



Wareham Public Schools District Review

Review conducted February 7-10, 2012

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Overview of District Reviews

Purpose

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

District reviews are conducted under Chapter 15, Section 55A of the Massachusetts General Laws and include reviews focused on “districts whose students achieve at low levels either in absolute terms or relative to districts that educate similar populations.” Districts subject to review in the 2011-2012 school year include districts that were in Level 3¹ (in school year 2011 or school year 2012) of ESE's framework for district accountability and assistance in each of the state's six regions: Greater Boston, Berkshires, Northeast, Southeast, Central, and Pioneer Valley. The districts with the lowest aggregate performance and least movement in Composite Performance Index (CPI) in their regions were chosen from among those districts that were not exempt under Chapter 15, Section 55A, because another comprehensive review had been completed or was scheduled to take place within nine months of the planned reviews.

Methodology

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

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

Wareham Public Schools

The site visit to the Wareham Public Schools was conducted from February 7–10, 2012. The site visit included 32 hours of interviews and focus groups with over 60 stakeholders ranging from school committee members to district administrators and school staff to teachers’ association representatives. The review team conducted focus groups with 12 middle school and 2 high school teachers. Elementary teachers were unable to attend the elementary focus group at the time that it was scheduled by the district. The team also conducted visits to all the district’s eight schools: East Wareham Elementary (pre-kindergarten), Ethel E. Hammond Elementary (kindergarten), John W. Decas Elementary (kindergarten through grade 5), Minot Forest Elementary (kindergarten through grade 5), Wareham Middle School (grades 6–8), Wareham High School (grades 9–12), Wareham Junior/Senior Cooperative (grades 7–12), and West Wareham Academy (grades 7–12). Further information about the review and the site visit schedule can be found in Appendix B; information about the members of the review team can be found in Appendix A. Appendix C contains information about student performance from 2009–2011. Appendix D contains finding and recommendation statements.

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

District Profile

Wareham is a town of approximately 22,000 residents located in southeastern Massachusetts. Situated at the head of Buzzards Bay, the “Gateway to Cape Cod,” Wareham has over 54 miles of coastline interrupted by beaches and enriched by estuaries, rivers, and ponds. These natural features and its proximity to Boston and Providence have attracted tourists and summer residents to Wareham, increasing its population to 44,000 during the summer months. Wareham consists of the villages of Onset, Wareham, East Wareham, and West Wareham. At one time a seasonal destination for musicians such as Duke Ellington and Tommy Dorsey, Onset has recently experienced burgeoning regrowth with the restoration of Victorian-style mansions and construction of cottages along its crescent-shaped shoreline. Bog ore was discovered in Wareham at the turn of the nineteenth century and many homesteads installed forges and furnaces to process the ore. The first nail-cut factory was established in 1819, but the historic Tremont Nail Company is all that remains of that industry today.

Many Wareham residents are employed in the construction or accommodations and food services sectors, both of which experienced severe contraction during the Great Recession that began in 2007. Wareham had a 2011 unemployment rate of 9.7 percent compared to the state rate of 8.2

percent. It has a substantial low-income population; it also has a number of homeless families largely accommodated in hotels.

According to U.S. Census Bureau data for 2010, 48 percent of Wareham households had income of less than \$50,000 and about half of these households had income of less than \$25,000. In contrast, 52 percent of Wareham households had income of \$50,000 and above and about one-third of these households had income of \$100,000 and above. According to U.S. Census Bureau data, school-age children constituted 18 percent of the population in 2010, and 38 percent of Wareham households included school-age children.

Schools

Wareham is governed by a board of selectmen/town manager/open Town Meeting form of municipal government. The Wareham superintendent is in his fourth year of service as superintendent and his eighteenth year as a district administrator, having served previously as assistant superintendent for two years and middle school principal for twelve years. The leadership team consists of the superintendent, the director of curriculum, the director of pupil services, the director of operations/finance, the transportation manager, six principals, and the clinical and educational coordinator of West Wareham Academy.

Parents and teachers told the review team that although textbooks are outdated and in short supply, in February 2012 the school committee defeated a motion to add \$100,000 to the textbook account in the proposed fiscal year 2013 budget by re-allocating the funds from other accounts. Although according to district data Wareham teachers' salaries are not competitive with surrounding towns, in fiscal year 2012 the school committee and the teachers' association agreed to a salary freeze to minimize staff reductions.

According to district and Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) data, the East Wareham Elementary School that houses the pre-kindergarten program was built in 1912 and renovated in 1997 and the Ethel E. Hammond Elementary School, home to some kindergarten classes, was built in 1910 and renovated in 1989. Both buildings are over 100 years old and considered to be well beyond their useful lives. The district hoped to conduct a study under the auspices of the MSBA to determine the feasibility of enlarging and renovating the Minot Forest Elementary School in order to incorporate pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classes and close the East Wareham and Ethel E. Hammond elementary schools. The high school, built in 1990 and renovated in 2000, has a leaking roof that has sometimes interfered with operations and access.

More than half of the buses in the district's fleet are at least 11 years old. According to administrators, to avoid escalating maintenance and inspection costs the district's transportation department aims to have buses with an average age of five years old with no bus over 10 years old. The district was weighing the cost-effectiveness of updating its bus fleet versus leasing buses. According to administrators, it would cost \$1.8 million dollars to update, operate, and maintain the bus fleet versus \$2.4 million dollars—and an additional \$180,000 for fuel—to lease buses.

The district is attempting to deal with financial strains, including the problems associated with aging facilities and school buses, without the full cooperation of the town. Both town officials and school committee members described long-standing difficulties in the relationship between town and district. According to administrators and school committee members, the district was likely to propose a combination of override and debt exclusion measures to fund critical needs. These would be presented to the voters in menu format in order to offer a choice. According to school administrators and town officials, it was uncertain whether the board of selectmen would allow any override or debt exclusion measures to come to a vote in the spring of 2012.

Post-Review Developments

Based on the recommendations of the selectmen and finance committee, the Wareham Town Meeting approved a fiscal year 2013 budget of \$25,140,794 for the school department in the spring of 2012, an amount \$250,000 below its fiscal year 2012 budget of \$25,390,794, and more than \$2,000,000 below its needs-based budget proposal of \$27,195,370. The school committee consequently had to cut not only items from its needs-based budget proposal, but also items from its fiscal year 2012 budget, including about 20 teaching positions.

In recognition of the town's severe financial limitations necessitating drastic reductions, the school committee proposed an operational budget override of \$780,000 to augment the school department budget and restore the positions of the teachers who had been laid off. In addition, the school committee sponsored debt exclusion measures to update textbooks and technology (\$341,000), purchase new and used school buses (\$360,000); repair the high school gymnasium roof (\$110,000); and conduct a feasibility study for the renovation and expansion of the Minot Forest Elementary School (\$575,000). The Town Meeting approved the override and debt exclusion proposals in the spring of 2012, subject to a final vote of the town. The selectmen subsequently placed the override and debt exclusion measures on the ballot for the July 25, 2012 town election, except for the bus purchase exclusion which failed by one vote to get a "super majority" of four out of the five members. On July 25, 2012, a small portion of Wareham's eligible voters (2,394 of 14,446, or approximately 17 percent) defeated the operational budget override and debt exclusion measures by large majorities ranging from 59 to 70 percent against.

Student Demographics

Table 1a below shows the 2010–2011 Wareham enrollments by race/ethnicity and special populations, while Table 1b shows the same for 2011–2012. According to Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) data, while total enrollment declined by approximately 7 percent from 3,325 in 2007 (data not in a table) to 3,084 in 2011 and 2,996 in 2012, the proportion of Wareham students from low-income families has steadily increased from 37.3 percent in 2007 (data not in a table) to 45.2 percent in 2011 and 50.2 percent in 2012. In 2010–2011 in the district the proportion of students receiving special education services of 19 percent was slightly higher than the state rate of 17 percent. Less than two percent of Wareham students were either English language learners or from families whose first language was not English (FLNE).

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

Selected Populations	Number	Percent of Total	Percent of State	Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity	Number	Percent of Total	Percent of State
Total enrollment	3,084	100.0	--	African-American/Black	244	7.9	8.2
First Language not English	22	0.7	16.3	Asian	33	1.1	5.5
Limited English Proficient*	16	0.5	7.1	Hispanic/Latino	166	5.4	15.4
Special Education**	592	19.0	17.0	White	2,298	74.5	68.0
Low-income	1,393	45.2	34.2	Native American	40	1.3	0.2
Free Lunch	1,106	35.9	29.1	Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	3	0.1	0.1
Reduced-price lunch	287	9.3	5.1	Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	300	9.7	2.4
<p>*Limited English proficient students are referred to in this report as “English language learners.”</p> <p>**Special education number and percentage (only) are calculated including students in out-of-district placements.</p> <p>Sources: School/District Profiles on ESE website and other ESE data</p>							

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

Selected Populations	Number	Percent of Total	Percent of State	Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity	Number	Percent of Total	Percent of State
Total enrollment	2,996	100.0	---	African-American/Black	233	7.8	8.3
First Language not English	21	0.7	16.7	Asian	29	1.0	5.7
Limited English Proficient*	14	0.5	7.3	Hispanic/Latino	162	5.4	16.1
Special Education**	613	20.3	17.0	White	2,246	75.0	67.0
Low-income	1,504	50.2	35.2	Native American	42	1.4	0.2
Free Lunch	1,185	39.6	30.4	Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	3	0.1	0.1
Reduced-price lunch	319	10.6	4.8	Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	281	9.4	2.5
*Limited English proficient students are referred to in this report as “English language learners.” **Special education number and percentage (only) are calculated including students in out-of-district placements. Sources: School/District Profiles on ESE website and other ESE data							

Student Achievement

From 2007 to 2011 the district’s proficiency rate in ELA increased from 57 percent to 62 percent; over the same years, however, the state proficiency rate increased from 66 percent to 69 percent. So between 2007 and 2011 the proficiency gap between district and state students decreased only by two points, from 9 percentage points to 7. In mathematics the district’s proficiency rate rose over these years from 36 percent to 47 percent, while the state’s rate increased from 53 percent to 58 percent. Thus the district’s proficiency gap in math decreased by 6 percentage points from 2007 to 2011, but the district’s rate still lagged the state rate by 11 points.

As described in the second Leadership and Governance finding below, the review team was particularly concerned about the recent elimination of the social studies program at the middle school, a Level 3 school with a history of low student performance, and the reduction of the middle school staff by at least eight teachers, raising class sizes considerably. The team was concerned that the loss of the social studies program and the increases in class size might jeopardize the district’s attempts to improve student teaching and learning at this level and ultimately at the high school.

Financial Profile

Table 2 below shows Wareham's expenditures, Chapter 70 state aid, and net school spending from fiscal year 2010 through fiscal year 2012. From fiscal year 2010 through fiscal year 2012, Wareham's local appropriation for education increased 2 percent in fiscal year 2011 and also in fiscal year 2012. The district was slightly above required net school spending in fiscal years 2010 (3.3 percent) and 2011 (2.7 percent).

**Table 2: Wareham Public Schools
Expenditures, Chapter 70 State Aid, and Net School Spending
Fiscal Years 2010–2012**

	FY10		FY11		FY12
	Estimated	Actual	Estimated	Actual	Estimated
Expenditures					
From local appropriations for schools					
by school committee	25,598,033	26,012,517	26,116,092	26,116,134	26,752,446
by municipality	8,668,488	8,916,806	8,778,568	8,951,162	8,838,935
Total from local appropriations	34,266,521	34,929,323	34,894,660	35,067,296	35,591,381
From revolving funds and grants	---	5,320,623	---	6,360,908	---
Total expenditures	---	40,249,946	---	41,428,204	---
Chapter 70 aid to education program					
Chapter 70 state aid*	---	12,242,029	---	12,159,874	12,255,154
Required local contribution	---	17,409,106	---	17,518,457	17,900,064
Required net school spending**	---	29,651,135	---	29,678,331	30,125,218
Actual net school spending	---	30,635,289	---	30,486,184	31,602,198
Over/under required (\$)	---	984,154	---	807,853	1,476,980
Over/under required (%)	---	3.3	---	2.7	4.9
<p>*Chapter 70 state aid funds are deposited in the local general fund and spent as local appropriations.</p> <p>**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.</p> <p>Sources: FY10, FY11 District End-of-Year Reports; Chapter 70 Program information on ESE website.</p> <p>Note: Data retrieved on August 28, 2012.</p>					

Findings

Leadership and Governance

The district has identified and taken steps to address curricular, instructional, student assessment, student support, and teacher supervision and evaluation needs.

In interviews, the superintendent, principals, and the director of curriculum described how the district has renewed the mathematics program through adoption of *Everyday Mathematics* in kindergarten through grade 6, *Transition Mathematics Program* in grade 7, and *University of Chicago School Mathematics Project (UCMP) Algebra* in grades 7 and 8. The new mathematics program is aligned with the new Massachusetts curriculum frameworks and is intended to improve grade-level consistency and grade-to-grade articulation.

The superintendent, curriculum director, and teachers told the review team that the district has established benchmarks in ELA and mathematics for kindergarten through grade 8 and developed related benchmark measures. The superintendent and other district administrators said that the district was implementing a Response to Intervention (RTI) program that initially focuses on ELA and includes training for all teachers in kindergarten through grade 6. According to interviewees, RTI will facilitate identification of student learning styles, strengths, and weaknesses, establishing the basis for tiered and differentiated instruction within classrooms.

The superintendent, teachers' association leaders, and district administrators said that Wareham had purchased a database to manage student achievement results. This will enable teachers to analyze and use data from multiple sources to inform instruction. The first Assessment finding in this report describes this database in greater detail.

Principals and the superintendent said that the use of a block schedule at the high school, which began in September 2011, would enable students to more readily complete the Massachusetts Core Curriculum requirements, increase rigor, reduce class sizes, and facilitate dual enrollment and school-to-career opportunities.

The curriculum director and other interviewees said that instructional leaders, one full-time at the middle school and two half-time at each elementary school, have been added to increase the supervision of classroom teachers. And central office administrators told the review team that instructional leaders at the elementary and middle schools are primarily responsible for helping teachers interpret and use data (see the second Assessment finding in this report). Facilitators have also been established at the middle school, with responsibility for coordinating components of the ELA, mathematics, and science programs. In addition, the curriculum director and other district administrators told the review team that the high school department chairs began to evaluate teachers in 2011–2012. Having instructional leaders and high school department chairs perform these functions will increase the district's capacity to review and improve teachers' instructional practices.

Wareham offers numerous support programs to provide a safety net for students who struggle academically. According to interviewees and documentation, the district has established supplemental support programs, including:

- A before- and after-school and summer program for students in grades 3 through 8
- The West Wareham Academy summer school program
- The elementary literacy lab
- Counseling and tutoring for at-risk students in grades 9 through 12
- The middle school summer school program
- Extended, school-year special education programs
- The kindergarten entry enrichment program

The district has also established two alternative academic programs for students in grades 7–12: the Wareham Cooperative Junior/Senior High School for at-risk students and the West Wareham Academy for students with clinically diagnosed social and emotional needs. These programs are designed for students with difficulties succeeding in the mainstream. Both programs are open to non-resident students on a tuition basis, providing a significant financial benefit to the district.

The superintendent and teachers' association leaders told the review team that the district is an early adopter of the new Massachusetts model for educator evaluation. The district's willingness to participate as an early adopter reflects a significant level of collaboration and cooperation among administrators, teachers, and teachers' association leaders. The new educator evaluation instrument and the procedures that will result from this initiative are designed to improve teacher supervision and evaluation in order to promote professional growth and accountability and increase student achievement.

Barriers to the implementation of otherwise well-intended initiatives have diminished their effectiveness. These barriers include problems with funding, capacity, planning, and the ability of leadership and the local teachers' association to resolve issues.

The district's initiatives, as described above, are appropriate, timely, and designed to improve student performance. However, problems with funding, capacity, and planning, as well as differences with the teachers' association, have weakened their potential effectiveness. An example of a capacity challenge was provided by the superintendent and other administrators, who told the review team that while teacher supervision was intended to be the instructional leaders' primary focus, these leaders serve in this role only half-time. Because of budget constraints, instructional leaders also serve as half-time interventionists providing direct instruction to identified students. Also, full use of the new assessment database has been delayed by limited personnel, technological support, and infrastructure, reflecting an absence of capacity. Teachers have little common planning time at the elementary and high school levels to design and review curriculum, and to analyze and use assessment results to inform instruction. This is because there are not enough teachers to provide options for students while other teachers meet.

The establishment of the role of the instructional leaders has been complicated by a planning process that did not allow for clarification and resolution of important issues in advance. Principals and the director of curriculum told the review team that there were conflicting interpretations of the provisions of the tentative collective bargaining agreement for teachers dated June 27, 2011. According to one interpretation, instructional leaders were encouraged to provide feedback to teachers either verbally or in writing immediately after all classroom visits. According to another, instructional leaders were only to “observe” in their first year, 2011–2012, and were constrained from providing any feedback. In their second year, 2012–2013, instructional leaders would assume a formal role in teacher evaluation and help prepare summative evaluations. With the curriculum director acting as scribe, the teachers’ association president, teacher representatives, and some instructional leaders prepared a clarifying memorandum on February 2, 2012, to provide more guidance on the role of instructional leaders in 2011–2012. According to this memorandum, instructional leaders were encouraged to provide teachers written and verbal feedback in 2011–2012. However, in the absence of a memorandum of understanding produced and ratified by the teachers’ association and the school committee, the instructional leaders continued to function without explicit definition of their supervisory roles.

Although the district was in the process of adopting the new Massachusetts model for educator evaluation, the supervisory and evaluation processes current at the time of the review appeared to be ineffectively implemented. A team review of a representative sample of teacher evaluations by administrators and high school department chairs showed that almost all teachers were rated as high-performing, and the review team found few suggestions for improving instruction. The evaluations of department chairs by the principals, and of principals and administrators by the superintendent, were similarly positive and devoid of recommendations for growth and improvement. The quality of instruction observed by the review team in 70 classrooms did not correspond with these uniformly favorable evaluations. The incidence in district classes observed by the review team of the techniques and strategies commonly associated with high-quality instruction was low. This suggests that teacher supervision has not been effective and that teacher evaluation also has not resulted in improvements to instructional skills. The supervision and evaluation of principals and other administrators by the superintendent also appeared not to focus on improving professional practice and student performance.

Conflicting interpretations of the collective bargaining agreement and differences about issues requiring negotiation between district leadership and the teachers’ association have sometimes been a barrier to implementation of district initiatives. For example, principals told the review team that the teachers’ association had not agreed to allow them to determine the purpose of the weekly after-school meeting time for elementary teachers. The teachers’ association grieved the scheduling outside of the school year of training for middle school teachers on the district’s Critical Thinking/World Views course although teachers were to be compensated for attending. According to interviewees, the association also took issue with the district’s proposed training for Advanced Placement course teachers on the ground that neither the fee teachers were to be assessed for the training nor the grant that the district procured to fund it had been negotiated.

Wareham has developed programs and services closely related to students' identified needs; however, smooth and effective implementation of these programs and services has been jeopardized by problems with capacity, funding, and planning, and by differences with the teachers' association. Despite well-founded initiatives, the district has been unable to maximize the benefits of its initiatives and has been unable to make substantial progress in closing the achievement gap between Wareham students and students statewide.

The reduction of staff at Wareham Middle School in fiscal year 2012 in response to a districtwide budget deficit has increased class sizes in a Level 3 school and may jeopardize implementation of the district's RTI initiative.

In interviews, the middle school principal, the curriculum director, and teachers' association leaders told the review team that class sizes at the middle school increased after a staff reduction in fiscal year 2012. The superintendent, the middle school principal, and the curriculum director said that this action was taken in response to a districtwide budget deficit of approximately \$340,000. The middle school principal and the superintendent told the review team that the district addressed the deficit by eliminating the social studies program, reducing the middle school staff by at least eight teachers. The decision to reduce staff only at the middle school was based upon equity, because past budget reductions had been made at the elementary and high school levels. Principals and teachers' association leaders said that the opening in the schedules of middle school students resulting from the elimination of the social studies program was filled by a new course entitled Critical Thinking/World Views. ELA, science, and mathematics teachers are teaching this course, which is outside their primary areas of certification. They also said that the middle school schedule was revised, increasing the period length for ELA, mathematics, and science by a total of 200 minutes for all three subjects each year. Principals and teachers' association leaders said that the teachers' association filed an unfair labor practice charge related to a change in working conditions. The resolution was the establishment of a scheduling committee to research options for the middle school. At the time of the site visit, this committee was scheduled to make its recommendations to the superintendent in June 2012.

The superintendent said that he had delegated the decision about how to reduce the middle school budget to the middle school principal. The superintendent added that he would have used a different strategy to reduce the middle school budget that would have led to a different outcome, but he was committed to site-based management, which implied that principals could make decisions with which he disagreed.

ESE categorized the Wareham Middle School as a Level 3 school because student performance on the MCAS tests was among the lowest 20 percent in the state among schools serving common grade levels. Wareham has been categorized as a Level 3 district because it has a school that has been placed in Level 3. While class size is not the sole determiner of student performance, it is a factor. The average class size at the middle school in 2010–2011 was 18.3 students. In 2011–2012, with the reduction in staff at the middle school, class sizes increased in ELA, science, and mathematics. Thirty-nine of the 81 classes in these subjects enrolled 25 or more students and enrollment in three of these classes exceeded 30 students. It is also noteworthy that before the

staff reduction in 2011–2012, the average class size at the middle school of 18.3 students was already higher than the district average class size of 16.6 students.

Based upon the review team’s observations, there was very little evidence of differentiated instruction in district classrooms, as will be explained in more detail in the second Curriculum and Instruction finding. However, the district has committed to increasing tiered and differentiated instructional strategies for students as reflected in its ongoing training for teachers in the RTI program. Central office administrators said that larger class sizes at the middle school will make these important strategies for individualizing learning more difficult to implement. The principal’s decision to eliminate staff at the middle school, a Level 3 school, increased class sizes that were already larger than the district average. This action has jeopardized realization of the district’s RTI initiative to increase tiered and differentiated instruction. It has also left the district’s middle school students without a program in social studies, a core subject. Unless the superintendent exercises authority when necessary, it will be difficult for the district to ensure that all administrative decisions are aligned with overarching district goals.

Curriculum and Instruction

Although Wareham has made strides in aligning its curriculum with the new Massachusetts curriculum frameworks, establishing common benchmarks, and involving staff in curriculum development, the district has not completed the process. Differentiated curriculum and programs to support higher-achieving students are not provided, and a consistent structure for curriculum development and revision has not been implemented.

According to documentation and interviews with teachers and administrators, district curriculum guides in ELA, mathematics, and science have been aligned with the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks in response to the findings in a 2005 review by the former Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA), which stated, “The district did not have clearly articulated, horizontally and vertically aligned curricula in the tested core subject areas.” In 2011–2012, Wareham is aligning its curriculum guides to the new Massachusetts curriculum frameworks and mapping the new standards using a software tool. The instructional leadership team, composed of teachers in kindergarten through grade 12, has established grade-span benchmarks. The district guides include standards and benchmarks for core subjects, but often do not provide suggested resources and assessment options. The mathematics curriculum guide was last revised in 2006. According to central office administrators, with the guidance of the director of curriculum the instructional leadership team composed of teachers from every grade level is coordinating the process of full alignment. According to these administrators, 2011–2012 is a transition year. Central office administrators and teachers said that the district did not have a formal long-term plan or cyclical process for curriculum review and revision.

Central office administrators and principals told the review team that elementary teachers at the John W. Decas and Minot Forest elementary schools use the same scope and sequence and curriculum pacing guides. At Wareham Middle School, teachers use pacing guides in ELA,

mathematics, and science in grades 6, 7, and 8. Monthly grade-level or vertical team meetings at the middle school address the progress of curriculum implementation. Administrators said that the middle school instructional leader monitors the fidelity of curriculum implementation in ELA, mathematics, and science. There are also a common, standards-based portfolio and common benchmark assessments. Core courses at the high school are aligned with twenty-first century learning expectations, and department chairs and administrators are working to align core courses with the new Massachusetts curriculum frameworks. There are common mid-year and final examinations and a common portfolio at the high school at all grade levels, but very few formative or benchmark assessments. According to interviewees and documentation, the district has created vertical teams consisting of elementary, middle, and high school teachers to improve vertical alignment of the curriculum.

Administrators and teachers told the review team that most students in special education are included in regular education classes and receive support services in an integrated setting. According to interviewees, students attending the Wareham Cooperative Junior/Senior High School and West Wareham Academy are held to the same standards as their peers, but the curriculum and teaching strategies are customized to meet their needs. In a review of documents, the review team found that although the same portfolio and materials are used, the curricula at the Wareham Cooperative Junior/Senior High School and West Wareham Academy are not closely aligned with the middle school and high school curricula and curricular articulation does not appear smooth and seamless. Although teachers at Wareham Cooperative Junior/Senior High School and West Wareham Academy attend in-service sessions with their grade-level peers in the district, they do not attend department and grade-level meetings routinely. Central office administrators, principals, and teachers told the review team that there are few programs and options for accelerated students. Administrators said that at the middle school the emphasis is on at-risk students. At the elementary schools, enrichment is provided for high-ability and high-achieving students during one of the RTI blocks. According to interviewees, the district does not have a gifted and talented program and there is no formal enrichment program at the elementary and middle school levels. Other than Advanced Placement courses, there are no options for accelerated students at the high school. According to central office administrators, the district does not collect data on advanced or accelerated students by subgroup.

According to documentation and interviews, instructional leaders and some administrators act as the curriculum and instruction leaders in the district. In kindergarten through grade 8, under the supervision of the director of curriculum and the school principals, instructional leaders check for classroom implementation of the curriculum. At Wareham High School, the principal supervises the department chairs who meet with him weekly to discuss the curriculum. The director of curriculum meets periodically with the principal and department chairs. The director of curriculum meets monthly with district principals.

At the high school, the principal holds the department chairs accountable for curricular and instructional leadership. The principal told the review team that department chairs are the “principals of their departments.” Department chairs evaluate teachers with professional status. At the middle school, the principal observes teachers who are having difficulty and the two

assistant principals evaluate all teachers. The elementary principals and assistant principals are responsible for evaluating all elementary teachers.

According to interviews and documentation, in 2011–2012 the district created instructional leader positions in kindergarten through grade 8. There is one full-time instructional leader and three curriculum facilitators at the middle school. The facilitators for ELA and mathematics are full-time teachers, and the instructional leader also serves as the science facilitator. At each elementary school there are two half-time instructional leaders, who focus on ELA and mathematics, but not exclusively. These instructional leaders are also responsible for providing students direct remedial and enrichment instruction. In interviews, the instructional leaders impressed the review team with their knowledge and enthusiasm. The superintendent and director of curriculum expressed a desire to make these positions full-time in the 2012–2013 school year.

Although curriculum documentation and alignment are being aligned to the new 2011 Massachusetts frameworks and common core state standards, the process is not complete and the district has not implemented a cyclical process for curriculum development and revision. In mathematics, where student performance is weakest according to the results of MCAS tests and other assessments, curriculum development and revision is an area of particular need. The district does not have any programs for high-achieving students or differentiation in instruction for high-ability students. Inconsistent supervision of curriculum implementation contributes to unequal delivery of frameworks-based instruction in the two alternative schools. All of these factors hinder the district's efforts to improve overall student achievement.

In most observed classes instruction in the Wareham Public Schools was not rigorous, engaging, or student-centered.

The review team conducted 70 classroom observations of approximately 20 minutes in length using ESE's instructional inventory, a tool for observing characteristics of standard-based teaching and learning. The tool contains 35 characteristics within 10 categories: classroom climate, learning objective, use of class time, content learning, instructional techniques, activation of higher-order thinking, pacing, student thinking, student groups, and use of student assessments. Review team members are asked to note when they observe or do not observe a characteristic and record evidence of a characteristic on a form. The review team made approximately the same number of observations at each level: elementary, middle, and high school.

Although student adherence to classroom rules and respectful teacher-to-student and student-to-student relations were evident in most observed classrooms (80 percent), high expectations for student learning were less evident (41 percent). The review team found evidence of high student engagement in only 21 percent of the classes observed. Direct instruction was the typical mode in most observed classrooms (90 percent), especially at the middle and high school levels. For example, in one mathematics class, the teacher worked out problems on the board without involving the students. The students were observed to be disengaged while the teacher instructed.

Some were completing worksheets without paying close attention to her and others appeared passive or diverted.

Students were observed to be solving problems in groups in 26 percent of high school, 14 percent of middle school, and 36 percent of elementary level classes visited. Students at the middle and high school classes visited were rarely observed to be engaged in activities that would advance their thinking. The review team found evidence of teachers formally checking for understanding or mastery in only 17 percent of all observed classes. For example, in an elementary class observed by the review team, the teacher was unclear about the objective of the lesson, did not monitor student progress by moving around the room as students were working, and did not check for understanding by posing questions. Students were observed to be working independently in only 20 percent of all classes visited.

Principals told the review team that the characteristics of high-quality instruction include rigorous content based on high standards and instructional techniques such as cooperative learning and differentiated instruction that broaden student involvement and increase independence. In most observed classrooms, however, the review team found teacher-centered rather than student-centered instruction, literal rather than interpretive and analytical comprehension questions, and lower level rather than challenging tasks. Learning time was not maximized in many observed classes, especially at the middle and high school levels. For example, in one observed high school mathematics class, students were directed to begin their homework 10 minutes before the end of the period. In a middle school class visited, students were permitted to socialize freely with each other and gathered at the door to leave five minutes before the end of the period. There was little evidence of student inquiry and thought in the classes observed.

The team did see outstanding practice in several classes, but this was not the norm. For example, in one observed classroom an elementary teacher assigned independent reading comprehension tasks to small groups while she worked with at-risk readers. In some observed middle and high school ELA classes, teachers asked students to share their writing in small groups and offer each other suggestions for revision.

The review team did not find that high expectations for student learning, a range of strategies for heterogeneous classes, and students assuming responsibility for their own learning were prevalent in observed district classrooms. For example in an observed middle school ELA class, the teacher read the text aloud without posing comprehension questions to check for understanding. Many students appeared inattentive and some were visibly off-task.

Instruction observed by the review team did not provide challenge and many students were observed to be inattentive, disengaged, and inactive. High-quality classroom instruction increases students' knowledge, skills, curiosity, and ownership of their learning and independence. Without more rigorous, engaging, and student-centered instruction, the district is unlikely to improve student performance.

Assessment

Wareham has developed a comprehensive battery to assess student achievement, including formative benchmark assessments in ELA and mathematics at the elementary and middle school levels. The absence of infrastructure to facilitate timely data analysis has reduced the usefulness and effectiveness of the district's assessment program.

According to documentation and interviews with district administrators and teachers, Wareham administers formative and summative assessments at each level. The elementary English language arts (ELA) battery consists of the Diagnostic Tests of Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) administered in the fall, winter, and spring in kindergarten through grade 3 and more frequently to students who are not making expected progress; the Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE) administered in the fall and spring in kindergarten through grade 5; and the district's benchmark assessments administered at five to six week intervals in grades 1 through 5. The mathematics battery consists of the Group Mathematics Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GMADE) administered in grades 1 through 5 in the fall and spring and the district's benchmark assessments administered at five to six week intervals in the same grades. The district's benchmark assessments are discussed in greater detail below. Wareham also administers the assessments in the Everyday Mathematics program and the end-of-unit and theme tests of the Houghton Mifflin reading program in kindergarten through grade 5.

The middle school level battery consists of the district's benchmark assessments in ELA and mathematics administered at five to six week intervals, common semester and final examinations, common writing prompts at each grade level, and ratings of selected student work products with teacher-developed rubrics. These work products are maintained in portfolios. According to documentation and interviewees, the portfolio system was instituted to comply with the individual student success and educational proficiency plans required by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) and the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and to demonstrate that student assignments are based on the ELA and mathematics standards in the new Massachusetts curriculum frameworks. Teachers plan two common ELA and mathematics assignments each quarter and one social studies and science assignment each semester.

The social studies and science assignments require application of ELA or mathematics skills. Students write a reflection on each common assignment stating their understanding of the relevance of the learning and their self-assessed learning strengths and needs. The common assignments are rated on a four-point scale with rubrics developed by ELA and mathematics teachers at each grade level. During the site visit, the review team examined grade-level rubrics for ELA and mathematics and several student portfolios. The portfolios contained common assignments and cumulative work products. While there are multiple measures of student progress and proficiency at the elementary and middle school levels, the high school level battery consists primarily of common mid-term and final examinations.

Central office administrators told the review team that in 2002 the district developed a local test closely based on the MCAS tests. Known by the acronym WCAS (Wareham Comprehensive

Assessment System), this test was administered quarterly to all students by grade-level teachers and the results were posted in the schools. Wareham abandoned the WCAS in 2005 based on evidence of many non-standard administrations of the test. The district adopted the Stanford 9 in 2005, but discontinued it in 2007 in favor of locally developed benchmark assessments.

The district's benchmarks are the power standards in the ELA and mathematics curricula. According to central office administrators, teachers meeting in vertical teams selected and agreed upon the benchmarks in 2005–2006. They subsequently developed benchmark assessments using a backwards design, deriving the measures from the student outcomes. The review team examined the benchmarks at each grade level in ELA and mathematics and a sample of benchmark assessments. Consisting of six to eight items correlated with student outcomes, the benchmark assessments are administered and scored by teachers. According to administrators and teachers, the benchmarks and benchmark assessments are regularly reviewed and revised. The last revision took place in 2009. Central office administrators said that the mathematics benchmarks and benchmark assessments are currently being revised to incorporate the newly adopted series in kindergarten through grade 8: *Everyday Mathematics* (kindergarten through grade 6), *Transitions Mathematics* (grade 7), and the *University of Chicago Mathematics Project (UCMP) Algebra* (grade 7–8).

According to central office administrators and principals, the district curriculum office is responsible for tabulating and disseminating assessment results. This process relies on a locally created software program that produces spreadsheets organized by class, grade, school, and district. Central office administrators described the process as slow and inefficient. One said that a single secretary “does almost all of the work herself.” Teachers and principals said that the timeliness of the data and the inability to manipulate it to produce customized reports impede data analysis.

Central office administrators described Inform, a data analysis software tool that the district had recently purchased and begun to install to facilitate its Response to Intervention (RTI) initiative. Operating in conjunction with the district's PowerSchool database, Inform will incorporate all the district's assessment data and sort it on demand according to multiple fields. This will enable teachers to compare the results for their classes with other classes and to disaggregate the data by subgroups. Although the purchase of Inform is a positive development, district leaders and school committee members expressed concern about the absence of technical personnel and infrastructure to make the program fully functional.

Wareham has developed a systematic approach to assessment of student achievement. The district has a comprehensive battery of multiple formative and summative measures and a process to review and update them. The absence of infrastructure, including technological capacity, has compromised the effectiveness of the assessment system and has impeded the district's ability to use data to inform instruction and improve student performance.

While Wareham has engaged specialists trained to work with teachers to interpret and use data to improve instruction, there is too little time for teachers to meet with them, especially at the elementary level.

Central office administrators, principals, and teachers described the district's MCAS test analysis procedure. The district holds an annual "district data conference" on a full in-service day in late September or early October. According to documents supplied by the district, the 2011 conference in early October consisted of a general session on "data for instruction" conducted by central office administrators and the District and School Assistance Center (DSAC) assessment specialist. After this session, teachers met in mixed groups of 12 to review the test results for a particular grade and domain, and identified students' strengths and weaknesses from an item analysis. Instructional leaders, department heads, and administrators led these small-group sessions. In the afternoon, under the direction of principals and assisted by instructional leaders at the elementary and middle school levels and department chairs at the high school, teachers met in school-based groups to discuss the instructional implications of the results for their schools. The role of the instructional leaders is discussed below. Principals said that while the data conference established preliminary improvement goals and set a direction for the year, there was little opportunity to monitor the district's progress toward the realization of these goals and no follow-up meeting toward the end of the year.

Central office administrators told the review team that while the director of curriculum and instruction is responsible for assessment at the district level, instructional leaders at the elementary and middle school levels and the assistant principal and department chairs at the high school are primarily responsible for helping the teachers in their schools interpret and use data. Central office administrators explained that the instructional leader positions were new in 2011–2012. Unlike the coaches they succeeded, the instructional leaders will eventually have responsibility for evaluating teachers. Administrators said that this responsibility would increase their effectiveness in changing teachers' practices. Each elementary school has two half-time instructional leaders who focus on ELA or mathematics, but not exclusively. The instructional leaders are also half-time interventionists, providing remedial or accelerated instruction to identified students. At the middle school level, there is one full-time instructional leader as well as subject facilitators for ELA, mathematics, and science. The ELA and mathematics facilitators are full-time teachers; the instructional leader also serves as the science facilitator.

Central office administrators, principals, and teachers told the review team that there is too little time for teachers to meet during or after the school day to discuss data and plan conjointly, especially at the elementary and high school levels. At the elementary level, the teachers' association agreed to a proposal to lengthen one school day by 20 minutes to provide 40 minutes of weekly common planning time in each grade level. The offset is an earlier ending time on two other days, including Fridays. Under the terms of the agreement, principals can designate the purpose for this time; however, principals cannot require teachers to plan collaboratively during their common preparation periods during the school day and during any of their after-school time of approximately 25 minutes two days a week.

According to central office administrators and elementary principals, principals occasionally hire substitutes so that teachers can meet in grade-level teams during the school day, but this practice is expensive and disrupts the continuity of the instructional program. The instructional leaders told the review team that they are reduced to meeting with individual teachers for a few minutes during the day in a “catch-as-catch-can situation” and often “chase them down in the corridors and teachers’ room.”

At the high school, teachers meet within departments after school three times each month for 45 minutes. According to the high school principal, one of the meetings is devoted predominantly to “housekeeping matters.” One central office administrator said and other interviewees agreed that there is no mechanism or structure for discussions of data at the high school. At the middle school level, one of the two weekly 57-minute department meetings held during the school day is devoted to curriculum, instruction, and data analysis and three additional 30-minute department meetings are held after school each month where data is discussed. Administrators and teachers said that while more time would be advantageous, they are able to have substantive discussions.

Interviewees told the review team that discussions of data at the elementary level were just beginning under the guiding expertise of the instructional leaders, but an absence of time constrained deeper discussions. Principals and the instructional leaders said that DIBELS, GRADE, and benchmark assessment results were used to form fluid groups in ELA, but there was not a similar process in mathematics because ELA was the priority in the first year of the RTI initiative.

At the high school, the discussions of the mid-term and final examinations serve mainly a curricular purpose and the focus is not student specific. Interviewees said that most of the changes resulting from discussion of the results of mid-term and final examinations concern content, sequence, and emphasis rather than instructional techniques and strategies. According to the instructional leaders and administrators at the middle school, teachers’ discussions of the results of the benchmark and other common assessments are student specific and inform instruction. Administrators attributed this development to a full-time instructional leader and the provision of departmental planning time. They added that differentiating instruction is a challenge in large heterogeneous classes of 26 to 29 students and that remedial support services are limited.

Wareham has developed a comprehensive assessment battery and has added expertise to help teachers use the results to inform instruction. The absence of common planning time, especially at the elementary level, has seriously reduced the impact of these initiatives and the district’s ability, by implementing them fully, to narrow the achievement gap.

Wareham has initiated a number of programs and services that respond directly to students' identified needs; however, the emphasis on ELA in the first year of implementation for the RTI initiative has had the unintended effect of diminishing remedial services for students in mathematics, and the district does not have a formal cyclical process for evaluating the effectiveness of its established programs and services.

Wareham has used student performance data and teacher and parent surveys and other indicators to identify and address students' needs. For example, according to district administrators, the Wareham Cooperative Junior/Senior High School program was developed in 2007 to serve the needs of disaffected and non-traditional students at Wareham Middle School and Wareham High School, who according to the data were failing, credit-deficient, repeatedly absent, frequently suspended, and at risk of dropping out. Although the program was designed to address their needs, 2010–2011 ESE data indicate that the Wareham Cooperative Junior/Senior High School has an attendance rate of 83.4 percent, an out-of-school suspension rate of 40 percent, and a graduation rate of 45.6 percent. When asked, administrators said that the program had saved some students who would otherwise have dropped out and made the middle and high schools safer and less prone to disruption; however, the Wareham Cooperative Junior/Senior High School program has not been formally evaluated as to whether it is fulfilling its original purposes.

To ameliorate students' persistent underperformance in mathematics, Wareham has adopted a new mathematics program consisting of *Everyday Mathematics* in kindergarten through grade 6, *Transitions Mathematics* in grade 7, and *UCMP Algebra* in grades 7 and 8. The district used data from MCAS test results to substantiate student weaknesses in vocabulary and reasoning and anecdotal and other data to verify that some elementary teachers had not faithfully implemented the previous Investigations mathematics program and others had not received the training to use it effectively. When asked, administrators said that beyond the evidence from the MCAS test scores there is no plan to evaluate the impact of the new mathematics program at the end of its second year of implementation.

Wareham has replaced ELA and mathematics coaches with instructional leaders at the elementary level. Principals told the review team that both are needed. They added that the emphasis on ELA in the first year of implementation of the RTI initiative has had the unintended effect of diminishing remedial services for students in mathematics, the district's greatest area of deficiency. Although the district plan to make the instructional leaders full-time in 2012–2013 may address these needs to some extent, according to administrators and principals there is no plan to formally evaluate the instructional leaders' initiative or the first phase of the RTI program.

Despite limited funding, Wareham has actively initiated programs and services to address the needs of students identified from multiple data sources. However, the district has not routinely evaluated its programs and services to determine their effectiveness. The district does not use data systematically to improve or discontinue programs and services. Without evaluating programs and services to determine their effectiveness and using data systemically to improve or

discontinue programs and services, in a period of scarce resources it will be difficult for the district to make informed decisions.

Human Resources and Professional Development

Teacher supervision and evaluation practices were largely ineffective. Most teachers were evaluated too infrequently, and the evaluations that were completed did not encourage either the improvement of instructional quality or professional growth. Time for instructional supervision was insufficient, and administrators and instructional leaders were not able to overcome perceived or actual contractual barriers to actively supervising teachers' instruction to improve education.

The review team examined the personnel files of 36 randomly selected Wareham teachers. Thirty of the teachers had professional status; six did not have professional status. All were appropriately certified for their assignments. The district's evaluation categories were aligned with the Principles of Effective Teaching.² Two-thirds of the summative evaluations were not completed in a timely manner as set out in district policy and state law. Seventeen of the thirty-six summative evaluations were informative, but only three contained recommendations for professional improvement and growth. Only one summative evaluation contained recommendations for professional development.

The teachers' collective bargaining agreement mandates the number of formal classroom observations depending on teachers' status and requires teachers' endorsement of classroom observation documents. However, the district evaluation policy does not state whether classroom observations should be attached to the summative evaluation. Therefore, there was inconsistency in the contents of personnel files reviewed. Many files contained only the summative evaluations. As a result, the observations, many of which provided recommendations for improving instructional strategies and pedagogy for a specific class, were not part of the formal record.

The teachers' collective bargaining agreement states that the purpose of the teacher evaluation is to improve the quality of teaching and learning, improve the quality of supervision and instruction, foster continuous growth, and provide positive and constructive feedback. The review team's examination of a representative sample of teacher evaluations found an absence of quality and specificity in feedback intended to improve instruction and promote professional growth. Most teachers were rated "proficient" on almost every characteristic and only a few were rated "in progress." Many of the summative evaluations were generic rather than specific and contained few references to the components of high-quality instruction identified by principals and described in the second Curriculum and Instruction finding in this report. There was a marked variation between the findings in teachers' evaluations and the classroom practices

² The Principles of Effective Teaching accompanied the regulations on evaluation of teachers and administrators (at 603 CMR 35.00) that were in effect through the 2010-2011 year; on June 28, 2011, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education voted to substitute a new set of regulations on the evaluation of educators.

observed by the review team. Although most Wareham teachers were rated as high-performing and needing little improvement, the review team found a low incidence of challenge, rigor, and activation of higher-order thinking in most observed classrooms.

Interviewees differed on the number of teachers currently on intensive assistance plans. Principals told the review team that three teachers were on intensive assistance plans in their schools; however, district administrators told the review team that only one teacher in the district was on an intensive assistance plan. The review team was unable to resolve this discrepancy.

In 2011–2012 the district added instructional leaders at the elementary and middle school levels to augment the supervision of teachers. As described previously, the instructional leader at the middle school is full-time and each elementary school has half-time instructional leaders in ELA and mathematics who are also half-time interventionists for identified students. The instructional leaders told the review team that they need more time to observe and work with teachers to improve teaching and learning. In interviews, some instructional leaders said that they work closely with the principals while others said that they work more independently. As described in the first Leadership and Governance finding of this report, there was confusion about what if any feedback instructional leaders could provide to teachers in 2011–2012 because of conflicting interpretations of the provisions in the tentative teachers’ collective bargaining agreement.

Direct feedback to teachers after classroom visits by administrators, department chairs, and instructional leaders is a critical component of the supervisory process. However, administrators said that they were reluctant to supervise teachers beyond the formal requirements of the evaluation procedure. Both administrators and teachers told the review team that “the teachers’ contract” did not allow supervisors to put anything in writing. Teachers said they were rarely given informal feedback, and instructional leaders said they were not allowed to give feedback under the collective bargaining agreement. When the review team followed up on these statements, principals said that if they put a constructive suggestion in writing, the teacher would submit a grievance and the suggestion would be removed from the file. As a result, they indicated their belief that it was not a good use of time to note in writing areas needing improvement and provide guidance. In its examination of the teachers’ collective bargaining agreement, however, the review team found nothing that prohibits administrators from observing classes and providing written feedback to teachers.

The superintendent and the teachers’ association told the review team that Wareham was an early adopter of the new Massachusetts model for educator evaluation. At the time of the review administrators and teachers’ association representatives had been meeting for nearly two years to identify standards and indicators. This work had been largely completed, but the rubrics had not yet been finalized. At the time of the site visit, the district was planning tentatively to present and explain the new district educator evaluation system to staff on the last early-release day of the school year in May 2012.

Wareham was not fulfilling the purposes of teacher evaluation set forth in the teachers’ collective bargaining agreement in effect at the time of the review. In addition, the district had been unable to implement a strong supervisory model to improve classroom instruction. These impediments

made it difficult for the district to make substantial progress in closing the achievement gap between Wareham students and students statewide.

The district's professional development program is varied and needs based, but has had little observable impact on teaching and learning.

The District Improvement Plan and individual School Improvement Plans contain a number of professional development initiatives based on student achievement data. The district has an instructional leadership team composed of representatives from all schools. According to interviewees, this team meets regularly to analyze student achievement data and determine what is needed to improve instruction and student learning. The instructional leadership team also develops a professional development calendar for the year.

The 2011–2012 professional development calendar addresses the following district topics: The Skillful Teacher, Observing and Analyzing Teaching, The Common Core, iPad Training, *Every Day Mathematics/University of Chicago Mathematics* training, AP training, and District Data Review. Attendance at some programs is not mandatory. The 2011–2012 professional development activities began in August 2011 with an external consultant conducting a session for administrators, department chairs, and instructional leaders on observing, coaching, and supervision. New teachers and mentors attended concurrent trainings.

Two, full-day, in-service days and five early-release days are scheduled throughout the year. There was a district data review day in October 2011 and the topics for the remaining days included RTI Training, Massachusetts Frameworks and Common Core Standards, Informational Text, Integrated Literacy, STEM, and NEASC visit preparation at the high school. At the time of the site visit, a presentation and discussion of the new Educator Evaluation Framework was tentatively scheduled for the last early-release day in May 2012.

New teacher training is mandatory under the terms of the teachers' collective bargaining agreement. All new Wareham teachers are required to take The Skillful Teacher courses during the first three years of employment. Teachers and administrators commented on the value of the training, but implementation is a concern because the review team noted little evidence of recommended strategies in classroom observations.

Except for new teacher training, professional development is not mandatory during the summer. All administrators are required to take The Skillful Teacher and OAT training and have been introduced to the new Educator Evaluation Framework. Instructional leaders and department heads were trained in data analysis during the summer of 2011. With the approval of the curriculum director, professional development reimbursements are provided for teachers taking courses or attending conferences. According to district administrators, teachers are rarely denied approval for course work. The director of operations/finance told the review team that in 2011–2012 the professional development budget was increased by 27 percent to address the areas that the instructional leadership team identified as needing improvement.

According to district data, in 2010–2011 instructional staff took a total of 712.5 days from teaching to attend professional development sessions. Administrators told the review team that

not all these programs were directly connected to district initiatives. Although substantial funds are allocated in the budget for educational reimbursements, district initiatives, and professional development opportunities, the district has not evaluated the professional development program to determine its effectiveness in improving teaching and learning.

The review team did not find a strong connection between professional development initiatives such as RTI and teachers' practices. The district has not been able to do what is necessary to fully implement its initiatives: embed more professional development time during the contractual day, make summer professional development mandatory, and increase time for the instructional leaders to help teachers translate theory into practice. It is the judgment of the review team that the district's professional development program has had little tangible effect on improving teaching and learning in Wareham. Without strengthening the connection between professional development initiatives and instruction and fully implementing its initiatives, the district will find it challenging to improve teaching and learning in Wareham.

Student Support

Wareham Middle School and Wareham High School issue suspensions at much higher rates than most middle and high schools across the state.

According to data compiled by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE), the 2011 out-of-school suspension rate for students in the Wareham Public Schools was twice that of the state (11.9 percent compared with 5.6 percent). See Table 3 below. At Wareham High School, the out-of-school suspension rate for 2009–2011 ranged from 13.7 to 17.3 percent (3.4 to 7.6 percentage points higher than the state rate for grades 9-12); at the middle school it ranged from 13.4 to 14.6 percent (6.5 to 7.9 percentage points higher than the state grade 6-8 rate). In addition, the number of incidents resulting in out-of-school suspensions was 26.4 per 100 students in 2010 in Wareham, more than double the state's rate of 12.7 per 100 students (data not in a table). And in 2010 in the Wareham Public Schools the number of criminal, drug- or tobacco-related, or violent incidents that resulted in out-of-school suspensions was more than three times as high per 100 students (8.8) as in all Massachusetts schools (2.5) (data not in a table).

A similar pattern emerges from a review of in-school suspension data, at least for the middle school. The overall in-school suspension rate for the Wareham Public Schools in 2011 was 7.5 percent, while that for the state was 3.5 percent. From 2009–2011 the in-school suspension rate at the high school ranged from 5.9 to 8.7 percent. (In both 2009 and 2010 the district rate of 5.9 percent was 1.3 percentage points lower than the state rate for grades 9-12; in 2011, however, it increased to 8.7 percent, a rate 1.8 points higher than the state rate.) And at the middle school the rate of in-school suspensions rose steadily, from 10.8 percent in 2009 to 11.9 percent in 2010 to 13.7 percent in 2011, while the gap with the state rate also rose steadily, from 6.9 to 8.0 to 10.0 percentage points.

**Table 3: Wareham Public Schools and State
In- and Out-of-School Suspension Rates
2009–2011**

	2009	2010	2011
Out-of-School Suspension Rates (OSS)			
Wareham High School OSS	15.6	13.7	17.3
State OSS (9-12)	10.3	10.3	9.7
Wareham Middle School OSS	14.6	13.4	13.5
State OSS (6-8)	6.7	6.9	6.5
District OSS (all grades)	9.3	11.0	11.9
State OSS (all grades)	5.3	6.0	5.6
In-School Suspension Rates (ISS)			
Wareham High School ISS	5.9	5.9	8.7
State ISS (9-12)	7.2	7.2	6.9
Wareham Middle School ISS	10.8	11.9	13.7
State ISS (6-8)	3.9	3.9	3.7
District ISS (all grades)	4.3	6.3	7.5
State ISS (all grades)	3.3	3.7	3.5
Note: Suspension rates represent the percentages of students suspended one or more times during the year. Source: ESE data			

In interviews with the review team, district administrators and student support specialists said that suspensions and attendance issues are of general concern in the district. They expressed the opinion, however, that a variety of appropriate policies, practices, and procedures have been established to deal with these issues. A review of district literature and documents, including student handbooks in all schools and the district’s comprehensive policy manual for students, parents, and staff, confirmed that specific and clear policies and requirements about attendance, suspension, promotion, course credit, grade retention, the code of conduct, and a wide range of other related subjects are readily available both online and in hard copy across the district. They further explained that the district’s attendance policies and discipline code are annually reviewed by a committee and that they are uniformly applied and consistently enforced. Interviewees added that the administrative structure at the high school had been significantly expanded in 2010–2011 with the addition of four dean positions. Each dean is assigned to and follows a specific grade—grade 9, grade 10, grade 11, or grade 12—to provide more direct and continuous oversight and support for all student-related issues, including discipline and attendance. School

and district leaders expressed confidence that this new administrative structure has great potential.

The student attendance rate in 2011 for the district as a whole (94.1 percent) was not substantially below that of the state (94.6 percent), and the district rate of chronic absence (14.1 percent) was not much higher than the state rate (12.6 percent). Suspension rates for both the middle school and the high school, however, continue to be substantially higher than corresponding state rates. Frequent use of suspension brings with it the risk of students falling behind academically, becoming disengaged from school, and perhaps eventually dropping out. In 2011 Wareham's annual dropout rate for grades 9-12 was 5.7 percent, compared to the state rate of 2.7 percent.

Despite the genuine concern, positive initiatives, and good intentions of district and school leaders, the persistent patterns of suspension from school are of concern. The consistent application of clear policies on suspension and the addition of the dean positions at the high school have not lowered the district's suspension rates. Students are missing too much instructional time.

The Wareham Public Schools have made improvements to special education programming, staffing, and the continuum of student services a priority during the period from 2009–2011. Although significant progress has been made in meeting these objectives, further development and refinement of support programs and services are needed.

The ESE 2009 Coordinated Program Review (CPR) Report cited a variety of special education service areas in the Wareham Public Schools that were not in compliance with state regulations. Based on a review of relevant documents and interviews with district administrators and program leaders, the review team identified key issues that were the primary focus of concern in that report. They included:

- Adequate and appropriate classroom space and accessibility in school facilities
- The role and training of paraprofessionals in the delivery of special education services pertinent to funding and job assignment within individual schools
- The absence of well-developed and systemic special education entry and exit criteria
- The appropriateness of disciplinary procedures for to students with learning disabilities

Through interviews with district leaders and program specialists, as well as an examination of a variety of relevant internal and external documents, the review team found that Wareham has developed serious and systematic initiatives over the past several years to comply with the recommendations contained in the CPR report. The district has made significant programmatic and operational adjustments, as well as budgetary investments, to implement needed changes and improvements. The review team was provided with considerable evidence documenting the progress that the district has thus far achieved.

In the spring of 2010 Wareham Public Schools commissioned a thorough external evaluation of its special education programs and services to assist in the development of short and longer range

plans and strategies to fully comply with state regulations. The district then developed a comprehensive strategic plan that has subsequently served as a blueprint to guide the district's work. Based on detailed information provided in interviews with district administrators and program leaders and the review of numerous pertinent documents, the review team identified those action steps thus far taken that represent the most significant responses to the weaknesses in Wareham's student support program. The action steps include:

- Developing a "district program" model for preschool-aged students that fully complies with age requirements and ADA handicapped guidelines and better serves student needs in both age-appropriate and needs-appropriate settings
- Expanding the district's continuum of student support services to more effectively address three areas of substantially separate special education programming (autism spectrum disorder, emotional and behavioral disorder, and developmental disorder)
- Reorganizing or moving specific programs to different spaces within present schools or to different district locations to make more efficient and effective use of the limited space at the elementary level
- Providing additional specialized training to cohorts of teaching assistants who work with specific student populations
- Creating a unified, centralized, and flexible assignment system by which teaching assistants can provide direct services to the programs and students for which they are trained

In addition, Wareham opened West Wareham Academy, a 10-month, therapeutic day program for students from 13 to 17 years of age. It provides a comprehensive array of educational and therapeutic programs and counseling services in a highly structured and supportive environment. The program has a current capacity of approximately 20 students and maintains a valuable partnership with the Walker Program. Wareham also established the Wareham Cooperative Junior/Senior High School, an alternative placement for at-risk students in grades 7–12. It is designed to provide programs that meet the academic, emotional, psychological, and behavioral needs of adolescents who, for many reasons, have not succeeded in the traditional setting. Monies from federal and state grants, as well as substantial district funds, have been used to create and support the Wareham Cooperative Junior/Senior School and West Wareham Academy. Finally, the district initiated the Response to Intervention (RTI) framework at the elementary level during the 2011–2012 school year, with plans to fully implement the program across the district by the 2013–2014 school year. All teachers and interventionists will receive 36 hours of RTI training by consultants.

The academic performance of Wareham students receiving special education services falls short of their peers in the state. In 2011 in all grades Wareham students receiving special education services performed below their peers across the state: 20 percent versus 30 percent were proficient in ELA and 16 percent versus 22 percent were proficient in mathematics. In 2009, Wareham students receiving special education services had a proficiency rate of 22 percent in

ELA as compared with the state subgroup's rate of 28 percent. In math, the Wareham subgroup's proficiency rate was 11 percent in 2009 as compared with the state subgroup's rate of 20 percent. Though in mathematics students receiving special education services had a higher proficiency rate than in 2009 and their proficiency gap with the state subgroup was narrower (6 percentage points in 2011 versus 9 in 2009), in ELA the district subgroup had a lower proficiency rate in 2011 than in 2009 and the proficiency gap with the state was wider (10 percentage points in 2011 versus 6 in 2009).

School and program leaders said that major student performance indicators have not yet begun to respond to the many initiatives and improvements that have been established across the district. They expressed optimism, however, that in the near term the combined effects of these enhanced programs and services will result in measurable improvement in the academic achievement of all students. District leaders also communicated considerable confidence that the major RTI initiative currently being implemented would provide Wareham with a high-quality, research-based educational framework with the capacity to substantially improve learning experiences, opportunities, and outcomes for special and regular education students alike.

Although it is apparent to the review team that the Wareham Public Schools have made considerable progress in improving the quality and range of their student support services, it is equally evident that much work remains to be done in terms of additional development and refinement of support programs and services to enhance the district's capacity to support its neediest learners.

Financial and Asset Management

Three communication challenges have been hindrances to ensuring that financial support for education is appropriate:

- **turnover in town positions, which has compromised financial forecasting and planning,**
- **a strained relationship between the school committee and the selectmen, which has compromised negotiations on funding for the district, and**
- **the school committee's advocacy for the schools, which has not always been strong and effective enough to make district and student needs clear and compelling. As every town has to balance the needs of each department, effective communication about the needs of the school district is important to provide public confidence that funding is appropriately allocated.**

Wareham's actual net school spending has been from 2.7 percent to 4.9 percent (estimated) over required net school spending in fiscal years 2010–2012 (see Table 2 in the District Profile above). However, many needs in the district are not being met—for instance for new textbooks, competitive teacher salaries, building renovation and repair, and school bus replacement (see

District Profile above).³ Because of a budget shortfall in fiscal year 2012, the middle school teaching staff was reduced, resulting in substantial increases in class sizes, and the school's social studies program replaced by a course taught by ELA, science, and math teachers (see below and second Leadership and Governance finding above).

The review team found that a variety of factors contribute to district needs being unmet. In separate interviews with the review team, the town administrator and superintendent were in agreement that turnover in the positions of town administrator and town accountant had contributed to fiscal uncertainty and hampered long-term planning. While the town had developed a five-year financial forecast and plan in accordance with the Town Charter, a revolving door of four town administrators and four town accountants in a period of seven years interrupted the execution.

Compounding the town's limited financial forecasting and planning is a challenging relationship between the board of selectmen and the school committee. School administrators described the board of selectmen as not supportive of the school department, while school committee members said that it was a "them and us" situation, that the selectmen perceived the schools as having a management problem rather than financial constraints, and that the school committee had taken a vote of no confidence in the selectmen a few years before. Town administrators said that there was "not the most sterling relationship" between the school board and the selectmen and that there had been distrust between town and school financial personnel.

Reported net school spending by the town includes benefits for school department employees, liability insurance premiums for school buildings, and portions of the salaries of the town administrator and town accountant. Allocating a town administrator's cost to the district is not typically done, nor is this expense mentioned in the state's "Advisory on School Budgets and Municipal Expenditures."⁴

There is no school committee representative on the capital improvement committee. The town administrator, his staff, and the superintendent told the review team that while the Town Charter requires a capital improvement committee it does not mandate the composition. Both the school finance/operations director and superintendent told the review team that the school department last received capital improvement funds in fiscal year 2008. When asked about the effect of limited capital improvement funds, one school committee member replied that the high school cancels school activities in the gymnasium when it rains because the roof needs repair.

The absence of active school committee advocacy has also limited the understanding in the town about the funds needed for education. A school committee member told the review team that in the last dozen years the school committee had never requested the Town Meeting to amend the town administrator's recommended school budget.⁵

³ In the spring of 2012, the school committee sponsored an operational budget override and four debt exclusion measures to augment the fiscal year 2013 school budget as described in the District Profile section of this report.

⁴ Available at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/finance/accounting/default.html?section=archive>.

⁵ See footnote 3 above about the school committee's sponsorship in spring 2012, after this review, of an override and four debt exclusion measures.

Following the 2011 Town Meeting, the school department's budget did not match the Town Meeting appropriation. The district addressed the \$340,000 shortfall by replacing the middle school social studies program with a course entitled Critical Thinking / World Views. While the reduction in staff associated with elimination of the social studies program accomplished the purpose and balanced the budget, it increased class sizes at the middle school substantially, as described in the Leadership and Governance section of this report, while leaving 6th, 7th, and 8th graders without this core program.

The review team found that the school committee had not always participated in or reviewed decisions within their purview. For example, the school committee did not vote on the elimination of the social studies program at the middle school, a major programmatic change. Both district administrators and school committee members said that school committee review was not required.

According to documentation and interviews, lack of collaboration among the town's governing bodies has led to fiscal uncertainty and unmet needs for the schools. The review team also found evidence of limited strategic planning and insufficient advocacy for education. The difficulties in the relationship between the school committee and the selectmen and the absence of joint strategic planning have reduced the communication needed to consider the best ways to provide optimal educational opportunities for the students of Wareham.

Recommendations

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

Leadership and Governance

The district should focus on fewer initiatives, implement them more deeply and completely in accordance with a commitment to excellence, and give the highest priority to improving the quality of instruction.

Wareham has addressed a number of identified needs. These include:

- Adoption of a new mathematics program in kindergarten through grade 8
- Creation of benchmarks and benchmark measures in kindergarten through grade 8
- Purchase of a database for management and analysis of assessment results;
- Implementation of the RTI program for differentiated instruction
- Establishment of instructional leader positions at the elementary and middle school levels to increase teacher supervision
- Creation of two alternative programs for at-risk students in grades 7 through 12
- Establishment of a variety of student-support programs

Although all these initiatives are appropriate, timely, and designed to improve student achievement, problems with funding, capacity, planning, as well as the inability to resolve differences with the teachers' association, have weakened their potential effectiveness. For example, while teacher supervision was intended to be the primary focus of the instructional leaders, because of budget constraints instructional leaders also serve as half-time interventionists and provide direct instruction to identified students. Establishment of the instructional leader positions has also been complicated by a planning process that did not allow for clarification and resolution of important considerations in advance, including a clear definition of their role in teacher supervision. Full use of the new assessment database has been delayed by limited personnel, technological support, and infrastructure. Finally, differences with the teachers' association have sometimes been a barrier to implementation of district initiatives.

It is difficult for a district with limited resources to manage a large number of initiatives concurrently and ensure that all are well accomplished. While there were examples of excellence, the review team found that the quality of district processes, programs, and services varied. The level of research-based, best instructional practices in the classrooms observed by the review team was low; yet staff evaluations examined by the review team contained few suggestions for improving instruction and in their evaluations administrators were not held directly accountable for improving student achievement. The review team recommends that the district focus on fewer initiatives to implement them more deeply and completely. The review

team also recommends that the district give the highest priority to improving the quality of instruction.

For evaluation to be valid and supervision to be effective, they must be based on the characteristics of high-quality instruction. The superintendent has the authority and responsibility to mandate and model a performance level in all areas that will help the district achieve the goal of excellence. Basing all district functions (including planning, organization, and coordination; budget preparation; and supervision and evaluation of staff) upon an expectation of excellence will ultimately result in improved student achievement.

The district should balance site-based management with districtwide priorities. While permitting principals and administrators to make most decisions within their scope of responsibility and authority, the superintendent should exercise primary authority whenever decisions are likely to conflict with district initiatives and goals.

To address a deficit of approximately \$340,000 in the fiscal year 2012, Wareham eliminated the social studies program at the middle school, thus reducing the staff by about eight teachers. Administrators said that the decision to make the reductions at the middle school was based upon equity, because past budget reductions had been made at the elementary and high school levels. The superintendent delegated the decision about how to reduce the middle school budget to the principal because of his strong commitment to site-based management, although the superintendent said that he would have used a different strategy that might have led to a better outcome.

Wareham Middle School is a Level 3 school with student performance on the MCAS tests among the lowest 20 percent in the state, among schools serving common grade levels. While class size is not the sole determiner of student performance, it is a factor. The average class size at the middle school in 2010–2011 was 18.3 students. With the staff reduction in 2011–2012, class sizes in ELA, science, and mathematics increased. Thirty-nine of the eighty one classes in these subject areas enrolled twenty-five or more students, and three classes exceeded thirty students. The district has made a commitment to increasing tiered and differentiated instruction through ongoing training for teachers in RTI. The larger middle school class sizes will make these important strategies for individualizing learning more difficult to implement. The district should monitor the effect of higher class sizes on student achievement at the middle school and take corrective steps if necessary.

The review team recommends that the superintendent exercise his authority and responsibility to make decisions in the best interests of the entire school community even when other administrators have perspectives unique to their position in the district. This is a challenging, but fundamental responsibility—ensuring that district administrators be allowed to exercise their level of authority to carry out their work, while ensuring that the chain of command results in the best decision-making for the overall good of the school system. When a superintendent applies effective professional judgment to issues, balancing the requests of subordinate administrators, the district benefits from a supported vision, a sense of order, and decisions aligned with overarching district goals.

Curriculum and Instruction

Wareham should implement a cyclical process for updating and completing its curriculum guides. Increasing academic expectations, especially in mathematics, and differentiating instruction, especially for accelerated students, should be priorities in this process.

District curriculum guides in ELA, mathematics, and science were aligned with the state frameworks in response to the findings in the 2005 EQA review. Wareham is aligning its curriculum guides to the new curriculum frameworks and mapping the new standards. The district guides include standards and benchmarks for the core subjects, but often do not provide suggested resources and assessment options. Under the director of curriculum, the instructional leadership team has established grade-span benchmarks and is coordinating the process of full alignment, but the district has not implemented a process for ongoing curriculum review and revision. The review team recommends that the district follow through on the work it was doing at the time of the review by implementing a review and revision process, to ensure that all its students receive instruction based on the latest and highest standards.

Mathematics performance has been a concern in Wareham based on persistently weak MCAS test results for most grades and other data; yet the mathematics curriculum guide was last revised in 2006. Also, the review team observed little evidence of active learning and rigor in mathematics instruction at all levels. There should be a special focus on assuring high expectations and academic rigor in mathematics. Strengthening the mathematics guide and standards are immediate priorities. The guide should include suggested resources and challenging assessments to enhance teaching and learning. In interviews and classroom observations the review team noted repeatedly an absence of differentiated instruction and opportunities for accelerated students. The review team encourages the district to develop supports and programs for higher achieving students. Increased initiatives to maximize the potential of higher-achieving students would likely bring more students to advanced levels of achievement on MCAS tests.

Wareham should make engaging, active learning a district priority and create a structure that places primary responsibility for implementing curriculum and instructional supervision on school principals.

The review team conducted 70 classroom observations of approximately 20 minutes in length to approximately the same number of classrooms at each level: elementary, middle, and high school. Students in classrooms visited at the middle and high school levels were rarely observed to be engaged in activities that would advance their thinking skills. In most observed classrooms, the review team found teacher-centered rather than student-centered instruction, literal rather than interpretive and analytical comprehension questions, and lower-level tasks without rigor and challenge. Learning time was not maximized in many of the observed classes, especially at the middle and high school levels.

Instructional leaders and certain district administrators act as the curriculum and instruction leaders in the district. At the elementary and middle school levels, the instructional leaders monitor the fidelity of implementation of the curriculum. At the high school, the department

chairs provide curricular and instructional leadership. The principal said that department chairs are the “principals of their departments.” The director of curriculum meets periodically with the principal and department chairs. The director of curriculum also meets monthly with district principals.

The review team’s observations of classroom instruction made clear that there is a critical need to raise the expectations for students and staff and to improve the classroom experience. Principals are the operational leaders of their schools, but their greatest responsibility lies in vibrant instructional leadership. The review team recommends that the district clearly designate the principals as the curricular and instructional leaders of their schools. This will align authority with responsibility in facilitating improvements. The review team recommends that the district enhance supervision to add to teachers’ repertoires challenging, innovative practices from its promising professional development training initiatives such as AP and RTI. Making these practices the norm would substantially enrich student learning.

Assessment

Wareham should continue its efforts to acquire and use technology for data collection, dissemination, and analysis, and increase time for teachers to meet with specialists for deeper discussions of student performance.

Wareham administers a comprehensive battery of formative and summative assessments at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. The district curriculum office is responsible for tabulating and disseminating the assessment results. This process relies on a locally created software program that produces spreadsheets organized by class, grade, school, and district. Central office administrators described the process as slow and inefficient. Data analysis is impeded by the timeliness of the data and the inability to manipulate it to produce customized reports. The district purchased and has begun to install a software program to support data analysis and facilitate its RTI initiative. This program will incorporate all of the district’s assessment data, sort it on demand according to multiple fields, permit class comparisons, and disaggregate data by subgroups. However, district leaders and school committee members expressed concern about an absence of infrastructure to make the program fully functional. The review team encourages Wareham to give priority to upgrading technology in the schools to make the new program accessible and operational. This program will help facilitate analysis of the educational implications of student performance data.

Wareham has provided experts to help teachers use the results of assessment to inform instruction. The trained instructional leaders at the elementary and middle school levels and the assistant principal and department chairs at the high school are primarily responsible for helping teachers in their schools interpret and use data, but there is currently too little time for teachers to meet during or outside of the school day to discuss data, especially at the elementary and high school levels. The review team encourages the district to collaborate with the teachers’ association to find low-cost ways to increase common planning time for teachers.

Appropriate common planning time and technology will allow principals, instructional leaders, department heads, and teachers to focus on student outcomes and to develop and align appropriate strategies to ensure a coherent and coordinated approach to improving student achievement.

Wareham should institute a formal evaluation cycle to improve the effectiveness of its programs and services. A representative district data team might conduct this cycle.

Although Wareham has used student performance data, teacher and parent surveys, and other indicators to identify and address student needs and has responded with relevant programs and services, it does not have a cyclical process for evaluating programs and services. For example, the Wareham Cooperative Junior/Senior High School, established in 2007, has not been formally evaluated to determine whether it is accomplishing the purposes for which it was established. And there are no plans to formally evaluate the RTI initiative and the new mathematics program in kindergarten through grade 8.

The review team recommends that Wareham consider designating a district data team to develop, monitor, and evaluate district initiatives. Composed of representatives from all three levels, this team would help the district select a limited number of high-impact initiatives to achieve the deepest and highest level of implementation. Specifically, the team would coordinate implementation activities in the district to ensure uniformity, enhance the quality of implementation through continuous monitoring and data-based decision-making, evaluate outcomes, and communicate with all stakeholder groups. A representative data team would enable the district to design, implement, monitor, and sustain promising initiatives and modify or terminate those that prove ineffective. This approach would ensure that the district derives maximum benefit from limited resources.

Human Resources and Professional Development

As it aligns its evaluation system with the state's new educator evaluation model, the district should ensure that all educators have meaningful professional practice and student learning goals and consistent, timely feedback, and that professional development is aligned with the evaluation system.

At the time of the review many teacher evaluations had not been completed on time, and the review team found an absence of quality and specificity in a representative sample of teacher and administrator evaluations. Few teacher or administrator evaluations contained recommendations for professional improvement. Most Wareham teachers were rated as high-performing and needing little improvement. Teachers were rated “proficient” on most characteristics, and many summative evaluations were generic, containing few references to the elements of high-quality instruction. Nine of ten administrators were rated “commendable” in almost all the evaluation categories, but there was little substantiating evidence. In contrast, in 70 classroom observations, the review team observed low levels of instructional rigor and differentiation of instruction.

Wareham is an early adopter of the new Massachusetts model for educator evaluation. At the time of the review team's visit, the district was tentatively planning to present and explain the new educator evaluation system to staff on the last early-release day of the 2011–2012 school year in May 2012.

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

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

Taking advantage of these opportunities will address the areas the review team identified for improvement in the educator evaluation system in use in the district at the time of the team's visit.

The district should work with the teachers' association to clarify collective bargaining agreement language—or its interpretation—that has led to confusion as to what feedback may be given to teachers outside of the formal evaluation process.

As described in the first Leadership and Governance finding and the first Human Resources/Professional Development finding in this report, there was confusion in the district at the time of the review as to what feedback outside of the formal evaluation process administrators and instructional leaders could give to teachers consistent with agreements with the teachers' association. The district and teachers' association should work together to reach an agreement that clears up this confusion and allows informal supervision and feedback. Ongoing, school-embedded supervision is necessary to improve classroom instruction.

The review team also recommends that the district develop a framework and protocol for walkthroughs and train all supervisory staff to use it. Evaluators should explicitly use the data gathered from walkthroughs to help teachers develop instruction strategies designed to increase student achievement.

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

- ***Frequent, unannounced observations.*** *Frequent observation of classroom practice—with feedback—is essential to improving practice, but only feasible if most observations*

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

- 3 observations conducted each day on 150 of the 180 days in a school year translate to 450 observations each year, or 10 observations per year for each of 45 teachers. 7-10 brief observations followed by focused feedback should be a sufficient number to secure a representative picture of practice and promote the reflection and discussion needed to support improving practice.*
- Feedback can be provided during a conversation or in writing. Providing feedback through conversation promotes discussion of practice; providing feedback in writing creates an opportunity for the educator to more easily reflect on the feedback on an ongoing basis. Whenever possible, an evaluator should have a conversation with the educator and follow up with brief written feedback summarizing the conversation and/or offering targeted advice for improvement.*
- It should be noted that not all observations can or should be 5 to 15 minutes. There will be circumstances where longer observations are appropriate. Novice or struggling teachers may benefit from longer observations on occasion.*
- **Observations outside of the classroom.** Observation of practice need not be limited to classroom observation. Conferences with individual teachers or teacher teams that focus on unit planning or ways the team is responding to interim assessment data can yield useful information and provide opportunities for feedback and growth. They can also be well-aligned with school and team goals. Most schools have goals that depend on effective collaboration among educators, so observation of educators in settings where they are developing their skills in collaboration can support school-wide goals. That said, care needs to be taken to ensure that observation does not interfere with the free exchange of ideas that is important in any healthy collegial environment. Therefore, collecting, reviewing and giving feedback on specific artifacts from department and team meetings can serve a purpose similar to observation of meetings. Similarly observing educators with parents and/or reviewing a team's analysis of representative samples of home-school communications can support collaborative work, reinforce school goals, and provide opportunities for useful feedback.*

Building a culture that promotes good teaching practices and improved student achievement will allow the district to develop consistently high-level practice among teachers and administrators.

The district should prioritize its professional development needs, provide continuous supervision to help teachers implement strategies and methods, and evaluate the professional development program to determine whether the initiatives have improved student achievement.

Although the district allocates substantial funds for tuition reimbursement and for professional development on district initiatives, it has not evaluated its professional development program to determine the program's effectiveness in improving teaching and learning. In observations the review team did not find that the instructional strategies and promising methods from district professional development initiatives such as RTI were prevalent in classrooms. Wareham has been unable to do what is necessary to fully implement its initiatives: embed more professional development time during the contractual day; make summer professional development mandatory; and increase time for instructional leaders to help teachers translate theory into practice. As a result, the district's professional development program has had a limited effect on teaching and learning.

The review team recommends that the district prioritize its professional development needs and implement fewer initiatives more quickly and deeply. The district should also monitor teachers' implementation of professional development through increased teacher supervision, and evaluate the effectiveness of the professional development through classroom observations and analysis of student performance results at both the district and school levels. The two half-time instructional leaders at each elementary school are unable to provide sufficient support for teachers. The review team endorses the recommendation of central office administrators to make these positions full-time.

The purpose of professional development is to improve teaching and learning through training, supervision, and support. Professional development initiatives are sustained by a rigorous supervision and evaluation process that monitors implementation and gives teachers continuous feedback. As recommended above, the district should develop a walkthrough protocol to provide teachers immediate confirmation and corrective feedback as they implement the strategies and methods learned in professional development.

The district can maximize the value of scarce professional development resources by prioritizing needs, fully implementing fewer initiatives, embedding professional development time during the contractual day, and making summer professional development mandatory. Making the elementary instructional leaders full-time would help supervise teachers and monitor the effectiveness of district professional development.

Student Support

The Wareham Public Schools should make it a priority to review and evaluate current suspension policies and practices and develop a plan to reduce suspensions.

In-school and out-of-school suspension rates in the Wareham Public Schools are well above state rates (see Table 3). In some cases these rates are two or three times the state rates. For example, in 2011 the district out-of-school suspension rate was 11.9 percent, compared to the state rate for all grades of 5.6 percent. Also, in 2011 the in-school suspension rate at Wareham Middle School was 13.7 percent, compared to the state rate for grades 6-8 of 3.7 percent. Although district and school leaders expressed a general awareness of and concern about suspension rates, they appeared confident that the current policies and procedures were appropriate and adequate to deal with the problems. One middle school administrator expressed the belief that suspension rates had been improving in that school. According to ESE data, from 2009–2011 although the middle school’s out-of-school suspension rate decreased from 14.6 percent to 13.5 percent, its in-school suspension rate increased from 10.8 percent to 13.7 percent.

The review team believes that suspension policies and related practices in the district are not dealing effectively with the chronic problems and negative patterns that the data clearly reveal. The district should make the goal of reducing suspensions a strategic priority, concentrating the attention and resources necessary and appropriate for the challenges faced. One subject of attention should be whether the district should adopt a new positive behavioral system. Another subject of attention should be whether any subgroups—for instance students from low-income families or students with disabilities—receive a disproportionate number of suspensions, in which case the district should work to reduce the disproportionality. The amount of class time lost by students in the district as a result of the high rates of suspension is unacceptable. The negative academic impact and personal consequences, not simply for the students themselves but for the school community as a whole, are enormous. The full attention and needed resources of the district should be brought together to carefully diagnose and effectively respond to the identified issues. Substantial reductions in the amount of instructional time lost will result in a wide range of enhanced learning outcomes and personal and educational benefits.

The district should undertake a thorough, data-driven review of its current model of special education services to determine its overall effectiveness and subsequently initiate, redesign, or discontinue specific programs or services based on analysis of this data.

Wareham has addressed the special education weaknesses identified in the ESE 2009 Coordinated Program Review (CPR) Report (see the second Student Support finding in this report). Substantial programmatic, operational, and budgetary adjustments have been made since 2009 to implement the required changes. It is clear to the review team that the district has made considerable progress in improving and expanding the quality and range of its student support services. It is equally evident from a review of MCAS test data, however, that despite the comprehensive improvements that the district has implemented, the academic performance of Wareham’s students with disabilities continues to lag behind their peers in the state. In 2011 in all grades Wareham students with disabilities performed below their peers across the state: 20 percent proficient versus 30 percent in ELA and 16 percent proficient versus 22 percent in mathematics. In 2009, Wareham students receiving special education services had a proficiency rate of 22 percent in ELA as compared with the state subgroup’s rate of 28 percent. In math, the Wareham subgroup’s proficiency rate was 11 percent in 2009 as compared with the state

subgroup's rate of 20 percent. Though in mathematics students receiving special education services had a higher proficiency rate than in 2009 and their proficiency gap with the state subgroup was narrower (6 percentage points in 2011 versus 9 in 2009), in ELA the district subgroup had a lower proficiency rate in 2011 than in 2009 and the proficiency gap with the state was wider (10 percentage points in 2011 versus 6 in 2009).

The review team is concerned that despite the many thoughtful and timely actions taken by the district over the past several years, there is little evidence of substantially improved academic performance by its students with disabilities. Consequently, it recommends that the district undertake a comprehensive data-driven evaluation of its present special education programs and services to determine their overall effectiveness and identify specific areas where further attention and enhancements may be needed. The district should consider using the services of an external consultant, as it did in 2010 during its CPR implementation initiative, to facilitate and support the systemic review and analysis process.

As district administrators said, it is possible that with additional time the combined effects of the numerous programmatic enhancements and modifications that have already been implemented, as well as the anticipated impact of the system wide RTI initiative, will result in improved academic performance for Wareham's students with disabilities. The question of why academic outcomes have not responded commensurately to the many programmatic enhancements must be examined, however. It is essential, therefore, that the district reliably determine whether each component in its present comprehensive continuum of support services, including its two alternative programs, West Wareham Academy and Wareham Cooperative Junior/Senior High School, is functioning in a manner consistent with its original design and to the degree intended. This is a most appropriate time to conduct a careful and thorough formative assessment of what has already been done as the next major progressive step, the RTI implementation, goes forward. The assessment will enhance the changes that have been made and better support the major enhancements that are planned for the near future. Ultimately, it will provide strong evidence about whether the established programs are educationally sound, cost-effective, and providing the very best and most appropriate special education services possible for this group of students.

Financial and Asset Management

The school committee should work with town officials to ensure that they have an agreement on municipal expenditures in support of schools that accords with state guidance and regulations. It should also work with the town to establish structures that will allow increased communication and understanding on both sides; the school committee and administration should use these structures to present a clear picture of district needs.

The review team found several ways in which communication between the schools and the town has been insufficient. At least one municipal expense allocated to the district as part of net school spending, portions of town administrators' salaries, is not typically so allocated, and it is not

mentioned in the state's Advisory on School Budgets and Municipal Expenditures.⁶ Though more than one school building is in need of renovation or repair (see District Profile above), there is no school committee representative on the town's capital improvement committee. For many years, school committee members did not request the Town Meeting to amend the town administrator's requested school budget. And interviews with both school and town personnel indicated a poor relationship between the schools and the town government.

There should be a clear agreement between the town and the schools on the correct reporting, allocation, and documentation of expenditures by the town for educational purposes. This agreement should be consistent with the Department's "Advisory on School Budgets and Municipal Expenditures" and the regulations at 603 CMR 10.00. When such an agreement cannot be reached by school and municipal officials, 603 CMR 10.04(3) requires that they notify the Department, so that the commissioner can appoint a designee to conduct an informal hearing to help them reach agreement.

The school committee should also work with town officials to establish means for regular communication, such as regular joint meetings between the school committee and the board of selectmen; presentations by the superintendent to these joint meetings or to meetings of the board of selectmen; written explanations of the background for various budget needs; and the establishment of a position for a liaison between the board of selectmen and the school committee. One or more joint meetings between the school committee and the selectmen, with a presentation by the superintendent and his staff, could be scheduled each year before the amount of the appropriation to the school committee is decided, to allow discussion of the district's needs and ways to address them within present financial constraints. Ways to address them might include, in addition to increased spending on the schools by the town, innovative re-allocations of resources or perhaps reduction of some expenses by collaborative undertakings between schools and town.

Making sure that communication is regular and that important information about the district is conveyed to town officials and the wider community will improve relations between the district and the town and lead to greater understanding of and support for the needs of the district.

⁶ Available at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/finance/accounting/default.html?section=archive>

Appendix A: Review Team Members

The review of the Wareham Public Schools was conducted from February 7–10, 2012 by the following team of educators, independent consultants to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Richard Smith, Leadership and Governance

Russell Dever, Curriculum and Instruction

Dr. James McAuliffe, Assessment, review team coordinator

Deborah DeCarlo, Human Resources and Professional Development

Dr. Frank Sambuceti, Student Support

John Moretti, Financial and Asset Management

Appendix B: Review Activities and Site Visit Schedule

District Review Activities

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

- The review team conducted interviews with the following Wareham financial personnel: director of operations/finance, bookkeeper, town treasurer, town accountant, and town administrator.
- The review team conducted interviews with the following members of the Wareham School Committee: chair, vice-chair, and two members.
- The review team conducted interviews with the following representatives of the Wareham Education Association: president, vice president, and chair of the negotiating committee.
- The review team conducted interviews and focus groups with the following representatives from the central office administration of the Wareham Public Schools: superintendent, director of curriculum, director of student services, and ELE coordinator.
- The review team visited the following schools in the Wareham Public Schools: East Wareham Elementary (pre-kindergarten), Ethel E. Hammond Elementary (kindergarten), John W. Decas Elementary (kindergarten through grade 5), Minot Forest Elementary (kindergarten through grade 5), Wareham Middle School (grades 6–8), Wareham High School (grades 9–12), Wareham Junior/Senior Cooperative (grades 7–12), and West Wareham Academy (grades 7–12).
- During school visits, the review team conducted interviews with school principals and teachers. The team interviewed 12 middle school, and 2 high school teachers. Elementary teachers were unable to attend the elementary focus group at the time that it was scheduled by the district.
- The review team conducted 70 classroom visits for different grade levels and subjects across the 8 schools visited.
- The review team analyzed multiple sets of data and reviewed numerous documents before and during the site visit, including:
 - Data on student and school performance, including achievement and growth data and enrollment, graduation, dropout, retention, suspension, and attendance rates.
 - Data on the district's staffing and finances.
 - Published educational reports on the district by ESE, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), and the former Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA).

- District documents such as district and school improvement plans, school committee policies, curriculum documents, summaries of student assessments, job descriptions, collective bargaining agreements, evaluation tools for staff, handbooks for students/families and faculty, school schedules, and the district's end-of-the-year financial reports.
- All completed program and administrator evaluations and a random selection of completed teacher evaluations.

Site Visit Schedule

The following is the schedule for the onsite portion of the district review of the Wareham Public Schools, conducted from February 7–10, 2012.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
February 7 Orientation with district leaders and principals; interviews with district staff and principals; review of documents; interview with education association; review of personnel files.	February 8 Interviews with district staff and principals; school visits (West Wareham Academy, John W. Decas, and Wareham High School); classroom observations; review of personnel files; teacher focus groups; focus group with parents.	February 9 Interviews with town or city personnel; school visits (John W. Decas, Minot Forest, and Wareham Middle School); interviews with school leaders; classroom observations; teacher team meetings; school committee interviews; review of personnel files.	February 10 School visits (Wareham High School, Wareham Middle School, John W. Decas, Minot Forest, Ethel E. Hammond, and Wareham Cooperative Junior/Senior High School); interviews with school leaders; classroom observations; teacher team meetings; follow-up interviews; team meeting; emerging themes meeting with district leaders and principals.

Appendix C: Student Performance 2009–2011

**Table C1: Wareham Public Schools and State
Proficiency Rates and Median Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs)
2009–2011 English Language Arts**

	2009		2010		2011	
Grade	Percent Proficient	Median SGP	Percent Proficient	Median SGP	Percent Proficient	Median SGP
All Grades—District	63	49	61	44	62	45
All Grades—State	67	50	68	50	69	50
Grade 3—District	52	NA*	57	NA*	50	NA*
Grade 3—State	57	NA*	63	NA*	61	NA*
Grade 4—District	43	45.5	43	42.5	46	43
Grade 4—State	53	50	54	50	53	51
Grade 5—District	66	59	57	51	64	53
Grade 5—State	63	50	63	50	67	50
Grade 6—District	57	35	60	31.5	56	36
Grade 6—State	66	50	69	50	68	50
Grade 7—District	66	53	67	43	65	45
Grade 7—State	70	50	72	50	73	50
Grade 8—District	77	43	69	34	73	38.5
Grade 8—State	78	50	78	50	79	50
Grade 10—District	78	56	75	70	78	59
Grade 10—State	81	50	78	50	84	50
<p>Note: The number of students included in the calculation of proficiency rate differs from the number of students included in the calculation of median SGP.</p> <p>*NA: Grade 3 students do not have SGPs because they are taking MCAS tests for the first time.</p> <p>Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website</p>						

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

	2009		2010		2011	
Grade	Percent Advanced/ Proficient	<i>Median SGP</i>	Percent Advanced/ Proficient	<i>Median SGP</i>	Percent Advanced/ Proficient	<i>Median SGP</i>
All Grades—District	43	44	46	39	47	42
All Grades—State	55	50	59	50	58	50
Grade 3—District	52	NA*	63	NA*	63	NA*
Grade 3—State	60	NA*	65	NA*	66	NA*
Grade 4—District	36	47	38	53	39	45.5
Grade 4—State	48	50	48	49	47	50
Grade 5—District	52	54	39	44	63	62
Grade 5—State	54	50	55	50	59	50
Grade 6—District	46	39	52	38	43	37
Grade 6—State	57	50	59	50	58	50
Grade 7—District	37	54	41	38.5	41	40.5
Grade 7—State	49	50	53	50	51	50
Grade 8—District	21	30	29	31	33	34
Grade 8—State	48	50	51	51	52	50
Grade 10—District	56	42	61	32	54	30.5
Grade 10—State	75	50	75	50	77	50
<p>Note: The number of students included in the calculation of proficiency rate differs from the number of students included in the calculation of median SGP.</p> <p>*NA: Grade 3 students do not have SGPs because they are taking MCAS tests for the first time.</p> <p>Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website</p>						

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

	Wareham Public Schools			State	
	<i>Number of Students Included</i>	CPI	<i>Median SGP</i>	CPI	<i>Median SGP</i>
All Students	1,625	84.5	45	87.2	50
African-American/Black	120	73.1	40	77.4	47
Asian	19	82.9	---	90.2	59
Hispanic/Latino	96	82	47	74.2	46
White	1,187	86.5	45	90.9	51
ELL	6	---	---	59.4	48
FELL	1	---	---	81.7	54
Special Education	311	64.9	41	68.3	42
Low-Income	820	80.7	44	77.1	46
<p>Note: 1. Numbers of students included are the numbers of district students included for the purpose of calculating the CPI. Numbers included for the calculation of the median SGP are different. 2. Median SGP is calculated for grades 4-8 and 10 and is only reported for groups of 20 or more students. CPI is only reported for groups of 10 or more students. 3. "ELL" students are English language learners. 4. "FELL" students are former ELLs. Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website</p>					

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

	Wareham Public Schools			State	
	<i>Number of Students Included</i>	CPI	<i>Median SGP</i>	CPI	<i>Median SGP</i>
All Students	1,631	74.9	42	79.9	50
African-American/Black	120	62.5	41	65	47
Asian	19	81.6	---	89.5	64
Hispanic/Latino	93	68.5	40.5	64.4	46
White	1,192	76.8	42	84.3	50
ELL	6	---	---	56.3	52
FELL	1	---	---	75.1	53
Special Education	316	54.7	43	57.7	43
Low-Income	821	69.7	41	67.3	46
<p>Note: 1. Numbers of students included are the numbers of district students included for the purpose of calculating the CPI. Numbers included for the calculation of the median SGP are different. 2. Median SGP is calculated for grades 4-8 and 10 and is only reported for groups of 20 or more students. CPI is only reported for groups of 10 or more students. 3. "ELL" students are English language learners. 4. "FELL" students are former ELLs. Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website</p>					

Appendix D: Finding and Recommendation Statements

Finding Statements:

Leadership and Governance

1. The district has identified and taken steps to address curricular, instructional, student assessment, student support, and teacher supervision and evaluation needs.
2. Barriers to the implementation of otherwise well-intended initiatives have diminished their effectiveness. These barriers include problems with funding, capacity, planning, and the ability of leadership and the local teachers' association to resolve issues.
3. The reduction of staff at Wareham Middle School in fiscal year 2012 in response to a district-wide budget deficit has increased class sizes in a Level 3 school and may jeopardize implementation of the district's RTI initiative.

Curriculum and Instruction

4. Although Wareham has made strides in aligning its curriculum with the new Massachusetts curriculum frameworks, establishing common benchmarks, and involving staff in curriculum development, the district has not completed the process. Differentiated curriculum and programs to support higher-achieving students are not provided, and a consistent structure for curriculum development and revision has not been implemented.
5. In most observed classes instruction in the Wareham Public Schools was not rigorous, engaging, or student-centered.

Assessment

6. Wareham has developed a comprehensive battery to assess student achievement, including formative benchmark assessments in ELA and mathematics at the elementary and middle school levels. The absence of infrastructure to facilitate timely data analysis has reduced the usefulness and effectiveness of the district's assessment program.
7. While Wareham has engaged specialists trained to work with teachers to interpret and use data to improve instruction, there is too little time for teachers to meet with them, especially at the elementary level.

8. Wareham has initiated a number of programs and services that respond directly to students' identified needs; however, the emphasis on ELA in the first year of implementation for the RTI initiative has had the unintended effect of diminishing remedial services for students in mathematics, and the district does not have a formal cyclical process for evaluating the effectiveness of its established programs and services.

Human Resources and Professional Development

9. Teacher supervision and evaluation practices were largely ineffective. Most teachers were evaluated too infrequently, and the evaluations that were completed did not encourage either the improvement of instructional quality or professional growth. Time for instructional supervision was insufficient, and administrators and instructional leaders were not able to overcome perceived or actual contractual barriers to actively supervising teachers' instruction to improve education.
10. The district's professional development program is varied and needs based, but has had little observable impact on teaching and learning.

Student Support

11. Wareham Middle School and Wareham High School issue suspensions at much higher rates than most middle and high schools across the state.
12. The Wareham Public Schools have made improvements to special education programming, staffing, and the continuum of student services a priority during the period from 2009–2011. Although significant progress has been made in meeting these objectives, further development and refinement of support programs and services are needed.

Financial and Asset Management

13. Three communication challenges have been hindrances to ensuring that financial support for education is appropriate:
 - turnover in town positions, which has compromised financial forecasting and planning,
 - a strained relationship between the school committee and the selectmen, which has compromised negotiations on funding for the district, and

- the school committee's advocacy for the schools, which has not always been strong and effective enough to make district and student needs clear and compelling. As every town has to balance the needs of each department, effective communication about the needs of the school district is important to provide public confidence that funding is appropriately allocated.

Recommendation Statements:

Leadership and Governance

1. The district should focus on fewer initiatives, implement them more deeply and completely in accordance with a commitment to excellence, and give the highest priority to improving the quality of instruction.
2. The district should balance site-based management with districtwide priorities. While permitting principals and administrators to make most decisions within their scope of responsibility and authority, the superintendent should exercise primary authority whenever decisions are likely to conflict with district initiatives and goals.

Curriculum and Instruction

3. Wareham should implement a cyclical process for updating and completing its curriculum guides. Increasing academic expectations, especially in mathematics, and differentiating instruction, especially for accelerated students, should be priorities in this process.
4. Wareham should make engaging, active learning a district priority and create a structure that places primary responsibility for implementing curriculum and instructional supervision on school principals.

Assessment

5. Wareham should continue its efforts to acquire and use technology for data collection, dissemination, and analysis, and increase time for teachers to meet with specialists for deeper discussions of student performance.
6. Wareham should institute a formal evaluation cycle to improve the effectiveness of its programs and services. A representative district data team might conduct this cycle.

Human Resources and Professional Development

7. As it aligns its evaluation system with the state's new educator evaluation model, the district should ensure that all educators have meaningful professional practice and student learning goals and consistent, timely feedback, and that professional development is aligned with the evaluation system.

8. The district should work with the teachers' association to clarify collective bargaining agreement language—or its interpretation—that has led to confusion as to what feedback may be given to teachers outside of the formal evaluation process.
9. The district should prioritize its professional development needs, provide continuous supervision to help teachers implement strategies and methods, and evaluate the professional development program to determine whether the initiatives have improved student achievement.

Student Support

10. The Wareham Public Schools should make it a priority to review and evaluate current suspension policies and practices and develop a plan to reduce suspensions.
11. The district should undertake a thorough, data-driven review of its current model of special education services to determine its overall effectiveness and subsequently initiate, redesign, or discontinue specific programs or services based on analysis of this data.

Financial and Asset Management

12. The school committee should work with town officials to ensure that they have an agreement on municipal expenditures in support of schools that accords with state guidance and regulations. It should also work with the town to establish structures that will allow increased communication and understanding on both sides; the school committee and administration should use these structures to present a clear picture of district needs.