

# District Review Report

Acushnet Public Schools

Review conducted December 8-11, 2014

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Center for District and School Accountability

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and  
Secondary Education

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# Acushnet Public Schools 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 systemwide functions, with reference to the six district standards used by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE): 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 2014-2015 school year include districts classified into Level 2, Level 3, and Level 4 of ESE's framework for district accountability and assistance. 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 reviews 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 onsite 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 Acushnet was conducted from December 8-11, 2014. The site visit included 29.5 hours of interviews and focus groups with approximately 41 stakeholders, including school committee members, district administrators, school staff, and teachers' association representatives. The team did not interview students. The review team conducted two focus groups with five elementary school teachers and three middle school teachers. The K-8 district sends its students to other area high schools including New Bedford High School, Fairhaven High School, Old Rochester Regional High School, and Old Colony Regional Vocational Technical High School.

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, student performance, and expenditures. The team observed classroom instructional practice in 28 classrooms in 2 schools. 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

Acushnet has a town manager form of government and the chair of the school committee is elected by the committee. There are five members of the school committee and they meet at least monthly.

The current superintendent has been in the position since 2005. The district leadership team includes a business manager, a director of special education, a director of technology, and two principals. Central office positions have been stable in number over the past nine years. The district has two principals leading two schools; both principals have recently joined the district, one in July 2014 and the other in October 2014. The two other school administrators, assistant principals, are not part of a bargaining unit. There are 68 teachers in the district.

In the 2013-2014 school year, 992 students were enrolled in the district’s 2 schools:

**Table 1: Acushnet Public Schools  
Schools, Type, Grades Served, and Enrollment\*, 2013-2014**

School Name	School Type	Grades Served	Enrollment
Acushnet Elementary School	Elementary	PK-4	536
Ford Middle School	Middle	5-8	456
<b>Totals</b>	<b>2 schools</b>	<b>PK-8</b>	<b>992</b>
*As of October 1, 2013			

Between 2010 and 2014 overall student enrollment decreased by .4 percent (996 to 992). 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 lower than the median in-district per pupil expenditures for 10 districts of similar size (less than 1,000 students) in fiscal year 2013: \$10,666 as compared with \$14,215 (see [District Analysis and Review Tool Detail: Staffing & Finance](#)). Actual net school spending has been above what is required by the Chapter 70 state education aid program, as shown in Table B6 in Appendix B.

## Student Performance

**Acushnet is a Level 2 district because both its schools are in Level 2.**

- Acushnet Elementary is in the 63<sup>rd</sup> percentile of elementary schools. It is in Level 2 because its cumulative Progressive Performance Index (PPI) for high-needs students was 73, below the target of 75.
- The Albert F. Ford Middle School is in the 54<sup>th</sup> percentile of middle schools. It is in Level 2 because its PPI for all students was 56 and for high-needs students, 51, below the target of 75.

**The district did not reach its 2014 Composite Performance Index (CPI) targets for ELA, math, and science.**

- ELA CPI was 85.6 in 2014, below the district's target of 91.2.
- Math CPI was 80.4 in 2014, below the district's target of 84.8.
- Science CPI was 80.1 in 2014, below the district's target of 87.6.

**ELA proficiency rates declined between 2011 and 2014 in the district as a whole and in every grade except the 4<sup>th</sup> grade.**

- ELA proficiency rates for all students in the district declined from 70 percent in 2011 to 64 percent in 2014.
- ELA proficiency rates declined between 2011 and 2014 by 12 percentage points in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades, by 7 percentage points in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, and by 4 percentage points in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades.
  - ELA proficiency rates were below the state rate in 2014 by 4 and 2 percentage points in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades, respectively, and by 7 and 5 percentage points in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades, respectively.
- ELA proficiency rates in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade improved 5 percentage points, from 57 percent in 2011 to 62 percent in 2014, and were above the 2014 state rate of 54 percent. ELA proficiency in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade in 2014 was also above the state rate by 2 percentage points.

**Math proficiency rates varied by grade. Between 2011 and 2014 there were notable improvements in the 4<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grades and declines in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades.**

- Math proficiency rates for all students in the district were 56 percent in 2011 and 60 percent in 2014.
- Math proficiency rates were above the state rate by 17 percentage points in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade and by 3 and 8 percentage points in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades, respectively.

- Between 2011 and 2014 math proficiency rates improved by 21 percentage points in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade and by 10 and 16 percentage points in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades, respectively. Math proficiency also improved by 5 percentage points in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.
- Math proficiency rates were below the state rate by 3 percentage points in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades and by one percentage point in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade.
  - Between 2011 and 2014 math proficiency rates declined by 20 percentage points in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade and by 10 percentage points in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade.

**Between 2011 and 2014 science proficiency rates declined throughout the district.**

- The 5<sup>th</sup> grade science proficiency rate was 59 percent in 2014, lower than the 2011 rate of 65 percent, but above the state rate of 53 percent.
- The 8<sup>th</sup> grade science proficiency rate was 40 percent in 2014, lower than the 2011 rate of 47 percent, and the state rate of 42 percent.

# Acushnet Public Schools District Review Findings

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## Strengths

### *Curriculum and Instruction*

- 1. Improvement of curriculum and instruction in Acushnet is marked by important structures and emerging practices that are being developed under the direction of the district's two new principals.**
  - A.** The district has created structures that are integral to instructional improvement.
    1. The Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment (CIA) meeting structure promotes instructional improvement.
      - a. School leaders have begun to use these meetings to examine performance data, to plan instruction, and to select materials to better align curriculum with the common core. At the elementary schools, for example, CIA teams are reviewing the curriculum and supplementing with their own materials when gaps are found in commercially produced programs used in the district.
  - B.** The practice of using assessment results to guide instruction is emerging in the district.
    1. In grades 2-8 the district has recently begun to use Galileo, an online assessment tool.
    2. The middle school is beginning to use the results of Galileo's formative assessments to devise re-teaching plans in key areas.
    3. The elementary school has started to use Galileo to provide useful data to chart the development of reading comprehension skills.
  - C.** The district has hired two new principals who have the support of key stakeholders in the Acushnet community.
    1. In multiple interviews the review team was told of the high regard in which the elementary and middle school principals are held in the school community.
      - a. The superintendent expressed his confidence in the new principals and said that he believes that they will be able to work closely with him to implement protocols and procedures that will improve student achievement in Acushnet.
      - b. Similarly, the school committee expressed its support of the new principals. One member stated that the new principals will provide the committee with educational plans and budget requests that will better inform the committee's work with town officials and at town meeting.

- c. Teachers from both schools echoed the enthusiasm and articulated their hope that the new leaders would bring stable leadership to their schools.
  - d. Parents stated their support for the principals in a focus group.
- D.** The leadership of the new principals, combined with the use of critical structures, means an emerging culture of accountability in the schools.
- 1. School leaders have provided focus and direction to CIA meetings and are establishing critical practices to improve curriculum and instruction. Meetings are marked by clear agendas and follow through, and both school principals reported that they are spending a great deal of time in classrooms in order to gather data about schoolwide instructional practices and to establish a structure of accountability.
  - 2. In interviews with the review team, school leaders articulated the specific focus of each CIA as it related to instructional improvement in their respective schools. Elementary CIA meetings have begun to focus on standards-based planning and horizontal alignment, and CIA meetings at the middle school are concentrating on getting the best use out of Galileo as they begin to assess standards.

**Impact:** Curriculum leadership and structures and protocols that ensure consistency, standard alignment, and effective delivery are of paramount importance to improved student achievement. The focus of the current leadership team provides the basis for instructional improvement that will help to strengthen achievement in Acushnet.

### ***Instruction***

#### **2. In observed classrooms the environment was conducive to learning.**

The team observed 28 classes throughout the district: 13 at the middle school and 15 at the elementary school. The team observed 17 ELA classes and 11 mathematics classes. Among the classes observed were two inclusion classes and one literacy intervention class. The observations were approximately 20 minutes in length. 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 in Appendix C.

- A.** The tone of interactions between teachers and students and among students was clearly and consistently positive and respectful (#1) in 96 percent of visited classes at the elementary and middle schools.
  - 1. Elementary teachers were noted establishing a familiar and comfortable rapport in observed classrooms.

2. Students were observed interacting kindly with one another. For example, when a boy spilled his bag of pretzels during snack time, fellow students, assisted by a classroom assistant, quickly came to his aid.
- B.** The review team observed well-behaved students in classrooms and in corridors in the elementary and middle schools.
1. Behavior standards were clearly and consistently communicated and disruptions, if present, were managed effectively and equitably (#2) in 96 percent of observed classrooms.
    - a. Elementary teachers were particularly skilled in their use of positive reinforcement to promote desired behavior. Observers frequently heard teachers recognizing “good listeners” and that a particular student was “ready to learn” as the class transitioned to a new activity.
    - b. The review team’s workroom was situated in the middle school; the team observed middle school students behaving appropriately in classrooms and attentive to instruction; in hallways students traveled respectfully, greeting adults, holding doors for visitors, and helping to locate classrooms.
- C.** Classroom rituals and routines promoted transitions with minimal loss of instructional time (#4) were clearly and consistently witnessed in 86 percent of classrooms districtwide and in 100 percent of elementary classrooms.
1. Elementary teachers made good use of timers and countdowns as they transitioned between activities. Middle school teachers had established routines which students followed.

**Impact:** The teachers observed by the review team demonstrated their mastery of a key skill in establishing the foundation of learning—a positive learning environment. This helps to lay the foundation for high-quality learning where students are likely to take responsibility for their own learning.

### **Assessment**

- 3. The district has processes and structures in place to collect and use data from multiple sources to identify students who need support and to begin the benchmarking of learning.**
  - A.** The elementary and middle schools currently use a variety of assessments to identify students who need support.
    1. The district uses the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Literacy (DIBELS) Next in kindergarten through grade 5 for fluency, STAR for assessing reading, and Digits for math assessments in the middle school. Administrators also reported the use of Symphony math assessments,

Reading Street assessments, Envision math assessments, and Teaching Strategies Gold in pre-kindergarten through kindergarten. District leaders reported that beginning with the 2014-2015 school year the district retired STAR Math and added the Galileo assessment for math and ELA in grades 2-8 and for social studies and science in the middle school. The superintendent noted in the assessment matrix<sup>1</sup> submitted for the review, "There are many more teacher generated assessments not included in this matrix."

2. The reading specialist/Title I facilitator is the lead collector and organizer of literacy assessment data for each grade level at the elementary school. The data is presented in a useful format, which provides teachers, principals, and program directors a quick way to identify students who have attained reading benchmarks, track interventions and progress at three checkpoints during the year, and to more frequently monitor students who are high-risk learners.
3. In 2014 the district introduced the use of Galileo assessments in ELA and math in grades 2-8 and science in grades 5-8, to benchmark learning three times a year.
  - a. Principals told the review team that some teachers are beginning to analyze Galileo baseline data at their CIA meetings, and to develop re-teaching plans for specific skills by grade level. For example, grade 3 teachers have begun to re-design lesson units based on analysis of student performance on Galileo. The middle school principal provided the team with samples of re-teach plans developed by grade 5 teachers following an analysis of Galileo.
  - b. The elementary school principal said that grade 4 teachers have begun to use Galileo reports to modify their instruction.
  - c. The two principals support the use of Galileo to improve teaching and learning and provide guidance and some training to grade-level teams.
- B.** A formal process for data analysis takes place K-4 where DIBELS Next data, used to monitor fluency acquisition, is collected by the Title I facilitator. Formal data meetings are held with staff three times a year and decisions about interventions for individual students and re-grouping for instruction are made at this time. At the middle school, data collection and analysis is less formally organized, because there are single-subject teachers at most grade levels.
- C.** Each school also has Student Teacher Assessment Team (STAT) meetings where data about individual students is reviewed as part of the process for determining interventions and support.
- D.** The district has set up and implemented a fully SIF-enabled Student Information System. Data from EWIS (Early Warning Indicator System) and Edwin Analytics is available to administrators, although not to teachers. The newly hired middle school principal told the team that he plans to use EWIS to identify students who may be at risk and referred to ESE's DART (District Analysis,

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<sup>1</sup> The assessment matrix is a list of assessments the district administers, organized by grade level and subject area.

Review & Assistance Tools) data when comparing the district's performance to that of higher performing districts.

- E. The district is beginning to use student performance data in its educator evaluation system. Of the 19 teacher evaluation documents reviewed, 11 contained SMART goals (specific and strategic; measurable; action-oriented; rigorous, realistic, and results-focused; and timed and tracked), some with references to district-determined measures (DDMs) of student learning, growth or achievement.

**Impact:** The processes and structures in place for the collection and use of data to identify students who need support are laying the foundation for a culture of data-driven decision-making. The introduction of the use of a districtwide standards-based assessment tool, Galileo, provides high-quality standards-based information for staff to make decisions about student support and may likely lead to decisions about improving professional practice. The use of student performance data in the educator evaluation system provides educators and educational leaders with enhanced opportunities for professional growth.

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

#### **4. The district has developed two comprehensive, detailed, and clear budget documents to communicate the district's financial needs to, and foster professional relations between town officials, the community, and district leaders.**

- A. The district's fiscal year 2015 PowerPoint presentation to the school committee and town finance committee provides a range of pertinent public education funding information, including:
  - 1. An explanation of education aid including anticipated Chapter 70 state education aid and the Chapter 70 formula.
  - 2. A review of the three basic steps of Chapter 70 state education aid, including the foundation budget, local contributions, and foundation aid.
  - 3. The calculation of minimum net school spending and its two components: required local contribution and Chapter 70 state education aid.
  - 4. Trends of school districts in meeting and exceeding net school spending requirements.
  - 5. Trends for the state and for Acushnet of total Chapter 70 state education aid and net school spending.
- B. The presentation describes the fiscal year 2015 district budget process that began in fall 2013.

1. School principals and district department administrators prepare and submit requests to the superintendent for review.
  2. The business manager assembles school and district department budgets into a districtwide budget.
  3. The school committee budget sub-committee meets with the superintendent, business manager, principals, special education director, and technology director to review budget requests.
  4. The preliminary budget is presented to the full school committee and approved.
  5. Adjustments are made for updated tuition, transportation, and salary information for public hearing.
- C.** The presentation highlights and delineates budget increases and decreases.
1. Salary costs are presented with new and eliminated positions.
  2. Expenditures are presented with specific increases and decreases.
  3. Expenditure requests are presented by function showing a comparison to the previous year's budget.
  4. The document provides a budget summary of total cost increase, the major contributing items of the increase, Chapter 70 state education aid, and town contribution.
- D.** The FY 2015 School Committee Budget 3/18/14 Public Hearing document provides to the school committee and town finance committee a range of budget information and explanations, including:
1. A four-year description of budget expenditures, by department, percent change, and total budget expenditures.
  2. Salary requests by function with a comparison to the previous year's budget.
  3. Expenditure requests by function with a comparison to the previous year's budget.
  4. Detailed information on personnel changes including revised and new job descriptions.
  5. Projected fiscal year student enrollment per class.
  6. Changes from the fiscal year preliminary budget to the final, approved budget.
  7. Costs of special education tuition, student transportation, and high school tuition.
- E.** School committee members and district leaders have a professional and cordial relationship with town officials and the community supports the school district.

1. School committee members stated that relations with town officials are generally good and discussions are professional. Members expressed the opinion that having a prior finance committee member on the school committee fosters further trust with officials. The parties want to settle budget issues before town meeting.
2. The superintendent and business manager told the team that they enjoy a professional and cordial relationship with town officials. District leaders said that providing detailed knowledge develops a sense of trust between school and town officials.
3. Town officials said the relationship with school department officials has been good, particularly over the past two years. There are some tensions before town meeting because the parties have different viewpoints. Town officials noted that they know that the town supports its schools. After the vote is taken tensions decrease and there is harmony between the parties.
4. Staff members and parents described a community that supports its school system. Most staff expressed the opinion that adequate funds are provided to deliver the educational programs. Parents told the team that they come to Acushnet for its schools.

**Impact:** The two district budget documents have provided significant transparency of the budget to district stakeholders. This has contributed to the district experiencing professional relations with town officials and community support for Acushnet's schools.

## **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***

- 5. Cohesive improvement planning, targeted allocation of resources, consistent communication, and effective time management are not in place to support student achievement progress. Principals do not have an appropriate role in the improvement planning process.**
  - A.** The process by which the District Improvement Plan (DIP) is developed and monitored is not cohesive or clear nor does it provide an appropriate role for the two school principals.
    1. A document review indicated that the DIP and the School Improvement Plans (SIPs) contain broad timelines, indefinite responsible parties, and goal assessments that are not measureable. At the time of the visit in December 2014, the 2014-2015 SIPs had not been completed, although they were nearing completion. One school principal arrived in the

district in July 2014 and the other in October 2014 and SIPs had not been completed by the prior principals.

2. The district improvement team (DIT) was formed as part of the Race to the Top initiative in order to analyze the data from the 2012 TELL Mass Survey, to identify at least one issue from the Survey, and to develop a plan to address the issue. The role of DIT is to develop, to review, to evaluate, and to promote the DIP.
  3. Minutes provided by the district and reviewed onsite indicated that principals did not attend DIT meetings between October 2013 and October 2014. The superintendent stated that principals are not part of this team. DIT members and teachers' association representatives confirmed that the superintendent is the only administrator on the team.
    - a. District leaders reported that the principals were not present at the DIT meetings because they were not required to be part of the team. A review of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the school committee and the teachers' association to create the DIT showed that the MOU (signed in August 2012) did not state that the principals would be part of this team or prohibit them from attending.
  4. DIT members and teachers' association representatives told the review team that DIT meetings were positive but questioned whether these meetings had any impact. Interviewees said that misinformation and an absence of information sometimes resulted from the principals not attending the DIT meetings. Others said that they were unsure where goals came from and questioned the role of the DIT members. Teachers expressed the concern that initiatives were not completed before the district moved on in a new direction.
  5. The superintendent reported that he sees the value in requiring principals to take part in the DIT meetings going forward because they will better ensure DIP and SIP alignment and will improve communication about the work of the DIT. He said that principals would attend all future DIT meetings.
- B.** The allocation of resources is not clearly linked with district and school priorities to support student achievement goals.
1. District and past school improvement plans do not refer to the cost of achieving priorities. District leaders told the review team that explicit reference is not made to district or school improvement plans when the budget is presented to the school committee.
  2. The fiscal year 2015 budget document does not clearly identify funds that are allocated for district and school priorities. District leaders said that they saw no direct, written connection made between the budget and improvement plans.
  3. School committee members and district leaders told the team that district and school priorities are not directly discussed as part of the budget development process.

4. End-of-year account balances are used by the district to address school needs. Teachers described supplies and materials that were purchased at the end of the school year and characterized the funds distribution process as not necessarily being predictable or fair. Town officials described this as not being a good practice.
  - a. District leaders reported that each year “varied and unpredictable” amounts of money are left over in the budget because students drop out of high school, transfer to or from high schools in Fairhaven and New Bedford, or move out of or in to Acushnet. They noted that this “virtually always” results in money available for end-of-year purchases.
- C. District administrative team meetings are not consistently scheduled and do not have formal advance agendas, affecting team members’ ability to be well informed and to plan for the meetings. Because the superintendent’s office is within the middle school, communication with the middle school principal is sometimes informal.
  1. A review of 22 sets of administrative team meeting minutes held between October 2013 and October 2014 showed no designated meeting dates or times. The minutes reviewed indicated that many of these discussions were related to operational issues and there was little discussion about district and school improvement plan alignment and monitoring of action steps.
  2. The superintendent reported that several years ago he made the decision to separate administrative meetings into two types: one dealing more with operational issues and one focusing more on items related to student achievement. The superintendent said that he wanted to promote more discussion about student achievement.

**Impact:** Student achievement progress is diminished without aligned and effective district support systems and processes for meeting the needs of the schools. The district improvement planning process cannot be aligned without the participation of the newly appointed principals. By not explicitly targeting district resources to district and school priorities to support student achievement goals, the district loses an opportunity to improve teacher effectiveness and student achievement. Without effective communication and district meeting protocols, school leaders cannot focus sufficiently on improvement planning.

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

6. **In some cases, the district has not ensured the effective development and use of a comprehensive standards-based curriculum.**
  - A. Interviews and a document review by team members indicated that the scope and sequence documents are not being used effectively as a basis for standards-based instruction and that teachers are not being provided sufficient support to develop standards-based lesson and units.

1. In some cases, curriculum documents do not include sufficient specificity in key elements commonly found in standards-based curriculum documents such as objectives, resources, instructional strategies, pacing guides, and measureable outcomes or assessments.
  2. The curriculum guides are program based.
    - a. Interviews with both teachers and school leaders indicated that the methodology used to develop curriculum guides generally involved matching existing commercially produced programs with Common Core Standards.
      - i. These interviews further confirmed that the process did not include the creation of standards-based units of study and lesson plans by teachers.
      - ii. When asked about the practice of explicit, standards-based instruction in the district, one interviewee expressed the opinion that teachers struggle when asked to design standards-based units because of the history of administrative monitoring of instruction that focused on teachers being required to be on a particular page in the textbook at a certain time.
  3. School leaders noted that the emphasis on textbook coverage in the district may have hindered the practice of teachers producing standards-based units of study and lessons that meet specific student needs.
- B.** The district has not clearly communicated its expectations concerning the teaching of the district's curriculum.
1. School leaders agreed that the teachers do not have a common understanding of their responsibility to teach the district's curriculum.
    - a. A school leader said that it is a challenge to communicate clear expectations to teachers because the district has not established a common curriculum marked by standards-based units, lesson plans, and assessments.
    - b. One school leader spoke of the absence of consistency across district classrooms and another made reference to an absence of vision and clarity about curriculum in the district.
    - c. In several interviews, teachers mentioned the general absence of curricular direction in the district and noted frequent changes in priority because of numerous administrative changes in the district.
- C.** The district cannot ensure that the written curriculum is taught.
1. School leaders expressed concerns that the curriculum is difficult to monitor in its current form and said that it should be aligned to the Common Core through teacher-produced units and lesson plans before meaningful monitoring can take place.

2. The principals stated that they supported re-establishing the district's practice of reviewing lesson plans in order to ensure fidelity to the curriculum. The collective bargaining agreement "permits school leaders to collect lesson plans in order to monitor the quality of instruction in the schools."

**Impact:** Without a guaranteed, comprehensive, and viable standards-based curriculum, the district and its schools are hindered in their efforts to meet the needs of students. Without specific standards-based units and lessons for all subjects that are teacher-developed and implemented with fidelity, the district does not have assurance that teachers are systematically teaching current state frameworks and that students have access to a high-quality, rigorous curriculum. Furthermore, without uniform implementation of a detailed standards-based curriculum, the schools are without the foundation for reliable student assessments, valid targeted interventions, and appropriate program evaluations.

**7. Teachers do not have a common understanding of a model of high- quality, standards-based instruction that is characterized by clear objectives, a range of appropriate instructional strategies, consistent assessment of learning, and tiered intervention.**

- A. Interviews with teachers and school leaders indicated that a common model of effective instruction is not in place throughout the district.
  1. Administrators shared a document with the review team entitled *Effective Teaching Strategies*, which provides elements of an effective instructional model.
    - a. Teachers, however, appeared generally unaware of the document and school leaders confirmed that it is not currently being used to frame effective instruction in the district.
    - b. District leaders reported that the document was created in order to establish a common model of high-quality instruction as part of the superintendent's goals and those of other administrators. They said that the document was presented to the school committee and that this common model of effective teaching will be used going forward.
- B. School leaders said that the district should adopt a shared instructional model that is research based and that can provide a common language of practice to promote instructional consistency.
- C. Teachers expressed a concern that the district has not completed the shift to an instructional model that incorporates the *2011 Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks*. One teacher stated, "I don't think that everyone has bought into it, or understands it. There is a big shift and I don't think we have made it."
- D. Interviews with school leaders and classroom observations showed that many teachers have not established a focus on standards by regularly communicating learning objectives to students.

1. The team observed teachers clearly and consistently communicating clear learning objectives (#8) in 25 percent of visited classrooms.
  - a. However, there was strong evidence of explicit reference to objectives in many of the middle school mathematics lessons observed by the team. In their implementation of the *Digits* curriculum, teachers were observed making frequent reference to learning objectives and in many cases, making explicit reference to prior objectives for clarity.
- E. The team also noted a relatively narrow range of instructional strategies in the district. The review team found clear and consistent evidence of teachers using appropriate instructional strategies well matched to learning objectives and content (#9) in 50 percent of visited classrooms and in 62 percent of classrooms in the middle school.
  1. The use of multiple resources to meet all students' diverse learning needs (#5) was found in 36 percent of classroom observed by the team. The use of modifications for English language Learners and students with disabilities (#10) was clearly and consistently evident in only 29 percent of observed classes.
  2. Classes, especially in the middle school, were characterized by the traditional arrangement of classroom furniture and a high level of "teacher talk"; while generally well behaved, students were usually not actively engaged in the learning process.
    - a. While students clearly and consistently assumed responsibility for their learning (#20) in 75 percent of all classrooms observed, review team members saw evidence of students elaborating about content and ideas (#20) in 29 percent of visited classes; students articulating their thinking (#18) in 39 percent of observed classrooms; and students inquiring, exploring, applying, analyzing, synthesizing and/or evaluating knowledge or concepts (#19) in 46 percent of visited classes.
  3. School leaders also described relatively low levels of engagement and differentiation in classrooms.
- F. The district's assessment and intervention strategies have been uneven; however, promising practices are emerging in the district. See Curriculum Strength Finding #1 and Assessment Strength finding #3 above.
  1. Formal systems of intervention are absent in the middle school and generally confined to ELA in the elementary school; however, the grade 1 team provides math interventions and the grade 3 team is developing an assessment and intervention model that it was planning to pilot in January 2015.

**Impact:** Without communication to all educators of a model of high-quality, standards-based instruction, sufficient support for educators in its implementation, and the use of appropriate strategies to ensure that students engage in higher-order thinking, the district is hindered in its efforts to improve instruction and learning.

## ***Assessment***

**8. The district does not have consistent districtwide processes or practices to collect and analyze student achievement data to improve instructional practice or to evaluate programs and services. There is limited analysis of data to improve the achievement of high-needs students.**

- A.** The superintendent annually produces a Data Analysis Report (DAR), which contains the district's "MCAS improvement process" and guides teachers at each grade level in identifying "student weaknesses." The 2014 draft DAR provided by the district states that the districtwide report "is offered to the schools and community in an effort to compile test information in one central document to facilitate the improvement of instruction and student achievement."
1. The DAR also contains elementary and middle school action plans, with steps, timelines, and the types of assessments used to measure implementation. While grade-level and subject area teacher teams review the data in the DAR, the review team did not find evidence of an expectation or structure in place to review and analyze patterns of student achievement across classes at each grade, or vertically K-8. District leaders and teachers said that there are no formal data teams at the grade, school, or district level.
- B.** Data collection and analysis practices vary among grade levels and between schools. There is little coordination between grades, or between elementary and middle schools.
1. At some grade levels, some teachers work together to analyze data. At other grade levels, individual teachers review their own student data, but do not collaborate with colleagues. One administrator said that while there are grade-level structures in place, they are used inconsistently. At the middle school, at most grade levels, there is a single content area teacher. Middle school teachers told the team that students are monitored during the year but that information is not carried through to the next year.
  2. There is no structure in place for discussions about assessment data at the transition grades. For example, one teacher at the middle school said that teachers heard that grade 4 students were doing well, noting "but we don't know what they (teachers) are doing." In an interview teachers suggested that teachers in grades 4-5 might sit together "to see what models they are using" to see what was working well.
- C.** Teachers use data to identify students who are not progressing and to determine appropriate interventions. There is some evidence that teachers are using data to inform daily instruction.
1. Two grade levels at the elementary school have begun to use data about student performance to make decisions about instructional practices, but this practice is not in place beyond the two grade levels. An interviewee told the team that at the middle school, there is uneven data literacy and limited use of data to improve instruction. Another interviewee

noted that at the elementary level, assessments “drive grades but are not currently used to drive instructional changes.”

2. Training in the use of data to inform instruction may be a factor. According to TELL Mass 2014 survey data, 37 percent of Acushnet teachers who responded indicated that they needed professional development in using student assessments to teach students more effectively and 36 percent noted that they needed professional development in using data to drive instructional decision making.
    - a. District leaders reported that at the beginning of the 2014-2015 school year teachers were trained in the use of the Galileo assessment.
- D.** There are no formal processes in place to evaluate the impact of programs on student achievement, and little data to indicate whether or not programs are achieving their objectives.
1. Interviewees told the team that some programs, such as Empowering Writers, were selected by leaders based on the analysis of MCAS student performance. However, teachers and leaders told the team that once programs are adopted, there are no evaluation processes in place to check for effectiveness. One interviewee noted, “We don’t accomplish things; we start and then we walk away,” asking “Why don’t we finish an initiative before [implementing] a new one?”
  2. Another interviewee reported that the selection of Reading Street as a literacy program was “somewhat collaborative” with teachers, but that there was no implementation plan or a plan for monitoring its effectiveness.
- E.** The district has limited processes in place to monitor the progress of its high-needs students or the effectiveness of support programs.
1. The superintendent, in the Data Analysis Report (DAR) for 2013 and draft report for 2014, reports on the MCAS performance of subgroups as compared with state-level data in order to identify problem areas at each grade level. Teachers prepare action plans to address these areas.
  2. The district does not have formal processes or structures in place to further analyze this data to determine which factors or programs may be contributing to, or inhibiting, improvement in sub-group student achievement.
    - a. One administrator expressed concern that interventions over time for students on IEPs did not result in improved achievement. Another raised questions about service delivery models and students’ accessibility to high-quality curriculum. Yet another told the team that there was no time to run the types of reports that could lead to this type of analysis.

3. New school leaders are beginning to address high-needs data. The elementary principal told the team that she has begun to triangulate the data on high-needs students to find patterns and correlations. The middle school principal is beginning to gather data on students who have graduated from the middle school and who currently attend the three public high schools attended by Acushnet students.

**Impact:** Limited processes and practices to analyze data and identify patterns and trends that could lead to changes in instruction and curriculum hinder staff ability to identify and address factors that may be contributing to or preventing improved student achievement for all students, and students in the high-needs groups, in particular.

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

**9. The district's professional development (PD) program is loosely linked to district priorities and is missing the components of an effective PD program, including clear goals and objectives.**

- A. Professional development (PD) offerings are loosely linked to priorities identified in the District Improvement Plan (DIP) and the analysis of student achievement data.
  1. District administrators expressed the view that PD was broadly aligned with student achievement goals; however, there was no other specific professional development alignment.
  2. Middle school teachers said the district did not have a professional development committee and that the superintendent determined professional development programs. They noted that some PD---such as Keys to Vocabulary and close reading strategies---was effective, but that there was no follow-through. Others told the team that there was no system in place to track which teachers attended each PD offering and no procedures in place to assess whether the PD had translated to improvements in instruction.
  3. The superintendent said there was little connection between the school improvement plans and PD and that a better job could be done.
- B. PD offerings do not have clear goals and objectives; they appear to be program driven rather than student outcome driven. PD programs are not evaluated for effectiveness.
  1. In the DIP 2013-2016, the professional development and mentoring goal states: "Develop and enhance instruction through professional development, mentoring, evaluations, PLC's, technology, and the dissemination of information." A list of 23 programs for professional staff follows, some of which are listed as "potential PD." They are neither prioritized, nor do they specify who would attend or how and when these trainings would take place.

2. PD offerings are often linked to program purchases such as Galileo, and ELA and math textbook series such as *Reading Street*. Some teachers reported that for programs such as PBIS at the middle school they received limited training and that, as a result, the program had not been fully implemented. Some teachers noted that PD choices have been driven by district leaders' interests and that follow through on these programs suffered when leaders moved out of the district.
- C. The district does not have a culture of shared best practices. For example, teachers told the review team that although some specials teachers are able to attend PD offerings outside of the district, they are not obligated to return to their schools and classrooms to share or implement their newly acquired learning. As noted earlier, although the district uses the CIA structure for biweekly meetings, some teachers work collaboratively at each grade level and others analyze data on their own.

**Impact:** Because the district's professional development program is loosely linked to district priorities it cannot provide a coherent set of learning experiences for teachers that will result in improved student achievement. Without clear goals, professional development programs cannot be accurately assessed for effectiveness, nor can the district ensure that its investment in teacher training is sustainable and relevant. Without a coherent professional development system in place, the goal of connecting the educator evaluation system and professional development is compromised.

### ***Student Support***

#### **10. ELA, math, and science and technology/engineering proficiency rates and growth for selected subgroups declined between 2013 and 2014, and were lower than those of statewide peers.**

**Structures currently in place are not sufficient to meet the needs of all learners.**

- A. ELA and math proficiency rates for high-needs students, students from low-income families, and students with disabilities declined between 2013 and 2014. Science proficiency rates for students with disabilities also declined in that period. See Appendix B, Tables B3a-B3c.
- B. The percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced in the district in the 2014 MCAS cycle in ELA, math, and science and technology/engineering was lower in specific subgroups as compared with their peers in the state.
  1. The percentage of high-needs students scoring proficient or higher in ELA was 38 percent as compared with 50 percent for their peers in the state. In math, the percentage of high-needs students scoring proficient or higher was 37 percent as compared with 40 percent for their peers in the state.
  2. The percentage of students from low-income families scoring proficient or higher in ELA was 49 percent as compared with 51 percent for their peers in the state. Math performance was

- slightly stronger with 42 percent of students achieving proficient or higher as compared with 41 percent of their peers in the state.
3. The percentage of students with disabilities scoring proficient or higher in ELA was 12 percent as compared with 31 percent for their peers in the state. In math, the percentage was 17 percent as compared with 22 percent of their peers in the state.
- C.** In 2014 the Composite Performance Index (CPI) in science and technology/engineering for students with disabilities was 53.6 as compared with 60.1 for their peers in the state. The CPI in science and technology/engineering for students with disabilities decreased from 60.3 in 2013 to 53.6 in 2014; the CPI for their state peers increased from 59.8 to 60.1 in the same period.
- D.** The elementary and middle schools have instituted Student Teacher Assistance Teams (STATs) to respond to academic, social, emotional, and behavioral needs of students identified by teachers.
1. Although these teams are designed to consider strategies to better respond to students' needs, interviewees reported that teachers at both levels "struggle with students outside the norm." Perceptions about the effectiveness of STATs vary.
    - a. Some administrators expressed a concern that there is over-identification of students with disabilities. They also expressed a view that when a student is not doing well academically, staff may conclude that the student has a learning disability rather than considering the need for differentiation in instruction. However, another administrator told the team that there had been "dramatic improvement" in the number of referrals for students for special education services, and that the district had put into place "a menu of accommodations and services for struggling students." The district has developed an extensive DCAP (district curriculum accommodation plan) as a resource for interventions for students.
    - b. An external review of the district's special education services<sup>2</sup> found that "several staff" expressed concern "about the efficacy of the pre-referral process in both schools."
- E.** The district's Response to Intervention (RTI) tiered instruction model is implemented inconsistently and may not meet the needs of all students.
1. RTI at the elementary school is currently designed to provide fluency remediation, using data from DIBELS Next three times a year to monitor progress. The principal told the review team that grade 1 also uses the RTI model for math support.
  2. RTI at the middle school is implemented inconsistently. Interviewees said that the biggest hurdle for implementing RTI at the middle school is the schedule, making it difficult to group students for re-teaching.

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<sup>2</sup> The Program Review of the Special Education Programs by Walker Partnerships in fall, 2013.

- a. The middle school instituted an enrichment period at the beginning of the 2014-2015 school year. Administrators and teachers told the team that the enrichment model as currently configured is not working. The new principal told the team that he has a committee that plans to examine how to address the scheduling issue.
- F.** The current model of service delivery to students with special needs limits the role of the classroom teacher as a provider of access to high-quality curriculum.
1. School and program leaders shared concerns with the team about “ownership” of students particularly when support services are delivered within or outside the classroom. For example, when asked about a model of co-teaching, one interviewee said, “There is one team interested in this; it hasn’t become a cohesive plan.” Another interviewee said about co-teaching, “There are some teachers who think that it [co-teaching] is not their role.” The district has not developed a plan for, or model of, co-teaching where both teachers instruct collaboratively.
  2. In observed classrooms, the quality of differentiation of instruction was inconsistent across the district. For example, in 47 percent of elementary classrooms visited there was clear and consistent evidence of multiple resources available to meet all students’ diverse learning needs (#5). At the middle school, the team found clear and consistent evidence of multiple resources available to meet all students’ diverse learning needs in 23 percent of the classrooms visited. Similarly, in 40 percent of elementary classrooms visited and in 15 percent of middle school classrooms visited, there was clear and consistent evidence of the teacher using appropriate modifications for English language learners and students with disabilities (#10). The use of technology as a tool for differentiation was low: in 7 percent of elementary classrooms and in 0 percent of the middle school classrooms the team clearly and consistently saw students using technology as a tool for learning and/or understanding (#22).
  3. Professional development in these areas may not be adequate. According to the 2014 TELL Mass survey results, of Acushnet teachers who responded:
    - a. More than half (52 percent) indicated that they need additional training in differentiating instruction.
    - b. More than half (56 percent) said they need additional training in teaching students with disabilities.
    - c. Fewer than half of the teachers (42 percent) agreed or strongly agreed that PD is differentiated to meet their needs.
- G.** A review of the Walker Report showed that some of its findings about the district’s special education services were aligned with evidence gathered in review team interviews and observations, including:
1. Special education teachers are underused.

2. There are limited examples of co-teaching.
3. The model of service delivery K-8 is inconsistent.
4. The STATs process has not worked adequately for some students who are not making progress.

**Impact:** The support structures currently in place are not meeting the needs of all learners, as seen in the declines in performance on the 2014 MCAS tests for many students. And the uneven implementation of support interrupts the continuity for student learning of high-quality curriculum. The absence of clarity around ownership for the learning of students, coupled with inconsistent differentiation, further jeopardizes the opportunities for improved instruction and achievement in the district.

# Acushnet Public Schools District Review Recommendations

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## ***Leadership and Governance***

- 1. The district should develop cohesive improvement planning and budget development processes and provide appropriate stakeholders, including principals, the opportunity to develop district goals and priorities.**
  - A.** Under the leadership of the superintendent, a working group with wide representation should analyze student performance and other data and develop a District Improvement Plan (DIP).
    1. It is critically important that this stakeholder group recognize, and be committed to, the role of the DIP in creating a blueprint for student success, achieving greater teacher effectiveness, and strongly influencing each school improvement plan.
  - B.** The DIP should include the district’s mission or vision, goals, and priorities for action.
    1. DIP goals should be SMART (specific and strategic; measurable; action oriented; rigorous, realistic, and results focused; and timed and tracked).
  - C.** The DIP’s performance goals for students should drive the development, implementation, and modification of the district’s educational programs.
    1. School Improvement Plans (SIPs) should be created in alignment with the DIP, and based on the analysis of student achievement data.
      - a. Principals should regularly communicate progress toward SIP goals to the superintendent, school committee, and staff.
      - b. The principal should use the SIP to inform his/her self-assessment and goal setting process when creating the Educator Plan, and progress toward Educator Plan goals should be used as evidence during implementation.
    2. The identified district and school priorities established in the improvement plans should be supported by appropriate allocation of resources that are clearly identified in the improvement plans and in the annual district budget. The practice of relying on end-of-year account balances to fund priorities should be re-examined and replaced with a budgeting process that is more directly linked with district and school improvement planning.
    3. Professional development should be designed to support DIP initiatives and goals.
  - D.** The DIP should be used as a tool for continuous improvement.
    1. The superintendent should periodically report to the school committee, staff, families, and community on progress toward achieving DIP goals.

2. The district should establish procedures to review the DIP annually. Strategic activities and benchmarks should be adjusted when necessary to meet current conditions.
- E. The formal communication process for district and school leaders should provide a structured and open forum to identify district and school needs and direction and provide a consistent message to stakeholders.
1. Regularly scheduled, timely, and agenda-driven administrative meetings should be conducted.

Recommended resources:

- *The Massachusetts Definition of College and Career Readiness* (<http://www.mass.edu/library/documents/2013College&CareerReadinessDefinition.pdf>) is a set of learning competencies, intellectual capacities and experiences essential for all students to become lifelong learners; positive contributors to their families, workplaces and communities; and successfully engaged citizens of a global 21st century. This could be a helpful resource as the district articulates its vision and goals.
- *Massachusetts Transfer Goals* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/candi/model/MATransferGoals.pdf>) are long range goals that students should work toward over the course of their PK-12 academic experience. They were written to provide an explicit connection between the standards-based Model Curriculum Units and Massachusetts' definition of College and Career Readiness. They are not recommended for use as a checklist, evaluation tool, or as an assessment tool, but they could be a helpful resource for the district as it articulates a vision and engages in long-term planning.
- ESE's *Planning for Success* tools (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/research/success/>) support the improvement planning process by spotlighting practices, characteristics, and behaviors that support effective planning and implementation and meet existing state requirements for improvement planning.
- *District Accelerated Improvement Planning - 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.
- *What Makes a Goal Smarter?* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/eval/resources/presentations/SMARTGoals/Handout5.pdf>) is a description of SMART goals with accompanying examples. The handout was designed to support educators in developing goals as part of the educator evaluation system, but could also be a useful reference for the district as it develops or refines its DIP and SIPs.

**Benefits:** A focused effort to develop and communicate a District Improvement Plan and to include appropriate stakeholders in the process will help to further establish a culture of collaboration and trust among all stakeholders and to refocus the energy of the district on greater teacher effectiveness and

improved student achievement. The DIP and the SIPs will provide guidance and ensure that the work at each level is intentionally designed to accomplish the district's short- and long-term goals.

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

#### **2. The district should build upon its emerging instructional and intervention practices to fully implement the 2011 Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks through the identification and communication of a shared instructional model and support of teachers in its implementation.**

- A.** The district should convene a representative group of leaders and teachers to define the characteristics of high-quality instruction.
  - 1. The district should consider further development of the elements contained in its *Effective Teaching Practices* document to support this work.
    - a. The recommended product of these meetings is a model that bases instruction on clear objectives, uses multiple instructional strategies to promote higher-order thinking, promotes high levels of student engagement, and benefits from frequent assessment of practice and student performance.
- B.** Once a model of instructional practice is identified and defined, district administrators should develop a plan to share instructional expectations with staff.
  - 1. The district is encouraged to provide opportunities for educators to discuss ideas and strategies from the instructional model. These opportunities might include grade level, department meetings, faculty meetings, common planning time, or professional development days.
  - 2. The administrative team is also encouraged to conduct non-evaluative walkthroughs in pairs/small groups, to generalize and share feedback about trends observed, and to discuss improvement strategies regularly with teachers.
  - 3. The schools should use understanding gained through the walkthroughs to inform the district's instructional model and curriculum. This work is currently underway in various forms at CIA meetings and will be bolstered by clear vision and support from the district.
    - a. Priorities should be sequenced based upon critical need and capacity and included as annual goals in school improvement plans.
    - b. As plans are implemented, walkthroughs should continue in order to assess the success of implementation and to establish new priorities as instructional practice improves.
- C.** Teachers should be provided with appropriate guidance and feedback as they implement the model.

1. Job-embedded professional development should focus on elements of the instructional model, and especially skills associated with differentiation and modifications to instruction.
2. Principals, as instructional leaders, should ensure that teachers have the information and support necessary to meet the district's expectations for instruction.
3. Teachers should receive frequent, helpful feedback that helps them to continually improve their instruction.

**Recommended resources:**

- ESE's *Learning Walkthrough Implementation Guide* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/dart/walk/ImplementationGuide.pdf>) is a resource to support instructional leaders in establishing a walkthrough process and culture of collaboration.
  - Appendix 4, *Characteristics of Standards-Based Teaching and Learning: Continuum of Practice* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/dart/walk/04.0.pdf>) is a framework that provides a common language or reference point for looking at teaching and learning.
- The March 2014 ESE Educator Evaluation e-Newsletter (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/eeval/communications/newsletter/2014-03.pdf>) includes a section called *Implementation Spotlight: Strategies for Focusing Observations and Providing Consistent, Constructive Feedback*.
- ESE's *Common Core State Standards Initiative web page* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/candi/commoncore/>) includes links to several resources designed to support the transition to the 2011 Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, which incorporate the Common Core.
- *Creating Curriculum Units at the Local Level* ([http://www.doe.mass.edu/candi/model/mcu\\_guide.pdf](http://www.doe.mass.edu/candi/model/mcu_guide.pdf)) is a guidance document that can serve as a resource for professional study groups, as a reference for anyone wanting to engage in curriculum development, or simply as a way to gain a better understanding of the process used to develop Massachusetts' Model Curriculum Units.
- *Creating Model Curriculum Units* (<http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLTuqmiQ9ssquWrLjKc9h5h2cSpDVZqe6t>) is a series of videos that captures the collaboration and deep thinking by curriculum design teams over the course of a full year as they worked to develop Massachusetts' Model Curriculum Units. The series includes videos about developing essential questions, establishing goals, creating embedded performance assessments, designing lesson plans, selecting high-quality materials, and evaluating the curriculum unit.
- *Model Curriculum Units* ([http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLTuqmiQ9ssqvX\\_Yjra4nBfqQPwc4auUBu](http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLTuqmiQ9ssqvX_Yjra4nBfqQPwc4auUBu)) is a video series that shows examples of the implementation of Massachusetts' Model Curriculum Units.

- The *Model Curriculum Unit and Lesson Plan Template* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/candi/model/MCUtemplate.pdf>) includes Understanding by Design elements. It could be useful for Acushnet’s curriculum development and revision.
- ESE’s *Quality Review Rubrics* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/candi/model/rubrics/>) can support the analysis and improvement of curriculum units.
- *Curriculum Mapping: Raising the Rigor of Teaching and Learning* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/Candl/model/maps/CurriculumMaps.pdf>) is a presentation that provides definitions of curriculum mapping, examples of model maps, and descriptions of curriculum mapping processes.
- Sample curriculum maps (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/candi/model/maps/default.html>) were designed to assist schools and districts with making sense of students’ learning experiences over time, ensuring a viable and guaranteed curriculum, establishing learning targets, and aligning curriculum to ensure a consistent implementation of the MA Frameworks.

**Benefits** for implementing this recommendation include clear and articulated expectations for administrators and teachers for what constitutes high-quality teaching. This will provide a common language that will facilitate more focused feedback and professional development. A district that prioritizes high-quality instruction for all students creates and sustains a culture of continuous improvement, resulting in professional growth and increased student achievement.

### ***Assessment***

- 3. The district should further develop policies, structures, and practices for the continuous collection, analysis, and dissemination of student performance and other data sources, and ensure that they are uniform and integrated.**
  - A.** The superintendent, principals and program leaders, in collaboration with teachers, should ensure that specific strategies, timelines, and clear expectations for the use of data are in place districtwide.
    1. Building on the practices in place in some grade levels, the district should establish systematic, consistent processes for the analysis and use of assessment data.
      - a. Common K-8 protocols to facilitate data collection, dissemination, and use should be developed; these protocols should include mathematics and science.
    2. The district should ensure that educators at all levels use data strategically to inform instruction, ongoing curriculum revision, program evaluation, and the educator evaluation system.

- a. The district should continue its work identifying and using DDMs, and develop the processes by which teachers will be trained and supported in their use as a tool to improve teaching and learning.
- B.** Ongoing, targeted training in the collection, analysis, and use of student performance data should be provided for staff in each school, grade level, and subject area.
1. Training should include, for appropriate staff, the development of skills to use EWIS (Early Warning Indicator System) and Edwin Analytics for making decisions about high-needs students.
  2. The district's leaders and teachers should review how CIAs and grade-level meetings are used; these could provide opportunities for more frequent data analysis to improve response time to student performance data.
- C.** District and school leaders should systematically incorporate student assessment results and other pertinent data into all aspects of policy, prioritization, and decision making, including budget development, district and school improvement plans, and the evaluation of educational programs and services.

**Recommended resources:**

ESE's Assessment Literacy Self-Assessment and Gap Analysis Tool (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/eval/ddm/webinar/PartI-GapAnalysis.pdf>) is intended to support districts in understanding where their educators fit overall on a continuum of assessment literacy. After determining where the district as a whole generally falls on the continuum, the district can determine potential next steps.

*District Data Team Toolkit* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/ucd/ddtt/toolkit.pdf>) is a set of resources to help a district establish, grow, and maintain a culture of inquiry and data use through a District Data Team.

The *Edwin Analytics* web page (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edwin/analytics/>) includes links to a Getting Started Guide, as well as a video tutorial series.

*District-Determined Measures*

(<http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLTuqmiQ9ssquEalxpfpzD6qG9zxvPWl0c>) is a series of videos featuring different aspects of the development and use of District-Determined Measures (DDMs).

**Benefits** from implementing this recommendation will include clarity and consistency in the district's use of data for decision making. It will help district leaders and teachers to understand, and provide professional development for, the analysis and use of data to improve instructional skills and raise student achievement. It will help all stakeholders to evaluate programs, texts, and services. It will enable the district to provide all students, including high-needs learners, with greatly improved learning opportunities and academic outcomes.

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

### **4. The district should align its professional development program with district improvement initiatives.**

- A.** District leaders should create a professional development (PD) committee to plan and oversee PD for the district.
  - 1. The committee should develop a PD plan for the district that is aligned with the District Improvement Plan and the district’s instructional model (see Leadership and Governance and Curriculum and Instruction recommendations above).
    - a. As part of this effort, the committee should outline and document a set of learning experiences for its educators that is systematic, sustained, and aligned with district goals.
  - 2. The plan should identify specific PD needs, determine how they might be met, and recommend adjustments in PD practices to meet them.
  - 3. The plan should address needs indicated by student performance data and trends from classroom observations. It should include goals focused on improving teacher practice and student outcomes.
  - 4. Professional development requires a long-term commitment by administrators and embedded support structures, such as facilitated team meetings, to convey and promote a common understanding of instructional practices expected from all educators.

#### **Recommended resources:**

*The Massachusetts Standards for Professional Development*

(<http://www.doe.mass.edu/pd/standards.pdf>) describe, identify, and characterize what high quality learning experiences should look like for educators.

*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.

*The Relationship between High Quality Professional Development and Educator Evaluation*

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R-aDxtEDncg&list=PLTuqmiQ9ssqtEmOcWkDEHPKBqRvurebm&index=1>) is a video presentation that includes examples from real districts.

**Benefits** from implementing this recommendation will include a clearer understanding of the district’s expectations about professional development, and the development of a system that prioritizes student learning, supports teachers as lifelong learners, and helps to implement best practices throughout the

district. A high-quality professional development program coupled with the time and resources already available in the district will likely lead to educator growth and improved student achievement.

### ***Student Support***

#### **5. District leaders, teachers, and staff should work collaboratively to improve practices and programs so that they are more effective in supporting and improving learning for all students.**

- A.** District leaders should work collaboratively with teachers, staff, and other stakeholders to improve practices with the goal of full integration and continuity of support services.
  - 1. District leaders should analyze student performance data from multiple sources over time to better understand the causes for declining achievement among some subgroups, to better target student supports, and to plan improvements in programs and service delivery.
  - 2. All teaching and support staff should receive focused professional development in effectively using differentiation and accommodation to create classrooms where all students have equal access to high-quality curriculum.
  - 3. The current RTI program should be closely reviewed and modified so that the role of classroom teachers as Tier 1 providers and specialists as Tier 2 providers is more broadly defined and better integrated.

#### **Recommended resources:**

- The *Massachusetts Tiered System of Support (MTSS)* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/mtss/>) is 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.  
  
MTSS Self-Assessment Overview (includes links to the MTSS Self-Assessment tool and *How to Complete the MTSS Self-Assessment*): <http://www.doe.mass.edu/mtss/sa/>
- ESE's *Early Warning Indicator System* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edwin/analytics/ewis.html>) is a tool to provide information to districts about the likelihood that their students will reach key academic goals. Districts can use the tool in conjunction with other data and sources of information to better target student supports and interventions and to examine school-level patterns over time in order to address systemic issues that may impede students' ability to meet academic goals.

**Benefits:** by implementing this recommendation the district will be better able to understand and respond to the factors that are contributing to under-performance of students in high needs subgroups. This will help to ensure that the district improves programs and practices so that all students have equal access to high-quality instruction that meets their individual needs.

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

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### Review Team Members

The review was conducted from December 8-11, 2014, by the following team of independent ESE consultants.

1. Dr. Fred Savoie, leadership and governance, financial and asset management
2. Dr. Tom Pandiscio, curriculum and instruction
3. Christine Brandt, assessment and human resources, *review team coordinator*
4. Willette Johnson, student support and professional development

### District Review Activities

The following activities were conducted during the review:

The team conducted interviews with the following financial personnel: the business manager and the senior account clerk.

The team conducted interviews with the following members of the school committee: the chairman and two members.

The review team conducted interviews with the following representatives of the teachers' association: the president, two co-vice-presidents, the treasurer, and one building representative.

The team conducted interviews/focus groups with the following central office administrators: the superintendent, the director of technology, and the director of special education.

The team visited the following schools: Ford Middle School (grades 5-8), and Acushnet Elementary School (PK-4).

During school visits, the team conducted interviews with two principals and focus groups with five elementary school teachers and three middle school teachers.

The team observed 28 classes in the district: 13 at the middle school, and 15 at the elementary school.

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. The team also reviewed an external report provided by the district: The Program Review of the Special Education Programs by Walker Partnerships in fall, 2013.
- All completed program and administrator evaluations, and a random selection of completed teacher evaluations.
- The 2014 TELL Mass survey results for Acushnet.

**Site Visit Schedule**

<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>
12/8/2014	12/9/2014	12/10/2014	12/11/2014
Orientation with district leaders and principals; interviews with district staff and principals; document reviews; interview with teachers’ association.	Interviews with district staff and principals; review of personnel files; teacher focus groups; parent focus group; interview with school committee member and visits to Acushnet Elementary School and Ford Middle School for classroom observations.	Interviews with town or city personnel; interviews with school leaders; interviews with school committee members; visits to Acushnet Elementary School and Ford Middle School for classroom observations.	Interviews with school leaders; follow-up interviews; district review team meeting; visits to Acushnet Elementary School and Ford Middle School for classroom observations; emerging themes meeting with district leaders and principals.

## Appendix B: Enrollment, Performance, Expenditures

**Table B1a: Acushnet Public Schools  
2013-2014 Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity**

Student Group	District	Percent of Total	State	Percent of Total
African-American	6	0.6%	82,990	8.7%
Asian	3	0.3%	58,455	6.1%
Hispanic	12	1.2%	162,647	17.0%
Native American	--	--	2,209	0.2%
White	969	97.7%	620,628	64.9%
Native Hawaiian	--	--	1,007	0.1%
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	2	0.2%	27,803	2.9%
<b>All Students</b>	992	100.0%	955,739	100.0%

Note: As of October 1, 2013

**Table B1b: Acushnet Public Schools  
2013-2014 Student Enrollment by High Needs Populations**

Student Groups	District			State		
	N	Percent of High Needs	Percent of District	N	Percent of High Needs	Percent of State
Students w/ disabilities	183	53.5%	18.4%	164,336	36.0%	17.2%
Low Income	238	69.6%	24.0%	365,885	80.1%	38.3%
ELLs and Former ELLs	6	1.8%	0.6%	75,947	16.6%	7.9%
All high needs students	342	100.0%	34.5%	456,639	100.0%	47.8%

Notes: As of October 1, 2013. District and state numbers and percentages for students with disabilities and high needs students are calculated including students in out-of-district placements. Total district enrollment including students in out-of-district placement is 1,015; total state enrollment including students in out-of-district placement is 965,602.

**Table B2a: Acushnet Public Schools  
English Language Arts Performance, 2011-2014**

Grade and Measure		Number Included (2014)	Spring MCAS Year					Gains and Declines	
			2011	2012	2013	2014	State 2014	4-Year Trend	2 Year Trend
3	CPI	112	85.8	92.6	83.6	84.2	82.6	-1.6	0.6
	P+	112	57.0%	75.0%	61.0%	53.0%	57.0%	-4.0%	-8.0%
4	CPI	77	81.3	83.9	86.4	83.8	79.1	2.5	-2.6
	P+	77	57.0%	59.0%	64.0%	62.0%	54.0%	5.0%	-2.0%
	SGP	74	53	58	54.5	64	49	11	9.5
5	CPI	118	87	81	86	86.4	84.5	-0.6	0.4
	P+	118	69.0%	58.0%	63.0%	62.0%	64.0%	-7.0%	-1.0%
	SGP	116	47	42	53	30.5	50	-16.5	-22.5
6	CPI	115	87.9	85.9	84.5	80.7	85.8	-7.2	-3.8
	P+	115	73.0%	66.0%	65.0%	61.0%	68.0%	-12.0%	-4.0%
	SGP	110	52.5	55	47	31.5	50	-21	-15.5
7	CPI	115	92.7	89.2	88.9	85.9	88.3	-6.8	-3
	P+	115	79.0%	74.0%	70.0%	67.0%	72.0%	-12.0%	-3.0%
	SGP	111	54	50	36.5	43	50	-11	6.5
8	CPI	113	94.2	93.5	94.2	92.5	90.2	-1.7	-1.7
	P+	113	85.0%	86.0%	84.0%	81.0%	79.0%	-4.0%	-3.0%
	SGP	110	47	42	68.5	53.5	50	6.5	-15
All	CPI	651	88.3	87.8	87.5	85.6	86.7	-2.7	-1.9
	P+	651	70.0%	70.0%	68.0%	64.0%	69.0%	-6.0%	-4.0%
	SGP	522	51	48	50	42	50	-9	-8

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.

**Table B2b: Acushnet Public Schools  
Mathematics Performance, 2011-2014**

Grade and Measure		Number Included (2014)	Spring MCAS Year					Gains and Declines	
			2011	2012	2013	2014	State 2014	4-Year Trend	2 Year Trend
3	CPI	112	84.9	87.1	88.5	84.4	85.1	-0.5	-4.1
	P+	112	60.0%	63.0%	79.0%	65.0%	68.0%	5.0%	-14.0%
4	CPI	77	78.4	81.7	87.1	86.4	79.6	8	-0.7
	P+	77	48.0%	54.0%	64.0%	69.0%	52.0%	21.0%	5.0%
	SGP	74	55	61	71	51.5	50	-3.5	-19.5
5	CPI	118	90	81.4	84.4	81.1	80.4	-8.9	-3.3
	P+	118	80.0%	58.0%	69.0%	60.0%	61.0%	-20.0%	-9.0%
	SGP	116	72.5	54	53.5	33	50	-39.5	-20.5
6	CPI	115	83.1	81.5	83.1	77.2	80.2	-5.9	-5.9
	P+	115	64.0%	59.0%	66.0%	57.0%	60.0%	-7.0%	-9.0%
	SGP	111	43	29	52	43	50	0	-9
7	CPI	115	72.9	83.2	79.6	75.2	72.5	2.3	-4.4
	P+	115	43.0%	66.0%	55.0%	53.0%	50.0%	10.0%	-2.0%
	SGP	111	27	60	53	50	50	23	-3
8	CPI	114	72.5	80	88.4	80.3	74.7	7.8	-8.1
	P+	114	44.0%	56.0%	74.0%	60.0%	52.0%	16.0%	-14.0%
	SGP	111	45	54	68	61	50	16	-7
All	CPI	652	79.7	82.3	84.9	80.4	80.3	0.7	-4.5
	P+	652	56.0%	59.0%	67.0%	60.0%	60.0%	4.0%	-7.0%
	SGP	524	45	53	58	49	50	4	-9

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.

**Table B2c: Acushnet Public Schools  
Science and Technology/Engineering Performance, 2011-2014**

Grade and Measure		Number Included (2014)	Spring MCAS Year					Gains and Declines	
			2011	2012	2013	2014	State 2014	4-Year Trend	2 Year Trend
5	CPI	117	86.6	82.9	81.4	85.9	79	-0.7	4.5
	P+	117	65.0%	64.0%	50.0%	59.0%	53.0%	-6.0%	9.0%
8	CPI	114	80.1	76.3	78.2	74.8	72.4	-5.3	-3.4
	P+	114	47.0%	47.0%	44.0%	40.0%	42.0%	-7.0%	-4.0%
All	CPI	234	83.4	79.2	79.6	80.1	79.6	-3.3	0.5
	P+	234	55.0%	55.0%	47.0%	49.0%	55.0%	-6.0%	2.0%

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.

**Table B3a: Acushnet Public Schools  
English Language Arts (All Grades)  
Performance for Selected Subgroups Compared to State, 2011-2014**

Group and Measure		Number Included (2014)	Spring MCAS Year				Gains and Declines		
			2011	2012	2013	2014	4 Year Trend	2-Year Trend	
High Needs	District	CPI	245	75.7	76.4	76.1	71.9	-3.8	-4.2
		P+	245	43.0%	47.0%	46.0%	38.0%	-5.0%	-8.0%
		SGP	183	44.5	46	48	35	-9.5	-13
	State	CPI	241,069	77	76.5	76.8	77.1	0.1	0.3
		P+	241,069	48.0%	48.0%	48.0%	50.0%	2.0%	2.0%
		SGP	183,766	46	46	47	47	1	0
Low Income	District	CPI	172	79.2	80.5	82.7	78.6	-0.6	-4.1
		P+	172	52.0%	56.0%	60.0%	49.0%	-3.0%	-11.0%
		SGP	128	44	46	50	37	-7	-13
	State	CPI	189,662	77.1	76.7	77.2	77.5	0.4	0.3
		P+	189,662	49.0%	50.0%	50.0%	51.0%	2.0%	1.0%
		SGP	145,621	46	45	47	47	1	0
Students w/ disabilities	District	CPI	120	63.4	62.1	61.3	54.8	-8.6	-6.5
		P+	120	20.0%	22.0%	17.0%	12.0%	-8.0%	-5.0%
		SGP	87	43	42	41	23	-20	-18
	State	CPI	90,777	68.3	67.3	66.8	66.6	-1.7	-0.2
		P+	90,777	30.0%	31.0%	30.0%	31.0%	1.0%	1.0%
		SGP	66,688	42	43	43	43	1	0
English language learners or Former ELLs	District	CPI	8	--	--	--	--	--	--
		P+	8	--	--	--	--	--	--
		SGP	7	--	--	--	--	--	--
	State	CPI	47,477	66.2	66.2	67.4	67.8	1.6	0.4
		P+	47,477	33.0%	34.0%	35.0%	36.0%	3.0%	1.0%
		SGP	32,239	50	51	53	54	4	1
All students	District	CPI	651	88.3	87.8	87.5	85.6	-2.7	-1.9
		P+	651	70.0%	70.0%	68.0%	64.0%	-6.0%	-4.0%
		SGP	522	51	48	50	42	-9	-8
	State	CPI	488,744	87.2	86.7	86.8	86.7	-0.5	-0.1
		P+	488,744	69.0%	69.0%	69.0%	69.0%	0.0%	0.0%
		SGP	390,904	50	50	51	50	0	-1

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 B3b: Acushnet Public Schools  
Mathematics (All Grades)  
Performance for Selected Subgroups Compared to State, 2011-2014**

Group and Measure		Number Included (2014)	Spring MCAS Year				Gains and Declines		
			2011	2012	2013	2014	4 Year Trend	2-Year Trend	
High Needs	District	CPI	246	66.4	70	71.1	65.2	-1.2	-5.9
		P+	246	33.0%	39.0%	45.0%	37.0%	4.0%	-8.0%
		SGP	185	44	49	56	34	-10	-22
	State	CPI	241,896	67.1	67	68.6	68.4	1.3	-0.2
		P+	241,896	37.0%	37.0%	40.0%	40.0%	3.0%	0.0%
		SGP	184,937	46	46	46	47	1	1
Low Income	District	CPI	173	69	73.9	76.4	69.1	0.1	-7.3
		P+	173	38.0%	46.0%	54.0%	42.0%	4.0%	-12.0%
		SGP	130	45	52	60	38.5	-6.5	-21.5
	State	CPI	190,183	67.3	67.3	69	68.8	1.5	-0.2
		P+	190,183	38.0%	38.0%	41.0%	41.0%	3.0%	0.0%
		SGP	146,536	46	45	46	47	1	1
Students w/ disabilities	District	CPI	121	56.5	56.4	56.7	50	-6.5	-6.7
		P+	121	20.0%	19.0%	21.0%	17.0%	-3.0%	-4.0%
		SGP	90	38.5	39	38.5	30.5	-8	-8
	State	CPI	91,181	57.7	56.9	57.4	57.1	-0.6	-0.3
		P+	91,181	22.0%	21.0%	22.0%	22.0%	0.0%	0.0%
		SGP	67,155	43	43	42	43	0	1
English language learners or Former ELLs	District	CPI	8	--	--	--	--	--	--
		P+	8	--	--	--	--	--	--
		SGP	7	--	--	--	--	--	--
	State	CPI	47,847	62	61.6	63.9	63.8	1.8	-0.1
		P+	47,847	32.0%	32.0%	35.0%	36.0%	4.0%	1.0%
		SGP	32,607	52	52	53	52	0	-1
All students	District	CPI	652	79.7	82.3	84.9	80.4	0.7	-4.5
		P+	652	56.0%	59.0%	67.0%	60.0%	4.0%	-7.0%
		SGP	524	45	53	58	49	4	-9
	State	CPI	490,288	79.9	79.9	80.8	80.3	0.4	-0.5
		P+	490,288	58.0%	59.0%	61.0%	60.0%	2.0%	-1.0%
		SGP	392,953	50	50	51	50	0	-1

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 B3c: Acushnet Public Schools  
Science and Technology/Engineering (All Grades)  
Performance for Selected Subgroups Compared to State, 2011-2014**

Group and Measure		Number Included (2014)	Spring MCAS Year				Gains and Declines		
			2011	2012	2013	2014	4 Year Trend	2-Year Trend	
High Needs	District	CPI	78	72.5	66.2	69.8	68.6	-3.9	-1.2
		P+	78	32.0%	33.0%	28.0%	32.0%	0.0%	4.0%
	State	CPI	100,582	63.8	65	66.4	67.3	3.5	0.9
		P+	100,582	28.0%	31.0%	31.0%	33.0%	5.0%	2.0%
Low Income	District	CPI	58	73.7	70.5	75	72	-1.7	-3
		P+	58	40.0%	39.0%	38.0%	40.0%	0.0%	2.0%
	State	CPI	79,199	62.8	64.5	66.1	66.8	4	0.7
		P+	79,199	28.0%	31.0%	32.0%	33.0%	5.0%	1.0%
Students w/ disabilities	District	CPI	35	66.1	53.9	60.3	53.6	-12.5	-6.7
		P+	35	18.0%	18.0%	10.0%	6.0%	-12.0%	-4.0%
	State	CPI	38,628	59.2	58.7	59.8	60.1	0.9	0.3
		P+	38,628	20.0%	20.0%	20.0%	22.0%	2.0%	2.0%
English language learners or Former ELLs	District	CPI	1	--	--	--	--	--	--
		P+	1	--	--	--	--	--	--
	State	CPI	16,871	50.3	51.4	54	54	3.7	0
		P+	16,871	15.0%	17.0%	19.0%	18.0%	3.0%	-1.0%
All students	District	CPI	234	83.4	79.2	79.6	80.1	-3.3	0.5
		P+	234	55.0%	55.0%	47.0%	49.0%	-6.0%	2.0%
	State	CPI	211,440	77.6	78.6	79	79.6	2	0.6
		P+	211,440	52.0%	54.0%	53.0%	55.0%	3.0%	2.0%

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 B4: Acushnet Public Schools  
Attendance Rates, 2011-2014**

Group	School Year Ending				Change 2011-2014		Change 2013-2014		State (2014)
	2011	2012	2013	2014	Percentage Points	Percent Change	Percentage Points	Percent Change	
All students	96.4%	96.3%	96.0%	96.4%	0.0	0.0%	0.4	0.4%	94.9%

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 B5: Acushnet Public Schools  
Suspension Rates, 2010-2013**

Group	School Year Ending				Change 2010-2013		Change 2012-2013		State (2013)
	2010	2011	2012	2013	Percentage Points	Percent Change	Percentage Points	Percent Change	
In-School Suspension Rate	1.1%	1.3%	1.5%	0.4%	-0.7	-63.6%	-1.1	-73.3%	2.2%
Out-of-School Suspension Rate	2.1%	1.9%	1.4%	0.8%	-1.3	-61.9%	-0.6	-42.9%	4.3%

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.

**Table B6: Acushnet Public Schools  
Expenditures, Chapter 70 State Aid, and Net School Spending Fiscal Years 2012–2014**

	FY12		FY13		FY14	
	Estimated	Actual	Estimated	Actual	Estimated	Actual
<b>Expenditures</b>						
<b>From local appropriations for schools:</b>						
By school committee	\$12,259,254	\$11,847,722	\$12,255,918	\$12,169,536	\$12,531,308	\$12,487,071
By municipality	\$3,456,309	\$3,327,725	\$3,339,088	\$3,257,667	\$3,256,975	\$3,229,299
Total from local appropriations	\$15,715,563	\$15,175,447	\$15,595,006	\$15,427,203	\$15,788,283	\$15,716,370
From revolving funds and grants	--	\$1,435,323	--	\$1,164,108	--	\$1,070,792
Total expenditures	--	\$16,610,770	--	\$16,591,311	--	\$16,787,162
<b>Chapter 70 aid to education program</b>						
Chapter 70 state aid*	--	\$6,039,807	--	\$6,088,327	--	\$6,118,877
Required local contribution	--	\$5,591,539	--	\$5,840,331	--	\$6,098,928
Required net school spending**	--	\$11,631,346	--	\$11,928,658	--	\$12,217,805
Actual net school spending	--	\$12,178,235	--	\$12,556,161	--	\$12,798,694
Over/under required (\$)	--	\$546,889	--	\$627,503	--	\$580,889
Over/under required (%)	--	4.7	--	5.3	--	4.8

\*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: FY12, FY13, FY14 District End-of-Year Reports, Chapter 70 Program information on ESE website

Data retrieved December 8, 2014

**Table B7: Acushnet Public Schools  
Expenditures Per In-District Pupil  
Fiscal Years 2011-2013**

<b>Expenditure Category</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>
Administration	\$436	\$435	\$470
Instructional leadership (district and school)	\$619	\$642	\$660
Teachers	\$4,105	\$4,374	\$4,415
Other teaching services	\$958	\$1,041	\$1,052
Professional development	\$67	\$95	\$63
Instructional materials, equipment and technology	\$895	\$537	\$595
Guidance, counseling and testing services	\$217	\$229	\$256
Pupil services	\$1,146	\$1,167	\$1,150
Operations and maintenance	\$824	\$870	\$756
Insurance, retirement and other fixed costs	\$1,209	\$1,290	\$1,249
<b>Total expenditures per in-district pupil</b>	<b>\$10,475</b>	<b>\$10,680</b>	<b>\$10,666</b>

Sources: [Per-pupil expenditure reports on ESE website](#)

## Appendix C: Instructional Inventory

Learning Environment & Teaching	By Grade Span	Evidence		
		None	Partial	Clear & Consistent
		(0)	(1)	(2)
1. Tone of interactions between teacher and students and among students is positive & respectful.	ES	0	0	15
	MS	0	1	12
	HS	-	-	-
	<b>Total #</b>	0	1	27
	<b>Total %</b>	0%	4%	96%
2. Behavioral standards are clearly communicated and disruptions, if present, are managed effectively & equitably.	ES	0	0	15
	MS	1	0	12
	HS	-	-	-
	<b>Total #</b>	1	0	27
	<b>Total %</b>	4%	0%	96%
3. The physical arrangement of the classroom ensures a positive learning environment and provides all students with access to learning activities.	ES	0	2	13
	MS	0	5	8
	HS	-	-	-
	<b>Total #</b>	0	7	21
	<b>Total %</b>	0%	25%	75%
4. Classroom rituals and routines promote transitions with minimal loss of instructional time.	ES	0	0	15
	MS	2	2	9
	HS	-	-	-
	<b>Total #</b>	2	2	28
	<b>Total %</b>	7%	7%	86%
5. Multiple resources are available to meet all students' diverse learning needs.	ES	4	4	7
	MS	6	4	3
	HS	-	-	-
	<b>Total #</b>	10	8	10
	<b>Total %</b>	36%	29%	36%
6. The teacher demonstrates knowledge of subject and content.	ES	0	2	13
	MS	0	1	12
	HS	-	-	-
	<b>Total #</b>	0	3	25
	<b>Total %</b>	0%	11%	89%
7. The teacher plans and implements a lesson that reflects rigor and high expectations.	ES	4	3	8
	MS	1	3	9
	HS	-	-	-
	<b>Total #</b>	5	6	17
	<b>Total %</b>	18%	21%	61%

Teaching	By Grade Span	Evidence		
		None	Partial	Clear & Consistent
		(0)	(1)	(2)
8. The teacher communicates clear learning objective(s) aligned to <i>the 2011 Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks</i> .	ES	5	8	2
	MS	2	6	5
	HS	-	-	-
	<b>Total #</b>	7	14	7
	<b>Total %</b>	25%	50%	25%
9. The teacher uses appropriate instructional strategies well matched to learning objective (s) and content.	ES	3	6	6
	MS	2	3	8
	HS	-	-	-
	<b>Total #</b>	5	9	14
	<b>Total %</b>	18%	32%	50%
10. The teacher uses appropriate modifications for English language learners and students with disabilities such as explicit language objective(s); direct instruction in vocabulary; presentation of content at multiple levels of complexity; and, differentiation of content, process, and/or products.	ES	9	0	6
	MS	9	2	2
	HS	-	-	-
	<b>Total #</b>	18	2	8
	<b>Total %</b>	64%	7%	29%
11. The teacher provides opportunities for students to engage in higher order thinking such as use of inquiry, exploration, application, analysis, synthesis, and/or evaluation of knowledge or concepts (Bloom’s Taxonomy).	ES	5	4	6
	MS	1	5	7
	HS	-	-	-
	<b>Total #</b>	6	9	13
	<b>Total %</b>	21%	32%	46%
12. The teacher uses questioning techniques that require thoughtful responses that demonstrate understanding.	ES	2	4	9
	MS	1	8	4
	HS	-	-	-
	<b>Total #</b>	3	12	13
	<b>Total %</b>	11%	43%	46%
13. The teacher implements teaching strategies that promote a safe learning environment where students give opinions, make judgments, explore and investigate ideas.	ES	2	5	8
	MS	1	6	6
	HS	-	-	-
	<b>Total #</b>	3	11	14
	<b>Total %</b>	11%	39%	50%
14. The teacher paces the lesson to match content and meet students’ learning needs.	ES	1	3	11
	MS	1	3	9
	HS	-	-	-
	<b>Total #</b>	2	6	20
	<b>Total %</b>	7%	21%	71%
15. The teacher conducts frequent formative assessments to check for understanding and inform instruction.	ES	2	2	11
	MS	4	5	4
	HS	-	-	-
	<b>Total #</b>	6	7	15
	<b>Total %</b>	21%	25%	54%
16. The teacher makes use of available technology to support instruction and enhance learning.	ES	5	2	8
	MS	3	2	8
	HS	-	-	-
	<b>Total #</b>	8	4	16
	<b>Total %</b>	29%	14%	57%

Learning	By Grade Span	Evidence		
		None	Partial	Clear & Consistent
		(0)	(1)	(2)
17. Students are engaged in challenging academic tasks.	ES	4	3	8
	MS	0	6	7
	HS	-	-	-
	<b>Total #</b>	4	9	15
	<b>Total %</b>	14%	32%	54%
18. Students articulate their thinking verbally or in writing.	ES	4	4	7
	MS	1	8	4
	HS	-	-	-
	<b>Total #</b>	5	12	11
	<b>Total %</b>	18%	43%	39%
19. Students inquire, explore, apply, analyze, synthesize and/or evaluate knowledge or concepts (Bloom’s Taxonomy).	ES	5	2	8
	MS	1	7	5
	HS	-	-	-
	<b>Total #</b>	6	9	13
	<b>Total %</b>	21%	32%	46%
20. Students elaborate about content and ideas when responding to questions.	ES	6	4	5
	MS	5	5	3
	HS	-	-	-
	<b>Total #</b>	11	9	8
	<b>Total %</b>	39%	32%	29%
21. Students make connections to prior knowledge, or real world experience, or can apply knowledge and understanding to other subjects.	ES	5	6	4
	MS	2	3	8
	HS	-	-	-
	<b>Total #</b>	7	9	12
	<b>Total %</b>	25%	32%	43%
22. Students use technology as a tool for learning and/or understanding.	ES	12	2	1
	MS	11	2	0
	HS	-	-	-
	<b>Total #</b>	23	4	1
	<b>Total %</b>	82%	14%	4%
23. Students assume responsibility for their own learning whether individually, in pairs, or in groups.	ES	2	0	13
	MS	3	2	8
	HS	-	-	-
	<b>Total #</b>	5	2	21
	<b>Total %</b>	18%	7%	75%
24. Student work demonstrates high quality and can serve as exemplars.	ES	7	4	4
	MS	9	4	0
	HS	-	-	-
	<b>Total #</b>	16	8	4
	<b>Total %</b>	57%	29%	14%