

# Targeted District Review Report

## Agawam Public Schools

Review conducted February 29-March 2, 2016

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Center for District and School Accountability

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and  
Secondary Education

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## Executive Summary

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### Strengths

At the district level, the superintendent and the school committee have demonstrated responsible, transparent, and collaborative leadership that has benefitted the district in its working relationship with school leaders and town leaders. Also, district and school leaders have contributed to the community's positive view of and support for the schools through their open leadership style. One way in which the district has shown effective management is in its thoughtful and collaborative screening standards and hiring practices, which include input from and the involvement of appropriate stakeholders and are designed to secure candidates who are highly qualified, committed to meeting students' needs, and capable of contributing to enhanced learning opportunities and achievement for all the district's students.

The district has made a commitment to develop both its leaders and teaching staff through multiple opportunities for professional development (PD), including internal release-day events, job-embedded activities, and external conferences and classes. The district has also encouraged talented teachers to apply for and be appointed to approximately 50 teacher leader positions distributed across all school levels. These grade-level and school-based teacher leaders interact regularly with colleagues and district and school leaders to improve teaching practice, curriculum, assessments, and to use data to make a positive impact on student achievement.

The district's financial systems and practices are collaborative and transparent. To develop the school budget, there is bottom-up participation from the schools to the district level and across-the-board collaboration at the town level. As a result, the district has secured adequate funding for school budgets and avoided some of the cuts in services and personnel seen in other communities. In addition, the town and schools work well together to provide the needed maintenance and custodial services as well as capital and facility improvement planning to address the needs of school buildings that are reaching an advanced age.

In 55 observed lessons across the district, strong or moderate evidence was found overall in 80 percent or more of lessons for the following 5 instructional characteristics of high-quality teaching: teachers' knowledge of subject matter and content; the use of instructional strategies well matched to learning objectives; motivated and engaged students; students who took responsibility for learning either individually, in pairs, or in small groups; and classroom climate characterized by respectful behavior, routines, tone and discourse. Evidence for these instructional characteristics was particularly strong in observed K-8 lessons.

### Challenges and Areas for Growth

Despite the notable strengths described above, there remain a number of challenges and areas in need of development. For example, district and school planning documents have not identified and communicated clear and aligned improvement priorities expressed as SMART goals. Also, improvement

plans do not consistently outline how goals will be accomplished, the needed resources, tasks or action steps, the person(s) and/or group(s) responsible, and timelines. In addition, the district has not established clear and consistent procedures for communicating progress in meeting goals to stakeholders. The absence of these planning features has resulted in unclear priorities and goals across the district as well as an incomplete understanding on the part of stakeholders about the district's progress in achieving improvement goals.<sup>1</sup>

Although the district has made progress in many of the supervisory policies and practices that are consistent with the requirements of the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Framework, in general, evaluations are not appropriately rigorous or evidence based and are missing substantive, specific, and actionable recommendations. In addition, the district's many professional development (PD) activities are not aligned with district and school improvement priorities, partly because the planning effort, as noted above, is not as robust as it could be. The PD program, in addition, does not have all the characteristics described in ESE's Standards for High Quality Professional Development and is not connected to recommendations for professional growth generated by the educator evaluation system.

Although the many opportunities for teacher leaders (TLs) have made a positive impact on improved collaboration and shared understandings at the grade and department level, TLs are hard pressed to find adequate time to fulfill their many responsibilities to their school, to the district, and to their colleagues.

School principals expressed concern about the only challenge noted in the Financial and Asset Management standard in this report. Principals said that they believe that the schools cannot maximize the benefits of effective health and wellness activities because school nurses are under the jurisdiction and supervision of the health department rather than the school department. Overall, the review team found that observed lessons at the high school were not sufficiently challenging and rigorous in stretching students to think critically, deeply, and analytically. High-school lessons often did not address students' individual or group learning needs and styles by providing multiple entry points or differentiated learning experiences to maximize student learning and understanding. In observed high-school lessons, teachers often did not use formative assessments to check for understanding of important concepts and topics and to adjust and fine-tune teaching. Classroom assessments and on-the-spot assessments, rather, focused on whether or not students got the right one-word or short answer to low-level questions without follow-up that would demonstrate understanding of ideas or concepts.

## Recommendations

- The district should develop one District Improvement Plan and align other planning documents with it.
- In going forward with implementing its educator evaluation system, the district should focus on consistently providing high-quality, evidence-based, actionable feedback to support the

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<sup>1</sup> District leaders reported that the district has developed a District Improvement Plan (DIP) and have been working on improving the DIP's integration with all School Improvement Plans.

professional growth of educators. To strengthen its PD program, the district should fully align its PD offerings with ESE's Standards for High Quality Professional Development. PD opportunities should be connected to performance improvement recommendations generated by the district's educator evaluation procedure.

- To enhance the schools' role in developing the health and wellness of the town's young people, the town and the school district should review the school nurses' role and responsibilities and explore alternatives for improvement.
- The district should build upon its work to support teachers' leadership and growth by identifying and articulating an instructional model to be implemented consistently across schools, communicating this to the full educational community, and supporting teachers in its implementation. This model should promote the use of rigor, high expectations, and higher-order thinking skills; differentiate instruction; and benefit from frequent assessments of practice and student performance.

# Agawam Public Schools Targeted District Review Overview

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## Purpose

Conducted under Chapter 15, Section 55A of the Massachusetts General Laws, targeted 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 three district standards used by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE). Targeted reviews address one of the following sets of three standards: **Governance and Administrative Systems** (Leadership and Governance, Human Resources and Professional Development, and Financial and Asset Management standards) or **Student-Centered Systems** (Curriculum and Instruction, Assessment, and Student Support standards). A targeted review identifies systems and practices that may be impeding improvement as well as those most likely to be contributing to positive results. In addition, the targeted district reviews is designed to promote district reflection on its own performance and potential next steps.

Districts whose performance level places them in Level 2 of ESE's framework for district accountability and assistance will typically participate in a targeted district review (Level 3 and Level 4 districts typically receive a comprehensive review). Other relevant factors are taken into consideration when determining if a district will participate in a targeted or comprehensive review.

## Methodology

Reviews collect evidence for each of the three district standards identified as the focus of the targeted review. Team members also observe classroom instructional practice. A district review team consisting of independent consultants with expertise in the district standards reviews documentation, data, and reports for two days before conducting a three-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. Subsequent to the onsite review, the team meets for two days to develop findings and recommendations before submitting a draft report to ESE.

## Site Visit

The site visit to the Agawam Public Schools was conducted from February 29–March 2, 2016. The site visit included 24 hours of interviews and focus groups with approximately 91 stakeholders, including school committee members, district administrators, school staff, high school students, and teachers' association representatives. The review team conducted 3 focus groups with 10 elementary-school teachers, 14 middle-school teachers, and 5 high-school teachers.

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 55 classrooms in 7 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

Agawam has a mayor-council form of government and the chair of the school committee is the mayor. The seven members of the school committee meet twice a month.

The current superintendent has been in the position since 2012. The district leadership team includes: the superintendent, the assistant superintendent for curriculum, instruction and human resources; the school business administrator; and the director of special services. Central office positions have been mostly stable in number over the past five years. The district has seven principals leading seven schools and a director of the Early Childhood Center. There are four other school administrators, three assistant principals at the high school, one assistant principal at the middle school, and one at the junior high school. In 2014-2015, there were 310.9 teachers in the district.

In the 2015-2016 school year, 3,939 students were enrolled in the district's 8 schools:

**Table 1: Agawam Public Schools  
Schools, Type, Grades Served, and Enrollment\*, 2015-2016**

School Name	School Type	Grades Served	Enrollment
Early Childhood Center	EEC	Pre-K	168
Benjamin J. Phelps Elementary School	ES	K-4	364
Clifford M. Granger Elementary School	ES	K-4	292
James Clark Elementary School	ES	K-4	319
Robinson Park Elementary School	ES	K-4	369
Roberta G. Doering Middle School	MS	5-6	577
Agawam Junior High School	JH	7-8	601
Agawam High School	HS	9-12	1,249
<b>Totals</b>	<b>8 schools</b>	<b>Pre-K-12</b>	<b>3,939</b>
*As of October 1, 2015			

Between 2012 and 2016 overall student enrollment decreased by 6.3 percent. Enrollment figures by race/ethnicity and high needs populations (i.e., students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged students, 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 slightly above the median in-district per pupil expenditures for 33 K-12 districts of similar size (3,000-3,999 students) in fiscal year 2014: \$12,752 as compared with \$12,721 (see [District Analysis and Review Tool Detail: Staffing & Finance](#)). Actual net school spending has been well above what is required by the Chapter 70 state education aid program, as shown in Table B6 in Appendix B.

## Student Performance

### District and Subgroup Results

**Agawam is a Level 2 district because all its schools with reportable data are in Level 2 for not meeting their gap narrowing targets for all students and/or high needs students.**

- Agawam as a district has low assessment participation (less than 95 percent) for ELL and former ELL students.
- Robinson Park has low assessment participation (less than 95 percent) for economically disadvantaged students and high needs students.

**Table 2: Agawam Public Schools  
District and School PPI, Percentile, and Level 2012–2015**

School	Group	Annual PPI				Cumulative PPI	School Percentile	Accountability Level
		2012	2013	2014	2015			
ESS: Agawam ECC	All	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	High Needs	--	--	--	--	--		
ES: Clifford M. Granger	All	56	81	44	75	65	60	2
	High Needs	25	88	25	38	43		
ES: Benjamin J. Phelps	All	63	69	19	63	51	32	2
	High Needs	38	125	13	100	73		
ES: Robinson Park	All	50	63	69	81	71	54	2
	High Needs	31	63	94	94	81		
ES: James Clark School	All	50	38	81	88	72	44	2
	High Needs	13	31	88	88	69		
MS: Roberta G. Doering School	All	30	40	45	55	47	50	2
	High Needs	35	65	45	55	52		
MS: Agawam Junior High	All	75	40	50	45	49	27	2
	High Needs	90	45	55	55	57		
HS: Agawam High	All	54	86	46	54	58	39	2
	High Needs	75	82	36	43	52		
District	All	43	57	46	50	50	--	2
	High Needs	54	57	43	43	47		



Between 2012 and 2015, ELA proficiency rates declined by 4 percentage points for the district as a whole and for English language learners, by 5 percentage points for high needs students, and by 6 percentage points for students with disabilities.

**Table 3: Agawam Public Schools  
ELA Proficiency by Subgroup 2012–2015**

Group		2012	2013	2014	2015	4-Year Trend	Above/Below State 2014
All students	District	72%	69%	69%	68%	-4	0
	State	69%	69%	69%	--	--	
High Needs	District	53%	52%	53%	48%	-5	3
	State	48%	49%	50%	--	--	
Economically Disadvantaged	District	--	--	--	57%	--	--
	State	--	--	--	--	--	
ELL and former ELL students	District	47%	57%	50%	43%	-4	14
	State	34%	34%	36%	--	--	
Students with disabilities	District	25%	23%	22%	19%	-6	-8
	State	31%	29%	30%	--	--	

Between 2012 and 2015, the percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced in math improved by 3 percentage points for all students, by 10 percentage points for English language learners, and by 1 percentage point for high needs students.

**Table 4: Agawam Public Schools  
Math Proficiency by Subgroup 2012–2015**

Group		2012	2013	2014	2015	4-Year Trend	Above/Below State 2014
All students	District	62%	65%	62%	65%	3	2
	State	59%	61%	60%	--	--	
High Needs	District	44%	47%	46%	45%	1	6
	State	37%	40%	40%	--	--	
Economically Disadvantaged	District	--	--	--	53%	--	--
	State	--	--	--	--	--	
ELL and former ELL students	District	46%	53%	56%	56%	10	21
	State	32%	35%	35%	--	--	
Students with disabilities	District	20%	17%	21%	18%	-2	-2
	State	21%	23%	23%	--	--	

Between 2012 and 2015, the percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced in science declined by 1 percentage point for the district as a whole, by 3 percentage points for high needs students, by 8 percentage points by students with disabilities, and by 11 percentage points for English language learners.

**Table 5: Agawam Public Schools  
Science Proficiency by Subgroup 2012–2015**

Group		2012	2013	2014	2015	4-Year Trend	Above/Below State 2015
All students	District	51%	49%	50%	50%	-1	-4
	State	54%	53%	55%	54%	0	
High Needs	District	36%	31%	36%	33%	-3	2
	State	31%	31%	33%	31%	0	
Economically Disadvantaged	District	--	--	--	42%	--	8
	State	--	--	--	34%	--	
ELL and former ELL students	District	32%	20%	22%	21%	-11	2
	State	17%	19%	18%	19%	2	
Students with disabilities	District	18%	11%	17%	10%	-8	-12
	State	20%	21%	21%	22%	2	

The district did not reach its 2015 Composite Performance Index (CPI) targets for all students, high needs students, and students with disabilities in ELA, math, and science. The district met its CPI target for English language learners in math but not in ELA.

**Table 6: Agawam Public Schools  
2015 CPI and Targets by Subgroup**

Group	ELA			Math			Science		
	2015 CPI	2015 Target	Rating	2015 CPI	2015 Target	Rating	2015 CPI	2015 Target	Rating
All students	87.0	92.8	No Change	83.6	88.5	Improved Below Target	77.7	85.9	No Change
High Needs	77.0	86.5	No Change	72.6	81.7	No Change	67.9	78.0	No Change
Economically Disadvantaged <sup>2</sup>	81.9	--	--	77.9	--	--	73.2	--	--
ELLs	77.2	84.3	Declined	82.2	83.3	On Target	--	--	--
Students with disabilities	60.9	77.9	No Change	54.6	73.1	No Change	52.7	71.0	Declined

<sup>2</sup> The economically disadvantaged subgroup does not have a CPI target and rating because 2015 is the first year that a CPI was calculated for the economically disadvantaged group and will serve as a baseline for future years' CPI targets.

**Students' growth in ELA and math compared with their academic peers statewide was moderate for all students and English language learners and low for students with disabilities. High needs students' growth was low in ELA and moderate in math compared with their academic peers.**

**Table 7: Agawam Public Schools  
2015 Median ELA and Math SGP by Subgroup**

Group	Median ELA SGP			Median Math SGP		
	District	State	Growth Level	District	State	Growth Level
All students	42.0	50.0	Moderate	47.0	50.0	Moderate
High Needs	40.0	47.0	Low	44.0	46.0	Moderate
Econ. Disad.	--	--	--	--	--	--
ELLs	52.0	53.0	Moderate	43.5	51.0	Moderate
SWD	35.0	43.0	Low	37.0	43.0	Low

**Between 2013 and 2015, Agawam's out-of-school and in-school suspension rates have declined and in 2015 were well below the state rates for all reportable groups.**

**Table 8: Agawam Public Schools  
Out-of-School and In-School Suspensions by Subgroup 2013–2015**

Group	Type of Suspension	2013	2014	2015	State 2015
High Needs	OSS	3.9%	2.4%	0.5%	4.8%
	ISS	6.0%	4.7%	0.1%	2.7%
Economically disadvantaged*	OSS	4.3%	2.4%	--	5.4%
	ISS	6.7%	5.4%	--	2.9%
Students with disabilities	OSS	4.8%	3.3%	--	6.1%
	ISS	4.8%	3.4%	--	3.4%
ELLs	OSS	--	--	--	3.8%
	ISS	--	--	--	1.8%
All Students	OSS	2.7%	1.9%	0.3%	2.9%
	ISS	5.0%	4.3%	0.0%	1.8%

\*Low income students' suspensions used for 2013 and 2014

In 2015, Agawam's four-year cohort graduation rate for all students was above the state rate by 3.2 percentage points and was higher than the state rate by 2.8 to 6.1 percentage points for high needs students, low income students, and students with disabilities. Agawam reached the four-year cohort graduation target for all students, high needs students, and low income students.<sup>3</sup>

**Table 9: Agawam Public Schools  
Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rates 2012-2015**

Group	Number Included (2015)	Cohort Year Ending				Change 2012-2015		Change 2014-2015		State (2015)
		2012	2013	2014	2015	Percentage Points	Percent Change	Percentage Points	Percent Change	
High needs	140	81.5%	80.0%	78.2%	83.6%	2.1	2.6%	5.4	6.9%	78.5%
Low income	115	83.7%	79.6%	76.7%	84.3%	0.6	0.7%	7.6	9.9%	78.2%
SWD	44	77.9%	74.6%	81.4%	72.7%	-5.2	-6.7%	-8.7	-10.7%	69.9%
ELLs	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	64.0%
All students	328	90.1%	90.0%	89.7%	90.5%	0.4	0.4%	0.8	0.9%	87.3%

Between 2011 and 2014, Agawam's five-year cohort graduation rate improved by 1.8 percentage points for all students, and by 9.6 percentage points for students with disabilities. Agawam reached the five-year cohort graduation target for all students.<sup>4</sup>

**Table 10: Agawam Public Schools  
Five-Year Cohort Graduation Rates 2011-2014**

Group	Number Included (2014)	Cohort Year Ending				Change 2011-2014		Change 2013-2014		State (2014)
		2011	2012	2013	2014	Percentage Points	Percent Change	Percentage Points	Percent Change	
High needs	133	79.7%	84.9%	84.3%	79.7%	0.0	0.0%	-4.6	-5.5%	80.3%
Low income	103	79.2%	85.7%	82.7%	77.7%	-1.5	-1.9%	-5.0	-6.0%	79.6%
SWD	59	75.0%	81.8%	79.7%	83.1%	8.1	10.8%	3.4	4.3%	73.5%
ELLs	--	71.4%	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	69.8%
All students	320	89.8%	91.6%	92.8%	90.3%	0.5	0.6%	-2.5	-2.7%	88.5%

<sup>3</sup> The four-year cohort graduation rate target is 80 percent for each group and refers to the 2014 graduation rate. Low income students did not receive a 2015 accountability rating because of the change to the economically disadvantaged measure.

<sup>4</sup> The five-year cohort graduation rate target is 85 percent for each group and refers to the 2013 graduation rate. Low income students did not receive a 2015 accountability rating because of the change to the economically disadvantaged measure.

**In 2015, Agawam’s dropout rate for all students, high needs students, economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and English language learners was lower than the state rate for each group.**

**Table 11: Agawam Public Schools  
Dropout Rates by Subgroup 2012–2015**

	2012	2013	2014	2015	State 2015
High Needs	3.4%	4.1%	2.9%	1.4%	3.4%
Econ. Disad. <sup>5</sup>	3.2%	5.3%	3.4%	2.1%	3.3%
SWD	5.4%	2.5%	0.6%	0.0%	3.5%
ELLs	10.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	5.7%
All students	1.3%	1.8%	1.6%	0.9%	1.9%

### Grade and School Results

**Between 2012 and 2015, ELA proficiency rates declined in the district as a whole and in each tested grade except in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 6<sup>th</sup> grades.**

- Between 2012 and 2015, ELA proficiency rates declined by 3 percentage points in the district as a whole, and by 10 and 8 percentage points in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grades, respectively, by 6 percentage points in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade, and by 2 percentage points the 5<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades.
  - In 2015, ELA proficiency rates were below the state rate by 12 percentage points in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, by 9 percentage points in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, by 4 percentage points in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade, and by 1 percentage point in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades.
- Between 2012 and 2015, ELA proficiency improved by 4 percentage points in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and by 1 percentage point in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade.
  - In 2015, ELA proficiency was 5 percentage points above the state rate in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade and 3 percentage points above the state rate in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

**Table 12: Agawam Public Schools  
ELA Percent Proficient or Advanced by Grade 2012–2015**

Grade	Number	2012	2013	2014	2015	State	4-Year Trend	2-Year Trend
3	290	59%	62%	64%	63%	60%	4	-1
4	310	66%	54%	55%	58%	53%	-8	3
5	266	61%	65%	56%	59%	71%	-2	3
6	310	69%	66%	72%	70%	71%	1	-2
7	295	72%	68%	63%	66%	70%	-6	3
8	323	81%	76%	79%	71%	80%	-10	-8
10	334	92%	93%	90%	90%	91%	-2	0
All	2,128	72%	69%	69%	69%	--	-3	0

<sup>5</sup> Low income dropout rates used for 2012, 2013, and 2014.

In 2015, ELA proficiency rates were above the state rate in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade in 2 of the 4 elementary schools, and in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade in 3 of the elementary schools. ELA proficiency was above the state rate in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade at Doering Middle. ELA proficiency in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade was 91 percent at Agawam High, equal to the state rate.

**Table 13: Agawam Public Schools  
ELA Proficient or Advanced by School and Grade 2014-2015**

School	3	4	5	6	7	8	10	Total
ESS: Agawam ECC	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
ES: Clifford M. Granger	59%	57%	--	--	--	--	--	58%
ES: Benjamin J. Phelps	78%	46%	--	--	--	--	--	62%
ES: Robinson Park	55%	66%	--	--	--	--	--	60%
ES: James Clark School	63%	68%	--	--	--	--	--	66%
MS: Roberta G. Doering School	--	--	61%	71%	--	--	--	65%
MS: Agawam Junior High	--	--	--	--	68%	73%	--	71%
HS: Agawam High	--	--	--	--	--	--	91%	91%
District Total	63%	58%	59%	70%	66%	71%	90%	69%
State	60%	53%	71%	71%	70%	80%	91%	--

**Between 2012 and 2015, ELA proficiency rates improved in only 1 of the district's schools, Clark School, by 13 percentage points.**

- Between 2012 and 2015, High needs students ELA proficiency rates improved by 7 percentage points at Phelps and Clark and by 2 percentage point at Robinson Park and declined by 9 to 13 percentage points at Granger, Agawam Junior High, and Agawam High.
- Between 2012 and 2015, students with disabilities ELA proficiency rates improved by 10 percentage points at Robinson Park and declined by 25 and 19 percentage points at Agawam High and Granger, respectively.
- Between 2012 and 2015, ELA proficiency for English language learners improved by 26 percentage points at Clark and declined by 36 percentage points at Agawam Junior High.

**Table 14: Agawam Public Schools  
ELA Proficient or Advanced by School and Subgroup 2012-2015**

	2012	2013	2014	2015	3- or 4-Year Trend
ESS: Agawam ECC	--	--	--	--	--
ES: Clifford M. Granger	70%	70%	61%	58%	-12
High Needs	48%	56%	46%	35%	-13
Economically disadvantaged	--	--	--	45%	--
ELL and former ELL	--	--	--	--	--
Students with disabilities	28%	27%	13%	9%	-19
ES: Benjamin J. Phelps	62%	60%	58%	62%	0
High Needs	35%	41%	46%	42%	7
Economically disadvantaged	--	--	--	48%	--
ELL and former ELL	21%	60%	40%	20%	-1
Students with disabilities	17%	12%	6%	9%	-8
ES: Robinson Park	66%	56%	57%	60%	-6
High Needs	42%	42%	48%	44%	2
Economically disadvantaged	--	--	--	47%	--
ELL and former ELL	60%	67%	55%	40%	-20
Students with disabilities	11%	10%	26%	21%	10
ES: James Clark School	53%	50%	63%	66%	13
High Needs	35%	34%	47%	42%	7
Economically disadvantaged	--	--	--	50%	--
ELL and former ELL	27%	57%	82%	53%	26
Students with disabilities	11%	3%	13%	10%	-1
MS: Roberta G. Doering School	66%	66%	63%	65%	-1
High Needs	46%	46%	47%	46%	0
Economically disadvantaged	--	--	--	58%	--
ELL and former ELL	38%	45%	46%	48%	10
Students with disabilities	18%	12%	14%	17%	-1
MS: Agawam Junior High	78%	74%	72%	71%	-7
High Needs	61%	59%	57%	52%	-9
Economically disadvantaged	--	--	--	64%	--
ELL and former ELL	78%	58%	33%	42%	-36
Students with disabilities	22%	33%	22%	17%	-5
HS: Agawam High	94%	95%	92%	91%	-3
High Needs	85%	85%	80%	74%	-11
Economically disadvantaged	--	--	--	84%	--
ELL and former ELL	--	--	--	--	--
Students with disabilities	67%	67%	58%	42%	-25

**Between 2012 and 2015, math proficiency rates improved in the district as a whole and in the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grades.**

- Between 2012 and 2015, math proficiency rates improved by 3 percentage points in the district as a whole, by 14 percentage points in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, and by 3 to 6 percentage points in the 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grades.
  - In 2015, math proficiency rates were above the state rate by 11 percentage points in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, by 7 percentage points in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades, and by 4 percentage points in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Between 2012 and 2015, math proficiency declined by 4 and 3 percentage points in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades and by 1 percentage point in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade.
  - In 2015, math proficiency rates in the district were below the state rate by 10 percentage points in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, by 4 percentage points in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, and by 1 percentage point in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade.

**Table 15: Agawam Public Schools  
Math Percent Proficient or Advanced by Grade 2012-2015**

Grade	Number	2012	2013	2014	2015	State	4-Year Trend	2-Year Trend
3	289	67%	77%	76%	81%	70%	14	5
4	307	55%	60%	53%	54%	47%	-1	1
5	266	61%	66%	60%	57%	67%	-4	-3
6	309	63%	63%	65%	66%	62%	3	1
7	298	52%	54%	50%	58%	51%	6	8
8	322	52%	52%	52%	56%	60%	4	4
10	335	81%	87%	82%	78%	79%	-3	-4
All	2,126	62%	65%	63%	65%	0%	3	2

**In 2015, math proficiency rates were above the state rate in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade in all 4 elementary schools, and in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade in 3 of the elementary schools. Math proficiency was below the state rate in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade at Doering Middle and above the state rate in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade at Agawam Junior High. Math proficiency in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade was 80 percent at Agawam High, compared with the state rate of 79 percent.**

**Table 16: Agawam Public Schools  
Math Proficient or Advanced by School and Grade 2014-2015**

School	3	4	5	6	7	8	10	Total
ESS: Agawam ECC	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
ES: Clifford M. Granger	77%	54%	--	--	--	--	--	66%
ES: Benjamin J. Phelps	79%	31%	--	--	--	--	--	54%
ES: Robinson Park	85%	63%	--	--	--	--	--	75%
ES: James Clark School	82%	72%	--	--	--	--	--	76%
MS: Roberta G. Doering School	--	--	58%	67%	--	--	--	62%
MS: Agawam Junior High	--	--	--	--	60%	58%	--	59%
HS: Agawam High	--	--	--	--	--	--	80%	80%
District Total	81%	54%	57%	66%	58%	56%	78%	65%
State	70%	47%	67%	62%	51%	60%	79%	--



**Between 2012 and 2015, math proficiency rates improved in only 1 of the elementary schools, Clark School, by 20 percentage points, and improved by 5 percentage points at Agawam Junior High.**

- Between 2012 and 2015, math proficiency rates for high needs students improved by 19 percentage points at Robinson Park and Clark.
- Between 2012 and 2015, math proficiency rates for English language learners improved by 33 percentage points at Clark and by 3 to 5 percentage points at Robinson Park, Doering Middle, and Agawam Junior High.
- Between 2012 and 2015, math proficiency rates for students with disabilities improved by 26 and 13 percentage points at Robinson Park and Phelps, respectively, and by 5 percentage points at Clark.

**Table 17: Agawam Public Schools  
Math Proficient or Advanced by School and Subgroup 2012-2015**

	2012	2013	2014	2015	3- or 4-Year Trend
ESS: Agawam ECC	--	--	--	--	--
ES: Clifford M. Granger	67%	77%	63%	66%	-1
High Needs	50%	68%	52%	50%	0
Economically disadvantaged	--	--	--	55%	--
ELL and former ELL	--	--	--	--	--
Students with disabilities	39%	55%	46%	35%	-4
ES: Benjamin J. Phelps	62%	66%	54%	55%	-7
High Needs	45%	47%	39%	41%	-4
Economically disadvantaged	--	--	--	40%	--
ELL and former ELL	43%	60%	54%	20%	-23
Students with disabilities	23%	18%	6%	36%	13
ES: Robinson Park	63%	71%	74%	75%	-12
High Needs	45%	59%	65%	64%	19
Economically disadvantaged	--	--	--	66%	--
ELL and former ELL	66%	73%	73%	71%	5
Students with disabilities	14%	14%	27%	40%	26
ES: James Clark School	56%	58%	69%	76%	20
High Needs	37%	41%	53%	56%	19
Economically disadvantaged	--	--	--	58%	--
ELL and former ELL	47%	64%	82%	80%	33
Students with disabilities	15%	3%	29%	20%	5
MS: Roberta G. Doering School	62%	63%	63%	62%	0
High Needs	44%	45%	45%	43%	-1
Economically disadvantaged	--	--	--	54%	--
ELL and former ELL	41%	38%	52%	45%	4
Students with disabilities	16%	16%	14%	14%	-2
MS: Agawam Junior High	54%	55%	52%	59%	5
High Needs	37%	38%	37%	36%	-1
Economically disadvantaged	--	--	--	45%	--
ELL and former ELL	39%	42%	27%	42%	3
Students with disabilities	13%	10%	11%	8%	-5
HS: Agawam High	84%	90%	83%	79%	-5
High Needs	69%	71%	65%	57%	-12
Economically disadvantaged	--	--	--	71%	--
ELL and former ELL	--	--	--	--	--
Students with disabilities	38%	37%	40%	22%	-16

**In 2015, science proficiency rates were below the state rate for the district as a whole and in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades.**

- 5<sup>th</sup> grade science proficiency rates were 54 percent in 2012 and in 2015, 3 percentage points above the state rate of 51 percent.
- 8<sup>th</sup> grade science proficiency rate declined 5 percentage points from 38 percent in 2012 to 33 percent in 2015, 9 percentage points below the state rate of 42 percent.
- 10<sup>th</sup> grade science proficiency rates improved 2 percentage points from 62 percent in 2012 to 64 percent in 2015, 8 percentage points below the state rate of 72 percent.

**Table 18: Agawam Public Schools  
Science Percent Proficient or Advanced by Grade 2012-2015**

Grade	Number	2012	2013	2014	2015	State	4-Year Trend	2-Year Trend
5	263	54%	46%	54%	54%	51%	0	0
8	320	38%	32%	33%	33%	42%	-5	0
10	318	62%	72%	64%	64%	72%	2	0
All	901	51%	49%	51%	50%	54%	-1	-1

**In 2015, the science proficiency rate in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade at Doering Middle was 55 percent, 4 percentage points above the state rate of 51 percent. The science proficiency rate in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade at Agawam Junior High science was 34 percent, 8 percentage points below the state rate of 42 percent. The science proficiency rate in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade at Agawam High was 65 percent, 7 percentage points below the state rate of 72 percent.**

**Table 19: Agawam Public Schools  
Science Proficient or Advanced by School and Grade 2014-2015**

School	3	4	5	6	7	8	10	Total
ESS: Agawam ECC	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
ES: Clifford M. Granger	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
ES: Benjamin J. Phelps	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
ES: Robinson Park	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
ES: James Clark School	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
MS: Roberta G. Doering School	--	--	55%	--	--	--	--	54%
MS: Agawam Junior High	--	--	--	--	--	34%	--	34%
HS: Agawam High	--	--	--	--	--	--	65%	65%
District Total	--	--	54%	--	--	33%	64%	50%
State	--	--	51%	--	--	42%	72%	54%

**Between 2012 and 2015, there was no notable improvement in science proficiency rates for all students at Doering Middle, Agawam Junior High, and Agawam High. There were notable improvements for high needs students and students with disabilities at Doering Middle and declines at Agawam High.**

- Between 2012 and 2015, science proficiency rates for high needs students improved by 6 percentage points at Doering Middle and declined by 5 and 12 percentage points at Agawam Junior High and Agawam High, respectively.
- Between 2012 and 2015, science proficiency rates for students with disabilities improved by 3 percentage points at Doering Middle and declined by 6 and 26 percentage points at Agawam Junior High and Agawam High, respectively.

**Table 20: Agawam Public Schools  
Science Proficient or Advanced by School and Subgroup 2012–2015**

	2012	2013	2014	2015	3- or 4-Year Trend
ESS: Agawam ECC	--	--	--	--	--
ES: Clifford M. Granger	--	--	--	--	--
ES: Benjamin J. Phelps	--	--	--	--	--
ES: Robinson Park	--	--	--	--	--
ES: James Clark School	--	--	--	--	--
MS: Roberta G. Doering School	55%	45%	53%	54%	-1
High Needs	40%	29%	38%	46%	6
Economically disadvantaged	--	--	46%	54%	--
ELL and former ELL	35%	27%	32%	--	--
Students with disabilities	16%	6%	15%	19%	3
MS: Agawam Junior High	38%	33%	35%	34%	-4
High Needs	25%	21%	29%	20%	-5
Economically disadvantaged	--	--	--	26%	--
ELL and former ELL	20%	15%	9%	--	--
Students with disabilities	10%	10%	18%	4%	-6
HS: Agawam High	63%	74%	65%	64%	1
High Needs	52%	54%	43%	40%	-12
Economically disadvantaged	--	--	--	54%	--
ELL and former ELL	--	--	--	--	--
Students with disabilities	33%	26%	16%	7%	-26

## Leadership and Governance

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### Contextual Background

School committee governance in Agawam is focused and effective. The informed, knowledgeable, and mostly veteran school committee members carry out their policy-making and decision-making procedures well. Through active sub-committees, working with the superintendent and school staff, school committee members develop and revise district policies; develop, approve, and monitor the district budget; and annually evaluate the superintendent. The superintendent and the school committee have created a culture of collaboration and transparency which encourages stakeholders such as city council members to work together to support their schools.

The development of the school budget is collaborative and transparent and involves school and town officials. The town and the district also collaborate on custodial cleaning, maintenance and nursing services, and capital projects to improve school buildings. The town has a capital plan, and town and school officials have worked together on recent capital projects for the schools, including renovations of the high school auditorium and library.

The district provides many opportunities for teachers to assume leadership. The district has appointed grade-level teacher leaders at the elementary schools and the middle school and content-based common core facilitators at all schools. Also, the district uses the train-the-trainer model when appropriate to improve teachers' skills and has a well-established mentor program for new teachers.

Overall, district planning processes are not coherent, contributing to an absence of clarity about district goals and strategies. Planning documents are missing clear priorities, are not aligned, and address many discrete operational tasks.

### Strength Finding

**1. Through his collaborative and supportive leadership style, the superintendent promotes a culture of transparency, trust, and public confidence throughout the district and the broader community.**

- A.** School committee members described the superintendent's positive and collaborative leadership style and interactions with many staff and stakeholders as he carries out his responsibilities.
  - 1. They stated that he is collaborative, listens well, and can build consensus.
  - 2. Committee members pointed out the community's respect for the superintendent, especially in the way he interacts with teachers and parents at the many school events he attends.

3. Members also said that the superintendent manages conflict extremely well while being respectful of all parties involved.
- B.** A city official cited the development of the 2015-2016 Budget as an example of the superintendent's effective leadership style.
1. The review team was told that this year's budget process was collaborative and went smoothly, which was appreciated by both city and school officials.
- C.** Teachers highlighted their positive interactions with the superintendent.
1. Teacher representatives from each school and the superintendent meet monthly on the Teacher-Superintendent Advisory Committee to discuss various issues and concerns.
  2. Teachers indicated that the superintendent listens to their feedback, is highly visible, and is accessible and responsive.
    - a. One teacher indicated that the superintendent met with him to help resolve a certification problem.
- D.** Principals described the superintendent's positive leadership style.
1. School leaders agreed that the superintendent is accessible and "hands on" and provides guidance and support without being overly directive, likening him to a coach.
  2. One principal said that during evaluation meetings, the dialogue was more valuable than the evaluation document, comparing the dialogue to the benefits of having a parent-teacher conference rather than reading a student's report card.
  3. Another principal underlined the helpful feedback the superintendent provides, noting that the superintendent's experience as a principal has strengthened his ability to make suggestions in a positive way.
- E.** The superintendent and school committee members told the review team that they work well together.
1. The superintendent is responsive to school committee members' requests for information and guidance and helps make the committee's work focused and effective, especially on developing and managing the annual budget.
  2. School committee members and the superintendent agreed that they have a positive and mutually productive working relationship.
    - a. A school committee member noted that the superintendent had responded positively to a recommendation in his 2015 performance evaluation for increased communication

with the committee and that in 2016 the superintendent has been working even more effectively with the committee.

3. School committee members pointed out the close collaboration between the superintendent, the school committee, city officials, and the city council budget subcommittee, when developing the annual budget.

**Impact:** Educational initiatives and ideas, no matter how well designed, cannot implement themselves. Effective district leaders display high degrees of both technical and adaptive (interpersonal) skills. While addressing initiatives or issues, district leaders consistently support, motivate, and communicate with the staff members and stakeholders who design and carry out desired goals and outcomes. Together they create the cultural and contextual conditions of trust and respect in and through which planned activities become realities.

## Challenges and Areas for Growth

### **2. The district's planning documents do not provide clear, aligned improvement priorities expressed as SMART goals and do not uniformly include student performance goals based on recent student achievement data.**

- A. A document review indicated that the school district has developed three planning documents with a wide range of goals and activities to achieve its theme, "Raising the Bar for 2018."<sup>6</sup>
  1. *Agawam Public Schools "Raising the Bar for 2018"* details a mission statement, vision, and core values and lists eight district goals.
  2. A document entitled *District/Superintendent's Priorities Rubric "Raising the Bar for 2018"* is referred to by the superintendent as the strategic plan and as the superintendent's goals.
    - a. This document refers to the four standards from the model rubric for teachers in the Model System for Educator Evaluation: Instructional Leadership, Management and Operations, Family and Community Engagement, and Professional Culture.
    - b. The document lists 177 "indicators" that district staff will address between 2014 and 2018; 91 are listed for the 2015-2016 school year.
  3. A document entitled *2015-16 District Priorities* lists 28 non-prioritized activities. These have been taken from *District/Superintendent's Priorities Rubric "Raising the Bar for 2018."*

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<sup>6</sup> District leaders reported that since the onsite review the district has developed a District Improvement Plan and has worked on improved integration with all school improvement plans.

- B.** When the review team posed questions to teachers and principals about the district’s priorities and goals, many different goals and activities were identified. Both teachers and principals seemed unclear about the district’s improvement priorities.

  - 1. Principals and teachers cited a wide range of goals and priorities, including: student engagement, higher-level thinking, a positive learning environment, “Put Children First,” life-long learners, technology, “Do the Right Thing,” and special education.
- C.** The district’s planning documents do not uniformly contain SMART goals (specific and strategic; measureable; action-oriented; rigorous, realistic, and results-focused; and timed and tracked) and measurable benchmarks for improving student performance.

  - 1. Most listed goals are more tactical than strategic and are more appropriate as action steps to meet a strategic initiative. For example, the (stated) goals to “Develop written curriculum for Junior High STEM program” and “Prepare for implementation of new State Science Standards” are more suited as a few of the action steps needed for an (unstated) strategic goal to improve student achievement in science by ensuring that the academic program is aligned to the 2016 Massachusetts *Science* and Technology/Engineering Standards.
- D.** The planning documents do not consistently identify how the goals will be accomplished, what funds are needed to accomplish them, people or groups responsible, and timelines for accomplishing goals.
- E.** Because of the timelines schools used for developing SIPs (plans were completed in May 2015), district and school staff used 2013-2014 achievement data results to develop plans for school year 2015-2016.

  - 1. The review team did not find evidence that the district has a process for analyzing current data (e.g., 2015 MCAS and AP results) in order to revise the plans’ goals and benchmarks.
  - 2. District leaders reported that over the summer administrators analyze MCAS and AP data and then review and discuss the analysis with staff. They noted that this takes place initially in a faculty meeting and then results are further analyzed and discussed by department, grade and/or school. Coaches also analyze data and make recommendations.
- F.** District planning documents and SIPs include activities for developing District-Determined Measures (DDMs), the district’s priority area for continuing to implement its educator evaluation system.
- G.** In general, the 2015-2016 district planning documents and SIPs are not aligned.

  - 1. Some 2015-2016 SIPs indicate that their content is aligned to previous district planning documents such as, “Building a Bridge to 2015,” Agawam Strategic Plan for Success, and the Agawam Comprehensive Strategic Plan.

2. The SIPs include a section called District Goal Correlate, which cites the district planning goal that the SIP goal is addressing. However, the numerical references cited in the 2015-2016 SIPs do not match the content of the district planning documents for 2015-2016.
  3. District and school planning documents do not have consistent goals and outcomes.
    - a. *Agawam Public Schools "Raising the Bar for 2018,"* states a vision that "Agawam Public schools will provide quality academic content & performance standards for effective instruction & assessment of *student performance that exceeds state and federal accountability measures for student achievement*" (emphasis added).
    - b. The SIPs for the four elementary schools state, "*85% of all students will successfully reach grade level district benchmarks in math*" (emphasis added).
    - c. The SIPs for the high school and the junior high school cite performance benchmarks based on the Composite Performance Index (CPI), a state accountability measure for student achievement.
  4. The superintendent told the team that the school district does not have a formal process for reviewing the SIPs to ensure that they are aligned with the district planning documents.
- H.** While 2015-2016 SIPs included goals and timelines, the quality of measureable benchmarks---and the data analysis required to develop them---varied widely.
- I.** The district does not have clear and consistent procedures for periodically reporting to staff and stakeholders on the progress of implementing district and school improvement initiatives.
1. Six SIPs cite two different procedures for reviewing SIPs.
    - a. For example, the Granger Elementary School's SIP notes that each January, "the Site-Based School Improvement Plan is monitored by the central office team and reported to the Agawam School Committee."
    - b. The junior high school's SIP states that its "Site Based Improvement Plan would be implemented each September and evaluated each spring."
  2. The superintendent said that as part of his annual evaluation he submits to the school committee a detailed report documenting implementation of the goals and activities in the district's planning documents.
    - a. The superintendent indicated that he and his staff review district planning documents at the end of the school year, during the summer.
  3. The team did not find evidence that school councils—which develop the SIPs—review and report progress during periodic meetings throughout the school year.



**Impact:** Three district planning documents, rather than one district improvement plan (DIP), have contributed to an absence of clarity about district goals and priorities. Not having a single DIP and aligned SIP, has reduced coherence, efficiency, and effectiveness in planning and in making plans a reality. In the absence of a clearly articulated districtwide improvement plan, the district misses an opportunity to monitor the effectiveness of planned initiatives and to keep the community fully informed about the direction of the district.

## **Recommendation**

### **1. The district should develop a District Improvement Plan (DIP) and align other planning documents with it.**

- A.** Under the leadership of the superintendent, a working group with wide representation should analyze student performance and other data and develop a DIP.
  - 1. The group should draw on existing district planning documents in order to create one coherent plan.
  - 2. 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; measureable; 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 an analysis of student achievement data.
    - a. The superintendent and central office staff should consider reviewing the SIPs to ensure that they are aligned with the DIP and that they meet all planning requirements.
  - 2. The district should identify a process for using the most recent student achievement data. The district could change the timelines for developing and approving the DIP and SIPs in order for staff to use and analyze the most current achievement data to guide planning and goal setting. Alternatively, the district could initiate a process for updating the DIP and SIPs after staff have analyzed current student achievement data.
    - a. Principals should provide the superintendent, school committee, and staff with regular updates on progress toward SIP goals.

- b. Each 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.
  - c. Professional development should be designed to support DIP and SIP 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 toward achieving DIP goals.
  - 2. The district should establish procedures to review the DIP annually.
    - a. Strategic activities and benchmarks should be adjusted when necessary to meet current conditions.
- E. The school committee and the superintendent should consider aligning some of the goals in the superintendent's Educator Plan (as part of the district's educator evaluation system) with DIP goals.

**Benefits:** Developing and communicating a District Improvement Plan will clarify the district's priorities and goals to increase teacher effectiveness and students' academic performance. 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. Communicating more frequently about how well priorities, goals, and activities have been accomplished will likely increase staff morale and public confidence in the district.

**Recommended resources:**

- ESE's *Planning for Success* tools (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/research/success/>) highlight the practices, characteristics and behaviors that contribute to effective improvement planning and implementation and meet state requirements for improvement planning.
- *What Makes a Goal Smarter?* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/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.
- *District Accelerated Improvement Planning - Guiding Principles for Effective Benchmarks* (<http://www.mass.gov/edu/docs/ese/accountability/turnaround/level-4-guiding-principles-effective-benchmarks.pdf>) provides information about different types of benchmarks to guide and measure district improvement efforts.

- 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.

## Human Resources and Professional Development

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### Contextual Background

The district's hiring policies and practices for both teaching and administrative positions are comprehensive, documented, and consistently implemented. The district uses high-quality screening protocols and interview procedures that include input from and the active involvement of appropriate district stakeholders. The district also uses several practices to inform its decision-making, including requiring each candidate to teach a mock lesson, respond to a writing prompt, and provide a comprehensive portfolio of professional work. The district's policies and practices are designed to recruit and select educators who are highly qualified to meet student needs, contribute to a professional learning community, and promote effective instruction and improved learning.

Although the district has made progress in the adoption of many of the supervisory policies and practices that are consistent with the requirements of the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Framework, the overall quality of formative assessments and summative evaluations for teachers and administrators is uneven. In general, evaluations are not appropriately rigorous or evidence based, and are missing recommendations that are substantive, specific, or actionable. Consequently, their effectiveness in expanding pedagogical practice, improving classroom instruction, and contributing to meaningful professional growth is diminished.

Teachers have a number of opportunities for leadership roles within the district. District leaders appoint teacher leaders (TLs) for ELA and math at each grade level at each elementary school, with two for ELA and math at the middle school. One common core facilitator (CCF) for each content area is appointed at the junior high school and the high school. TLs and CCFs are conduits of information from the district to the teachers. They also plan and facilitate grade-level or department meetings once a month, a key form of job-embedded professional development (PD) in the district.

By contract, PD events take place on 3.5 early release days each year. In 2015-2016, release-time PD topics ranged from focused sessions on various academic issues such as implementing the Daily 5 literacy strategies to developing District-Determined Measures (DDMs) in several disciplines. Staff members have numerous opportunities to present best practices at release-time PD sessions. Time for job-embedded PD is mostly scheduled before or after the school day, one hour per month for ELA and math at the elementary schools and the middle school, and once a month for each content area in the junior high and high school. The district also hires substitute teachers and releases teachers from teaching duties to accomplish specific tasks, such as to analyze the new science standards.

Participants assess in-house PD sessions online; however, the review team did not find evidence that the district evaluates the effectiveness of PD on teachers' performance. The team also did not find evidence that the district connects PD with systemwide goals to improve student achievement or with performance-improving recommendations generated by the educator evaluation system.

## Strength Findings

- 1. The district has developed and consistently employs policies and practices to recruit and select educators who are highly qualified to meet students' needs, contribute to a professional learning community, and promote high-quality instruction and learning.**

### *Screening, Interviewing, and Hiring*

- A.** A review of district policy and procedural documents, including "Agawam Public Schools Hiring Procedures," and interviews with district and school administrators indicated that the district's recruiting and hiring policies and practices are clearly defined, documented, and consistently followed.
  1. The district uses School Spring as its major teacher recruitment vendor. It also uses other outside advertising for some positions (usually administrative).
    - a. Under articles 29 and 30 of the teachers' bargaining agreement, all vacancies routinely are posted internally and internal candidates qualified for posted vacancies may apply for such vacancies.
  2. The district requires that the administrator responsible for the hiring of a staff member establish a committee. In the case of districtwide positions, including principalships, that administrator is the superintendent; for school-based personnel, the administrator is the school principal.
    - a. The committee must be composed of teachers, including specialists, parents, and student representatives for high-school positions, and others, as appropriate.
      - i. For administrative vacancies, the committee must also include the superintendent or assistant superintendent and a school committee representative.
  3. The committee composes interview questions and writing prompt(s) and compiles this information on district forms. The principal or the superintendent approves the interview questions and writing prompt(s) before the interviews.
  4. The committee also reviews pertinent legal and procedural issues, including confidentiality, ethics, and the specific roles and responsibilities of committee members before the interviews.
  5. Appropriate behaviors and protocols are clearly defined and consistently followed to ensure equitable treatment for all candidates throughout the interview process. These include asking each candidate the same questions, following a standard procedure when asking a candidate to clarify an answer, etc.

6. The committee routinely uses several practices to inform its decision-making. Each candidate teaches a mock lesson, when possible; provides a comprehensive portfolio of professional work; and writes a response to a prompt.
  - a. The committee also reviews candidates' Pre-Performance Assessment (PPA) and Candidate Assessment Performance (CAP) documentation from student teacher practicums.
7. The committee forwards recommendations for appointments to the superintendent.
8. The district works closely with regional colleges and universities to offer student-teacher placements and administrative internship opportunities for promising candidates; central office administrators told the review team that these often result in professional opportunities within the district's schools for successful candidates.

#### *District Personnel Policies*

- B. One of the goals of school committee policy GCF (Professional Staff Hiring) is that the district "will strive to attract, secure, and hold the highest qualified personnel for all professional positions. The selection process will be based upon an awareness to [hire] candidates who will devote themselves to the education and welfare of the children attending the schools."
- C. Another school committee policy GCE (Professional Staff Recruiting/Posting of Vacancies) states in part, "The search for good teachers and other professional employees will extend to a wide variety of educational institutions and geographical areas. It will take into consideration the characteristics of the town and the need for a heterogeneous staff from various cultural backgrounds."
- D. When these policies are combined, a clear recruiting value is established in policy. In addition, this organizational value is further strengthened in school committee policy GCE which states: "It is the responsibility of the superintendent, with the assistance of the administrative staff, to determine the personnel needs of the school system and it is the responsibility of the principal, in consultation with the superintendent, to determine the personnel needs of the individual schools."

**Impact:** The district has developed and consistently uses policies and practices designed to secure candidates who are highly qualified, committed to meeting students' needs, and capable of making a significant professional contribution to the school community. By establishing high-quality screening standards, collaborative selection practices, and making students' learning needs the overarching goal of the selection process, the district seeks to recruit and hire teachers and administrators with the experience, content knowledge, and skills to contribute to enhanced learning opportunities and achievement for all the district's students.

**2. The district offers, finances, and tracks many opportunities and events for educator development.**

- A.** Each year the district plans professional development (PD) events.
  - 1. The assistant superintendent constructs, schedules, and supervises a districtwide Professional Development Plan and calendar that includes 3.5 PD days during each school year (two full days and three half-days of release time).
    - a. These days of release time for students are required under Article 15 of the 2013-2016 collective bargaining agreement with the Agawam Teachers' Association.
- B.** At the end of the school year staff members complete a staff survey to suggest PD topics for the upcoming year. The assistant superintendent approves and schedules topics as PD sessions.
  - 1. Release-time days offer opportunities for teachers to receive formal PD, to meet with job-alike groups to deal with day-to-day issues of teaching and learning, and to work on implementing state initiatives.
  - 2. Approved topics for these 3.5 days of PD may include districtwide issues, schoolwide issues, and grade-level issues as well as information on new initiatives.
  - 3. The March 1, 2016, release time day included 46 independent topics offered in multiple locations for a 1.5-hour period.
    - a. The visiting team had an opportunity to visit several onsite PD sessions during the March 1, 2016, release time.
    - b. In some events facilitators were developing curriculum or District-Determined Measures (DDMs). In one session, an instructor was teaching teachers how to use a new math program.
  - 4. Participants sign up for each planned PD session and provide an evaluation and follow-up about the impact of PD on their teaching in "My Learning Plan," the district's online system for tracking evaluations and PD.
- C.** PD topics often originate with and are presented by staff.
  - 1. The "Daily Five," a classroom organizational strategy, was brought to the district by one teacher and spread to other classrooms because of its positive effects on literacy instruction.
  - 2. The Western Massachusetts Writing Program was brought to the middle school by literacy coaches to improve student writing.
  - 3. The district initiated the Positive Behavior Intervention and Support program (PBIS) to focus on improving the learning strategies of students whose behavior often interferes with their learning.

- D.** Limited job-embedded professional development is available in the district.
  - 1. Teacher leaders (TLs) and common core facilitators meet with colleagues before or after school for one hour per month in each subject.
  - 2. Grade-level and department meetings take place before and after school and follow-ups to job-embedded coaching or other interventions may take place infrequently.
- E.** The district provides substitute teachers to cover classes so that teachers can, for example, attend PD sessions.
- F.** The district uses a “train the trainer” model when appropriate, to improve teachers’ ability to support various new models of instruction, use of technology, or student services.
- G.** The district has a well-established mentoring program for new teachers.
  - 1. New teachers are required to attend an introductory meeting in the fall. A mentor is assigned from a list of pre-approved staff volunteers.
  - 2. First-year mentors must complete online mentor training.
  - 3. The mentor is required to establish a calendar of formal meetings with assigned new teachers for the school year.
    - a. The mentor is required to keep a log of meetings.
    - b. The district provides a thorough list of preferred practices that mentors may use as they support new teachers.
- H.** The collective bargaining agreement requires that the district have a PD committee, but the committee was replaced several years ago by a more centralized approach, supervised by the assistant superintendent.
  - 1. In one interview the team was told that “The transition to in-house PD was beneficial,” “We are now going to meaningful PD,” and “We are more closely addressing initiatives.”
    - a. In interviews with the assistant superintendent the team was impressed with the assistant superintendent’s detailed knowledge of how PD planning, scheduling, and collaboration has been differentiated to the satisfaction of many teachers and administrators.
    - b. The team was told that the district has created an internal structure to support job-embedded PD despite limited time for those assigned oversight of job-embedded PD to connect with colleagues. The assistant superintendent created this model with the superintendent after the district lost a number of supervisory positions several years ago.



- c. Interviews and a document review indicated that the district uses per diem substitute teachers to encourage and support teacher-initiated PD outside the district.

**Impact:** The district has created an adult learning culture that is responsive to staff needs, supports new teachers, and provides some job-embedded professional development. This continuous improvement model promotes currency in instruction and curriculum while supporting a staff of reflective practitioners. By developing a “train the trainer” model, and building internal ability, the district promotes educator growth and improved student learning.

### **3. The district provides multiple opportunities for teachers to assume leadership.**

- A.** Interviews and a document review indicated that the district has appointed grade-level Teacher Leaders (TLs) in ELA and math at all elementary schools and the middle school and content-based Common Core Facilitators (CCFs) at all schools.
  1. Interviewees said that CCFs are like department heads although they do not evaluate teachers. They do, however, have a role in textbook selection, and act as communication liaisons between the assistant superintendent and teachers.
  2. TLs and CCFs teach a full academic load; at the secondary level they do not have duty or supervisory periods.
  3. District leaders reported that TLs receive a stipend of \$450 and CCFs receive a stipend of \$2,500.
- B.** A document review indicated that TLs and CCFs have the following responsibilities for curriculum and instruction.
  1. They help ensure that the district’s curriculum is aligned to state curriculum frameworks and that it is consistently used, aligned, and effectively delivered.
  2. Additional responsibilities include “planning, scheduling and conducting monthly grade-level or department meetings and communicating and cooperating with curriculum leaders at all levels to ensure implementation of an articulated coordinated program for curriculum, instruction and assessment, and attending all district level department meetings.”
  3. TLs and CCFs also take initiative and participate with peers to continuously improve and revise grade-level curriculum and instruction and to interact with consultants and sales representatives in selecting teaching materials, supplies, and equipment for the department/grade level.”
  4. TLs and CCFs act as communication links between the school and district administration and members of the department or grade level. They maintain an up-to-date inventory of needed supplies, textbooks and equipment. They provide input when requested, in the

development, implementation, and revision of department, school, and district policy. TLs and CCFs also participate in a team that supports new teachers.

5. TLs and CCFs provide input, when requested, in planning and administering assessments of students' progress and of the effectiveness of instruction. As such, they have played a key role in the development of District-Determined Measures (DDMs). At the end of the year, they submit to the principal and central office leaders a written, summary of the work and progress of the department with suggestions for changes or improvements.
6. TLs and CCFs are responsible for keeping current about curriculum by reading professional publications and disseminating information about new developments to department/grade-level colleagues. They are also advised to encourage department/grade level colleagues to participate in professional organizations and professional development (PD) opportunities.

**C. TLs and CCFs meet monthly with teacher colleagues.**

1. TLs meet with grade-level colleagues and CCFs meet with content or department team members in a Professional Learning Community (PLC) once a month for an hour before or after school. There is no Common Planning Time (CPT) during the school day for TLs or CCFs to meet with their teams.
2. TLs and CCFs also meet with the principal and assistant principals at school leadership team meetings once a month. The assistant superintendent often attends these monthly leadership meetings.
3. The two coaches who support instruction at the elementary and middle schools meet with the grade-level TLs in a PLC to provide professional development in a "train the trainer" model.
  - a. In addition, the coaches sometimes attend grade-level meetings, model lessons, train new staff, and train veteran staff with new methodologies.
  - b. In the PLC meetings with TLs, coaches model data analysis and the use of data to drive decision-making, which TLs can then bring back to monthly grade-level PLCs.
4. One challenge to the work of the TLs and CCFs is the one-hour per month meeting time with teacher colleagues.
  - a. When asked whether meeting time was sufficient, an administrator said that although it was not ideal, it was better than five years ago when the district did not have department heads.
  - b. This administrator noted that the district had several strategies to compensate for limited meeting time with teacher colleagues.
    - i. TLs and CCFs can work on data analysis on some PD days.

- ii. The district generally honors all requests for PD time for teachers to meet and hires substitutes to cover classes. For example, the district recently allocated a day for science teachers to be released from class to collaborate to “unpack” the new science standards.
  - iii. Some departments choose to do department work during the summer.
- c. District leaders reported that TLs at the high school have an additional prep period built into their schedules. At the other levels, the TLs often do not have a duty period so they have additional time in their schedules.
- D. Another opportunity for teacher leadership is the “Super Committee,” a joint committee composed of equal numbers of teachers and administrators charged with the development and oversight of the educator evaluation system.
  - 1. The Super Committee meets periodically to monitor and promote the implementation of the educator evaluation system.
  - 2. The Super Committee has recently assumed responsibility for implementing District-Determined Measures (DDMS) and student feedback, the more recent components of the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Framework.
- E. The district has also created a Superintendent-Teacher Advisory Committee composed of the superintendent and representative teachers from each school. They meet once a month to discuss teachers’ issues and concerns.

**Impact:** By creating opportunities for exemplary teachers to have responsibility for instructional leadership, the district is investing and supporting the professional growth of teachers. These leadership roles can ensure that curricular and instructional improvement activities are collaborative and focused on the real work and issues of classroom practice. The use of teacher leaders can also support communication and help the district focus on priorities to improve teaching, learning, and the curriculum. The use of monthly PLCs can also contribute to continuous improvement.

### **Challenge and Areas for Growth**

- 4. Formative assessments and summative evaluations contained little concrete evidence and were not appropriately evidence based or growth oriented.**
  - A. The quality of formative assessments and summative evaluations written for both teachers and administrators was uneven. Evaluations were frequently brief, included few references to concrete evidence, and in general were not instructive. Written evaluations rarely provided specific, clearly articulated, and actionable recommendations for improved practice.
    - 1. The review team reviewed the evaluative documents of 30 teachers randomly selected from across the district. In general, formative assessments and summative evaluations were

completed according to contractual timelines and were informative, containing factual details relevant to classroom instruction and professional practice. Overall, however, they were not instructive.<sup>7</sup> Evaluations contained little concrete evidence of substantive recommendations for improved instructional practices that were either specific or actionable or clear evidence-based feedback that could have a direct impact on pedagogy or contribute meaningfully to professional growth.

2. A review of the evaluations of the district's principals and administrators indicated a similar range of concerns. Although summative evaluations had been written, formative assessments were often missing from administrative folders. Completed evaluations offered few concrete recommendations or action steps and contained little supporting evidence. Comments such as, "Good work," "Nice job," and "On target" were common.
  3. Principals reported that their caseload of evaluatees was excessive and unwieldy. This problem was described as particularly acute in the elementary schools.
    - a. Some elementary principals indicated that because they do not have assistant principals they are responsible for evaluating up to 40 professional staff in addition to all paraprofessionals and school secretaries. Principals acknowledged an evaluative "triage" situation in which they opt to devote much of their limited time and attention to new and "low-performing teachers."
  4. Some teachers expressed ambivalence about the educator evaluation system. They described it as "cumbersome," "time consuming," and "frustrating." They reported that evaluative standards and processes varied widely from school to school. Some teachers indicated that feedback was often not helpful. They suggested that because "evaluators have a task that is far too large, it is unrealistic to expect good feedback." Some teachers said, "Educator evaluation has not improved MCAS scores" and others recognized that scores had remained flat or declined over the past several school years.
- B.** The educator evaluation regulations (603 CMR 35.07) require that all Massachusetts districts collect and use student and staff feedback as evidence in the educator evaluation process.
1. Although the district collected staff feedback electronically at the end of the 2014-2015 school year, administrators reported those results were not formally used in the summary evaluations of principals or as evidence in the educator evaluation process.

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<sup>7</sup> An informative evaluation is factual and cites instructional details such as methodology, pedagogy, Standards and Indicators of Effective Teaching Practice or instruction of subject-based knowledge that is aligned with the state curriculum frameworks. It does not commit to improvement strategies. An instructive evaluation includes comments intended to improve instruction.

2. Student feedback was solicited informally at the conclusion of the 2014-2015 school year. Administrators said that the district's Super Committee had developed the questionnaires in hard copy; these were distributed, collected, and kept by classroom teachers. The results, therefore, were not used as evidence in the educator evaluation process.
  3. District leaders reported that all teachers received a Student Impact Rating in 2015-2016 based on two years of data from District-Determined Measures (DDMs). In addition, all teachers have completed staff surveys for the second year in a row and have shared that information with administrators.
- C. The regulations also require the identification of DDMs to assess student learning across the curriculum and to serve as a key element in determining an individual educator's Student Impact Rating.
1. Administrators reported that DDMs are currently being used or piloted across the district and teachers and curriculum leaders are beginning to compile and analyze the student performance data being generated. They acknowledged, however, that the district has not developed plans or strategies to determine the manner by which the results should be used in determining an individual educator's Student Impact Rating.
  2. Districts had the opportunity to submit a proposal to ESE by June 30, 2015, to use an alternative pathway for determining Student Impact Ratings. Proposals could include a new proposed process for determining ratings or an extended implementation timeline. Agawam did not submit a proposal.

**Impact:** The Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Framework is designed to promote educator growth and development while keeping student learning as its central focus. The absence of clear, rigorous, consistent, and evidence-based formative assessments and summative evaluations prevent the system from significantly enhancing the professional growth of educators and educational leaders.

**5. The district's professional development is not aligned with district priorities or goals and the district does not have a system for monitoring teachers' practice to determine the effectiveness of professional development.**

- A. Professional development (PD) programming in the district is not well aligned with ESE's Standards for High Quality Professional Development (HQPD). Among the guiding principles of HQPD are those that ensure that it (a) is intentional, (b) is a structured process, (c) is evaluated for effectiveness, and (d) requires strong leadership.
1. Interviews and a document review indicated that the district's centrally planned professional development (PD) is *intentional* in that it has clearly scheduled events with topics, timing, and location, but PD is not aligned with district goals or priorities.

2. Professional development documents reviewed by the team did not contain SMART goals (specific and strategic; measureable; action oriented; rigorous, realistic, and results focused; and timed and tracked).
  3. District leaders reported that when MCAS scores several years ago indicated that middle-school students were struggling with writing, the district contracted with an outside consultant to provide ongoing professional development about writing.
- B.** The scheduled PD events are well organized and those observed by the visiting team were orderly and seemed interesting to participants. However, in the review team's view, they are not organized as part of a coherent process supporting educator development.
1. Interviewees described the district's planned PD as time for new learning, time for developing District-Determined Measures (DDMs), and time to catch up on work related to one's daily responsibilities. One experienced teacher told the team that he would spend the March 1, 2016, release time "finishing up my finals and reviewing our common assessments."
    - a. Planned PD becomes available time during which personal priorities compete with learning opportunities.
- C.** Participants assess planned PD sessions delivered in-district and external PD opportunities using an electronic evaluation form. However, the review team did not find evidence that the district evaluates the effectiveness of PD on teachers' performance.
- D.** PD is not connected to performance improvement recommendations generated by the district's educator evaluation system. A review by the team of 60 educator evaluations indicated few concrete recommendations for PD.
1. One interviewee noted, "One of our evaluators might recommend an article to read."
- E.** The teaching schedules of CCFs, TLs, and coaches leave limited time for presentation of PD and for follow-through or evaluation of PD on performance.

**Impact:** Without connecting PD offerings to district priorities, goals, and performance-improvement recommendations generated from the educator evaluation system, the district cannot adequately expand educators' professional competencies, advance the district's educational goals, or improve students' academic achievement. Because there is no overall districtwide assessment of the effectiveness of PD offerings, the district is losing an opportunity to purposefully improve teachers' skills and to provide teachers with opportunities to reach their professional practice goals.

## Recommendations

1. **The district should take prompt and immediate action to implement all components of its educator evaluation system and to enhance its overall effectiveness, focusing particular attention on consistently providing high-quality, evidenced-based, actionable feedback in formative assessments and summative evaluations.**
  - A. The district's Super Committee should continue to oversee, coordinate, and support the full and effective implementation of the educator evaluation process.
    1. The Super Committee should focus on opportunities to maximize the efficiency of the educator evaluation system by scrutinizing the amount of documentation the district is requiring of educators and evaluators.
  - B. To ensure that all educators receive high-quality feedback and support, the district is strongly encouraged to explore alternative models of distributed leadership in order to identify additional educators to observe and to evaluate teachers.
    1. The district might consider allocating evaluator responsibilities to a wider pool of staff members, such as other school and district administrators or teacher leaders.
  - C. Additional and ongoing training for teachers and administrators should be provided to further support and promote the educator evaluation system. All administrators should receive targeted training in contemporary supervisory and evaluative practices to improve their professional judgment. This includes enhancing their abilities to observe and to analyze instruction, and to provide specific evidence-based feedback to staff that can significantly improve and expand professional competencies.

**Benefits:** The full and faithful implementation of all key elements of the district's educator evaluation system will provide the surest path to ensuring continued improvement of pedagogical practice and the professional growth and development of teachers and administrators.

### Recommended resources:

- ESE's *Quick Reference Guide: Student and Staff Feedback* ([www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/QRG-Feedback.pdf](http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/QRG-Feedback.pdf)) provides guidance on the incorporation of student and staff feedback into the evaluation process and includes a set of valid and reliable student and staff surveys aligned to the Massachusetts Standards of Effective Practice.
- The Student and Staff Feedback web page (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/feedback>) provides links to model instruments and training resources.
- The *Quick Reference Guide: Opportunities to Streamline the Evaluation Process* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/QRG-Streamline.pdf>) highlights some of the ways that

districts can adjust the educator evaluation process to ensure that it is efficient, focused on professional growth, and valuable to educators and students.

**2. The district should align its professional development program with the priorities in the District Improvement Plan (DIP).**

- A.** The district should outline and document a set of learning experiences for its educators that is systematic, sustained, and aligned.
1. District leaders should create a professional development plan for the district that is aligned with the DIP and the district's instructional model (see the Leadership and Governance and Instruction recommendations above).
    - a. As part of the plan, district leaders should identify specific PD needs, determine how they might be met, and recommend adjustments in PD practices to meet them.
  2. 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.
  3. PD 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.
    - a. The district should consider ways to increase the time available for Teacher Leaders and Common Core Facilitators to facilitate embedded PD.

**Benefits:** Developing a districtwide PD plan that is driven by district priorities and includes expected learning experiences for educators and student achievement outcomes will help move the district toward high-quality PD. A high-quality PD program coupled with the resources already available in the district will likely lead to improved student achievement.

**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.
- *ESE's Professional Development Self-Assessment Guidebook* (<http://www.mass.gov/edu/docs/ease/accountability/dsac/professional-development-self-assessment-guide.pdf>) provides tools for analyzing professional development offerings' alignment with the Massachusetts High-Quality Professional Development Standards, the Educator Evaluation Framework, and the Standards and Indicators of Effective Practice.
- *Identifying Meaningful Professional Development* (<https://youtu.be/zhuFioO8GbQ>) is a video in which educators from three Massachusetts districts discuss the importance of targeted, meaningful



professional development and the ways districts can use the evaluation process to identify the most effective PD supports for all educators.

## Financial and Asset Management

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### Contextual Background

The town of Agawam has a city form of government with a mayor and a city council and the mayor chairs the school committee. There are close communications between town and school officials in several areas including district budget deliberations and appropriations, custodial and maintenance services, school nursing services, and capital school projects.

The development of the school budget is a collaborative and transparent process involving input from both school and town officials. Principals and administrators submit their needs for consideration in the proposed budget and participate together in prioritizing budget requests. The superintendent communicates closely with the town treasurer about town and state revenues available for the school budget, and the mayor and city council members communicate with the superintendent and the school committee throughout the budget season. Presentations of the proposed budget and budget documents are comprehensive and transparent, including revenue estimates as well as proposed changes in expenditures and staffing. The school committee's budget/finance subcommittee and the town's school budget subcommittee meet jointly to review and discuss proposed school budgets, and city council members attend school committee deliberations on the proposed budget. School and town officials told the team that as a result the school budget has been approved by the city council with little opposition. The town and district have an agreement for allocating town expenses for the district which officials reported is reasonable and fair. The town has funded education at approximately 20 percent above the required net school spending level, and per pupil in-district costs are slightly above the median for comparably sized districts (See the District Profile above).

The town and district also collaborate on custodial cleaning, maintenance and nursing services, and on capital projects to improve school facilities. School custodians are town employees and the town provides maintenance services for the upkeep of school buildings and grounds. School administrators reported that the town custodial and maintenance services have been satisfactory, with an effective maintenance request system for facility needs. Review team members found the facilities to be clean and well maintained in spite of the age of several school buildings. School nurses are also town employees under the supervision of the town's health department. Administrators reported problems with the oversight, supervision, and training of the nurses and some shortages of supplies. They expressed concern that the supervision of school nurses by the town has restricted their services to the care of sick children with little or no responsibility for health and wellness education or other health needs in the schools.

The town has a capital plan, and town and school officials have collaborated on recent capital projects for the schools including renovations of the high school auditorium and library, the track facility, boilers, and green repairs to the junior high. They have jointly prepared statements of interest to the MSBA for high school renovations (without success), and are currently engaged in a feasibility study for the facility housing early childhood programs.

## Strength Findings

**1. The process for developing and presenting the annual school budget in Agawam has been collaborative and transparent and includes input from administrators, school committee members, town officials, and the public.**

**A.** Interviews and a document review indicated that the development of the district budget begins in November, and the process includes input from administrators, town officials, school committee members, and the public in a variety of forums.

1. The budget timeline, distributed in October, begins with proposals from principals and other administrators for school needs and estimates of salary and fixed costs.
  - a. Principals confirmed that district administrators work collaboratively to meet school needs within available funding, and if they have a persuasive rationale for needs, the district tries to find the needed resources. For example, elementary staff increases were postponed to allow other needs to be met at upper levels.
2. The superintendent told the team that he and the business manager meet with principals and administrators from November to December to assess school budget needs, goals, and plans and to hear their rationale for needs.
3. Simultaneously, the superintendent, the business manager, and the town treasurer estimate revenues, including Chapter 70, the town contribution, grants, and outside funds.
4. Administrators reported that they meet to assess and prioritize budget requests in January.
5. School committee members and administrators stated that principals and other administrators present their program and budget needs to the budget/finance subcommittee of the school committee.
6. The superintendent's presentations begin with estimated revenues for education (including Chapter 70, the estimated town contribution, and grants), then highlighted district needs and proposed changes in expenditures and staffing. During the budget season he presents proposed budgets to the school committee budget/finance subcommittee and to joint meetings of the budget/finance committee and the city council school budget subcommittee as well as to the full school committee and the public.
7. The superintendent and his administrators present proposed budgets to the school committee publicly at several meetings, culminating in a public hearing in April. School committee members reported that city council members have been invited to these

meetings and some have usually attended; they emphasized that they try to be transparent about the budget.

8. Town officials as well as administrators said that the school budget has been approved annually by the city council with little opposition, and a review of budget documents showed that the school budget increased by 2.7 percent for fiscal year 2016 and by 4.9 percent for fiscal year 2015. The superintendent noted that through tough times the district has maintained class sizes and has not had to cut services or lay off staff.
  9. According to ESE data, the town has exceeded its net school spending obligation by approximately 20 percent over the past several years and its per pupil in-district costs have been slightly above the median for similar districts (see the District Profile and Table B6).
- B.** The superintendent has communicated informally and closely with school committee members and town officials as well as administrators to ensure a transparent and inclusive budget development process.
1. The superintendent and municipal officials said that the superintendent was in close contact with the town treasurer and the chairman of the city council school budget subcommittee early in the process to discuss estimated state aid for education and other town revenue sources that may be available for the schools.
  2. School committee members praised the superintendent in his evaluation for developing a fiscally responsible and transparent budget.
- C.** Budget documents are comprehensive, clear, and transparent.
1. The PowerPoint budget presentations include estimated revenue sources including town and state revenues for education. They identify highlights and priorities such as maintaining class size, increases for salaries, new positions (for example, special education and math coach), safety and security, technology, special education, and transportation costs. Budget line items by school and other cost centers included personnel as well as financial increases and decreases.
  2. Budget documents include a message from the superintendent, estimated revenues from grants and revolving funds, narratives for each school, and capital project requests as well as budget and personnel increases and decreases for each budget line.

**Impact:** The frequent and open communications between administrators, school committee members, and town officials have resulted in high levels of cooperation about budgets and support for the superintendent's proposed budgets at both the school committee and city council levels. The town has exceeded its net school spending requirement by approximately 20 percent in recent years and schools

have been able to fund new textbooks, technology, negotiated salary increases, and other program needs while maintaining class size and services.

**2. The district collaborates and works closely with municipal offices to provide maintenance and custodial services for the schools and support for capital and facility needs as well as budgets for school programs.**

- A.** Town municipal departments provide custodial and maintenance services for the schools and they keep them clean, well maintained, safe, and conducive to education.
  - 1. School administrators and town officials reported that the town provides maintenance and custodial services to the schools. These services and staff are employed by the town and are under the supervision of a facilities and maintenance director for all town buildings.
  - 2. They reported that they are in the process of implementing School Dude software for maintenance work orders, and for emergencies, principals call the town facilities department directly. They believed the town does an effective job cleaning and maintaining the schools, many of which are old.
  - 3. The district and the town have an agreement for allocating the town's maintenance and custodial costs for the calculation of town contributions for required net school spending.
  - 4. Although school buildings are old, reviewers found the schools to be clean, well maintained, and conducive to education.
  - 5. The superintendent reported that the district collaborates with police and fire departments on safety, including drills and emergencies.
- B.** The town and district have worked together to support capital projects for school building needs and to seek state funding.
  - 1. The town has approved funding for a major renovation (\$6 million) of the high school track facility and the project is currently underway. Municipal officials reported that the town has also funded renovations of the high school auditorium and library, the junior high school boilers, and green repairs.
  - 2. Other projects noted by school committee members and on the town's capital improvement plan include energy management systems, rooftop air conditioning units, a new or expanded Early Childhood Center, swimming pool filtration, and high school science rooms as recommended by the NEASC.
  - 3. Administrators and municipal officials identified several school capital needs including high school renovations, the Early Childhood Center and elementary spaces for art, music, and science. The district has funded a feasibility study and is considering the options collaboratively.

4. The town and the district worked together (unsuccessfully) to seek MSBA funding for high school science and handicap access renovations. Town and district officials told the team that they plan to consider statements of interest for other projects such as middle school boilers, the Early Childhood Center building, and improvements to the elementary schools.
- C.** Town and district officials have worked together to maintain district funding at a level approximately 20 percent above the net school spending requirement.

**Impact:** The cooperation of town and school administrators in funding and providing custodial and maintenance services for school buildings has kept schools clean, safe, and conducive for education and prolonged the effective use of facilities. Similarly, town and school administrators have cooperatively submitted applications to the MSBA for capital school projects and have collaboratively included those and other capital needs in the town capital plan resulting in funding for some. Finally, the town has funded the district and education at a level approximately 20 percent above the required net school spending level in large part because district and town officials have worked closely together to prepare responsible and educationally sound budgets.

## **Challenges and Areas for Growth**

- 1. School nurses are town employees and are not under the supervision of school principals, who have concerns about the arrangement.**
  - A.** Special legislation filed for Agawam permits nurses to be town employees and work and be supervised by the town rather than under the control of the district or school principals.
    1. Administrators and town officials confirmed that nurses are town employees who work for the town health department.
    2. Municipal officials noted that nurses are not paid on the basis of the teachers' salary schedule and said that nurses would like better pay. They also stated that the superintendent and the health director work out any issues.
  - B.** Administrators described problems with nursing services for the schools.
    1. Principals referred to the practice of town supervision of nurses in their schools as a "disaster" and cited problems with sufficient nursing supplies such as gloves, Epi-Pens, and nebulizers.
    2. District leaders raised concerns about health care and nursing services in the schools, including the hiring, supervision, training, and oversight of the nurses.

3. The supervision of school nurses by the town has restricted their services to the care of sick children with little or no responsibility for health and wellness education or other health needs in the schools.

**Impact:** The restriction of nursing services to the care of sick children with little or no responsibility for health and wellness education or other health needs in the schools and problems with sufficient health and safety supplies may compromise the wellness of the district's students.

## Instruction

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The team observed 55 classes throughout the district: 14 at the high school, 6 at the junior high school, 9 at the middle school, and 26 at the elementary schools. The team observed 25 ELA classes, 18 mathematics classes, 10 science classes, and 2 classes in other subject areas. 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.

### Contextual Background

The quality of observed instruction varied across school levels with considerable strengths noted in most K-8 lessons. Strong or moderate evidence was observed overall in 80 percent or more of lessons for the following five instructional characteristics: teachers' knowledge of subject matter and content; the use of appropriate instructional strategies well matched to learning objectives; motivated and engaged students; students who took responsibility for their learning either individually, in pairs or in groups; and classroom climate reflecting respectful behavior, tone and discourse. The review team found in high school lessons a low incidence of strong or moderate evidence for instructional characteristics related to critical thinking, rigor, and high expectations in lessons that stretch and challenge students. In addition, the review team observed in high school and middle school lessons a low incidence of strong or moderate evidence for differentiated instruction and in high school lessons a low incidence of formative assessments.

### Strength Finding

- 1. In 80 percent or more of observed classes overall, the review team found strong or moderate evidence of teachers' knowledge of subject matter and content, of appropriate instructional strategies well matched to learning objectives, of motivated and engaged students, and of a positive classroom environment. The incidence of these characteristics was particularly strong K-8.**
  - A.** Team members saw strong or moderate evidence overall that teachers demonstrated knowledge of subject matter and content in 47 of 55 classes or 86 percent of observed lessons (in 89 percent of elementary lessons, in 93 percent of middle-school and junior-high lessons, and in 71 percent of high-school lessons).
    1. For example, in a grade 5 lesson on colonial trade, the teacher clearly interpreted for the students the differences between indentured servants and slaves and their roles in colonial America's economic system.
    2. In a grade 8 science lesson to prove the Law of Conservation of Mass, pairs of students and the teacher engaged in lively discussions and observations exploring the reaction caused when baking soda was dissolved in vinegar.



- B.** In 44 of 55 classes or 80 percent of observed lessons, team members noted strong or moderate evidence overall in the use of appropriate instructional strategies well matched to the learning objective(s) (in 89 percent of elementary lessons, in 94 percent of middle-school and junior-high lessons, and in 50 percent of high-school lessons).

  - 1. For example, in a grade 4 class on fractions, the teacher implemented a well-planned lesson with all activities, materials, and media aligned with the learning objective and whole-group, paired, and small-group learning activities.
  - 2. In a grade 6 ELA lesson on the identification and resolution of conflict, students shared in groups what they wrote about conflict and then practiced making inferences by discussing “what would have happened if....”
- C.** In 46 of 55 classes or 85 percent of observed lessons, team members saw strong or moderate evidence overall that students were motivated and engaged in the lesson, a characteristic that was described in interviews as a district priority (in 96 percent of elementary lessons, in 87 percent of middle-school and junior-high lessons, and in 64 percent of high-school lessons).

  - 1. For example, in a grade 12 English class, students were highly motivated and interested in developing thesis statements for a research paper. Students had selected their own research topics and showed a high degree of interest in their topics while engaging in animated dialogue with the teacher.
  - 2. In a grade 6 introductory statistics lesson, students were immersed and engaged when the teacher checked students’ heartbeats and then graphed them on the board.
- D.** There was strong or moderate evidence in 45 of 55 classes or 82 percent of observed lessons overall that students assumed responsibility for their own learning whether individually, in pairs, or in groups (in 93 percent of elementary lessons, in 94 percent of middle-school or junior-high lessons, and in 50 percent of high-school lessons).

  - 1. For example, in several observed ELA lessons at the elementary level, students took responsibility for developing their literacy skills in a variety of Daily 5 activities such as read to self, read with a buddy, work with the teacher on reading, work on vocabulary, or work on writing.
- E.** In 47 of 55 classes or 86 percent of observed lessons, team members noted that classroom climate was characterized by respectful behavior, routines, tone, and discourse (in 93 percent of elementary lessons, in 100 percent of middle-school and junior-high lessons, and in 58 percent of high-school lessons).

**Impact:** Student learning and growth can be encouraged and maximized when teachers align content knowledge to a variety of appropriate instructional strategies. In the best lessons, students are asked to assume responsibility for their own learning, whether individually, in pairs or in groups. In these lessons,

students enthusiastically engage in active learning and are motivated to delve more deeply into ideas, thinking, and skill development. They also can be reflective about what they are learning. Active and collaborative learning experiences also help students learn to apply knowledge, skills, and understanding to new contexts.

## Challenges and Areas for Growth

**2. In contrast to observed lessons at the elementary, middle-school, and junior-high levels, in observed lessons at the high school there was a low incidence of instructional practices characterized by academic rigor, critical thinking, differentiated instruction, and the use of formative assessments.**

- A.** The table below shows the percentages of observed classes at the various levels in which the team saw strong and moderate evidence of academic rigor, critical thinking, differentiation, and the use of formative assessments.

**Table 21: Percentage of Observed Classrooms with Strong or Moderate Evidence of Rigor, Critical Thinking, Differentiated Instruction, and Formative Assessments**

Characteristic	Elementary (of 26 lessons)	Middle/Junior High (of 15 lessons)	High School (of 14 lessons)
<b>Rigor and High Expectations</b>	80%	86%	35%
<b>Critical and Analytical Thinking</b>	69%	60%	28%
<b>Differentiated Instruction</b>	65%	34%	29%
<b>Formative Assessments</b>	85%	86%	36%

Source: Data from Instructional Inventory (see Appendix C)

- B.** Team members observed strong or moderate evidence that teachers implemented lessons that reflected high expectations aligned to learning objectives in only 5 of 14 or 35 percent of high-school lessons.
1. In a grade 9 English lesson focused on a short story, learning objectives were not stated or posted to guide student learning. Students read aloud in round-robin manner without discussion or questions to check for understanding.
  2. In an advanced level honors math class, the teacher did almost all the explaining and the questions directed to the students mainly required Yes or No or one word answers with only a few opportunities for students to contribute explanations.

- C. Team members saw strong or moderate evidence of tasks that encouraged students to develop and engage in critical thinking in just 4 of 14 classes or 29 percent of observed high school lessons.
  - 1. In a positive example, in a high school English class the teacher repeatedly asked the students “Why?” and asked them to explain their thinking.
  - 2. In contrast, in another high school English class, students listened for almost 30 minutes while the teacher read aloud from a novel, stopping only once to ask for a word definition. Several students had their heads on their desks while others frequently turned around to check the clock at the back of the room.
  - 3. In a grade 9 English lesson, students took turns reading aloud from a story and were asked to respond to low-level questions such as “Who?” “What?” and “When?” rather than being asked to explain or interpret or respond to questions such as “How?” “Why?” and “Why not?”
  - 4. In a grade 12 math lesson on probability and random digits, students sat quietly and copied what the teacher explained and then filled in on a worksheet projected on the Smart Board.
  - 5. In most observed English and math lessons at the high school, all students did the same work.
- D. Team members observed strong or moderate evidence of the use of differentiated instruction to make lesson content accessible for all learners, described in focus groups as a district priority, in just 5 of 15 or 34 percent of middle-school or junior-high lessons and in only 4 of 14 or 29 percent of high-school lessons.
  - 1. In a positive example, in a high school English lesson, students used their Chromebooks to access data to support research on individual topics.
- E. Strong or moderate evidence of the use of formative assessments to check for student understanding was noted in just 5 of 14 classes or 36 percent of observed lessons at the high school.
  - 1. As a positive example, in a high school English lesson in which students were developing statements for a research paper, the teacher continually circulated checking, questioning, and facilitating students’ efforts as students worked on their statements.
  - 2. In a high-school chemistry lesson, the teacher sat at a desk and calculated equations that were projected on the white board, asking students to fill in the blanks on their worksheets with the correct answer, with the teacher rather than the students often answering the questions.

3. In observed grade 9 and 10 English lessons, there was little checking for understanding about the novel or the play students were reading. When questions were asked, only those students who volunteered were called on to respond, mostly to lower-level questions.

**Impact:** Students are more likely to meet their potential when lessons require critical thinking and are student centered---designed with students' diverse learning needs in mind, rather than to accommodate a "one size fits all" whole-class, teacher-centered lesson design. Without the use of a repertoire of thoughtful formative assessments to frequently check for understanding, teachers cannot determine what students know, can do, and understand before moving to the next component of a lesson or a unit of study. In addition, without skillful use of formative assessments, teachers cannot reliably know when to adjust and fine-tune instruction.

### **Recommendation**

- 1. The district should improve instruction by building teachers capacity---at the high school in particular--to increase instructional rigor and high expectations, to cultivate higher-order thinking skills, to deliver differentiated instructional model, to use formative assessments to inform instruction.**

**A.** The district should consider making these areas a focus for planning professional development.

1. The district should review and if possible modify teaching schedules so that teachers at all levels have regular, frequent department and/or grade-level common planning time in which to collaboratively reflect on and improve curriculum and instruction.

**B.** Teacher Leaders and Common Core Facilitators should be supported as they work with colleagues to focus on these areas of instruction.

**C.** Teachers should be given opportunities to observe peers who demonstrate expertise in these areas.

1. 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.

**D.** When conducting observations, evaluators should prioritize these four teaching characteristics and provide feedback, recommendations, or suggestions to teachers on how to improve their skills in implementing them, as appropriate.

**Benefits:** 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. By implementing this recommendation, the district will provide a common language that will facilitate more focused feedback and professional development. Students will benefit because they will be more challenged in lessons, they will further develop higher-order thinking skills, lessons will more definitively

meet their specific learning needs, and they will be better able to demonstrate what they truly understand and where more work is needed to meet their learning needs.

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

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### Review Team Members

The review was conducted from February 29 –March 2, 2016, by the following team of independent ESE consultants.

1. James Caradonio, Ed. D., Leadership and Governance
2. Frank Sambuceti, Ed. D., Human Resources
3. Tom Johnson, Ed. D., Professional Development
4. George Gearhart, Ed. D, Financial and Asset Management
5. Linda L. Greyser, Ed. D., Instruction and *review team coordinator*

### District Review Activities

The following activities were conducted during the review:

The team conducted interviews with the following financial personnel: school business administrator financial analyst.

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

The review team conducted interviews with the following representatives of the teachers' association: president, vice-president/middle school, vice-president/secondary schools, and eight members/building representatives.

The team conducted interviews/focus groups with the following central office administrators: superintendent; assistant superintendent for curriculum, instruction, and human resources; school business administrator; and special education director.

The team visited the following schools: Benjamin J. Phelps Elementary School (K-4), Clifford M. Granger Elementary School (K-4), James Clark Elementary School (K-4), Robinson Park Elementary School (K-4), Roberta G. Doering Middle School (grades 5-6), Agawam Junior High School (grades 7-8), and Agawam High School (grades 9-12).

During school visits, the team conducted interviews with 8 principals and focus groups with 10 elementary school teachers, 14 middle school and junior high school teachers, and 5 high school teachers.

The team observed 55 classes in the district: 14 at the high school, 15 at the middle school and junior high school, and 26 at the 4 elementary schools.

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

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

#### Site Visit Schedule

Monday 02/29/2016	Tuesday 03/01/2016	Wednesday 03/02/2016
Orientation with district leaders and principals; interviews with district staff and principals; document reviews; interview with teachers' association; and visits to the Clark Elementary School and the high school for classroom observations.	Interviews with district staff and principals; interviews with town personnel; review of personnel files; teacher focus groups; parent focus group; student focus group; interviews with school committee members and observations of professional development activities during the .5 release day.	Visits to Robinson Park Elementary School, Granger Elementary School, Phelps Elementary School, Doering Middle School, Agawam Junior High School, and Agawam High School for classroom observations.

## Appendix B: Enrollment, Performance, Expenditures

**Table B1a: Agawam Public Schools  
2015–2016 Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity**

Student Group	District	Percent of Total	State	Percent of Total
African-American	70	1.8%	83,481	8.8%
Asian	97	2.5%	61,584	6.5%
Hispanic	264	6.7%	176,873	18.6%
Native American	1	0.0%	2,179	0.2%
White	3,408	86.5%	597,502	62.7%
Native Hawaiian	2	0.1%	888	0.1%
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	97	2.5%	30,922	3.2%
<b>All Students</b>	<b>3,939</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>953,429</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Note: As of October 1, 2015

**Table B1b: Agawam Public Schools  
2015–2016 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	651	42.7%	16.3%	165,559	39.4%	17.2%
Econ. Disad.	993	65.1%	25.2%	260,998	62.2%	27.4%
ELLs and Former ELLs	173	11.3%	4.4%	85,763	20.4%	9.0%
All high needs students	1,526	100.0%	38.2%	419,764	100.0%	43.5%

Notes: As of October 1, 2015. 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 3,990; total state enrollment including students in out-of-district placement is 964,026.



**Table B2a: Agawam Public Schools  
English Language Arts Performance, 2012–2015**

Grade and Measure		Number Included (2015)	Spring MCAS Year					Gains and Declines	
			2012	2013	2014	2015	State (2015)	4-Year Trend	2-Year Trend
3	CPI	290	83.9	85.4	85.8	86.5	83.4	2.6	0.7
	P+	290	59%	62%	64%	63%	60%	4%	-1%
4	CPI	310	85.7	79.1	81.5	82.1	78.5	-3.6	0.6
	P+	310	66%	54%	55%	58%	53%	-8%	3%
	SGP	294	51	47	46	50	50	-1	4
5	CPI	266	82.1	85	80.4	81.6	87.3	-0.5	1.2
	P+	266	61%	65%	56%	59%	71%	-2%	3%
	SGP	251	37	32	32	30	50	-7	-2
6	CPI	310	86.5	85.4	87.6	87	86.6	0.5	-0.6
	P+	310	69%	66%	72%	70%	71%	1%	-2%
	SGP	297	43	49	41	57	50	14	16
7	CPI	295	88.9	87.9	84.4	86.3	87	-2.6	1.9
	P+	295	72%	68%	63%	66%	70%	-6%	3%
	SGP	275	49	36	28.5	29	50	-20	0.5
8	CPI	323	92.6	89.7	91.6	87.1	91.4	-5.5	-4.5
	P+	323	81%	76%	79%	71%	80%	-10%	-8%
	SGP	307	57	46	52	36	50	-21	-16
10	CPI	334	97.2	97.3	96.6	96.6	96.7	-0.6	0
	P+	334	92%	93%	90%	90%	91%	-2%	0%
	SGP	298	40.5	43	45	52.5	51	12	7.5
All	CPI	2,128	88.4	87.2	87.1	87	--	-1.4	-0.1
	P+	2,128	72%	69%	69%	69%	--	-3%	0%
	SGP	1,722	45	42	41	42	50	-3	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 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: Agawam Public Schools  
Mathematics Performance, 2012–2015**

Grade and Measure		Number Included (2015)	Spring MCAS Year					Gains and Declines	
			2012	2013	2014	2015	State (2015)	4-Year Trend	2-Year Trend
3	CPI	289	84.9	90.2	88.8	92.1	85.4	7.2	3.3
	P+	289	67%	77%	76%	81%	70%	14%	5%
4	CPI	307	83.6	83.9	81.9	81.4	77.2	-2.2	-0.5
	P+	307	55%	60%	53%	54%	47%	-1%	1%
	SGP	296	43	47	38	52.5	49	9.5	14.5
5	CPI	266	80.8	84	80.6	79.5	83.6	-1.3	-1.1
	P+	266	61%	66%	60%	57%	67%	-4%	-3%
	SGP	251	43.5	45	41	39	50	-4.5	-2
6	CPI	309	84.1	82.4	84.4	83.8	81.5	-0.3	-0.6
	P+	309	63%	63%	65%	66%	62%	3%	1%
	SGP	300	48	48	47	53.5	50	5.5	6.5
7	CPI	298	78.5	78.8	74.2	79	73	0.5	4.8
	P+	298	52%	54%	50%	58%	51%	6%	8%
	SGP	278	56	45	42	49.5	51	-6.5	7.5
8	CPI	322	76.8	75.2	77.8	78.1	78.7	1.3	0.3
	P+	322	52%	52%	52%	56%	60%	4%	4%
	SGP	308	44.5	37.5	46	41	51	-3.5	-5
10	CPI	335	92.4	93.6	91.9	90.6	89.9	-1.8	-1.3
	P+	335	81%	87%	82%	78%	79%	-3%	-4%
	SGP	297	45	55	46	45	50	0	-1
All	CPI	2,126	82.9	83.7	82.8	83.6	0	0.7	0.8
	P+	2126	62%	65%	63%	65%	0%	3%	2%
	SGP	1,730	47	46	43	47	50	0	4

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: Agawam Public Schools  
Science and Technology/Engineering Performance, 2012–2015**

Grade and Measure		Number Included (2015)	Spring MCAS Year					Gains and Declines	
			2012	2013	2014	2015	State (2015)	4-Year Trend	2-Year Trend
5	CPI	263	80.7	78.2	80.4	81.1	78.2	0.4	0.7
	P+	263	54%	46%	54%	54%	51%	0%	0%
8	CPI	320	69.9	69.9	71.1	67.6	72.4	-2.3	-3.5
	P+	320	38%	32%	33%	33%	42%	-5%	0%
10	CPI	318	85.2	89.6	85.7	85	88.2	-0.2	-0.7
	P+	318	62%	72%	64%	64%	72%	2%	0%
All	CPI	901	78.3	78.7	79.2	77.7	79.4	-0.6	-1.5
	P+	901	51%	49%	51%	50%	54%	-1%	-1%

Notes: P+ = percent *Proficient* or *Advanced*. Students participate in Science and Technology/ Engineering (STE) MCAS tests in grades 5, 8, and 10 only. Median SGPs are not calculated for STE.

**Table B3a: Agawam Public Schools  
English Language Arts (All Grades)  
Performance for Selected Subgroups Compared to State, 2012–2015**

Group and Measure			Number Included (2015)	Spring MCAS Year				Gains and Declines	
				2012	2013	2014	2015	4-Year Trend	2-Year Trend
High Needs	District	CPI	870	79.3	78.2	79.2	77	-2.3	-2.2
		P+	870	53.0%	52.0%	53.0%	48.0%	-5.0%	-5.0%
		SGP	657	45	43	42	40	-5	-2
	State	CPI	93,277	76.5	76.8	77.1	79.5	3	2.4
		P+	93,277	48.0%	48.0%	50.0%	55.0%	7.0%	5.0%
		SGP	68,746	46	47	47	47	1	0
Econ. Disad.	District	CPI	616	--	--	--	81.9	81.9	81.9
		P+	616	--	--	--	57.0%	57.0%	57.0%
		SGP	462	--	--	--	42	42	42
	State	CPI	63,124	--	--	--	80.9	80.9	80.9
		P+	63,124	--	--	--	59.0%	59.0%	59.0%
		SGP	47,064	--	--	--	47	47	47
Students w/ disabilities	District	CPI	360	64.9	60.7	61.5	60.9	-4	-0.6
		P+	360	24.0%	23.0%	22.0%	19.0%	-5.0%	-3.0%
		SGP	262	40	41	35.5	35.5	-4.5	0
	State	CPI	39,117	67.3	66.8	66.6	71.6	4.3	5
		P+	39,117	31.0%	30.0%	31.0%	39.0%	8.0%	8.0%
		SGP	28,234	43	43	43	44	1	1
English language learners or Former ELLs	District	CPI	92	74.5	81.8	80	77.2	2.7	-2.8
		P+	92	47.0%	57.0%	50.0%	43.0%	-4.0%	-7.0%
		SGP	62	63	54	49	52	-11	3
	State	CPI	18,541	66.2	67.4	67.8	70.1	3.9	2.3
		P+	18,541	34.0%	35.0%	36.0%	41.0%	7.0%	5.0%
		SGP	11,589	51	53	54	54	3	0
All students	District	CPI	2,128	88.4	87.2	87.1	87	-1.4	-0.1
		P+	2,128	72.0%	69.0%	69.0%	69.0%	-3.0%	0.0%
		SGP	1,722	45	42	41	42	-3	1
	State	CPI	216,396	86.7	86.8	86.7	89.3	2.6	2.6
		P+	216,396	69.0%	69.0%	69.0%	75.0%	6.0%	6.0%
		SGP	172,652	50	51	50	50	0	0

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

**Table B3b: Agawam Public Schools  
Mathematics (All Grades)  
Performance for Selected Subgroups Compared to State, 2012–2015**

Group and Measure			Number Included (2015)	Spring MCAS Year				Gains and Declines	
				2012	2013	2014	2015	4-Year Trend	2-Year Trend
High Needs	District	CPI	868	72.4	73.7	73.5	72.6	0.2	-0.9
		P+	868	44.0%	47.0%	46.0%	45.0%	1.0%	-1.0%
		SGP	662	43	43	40	44	1	4
	State	CPI	93,295	67	68.6	68.4	70.2	3.2	1.8
		P+	93,295	37.0%	40.0%	40.0%	43.0%	6.0%	3.0%
		SGP	69,106	46	46	47	47	1	0
Economically Disadvantaged	District	CPI	613	0	0	0	77.9	77.9	77.9
		P+	613	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	53.0%	53.0%	53.0%
		SGP	465	0	0	0	46	46	46
	State	CPI	63,076	--	--	--	71.9	71.9	71.9
		P+	63,076	--	--	--	47.0%	47.0%	47.0%
		SGP	47,295	--	--	--	46	46	46
Students w/ disabilities	District	CPI	361	56.5	55.3	55.4	54.6	-1.9	-0.8
		P+	361	20.0%	17.0%	21.0%	19.0%	-1.0%	-2.0%
		SGP	266	34	35	39.5	37	3	-2.5
	State	CPI	39,181	56.9	57.4	57.1	60	3.1	2.9
		P+	39,181	21.0%	22.0%	22.0%	27.0%	6.0%	5.0%
		SGP	28,451	43	42	43	44	1	1
English language learners or Former ELLs	District	CPI	90	74.1	81.3	81.7	82.2	8.1	0.5
		P+	90	46.0%	53.0%	56.0%	56.0%	10.0%	0.0%
		SGP	60	51.5	50	37	43.5	-8	6.5
	State	CPI	18,625	61.6	63.9	63.8	64.4	2.8	0.6
		P+	18,625	32.0%	35.0%	36.0%	37.0%	5.0%	1.0%
		SGP	11,735	52	53	52	50	-2	-2
All students	District	CPI	2,126	82.9	83.7	82.8	83.6	0.7	0.8
		P+	2,126	62.0%	65.0%	63.0%	65.0%	3.0%	2.0%
		SGP	1,730	47	46	43	47	0	4
	State	CPI	216,363	79.9	80.8	80.3	83.1	3.2	2.8
		P+	216,363	59.0%	61.0%	60.0%	66.0%	7.0%	6.0%
		SGP	173,217	50	51	50	50	0	0

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

**Table B3c: Agawam Public Schools  
Science and Technology/Engineering (All Grades)  
Performance for Selected Subgroups Compared to State, 2012–2015**

Group and Measure			Number Included (2015)	Spring MCAS Year				Gains and Declines	
				2012	2013	2014	2015	4-Year Trend	2-Year Trend
High Needs	District	CPI	340	68.7	68.9	70.3	67.9	-0.8	-2.4
		P+	340	36.0%	31.0%	36.0%	34.0%	-2.0%	-2.0%
	State	CPI	91,013	65	66.4	67.3	66.3	1.3	-1
		P+	91,013	31.0%	31.0%	33.0%	32.0%	1.0%	-1.0%
Econ. Disad.	District	CPI	237	0	0	0	73.2	73.2	73.2
		P+	237	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	42.0%	42.0%	42.0%
	State	CPI	62,345	0	0	0	67.1	67.1	67.1
		P+	62,345	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	33.0%	33.0%	33.0%
Students w/ disabilities	District	CPI	147	56.9	54.8	58.2	52.7	-4.2	-5.5
		P+	147	18.0%	11.0%	17.0%	10.0%	-8.0%	-7.0%
	State	CPI	38,520	58.7	59.8	60.1	60.2	1.5	0.1
		P+	38,520	20.0%	20.0%	22.0%	22.0%	2.0%	0.0%
English language learners or Former ELLs	District	CPI	14	70.2	66.7	67.2	64.3	-5.9	-2.9
		P+	14	32.0%	20.0%	22.0%	21.0%	-11.0%	-1.0%
	State	CPI	17,516	51.4	54	54	53.9	2.5	-0.1
		P+	17,516	17.0%	19.0%	18.0%	18.0%	1.0%	0.0%
All students	District	CPI	901	78.3	78.7	79.2	77.7	-0.6	-1.5
		P+	901	51.0%	49.0%	51.0%	50.0%	-1.0%	-1.0%
	State	CPI	210,454	78.6	79	79.6	79.4	0.8	-0.2
		P+	210,454	54.0%	53.0%	55.0%	54.0%	0.0%	-1.0%

Notes: Median SGPs are not calculated for Science and Technology/ Engineering (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: Agawam Public Schools  
Annual Grade 9-12 Drop-Out Rates, 2012–2015**

Group	School Year Ending				Change 2012–2015		Change 2014–2015		State (2015)
	2012	2013	2014	2015	Percentage Points	Percent Change	Percentage Points	Percent Change	
High Needs	3.4%	4.1%	2.9%	1.4%	-2.0	-58.8%	-1.5	-51.7%	3.4%
Econ. Disad.	--	--	--	2.1%	--	--	--	--	3.3%
Students w/ disabilities	5.4%	2.5%	0.6%	0.0%	-5.4	-100%	-0.6	-100%	3.5%
ELL	10%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	-10.0	-100%	--	--	5.7%
All students	1.3%	1.8%	1.6%	0.9%	-0.4	-30.8%	-0.7	-43.8%	1.9%

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

**Table B5: Agawam Public Schools  
Attendance Rates, 2012–2015**

Group	School Year Ending				Change 2012–2015		Change 2014–2015		State (2015)
	2012	2013	2014	2015	Percentage Points	Percent Change	Percentage Points	Percent Change	
All students	95.2%	95.2%	95.6%	95.4%	0.2	0.2%	-0.2	-0.2%	94.7%

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 B6: Agawam 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>						
From local appropriations for schools:						
By school committee	\$34,541,167	\$34,903,169	\$36,488,490	\$36,484,912	\$38,080,847	\$38,272,892
By municipality	\$14,564,112	\$15,141,638	\$15,441,482	\$16,039,106	\$15,579,468	\$15,015,598
Total from local appropriations	\$49,105,279	\$50,044,807	\$51,929,972	\$52,524,018	\$53,660,315	\$53,288,490
From revolving funds and grants	--	\$6,445,515	--	\$4,247,538	--	\$5,152,052
Total expenditures	--	\$56,490,322	--	\$56,771,556	--	\$58,440,542
<b>Chapter 70 aid to education program</b>						
Chapter 70 state aid*	--	\$17,494,998	--	\$18,531,418	--	\$18,633,593
Required local contribution	--	\$21,196,318	--	\$21,799,451	--	\$22,317,126
Required net school spending**	--	\$38,691,316	--	\$40,330,869	--	\$40,950,719
Actual net school spending	--	\$46,529,260	--	\$48,281,643	--	\$50,014,056
Over/under required (\$)	--	\$7,837,944	--	\$7,950,774	--	\$9,063,337
Over/under required (%)	--	20.3%	--	19.7%	--	22.1%

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

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

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

Data retrieved 11/20/15

**Table B7: Agawam Public Schools  
Expenditures Per In-District Pupil  
Fiscal Years 2012–2014**

<b>Expenditure Category</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>
Administration	\$485	\$485	\$499
Instructional leadership (district and school)	\$743	\$633	\$832
Teachers	\$4,697	\$4,708	\$4,939
Other teaching services	\$1,120	\$1,163	\$1,275
Professional development	\$142	\$116	\$154
Instructional materials, equipment and technology	\$424	\$547	\$346
Guidance, counseling and testing services	\$424	\$443	\$488
Pupil services	\$1,142	\$1,156	\$1,125
Operations and maintenance	\$949	\$922	\$952
Insurance, retirement and other fixed costs	\$2,174	\$2,100	\$2,140
Total expenditures per in-district pupil	\$12,302	\$12,273	\$12,752

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

Note: Any discrepancy between expenditures and total is because of rounding.

## Appendix C: Instructional Inventory

<b>Focus Area #1: Learning Objectives &amp; Instruction</b>		Insufficient	Minimal	Moderate	Strong	Avg Number of points
		(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(0 to 3)
1. The teacher demonstrates knowledge of subject matter and content.	<b>ES</b>	8%	4%	35%	54%	2.3
	<b>MS</b>	0%	7%	33%	60%	2.5
	<b>HS</b>	14%	14%	21%	50%	2.1
	<b>Total #</b>	4	4	17	30	2.3
	<b>Total %</b>	7%	7%	31%	55%	
2. The teacher provides and refers to clear learning objective(s) in the lesson.	<b>ES</b>	8%	0%	38%	54%	2.4
	<b>MS</b>	13%	20%	20%	47%	2.0
	<b>HS</b>	29%	14%	43%	14%	1.4
	<b>Total #</b>	8	5	19	23	2.0
	<b>Total %</b>	15%	9%	35%	42%	
3. The teacher implements a lesson that reflects high expectations aligned to the learning objective (s).	<b>ES</b>	4%	15%	42%	38%	2.2
	<b>MS</b>	0%	13%	73%	13%	2.0
	<b>HS</b>	29%	36%	21%	14%	1.2
	<b>Total #</b>	5	11	25	14	1.9
	<b>Total %</b>	9%	20%	45%	25%	
4. The teacher uses appropriate instructional strategies well matched to the learning objective(s).	<b>ES</b>	4%	8%	27%	62%	2.5
	<b>MS</b>	0%	7%	67%	27%	2.2
	<b>HS</b>	29%	21%	36%	14%	1.4
	<b>Total #</b>	5	6	22	22	2.1
	<b>Total %</b>	9%	11%	40%	40%	
<b>Total Score For Focus Area #1</b>	<b>ES</b>					<b>9.3</b>
	<b>MS</b>					<b>8.7</b>
	<b>HS</b>					<b>6.1</b>
	<b>Total</b>					<b>8.3</b>

<b>Focus Area #2: Student Engagement &amp; Critical Thinking</b>		Insufficient	Minimal	Moderate	Strong	Avg Number of points
		(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(0 to 3)
5. Students are motivated and engaged in the lesson.	<b>ES</b>	4%	0%	15%	81%	2.7
	<b>MS</b>	0%	13%	27%	60%	2.5
	<b>HS</b>	14%	21%	43%	21%	1.7
	<b>Total #</b>	3	5	13	33	2.4
	<b>Total %</b>	5%	9%	25%	60%	
6. The teacher facilitates tasks that encourage students to develop and engage in critical thinking.	<b>ES</b>	8%	23%	38%	31%	1.9
	<b>MS</b>	0%	40%	40%	20%	1.8
	<b>HS</b>	29%	43%	14%	14%	1.1
	<b>Total #</b>	6	18	18	13	1.7
	<b>Total %</b>	11%	33%	33%	24%	
7. Students assume responsibility for their own learning whether individually, in pairs, or in groups.	<b>ES</b>	4%	4%	35%	58%	2.5
	<b>MS</b>	0%	7%	47%	47%	2.4
	<b>HS</b>	14%	36%	43%	7%	1.4
	<b>Total #</b>	3	7	22	23	2.2
	<b>Total %</b>	5%	13%	40%	42%	
<b>Total Score For Focus Area #2</b>	<b>ES</b>					<b>7.1</b>
	<b>MS</b>					<b>6.7</b>
	<b>HS</b>					<b>4.3</b>
	<b>Total</b>					<b>6.3</b>

<b>Focus Area #3: Differentiated Instruction &amp; Classroom Culture</b>		Insufficient	Minimal	Moderate	Strong	Avg Number of points
		(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(0 to 3)
8. The teacher appropriately differentiates instruction so the lesson content is accessible for all learners.	<b>ES</b>	12%	23%	27%	38%	1.9
	<b>MS</b>	40%	27%	7%	27%	1.2
	<b>HS</b>	43%	29%	29%	0%	0.9
	<b>Total #</b>	15	14	12	14	1.5
	<b>Total %</b>	27%	25%	22%	25%	
9. The teacher uses appropriate resources aligned to students' diverse learning needs. (e.g., technology, manipulatives, support personnel).	<b>ES</b>	12%	15%	38%	35%	2.0
	<b>MS</b>	20%	20%	33%	27%	1.7
	<b>HS</b>	29%	36%	21%	14%	1.2
	<b>Total #</b>	10	12	18	15	1.7
	<b>Total %</b>	18%	22%	33%	27%	
10. The classroom climate is characterized by respectful behavior, routines, tone, and discourse.	<b>ES</b>	4%	4%	12%	81%	2.7
	<b>MS</b>	0%	0%	7%	93%	2.9
	<b>HS</b>	7%	36%	29%	29%	1.8
	<b>Total #</b>	2	6	8	39	2.5
	<b>Total %</b>	4%	11%	15%	71%	
11. The teacher conducts appropriate formative assessments to check for understanding and provide feedback to students.	<b>ES</b>	4%	12%	50%	35%	2.2
	<b>MS</b>	7%	7%	53%	33%	2.1
	<b>HS</b>	21%	43%	7%	29%	1.4
	<b>Total #</b>	5	10	22	18	1.9
	<b>Total %</b>	9%	18%	40%	33%	
<b>Total Score For Focus Area #3</b>	<b>ES</b>					<b>8.7</b>
	<b>MS</b>					<b>7.9</b>
	<b>HS</b>					<b>5.3</b>
	<b>Total</b>					<b>7.6</b>