Massachusetts Department of
ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY
EDUCATION

Middleborough Public Schools
District Review

Review conducted April 9–12, 2012

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Date of Report Completion: February 2013

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Overview of District Reviews

Purpose

The goal of district reviews conducted by the Center for District and School Accountability (CDSA) in the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) is to support districts in establishing or strengthening a cycle of continuous improvement. Reviews consider carefully the effectiveness, efficiency, and integration of systemwide functions using ESE's six district standards: **Leadership and Governance, Curriculum and Instruction, Assessment, Human Resources and Professional Development, Student Support, and Financial and Asset Management**.

District reviews are conducted under Chapter 15, Section 55A of the Massachusetts General Laws and include reviews focused on "districts whose students achieve at low levels either in absolute terms or relative to districts that educate similar populations." Districts subject to review in the 2011-2012 school year include districts that were in Level 3[1] (in school year 2011 or school year 2012) of ESE's framework for district accountability and assistance in each of the state's six regions: Greater Boston, Berkshires, Northeast, Southeast, Central, and Pioneer Valley. The districts with the lowest aggregate performance and least movement in Composite Performance Index (CPI) in their regions were chosen from among those districts that were not exempt under Chapter 15, Section 55A, because another comprehensive review had been completed or was scheduled to take place within nine months of the planned reviews.

Methodology

To focus the analysis, reviews collect evidence for each of the six district standards (see above). The reviews seek to identify those systems and practices that may be impeding rapid improvement as well as those that are most likely to be contributing to positive results. The district review team consists of independent consultants with expertise in each of the district standards who review selected district documents and ESE data and reports for two days before conducting a four-day district visit that includes visits to various district schools. The team holds interviews and focus groups with such stakeholders as school committee members, teachers' union representatives, administrators, teachers, parents, and students. Team members also observe classes. The team then meets for two days to develop findings and recommendations before submitting the draft of their district review report to ESE.

[1] In other words, as Level 3 is defined, districts with one or more schools that score in the lowest 20 percent statewide of schools serving common grade levels pursuant to 603 CMR 2.05(2)(a).

Middleborough Public Schools

The site visit to the Middleborough Public Schools was conducted from April 9–12, 2012. The site visit included 34 hours of interviews and focus groups with over 42 stakeholders ranging from school committee members to district administrators and school staff to teachers' association representatives. The review team conducted focus groups with 38 elementary school, 15 middle school, and 5 high school teachers including 3 department heads. The team also conducted visits to four of the district's five schools: Henry B. Burkland Elementary School (grades 1–5), Mary K. Goode Elementary School (grades 1–5), John T. Nichols Middle School (grades 6-8), and Middleborough High School (grades 9–12). The review team did not visit classes at the Memorial Early Childhood Center (pre-kindergarten through kindergarten). Further information about the review and the site visit schedule can be found in Appendix B; information about the members of the review team can be found in Appendix A. Appendix C contains information about student performance from 2009–2011. Appendix D contains information about administrative turnover from 2003–2012. Appendix E contains finding and recommendation statements.

Note that any progress that has taken place since the time of the review is not reflected in this benchmarking report. Findings represent the conditions in place at the time of the site visit, and recommendations represent the team's suggestions to address the issues identified at that time.

District Profile[2]

About Middleborough

Located 38 miles south of Boston in Plymouth County, the town of Middleborough is the second largest town by land area in the Commonwealth, covering almost 69 square miles. Middleborough is recognized as an historic industrial town on the Nemasket River and a major Native American settlement throughout the colonial period. The first European settler was an English fugitive who settled among the Nemasket Indians in 1633. He was captured and returned to England and it was several years before a small group of white settlers led by a woman, Elizabeth Poole, established themselves within the town. During King Philip's War (1675–1676), the entire population took shelter in a fort constructed along the Nemasket River, a site located behind the current Memorial Early Childhood Center. When the town was burned to the ground, residents fled to the shelter of the Plymouth Colony; Middleborough would not be refounded for several years.

[2] Data derived from ESE's website, ESE's Education Data Warehouse, or other ESE sources. Historical information about Middleborough gleaned from Massachusetts Department of Housing and Urban Development profile of Middleborough and the History of Middleborough from www.middleborough.com and www.aldenshoe.com/history.

Lumbering, agriculture, fishing, and hunting were the main occupations of the early settlers. As Indian settlements dwindled, the town's industries expanded, particularly iron and a mill forge supporting a slitting mill[3] and blacksmithing. Judge Peter Oliver founded the first large, self-contained industrial complex, which was confiscated when Oliver fled the Revolution as a Tory. Although the iron industry dominated the Federal period, Middleborough also made shovels, textiles, straw bonnets, and woolens. Immigrant populations of Swedes, Italians, Canadians, and Armenians followed the industrial jobs throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century. After the Civil War, the town became a rail center, attracting industrial development, lumbering, box mills, brick making, and the well-known Maxim Motor Company, which produced world renowned fire trucks from 1914 until it was forced to close in 1989. Middleborough is home to the Alden Shoe Company, one of the last two shoe manufacturers remaining in America, and also hosts the corporate headquarters of the Ocean Spray Cranberry Company, identifying the town as the "cranberry capital of the world."

Today Middleborough is proud of the partially restored Oliver Mills Park on the site of Judge Oliver's industrial complex where residents can follow the spring herring run bringing thousands of alewives upstream to spawn. In addition, the town has a number of museums, which feature recreations of nineteenth-century homes, historic fire engines, Nemasket Indian artifacts, toy trains, and memorabilia of the famous midgets General Tom Thumb, a native of Middleborough, and his wife Lavinia. Another famous Middleborough resident was Deborah Sampson, a female soldier of the Revolution who dressed as a man in order to serve in combat.

With 23,116 residents, based on the 2010 census, Middleborough is governed by a board of selectmen and a town manager who work within the framework of an open town meeting to provide leadership and management of town affairs.

The Middleborough Public Schools

An elected school committee composed of six members and an appointed student representative govern the community's five schools. The schools enrolled 3,373 students in the 2011–2012 school year: Memorial Early Childhood Center (332 students), Henry B. Burkland Elementary School (667 students), Mary K. Goode Elementary School (686 students), John T. Nichols Middle School (873 students) and Middleborough High School (815 students).

Both elementary schools share a large, expansive campus not far from the center of town. In the 2011–2012 school year, the district reorganized the two elementary schools by reconfiguring the grade structure to include grades 1–5 in both schools. Previously, grades 1–2 were located in the Mary K. Goode Elementary School and grades 3–5 in the Henry B. Burkland Elementary School. According to a document provided by the district, the decision followed the recommendation of a two-year task force composed of school and district leaders, teachers, parents, and a school committee representative who addressed the question of how to improve student achievement after five years of continued weak performance on MCAS tests.[4] The rationale for the reorganization was to develop smaller learning communities at grade levels,

[3] A watermill for slitting bars of iron into rods.
[4] Recommendation Report, Middleborough Elementary School Reconfiguration Task Force, February 2010, pp. 2-6.

share resources for intervention and support, expand opportunities for examining student work, decrease school transitions, build community, engage families, improve social learning, and support emotional growth.

The middle school enrolls the most students (873 students) even though the high school (815 students) serves more grade levels. Interviewees explained that a meaningful number of students leave the district at grade 9 to attend either Bristol-Plymouth Regional Vocational Technical School, Norfolk County Agricultural High School, or independent schools. According to ESE data, grade 8 enrolled 303 students in September 2010 and in the following September, grade 9 enrolled 223 students—a loss of 80 students or 26 percent of the 2011 entering freshman class.

The district has experienced a significant number of leadership transitions at every level over the past decade. At the time of the review, an interim superintendent who had served for almost two years was preparing to hand over leadership to a new superintendent on June 1, 2012. The new superintendent would become the fifth district leader since the 2003–2004 school year. The position of assistant superintendent was eliminated at the end of the 2010–2011 school year and although three people had held that role since 2003 the position went unfilled from 2007–2010. Three of five principals left the district from 2009–2011 and two principals announced intentions to depart in June 2012 as did two of five assistant principals. Administrative turnover is examined in more detail in the Leadership and Governance findings and documented in Appendix D.

Student Demographics

Total enrollment has decreased 5.3 percent in recent years, from 3,561 students in 2007 (data not in table) to 3,373 students in 2012. In addition, 2011 ESE data shows a student stability rate[5] of 95 percent that matches the state rate. Table 1a illustrates the Middleborough 2010–2011 enrollments by race/ethnicity and selected populations, while Table 1b does the same for 2011–2012. Table 1b shows that 16.9 percent of students are designated as receiving special education services in the 2011–2012 school year, close to the 17 percent rate in the state as a whole. Students from low-income families make up 32.4 percent of students, also not far from the state rate of 35.2 percent. According to ESE data, this represents a 12 percent increase— from 20 percent in 2007 to 32.4 percent in 2012— and possibly reflects the recent economic downturn.

Table 1b also shows the largest subgroup to be white students at 89.8 percent of enrollment compared to 67 percent in the state as a whole. Proportions for other subgroups are substantially different from state rates with the district enrolling smaller proportions of selected populations in most categories than the state overall. Middleborough's student population is clearly less diverse racially and ethnically than that of the state overall. While almost a third of Massachusetts students represent various racial and ethnic subgroups, in Middleborough those subgroups make up 10.3 percent of students. However, the percentages of subgroup populations are shifting ever so subtly, according to ESE data not included in Tables 1a and 1b. Based on ESE district profile data for 2007–2012, in 2007 2.5 percent of Middleborough students were African-American, in

[5] The stability rate measures how many students remain in a district throughout the school year.

2012, 1.9 percent. In 2007, 0.6 percent of Middleborough students were Asian; in 2012, 1.0 percent. In 2007, 2.2 percent of students were Hispanic/Latino; in 2012, 3.6 percent. In 2007, 1.8 percent of students were of multi-race/non-Hispanic origins; in 2012, 3.1 percent.

Table 1a: Middleborough Public Schools
Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity & Selected Populations
2010–2011

Selected Populations	Number	Percent of Total	Percent of State	Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity	Number	Percent of Total	Percent of State
Total enrollment	**3,457**	**100.0**	--	African-American/ Black	71	2.1	8.2
First Language not English	32	0.9	16.3	Asian	35	1.0	5.5
Limited English Proficient*	21	0.6	7.1	Hispanic/Latino	112	3.2	15.4
Special Education**	580	16.6	17.0	White	3,126	90.4	68.0
Low-income	1,050	30.4	34.2	Native American	19	0.5	0.2
Free Lunch	805	23.3	29.1	Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	2	0.1	0.1
Reduced-price lunch	245	7.1	5.1	Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	92	2.7	2.4

*Limited English proficient students are referred to in this report as "English language learners."
**Special education number and percentage (only) are calculated including students in out-of-district placements.
Sources: School/District Profiles on ESE website and other ESE data

Table 1b: Middleborough Public Schools
Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity & Selected Populations
2011–2012

Selected Populations	Number	Percent of Total	Percent of State	Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity	Number	Percent of Total	Percent of State
Total enrollment	**3,373**	**100.0**	--	African-American/ Black	63	1.9	8.3
First Language not English	36	1.1	16.7	Asian	34	1.0	5.7
Limited English Proficient*	26	0.8	7.3	Hispanic/Latino	121	3.6	16.1
Special Education**	575	16.9	17.0	White	3,028	89.8	67.0
Low-income	1,093	32.4	35.2	Native American	22	0.7	0.2
Free Lunch	854	25.3	30.4	Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	0	0.0	0.1
Reduced-price lunch	239	7.1	4.8	Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	105	3.1	2.5

*Limited English proficient students are referred to in this report as "English language learners."
**Special education number and percentage (only) are calculated including students in out-of-district placements.
Sources: School/District Profiles on ESE website and other ESE data

Financial Profile

In January 2010, the district proposed a $2.4 million override of Proposition 2 ½ to support the fiscal year 2011 school budget. The effort failed by a three-to-one margin. Expenditures for schools from all sources of funding dropped 2.2 percent from fiscal year 2010 to fiscal year 2011. At the time of the review, actual expenditures for fiscal year 2012 were not available.

Chapter 70 state aid to education was augmented in FY09, FY10 and FY11 by federal grants from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), and the total from these two sources increased by 0.5 percent from FY10 to FY11. In FY12, this funding was no longer available, and Chapter 70 aid was 3 percent less than the total of Chapter 70 and ARRA in FY11.

The district has exceeded NSS requirements in each of the last three fiscal years, but the margin over required NSS has decreased slightly from 7.4 percent in fiscal year 2010 to an estimated 6.2 percent in fiscal year 2012.

Table 2: Middleborough Public Schools
Expenditures, Chapter 70 State Aid, and Net School Spending
Fiscal Year 2010—Fiscal Year 2012

	FY2010		FY2011		FY2012
	Estimated	Actual	Estimated	Actual	Estimated
Expenditures					
From local appropriations for schools					
by school committee	25,119,068	25,252,274	25,057,874	25,053,208	25,738,582
by municipality	14,234,576	14,625,409	13,784,404	13,689,208	14,342,199
Total from local appropriations	39,353,644	39,877,683	38,842,278	38,742,416	40,080,781
From revolving funds and grants	---	5,070,879	---	5,231,347	---
Total expenditures	---	44,948,562	---	43,973,763	---
Chapter 70 aid to education program					
Chapter 70 state aid*	---	16,841,680	---	16,422,246	17,008,329
Required local contribution	---	14,608,790	---	14,805,660	15,132,961
Net School Spending (NSS)					
Required net school spending**	---	31,450,470	---	31,227,906	32,141,290
Actual net school spending	---	33,762,697	---	32,858,411	34,124,456
Over/under required ($)	---	2,312,227	---	1,630,505	1,983,166
Over/under required (%)	---	7.4%	---	5.2%	6.2%

*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: Fiscal year 20100, fiscal year 2011 District End-of-Year Reports; Chapter 70 Program information on ESE website.

The district has had comparatively little increase in funding for three fiscal years. Ramifications of the funding level are explored in more detail in the Financial and Asset Management findings below and are present in other findings.

Overall, the review's findings and recommendations represent a school district that has demonstrated aggregate student achievement that has remained flat and below state achievement levels as measured by proficiency in MCAS results from 2007–2012. Although there have been sporadic examples of improvements at some grade levels and at the high school level, this is not yet a robust trend in the district as a whole. Several of the district's important educational systems—leadership, curriculum, instruction, assessment, professional development, supervision

and evaluation, and academic supports— have not yet been maximized to support students' learning needs. Leadership turnover and the current absence of leadership in key district roles as well as limited resources, e.g., time, funding and expertise, have contributed to weaknesses in the district's systems and practices.

Even with the preponderance of leadership turnover, positive opportunities are presented each time new leaders arrive. A new superintendent with expertise in curriculum and instruction will assume responsibility for the district in June 2012. With numerous vacancies in school leadership roles, the new superintendent can build a strong, new leadership team with the knowledge and experience required to renew the district and strengthen it in order to meet the needs of all students. This is a worthy endeavor in a community that professes pride in its schools and a desire to ensure excellence.

Findings

Student Achievement[6]

For the last five test administrations, the district's MCAS results overall for both ELA and mathematics have typically been lower than statewide rates and have remained flat. In 2011, the percentage of students scoring proficient or higher was farthest below the state rate in mathematics in grades 7 and 8 and in ELA in grades 4 through 6.

In 2011, the overall percentage of Middleborough students scoring proficient or higher on the ELA MCAS was 64 percent, compared to the state proficiency rate of 69 percent (see Table C1 in Appendix C). In mathematics, it was 50 percent, compared to the state rate of 58 percent (see Table C2 in Appendix C). In both subjects, proficiency rates for "all students" showed very little increase over the five test administrations from 2007 to 2011—an increase of one percentage point.[7] In ELA in 2011, the district was well below the state proficiency rates in grades 4 and 5—the Burkland School, the district's Level 3 school, includes these grades—and also in grade 6 at the Nichols Middle School (12, 11, and 7 percentage points respectively). In mathematics, the district was below the state proficiency rate in every grade in 2011, with an especially large gap in grades 7 and 8 at the Nichols Middle School (13 and 16 percentage points). (Again, see Tables C1 and C2 in Appendix C.)

The district's median Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs) have been consistently in the 40s in both ELA and mathematics from 2008 to 2011, a low-moderate growth level that suggests the district may continue to have difficulty raising proficiency rates above their current levels in the near future.

From 2007 to 2011, the district's Composite Performance Index (CPI), which measures the extent to which students are progressing toward proficiency in MCAS results, has remained steady and falls two to three points below the state CPI in ELA. In mathematics, the CPI gap with the state widened slightly from about two points lower in 2007 to about five points lower in 2011. In mathematics, not only are students having more difficulty improving to reach the proficiency level, but also students below proficiency are not improving, e.g., moving from high Warning/Failing to low Needs Improvement.

The Burkland School is the district's Level 3 school and was among the 20 percent lowest-performing schools in the state in 2011. At that time, the school enrolled all students in grades 3-5. Since 2009, ELA proficiency for Burkland students in grades 4 and 5 has fallen below their peers statewide. Fewer than half of grade 4 students scored proficient or higher in ELA from 2009 to 2011. That percentage decreased over the three test administrations: 47 percent in 2009, 43 percent in 2010, and 41 percent in 2011, compared to the state rates of 53 percent, 54 percent, and 53 percent, respectively. In grade 5, the 2011 ELA proficiency rate showed little

[6] The reader is referred to the tables in Appendix C for student achievement data.

[7] See District Analysis and Review Tool (DART) for Districts for Middleborough, Curriculum tab, at http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/dart/default.html. (Note that proficiency rates vary very slightly in the DART from School/District Profiles because of slightly different methods of calculation.)

improvement from 2009: the rate was 55 percent in 2009, 51 percent in 2010, and 56 percent in 2011, compared to the state rates of 63 percent, 63 percent, and 67 percent, respectively. From 2009 to 2011, fewer than half of Middleborough's grade 7 students scored proficient or higher in mathematics. This reached a low of 37 percent in 2011. During the three test administrations from 2009 to 2011, only about one-third of grade 8 students scored proficient or higher in mathematics: 39 percent in 2009 and 35 percent in both 2010 and 2011.

These trends in achievement foreshadow findings described below that detail several areas of practice in need of systemic improvement including curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional development. This need for systemic improvement is particularly true for mathematics in the middle grades and for ELA in the upper elementary grades. The findings show insufficient documented mathematics curriculum at the middle school level and other levels. In addition to the absence of a complete written curriculum, there are variations in teaching and assessment materials, and multiple mathematics programs are used in middle school mathematics classrooms. Students from classroom to classroom at the same grade levels do not benefit from a soundly coordinated and articulated program of studies. In ELA in the upper elementary grades, grade 4 and 5 students cannot benefit from the Response to Intervention provided to students through grade 3. At all grade levels through grade 8, there are ineffective systems and practices related to how instruction is supervised and evaluated. These areas of practice in need of systemic improvement are presented in more detail in several findings below and revisited in the recommendations that follow.

Although proficiency rates overall have typically been lower than state rates, there have been a few recent improvements in proficiency and in other indicators of academic success in some grade levels.

Although the district overall has demonstrated very little increase in performance in both ELA and mathematics from 2007 to 2011, there have been recent improvements in a few grade levels. Grade 5 ELA proficiency has improved. The percentage of grade 5 students who scored proficient or higher in ELA increased from 51 percent in 2010 to 55 percent in 2011; although the state rate was 67 percent. In 2011, the median SGP for grade 5 ELA increased by 15 points, from 34.0 to 49.0, a meaningful increase.

Grade 7 ELA proficiency has improved. Although the percentage of students scoring proficient or higher had been close to the state's rate with a net gain of only four points from 2007 to 2011, the median SGP has increased steadily since 2008, from 48.5 points to 64.0 points. Though the increase was not at a meaningful level (10 points) in any one year, the steadiness of the trend may indicate a consistent improvement in instruction.

Grade 7 students have improved in their ability to respond well to open response questions. Although overall the district shows a relatively mixed pattern of improvement in students' abilities to respond well to open response questions on MCAS, the percentage of grade 7 students scoring 2 or above on these test items in ELA increased from 54 percent in 2007 to 77 percent in 2011, higher than the state rate of 72 percent. However, it dropped in grade 7 mathematics, from 67 percent in 2007 to 64 percent in 2011, lower than the state rate of 73

percent. This trend was replicated in grade 8: from 63 percent in 2007 to 80 percent in 2011 in ELA and from 59 percent in 2007 to 46 percent in 2011 in mathematics, lower than the state rate of 64 percent. Other grade levels also showed mixed results. Although improvements may reflect the district's recent focus on improving students' responses to open response questions, the mixed results indicate that there is still more work to be done.

Grade 4 mathematics improved. The percentage of grade 4 students scoring proficient or higher in mathematics improved in 2011 from 34 percent proficient in 2010 to 40 percent in 2011 (the state was at 47 percent). The median SGP rose 17 points, from 34.0 in 2010 to 51.0 in 2011, a meaningful change.

Grade 5 mathematics has improved. Although the percentage of grade 5 students scoring proficient or higher improved by only four points, from 51 percent in 2010 to 55 percent in 2011, there was a 6.5 point improvement in the median SGP, from 47.5 to 59.0.

The high school has shown several gains in student achievement. At the high school, grade 10 students scoring proficient or higher in ELA improved from 74 percent in 2007 to 87 percent in 2011; the state rate was 84 percent. In mathematics, the percentage of students scoring proficient or higher increased from 64 percent in 2007 to 72 percent in 2011; the state rate was 77 percent. Also, the district reported an increasing percentage of students completing MassCore content, from 40 percent in 2007 to 61 percent in 2011, compared to the state at 70 percent. And the percentage of juniors and seniors taking at least one Advanced Placement class increased from 10 percent in 2007 to 28 percent in 2011, compared to the state at 22 percent. Most AP classes were in social studies and science, the latter reflecting the district's participation in the Massachusetts Mathematics and Science Initiative (MMSI) grant program. In addition, the class of 2011 at Middleborough High School had a 93.5 percent graduation rate (compared to the state rate of 83.4 percent), an increase from 82.6 percent in 2010.

These more positive trends provide several contexts in which the district can begin to build toward more sustainable improvement across grade levels. However, the larger trends districtwide of generally lower performance than the state as measured by MCAS still indicate that there is much work to do to ensure that the district's systems and practices can promote and sustain improvements in student achievement across all grade levels.

Leadership and Governance

A persistent pattern of leadership turnover at all levels for the past decade has slowed continuous improvement efforts and hindered leadership stability in the district.

Leadership

The district has experienced some tumultuous times in terms of leadership stability over the past 10 years and, in particular, from 2009–2011. In fact, as noted below, this is an ongoing phenomenon.

The interim superintendent's term will end at the close of the 2011–2012 school year. He was appointed by the school committee in August of 2010 with the expectation that he would serve for no longer than six months. That term was extended to one year and was again extended for a second year. When appointed in 2010, the interim superintendent became the fourth superintendent to lead the district since the 2003–2004 school year.

Upon arrival, the interim superintendent focused on district finances and was able to identify a $700,000 surplus in the operating budget. In addition, he noted that large class sizes were a problem and was able to reduce class sizes in some schools by using a percentage of the identified surplus funds to hire teachers. However, he also initiated an administrative reorganization that eliminated the position of assistant superintendent in June of 2011, freeing additional funds to hire teachers. The leadership responsibilities in curriculum and instruction, assessment, and professional development assigned to that position were then redistributed to the principals. Additional new positions were created, including a pupil and personnel services administrator, a technology administrator, and academic coaches in ELA and mathematics, one for each subject area, to work with all teachers in pre-kindergarten through grade 5. Simultaneously, a new director of elementary education position was created to support the reorganization of the elementary schools effective in September 2011. At that time, after two years of study by a schoolwide task force, the district moved from one elementary school serving grades 1–2 and one elementary school serving grades 3–5 to both elementary schools enrolling students in grades 1–5.

In addition to the turnover in the superintendency, three of five principals departed the district from 2009–2011. At the time of the site visit, the review team was advised of the resignations of another three principals effective at the close of the 2012 school year along with the departures for different reasons of several assistant principals. This recent example of turnover reflects a continuous pattern that commenced a decade ago and is reflected below. This pattern is documented in even more detail in Appendix D. Since 2003, the district has had:

- four superintendents
- three assistant superintendents (the position was unfilled, 2007–2010)
- three directors of business and finance
- three high school principals
- three middle school headmasters (principals)

The district will start the 2012–2013 school year with:

- a new superintendent
- a new elementary principal and a new assistant principal
- a new middle school headmaster
- a new high school principal and a new assistant principal

In interviews, all members of the school community said that they have felt the impact of and expressed concern about the instability in district- and school-level leadership. Teachers stated that momentum in goal setting and achievement has been lost when administrators have departed, citing no continuity of vision. Some teachers suggested that morale is low with so many departures. Parents expressed great concern over the impact of the changes in leadership in the district. They noted the need to consistently "start over" in improvement efforts when there is a change in leaders and how things have been "stagnant" because of the turnover. They said that they believe that the instability is making an impact on children's education. Leaders said that some efforts have come to a "screeching halt" when leadership has changed, with one acknowledging having worked with four principals and three superintendents over time. School committee members expressed frustration over school and district leaders leaving for positions in other communities. They also cited this as one weakness of the district. Finally, the teachers' association leadership believes that the turnover in leadership is a contributing factor in the absence of growth and progress in student achievement, as people have not stayed in roles long enough to have an impact.

Strategic Direction

The instability in district leadership over many years has coincided with an absence of an ongoing district mission, vision, and accountability for staff in curriculum and instruction. It has also inhibited continuity in improvement planning that would make possible aligned goals and objectives. Based on a review of school improvement plans, improvement planning in the district is now somewhat fragmented. Although two of the four current school improvement plans demonstrate some alignment of school goals with a number of new strategic goals, two do not. The formats, documentation, and measurability of school-level goals vary meaningfully across schools. The years of no strategic direction have contributed to uncoordinated and in some instances incomplete improvement planning and efforts.

However, now there is a newly developed Strategic Plan 2011–2016, initiated by the interim superintendent, that includes a district mission, vision, and beliefs as well as five strategic goals. This is a document upon which the district can begin to build a continuous improvement system and include a district improvement plan to translate strategic goals into measureable district goals and objectives.

Curriculum and Instruction

With the absence of aligned and coordinated improvement planning, curriculum and instructional improvement have been delayed. Principals and the director of elementary education reported that curriculum work has been incomplete in most grade levels and subject areas. The consistent "changing of the guard" has also contributed to very little and sporadic feedback to teachers about instruction other than through the formal contractually controlled evaluation process.

One measure of effective planning and implementation of continuous improvement efforts is whether or not a trend in improved student achievement takes place. In Middleborough, there has been no demonstrated meaningful improvement in MCAS tests results in the aggregate from 2007–2011 as shown in Table 3. ESE data shows that proficiency rates for both ELA and

mathematics for the district as a whole have remained consistently flat and below state proficiency rates from 2007 to 2011. District-level median Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs) have also remained relatively flat, in the low- to mid-40s range, and have shown no meaningful increases from 2008, when the state began to document median SGPs, to 2011.

Table 3: Middleborough Public Schools and State
Proficiency Rates and Median Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs)
2007–2011 English Language Arts and Mathematics

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
District ELA Proficiency Rate	64	60	63	63	64
State ELA Proficiency Rate	66	64	67	68	69
District ELA Median SGP	--	45.0	45.0	44.0	47.0
District Mathematics Proficiency Rate	49	48	48	49	50
State Mathematics Proficiency Rate	53	55	55	59	58
District Mathematics Median SGP	--	47.0	43.0	41.5	45.0

Note: The state began to document median SGPs in 2008.
Source: ESE School and District Profiles, Middleborough Public Schools.

Professional Development

In addition, the turnover in districtwide leadership and associated changes in direction have often left individual schools to their own devices to plan and deliver professional development. It was reported that there is currently no one staff member with districtwide responsibility to oversee, coordinate, and collaborate in the planning and implementation of professional development for both the district and school levels. The district has no current district professional development plan. And only recently, in January 2012, was a professional development committee formed; yet this is only for the elementary level.

Assessment

As leaders have come and gone at the district and school levels, the responsibility for coordinating student assessment, collecting and analyzing assessment data, and implementing a more data-driven decision-making process has not been assigned. As a result, according to interviewees, the district assessment program is neither comprehensive nor balanced and is not meaningfully data driven.

Student Support

The absence of coordination and the gaps in student support programs also reflect the instability in the district. At the elementary level only children in kindergarten through grade 3 can receive systematic intervention support services. At the middle school and high school, staff suggested that their Child Study Teams are providing services comparable to a Response to Intervention program for students; however, the review team observed limited examples of tiered or differentiated instruction in middle and high school classrooms and did not note any formal support programs available to struggling regular education students.

Supervision and Evaluation

Finally, with persistent leadership turnover over recent years, the supervision and evaluation processes in the district are uncoordinated and incomplete. Before the arrival of the current interim superintendent, administrators had not been evaluated in six years. A review of personnel files showed that a surprising number of teachers had not been evaluated in several years. Principals in an interview said that there has been a wide variety in how evaluations are conducted, one stating "Everyone does it differently." As noted above, teachers do not receive informal supervisory feedback to improve their practice.

The persistent pattern of leadership change in the district has contributed to discontinuity in procedures and low morale among staff and has not supported the staff or the students with what is required to improve teaching and learning. Several of the shortcomings cited above will be discussed in greater detail in the findings below. The district is poised to develop cohesive and strategic plans supported by thoughtful and thorough district and school improvement plans to address the effects of these leadership shortcomings; however, without stable leadership over multiple years it will be challenging for the district to overcome these shortcomings.

Note: The following two findings address the insufficiency of leadership for curriculum and instruction from two different yet interrelated perspectives. The review team believes that both perspectives should be described in detail in the report.

The district does not have systemic leadership in curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional development and therefore, does not have cohesive planning, implementation, and monitoring of initiatives in these areas.

The interim superintendent, principals, and directors reported that at the end of the 2010–2011 school year the position of assistant superintendent of schools was eliminated. Included in that role was districtwide responsibility for professional development, curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The elimination of the position was followed by the establishment of several new positions in the 2011–2012 school year. These included a pupil and personnel services administrator to oversee special education and a technology administrator. In addition, a director of elementary education position was created as well as academic coaches in math and ELA, one for each subject area in pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The coaches are now working with small groups of grade-level teachers, modeling instructional strategies, and facilitating some professional development. Although responsibility for curriculum, instruction, and assessment was assigned to the school principals, the interim superintendent noted that some had not followed through on curriculum changes and others had not accomplished much.

Professional Development

The interim superintendent and principals said that there is currently no one with districtwide responsibility for planning and implementing professional development. The interim superintendent also indicated that there is no current district professional development plan and that a curriculum/professional development advisory committee was just established in January of 2012 for the elementary schools. The middle and high school principals stated that they were

responsible for professional development for teachers in grades 6–8 and 9–12, respectively. The director of elementary education, the interim superintendent, and principals said that the director of elementary education leads professional development for teachers in pre-kindergarten through grade 5.

Curriculum and Instruction

Principals and teachers stated that there is no single districtwide curriculum and instructional leader to coordinate and prioritize efforts for pre-kindergarten through grade 12. The high school principal reported, and the interim superintendent agreed, that she, with the collaboration of high school department heads, is responsible for the development and revision of the high school curriculum and instructional practices. The middle school principal and the interim superintendent indicated that the middle school principal leads curriculum and instruction efforts at that school. The director of elementary education said that she is "somewhat" responsible for curriculum and instruction in pre-kindergarten through grade 5. Elementary principals suggested that they are responsible for leadership for those areas in their schools. There are four teams of elementary level teachers focusing on ELA and math curricula, simultaneously. Two teams are facilitated by the director of elementary education and two by the elementary principals.

The absence of districtwide curriculum and instructional oversight and absence of clarity about responsibility for curriculum and instruction at the elementary level reflect the uncoordinated and in some instances incomplete improvement efforts in these areas. Principals and the director of elementary education reported that curriculum work has been incomplete for most grade levels and subject areas. For example, there has been "no curriculum in place for about seven years in elementary science." The elementary school principals stated that although they use textbook programs such as *Everyday Mathematics*, *Readers Workshop*, and *Fundations*, they have no fully documented and updated curricula in any subject areas to guide them.

The middle school principal reported that curriculum maps are incomplete and teachers use different books for the same subject at the same grade level. As a result, there is no consistency in what is taught. School leaders and teachers reported that there have been recent vertical discussions at the K-5 level, but not between the elementary level and the middle school. Recently because of the MMSI grant there have been more opportunities for vertical conversations to take place between middle and high school science, math, and English teachers.

Evaluation

Administrators said that there is very little feedback given to teachers about instruction other than through the formal, contractually controlled evaluation process. By the teachers' bargaining agreement and regulation, teachers without professional status are observed twice a year and evaluated every year, and teachers with professional status are observed twice and evaluated once every two years; however, these practices have been inconsistently implemented across schools.

Assessment

Principals and teachers stated that there is no one person with responsibility for the oversight of assessments in the district. Principals and directors also said that the district assessment program is neither comprehensive nor balanced. Elementary teachers noted in a focus group that the assessment system is fragmented and that the district does not yet use data well to inform its decision-making. At the middle school, although an effort was made by a previous literacy team to institute Fountas and Pinnell assessments, this has not been followed up and there are few common formative and summative assessments used at this level. Middle school teachers reported that the analysis of MCAS data has not consistently influenced instruction and teachers have not been guided in how to analyze and use data.

High school departments are engaged in an ongoing process to develop and implement common assessments and elements of common assessments in all core subject areas. High school teachers use common assessments or common assessment elements in all mid-terms and final exams, depending on the subject area. Teachers also review PSAT and SAT data. MCAS data is reviewed by departments to determine strengths and weaknesses and guide curriculum planning. However, for the most part, the review team did not find evidence that data analysis at the high school leads to meaningful individualized or differentiated instruction to meet students' diverse learning needs.

Teachers were confused about who is in charge of curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional development in the district. Some stated that no one is in charge; others thought that the principals are responsible; and still others indicated that they believed the director of elementary education has some responsibility at the elementary level.

Without sustained districtwide leadership and coordination in curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional development, the schools have been left to their own devices to address key teaching and learning issues. There are sporadic examples of progress at the elementary level and high school. However, completed curricula do not exist districtwide. Instruction is not regularly supervised. Evaluations are sometimes not completed. Assessment is neither comprehensive nor systemic. And professional development is not systematically coordinated and aligned to an overarching district mission or improvement goals and objectives at the district and school levels. These weaknesses are mainly related to the absence of systemwide leadership for teaching and learning and an absence of aligned improvement planning at the district and school levels. The current strategic plan is relatively new and has not yet been supplemented by a district improvement plan. The assistant superintendent position that was eliminated at the end of the 2010–2011 school year included responsibility for districtwide leadership in curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional development. The elimination of the position has left the district with no one with the responsibility for districtwide oversight and coordination of these important systems. Furthermore, not all principals have fully met their responsibilities in these areas. The decision to eliminate district leadership for curriculum and instruction is worthy of reconsideration as new leaders assume their roles and begin to develop cohesive district and schoolwide plans for continuous improvement.

Curriculum and Instruction

The district has insufficient curriculum leadership to ensure that there are written, updated, and aligned curriculum documents in all content areas.

As noted in the finding above, the district does not currently have sufficient districtwide curriculum leadership. Additionally, curriculum leadership at the school level is inconsistent. In interviews, teachers, school leaders, school committee members, and the interim superintendent stated that no one is in charge of the curriculum districtwide. Interviewees reported that before June 2011, the assistant superintendent had districtwide responsibility for curriculum. The position was eliminated at the end of the 2010–2011 school year leaving a vacuum in curriculum leadership at the district level. School leaders and teachers said that this position is a "vital" position and that without it there is no one "to follow through in the district." School leaders also stated that there is no one at the district level whom they can look to for leadership in curriculum and instruction. Further, interviewees said that the previous superintendent eliminated the position of coordinator of curriculum in 2010, adding that role's responsibilities to those of the assistant superintendent.

There is an absence of clarity in the district about curriculum responsibilities at the elementary level. In 2011–2012, with the reorganization of the Mary K. Goode Elementary School (grades 1–2) and the Henry B. Burkland Elementary School (grades 3–5) into two schools with grades 1–5, the interim superintendent created the position of director of elementary education. Among the responsibilities assigned to this position are the following:

- Coordinating the curriculum in kindergarten through grade 5
- Ensuring equity of programs across elementary schools and into the first year of middle school
- Providing leadership in the full implementation and evaluation of programs such as *Readers Workshop* and *Everyday Mathematics* at the kindergarten through grade 6 level
- Assisting the elementary principals, the ELL director, the Title I director, and the assistant principals
- Monitoring district/state standards at the elementary level

In interviews, school leaders and school committee members referred to the director of elementary education as having curriculum leadership responsibilities at the kindergarten through grade 5 level. Whereas, in interviews, teachers explained that the curricular role of the director of elementary education is "temporarily to oversee the elementary reconfiguration." At the school level, although the principals of each of the district schools viewed themselves as the curriculum leaders, teachers expressed mixed views ranging from "nobody is in charge of the curriculum" to the director of elementary education "drives the curriculum" at the kindergarten through grade 5 level.

Kindergarten and Elementary Curriculum

The review team was told that issues with the curriculum begin at the kindergarten level. In interviews with district leadership it was reported that although the district was an early adopter of a full-day kindergarten, the kindergarten curriculum for mathematics and ELA has not been updated or expanded to reflect a full-day kindergarten program. DIBELS data for the fall of 2010 indicates that 26 percent of students entering grade 1 were reading at the "strategic" level and 24 percent at the "intensive" level. In other words, half of students entering grade 1 were not "established" readers. DIBELS data for fall 2011 indicated some improvements; yet, at the Mary K. Goode School, 33 percent of students entering grade 1 were still not established readers and at the Henry B. Burkland School, 16 percent were still not established readers.

Curriculum documentation at the elementary level is fragmented and was described as such by teachers and one principal. In interviews, teachers, school leaders, and district leaders reported that at the elementary level there are no consistent schoolwide documents for the curriculum that include objectives, resources, instructional strategies, timelines, and assessments. In ELA and mathematics there is a heavy reliance on textbook programs and teachers' manuals to guide instruction. Interviewees stated that when new teachers arrive in the elementary grades, they receive teacher-designed units of study for *Readers Workshop*; a copy of the state standards and teacher's manuals for *Readers Workshop* and *Everyday Mathematics, Good Habits, and Great Readers*; literacy materials; a comprehension tool kit; and *Fundations*.

Readers Workshop has been implemented as the literacy program at the elementary level. In interviews, teachers and school and district leaders reported that teachers received two and a half years of professional development from the Tufts Center for Applied Child Development to launch the program. Kindergarten through grade 2 teachers created units with questions and benchmarks. Interviewees stated that they now have "pieces" of curriculum and that the program is now "embedded" in kindergarten through grade 2 and still a work in progress in grades 3–5. District documents and interviews with teachers and school leaders indicate that teachers are receiving ongoing support from the literacy coach, principals, and the director of elementary education to fully implement the program.

Although the district now has a unified research-based reading program in place at the elementary level, there is no unified writing program. In interviews, teachers and school leaders reported that various programs are used, including *Lucy Calkins Writing Workshop*, *Writers Express*, and *6 + 1 Traits of Writing*. As students transition from grade to grade, many need to adjust to new writing protocols and formats.

In math, teachers do not have the benefit of a documented curriculum to drive instruction. In interviews, teachers, school leaders, and directors reported that there are no curriculum documents for the mathematics program, *Everyday Mathematics*, which has been used in the district since 2008. Until the 2011–2012 school year with the introduction of the mathematics coach at the elementary level, the only professional development teachers received to launch the program was from the publisher and was limited to the first six months of the program's

implementation. Interviewees stated that they are now receiving support from the mathematics coach to implement *Everyday Mathematics*.

There is limited curricular support for science and social studies at the elementary level. Interviewees said that the time allotted for science and social studies at the kindergarten through grade 2 level is 90 minutes weekly with science topics often embedded into ELA texts. In grades 3–5 the time allotted for both subjects is 60 minutes per day. In interviews it was reported that there has been no curriculum in science at the elementary level since 2005. A PowerPoint presentation on the kindergarten through grade 5 science curriculum, which was posted on the Middleborough Public Schools website at the time of the onsite visit, is dated October 6, 2003. There is a scope and sequence for social studies. However, interviewees said that "no conversations about teaching science and social studies are taking place in the district."

Elementary Curriculum Initiatives

A review of district documents and interviews with district and school leaders confirmed that several curriculum development initiatives are taking place at the elementary level. Each elementary school has formed ELA and math leadership teams led by school principals. In addition, a kindergarten through grade 5 ELA team and a kindergarten through grade 5 math team were organized by the director of elementary education to work on alignment and curriculum mapping of the new Massachusetts curriculum frameworks and a K–5 Curriculum and Professional Development Advisory Council was formed in January 2012.

Middle School Curriculum

There are no operational schoolwide curriculum documents at the middle school level. Interviewees reported that at the close of the 2010–2011 school year, the interim superintendent eliminated department heads at the middle school. They had no curriculum responsibilities and did not agree to meet with the principal. It was unclear to him what they did. In interviews, school leaders, teachers, and district leaders said that the principal is now the designated curriculum leader at the middle school. Interviewees elaborated on this by stating that with the elimination of the assistant superintendent and department heads the responsibility for the curriculum has "fallen to the principal, but nothing is happening." And although the interim superintendent had included funds for subject-level team leaders at the middle school in the fiscal year 2012 budget, the principal never filled those positions.

ELA at the Middle School

Until last year, students at the middle school were not receiving adequate time-on-learning. Teachers, school leaders, and district leaders said that by eliminating a directed study period, the principal was able to increase time for ELA instruction to 102 minutes per day. However, by increasing time-on-learning common planning time for interdisciplinary teams, the organizing principle of the school, was eliminated. Although middle school teams are referred to as interdisciplinary teams, interviewees reported that it is in name only. Teachers at the middle school now meet as a department once a month and as a full faculty once a month. Interdisciplinary teams may meet informally during teacher prep time.

There are no complete curriculum maps in ELA at the middle school level. In interviews, school leaders and teachers reported that each grade at the middle school "does something different." Interviewees stated said that although there are common novels plus supplements in use, various texts are used across grades and in some cases within grades. They said that there is no uniformity about what is taught at grade levels. Interviewees reported that curriculum mapping in ELA is teacher driven with teachers completing maps on their "own time."

Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies at the Middle School

There is no unified mathematics program at the middle school nor are there schoolwide curriculum documents for mathematics. In interviews, teachers and school leaders described the mathematics program as not having unity and said that, in some cases, different textbooks are used within teams at the same grade level. Curriculum maps that do exist were described by interviewees as "old" with no professional development offered by the district or at the school to develop new maps. Interviewees reported they are left to do curriculum maps individually. In 2011, MCAS test results in mathematics show that the district was well below the state proficiency rate in grades 7 and 8, by 14 points and 17 points, respectively (see Table C2 in Appendix C).

In interviews, teachers and school leaders said that science books are old and there are no current, updated curriculum documents for science. Interviewees stated that the two grade 6 teams use different science texts; in grade 7 two different texts are used because they do not have enough of the same textbooks. The three grade 8 teams use a text as a reference. The state of social studies mirrors that of science at the middle school. In addition to no schoolwide curriculum, interviewees said that the two grade 6 teams used two different approaches to teaching social studies; in grade 7, a text is not often used; while in grade 8, all three teams use the same textbook.

Keys to Literacy Grant and MMSI Grant

In interviews with school leaders and teachers it was reported that middle school teachers are receiving professional development through the Keys to Literacy grant (supported by DSAC) and the MMSI (Massachusetts Math Science Initiative) grant. Three middle school teachers are scheduled to be trained as literacy coaches, while through the MMSI grant vertical articulation between high school and middle school in math, ELA, and science has begun In addition, interviewees said that the MMSI grant has had a "huge impact" on AP enrollment at the high school (see the first Student Support finding).

High School Curriculum

Curriculum at the high school is more fully documented than curriculum at other levels. In interviews, teachers and school leaders and department heads reported that curriculum documentation became an initiative during the 2010–2011 school year under the leadership of a new principal. In addition, interviewees stated that the high school is preparing for a NEASC accreditation visit scheduled for the spring of 2013. One goal in preparing for the visit is to

document curriculum. Curriculum documentation for the core classes will be completed by June 2012.

Curriculum leadership at the high school is the responsibility of the principal and the department heads. Interviewees said that department meetings take place monthly and that during the 2011–2012 school year the focus has been on curriculum mapping. Although teachers are creating maps for the subjects they teach, the departments as a whole are reviewing and approving the maps. A common template defined by the principal is being used in all departments and includes the following characteristics: time frame, content, essential questions, state standards, 21st century skills, resources/materials/references, and formative and summative assessments. A review of draft curriculum maps shows a range in completeness and quality with some excellent examples of curriculum mapping. Interviewees reported that the revised curriculum maps will reflect the new Massachusetts curriculum frameworks.

Review and Revision of the Curriculum and Vertical Articulation

The district has not established a formal districtwide procedure for review and revision of the curriculum. In addition, the review team was told in interviews that the district does not have a cycle for updating textbooks and resources. Although the district has not established a deadline/timeline for alignment to the new Massachusetts curriculum frameworks, interviewees reported that principals have determined that they must have alignment in place by 2014 and some work has begun. In interviews, school leaders and teachers stated that with the exception of the high school where curriculum revisions are taking place, there has been no focus on curriculum renewal in the district. At the elementary level, the kindergarten through grade 5 ELA team and the kindergarten through grade 5 math team are working with coaches on mapping the ELA and math curriculum to align with the new Massachusetts curriculum frameworks. At the time of the review, however, there were no completed documents available for the review team to examine.

Vertical alignment of curriculum between grades and schools is not firmly established. In interviews, teachers reported that there is no continuity between grades because they "have nothing concrete" and that the curriculum is fragmented. However, school leaders and teachers said that although there have been recent vertical discussions at the kindergarten through grade 5 level, there have not been any between the elementary and the middle schools. . Interviewees said that in December 2011, middle and high school English teachers met for vertical discussion for the first time since 2008. Recently because of the terms of the MMSI grant, there have been more opportunities for vertical conversations to take place among middle and high school science, mathematics, and English teachers.

In summary, the district has not given sufficient oversight to curricula practices at every level, beginning with kindergarten. At the present time, the district does not have complete curriculum documents for the core subjects at the elementary and the middle school levels. With the reconfiguration of the district's elementary schools and the appointment of a director of elementary education, the district has taken initial steps to develop a written curriculum in

mathematics and ELA at the elementary level. With a needed focus on mathematics and ELA, the absence of science and social studies curricula has not yet been addressed.

In addition, the district has not given enough attention to the development of curriculum at the middle school level. An absence of a fully documented curriculum at the middle school level and a reliance on variety of textbooks within grade-level classes of the same subject have contributed to inconsistencies and disunity in what is being taught in the core subjects. And the absence of a cohesive mathematics program at the middle school has contributed to MCAS test results meaningfully below the state results. With the exception of the state standards there are no curriculum documents for the middle school to guide instruction. Although high school curriculum documents (curriculum maps) are being revised and are nearing completion, they are not of uniform quality and completeness.

Alignment across grades and between grades and school levels in the district is not firmly established at the elementary and middle school levels and between middle school and high school. Students in the district are not experiencing the benefits of a rigorous and aligned curriculum. Without a fully developed curriculum in core subjects, the delivery of high-quality instruction is compromised throughout the district. Further, without a written curriculum to guide instruction there is no assurance that what students are being taught is aligned to the state standards.

Instructional practices in the district are not effectively monitored at all levels and teachers receive insufficient feedback to improve instruction. Observed instructional practices in the district are not focused on clearly articulated learning objectives, and instruction is mainly teacher-centered with limited opportunities for students to actively engage in learning and to experience varied instructional strategies, higher-order thinking, student groups, and formative assessments.

Monitoring and Providing Feedback on Instruction

The district does not have a system in place to actively monitor and give feedback on instructional practices at all levels. In interviews school leaders reported that the district has not provided direction or formal training in conducting learning walkthroughs, although there is an objective to explore walkthroughs in the current elementary SIP. In focus groups, teachers and school leaders stated that except for observations required before a summative evaluation is completed (see the second Human Resources and Professional Development finding), teachers receive little other feedback on instruction. At the high school level, although department heads may sometimes conduct walkthroughs, there is no commonly understood walkthrough protocol or a format to give feedback on instruction. In interviews, teachers at all levels reported that they receive little feedback on instruction.

In interviews the review team was told that there is no consistency in monitoring or reviewing lesson plans in the district. At one elementary school, although lesson plans are reviewed monthly by the assistant principal, no feedback is generally given. Lesson plans are not collected at the other elementary school and are not reviewed at the middle school. At the high school, interviewees reported that although lesson plans are "requested" by some department heads, not

all teachers comply. There is no districtwide expectation that lesson plans be monitored throughout the schools and feedback given to teachers. Although in interviews the review team was told that they should expect to see agendas, objectives, essential questions, and checking for understanding in the classrooms observed, these lesson elements were not seen with any consistency in observed classrooms.

Opportunities for teachers to meet as teams or in grade-level meetings to discuss instructional practices are limited. At the elementary level, interviewees stated that teachers do not have common planning time and that grade-level teams meet on their own. In interviews with school leaders and teachers, the review team was told that middle school, grade-level interdisciplinary teams do not have common planning time because of a needed schedule change to ensure adequate time-on-learning. Although the new schedule provides common time, it is for individual teacher prep time rather than time to meet as an interdisciplinary teaching team. Teachers at the middle school meet once a month as a faculty and once a month as a department. At the high school level teachers meet in departments once a month.

Although interviewees reported that teachers are eager to work with the newly appointed mathematics and literacy coaches at the elementary level, the opportunities to do so are restricted by an absence of common planning time and by having only two coaches whose schedules and caseloads limit their availability. Coaches can only work with grade-level teams for half the year. In interviews with teachers and school leaders, the review team was told that from September through December the literacy coach works with teachers in kindergarten through grade 2 and from January through June with teachers in grades 3–5. The math coach has the reverse schedule, working first with grade 3–5 teachers and then switching to kindergarten through grade 2 in January. Both the literacy and mathematics coaches are doing intensive lesson modeling and classroom teachers are receiving professional development in literacy and mathematics instruction during the school day because substitutes are hired for teachers during coaching meetings. Interviewees said that each of the coaches is working with 68 teachers in three schools in the district.

Classroom Observations

The review team observed instruction in 82 classrooms in the district: 29 elementary classrooms at the grades 1–5 level; 22 classrooms at the middle school level, and 31 classrooms at the high school level. At the elementary level, these included 15 ELA classes, 8 mathematics classes, 5 science classes, and 1 music class. At the middle school level, the review team observed 11 ELA classes, 7 mathematics classes (one class was a language-based mathematics class), and 1 music class. At the high school, the review team observed five English classes, six math classes, ten science classes, eight social studies classes, one fine arts class, and one consumer economics class.

The observations were approximately 20 minutes in length. All review team members used ESE's instructional inventory, a tool for observing characteristics of standards-based teaching and learning, to record their observations. The tool contains 35 characteristics within 10 categories: classroom climate, learning objective, use of class time, content learning,

instructional techniques, activation of higher-order thinking, instructional pacing, student thinking, student groups, and the use of assessments. Review team members are asked to note when they observe or do not observe a characteristic and record evidence of a characteristic on a form.

Classroom Climate

The characteristics of students following school rules and classroom expectations and students and teachers demonstrating positive and respectful relationships were observed to be solidly in place in the district. In the category of classroom climate, the review team found that students behaved according to school rules and expectations in 100 percent of the classrooms observed at the elementary and middle school levels and in 84 percent of the classrooms observed at the high school level. Review team members described students at all levels as "respectful" and "well behaved" with a "positive tone" in classrooms observed throughout the district. When students in one grade 3 ELA class used the new vocabulary that they had learned, the teacher remarked "I love that you are using our new vocabulary." In one middle school classroom the teacher said "I see a lot of good things going on" as students were writing in their journals at the start of class. After a class discussion of the "Do Now," a grade 11 English teacher said "Well done. Snaps for you." And all the students robustly snapped their fingers in acknowledgement of a task well done.

Use of Class Time

Review team members found that the practice of teachers being prepared with materials ready for instruction was very solidly in place throughout the district. This characteristic was observed in 100 percent of observed classrooms at the elementary level, 95 percent of classrooms visited at the middle school level, and 90 percent of observed classrooms at the high school level. In one grade 7 ELA classroom, students entered the room to find the agenda for the day posted along with the homework and the "Do Now" projected on the screen. Responding to routines and making transitions between activities is solidly in place at all school levels and was noted in 83 percent of observed elementary classrooms and in 77 percent of classrooms visited at both the middle school and high school levels. Teachers explained tasks and provided choices for when the task was complete in 81 percent of classrooms observed at the high school; this characteristic was observed less frequently at the elementary and middle school levels, where it was seen in 66 percent and 64 percent of the visited classrooms, respectively.

In 79 percent of the classrooms observed at the elementary level the review team noted that teachers set high expectations for student learning and conveyed them to students. In one observed elementary class students took a pledge to do their best work and to respect one another. This characteristic of teachers setting high expectations and conveying them to students was not as solidly in place at the high school and middle school, where it was evident in 65 percent and 59 percent of the observed classrooms, respectively. In observed classes at both the high school and middle school while there were examples of high expectations set, there were exceptions. In one grade 9 English class, students were told to pronounce words "however you want" with the teacher making no attempt to review the challenging vocabulary before students

began reading the book. In a high school geometry class, a student asked a question about the origin of the word "parabola" and while the teacher did not know the answer and said so, no attempt was made to encourage students in the class to look it up and report back to the class.

Content Learning

In the category of content learning the review team reported solid evidence that teachers are communicating academic content with clarity and accuracy in 90 percent of observed classes at the high school level, in 73 percent of classes visited at the middle school level, and in 83 percent of observed classrooms at the elementary level. The review team found that content appropriate for grade and level was solidly in place in 90 percent of classrooms observed at the high school level, in 91 percent of classrooms visited at the middle school, and in 79 percent of observed classes at the elementary level. For example, in a grade 9 science class students were determining whether the capture-tag-recapture method produces accurate fish population counts by recreating the procedure in a controlled lab, recording the data, and completing a written analysis. In a grade 7 English class, students were starting a novel and had received a 20-page "literature note packet" containing activities, vocabulary lists, a KWL chart (i.e., what the student *knows, wants to know,* and has *learned*), comprehension questions, and graphic organizers for essay development. Students in a grade 1 ELA class, who were learning about personification in poetry, were giving examples such as "the hands on a clock" and "the back of a door."

The review team observed the practice of students making connections to prior learning in 76 percent of visited elementary classrooms and in 68 percent of visited classrooms at the middle and high school levels. For example, in a grade 5 mathematics class, the teacher began a lesson on scientific notation by saying "yesterday, we talked about *nanobytes*. How many decimal places are in a *nano*?"

While the characteristics in the category of content learning clearly are in place in the district, the review team found that there are limited opportunities for students at all levels in the district to engage in a variety of instructional resources, including technology, to learn content. The review team observed a variety of resources or technology in 21 percent of visited elementary classrooms, in 18 percent of visited classes in the middle school, and 35 percent of visited classrooms at the high school. The characteristic of engaging students by using a variety of instructional strategies to accommodate their learning styles was observed in 41 percent of visited classrooms at the elementary level, in 27 percent of visited classes at the middle school, and in 52 percent of visited classrooms at the high school.

The characteristic of responding to students' individual and diverse learning needs by differentiating instruction is not in place in the district. In classrooms visited across schools, the review team found that students have limited opportunities to participate in tiered or differentiated learning activities. The characteristic of asking students to apply new conceptual knowledge in a lesson was most frequently observed at the elementary level where it was seen in 52 percent of visited classrooms. In one grade 3 ELA lesson, students were learning the distinction between inferences and inferring by applying each concept to a new story that they

were reading. This characteristic of asking students to apply new conceptual knowledge in a lesson was not typically seen at the middle and high schools where it was observed in 23 percent and 35 percent of visited classes, respectively.

Instructional Techniques

The review team observed teacher-directed, whole-group instruction in 90 percent of classrooms visited at the high school level, in 68 percent of classes visited at the middle school level, and in 69 percent of classrooms visited at the elementary level. With teacher-centered instruction the dominant instructional technique observed, students in the district have few opportunities for guided practice, small group and paired learning, and independent practice.

Instructional Pacing

While the review team noted that lessons were paced to allow all students to engage in lessons as a group in 76 percent of classrooms observed at the elementary level, in 73 percent of classes visited at the middle school level, and in 68 percent of classrooms observed at the high school level, it did not find questioning techniques solidly in place in observed classes across the district. The practice of using wait time to allow all students to think and then to respond was uneven in classrooms visited throughout the district. Review team members noted this practice in 73 percent of the classrooms observed at the middle school, in 55 percent of the classes visited at the high school, and in 45 percent of the classes observed at the elementary level. The team also observed a range in the quality of effective questioning techniques in the classes visited in the district. In one middle school ELA class the teacher continued probing and supporting a student by asking, "When you speak out what's happening?" and "When you call out what's happening?" staying with him until he was able to answer the question, beaming. In one class observed at the elementary level, the teacher waited a very little time after asking questions and then answered the questions herself.

Activation of Higher-Order Thinking

In the category of activation of higher-order thinking skills, the characteristic of students examining, analyzing, or interpreting information was most evident at the high school where the review team observed this characteristic in 81 percent of all classrooms visited. In one high school science class students were analyzing elastic collision with the goal of creating a flyer that "defined, explained and demonstrated" momentum and collisions. At the middle school level, the review team found students examining, analyzing, and interpreting information in 68 percent of the classrooms observed and at the elementary level in 59 percent of the classrooms observed.

However, the activation of other higher-order thinking skills is not in place in the district. The characteristic of students forming predictions, developing arguments, and evaluating information either verbally or in written format was observed in 45 percent of visited high school classrooms, in 18 percent of visited middle school classrooms, and in 34 percent of elementary classrooms visited. Opportunities for students to evaluate and reflect on their own thinking in how they go about solving a problem or complete a task were noted in 16 percent of observed classrooms at the high school level, in 14 percent of visited classrooms at the middle school level, and in 28

percent of observed classes at the elementary level. The review team observed students asking questions that were linked to the learning objectives of the lesson in 32 percent of visited high school classrooms, in 9 percent of visited middle school classrooms, and in 3 percent of classrooms visited at the elementary level.

Student Thinking and Student Groups

Linked to higher-order thinking skills is the category of student thinking in which students use various means, verbally or in writing, to represent their ideas and thinking. The review team observed this practice in 69 percent of classrooms visited at the elementary level, in 27 percent of classes visited at the middle school, and in 48 percent of classrooms visited at the high school level. The review team found in observed classes that students at all school levels had limited opportunities to participate with one another in structures such as think-pair-share or turn-and-talk or in small groups to advance their thinking. The review team observed these practices in 28 percent of visited elementary classrooms, in 18 percent of visited middle school classes, and in 19 percent of visited high school classrooms. There were notable exceptions; for example, in one middle school mathematics class think-pair-share was used as a warm-up activity and throughout the lesson students shared their thinking on square roots with one another.

Learning Objective and Use of Student Assessments

Review team members found that the practice of using learning objectives and communicating them to students to drive the lesson is not embedded in instruction in the district. Although the review team noted that in observed classrooms agendas of classroom activities were sometimes listed on classroom boards, typically learning objectives to identify learning outcomes for students were not posted. The review team found posted learning objectives in 38 percent of visited elementary classrooms, in 33 percent in observed middle school classrooms, and in 45 percent of visited high school classrooms.

Informal classroom assessments, on-the-spot informal assessments, students receiving feedback in relation to the learning objectives, and students revising work based on feedback were observed with limited frequency throughout the district's schools. The practice of using at least one informal assessment (e.g., thumb tool, ticket to leave) to check for students' understanding or mastery of the lesson objectives was seen in 17 percent of observed classrooms at the elementary level, in 5 percent of visited classes at the middle school level, and in 23 percent of observed classrooms at the high school level. Teachers' use of on-the-spot feedback from informal assessments to adjust instruction was observed in 10 percent of classrooms visited at the elementary level, in 5 percent of classrooms visited at the middle school level, and in 6 percent of classes visited at the high school level. In observed classrooms at all levels, the review team found that students did not have sufficient opportunities to receive verbal or written feedback in how they were doing in relation to the learning objectives. This practice of students receiving feedback that tells where they are in relation to the learning goals was observed in 7 percent of visited elementary classrooms, in 18 percent of visited middle school classrooms, and in 10 percent of visited high school classrooms. Across all levels in observed classrooms, review team members found that students did not have enough opportunities to revise and improve their work

based on feedback from the teacher. The review team observed this practice in 10 percent or fewer of the classrooms visited throughout all levels in the district.

In summary, according to the evidence from observed classrooms, there are areas of instructional strength in Middleborough's schools. These include a strong classroom climate, effective teacher preparation and use of class time, effective teacher communication in content areas, appropriate selections of content for grade and level, and effective instructional pacing to insure student engagement. While these strengths are clear from the evidence gathered by the review team, there are areas of instructional design and delivery that have not been fully developed resulting in uneven and weak instructional practices districtwide.

Across schools, a number of key characteristics of effective instructional practices are not consistently in place. The district does not have a clearly understood design for instructional delivery that includes, among other characteristics, the posting and communicating of rigorous learning objectives that identify student learning outcomes. At present, the use of informal classroom assessments throughout the district is not solidly in place. Informal classroom assessments are linked to learning objectives and clarify whether or not students understand the key ideas in a lesson, often before they move on to a new lesson segment.

Although content appears appropriate for grade and level throughout the district, content learning for students is not maximized. Students do not have enough opportunities to actively engage with content through technology and through varied instructional strategies that meet their diverse learning needs. The dominant mode of instruction is teacher-directed, whole-group instruction limiting students' opportunities to fully engage in learning and be active learners. Nor are there enough opportunities for tiered instruction at all levels in the district. Opportunities for students to participate in small-group work and pair learning are not firmly in place. With the exception of examining, analyzing, and interpreting information, higher-order and critical thinking skills are not being consistently activated throughout the schools.

At all levels, teachers are not receiving rigorous instructional feedback to improve their practice. There is no formal walkthrough process whereby teachers can receive informal feedback on instruction. Although the district now has a literacy coach and a mathematics coach at the elementary level, their impact on instructional practice is compromised because of fractured scheduling and high caseload issues. Further, curriculum, instruction, and assessment are linked; this is not reflected in documents and in practice in the district. Without a robust updated curriculum at all levels (see the first Curriculum and Instruction finding) to guide and enrich curriculum, instruction, and assessment, effective instructional practices are difficult to attain and sustain. Until effective instructional practices are developed and embedded districtwide, it will be challenging for the district to ensure that all students are benefiting from strong teaching practices that support higher levels of achievement.

Assessment

Although a number of assessments are administered in core academic subjects, the district does not yet have a balanced and comprehensive assessment system to guide instruction, inform curriculum, and determine students' remedial and enrichment requirements.

Identifying Assessment as a District and School Priority

Under the leadership of the interim superintendent, the district has identified assessment and the use of data as a priority in several goals in the new Strategic Plan 2011–2016. The plan includes a belief statement that "the effective utilization of data results in informed decision-making and accountability." Goal #3 includes an objective "to implement a comprehensive and systemic approach to formative and summative assessment." Goal #5 lists four objectives to "develop and implement a comprehensive data-based management system…that provides real time access to fiscal, programmatic and student data."

The Strategic Plan was developed in 2011 and little has been accomplished in establishing systems to fulfill its goals. A District Improvement Plan has yet to be developed. A review of all five School Improvement Plans and evidence from interviews with school leaders and teachers indicate that the SIPs generally do not have explicit strategies and goals to develop, analyze, and use multiple forms of assessment or promote the use of assessments and assessment data. There are some exceptions, such as the charge to the elementary mathematics coach to develop formative assessments, the continued use of DIBELS and the DRA2 for elementary literacy, and references to using assessment evidence (e.g., performance tasks) in the transition to Understanding by Design at the middle school. The latter has not yet taken place. Districtwide the schools have identified as a goal improving students' responses to open- response questions on MCAS tests.

Assessment at the Memorial Early Childhood Center and the Elementary Schools

The range of elementary assessments meets some teaching and learning needs. For literacy in pre-kindergarten through grade 5, there is clarity about standardized assessments used for screening, diagnostics and, in some cases, benchmarking. For example, at the Memorial Early Childhood Center, preschool teachers use the Brigance Preschool Screening tool and kindergarten teachers use the Eliot Pearson Screening Tool to assess students' readiness for school and academic work. Standardized formative literacy assessments for kindergarten through grade 5 include the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), given three times a year to assess key reading skill development and monitor reading progress. Teachers also use DIBELS data to compose reading groups and help place students in kindergarten through grade 3 in appropriate tiers for Response to Intervention (RTI) sessions. In addition, teachers use DIBELS to run records to monitor reading progress. However, the review team was told that the district sometimes does not have an effective system to collect and share DIBELS data in a timely way to ensure proper grouping in RTI sessions held each morning from 8:50 a.m. to 9:20 a.m.

The Dynamic Reading Assessment (DRA2), 2nd edition, is also given to assess reading skills, once at the end of kindergarten and at the beginning and end of the year in grades 1–5. Students reading below benchmark take the DRA2 more frequently at the teacher's discretion. Finally, students in kindergarten through grade 3 also take *Fundations* unit tests as they develop phonemic awareness.

For the *Readers Workshop* program, teachers hold conferences with students individually or in groups to assess literacy strengths and weaknesses using leveled books. When done well, this is a type of formative assessment; it was observed by review team members in several lessons. In addition, teachers also use guided reading activities with small groups who may need additional support. This practice was also observed by the review team in a number of classrooms. However, because there is no fully documented curriculum in ELA, most assessments for *Readers Workshop*, either formative or summative, are designed and used at the teacher's discretion with some sharing of materials. Formative assessment formats or strategies, apart from conferences, were not in widespread use as instructional strategies in observed lessons.

The use of writing programs, the teaching of writing, and writing assessments are fragmented in kindergarten through grade 5. Three writing programs are used at the elementary schools, according to interviewees: *6 + 1 Trait Writing* in kindergarten through grade 2, *Writers Express* in grades 3–5, and *Lucy Calkins Writers Workshop*. Interviewees indicated that the 20 or more teachers who have had *Writers Express* training are the ones who use the program even though not all need the teaching materials that have been made available to support it. Although writing benchmarks were developed last year for grades 1–2, interviewees noted that not all teachers use them.

Other assessments at the elementary level include the mid-year and end-of-year benchmark tests for *Everyday Mathematics*. In a focus group, teachers agreed that although benchmarking was required, it was not done uniformly across grades. Also, according to the Assessment Matrix submitted by the district before the review, mathematics benchmarks are given only in kindergarten through grade 2. Students in grade 5 take an end-of-year mathematics transition test as they prepare for grade 6. However, a leader told the review team that everyone interprets these tests differently. Other assessments in mathematics vary by teacher, although some do share assessments and discuss them informally.

Interviewees noted that overall formative assessments other than DIBELS are developed and used at the discretion of individual teachers. Teachers in an elementary focus group concurred, describing both the curriculum and the assessment system as "fragmented," a term also used to describe curriculum and instruction and assessment in an interview with an elementary leader.

According to interviewees, assessments for science and social studies rely on end-of-unit tests that accompany the programs with some teachers using formative assessments. Yet, others in the focus group noted that science and social studies materials are not evenly available across schools or grade levels to support instruction and there is no updated curriculum. An example given for a formative assessment was for students to draw pictures of topics being studied and

then explain them. Interviewees also noted that science and social studies topics are sometimes incorporated into texts for *Readers Workshop* lessons.

Teachers and leaders noted that there is no regularly scheduled common planning time for full, grade-level teams to meet other than at monthly faculty meetings or informally on their own. This sometimes takes place during the six half-day professional development days set aside for teachers' work. Although teachers sometimes discuss assessments at the informal meetings, the review team found no evidence that this was an expectation of the school or the district.

Other teacher meetings take place when the new ELA and mathematics coaches convene partial grade-level teams for professional development for one half-day each month during half the year. The teachers who attend are determined by the number of substitutes available that day; therefore, the same group of teachers may not convene for the next sequenced coaching session. Sustained work with coaches for both ELA and mathematics for a full year does not take place in the district. Grade levels meet with the coaches for only half the year. Each coach works with 68 teachers who come from both elementary schools.

Further evidence of the use of assessments was derived from classroom observations. When the review team observed 29 classrooms at the elementary level, 17 percent provided evidence of at least one informal (formative) assessment to check for student understanding or mastery. In ten percent of observed classrooms, teachers adjusted instruction based on those on-the-spot or formal assessments. In seven percent of observed classrooms, students received feedback from the teacher on where they were in relation to the learning objective, and in seven percent of visited classes, students revised their work based on feedback.

Assessment at the Middle School

The middle school's assessment system is loosely structured mainly because no updated curriculum documents exist to delineate which assessments are either required or appropriate for units of study or individual lessons. Furthermore, the middle school does not have leadership in assessment. Although the interim superintendent designated the middle school principal responsible for curriculum and instruction at her school, teachers told the review team that, as noted above, "nothing is happening." Middle school department heads are no longer in place to guide the development and use of assessments and analysis of assessment data; however, interviews with the interim superintendent and the principal did not indicate that department heads did this when they were in place. In a focus group, middle school teachers noted that although they used to have data meetings in 2009 led by the assistant superintendent, they no longer take place. In addition, although the interim superintendent provided for grade-level team leaders in the 2012 budget to give some leadership, the principal did not appoint them.

In a focus group, it was noted that leadership in curriculum, instruction, and assessment is not taking place at this level. Because of the absence of leadership for curriculum, instruction, and assessment at the middle school, although several high school department heads have taken steps to support middle school departments, this is not a systematic activity; however, it is an expectation of the district's MMSI grant.

Without curriculum guides and without leadership in curriculum, instruction, and assessment, middle school teachers essentially choose what to teach, how to teach, and how to assess student progress. Based on interviews, at the middle school teachers choose ELA texts from among a list of novels and assess student work basically using their own materials, although some share and collaborate. A leader told the review team "People want to do their own thing." The mathematics program has not identified a specific textbook or program and an interviewee noted difficulty in determining who uses which mathematics texts within teams at grade-levels. Teachers in a focus group said that they had developed mathematics benchmarks and some in grade 8 had developed their own final exam, adding that work on assessment for them was staff driven.

The middle school's Assessment Matrix lists writing benchmarks given four times a year and the MCAS test as the ELA assessments. In an interview, the review team was told that although there are common writing prompts, it is difficult to know whether teachers are teaching writing with the same "intensity." And although teachers had been trained in the John Collins Writing Program in the past, there has been no follow–up for new teachers. In mathematics, the matrix includes mathematics benchmarks given "at least six times a year" and the MCAS test. In science, the middle school matrix lists the MCAS test.

A leader told the review team that an area in need of improvement in grades 6–8 is how to interpret the given assessments; the interviewee expressed the hope that all teachers for a given subject are using the same unit tests, wondering aloud whether that had even been communicated to teachers. When the review team asked how teachers address gaps and redundancies and use assessment data, the team was told that middle school teachers do not have the skill or training to look at assessment data and know what they are seeing." When teachers were asked about using data, they said that instruction at the middle school is driven by data "only here and there."

The middle school's educational structure is based on the model of interdisciplinary teams that teach the same cohort of students. When the review team asked when the teams meet to discuss formative and summative assessments, the response indicated that they do not meet regularly. Once a month teachers meet in department meetings and once a month they have faculty meetings. The middle school does not regularly schedule common time to meet as an interdisciplinary team to discuss curriculum, instruction, and assessment or to talk about shared students or student work. A new schedule developed to address time-on-learning deficiencies has eliminated common meeting time for teams. Teachers do have individual prep time and they sometimes meet informally in teams during this time. When asked about common assessments, one interviewee indicated that this is not an expectation or a practice, giving the example of two grade 8 social studies teachers who gave mid-term exams and finals as practice for high school assessments and two who did not.

When the review team observed 22 classrooms at the middle school level, 5 percent provided evidence of at least one informal assessment to check for student understanding or mastery. In five percent of the observed classrooms, the teacher adjusted instruction based on on-the-spot or formal assessment. In 18 percent of visited classes, students received feedback from the teacher

on where they were in relation to the learning objective. And, in nine percent of observed classrooms, students revised work based on feedback.

Assessment at the High School

At the high school level, assessments are fairly well defined and overall appeared thoughtfully implemented. In preparation for a NEASC accreditation visit in the spring of 2013, since 2010–2011 the principal has led the high school staff, with guidance from department heads, in an ongoing process of creating and revising curriculum, instructional strategies, and assessments. In addition to preparing for the NEASC visit, the process has also addressed the need to align curriculum and instruction and by definition assessments to the new Massachusetts curriculum frameworks. Based on a review of documents and evidence from interviews, all this work has not yet been completed; however, progress has been made. The expectation is that documents and practices will be in place in time for the accreditation visit.

The English department has identified the need for common expectations for what students should accomplish by the end of the year in classes. The department has developed common assessments and rubrics and created grade-level essays using common writing prompts with the goal of establishing a standardized language for writing. Previously, teachers used individual rubrics; now rubrics will be shared. The common writing rubric, now being field tested, will also be shared across academic disciplines. A teacher team has also completed five of the seven communications rubrics for the NEASC visit. The high school's Assessment Matrix includes two common final essays in grades 9, 10, and 12 and a digital portfolio project for grades 9 and 11.

A review of the Assessment Matrix and an interview confirm that students take common mid-terms, finals, and unit tests in all high school mathematics courses. Current developmental work in mathematics is focused on aligning courses to the new Massachusetts curriculum frameworks; this will necessitate a shift in topics for both curriculum and assessments. This work is ongoing.

Evidence from interviews, the Assessment Matrix, and curriculum documents indicates that all social studies courses for grades 9, 10, and 11 now use common unit tests, common mid-semester, and common final exams that teachers have developed and shared. The assessments are based on state standards and are often guided by a review of assessment data. Mid-semester and final exams include both multiple choice and open-ended (essay) questions. The social studies department tallies and analyzes data from its multiple choice items and discusses results in department meetings, according to evidence from an interview. In addition, the department also gives students formative and project-based assessments such as a mock court trial.

The high school science department administers common mid-terms and finals; these are delineated by course in the Assessment Matrix. Students take common unit tests only in biology. In other courses, teachers have developed common questions or common elements to use in assessing student work. In addition, the science department has created a standardized format for lab reports and intends to develop common lab reports for grades 6–12 as part of the requirement of the district's Massachusetts Mathematics and Science Initiative (MMSI) grant to convene vertical team meetings and collaborate with teachers in grades 6–12.

However, classroom assessments were not prevalent when the review team observed 31 lessons at the high school. There, 23 percent of observed classes provided evidence of at least one informal assessment to check for student understanding or mastery. In six percent of visited classrooms, the teacher adjusted instruction based on on-the-spot or formal assessment. In ten percent of observed classes, students received feedback from the teacher on where they were in relation to the learning objective, and in ten percent of visited classes students revised work based on feedback.

Overall, the district has yet to develop a comprehensive and balanced assessment system of formative, benchmark, and summative assessments in all core subjects at all grade levels. In addition, data-driven analysis and decision-making embedded in district and school practice and culture at all levels is not uniformly practiced across the district. Although such analysis and decision-making have more presence at the high school, they are unsystematic at other levels. Other assessment formats such as performance assessments and project-based assessments, to name a few, are infrequently used to enhance how students demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and understanding.

In addition, districtwide teachers do not have ample opportunities to meet regularly and frequently in small learning communities in grade-level, subject-level, or team-level groups to discuss teachers' work and students' work, to revise curriculum, to plan instruction, or to analyze and respond to assessment data. Although several qualities of a more complete assessment system are present for grades 9–12, that system, too, is not yet robust in its use of data.

Part of the problem originates with the absence of complete and rich curriculum documents. Part of the problem is related to the limited capacity of teachers and some leaders to meaningfully use assessments and assessment data with agility. Part of the problem rests with limited time to meet in working groups to address teaching and learning issues regularly. Unless the district and each school resolves these issues by building and sustaining a balanced and comprehensive assessment system, Middleborough's educators will find it difficult to take advantage of the potential of assessment to guide instruction, improve pedagogy, inform curricular decisions and revisions, and generally promote improved student achievement and understanding.

Several steps have recently been taken to promote data-based decision-making at all levels; however, leaders and teachers do not yet routinely identify, collect, share, analyze, monitor, and use data from multiple sources to improve performance.

The interim superintendent has highlighted the importance of developing a data-driven and data-managed school district by including a strategic goal related to data management in the Strategic Plan 2011–2016. The need to meet the many objectives outlined in that goal is supported by the examples of the current use and management of data in the district and described below.

Using Data to Set Policy, Allocate Resources, and Drive Improvement Planning

In interviews, school committee members indicated that the principals and the interim superintendent report to the committee on student achievement mainly by presenting MCAS data in the fall. Committee members also noted receiving other data such as dropout rates, Title I

data, and information from newly appointed coaches on ELA and mathematics in the elementary schools. When asked to identify how the committee used MCAS or other data in its decision-making, in one interview committee members pointed to establishing new graduation requirements several years ago and implementing a new mathematics program about five years ago, adding that the change in program did not produce a change in mathematics performance. In another interview, a committee member noted that although this year the committee received MCAS data for student subgroups, there was no real conversation about what they (i.e., the schools) were doing about MCAS scores or the "next steps" needed to improve student achievement.

A review of the schools' PowerPoint presentations of MCAS tests results to the school committee showed four very different presentations in content, substance, and format. The variations suggest that clear expectations had not been set for the presentations and no common format was specified to define the most useful information to inform and assist the committee as they prepared to develop the budget.

To make a difference in student achievement, the interim superintendent has used MCAS and other student data to drive budget decisions about staffing and class size. In two budget cycles he has prioritized the reduction of class size at some schools and was able to cut 16 positions (administrators and teachers) in order to add 23 positions, mostly teachers.

Using MCAS Data and Other Data to Guide Instruction and Improve Curriculum

In focus groups, teachers noted receiving MCAS presentations from their principal or, at the high school, from department heads. They mentioned a variety of ways in which MCAS results are used, or not used, to better understand students' strengths and weaknesses, to adjust curriculum, and to improve teaching decisions and strategies. Elementary teachers reported that results are discussed at a faculty meeting and trends are identified, resulting in the priority to improve scores on ELA and mathematics open-response questions. This priority is included in the elementary SIP. Yet, at the beginning of the focus group, when teachers were asked to describe actions taken either by the district or the school to improve student achievement in the two years before the site visit, no teacher identified building student capacity to better answer open-response questions as a priority. Elementary teachers identified other improvement initiatives derived from MCAS tests results such as changing the sequence of when to teach poetry. Furthermore, teachers noted an absence of clarity in how decisions are made to make improvements at their schools. Elementary leaders described taking a couple of faculty meetings to look at MCAS trends, content standards, and strands. They also noted the priority to improve how students answered open-response questions. In addition, they described discussing the meaning of MCAS data and how to improve MCAS tests results with students in grade-level meetings.

Yet, there is evidence that data-informed lessons and modifications to practice are a work in progress. For example, in the fall of 2010, 50 percent of students entering grade 1 were identified as either "strategic" or "intensive" in reading as measured by DIBELS data. In the fall of 2011, one third of students entering grade 1 at the Mary K. Goode Elementary School were identified

in the same way. Although modifications might have been made to the kindergarten ELA curriculum, at one elementary school one in three students was still unprepared for grade 1 reading, according to a district leader.

At the middle school, when questioned about using MCAS tests results to guide planning and decision-making, a teacher in a focus group noted that although the principal had presented MCAS data at a faculty meeting there had been "no explanation of what to do about it." Another noted that teachers had not received any professional development in [analyzing] MCAS data; this was confirmed by others in the group. One interviewee explained that middle school teachers were able to look at MCAS tests results in small groups at a faculty meeting for the first time this year (2011–2012).

At the high school teacher focus group, department heads noted that they had participated in the session in which the principal presented MCAS tests results to the school committee. Their role was to talk about what their departments were doing to improve results. In addition, high school department heads indicated that they had met with the principal to discuss MCAS tests results and trends and followed up with presentations and discussions at department meetings. In an interview, several noted how MCAS tests scores influenced changes to curriculum and instruction. For example, in science, a fundamental level course was eliminated in order to raise expectations for all students to study college level biology. In English, the department reviewed strengths and weaknesses and decided to adjust when to teach certain curriculum topics in specific grade levels. For example, *The Crucible* and early American speeches were shifted from grade 11 to grade 10 and further adjustments were made to the non-fiction curriculum. In mathematics, the department extended the grade 9 mathematics time to three terms and grade 10 students who are struggling have a fourth term to fill gaps.

For all intents and purposes, a viable data team has never existed in the district or in the individual schools. Interviewees said that although one was formed in 2009, and met once, it has not met again. An interviewee noted that this was an initiative by the former assistant superintendent.

Communicating and Using Data to Improve Teaching

In several interviews, leaders and teachers explained how walkthroughs have not systematically taken hold in the district. Although the current elementary SIP identifies a walkthrough study team to explore the idea of walkthroughs in the 2011–2012 school year and to recommend steps for implementation in the 2012–2013 school year, no interviewee or document elaborated on this, even when the question of walkthroughs was raised and discussed at several interviews and focus groups. In the elementary focus group, teachers explained that although walkthroughs had been proposed and sometimes leaders came to their rooms briefly, the district has not put in place a structure and provided limited feedback on instruction. Others said that the two assistant principals do joint walkthroughs at the two elementary schools "to have a presence." It was explained that these are just informal visits and limited feedback about instruction is given to teachers.

At the middle school, teachers in a focus group said that they used to have walkthroughs before the prior administration. When walkthroughs took place, teachers believed that leaders hoped to see engaged students and differentiated instruction; however, teachers noted they had not really been trained to differentiate instruction. Teachers then said that the current principal does not have any time to do walkthroughs because there is only one other administrator in the school. They noted that she visits classrooms only for formal observations to inform evaluations.

High school department heads noted in an interview that they conduct informal walkthroughs and informal observations and meet one-on-one with teachers to talk about what has been seen. However, in the high school teacher focus group, a person noted that there is very little feedback to teachers about the quality of instruction, at least in her department.

Using Technology to Collect, Disseminate, Access, Communicate, and Display Data

While there was not a lot of discussion or inquiry during the site visit about the status of technology in the district, the review team noticed that teachers and students infrequently used instructional technology in classrooms. When identifying the number of classrooms in which "students engaged with a variety of curriculum resources and/or technology that enhances their learning," review team members observed this characteristic in 21 percent of observed elementary classrooms, in 18 percent of observed middle school classrooms, and in 35 percent of observed high school classrooms. Computers arrayed in the back of some visited classrooms appeared outdated and were not observed in use. During the week of the site visit, the district's new technology director was in her first week on the job and observed several interview sessions.

The review team also examined the objectives of Goal #5 in the Strategic Plan that identifies the need for a data management system. The objectives demonstrate how extensively the district lags behind many Massachusetts school districts in its capacity to manage its administrative procedures and its instructional systems using state-of-the-art hardware and software. All are noted in need of development. Stakeholders in the schools and community—from leaders to teachers to parents to students—do not currently have adequate and flexible electronic access to school and district and student information and other data that can transform how they think, study, plan, and work. The fiscal year 2013 budget includes allocations for technology to begin to address these objectives.

In more than one instance, teachers said that they do not have the skills to analyze data. While principals in Middleborough now present MCAS tests results to teachers, in many Massachusetts districts teachers have real-time access to MCAS tests results on ESE's Education Data Warehouse. Using X2 or other data access software they also can access other assessment data and pertinent student information to inform them of students' diverse learning needs and capacities. In Middleborough, this does not yet take place. In addition, as noted above, data teams who analyze data, communicate, and use achievement and other data have not been a component of how the district collects, analyzes, communicates, and facilitates the understanding of student work and progress.

In summary, a number of conditions in the district have had an impact on the district's ability to be a highly developed, data-driven system. A comprehensive, data-based management system

has not been a priority until the current Strategic Plan was developed under the guidance of the interim superintendent. A new technology director just started in April 2012. MCAS data presentations have not been effectively designed and shared with the goal of informing policy and budgetary decisions and educating stakeholders about the needs of students, staff, and the academic programs. There is an absence of a state-of-the-art technology infrastructure. The "human infrastructure" has not been well trained in using data to understand and drive all facets of decision-making. It will be challenging for the district and its schools and stakeholders to achieve a more functionally data-driven system until these components, the appropriate resources and stronger human capacity, are more firmly in place.

Human Resources and Professional Development

The district does not have a well-funded, cohesive, districtwide professional development plan developed collaboratively by teachers and administrators to address district and school issues. For the most part, teachers have limited input into identifying professional development needs and the district does not have a central office administrator responsible for professional development districtwide.

According to the interim superintendent, district administrators, and teachers, the district does not have a districtwide professional development plan linked to school or program goals or a district administrator responsible for professional development. District administrators and teachers stated that before the 2011–2012 school year, the assistant superintendent was responsible for professional development; however, because of budgetary restrictions, the interim superintendent eliminated the assistant superintendent position for the 2011–2012 school year and delegated responsibility for professional development to principals and the director of elementary education. When principals were asked who is responsible for professional development in their schools, the middle and high school principals identified themselves (and assistant principals at the high school) as well as the director of elementary education at the elementary level. As a result, focus groups of administrators and teachers told the review team, the district's professional development program is fragmented and does not have focus. Additionally, a review of 2011 per-pupil-expenditure data provided to the review team by ESE showed that Middleborough spends $50 per pupil on professional development compared to $241 per pupil on average statewide. Although the review team is aware that this figure may be calculated differently in different districts, the disparity is wide nevertheless.

The interim superintendent stated that while the district does not have a professional development plan, it does have school-based professional development plans. He said that the director of elementary education coordinates professional development in pre-kindergarten through grade 5 and is the grade 6 liaison for professional development. He went on to say that although the principals are primarily responsible for professional development, a lot of work still needs to be done. He indicated that professional development funding has been kept consistent from year to year and is allocated to the schools, that professional development continues to be a

work in progress, and that a lot of work needs to be done to dig deeper and make professional development more aligned to priorities to improve student achievement.

Interviews and a review of documents showed that professional development takes different forms, including teacher-centered days and coaching at the elementary level, faculty meetings, new-teacher mentoring meetings, department meetings, external workshops, teacher contract credit course offerings, and full-day professional development sessions. The review team examined documents related to professional development, school improvement, and strategic planning; they indicated that on May 19, 2011, the school committee approved a strategic plan that includes five goals, including a goal to "provide ongoing, systemic and sustained professional development that supports the goals of the district and promotes best practices of the Middleborough Public School educators and support staff, in order to enhance student learning." The goal has five objectives ranging from building teacher competency in the new Massachusetts curriculum frameworks to building a rigorous curriculum across content areas. Although all school improvement plans include a professional development goal, they are not all aligned with the strategic plan's professional development goal.

Professional Development in the Elementary Schools

At the elementary level the director of elementary education is responsible for providing leadership in the development and implementation of the elementary professional development plan in pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The district submitted to the review team a document labeled Professional Development Plan for the Elementary Schools 2011–2012, which consists of mathematics, writing, and school improvement goals, as well as a teacher survey and a budget. The document includes a schedule of professional development as well as the professional development needs of each elementary school. Professional development sessions for Education Service Providers (ESPs, i.e., paraprofessionals) are also included on the schedule. The review team also was told that an elementary curriculum and professional development advisory council was recently established by the director and met for the first time on January 26, 2012. At this meeting, the council established a curriculum and professional development advisory team, which "advises and assesses needs in the area of curriculum and professional development in a forecasting approach." Elementary teachers stated that although they have received a lot of worthwhile professional development for *Readers Workshop,* until this year, with a new mathematics coach, limited professional development was offered in mathematics. They also said that, at the elementary level, six half-days of professional development are teacher-directed days and teachers are responsible for informing the principal of their plans for the day.

A review of the elementary level professional development plan and information provided by teachers in the elementary focus group showed that in the 2011–2012 school year ELA and mathematics coaches provided formal and informal professional development to teachers. Elementary focus group participants were overwhelmingly positive about the assistance provided by the two coaches; teachers stated that they are available on teacher-directed professional development days to provide individual assistance to teachers. Some elementary focus group

participants expressed concern about the absence of consistent and relevant professional development for special education teachers and ESPs.

Professional Development at the Middle School

A two-page document related to the Nichols Middle School and labeled NMS Professional Development Plan for School Year 2011–2012 includes the dates of professional development sessions, the type of professional development (faculty meeting, department meeting, or general professional development), and a column labeled agenda. This document does not include an agenda for any session. Teachers in the middle school teacher focus group stated that although the principal has been responsible for professional development since the elimination of the assistant superintendent position and that some professional development in literacy and mathematics is provided through ESE grants, the school district provides limited professional development in mathematics and analysis of data. Teachers did say that professional development is provided in literacy using Keys to Literacy and in special education. Teachers also stated that they do not have any input into professional development. Focus group participants said that professional development at the middle school is "very disjointed." One participant stated that the district has not made one person responsible for professional development across the district and last year (2010–2011) the assistant superintendent had a lot on her plate. Middle school teachers have the opportunity to access external workshops.

Professional Development at the High School

A one-page document labeled Middleborough High School Reaccreditation Plan 2011–2012 School Year Draft 6-20-2011 was submitted to the review team by the district as the high school's professional development plan. It consists of monthly activities associated with the upcoming New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) visit in 2013. Participants in the high school teacher focus group stated that professional development is not up to par. They said that although department heads have run schoolwide professional development, it is a "quick hit with no opportunity for follow up." Focus group participants confirmed that the professional development focus concerns the tasks needed for the NEASC visit. Staff at the high school also have the opportunity to access external workshops.

Professional Development Topics 2009–2011

Although professional development in the district is not developed systematically across the district, teachers at all levels have access to and receive professional development on a variety of topics. The district provided the review team with a document entitled Professional Development Activities for General Education and Special Education Staff. The document lists professional development activities offered or sponsored from September 2009–June 2011. Examples of professional development at the elementary level include *Readers Workshop*, Social Thinking, Data Collection and Analysis training, Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) training, and multiple sessions related to bullying. At the secondary level, examples of professional development include Standard-Based Grading and Reporting, SmartBoard training, Key Three Routines training, Kurzweil training, and sessions on bullying. The review team noted a limited amount of mathematics professional development listed on the document. The review

team also reviewed the 2011–2012 professional development calendar and agenda for special education ESPs. Ten half-day sessions are scheduled and topics listed on the agenda include behavior management strategies, confidentiality and professionalism, and stress management.

The review team was also provided information about the number of teachers who have participated in Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) training. In 2012 the district has 26 English language learners (ELLs) in 5 schools at 13 levels. Fifty-two teachers have received Level 1 training, twenty-one have received Level 2 training, six have received Level 3 training, eleven have received Level 4 training, and two have received training in all four levels. One teacher has English as a Second Language (ESL) certification. Principals and ESL staff said in a focus group that only a few teachers are trained and only one kindergarten teacher has Level 1 training and most teachers trained were at the middle and high school levels. Participants acknowledged the need for training.

The absence of an organized professional development system has an impact on teaching and learning at all levels and does not send a message that improving teacher competency and student achievement is a priority. Based on the evidence, the review team believes that although the district does not have a system of sustained and well-funded professional development, the district's recent design of a strategic plan with a specific professional development goal lays the foundation for this system in the future.

The district does not have a highly functional evaluation system for teachers and administrators that includes consistent observations and formal evaluations that are instructive and promote growth and effectiveness. The district does not have a structured supervision model that includes formative monitoring and feedback to improve instructional quality.

An interview with the interim superintendent and a review of administrator personnel files show that until 2011 administrators were not evaluated annually as required by law and regulation. The interim superintendent said that administrators had not been evaluated for six years. A review of 12 administrative personnel files showed that, except for 3 administrators who were in their first year in the position, all had been evaluated by the interim superintendent in 2011. Most evaluations were not timely because they had not been done annually by the prior superintendent. All the 2011 evaluations had been reviewed and signed, were aligned with the Principles of Effective Administrative Leadership, and were informative and instructive, because they included information on what aspect of the performance needed to improve. The evaluations did not include specific recommendations to attend professional development sessions to improve performance. All administrators' files reviewed by the review team included documentation that the administrator held an active and appropriate license. The review team also reviewed documents that included three to five goals developed by administrators and the interim superintendent that will form the basis of their 2012 evaluation. Administrators confirmed in an interview that they had been or were scheduled to be evaluated by the interim superintendent.

Several school committee members indicated that it was their expectation that administrators and teachers were being evaluated as required and although they had evaluated the prior superintendent, they had not evaluated the interim superintendent.

The collective bargaining agreement between the Middleborough School Committee and the Middleborough Education Association dated July 1, 2010–June 30, 2013 states that teachers without professional status shall be evaluated annually and teachers with professional status shall be evaluated every two years. The review team examined a document entitled Middleborough School Committee and Middleborough Education Association Evaluation Procedures, Standard, and Forms. It includes a description of the documents and forms used by administrators to evaluate teachers. The document also contains an evaluation philosophy, principles of evaluation, timelines, pre- and post-evaluation conference procedures, teacher observation forms, summative evaluation forms, a summative evaluation scoring matrix, and a description of the teacher assistance plan. The review team found the document detailed, complete, and aligned with the Principles of Effective Teaching.

The review team was told in a focus group of administrators that the review team would find a wide variety of ways in which teachers are evaluated, that everyone does it differently. Some evaluations would be limited, others extensive. The review team was also told that it would find files in which evaluations had not been performed for a long time. The review team reviewed the formal evaluations included in the personnel files of 35 teachers with and without professional status. Nineteen of the 35 evaluations had been conducted in a timely manner as described in the teachers' bargaining agreement. All but two were reviewed and signed. Although all were informative, most were not instructive because they did not include comments on how to improve instruction or how to address professional growth. Also, the evaluations did not include recommendations for the teachers to attend specific professional development sessions to address professional needs. The review team reviewed a binder that includes the licensure status of all staff and confirmed that all teachers are either licensed or teaching on a waiver. The district has assigned administrative support personnel to monitor the licensure status of teachers and administrators and to confirm teacher and administrator licensure status.

The review team was told by numerous focus group participants that the district has not put in place a structured walkthrough process and that teachers receive limited formative feedback on the quality of their instruction. Some teacher focus group participants stated that although they are not supervised and that the principal does not come into the classroom, coaches do provide some guidance. Other teachers indicated that although walkthroughs had been proposed and sometimes take place informally, feedback is limited. Other teachers said that although there used to be a walkthrough process, the principal never does walkthroughs now unless they are related to the formal observation process. Some focus group participants stated that the director of elementary education performs walkthroughs. Another focus group participant said that the principal does not have enough time to do the walkthroughs, the school used to have three administrators, and the principal has nobody to delegate responsibilities to.

Focus group participants stated that department heads at the high school conduct classroom observations and have input into teachers summative evaluations. Middle school department heads, when they are in place, do not do classroom observations, according to the principal, who said that she found it hard to complete all evaluations because one administrator had been eliminated at the middle school. At the elementary level, assistant principals do joint walkthroughs, according to focus group participants.

First-year teachers receive professional development and are supervised as part of the district's mentoring program. The review team was provided a list of 14 mentors, including a mentor coordinator. Mentors receive a stipend of $883.00 and the estimated budget for the mentor coordinator, who is compensated hourly, is $2,638.00. Mentors and protégés are scheduled to meet nine times during the 2011–2012 school year. A review of the mentoring program overview showed that the purpose of the program is to improve teacher performance, increase retention of new teachers, promote personal and professional well-being, transmit the culture, and satisfy the requirements of certification. Participants at the elementary teacher focus group stated that new teachers are not always assigned mentors who are in the same grade and content level and other participants indicated that the reason for this was the absence of funds to train more mentors.

Having a poorly implemented and inconsistent evaluation system inhibits teacher professional growth and accountability, as well as improved student achievement. The absence of an organized walkthrough process that includes consistent written or oral feedback precludes teachers from quickly modifying instruction to meet individual student needs as well as the ability of administrators to monitor the quality of instruction.

Student Support

The district has limited academic support services for students who perform below grade level expectations or are at risk of not reaching proficiency on MCAS tests.

The Memorial Early Childhood Center and the Elementary Schools

Although the Memorial Early Childhood Center (pre-kindergarten through kindergarten) and the two elementary schools have a process in place to help identify students who are performing below grade level, targeted academic assistance is limited. Each elementary school has a Building Based Support Team (BBST). It was reported that elementary BBSTs meet regularly before school and are composed of regular and special education teachers, the principal, the referring teacher, an occupational therapist, the school psychologist, and the school adjustment counselor. Students are identified by classroom teachers through DIBELs, DRA2, or other in-class assessments. The team meets weekly and during discussions of each student devises an assessment plan, develops goals and objectives, designs an intervention plan, and establishes progress monitoring techniques. The team may provide the referring teacher with suggestions for in-class strategic support (tier II) or recommend a student for intensive support (tier III). Interviewees reported that this model of tiered instruction takes place four times per week for 30 minutes (8:50 a.m.–9:20 a.m.) in nine-week cycles, only for kindergarten through grade 3.

Title I services, provided by reading specialists and education service providers (ESPs), are also available in the two elementary schools This year (2011–2012), 50 students in grades 2–4 receive reading support and 10 grade 3 students are supported in mathematics. Most Title I students receive services in small groups of three to six students during regular school hours. During the summer of 2012 there will be a summer program focused on reading and mathematics funded through Title I for 50 rising grade 1 through grade 5 students identified by classroom teachers. Although the district will not make transportation available, administrators expect more than 100 applicants.

Although tiered instruction and targeted Title I support are provided for eligible students, there are still many students who are not receiving extra academic support. For example, 170 grade 3 students or 63 percent of a class of 270 students attained proficiency on the mathematics MCAS test in 2011. That means that 100 current grade 4 students may again be at risk of not attaining proficiency and the district does not provide academic support outside the classroom. In Middleborough, the district does not have any academic support for non-Title I, general education students outside the classroom in reading or mathematics in grades 4–5 during the school year and limited support is offered during the summer. As noted earlier, the early morning intervention program only serves students in kindergarten through grade 3.

In the joint School Improvement Plan for the two elementary schools one student performance target reads, "At least 80 percent of the student population in grades one to five will meet or exceed the grade level end of year benchmark in reading". Although this is a target and it is measurable, the SIP does not include data about where students are now or whether this performance target is attainable; also, the SIP does not contain measurable goals for improvement in MCAS tests results.

The Middle School

At the middle school, a Child Study Team (CST) meets weekly. Teachers identify students not performing at grade level or students exhibiting attendance or behavioral issues. The CST includes the principal, the assistant principal, the special education facilitator, the school psychologist, the school nurse, and the guidance counselor. Classroom teachers make referrals through the guidance counselor. The team may suggest in-class intervention, social/emotional interventions, or court-related interventions, or refer students for special education evaluation. Even though in-class interventions may be recommended, the review team did not observe any examples of tiered or differentiated instruction in the middle school.

There is limited support for middle school students beyond the regular school day. Afterschool help is available Mondays and Wednesdays for one hour. Teachers are required to stay that extra hour and students can seek help during that time. Interviewees also reported that students can also get extra help during the 20 minute Sustained Silent Reading Time. In the middle school students may also be scheduled for one MCAS remedial mathematics class in place of one Unified Arts class.

Interviewees reported that there is a "working lunch" during which students can get extra help during their lunch period. During a middle school visit, one review team member observed 10

students during "working lunch." It was held in the in-house suspension room; upon further inquiry, the review team member found that the students were not there voluntarily. All students present were on in-house suspension or lunch detention for one reason or another. The supervising teacher said that during the previous lunch period some grade 8 students were there voluntarily.

When asked about tiered instruction, interviewees responded that the middle school does not have any. The middle school has leveled classes, two in grade 7 and three in grade 8. An administrator said that the district does not have any money for support and additional services; she said, "The well is dry in every avenue."

One of the objectives in the middle school SIP is "Continue to promote success among reluctant learners and students at-risk for non-promotion". Listed among the activities is differentiated instruction and expansion of interventions; yet, as noted earlier, review team members did not see evidence of differentiated or tiered instruction in observed classrooms. Targeted academic support for students in the middle school is limited. The district does not have any formal programs or consistent practices to ensure that students who are struggling or performing below grade level are receiving academic support. This was confirmed by the interim superintendent who said, "There is no focus on programs to help low-achieving students."

The High School

The high school has a Child Study Team (CST) that meets regularly and operates similarly to the middle school CST. Grants have funded some after-school and summer programming. The 623 Grant for after-school support provides help for student identified with needs for additional support for MCAS tests. The 625 Grant has funded an interdisciplinary summer program consisting of two, one-week programs blending mathematics, ELA, and science. Approximately 30 students attended. Students may use PLATO and Study Island for credit recovery.

It was reported that although there is an MCAS reading skills class it is uncertain whether it will run every year. Administrators reported that although there are MCAS review classes available for students in any grade students are not automatically enrolled if they have either failed or are at risk of failing MCAS tests. It was also reported that three terms of mathematics classes rather than two are available for grade 9 students who have struggled on the MCAS tests. When interviewees were asked about tiered instruction they responded that there is none. The high school differentiates instruction by providing leveled classes including AP, honors, college prep, and college tech prep.

Other high school programs include:

The Futures Program

The Futures Program is a general education alternative program serving approximately 25 students. It is modeled after the evening school program targeted for students at risk of dropping out of school. It is staffed by a director, three teachers, one special education teacher, an ESP, and an adjustment counselor. Classes are conducted in a small contained area at the high school. Classes are smaller and shorter. Students must complete three years of coursework and an

internship. Last year (2010–2011) 100 percent of the students in the Futures Program achieved proficiency on the MCAS tests.

The Links Program

The Links Program is a special education program for students with emotional disabilities. This year (2011–2012) it provides services for approximately 18 students. It is staffed by a special education teacher, an ESP, and an adjustment counselor. Students are fully or partially included in support services.

The Gateway Program

The Gateway Program at Massasoit Community College allows a small number of students to finish their high school degree in a college environment. Students are dually enrolled in Middleborough High School and Massasoit Community College. Students may receive college credit.

Massachusetts Mathematics Science Initiative (MMSI)

Middleborough High School participates in the Massachusetts Mathematics and Science Initiative Grant (MMSI). This grant is used as a means to attain excellence in mathematics, science, and English achievement by increasing rigor and encouraging students to enroll in higher level course work. It was reported in the superintendent's 2010 Annual Report to the school committee that the MMSI grant has had a huge impact on AP enrollment at the high school. Enrollment has increased from 57 students in 2009–2010 to 164 in 2010–2011. All AP students are expected to take an exam. This year over 200 AP exams were taken by 150 students.

High School Advisory Program

The High School Advisory Program is new this year. Every adult in the school has an advisory group of 10–12 students. The goal is for students to have the same advisor throughout their time at the high school. Advisory is driven by research that kids need one important adult in their lives. Advisory is the first activity each morning for 30 minutes.

Although the high school has some programs in place to provide academic support for students, the evidence suggests that there are not enough options for students. Although students in the college tech prep level classes are recommended for an MCAS remedial class and struggling grade 9 students are recommended to a reading and writing class elective, the district does not have a structure in place to ensure that students who need extra help are getting it. There is limited tiered or differentiated instruction. Reviewers observed tiered instruction in six percent of classrooms visited at the high school. Although teachers and students stay after school, programs are informal. While the MMSI grant is driving an increase in AP course enrollment, the high school does not have a staff member who is systematically monitoring low-performing students or, in fact, the performance of student subgroups. The high school SIP does not include measurable student achievement goals or objectives.

While there is some academic support available in the district there are still students whose needs are not being met. RTI exists in kindergarten through grade 3 and with the new reconfiguration

at the elementary schools and with the implementation of *Readers Workshop*, it is hoped that it will expand to grades 4 and 5 in reading and mathematics. Although the middle and high school describe the Child Study Team as a form of RTI there was little evidence of differentiation or tiered instruction at each of those schools. Both the middle and high schools provide academic support in a more casual, not-urgent manner with fewer opportunities offered to middle school students. The limited options for support in the district do not promote a culture of "high expectations." The district also does not have a mechanism to monitor and report on the effectiveness of student achievement support programs.

Students will have difficulty reaching their potential if high goals are not set and additional supports are not developed and provided. Unless the schools monitor student progress and report on successes, it will be difficult for the district to maintain a steady path of continuous improvement.

Middleborough has limited academic support for subgroups of students, specifically special education students.

Students receiving special education services do not receive targeted, specific, academic support to help them score proficient or higher on MCAS tests. MCAS data for 2011 showed that only 22 percent of Middleborough students receiving special education services scored proficient or higher on ELA, compared to 31 percent for the state, and 15 percent scored proficient in mathematics, compared to 22 percent for the state. Interviewees reported and documents confirmed that the district offers a range of services for students with special needs. In the elementary schools students may receive services for speech and language, social language, social skills, adaptive physical education, counseling, and OT/PT. There is one autism spectrum classroom and one moderate-to-severe special needs classroom.

In the middle school and high school the majority of students are served in a regular education classroom with some co-teaching. There are learning centers where students may be scheduled if they require more assistance than the classroom teacher can provide. In addition, 24 students (5 in the middle school and 19 in the high school) are in a non-diploma-track life-skill class.

The district has a high percentage of students receiving special education services within regular education classrooms. Data provided by ESE confirmed that in 2009–2010 72 percent of students receiving special education services were in full inclusion programs, compared to 57 percent in the state. Reviewers found large class sizes. In documents provide by the district, the average class size is 28 in grade 6 and 27 in grade 7. District students with special needs score below proficient at high rates and reviewers observed large inclusion classrooms with limited evidence of differentiated or tiered instruction. Although administrators reported that grant-funded professional development focused on co-teaching this year it was a struggle to get principals to release teachers to attend. Teacher focus groups mentioned the need for more professional development in co-teaching. Although teachers at the middle school focus group reported receiving co-teaching professional development, teachers at the high school focus group reported participating in co-teaching classrooms without any training. Reviewers also found that while the district's special education dropout rate at 1.7 percent in 2010 was below the state of 4.7

percent, the special education graduation rate was only 49 percent compared to the state special education graduation rate of 64 percent.

Differentiated teaching benefits all students and it is essential in classrooms with diverse learners. Students who struggle to reach their academic potential or attain proficiency in MCAS tests need more specific and deliberate attention and support systems to succeed, especially students receiving special education services. Without a more laser-like focus on academic support for students with special needs, they will have difficulty improving in academic work and in MCAS performance.

Financial and Asset Management

Limited budget increases have put strains on the district's allocation of resources across its various programs and needs.

In an interview, the Town Manager said that the school district is not adequately funded, pointing to higher class sizes and saying that the schools had layoffs even prior to the recession. However, the town taxes at its Proposition 2 ½ levy limit, and cannot generate more local revenues without an override. He did say that his recommendation will be to pass on to the school budget dollar for dollar any increases in Chapter 70 funding from the State.

Several years ago, an override vote to fund the school budget was soundly defeated by a three-to-one margin. According to interviewees, some community members expressed the view that the school administration was top heavy and others believed that this partially contributed to the defeat of the override. In response, the interim superintendent eliminated the position of assistant superintendent in fiscal year 2011. However, a comparison to the state shows that the district has consistently had fewer administrators relative to its enrollment than is typical across the state, and after the FY11 reduction had less than half as many.

Table 4: Student to District Administrator Ratios, Middleborough and State, FY2009 – FY2011

	FY2009	FY2010	FY2011
District	745:1	738:1	922:1
State	535:1	542:1	467:1

Source: DART for Districts

An example of resource issues can be seen in student to teacher ratios which have been increasing over the last three years, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Student to Staff Ratios, Middleborough and State, FY2009 – FY2011

	FY2009	FY2010	FY2011
District	15.5:1	15.4:1	16.6:1
State	13.6:1	13.7:1	13.9:1

Source: DART for Districts

The interim superintendent has added teachers to reduce class sizes in grades 1 and 2. However, class sizes above grade 2 remain high. At the Mary K. Goode Elementary School, grades 1-5, all 15 classes for grades 3-5 are between 26 to 30 students per class for the 2012 school year. At the Henry B. Burkland Elementary School, grades 1-5, nine out of the 15 classes for grades 3-5 are from 26 to 29 students per class.

At the Nichols Middle School, all twenty 6th and 7th grade sections are between 26 and 29 students, and six of twelve 8th grade sections are 26-27 students in the 2012 school year. Class size was slightly lower in half of the 8th grade sections because teachers were funded by eliminating one of two assistant principals and all department heads at the school. Without this budget trade-off, the average 8th grade class size would have been over 30 students per section.

From fiscal year 2007 to fiscal year 2011, 39.3 full time equivalent (FTE) teaching positions were eliminated, and student enrollment decreased by only 100 students. The percentage of students from low-income families increased from 20 percent to 30 percent. With increasing challenges such as these, the district's resources are unpredictable and inadequately allocated to meet the diverse educational needs of all the students in the district.

The school district is improving its cost-effective resource management, but there is room for further improvements.

Through a reorganization and elimination of positions, the interim superintendent has been able to add teachers to decrease class sizes at grades 1 and 2. However, as noted in the previous finding, class sizes are still much larger in grades 3 through 8, which is of concern to school committee members. The district's low number of administrators may hinder improvement in curriculum and instruction.

One budget area that needs closer examination is operations, particularly utilities. In an interview, the director of business and finance said that the electricity and heating (natural gas) budgets have been level funded, despite a projected balance in these utility accounts of $300,000 for the current year, fiscal year 2012, due to the unusually warm winter. She also said that the utility account balance was $200,000 in FY2011, when the winter was colder, and she expected these accounts to be reviewed for fiscal year 2013 to free up funds to hire additional teachers.

Another area for better resource allocation would appear to be the scheduling of high school classes. In a classroom observation, an Algebra II Honors class had 29 students. A teacher said that last year there had been 36 students in a Pre-Calculus class, and that the honors classes tended to be larger. It is positive to have large enrollments in honors level courses, but reducing the size of individual sections would strengthen these offerings. In a succeeding observation, an English IV College CT (college tech) course had an enrollment of only seven students. A school leader mentioned that there was no policy for reviewing and approving small class sizes at the high school, although such a policy could help reallocation of teacher resources.

Well-prepared teachers, professional development aligned to district and school improvement goals, updated curriculum, available up-to-date textbooks, technology and other instructional material are all important to student learning. However, even with all of these in place, one of the basic building blocks of educational success is class size. The absence of many of these items plus large class sizes makes for a very difficult instructional environment in which it is challenging for both students and teachers to succeed. There are critical decisions facing the next administration to balance the use of resource allocation to lower class sizes while still strengthening professional development and building a strong curriculum and improved instruction.

Recommendations

The priorities identified by the review team at the time of its site visit and embodied in the recommendations that follow may no longer be current, and the district may have identified new priorities in line with its current needs.

Leadership and Governance

To improve leadership stability, the district should establish a leadership development program to create pathways to leadership roles for qualified teachers and an induction program for all leaders new to the system.

According to a document provided by the district, from 2009–2011 three of five principals departed the Middleborough Public Schools. In addition, the review team was advised of three additional principal resignations, effective at the close of the 2011–2012 school year.

Since 2003, the district has had four superintendents, with a fifth to be in place at the end of the 2011-2012 school year. Since 2003, it has had three assistant superintendents, with the position unfilled from 2007 to 2010, three directors of business and finance (including one interim), three high school principals, and three middle school principals. There were to be new assistant principals in the 2012-2013 school year. This trend represents major leadership turnover at both the school and district levels.

Teachers, parents, school committee members, administrators, and teachers' association members all expressed concern about the instability in school and district leadership. As consequences of the turnover, they cited an absence of continuity of vision, the need to restart and revise improvement efforts, and, most importantly, the loss of momentum to improve student achievement.

Every district has talented, motivated teachers with leadership potential who have made a commitment to their school communities and have remained in their roles for many years. If motivated and given the opportunity and support, they can often develop into successful administrators who may maintain their loyalty to their district in a leadership capacity.

The superintendent, with the endorsement of the school committee, should establish a program for aspiring leaders from within the existing professional staff. Opportunities for leadership (e.g., chairing district committees, leading professional development) should be created. In addition, an in-district professional development program designed for aspiring leaders should be established to provide insight and skills needed for administrative roles. It may also motivate some to pursue the associated required academic credentials and state licensure. Home-grown, proven professionals can provide more stable leadership in the district if given the opportunity to learn and grow into school and district leadership roles.

In addition, new leaders can benefit from participation in a supportive induction program. Such a program could provide professional development related to the district's existing collective bargaining agreements, budget priorities and administration, evaluation systems, professional development goals and plans, curricular and instructional priorities, and assessment programs.

The superintendent, with the endorsement of the school committee, should establish an induction program for all leaders new to the district. This would include clearly defined curricula related to the areas cited above and perhaps others. The superintendent and other qualified district leaders should facilitate the induction activities. Detailed, relevant insights in key leadership areas will prepare new administrators for dialogue, interpretation, and action in an informed and effective manner, greatly enhancing their potential for long-term success and satisfaction in the role. Both the program for aspiring leaders and the induction program can lead to greater stability in leadership for the district.

Leaders, in collaboration with representative stakeholders, should develop more complete and aligned improvement plans (a new District Improvement Plan and revised School Improvement Plans) focused on meeting the learning needs of all students.

Guided by the new strategic goals, leaders should, with stakeholder input, develop more aligned and measurable goals and objectives in a District Improvement Plan and new School Improvement Plans. The new DIP and SIPs should include strategies and supports to meet the diverse learning needs of all students, including those at risk of not attaining proficiency on MCAS.

Although the district has a strategic plan that outlines five broad district goals, at the time of the review it did not have a District Improvement Plan. The district should develop a DIP that includes measurable student achievement goals and identifies the strategies, activities, and resources needed to achieve them. Measurable goals will drive the district to plan and provide staff with appropriate professional development including, but not limited to, training in differentiated instruction, data analysis, and RTI.

Better improvement planning can provide pathways to ensure that all students at risk of not reaching proficiency are provided the necessary supports. Currently, at all school levels, there are students who are struggling and have insufficient targeted support.

- In grades 4 and 5 in the elementary schools, there is no academic support outside the classroom for non-Title I general education students in reading or mathematics during the school year.
- There is limited support offered during the summer.
- The middle school does not have any formal programs or consistent practices to ensure that students who perform below grade level or below expectations are receiving needed academic support.
- Although the high school has some programs in place to provide academic support for students, the evidence suggests that there are not enough options for students.

The district does not have a mechanism to monitor and report on the effectiveness of student achievement support programs.

A new DIP and enhanced SIPs can provide a structure for planning and accountability. SIPs aligned with the goals in the DIP can be used to support the allocation of resources and drive

budgetary decisions. The new DIP and SIPs can also help set priorities and planning for professional development. The Annual Report to the school committee can be a vehicle to report on successes and ongoing challenges as SIPs are updated and revised.

The new SIPs should have measurable goals and objectives that cover benchmark assessments and MCAS results. SIPs offer schools the opportunity to focus planning on improving the academic achievement of all students including subgroups.

- In 2011, 64 percent of district students scored proficient or higher on the ELA MCAS (compared to 69 percent of state students) and 50 percent of district students scored proficient or higher in mathematics (compared to 58 percent statewide).
- Also in 2011, 22 percent of the students receiving special education services scored proficient or higher on the ELA MCAS (compared to 30 percent of state students) and 15 percent of district students receiving special education services scored proficient or higher in mathematics (compared to 22 percent statewide).

The district needs a laser-sharp focus on all students, including students with disabilities, who are not reaching proficiency on MCAS or other benchmarks. More effective planning and focus can ensure that appropriate student supports are in place. Measurable goals and objectives in SIPs will likely lead to strategies that include expanded RTI, targeted after-school and summer programming, and more professional development on the topics of differentiated and tiered instruction. These are all critical components of a plan to improve student achievement.

Curriculum and Instruction

The district should establish clear and firm leadership for curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional development at the district and school levels. With this leadership the district should develop for all grades high-quality curriculum guides in the core subjects, aligning curriculum to the new Massachusetts curriculum frameworks and including objectives, resources, instructional strategies, timelines, and assessments in the guides.

Because of the elimination of the position of coordinator of curriculum in 2010 and the position of assistant superintendent in 2011 the district did not have clear and firm districtwide leadership for curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional development at the time of the review. The principals at each of the district's schools were viewed by some as curriculum leaders. In addition, the newly appointed director of elementary education assisted the elementary principals in the coordination of the elementary curriculum in kindergarten through grade 5 and in the implementation of programs. Yet the evidence indicated that curriculum leadership was somewhat inconsistent and undefined, especially through grade 8.

The district does not have any updated and complete curriculum guides K-8 for core academic subjects. The curriculum at the elementary level is disconnected, with a heavy reliance on textbook programs. While there are some units of study for the reading program, there are no schoolwide support documents for the full curriculum. With the recent grade reconfiguration at

the elementary schools, the district has begun initiatives to address the state of the curriculum at the elementary level. ELA and math curriculum committees have been formed and have begun to map and align curriculum to the new Massachusetts curriculum standards. At the time of the review work had not yet begun to address curriculum for science and social studies.

The middle school does not have any documentation for the taught curriculum in any content area. In addition, a variety of different texts and materials are being used in same subject/grade-level courses without oversight by leadership. This has resulted in limited consistency in what is taught in core subjects at the middle school level.

Curriculum documentation is more complete at the high school, where all departments undertook curriculum revisions beginning in 2010 in anticipation of the NEASC visit in 2013. While there is greater documentation for curriculum at the high school, there is a range in the completeness and quality of the documents. These too need to be reviewed to ensure consistency in quality, rigor, and completeness.

In consideration of the status of the curriculum, the review team strongly recommends that the district provide sufficient districtwide and school-level curriculum leadership (as well as leadership for instruction, assessment, and professional development), with clearly defined roles. Curriculum leaders should ensure that each level of the district's schools has updated written curriculum guides for the core subjects that are aligned to the new Massachusetts curriculum standards. Curriculum documents should include standards, objectives, resources, timelines, instructional strategies (with extensions for high- and low-performing students as well as differentiated instruction), and assessments. Discrete district programs such as Title I, the Futures program, the Links program, and the new advisory program should each have a written curriculum guide. Further, the review team recommends that the district give careful attention to its middle school level with a focus on consistency and cohesiveness in the taught curriculum. This should include attention to the materials and texts used in the core subjects at each grade level, to ensure that there is not only alignment to the new Massachusetts curriculum frameworks but also alignment across the same grade and between grades. Finally, the review team recommends that the district establish and implement a cyclical process for the timely review and revision of curricula based on 1) valid research on best practices and current knowledge in the field and 2) the analysis of data from MCAS and other assessments.

Written curriculum is necessary for assurance that what is taught is aligned to the new Massachusetts curriculum frameworks. The presence of a richly documented curriculum is also necessary for strong horizontal alignment across grades and strong vertical alignment between grades. Vertical alignment was especially in need of strengthening between grades at the elementary and middle school levels and between schools at grades 5 and 6 and grades 8 and 9. Alignment to the state standards and horizontal and vertical alignment provide assurance that all students can benefit from a common, rigorous, and complete curriculum. With appropriate curriculum leadership and with fully developed and aligned curriculum guides in core subjects and discrete programs that are regularly reviewed and revised, all Middleborough students will have an opportunity to achieve at the highest levels.

To create the practice of continuous improvement in instruction, the district should establish a common understanding of the characteristics of high-quality instruction. It should also provide appropriate professional development to meet expectations for high-quality instruction and more opportunities for teachers at all levels to receive informal feedback on instructional practices.

The review team found notable areas of instructional strength in the district. These included the establishment of a strong classroom climate, effective teacher preparation and use of class time, good teacher communication in content areas, appropriate selections of content for grade and level, and effective instructional pacing to ensure student engagement. While these strengths were clear, there were areas of instructional design and delivery in observed classes that had not been fully developed, signaling uneven and ineffective instructional practices in the district's schools.

The district did not have a uniform design for instructional delivery including, among other characteristics, the posting and communicating of learning objectives that identify student learning outcomes. At the time of the review, the use of informal classroom assessments was not in place throughout the district.

Although teachers have appropriate content knowledge, many students in observed classes did not have enough opportunities to engage with content through technology and through varied instructional strategies such as differentiation. Nor, at all levels, were there enough examples of tiered instruction. Instructional techniques throughout the district were found to be limited by the dominant use of teacher directed, whole-group instruction.

According to the review team's observations, students did not have enough opportunities for small-group work and pair learning or enough opportunities to engage in lessons that advance more complex and critical thinking. Observations did provide evidence of students examining, analyzing, and interpreting information. However, higher-order thinking skills such as predicting, developing arguments, evaluating information, and evaluating or reflecting on students' own thinking, progress, and approach were not consistently activated in observed classrooms.

Finally, the district did not have a system in place to actively monitor and give informal feedback on instructional practices. Walkthroughs were not conducted with consistency or with a governing protocol. Nor had the district provided training to its administrators on conducting this important instructional improvement practice. Although the elementary level now has a literacy coach and a mathematics coach, the team found their impact on instructional practice to be compromised by scheduling and caseload issues.

Under the leadership it has established (see previous recommendation), the district should provide professional development for leaders and teachers that focuses on developing a common understanding of the characteristics of high-quality instruction, with particular consideration given to diversifying instructional strategies, differentiating learning experiences, activating higher-order thinking skills, implementing small-group work, and using informal assessments in daily classroom instruction. The review team recommends that the district establish a protocol

for conducting walkthroughs at all levels and a system for providing feedback to teachers from those walkthroughs. Professional development should be provided to those who will conduct and those who will experience walkthroughs. In addition, the district should investigate ways to expand opportunities for instructional coaching at the elementary and middle school levels.

By expanding opportunities for students to experience instructional practices targeted to their diverse learning needs, the district will help all students develop the necessary knowledge, skills, and understanding to achieve at higher levels.

Assessment

Under the leadership it has established for assessment, the district should expand the assessment system to make it more balanced and comprehensive in all core subjects, documenting the system and ensuring that it is fully integrated into the newly revised and documented curriculum.

While formative, benchmark, and summative assessments are used throughout the district, they are not uniformly integrated into all subjects at all grade levels with appropriate regularity. As the district moves to update and document curriculum in all subjects, it should simultaneously ensure that it develops a robust assessment system. This implies a system that provides assessments in multiple formats to measure student progress and achievement. Each component generates information that is meaningful to improving teaching, learning, and the curriculum.

To start, the district should develop and systematize more informal **formative assessments** and develop teachers' capacity to create formative assessment strategies. Formative assessments, or assessments *for* learning, inform about students' strengths and weaknesses in learning either as individuals or as groups. Formative assessments can also provide teachers with information to guide short-term or medium-term decisions on how to focus instruction on students' diverse learning needs, i.e., how to differentiate instruction. Formative assessments should be high-frequency assessments, used multiple times daily in class and in small groups. Each formative assessment should focus on a single learning objective or just a few. The primary audience for formative assessments is in the classroom, i.e., the teacher and the student(s).

The district should ensure that **benchmark assessments** (either teacher-designed or externally designed) are used uniformly within appropriate teaching units in all core subjects. Benchmarks are guided by standardized testing protocols, with essentially the same time frame and procedures at specific grade levels or for specific courses. Benchmarks measure students' mastery of key knowledge, skills, and understanding. Although several benchmarks are already used in the district, this assessment format is not firmly embedded in all core subjects at all levels and is not administered with fidelity. The district should develop additional benchmark assessments to administer in all subjects at obvious breaks in instruction, such as the end of a unit of study or semester. Benchmarks have a wider audience than formative assessments—students, the teacher and groups of teachers, curriculum leaders, and principals, for example. They can help guide instructional decisions, student grouping, curriculum revisions, and pacing.

The district should also consider how to continue to develop and use **summative assessments** or assessments *of* learning. Summative assessments are administered after instruction is completed and measure how well students have mastered broad learning objectives. They test the knowledge, skills, and understandings outlined in the curriculum at a culminating point, and they reflect and measure the broad goals of state standards. They are administered with low frequency, e.g., at mid-term, mid-year, as a final exam, or at the end of major units of study. They often test an integration of knowledge and understanding to permit students to demonstrate higher levels of thinking and the application of what they have learned, sometimes through projects, portfolios, or student presentations in addition to "paper and pencil" tests. Results are usually public, as the data is often shared with stakeholders outside the classroom such as administrators and parents. They are evaluative—used for appraisal, to assign grades and to give credibility to credits earned.

Results from all three assessment formats are typically used by teachers and leaders to inform and guide decisions about improving teaching and learning and the curriculum. In further developing its assessment system on its journey toward continuous improvement, the district is advised to consider all the above components. An expanded assessment system integrated with the district's upgraded curriculum will help all students achieve at high levels. It will also ensure that the district has established a culture of accountability for all.

To become more data-driven in its decision-making, the district should develop the technology infrastructure, human capacity, and districtwide procedures needed for a new data management system.

It is important for the district to be able to identify, collect, disseminate, analyze and use assessment data and other data and information to benefit student achievement and guide all aspects of its decision-making. As it considers expanding its technological infrastructure to become a more data-driven system as outlined in goal #5 of the Strategic Plan, the district should address a number of related topics.

As a first step, the district should revisit its technology plan to ensure that it includes the resources and provisions for adequate technology infrastructure and the professional development needed to build human capacity.

To build infrastructure, appropriate and cost-effective investments are required to upgrade to state-of-the-art hardware and software. Decisions will have to be made about the choice and use of portals such as X2 to enable stakeholders to use information to support improved systems and opportunities to learn.

To build human capacity, teachers and leaders will need professional development both to understand the potential of a data-driven educational system and to be equipped with the skills to operate within one. Sequenced, ongoing professional development will be needed to achieve this. There is also a need to allocate time for teachers to meet with each other and with leaders in order to discuss and plan for improvements to teaching, the curriculum, and student learning.

It is important for both teachers and leaders to have a good understanding of how to identify, collect, analyze, and respond to data. The district and each school should consider potential sources for data and other information that can contribute to improving student learning and meeting improvement goals. For example, it is recommended that questions such as the following be asked:

- "What data does the school committee need from the district and from every school to enable a better understanding of district, school, and student needs in order to set priorities for budgeting and resource allocation?"
- "What data and information will help predict who might be at risk of dropping out of high school and how can educators identify and use this data in a timely way to prevent students from dropping out?"

The district should also develop districtwide procedures to collect, display, and share data and consider how various stakeholders will access data, respond to data, and, in some cases, manipulate data. Some questions to consider include:

- "How can a teacher or a teacher team access all data for one student, for a group of students, for one classroom, for a grade level or course and use it to inform instructional decisions?"
- "How can data teams be structured so that they have the personnel, responsibilities, and time to provide high-quality support for the use of data at the district, school, and classroom levels?"
- "How can special education teachers and ESPs participate in regularly sequenced team meetings when student work and achievement is discussed?"

There are undoubtedly other topics that will be valuable to consider as the district moves toward re-invention as a data-driven system. With thoughtful planning and capacity building and the support of appropriate resources, i.e., time, trained staff, infrastructure and funding, the district can establish a data-driven school community that supports continuous improvement in professional practice and in student achievement.

Human Resources and Professional Development

The district should develop and implement a structured walkthrough process that provides regular feedback. It should expeditiously design and negotiate agreement on a new system of educator evaluation consistent with the new state system, so as to be ready to begin implementing it in 2013-2014.

The review team was told by teachers and administrators that principals and other administrators do not supervise the quality of instruction using a structured walkthrough process. Teachers said that although principals or assistant principals periodically come into classrooms, they do so mostly as required by procedures for summative evaluations. Some focus group participants said that although department heads conduct classroom observations at the high school and the

director of elementary education also observes classes, these observations are not regular, structured, or guided by a protocol.

The review team recommends that the district develop and implement a walkthrough protocol that provides for oral and/or written feedback; the team believes that walkthroughs conducted with such a protocol by administrators trained in observing classrooms will improve teacher competency and student achievement. Walkthroughs will allow administrators to monitor curriculum delivery and alignment and whether or not professional development strategies have been implemented. This monitoring, combined with any necessary follow-up, will help make the district's investment in professional development worthwhile.

Frequent, unannounced observations and observations of teachers outside the classroom are both important aspects of an effective educator supervision and evaluation system, as stated in ESE's guide entitled *Strategies and Suggestions for Observations*, which is available at http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/. Specifically, the guide outlines the following:

- ***Frequent, unannounced observations.*** *Frequent observation of classroom practice – with feedback—is essential to improving practice, but only feasible if most observations are short, unannounced and followed by brief, focused feedback. There will be times when an evaluator is in a classroom or other work site and it becomes apparent that the visit needs to be extended, but a visit of approximately 10 minutes can yield a great deal of useful information. With short, unannounced visits, many more samples of practice can be collected, and many more powerful conversations about teaching practice can be had: when the typical observation of classroom practice is 10 minutes in duration and does not have to be preceded by a pre-observation conference or followed by a period-long post-observation conference, then evaluators can reasonably be expected to conduct 2 to 5 such observations on a typical day.*

    - *3 observations conducted each day on 150 of the 180 days in a school year translate to 450 observations each year, or 10 observations per year for each of 45 teachers. 7-10 brief observations followed by focused feedback should be a sufficient number to secure a representative picture of practice and promote the reflection and discussion needed to support improving practice.*

    - *Feedback can be provided during a conversation or in writing. Providing feedback through conversation promotes discussion of practice; providing feedback in writing creates an opportunity for the educator to more easily reflect on the feedback on an ongoing basis. Whenever possible, an evaluator should have a conversation with the educator and follow up with brief written feedback summarizing the conversation and/or offering targeted advice for improvement.*

    - *It should be noted that not all observations can or should be 5 to 15 minutes. There will be circumstances where longer observations are appropriate. Novice or struggling teachers may benefit from longer observations on occasion.*

Observations outside of the classroom. *Observation of practice need not be limited to classroom observation. Conferences with individual teachers or teacher teams that focus on unit planning or ways the team is responding to interim assessment data can yield useful information and provide opportunities for feedback and growth. They can also be well-aligned with school and team goals. Most schools have goals that depend on effective collaboration among educators, so observation of educators in settings where they are developing their skills in collaboration can support school-wide goals. That said, care needs to be taken to ensure that observation does not interfere with the free exchange of ideas that is important in any healthy collegial environment. Therefore, collecting, reviewing and giving feedback on specific artifacts from department and team meetings can serve a purpose similar to observation of meetings. Similarly observing educators with parents and/or reviewing a team's analysis of representative samples of home-school communications can support collaborative work, reinforce school goals, and provide opportunities for useful feedback.*

The review team was told that teacher evaluations were generally not timely and not instructive. Additionally, until the interim superintendent evaluated principals in the 2010–2011 school year, administrators had not been evaluated consistently for six years. The interim superintendent had evaluated and had scheduled the evaluations of all administrators and had developed goals to serve as the foundation of the administrator evaluations in the 2012–2013 school year.

The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education amended the regulations at 603 CMR 35.00 in June 2011. By school year 2013-2014, all public schools are required to implement an evaluation system consistent with the new state system. At the time of the review the district had participated in a regional presentation by ESE on the new system; it should expeditiously design, negotiate agreement on, and plan implementation of its new system.

The new educator evaluation model provides opportunities for school districts to develop and implement

- Professional development for evaluators;
- Training to develop meaningful professional practice and student learning goals;
- Systems to ensure
    - that evaluators have the time and support to carry out the new system with fidelity and
    - that district and school goals are aligned with administrator goals
- Professional development for educators that prioritizes educator needs identified through the goal-setting and evaluation process.

Taking advantage of these opportunities will result in all educators having meaningful professional practice and student learning goals and consistent, timely feedback, thus addressing the areas the review team identified for improvement in the educator evaluation system in use in the district at the time of the team's visit.

The district should build on the foundation laid by the professional development goal in the Strategic Plan to provide systemic and sustained professional development. Under the leadership it has identified for professional development, the district should create and implement a focused professional development plan that is informed by student and teacher needs and aligned to district and school improvement plans.

While the district provides staff with access to a variety of professional development activities, the professional development program does not have direction. The interim superintendent created a Strategic Plan that includes a professional development goal, and the School Improvement Plans include a similar professional development goal; however, the review team found in interviews and a review of documents that professional development was not for the most part focused or planned collaboratively between teachers and administrators at the school and district levels, did not include formal input from teachers at all school levels, and continued to be a work in progress.

District leaders told the review team that before the 2011–2012 school year, the assistant superintendent was responsible for professional development; however, because of budgetary restrictions, the interim superintendent eliminated the assistant superintendent position for the 2011–2012 school year and delegated authority for professional development planning to principals and to the director of elementary education, who was to provide professional development leadership at the elementary level. The interim superintendent told the team that more work was needed in planning and providing adequate professional development.

The review team recommends that the district continue to build on the professional development goal in the strategic plan. This will require the development of a district professional development plan and similar school professional development plans aligned with the objectives under the Strategic Plan's professional development goal:

- To provide professional development that builds teacher competency in the new Massachusetts curriculum frameworks incorporating the Common Core and supports best practices for teaching and learning
- To build teacher competency in the integration of technology as an essential tool for 21st century learning
- To build a rigorous, relevant, and viable curriculum that is aligned and informed by data in all content areas through professional development
- To provide staff training in best practices for student health and safety
- To establish and foster connections with Higher Education in order to build student college and career readiness, especially in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics

The rationale for allocating resources for focused professional development is clear: the greater the opportunity teachers have to learn and grow professionally, the greater the opportunity their students will have to learn and grow. Meaningful professional development aligned with the district's Strategic Plan, the new District Improvement Plan, and the School Improvement

Plans—as well as with educator needs identified through the goal-setting and evaluation process (see the previous recommendation)—will improve staff competency and lead to improved student achievement.

Student Support

Please see second Leadership and Governance recommendation above.

Financial and Asset Management

The district should continue to examine all budget accounts to reallocate resources to the most cost-efficient uses that directly support district and school improvement plans.

Resources may be identified within the school budget such as savings from utilities, or the town manager may be able to pass an increase of chapter 70 funding on to the schools, but all budget lines should be re-examined. The interim superintendent recommended additional elementary teachers for the fiscal year 2013 budget. However, most class sizes at the middle school were to continue to be above 25 students per section.

Savings in the utility accounts would make funds available in the fiscal year 2013 budget to help support additional elementary teachers recommended by the interim superintendent. For the purpose of balancing high school class sizes within existing resources, it is recommended that a policy be implemented to require the superintendent's review for classes scheduled below a specified minimum size. While some small class sizes may be necessary and legitimate, best practice suggests that this policy should require written justification by the high school principal to explain the need.

With limited budget funds, it is critical that the allocation of existing resources be carefully reviewed and all trade-offs considered to optimize the educational opportunities for all students.

Appendix A: Review Team Members

The review of the Middleborough Public Schools was conducted from April 9–12, 2012, by the following team of educators, independent consultants to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Richard Smith, Leadership and Governance

Suzanne Kelly, Curriculum and Instruction

Linda L. Greyser, Ed. D., Assessment and review team coordinator

James Hearns, Human Resources and Professional Development

Lenora Jennings, Student Support

Gerry Missal, Ed. D., Financial and Asset Management

Appendix B: Review Activities and Site Visit Schedule

District Review Activities

The following activities were conducted as part of the review of the Middleborough Public Schools.

- The review team conducted interviews with the following Middleborough financial personnel: director of business and finance, payroll clerk, accounts payable and receivable clerk, town accountant, town treasurer, and town manager.
- The review team conducted interviews with the following members of the Middleborough School Committee: six school committee members, including the chairman and vice-chairman.
- The review team conducted interviews with the following representatives of the Middleborough Teachers Association: president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, and chair of professional rights and responsibilities.
    - The review team conducted interviews and focus groups with the following representatives from the Middleborough Public Schools central office administration: interim superintendent, director of business and finance, director of student services, and director of elementary education.
- The review team visited the following schools in the Middleborough Public Schools:
    - Henry B. Burkland Elementary School (grades 1–5), Mary K. Goode Elementary School (grades 1–5), John T. Nichols Middle School (grades 6–8), and Middleborough High School (grades 9–12). The review team did not visit classes at the Memorial Early Childhood Center (pre-kindergarten through kindergarten).
    - During school visits and during the site visit, the review team conducted interviews with school principals, teachers and assistant principals, high school department heads, special education facilitators, school psychologist, school adjustment counselor, and literacy and mathematics coaches. The team interviewed 38 elementary teachers, 15 middle school teachers, and 5 high school teachers.
    - The review team conducted 82 classroom visits for different grade levels and subjects across the four schools visited.
- The review team analyzed multiple sets of data and reviewed numerous documents before and during the site visit, including:
    - Data on student and school performance, including achievement and growth data and 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 for students/families and faculty, school schedules, and the district's end-of-the-year financial reports.
- All completed program and administrator evaluations, and a random selection of completed teacher evaluations.

Site Visit Schedule

The following is the schedule for the onsite portion of the district review of the Middleborough Public Schools, conducted from April 9–12, 2012.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
April 9 Orientation with district leaders and principals; interviews with district staff and principals; review of documents including testing of payroll; interview with teachers' association.	April 10 Interviews with district staff and principals; interview with town personnel; school visits (Nichols Middle School, Henry B. Burkland Elementary School); classroom observations; review of personnel files; teacher focus groups; focus group with parents.	April 11 Interviews school leaders and teacher-leaders and teachers; school visits (Mary K. Goode Elementary School, Henry B. Burkland Elementary School, Nichols Middle School); classroom observations; school committee interviews.	April 12 School visits (Middleborough High School, Nichols Middle School); interviews with school leaders; classroom observations; follow-up interviews; team meeting; emerging themes meeting with superintendent and then with all district leaders and principals.

Appendix C: Student Performance 2009–2011

Table C1: Middleborough Public Schools and State
Proficiency Rates and Median Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs)[8]
2009–2011 English Language Arts

	2009		2010		2011	
Grade	**Percent Proficient**	***Median SGP***	**Percent Proficient**	***Median SGP***	**Percent Proficient**	***Median SGP***
All Grades—District	**63**	***45***	**63**	***44***	**64**	***47***
All Grades—State	67	*50*	68	*50*	69	*50*
Grade 3—District	**53**	***NA****	**55**	***NA****	**60**	***NA****
Grade 3—State	57	*NA**	63	*NA**	61	*NA**
Grade 4—District	**47**	***48***	**43**	***39***	**41**	***39***
Grade 4—State	53	*50*	54	*50*	53	*51*
Grade 5—District	**55**	***43***	**51**	***34***	**56**	***49***
Grade 5—State	63	*50*	63	*50*	67	*50*
Grade 6—District	**62**	***39***	**60**	***41***	**61**	***46.5***
Grade 6—State	66	*50*	69	*50*	68	*50*
Grade 7—District	**66**	***50***	**72**	***57***	**73**	***64***
Grade 7—State	70	*50*	72	*50*	73	*50*
Grade 8—District	**79**	***52***	**76**	***51***	**78**	***47***
Grade 8—State	78	*50*	78	*50*	79	*50*
Grade 10—District	**76**	***40***	**82**	***44.5***	**87**	***37***
Grade 10—State	81	*50*	78	50	84	*50*

Note: The number of students included in the calculation of proficiency rate differs from the number of students included in the calculation of median SGP.
*NA: Grade 3 students do not have SGPs because they are taking MCAS tests for the first time.
Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

[8] "Student growth percentiles" are a measure of student progress that compares changes in a student's MCAS scores to changes in MCAS scores of other students with similar performance profiles. The most appropriate measure for reporting growth for a group (e.g., subgroup, school, district) is the median student growth percentile (the middle score if one ranks the individual student growth percentiles from highest to lowest). For more information about the Growth Model, see "MCAS Student Growth Percentiles: Interpretive Guide" and other resources available at http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/growth/.

Table C2: Middleborough Public Schools and State
Proficiency Rates and Median Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs)
2009–2011 Mathematics

	2009		2010		2011	
Grade	**Percent Advanced/ Proficient**	***Median SGP***	**Percent Advanced/ Proficient**	***Median SGP***	**Percent Advanced/ Proficient**	***Median SGP***
All Grades—District	**48**	***43***	**49**	***41.5***	**50**	***45***
All Grades—State	55	*50*	59	*50*	58	*50*
Grade 3—District	**54**	***NA****	**56**	***NA****	**63**	***NA****
Grade 3—State	60	*NA**	65	*NA**	66	*NA**
Grade 4—District	36	*41*	34	*34*	40	*51*
Grade 4—State	48	*50*	48	*49*	47	*50*
Grade 5—District	**48**	***42***	**51**	***47.5***	**55**	***59***
Grade 5—State	54	*50*	55	*50*	59	*50*
Grade 6—District	**50**	***51***	**55**	***47***	**56**	***53***
Grade 6—State	57	*50*	59	*50*	58	*50*
Grade 7—District	45	*47*	49	*54*	37	*37*
Grade 7—State	49	*50*	53	*50*	51	*50*
Grade 8—District	**39**	***37***	**35**	***25***	**35**	***30***
Grade 8—State	48	*50*	51	*51*	52	*50*
Grade 10—District	**69**	***39***	**70**	***38***	**72**	***43***
Grade 10—State	75	*50*	75	*50*	77	*50*

Note: The number of students included in the calculation of proficiency rate differs from the number of students included in the calculation of median SGP.
*NA: Grade 3 students do not have SGPs because they are taking MCAS tests for the first time.
Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

Table C3: Middleborough Public Schools and State
Composite Performance Index (CPI) and Median Student Growth Percentile (SGP)
for Selected Subgroups
2011 English Language Arts

	Middleborough Public Schools			State	
	Number of Students Included	**CPI**	***Median SGP***	**CPI**	***Median SGP***
All Students	***1,937***	**85.2**	***47***	**87.2**	***50***
African-American/Black	*39*	76.9	*48.5*	77.4	*47*
Asian	*19*	80.3		90.2	*59*
Hispanic/Latino	*64*	81.3	*42*	74.2	*46*
White	*1,751*	85.8	*47.5*	90.9	*51*
ELL	*5*	---	---	59.4	*48*
FELL	*3*	---	---	81.7	*54*
Special Education	*362*	61.1	*49*	68.3	*42*
Low-Income	*594*	78.5	*47*	77.1	*46*

Note: 1. Numbers of students included are the numbers of district students included for the purpose of calculating the CPI. Numbers included for the calculation of the median SGP are different.
2. Median SGP is calculated for grades 4-8 and 10 and is only reported for groups of 20 or more students. CPI is only reported for groups of 10 or more students.
3. "ELL" students are English language learners.
4. "FELL" students are former ELLs.

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

Table C4: Middleborough Public Schools and State
Composite Performance Index (CPI) and Median Student Growth Percentile (SGP)
for Selected Subgroups
2011 Mathematics

	Middleborough Public Schools			State	
	Number of Students Included	**CPI**	***Median SGP***	**CPI**	***Median SGP***
All Students	***1,938***	**75**	***45***	**79.9**	***50***
African-American/Black	*39*	60.9	*47*	65	*47*
Asian	*19*	71.1	---	89.5	*64*
Hispanic/Latino	*63*	68.3	*54*	64.4	*46*
White	*1,752*	76	*45*	84.3	*50*
ELL	*5*	---	---	56.3	*52*
FELL	*3*	---	---	75.1	*53*
Special Education	*361*	50.1	*45*	57.7	*43*
Low-Income	*590*	64.9	*43*	67.3	*46*

Note: 1. Numbers of students included are the numbers of district students included for the purpose of calculating the CPI. Numbers included for the calculation of the median SGP are different.
2. Median SGP is calculated for grades 4-8 and 10 and is only reported for groups of 20 or more students. CPI is only reported for groups of 10 or more students.
3. "ELL" students are English language learners.
4. "FELL" students are former ELLs.

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

Appendix D: Administrative Turnover, 2003–2012

Administrative Turnover
Middleborough Public Schools, 2003–2012[9]

Position	Years of Service
Superintendent	2003-2004 2004-2005 (interim) 2005-2010 2010-2012 (interim) June 2012-
Assistant Superintendent	2003-2004 2005-2007 2007-2010 (unfilled) 2010-2011 2011-2012 (position cut)
Coordinator of Curriculum	2003-2007 2007-2010 2010-2011 (position cut)
Director of Business and Finance	2003-2009 2009-2010 (interim) 2010-
Director of Athletics	2003-2012 (retired)
Director of Technology	2003-2007 2007-2012 (position cut) April 2012-
Director of Special Education	2003-2006 2006-2011 2011-
Director of Guidance	2003-2004 2004-2007 2007-2012 (position cut)
Director of Fine Arts	2003-2004 2004-2007 2007-2011 (.75 position) 2011-2012 (position cut)
Director of Elementary Education (newly created position)	2011-

[9] Drawn from a larger table prepared for the review team by Michael Malone, Interim Superintendent, April 10, 2012.

Position	Years of Service
Early Childhood Principal	2003-2004 2004-
Mary K. Goode School, Principal	2003-2011 2011-
Mary K. Goode School, Assistant Principal	2003-2007 2007-2010 2010-
Henry B. Burkland School, Principal	2003-2008 2008-2012 (leaving 6/30/12)
Henry B. Burkland School, Assistant Principal	2003-2012 (retiring 6/30/12)
John T. Nichols Middle School, Headmaster	2003-2006 2006-2010 2010-2012 (leaving 6/30/12)
John T. Nichols Middle School, Housemaster (assistant principal) (two different positions)	2003-2004 2004-2005 (interim) 2006-2012 (2012 position cut) 2007-2011
Middleborough High School, Principal	2002-2005 2005-2010 2010-2012 (leaving 6/30/12)
Middleborough High School, Assistant Principal (two different positions)	2002-2005 2002-2005 2005-2007 2005-2009 2007-2009 2009-2010 (interim) 2009-2012 (leaving 6/30/12) 2010-2012 (moving to interim high school principal)
Director of Alternative Program, grades 6-12	2005-2008 2008-2009 ((interim) 2009-2012 (position cut, moving to assistant principal)

Appendix E: Finding and Recommendation Statements

Finding Statements:

Student Achievement

1. For the last five test administrations, the district's MCAS results overall for both ELA and mathematics have typically been lower than statewide rates and have remained flat. In 2011, the percentage of students scoring proficient or higher was farthest below the state rate in mathematics in grades 7 and 8 and in ELA in grades 4 through 6.

2. Although proficiency rates overall have typically been lower than state rates, there have been a few recent improvements in proficiency and in other indicators of academic success in some grade levels.

Leadership and Governance

3. A persistent pattern of leadership turnover at all levels for the past decade has slowed continuous improvement efforts and hindered leadership stability in the district.

4. The district does not have systemic leadership in curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional development and therefore, does not have cohesive planning, implementation, and monitoring of initiatives in these areas.

Curriculum and Instruction

5. The district has insufficient curriculum leadership to ensure that there are written, updated, and aligned curriculum documents in all content areas.

6. Instructional practices in the district are not effectively monitored at all levels and teachers receive insufficient feedback to improve instruction. Observed instructional practices in the district are not focused on clearly articulated learning objectives, and instruction is mainly teacher-centered with limited opportunities for students to actively engage in learning and to experience varied instructional strategies, higher-order thinking, student groups, and formative assessments.

Assessment

7. Although a number of assessments are administered in core academic subjects, the district does not yet have a balanced and comprehensive assessment system to guide instruction, inform curriculum, and determine students' remedial and enrichment requirements.

8. Several steps have recently been taken to promote data-based decision-making at all levels; however, leaders and teachers do not yet routinely identify, collect, share, analyze, monitor, and use data from multiple sources to improve performance.

Human Resources and Professional Development

9. The district does not have a well-funded, cohesive, districtwide professional development plan developed collaboratively by teachers and administrators to address district and school issues. For the most part, teachers have limited input into identifying professional development needs and the district does not have a central office administrator responsible for professional development districtwide.

10. The district does not have a highly functional evaluation system for teachers and administrators that includes consistent observations and formal evaluations that are instructive and promote growth and effectiveness. The district does not have a structured supervision model that includes formative monitoring and feedback to improve instructional quality.

Student Support

11. The district has limited academic support services for students who perform below grade level expectations or are at risk of not reaching proficiency on MCAS tests.

12. Middleborough has limited academic support for subgroups of students, specifically special education students.

Financial and Asset Management

13. Limited budget increases have put strains on the district's allocation of resources across its various programs and needs.

14. The school district is improving its cost-effective resource management, but there is room for further improvements.

Recommendation Statements:

Leadership and Governance

1. To improve leadership stability, the district should establish a leadership development program to create pathways to leadership roles for qualified teachers and an induction program for all leaders new to the system.

2. Leaders, in collaboration with representative stakeholders, should develop more complete and aligned improvement plans (a new District Improvement Plan and revised School Improvement Plans) focused on meeting the learning needs of all students.

Curriculum and Instruction

3. The district should establish clear and firm leadership for curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional development at the district and school levels. With this leadership the district should develop for all grades high-quality curriculum guides in the core subjects, aligning curriculum to the new Massachusetts curriculum frameworks and including objectives, resources, instructional strategies, timelines, and assessments in the guides.

4. To create the practice of continuous improvement in instruction, the district should establish a common understanding of the characteristics of high-quality instruction. It should also provide appropriate professional development to meet expectations for high-quality instruction and more opportunities for teachers at all levels to receive informal feedback on instructional practices.

Assessment

5. Under the leadership it has established for assessment, the district should expand the assessment system to make it more balanced and comprehensive in all core subjects, documenting the system and ensuring that it is fully integrated into the newly revised and documented curriculum.

6. To become more data-driven in its decision-making, the district should develop the technology infrastructure, human capacity, and districtwide procedures needed for a new data management system.

Human Resources and Professional Development

7. The district should develop and implement a structured walkthrough process that provides regular feedback. It should expeditiously design and negotiate agreement on a new system of educator evaluation consistent with the new state system, so as to be ready to begin implementing it in 2013-2014.

8. The district should build on the foundation laid by the professional development goal in the Strategic Plan to provide systemic and sustained professional development. Under the leadership it has identified for professional development, the district should create and implement a focused professional development plan that is informed by student and teacher needs and aligned to district and school improvement plans.

Student Support

Please see second Leadership and Governance recommendation above.

Financial and Asset Management

9. The district should continue to examine all budget accounts to reallocate resources to the most cost-efficient uses that directly support district and school improvement plans.