

District Review Report

Dracut Public Schools

Review conducted January 19–22, 2016

Center for District and School Accountability

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and
Secondary Education

Organization of this Report

Executive Summary.....	2
Dracut Public Schools District Review Overview	5
Leadership and Governance	18
Curriculum and Instruction	22
Assessment	28
Human Resources and Professional Development.....	36
Student Support.....	43
Financial and Asset Management	51
Appendix A: Review Team, Activities, Schedule, Site Visit	58
Appendix B: Enrollment, Performance, Expenditures	60
Appendix C: Instructional Inventory	70

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



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

Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.
Commissioner
Published June 2016

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.

© 2016 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



Executive Summary

Strengths

The district is led by a superintendent and a team of leaders who share a common vision and understanding of the areas that need improvement and have developed plans to improve student achievement. Communication between central office and school leaders and between principals and teachers appears robust and systematized. The district's improvement initiatives are based on research-based strategies and are beginning to take root in spite of limited resources. In 2013, the New England School Development Council (NESDEC) completed a study of the district's declining enrollment and its facility needs, providing the impetus for the district's reorganization to a middle school (grades 6-8), 4 elementary schools (K-5), and the closing of 1 school. In the 2014-2015 school year, the superintendent initiated a townwide redistricting program that has resulted in a more effective grouping of students: K-5, 6-8, and 9-12, compared with the prior configuration of K-4, 5-6, 7-8, and 9-12. The review team found a "culture of caring" evident in all of the schools, and most students the team observed were engaged in their learning.

Principals, a team of teachers on the mathematics and ELA curriculum development committees, and the director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment have completed the initial stages of an Understanding by Design (UbD) curriculum and have posted these curricula on Atlas Rubicon for access by all teachers. Instructional rounds are conducted at all levels and are designed to improve leaders' supervision and classroom teachers' skills. School leaders use assessment data to monitor students' progress and are beginning to use data for district improvement. Since the fall of the 2015-2016 school year, some initial steps and preliminary actions have been taken to create a professional development committee. The team was told of a plan to expand by 2018 the use of the educator evaluation platform Baseline Edge to store and manage data for improved educator access and use. In spring 2015 the district commissioned an outside review of the middle-school special needs program by the Collaborative for Regional Educational Service (CREST). The review generated a report with findings and recommendations to strengthen the special education program in Dracut.

The district's budget process and documentation have been comprehensive and transparent. They have included long-term projections of school priorities and needs. In addition, the town and the district have maintained and improved school buildings effectively and efficiently to support student learning.

In 2013-2014, the board of selectmen, the town finance committee, and the school committee formed a Tri-Board to review town finances and revenues. In 2015 the Tri-Board created a Budget Task Force to review these needs in detail, and the Tri-Board as a whole met recently to discuss financial issues.

Challenges and Areas for Growth

Dracut is a Level 3 district because Richardson Middle School is in Level 3 for being among the lowest performing 20 percent of schools statewide. It is also a focus school because its students with disabilities and high needs students are among the lowest performing 20 percent of subgroups statewide. The district's ELA proficiency rates improved between 2012 and 2015 in each tested grade except grade 7. Math proficiency rates were below the state rate in each tested grade but improved between 2012 and 2015 in the district as a whole and in each tested grade except grades 4 and 10. Science proficiency rates were below the state rate for the district as a whole.

Following protracted negotiations, the district and the Dracut Teachers' Association signed a collective bargaining agreement in the fall of 2015. Teachers, administrators, and members of the school committee reported that their relationships have historically been unproductive. As a result, progress toward district improvement has been slow. The next phase of curriculum work awaits; participation in any activities that are not compensated appears to raise concerns among some teachers; and teacher voice in professional development planning is not strong. There does not appear to be regular communication between the superintendent and the town manager.

The district does not have formal structures/teams for the collection and analysis of student performance data districtwide. The district does not have a district-level data team to track patterns across all schools and to better inform program selections and resource allocations. Common planning time is scheduled in only half of the district's schools and is limited to one weekly or bi-weekly teachers' meeting. Classroom instruction needs improvement in four areas: the setting of higher expectations for learning; the engagement of students in more opportunities for critical thinking; the expansion of teachers' use of data to inform their daily instruction; and the development of differentiated teaching strategies to teach all learners. Supports and interventions for students are sparse throughout the district, and systems for identification of students' needs are not used consistently at all levels. While the district has made progress in implementing its educator evaluation system, in general, evaluations are not appropriately rigorous or evidence based, and are missing substantive, specific, and actionable recommendations for improved practice and professional growth. The district has not adopted and implemented the more recent components of the Educator Evaluation Framework that require the collection and use of multiple sources of evaluative evidence such as District-Determined Measures (DDMs) and student and staff feedback. Though teachers have been invited to participate in a newly developing professional development committee, at the time of the review the committee was composed and directed almost entirely by district and school administrators.

Town funding for the schools is limited to its net school spending requirement. At times, particularly around budgets, constraints on funding have contributed to challenging relationships among district stakeholders.

Recommendations

As the district moves forward, guided by its improvement plans, district administrators, teachers' association leaders, and town officials must work together and assume shared responsibility for improving student learning and creating the collaborative systems and positive, productive professional climate essential to advancing the district's goals and priorities. To improve the quality of student learning, the district should further articulate its instructional model, complete its curriculum documentation on Atlas Rubicon, move forward with its plan to create a professional development committee, and establish systematic, consistent processes for the analysis and use of student performance data across the district. In conjunction with these efforts, the district should urgently implement all components of its educator evaluation system and enhance its overall effectiveness.

The district should review its programs and practices in serving students with disabilities and use the recommendations from a recent study of the special education program at the middle school to improve its supports and services to students with disabilities districtwide.

Dracut 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 system wide 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 2015-2016 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.

Site Visit

The site visit to the Dracut Public Schools was conducted from January 19-22, 2016. The site visit included 34 hours of interviews and focus groups with approximately 66 stakeholders, including school committee members, district administrators, school staff, students and teachers' association representatives. The review team conducted 3 focus groups with 19 elementary-school teachers, 12 middle-school teachers, and 8 high-school teachers. The team also met with 28 parents and 8 high-school students.

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 62 classrooms in 6 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

Dracut has a town manager form of government and the chair of the school committee is elected. The five members of the school committee meet bi-weekly.

The current superintendent has been in the position since 2012. The district leadership team includes: the director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment; the director of student services; the business manager; and six principals. Central office positions have been stable in number over the past four years. However, there has been some administrative turnover in the past four years. Of the six principals, three have served three years or less in their position; the director of student services is in his second year; and the superintendent and the business manager are in their fourth year. There are five assistant principals. In 2014-2015, there were 214 teachers in the district.

The school district underwent major reorganization in 2015-2016 when the high school renovation and new construction project were completed. Grade 9 left its temporary home in the junior high school and moved back into the high school, the junior high school became a middle school (grades 6-8), and all grade 5 students who had been housed at the junior high school moved to the elementary schools.

In the 2015-2016 school year, 3,600 students were enrolled in the district's 6 schools:

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

School Name	School Type	Grades Served	Enrollment
Brookside Elementary School	ES	K-5	446
Campbell Elementary School	ES	K-5	559
Englesby Elementary School	ES	K-5	507
Greenmont Avenue School	ES	K-5	291
Richardson Middle School	MS	6-8	955
Dracut Senior High	HS	9-12	842
Totals	6 schools	K-12	3,600
*As of October 1, 2015			

Between 2012 and 2016 overall student enrollment decreased by 8.9 percent. Enrollment figures by race/ethnicity and high needs populations (i.e., students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged students, and English language learners (ELLs) and former ELLs) as compared with the state are provided in Tables B1a and B1b in Appendix B.

Total in-district per-pupil expenditures were lower than the median in-district per pupil expenditures for 33 K-12 districts of similar size (3,000-3,999 students) in fiscal year 2014: \$10,109 as compared with \$12,721 (see [District Analysis and Review Tool Detail: Staffing & Finance](#)). Actual net school spending has been equal to what is required by the Chapter 70 state education aid program, as shown in Table B6 in Appendix B.

Student Performance

District and Subgroup Results

Dracut is a Level 3 district because Richardson Middle School is in Level 3 for being among the lowest performing 20 percent of middle schools.

- Richardson Middle is a focus school because its students with disabilities and high needs students are among the lowest performing 20 percent of subgroups.

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

School	Group	Annual PPI				Cumulative PPI	School Percentile	Account ability Level
		2012	2013	2014	2015			
HS: Parker Avenue	All	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	High Needs	--	--	--	--	--		
ES: Campbell Elementary	All	63	19	56	75	57	30	2
	High Needs	25	75	50	63	58		
ES: Greenmont Avenue	All	38	94	25	81	63	47	2
	High Needs	--	--	--	38	--		
ES: Brookside Elementary	All	31	63	81	50	60	26	2
	High Needs	19	63	75	75	67		
ES: Englesby Elementary	All	25	75	63	88	71	40	2
	High Needs	19	69	81	81	73		
MS: Richardson	All	35	40	45	90	61	14	3
	High Needs	35	40	35	90	58		
HS: Dracut Senior High	All	75	82	71	64	71	52	2
	High Needs	79	75	54	68	66		
District	All	54	50	43	57	51	--	3
	High Needs	54	46	29	61	48		

Between 2012 and 2015 the proportion of students scoring proficient or advanced in ELA improved by 2 percentage points for the district as a whole and by 4 and 7 percentage points for high needs students and English language learners, respectively. In 2014 ELA proficiency rates were below the state rate by 3 percentage points for all students and by 2 to 12 percentage points for high needs students, English language learners, and students with disabilities.

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

Group		2012	2013	2014	2015	4- Year Trend	Above/Below State 2014
All students	District	66%	66%	66%	68%	2	-3
	State	69%	69%	69%	--	--	
High Needs	District	43%	42%	44%	47%	4	-6
	State	48%	49%	50%	--	--	
Economically Disadvantaged	District	--	--	--	60%	--	--
	State	--	--	--	--	--	
ELL and former ELL students	District	22%	29%	34%	29%	7	-2
	State	34%	34%	36%	--	--	
Students with disabilities	District	19%	16%	18%	18%	-1	-12
	State	31%	29%	30%	--	--	

Between 2012 and 2015 the proportion of students scoring proficient or advanced in math improved by 4 percentage points for all students and English language learners. In 2014 math proficiency rates were below the state rate by 5 percentage points for all students and by 8 to 10 percentage points for high needs students, English language learners, and students with disabilities.

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

Group		2012	2013	2014	2015	4- Year Trend	Above/Below State 2014
All students	District	51%	53%	55%	55%	4	-5
	State	59%	61%	60%	--	--	
High Needs	District	32%	33%	32%	31%	-1	-8
	State	37%	40%	40%	--	--	
Economically Disadvantaged	District	--	--	--	40%	--	--
	State	--	--	--	--	--	
ELL and former ELL students	District	20%	29%	25%	24%	4	-10
	State	32%	35%	35%	--	--	
Students with disabilities	District	14%	12%	14%	11%	-3	-9
	State	21%	23%	23%	--	--	

Between 2012 and 2015 the proportion of students scoring proficient or advanced in science did not improve for the district as a whole and for high needs students. In 2015 science proficiency rates were below the state rate by 22 percentage points for all students and by 5 and 9 percentage points for English language learners and students with disabilities, respectively.

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

Group		2012	2013	2014	2015	4-Year Trend	Above/Below State 2015
All students	District	32%	24%	28%	32%	0	-22
	State	54%	53%	55%	54%	0	
High Needs	District	32%	24%	28%	32%	0	1
	State	31%	31%	33%	31%	0	
Economically Disadvantaged	District	--	--	--	38%	--	4
	State	--	--	--	34%	--	
ELL and former ELL students	District	21%	14%	9%	14%	-7	-5
	State	17%	19%	18%	19%	2	
Students with disabilities	District	11%	7%	11%	13%	2	-9
	State	20%	21%	21%	22%	2	

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

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

Group	ELA			Math			Science		
	2015 CPI	2015 Target	Rating	2015 CPI	2015 Target	Rating	2015 CPI	2015 Target	Rating
All students	86.4	91.2	Improved Below Target	77.8	84.3	Improved Below Target	78.9	83.4	Improved Below Target
High Needs	74.6	82.4	Improved Below Target	62.2	74.7	No Change	67.1	73.1	Improved Below Target
Economically Disadvantaged ¹	82.1	--	--	68.9	--	--	71.2	--	--
ELL and former ELLs	65.5	79.4	No Change	58.6	76.5	Improved Below Target	--	--	--
Students with disabilities	58.1	71.1	Improved Below Target	45.8	64.8	No Change	52.9	65.5	Improved Below Target

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

¹ The economically disadvantaged subgroup does not have a CPI target and rating because 2015 is the first year that a CPI was calculated for the economically disadvantaged group and will serve as a baseline for future years' CPI targets.

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

Group	Median ELA SGP			Median Math SGP		
	District	State	Growth Level	District	State	Growth Level
All students	47.0	50.0	Moderate	52.0	50.0	Moderate
High Needs	42.0	47.0	Moderate	44.0	46.0	Moderate
Econ. Disad.	--	--	--	--	--	--
ELLs	47.0	53.0	Moderate	41.0	51.0	Moderate
SWD	37.5	43.0	Low	38.5	43.0	Low

In 2015 Dracut's out-of-school and in-school suspension rates were lower than the state rate for all students, high needs students, economically disadvantaged students, and students with disabilities.

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

Group	Type of Suspension	2013	2014	2015	State 2015
High Needs	OSS	6.0%	5.6%	3.5%	4.8%
	ISS	2.1%	1.3%	1.2%	2.7%
Economically disadvantaged*	OSS	6.2%	6.1%	3.8%	5.4%
	ISS	2.3%	1.4%	1.1%	2.9%
Students with disabilities	OSS	7.3%	6.5%	3.7%	6.1%
	ISS	2.4%	1.0%	1.4%	3.4%
ELLs	OSS	--	--	--	3.8%
	ISS	--	--	--	1.8%
All Students	OSS	3.4%	3.2%	2.0%	2.9%
	ISS	1.1%	0.8%	0.7%	1.8%

*Low income students' suspensions used for 2013 and 2014

Between 2012 and 2015 Dracut's four-year cohort graduation rate improved for all students and high needs students by 2.5 and 2.9 percentage points, respectively, and by 8.9 percentage points for low income students, but declined by 24.8 percentage points for students with disabilities. Dracut reached the four-year cohort graduation target for all students.²

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

Group	Number Included (2015)	Cohort Year Ending				Change 2012-2015		Change 2014-2015		State (2015)
		2012	2013	2014	2015	Percentage Points	Percent Change	Percentage Points	Percent Change	
High needs	72	73.5%	59.6%	75.3%	76.4%	2.9	3.9%	1.1	1.5%	78.5%
Low income	62	75.0%	64.0%	76.6%	83.9%	8.9	11.9%	7.3	9.5%	78.2%
SWD	21	62.9%	45.7%	53.8%	38.1%	-24.8	-39.4%	-15.7	-29.2%	69.9%
ELLs	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	64.0%
All students	253	88.0%	82.2%	88.5%	90.5%	2.5	2.8%	2.0	2.3%	87.3%

Between 2011 and 2014 Dracut's five-year cohort graduation rate declined by 0.5 percentage points for all students and by 4.8 percentage points for low income students and improved by 9.1 and 17.7 percentage points for high need students and students with disabilities, respectively. Dracut reached the five-year cohort graduation target for all students.³

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

Group	Number Included (2014)	Cohort Year Ending				Change 2011-2014		Change 2013-2014		State (2014)
		2011	2012	2013	2014	Percentage Points	Percent Change	Percentage Points	Percent Change	
High needs	89	66.2%	75.9%	68.1%	75.3%	9.1	13.7%	7.2	10.6%	80.3%
Low income	64	81.4%	76.7%	70.7%	76.6%	-4.8	-5.9%	5.9	8.3%	79.6%
SWD	39	36.1%	68.6%	60.0%	53.8%	17.7	49.0%	-6.2	-10.3%	73.5%
ELLs	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	69.8%
All students	287	89.4%	89.1%	85.9%	88.9%	-0.5	-0.6%	3.0	3.5%	88.5%

In 2015 Dracut's dropout rate was lower than the state rate for all students but higher for high needs students, economically disadvantaged students, and students with disabilities.

² The four-year cohort graduation rate target is 80 percent for each group and refers to the 2014 graduation rate. Low income students did not receive a 2015 accountability rating because of the change to the economically disadvantaged measure.

³ The five-year cohort graduation rate target is 85 percent for each group and refers to the 2013 graduation rate. Low income students did not receive a 2015 accountability rating because of the change to the economically disadvantaged measure.

**Table 11: Dracut Public Schools
Dropout Rates by Subgroup 2012–2015⁴**

	2012	2013	2014	2015	State 2015
High Needs	4.5%	5.9%	4.5%	4.4%	3.4%
Econ. Disad.	3.2%	4.5%	3.6%	3.8%	3.3%
SWD	7.8%	11.1%	8.7%	4.4%	3.5%
ELLs	--	--	--	--	5.7%
All students	1.8%	2.5%	2.4%	1.7%	1.9%

Grade and School Results

Between 2012 and 2015 ELA proficiency rates improved in the district as a whole and in each tested grade except the 4th grade.

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

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

Grade	Number	2012	2013	2014	2015	State	4-Year Trend	2-Year Trend
3	293	56%	55%	60%	57%	60%	1%	-3%
4	308	59%	46%	53%	52%	53%	-7%	-1%
5	302	59%	64%	59%	68%	71%	9%	9%
6	317	68%	71%	73%	70%	71%	2%	-3%
7	333	59%	64%	64%	71%	70%	12%	7%
8	320	74%	73%	68%	76%	80%	2%	8%
10	189	92%	94%	93%	93%	91%	1%	0%
All	2,062	66%	66%	66%	68%	--	2%	2%

⁴ Low income dropout rate used for the 2012, 2013, and 2014 economically disadvantaged dropout rate.

ELA proficiency rates were below the state rate in all four elementary schools in the 3rd, in the 4th and 5th grades at Brookside Elementary, and in the 5th grade at Englesby Elementary. ELA proficiency rates were equal to or above the state rate in the 7th and 8th grades at Richardson Middle. ELA proficiency in the 10th grade at Dracut Senior High was 95 percent, above the state rate of 91 percent.

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

School	3	4	5	6	7	8	10	Total
HS: Parker Avenue	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
ES: Campbell Elementary	58%	58%	76%	--	--	--	--	63%
ES: Greenmont Avenue	56%	67%	74%	--	--	--	--	67%
ES: Brookside Elementary	59%	38%	59%	--	--	--	--	52%
ES: Englesby Elementary	55%	56%	66%	--	--	--	--	59%
MS: Richardson Middle	--	--	--	71%	72%	76%	--	73%
HS: Dracut Senior High	--	--	--	--	--	--	95%	95%
District Total	57%	52%	68%	70%	71%	76%	93%	68%
State	60%	53%	71%	71%	70%	80%	91%	--

Between 2012 and 2015 ELA proficiency rates improved by 3 percentage points at Greenmont, by 6 percentage points at Richardson Middle, and by 1 percentage point at Dracut Senior High.

- Between 2012 and 2015 ELA proficiency rates for high needs students improved by 13 percentage points at Brookside Elementary, by 9 percentage points at Campbell Elementary, and by 4 and 7 percentage points at Richardson Middle and Dracut Senior High, respectively.
- Between 2012 and 2015 ELA proficiency for English language learners improved by 14 percentage points at Brookside and declined by 3 percentage points at Richardson Middle.
- Between 2012 and 2015 ELA proficiency rates for students with disabilities improved by 19 and 9 percentage points at Campbell Elementary and Dracut Senior High, respectively, and declined by 5 and 9 percentage points at Brookside Elementary and Richardson Middle, respectively.

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

	2012	2013	2014	2015	3- or 4-Year Trend
HS: Parker Avenue	--	--	--	--	--
ES: Campbell Elementary	64%	53%	58%	63%	-1
High Needs	31%	29%	38%	40%	9
Economically disadvantaged	--	--	--	53%	--
ELL and former ELL	--	--	--	--	--
Students with disabilities	4%	7%	13%	23%	19
ES: Greenmont Avenue	64%	66%	61%	67%	3
High Needs	46%	46%	47%	46%	0
Economically disadvantaged	--	--	--	55%	--
ELL and former ELL	--	--	--	--	--
Students with disabilities	--	--	19%	26%	--
ES: Brookside Elementary	52%	46%	55%	52%	0
High Needs	30%	23%	39%	43%	13
Economically disadvantaged	--	--	--	51%	--
ELL and former ELL	6%	6%	20%	20%	14
Students with disabilities	22%	18%	17%	17%	-5

ES: Englesby Elementary	--	--	--	59%	--
High Needs	--	--	--	40%	--
Economically disadvantaged	--	--	--	50%	--
ELL and former ELL	--	--	--	--	--
Students with disabilities	--	--	--	3%	--
MS: Richardson Middle	67%	70%	66%	73%	6
High Needs	44%	47%	43%	48%	4
Economically disadvantaged	--	--	--	64%	--
ELL and former ELL	33%	50%	50%	30%	-3
Students with disabilities	23%	16%	11%	14%	-9
HS: Dracut Senior High	94%	95%	94%	95%	1
High Needs	78%	81%	77%	85%	7
Economically disadvantaged	--	--	--	89%	--
ELL and former ELL	--	--	--	--	--
Students with disabilities	55%	50%	53%	64%	9

Between 2012 and 2015 math proficiency rates improved in the district as whole and in the 3rd, 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th grades. However, math proficiency rates were below the state rate in each tested grade by 2 to 12 percentage points.

- Between 2012 and 2015 math proficiency rates improved by 4 percentage points in the district a whole, by 16 percentage points in the 8th grade, by 9 and 6 percentage points in the 3rd and 7th grades, respectively, and by 1 and 3 percentage points in the 5th and 6th grades, respectively.
- Between 2012 and 2015 math proficiency rates decreased by 3 percentage points in the 4th grade and by 2 percentage points in the 10th grade.
 - Math proficiency rates in the district were below the state rate by 12 percentage points in the 8th grade, by 9 and 7 percentage points in the 7th and 5th grades, , respectively, and by 2 to 5 percentage points in the 3rd, 4th, 6th, and 10th grades.

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

Grade	Number	2012	2013	2014	2015	State	4-Year Trend	2-Year Trend
3	289	56%	57%	64%	65%	70%	9%	1%
4	309	46%	46%	45%	43%	47%	-3%	-2%
5	303	59%	57%	53%	60%	67%	1%	7%
6	317	56%	64%	64%	59%	62%	3%	-5%
7	336	36%	40%	48%	42%	51%	6%	-6%
8	317	32%	32%	36%	48%	60%	16%	12%
10	191	79%	82%	80%	77%	79%	-2%	-3%
All	2,062	51%	53%	55%	55%	--	4%	0%

Math proficiency rates were below the state rate in the 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades in 3 of the 4 elementary schools. Math proficiency rates were below the state rate in 6th, 7th, and 8th grades at Richardson Middle. Math proficiency in the 10th grade at Dracut Senior High was 81 percent, above the state rate of 79 percent.

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

School	3	4	5	6	7	8	10	Total
HS: Parker Avenue	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
ES: Campbell Elementary	65%	43%	71%	--	--	--	--	59%
ES: Greenmont Avenue	68%	62%	64%	--	--	--	--	65%
ES: Brookside Elementary	61%	36%	52%	--	--	--	--	50%
ES: Englesby Elementary	70%	45%	57%	--	--	--	--	57%
MS: Richardson Middle	--	--	--	61%	43%	49%	--	51%
HS: Dracut Senior High	--	--	--	--	--	--	81%	81%
District Total	65%	43%	60%	59%	42%	48%	77%	55%
State	70%	47%	67%	62%	51%	60%	79%	--

Between 2012 and 2015 math proficiency rates improved by 4 percentage points at Campbell Elementary, by 12 percentage points at Greenmont, and by 17 percentage points at Richardson Middle.

- Between 2012 and 2015 math proficiency rates for high needs students improved by 10 percentage points at Richardson Middle and by 1 and 2 percentage points at Brookside and Greenmont Avenue, respectively.
- Between 2012 and 2015 math proficiency for English language learners improved by 14 and 25 percentage points at Brookside and Richardson Middle, respectively.
- Between 2012 and 2015 math proficiency rates for students with disabilities improved by 7 and 6 percentage points at Campbell and Dracut Senior High, respectively.

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

	2012	2013	2014	2015	3- or 4-Year Trend
HS: Parker Avenue	--	--	--	--	--
ES: Campbell Elementary	55%	49%	54%	59%	4
High Needs	33%	30%	32%	30%	-3
Economically disadvantaged	--	--	--	36%	--
ELL and former ELL	--	--	--	--	--
Students with disabilities	8%	11%	25%	15%	7
ES: Greenmont Avenue	53%	76%	55%	65%	12
High Needs	45%	54%	44%	47%	2
Economically disadvantaged	--	--	--	56%	--
ELL and former ELL	--	--	--	--	--
Students with disabilities	--	--	15%	25%	--
ES: Brookside Elementary	50%	50%	54%	50%	0
High Needs	33%	33%	36%	34%	1
Economically disadvantaged	--	--	--	42%	--
ELL and former ELL	6%	12%	10%	20%	14
Students with disabilities	22%	22%	23%	13%	-9

ES: Englesby Elementary	--	--	--	57%	--
High Needs	--	--	--	34%	--
Economically disadvantaged	--	--	--	41%	--
ELL and former ELL	--	--	--	--	--
Students with disabilities	--	--	--	14%	--
MS: Richardson Middle	34%	36%	42%	51%	17
High Needs	18%	19%	20%	28%	10
Economically disadvantaged	--	--	--	37%	--
ELL and former ELL	0%	17%	20%	25%	25
Students with disabilities	8%	5%	4%	6%	-2
HS: Dracut Senior High	81%	84%	83%	81%	0
High Needs	55%	58%	54%	52%	-3
Economically disadvantaged	--	--	--	59%	--
ELL and former ELL	--	--	--	--	--
Students with disabilities	20%	36%	28%	26%	6

Between 2012 and 2015 science proficiency rates declined by 2 percentage points for the district as a whole and by 11 percentage points in the 5th grade.

- 5th grade science proficiency rates declined 11 percentage points from 63 percent in 2012 to 52 percent in 2015, 1 percentage point above the state rate of 51 percent.
- 8th grade science proficiency rates increased 9 percentage points from 27 percent in 2012 to 36 percent in 2015, 6 percentage points below the state rate of 42 percent.
- 10th grade science proficiency rates increased 3 percentage points from 75 percent in 2012 to 78 percent in 2015, 6 percentage points above the state rate of 72 percent.

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

Grade	Number	2012	2013	2014	2015	State	4-Year Trend	2-Year Trend
5	302	63%	47%	54%	52%	51%	-11%	-2%
8	317	27%	24%	30%	36%	42%	9%	6%
10	172	75%	75%	77%	78%	72%	3%	1%
All	791	53%	47%	51%	51%	54%	-2%	0%

In 2015 science proficiency rates in the 5th grade ranged from 39 percent at Brookside Elementary to 65 percent at Greenmont Avenue and were above the state rate of 51 percent at 3 of the 4 elementary schools. The 8th grade science proficiency rate was 37 percent, below the state rate of 42 percent. The 10th grade science proficiency was 82 percent, above the state rate of 72 percent.

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

School	3	4	5	6	7	8	10	Total
HS: Parker Avenue	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
ES: Campbell Elementary	--	--	52%	--	--	--	--	52%
ES: Greenmont Avenue	--	--	65%	--	--	--	--	65%
ES: Brookside Elementary	--	--	39%	--	--	--	--	39%
ES: Englesby Elementary	--	--	56%	--	--	--	--	56%

MS: Richardson Middle	--	--	--	--	--	37%	--	37%
HS: Dracut Senior High	--	--	--	--	--	--	82%	82%
District Total	--	--	52%	--	--	36%	78%	51%
State	--	--	51%	--	--	42%	72%	54%

In 2015 science proficiency rates at the elementary schools ranged from 39 percent at Brookside Elementary to 65 percent at Greenmont Avenue. Between 2012 and 2015 science proficiency rates improved by 10 percentage points at Richardson Middle and by 6 percentage points at Dracut Senior High.

- Between 2012 and 2015 science proficiency rates for high needs students improved by 8 percentage points at Richardson Middle and by 3 percentage points at Dracut Senior High.
- Between 2012 and 2015 science proficiency rates for students with disabilities improved by 1 percentage point at Richardson Middle and by 9 percentage points at Dracut Senior High.

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

	2012	2013	2014	2015	3- or 4-Year Trend
HS: Parker Avenue	--	--	--	--	--
ES: Campbell Elementary	--	--	--	52%	--
High Needs	--	--	--	46%	--
Economically disadvantaged	--	--	--	62%	--
ELL and former ELL	--	--	--	--	--
Students with disabilities	--	--	--	27%	--
ES: Greenmont Avenue	--	--	--	65%	--
High Needs	--	--	--	27%	--
Economically disadvantaged	--	--	--	30%	--
ELL and former ELL	--	--	--	--	--
Students with disabilities	--	--	--	--	--
ES: Brookside Elementary	--	--	--	39%	--
High Needs	--	--	--	22%	--
Economically disadvantaged	--	--	--	27%	--
ELL and former ELL	--	--	--	--	--
Students with disabilities	--	--	--	6%	--
ES: Englesby Elementary	--	--	--	56%	--
High Needs	--	--	--	50%	--
Economically disadvantaged	--	--	--	60%	--
ELL and former ELL	--	--	--	--	--
Students with disabilities	--	--	--	--	--
MS: Richardson Middle	27%	25%	30%	37%	10
High Needs	12%	12%	13%	20%	8
Economically disadvantaged	--	--	--	25%	--
ELL and former ELL	--	--	--	--	--
Students with disabilities	5%	5%	0%	6%	1
HS: Dracut Senior High	76%	76%	79%	82%	6
High Needs	51%	49%	53%	54%	3
Economically disadvantaged	--	--	--	55%	--
ELL and former ELL	--	--	--	--	--
Students with disabilities	28%	20%	28%	37%	9

Leadership and Governance

Contextual Background

Over the past four years the Dracut Public Schools have undergone significant change. In 2014 a renovation and expansion project was completed at the high school. In 2014-2015, the K-8 grade configuration was changed from 3 elementary schools (K-4), 1 intermediate school (grades 5-6), and 1 junior high school (grades 7-8) to the present configuration of 4 elementary schools (K-5) and 1 middle school (grades 6-8). Lastly, after lengthy negotiations, in November 2015 the district and the Dracut Teachers' Association signed a collective bargaining agreement.

With this backdrop the district began initiating many strategies to improve student achievement. The superintendent, who began leading the district in 2012, has purposefully built the district's administrative team over the last five years. Together they have developed a multifaceted plan to improve student achievement. Many of the improvement efforts are targeted at increasing student achievement at the district's lowest performing school, Richardson Middle.

Although the strategies proposed are educationally sound and research based they are not established throughout the district. The district faces two intertwined issues that threaten to derail improvement efforts. The district operates without many of the structures and processes that are hallmarks of high achieving districts such as instructional coaches, consistent use of data to improve classroom instruction, and support and services for all students. In addition, the district's relationships with its teachers' association and with town officials have historically been unproductive. In 2013-2014 town and school officials formed a Tri-Board made up of selectmen, school committee members, and finance committee members to discuss town finances, including budget needs, funding sources, and a possible override. In 2015 the Tri-Board created a Budget Task Force to review these needs in detail, and the Tri-Board as a whole met recently to discuss financial issues.

Strength Finding

- 1. The district is setting a direction that holds promise to raise student achievement. Many research-based strategies and initiatives have been identified to move the district forward.**
 - A.** The superintendent has been purposeful and focused in building a leadership team. The leadership team shares a common vision and understanding of what needs improvement and has developed plans to improve student achievement.
 - B.** The 2013-2017 Draft District Improvement Plan sets forth strategic initiatives to create "an optimal learning environment," including creating a tiered system of instructional interventions, systematizing the use of formative assessments at all levels, and institutionalizing expectations of common instructional practices districtwide.
 - C.** The 2016 draft School Improvement Plans (SIPs) focus on improving student achievement.

1. In preparing the SIPs, each school leader developed a 2015-2016 Action Plan based on an analysis of MCAS test results.
- D.** Interviews and a document review indicated that the district emphasizes high-quality instruction in all its initiatives.
1. The district's core values state that the "the classroom should be the primary focus of a district's work." The five "signature practices" promoted by the district are effective lesson plans, student learning outcomes, critical thinking, student-centered learning activities, and authentic assessment. In addition, the leadership team has aligned these signature practices with elements in the Educator Evaluation Model Rubrics.
 2. The district has established and embedded instructional rounds at the administrative level. The instructional rounds are designed to provide school leaders with a structure to calibrate their expectations to improve evaluators' supervision and teachers' instruction. Administrators reported that the instructional rounds are also the vehicle through which they monitor implementation of the district's initiatives.
- E.** The district has effectively used its resources to plan and implement key instructional and organizational improvements.
1. The district was recently reorganized K-8 from 3 elementary schools (K-4), 1 intermediate school (grades 5-6), and 1 junior high school (grades 7-8) to 4 elementary schools (K-5) and 1 middle school (grades 6-8).
 - a. The New England League of Middle Schools provided a status study and some support for the administration as the district strives to transform the school serving grades 6-8 into a Turning Point Middle School.
 2. In an effort to bring consistency across the elementary and middle schools the district has engaged an outside consultant to provide professional development and embedded support in the form of lab classrooms for teachers in grades 1-8 in the workshop model.
 3. The middle school's students with disabilities are among the lowest performing 20 percent of subgroups statewide. In an effort to understand some the causes of low achievement, the district commissioned a study of its special education programs at the middle school by the Collaborative for Regional Educational Services and Training (CREST).

Impact: The district is developing a clear vision of continuous improvement and the means to achieve it. With regular communication and a commitment to collaboration and shared responsibility with stakeholders for improving student learning, the district can move forward to sustain improvement initiatives.

Challenge and Areas for Growth

2. Two connected issues are slowing the district's improvement initiatives: budget constraints and historically challenging relations between the schools and the town and between district leadership and the Dracut Teachers' Association (DTA).

- A.** Teachers, administrators, town officials, and members of the school committee reported that their relationships have been historically unproductive.
 - 1. After lengthy negotiations, the district and the Dracut Teachers' Association signed a collective bargaining agreement in November 2015.
 - 2. Teachers and administrators told the team that most improvement initiatives were slowed during the previous year, and that improvement efforts such as curriculum development, balanced literacy, and the establishment of data and professional development teams were affected.
 - a. Interviewees said that this continues to be the case. The development of District-Determined Measures (DDMs) is at an impasse.
 - 3. Some teachers said that they were willing to participate in improvement efforts only when compensation and/or release time from classroom instruction was provided. Some teachers reported that in the infrequent instances in which they have participated in district teams, their opinions were not validated. They said that this made them feel disrespected. They told the review team that despite these experiences they held their principals in high esteem.
 - 4. Administrators and town officials said that the district's relationships with the town have historically been challenging.
 - 5. There appear to be only sporadic meetings between the superintendent and the town manager.
- B.** The town has supported two large school construction projects in the past 15 years, and has funded education at less than 1 percent over its net school spending requirement for the past several years.
- C.** Students do not have access to structures and services commonplace in high achieving school systems.
 - 1. The district does not have reading teachers or coaches for reading and math. Teachers and administrators reported that paraprofessionals provide Title I reading services at the elementary level and Title I math services at the middle school.
 - 2. Similarly, paraprofessionals provide instruction in the inclusion model to students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) at the middle- and high-school levels. Some

elementary students are instructed by special education teachers once per week with the balance of instruction provided by paraprofessionals.

3. Administrators and teachers reported that one counselor provides counseling services at the elementary level. The middle school has one adjustment and one guidance counselor for 1,000 students; the high school has both a guidance and an adjustment counselor dedicated to the ninth grade academy while two guidance counselors and an adjustment counselor provide services to grades 10-12.
4. All the elementary schools share an assistant principal who is responsible for supporting the balanced literacy initiative. The two larger elementary schools, Engelsby and Campbell, serve more than 500 students.
5. Interviews and a review of budget documents indicated that money for texts and instructional supplies is allocated on a simple per-pupil formula that does not address the specialized needs of students, particularly at the middle school, the district's Level 3 school.
6. Teachers reported that common planning time is scheduled in some of the district's K-4 schools. Elementary administrators in the other schools reported that they have made an attempt to provide teachers with a preparation period in common. There is no scheduled time for teachers in these schools to collaborate about instructional issues.

Impact: In the absence of a positive and productive professional climate the district's improvement efforts have slowed. Without collaboration, regular communication, and shared responsibility for students' learning, stakeholders cannot advance the district's improvement efforts.

Recommendation

1. It is strongly recommended that school committee members, district leaders, and town officials take steps to communicate and collaborate more effectively.

A. Given the recent tensions between town and school officials and between district administrators and the teachers' association, regular meetings involving district and school leaders should be scheduled. This will be especially useful when budget development begins.

1. Regular contact between the superintendent and the town manager will be particularly important.
2. The Tri-Board and the Budget Task Force should continue to discuss revenue, budget needs, and allocations.

Benefits: By implementing this recommendation stakeholders can create a culture of trust, collaboration, and mutual benefit. Such measures will require long-term commitment and effort by all involved.

Curriculum and Instruction

Contextual Background

The district's instructional leaders are focused on growing their skills as supervisors in order to contribute to improved teaching and learning. The instructional leadership team, including central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders, contribute to a culture of continuous learning for staff and students.

The district has begun the process of creating curriculum and making it accessible online. Teacher representatives K-12 are constructing curricular maps in the disciplines of mathematics and English language arts using the Understanding by Design format.

The review team visited 62 of the district's classrooms. Review team members found strong or moderate evidence of respectful classroom cultures in many classes. In most of the district's classrooms, observers found students to be motivated and actively participating in learning activities. However, review team members found that observed lessons did not consistently reflect high expectations for learning and critical thinking, and lessons did not address all students' learning needs.

Strength Findings

1. The district's instructional leaders continue to develop their leadership skills. They initiate and lead many of the district's professional activities.

A. The district depends on key staff to support curriculum and instruction initiatives.

1. The director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment is responsible for all curricular, instructional, and assessment initiatives and activities K-12.
2. The superintendent expressed the view that the schools' principals are the district's curriculum and instructional leaders.
 - a. The district's principals participate in instructional rounds (IRs) each month. IRs contribute to their professional growth and help calibrate their observation and evaluation skills.
 - b. The district's instructional leaders said that they have narrowed their evaluation focus to a subset of indicators of effective teaching practice as identified in the Massachusetts Education Evaluation Framework.
3. At the high school an instructional leadership team (ILT) consisting of department heads teacher leaders, and assistant principals meets weekly to review data.
4. "Lab teachers" and "lab classrooms" are used in grades 1-8 as models and as a source of support for colleagues. Lab teachers are "teacher leaders who are ahead of the pack."

- B.** The district's instructional leaders and teachers have begun the process of developing and making curriculum available online.
 - 1. The district has convened mathematics and English Language Arts curriculum development committees. The committees have broad representation K-12. Each committee is chaired by a high school department head.
 - 2. The district's curriculum "platform" (Atlas) provides teachers access to ELA and mathematics curricula.
 - a. Interviews and a document review indicated that a draft of stages 1 and 2 (Big Ideas & Enduring Understandings and Assessments) of Understanding by Design's three-stage "backwards" mapping process has been entered into Atlas.
 - b. All the district's ELA and mathematics teachers have electronic access to Atlas.
 - c. Atlas enables teachers to review the continuum of their discipline's curriculum. A grade five mathematics teacher said, "I can see the 4th grade's scope and sequence."
 - 3. The district has joined a consortium of 16 districts that is beginning the process of aligning science curricula to the Massachusetts Science and Technology/Engineering Standards. The director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment told the team that drafts of science curricula would be available on Atlas by the end of 2017.

Impact: An instructional leadership team of central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders who are focused on activities related to enriching curriculum and enhancing instruction contribute to an emerging culture of continuous learning for staff and students.

2. In observed lessons, the review team found that the climate of many district classrooms was characterized by respectful behaviors and most students were motivated and actively participating in activities.

The team observed 62 classes throughout the district: 13 at the high school, 17 at the middle school, and 32 at the 4 elementary schools. The team observed 30 ELA classes, 16 mathematics classes, 6 science classes, and 10 classes in other subject areas. The observations were approximately 20 minutes in length. All review team members collected data using ESE's instructional inventory, a tool for recording observed characteristics of standards-based teaching. The instructional inventory includes three areas of focus: *Learning Objectives & Instruction*; *Student Engagement & Critical Thinking*; and *Differentiated Instruction & Classroom Culture*. Observational data is compiled for each area of focus and by grade-level segments---elementary, middle, and high school. This data is presented in Appendix C.

- A.** In observed classrooms at all levels teachers created and maintained positive learning environments.
 - 1. In 100 percent of elementary school classrooms observers found teachers using rituals, routines, and responses that created a positive intellectual environment where students are

encouraged to take academic risks (84 percent, strong evidence; 16 percent, moderate evidence).

- a. In a grade 1 classroom, an observer noted that students were very attentive while a classmate told a story during open circle.
 - b. One kindergarten student said to a classmate who had been absent: “We missed you!” as the teacher helped the student to feel comfortable in reentering the classroom.
2. The team observed a similar positive environment in 82 percent of the visited middle school classrooms (41 percent, strong evidence; 41 percent, moderate evidence).
 - a. The team observed grade 8 students appropriately engaged in a quiet writing lesson.
 - b. The team noted that grade 6 students were very receptive to teacher feedback.
 3. Teachers created and maintained an environment conducive to learning in 84 percent of the visited high school classrooms (38 percent, strong evidence; 46 percent, moderate evidence).
 - a. The team observed positive and engaging student teacher interactions in a grade 9 mathematics class.
 4. Review team members observed that most students were motivated and engaged with the content of the lessons.
 - a. Observers found students who were motivated and engaged with students actively participating in learning activities in 84 percent of the elementary classrooms (50 percent, strong evidence; 34 percent, moderate evidence), in 65 percent of middle-school classes (24 percent, strong evidence; 41 percent, moderate evidence), and in 85 percent of the high school classrooms (8 percent, strong evidence; 77 percent, moderate evidence).
 - i. For example, in a grade 1 classroom, students accurately linked hand gestures with phonics sounds because, as one student said, “It helps our brains to learn.”
 - ii. In an ELA lesson, students were engaged in analyzing and evaluating a song’s lyrics.

Impact: Engaged and motivated students are more likely to achieve academically. Positive intellectual environments foster increased student motivation and engagement and willingness to take risks in learning. Student learning is likely to take place to a greater degree in classrooms characterized by respectful behaviors.

Challenge and Areas for Growth

3. In observed classrooms, students were not consistently challenged with high, rigorous expectations for learning and higher-order thinking. Lessons did not address all students' learning needs.

- A. Lessons did not consistently reflect high expectations. The team found moderate or strong evidence of instruction reflecting high expectations in 72 percent of observed elementary lessons, in 53 percent of observed middle-school classrooms, and in only 31 percent of high-school classrooms.
 - 1. For example, high expectations were noted in a 9th grade mathematics class where students were engaged in a challenging and rigorous review activity using a *Jeopardy* game format.
 - 2. In contrast, in a high school mathematics class, the entire lesson was teacher centered with the teacher answering her own questions and providing all the follow-up explanations.
- B. In observed classes, teachers did not consistently encourage students to develop and engage in deep thinking. In only 46 percent of high-school classrooms, in 59 percent of the middle school classrooms, and in 50 percent of the elementary school classrooms observers found moderate or strong evidence of teachers encouraging students to engage in critical thinking exercises.
 - 1. For example, critical thinking was noted in a kindergarten classroom when the teacher asked students analytical questions about shapes such as: "How are a square and a rectangle different?"
 - 2. In contrast, in a middle-school classroom the teacher asked students questions but did not ask them to explain their thinking or justify their answers.
- C. Observers found moderate or strong evidence of teachers differentiating instruction to account for differences in learning preferences in only 47 percent of elementary school classrooms, in just 18 percent of middle-school classrooms, and in only 15 percent of high-school classrooms.
 - 1. For example, a middle school teacher in a history class differentiated based on students' interests by asking each student to select a character of their choosing and to develop a "report card" assessing character traits.
 - 2. In contrast, in a grade 2 ELA lesson about contractions all students were using the same materials with no differentiation of instructional strategies or materials.

Impact: Increased and enriched student learning is more readily achieved in environments where instruction is differentiated and includes high expectations and opportunities for students to engage in critical thinking.

Recommendation

1. The district should build upon its developing instructional and intervention practices by further articulating its instructional model and supporting teachers in its implementation. The district should continue developing ELA and math curriculum and making it available to teachers.

- A. The district should convene a representative group of leaders and teachers to fully articulate and define a comprehensive model of high-quality instruction.
 - 1. The district might use grade-level, department, and faculty meetings, common planning time, and professional development for this purpose.
 - 2. The recommended product of these meetings is a model that promotes rigor and high expectations, uses multiple strategies to promote higher-order thinking, and supports differentiation.
- B. Once a model of instructional practice is identified and defined, district administrators should develop a plan to share instructional expectations with staff.
- C. The district should support teacher leadership and growth by creating opportunities for exemplary teachers to have responsibility for instructional leadership and mentoring.
- D. Administrators are encouraged to empower teachers by providing more time for them to observe effective practice in classrooms.
- E. The district should provide ongoing professional development to deepen educators' understanding of instructional strategies and district expectations.
- F. The district should complete its ELA and math curriculum and make it available on Atlas Rubicon.

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

Recommended resources:

- ESE's *Calibration Video Library* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/calibration/>) is a collection of professionally created videos of classroom instruction produced by the School Improvement Network. These videos depict a range of practice (this is not a collection of exemplars) to support within-district calibration activities that promote a shared understanding of instructional quality and rigor.
- ESE's *"What to Look For" Observation Guides* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/candi/observation/>) describe what observers should expect to see in a classroom at a particular grade level in a specific

subject area. This includes the knowledge and skills students should be learning and using (as reflected in state learning standards) and best practices related to classroom curriculum, instruction, and assessment for each subject area. The guides are not designed to replace any evaluation system or tools districts currently use, but are a resource to help classroom observers efficiently identify what teachers and students should be experiencing in specific subjects and grade levels.

Assessment

Contextual Background

District and school leaders use student assessment data in district and school improvement plans (SIPs) and in leadership team meetings to identify problem areas; however, the district does not have an effective system to collect, analyze, and disseminate student performance data. Except at the high school where department chairs and the instructional leadership team analyze assessment data, formal analysis of student performance remains at the administrative level.

The use of assessment data to improve instruction is not a common practice. The director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment has focused on the development of a standards-based curriculum in ELA and math. The district has just begun to disaggregate data by subgroups. Draft SIPs for 2016 presented goals that reflected the need to raise the performance level of students with disabilities. While data analysis has informed some major decisions such as the reorganization of grades and changes in the transportation program, it does not appear to be the driving force for decisions such as the creation of the freshman academy or the selection of the Readers/Writers workshop model K-8.

At the school level, while principals conduct data analyses with a variety of staff, few structures are in place to support teacher collaboration to analyze student assessment data. At all schools the principal and some staff engage in data meetings, but structures and formalized procedures for teacher engagement vary by school. High school teachers, with their departmental structure and with common assessments, engage in data analysis in their content areas particularly after quarterly assessments. At the middle school, while teacher meeting times are built into the schedule, there are no formal data teams and common assessments are limited. At the elementary level, teachers are provided the MCAS analysis by principals, and are responsible for analyzing the Fountas and Pinnell literacy assessments. In two elementary schools data meetings are occasionally held. K-8 schools do not analyze math assessment data.

The district does not have a balanced system of formative and benchmark assessments to guide instruction. The elementary schools do not have common assessments. The district has developed math diagnostic tests that are used between grades 8 and 9 to guide placement; these tests also helped to expand algebra offerings for students not ready for Algebra I. In 65 percent of observed classrooms K-12 the team found moderate or strong evidence that teachers conducted appropriate formative assessments.

Although district leaders and principals are currently working on using data to better understand student learning challenges, they have not provided teachers sufficient professional development on how to analyze data to guide instruction.

The team was told that the district is planning to implement a module of Baseline Edge which it anticipates will systematize data collection, link data directly to the educator evaluation system, and ultimately mean instructional improvement.

Strength Finding

1. District and school leaders have begun to use data to monitor student performance. District leadership is setting expectations for the use of data in decision-making and emerging structures may facilitate the district's analysis of multiple sources of data.

- A. The 2013-2017 District Improvement Plan Working Draft (DIP) cites several initiatives to support the use of data by school leaders and teachers.
 - 1. The DIP lists the following data-related initiatives: establish data analysis/leadership teams; establish an instructional rounds process; systematize the use of formative assessments at all levels; revise/revamp report cards; and implement fully the student management data system (IPASS).
 - a. Administrators, department chairs, and teachers said that three of the five initiatives are in place. The district has not developed common assessments K-8, established district or school data teams, or revised K-12 report cards.
- B. Interviewees told the team about a plan to expand by 2018 the use of the teacher evaluation platform, Baseline Edge, to store and manage data for improved educator access and use.
- C. The high school's instructional leadership team (ILT) and department chairs analyze student performance data on Cornerstone Assessments developed following recommendations from the 2011 New England Association of Secondary Schools (NEASC) accreditation process.
- D. The district is engaged in DSAC (District and School Assistance Center) training for administrators and teachers in developing assessment strategies.
- E. Elementary principals and kindergarten teachers have reengaged in the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation process that includes training teachers on documenting student progress.
- F. The middle school, using the Turning Points initiative, has designed its schedule to allow for weekly or bi-weekly teacher meetings to enable teachers to collaborate on data analysis though these meetings are not required.
- G. Drafts of the 2016 School Improvement Plans (SIPs) focus on improving student achievement and where appropriate rely on data to indicate progress toward goals.
 - 1. In preparing the SIPs each school leader developed a 2015-2016 MCAS Action Plan based on the analysis of MCAS performance. Examples include:
 - a. High school: "Conduct data analysis of summative and formative assessments via GradeCam and iPASS to inform instruction" and "Revise activities and projects based on MCAS analysis of student performance results in specific standards and emphasizing student-centered activities."

- b. Middle school: "Identify and support children who are close to moving into the next 'higher' achievement category."
 - c. Elementary schools: "Teachers review data and identify areas of strength and areas of weakness in order to further determine the source of each and create a plan... (Englesby)"; "Meetings are held to have conversations about what teachers see in the data and what they think it means with regard to their instruction (Greenmont)"; and "MCAS data presented to whole staff during staff meeting and areas of strength and concern are identified for grades 3-5 (Campbell)."
- H. While the district does not have a formal data team, groups of educators monitor and analyze data at each school.
- 1. Principals told the team that although there are few formal structures for educators to exchange information about student achievement in the district the superintendent expects that they collaborate in looking at data because they are using the same sources of data.
 - 2. Administrators and department chairs said and a documentation review confirmed that at the high school teachers in the core content areas administer common exams and participate in data discussions.
 - a. Teachers analyze MCAS data and Cornerstone assessments and look at trends and challenges in the curriculum and consider improvement strategies.
 - b. AP teachers analyze student performance data and develop common strategies such as close reading, open responses, and annotated graphic organizers.
 - c. Math teachers in grade 9 also use data from diagnostic tests to determine the appropriate algebra courses.
 - d. Other high school staff members monitor EWIS data on selected students to determine interventions; a small group that includes the high school guidance chair analyzes attendance.
 - i. Department chairs told the review team that because access to Edwin is relatively new for teachers, a high school math teacher developed a spreadsheet to analyze MCAS and other data such as Cornerstone assessments to track students' growth and achievement.
 - 3. At the middle school, members of the principal's instructional leadership team and members of the crisis response team analyze data such as MCAS. Teachers meet weekly and discuss student performance on mid-terms. Staff members also review Fountas and Pinnell assessments to determine eligibility for Title I services.
 - 4. Teachers said that at all elementary schools principals review MCAS data with teachers. Teachers participate in formal data teams at the Englesby, one of the elementary school that has established weekly common meeting times for teachers. There are no formal data

team meetings at the other elementary schools. The Title I director collects and monitors students' literacy skills through Fountas and Pinnell assessments administered by classroom teachers at all schools.

- a. Some elementary teachers told the team that they use the results of Fountas and Pinnell assessments to determine the needs of individual students for reteaching.

Impact: District leadership has set expectations for its leaders and teachers to use data to promote improvements in learning. Some leaders are beginning to develop and to use structures within their schools to facilitate data use by teachers. By knowing students' level of learning in each content area school leaders and teachers can make more effective adjustments in the curricula and in their daily instruction to contribute to improved achievement for all students.

Challenges and Areas for Growth

2. The district has few formal structures in place to analyze data horizontally (by grade level) and vertically (K-12), or to disaggregate data by subgroup.

- A. The district does not have a district-level data team to track patterns across all schools and to better inform program selections and resource allocations.
- B. The district does not have a designated leader or a leadership team whose area of responsibility includes the monitoring of horizontal and vertical data on student achievement across all schools.
 1. Department chairs at the high school told the team that they review data for grades 9-12 and use data from grade 8 to inform placement in grade 9. At other grade levels, principals and leadership teams oversee the data within their own schools.
- C. Significant program decisions do not consistently involve sufficient data analysis.
 1. For example, administrators said that they were not sure that a major district initiative, the shift to the Reader's Workshop model K-8, was driven by the analysis of student reading data.
 2. When asked what led to the development of the Freshman Academy, administrators told the team that grade 9 students had been housed separately at the middle school during construction and renovation of the high school and they decided to continue with the design and "build a program for them," noting that "Necessity was the mother of invention."
- D. The district is using data for some decisions.
 1. For example, the superintendent told the team that the major grade reorganization, the shift of grade 5 to the elementary schools took place for several reasons including the low performance of students in grades 7 and 8 on MCAS.

2. The district has begun to use teacher feedback data to improve the quality of its professional development offerings.
 3. An analysis of bus enrollment guided the district in shifting from a three- to a two-tier busing program resulting in the same number of buses but fewer trips.
- E. District and program leaders and teachers have recently begun to disaggregate data by subgroups to begin to understand the causes for the continuing proficiency gap for subgroups across the district, including students with disabilities.
1. School leaders told the team that the superintendent had asked them to “drill down” on subgroup data. The team reviewed recently completed MCAS Action Plans which were required to answer the following questions: “What actions are being taken to identify specific strategies to improve achievement relative to subgroups, particularly Students with Disabilities category?”
 2. A study of the district’s special needs program at the middle school by the Collaborative for Regional Education Services (CREST) generated a report in April 2015 which indicated that “student growth data for students with disabilities is an area of concern.” The study noted that “student data trends are alarming for this limited dated review. This data is powerful and can be the catalyst for reform.”
 - a. At the time of the visit district principals were just beginning to disaggregate the data in the draft SIPs and taking some actions to address proficiency gaps.
 - b. Some interviewees told the team that the district does not look at Early Warning Indicator System (EWIS) indicators by subgroup because the numbers in these groups are small. Others said that the overarching theme of the new SIPs was to address data and special education and that data was beginning to be exchanged with some special education chairs.
- E. Program leaders and principals told the team that the district did not keep official data on the success of interventions. The team was told that high-school leaders are working with the DSAC to track the most successful interventions.

Impact: The district practice of reviewing data at the school level prevents district leaders from tracking vertical patterns and gaps in learning as well as trends in subgroup performance. It has a negative impact on leaders’ ability to justify requests for and allocation of resources and affects the district’s ability to select and grow programs that are effective in improving students’ achievement.

3. Teachers’ readiness and skills to effectively use data to inform instruction vary greatly from level to level and school to school.

- A. High school teachers discuss Cornerstone assessments.

1. High-school leaders, department chairs, and teachers said that they used Cornerstone assessments to inform discussions about curriculum and instruction. Formal meetings are scheduled for these discussions.
 2. Each Monday members of the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) meet to discuss data and student growth from quarter to quarter.
 3. High-school teachers told the team that they were expected to meet at the end of the school year to discuss students' test results. They also said that they do not have training in data analysis, that they do not have the time needed to analyze the data, or the same access to the data as the ILT team members.
- B.** At the middle school, data analysis is a new skill for many teachers in grades 7 and 8.
1. Grade 6 teachers who taught in the elementary schools before 2014-2015 gained experience with data analysis during that time.
 2. Middle-school teachers voiced two concerns: the absence of time to review and analyze data, and the absence of common assessments.
- C.** At the elementary schools, the primary sources of common data are the Fountas and Pinnell assessments.
1. Each classroom teacher administers tests and provides data to the director of Title I; the director uses the information for eligibility for services and shares the data with principals.
 2. However, there appear to be mixed abilities to use data to inform instruction.
 - a. Some teachers described their role as providing data to other educators ("I put the data on a spreadsheet for the vice-principal" and "The Title I person looks at data and uses it for referrals.").
 - b. Other teachers noted, "We use the results of Fountas and Pinnell to determine the needs of individual students for reteaching."
- D.** Classroom teachers do not disaggregate data or analyze student performance data by subgroup.

Impact: Because teacher skills to use data effectively vary within and between schools, some teachers are not able to use multiple data sources to monitor the effectiveness of their instruction. Without careful teacher monitoring of student learning, some teachers are also unable to see where they must modify their curriculum and what specific interventions to provide to ensure student learning.

Recommendation

- 1. The district should develop uniform and integrated policies, structures, and practices for the continuous collection, analysis, and dissemination of student performance and other data sources.**
 - A.** The superintendent, principals, and program leaders, in collaboration with teachers, should develop specific strategies, timelines, and clear expectations for the use of data districtwide.
 1. Building on practices in place in some grade levels, the district should establish systematic, consistent processes for the analysis and use of assessment data.
 2. The district should ensure that educators at every level use data strategically to inform instruction, ongoing curriculum revisions, program evaluation, and the educator evaluation system.
 - B.** Ongoing, targeted training in the collection, analysis, and use of student performance data should be provided for staff in each school, grade level, and subject area.
 1. Training should include, for appropriate staff, the development of skills to use EWIS (Early Warning Indicator System) and Edwin Analytics to inform decisions about high-needs students.
 2. Targeted and sustained professional development should be provided for all staff in the development of valid and reliable student assessments, including District-Determined Measures (DDMs).
 - C.** District and school leaders should systematically incorporate student assessment results and other pertinent data into all aspects of policy, prioritization, and decision making, including budget development, district and school improvement plans, and the evaluation of educational programs and services.

Benefits: Implementing this recommendation will mean clarity and consistency in the district's use of data for decision-making. It will help district leaders and teachers to understand, and provide professional development for, the analysis and use of data to improve instruction and learning. It will help all stakeholders to evaluate programs, text, and services. It can enable the district to provide all students, including high-needs learners, with greatly improved learning opportunities and academic outcomes.

Recommended resources:

- ESE's *Assessment Literacy Self-Assessment and Gap Analysis Tool* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/eval/ddm/webinar/PartI-GapAnalysis.pdf>) is intended to support districts in understanding where their educators fit overall on a continuum of assessment literacy.

After determining where the district as a whole generally falls on the continuum, the district can determine potential next steps.

- ESE's *District Data Team Toolkit* (<http://www.mass.gov/edu/government/departments-and-boards/ease/programs/accountability/tools-and-resources/district-analysis-review-and-assistance/leadership-and-governance.html>) is a set of resources to help a district establish, grow, and maintain a culture of inquiry and data use through a District Data Team.
- The *Edwin Analytics* web page (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edwin/analytics/>) includes links to a Getting Started Guide, as well as a video tutorial series.
- *District-Determined Measures* (<http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLTuqmiQ9ssquEalxpfpzD6qG9zxvPWl0c>) is a series of videos featuring different aspects of the development and use of District-Determined Measures (DDMs).

Human Resources and Professional Development

Contextual Background

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

The district has not adopted and implemented the more recent components of the Framework that require the collection and use of multiple sources of evaluative evidence such as District-Determined Measures (DDMs) and student and staff feedback. The district's professional development (PD) programming is not comprehensive, fully coordinated, or aligned with many of the key ESE standards for High Quality Professional Development. The PD programming is missing: collaborative leadership; clearly articulated and measurable goals and objectives; direct alignment with well-defined district priorities; and adequate resources, including sufficient embedded and regularly scheduled common planning and meeting opportunities to enable all staff to work together in sustained and structured collaborations needed to achieve identified objectives.

Challenges and Areas for Growth

- 1. Formative assessments and summative evaluations contained little concrete evidence and were not appropriately evidence based or growth oriented. The district has not taken action on the more recent components of the Educator Evaluation Framework that require the collection and use of multiple sources of evaluative evidence.**
 - A.** The quality of formative assessments and summative evaluations written for both teachers and administrators was uneven. Evaluations were often brief, contained limited references to concrete evidence, and in general were not instructive. They typically provided few specific suggestions or detailed recommendations for improved classroom instruction or professional growth.
 1. Review team members reviewed evaluative documentation of 25 teachers randomly selected from across the district. Formative assessments and summative evaluations were completed according to contractual timelines and typically were informative, containing factual details relevant to classroom instruction and professional practice. In general, however, they were not instructive.⁵ They contained little concrete evidence and seldom

⁵ An informative evaluation is factual and cites instructional details such as methodology, pedagogy, Standards and Indicators of Effective Teaching Practice or instruction of subject-based knowledge that is aligned with the state

provided specific or actionable recommendations for improved practice or professional growth.

2. A review of the evaluations of the district's principals showed a similar pattern. Summative evaluations were less than a page in length, contained limited specific supporting evidence, and offered few concrete recommendations or well defined action steps. Consequently, they could not contribute in a meaningful way to a principal's leadership ability or professional growth.

B. The educator evaluation regulations (603 CMR 35.07) require that all Massachusetts districts collect and use student feedback as evidence in the educator evaluation process. The district is currently out of compliance with this regulatory requirement.

1. Administrators reported that no formal action or initiative to collect and use either student or staff feedback as a key component of the educator evaluation process is currently underway within the district.

C. The educator evaluation regulations also require the identification of District-Determined Measures (DDMs) to assess student learning across the curriculum and to serve as a key element in determining an individual educator's Student Impact Rating. The district is currently out of compliance with this regulatory requirement.

1. Interviewees reported that although some preliminary efforts to develop DDMs had been initiated in the district in the past, that work has not been continued and that at the time of the review DDMs were "on a side burner."
2. Districts interested in pursuing an alternative pathway for DDMs development were to submit their plan to ESE's Center for Educator Effectiveness by June 30, 2015. Administrators indicated they did not know whether the district had done so and were unaware of what the content of such a plan might have been.
3. Staff from ESE's Center for Educator Effectiveness indicated that the Center did not receive an approvable plan for the implementation of District-Determined Measures (DDMs) from the district by the June 30th deadline; the submission received by the Center on June 29, 2015, signaled impasse with the association and included a request to use an alternative pathway. On July 9, 2015, the superintendent was informed that Dracut's alternative pathway request would not be approved because it was not submitted with support from the teachers' association. As a result, processing of Dracut's Title IIA grant application was placed on hold, pending the submission of an approvable plan, and Dracut was required to

curriculum frameworks. It does not commit to improvement strategies. An instructive evaluation includes comments intended to improve instruction.

participate in a series of monitoring and technical assistance calls. The superintendent notified the Center on April 1, 2016, that a tentative agreement had been reached between the Dracut School Committee and the Dracut Teachers' Association related to the Student Impact Rating, resulting in a plan to move the work forward, albeit on a protracted timeline. The district's Title IIA grant application was subsequently cleared for processing and approved.

Impact: The Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Framework is designed to promote educator growth and development while keeping student learning as its central focus. The absence of clear, rigorous, consistent, and evidence-based formative assessments and summative evaluations prevents the evaluation system from significantly enhancing the professional growth and development of educators and educational leaders. The full implementation of the state Framework requires that districts use an educator evaluation system that appropriately incorporates multiple sources of evaluative evidence in addition to direct observations and artifacts of practice. Specifically, these include multiple district-developed measures of student learning (DDMs) and the systematic collection and use of student and staff feedback. Without moving forward with these key initiatives, the district has reduced its ability to make significant and lasting improvements in learning opportunities, classroom instruction, and academic outcomes for all the district's students.

2. The effectiveness of the district's professional development programming is diminished by: the absence of collaborative leadership; of comprehensive, fully coordinated, and clearly articulated PD plans, goals, and objectives; and of direct and sustained alignment with district priorities and needs.

- A.** Professional Development (PD) in the district is not aligned with many of the key ESE Standards for High Quality Professional Development, including that it: (a) is intentional; (b) is a structured, comprehensive, and coordinated process; and (c) requires strong and collaborative leadership.
1. Until very recently the district did not have a designated PD committee to plan, coordinate, and support PD programming and services K-12.
 2. The need to establish such a committee and to subsequently create a comprehensive PD plan for the district is articulated in the superintendent's 2015-2016 Goals and in the 2013-2017 District Improvement Plan Working Draft.
 3. Since the fall of the 2015-2016 school year some initial steps and preliminary actions have been taken but the process remains in a formative stage. The superintendent described the current status of creating a PD committee and developing a PD plan as "rudimentary" and indicated that it needs to be "formalized."
 - a. Central office leaders indicated that although their goal was to recruit teachers to serve on a PD steering committee and to increase teacher involvement in PD design and delivery, for a number of reasons, including what was described as a "difficult" collective

bargaining environment, some teachers were unwilling to join with administrators in meaningful PD collaboration.

- b. Because the district's newly formed PD committee does not have teacher membership, collaboration, or the active support of the Dracut Teachers' Association (DTA), it is currently composed and directed almost entirely by district and school level administrators.
- B. Administrators identified PD focus areas for the 2015-2016 school year, including a collaborative initiative in the elementary schools, the Readers/Writers Workshop. They acknowledged the absence of a comprehensive, fully coordinated K-12 PD plan, as well as clearly articulated PD goals and specific, measurable objectives that are closely aligned and directly support district priorities.
- C. The district has taken preliminary steps to collect and use data to identify teacher needs/interests and to evaluate PD programs. An online PD survey was administered to faculty at the start of the 2015-2016 school year and exit surveys are made available to teachers in order to provide feedback on the value and effectiveness of PD programs. Interviewees said that faculty participation in these data collection efforts is voluntary and participation and results have been uneven.
- D. Many administrators and teachers said that the amount of time currently provided for PD is insufficient to enable staff to engage in the sort of sustained, coordinated, and collaborative work needed to build professional ability and improve student achievement.
 - 1. The district calendar provides only one full and four early release PD days. Further, common planning time is built into the schedules of only half of the district's schools and is limited to one weekly or bi-weekly teacher meeting.
 - a. Interviewees acknowledged that there are few regularly scheduled job-embedded common meeting and planning opportunities available to staff across the district.
 - 2. Administrators reported that, according to the terms of the recent collective bargaining agreement, the number of monthly departmental and grade level teacher meetings has been reduced from 10 per year to 5.
- E. According to ESE data, district PD spending in 2014-2015 was only \$25 per pupil. Although district leaders were uncertain whether all relevant PD spending had been properly factored in to this amount, they acknowledged that PD is underfunded and that reductions to PD programming had been substantial and progressive over the past several years.

Impact: The absence of a sustained, comprehensive and high-quality PD program that is targeted to the goals in district and school improvement plans limits the professional growth of educators and hinders the ability of the district to systematically advance district goals, priorities, and programs and to improve students' academic achievement.

Recommendations

1. **The district should take prompt and appropriate action to implement all components of its educator evaluation system and enhance its overall effectiveness, focusing particular attention on the quality and efficacy of educators' formative assessments and summative evaluations and the collection and use of multiple sources of evidence to inform the evaluations of educators and educational leaders.⁶**
 - A. The district should consider the creation of a joint evaluation steering committee of administrators, teachers, and specialists to oversee, coordinate, and support the full and effective implementation of the educator evaluation process.
 1. This committee should develop strategies and structures to incorporate student and staff feedback into educators' evaluations in a timely way.
 - a. The district must report Student Impact Ratings for some educators at the completion of the 2016-2017 school year and for all educators by the completion of the 2017-2018 school year. This will require thorough planning during the 2015-2016 school year.
 2. This committee should establish a formal process and structure through which teachers and curriculum leaders can work together to develop and implement a comprehensive set of District-Determined Measures (DDMs) that meet all current ESE expectations, guidelines, and timetables. Positive and clear communication from district leaders to educators about the purpose and uses of DDMs will increase teacher buy-in to the DDMs process.
 - B. Additional and ongoing training for both teachers and administrators should be provided to further support and promote the educator evaluation system. All administrators should receive targeted training in contemporary supervisory and evaluative practices to improve their professional judgment. This includes enhancing their abilities to observe and to analyze instruction, and to provide specific evidence-based feedback to staff that can significantly improve and expand professional competencies.

Benefits: The full and faithful implementation of all key components of the district's evaluation system will provide the surest path to ensuring continued improvement of pedagogical practice and the professional growth and development of both teachers and administrators. The use of multiple measures of student academic progress and achievement as an integral component of educator evaluation will appropriately place student learning at the center of all district improvement efforts.

Recommended resources:

- *ESE's Quick Reference Guide: Student and Staff Feedback* (www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/QRG-Feedback.pdf) provides guidance on the incorporation

⁶ The superintendent reported that the teachers' association and the school committee ratified language about District-Determined Measures (DDMs) and Student Impact Ratings on May 19 and May 23, 2016.

of student and staff feedback into the evaluation process and includes a set of valid and reliable student and staff surveys aligned to the Massachusetts Standards of Effective Practice.

- ESE's Student and Staff Feedback web page (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/feedback/>) provides links to model instruments and training resources.
 - ESE's Student Impact Rating web page (www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/sir/) provides information and resources to support planning and implementation.
 - Quick Reference Guide: Alternative Pathways for Evaluating Educator Impact (www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/QRG-AlternativePathways.pdf) describes the three pathways for DDM development.
- 2. The district should move forward with its goal of creating a PD committee to develop a comprehensive plan and oversee PD programs and services for the district. These efforts should be guided by and closely aligned with ESE's Standards for High Quality Professional Development.**
- A.** District leaders should create a professional development committee (PD) to and oversee PD programs for the district.
1. The district and DTA must work together to address and resolve current impediments to full collaboration and active participation in the PD process. The district and its teachers share an equal obligation to work together as partners in constructive professional collaborations for the benefit of students.
 2. The committee should develop a PD plan that is aligned with the District Improvement Plan and the district's instructional model.
 - a. As part of this effort, the committee should outline and document a set of learning experiences for its educators that is systematic, sustained, and aligned to district goals.
 3. The plan should identify specific PD needs, determine how they might be met, and recommend adjustments in PD practices to meet them.
 4. The plan should address needs indicated by student performance data and trends from classroom observations. It should include goals focused on improving teachers' practice and students' outcomes.
 5. Professional development requires a long-term commitment by administrators and embedded support structures, such as facilitated team meetings, to convey and promote a common understanding of instructional practices expected from all educators.

Benefits: Creating a PD committee and developing and supporting a PD plan will mean a clearer understanding of the district's expectations about PD, and the development of a system that prioritizes student learning, supports teachers as lifelong learners, and helps to implement best practices

throughout the district. A high-quality PD program coupled with the time and resources in the district will likely lead to improved student achievement.

Recommended resources:

- The *Massachusetts Standards for Professional Development* (www.doe.mass.edu/pd/standards.pdf) identify, describe, and characterize what high-quality learning experiences for educators should look like.
- The Working Group for Educator Excellence (WGEE) offers an *Electronic Clearinghouse* (<http://wgee.org/electronic-clearinghouse-with-promising-practices/>), which includes exemplars for teachers, school administrators, district leaders and evaluators that clarify particular Indicators on the Classroom Teacher Rubric from the Massachusetts Model System for Educator Evaluation.
- ESE's *Professional Development Self- Assessment Guidebook* (<http://www.mass.gov/edu/docs/ese/accountability/dsac/professional-development-self-assessment-guide.pdf>) provides tools for analyzing professional development offerings' alignment with the Massachusetts High-Quality Professional Development Standards, the Educator Evaluation Framework, and the Standards and Indicators of Effective Practice.
- *Identifying Meaningful Professional Development* (<https://youtu.be/zhuFioO8GbQ>) is a video in which educators from three Massachusetts districts discuss the importance of targeted, meaningful professional development and the ways districts can use the evaluation process to identify the most effective PD supports for all educators.

Student Support

Contextual Background

The district has adopted *Community of Caring*, a character education program, and elements of the program can be found in activities in all schools. Teacher Assistance Teams (TATs) are in place across the district but are used for academic support primarily although not consistently at the elementary schools. The district has limited interventions. It does not have reading specialists, math specialists, or coaches to assist teachers in meeting the needs of all learners. Title I support in the district is targeted for specific grade 1-6 students (200 in total) across three elementary schools and one middle school. Services are provided by 1 coordinator and 13 part-time staff. Only one elementary school has a scheduled Response to Intervention (RtI) period for each grade. Many elementary and most middle and high school students receive inclusionary support from paraprofessionals. Although every educator in Dracut is required to stay after school for 30 minutes once a week for student support, in most cases this support is not organized to target specific needs. The district has few guidance and school adjustment counselors.

Dracut is beginning to develop specific strategies to improve the academic achievement of student subgroups, particularly students with learning disabilities. The district is commended for commissioning an outside review of its middle school special needs program by Collaborative for Regional Educational Service (CREST) in spring 2015. The review generated a report with findings and recommendations to strengthen the special education program in Dracut. It is a useful blueprint and should guide the district closely in improving its services to students with disabilities not only at the middle school, but at other levels as well.

Strength Finding

- 1. The district has adopted a nationally recognized character education program that has been embraced by all schools K-12.**
 - A.** The district has adopted the Community of Caring character education program which contains five core values: caring, respect, responsibility, trust, and family.
 1. The home page of the district's website states that Dracut is a proud member of the Community of Caring character education family made up of schools and districts from across the United States and Canada.
 2. A review of *Lighthouse*, a district newsletter, indicated that the district completed its first year with this character education program in the spring 2015.
 3. Parents told the review team that they help plan Community of Caring activities in schools and that the program contributes to maintaining a safe school environment.

- B.** The Community of Caring program has been embraced at all levels across the district; the five core values are printed on the covers of the elementary-, middle-, and high-school student handbooks.
1. Administrators told the review team that Community of Caring was embraced to promote positive behaviors and that each school elementary school advances it in its own way.
 - a. One elementary school reported in the *Lighthouse* newsletter that it has monthly whole-school assemblies with a focus on the core values of Community of Caring.
 - b. The team was told that another elementary school has extended the program and awards students with PAWS when they are “caught” displaying a **P**ositive Attitude, **A**cting responsibly, **W**orking and playing safely, or **S**howing respect.
 2. Administrators reported that middle-school students who are “caught caring” over the course of a month are recognized as students of the month and treated to a special breakfast.
 3. Interviewees said that the principles of a Community of Caring are reflected in several high school clubs that carry out community service including Katie’s Closet which held a clothing drive, and another initiative which raised money for Save the Children, an organization assisting victims of the recent earthquakes in Nepal.

Impact: Adopting a character education program K-12 provides teachers, students, and families a consistent message about what values are embraced across the district and promotes positive social behaviors, likely enabling schools to maintain a climate conducive to learning and improved achievement.

Challenges and Areas for Growth

- 2. While the district has a process in place at all levels to identify and support struggling students, it is not uniformly used or grounded in data analysis. Furthermore, the district has limited targeted interventions for struggling students K-12.**
 - A.** A document review indicated and interviews confirmed that Teacher Assistance Teams (TATs), also referred to as Student Support Teams (SSTs), are in place in each school to provide “a systematic and collaborative approach to identifying and addressing individual student academic and behavioral needs.”
 1. Administrators reported that TATs, composed of a team chair, principal, and referring teacher, are in place in every school. The frequency of team meetings varies from school to school.

2. The *Request for TAT Intervention* form asks the referring teacher to describe the student's past educational history, current problem, tried educational strategies, attendance, areas of strengths and challenge, behavior, homework history, environmental matters, and parent communication. The form does not request test results or other data of concern to the referring teacher.
 3. High school teachers reported that the TAT referral is "cumbersome" and is not used for students in grades 10-12. Teachers who have concerns contact guidance and the principal directly.
 4. Interviewees told the team that TATs do not address non-academic issues, noting that most of the time their concerns were academic.
- B.** Interviewees said that they turn to the nurse or adjustment counselor for support for non-academic issues.
1. Teachers reported 1 nurse, 1 guidance counselor, and 1 adjustment counselor for 1,000 students at the middle school.
 2. Administrators said that four elementary schools share one adjustment counselor. The superintendent reported that 1,800 elementary students share 1 adjustment counselor.
 3. Administrators stated that it is not unusual for students to self-identify or for friends to report students' non-academic needs.
- C.** Limited targeted interventions are available for struggling students.
1. The Title I program serves 200 students in grades 1-3 for reading and in grades 4-6 for math. There is a coordinator and staff of 13, almost half of whom are retired teachers who work part-time; others are young professionals in the process of obtaining certification.
 - a. Students are served in class and in pull-out programs. Interviewees reported that Title I progress reporting is informal, there are no regularly scheduled meetings, and data that is collected is shared with principals on Google Docs.
- D.** The review team was told that every educator is required to stay after school one day a week for 30 minutes to provide academic support but in most cases this support is not organized to target specific needs for groups of students and that, in some cases, the help is provided at the teacher's invitation.
1. Interviewees stated that elementary students are invited to stay after school for help on a week-by-week basis.
 2. When the team asked whether the 30 minute after-school support was successful, interviewees said, "For some... if they take the initiative."

3. Some after-school stay time is used to support students ready for accelerated work.
- E. Interviewees reported that the district provides MCAS tutoring on weekends for invited students.
- F. The District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP) is a district resource for general education teachers, filled with suggested modifications and accommodations to meet students' diverse learning needs. The plan is not generally used, and some teachers are unaware of its purpose.
1. Some team chairs said that they suggest DCAP as a resource. The team also was told that while the DCAP is posted on the district's website under teacher resources, it is not included in orientations at the beginning of each school year.
- G. There is little structured time within the school day and few resources available to support struggling students.
1. Only one elementary school schedules one period a week for each class to provide Tier 2 support. School specialists support classroom teachers by helping them create small targeted groups.
 2. Administrators reported that in grades 7 and 8 they schedule one period a day for 50 minutes. Called SOAR (Strengthening Our Academic Rigor), it provides support for struggling students.
 3. Parents said that programs and supports are inconsistent across the district.
 4. The superintendent reported and others confirmed that there are no reading specialists in the district.
- H. The review team found moderate or strong evidence that the teacher appropriately differentiated instruction so the lesson content was accessible for all learners in only 32 percent of the classrooms observed.

Impact: Without the use of data to identify and monitor student progress over time there is no way to determine whether the teacher's interventions are succeeding. The limited number of in-school structured interventions does not meet the needs of students who do not qualify for Title I support.

3. While school leaders are beginning to review subgroup achievement data and plan improvements, there is limited improvement planning for subgroups at the district level.

- A. While on site, the review team reviewed the 2015-2016 MCAS Action Plan that lists the action steps each school plans to take to improve the achievement of subgroups, particularly students with disabilities.
1. The superintendent reported that the MCAS Action Plan is new and was written by principals with increased emphasis on looking at subgroup performance.

- B.** The review team also reviewed the 2016-2018 School Improvement Plans (SIPs) while on site. Most SIPs address the need to improve instruction and outcomes for students in particular subgroups.
1. Each elementary plan has a theory of action that reads: *If students with disabilities are taught in a general education environment by content specific teaching staff with support from special educators then there will be an anticipated increase of academic achievement within this subgroup.*
 2. The high school SIP has a theory of action that states: *If special educators and regular educators collaborate to differentiate instruction and modify assessments in core academic classes, then we can expect a decrease in the achievement gap between high needs and non-high needs students.*
 3. The middle school SIP does not have a theory of action that specifically addresses the performance of student subgroups.
- C.** According to ESE data, Dracut students with disabilities and high needs students at the middle grades are among the lowest performing 20 percent of subgroups statewide. Parents and teachers reported that more help is needed in this area.
1. Interviewees stated that there is limited planning for subgroup improvement at the district level.
 2. The review team was told that some special education teachers are teaching content areas that are outside their areas of expertise.
 3. Interviewees reported that at the middle and high school inclusion services were provided by paraprofessionals rather than by special educators. They said that more training was needed for general education and special education teachers.
 4. When review team members asked teachers whether special educators met with general education teams at the middle school teachers said that because assigned students might be on different teams, special education teachers cannot always attend meetings with general education teachers.
 5. Interviewees reported that special educators could collaborate more with general education teachers if they had common planning time.
 6. Parents stated that special educators needed more training. They also said that special education support is inadequate.
- D.** The superintendent reported that the district loses special education teachers every year and that this is a problem particularly at the middle school. He also said that the district has started to do more inclusion in the middle school but staff was not ready.

- E. The district commissioned an independent review of the special education program at the middle school by the Collaborative for Regional Educational Services (CREST). The study generated the Dracut Special Education Program Review April 2015 which included the following summary themes with implications for special education districtwide.

- “Special education teachers need to be in the classroom more often.”
- “Classroom teachers would like more time to collaborate with special education teachers.”
- “Special education teachers feel that they have not been given the same curriculum training as the general education teachers.”

Impact: Without adequate support and clear direction from the district students receive uneven support and interventions, making it more difficult for the district and its schools to improve students’ well-being and academic achievement.

Recommendation

1. District leaders, teachers, and staff should work collaboratively to improve and coordinate practices and programs so that they are more effective in supporting and improving learning for all students.⁷

- A. The district should build on practices in place to ensure that all students receive classroom instruction and supports that meet their needs.
1. It should use student performance data to determine additional interventions that are necessary to more directly address students’ needs.
 2. The district should highlight for general education staff the suggested modifications and accommodations detailed in the DCAP and provide all teachers copies of this resource.
- B. The district should review the make-up, purpose, and goals of the Teacher Assistance Teams (TATs) with the goal of making them a broader resource for classroom teachers in working to improve student achievement.
1. TATs should review student performance data as part of the referral process.
 2. The district should consider identifying ways to make the referral process less cumbersome in order to encourage teachers to use it as needed.

⁷ The superintendent reported that on May 9, 2016, in open session the school committee unanimously approved the administration’s recommendation to recreate the Title I program in advance of the 2016-2017 school year. The superintendent noted that the district will use the Title I funds to retain literacy and math coaches in the elementary and middle schools.

- C. The district should review and extend its approach to providing additional supports to students, with the goals of establishing a coordinated, districtwide system of tiered interventions.
 - 1. The district should document and specify Tier 2 interventions that are available to better identify where there are gaps and create a plan to address those intervention gaps.
- D. The district should consider more strategic use of limited resources.
 - 1. Targeted after-school help might be assigned K- 12 each week for 6-8 weeks for a group of students.
 - 2. Title I teachers and paraprofessionals might provide support small group in-class RtI.
 - 3. The district might provide targeted SOAR (Strengthening Our Academic Rigor) support at the middle school for 6-8 weeks with progress monitoring.
 - 4. The district might schedule school adjustment counselors for 6-8 weeks at a time where necessary to address behavioral concerns.
 - 5. The district should consider partnering with an outside agency or local university to bring in interns for guidance and adjustment counselors.
- E. The district should urgently use the recommendations of the report by the Collaborative For Regional Educational Services (CREST) to create a multi-year plan to strengthen the special education program throughout the district.

Benefit: The district is poised to have a robust student support system provided it strategically uses current resources with fidelity and consistency. The recommendations outlined above will greatly enhance the support system and set clear expectations for staff and program outcomes.

Recommended resources:

- The *Massachusetts Tiered System of Support (MTSS)* (www.mass.gov/ese/mtss) is a blueprint for school improvement that focuses on systems, structures and supports across the district, school, and classroom to meet the academic and non-academic needs of all students. The MTSS website includes links to a self-assessment and a variety of helpful resources.
- The *Wraparound Replication Cookbook* (<https://sites.google.com/site/masswazcookbook/>) is a practical guide focused on improving academic performance by systematically addressing students' social emotional and non-academic needs. It is based on the experience of several Massachusetts districts, and is organized according to the following key strategy areas:
 - Addressing School Culture and the Social Emotional Aspects of Learning
 - Rethinking Systems for Identifying and Addressing Academic and Social Emotional Needs
 - Creating Focused Partnerships & Coalitions

- The *Early Warning Implementation Guide* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edwin/analytics/2014ImplementationGuide.pdf>) provides information on how to use early warning data, including the Massachusetts Early Warning Indicator System (EWIS), to identify, diagnose, support and monitor students in grades 1-12. It offers educators an overview of EWIS and how to effectively use these data in conjunction with local data by following a six-step implementation cycle.

Financial and Asset Management

Contextual Background

The town of Dracut has funded education at less than 1 percent over its net school spending requirement for the past several years. The finance committee, school committee, and town meeting have traditionally recommended and approved the budget recommendations of the town manager, which have been based on meeting net school spending obligations rather than district needs.

Total in-district per-pupil expenditures were lower than the median in-district per pupil expenditures for 33 K-12 districts of similar size (3,000-3,999 students) in fiscal year 2014: \$10,109 as compared with \$12,721. The town taxes at its levy limit and 13 unsuccessful override attempts have been made to increase funding for school and town services, including two in 2014. In 2013-2014 town and school officials formed a Tri-Board made up of selectmen, school committee members, and finance committee members to discuss town finances, including budget needs, funding sources, and a possible override. In 2015 the Tri-Board created a Budget Task Force to review these needs in detail, and the Tri-Board as a whole met recently to discuss financial issues and the possibility of another override.

The district's budget process has been transparent and the documentation has been clear and comprehensive. The school committee has had input into budget priorities, and principals and administrators have had the opportunity to propose their school and program needs for the upcoming year. The committee received estimates of fixed cost increases for salaries, transportation, utilities, special education, and other needs and had opportunities to hear administrators' program needs. Administrators said that the allocation of costs such as supplies has been made according to formula, rather than based on students' needs.

The superintendent's public presentation of his proposed budget and documentation in March 2015 clearly indicated how net school funding levels are calculated and how much net school funding is expected to be available to the district. The presentation and documentation included transparent summaries of projections for salary, transportation, special education, and other expenses for the upcoming year along with programmatic needs such as an ELL teacher. They included historical trends and projections, comparisons to state averages and educational spending in neighboring communities, and district revenues such as grants, fees, and revolving funds. The superintendent's presentations to the town Budget Task Force were comprehensive and addressed controversial areas such as historical staffing levels and the transportation contract; they also included five-year projections.

The town is near its levy limit and constraints on funding for the schools and the town have contributed to challenging relations. Pressures on the district such as declining enrollments,⁸ students electing to attend charter and vocational schools, reductions in staff after reductions in federal funding, and increases in special education and transportation costs have also affected available funding and have been exacerbated by negative publicity over school funding. School officials, teachers, and town

⁸ Between 2012 and 2016 enrollment in Dracut declined 8.9 percent, from 3,953 in 2012 to 3,872 in 2013 to 3,816 in 2014 to 3,688 in 2015 to 3,600 in 2016.

officials described an adversarial and contentious atmosphere around budget development; issues include proposed chargebacks by the city for municipal spending on education, the uses of extra funding from the town such as school rental income and funds for technology, and increases in transportation costs and salaries. The town and district have maintained and improved school facilities effectively and efficiently, and reviewers found them suitable for education, even one building dating back to 1927. The district has a self-sufficient maintenance department with an electrician, a plumber, an HVAC technician, and a master carpenter who keep the buildings in good condition with little assistance from outside contractors or other town departments. Most school maintenance needs are addressed within 24 hours, and the buildings are clean and supportive of learning. The district has a five-year capital plan which is updated annually and which sets priorities for major projects such as roofs and technology infrastructure, although funding for projects is extremely limited. A new middle school opened in 2001 and a renovation and expansion of the high school were completed in 2014. Renovations of three elementary schools are being planned. Administrators and school committee members told the review team that they expected that these updated facilities would make the schools more conducive to learning and the district more attractive to families who are considering sending their children to charter, choice, vocational, and private schools.

Strength Findings

1. The district has a self-sufficient maintenance department which maintains buildings well, keeping them clean and conducive to learning. The town has supported a state-of-the-art high school, renovated and expanded in 2014, and a new middle school was built in 2001.

A. The schools are maintained and cleaned by a maintenance and custodial staff under the direction of a supervisor of buildings and grounds with little assistance from outside contractors or town public works departments.

1. Administrators reported that the district's maintenance staff includes an electrician, a plumber, an HVAC technician, and a master carpenter.
 - a. They said that the maintenance staff inspects and maintains boilers, unit ventilators, rooftop units, locks, fields, and most other facility needs. Administrators reported that most infrastructure and wiring for technology is also done in-house.
 - b. The district uses outside contractors and town public works departments for only a few projects such as roofs, sidewalks and parking lots, and fire extinguishers and smoke detectors.
 - c. The maintenance staff uses School Dude software to track and address school maintenance needs, with most issues addressed within 24 hours.
 - d. Reviewers found even the oldest buildings to be clean, well maintained, and conducive to learning.

- B. Administrators reported that computers with projectors, interactive white boards, laptops, and document cameras are used across all schools.
- C. The district maintains a five-year capital plan with projects estimated to cost \$11,185,000. It is updated annually and includes major needed maintenance repairs such as roofs, security systems, rooftop HVAC systems, technology, and vehicles. Administrators reported that the town has supported a few of the projects in the plan, such as \$17,000 for a partial roof replacement in 2015 and \$100,000 for technology in 2014; however, most projects have not been funded.
- D. MSBA data indicated that the schools were built in 1927, 1963, 1968, 1974, 2001, and 2014 with renovations for all but one completed between 1995 and 2001.
- E. The town supported a new middle school which opened in 2001 and a renovated and expanded high school which opened in 2014.
 - 1. The high school was a \$59.8 million project, including 62.5 percent from the MSBA.
 - 2. The town approved the high school project on a debt exclusion override vote in 2012.
 - 3. The school committee has approved statements of interest for renovations and major repairs to the Englesby, Brookside, and Campbell elementary schools.

Impact: In the face of real and continuing budget challenges, the district has town support for school buildings and the district maintains them well and keeps them suitable for learning.

2. The district's budget process and documentation are comprehensive and transparent. They include long-term projections of school priorities and needs.

- A. The development of the district budget includes input from principals and administrators, school committee members, and a public hearing.
 - 1. Administrators reported that the budget process begins with estimates of salary and other costs for the upcoming year and requests from principals and other administrators for needed staff and supplies.
 - 2. School committee members as well as central administrators told the team that they are aware of principals' requests and needs, and school committee members indicated that there are budget workshops for administrators' input.
 - 3. School committee members have input into priorities for the proposed budget, and the finance subcommittee reviews revenue projections and outside grants and funds as well as budget proposals before the budget is submitted to the full committee.
 - 4. A review of school committee minutes indicated that the proposed budget is presented at a public hearing where interested parents and others have the opportunity to provide input.

5. Administrators reported that town officials give school officials the amount to be recommended to town meeting for the district budget, based on meeting the town's net school spending obligations.
- B.** A document review indicated that budget presentations and documentation are transparent, including grants and outside funding, historical trends, projections, comparisons to state and neighboring community data, and new requests.
1. The superintendent's fiscal year 2016 budget presentation for the school committee and public hearing included estimates of salary and other increases needed to provide level services and a new request for an ELL teacher. Projected revenues based on required net school funding and chargebacks from the town were included. Historical data for staffing was included along with estimates of class size. The budget presentation included previous revenues from outside funding such as entitlement grants, fees, circuit breaker, and school choice.
 2. The budget documentation listed all line items for the town appropriations for transportation and school operations, offsets such as circuit breaker revenues and carryover, and the special education tuition grant. Historical trends for fiscal years 2012-2016 were included.
 3. The superintendent's presentations to the town's Budget Task Force about district expenses and revenues were designed to be transparent about controversial areas of the school budget such as net school spending and other constraints, historical staffing levels, the management of transportation contracts, and outside revenues such as grants and fees. The presentations included programmatic needs and comparisons to spending by other towns. Five-year projections for salaries, instruction, chargebacks, tuitions, and utilities averaged a 3.4 percent increase per year.

Impact: The comprehensive and transparent presentations of district expenses, revenues, and trends make a strong case for school programs and needs. They provide helpful information as town and school officials decide how to allocate resources.

Challenges and Areas for Growth

- 3. In recent years, the town has funded the school district at the minimum amount necessary to meet the state's net school spending requirement. At the time of the review, relations were challenging between town and school officials, communication was inadequate between the superintendent and the town manager and between the town finance committee and the school committee, and issues of trust and cooperation between them remained.**
 - A.** The town manager gives the superintendent the budget figure for schools, which has historically been recommended by the finance committee. The figure is based on the minimum net school spending requirement.
 1. The town funding for education was slightly above its net school spending requirement by 0.3 percent and 0.1 percent for fiscal year 2014 and fiscal year 2015, respectively.
 2. The district's per in-district pupil spending for fiscal year 2014 was \$10,109, compared with a median of \$12,721 for 33 districts of similar size (3,000-3,999 students) statewide.
 - B.** Sources of financial pressure on the schools have included declining enrollments, students electing to attend charter and vocational schools, reductions in staff after the loss of federal Race to the Top funding in 2012, and increases in special education and transportation costs.
 1. According to Department of Revenue (DOR) data, the town is near its levy limit. However, it has accumulated approximately \$7.4 million in free cash, stabilization fund, and overlay reserve.
 2. DOR data also indicated the town's votes on general overrides have failed 13 times since 1991, including 2 failed overrides in 2014.
 - C.** Administrators voiced concern that negative publicity over staff reductions and other budget difficulties have led many students to leave the district for vocational, choice, charter, and private schools.
 - D.** Teachers and administrators reported that teachers have left for better paying districts.
 - E.** The constraints on funding available for the schools and the town have contributed to tensions over budgets.
 1. School leaders, teachers, and town officials described an "adversarial" and "contentious" atmosphere about school and town budgets.
 2. School and town officials reported tension and mistrust between school and town officials.
 - a. Sources of contention include proposed chargebacks by the city for the public library, the use of extra allocations to the schools for technology, receipts from school building rents, salary raises, and the recent transportation contract which came in over budget.

- b. Town officials reported that additional services and funding for public safety are needed.
- 3. School officials described the relationships between the town and the schools as somewhat improved in the past two years, noting additional funding for technology, from rentals for a closed school, and \$200,000 for the fiscal year 2016 budget.
- F.** Town and school officials meet to review and discuss budget and revenue needs.
 - 1. School officials reported that their recommended budget has usually been in line with the town manager's recommendation. The school committee has approved a budget in line with the same number.
- G.** In 2013-2014 the board of selectmen, the town finance committee, and the school committee formed a Tri-Board to review town finances and revenues.
 - 1. In 2015 the Tri-Board created a Budget Task Force to review school and town budget needs. The superintendent made presentations to the Task Force outlining the district's outside funds and its budget expenses, highlighting revenues, transportation and special education costs, a history of staffing levels, needs for district programs, and projections.
 - 2. The Tri-Board recently discussed at an open meeting the possibility of an override vote for school and public safety needs. In the past it has not been comfortable recommending overrides.
- H.** Other than the Tri-Board there are few formal structures for meetings and collaboration between town and school officials.
- I.** School and town officials reported that parents have become more vocal in supporting funding for school programs and services. For example, several parents attended and spoke at a recent Tri-Board meeting on possible overrides.

Impact: Limited structures for meetings and collaboration and difficulties in relations between the town and the schools are barriers to good budgeting and the larger community's ability to understand the district's goals and challenges.

Recommendation

- 1. The district and the town should build upon the efforts of the Tri-Board and the Budget Task Force to communicate and collaborate more effectively.**
 - A.** District leaders should ensure that information about district needs is communicated to town officials and to the wider community.
 - 1. These means could include regular meetings between the finance committee and the school committee and between the superintendent and the town manager.

Benefit: Regular, effective communication is essential to developing an environment of trust, collaboration, and mutual benefit. Such measures will require long-term commitment and effort by all concerned.

Recommended resource: *Labor-Management-Community Collaboration in Springfield Public Schools* (<http://www.renniecenter.org/research/LaborMgmtCommunityCollab.pdf>) is a case study from the Rennie Center describing how a district improved collaboration, communication, and relationships among adult stakeholders with the goal of improved student achievement.

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

Review Team Members

The review was conducted from January 19-22, 2016, by the following team of independent ESE consultants.

1. Magdalene Giffune, leadership and governance
2. Peter McGinn, curriculum and instruction
3. Christine Brandt, assessment, *review team coordinator*
4. Frank Sambuceti, human resources and professional development
5. Lenora Jennings, student support
6. George Gearhart, financial and asset management

District Review Activities

The following activities were conducted during the review:

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

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

The review team conducted interviews with the following representatives of the teachers' association: president, vice-president, secretary, assistant treasurer, grievance chairpersons, and building representatives.

The team conducted interviews/focus groups with the following central office administrators: superintendent; director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment; and director of student services.

The team visited the following schools: Dracut High School (grades 9-12), Richardson Middle School (grades 6-8), Brookside Elementary School (K-5), Campbell Elementary School (K-5), Englesby Elementary School (K-5), and Greenmont Avenue School (K-5).

During school visits, the team conducted interviews with 6 principals and focus groups with 19 elementary-school teachers, 12 middle-school teachers, and 8 high-school teachers. The team met with 8 high-school students.

The team observed 62 classes in the district: 13 at the high school, 17 at the middle school, and 32 at the 4 elementary schools.

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

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

Site Visit Schedule

Tuesday 1/19/2016	Wednesday 1/20/2016	Thursday 1/21/2016	Friday 1/22/2016
Orientation with district leaders and principals; interviews with district staff and principals; document reviews; interview with teachers' association.	Interviews with district staff and principals; review of personnel files; teacher focus groups; parent focus group; and visits to the high school and middle school for classroom observations.	Interviews with town or city personnel; interviews with school leaders; interviews with school committee members; visits to the high school, middle school, and three of the four elementary schools for classroom observations.	Interviews with school leaders; follow-up interviews; district review team meeting; visits to the middle school and the remaining elementary school for classroom observations; emerging themes meeting with district leaders and principals.

Appendix B: Enrollment, Performance, Expenditures

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

Student Group	District	Percent of Total	State	Percent of Total
African-American	180	5.0%	83,481	8.8%
Asian	177	4.9%	61,584	6.5%
Hispanic	267	7.4%	176,873	18.6%
Native American	4	0.1%	2,179	0.2%
White	2,916	81.0%	597,502	62.7%
Native Hawaiian	2	0.1%	888	0.1%
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	54	1.5%	30,922	3.2%
All Students	3,600	100.0%	953,429	100.0%

Note: As of October 1, 2015

**Table B1b: Dracut Public Schools
2015–2016 Student Enrollment by High Needs Populations**

Student Groups	District			State		
	N	Percent of High Needs	Percent of District	N	Percent of High Needs	Percent of State
Students w/ disabilities	569	48.0%	15.6%	165,559	39.4%	17.2%
Econ. Disad.	713	60.2%	19.8%	260,998	62.2%	27.4%
ELLs and Former ELLs	36	3.0%	1.0%	85,763	20.4%	9.0%
All high needs students	1,185	100.0%	32.4%	419,764	100.0%	43.5%

Notes: As of October 1, 2015. District and state numbers and percentages for students with disabilities and high needs students are calculated including students in out-of-district placements. Total district enrollment including students in out-of-district placement is 3,654; total state enrollment including students in out-of-district placement is 964,026.

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

Grade and Measure		Number Included (2015)	Spring MCAS Year					Gains and Declines	
			2012	2013	2014	2015	State (2015)	4-Year Trend	2-Year Trend
3	CPI	293	81.9	85.1	85.5	84.9	83.4	3	-0.6
	P+	293	56%	55%	60%	57%	60%	1%	-3%
4	CPI	308	82.5	76.3	80.5	78	78.5	-4.5	-2.5
	P+	308	59%	46%	53%	52%	53%	-7%	-1%
	SGP	286	45.5	46.5	44.5	45	50	-0.5	0.5
5	CPI	302	82.7	84.3	81.9	86.9	87.3	4.2	5
	P+	302	59%	64%	59%	68%	71%	9%	9%
	SGP	280	42	42	54	48.5	50	6.5	-5.5
6	CPI	317	84.9	88.2	88.8	84.8	86.6	-0.1	-4
	P+	317	68%	71%	73%	70%	71%	2%	-3%
	SGP	297	49	61	66	55	50	6	-11
7	CPI	333	83.3	83.5	85.6	87.5	87	4.2	1.9
	P+	333	59%	64%	64%	71%	70%	12%	7%
	SGP	311	24	29	29	40	50	16	11
8	CPI	320	89.3	87	83.8	89.2	91.4	-0.1	5.4
	P+	320	74%	73%	68%	76%	80%	2%	8%
	SGP	301	37	42	34	40	50	3	6
10	CPI	189	97.1	98	97.5	97.4	96.7	0.3	-0.1
	P+	189	92%	94%	93%	93%	91%	1%	0%
	SGP	161	43	60	64	55	51	12	-9
All	CPI	2,062	85.8	85.8	85.9	86.4	--	0.6	0.5
	P+	2,062	66%	66%	66%	68%	--	2%	2%
	SGP	1,636	40	47	46	47	50	7	1

Notes: The number of students included in CPI and percent *Proficient* or *Advanced* (P+) calculations may differ from the number of students included in median SGP calculations. A median SGP is not calculated for students in grade 3 because they are participating in MCAS tests for the first time.

**Table B2b: Dracut Public Schools
Mathematics Performance, 2012–2015**

Grade and Measure		Number Included (2015)	Spring MCAS Year					Gains and Declines	
			2012	2013	2014	2015	State (2015)	4-Year Trend	2-Year Trend
3	CPI	289	78.4	80.7	84.1	83	85.4	4.6	-1.1
	P+	289	56%	57%	64%	65%	70%	9%	1%
4	CPI	309	77.6	77	76.8	76.6	77.2	-1	-0.2
	P+	309	46%	46%	45%	43%	47%	-3%	-2%
	SGP	288	45	48	51	58.5	49	13.5	7.5
5	CPI	303	79.4	78.9	76.9	81.4	83.6	2	4.5
	P+	303	59%	57%	53%	60%	67%	1%	7%
	SGP	281	46	45	46	63	50	17	17
6	CPI	317	79.2	82.7	83.4	80.5	81.5	1.3	-2.9
	P+	317	56%	64%	64%	59%	62%	3%	-5%
	SGP	297	46.5	54	58	66	50	19.5	8
7	CPI	336	65.4	66.4	71	68.3	73	2.9	-2.7
	P+	336	36%	40%	48%	42%	51%	6%	-6%
	SGP	314	34	31	40	29	51	-5	-11
8	CPI	317	62.2	60.9	62.8	71.3	78.7	9.1	8.5
	P+	317	32%	32%	36%	48%	60%	16%	12%
	SGP	296	32	26	33	40.5	51	8.5	7.5
10	CPI	191	90.1	92.2	90.4	89	89.9	-1.1	-1.4
	P+	191	79%	82%	80%	77%	79%	-2%	-3%
	SGP	161	54	53	65	67	50	13	2
All	CPI	2,062	75.6	76.6	77.6	77.8	0	2.2	0.2
	P+	2,062	51%	53%	55%	55%	0%	4%	0%
	SGP	1,637	43	42	48	52	50	9	4

Notes: The number of students included in CPI and percent *Proficient* or *Advanced* (P+) calculations may differ from the number of students included in median SGP calculations. A median SGP is not calculated for students in grade 3 because they are participating in MCAS tests for the first time.

**Table B2c: Dracut Public Schools
Science and Technology/Engineering Performance, 2012–2015**

Grade and Measure		Number Included (2015)	Spring MCAS Year					Gains and Declines	
			2012	2013	2014	2015	State (2015)	4-Year Trend	2-Year Trend
5	CPI	302	83.6	80	79.8	80.8	78.2	-2.8	1
	P+	302	63%	47%	54%	52%	51%	-11%	-2%
8	CPI	317	61.9	63.4	63.4	70.4	72.4	8.5	7
	P+	317	27%	24%	30%	36%	42%	9%	6%
10	CPI	172	90.7	90.3	90.5	91	88.2	0.3	0.5
	P+	172	75%	75%	77%	78%	72%	3%	1%
All	CPI	791	77.6	77	76.6	78.9	79.4	1.3	2.3
	P+	791	53%	47%	51%	51%	54%	-2%	0%

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

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

Group and Measure			Number Included (2015)	Spring MCAS Year				Gains and Declines	
				2012	2013	2014	2015	4-Year Trend	2-Year Trend
High Needs	District	CPI	736	72.6	73	73.5	74.6	2	1.1
		P+	736	43.0%	42.0%	44.0%	47.0%	4.0%	3.0%
		SGP	526	37	42	40	42	5	2
	State	CPI	93,277	76.5	76.8	77.1	79.5	3	2.4
		P+	93,277	48.0%	48.0%	50.0%	55.0%	7.0%	5.0%
		SGP	68,746	46	47	47	47	1	0
Econ. Disad.	District	CPI	498	--	--	--	82.1	82.1	82.1
		P+	498	--	--	--	60.0%	60.0%	60.0%
		SGP	363	--	--	--	43	43	43
	State	CPI	63,124	--	--	--	80.9	80.9	80.9
		P+	63,124	--	--	--	59.0%	59.0%	59.0%
		SGP	47,064	--	--	--	47	47	47
Students w/ disabilities	District	CPI	325	57.3	57.4	56.4	58.1	0.8	1.7
		P+	325	19.0%	16.0%	18.0%	18.0%	-1.0%	0.0%
		SGP	212	33	38	32	37.5	4.5	5.5
	State	CPI	39,117	67.3	66.8	66.6	71.6	4.3	5
		P+	39,117	31.0%	30.0%	31.0%	39.0%	8.0%	8.0%
		SGP	28,234	43	43	43	44	1	1
English language learners or Former ELLs	District	CPI	55	62.7	67.8	66.8	65.5	2.8	-1.3
		P+	55	22.0%	29.0%	34.0%	29.0%	7.0%	-5.0%
		SGP	35	40	48	46	47	7	1
	State	CPI	18,541	66.2	67.4	67.8	70.1	3.9	2.3
		P+	18,541	34.0%	35.0%	36.0%	41.0%	7.0%	5.0%
		SGP	11,589	51	53	54	54	3	0
All students	District	CPI	2062	85.8	85.8	85.9	86.4	0.6	0.5
		P+	2062	66.0%	66.0%	66.0%	68.0%	2.0%	2.0%
		SGP	1636	40	47	46	47	7	1
	State	CPI	216,396	86.7	86.8	86.7	89.3	2.6	2.6
		P+	216,396	69.0%	69.0%	69.0%	75.0%	6.0%	6.0%
		SGP	172,652	50	51	50	50	0	0

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

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

Group and Measure			Number Included (2015)	Spring MCAS Year				Gains and Declines	
				2012	2013	2014	2015	4-Year Trend	2-Year Trend
High Needs	District	CPI	737	61.2	63	62.8	62.2	1	-0.6
		P+	737	32.0%	33.0%	32.0%	31.0%	-1.0%	-1.0%
		SGP	530	40	35	39	44	4	5
	State	CPI	93,295	67	68.6	68.4	70.2	3.2	1.8
		P+	93,295	37.0%	40.0%	40.0%	43.0%	6.0%	3.0%
		SGP	69,106	46	46	47	47	1	0
Economically Disadvantaged	District	CPI	498	--	--	--	68.9	68.9	68.9
		P+	498	--	--	--	40.0%	40.0%	40.0%
		SGP	366	--	--	--	45.5	45.5	45.5
	State	CPI	63,076	--	--	--	71.9	71.9	71.9
		P+	63,076	--	--	--	47.0%	47.0%	47.0%
		SGP	47,295	--	--	--	46	46	46
Students w/ disabilities	District	CPI	326	45.2	48	48.1	45.8	0.6	-2.3
		P+	326	14.0%	12.0%	14.0%	11.0%	-3.0%	-3.0%
		SGP	214	29	29.5	30	38.5	9.5	8.5
	State	CPI	39,181	56.9	57.4	57.1	60	3.1	2.9
		P+	39,181	21.0%	22.0%	22.0%	27.0%	6.0%	5.0%
		SGP	28,451	43	42	43	44	1	1
English language learners or Former ELLs	District	CPI	55	54.2	60.6	57.4	58.6	4.4	1.2
		P+	55	20.0%	29.0%	25.0%	24.0%	4.0%	-1.0%
		SGP	34	27	44	48.5	41	14	-7.5
	State	CPI	18,625	61.6	63.9	63.8	64.4	2.8	0.6
		P+	18,625	32.0%	35.0%	36.0%	37.0%	5.0%	1.0%
		SGP	11,735	52	53	52	50	-2	-2
All students	District	CPI	2062	75.6	76.6	77.6	77.8	2.2	0.2
		P+	2062	51.0%	53.0%	55.0%	55.0%	4.0%	0.0%
		SGP	1637	43	42	48	52	9	4
	State	CPI	216,363	79.9	80.8	80.3	83.1	3.2	2.8
		P+	216,363	59.0%	61.0%	60.0%	66.0%	7.0%	6.0%
		SGP	173,217	50	51	50	50	0	0

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

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

Group and Measure			Number Included (2015)	Spring MCAS Year				Gains and Declines	
				2012	2013	2014	2015	4-Year Trend	2-Year Trend
High Needs	District	CPI	264	65.7	63.8	60.8	67.1	1.4	6.3
		P+	264	32.0%	24.0%	28.0%	32.0%	0.0%	4.0%
	State	CPI	91,013	65	66.4	67.3	66.3	1.3	-1
		P+	91,013	31.0%	31.0%	33.0%	32.0%	1.0%	-1.0%
Econ. Disadv.	District	CPI	191	--	--	--	71.2	71.2	71.2
		P+	191	--	--	--	38.0%	38.0%	38.0%
	State	CPI	62,345	--	--	--	67.1	67.1	67.1
		P+	62,345	--	--	--	33.0%	33.0%	33.0%
Students w/ disabilities	District	CPI	104	50.5	52.6	46.3	52.9	2.4	6.6
		P+	104	11.0%	7.0%	11.0%	13.0%	2.0%	2.0%
	State	CPI	38,520	58.7	59.8	60.1	60.2	1.5	0.1
		P+	38,520	20.0%	20.0%	22.0%	22.0%	2.0%	0.0%
English language learners or Former ELLs	District	CPI	14	60.5	58	47.7	53.6	-6.9	5.9
		P+	14	21.0%	14.0%	9.0%	14.0%	-7.0%	5.0%
	State	CPI	17,516	51.4	54	54	53.9	2.5	-0.1
		P+	17,516	17.0%	19.0%	18.0%	18.0%	1.0%	0.0%
All students	District	CPI	791	77.6	77	76.6	78.9	1.3	2.3
		P+	791	53.0%	47.0%	51.0%	51.0%	-2.0%	0.0%
	State	CPI	210,454	78.6	79	79.6	79.4	0.8	-0.2
		P+	210,454	54.0%	53.0%	55.0%	54.0%	0.0%	-1.0%

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

**Table B4: Dracut Public Schools
Annual Grade 9-12 Drop-Out Rates, 2012–2015**

Group	School Year Ending				Change 2012–2015		Change 2014–2015		State (2015)
	2012	2013	2014	2015	Percentage Points	Percent Change	Percentage Points	Percent Change	
High Needs	4.5%	5.9%	4.5%	4.4%	-0.1	-2.2%	-0.1	-2.2%	3.4%
Econ. Disad.	--	--	--	3.8%	--	--	--	--	3.3%
Students w/ disabilities	7.8%	11.1%	8.7%	4.4%	-3.4	-43.6%	-4.3	-49.4%	3.5%
ELL	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	5.7%
All students	1.8%	2.5%	2.4%	1.7%	-0.1	-5.6%	-0.7	-29.1%	1.9%

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

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

Group	School Year Ending				Change 2012–2015		Change 2014–2015		State (2015)
	2012	2013	2014	2015	Percentage Points	Percent Change	Percentage Points	Percent Change	
All students	95.4%	95.2%	95.4%	95.1%	-0.3	-0.3%	-0.3	-0.3%	94.7%

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

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

	FY12		FY13		FY14	
	Estimated	Actual	Estimated	Actual	Estimated	Actual
Expenditures						
From local appropriations for schools:						
By school committee	\$28,163,475	\$28,473,835	\$26,740,000	\$27,818,849	\$28,690,000	\$29,519,051
By municipality	\$14,575,807	\$16,806,172	\$11,473,517	\$15,216,463	\$16,774,825	\$32,288,713
Total from local appropriations	\$42,739,282	\$45,280,007	\$38,213,517	\$43,035,312	\$45,464,825	\$61,807,764
From revolving funds and grants	--	\$5,233,769	--	\$4,360,261	--	\$3,799,723
Total expenditures	--	\$50,513,776	--	\$47,395,573	--	\$65,607,487
Chapter 70 aid to education program						
Chapter 70 state aid*	--	\$17,732,219	--	\$18,109,090	--	\$18,612,210
Required local contribution	--	\$17,528,088	--	\$18,026,125	--	\$19,185,323
Required net school spending**	--	\$35,260,307	--	\$36,135,215	--	\$37,797,533
Actual net school spending	--	\$36,285,837	--	\$35,689,751	--	\$37,911,810
Over/under required (\$)	--	\$1,025,530	--	-\$445,464	--	\$114,278
Over/under required (%)	--	2.9%	--	-1.2%	--	0.3%

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

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

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

Data retrieved 11/20/15

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

Expenditure Category	2012	2013	2014
Administration	\$210	\$322	\$380
Instructional leadership (district and school)	\$597	\$471	\$398
Teachers	\$3,907	\$3,766	\$3,816
Other teaching services	\$764	\$750	\$850
Professional development	\$59	\$41	\$34
Instructional materials, equipment and technology	\$100	\$101	\$177
Guidance, counseling and testing services	\$220	\$156	\$187
Pupil services	\$1,014	\$897	\$946
Operations and maintenance	\$891	\$901	\$957
Insurance, retirement and other fixed costs	\$2,012	\$2,153	\$2,364
Total expenditures per in-district pupil	\$9,773	\$9,558	\$10,109

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

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

Appendix C: Instructional Inventory

Focus Area #1: Learning Objectives & Instruction		Insufficient	Minimal	Moderate	Strong	Avg Number of points
		(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(0 to 3)
1. The teacher demonstrates knowledge of subject matter and content.	ES	0%	6%	61%	32%	2.3
	MS	0%	0%	59%	41%	2.4
	HS	0%	0%	54%	46%	2.5
	Total #	0	2	36	23	2.3
	Total %	0%	3%	59%	38%	
2. The teacher provides and refers to clear learning objective(s) in the lesson.	ES	3%	31%	38%	28%	1.9
	MS	0%	18%	47%	35%	2.2
	HS	8%	15%	77%	0%	1.7
	Total #	2	15	30	15	1.9
	Total %	3%	24%	48%	24%	
3. The teacher implements a lesson that reflects high expectations aligned to the learning objective (s).	ES	0%	28%	63%	9%	1.8
	MS	0%	47%	41%	12%	1.6
	HS	0%	69%	31%	0%	1.3
	Total #	0	26	31	5	1.7
	Total %	0%	42%	50%	8%	
4. The teacher uses appropriate instructional strategies well matched to the learning objective(s).	ES	6%	13%	44%	38%	2.1
	MS	0%	24%	47%	29%	2.1
	HS	8%	31%	62%	0%	1.5
	Total #	3	12	30	17	2.0
	Total %	5%	19%	48%	27%	
Total Score For Focus Area #1	ES					8.1
	MS					8.3
	HS					7.0
	Total					7.9

Focus Area #2: Student Engagement & Critical Thinking		Insufficient	Minimal	Moderate	Strong	Avg Number of points
		(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(0 to 3)
5. Students are motivated and engaged in the lesson.	ES	0%	16%	34%	50%	2.3
	MS	6%	29%	41%	24%	1.8
	HS	0%	15%	77%	8%	1.9
	Total #	1	12	28	21	2.1
	Total %	2%	19%	45%	34%	
6. The teacher facilitates tasks that encourage students to develop and engage in critical thinking.	ES	0%	50%	50%	0%	1.5
	MS	0%	41%	35%	24%	1.8
	HS	8%	46%	46%	0%	1.4
	Total #	1	29	28	4	1.6
	Total %	2%	47%	45%	6%	
7. Students assume responsibility for their own learning whether individually, in pairs, or in groups.	ES	6%	6%	53%	34%	2.2
	MS	6%	24%	35%	35%	2.0
	HS	0%	23%	54%	23%	2.0
	Total #	3	9	30	20	2.1
	Total %	5%	15%	48%	32%	
Total Score For Focus Area #2	ES					6.0
	MS					5.6
	HS					5.3
	Total					5.8

Focus Area #3: Differentiated Instruction & Classroom Culture		Insufficient	Minimal	Moderate	Strong	Avg Number of points
		(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(0 to 3)
8. The teacher appropriately differentiates instruction so the lesson content is accessible for all learners.	ES	19%	34%	41%	6%	1.3
	MS	41%	41%	18%	0%	0.8
	HS	31%	54%	15%	0%	0.8
	Total #	17	25	18	2	1.1
	Total %	27%	40%	29%	3%	
9. The teacher uses appropriate resources aligned to students' diverse learning needs. (e.g., technology, manipulatives, support personnel).	ES	13%	16%	53%	19%	1.8
	MS	0%	47%	53%	0%	1.5
	HS	0%	62%	31%	8%	1.5
	Total #	4	21	30	7	1.6
	Total %	6%	34%	48%	11%	
10. The classroom climate is characterized by respectful behavior, routines, tone, and discourse.	ES	0%	0%	16%	84%	2.8
	MS	6%	12%	41%	41%	2.2
	HS	0%	15%	46%	38%	2.2
	Total #	1	4	18	39	2.5
	Total %	2%	6%	29%	63%	
11. The teacher conducts appropriate formative assessments to check for understanding and provide feedback to students.	ES	3%	28%	34%	34%	2.0
	MS	6%	33%	33%	28%	1.8
	HS	8%	31%	62%	0%	1.5
	Total #	3	19	25	16	1.9
	Total %	5%	30%	40%	25%	
Total Score For Focus Area #3	ES					8.0
	MS					6.3
	HS					6.1
	Total					7.1