

District Review Report

Northampton-Smith Vocational
Agricultural School District



Review conducted March 4-7, 2013

Center for District and School Accountability
Massachusetts Department of Elementary and
Secondary Education

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Northampton-Smith District Review Overview

Purpose

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

Districts reviewed in the 2012-2013 school year included those classified into Level 3¹ of the 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. Review reports may be used by ESE and the district to establish priority for assistance and make resource allocation decisions.

Methodology

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

Site Visit

The site visit to the Northampton-Smith Vocational Agricultural School District was conducted from March 4 through March 7, 2013. The site visit included 31 hours of interviews and focus groups with approximately 45 stakeholders, including school committee members, district administrators, school staff, and teachers' association representatives. The review team conducted a focus group with 25 high school teachers.

The team observed classroom instructional practice in 26 classrooms including 13 vocational and 13 academic classrooms. The team collected data using ESE's instructional inventory, a tool for recording observed characteristics of standards-based teaching.

Further information about the review, the site visit schedule and the review team can be found in Appendix A. Appendix B contains information about enrollment, expenditures, and student performance. Appendix C contains the instructional inventory—the record of the team's observations in classrooms.

¹ Districts selected were in Level 3 in school year 2012-2013; all served one or more schools among the lowest 20 percent of schools statewide serving common grade levels pursuant to 603 CMR 2.05(2)(a). The districts with the lowest aggregate performance and least movement in Composite Performance Index (CPI) in their respective regions were selected for review from among those districts that were not exempt under Chapter 15, Section 55A. This is because another comprehensive review had been completed or was scheduled within nine months of the planned reviews.

District Profile

Northampton, Massachusetts, has a mayoral/city council form of government and the mayor serves as an ex-officio, voting member of the district's board of trustees. Three members of the board are elected by open ballot in Northampton. The superintendent of the Northampton Public Schools and the mayor complete the board as ex-officio members. Both the mayor and the superintendent attend and vote in regular sessions. They meet monthly with all attending, and the three members elected to the board meet once additionally each month in subcommittee session.

The current superintendent has been in the position since July, 2012. At the time of the team's site visit, the district leadership team included the following administrators: superintendent (8 months), principal (4 years), dean of students (4 years), business manager (12 years), and director of student services (2 years). Central office positions have been mostly stable over the past three years, although a vocational director position was added in September of 2012. There are 47 teachers in the district.

As of October 1, 2012, 434 students were enrolled in grades 9–12. All attended the Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School, the one school in the district.

Between 2008 and 2012 overall student enrollment declined from 453 to 434 students, a decrease of 4 percent. In 2011–2012 the majority were white students (82.7 percent), followed by Hispanic/Latino (13.8 percent). In 2012 white students were the only racial/ethnic group large enough to be included in the school's accountability calculations (N = 91 in English Language Arts; 92 in mathematics, and 85 in science.²As of October 1, 2012, English language learners and former English language learners (ELLs and FELLs) made up 2.9 percent of enrollment, compared with 10.0 percent statewide, and students whose first language is not English made up 4.5 percent of enrollment, compared with 17.3 percent statewide. The proportion of students with disabilities was 39.0 percent, compared with 17.0 percent statewide, and the proportion of students from low-income families was 46.2 percent, compared with 37 percent statewide.

In fiscal year 2011 total in-district per-pupil expenditures were slightly lower than the median for similar-size vocational/agricultural districts (fewer than 1,000 students): \$18,981 (as shown in Table B3), compared with the median among those districts of \$20,018. Although in recent years actual net school spending has been below the required amount set by the state, as shown in Table B2 in Appendix B, up until the time of the review enforcement of the minimum spending requirement has been stayed at the request of the mayor and former superintendent (see financial finding under Challenges and March 5, 2013, letter from ESE Deputy Commissioner Jeff Wulfson in Appendix D).

Student Performance

Information about student performance includes: (1) the accountability and assistance level of the district, including the reason for the district's level classification; (2) the progress the district and its schools are making toward narrowing proficiency gaps as measured by the Progress and Performance Index (PPI); (3) English language arts (ELA) performance and growth; (4) mathematics performance and growth; (5) science and technology/engineering (STE) performance; (6) annual dropout rates and cohort graduation rates; and (7) suspension rates. Data is reported for the district and for schools and student subgroups that have at least four years of sufficient data and are therefore eligible to be classified into an accountability and assistance level (1-5). "Sufficient data" means that at least 20 students in a district or school

² At least 20 students must be assessed in a school and at least 30 students in a given subgroup for the school or subgroup to be included in annual accountability determinations.

or at least 30 students in a subgroup were assessed on ELA and mathematics MCAS tests for the four years under review.

Four-and two-year trend data are provided when possible, in addition to areas in the district and/or its schools demonstrating potentially meaningful gains or declines over these periods. Data on student performance is also available in Appendix B. In both this section and Appendix B, the data reported is the most recent available.

1. The school is in Level 3 at the 16th percentile.³

- A.** The Smith Vocational and Agricultural High is among the lowest performing 20 percent of high schools based on its four-year (2009-2012) achievement and improvement trends.⁴

2. The school is sufficiently narrowing proficiency gaps.

- A.** The school as a whole is considered to be making sufficient progress toward narrowing proficiency gaps. This is because the 2012 cumulative PPI for all students and for high needs⁵ students is greater than 75 for the school. The school's cumulative PPI⁶⁷ is 89 for all students and 88 for high needs students. The school's cumulative PPI for reportable subgroups are: 82 (low income students), 87 (students with disabilities), and 90 (White students).

3. The school's English language arts (ELA) performance is low⁸ relative to other high schools and its growth⁹ is moderate.¹⁰

³ Due to the district's Level 3 classification, it received a concurrent determination of need for special education technical assistance or intervention of "Needs Technical Assistance (NTA)." This serves as an indication that while areas of the district's performance may be positive, one or more schools (or, in the case of a single school district, the district as a whole) may be experiencing poor outcomes for students with disabilities and/or are having compliance issues.

⁴ A district is classified into the level of its lowest-performing school unless it has been placed in Level 4 or 5 by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education independent of the level of its schools.

⁵ The high needs group is an unduplicated count of all students in a school or district belonging to at least one of the following individual subgroups: students with disabilities, English language learners (ELL) and Former ELL students, or low income students (eligible for free/reduced price school lunch).

⁶ The PPI combines multiple measures of performance data (achievement, improvement, and graduation and dropout rates) over multiple years into a single number. All districts, schools, and student subgroups receive an *annual PPI* based on improvement from one year to the next and a *cumulative PPI* between 0 and 100 based on four years of data. A district's, school's or subgroup's cumulative PPI is the average of its annual Progress and Performance Index scores over the four most recent MCAS administrations, weighting recent years the most (1-2-3-4). A cumulative PPI is calculated for a group if it has at least three annual PPIs. If a group is missing an annual PPI for one year, that year is left out of the weighting (e.g., 1-X-3-4). While a group's annual PPI can exceed 100 points, the cumulative PPI is always reported on a 100-point scale.

⁷ The cumulative PPI is a *criterion-referenced* measure of a district or school's performance relative to its own targets, irrespective of the performance of other districts or schools. Conversely, school percentiles are *norm-referenced* because schools are being compared to other schools across the state that serve the same or similar grades.

⁸ All districts, schools, and subgroups are expected to halve the gap between their level of performance in the year 2011 and 100 percent proficient by the 2016-17 school year in ELA, mathematics, and STE. The Composite Performance Index (CPI), a measure of the extent to

- A. The school met its annual proficiency gap narrowing targets for all students, high needs students, low income students, students with disabilities, and White students.¹¹
- B. The school met its annual growth for all students, high needs students, low income students, students with disabilities, and White students.
- C. The school earned extra credit toward its annual PPI for increasing the percentage of students scoring *Advanced* 10 percent or more and for decreasing the percentage of students scoring *Warning/Failing* 10 percent or more between 2011 and 2012 for all students, high need students, low income students, students with disabilities, and White students.
- D. In 2012 the school demonstrated low performance in grade 10 relative to other schools.
- E. In 2012 the school demonstrated moderate growth in grade 10 relative to other schools.
- F. Between 2009 and 2012 and more recently between 2011 and 2012, the district demonstrated potentially meaningful¹² gains in grade 10 in the CPI, the percentage of students scoring *Proficient* or *Advanced*, and in median SGP.

which a group of students has progressed towards proficiency, is the state's measure of progress towards this goal. In this report the 2012 CPI is used to compare the performance of districts, schools, and grades in a particular subject for a given year. For districts, for each level of school, and for each grade the CPIs are ordered from lowest to highest and then divided into five equal groups (quintiles) with the corresponding descriptions: "very high", "high", "moderate", "low" or "very low". In their assignment to quintiles single-school districts are treated as schools rather than districts. Quintiles for grades are calculated two ways: using a ranking of all districts' CPIs for a particular grade, and using a ranking of all schools' CPIs for a particular grade. CPI figures derive from the MCAS Report on the Department's School and District Profiles website: http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/state_report/mcas.aspx.

⁹ Massachusetts uses student growth percentiles (SGP) to measure how much a student's or group of students' achievement has grown or changed over time. At the student level, student growth percentiles measure progress by comparing changes in a student's MCAS scores to changes in MCAS scores of other students with similar achievement profiles ("academic peers"). Growth at the district, school, and subgroup levels are reported as median SGPs - the middle score when the individual SGPs in a group are ranked from highest to lowest. Median SGPs are reported for ELA and mathematics. In contrast to the CPI, which describes a group's progress toward proficiency based on the group's current level of achievement, the median SGP describes a group's progress in terms of how the achievement of the students in the group changed relative to the prior year as compared to their academic peers. A group demonstrates "moderate" or "typical" growth if the group's median SGP is between the 41st and 60th percentiles.

¹⁰ For ELA trends in the aggregate see Table B4a in Appendix B; for selected subgroups, see Table B5a.

¹¹ A district, school, or subgroup is considered to have met its target when its CPI is within 1.5 CPI points of the target.

¹² The following changes in measures of achievement and growth, either positive or negative, are potentially meaningful, pending further inquiry: CPI (2.5 points); median SGP (10 points); percent *Proficient* and *Advanced* (3 percentage points). Changes are more likely to be potentially meaningful for larger groups of students; higher performing groups tend to demonstrate fewer potentially meaningful changes than lower performing groups; and certain subjects and grade levels are more likely to demonstrate potentially meaningful changes than others. A consistent pattern of potentially meaningful change over several consecutive pairs of consecutive years is more likely to be meaningful than changes from one year to another, whether consecutive or not. In this report, a statement of potentially meaningful change is provided when a district, school, grade level, or subgroup demonstrates three or more instances of declines or gains of the amounts specified above in the CPI, median SGP, and percent *Proficient* or *Advanced* over the last four years, the most recent two years, or both. Any instance of decline of one of the amounts specified above (or more) prevents three or more instances of gain from being considered potentially meaningful, and vice versa.

4. **The school's mathematics performance is very low relative to other high schools and its growth is low.**¹³
- A. The school met its annual proficiency gap narrowing targets for all students, high needs students, low income students, students with disabilities, and White students.
 - B. The school met its annual growth for all students, high needs students, low income students, and White students; the school did not meet its annual growth targets for students with disabilities.
 - C. The school earned extra credit toward its annual PPI for increasing the percentage of students scoring *Advanced* 10 percent or more between 2011 and 2012 for high need students and low income students, and it earned extra credit for decreasing the percentage of students scoring *Warning/Failing* 10 percent or more over this period for all students, high need students, low income students, students with disabilities, and White students.
 - D. In 2012 the school demonstrated very low performance in grade 10 relative to other high schools.
 - E. In 2012 the school demonstrated low growth in grade 10 relative to other high schools.
 - F. Between 2009 and 2012 and more recently between 2011 and 2012, the district demonstrated gains in grade 10 in the CPI and the percentage of students scoring *Proficient* or *Advanced*, and declines in median SGP. Most of the gains were attributed to its performance over both periods; the decline in median SGP is mostly attributable to the period between 2011 and 2012.
5. **The school's science and technology/engineering (STE) performance is low relative to other high schools.**¹⁴
- A. The school met its annual proficiency gap narrowing targets for all students, high needs students, low income students, students with disabilities, and White students.
 - B. The school earned extra credit toward its annual PPI for increasing the percentage of students scoring *Advanced* 10 percent or more between 2011 and 2012 for high need students and low income students, and it earned extra credit for decreasing the percentage of students scoring *Warning/Failing* 10 percent or more over this period for all students, high need students, low income students, students with disabilities, and White students.
 - C. In 2012 the school demonstrated low performance in grade 10 relative to other districts.
 - D. Between 2009 and 2012 and more recently between 2011 and 2012, the district demonstrated potentially meaningful gains in grade 10 in the CPI and the percentage of students scoring *Proficient* or *Advanced*. Most of the gains in CPI were attributed to its performance over both periods; the gain in the percentage of students scoring *Proficient* or *Advanced* is mostly attributable to the period between 2009 and 2012.

¹³ For mathematics trends in the aggregate see Table B4b in Appendix B; for selected subgroups, see Table B5b.

¹⁴ For STE trends in the aggregate see Table B4c in Appendix B; for selected subgroups, see Table B5c.

6. In 2012, the district met its annual improvement targets for all students for the four-year cohort graduation rate, and the five-year cohort graduation rate, and did not make its improvement target for the annual grade 9-12 dropout rate.¹⁵ Over the most recent three-year period for which data is available¹⁶, the four-year cohort graduation rate increased, the five-year cohort graduation rate declined, and the annual grade 9-12 dropout rate declined. Over the most recent one-year period for which data is available, the four-year cohort graduation rate increased, the five-year cohort graduation rate declined, and the annual grade 9-12 dropout rate remained constant.¹⁷
- A. Between 2009 and 2012 the four-year cohort graduation rate increased 4.8 percentage points, from 87.9% to 92.7%, an increase of 5.5 percent. Between 2011 and 2012 it increased 10.8 percentage points, from 81.9% to 92.7%, an increase of 13.2 percent.
 - B. Between 2008 and 2011 the five-year cohort graduation rate declined 2.2 percentage points, from 87.0% to 84.8%, a decrease of 2.5 percent. Between 2010 and 2011 it declined 6.6 percentage points, from 91.4% to 84.8%, a decrease of 7.2 percent.
 - C. Between 2009 and 2012 the annual grade 9-12 dropout rate declined 1.0 percentage points, from 2.4% to 1.4%, a decrease of 42.5 percent. Between 2011 and 2012 it remained the same changing 0.0 percentage points, from 1.4% to 1.4%, a change of 0.0 percent.
7. The school's rate of in-school suspensions was significantly higher than the state rate for grades 9-12 in 2011-2012 and its rate for out-of-school suspensions in 2011-2012 was significantly lower than the statewide rate for grades 9-12¹⁸.
- A. The rate of in-school suspensions was 23.7 percent, significantly higher than the state rate for grades 9-12 of 6.5 percent. The rate of out-of-school suspensions was 8.1 percent, significantly lower than the state rate of 9.0 percent for grades 9-12.
 - B. There was not a significant difference among racial/ethnic groups for in-school suspensions¹⁹. The in-school-suspension rate was 16.7 percent for African-American/Black students, and 23.1 percent for White students.

¹⁵ All groups (districts, schools, and subgroups) are expected to make steady progress toward a goal of 90 percent for the four-year cohort graduation rate and 95 percent for the five-year rate by the 2016-17 school year. For accountability determinations in any given year, the cohort graduation rate from the prior school year is used. For example, 2012 accountability determinations for the four-year rate use data from 2011; determinations for the five-year rate use data from 2010. Districts, schools, and subgroups are considered to be on target if they meet the state's federally-approved annual targets in a given year for either the four-or five-year cohort graduation rate, whichever is higher.

¹⁶ Note that the 2012 four-year graduation and dropout rates and the 2011 five-year graduation rate will be used in the 2013 accountability determination; the 2011 four-year graduation and dropout rates and the 2010 five-year graduation rate were used in the 2012 determination. See previous footnote.

¹⁷ For annual dropout rate trends from 2009 to 2012, see Table B6 in Appendix B. For cohort graduation rate trends for the last three years available, see Tables B7a and B7b.

¹⁸ Statistical significance based on one sample T test. $P \leq .05$

¹⁹ Statistical significance for racial/ethnic groups and other subgroups based on Chi Square. $P \leq .05$

- C.** There was not a significant difference among racial/ethnic groups for out-of-school suspensions. The out-of-school-suspension rate was 0.0 percent for African-American/Black students, and 7.5 percent for White students.
- D.** There was not a significant difference between the in-school suspension rates of high needs students and non high needs students (24.7 percent compared to 21.9 percent), low income students and non low income students (23.8 percent compared to 23.7 percent), and students with disabilities and students without disabilities (25.9 percent and 22.3 percent).
- E.** There was not a significant difference between the rates of out-of-school suspensions for high needs students and non high needs students (7.4 percent compared to 9.3 percent), low income students and non low income students (6.7 percent compared to 9.1 percent), and students with disabilities and students without disabilities (8.0 percent compared to 8.1 percent).
- F.** On average students in the school missed 2.5 days per disciplinary action²⁰, lower than the state average for grades 9-12 of 3.7.

²⁰ Disciplinary action refers to in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, permanent expulsion, removal by an impartial hearing officer to an alternative setting, or removal by school personnel to an alternative setting.

Northampton-Smith Review Findings

Strengths

Leadership and Governance

1. **The superintendent/director's entry plan shows a determination to address problems and needs identified in the 2012 TELL Mass Survey, and in the May 2012 superintendent selection survey, as well as several areas for improvement described during interviews conducted by the review team.**
 - A. In the 2012 TELL Mass Survey²¹, 64 percent or more of the respondents identified the following areas as problematic:
 1. Time available to collaborate with colleagues (95 percent)
 2. Sufficient instructional time (64 percent)
 3. Students' understanding of expectations for conduct (89 percent)
 4. Students following rules of conduct (97 percent)
 5. Consistent enforcement of rules for student conduct by school administrators (100 percent)
 6. Administrative support for teachers to maintain classroom discipline (91 percent)
 7. Providing input on spending the school budget (92 percent)
 8. School Improvement Planning (89 percent)
 9. Appropriate level of influence on decision making (91 percent)
 10. Faculty and leadership having a shared vision (100 percent)
 11. An atmosphere of trust and mutual respect (95 percent)
 12. Consistent support for teachers by the school leadership (94 percent)
 13. The school improvement team providing effective leadership (90 percent)
 14. Making a sustained effort to address leadership issues (91 percent)
 15. Managing student conduct (94 percent)

²¹ Survey results available at <http://www.tellmass.org/reports/detailed.php?orgID=M0406>.

B. In the May 9, 2012, superintendent selection survey, the following were the 4 issues the largest proportions of respondents identified as among the 5 most significant current or future issues the new superintendent would need to address:

1. Staff relations/morale (81 percent)
2. Educational leadership skills in a vocational school (77 percent)
3. Public relations/communications (57 percent)
4. Teaching effectiveness (51 percent)

Of the 91 respondents to this survey, 72 (79 percent) were employees of the district.

C. Respondents to the same superintendent selection survey also placed premium emphasis on the ability of applicants for the superintendency to:

1. Articulate a vision for vocational education (74 percent)
2. Attract and/or lead a high performing administrative team (61 percent)

D. Interviews conducted by the district review team identified three areas in particular relating to personnel and student matters of substantial concern:

1. Low morale
2. Inadequate and infrequent teacher and administrative evaluations
3. Inconsistent student discipline and absence of administrative support for teachers

E. Selected in the summer of 2012, the new superintendent conducted a series of interviews with the board of trustees, school employees, students, Northampton municipal and school officials, and other interested parties. As a result of these interviews the superintendent, with the endorsement of the board of trustees, developed a multi-year plan with 19 goals outlined for the first year (2012–2013) of his plan. They include:

1. Support for teachers and assurance of their safety
2. Training in, and implementation of, the new educator evaluation system
3. Commitment to evaluate “the entire district staff”
4. Collaboration between vocational and academic teachers through training, “cross-curricular peer observation,” and scheduling social events for the faculty
5. Improvement of school culture by forming a Student Advisory Committee to address concerns from the student body and reviewing and updating the student handbook

6. Reaching out to sending districts
7. Hiring a vocational director
8. Forming a data team of teachers and administrators to analyze data and help improve achievement

Impact: The review team, in multiple interviews, noticed a sense of optimism among the administrators, teachers, and the board of trustees, stemming from the view that, after approximately seven months of effort, the new superintendent/director was having a positive impact on the culture of the school district, and that he was addressing the problems and needs expressed by a broad range of the school district's stakeholders. One administrator said: "I think we're heading in the right direction. Jeff is pushing people and they're not rebelling. I think that's good."

Human Resources and Professional Development

- 2. The district has made serious and purposeful efforts to begin implementation of a new educator evaluation system consistent with the state's new system, as required by 2013-2014.**

All districts are required to implement a new educator evaluation system consistent with ESE's new system; as it is not a participant in the Race to the Top grant program; Northampton-Smith is required to begin implementation by 2013–2014.

The district's teachers and their evaluators have taken several steps toward implementation of a new educator system.

- A.** Though at the time of the review negotiations on a new teachers' collective bargaining agreement were continuing, teachers' association representatives and the superintendent said that the district had a basic level of agreement about the new educator evaluation system.
- B.** Teachers' association members said that there was an evaluation team in place, consisting of representatives of both the teachers' association and the administration.
 1. In separate interviews, evaluation team members said that folders had been prepared and teachers had begun collecting artifacts for evaluations.
 2. Training sessions in the new teacher evaluation system had already begun. According to administrators, there had been one half-day training for all teachers, and three full days for members of the evaluation team.

3. According to the superintendent, efforts were made to recruit other districts to participate with Northampton-Smith in a training for teachers, sharing the costs. In the absence of any interest in such a collaboration, the district committed to fully funding the training initiative itself.

- C. In interviews with the superintendent, administrators, and teachers' association officers stakeholders agreed that once the new educator evaluation system has been fully implemented and supported it will represent an advance over the district's previous system.

Impact: By forming an evaluation team, coming to basic agreement on a new system, beginning training on the system, and having teachers begin preparing for evaluations, the district has put itself in a favorable position to implement the new system as required in 2013-2014, turning over a new leaf from its previous system of evaluation (see second Human Resources and Professional Development finding under Challenges below).

Student Support

3. The district successfully provides many school-to-career options to its students.

- A. Students can choose to develop skills in 12 trades ranging from agriculture mechanics and horticulture to auto and construction trades, to areas such as cosmetology and health technology.

Impact: As a result of the career preparation offered in the district, many students are able to make a strong start toward their work and education goals.

1. According to student reports after graduation, many are placed in the trades and continue their education in an apprenticeship or two-year program. According to Department of Elementary and Secondary Education reports,²² in 2010, the most recent year for which results are available, of 7 programs with more than 5 recent graduates responding, 5 reported that 100 percent of the graduates were successfully placed on the job, in the military, or in higher education. The sixth and seventh programs reported that 90.91 percent and 88.9 percent of the students were successfully placed.

²² Graduate Follow-up Data, District Reports by Program, 2010, <http://www.doe.mass.edu/cte/data/>

Challenges and Areas for Growth

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

Leadership and Governance

- 4. The district does not have a focused improvement plan or an ongoing, systematic approach to decision-making and planning that is aligned with school improvement goals and priorities. It does not have an articulated vision or a forecast for the needs of tomorrow that has been communicated to stakeholders.**
 - A.** The district was operating without a District Improvement Plan (DIP).
 1. At the time of the review a DIP had been finalized and was scheduled for approval by the board of trustees in April, 2013. Once the DIP was approved, it was to be used to inform the development of an up-to-date School Improvement Plan (SIP).
 - B.** While the most recent SIP, dated 2011–2012, is rich in historical detail and statistical data, and includes general goals, it does not state with specificity how the goals will be achieved through improvements in instructional practice leading to increased student achievement.
 - C.** The SIP does not play a role in influencing decision-making and informing instructional practice.
 1. An administrator said that the teachers were unaware of the contents of the SIP.
 2. Representatives of the teachers' association said that they had never been asked to provide input into the SIP, or been involved in the development process. There were, however, two teachers on the school council.
 - D.** The district Professional Development Plan, which is part of the 2011-2012 SIP, does not relate specific professional development activities to any goals for instructional improvement.
 1. The objectives and activities listed to achieve each of the three stated professional development goals for 2011–2012 of proficiency, sustainability, and wellness are general statements, unrelated to a particular activity on an identified date during the year; benchmarks for success in achieving the goals or objectives are not provided.

Impact: The absence of tightly integrated District Improvement, School Improvement, and Professional Development Plans, with clear, specific, and measurable goals for connecting improvements in instruction with increases in student achievement, prevents the school district and its employees from working in a common direction with a clear sense of purpose, and from achieving the educational successes that would result.

Curriculum and Instruction

5. Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School does not have a curriculum development, review, and revision process or an adequate infrastructure to support effective instruction.

A. Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School does not have an institutionalized process for the development, review, and revision of curriculum, according to an administrator.

1. Although the district has curriculum maps in ELA, it does not have complete, aligned curriculum guides for mathematics and science. On the vocational side, there are curriculum guides in 9 of the 12 shop areas.

B. Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School does not have sufficient instructional leadership.

1. Leadership and support are not in place to support effective instruction.
 - a. The position of curriculum coordinator no longer exists. According to administrators, a staff member receives a stipend for curriculum responsibilities—in addition to other extra duties.
 - b. Department heads said that they provided support to teachers and neither the department heads nor the individual with curriculum duties had supervisory or evaluative responsibilities.
 - c. Educator development opportunities are not linked to teachers' professional development concerns or needs, according to teachers. In the 2012 TELL Mass survey, 70 percent of respondents disagreed with the statement: The school leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about professional development. Also, 75 percent of respondents disagreed with the statement: Professional development is differentiated to meet the needs of individual teachers.
2. Identification of instructional needs and strengths through monitoring does not take place, according to department heads and administrators.
 - a. Department heads said that with full teaching schedules they did not get into teachers' classrooms to monitor or support instruction but acted more in a supportive role outside of the classroom.

- b. An administrator said that there has not been a functioning evaluation system.
- C. Assessment results are provided to administrators and department chairs, but there is no formal mechanism to ensure that teachers receive or use the results to modify curriculum or instructional practices, according to administrators. (See the Assessment finding below.)

Impact: The absence of a curriculum review and revision process rules out teacher input into curriculum, curriculum modifications informed by assessment results, sufficient responsiveness to student performance trends, and a targeting mechanism for the staff's professional development needs. Because the school has guides or maps only for one subject area, it does not provide horizontal consistency and vertical coherence of curriculum. And without sufficient supervision, the school does not have an adequate system for improving the faculty's instructional skills.

6. The district does not have key, effective instructional practices and expectations in place.

The team observed 13 academic classes and all 13 vocational programs. The team observed five ELA classes, four mathematics classes, and four classes in other subject areas, including three in science, technology, and engineering, and one in social studies. Observations were approximately 20 minutes in length and data was recorded using ESE's instructional inventory, a tool for documenting observed characteristics of standards-based teaching.

- A. In 6 of the 13 academic classrooms visited (46 percent) the team found clear and consistent evidence that lessons reflected rigor and high expectations. However, in 11 of the 13 vocational shops observed (85 percent), there was clear and consistent evidence of rigor and high expectations. An observer noted that in one classroom, students were working on cardiac blood flow. In a shop area the observer noted students working on differentiated projects.
- B. In 6 of the 13 academic classrooms visited (46 percent) the team found clear and consistent evidence of teachers using varied strategies in their instruction. However, in 11 of the 13 vocational shops observed (85 percent), clear and consistent evidence of varied teaching strategies was noted. In one classroom an observer noted students working in groups— some were performing CPR on models, other students were watching videos, and another group was doing desk work.
- C. In 9 of the 13 academic classrooms visited (69 percent) the team did not find evidence of teaching that required inquiry, exploration, application, analysis, synthesis, or evaluation of concepts to demonstrate higher-order thinking. In one class the observer noted students engaged in trouble shooting, problem identification, and resolution.

- D. In 9 of the 13 academic classrooms visited (69 percent) the team did not find evidence of teachers using technology to enhance learning.
- E. In 5 of the 13 academic classrooms visited (38 percent) the team did not find evidence of students assuming responsibility for their own learning. However, in 10 of the 13 vocational shops observed (77 percent), the team found clear and consistent evidence that students were assuming responsibility for their own learning.
- F. In 10 of the 13 academic classrooms visited (77 percent) the team did not find evidence of students using technology as a tool for learning or understanding. In one classroom an observer noted students working in groups. Each group had two laptops— one had an interactive lesson on the screen and the second was being used for writing and reporting.
- G. In 10 of the 13 academic classrooms visited (77 percent), and in 7 of the 13 vocational classrooms visited (54 percent), the team did not find evidence of students work demonstrating high quality. In one classroom, projects of 10th grade students were displayed prominently.

Impact: In observed classrooms at Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School, key instructional practices and expectations were often absent. Without the use of varied instructional methods, the diversity of learning styles among Smith’s students is not served. Student achievement is compromised without the coupling of rigorous learning experiences and higher expectations. And a 21st century curriculum that does not integrate technology is sure to miss opportunities for enhanced instruction and enriched learning.

Assessment

- 7. **Although efforts toward that end have begun, the district does not yet have a fully functioning system of assessment and data analysis.**
 - A. The Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE) and the Group Mathematics Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GMADE) tests are administered to incoming grade 9 students in the summer or fall before their admission, and in the spring to students in grades 9, 10, 11, and 12.
 - 1. According to interviewees, the initial GRADE and GMADE tests are scored by guidance counselors and used for placement purposes.
 - 2. Results of the spring test administrations are used primarily to meet Title I requirements. Rank-ordering of students was the initial purpose of the test, according to interviewees.

3. Assessment results are provided to administrators and department chairs, but there is no formal mechanism to ensure that teachers receive or use the results to modify curriculum or instructional practices, according to administrators.
- B.** MCAS, GRADE, GMADE and Accuplacer are administered to some students.
 - C.** In 2012-2013 for the first time, the district pilot-tested the use of the Accuplacer examination with some 11th grade students. It was planned that the district would administer the test to all 11th grade students during the 2013–2014 school year.
 - D.** The district initiated a new data team in October 2012. An examination by the review team of data team summaries from October 2012 through March 7, 2013, indicated that while the elementary stages of the team’s work were promising, the team was still exploring its own functions and examining its own potential.
 - E.** Formative assessments were described by administrators as being “all over the map” and classroom specific.
 - F.** Review team members observed clear and consistent evidence of formative assessment in 50 percent of visited academic classrooms and in 62 percent of vocational shops, as teachers observed projects, evaluated progress and skills attainment, provided feedback, and redirected student progress toward proficiency.
 1. Teachers in the focus group spoke of using multiple means of assessment. Interviewees said, however, that the district did not have a formal mechanism for ensuring that all teachers used tools of formative assessment.
 2. Interviewees said that an assessment was created in-house by the mathematics department using 20 previously released MCAS questions. Results were used in all classes (except one, where students did not finish) to correlate with MCAS score bands. However, administrators and staff were not provided documents or calculations to confirm the predictive validity of the assessment.
 - G.** Interviewees said that they did, however, use course grades and performance measures. Performance measures are collected in vocational areas, although the manner of the collection varies by program area. Some teachers use the Department’s competency attainment database, called the Vocational Technical Competency Tracking System (VTCTS). Other programs use Excel, or even pencil-and-paper spreadsheets.
 - H.** Evaluation of Instructional Programs Policy IL states that “The Board of Trustees considers comprehensive and objective evaluation of the effectiveness of the curriculum to be of primary importance” and specifies five goals for its policy:

1. Determine educational needs and provide information for planning
 2. Indicate instructional strengths and weaknesses
 3. Check the suitability of programs in terms of community requirements
 4. Show the relationship between achievement and the system's stated goals
 5. Provide data for public information
- I. Other than MCAS, the review team did not find evidence that there were sufficient assessments regularly used that would provide the appropriate data to meet those goals.
- J. The district is currently conducting a self-evaluation in preparation for an upcoming visit by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). Other than this, the review team did not find evidence of a mechanism for the regular evaluation of programs, or for the use of data by teachers to make instructional decisions.

Impact: It is important to have an effective system of acquiring, analyzing, and distributing data. Such a system, combined with an effective professional development program to assist teachers in learning how to use data, and with benchmarks linked to current curriculum standards, promotes the improvement of instruction. Without effective systems for assessment and for the analysis and use of data, instructional improvement is compromised.

Human Resources and Professional Development

8. **Although the district has some effective hiring practices in place, it does not have a complete system of recruitment or mentoring.**
- A. According to administrators, there has been very limited use of recruitment tools such as job fairs for teachers, teacher internships or other relationships with teacher training institutions, or advertising in the eastern part of the state.
1. Interviewees said that advertising for most open positions has been limited to postings in the local newspapers, the School Spring web site, and, for vocational teacher openings, the Massachusetts Association of Vocational Administrators (MAVA) website.
 2. In some cases where a limited pool of candidates is anticipated, the radius of advertising is expanded somewhat. Recruitment and recommendations by current staff are also encouraged.

- B. Administrators said that recruitment of new teachers has not always resulted in the strongest possible pool of applicants for some teacher positions, such as those in mathematics and science.
- C. According to interviewees, the district uses a broad-based team of teachers and administrators to interview candidates for open teaching positions.
 - 1. In most cases, and always when possible, the principal recruits an interview team including the department chair, the vocational director (who has experience in both academic and vocational teaching), the director of curriculum and instruction, and the director of student services (for student support vacancies).
- D. Once they are hired, the district provides limited support integrating new teachers into the faculty.
 - 1. Teachers in the focus group confirmed statements by other interviewees that all new teachers are assigned mentors.
 - 2. There are no regular training modules or programs scheduled as part of the mentorship program with the exception of a discussion during orientation about discipline with dignity.
 - 3. Several interviewees said that a job description for a mentor was not available in the district.
 - 4. According to teachers and an administrator, mentors are responsible for providing a one-day orientation for new teachers, checking in and answering questions during the year, and conducting non-evaluative observations of new teachers' classes—usually at their invitation.

Impact: Without a wide range of recruitment strategies, the district is not hiring from as strong a pool of candidates as possible. And without a more structured mentorship program, it is not using it to the extent it could to facilitate the integration of new teaching staff. A strong teaching staff is critical to the improvement of student achievement. It is also more cost effective to support teachers on staff than to recruit and train new teachers. Without efficient and effective recruitment and mentoring a district may need to use valuable resources for additional recruitment and training rather than to support the instructional programs.

9. The system of evaluation in place in the district over the previous three years was largely ineffective. Most staff were evaluated too infrequently, and the evaluations that were completed, did not have enough comments aimed at improving instruction or recommendations for professional development.

- A. In a review of 21 randomly selected teacher personnel files, only 11 (52 percent) were conducted on a timely basis as required by district policy. Of the 20 files that contained evaluations, 20 (100 percent) were

considered by review team members to be informative, but only 9 (45 percent) were considered instructive.²³

- B. Of the 20 files that contained evaluations, which represented about 43 percent of the teaching staff, only one (5 percent) of the evaluations recommended areas of professional development for a teacher.
- C. Possible teacher ratings on the evaluation form were 1, 2, or 3, indicating satisfactory, needs improvement, or unacceptable. In every evaluation found except for one, teachers received the same designation, “1 satisfactory.” Ten personnel files for all active administrators in the district were also reviewed, including that of the newly appointed superintendent. Of the personnel folders for the other nine administrators, only one (11.0 percent) contained an evaluation.
- D. Of the administrative evaluations, none contained a recommendation to encourage professional improvement. Four (44 percent) were considered informative by review team members.

Impact: The absence of timely teacher and administrator evaluations in recent years has been a missed opportunity for the district to improve professional practice. And because the use of ratings in the school under the previous system of evaluation did not distinguish good teachers from less effective ones, the system was ineffective in supporting personnel decisions. (See the Human Resources and Professional Development Strength finding above for the school’s steps toward a new evaluation system.)

10. The professional development plan in the School Improvement Plan is not linked to district priorities or sufficiently informed by educators’ needs.

- A. A review by the team of the district’s professional development plan as it appears in the School Improvement Plan (dated 2011–2012) showed that it is not informed by district priorities and is mostly a list of courses taken by individual teachers for the purpose of keeping skills current, advancement of a degree or licensure, and personal interest. Teachers are released to attend some conferences or workshops that are of particular interest to the school. Relatively few courses are offered by the school. The district’s professional development funds are principally committed to reimbursement to teachers for courses taken through the Teacher Quality Grant and district allotment, according to administrators.

²³ “Informative” means that the evaluation is factual and cites instructional details such as methodology, pedagogy, or instruction of subject-based knowledge that is aligned with the state curriculum frameworks. “Instructive” means that the evaluation includes comments intended to improve instruction.

- B. Teachers' association representatives said that the district has not requested teacher input for the professional development offerings, while administrators said that professional development plans are "based on teacher discussion" but are more "administrative determined."
- C. Administrators said that although staff had worked together on Curriculum Wednesdays, this has ceased. Department meetings and professional days have recently been devoted to activities such as category training. There has been little time available for staff to work together on curriculum or sharing of practice.
- D. The review of personnel files showed an insufficient number of suggestions for improvement of instruction and the near absence of recommendations for targeted professional development.

Impact: In the absence of any link to priorities for the district, the professional development plan in the SIP is a list of courses taken and conferences attended. Without a connection to district priorities or to the needs identified in evaluations, the district loses an opportunity to ensure staff members are pursuing common goals, developing a common language, and addressing school-wide or individual needs in the professional development they pursue.

Student Support

- 11. The district continues to experience problems with discipline, which is a serious concern among teachers. Discipline policies, while spelled out at length in the student handbook, are not uniformly understood and applied throughout the school.**

- A. In the 2012 TELL Mass Survey, respondents clearly said that student discipline was a serious concern within the school. The following summarizes key responses:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Students at this school understand expectations for their conduct.	33 %	56 %	11 %	0 %
Students at this school follow rules of conduct.	51 %	46 %	3 %	0 %
Policies and procedures about student conduct are clearly understood by the faculty.	22 %	50 %	22 %	6 %
School administrators consistently enforce rules for student conduct.	76 %	24 %	0 %	0 %
School administrators support teachers' efforts to maintain discipline in the classroom.	44 %	47 %	9 %	0 %

- B.** The school currently has practices in place to improve morale in the school.
1. Transition practices bring students into this independent vocational school. Visits by staff to sending schools, sharing of information, a summer camp, and orientation day are all part of the process.
 2. Staff said that the new superintendent has reached out to students, started a student advisory committee, and allowed students to have tables in the cafeteria at lunch to promote various activities of interest to them. These activities are encouraged because they empower students and help them take ownership of their school experience.
- C.** The school is encouraging teachers to take more responsibility for discipline. In addition, because of transportation issues and in order to assist students to complete multiple hours of assigned discipline, the school initiated a Saturday morning detention, but it is falling out of use.
- D.** Despite attempts to change the discipline system, the district still experiences a large number of infractions.
1. The school's out-of-school suspension rate dropped from 21 percent in 2007 to 13 percent in 2011 and 8 percent in 2012.
 2. The number of disciplinary incidents per 100 students resulting in out-of-school suspensions dropped from 42 in 2007 to 19 in 2011. And the number of criminal, drug, tobacco-related and violent incidents per 100 students resulting in out-of-school suspensions dropped from 18 in 2007 to 9 in 2011.
 3. However, the in-school suspension rate rose from 0.2 percent in 2009 and 0.0 percent in 2010 to 35.8 percent in 2011 and 23.7 percent in 2012, compared with the state rate for high schools in 2012 of 6.5 percent.
 - a. Currently, the In School Suspension (ISS) program is used for portions of the day, more like a time-out period, according to interviewees.
- E.** The code of conduct is elaborated in six pages of the student handbook, complemented by several more pages for the dress code, a memorandum of understanding with the Northampton Police Department, and detailed penalties for tobacco use among other things. Consequences for infractions are specific and include the possibility that the police and the district attorney may become involved. Nevertheless, interviewees said that discipline policies were unclear. For example, they said that a policy prohibiting the wearing of hats was changed and then left to teacher discretion; there is no policy about hats, according to some. Team members saw two different sets of school rules. In one classroom where the rules said that hats were forbidden, several students wore hats, and the instructor did not ask the students to remove their hats. The

student code of conduct prohibits the use of earphones and the wearing of hoods during the school day. Both behaviors were observed and were not observed to be addressed by teachers. Administrators attributed the perception that the rules were not applied consistently to all students to the intervention by other administrators.

- F. The professional development program offers limited training to prepare the teaching staff for the learning needs of the district's students and to develop classroom management skills.
 - 1. Teachers and administrators said that the regular staff has not had professional development in classroom management.
 - 2. A review of the professional development portion of the School Improvement Plan by the team showed that in the absence of district priorities, the district's professional development program has provided few extended opportunities for staff to develop skills to improve instruction and classroom management.

Impact: When discipline is problematic, the school is not providing a positive social and emotional environment for learning. As the district focuses on the symptoms rather than on root causes, it diverts staff members' time and energy, which could be spent creating a cohesive learning community.

12. The district does not provide sufficient supports for students with disabilities.

- A. The district has not provided sufficient training for tiered instruction, according to administrators.
 - 1. Administrators said that students with disabilities are scheduled in regular education classes with the exception of Applied Academics, a support class, and Developmental Language, an ELA course for students with substantial reading delays.
 - 2. According to teachers, the district has not prioritized training in the area of accommodation strategies and differentiation for its instructors, though students with disabilities make up approximately 40 percent of the student body. Observers found clear and consistent evidence of teachers using varied strategies matched to learning objectives and content in less than half (46 percent) of the visited academic classrooms. Team members observed clear and consistent evidence of teachers implementing appropriate and varied strategies that met students' diverse learning needs in less than half (42 percent) of the visited academic and vocational classes.
- B. The staff expressed concern that because there was no math curriculum, the Integrated Math classes did not expose students to the full Massachusetts framework. Although Integrated Math is a regular education class, it has a large proportion of students with disabilities.

- C. While ESE data shows that in 2011-2012 other vocational schools in Western Massachusetts had ratios of students with disabilities to special education teachers ranging approximately from 14 to 1 to 20 to 1²⁴, in the district that ratio was 58.5 students with disabilities per special education teacher. An estimate for 2012-2013 by an administrator lowered the ratio of students with disabilities to special education teachers to approximately 33 to 1.
- D. In addition, in a review of 21 randomly selected teacher personnel files, only 9 (45 percent) of the 20 files that contained evaluations included comments intended to improve instruction. See the second Human Resources and Professional Development finding in Challenges above.

Impact: Without providing access to the full curriculum, adequate special education staffing, and sufficient training and support so that teachers can provide appropriate, tiered instruction, the district cannot meet students' diverse learning needs, a necessity if achievement is to be improved.

13. Despite its crisis plan, the physical layout of the district poses challenges for safety.

- A. Although the district has worked with local law enforcement to create a safety plan, administrators said that the drills have not been practiced and areas of responsibility have not been assigned to specific staff members.
- B. Students travel between several buildings each school day. Doors are unlocked. The review team was told that security cameras in the parking areas and around the outside of the building do not give sufficiently clear pictures to identify intruders or other threats.
- C. The intercom system cannot be heard in some shops.

Impact: Although no crisis plan can be perfect, the absence of good security cameras, assigned roles in the event of an emergency, yearly drills, and a functional communication system throughout the campus weakens the best of plans.

Finance and Asset Management

14. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has told the district and the City of Northampton that the district must meet required net school spending beginning in fiscal year 2014, raising significant issues of finance and governance.

- A. A letter from Deputy Commissioner Jeff Wulfson dated March 5, 2013 (see Appendix...) states that:

²⁴ The 2012 ratios of students with disabilities to special education teachers were 14.7 to 1, 14.1 to 1, and 20.3 to 1 for Bristol County Agricultural, Essex Agricultural Technical, and Norfolk County Agricultural, respectively.

On several occasions, the commissioner stayed the enforcement of the minimum spending requirement for Smith at the joint request of Mayor Clair Higgins and Superintendent Frank Llamas. Their request was in part due to the extra capital funding provided by the city to the school...Recently, Superintendent Peterson notified me that the school wished to withdraw its support for this accommodation. Accordingly, I am advising the city and the school that Smith's net school spending requirement will be in full effect for fiscal year 2014 and subsequent years.

- B.** In fiscal year 2012, the district was \$763,332 (28.5 percent) below required net school spending (see Table 2 in Appendix B). Districts more than 5 percent below required net school spending are assessed a penalty that directly reduces Chapter 70 aid, though as noted above the penalty has not been enforced for this district in the past for unique reasons.

- 1. Although Smith is a vocational-technical school serving a number of districts, it is an independent school, not a regional school. The City of Northampton is the only member and its students are the only residents of the district. Therefore the district's foundation budget is based only on Northampton students attending the school, and the City of Northampton's appropriation is the only source of required local contribution. However, 75 percent of Smith's students are from other municipalities, which pay non-resident tuition. Expenditures made from tuition revenues do not count toward meeting the net school spending requirement.

- C.** The district has a unique governance structure based on Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 74, Section 24:

Smith Agricultural School, established under chapter one hundred and fifty-one of the Special Acts of nineteen hundred and eighteen, shall be maintained by the city of Northampton as a state-aided approved vocational-technical school...provided, however, that the superintendents of said school shall consist of the mayor and superintendent of schools of said city, ex officials, and three other superintendents to be elected at its city election by ballot, as provided in the will of Oliver Smith, and that said superintendents shall have the powers of local trustees...

- D.** Finance issues have become a source of dissension and distraction and the school's organization and governance, which is entwined with Northampton's city and public school district, creates challenges for resolving financial issues.

Impact:

- 1. After advising that Smith's net school spending requirement will be in full effect as of fiscal year 2014, the deputy commissioner's letter of March 5, 2013, states that "relief from this requirement would

require either special legislation or a change in the school's status. Options include either conversion to a charter school...or merging the school with the Northampton public school district..."

2. If the district does not meet required net school spending, a penalty will be assessed.
3. Dissension about finances and the new requirement to meet required net school spending make it difficult for the school's leadership to plan for and focus on improving student performance.

Northampton-Smith District Review Recommendations

Leadership and Governance

1. **The district should develop a strategic plan with input from key stakeholders, align other planning efforts within the district, set goals and benchmarks, and provide common direction to all administrators, faculty and staff, students, and community members. The administration should also ensure that progress reports on the attainment of goals in all of the linked plans are regularly made public.**
 - A. At the time of the review a District Improvement Plan (DIP) had been finalized and was scheduled for approval by the board of trustees in April, 2013. Although this is a commendable step forward for the district, some of the goals in the final plan reviewed by the review team could better be described as activities, requiring short-term or ongoing actions. The district should:
 1. Prepare an action plan to schedule interim steps in achieving the goals in the DIP and involve as many participants as is practical in its implementation.
 2. Provide quarterly or semi-annual reports to the board of trustees on the state of the Plan's implementation and progress toward the attainment of interim goals.
 3. Publish those reports to share with school staff and community members.
 4. Consider making an annual report on the state of the district and distributing it with the annual budget proposal.
 5. Align the goals in the School Improvement Plan (SIP) to the extent possible with the goals in the DIP.
 - B. The SIP should identify SMART goals, parties responsible for each, timelines, and benchmarks for gauging progress toward completion.
 1. To identify possible key strategies to include in the SIP, the district should review best practices employed by schools demonstrating rapid achievement gains. Examples can be seen in reports such as <http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/ss/assistance/emergingpractices.pdf>.
 2. Guiding principles to help identify appropriate goals and benchmarks can be found at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/ss/turnaround/level4/AIP-GuidingPrinciples.pdf>.

- C. The SIP should be published and distributed to faculty and staff members at the beginning of each school year. The district should ensure that the revision of the discipline policy, as described more fully in the Student Support recommendations below, is aligned fully with the DIP and the SIP.
- D. The district should ensure that the professional development plan, as recommended below in the Human Resources and Professional Development section, are aligned with the DIP and the SIP.

Benefits: Having one guiding plan with clear benchmarks, from which all other plans draw their rationale, will enable all those who care deeply about Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School to see evidence that improvement is happening and to identify necessary midcourse corrections. This practice will also help all stakeholders to share a unified strategic vision that must ultimately drive all improvement efforts to make permanent gains in student achievement.

Curriculum and Instruction

2. The district should take immediate steps to develop an organizational infrastructure to support curricula and instructional practices designed to cultivate higher levels of achievement for all students.

- A. The district should assign to a senior administrator responsibility for enhancing teachers' instructional practices and aligning, consistently delivering, and continuously improving curriculum.
 - 1. This administrator should be responsible for supervising the cyclical process of developing, reviewing, and revising the school's curriculum to ensure alignment with Massachusetts standards and guarantee the curriculum's viability for all students. The process should include teacher input and the regular review of assessment results.
 - 2. Together with district leaders and other stakeholders, this administrator should ensure that key effective instructional practices are commonly understood by all educators and that teachers are supported as they implement them.
 - 3. *Characteristics of Standards-Based Teaching and Learning: Continuum of Practice* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/dart/walk/04.0.pdf>) provides an overview of seventeen characteristics of standards-based practice, and could help the district to develop a common language or reference point for instruction.²⁵

²⁵ This resource is part of ESE's Learning Walkthrough Implementation Guide (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/dart/walk/ImplementationGuide.pdf>).

4. *How to Develop Curriculum Maps to Support a Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum that Guides Instruction* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/candi/model/maps/CurriculumMaps.pdf>) is a useful resource describing the purpose and definition of curriculum maps, along with examples.
5. Common Core State Standards Initiative materials (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/candi/commoncore/>), which include implementation resources, model curriculum units, and information about transitioning to the 2011 Frameworks, provide information that can help to ensure the quality of the curriculum.
6. Sample curriculum units (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/candi/model/>), which incorporate the Common Core State Standards and include embedded curriculum maps and performance assessments, can provide the district with high-quality models as it establishes an infrastructure for creating and refining curriculum.

Benefits: Having curriculum leadership that ensures consistent use, alignment, and effective delivery of the school's curricula will enable teachers to effectively use documented and cohesive curriculum materials for all content areas.

A curriculum development process that produces documents aligned to the common core both horizontally and vertically can promote higher levels of student achievement. With high-quality curricula developed and continually refined, and with effective instructional practices consistently implemented, achievement for all students is more likely to improve.

3. The district should provide higher levels of instructional leadership to support professional development and improved student achievement.

A. The district should continue to embrace and implement the new educator evaluation system.

1. Embracing and implementing the new educator evaluation system can help kindle a discussion about instructional methodologies that best serve all the district's students. As the instructional corps reviews the educator evaluation system's *Standards and Indicators of Effective Teaching Practice* (during the self-assessment and goal setting steps), appropriate instructional skills and strategies will emerge. Team goal setting in the evaluation cycle can be used to advance this work. For example, a teacher team could share the common professional practice goal of learning backwards design principles and subsequently creating units together. Department and faculty meetings could provide opportunities to share and critique units.

2. Similarly, team goal setting will provide an opportunity for the evaluators (administrators) to share the same professional practice goal of learning to observe classroom instruction more consistently and provide more useful, targeted feedback through the lens of the effective teaching rubric. Strong vertical alignment between individual, team, and school goals will accelerate improvement.
3. Key to this effort will be the modeling provided by the board of trustees' evaluation of the superintendent. The superintendent's self-assessment and his setting of three to five district improvement goals should be a public process for the purpose of modeling the new educator evaluation system and a demonstration to the teaching community that the system applies to all educators. It is important for the superintendent, the teachers' association, and the school's administrative team to communicate the message that "we're all in this together" so that teachers do not perceive themselves as the only participants in the process. The superintendent's goals should be aligned with the District Improvement Plan.
4. The superintendent's evaluation of the school's administrators should start before the process begins for teachers. It is important to implement the process with fidelity to maximize the benefit to the district's instruction.
5. The Massachusetts Model System for Educator Evaluation (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/model/>) is a collection of resources to support effective implementation of the new educator evaluation system including district and school-level planning and implementation guides, model rubrics, and model contract language.
6. The board of trustees and the superintendent should seek coaching from the District Governance Support Project²⁶ — a collaboration of ESE, MASS, and MASC to help school committees and superintendents implement the superintendent evaluation system effectively.

Benefits: "Unpacking" the instructional and leadership rubrics will help educators develop a deep, shared understanding of what proficient leadership and teaching practice look like. Acknowledging and accepting instructional and leadership rubrics that define excellence will provide a foundation as the district's educators strive to provide the school's diverse student learners with high-quality instruction to foster greater achievement.

²⁶ Re District Governance Support Project (DGSP), see <http://www.doe.mass.edu/boe/docs/2012-01/item3.html>. Brochure for the DGSP is at <http://www.masc.org/advocacy-center/masc-news/13-statehouse-news/371-mascmassdese-joint-governance-initiative>

Assessment

- 4. The district should continue the work of its new data team and use it to inform curriculum and instructional practices and to support ongoing planning and decision making, including the evaluation of programs.**
 - A.** The district should analyze data to evaluate programs and investigate ways to provide better training for teachers in using data to improve curriculum and instruction.
 1. Although there are three goals for assessment included in the District Improvement Plan, the district should consider adding or reprioritizing goals to increase the use of formative assessment by teachers to improve instruction and thus student achievement.
 2. ESE's Data Team Toolkit (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/ucd/ddtt/toolkit.pdf>) provides information to help districts to use a district data team to establish, grow, and maintain a culture of inquiry and data use. In particular, Chapter 2 of Module 6 (Planning for Evaluation) provides guidance to data teams in deciding what to evaluate, developing an evaluation plan, analyzing evaluation data, and communicating results.

Benefits: By implementing this recommendation Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School will have more and better information on which to base decisions about curriculum and instruction. In addition, information from data analysis about the effectiveness of programs will help the district to more easily identify its most cost-effective strategies and programs. That, in turn, will enable it to channel more resources to effective practices and programs and to deemphasize less effective ones that no longer merit continued support.

Human Resources and Professional Development

- 5. The district should continue its efforts to implement the new educator evaluation system, train teachers and administrators in the best ways to recognize and encourage good teaching, and consistently apply the practices to improve instruction in the district.**
 - A.** The evaluation team should continue collaborating to identify practices – acceptable and understood by all – that discriminate between good, average, and ineffective teaching and that improve the skills of all educators.

1. The district should continue to refer to the Educator Evaluation page on the Department’s website (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/>), as resources are continually added and updated.
- B.** All new teachers should be assigned a mentor, and each mentor should have a group of mentees that is small enough to allow the mentor to effectively monitor and help improve instruction and classroom management.
1. The mentoring program should feature research-based practices, activities, and assessments to ensure best results both for teachers and for students.
 2. Resources related to educator induction programs (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/educators/mentor/>) might be helpful as the district considers ways to further develop its mentoring program.

Benefits from implementing an educator evaluation system consistent with the new Massachusetts system and supporting a robust mentoring program include alignment of district/school, team, and educator goals and the promotion of collaboration and continuous learning. When implemented well, these systems can be powerful drivers for improving instruction.

6. The district should reconstruct its professional development plan based on district priorities as outlined in the District and School Improvement Plans. The professional development plan should include goals for instructional improvement; strategies to help teachers to learn more about how to use data; and attention to classroom management techniques.

- A.** The district should decide which areas of staff development are priorities for the next school year.
1. District leadership should base these priorities on their goals, on available data, and on student achievement data.
 2. The district should consider the specific professional development needs of all teachers, including those articulated in their professional practice goals, to ensure that the professional development plan is differentiated in such a way that all teachers have the opportunity to deepen their expertise.
 3. The school council should also provide input based on school needs and data.
- B.** These priorities should be directed to the professional development committee so that appropriate learning opportunities can be planned.

- C. The district should encourage staff to share practices, develop performance benchmarks, and review data in small groups in order to improve practice.
 - 1. One approach to ongoing, embedded professional development for instructional teams is a professional learning community (PLC). The *Professional Learning Community Guidance Document* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/ucd/PLCguidance.pdf>) is a research-based reference tool that can support the district's implementation of a collaborative, structured cycle of data analysis, target-setting, and lesson planning.
- D. The district should investigate ways to increase the number of hours available for professional development such as school and department meetings and opportunities to earn professional development points (PDPs) after school or during the summer.

Benefits to Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School from implementing this recommendation include the development of a cohesive approach to professional development based on district priorities and supported by ongoing school learning communities. This will focus the staff on specific goals and give them the needed tools to improve instruction.

Student Support

- 7. **As attendance reflects school culture, it is recommended that the school consider revisions to its attendance policy.**
 - A. The attendance policy should be revised to conform to state policy.
 - 1. The district should reconsider giving students academic credit when absent more than 10 percent of the school year. According to the current district policy, "any student who misses more than ten class periods in one school year will not receive credit for that course," but an administrator said that "the handbook is not followed and too many people are involved."
 - 2. The penalties for unexcused absences should be printed with the attendance policy rather than in a separate section of the student handbook.

3. The school has the prerogative to decide which absences are excused or acceptable. However, once the school has decided that the absences are unexcused, it should not circumvent its own regulations by having students make up days lost at a time when classes are not meeting. Although assignment to detention may be a penalty for repeated tardiness or missing a class without permission, detention does not equal attendance and cannot make up the lost learning associated with extended, unexcused absence.

Benefits: Once the attendance policy has been strengthened and a consistent message delivered to students by all adults in the school, expectations will be clear and more teaching and learning will take place.

8. The school leadership should review and rewrite its discipline policies with the faculty and ensure that they are clear, acceptable, consistently applied, and build on current school morale-building strategies.

- A. The leadership should consider meeting with faculty or surveying them through electronic means to formulate a list of behaviors that everyone agrees need to be addressed. Other stakeholders such as the school council and student advisory committee should also have an opportunity for input. In areas such as the dress code, there might be different expectations in vocational shops and academic classes.
- B. The school should review the existing rewards for positive behavior and penalties for infractions. School policy should delineate an appropriate array of options for proactively addressing behavior that may include positive reinforcement, positive behavioral interventions and supports, teacher and school detention, suspension, parental involvement, and referral to outside agencies including social services and law enforcement.
- C. Once in place, the discipline policy should be consistently implemented by administration and staff without resorting to special exceptions frequently. It is important that all adults on the campus continually deliver the message that they hold high expectations for all students' behavior.
- D. The Building Based Support Team should adopt a more proactive role in addressing student needs.
 1. School leadership and faculty should refer students who are falling short in their instructional performance or behavior. Rather than as a final effort to keep students in school or determine placement as they leave, the team should intervene earlier when instructional accommodations, counseling, outside referrals, schedule changes, and additional instructional services could assist students to make changes that will lead to resolution of issues and a more positive learning experience.

2. The team should be composed of guidance or counseling staff, special education representation, teachers, and others as needed.
- E. The district should build on school morale strategies that are in place.
1. The school currently has transition practices that bring students into this independent vocational school. Visits by staff to sending schools, sharing of information, a summer camp, and orientation day are all part of the process now in place and should be continued and enhanced. For example, new students who arrive alone or with few peers from a sending district should be given the opportunity to meet with others in a like situation in order to form a small support group. Time for such an activity could be found during an activity period during the school day or by delaying the bus schedule by 30 to 45 minutes, which would also allow for a variety of after-school activities that are not possible with the current schedule.
 2. Staff said that the new superintendent has reached out to students, started a student advisory committee, and allowed students to have tables in the cafeteria at lunch to promote various activities of interest to them. These activities are encouraged because they empower students and help them take ownership of their school experience.
 3. *Youth Voices—How High Schools Can Respond to the Needs of Students and Help Prevent Dropouts* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/ccr/YouthFocusGroup.pdf>) is based on youth focus groups across the Commonwealth and is helpful in understanding what students like most and least about school, why students drop out, and how schools should be improved. This resource can start a discussion on how to improve school climate.

Benefits to Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School from implementing this recommendation include the likelihood that mutual respect, teamwork, and the consideration of students' unique needs will enable staff to spend more time and effort on instruction and less on discipline. If policies are clear, reasonable, and mutually agreed upon, then teachers can adhere to them in every classroom and administration can support teachers' use of the policies. If administration and staff consistently enforce rules, students are less likely to get the message that all rules can be contested. Respect shown to students for their interests, capabilities, and growing ability to be responsible will pay off in the classroom.

9. **The district should take additional steps to ensure that all high-needs students have support services and access to the full curriculum.**
- A. Classes that are composed completely of students with disabilities, even if the course was not originally envisioned as a special education support class, should be taught or co-taught by a special education instructor.
 - B. The district should examine its Integrated Math course to ensure that the full math curriculum according to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks is delivered to all students.
 - 1. The *Resource Guide to the 2011 Mathematics Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for Students with Disabilities* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt/rg/2012Math.pdf>) identifies “entry points” for each standard that allow educators to help students who are performing below grade-level expectations to approach the grade level standard. (Note that many students with disabilities benefit from challenging, grade-appropriate instruction, without the need for entry points; see Figure 1 on page three of the guide.)
 - C. The district has a very large proportion of students in the high-needs subgroup. The staff should be trained in the variety of accommodations that can be offered in all academic and shop classrooms. Staff should work closely with special education professionals to address the needs identified on students’ IEPs.
 - D. Through informal and formal observation and evaluation procedures, school leaders should ensure that appropriate accommodations are used.

Benefits: Implementing this recommendation will result in training staff in strategies that are effective with diverse learners. The use of carefully selected accommodations can produce better instruction for *all* students. Implementing these strategies and providing access to the complete math curriculum will help the district in further narrowing the achievement gap of students with disabilities in math (see the second Student Performance finding) and in meeting its proficiency targets across the board. In addition, when students feel that instruction addresses their learning styles, they can be inclined to act out less and to work toward their academic goals.

10. **The district should back up its safety plan with adequate training, clearly defined roles, and basic communication equipment.**
- A. The district should take steps to practice its safety plan. Individuals who substitute on a regular basis in the school should be included in these practices.

- B. Each year the leadership team should review their roles in the crisis plan so that there will be no doubt about whose responsibility it is to notify staff, work with the police, and supervise evacuation procedures.
- C. The district should review the effectiveness of the surveillance and school communication system; if they are not functional or of low quality, it should seek ways to fund necessary repairs in the capital improvement budget.

Benefits: Implementing this recommendation will ensure proper preparation for potential crises. It will help the district to address emergencies even as routine as a fire in order to prevent personal injury and property damage to the extent that it is possible and to minimize liability. It is difficult to ensure safety on a school campus that has open access between buildings during the school day. At a minimum, the district needs a functioning crisis and communication system as well as staff that are trained in its use.

Finance and Asset Management

- 11. The school's board should work vigorously with the City of Northampton to find a solution to the financial and organizational challenges now facing them.**

The school's board, working with the City of Northampton, should immediately begin a review of options for resolving the finance and/or governance issues that are outlined in the deputy commissioner's letter of March 5, 2013, including the immediate implications for the district's fiscal year 2014 budget. The district should use the results of the improvement planning process recommended above under Leadership and Governance to inform the finance and governance discussion.

Benefit: By resolving these issues of finance and governance, the district will meet required net school spending and avoid a penalty, while allowing the school's leadership to focus on improving student performance.

- 12. The school district should revamp its budget development process to align proposed expenditures with highly articulated, broadly publicized, and tightly integrated District Improvement, School Improvement, and Professional Development Plans for a three year period.**

- A. Current disagreements over the appropriate levels of funding focus almost exclusively on the expenditures themselves and are unrelated to broader educational themes such as instructional improvement, student achievement, and curriculum development.

- 1. Occasionally, the arguments about spending are related to a deterioration of the physical plant.

2. A general feeling was expressed that salaries paid by the district were not regionally competitive, with a differential of \$10,000 preventing the district from employing the best teachers and administrators.
- B. The superintendent's entry plan provides a basis for formulating a meaningful and relevant DIP, SIP, and professional development plan which should be utilized to develop a budget which appropriately allocates resources in a cost-effective and targeted manner to support the goals identified in each of the planning documents.
 - C. The analysis of student performance conducted by the data team, the evaluative information on teacher and administrator performance obtained through the new evaluation system, and finally, the comprehensive information derived from the NEASC self-evaluation study will serve as extraordinarily powerful additional resources in the district and school planning processes.
 - D. In seeking to improve its budget development process to a more comprehensive program and planning document—relevant to all stake holders—the district may wish to consult the Rennie Center's "Smart School Budgeting" document. Located at <http://www.renniecenter.org/research/SmartSchoolBudgeting.pdf>, it provides a summary of existing resources on school finance, budgeting, and reallocation. Another valuable resource available to the school district is the District and School Assistance Center of the Pioneer Valley.

Benefits to the Northampton-Smith Vocational Agricultural Regional School District: By using the goals of the district as they relate to improvements in instruction and student achievement as the opening paragraph in the budget development process, elected officials and administrators will begin the dialogue with a proper focus. That particular emphasis has, within its roots, the prospect of diminishing the existing tension between the City of Northampton and the school district, as well as creating an enlightened and more thoroughly informed community to support possible increases in school expenditures.

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

Review Team Members

The review of the Northampton-Smith Vocational Agricultural School District was conducted from March 4 to 7, 2013, by the following team of independent ESE consultants.

1. Dr. Owen Conway, leadership, governance and finance
2. Dr. Peter McGinn, curriculum and instruction
3. Dr. John Roper, assessment and human resources, review team coordinator
4. Dr. Katherine Lopez Natale, student support and professional development

District Review Activities

The following activities were conducted during the review of Northampton-Smith Vocational Agricultural School District.

- The team conducted interviews with the following financial personnel: business manager.
- The team conducted interviews with the following members of the School Committee: two at-large members, including the chair.
- The review team conducted interviews with the following representatives of the teachers' association: all teachers' association officers at Smith are considered "building representatives." Other officers represent the Northampton Teachers' Association.
- The team conducted interviews/focus groups with the following central office administrators: superintendent and business manager.
- During school visits, the team conducted interviews with the principal and one focus group with 25 high school teachers.
- The team observed 26 classes in the district: 13 academic classes and 13 vocational programs.
- The review team analyzed multiple sets of data and reviewed numerous documents before and during the site visit, including:
 - o Student and school performance data, including achievement and growth, enrollment, graduation, dropout, retention, suspension, and attendance rates.
 - o Data on the district's staffing and finances.
 - o 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).
 - o District documents such as district and school improvement plans, school committee policies, curriculum documents, summaries of student assessments, job descriptions, collective bargaining agreements, evaluation tools for staff, handbooks, school schedules, and the district's end-of-year financial reports.
 - o 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 Northampton-Smith Vocational Agricultural School District, conducted from March 4 through 7, 2013.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
Orientation with district leaders and principals; interviews with district staff and principals; document reviews; interview with teachers' association;	Interviews with district and school staff and principal; review of personnel files; teacher focus groups; parent focus group; and visits to various buildings on campus for classroom observations.	Interviews with town or city personnel; interviews with school leaders; interviews with trustees; visits to various buildings on campus for classroom observations.	Interviews with school leaders; follow-up interviews; district review team meeting; classroom observations; emerging themes meeting with district leaders and principals.

Appendix B: Enrollment, Expenditures, Performance

**Table B1a: Northampton-Smith
2012-2013 Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity**

Student Group	District	Percent of Total	State	Percent of Total
Asian	3	0.7%	56,517	5.9%
Afr. Amer./Black	6	1.4%	81,806	8.6%
Hispanic/ Latino	55	13.2%	156,976	16.4%
Multi-race, Non-Hisp. /Lat.	8	1.9%	26,012	2.7%
Nat. Haw. Or Pacif. Isl.	1	0.2%	1,020	0.1%
White	344	82.3%	630,150	66.0%
All students	418	100.0%	954,773	100.0%

Note: As of October 1, 2012

**Table B1b: Northampton-Smith
2012-2013 Student Enrollment by High Needs Populations**

Student Group	District			State		
	N	Percent of High Needs	Percent of District	N	Percent of High Needs	Percent of State
Students w/ disabilities	163	58.6%	39.0%	163,921	35.5%	17.0%
Low income	193	69.4%	46.2%	353,420	76.5%	37.0%
ELL and Former ELL	12	4.3%	2.9%	95,865	20.7%	10.0%
All high needs students	278	--	66.5%	462,272	--	47.9%

Notes: As of October 1, 2012. District and state numbers and percentages for students with disabilities and high needs students are calculated including students in out-of-district placements. Total district enrollment including students in out-of-district placement is 418; total state enrollment including students in out-of-district placement is 965,602.

**Table B2: Northampton-Smith
Expenditures, Chapter 70 State Aid, and Net School Spending Fiscal Years 2011–2013**

	FY11		FY12		FY13
	Estimated	Actual	Estimated	Actual	Estimated
Expenditures					
From local appropriations for schools					
By school committee	5,825,366	5,828,364	5,906,058	5,906,058	5,870,164
By municipality	1,637,292	1,701,081	1,603,056	1,728,798	1,854,816
Total from local appropriations	7,462,658	7,529,445	7,509,114	7,634,856	7,724,980
From revolving funds and grants	---	1,165,323	---	980,268	---
Total expenditures	---	8,694,768	---	8,615,124	---
Chapter 70 aid to education program					
Chapter 70 state aid*	---	880,911	---	885,640	890,560
Required local contribution	---	1,892,742	---	1,791,034	1,884,964
Required net school spending**	---	2,773,653	---	2,676,674	2,775,524
Actual net school spending	---	2,211,537	---	1,913,342	2,036,906
Over/under required (\$)	---	-562,116	---	-763,332	-738,618
Over/under required (%)		-20.3	---	-28.5	-26.6

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

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

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

Data retrieved June 13, 2013

**Table B3: Northampton-Smith
Expenditures Per In-District Pupil
Fiscal Years 2010–2012**

Expenditure Category	2010	2011	2012
Administration	\$1,265.49	\$1,424.44	\$1,496.51
Instructional leadership (district and school)	\$1,606.43	\$1,864.72	\$1,742.39
Teachers	\$6,040.67	\$6,097.20	\$6,089.24
Other teaching services	\$731.97	\$644.24	\$845.59
Professional development	\$387.25	391.85	\$361.85
Instructional materials, equipment and technology	\$1,218.38	\$1,171.90	\$1,126.68
Guidance, counseling and testing services	\$925.71	\$889.02	\$937.56
Pupil services	\$1,070.06	\$1,222.27	\$1,375.21
Operations and maintenance	\$2,174.67	\$2,443.45	\$2,268.57
Insurance, retirement and other fixed costs	\$2,273.90	\$2,831.61	\$2,787.38
Total expenditures per in-district pupil	\$18,175	\$18,981	\$19,031

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

**Table B4a: Northampton-Smith
English Language Arts Performance, 2009-2012**

Grade and Measure		Number Included (2012)	Spring MCAS Year				Gains and Declines			2012 Performance (CPI, SGP)
			2009	2010	2011	2012	4-Year Trend	2-Year Trend	Potentially Meaningful?	
10	CPI	110	80.7	88.0	90.4	96.1	15.4	5.7	--	Low
	P+	110	51%	67%	72%	88%	37	16		--
	SGP	101	30.5	52.0	47.5	50.0	19.5	2.5		Moderate

Notes: The number of students included in CPI and percent *Proficient* or *Advanced* (P+) calculations may differ from the number of students included in median SGP calculations. A median SGP is not calculated for students in grade 3 because they are participating in MCAS tests for the first time. The “2012 Performance” column shows the quintile into which the CPI for the grade (or all grades) falls in a ranking of all Massachusetts districts’ CPIs for that grade (or all grades). See footnote 8 in the Student Performance section above. The “2012 Performance” column also gives the level of the median SGP. Median SGPs from 0 to 20 are considered to be Very Low; from 21 to 40, Low; from 41 to 60, Moderate; from 61 to 80, High; and from 81 to 100, Very High.

**Table B4b: Northampton-Smith
Mathematics Performance, 2009-2012**

Grade and Measure		Number Included (2012)	Spring MCAS Year				Gains and Declines			2012 Performance (CPI, SGP)
			2009	2010	2011	2012	4-Year Trend	2-Year Trend	Potentially Meaningful?	
10	CPI	111	76.9	75.4	77.5	81.1	4.2	3.6	--	Very Low
	P+	111	48%	41%	52%	58%	10	6		--
	SGP	102	42.0	50.0	48.0	38.0	-4.0	-10.0		Low

Notes: The number of students included in CPI and percent *Proficient* or *Advanced* (P+) calculations may differ from the number of students included in median SGP calculations. A median SGP is not calculated for students in grade 3 because they are participating in MCAS tests for the first time. The “2012 Performance” column shows the quintile into which the CPI for the grade (or all grades) falls in a ranking of all Massachusetts districts’ CPIs for that grade (or all grades). See footnote 8 in the Student Performance section above. The “2012 Performance” column also gives the level of the median SGP. Median SGPs from 0 to 20 are considered to be Very Low; from 21 to 40, Low; from 41 to 60, Moderate; from 61 to 80, High; and from 81 to 100, Very High.

**Table B4c: Northampton-Smith
Science and Technology/Engineering Performance, 2009-2012**

Grade and Measure		Number Included (2012)	Spring MCAS Year				Gains and Declines			2012 Performance (CPI)
			2009	2010	2011	2012	4-Year Trend	2-Year Trend	Potentially Meaningful?	
10	CPI	102	72.8	78.4	80.8	85.0	12.2	4.2	Yes	Low
	P+	102	40%	53%	63%	64%	24	1		--

Notes: P+ = percent *Proficient* or *Advanced*. Students participate in STE MCAS tests in grades 5, 8, and 10 only. Median SGPs are not calculated for STE. The “2012 Performance” column shows the quintile into which the CPI for the grade (or all grades) falls in a ranking of all Massachusetts districts’ CPIs for that grade (or all grades). See footnote 8 in the Student Performance section above.

**Table B5a: Northampton-Smith
English Language Arts (Grade 10)
Performance for Selected Subgroups Compared to State, 2009-2012**

Group and Measure			Number Included (2012)	Spring MCAS Year				Gains and Declines	
				2009	2010	2011	2012	4-Year Trend	2-Year Trend
High needs	District	CPI	69	74.6	83.8	86.5	94.2	19.6	7.7
		P+	69	44%	58%	60%	83%	39	23
		SGP	62	32.0	51.0	43.0	49.0	17	6
	State	CPI	29,809	83.2	83.3	86.9	91.0	7.8	4.1
		P+	29,809	60%	57%	67%	75%	15	8
		SGP	23,738	44.0	45.0	46.0	46.0	2.0	0.0
Low income	District	CPI	46	77.0	82.0	87.0	94.6	17.6	7.6
		P+	46	50%	56%	58%	83%	33	25
		SGP	40	39.5	51.0	51.0	57.5	18.0	6.5
	State	CPI	22,743	84.4	84.1	87.4	91.3	6.9	3.9
		P+	22,743	63%	60%	69%	77%	14	8
		SGP	18,051	45.0	46.0	46.0	45.0	0.0	-1.0
Students w/ disabilities	District	CPI	37	69.3	80.3	81.9	93.2	23.9	11.3
		P+	37	34%	48%	47%	78%	44	31
		SGP	36	23.5	49.5	41.0	48.0	24.5	7.0
	State	CPI	11,604	76.0	75.7	80.2	85.8	9.8	5.6
		P+	11,604	43%	38%	50%	60%	17	10
		SGP	9,139	39.0	39.0	43.0	45.0	6.0	2.0
English language learners or Former ELL	District	CPI	3	--	--	--	--	--	--
		P+	3	--	--	--	--	--	--
		SGP	0	--	--	--	--	--	--
	State	CPI	3,909	65.7	65.9	69.7	77.0	11.3	7.3
		P+	3,909	31%	28%	37%	47%	16	10
		SGP	2,001	53.0	55.0	56.0	59.0	6.0	3.0
All students	District	CPI	110	80.7	88.0	90.4	96.1	15.4	5.7
		P+	110	51%	67%	72%	88%	37	16
		SGP	101	30.5	52.0	47.5	50.0	19.5	2.5
	State	CPI	69,059	92.9	91.9	93.9	95.8	3.6	1.9
		P+	69,059	80%	78%	84%	88%	8	4
		SGP	59,884	50.0	50.0	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0

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

**Table B5b: Northampton-Smith
Mathematics (Grade 10)
Performance for Selected Subgroups Compared to State, 2009-2012**

Group and Measure			Number Included (2012)	Spring MCAS Year				Gains and Declines	
				2009	2010	2011	2012	4-Year Trend	2-Year Trend
High needs	District	CPI	70	70.1	68.6	69.4	74.6	4.5	5.2
		P+	70	33%	28%	35%	44%	11	9
		SGP	63	50.0	50.0	46.0	44.0	-6.0	-2.0
	State	CPI	29,800	76.8	77.8	79.1	80.4	3.6	1.3
		P+	29,800	52%	54%	57%	59%	7	2
		SGP	23,668	47.0	47.0	48.0	48.0	1.0	0.0
Low income	District	CPI	47	71.4	74.0	67.6	78.7	7.3	11.1
		P+	47	34%	36%	30%	49%	15	19
		SGP	41	51.0	56.0	35.5	38.0	-13.0	2.5
	State	CPI	22,698	77.7	78.9	79.7	81.3	3.6	1.6
		P+	22,698	54%	56%	59%	62%	8	3
		SGP	18,006	46.0	47.0	48.0	47.0	1.0	-1.0
Students w/ disabilities	District	CPI	38	63.1	62.5	65.2	67.1	4.0	1.9
		P+	38	21%	13%	30%	29%	8	-1
		SGP	36	50.5	51.5	49.5	45.5	-5.0	-4.0
	State	CPI	11,646	69.4	69.4	70.1	71.4	2.0	1.3
		P+	11,646	37%	36%	39%	41%	4	2
		SGP	9,093	47.0	47.0	46.0	47.0	0.0	1.0
English language learners or Former ELL	District	CPI	3	--	--	--	--	--	--
		P+	3	--	--	--	--	--	--
		SGP	1	--	--	--	--	--	--
	State	CPI	3,969	65.2	64.5	66.2	67.5	2.3	1.3
		P+	3,969	38%	36%	40%	42%	4	2
		SGP	2,023	50.0	55.0	59.0	59.0	9.0	0.0
All students	District	CPI	111	76.9	75.4	77.5	81.1	4.2	3.6
		P+	111	48%	41%	52%	58%	10	6
		SGP	102	42.0	50.0	48.0	38.0	-4.0	-10.0
	State	CPI	69,015	88.1	88.8	89.4	90.0	1.9	0.6
		P+	69,015	74%	75%	77%	78%	4	1
		SGP	59,827	50.0	50.0	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0

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

**Table B5c: Northampton-Smith
Science and Technology/Engineering (Grade 10)
Performance for Selected Subgroups Compared to State, 2009-2012**

Group and Measure			Number Included (2012)	Spring MCAS Year				Gains and Declines	
				2009	2010	2011	2012	4-Year Trend	2-Year Trend
High needs	District	CPI	64	65.3	71.4	73.5	79.3	14	5.8
		P+	64	26%	42%	49%	52%	26	3
	State	CPI	29,090	69.1	71.7	73.9	76.0	6.9	2.1
		P+	29,090	35%	39%	43%	46%	11	3
Low income	District	CPI	41	68.5	70.0	73.3	82.3	13.8	9
		P+	41	29%	40%	49%	59%	30	10
	State	CPI	22,172	69.1	71.8	73.9	76.2	7.1	2.3
		P+	22,172	36%	41%	44%	47%	11	3
Students w/ disabilities	District	CPI	37	59.6	69.4	67.6	73.6	14	6
		P+	37	21%	40%	41%	41%	20	0
	State	CPI	11,665	63.9	65.2	67.1	68.8	4.9	1.7
		P+	11,665	25%	27%	30%	32%	7	2
English language learners or Former ELL	District	CPI	2	--	--	--	--	--	--
		P+	2	--	--	--	--	--	--
	State	CPI	3,304	54.5	55.8	59.3	61.8	7.3	2.5
		P+	3,304	18%	20%	23%	26%	8	3
All students	District	CPI	102	72.8	78.4	80.8	85.0	12.2	4.2
		P+	102	40%	53%	63%	64%	24	1
	State	CPI	67,556	83.1	84.6	85.7	87.0	3.9	1.3
		P+	67,556	62%	65%	67%	69%	7	2

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

**Table B6: Northampton-Smith
Annual Grade 9-12 Dropout Rates, 2009-2012**

	School Year Ending				Change 2009-2012		Change 2011-2012		State (2012)
	2009	2010	2011	2012	Percentage Points	Percent	Percentage Points	Percent	
All students	2.4%	1.3%	1.4%	1.4%	-1.0	-42.5%	0.0	-1.4%	2.5%

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

**Table B7a: Northampton-Smith
Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rates, 2009-2012**

Group	Number Included (2012)	School Year Ending				Change 2009-2012		Change 2011-2012		State (2012)
		2009	2010	2011	2012	Percentage Points	Percent	Percentage Points	Percent	
High needs	73	85.9%	80.3%	76.1%	93.2%	7.3	8.5%	17.1	22.5%	74.1%
Low income	56	82.0%	78.8%	70.4%	91.1%	9.1	11.1%	20.7	29.4%	72.4%
Students w/ disabilities	48	80.4%	78.4%	79.5%	91.7%	11.3	14.1%	12.2	15.3%	68.6%
English language learners (ELL) or Former ELL	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	61.1%
All students	109	87.9%	86.2%	81.9%	92.7%	4.8	5.5%	10.8	13.2%	84.7%

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

**Table B7b: Northampton-Smith
Five-Year Cohort Graduation Rates, 2008-2011**

Group	Number Included (2011)	School Year Ending				Change 2008-2011		Change 2010-2011		State (2011)
		2008	2009	2010	2011	Percentage Points	Percent	Percentage Points	Percent	
High needs	71	88.1%	88.5%	86.8%	80.3%	-7.8	-8.9%	-6.5	-7.5%	76.5%
Low income	54	88.9%	85.2%	86.5%	75.9%	-13.0	-14.6%	-10.6	-12.3%	75.0%
Students w/ disabilities	44	85.4%	84.8%	86.3%	84.1%	-1.3	-1.5%	-2.2	-2.5%	70.8%
English language learners (ELL) or Former ELL	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	64.2%
All students	105	87.0%	90.9%	91.4%	84.8%	-2.2	-2.5%	-6.6	-7.2%	86.3%

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

**Table B8: Northampton-Smith
Attendance Rates, 2009-2012**

	School Year Ending				Change 2009-2012		Change 2011-2012	
	2009	2010	2011	2012	Percentage Points	Percent	Percentage Points	Percent
All Students	92.8%	93.7%	94.3%	94.1%	1.3	1.4%	-0.2	0.2%

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

**Table B9: Northampton-Smith
Suspension Rates, 2009-2012**

Group	School Year Ending				Change 2009-2012		Change 2011-2012		State Rates for High Schools (2012)
	2009	2010	2011	2012	Points	Percent	Percentage Points	Percent	
In-School Suspension Rate	0.2%	0.0%	35.8%	23.7%	23.5	---	-12.1	-33.8%	6.5%
Out-of-School Suspension Rate	12.2%	17.0%	13.3%	8.1%	-4.1	-33.6%	-5.2	-39.1%	9.0%

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

Appendix C: Instructional Inventory

Learning environment	By school type:	No evidence	Partial evidence	Clear & consistent evidence
		0	1	2
1. Interactions between teacher & students & among students are positive & respectful.	Overall	0%	12%	88%
	Vocational	0%	0%	100%
	Academic	0%	23%	77%
2. Behavioral standards are clearly communicated & disruptions, if present, are managed effectively & equitably.	Overall	15%	12%	73%
	Vocational	31%	0%	69%
	Academic	0%	23%	77%
3. Classroom procedures are established & maintained to create a safe physical environment & promote smooth transitions among all classroom activities.	Overall	3%	7%	90%
	Vocational	0%	0%	100%
	Academic	8%	15%	77%
4. Lesson reflects rigor & high expectations.	Overall	8%	27%	65%
	Vocational	0%	15%	85%
	Academic	15%	38%	46%
5. Classroom rituals, routines & appropriate interactions create a safe intellectual environment in which students take academic risks & most behaviors that interfere with learning are prevented.	Overall	8%	12%	81%
	Vocational	8%	0%	92%
	Academic	8%	23%	69%
6. Multiple resources are available to meet students' diverse learning needs.	Overall	23%	19%	58%
	Vocational	8%	0%	92%
	Academic	38%	38%	23%
7. The physical arrangement of the classroom ensures a positive learning environment & provides all students with access to learning activities.	Overall	0%	4%	96%
	Vocational	0%	0%	100%
	Academic	0%	8%	92%

Teaching	By school type:	No evidence 0	Partial evidence 1	Clear & consistent evidence 2
8. Demonstrates knowledge of subject & content.	Overall	4%	4%	92%
	Vocational	0%	0%	100%
	Academic	8%	8%	85%
9. Communicates clear grade-appropriate learning objectives aligned to state standards. Applicable ELL language objectives are evident.	Overall	72%	8%	20%
	Vocational	58%	17%	25%
	Academic	85%	0%	15%
10. Uses appropriate & varied strategies matched to learning objectives & content.	Overall	19%	15%	65%
	Vocational	8%	8%	85%
	Academic	31%	23%	46%
11. Requires inquiry, exploration, application, analysis, synthesis, &/or evaluation of concepts individually, in pairs or in groups to demonstrate higher-order thinking. (circle observed skills)	Overall	46%	12%	42%
	Vocational	23%	15%	62%
	Academic	69%	8%	23%
12. Uses varied questioning techniques that require/seek thoughtful responses & promote deeper understanding.	Overall	38%	12%	50%
	Vocational	38%	0%	62%
	Academic	38%	23%	38%
13. Implements appropriate & varied strategies that meet students' diverse learning needs.	Overall	27%	31%	42%
	Vocational	8%	46%	46%
	Academic	46%	15%	38%
14. Paces lesson to engage all students & promote understanding.	Overall	15%	19%	65%
	Vocational	15%	15%	69%
	Academic	15%	23%	62%
15. Conducts frequent formative assessments to check for understanding & inform instruction.	Overall	12%	32%	56%
	Vocational	15%	23%	62%
	Academic	8%	42%	50%
16. Makes use of technology to enhance learning.	Overall	50%	12%	38%
	Vocational	31%	15%	54%
	Academic	69%	8%	23%

Learning	By school type:	No evidence 0	Partial evidence 1	Clear & consistent evidence 2
17. Students are engaged in productive learning routines.	Overall	4%	8%	88%
	Vocational	8%	8%	85%
	Academic	0%	8%	92%
18. Students are engaged in challenging academic tasks.	Overall	15%	15%	69%
	Vocational	15%	15%	69%
	Academic	15%	15%	69%
19. Students assume responsibility for their own learning.	Overall	27%	19%	54%
	Vocational	15%	8%	77%
	Academic	38%	31%	31%
20. Students articulate their thinking or reasoning verbally or in writing either individually, in pairs or in groups.	Overall	46%	12%	42%
	Vocational	62%	8%	31%
	Academic	31%	15%	54%
21. Students' responses to questions elaborate about content & ideas (not expected for all responses).	Overall	58%	23%	19%
	Vocational	69%	15%	15%
	Academic	46%	31%	23%
22. Students make connections to prior knowledge, real world experiences & other subject matter.	Overall	31%	23%	46%
	Vocational	15%	31%	54%
	Academic	46%	15%	38%
23. Students use technology as a tool for learning &/or understanding.	Overall	54%	0%	46%
	Vocational	31%	0%	69%
	Academic	77%	0%	23%
24. Student work demonstrates high quality & can serve as exemplars.	Overall	65%	12%	23%
	Vocational	54%	8%	38%
	Academic	77%	15%	8%

Appendix D: March 5, 2013, letter from ESE Deputy Commissioner Jeff Wulfson



Mitchell D. Chevalier, Esq. D.
Commissioner

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March 5, 2013

Mayor David J. Narkewicz
City Hall
210 Main Street
Northampton, MA 01060

Superintendent Jeffrey Peterson
Smith Vocational & Agricultural High School
80 Locust St.
Northampton, MA 01060

Dear Mayor Narkewicz and Superintendent Peterson:

I am writing to follow up on our recent conversations regarding the city's annual appropriations for the operation of the Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School.

As you know, Chapter 70 of the Massachusetts General Laws, in effect since fiscal year 1994, requires each municipality to appropriate minimum spending amounts as calculated by the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education. On several occasions, the commissioner stayed the enforcement of the minimum spending requirement for Smith at the joint request of Mayor Claire Higgins and Superintendent Frank Llanas. Their request was in part due to the extra capital funding provided by the city to the school. We also recognized that the city's total net school spending, for both the Smith school and the Northampton public schools, exceeded the combined requirement for the two districts.

Recently, Superintendent Peterson notified me that the school wished to withdraw its support for this accommodation. Accordingly, I am advising the city and the school that Smith's net school spending requirement will be in full effect for fiscal year 2014 and subsequent years.

We have spoken with the city's attorney, Alan Scowald, who has questioned our authority to set a separate minimum spending level for Smith. In our opinion, authority to do so derives from the definition of preliminary local contribution in section 2 of Chapter 70, which states that "the preliminary local contribution shall be defined separately for each municipality's share of each district to which it belongs." Although the formula for calculating the local contribution has changed significantly since 1994, it has been our consistent practice to calculate a separate spending requirement for each operating school district in the Commonwealth.

As I have noted in past discussions, relief from this requirement would require either special legislation or a change in the school's status. Options include either conversion to a charter school (in which case the city's financial support of the school would be based on the charter school tuition formula) or merging the school with the Northampton public school district (in which case the level of financial support would be determined by the Northampton school committee). Please let us know if we can assist you in the evaluation of these or other alternatives.

Sincerely,

Jeff Wulfsen
Deputy Commissioner

cc: Alan Secwold, Esq.
Supt. Brian Salzer, Northampton Public Schools
Jay Sullivan, ESE
Debra Comfort, Esq., ESE
Roger Hatch, ESE
Tom Moran, ESE