses).	ES	0%	0%	0%	(0)	13	46%
	MS	0%	0%	0%	(1)	7	25%
	HS	46%	25%	29%	(2)	8	29%
22. Students make connections to prior knowledge, real world experiences & other subject matter.	ES	0%	0%	0%	(0)	8	29%
	MS	0%	0%	0%	(1)	7	25%
	HS	29%	25%	46%	(2)	13	46%
23. Students use technology as a tool for learning &/or understanding.	ES	0%	0%	0%	(0)	17	61%
	MS	0%	0%	0%	(1)	2	7%
	HS	61%	7%	32%	(2)	9	32%
24. Student work demonstrates high quality & can serve as exemplars.	ES	0%	0%	0%	(0)	20	71%
	MS	0%	0%	0%	(1)	4	14%
	HS	71%	14%	14%	(2)	4	14%

(Please see next page)

**Career/Technical Education Classes (#=16)**

Learning Environment	By Grade Span	Evidence					
		None	Partial	Clear & Consistent	Overall		
		(0)	(1)	(2)	#	%	
1. Interactions between teacher & students & among students are positive & respectful.	ES	0%	0%	0%	(0)	0	0%
	MS	0%	0%	0%	(1)	0	0%
	HS	0%	0%	100%	(2)	16	100%
2. Behavioral standards are clearly communicated. Disruptions, if present, are managed effectively & equitably.	ES	0%	0%	0%	(0)	7	44%
	MS	0%	0%	0%	(1)	1	6%
	HS	44%	6%	50%	(2)	8	50%
3. Classroom procedures are established & maintained to create a safe physical environment & promote smooth transitions among all classroom activities.	ES	0%	0%	0%	(0)	1	6%
	MS	0%	0%	0%	(1)	0	0%
	HS	6%	0%	94%	(2)	15	94%
4. Lesson reflects rigor & high expectations.	ES	0%	0%	0%	(0)	3	19%
	MS	0%	0%	0%	(1)	1	6%
	HS	19%	6%	75%	(2)	12	75%
5. Classroom rituals, routines & appropriate interactions create a safe intellectual environment in which students take academic risks & most behaviors that interfere with learning are prevented.	ES	0%	0%	0%	(0)	1	6%
	MS	0%	0%	0%	(1)	0	0%
	HS	6%	0%	94%	(2)	15	94%
6. Multiple resources are available to meet students' diverse learning needs.	ES	0%	0%	0%	(0)	1	6%
	MS	0%	0%	0%	(1)	1	6%
	HS	6%	6%	88%	(2)	14	88%
7. The physical arrangement of the classroom ensures a positive learning environment & provides all students with access to learning activities.	ES	0%	0%	0%	(0)	0	0%
	MS	0%	0%	0%	(1)	1	6%
	HS	0%	6%	94%	(2)	15	94%

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Teaching	By Grade Span	Evidence					
		None	Partial	Clear & Consistent	Overall		
		(0)	(1)	(2)	#	%	
8. Demonstrates knowledge of subject & content.	ES	0%	0%	0%	(0)	1	6%
	MS	0%	0%	0%	(1)	0	0%
	HS	6%	0%	94%	(2)	15	94%
9. Communicates clear grade-appropriate learning objectives aligned to state standards. Applicable ELL language objectives are evident.	ES	0%	0%	0%	(0)	6	38%
	MS	0%	0%	0%	(1)	0	0%
	HS	38%	0%	62%	(2)	10	62%
10. Uses appropriate & varied strategies matched to learning objectives & content.	ES	0%	0%	0%	(0)	5	31%
	MS	0%	0%	0%	(1)	1	6%
	HS	31%	6%	63%	(2)	10	63%
11. Requires inquiry, exploration, application, analysis, synthesis, &/or evaluation of concepts individually, in pairs or in groups to demonstrate higher-order thinking. (circle observed skills)	ES	0%	0%	0%	(0)	7	44%
	MS	0%	0%	0%	(1)	4	25%
	HS	44%	25%	31%	(2)	5	31%
12. Uses varied questioning techniques that require/seek thoughtful responses & promote deeper understanding.	ES	0%	0%	0%	(0)	7	44%
	MS	0%	0%	0%	(1)	3	19%
	HS	44%	19%	37%	(2)	6	37%
13. Implements appropriate & varied strategies that meet students' diverse learning needs.	ES	0%	0%	0%	(0)	7	44%
	MS	0%	0%	0%	(1)	1	6%
	HS	44%	6%	50%	(2)	8	50%
14. Paces lesson to engage all students & promote understanding.	ES	0%	0%	0%	(0)	3	19%
	MS	0%	0%	0%	(1)	0	0%
	HS	19%	0%	81%	(2)	13	81%
15. Conducts frequent formative assessments to check for understanding & inform instruction.	ES	0%	0%	0%	(0)	8	50%
	MS	0%	0%	0%	(1)	0	0%
	HS	50%	0%	50%	(2)	8	50%
16. Makes use of technology to enhance learning.	ES	0%	0%	0%	(0)	4	25%
	MS	0%	0%	0%	(1)	2	13%
	HS	25%	13%	62%	(2)	10	62%

(Please see next page)

Learning	By Grade Span	Evidence					
		None	Partial	Clear & Consistent	Overall		
		(0)	(1)	(2)	#	%	
17. Students are engaged in productive learning routines.	ES	0%	0%	0%	(0)	0	0%
	MS	0%	0%	0%	(1)	2	13%
	HS	0%	13%	87%	(2)	14	87%
18. Students are engaged in challenging academic tasks.	ES	0%	0%	0%	(0)	4	25%
	MS	0%	0%	0%	(1)	5	31%
	HS	25%	31%	44%	(2)	7	44%
19. Students assume responsibility for their own learning.	ES	0%	0%	0%	(0)	5	31%
	MS	0%	0%	0%	(1)	3	19%
	HS	31%	19%	50%	(2)	8	50%
20. Students articulate their thinking or reasoning verbally or in writing either individually, in pairs or in groups.	ES	0%	0%	0%	(0)	9	56%
	MS	0%	0%	0%	(1)	5	31%
	HS	56%	31%	13%	(2)	2	13%
21. Students' responses to questions elaborate about content & ideas (not expected for all responses).	ES	0%	0%	0%	(0)	9	56%
	MS	0%	0%	0%	(1)	5	31%
	HS	56%	31%	13%	(2)	2	13%
22. Students make connections to prior knowledge, real world experiences & other subject matter.	ES	0%	0%	0%	(0)	5	31%
	MS	0%	0%	0%	(1)	0	0%
	HS	31%	0%	69%	(2)	11	69%
23. Students use technology as a tool for learning &/or understanding.	ES	0%	0%	0%	(0)	1	6%
	MS	0%	0%	0%	(1)	3	19%
	HS	6%	19%	75%	(2)	12	75%
24. Student work demonstrates high quality & can serve as exemplars.	ES	0%	0%	0%	(0)	6	38%
	MS	0%	0%	0%	(1)	0	0%
	HS	38%	0%	62%	(2)	10	62%