

# District Review Report

## Amesbury Public Schools

Review conducted November 17-20, 2014

---



Center for District and School Accountability

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and  
Secondary Education

### Organization of this Report

Amesbury Public Schools District Review Overview .....	1
Amesbury Public Schools District Review Findings .....	6
Amesbury Public Schools District Review Recommendations .....	29
Appendix A: Review Team, Activities, Site Visit Schedule .....	38
Appendix B: Enrollment, Performance, Expenditures .....	40
Appendix C: Instructional Inventory .....	53

**Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education**  
75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148-4906  
Phone 781-338-3000 TTY: N.E.T. Replay 800-439-2370  
[www.doe.mass.edu](http://www.doe.mass.edu)



This document was prepared by the  
Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.  
Commissioner  
**Published March 2015**

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, an affirmative action employer, is committed to ensuring that all of its programs and facilities are accessible to all members of the public. We do not discriminate on the basis of age, color, disability, national origin, race, religion, sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation. Inquiries regarding the Department's compliance with Title IX and other civil rights laws may be directed to the Human Resources Director, 75 Pleasant St., Malden, MA 02148-4906. Phone: 781-338-6105.

© 2015 Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

*Permission is hereby granted to copy any or all parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes. Please credit the "Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education."*

This document printed on recycled paper

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education  
75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148-4906  
Phone 781-338-3000 TTY: N.E.T. Relay 800-439-2370  
[www.doe.mass.edu](http://www.doe.mass.edu)



# Amesbury Public Schools District Review Overview

---

## Purpose

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

Districts reviewed in the 2014-2015 school year include districts classified into Level 2, Level 3, or Level 4 of ESE's framework for district accountability and assistance. Review reports may be used by ESE and the district to establish priority for assistance and make resource allocation decisions.

## Methodology

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

## Site Visit

The site visit to the Amesbury Public Schools was conducted from November 17-20, 2014. The site visit included approximately 26 hours of interviews and focus groups with approximately 75 stakeholders, including school committee members, district administrators, school staff, students, and teachers' association representatives. The review team conducted 3 focus groups with 12 elementary school teachers, 1 middle school teacher, and 1 high school teacher.

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 48 classrooms in 4 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

Amesbury has a mayor-council form of government and the chair of the school committee is the mayor. There are seven members of the school committee and they meet twice a month.

The current superintendent has been in the position since July 2011. The district leadership team includes the assistant superintendent, the director of teaching and learning, and the director of student services. Central office positions have been mostly stable in number over the past three years. The district has four principals leading four schools. There are four other school administrators, four assistant principals. There are 156.7 teachers in the district.

In the 2013-2014 school year, 2,348 students were enrolled in the district's 4 schools:

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

School Name	School Type	Grades Served	Enrollment
Cashman Elementary School	ES	PK-4	533
Amesbury Elementary School	ES	PK-4	436
Amesbury Middle School	MS	05-08	738
Amesbury High School	HS	09-12	641
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4 schools</b>	<b>PK-12</b>	<b>2,348</b>
*As of October 1, 2013			

Between 2010 and 2014 overall student enrollment decreased by 3.1 percent, from 2,424 in 2010 to 2,348 in 2014. Enrollment figures by race/ethnicity and high needs populations (i.e., students with disabilities, students from low-income families, and English language learners (ELLs) and former ELLs) as compared with the state are provided in Tables B1a and B1b in Appendix B.

Total in-district per-pupil expenditures were slightly lower than the median in-district per pupil expenditures for 48 K-12 districts of similar size (2,000-2,999 students) in fiscal year 2013: \$12,185 as compared with \$12,246 (see [District Analysis and Review Tool Detail: Staffing & Finance](#)). Actual net school spending has been above what is required by the Chapter 70 state education aid program, as shown in Table B8 in Appendix B.

## Student Performance<sup>1</sup>

**Amesbury is a Level 2 district because Cashman Elementary and Amesbury Middle are in Level 2.**

- Amesbury Elementary is in the 62<sup>nd</sup> percentile of elementary schools and is in Level 1 for reaching the Cumulative Progress Performance Index (PPI) target of 75 for all students and high needs students. Cashman Elementary is in the 69<sup>th</sup> percentile of elementary schools and is in Level 2 with a cumulative PPI of 69 for all students and 59 for high needs students.
- Amesbury Middle is in the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile of middle schools and is in Level 2 with a cumulative PPI of 50 for all students and 48 for high needs students; the target is 75.
- Amesbury High is in the 62<sup>nd</sup> percentile of high schools and is in Level 1 with a cumulative PPI of 84 for all students and 78 for high needs students.

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

- ELA CPI was 89.3 in 2014, below the district's target of 92.6.
- Math CPI was 81.5 in 2014, below the district's target of 85.7.
- Science CPI was 86.0 in 2014, below the district's target of 88.0.

**ELA proficiency rates were above the state rate for the district as whole and above or equal to the state rate for every grade except the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades.**

- ELA proficiency rates for all students in the district were 74 percent in 2011 and 73 percent in 2014, and above the state rate of 69 percent.
- ELA proficiency rates were equal to the state rate in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, 7 and 4 percentage points above the state in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades, respectively, and 10 percentage points above the state in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades, respectively.
  - Between 2011 and 2014 ELA proficiency rates increased by 3 to 6 percentage points in the 4<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup> grades.
- ELA proficiency rates in 2014 were below the state rate by 1 and 2 percentage points in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades, respectively.
  - Between 2011 and 2014 ELA proficiency rates decreased by 3 percentage points in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, by 11 percentage points in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, and by 8 percentage points in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade.

---

<sup>1</sup> See also student performance tables in Appendix B.

**Math proficiency rates were above the state rate for the district as a whole and above or equal to the state rate for every grade except the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades. Math performance also varied by elementary school.**

- Math proficiency rates for all students in the district were 60 percent in 2011 and 62 percent in 2014, compared with the state rate of 60 percent in 2014.
- Math proficiency rates were 5 to 8 percentage points above the state rate in the 4<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grades and equal to and one point above the state rate in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades, respectively.
  - Between 2011 and 2014 math proficiency rates increased by 7 and 5 percentage points in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades, respectively, and by 2 percentage points in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grades.
- Math proficiency rates were below the state rate by 3 and 7 percentage points in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades, respectively.
  - Between 2011 and 2014 math proficiency rates declined by 2 and 3 percentage points in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades, respectively, and by 6 percentage points in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Math proficiency rates at Amesbury Elementary increased from 58 percent in 2011 to 74 percent in 2014, and decreased from 66 percent in 2011 to 58 percent in 2014 at Cashman Elementary.

**Science proficiency rates were above the state rate in the district as a whole and in each tested grade.**

- 5<sup>th</sup> grade science proficiency rates were 64 percent in 2011 and 66 percent in 2014, above the state rate of 53 percent.
- 8<sup>th</sup> grade science proficiency rates increased 10 percentage points from 45 percent in 2011 to 55 percent in 2014, above the state rate of 42 percent.
- 10<sup>th</sup> grade science proficiency rates increased 6 percentage points from 74 percent in 2011 to 80 percent in 2014, above the state rate of 71 percent.

**Amesbury reached the 2014 four year cohort graduation target of 80.0 percent and the five year cohort graduation target of 85.0 percent.<sup>2</sup>**

- The four year cohort graduation rate increased from 82.0 percent in 2010 to 87.4 percent in 2013, above the state graduation rate of 85.0 percent.
- The five year cohort graduation rate declined from 87.4 percent in 2009 to 85.8 percent in 2012, below the state graduation rate of 87.5 percent.

---

<sup>2</sup> 2014 graduation targets are 80 percent for the four year and 85 percent for the five year cohort graduation rates and refer to the 2013 four year cohort graduation rate and 2012 five year cohort graduation rates.

- The annual dropout rate for Amesbury was 1.8 percent in 2010 and 2.3 percent in 2013, slightly above the statewide rate of 2.2 percent.

## Amesbury Public Schools District Review Findings

---

### Strengths

#### *Leadership and Governance*

**1. The superintendent and school committee have created a culture of collaboration that encourages stakeholders to work together to support higher levels of student achievement.**

- A. The school committee understands and accepts its policy-making and oversight role.
  - 1. Committee members described the committee's leadership role as multi-faceted, doing its work through workshops, regular meetings, the budget, and communicating to families. They said that they list their contact information on the district website.
  - 2. One member said that they exercise their role by attending functions, responding appropriately to parents' calls, and through the media. The team was told that committee members participate on a Facebook site called "Amesbury Talks."
  - 3. When asked how the school committee governs through broad-based policies that provide direction without direct involvement in day-to-day operations, a committee member responded, "Through communication."
  - 4. Committee members said that they urge parents to follow the protocol of speaking with administrators first and not going directly to the school committee.
- B. School committee members indicated that they trust "that the superintendent knows what she's doing," noting that the superintendent keeps the committee "generally informed."
  - 1. One committee member said that the superintendent is very good with weekly updates and that members feel free to call her with questions.
  - 2. The team was told that the superintendent sends a weekly memo to the school committee and that she is starting to send a weekly newsletter to parents.
- C. Principals told the team, "the superintendent is doing for us what principals do for teachers; using evaluation for our growth and improvement, not for [an] 'I gotcha'."
- D. School committee members referred to strong partnerships with community organizations to work collaboratively to improve outcomes (for example, to reduce domestic violence).

**Impact:** Creating a culture of collaboration paves the way for stakeholders to work together to address difficult issues, to develop strategies to support higher levels of student achievement, and to implement important initiatives in a timely way.



**2. The superintendent has created a needs analysis with her Entry Plan.**

- A. The superintendent told the team that the district's strategic plan had expired in 2009-2010, the year before she arrived in Amesbury (2010-2011). She said that she knew the district needed "a road map to go forward" and that she wanted to become familiar with the district before she developed a plan.
1. The superintendent reported that in the process of completing the plan she had visited classrooms, attended activities and events, interviewed over 100 people, met with groups and organizations, analyzed data, and reviewed documents.
  2. In her introduction to the Entry Plan, the superintendent stated that the purpose of the plan was to "listen and learn about our district: its strengths, improvement opportunities and challenges...."
  3. She said that the plan's purpose was to lay the foundation "for the building of a strategic plan in the 2012/2013 school year."
  4. The objectives of the plan are: to gather information about the community and the district; establish a strong community presence; assess the district's strengths and areas of concern; and to identify critical issues to be addressed by the district's strategic plan. The plan would also identify areas for further study to develop strategies for improving student achievement and "sharpen the focus of our commitment to ensure the success of all students."
- B. The needs identified by the superintendent in her Entry Plan included:
- "there is no human resource department and no single position dedicated to HR management";
  - "there is an increased need for data collection and analysis and no person responsible";
  - "technology infrastructure in all buildings lacks the capability to create critical learning environments for all students"; and
  - "necessary budget cuts have resulted in limited specialized programs."
- C. In her conclusion, the superintendent stated, "Over the years, it has become progressively more difficult to meet the increasing needs of our students and for the city to provide level service funding for the schools."
- D. The superintendent told the review team that after she finished her Entry Plan she began to restructure Student Services. She said, "As for vision, I talk about it at school committee meetings and team meetings. It's what I have in the Entry Plan."

- E. The superintendent had as a next step in her Entry Plan 2011-2012 to use professional learning communities (PLCs) and subject area committees (SACs) to develop processes for systematically analyzing data to inform curriculum, instruction, and program decisions.

**Impact:** By implementing a strong needs analysis and developing an Entry Plan, the superintendent has created a foundation on which to base a strategic plan with a vision and strategy for accomplishing a mission and set of goals. The Entry Plan provides a basis for obtaining and leveraging resources and for renewed commitment to improved student learning.

### ***Assessment***

#### **3. The district administers a range of formative and benchmark assessments in literacy and mathematics in the elementary and middle schools and uses results to form instructional groups and to identify students for interventions.**

- A. Interviews and a document review indicated that the district administers a variety of assessments K-8 three times a year and more often for progress monitoring for students who are receiving an intervention.
  - 1. Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), Reading Street, and Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) are used to assess literacy K- 4. Go Math Unit Assessments and MAP mathematics are used to assess mathematics K-4.
  - 2. MAP is administered in the middle school for reading and Go Math and MAP are used for mathematics. The district has also developed a writing rubric and uses science journals to assess student growth in writing and science.
- B. Data results are collected, analyzed, and used at the elementary and middle school to form instructional groups and to identify students for interventions.
  - 1. Interviewees reported that reading specialists collect, analyze, and share data with grade level teams at the elementary schools. Documents provided to the review team showed color coded data reports used with grade level teams to develop instructional groups.
  - 2. The review team was told and documents confirmed that teacher's referrals to the Intervention Team must be accompanied by recent data results and copies of student work.
  - 3. Administrators reported that middle school teachers meet to review data once in a six day cycle. Discussions are led by the principal. In addition, MCAS analysis is discussed in the middle school School Achievement Plan, resulting in at least one goal to increase the number of students moving up from high warning, high needs improvement, and high proficiency to the next level by June 2015.

**Impact:** A balance of formative and benchmark assessments allows the district to generate multiple data reports throughout the year and to adjust programming, instruction, and interventions to better meet the needs of students. Programs including curriculum enrichment at the middle school, Walk-to-Read, and intervention blocks at the elementary schools are more able to respond to changing student performance levels mid-year. Furthermore, benchmark assessments, when used to monitor progress, can help educators decide how interventions are working.

### ***Student Support***

**4. The district has common systems in place in its schools to identify struggling students and to provide some interventions for students. The district proactively evaluated the special needs program and is in the process of responding to the findings to better serve students with special needs.**

- A. Each of the four schools in Amesbury has a team that meets regularly to discuss students who are struggling in class.
  - 1. Administrators told the review team that the elementary, middle and the high schools have a process in place for teachers to identify and to refer students who are struggling. Although called by different names (intervention team, Star Team, or Child Study team), each team is composed of a school psychologist, guidance counselors, teachers, a nurse, an administrator, and the referring teacher. A document review showed that in the middle school, referring teachers are expected to provide data from recent assessments as well as student work to the Intervention Team. The Intervention Team works with the referring teacher to create an academic support plan. Interviewees reported and documents confirmed that a follow-up meeting takes place six to eight weeks later.
- B. There are structures in place at the elementary, middle, and high schools to enable teachers to provide interventions for students with similar needs.
  - 1. The team was told that Amesbury Elementary School has a school-based program called Walk-to-Read in which students are grouped by ability for 30 minutes per day for guided reading. At the Cashman Elementary School, the color-coded schedule showed a dedicated block each day ranging from 15 to 45 minutes earmarked for support. Additionally, intervention blocks are listed among the school highlights in the Cashman School Achievement Plan (SAP).
  - 2. Title I services are provided for students in reading at both elementary schools. Students performing in the lowest 20 percent on DIBELS and DRA are eligible for services.

3. Interviews reported and a document review showed that the middle school uses a Curriculum Enrichment Block to provide support and enrichment. Curriculum Enrichment is listed in the middle school SAP as a key strength. Curriculum enrichment block is scheduled for three days out of a six-day cycle and is designed to provide students with enrichment, direct instruction, intervention, and MCAS preparation.
  4. The high school provides some support during A Block, a morning period when students can informally get extra help from teachers. Students reported that they seek and receive help from teachers during lunch or a free block.
- C. Walker Partnerships was contracted by the Amesbury Public Schools to conduct a districtwide evaluation of the special education program. The district is now in the process of making changes to better meet the needs of students with specials needs.
1. Walker Partnerships conducted the evaluation of the special education program in the winter of 2013 and submitted a report with findings and recommendations to the superintendent. The superintendent said that one of the findings was that the district had an over dependence on paraprofessionals, over-identification of students with special needs, and the need for a stronger Response to Intervention (RtI).
  2. Recommendations outlined in the report related to: pre-referral and RtI; program development; service models (namely co-teaching); professional development; transition practices, data collection and scheduling oversight; entrance and exit criteria; and programming and staffing oversight.
  3. Reviewers were told that in response to the recommendations the district is looking at exit and entry criteria and attempting to make sure that all possible strategies in regular education have been tried before a referral is made. Other more specific responses include:
    - a. A more intensive program for students who are developmentally delayed was created.
    - b. The district created a dedicated program for children with autism.
    - c. At the high school level, for students with special needs the district reduced the 87 minute blocks of core instruction to 45 minutes and the remaining time was used for targeted support in the learning center.

**Impact:** Having reliable and consistent processes for identifying and providing interventions for students who are not performing at expected levels helps the district ensure that teachers get support and struggling students get the help they need. Furthermore, being proactive in evaluating the special education program helps to ensure that students with special needs are being served in the best possible way and are accessing the curriculum in the least restrictive environment. In Amesbury, this has led to enhanced programming at the preschool and early grades and adjustments to the schedule at the high school.

**5. The district has partnerships that provide support and enrichment for students, advocate and provide resources for students and families, and give staff opportunities to explore creative and enriching educational initiatives.**

- A. Pettengill House is a community-based organization that provides support for students and families' basic needs of food, shelter, clothing, and health. In fiscal year 2013, Pettengill House provided services for 676 adults and 476 children from Amesbury.
  - 1. Administrators reported that the school has a contract with Pettengill House and that representatives sometimes attend IEP meetings with families to help them navigate the school process.
  - 2. Interviewees also said that a representative from Pettengill attends Intervention Team meetings. Other interviewees told the review team that Pettengill House is "wonderful," it links families to needed resources in the community, and "parents trust them."
- B. Amesbury Educational Foundation Incorporated (AEFI) offers scholarships for students and grants for teachers.
  - 1. Review team members were told that AEFI raised money for the district's students and staff and its grant programs "have been able to challenge staff and students in ways that the district budget cannot."
  - 2. School committee members said that the AEFI has awarded grants to teachers and competition among teachers for these grants is high.
    - a. The high school School Achievement Plan (SAP) indicated that teachers received \$11,500 in grants and 13 students from the class of 2013 were awarded scholarships in recognition of their achievement on AP exams.
    - b. The middle school SAP indicated that AEFI awarded a \$10,000 Sgt. Jordon M. Shay Memorial Grant to the school for "Trailblazing the Brad Ford Nature Trail."
    - c. The AEFI website lists recipients of grants in recent years from each of the elementary schools, the middle school, and the high school.
  - 3. AEFI scholarships, sponsored in part by a \$100,000 donation from a famous native of Amesbury, have been awarded to students going into the arts.
- C. Amesbury High School has partnerships with local colleges, for early college and dual enrollment opportunities for its students.
  - 1. Northern Essex Community College (NECC) and Amesbury Public Schools have formed a partnership and launched an Early College Program for Amesbury High School students. Students can enroll as sophomores and continue through their senior year taking selected courses to earn credits that can give them a head start on their college plans.

2. Students can earn dual credit for high school and college through programs with NECC and Salem State.

**Impact:** Maintaining partnerships with higher education and other community-based organizations has been an asset to the district. Partnerships enable the district to provide expansive educational opportunities for students through the dual enrollment and early college program. Partnerships help prepare students for successful college and career paths after they graduate. Other partnerships provide additional funding for scholarships and award grants for teachers to explore enriching topics with students. District partnerships also provide support and resources for parents' and students' basic needs of food, shelter, and clothing.

## Challenges and Areas for Growth

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

### *Leadership and Governance*

6. **The superintendent and the administrative staff have not recommended to the school committee budgets that refer to improvement planning and the analysis of student achievement data.**
  - A. The fiscal year 2015 Budget Transmittal Letter from the superintendent to the mayor introduces the fiscal year 2015 Amesbury Public Schools Budget with the following statement: "This budget recognizes the financial limitations facing our city as well as addresses the growing needs of our students and school community." It neither refers to, nor documents through data, student needs based on achievement.
    1. The Budget Transmittal Letter only refers to: contractual obligations; health insurance premiums; significant increases in special education and state and federal mandates; and spending reductions and the streamlining of resources. It does not mention students' needs, as demonstrated by achievement data or other indicators.
    2. Budget narratives for each of the district's schools are included in the fiscal year 2015 budget document. The high school narrative includes results of the spring 2013 MCAS administration but makes no statement of students' need or associated budget requests.
    3. Only the Amesbury Elementary School narrative makes specific budget requests beyond level services. It includes requests for an additional classroom teacher to maintain class size, a 0.5 FTE technology support person, an increase of 20 days for a school clerk, and a 1.0 FTE math interventionist. However, student achievement data are not presented to support these requests and the positions are not included in the adopted fiscal year 2015 budget.

4. The school narratives do not include student achievement data.
- B. When asked how the school committee uses student achievement data to guide policy and decision-making, the committee told the team that “there is little time to look at the data or the central causes underlying the issues.” The review team was told, “Sometimes, despite the budget, we are able to help with student performance indicators.”
- C. District leaders noted that during several public budget workshops the principals and district leaders present to the school committee student achievement data and explain how this data translates in the budget process. They reported that, for example, after careful consideration of student achievement data and students’ needs in 2012-2013 the district decided to purchase instructional programs in math and reading and a districtwide assessment tool, and to provide professional development and support for teachers in the implementation of these tools. In addition, leaders said that the school committee was informed of the analysis in school committee meetings in 2013-2014 and approved the proposed purchases during the budget development process at the end of 2013-2014.

**Impact:** Without communicating in the budget how student achievement data guides allocations, the district is not providing stakeholders with a clear, complete picture of how resources are used effectively to support students’ needs.

**7. The district does not have a current actionable, multi-year strategic plan or a District Achievement (Improvement) Plan with essential components to guide efforts to attain strategic goals.**

- A. The superintendent has written and published several documents, which include items labeled as goals, objectives, strategic objectives, strategic initiatives, action steps, or key actions, depending on the document.
  1. The “Entry Plan Report (2011-2012)” includes a “Targeted Theory of Action” with a theory of action, strategic objectives and strategic initiatives. A “ Draft District Achievement Plan Goals and Action Steps 2014-2016” includes a goal statement, objectives, key actions and benchmarks, all of which are different from those in the Entry Plan Report. A document labeled “District Achievement (strategic) Plan Strategic Goals (undated)” is not a strategic plan and is different from each of the other documents.
  2. These documents have not been developed in the format of an action plan and generally do not contain measurable goals, objectives, specific timelines or the persons responsible for completing tasks.
  3. The report of the 2013 NEASC Visiting Committee to Amesbury High School, states: “The last District Strategic Plan was created in 2006 and expired in 2011. The superintendent was given a year of an ‘Entry’ or ‘Bridge’ plan so that she could get to know and understand her new district and determine the key issues at the building, central office, school committee and community levels. The school committee recently extended this to a second year. The

lack of a formal written district strategic plan with benchmarks and timelines for implementation inhibits the ability of students to achieve the AHS 21st Century Learning Expectations.”<sup>3</sup>

4. The superintendent reported that the mayor has begun a strategic plan development process. She told the team that currently the school committee and the leadership team are working on it and that it will eventually involve the teachers.
5. A school committee member reported that they are working on a new strategic plan with the leadership teams from all the schools.

**Impact:** In the absence of a strategic plan or a District Achievement (Improvement) Plan, informed by student achievement data and other educationally relevant data, there is a lack of cohesion and coherence in the district; school committee members cannot make informed and knowledgeable decisions and district and school leaders cannot implement a well-designed strategy for accomplishing a clearly defined mission and set of goals. A strategic plan or a District Achievement (Improvement) Plan provides performance goals for students which, when linked to analysis of student achievement data, drive the development, implementation, and modification of educational programs. The absence of a strategic plan or a District Achievement (Improvement) Plan leaves the district without direction and without a basis for measuring progress.

**8. School Achievement Plans (SAPs) for each of the four Amesbury schools are not informed by a district strategic plan or a District Achievement (Improvement) Plan.**

- A. Each of the School Achievement Plans (SAPs) for 2014-2016 lists District Goal 1 and District Goal 2 and a District Vision or Mission Statement. However, the SAPs do not include steps to address those goals.
- B. When asked to describe how the SAP is aligned with the district goals, one principal responded, “We shoot for alignment,” another said, “It all falls into place.”
- C. It is unclear how SAPs are developed. Principals told team members that when developing the SAPs, their school staffs were “actively and completely involved.” However, members of the teachers’ association told the team that teacher involvement is “minimal.” They said that while input is welcomed, it is “just a procedure.” They said that there are currently no SAP committees at the schools.
- D. When asked whether the budget is driving the SAPs instead of the SAPs driving the budget, all principals said, “Absolutely.” One principal said, “We identified in 2007-2008 the needs of the district. It’s [the document is] still sitting there. It was a really clear roadmap about what was necessary.” Another responded, “One of the things I identified as a need was RTI. We’re trying to do the best we can with the loss of staff,” noting “We’re trying to maintain what we have.”

---

<sup>3</sup> NEASC: Report of the Visiting Committee for Amesbury High School, Amesbury, MA, May 5-8, 2013, p.38.



- E. District leaders reported that beginning in the 2013-2014 school year the format of the SAPs was changed to ensure consistency across the district about the collection and reporting of student data, challenges, root causes, action steps, and resource needs/allocation. With participation by all faculty and the school council, each school used professional release time to work on the development of the SAPs and the SAPs were presented to the school committee in the spring 2014 “as a means of overtly attaching student achievement data to needs identified in the budget.” Leaders said that the district is working on refining the process so that SAPs are presented as part of the budget workshops in the development of the fiscal year 2016 budget.

**Impact:** Without School Achievement Plans that are informed by a district strategic plan or a District Achievement Plan, based on an analysis of student achievement data, and developed through a process that includes input from staff, families and community members:

- staff is not fully informed about the schools’ mission and strategies;
- student progress cannot be measured against district and school goals; and
- staff time and resources cannot be effectively focused on instructional improvement and student learning through effective management of operations.

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

**9. The district curriculum is inconsistently documented and Amesbury has limited personnel with defined responsibility and limited time for curriculum development and renewal.**

- A. The district has made use of assessment results to improve instruction a higher priority than curriculum development. Central office administrators told the team that after 2012-2013, the focus had been on selection, administration, and interpretation of the results of assessments.
1. Central office administrators and principals told the review team that the original title for the director of teaching and learning position was director of assessment and accountability.
  2. Interviewees identified the director of teaching and learning as the district assessment expert and when asked, some interviewees expressed the view that the district did not have a curriculum leader.
- B. The K-12 district curriculum is documented inconsistently.
1. The high school curriculum is fully documented with maps aligned to the 2011 Massachusetts Frameworks in ELA, mathematics, and science. The maps consist of common components and have been entered on the district’s Aspen/X2 database.
  2. Central office administrators and principals told the team that the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) accreditation visit in May 2013 provided an impetus for the

documentation of the high school curriculum. High school teachers were given release time during the school day and stipends during the summer to complete the work.

- a. The team found that the high school curriculum maps had the following components: Essential Understandings, Essential Skills, Growth Activities, Essential Questions, Print and Digital Resources, Summative Assessments, Formative Assessments, and Common Core Standards.
  - b. A review of a sample of ELA, mathematics, and science curriculum maps showed that almost all were complete. The most common missing or unfinished components were Growth Activities and Formative Assessments.
3. Central office administrators and principals told the review team that in 2012-2013 the district had engaged substitutes to enable teachers in grades 2-8 to complete curriculum maps in ELA and mathematics with the same components as the high school maps and to enter them on the district database. This work is unfinished and complications with the use of the database have reduced teacher access to the maps and the instrumental value of these maps.
  - a. In a review of a sample of ELA and mathematics curriculum maps for grades 2-8, the review team found that many had unfinished and missing components, especially in the areas of Formative and Summative Assessment.
  - b. Teachers and administrators told the review team that the Aspen/X2 database was not “user-friendly” for teachers. For example, they said that it was difficult for teachers to download and to print the curriculum maps on a single page, adding that no one was trained to assist them.
  - c. Elementary teachers said that they had limited access to the Aspen/X2 database and rarely referred to the curriculum maps for instructional planning.
  - d. There are some disparities between the two elementary schools. For example, central office administrators told the review team that the two elementary schools varied in their approach to literacy instruction; one had a balanced literacy program while the other used basal readers.
4. The kindergarten and grade 1 ELA and mathematics curricula are not on the district database because the kindergarten and grade 1 teachers were granted their preference not to participate in the mapping when they expressed the view that the template was developmentally inappropriate for the early childhood level. They preferred to rely upon their own curriculum notebooks.
5. A document review and interviews with central office administrators showed that mapping of the science curriculum has not begun K-4, and is in progress in grades 5-8.

6. Central office administrators told the review team that the grade 2 through grade 8 curriculum maps for ELA and mathematics completed in 2012-2013 were now “outdated” because the district has since adopted the latest revision of the Reading Street series and Go Math to replace the Everyday Math program. They said that there is no formal curriculum review cycle to update the maps.
- C. The district does not have sufficient personnel with clearly defined responsibility for curriculum development.
1. Central office administrators and principals told the review team that they discussed curricular topics at their bimonthly meetings; however, the team did not find explicit references to the curriculum in a review of a sample of the agendas for these leadership meetings. Central office administrators said that the director of teaching and learning did not hold regularly scheduled meetings with the principals to discuss the curriculum.
  2. Principals described the director of teaching and learning as the district curriculum leader, but expressed concern about their own role in district curriculum development. They described the director of teaching and learning as burdened with heavy responsibilities including responsibility for the district assessment program, which had been given high priority. They said that they were not able to assist with district curriculum work. The two elementary principals were without assistant principals and the middle school principal’s assistant principals had assumed both instructional and student supervisory responsibilities to compensate for losses in the teaching staff.
  3. Principals said that they were the curriculum leaders in their schools, in close consultation with central office administrators, but added that no one was formally in charge of monitoring the faithful implementation of the district curriculum.
  4. There has been a loss of infrastructure for curriculum development and renewal. Central office administrators, principals, and teachers told the team that the district no longer has a standing curriculum committee, subcommittees in the disciplines, and a cycle for continuous curriculum development and review. In addition, there are no longer any grade level leaders at the elementary school or department heads at the middle and high school levels. The Title I reading specialists at the elementary and middle school levels provide guidance on the literacy curriculum, but this is not a formal role expectation. The district no longer has a coach with expertise in mathematics.
- D. The district does not have sufficient time allotted for curriculum development and renewal.
1. Teachers and administrators told the review team that professional development days were used in part for horizontal alignment of the curriculum at the two elementary schools and vertical alignment of the K-12 curricula in the core disciplines. The team was told and a review of documents confirmed that the district’s professional development days were used for many other purposes, especially mandatory trainings.

2. Elementary school teachers have one period of common planning time each week, occasionally augmented by faculty meeting time once each month. At the middle school, common planning time takes place twice during a six day cycle. The sessions at the middle school are grade level rather than discipline specific. High school teachers have one department meeting each week. In the absence of department heads, the agendas are prepared by an assistant principal who rotates among the departments to facilitate the discussions. Teachers described the meetings as “collegial exchanges.”
3. In 2013-2014, the district devoted nearly all its professional development and faculty meeting time to implementation of the new educator evaluation system and District Determined Measures.
4. For the last two school years, the district has not funded summer curriculum work.

**Impact:** Amesbury does not have a fully documented curriculum in all core subject areas and has not defined the roles of personnel for curriculum development and renewal. Under current conditions, it is difficult to ensure that all Amesbury students are receiving standards-based instruction at all grade levels in all core subject areas. A fully elaborated and documented curriculum is fundamental to improving proficiency rates, closing the achievement gap, interpreting the results of student and programmatic assessments, holding teachers accountable for teaching and learning, and identifying professional development needs.

**10. Best practices were not clearly and consistently evident in observed classrooms.**

The team observed 48 classes throughout the district: 16 at the high school, 9 at the middle school, and 23 at the 2 elementary schools. The team observed 25 ELA classes, 15 mathematics classes, and 8 classes in other subject areas. Among the classes observed were four special education classes. The observations were approximately 20 minutes in length. All review team members collected data using ESE’s instructional inventory, a tool for recording observed characteristics of standards-based teaching. This data is presented in Appendix C.

- A. The district does not have a common definition of high quality instruction.
  1. Although central office administrators, principals, and teachers said that there was broad agreement in the district about the components of high-quality instruction, they agreed that the district had not defined high-quality instruction.
- B. The learning environment was positive in most district classes observed by the review team.
  1. The review team found clear and consistent evidence that the tone of Interactions among students and between teachers and students (#1) was positive and respectful (in 46 of the 48 classes or 96 percent overall), behavioral standards were clearly communicated and disruptions, if present, were effectively and equitably managed (#2) in 37 of the 48 classes or 77 percent overall, and classroom rituals and routines promoted transitions with minimal loss of instructional time (#4) in 32 of the 48 classes or 67 percent overall.

- C. In observed classes overall, the review team found a low incidence of some important characteristics of effective instruction.
1. Most teachers did not make the learning objectives apparent to the students.
    - a. Although instruction was clearly purposeful in most observed classes, teachers clearly and consistently communicated clear learning objectives aligned to the 2011 Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks (#8) in only 4 of the 48 classes or 8 percent overall.
    - b. Principals said that although the district did not require teachers to post objectives or to refer to them orally, some principals did encourage this practice in their schools.
    - c. Both principals and teachers told the review team that some principals ascertained whether students understood the purpose of the lesson by asking them during classroom visits what they were learning. These principals also gave teachers feedback intended to reinforce the importance of making the lesson objectives clear to the students.
  2. There was clear and consistent evidence of students articulating their thinking orally or in writing (#18) in only 22 of the 48 observed classes or 46 percent overall, and students elaborating about content and ideas when responding to questions (#20) in only 13 of the 48 observed classes or 27 percent overall. There was clear and consistent evidence of teachers using questioning techniques that required thoughtful student responses that demonstrated understanding (#12) in only 20 of the 48 classes observed or 42 percent overall.
    - a. In most observed classes, teachers did not require students to give fully developed responses that showed or substantiated their conceptual thinking. For example, in an elementary class students simply stated whether they agreed or disagreed with a student's response without providing an explanation; in a middle school class, students offered the numerical solutions to mathematical problems without explaining their underlying reasoning; and in a high school class, students described the characteristics of the protagonist in a novel they were reading without providing supportive evidence from the text.
  3. There was clear and consistent evidence of teachers conducting frequent formative assessments to check for student understanding and to inform instruction (#15) in only 17 of the 48 observed classes or 35 percent overall. Most of these classes were at the elementary level. The teachers who checked for understanding used a variety of methods including
    - asking students to position their thumbs up if they understood a concept; down if they did not; and sideways if they were uncertain

- giving students a problem to solve based on the lesson as a “ticket to leave”
  - asking students whether an explanation was making sense to them and to think of a question to ask
  - circulating to monitor students’ independent or small group work and providing direct in-the-moment assistance
  - asking students to repeat given directions in their own words
4. Teachers made use of available technology to support instruction and enhance learning (#16) in only 9 of the 48 observed classes or 19 percent overall. Students made use of technology as a tool for learning and/or understanding (#22) in only 2 of the 48 observed classes or 4 percent overall.
- a. Most classrooms were equipped with one computer for teacher use and another for student use, both of which appeared to be obsolete.
5. There was clear and consistent evidence of teachers providing opportunities for students to engage in higher order thinking such as use of inquiry, explanation, application, analysis, synthesis, and/or evaluation of knowledge or concepts (#11) in only 11 of the 48 classes observed or 23 percent overall. Students clearly and consistently inquired, explored applied, analyzed, synthesized and/or evaluated knowledge or concepts (#19) in only 16 of the 48 observed classes or 33 percent overall. There was clear and consistent evidence of students engaged in challenging academic tasks (#17) in only 17 of the 48 classes observed or 35 percent overall.
- a. Examples of practices and activities reflecting rigor and promoting higher order thinking from the review team’s classroom observations included:
- drawing conclusions and substantiating them with evidence from the text
  - explaining the mathematical reasoning used to solve a problem
  - predicting the outcome of a story
  - guessing what a story might be about from the cover illustration
  - countering student logic with open-ended questions that cause students to think more deeply and broadly
  - describing how two characters in a story are similar and different
  - surveying the class for opinions
- b. Examples of practices and activities that were not sufficiently challenging included:

- calling only on volunteers without broadening the discussion
- getting to “right answers” without discussing strategies and reasoning
- dominating the class with teacher talk and not engaging students
- providing little opportunity for students to discuss the meaning of the facts
- not considering the different points of view expressed by two students and spending most of the class time on the teacher’s own conclusions
- not providing extension tasks for students who finish assigned work early

**Impact:** Amesbury has established a positive learning environment in all district schools, positioning the district to move forward in closing the achievement gap. However, when lesson objectives are not posted or stated, learning can be less meaningful and motivating to students, and teachers’ instruction may drift from mastery of the Massachusetts Frameworks. While there was some evidence of best practices in observed classes, the incidence of some important characteristics of effective instruction was generally low and there was little promotion of such higher-order thinking skills such as evaluation, analysis, and synthesis. The district will not improve student results until best practices become more common. Without a common definition of high-quality instruction, teachers do not have the necessary guidance to develop more effective teaching.

## ***Assessment***

### **11. The collection, analysis, and use of data at the high school is limited.**

- A. There is limited use of formative and benchmark assessments to monitor student growth at the high school level.
  1. Interviewees reported that while the high school uses chapter exams, unit exams, and end of term or year tests to assess student growth and performance, MAP, the one standard formative/summative common assessment given K-8, was started in grade 9 but then discontinued.
  2. Interviewees expressed the desire to find an assessment for the high school that is as effective as MAP is at other schools.
- B. Achievement goals in the School Achievement Plan (SAP) are developed around MCAS and class grades; they are not specific or time bound.
  1. One achievement goal identified in the high school SAP is to reduce failing grades by 25 percent.

2. Another achievement goal identified in the SAP is to increase the performance of high needs students and move the high school back to Level 1 status.
- C. The loss of department heads has made data discussions inconsistent and less frequent at the high school.
1. The high school SAP lists the limited use of data among its priority concerns. The SAP explains that formative and summative assessments are used as a means to obtain grades for student transcripts and to determine learning and that there is limited use of data to inform instruction.
  2. Interviewees reported that department heads were eliminated a few years ago and data discussions have changed.
  3. Others reported that even though Critical Friends Groups, a professional learning community with structured protocols, meet monthly, it is hard to have meaningful discussions without department heads.

**Impact:** Limited data and inconsistent structures for ongoing discussions about assessments in the high school inhibits the high school from having data-driven discussions or creating action plans based on student achievement results. Without benchmark or formative assessment data the district is less able to be as responsive to student academic needs at the high school as it can at the middle and elementary levels.

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

**12. While the district is implementing its new educator evaluation system, the district's principals are struggling to find the time necessary to conduct the required observations and to complete evaluations.**

- A. The district is implementing its new educator evaluation system and is tracking evaluations on *My Learning Plan* software.
1. A review of administrators' electronic files indicated the following:
    - a. All 11 administrators and the superintendent were found to be current in their evaluations for the 2013-2014 school year. Evidence was observed of self-assessment, goal setting, observation reports, formative assessments, summative evaluations, and recommendations.
    - b. At the time of the review 9 of the 11 school administrators had completed both the self-assessment and goal setting portions of their evaluations for the current school year. The assistant principals at the middle school were in the process of completing this work.



- c. Principals indicated that the superintendent visits with them and conducts an observation. A discussion then takes place about what was observed. Goals are set that align with district and SAP goals and action steps are written. At mid-year, the principal and superintendent meet and talk about progress made. Principals described the process as “supportive.”
- B. The district’s principals and teachers reported that principals are struggling to find the time necessary to conduct the required observations and to complete evaluations.
  - 1. Principals said that they did not have sufficient time to implement the new educator evaluation system, to deal with the “kinks,” to identify and address issues, and to decide on the evidence in an effective way.
    - a. Administrators characterized the *My Learning Plan* software as both “cumbersome” and time consuming.
    - b. Principals mentioned staffing challenges and added responsibilities that reduced the time available for observations and evaluations.
      - i. The high school has lost department heads.
      - ii. At the middle school a retired teacher, who can teach a maximum of eight hours a month, is a reading coach. The two assistant principals teach enrichment. Their combined administrative FTE equivalent is only 0.8.
      - iii. The elementary schools do not have assistant principals. Interviewees said that the unofficial assistant principals are the building coordinators at the elementary schools who teach half time and have other responsibilities. They do not evaluate.
  - 2. The principal of one elementary school reported teaching grade 3 reading in 2013-2014 for one hour per day. Teachers reported their perception that the task of completing evaluations was not feasible for their principals. They also said that there was not sufficient time for a principal to engage in one-on-one conversations with a teacher with just one person in each school doing all the evaluations.
  - 3. Teachers’ association representatives indicated that the *My Learning Plan* software program was not “user friendly.” They also said that without assistant principals the elementary principals found it challenging to complete evaluations for all their teachers, particularly with paraprofessionals being added to their evaluation caseload in the current school year.
  - 4. The superintendent indicated that while asking principals to be in classrooms daily basis, she recognizes that they do not have a lot of time to accomplish that. When asked whether anyone had calculated the number of staff actually needed to do evaluations properly, a central office administrator said that she only understood how the principals have

restructured their schedules to find the time necessary to complete evaluations, adding that a case could not be made for additional positions without the data.

**Impact:** Unless the district is able to provide needed and ongoing support structures for administrators, continuous and comprehensive improvements in instructional strategies and academic programs and outcomes for all students are unlikely to take place.

**13. The district does not have an ongoing organized plan for professional development.**

- A. The *Amesbury Professional Development Catalog* represents more of a retrospective listing and documentation of professional development activities that have been offered/conducted year-to-date than a collaboratively determined prospective listing of offerings created by the Professional Development Committee for the school year from which teachers can select to best meet their needs.
  - 1. A review of the *Amesbury Professional Development Catalog* indicated that 39 trainings had been offered in the district on 6 different dates between August 8 and November 7, 2014.
  - 2. Of those trainings that supported goals identified in the district's school achievement plans, three were offered in *Go Math*, one on *OASYS/My Learning Plan* goal setting and developing assessments, one was offered in *MAP* training, and one on MCAS grade level analysis. The remaining professional development offerings covered a variety of topics including five trainings on DDMs, two on re-envisioning the district's special education model, and one on Massachusetts Kindergarten Entry Assessment (MKEA).
- B. The leadership team rather than the Professional Development Committee plans the professional development calendar for the district. Although the Professional Development Committee has been collectively bargained,<sup>4</sup> it has been inactive for the past three years. Principals told the review team that while the Professional Development Committee exists in theory, it does not meet.
  - 1. District administrators indicated that they had not worked through the recommendations made by the Professional Development Committee three years ago.
  - 2. District administrators said that they conduct surveys to obtain information on staff professional development needs.
  - 3. The leadership team plans its professional development calendar by first fitting mandated activities into the available professional development days.
- C. Teachers reported that they do not have any input into decisions about professional development and that professional development offerings are not sufficiently differentiated to meet their individual needs. They reported hearing that much of the professional development

---

<sup>4</sup> See Article IV of the 2012-2015 collective bargaining agreement between the Amesbury school committee and the AFT Amesbury.

activities are “mandated” and told the review team that they seem to be assigned to professional development programs according to their title or position. Further, they indicated that the determinations are often made with little advanced notice.

- D. Administrators indicated that time for professional development is limited during the school year.
  - 1. They reported five early release days of three hours in duration, three days of five hours in duration, and a full day in August for professional development for new teachers. The November professional development day is used for parent conferences.
  - 2. Administrators indicated that most of the professional development days are used for mandated trainings (i.e., restraint, kindergarten MKEA goals, and SEI).
  - 3. Additionally, administrators said that other forms of professional development taking place include teacher initiatives such as informal book study groups, professional development at faculty meeting times, and the Crisis Prevention Initiative (CPI restraint and de-escalation training).
- E. The team saw little evidence that school achievement plans drive professional development in the district.

**Impact:** By not involving all stakeholders in the formulation of the district’s annual professional development offerings, the district risks an absence of “buy in” on the part of its teachers and misses the opportunity to more closely target its professional development opportunities to meet differentiated teacher needs and to expand and improve their professional competencies. An insufficient link between professional development and school achievement plans prevents the district from effectively advancing educational goals or improving student achievement.

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

#### **14. The approved fiscal year 2015 operating budget does not address student achievement priorities with budget impacts, as identified in School Achievement Plans.**

- A. All four SAPs cited increased or focused professional development as being needed for improved student achievement.
  - 1. Professional development budgets were not increased, and in some cases professional development line items were decreased in the fiscal year 2015 budget.
    - a. Line items for teacher workshops for both regular education and special education at all schools had a net decrease of \$1,124.

2. When asked whether the fiscal year 2015 budget addressed their School Achievement Plans, the principals said “No.”
  3. When asked whether the need for professional development was addressed in the fiscal year 2015 budget, a central office administrator replied that there was no need for increased funds for professional development but did not offer a rationale.
- B. Both the Amesbury Elementary School and the Cashman Elementary School SAPs identified as priority concerns about student achievement the unavailability of instructional interventions outside the regular classroom and insufficient bandwidth, wireless access and/or hardware for technology-based interventions in their SAPs. Both SAPs cited “increased access to wireless solutions as well as hardware (e.g., tablets)” as solutions to these priority concerns.
1. Neither Amesbury Elementary School nor Cashman Elementary School had increases in their school budgets for instructional technology.
  2. Amesbury Elementary School’s districtwide instructional technology hardware budget was decreased by \$7,475 in fiscal year 2015.
  3. Cashman Elementary School’s districtwide instructional technology hardware budget was decreased by \$6,360 in fiscal year 2015.
- C. The Middle School Achievement Plan identified “deficiencies in technology” as a priority concern.
1. The budget for instructional technology in the middle school was not increased and district-wide technology budgets for the middle school were decreased.
    - a. The instructional technology hardware budget was decreased by \$11,985.
    - b. The instructional technology software budget for the middle school was decreased by \$1,476.
- D. Amesbury High School’s School Achievement Plan identified a priority concern about “Availability and use of technology in the classroom” and cited as the solution: “Infrastructure needs to be upgraded to allow full use of wireless and connected devices by students and teachers.”
1. There was no increase in the school instructional technology budget line item for Amesbury High School in the fiscal year 2015 operating budget.
  2. The high school’s district-wide instructional hardware budget line item was decreased by \$24,110 in the fiscal year 2015 operating budget.

**Impact:** By not addressing in the fiscal year 2015 operating budget the initiatives identified by school principals and included in School Achievement Plans, the district is limiting its ability to make a focused and responsive commitment to improving student achievement.

**15. The fiscal year 2015 Operating Budget is long, incomplete, and unclear. It does not include comprehensive staffing data or special revenue and revolving account revenue and expenses.**

- A. The fiscal year 2015 Operating Budget document is 100 pages in length and is difficult to navigate.
  - 1. The budget document contains 47 pages of narrative including descriptions of the schools, definitions of revenue types and mandates, memorandums of understanding, and general budget information.
  - 2. The budget document also includes 53 pages of a detailed line item budget.
- B. The budget document does not contain complete, consistent, or accurate staffing data.
  - 1. Projected fiscal year 2015 staffing data is included for administrators, teachers, clerical, and custodial staff but not for teacher assistants.
  - 2. Individual salaries and FTEs for previous fiscal years are not included.
  - 3. Staffing data FTEs, with corresponding salaries, are not consistently presented.
    - a. There are numerous examples of line items where salaries are prorated for less than full-time employees and other line items where they are not.
  - 4. Position reductions are not consistently presented throughout the budget document.
    - a. For example, in the high school teacher salary section, a reduction/retirement of a World Languages teacher is clearly noted with a salary of \$0 but an Industrial Technology teacher that was reduced is highlighted in red with a full salary amount but without notation of the reduction.
- C. Special Revenue and Revolving Account projected revenue and expenses are not included in the budget document.
  - 1. Instead of a separate budget for the above funds, general fund operating budget totals are offset by expenses to be paid from special revenue and revolving funds.
    - a. One example of this offset method is found in the high school teacher salary line item where the salary subtotal is offset by payments to be charged to South Hampton tuition revolving and school choice revolving accounts.
  - 2. The offset method is used throughout the line item budget but because there is no budget for these accounts showing beginning balances or projected revenue, there is no indication

of how the expenses charged to the special revenue and revolving accounts will affect the ending balances in those accounts.

3. In an interview, a member of the school committee expressed frustration with not knowing true budget numbers because of the revenue offsets used.
- D. The length and missing/incorrect data result in a document that a number of stakeholders find confusing.
1. A central office administrator stated that discussions were underway to make the budget more understandable to the public and agreed that using non-general fund revenue to offset general fund expenses had to change.
  2. A teacher said that she and other members of the public did not understand the real financial issues of the district because budget line items were not clear.

**Impact:** Although the Amesbury Public Schools fiscal year 2015 Operating Budget document contains a sizeable amount of information, the absence of complete and accurate staffing data and the inclusion of special revenue and revolving fund revenue only as operating expense offsets makes the document confusing. This confusion makes it difficult for all stakeholders to understand and to support the district's budget proposal.

**16. The district is not using accounting technology to effectively track, manage, and forecast funds or to provide useful reports to district leaders and the school committee.**

- A. A central office administrator told the review team that staffing expenses are 80-85 percent of the district's expenses but staffing information is not kept in an electronic format.
1. A school committee member told the team that in response to a request for staffing data a handwritten list was provided.
  2. A central office administrator stated that when a request was made for payroll information to forecast payroll expenses, it was provided in a handwritten tally that was inaccurate by an amount of \$250,000.

**Impact:** Not using an accounting system that efficiently tracks staff-related expense records makes it difficult for the district to effectively monitor, forecast, and fulfill its financial responsibilities.

# Amesbury Public Schools District Review Recommendations

---

## ***Leadership and Governance***

- 1. The superintendent and the administrative staff should recommend a budget that refers to the district's improvement planning and includes an analysis of student achievement data.**
  - A. The superintendent's recommended budget should respond to the needs of the district and its schools related to staffing, instruction, supervision and administration, as well as to operations and support, to improve student achievement.
    1. The superintendent should continue to articulate to the school committee and the community what data analyses are performed to identify trends in student achievement and related student needs that inform decision-making and budget planning.
    2. The budget should be aligned with district and school improvement plans.
    3. Resources should be allocated to meet students' needs.
    4. The superintendent should ensure that the budget and the district's administrative structure provide for monitoring and support of district and school achievement plans.
    5. The school committee should base its planning and decision-making on a careful analysis of student achievement.

### **Recommended resources:**

- The Rennie Center's *Smart School Budgeting* ([http://www.renniecenter.org/topics/smart\\_school\\_budgeting.html](http://www.renniecenter.org/topics/smart_school_budgeting.html); direct link: [http://www.renniecenter.org/research/SmartSchool\\_Budgeting.pdf](http://www.renniecenter.org/research/SmartSchool_Budgeting.pdf)) contains a summary of existing resources on school finance, budgeting and reallocation.
- ESE's *District Analysis and Review Tool (DART)* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/dart/>) is organized by the District Standards and can help district leaders see where similar districts in the state are showing progress in specific areas to identify possible best practice.
- ESE's *Statistical Reports* page (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/reports/>) provides links to downloadable district-level reports on graduation rates, grade retention, dropout rates, educator evaluation data, enrollment, mobility, and other data.
- *Per-Pupil Expenditure Reports* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/finance/statistics/ppx.html>) is a report series that provides summary and detail per pupil spending data for each school district.

**Benefits** from implementing this recommendation could include increased public confidence and community support needed to achieve high performance by students and staff. Recommending an educationally sound budget, based primarily on the district's and schools' improvement plans and student achievement data, will help to foster the allocation of resources based on identified need. By using

student performance to inform decision-making, the school committee will ensure that its actions move the district toward improved achievement.

**2. The superintendent, with input from stakeholders, should lead a focused improvement planning process to guide continuous improvement of achievement for all Amesbury students.**

- A. A two- to three-year district achievement (improvement) plan (DAP) should be developed. It should be grounded in a vision and a thorough analysis of needs to be addressed and strengths on which to build.
  - 1. The analysis should consist of an extensive review of current student achievement data, other measures of student progress, and additional information.
  - 2. The district should utilize the results of the analysis to establish SMART goals (Specific and Strategic; Measurable; Action Oriented and Results Focused; and Timed and Tracked).
- B. The DAP should be used as a tool for continuous improvement.
  - 1. The plan's goals should drive the development, implementation, and modification of educational programs in the district.
  - 2. Procedures should be established to regularly and publicly review progress toward DAP goals. Activities and benchmarks should be adjusted when required to address changing conditions.
  - 3. The superintendent and school committee should consider aligning some of the goals in the superintendent's Educator Plan with DAP goals.
- C. The superintendent should ensure that all principals develop school achievement (improvement) plans (SAP) that are aligned with the DAP and contain SMART Goals.
  - 1. The development of the SAPs should include input from a range of stakeholders.
  - 2. SAPs should include specific performance goals for students based on an analysis of student achievement data and other important measures.
- D. The implementation of the SAPs should be monitored consistently, and midcourse adjustments should be made as necessary.
  - 1. The superintendent or designee should meet regularly with principals to review the progress of the SAPs' objectives and the schools' student achievement progress.
  - 2. Principals and their faculties should review the progress toward SAP goals on a regular basis, and should provide regular updates to the school committee and community.
  - 3. Each principal should use the SAP to inform his/her self-assessment and goal setting process when creating the Educator Plan. Progress toward Educator Plan goals should be used as evidence during implementation.



4. Teachers should consider aligning the goals in their Educator Plans with SAP goals. Team goals may be an appropriate opportunity to focus on addressing growth areas identified in the SAP.

**Recommended Resources:**

- ESE's *District Standards and Indicators* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/review/district/StandardsIndicators.pdf>) identify the characteristics of effective districts in supporting and sustaining school improvement.
- The *District Self-Assessment* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/review/district/district-self-assessment.pdf>) frames the District Standards and Indicators, along with key questions, in a rubric for conducting a scan of current practice, identifying areas of strength and highlighting areas requiring greater focus.
- ESE's *Planning for Success* tools (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/research/success/>) support the improvement planning process by spotlighting practices, characteristics, and behaviors that support effective planning and implementation and meet existing state requirements for improvement planning.
- *District Accelerated Improvement Planning - Guiding Principles for Effective Benchmarks* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/sss/turnaround/level4/AIP-GuidingPrinciples.pdf>) provides information about different types of benchmarks to guide and measure district improvement efforts.

**Benefits** from implementing this recommendation include the establishment of a structure in the district that can serve as a road map to success. Careful planning, regular monitoring of progress, and frequent adjustments will ensure that the work at each level is intentionally focused on accomplishing the district's short- and long-term goals.

***Curriculum and Instruction***

**3. The district should give high priority to curriculum development and renewal by restoring infrastructure and providing more time for curriculum work.**

- A. All districts were expected to have aligned their ELA and mathematics curricula to the *2011 Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks* by the beginning of the 2013-2014 school year. Race to the Top (RTTT) districts received an orientation to the 2011 frameworks and resources to help them accomplish the alignment.
  1. District administrators should develop a plan for accelerating curriculum development and ensuring that existing curriculum maps are current, high-quality, and posted on the district's curriculum platform.
  2. The district should ensure that all teachers have the access, training, and support necessary to easily access all curriculum materials.

- B. The district should restore capacity for curriculum development and renewal by giving individuals and groups clearly delineated roles and responsibilities for aspects of the work under the overall direction of the director of teaching and learning.
  - 1. The director of teaching and learning, with the support of other curriculum leaders, should plan and oversee a comprehensive, ongoing cycle of curriculum review and renewal.
- C. The district should increase the time available for curriculum development and renewal, including vertical alignment of the curriculum.
  - 1. Some possible approaches to accomplishing this include:
    - a. Increasing the number of early-release days for professional development and dedicating these to curriculum development activities;
    - b. Holding curriculum development workshops after school and during the summer; or
    - c. Other district-determined approaches.
- D. The district may wish to consider supplementing the Aspen/X2 data base with a platform dedicated exclusively to curriculum development. This would allow teachers to work collaboratively and to comment on drafts of curriculum documents in order to inform curriculum planning.

**Recommended resources:**

- ESE's *Common Core State Standards Initiative* web page (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/candi/commoncore/>) includes links to several resources designed to support the transition to the 2011 Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, which incorporate the Common Core.
- *Creating Curriculum Units at the Local Level* ([http://www.doe.mass.edu/candi/model/mcu\\_guide.pdf](http://www.doe.mass.edu/candi/model/mcu_guide.pdf)) is a guidance document that can serve as a resource for professional study groups, as a reference for anyone wanting to engage in curriculum development, or simply as a way to gain a better understanding of the process used to develop Massachusetts' Model Curriculum Units.
- *Creating Model Curriculum Units* (<http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLTuqmiQ9ssquWrLjKc9h5h2cSpDVZqe6t>) is a series of videos that captures the collaboration and deep thinking by curriculum design teams over the course of a full year as they worked to develop Massachusetts' Model Curriculum Units. The series includes videos about developing essential questions, establishing goals, creating embedded performance assessments, designing lesson plans, selecting high-quality materials, and evaluating the curriculum unit.

- *Model Curriculum Units* ([http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLTuqmiQ9ssgvx\\_Yjra4nBfqQPwc4auUBu](http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLTuqmiQ9ssgvx_Yjra4nBfqQPwc4auUBu)) is a video series that shows examples of the implementation of Massachusetts' Model Curriculum Units.
- ESE's *Quality Review Rubrics* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/candi/model/rubrics/>) can support the analysis and improvement of curriculum units.

**Benefits:** Strong central office direction and a robust infrastructure for curriculum development and renewal will facilitate curricular coherence and ensure that decisions about programs and initiatives serve the entire district. A fully documented, aligned curriculum based on the 2011 Massachusetts Frameworks with shared, rigorous expectations for student learning will: help to ensure that all students have access to high quality instruction; contribute to smoother transitions for students; and potentially raise the overall level of student achievement in Amesbury.

**4. The district should take steps to ensure that rigorous, high-quality instruction occurs in all classrooms every day.**

- A. Leaders and teachers should develop a common definition of high quality instruction that emphasizes high expectations for student learning, opportunities for students to articulate and elaborate about their ideas verbally and in writing, and higher order thinking such as the use of inquiry, exploration, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of concepts and knowledge.
  - 1. The district should provide guidance to educators, including ongoing professional development, to support the use of instructional strategies that provide an appropriate level of challenge for students.
  - 2. The district should consider identifying and disseminating examples of best practices in these areas.
  - 3. 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 and meeting time that can be used to collaboratively reflect on and improve curriculum and instruction.
- B. District and school leaders should inform teachers that lesson objectives must be posted, stated orally, or both, and referenced periodically during the course of the lesson in order to ensure that students understand and can state the purpose of the learning activities.
- C. Principals should provide regular, timely, useful feedback on teachers' lessons in order to improve the quality and consistency of instruction.
  - 1. The quality of instruction should be monitored as part of informal classroom visits and formal observations.

**Recommended resource:**

- ESE's *Learning Walkthrough Implementation Guide* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/dart/walk/ImplementationGuide.pdf>) is a resource to support instructional leaders in establishing a *Learning Walkthrough* process in a school or district. It is designed to provide guidance to those working in an established culture of collaboration as well as those who are just beginning to observe classrooms and discuss teaching and learning in a focused and actionable manner.

Appendix 4, *Characteristics of Standards-Based Teaching and Learning: Continuum of Practice* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/dart/walk/04.0.pdf>) is a framework that provides a common language or reference point for looking at teaching and learning.

**Benefits:** More consistent high-quality instruction will help to ensure educational equity for all students. High expectations and an emphasis on higher-order thinking will accelerate and deepen student learning and increase achievement.

***Assessment***

5. **The district should ensure that there are multiple forms of formative data available to high school educators, and that educators have the necessary support to use the data to inform instruction, planning, and decision-making.**
  - A. The district should identify formative and benchmark assessments for grades nine through 12 that can be used to inform instruction, modify programming and identify struggling students.
  - B. The district should provide professional development to high school educators in how to collect, analyze, and use data results to modify programs and inform instruction better meet the need of students.
  - C. The district should provide opportunities for educators at the high school to review student data, develop goals and objectives that identify strengths and address challenges and create action steps that include interventions for at-risk students.
  - D. The district should provide leadership and guidance to ensure that high school educators have well-organized data discussions.

**Benefits:** By implementing this recommendation, the high school will join the elementary and middle schools in having multiple forms of data to plan improvements as well as a strong basis to advocate for needed services. By putting student data at the forefront of planning and goal setting, student's needs are more likely to be met and student achievement is more likely to improve.

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

**6. To improve the implementation of the new educator evaluation system and enhance its overall effectiveness, the district should review its current staffing levels and allocation of responsibilities and prioritize the development or acquisition of software with the capacity to properly support the new evaluation system.**

- A. The district should consider the formation of a joint committee, composed equally of administrators and teachers, which would meet regularly and serve as a formal mechanism to monitor the overall implementation of the new educator evaluation system, to identify problems proactively, and to collaboratively develop appropriate and timely solutions. In particular, the joint committee should focus on opportunities to maximize the efficiency of the new educator evaluation system by scrutinizing current observation and evidence collection practices and generating recommendations for streamlining these processes for both educators and evaluators. For example, the joint committee might identify “priority elements” from the Model Rubric aligned to district priorities to tighten the focus of the evaluation process and improve integration with other district initiatives.

**Benefits:** by implementing this recommendation the superintendent, her administrative team, and all key stakeholders will more effectively oversee and ensure the full implementation of the new educator evaluation system and a culture of growth oriented supervision as envisioned in the educator evaluation regulations.

**7. The district should consider re-activating its professional development committee and charging it with developing and evaluating annual professional development plan for the district.**

- A. In collaboration with district leaders, the professional development committee should develop an annual districtwide professional development plan that represents a coherent approach to professional development for all principals, teachers, and other professional staff.
1. The plan should include specific learning goals for educators that are based on: district and school priorities (as indicated by the DAP and SAPs); student achievement data; information about staff needs; and assessments of instructional practices and programs at each school.
  2. The committee should ensure that the professional development plan reflects input from all constituents and is differentiated based on educators’ areas of responsibility and levels of expertise and experience.
  3. The plan should identify the resources, including funding and time, necessary for successful implementation.
    - a. The committee should consider possible ways to reallocate time, and/or to provide additional time, for educators to participate in professional development.

4. The plan should include short- and long-term mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of professional development.

**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.
- *PBS LearningMedia* (<http://www.pbslearningmedia.org/>) is a free digital media content library that provides relevant educational resources for PreK-12 teachers. The flexible platform includes high-quality content tied to national curriculum standards, as well as professional development courses.
- *Quick Reference Guide: Educator Evaluation & Professional Development* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/QRG-ProfessionalDevelopment.pdf>) describes how educator evaluation and professional development can be used as mutually reinforcing systems to improve educator practice and student outcomes.
- *The Relationship between High Quality Professional Development and Educator Evaluation* (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R-aDxtEDncg&list=PLTuqmiQ9ssqt9EmOcWkDEHPKBqRvurebm&index=1>) is a video presentation that includes examples from real districts.

**Benefits:** Developing a districtwide professional development plan that is data-driven, aligned with district and school goals, and includes expected learning experiences for educators will help to ensure a more coordinated and purposeful approach to professional growth in the district. A high quality professional development program will facilitate the attainment of goals identified in the district and school achievement plans and will enhance the likelihood of improved student achievement.

***Financial and Asset Management***

8. **The district should create budget documents for public presentation that contain comprehensive and historical data and that are written more clearly and concisely to better communicate the district's academic, programmatic, and financial needs and plans.**

- A. The district should consider revising the annual budget document that is used in discussions and presentations to the school committee, city councilors, and residents.
  1. The district should consider including a brief narrative section at the beginning of the budget summarizing plans, achievement data, etc.
  2. The district should consider presenting some information, such as non-financial school descriptions and the pages of state and federal mandates, in a separate format other than

the budget document. The inclusion of this non-financial information contributes to an unnecessarily hefty budget document.

3. The district should continue providing the finance subcommittee of the school committee with all line item detail from the accounting system and to any member of the public who requests it. However, the district should consider creating a separate budget document that condenses all of the important budget information into a more clear and concise format to be shared with a wide audience.

**Benefits** from implementing this recommendation will include stakeholders having a better understanding of the district's financial position, greater trust in the administration's and school committee's management of public funds, and support for the district's efforts to provide an education that leads to students' academic success.

**9. The training of central office staff in the use of accounting technology, and the immediate creation of staff-related expense information in an electronic format that can be easily modified and shared, should be a district priority.**

- A. Central office staff with responsibility for staff-related expenses should receive appropriate professional development in both Excel and the accounting software shared with the municipality.
- B. A comprehensive list of staff-related expenses, including but not limited to names, job titles, full-time equivalents, salaries, and stipends, should be created in an electronic format, and subsequently monitored and updated on a regular basis.

**Benefits:** With staff-related expenses making up 80-85 percent of the total operating budget, the benefits of having accurate financial staff data will include timely and effective expense monitoring and forecasting. In addition, being able to share accurate staff data with all stakeholders will contribute to budget development transparency and a clearer understanding of this element of the budget on the part of school committee, city councilors, and the community.

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

---

### Review Team Members

The review was conducted from November 17-20, 2014, by the following team of independent ESE consultants.

1. Dr. Richard Silverman, leadership and governance
2. Dr. James McAuliffe, curriculum and instruction
3. Lenora Jennings, *review team coordinator*, assessment and student support
4. Dr. Bill Contreras, human resources and professional development
5. Marge Foster, financial and asset management

### District Review Activities

The following activities were conducted during the review:

The team conducted interviews with the following financial personnel: the assistant superintendent, finance manager, the town chief financial officer, and the assistant city accountant.

The team conducted interviews with the following members of the school committee: the chair, the vice chair, the secretary, and four members.

The review team conducted interviews with the following representatives of the teachers' association: the president, vice president, and three building representatives.

The team conducted interviews/focus groups with the following central office administrators: the assistant superintendent, the director of teaching and learning, and the director of student services.

The team visited the following schools: Amesbury Elementary (PK-4), Cashman Elementary (PK-4), Amesbury Middle School (grades 5-8), and Amesbury High School (grades 9-12).

During school visits, the team conducted interviews with four principals and focus groups with 12 elementary school teachers, 1 middle school teacher, and 1 high school teacher.

The team observed 48 classes in the district: 16 at the one high school, 9 at the middle school, and 23 at the 2 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 11/17/2014	Tuesday 11/18/2014	Wednesday 11/19/2014	Thursday 11/20/2014
Orientation with district leaders and principals; interviews with district staff and principals; document reviews; interview with teachers' association; and school committee members	Interviews with district staff and principals; review of personnel files; teacher focus groups; parent focus group; and visits to Amesbury High School for classroom observations.	Interviews with town or city personnel; interviews with school leaders; visits to Amesbury Middle School and the Cashman and Amesbury elementary schools for classroom observations.	Interviews with school leaders; follow-up interviews; district review team meeting; visits to Amesbury High School and Cashman Elementary School for classroom observations; emerging themes meeting with district leaders and principals.

## Appendix B: Enrollment, Performance, Expenditures

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

Student Group	District	Percent of Total	State	Percent of Total
African-American	33	1.4%	82990	8.7%
Asian	28	1.2%	58455	6.1%
Hispanic	97	4.1%	162647	17.0%
Native American	--	--	2209	0.2%
White	2123	90.4%	620628	64.9%
Native Hawaiian	2	0.1%	1007	0.1%
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	65	2.8%	27803	2.9%
<b>All Students</b>	<b>2348</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>955739</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Note: As of October 1, 2013

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

Student Groups	District			State		
	N	Percent of High Needs	Percent of District	N	Percent of High Needs	Percent of State
Students w/ disabilities	459	52.3%	19.5%	164336	36.0%	17.2%
Low Income	623	71.0%	26.5%	365885	80.1%	38.3%
ELLs and Former ELLs	22	2.5%	0.9%	75947	16.6%	7.9%
All high needs students	878	100.0%	37.4%	456639	100.0%	47.8%

Notes: As of October 1, 2013. District and state numbers and percentages for students with disabilities and high needs students are calculated including students in out-of-district placements. Total district enrollment including students in out-of-district placement is 2,382; total state enrollment including students in out-of-district placement is 965,602.

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

Grade and Measure		Number Included (2014)	Spring MCAS Year					Gains and Declines	
			2011	2012	2013	2014	State 2014	4-Year Trend	2 Year Trend
3	CPI	170	87.9	89.1	91.9	87.6	82.6	-0.3	-4.3
	P+	170	67.0%	76.0%	76.0%	64.0%	57.0%	-3.0%	-12.0%
4	CPI	181	85	85.3	85.4	86.3	79.1	1.3	0.9
	P+	181	60.0%	62.0%	69.0%	64.0%	54.0%	4.0%	-5.0%
	SGP	169	53	58	57	47	49	-6	-10
5	CPI	180	90.9	86	87.2	84.6	84.5	-6.3	-2.6
	P+	180	75.0%	65.0%	71.0%	64.0%	64.0%	-11.0%	-7.0%
	SGP	171	64	46	49	34	50	-30	-15
6	CPI	194	90.9	89.5	86.3	90.5	85.8	-0.4	4.2
	P+	194	75.0%	73.0%	68.0%	78.0%	68.0%	3.0%	10.0%
	SGP	187	40	59	46.5	52	50	12	5.5
7	CPI	187	90.8	90.1	91.5	88.2	88.3	-2.6	-3.3
	P+	187	79.0%	74.0%	76.0%	71.0%	72.0%	-8.0%	-5.0%
	SGP	177	62	40	40	41	50	-21	1
8	CPI	173	89.9	91.8	91.6	89.9	90.2	0	-1.7
	P+	173	77.0%	82.0%	82.0%	77.0%	79.0%	0.0%	-5.0%
	SGP	161	34	46	42	31	50	-3	-11
10	CPI	174	96.3	96	98	98.1	96	1.8	0.1
	P+	174	88.0%	90.0%	94.0%	94.0%	90.0%	6.0%	0.0%
	SGP	157	43.5	58	65	67	50	23.5	2
All	CPI	1259	90.1	89.6	90	89.3	86.7	-0.8	-0.7
	P+	1259	74.0%	74.0%	76.0%	73.0%	69.0%	-1.0%	-3.0%
	SGP	1022	51	49	49	46	50	-5	-3

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: Amesbury Public Schools  
Mathematics Performance, 2011-2014**

Grade and Measure		Number Included (2014)	Spring MCAS Year					Gains and Declines	
			2011	2012	2013	2014	State 2014	4-Year Trend	2 Year Trend
3	CPI	167	87.3	86.9	92.3	86.2	85.1	-1.1	-6.1
	P+	167	66.0%	74.0%	79.0%	68.0%	68.0%	2.0%	-11.0%
4	CPI	179	84.2	85.9	85.9	86	79.6	1.8	0.1
	P+	179	58.0%	65.0%	65.0%	60.0%	52.0%	2.0%	-5.0%
	SGP	168	54	68	66	43	50	-11	-23
5	CPI	180	80.6	75.3	79	77.9	80.4	-2.7	-1.1
	P+	180	60.0%	49.0%	61.0%	58.0%	61.0%	-2.0%	-3.0%
	SGP	170	31	27	33.5	28	50	-3	-5.5
6	CPI	193	73.8	77.2	75.1	74.4	80.2	0.6	-0.7
	P+	193	46.0%	56.0%	51.0%	53.0%	60.0%	7.0%	2.0%
	SGP	185	20	34	37	25	50	5	-12
7	CPI	185	72.6	81.7	77.6	77.2	72.5	4.6	-0.4
	P+	185	51.0%	56.0%	58.0%	56.0%	50.0%	5.0%	-2.0%
	SGP	176	64.5	72	55	69	50	4.5	14
8	CPI	173	79.2	76.2	79.9	77.9	74.7	-1.3	-2
	P+	173	60.0%	55.0%	61.0%	57.0%	52.0%	-3.0%	-4.0%
	SGP	160	68	67	68.5	54	50	-14	-14.5
10	CPI	175	92.5	94.8	93.1	91.9	90	-0.6	-1.2
	P+	175	86.0%	86.0%	87.0%	80.0%	79.0%	-6.0%	-7.0%
	SGP	156	69.5	68	50	62	50	-7.5	12
All	CPI	1252	80.9	82.3	82.9	81.5	80.3	0.6	-1.4
	P+	1252	60.0%	62.0%	65.0%	62.0%	60.0%	2.0%	-3.0%
	SGP	1015	50	58	51	49	50	-1	-2

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: Amesbury Public Schools  
Science and Technology/Engineering Performance, 2011-2014**

Grade and Measure		Number Included (2014)	Spring MCAS Year					Gains and Declines	
			2011	2012	2013	2014	State 2014	4-Year Trend	2 Year Trend
5	CPI	180	86.9	83.1	82.6	84	79	-2.9	1.4
	P+	180	64.0%	53.0%	62.0%	66.0%	53.0%	2.0%	4.0%
8	CPI	173	75.7	78.7	76.8	82.1	72.4	6.4	5.3
	P+	173	45.0%	56.0%	49.0%	55.0%	42.0%	10.0%	6.0%
10	CPI	168	90.7	88.3	89.1	92.3	87.9	1.6	3.2
	P+	168	74.0%	73.0%	69.0%	80.0%	71.0%	6.0%	11.0%
All	CPI	521	84	82.9	82	86	79.6	2	4
	P+	521	60.0%	59.0%	59.0%	67.0%	55.0%	7.0%	8.0%

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

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

Group and Measure			Number Included (2014)	Spring MCAS Year				Gains and Declines	
				2011	2012	2013	2014	4 Year Trend	2-Year Trend
High Needs	District	CPI	477	79.9	79.8	78.3	78.1	-1.8	-0.2
		P+	477	51.0%	54.0%	52.0%	49.0%	-2.0%	-3.0%
		SGP	366	43	42	42.5	39	-4	-3.5
	State	CPI	241069	77	76.5	76.8	77.1	0.1	0.3
		P+	241069	48.0%	48.0%	48.0%	50.0%	2.0%	2.0%
		SGP	183766	46	46	47	47	1	0
Low Income	District	CPI	331	81.8	80.4	78.9	78.3	-3.5	-0.6
		P+	331	56.0%	56.0%	58.0%	52.0%	-4.0%	-6.0%
		SGP	253	43	42	43.5	38	-5	-5.5
	State	CPI	189662	77.1	76.7	77.2	77.5	0.4	0.3
		P+	189662	49.0%	50.0%	50.0%	51.0%	2.0%	1.0%
		SGP	145621	46	45	47	47	1	0
Students w/ disabilities	District	CPI	247	69.2	72.3	68.3	68.7	-0.5	0.4
		P+	247	28.0%	38.0%	32.0%	32.0%	4.0%	0.0%
		SGP	190	37	40.5	38	37	0	-1
	State	CPI	90777	68.3	67.3	66.8	66.6	-1.7	-0.2
		P+	90777	30.0%	31.0%	30.0%	31.0%	1.0%	1.0%
		SGP	66688	42	43	43	43	1	0
English language learners or Former ELLs	District	CPI	11	77.8	75	0	65.9	-11.9	65.9
		P+	11	39.0%	46.0%	0.0%	27.0%	-12.0%	27.0%
		SGP	7	--	--	--	--	--	--
	State	CPI	47477	66.2	66.2	67.4	67.8	1.6	0.4
		P+	47477	33.0%	34.0%	35.0%	36.0%	3.0%	1.0%
		SGP	32239	50	51	53	54	4	1
All students	District	CPI	1259	90.1	89.6	90	89.3	-0.8	-0.7
		P+	1259	74.0%	74.0%	76.0%	73.0%	-1.0%	-3.0%
		SGP	1022	51	49	49	46	-5	-3
	State	CPI	488744	87.2	86.7	86.8	86.7	-0.5	-0.1
		P+	488744	69.0%	69.0%	69.0%	69.0%	0.0%	0.0%
		SGP	390904	50	50	51	50	0	-1

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

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

Group and Measure			Number Included (2014)	Spring MCAS Year				Gains and Declines	
				2011	2012	2013	2014	4 Year Trend	2-Year Trend
High Needs	District	CPI	473	65.1	68.1	67	65.8	0.7	-1.2
		P+	473	34.0%	39.0%	38.0%	36.0%	2.0%	-2.0%
		SGP	361	42.5	52	45	42	-0.5	-3
	State	CPI	241896	67.1	67	68.6	68.4	1.3	-0.2
		P+	241896	37.0%	37.0%	40.0%	40.0%	3.0%	0.0%
		SGP	184937	46	46	46	47	1	1
Low Income	District	CPI	329	67	70	69.3	67.2	0.2	-2.1
		P+	329	37.0%	41.0%	44.0%	39.0%	2.0%	-5.0%
		SGP	250	39	53	45	34	-5	-11
	State	CPI	190183	67.3	67.3	69	68.8	1.5	-0.2
		P+	190183	38.0%	38.0%	41.0%	41.0%	3.0%	0.0%
		SGP	146536	46	45	46	47	1	1
Students w/ disabilities	District	CPI	245	56.2	58.6	57.2	56.3	0.1	-0.9
		P+	245	21.0%	26.0%	23.0%	22.0%	1.0%	-1.0%
		SGP	185	46	48	45	43	-3	-2
	State	CPI	91181	57.7	56.9	57.4	57.1	-0.6	-0.3
		P+	91181	22.0%	21.0%	22.0%	22.0%	0.0%	0.0%
		SGP	67155	43	43	42	43	0	1
English language learners or Former ELLs	District	CPI	11	64.5	69.2	0	70.5	6	70.5
		P+	11	26.0%	38.0%	0.0%	27.0%	1.0%	27.0%
		SGP	6	--	--	--	--	--	--
	State	CPI	47847	62	61.6	63.9	63.8	1.8	-0.1
		P+	47847	32.0%	32.0%	35.0%	36.0%	4.0%	1.0%
		SGP	32607	52	52	53	52	0	-1
All students	District	CPI	1252	80.9	82.3	82.9	81.5	0.6	-1.4
		P+	1252	60.0%	62.0%	65.0%	62.0%	2.0%	-3.0%
		SGP	1015	50	58	51	49	-1	-2
	State	CPI	490288	79.9	79.9	80.8	80.3	0.4	-0.5
		P+	490288	58.0%	59.0%	61.0%	60.0%	2.0%	-1.0%
		SGP	392953	50	50	51	50	0	-1

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

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

Group and Measure			Number Included (2014)	Spring MCAS Year				Gains and Declines	
				2011	2012	2013	2014	4 Year Trend	2-Year Trend
High Needs	District	CPI	205	69.8	70.9	65.9	73.4	3.6	7.5
		P+	205	35.0%	37.0%	32.0%	42.0%	7.0%	10.0%
	State	CPI	100582	63.8	65	66.4	67.3	3.5	0.9
		P+	100582	28.0%	31.0%	31.0%	33.0%	5.0%	2.0%
Low Income	District	CPI	137	70.6	73	65.7	75.4	4.8	9.7
		P+	137	36.0%	43.0%	34.0%	49.0%	13.0%	15.0%
	State	CPI	79199	62.8	64.5	66.1	66.8	4	0.7
		P+	79199	28.0%	31.0%	32.0%	33.0%	5.0%	1.0%
Students w/ disabilities	District	CPI	103	61.9	60.9	58.5	65.3	3.4	6.8
		P+	103	26.0%	20.0%	21.0%	27.0%	1.0%	6.0%
	State	CPI	38628	59.2	58.7	59.8	60.1	0.9	0.3
		P+	38628	20.0%	20.0%	20.0%	22.0%	2.0%	2.0%
English language learners or Former ELLs	District	CPI	9	--	--	--	--	--	--
		P+	9	--	--	--	--	--	--
	State	CPI	16871	50.3	51.4	54	54	3.7	0
		P+	16871	15.0%	17.0%	19.0%	18.0%	3.0%	-1.0%
All students	District	CPI	521	84	82.9	82	86	2	4
		P+	521	60.0%	59.0%	59.0%	67.0%	7.0%	8.0%
	State	CPI	211440	77.6	78.6	79	79.6	2	0.6
		P+	211440	52.0%	54.0%	53.0%	55.0%	3.0%	2.0%

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



**Table B4: Amesbury Public Schools  
Annual Grade 9-12 Dropout Rates, 2010-2013**

	School Year Ending				Change 2010-2013		Change 2012-2013		State (2013)
	2010	2011	2012	2013	Percentage Points	Percent	Percentage Points	Percent	
All students	1.8	1.6	1.7	2.3	0.5	0.28	0.6	0.35	2.2

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

**Table B5a: Amesbury Public Schools  
Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rates, 2010-2013**

Group	Number Included (2013)	School Year Ending				Change 2009-2012		Change 2011-2012		State (2013)
		2010	2011	2012	2013	Percentage Points	Percent Change	Percentage Points	Percent Change	
High needs	47	54.7%	62.5%	61.1%	68.1%	13.4	24.5%	7.0	11.5%	74.7%
Low income	35	50.0%	51.2%	63.2%	68.6%	18.6	37.2%	5.4	8.5%	73.6%
Students w/ disabilities	21	39.4%	59.0%	39.3%	52.4%	13.0	33.0%	13.1	33.3%	67.8%
English language learners or Former ELLs	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	63.5%
All students	151	82.0%	82.5%	83.9%	87.4%	5.4	6.6%	3.5	4.2%	85.0%

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

**Table B5b: Amesbury Public Schools  
Five-Year Cohort Graduation Rates, 2009-2012**

Group	Number Included (2012)	School Year Ending				Change 2009-2012		Change 2011-2012		State (2012)
		2009	2010	2011	2012	Percentage Points	Percent Change	Percentage Points	Percent Change	
High needs	54	63.4%	60.9%	68.8%	64.8%	1.4	2.2%	-4.0	-5.8%	78.9%
Low income	38	64.0%	55.8%	58.1%	68.4%	4.4	6.9%	10.3	17.7%	77.5%
Students w/ disabilities	28	51.9%	45.5%	69.2%	42.9%	-9.0	-17.3%	-26.3	-38.0%	73.8%
English language learners or Former ELLs	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	68.5%
All students	155	87.4%	84.8%	85.4%	85.8%	-1.6	-1.8%	0.4	0.5%	87.5%

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

**Table B6: Amesbury Public Schools  
Attendance Rates, 2011-2014**

Group	School Year Ending				Change 2011-2014		Change 2013-2014		State (2014)
	2011	2012	2013	2014	Percentage Points	Percent Change	Percentage Points	Percent Change	
All students	95.2%	95.4%	95.3%	95.3%	0.1	0.1%	0.0	0.0%	94.9%

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

**Table B7: Amesbury Public Schools  
Suspension Rates, 2010-2013**

Group	School Year Ending				Change 2010-2013		Change 2012-2013		State (2013)
	2010	2011	2012	2013	Percentage Points	Percent Change	Percentage Points	Percent Change	
In-School Suspension Rate	2.4%	1.8%	0.9%	0.2%	-2.2	-91.7%	-0.7	-77.8%	2.2%
Out-of-School Suspension Rate	2.6%	2.5%	4.6%	2.6%	0.0	0.0%	-2.0	-43.5%	4.3%

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

**Table B8: Amesbury 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	\$25,833,496	\$25,873,226	\$26,433,496	\$27,303,786	\$27,348,496	\$27,348,497
By municipality	\$5,882,830	\$5,248,336	\$5,245,734	\$5,194,007	\$5,307,764	\$5,022,187
Total from local appropriations	\$31,716,326	\$31,121,562	\$31,679,230	\$32,497,793	\$32,656,260	\$32,370,684
From revolving funds and grants	--	\$3,047,618	--	\$3,287,057	--	\$3,770,917
Total expenditures	--	\$34,169,180	--	\$35,784,850	--	\$36,141,601
<b>Chapter 70 aid to education program</b>						
Chapter 70 state aid*	--	\$8,422,786	--	\$8,517,266	--	\$8,577,441
Required local contribution	--	\$13,871,392	--	\$14,228,051	--	\$14,645,774
Required net school spending**	--	\$22,294,178	--	\$22,745,317	--	\$23,223,215
Actual net school spending	--	\$27,562,341	--	\$28,913,529	--	\$28,831,437
Over/under required (\$)	--	\$5,268,163	--	\$6,168,212	--	\$5,608,222
Over/under required (%)	--	23.6	--	27.1	--	24.1

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

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

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

Data retrieved November 24, 2014, and January 5, 2015

**Table B9: Amesbury Public Schools  
Expenditures Per In-District Pupil  
Fiscal Years 2011-2013**

<b>Expenditure Category</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>
Administration	\$409	\$319	\$366
Instructional leadership (district and school)	\$699	\$664	\$654
Teachers	\$4,862	\$4,320	\$5,184
Other teaching services	\$1,105	\$953	\$1,152
Professional development	\$143	\$398	\$113
Instructional materials, equipment and technology	\$237	\$301	\$255
Guidance, counseling and testing services	\$340	\$270	\$278
Pupil services	\$946	\$874	\$998
Operations and maintenance	\$987	\$957	\$938
Insurance, retirement and other fixed costs	\$2,439	\$2,437	\$2,246
Total expenditures per in-district pupil	\$12,166	\$11,493	\$12,185

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

## Appendix C: Instructional Inventory

Learning Environment	By Grade Span	Evidence		
		None	Partial	Clear & Consistent
		(0)	(1)	(2)
1. Tone of interactions between teacher and students and among students is positive & respectful.	ES	0	1	22
	MS	0	0	9
	HS	0	1	15
	Total #	0	2	46
	Total %	0	4	96
2. Behavioral standards are clearly communicated and disruptions, if present, are managed effectively & equitably.	ES	0	2	21
	MS	0	2	7
	HS	0	7	9
	Total #	0	11	37
	Total %	0	23	77
3. The physical arrangement of the classroom ensures a positive learning environment and provides all students with access to learning activities.	ES	0	5	18
	MS	0	2	7
	HS	0	2	14
	Total #	0	9	39
	Total %	0	19	81
4. Classroom rituals and routines promote transitions with minimal loss of instructional time.	ES	2	5	16
	MS	0	1	8
	HS	7	1	8
	Total #	9	7	32
	Total %	19	15	67
5. Multiple resources are available to meet all students' diverse learning needs.	ES	10	7	6
	MS	1	2	6
	HS	11	5	0
	Total #	22	14	12
	Total %	46	29	25
6. The teacher demonstrates knowledge of subject and content.	ES	1	1	21
	MS	1	0	8
	HS	0	2	14
	Total #	2	3	43
	Total %	4	6	90
7. The teacher plans and implements a lesson that reflects rigor and high expectations.	ES	7	12	4
	MS	1	4	4
	HS	4	6	6
	Total #	12	22	14
	Total %	25	46	29

Teaching	By Grade Span	Evidence		
		None	Partial	Clear & Consistent
		(0)	(1)	(2)
8. The teacher communicates clear learning objective(s) aligned to the <i>2011 Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks</i> .	ES	18	4	1
	MS	7	0	2
	HS	13	2	1
	Total #	38	6	4
	Total %	79	13	8
9. The teacher uses appropriate instructional strategies well matched to learning objective (s) and content.	ES	3	9	11
	MS	6	1	2
	HS	8	3	5
	Total #	17	13	18
	Total %	35	27	38
10. The teacher uses appropriate modifications for English language learners and students with disabilities such as explicit language objective(s); direct instruction in vocabulary; presentation of content at multiple levels of complexity; and, differentiation of content, process, and/or products.	ES	17	3	3
	MS	7	0	2
	HS	15	1	0
	Total #	39	4	5
	Total %	81	8	10
11. The teacher provides opportunities for students to engage in higher order thinking such as use of inquiry, exploration, application, analysis, synthesis, and/or evaluation of knowledge or concepts (Bloom's Taxonomy)	ES	16	5	2
	MS	2	3	4
	HS	9	2	5
	Total #	27	10	11
	Total %	56	21	23
12. The teacher uses questioning techniques that require thoughtful responses that demonstrate understanding.	ES	6	9	8
	MS	3	1	5
	HS	6	3	7
	Total #	15	13	20
	Total %	31	27	42
13. The teacher implements teaching strategies that promote a safe learning environment where students give opinions, make judgments, explore and investigate ideas.	ES	4	5	14
	MS	1	1	7
	HS	4	1	11
	Total #	9	7	32
	Total %	19	15	67
14. The teacher paces the lesson to match content and meet students' learning needs.	ES	7	1	15
	MS	0	2	7
	HS	6	2	8
	Total #	13	5	10
	Total %	27	10	63
15. The teacher conducts frequent formative assessments to check for understanding and inform instruction.	ES	9	4	10
	MS	3	2	4
	HS	9	4	3
	Total #	21	10	17
	Total %	44	21	35
16. The teacher makes use of available technology to support instruction and enhance learning.	ES	19	1	3
	MS	4	1	4
	HS	12	2	2
	Total #	35	4	9
	Total %	73	8	19



Learning	By Grade Span	Evidence		
		None	Partial	Clear & Consistent
		(0)	(1)	(2)
17. Students are engaged in challenging academic tasks.	ES	10	10	3
	MS	1	2	6
	HS	5	3	8
	Total #	16	13	17
	Total %	33	31	35
18. Students articulate their thinking verbally or in writing.	ES	9	7	7
	MS	2	1	6
	HS	6	1	9
	Total #	17	9	22
	Total %	35	19	46
19. Students inquire, explore, apply, analyze, synthesize and/or evaluate knowledge or concepts (Bloom's Taxonomy).	ES	14	7	2
	MS	1	1	7
	HS	8	1	7
	Total #	23	9	16
	Total %	48	19	33
20. Students elaborate about content and ideas when responding to questions.	ES	13	6	4
	MS	3	3	3
	HS	9	1	6
	Total #	25	10	13
	Total %	52	21	27
21. Students make connections to prior knowledge, or real world experience, or can apply knowledge and understanding to other subjects.	ES	7	8	8
	MS	3	0	6
	HS	6	5	5
	Total #	16	13	19
	Total %	33	27	40
22. Students use technology as a tool for learning and/or understanding.	ES	20	2	1
	MS	9	0	0
	HS	10	5	1
	Total #	39	7	2
	Total %	81	15	4
23. Students assume responsibility for their own learning whether individually, in pairs, or in groups.	ES	8	8	7
	MS	2	0	7
	HS	8	2	6
	Total #	18	10	20
	Total %	38	21	42
24. Student work demonstrates high quality and can serve as exemplars.	ES	20	2	1
	MS	2	2	5
	HS	10	3	3
	Total #	32	7	9
	Total %	67	15	19