

Comprehensive District Review Report



Winchendon Public Schools

Review conducted Nov. 28-Dec. 1, 2016

Center for District and School Accountability

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and
Secondary Education

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Executive Summary

In recent years, Winchendon has experienced a high degree of change at several organizational levels. Most school and district leaders have worked in the district for many years; however, all have been in their leadership positions for three years or less.

Under financial pressure at the end of the 2014-2015 school year, the district eliminated the position of curriculum director when the incumbent left, and assigned K-12 leadership responsibility for curriculum, instruction, and professional development to the high school principal. This expanded leadership role was intensified in 2016-2017 when the district also made him principal of the middle school.

The town has new selectmen, a new town manager and town accountant, and four out of five school committee members are new.

Steadily decreasing enrollment, financial restrictions, and high chronic absence rates further challenge the implementation of the district's improvement initiatives. Winchendon has been a Level 3 district for over five years because in each of the last five years, one or more schools were classified as Level 3. Despite these conditions, during the onsite review interviewees and focus group participants displayed an admirable sense of urgency, a collaborative mindset, and good will.

Strengths

The superintendent has drafted and continues to develop a multi-year strategic plan that focuses on improving teaching and learning. A number of initiatives to enhance instruction and expectations for high-quality instruction have been implemented and are regularly communicated to teachers at faculty meetings. The high school staff handbook describes instructional expectations, and learning walks and lesson studies have been established to define instructional needs and improve teaching. In observed classrooms, review team members noted a generally high incidence of most characteristics of effective instruction, particularly at the elementary and middle schools.

The district has implemented a teacher induction program that includes a three-year mentoring component. All teachers new to the district or to teaching are assigned a mentor for up to three years. A mentor handbook has been developed which outlines the responsibilities of mentors, mentees, principals, and the mentor coordinators. The program is well-resourced with stipends for mentors and mentor coordinators.

The district has begun to develop an academic and behavioral tiered system of supports at all school levels. A system of behavioral interventions is in place Pre-K-8. At the high school, tiered interventions focus on meeting academic requirements for graduation. The district has developed an alternative high school to support students who cannot attend traditional classes. Small group and online classes are available to students.

In the past, the district and the town have had a "contentious" relationship along with major financial management issues. In recent years, the superintendent, members of the school committee, and town

officials have come together to improve their relationship, to rebuild trust and confidence in the schools and town, and to move the district forward. The superintendent and new business manager are working cooperatively with town officials in a more focused way to resolve accounting and financial reporting issues.

Efforts have been made to be more transparent about the accomplishments of the schools, which the superintendent is now highlighting at school committee meetings that are televised on the local cable station.

Challenges and Areas for Growth

The district's draft strategic plan does not include measureable goals or specific targets to improve student achievement. The Investment Plan of District (IPOD), which is the District Improvement Plan, is not aligned with the draft strategic plan and does not include measureable goals or specific targets to improve student achievement. School Improvement Plans are not aligned with the draft strategic plan or the IPOD and have different timelines; most are missing measureable goals.

Curriculum, instruction, and professional development leadership has been distributed to the schools with the middle-high school principal responsible for K-12 oversight in these areas. The middle-high school principal collaborates with the administrative team on curriculum, instruction, and professional development issues. Principals and assistant principals are responsible for the entire education process in their schools, including improvement planning, budgeting, educator evaluation, professional development, assessment, curriculum, and instruction. Schools do not have department heads or coaches to support principals in these areas.

The district does not have a well-balanced assessment system to guide instructional decisions. The use of assessment data is uncoordinated and the district does not have systematic, consistent processes for the analysis and use of assessment data. Assessment data is used to determine which students are at risk or performing at grade level, but school assessment data is not provided to district leaders for improvement planning or resource allocation across schools.

The district has implemented an educator evaluation system that is aligned with the state framework; however, work is needed by evaluators of teachers and administrators to consistently provide rigorous, timely, specific, and actionable feedback to promote improved instruction and professional growth. The district does not have a professional development (PD) plan or a PD program that is aligned with district or school goals or the district's instructional model; most PD is determined at the school level.

Overall chronic student absence and drop-out rates exceed the state rates---with especially high chronic student absence rates at the high school---and graduation rates lag state rates. The district has eliminated two graduation requirements, four years of mathematics and two years of foreign language, which means that the district is not providing the full recommended Massachusetts High School

Program of Studies (MassCore).¹ Enrollment in the district has steadily decreased over the past decade, with numerous students choosing to attend school in other school districts, charter schools, or vocational schools. At the same time, Winchendon experienced a financial emergency that began in fiscal year 2013 and continued into fiscal year 2014, when the town was unable to meet operating obligations of approximately \$5 million. The reasons for the deficits included health insurance claims of approximately \$1.8 million. As a result the town had to borrow approximately \$3 million from the commonwealth to cover the deficit. At the time of the onsite in late November/early December 2016, about half the loan had been repaid.

Recommendations

- The superintendent should complete the strategic plan and align other planning documents with it. The strategic plan's performance goals for students should drive the development, implementation, and modification of the district's educational system.
- The district should convene a working group with wide representation to develop recommendations and action steps about how best to allocate resources (people, time, and money).
- The district should build on practices in place at some grade levels and establish systematic, consistent processes for the analysis and use of assessment data. The district should ensure that educators at all levels use data strategically to inform instruction, ongoing curriculum revision, program evaluation, and the educator evaluation system.
- The district should develop policies and practices to effectively promote the culture of growth-oriented collaborative supervision and evidence-based evaluation that is the goal of the educator evaluation system. The district should align its professional development program with district improvement initiatives and its instructional model.
- District teachers, staff, and members of the larger community should work collaboratively to establish a culture of continuous learning that supports all students' attendance, course completion and grade promotion, encourages on-time graduation, and ensures that all students are college-and-career ready.
- The district should formally collect feedback from stakeholders to determine why families are leaving, analyze results, make recommendations for change, and inform stakeholders of planned changes. Budget documents should be revised and clarified to ensure that they are accurate and comprehensive.

¹Administrators reported that recently graduation requirements were changed so that starting with the class of 2020 the full recommended Massachusetts High School Program of Studies (MassCore) is required for graduation. (See the first Challenge Student Support finding below.)

Winchendon Public Schools Comprehensive District Review

Overview

Purpose

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

Districts reviewed in the 2016-2017 school year include districts classified into Level 2, Level 3, or Level 4 of ESE's framework for district accountability and assistance. Review reports may be used by ESE and the district to establish priority for assistance and make resource allocation decisions.

Methodology

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

Site Visit

The site visit to the Winchendon school district was conducted from November 28-December 1, 2016. The site visit included 35 hours of interviews and focus groups with approximately 55 stakeholders, including school committee members, district administrators, school staff, high school students, and teachers' association representatives. The review team conducted three focus groups with eight elementary-school teachers, seven middle-school teachers, and eight high-school teachers.

A list of review team members, information about review activities, and the site visit schedule are in Appendix A, and Appendix B provides information about enrollment, student performance, and expenditures. The team observed classroom instructional practice in 69 classrooms in 5 schools. The team collected data using ESE's Instructional Inventory, a tool for recording observed characteristics of standards-based teaching. This data is contained in Appendix C.

District Profile

Winchendon has a town manager form of government and the chair of the school committee is elected. The five members of the school committee meet twice monthly.

The current superintendent has been in the permanent position since December 2015, after serving as interim superintendent since July 1, 2015. The district leadership team includes the superintendent, the director of pupil services, the business manager, the director of technology, the director of facilities, and the principals. Central office positions have been decreasing over the past three years. The district has four principals (two interim) leading four schools, a director of the Murdock Academy of Success, and a director of the Pre-School program and elementary schools' Alternative Lifelong Learning (ALL) program. There are two other school administrators, one assistant principal at the middle school and one assistant principal at the high school. In the 2015-2016 school year, there were 94 teachers in the district.

In the 2015-2016 school year, 1,291 students were enrolled in the district's 6 schools:

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

School Name	School Type	Grades Served	Enrollment
Winchendon Pre-School Program	EES	Pre-K	74
Memorial	ES	K-2	289
Toy Town Elementary	ES	3-5	289
Murdock Middle School	MS	6-8	305
Murdock High School	HS	9-12	302
Murdock Academy for Success	HS	9-12	32
Totals	6 schools	Pre-K-12	1,291
*As of October 1, 2015			

Between 2012 and 2016 overall student enrollment decreased by 12.7 percent. Enrollment figures by race/ethnicity and high needs populations (i.e., students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged students, and English language learners (ELLs) and former ELLs) as compared with the state are provided in Tables B1a and B1b in Appendix B.

Total in-district per-pupil expenditures were higher than the median in-district per pupil expenditures for 51 K-12 districts of similar size (1,000-1,999 students) in fiscal year 2015: \$ 13,711 as compared with \$ 13,140. Actual net school spending in fiscal year 2015 was above what is required by the Chapter 70

state education aid program, as shown in Table B6 in Appendix B. In the prior three fiscal years net school spending was below what was required by the Chapter 70 state education aid program.

Student Performance

Winchendon is a Level 3 district because all three of its schools with reportable data are in Level 3 for being among the lowest performing 20 percent of schools in their grade span.

- Toy Town Elementary is in Level 3 for being among the lowest performing 20 percent of elementary schools.
- Murdock Middle School is in Level 3 for being among the lowest performing 20 percent of middle schools and is a focus school because its students with disabilities are among the lowest performing 20 percent of subgroups.
- Murdock High is in Level 3 for being among the lowest performing 20 percent of high schools and is a focus school because its high needs students are among the lowest performing 20 percent of subgroups.

**Table 2: Winchendon Public Schools
District and School PPI, Percentile, and Level 2013–2016**

School	Group	Annual PPI				Cumulative PPI	School Percentile	Accountability Level
		2013	2014	2015	2016			
Winchendon PreSchool	All	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	High Needs	--	--	--	--	--		
Memorial	All	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	High Needs	--	--	--	--	--		
Toy Town	All	70	85	0	70	74	16	3
	High Needs	55	80	80	70	74		
Murdock Middle	All	35	55	80	25	49	10	3
	High Needs	45	40	65	15	38		
Murdock Academy for Success	All	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	High Needs	--	--	--	--	--		
Murdock High	All	43	79	46	75	64	12	3
	High Needs	50	82	82	79	77		
District	All	46	61	50	21	40	--	3
	High Needs	50	54	54	21	40		

Between 2015 and 2016, the percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations improved by 2 percentage points in ELA and by 5 percentage points in math.

- The percentage of high needs students meeting or exceeding expectations improved by 1 percentage point in ELA and by 6 percentage points in math.
- The percentage of economically disadvantaged students meeting or exceeding expectations declined by 1 percentage point in ELA and improved by 3 percentage points in math.
- The percentage of ELL and former ELL students meeting or exceeding expectations improved by 10 percentage points in both ELA and math.
- The percentage of students with disabilities meeting or exceeding expectations improved by 6 percentage points in ELA and by 9 percentage points in math.

**Table 3: Winchendon Public Schools
ELA and Math Meeting or Exceeding Expectations (Grades 3-8) 2015-2016**

Group	ELA			Math		
	2015	2016	Change	2015	2016	Change
All students	44%	46%	2	33%	38%	5
High Needs	29%	30%	1	22%	28%	6
Economically Disadvantaged	33%	32%	-1	26%	29%	3
ELL and former ELL students	27%	37%	10	27%	37%	10
Students with disabilities	5%	11%	6	6%	15%	9

Between 2013 and 2016, the percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced in science declined by 13 percentage points for all students, by 12 percentage points for high needs students, and by 9 percentage points for students with disabilities. In 2016 the percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced in science was 22 percentage points below the state rate for the district as a whole and 9 to 13 percentage points below the state rate for high needs students, economically disadvantaged students, and students with disabilities.

**Table 4: Winchendon Public Schools
Science Percent Proficient or Advanced by Subgroup 2013–2016**

Group		2013	2014	2015	2016	4-Year Trend	Above/Below State (2016)
All students	District	45%	44%	37%	32%	-13	-22
	State	53%	55%	54%	54%	1	
High Needs	District	33%	34%	26%	21%	-12	-10
	State	31%	33%	31%	31%	0	
Economically Disadvantaged	District	--	--	31%	23%	--	-9
	State	--	--	34%	32%	--	
ELL and former ELL students	District	--	--	--	--	--	--
	State	19%	18%	19%	19%	0	
Students with disabilities	District	17%	11%	10%	8%	-9	-13
	State	21%	21%	22%	21%	0	

The district did not reach its 2016 Composite Performance Index (CPI) targets in ELA, math, and science for any group except economically disadvantaged students in math.

**Table 5: Winchendon Public Schools
2016 CPI and Targets by Subgroup**

Group	ELA			Math			Science		
	2016 CPI	2016 Target	Rating	2016 CPI	2016 Target	Rating	2016 CPI	2016 Target	Rating
All students	80.2	87.5	No Change	71.0	81.0	Improved Below Target	67.3	84.7	Declined
High Needs	71.6	83.7	No Change	63.5	77.0	Improved Below Target	60.0	81.3	Declined
Economically Disadvantaged ²	73.0	77.0	No Change	66.1	66.7	On Target	60.3	69.5	Declined
ELLs	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Students with disabilities	58.3	73.1	Improved Below Target	48.4	66.6	Improved Below Target	52.8	74.5	Improved Below Target

In 2016, students' growth in ELA and math was low compared with their academic peers statewide and below target for all students, high needs students, and economically disadvantaged students. . Growth for students with disabilities was low in ELA and moderate in math compared with their academic peers statewide and below target in ELA and math.

**Table 6: Winchendon Public Schools
2016 Median ELA and Math SGP by Subgroup**

Group	2016 Median ELA SGP			2016 Median Math SGP		
	District	CPI Rating	Growth Level	District	CPI Rating	Growth Level
All students	38.0	Below Target	Low	39.0	Below Target	Low
High Needs	35.0	Below Target	Low	38.0	Below Target	Low
Econ. Disad.	36.0	Below Target	Low	35.0	Below Target	Low
ELLs	--	--	--	--	--	--
SWD	30.0	Below Target	Low	41.0	Below Target	Moderate

² The economically disadvantaged subgroup does not have a CPI target and rating because 2015 is the first year that a CPI was calculated for the economically disadvantaged group; this CPI will serve as a baseline for future years' CPI targets.

Between 2013 and 2016, the district's out-of-school and in-school suspension rates declined for all students and each group that makes up the high needs population. The district's out-of-school and in-school suspension rates were lower than the state rate for each subgroup that makes up the high needs population.

**Table 7: Winchendon Public Schools
Out-of-School and In-School Suspension Rates by Subgroup 2013–2016**

Group	Type of Suspension	2013	2014	2015	2016	State 2016
High Needs	ISS	5.2%	5.4%	2.1%	1.7%	2.9%
	OSS	6.9%	5.2%	2.9%	4.7%	4.9%
Economically disadvantaged*	ISS	5.7%	5.9%	2.1%	1.7%	3.2%
	OSS	7.2%	5.3%	2.9%	4.1%	5.6%
ELLs	ISS	--	--	--	--	1.9%
	OSS	--	--	--	--	4.0%
Students with disabilities	ISS	5.1%	6.9%	3.0%	2.1%	3.5%
	OSS	6.9%	6.5%	3.3%	5.2%	5.9%
All Students	ISS	4.5%	4.0%	2.2%	1.8%	1.9%
	OSS	5.5%	3.5%	2.2%	3.6%	2.9%

*Low income students' suspensions used for 2013 and 2014

Between 2012 and 2015, the district's four-year cohort graduation rate improved by 1.5 percentage points for all students and by 1.7 to 5.1 percentage points for high needs students, low income students, and students with disabilities. The 2015 rates were below state rates for all these subgroups and for all students. The district did not reach the four-year cohort graduation target for all students or for any of the subgroups that make up the high needs population.³

**Table 8: Winchendon Public Schools
Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rates 2012-2015**

Group	Number Included (2015)	Cohort Year Ending				Change 2012-2015		Change 2014-2015		State (2015)
		2012	2013	2014	2015	Percentage Points	Percent Change	Percentage Points	Percent Change	
High needs	58	62.1	82.8	71.7	63.8	1.7	2.7%	-7.9	-11.0%	78.5
Low income	43	60.0	81.8	72.2	65.1	5.1	8.5%	-7.1	-9.8%	78.2
ELLs	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	64.0
SWD	26	50.0	69.6	50.0	53.8	3.8	7.6%	3.8	7.6%	69.9
All students	84	73.9	84.5	80.0	75.0	1.1	1.5%	-5	-6.3%	87.3

³ The four-year cohort graduation rate target is 80 percent for each group and refers to the 2015 graduation rate. Low-income students did not receive a 2016 accountability rating because of the change to the economically disadvantaged measure.

Between 2011 and 2014, the district's five-year cohort graduation rate improved by 6.8 percentage points for all students, and by 8.8 to 13.6 percentage points for high needs students, low income students, and students with disabilities. The 2014 rates were below state rates for all these subgroups and for all students. The district did not reach the five-year cohort graduation target for all students or for any of the subgroups that make up the high needs population.⁴

**Table 9: Winchendon Public Schools
Five-Year Cohort Graduation Rates 2011-2014**

Group	Number Included (2014)	Cohort Year Ending				Change 2011-2014		Change 2013-2014		State (2014)
		2011	2012	2013	2014	Percentage Points	Percent Change	Percentage Points	Percent Change	
High needs	60	63.1	65.5	84.4	76.7	13.6	21.6%	-7.7	-9.1%	80.3%
Low income	54	66.0	63.6	83.6	77.8	11.8	17.9%	-5.8	-6.9%	79.6%
ELLs	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	69.8%
SWD	22	54.8	50.0	73.9	63.6	8.8	16.1%	-10.3	-13.9%	73.5%
All students	95	76.4	76.1	86.6	83.2	6.8	8.9%	-3.4	-3.9%	88.5%

In 2015, the district's drop-out rates for all students, high needs students, and economically disadvantaged students were more than twice the state rates and the drop-out rate for students with disabilities was higher than the state rate.

**Table 10: Winchendon Public Schools
Drop-out Rates by Subgroup 2012-2015⁵**

	2012	2013	2014	2015	State 2015
High Needs	3.5%	3.1%	3.3%	8.2%	3.4%
Econ. Disad. ⁶	4.0%	3.1%	3.2%	8.6%	3.3%
ELLs	--	--	--	--	5.7%
SWD	4.5%	6.0%	1.4%	6.2%	3.5%
All students	2.6%	2.6%	2.8%	5.5%	1.9%

⁴ The five-year cohort graduation rate target is 85 percent for each group and refers to the 2014 graduation rate. Low-income students did not receive a 2016 accountability rating because of the change to the economically disadvantaged measure.

⁵ Low income drop-out rate used for 2012, 2013, and 2014 economically disadvantaged rates.

⁶ Low income students' drop-out rates used for 2012, 2013, and 2014 economically disadvantaged rates.

Grade and School Results

Between 2013 and 2016, ELA CPI for all students improved by 1.3 points, from 78.9 in 2013 to 80.2 in 2016, and improved in the 3rd, 5th, 7th, and 8th grades.

- ELA CPI improved by 6.3 points in the 3rd grade, by 2.2 points in the 5th grade, by 3.0 points in the 7th grade, and by 4.3 points in the 8th grade.
- ELA CPI declined by 1.8 points in the 4th grade, by 4.8 points in the 6th grade, and by 4.0 points in the 10th grade.
 - ELA CPI in the 10th grade was 86.8 in 2016, 9.9 points below the 2016 state CPI of 96.7.

**Table 11: Winchendon Public Schools
ELA Composite Performance Index (CPI) by Grade 2013–2016**

Grade	Number	2013	2014	2015	2016	State	4-Year Trend	2-Year Trend
3	105	79.1	80.1	76.1	85.4	--	6.3	9.3
4	88	72.6	71.9	69.9	70.8	--	-1.8	0.9
5	92	78.2	84.1	76.0	80.4	--	2.2	4.4
6	98	76.3	76.2	83.9	71.5	--	-4.8	-12.4
7	101	77.8	77.7	81.8	80.8	--	3.0	-1.0
8	108	81.8	83.3	86.9	86.1	--	4.3	-0.8
10	74	90.8	95.6	91.8	86.8	96.7	-4.0	-5.0
All	681	78.9	80.8	80.7	80.2	--	1.3	-0.5

The percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations in ELA was 47, 45, and 50 percent in the 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades, respectively, at Toy Town Elementary and 40, 54, and 46 percent in the 6th, 7th, and 8th grades, respectively, at Murdock Middle. The percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced in ELA was 84 percent in the 10th grade at Murdock High.

**Table 12: Winchendon Public Schools
ELA Meeting or Exceeding Expectations by School and Grade 2015-2016⁷**

School	3	4	5	6	7	8	10	Total
Winchendon PreSchool	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Memorial	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Toy Town	47%	45%	50%	--	--	--	--	47%
Murdock Middle	--	--	--	40%	54%	46%	--	47%
Murdock Academy for Success	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Murdock High	--	--	--	--	--	--	84%	--
District	47%	44%	51%	38%	51%	44%	73%	--

⁷ 10th grade results are MCAS and refer to the percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced.

Between 2013 and 2016, ELA CPI improved by 2.1 points at Toy Town Elementary and between 2014 and 2016 improved by 2.3 points at Murdock Middle and declined by 2.0 points at Murdock High.

- Between 2013 and 2016 ELA CPI for high needs students declined by 0.4 point at Toy Town Elementary and between 2014 and 2016 by 4.2 points at Murdock High, and between 2014 and 2016 improved by 0.5 point at Murdock Middle.
- Between 2013 and 2016 ELA CPI for students with disabilities declined by 3.6 points at Toy Town Elementary, and between 2014 and 2016 by 2.0 points at Murdock Middle and by 7.2 points at Murdock High.

**Table 13: Winchendon Public Schools
ELA Composite Performance Index (CPI) by School and Subgroup 2013-2016**

	2013	2014	2015	2016	4-Year Trend
Winchendon PreSchool	--	--	--	--	--
Memorial	--	--	--	--	--
Murdock Academy for Success	--	--	--	--	--
Toy Town	77.4	80.1	74.7	79.5	2.1
High Needs	72.1	73.1	65.0	71.7	-0.4
Econ. Disad.	--	--	66.3	72.5	--
ELLs	--	--	--	82.5	--
SWD	60.4	64.1	46.9	56.8	-3.6
					3-Year Trend
Murdock Middle	--	79.9	84.2	82.2	2.3
High Needs	--	72.4	75.6	72.9	0.5
Econ. Disad.	--	--	80.6	75.0	--
ELLs	--	--	--	--	--
SWD	--	56.5	60.0	54.5	-2.0
Murdock High	--	95.9	92.2	93.9	-2.0
High Needs	--	94.4	85.0	90.2	-4.2
Econ. Disad.	--	--	88.0	96.3	--
ELLs	--	--	--	--	--
SWD	--	88.5	75.0	81.3	-7.2

Between 2013 and 2016, math CPI improved by 2.4 points for all students, from 68.6 in 2013 to 71.0 in 2016. Math CPI also improved in the 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 7th grades.

- Math CPI improved by 13.5 points in the 3rd grade, by 4.7 points in the 4th grade, by 6.7 points in the 5th grade, and by 4.8 points in the 7th grade.
- Math CPI declined by 4.8 points in the 6th grade, by 6.0 points in the 8th grade, and by 2.9 points in the 10th grade.
 - o Math CPI in the 10th grade was 75.7 in 2016, 14.0 points below the 2016 state CPI of 89.7.

**Table 14: Winchendon Public Schools
Math Composite Performance Index (CPI) by Grade 2013-2016**

Grade	Number	2013	2014	2015	2016	State	4-Year Trend	2-Year Trend
3	105	77.2	86.3	80.8	90.7	--	13.5	9.9
4	88	72.8	76.4	75.3	77.5	--	4.7	2.2
5	91	69.7	71.1	68.8	76.4	--	6.7	7.6
6	98	66.9	60.4	66.7	62.1	--	-4.8	-4.6
7	101	56.9	55.0	59.2	61.7	--	4.8	2.5
8	110	63.6	61.7	67.5	57.6	--	-6.0	-9.9
10	71	78.6	78.7	77.7	75.7	89.7	-2.9	-2.0
All	678	68.6	68.4	69.6	71.0	--	2.4	0.4

The percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations in math was 63, 48, and 39 percent in grades 3, 4, and 5, respectively, at Toy Town Elementary and 25, 33, and 27 percent in grades 6, 7, and 8, respectively, at Murdock Middle School. The percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced was 61 percent in the 10th grade.

**Table 15: Winchendon Public Schools
Math Meeting or Exceeding Expectations by School and Grade 2015-2016⁸**

School	3	4	5	6	7	8	10	Total
Winchendon PreSchool	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Memorial	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Toy Town	63%	48%	39%	--	--	--	--	51%
Murdock Middle	--	--	--	25%	33%	27%	--	28%
Murdock Academy for Success	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Murdock High	--	--	--	--	--	--	61%	--
District	63%	47%	40%	23%	31%	25%	52%	--

⁸ 10th grade results are MCAS and refer to the percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced.

Between 2013 and 2016, math CPI improved by 8.6 points at Toy Town Elementary, and between 2014 and 2016 improved by 2.0 points at Murdock Middle and by 2.6 points at Murdock High.

- Between 2013 and 2016 math CPI for high needs students improved by 12.0 points at Toy Town Elementary, and between 2014 and 2016 improved by 0.4 point at Murdock Middle and by 4.2 points at Murdock High.
- Between 2013 and 2016 math CPI for students with disabilities improved by 6.3 points at Toy Town Elementary, and between 2014 and 2016 improved by 2.4 points at Murdock Middle and declined by 5.4 points at Murdock High.

**Table 16: Winchendon Public Schools
Math Composite Performance Index by School and Subgroup 2013-2016**

	2013	2014	2015	2016	4-Year Trend
Winchendon PreSchool	--	--	--	--	--
Memorial	--	--	--	--	--
Murdock Academy for Success	--	--	--	--	--
Toy Town	73.5	78.5	75.5	82.1	8.6
High Needs	66.5	73.7	68.0	78.5	12.0
Econ. Disad.	--	--	68.8	79.5	--
ELLs	--	--	--	82.5	--
SWD	58.5	66.7	57.0	64.8	6.3
					3-Year Trend
Murdock Middle	--	60.3	64.4	62.3	2.0
High Needs	--	51.7	54.4	52.1	0.4
Econ. Disad.	--	--	59.7	54.8	--
ELLs	--	--	--	--	--
SWD	--	37.1	35.5	39.5	2.4
Murdock High	--	81.3	78.7	83.9	2.6
High Needs	--	72.6	65.0	76.8	4.2
Econ. Disad.	--	--	69.0	87.5	--
ELLs	--	--	--	--	--
SWD	--	59.6	43.3	54.2	-5.4

Between 2013 and 2016, science proficiency rates declined by 13 percentage points in the district as whole, from 45 percent in 2013 to 32 percent in 2016, 22 percentage points below the 2016 state rate of 54 percent.

- 5th grade science proficiency rates decreased by 17 percentage points from 52 percent in 2013 to 35 percent in 2016, 12 percentage points below the 2016 state rate of 47 percent.
- 8th grade science proficiency rates decreased by 14 percentage points from 34 percent in 2013 to 20 percent in 2016, 21 percentage points below the 2016 state rate of 41 percent.
- The 10th grade science proficiency rate was 51 percent in 2013 and 49 percent in 2016, 24 percentage points below the 2016 state rate of 73 percent.

**Table 17: Winchendon Public Schools
Science Percent Proficient or Advanced by Grade 2013-2016**

Grade	Number	2013	2014	2015	2016	State	4-Year Trend	2-Year Trend
5	93	52%	50%	49%	35%	47%	-17%	-14%
8	113	34%	35%	25%	20%	41%	-14%	-5%
10	65	51%	50%	45%	49%	73%	-2%	4%
All	271	45%	44%	37%	32%	54%	-13%	-5%

In 2016, in the 5th grade the percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced in science was 36 percent at Toy Town Elementary, 11 percentage points below the 2016 state rate of 47 percent. In the 8th grade science proficiency was 22 percent at Murdock Middle School, and was below the 2016 state rate of 41 percent. In grade 10 the percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced in science was 57 percent, 16 percentage points below the 2016 state rate of 73 percent.

**Table 18: Winchendon Public Schools
Science Percent Proficient or Advanced by School and Grade 2015-2016**

School	3	4	5	6	7	8	10	Total
Winchendon PreSchool	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Memorial	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Toy Town	--	--	36%	--	--	--	--	36%
Murdock Middle	--	--	--	--	--	22%	--	22%
Murdock Academy for Success	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	9%
Murdock High	--	--	--	--	--	--	57%	57%
District	--	--	35%	--	--	20%	49%	32%
State	--	--	47%	--	--	41%	73%	54%

Between 2013 and 2016, science proficiency rates declined by 17 percentage points at Toy Town Elementary, and between 2014 and 2016 declined by 13 percentage points at Murdock Middle and improved by 6 percentage points at Murdock High.

- Between 2013 and 2016, science proficiency rates for high needs students declined by 20 percentage points at Toy Town Elementary, and between 2014 and 2016 declined by 13 percentage points at Murdock Middle and improved by 14 percentage points at Murdock High.
- Between 2014 and 2016 science proficiency rates for students with disabilities did not improve at Murdock Middle and improved by 17 percentage points at Murdock High.

**Table 19: Winchendon Public Schools
Science Percent Proficient or Advanced by School and Subgroup 2013–2016**

	2013	2014	2015	2016	4-Year Trend
Winchendon PreSchool	--	--	--	--	--
Memorial	--	--	--	--	--
Toy Town	53%	51%	50%	36%	-17%
High Needs	42%	47%	46%	22%	-20%
Econ. Disad.	--	--	48%	22%	--
ELLs	--	--	--	--	--
SWD	41%	29%	23%	--	--
					3-Year Trend
Murdock Middle	--	35%	28%	22%	-13
High Needs	--	24%	15%	11%	-13
Econ. Disad.	--	--	22%	15%	--
ELLs	--	--	--	--	--
SWD	--	0%	4%	0%	0%
Murdock Academy for Success	--	--	--	9%	--
High Needs	--	--	--	--	--
Econ. Disad.	--	--	--	--	--
ELLs	--	--	--	--	--
SWD	--	--	--	--	--
Murdock High	--	51%	46%	57%	6
High Needs	--	36%	30%	50%	14
Econ. Disad.	--	--	35%	63%	--
ELLs	--	--	--	--	--
SWD	--	8%	14%	25%	17

Leadership and Governance

Contextual Background

From August to December 2015, the district was led by an interim superintendent who has been in the district for 15 years. In December 2015 he was appointed the permanent superintendent. Central office leaders have been in their positions between five months and 18 months. School leaders at the middle and high schools have been in their positions between 18 months and 36 months and elementary principals have been in their positions three months. Shortly before the beginning of the 2016-2017 school year, the two elementary principals (formerly the assistant principals) were appointed interim principals because of the sudden resignation of the designated principal. In addition, the school business manager is new in 2016-2017.

The superintendent has drafted and continues to develop a strategic plan (2016-2019) of objectives and initiatives to enhance instruction and improve student achievement. The superintendent, teachers, administrators, support staff, and elected officials share a common goal of increasing student achievement while improving community confidence in the schools. In the spirit of cooperation, school and town personnel regularly meet in an effort to move the town and schools forward. The school committee, superintendent and all school personnel have committed themselves to becoming a Level 2 district in 3 years and a Level 1 district in 5 years.

In his first full school year as permanent superintendent (2016-2017), the superintendent is participating in the New Superintendent Induction Program, a three-year program that provides professional development and coaching focused on entry planning, team building, strategy development and robust supervision and evaluation.⁹

Strength Findings

1. **The superintendent has drafted and is continuing to develop a multi-year strategic plan to improve instruction and student achievement. The superintendent has implemented strategies to improve the culture and image of the district.**
 - A. The superintendent is developing a strategic plan with an objective and initiatives to enhance the quality of instruction and improve student achievement at all levels.
 1. Some teachers said that the superintendent's goal of moving the district forward is very well understood. Learning walks, lesson study, mentoring, and common planning time help inform professional development for teachers to improve instruction.
 2. A review of school committee minutes indicated that the superintendent has established a systemwide goal that the district will be at Level 2 in 3 years and at Level 1 in 5 years.

⁹ The New Superintendent Induction Program (NSIP) is a partnership between ESE and the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents and supported by the school district.

3. Teachers' association representatives stated that the overarching theme across the district is how to get to Level 1. They noted that there is trust with teaching faculty---and the teachers said that they feel good about this.
 4. Principals told the review team that the new district leadership team is working and growing together with collegiality and professionalism. The team is enthusiastic and has uniform expectations for principals. The principals said that there is a new sense of urgency.
- B.** The superintendent has worked to repair the district's relationship with town officials and to restore community confidence in the schools (see the Strength Financial Asset and Management finding below).
1. Teachers noted that the schools' relationship with the town has improved.
 - a. Teachers spoke of the reduction of tension between the town and the schools.
 - b. Teachers' association leaders said that the school's relationship with the town has become more positive.
- C.** The superintendent has embarked on a program to highlight the positive accomplishments of the students, teachers, and schools.
1. The superintendent includes highlights of school accomplishments in all school committee agendas. Emphasis is on student of the month, teacher of the month, concerts and plays, student awards, and community service activities.
 2. All school committee meetings are televised on the local cable television channel. School committee members said that during these meetings they try to promote a strong positive front by acknowledging the successes of students and staff.
 3. The superintendent has initiated a postcard mailing to all town households showcasing the school district.
 4. The draft strategic plan includes an initiative to improve the perception and image of the schools.
 5. A school committee member stated that the community's perception of the schools is negative, noting that the district needs to build a positive perception. The member went on to say that changes in school and district leadership led to an inconsistent vision for the schools and the district. The member stated the district now has a strong administrative team that hopefully will stay together.

Impact: With the creation of a new district leadership team and a clear sense of its goal, the district can channel its efforts toward the development of high-quality instructional practices and increased student achievement. The superintendent, with valued input from all levels of the district and community, has

the opportunity to elevate the schools to educational excellence and their desired stature in the community.

Challenges and Areas for Growth

2. **The district does not have a comprehensive, actionable strategic plan, District Improvement Plan, or aligned School Improvement Plans.**

- A. The superintendent's draft strategic plan for 2016-2019 includes four overall objectives: educator academic excellence, curriculum and instruction, assessment and data, and school climate and culture. The district has not established specific timelines for completion of priorities and has not designated staff with primary responsibility for planning and implementing priorities. The district has not identified measureable evidence, outcomes, indicators, and specific student performance goals based on achievement data to indicate that priorities have been met.
- B. The Investment Plan of District 2016-2018 (IPOP) is the District Improvement Plan.
 - 1. The IPOP 2016-2018 is not aligned with the superintendent's draft strategic plan.
- C. School Improvement Plans (SIPs) are not uniformly aligned with the draft strategic plan or the IPOP.
 - 1. Some SIPs mention district goals. Only one elementary SIP states the school's vision and only the two elementary SIPs state the school's mission.
 - 2. The district's plans do not have a uniform timeline.
 - a. The draft strategic plan is dated 2016-2019; the IPOP, 2015-2018; the elementary SIPs, 2015-2018; the middle school SIP, 2014-2017; and the high school SIP, 2016-2017.

Impact: Comprehensive, actionable plans based on the district's vision and mission provide the foundation and justification for all work in a school district. Without a complete and comprehensive strategic plan and/or DIP and aligned SIPs, the district, schools, and community are unable to systematically implement, monitor, and refine continuous improvement efforts, and the district cannot ensure accountability for meeting improvement priorities.

Recommendation

- 1. The superintendent should complete the strategic plan and align other planning documents with it.**
 - A.** Under the leadership of the superintendent, a working group with wide representation should analyze student achievement and other data and complete the district's strategic plan.
 1. It is critically important for this stakeholder group to recognize, and be committed to, the role of the strategic plan in creating a blueprint for student success, achieving greater teacher effectiveness, and strongly influencing the district's planning documents.
 - B.** The strategic plan should include the district's mission or vision, goals, and priorities for action.
 1. Strategic goals should be SMART (Specific and Strategic; Measurable; Action oriented; Rigorous, Realistic and Results focused; and Timed and tracked).
 - C.** The strategic plan's performance goals for students should drive the development, implementation, and modification of the district's educational system.
 1. School Improvement Plans (SIPs) should be created in alignment with the strategic plan and based on an analysis of student achievement data.
 - a. Principals should regularly communicate progress toward SIP goals to the superintendent, school committee, and staff.
 - b. Each principal should use the SIP to inform his/her self-assessment and goal setting process when creating the Educator Plan, and progress toward Educator Plan goals should be used as evidence during implementation.
 2. SIPs should be created annually and submitted to the school committee for review.
 3. Professional development should be designed to support strategic goals and initiatives.
 - D.** The strategic plan should be used as a tool for continuous improvement.
 1. The superintendent should periodically report to the school committee, staff, families, and community on progress toward achieving strategic goals.
 2. The district should establish procedures to review the strategic plan annually. Strategic activities and benchmarks should be adjusted when necessary to meet current conditions.
 3. The superintendent and the school committee should consider aligning some goals in the superintendent's Educator Plan (as part of the district's educator evaluation system) with strategic goals.

Benefits: Comprehensive, aligned district and school plans will focus the district on common improvement goals. These documents will provide guidance and ensure that the work at each level is designed to accomplish the district's short- and long-term goals.

Recommended resources:

- ESE's *Planning for Success* tools (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/research/success/>) support the improvement planning process by spotlighting practices, characteristics, and behaviors that support effective planning and implementation and meet existing state requirements for improvement planning.
- *What Makes a Goal Smarter?* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/presentations/SMARTGoals/Handout5.pdf>) is a description of SMART goals with accompanying examples. The handout was designed to support educators in developing goals as part of the educator evaluation system, but could also be a useful reference for the district as it develops or refines its DIP and SIPs.
- *Focused Planning for Accelerating Student Learning* (<http://www.mass.gov/edu/docs/ease/accountability/dsac/focused-planning.pdf>) provides guidance for Level 3 districts to accelerate achievement for all students through the development of a focused, actionable and sustainable Accelerated Improvement Plan (AIP).

Curriculum and Instruction

Contextual Background

This small, rural school district is in a transitional stage in regard to curriculum and instruction. This transition began in December 2015, with the appointment of the interim superintendent as the permanent superintendent. With new leadership, in the past two years instructional practice has taken on greater purpose with a clear understanding at all school levels about what effective teaching entails. There is a heightened emphasis on engaging students through active learning, developing higher-order thinking skills through higher expectations and more rigorous lessons, and providing opportunities for teachers to be more purposeful and reflective about their practice. The district has collaborated with the DSAC (District and School Assistance Center) over the past five years to develop and implement a learning walk protocol and more recently a lesson study protocol. The positive impact of the increased focus on these instructional practices was apparent during classroom observations in 69 classrooms: 23 at the high school, 16 at the middle school, and 30 at the 2 elementary schools. Review team members noted a generally high incidence of most characteristics of effective instruction, particularly at the elementary and middle schools. In observed classrooms, however, many lessons were whole-class, teacher-directed learning. And at all school levels, observers found that differentiated instruction was the least well-developed characteristic of effective instruction. Interviewees reported that teachers attended districtwide differentiated instruction training approximately eight years ago. Administrators reported that the district has repeatedly tried to schedule professional development (PD) in effectively using differentiation and accommodations but has been unable to find suitable PD.

Under financial pressure at the end of the 2014-2015 school year, the district eliminated the position of curriculum director when the incumbent left, and assigned K-12 leadership responsibility for curriculum, instruction, and professional development to the high school principal. His expanded leadership role was added to the typical obligations of school leadership and was intensified in 2016-2017 when the district also made him principal of the middle school. He now works closely with the work of two new interim elementary school principals and the assistant principal of the middle school, and oversees the work of the assistant principal of the middle school. Each of these school leaders works with teachers to develop, monitor and improve curriculum, instruction, and professional development at their schools.

Some progress is evident. In 2015-2016 the middle-high school principal designed a multi-year curriculum revision plan, and a new curriculum review and revision cycle is in place. The plan sequentially assigns the content areas to one of five stages of curriculum development each year over five years: research, write, implement, review, and research again. Curriculum is developed and shared schoolwide and districtwide on Google docs.

In 2016-2017, guidance and technology are implementing new curriculum developed in 2015-2016. The district is writing and revising curriculum to be aligned with the Next Generation Science Standards and teachers report that progress has been made. Social studies and physical education curricula are in the research stage of revision.

The high school and middle school share a common curriculum template based on the *Understanding by Design* (UbD) format, used districtwide under the former curriculum director.

The team noted substantial clarity on the part of leaders and teachers that the district's curriculum is standards-based. Teachers teach standards and design units and lessons that use texts, programs, and other teaching materials as curriculum resources. This was described as a cultural shift in the district. "We wouldn't have had these same conversations five years ago," is how one teacher put it.

A new elementary math program, Envision MATH, has been introduced, first in grades 3-5 in school year 2015-2016 and then in grades 1-2 this school year, 2016-2017. The district is considering the adoption of a K-5 research-based literacy program since it has not had one for about five years. The district is in the process of revising curricula in the middle and high schools in core subjects from UbD units to similar "teaching for understanding" units and re-aligning curricula to the 2011 Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.

The district struggles with the challenges common to small districts bound by limited resources: finding enough staff and time to take on and complete important development assignments and providing a sufficient number of challenging courses at the secondary level, given the small number of teaching staff in each department. For example, since the 2015-2016 school year the district has not offered honors sections in English and History for grades 11 and 12. Overall, though, in recent years the district has approached teaching and learning with a renewed sense of resolve and a heightened sense of urgency. Many educators reported a shift to a new district culture in the schools and more trust and confidence in the community. A considerable challenge for the district is how to sustain the focused intensity of the work, given the multiple assigned responsibilities and small numbers of district and school leaders.

Strength Findings

1. In observed classrooms, review team members noted a generally high incidence of most characteristics of effective instruction, particularly at the elementary and middle schools.

The team observed 69 classes throughout the district: 23 at the high school (including 2 at the academy), 16 at the middle school, and 30 at the two elementary schools. The team observed 26 ELA classes, 17 mathematics classes, 2 classes with both ELA and math, 10 science classes, and 14 classes in other subject areas. Among the classes observed were 3 special education classes, 2 intervention classes, and 4 co-taught classes. The observations were approximately 20 minutes in length. All review team members collected data using ESE's Instructional Inventory, a tool for recording observed characteristics of standards-based teaching. This data is presented in Appendix C.

A. Focus Area #1 – Learning Objectives and Instruction. In most observed lessons, teachers demonstrated knowledge of subject matter and content. A majority of lessons set high expectations for learning that were supported by appropriate instructional strategies.

1. The team saw strong and moderate evidence that teachers provided and reinforced a clear learning objective (characteristic #2) in 67 percent of elementary classes, in 94 percent of middle-school classes and in 56 percent of high-school classes.
 - a. A clear learning objective was observed in a grade 2 science lesson in which students would learn “ant vocabulary and be able to use facts to share information about a non-fiction topic.”
 - b. In a middle school math class, a clear learning objective was framed using, “Today I will... So I can ... I know I got it if....”
 2. Review team members saw strong and moderate evidence that teachers implemented lessons that reflected high expectations (characteristic #3) in 76 percent of elementary classes, in 88 percent of middle-school classes, and in 69 percent of high-school classes.
 - a. By the end of a high school English class, according to the posted objective, students would be able to identify the definitions of five new vocabulary words and locate and identify evidence to support a claim about a character. During the lesson, students could define the new words, cite examples of usage in the text, and use the new vocabulary to interpret the reading and several characters.
 3. Appropriate instructional strategies were well matched to lesson objectives (characteristic #4) so that most students could access and engage with content in 80 percent of elementary lessons, in 75 percent of middle-school lessons, and in 73 percent of high-school lessons.
 - a. For example, in a grade 4 math lesson, pairs and small groups of students used math vocabulary and manipulatives effectively to explain what they were thinking and doing in a lesson on division.
- B. Focus Area #2 – Student Engagement and Critical Thinking.** Overall, in the majority of observed classes, students were motivated and engaged in lessons that required critical thinking---two characteristics that leaders and teachers identified as qualities of effective instruction.
1. There was strong and moderate evidence that students were motivated and engaged (characteristic #5) in 77 percent of elementary classes, in 82 percent of middle-school classes, and in 56 percent of high -school classes. Similarly, the team found strong and moderate evidence of lesson tasks that encouraged students to develop and engage in critical thinking (characteristic # 6) in 77 of percent of elementary classes, in 76 percent of middle-school classes, and in 57 percent of high-school classes.
 - a. For example, in a high-school math class, an observer noted that students were highly engaged in thoughtful dialogue with the teacher while using iPads and calculators to identify the sides and angles of a triangle using the Law of Sines and determine the area of a triangle using Heron’s Law.

2. There was strong and moderate evidence that students assumed responsibility for their own learning either individually, in pairs, or in groups (characteristic # 7) in 64 percent of elementary classes, in 76 percent of middle-school classes, and in 56 percent of high-school classes.
 - a. In a grade 7 science lesson, students worked in groups of four to create charts about the relationship between predators and prey.
 - b. In a number of elementary ELA lessons, small groups easily circulated through multiple “Daily Five” literacy activities, working with a teacher, a volunteer or a paraprofessional on one or more activities based on their learning needs.

C. Focus Area #3 – Differentiated Instruction and Classroom Culture. In 71 percent of observed lessons districtwide, observers found that teachers used appropriate resources aligned to students’ diverse learning needs. In 83 percent of observed classes overall, team members noted that classroom climate was characterized by respectful behavior, routines, tone and discourse.

1. Team members observed strong and moderate evidence that teachers used appropriate resources (e.g., people, time, technology, materials) aligned to students’ diverse learning needs (characteristic # 9) in 77 percent of elementary lessons, in 87 percent of middle-school lessons, and in 52 percent of high-school lessons.
 - a. The team observed four inclusion lessons co-taught by a content teacher and a special education teacher, each teaching and working with students.
 - b. Observers also saw small intervention groups in which struggling students worked with interventionists.
 - c. Many students and teachers used interactive white board technology, calculators, computers, videos, and iPads to support learning at all school levels.
 - d. Team members observed K-2 students use manipulatives such as white boards, tiles and dots in math lessons to help better understand math concepts.
2. Observers saw strong and moderate evidence of teachers using appropriate formative assessments to check for understanding and provide feedback to students (characteristic #11) in 84 percent of elementary classes, in 82 percent of middle-school classes, and in 70 percent of high-school classes.
 - a. In a lesson with two paraprofessionals and two teachers, the adults worked with small groups of four. Staff used questions beginning with phrases such as, “What else...?” “How else...?” and “Did you want to ask about...?” to check students’ understanding and push them to think more broadly and deeply about content.

- b. In almost all lessons with small-group learning activities, teachers circulated to work with students, check work, and respond to questions. This was also true of the many volunteers, paraprofessionals, and special education teachers.
- c. In multiple elementary-school lessons, students were asked to show their work on white boards, or indicate by “thumbs up,” “snapped fingers,” and “clapped hands” to signal they understood. In one lesson, the teacher asked students to restate their responses, insisting that they use math vocabulary.

Impact: When lessons provide clear learning objectives, set high expectations, and use appropriate learning strategies, students are more likely to be engaged in their learning. When lessons require students to assume responsibility for their learning and to engage in tasks to develop higher-order thinking skills, students can be well prepared for work and college. Finally, when instruction and resources are differentiated to meet students’ learning needs and formative assessments are used to check for students’ understanding, students have opportunities to meet their potential in the classroom and in their lives after high school.

2. Across the district there is a clear understanding of what constitutes high-quality teaching. The district is implementing multiple initiatives to improve instruction.

A. Under the leadership of the middle-high school principal, who is responsible for curriculum and instruction K-12, there is considerable clarity in the district about what constitutes effective teaching.

1. Effective instruction was consistently described in interviews as having the following components:

- Providing “engaging activities that promote higher-order thinking,” and are appropriately challenging and informed by the standards and student data;
 - Students know what they are doing and why; and
 - There is an appropriate assessment to measure students’ success and a plan if students do not meet that standard.
- a. At the high school, these expectations are consistently communicated at staff meetings and reinforced through the educator evaluation system.
 - b. “The Three Essentials,” a district-developed document, guides teaching and learning. The Three Essentials of teaching and learning are:
 - i. Task – Opportunity to Learn: builds background knowledge, requires higher-order thinking, and promote student articulation

- ii. Lesson Design – Effective Planning: makes learning intention clear, employs appropriate scaffolding (e.g., explanations, questioning, grouping, and manipulatives), provides for oral/written communication
- iii. Student Learning – Evidence: student investment and performance of understanding.

A rubric is used to evaluate how well lessons meet The Three Essentials.

- c. To boost higher-order thinking in lessons, a high-school English teacher has developed the TEACH model: Topic, Evidence, Alternative Points of View, Conclusion, How do you know? The model has been implemented in all departments.
2. The High School Faculty Handbook explains instructional expectations, gives useful information about what rigor looks like, describes how the learning strategies in Bloom’s Taxonomy look in lessons, and shows how multiple-choice questions can be designed to require higher-order thinking.
- B.** The district has implemented learning walks districtwide.
- 1. The district has worked with DSAC (District and School Assistance Center) for five years to develop and implement learning walks. The goal of learning walks is to improve the quality of instruction and to define instructional needs to inform decisions for professional development.
 - 2. In a learning walk, the administrator defines the focus of inquiry, such as student engagement or higher-order thinking. The team of teachers sets group norms, visits classrooms to look for trends and gather evidence which they place on a rubric, and have “hall work” to identify two pieces of evidence and check for objectivity and alignment. They then conduct two debriefs---as a team and then in a whole group---share summaries, and define next steps.
 - 3. Twice a year, 20 or so educators assigned to teams of 4 or 5 teachers and an administrator conduct learning walks in 15 classrooms in each school. The protocol is the same in all schools.
 - 4. Staff participating in learning walks rate practices such as student discourse, educator’s questioning, and learning objectives. Teachers are aware that learning walks will take place on a specific day but do not know which lessons will be observed.
 - 5. Teachers receive data (information) on the learning walks and can then use the data to improve practice. They can also ask administrators for specific feedback from learning walks if their lesson was observed.

6. Secondary school teachers reported that they no longer “stress out” about learning walks and attributed this to a districtwide cultural shift from a “fixed mindset” to a “growth mindset.” Teachers said that the middle-high school principal and the middle school assistant principal have transformed the environment for teaching and learning. Morale has improved, and teachers feel supported and want to take risks as well as ownership of problems.
 7. Middle- and high-school teachers said they noticed an improvement in teaching from last year’s learning walks to this year’s learning walks.
- C. The district has implemented lesson study at the middle and high schools to improve teaching. Interviewees stated that lesson study would take place at the elementary level in the spring or the fall 2017.
1. Lesson study, a collaborative activity developed with the DSAC in school year 2015-2016, takes place twice a year in grades 6-12.
 2. In lesson study, department teachers meet for several hours to develop a lesson as a group. One teacher teaches the lesson and others observe. The lesson is taught multiple times and focuses on strategy rather than on content, since content varies across classes and grade levels.
 - a. For example, in a lesson study a middle-school English teacher might teach a lesson on theme vs. plot. After the observations, teachers meet to debrief and suggest changes to the lesson, which all teachers then teach and then conduct another debrief. Lessons learned are applied to improve teaching skills.
 3. Sample notes from a lesson study debrief shared with the review team indicated a reflective practice that identified follow-up, took an open-minded approach to constructive criticism, and identified how collaborative work and of feedback can promote improvement in teaching and learning.
 4. The notes also identified several benefits to student learning derived from the lesson study: setting high expectations from the beginning, taking small steps to help foster critical-thinking skills, anticipating all the questions that may arise in class, taking more time for teachers to address student misconceptions, and helping to promote reflection on which instructional changes are effective and which are less effective.

Impact: The steps the district has taken in recent years to improve instruction have made a positive impact on teaching and on school and district culture. District leaders and teachers see their work as more collaborative and focused on teaching and learning. Over time, it is expected that these improvements likely will influence student learning to promote higher levels of achievement at all levels.

Challenges and Areas for Growth

3. The district has distributed leadership for curriculum, instruction, and professional development to the school level and has designated the middle-high school principal responsible for K-12 oversight.

- A.** After the position of curriculum director was eliminated at the end of school year 2014-2015, the district delegated districtwide responsibility for curriculum, instruction, and professional development (PD) to the high-school principal beginning in school year 2015-2016. This assignment was in addition to his school leadership role.
 - 1. In 2016-2017, the high-school principal took on the additional role of middle-school principal.
- B.** The middle-high school principal, the interim elementary-school principals, and the middle-school assistant principal (all members of the administrative team) are largely responsible for the entire educational process at their schools: improvement planning, budgeting, educator evaluation, PD, curriculum, instruction, and assessment---to name just the key responsibilities.
 - 1. The district does not have high-school department heads in the traditional sense. However, one lead teacher (who teaches 4/5 time) may run a faculty meeting and assist with calendar planning and instruction.
 - 2. The district does not have literacy or math coaches. At the middle and elementary schools, principals are solely responsible for instructional leadership.
 - 3. Administrative team members meet every other week. This provides a forum for updates on progress in curriculum, instruction, assessment and PD.
- C.** The review team was told that the middle-high school principal, as a peer, has limited authority and limited resources---especially time---to fulfill responsibilities.
 - 1. When the review team asked administrators whether the middle-high school principal had a “big picture,” systemic view of curriculum development at the school level, the review team was told that the work was hard to manage and often got put “on the back burner.”
 - 2. The middle-high school principal attends and participates in department meetings at the high school and middle school once or twice a month where he discusses topics such as essential questions for units and lesson objectives or reviews achievement data with staff.
 - 3. Teachers told the team that some believed it was “unfair” for the principal to be the principal of the high school and the middle school and oversee all K-12 curriculum, instruction, and PD initiatives.
 - 4. In addition, the superintendent noted that that the principals were responsible for curriculum and it was “overwhelming for them.” He stated that they were fulfilling this

responsibility and some things had to slip. He also said that he and some principals sometimes exchanged emails in the middle of the night or before dawn.

- D.** Time for curriculum development is limited and unevenly allocated across schools, resources are few, and much curriculum needs completion.
1. In 2016-2017, every school has one full PD day to write and align science curriculum. Substitutes are brought in to cover classes.
 2. Otherwise, teachers develop curriculum when time is allocated for curriculum initiatives during common planning time, faculty meetings, department meetings, and on full- or half-day PD days.
- E.** Curriculum alignment to the 2011 Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks is incomplete and inconsistent across the district. Horizontal and vertical alignment of the taught curriculum is a work in progress.
1. The team was told that the district has not had a research-based literacy program for K-5 ELA for five years. Teachers use guided reading (*Readers Workshop*) resourced by individual classroom libraries. Understanding by Design units aligned to state standards still guide some K-5 ELA lessons and some teachers choose to also use the Daily Five strategies K-2. Some teachers stated that they followed “the Common Core [state standards].”
 - a. Interviewees agreed that vertical alignment of ELA is inconsistent, with some content replication in grades 2 and 3. At Toy Town Elementary School, teachers are interpreting the writing standards and fine-tuning and revising writing rubrics.
 - b. Interviewees told the team that in kindergarten through grade 2 monthly grade-level meetings can ensure horizontal alignment, but vertical alignment has not been pursued.¹⁰
 2. In 2016-2017 the *EnVision MATH* program is being implemented as a curriculum resource for grades 1-2. However, since the program was purchased only for grades 1-2, grade 1 teachers have had to add kindergarten math concepts to grade 1 lessons. Teachers are aligning lessons to state standards using *EnVision MATH* and other materials, most recently at the November 8, 2016, PD day.
 3. In 2016-2017 *EnVision MATH* is in its second year of implementation in grades 3-5. Teachers stated that they need considerable PD to learn to teach the new program and alignment to state standards continues to be an issue.

¹⁰ Daily Five strategies are: Read to Self, Writing Center, Word Work, Listen to Reading, Reading Comprehension with Teacher.

4. In grades 6-12, the English and math curricula are fully aligned with state frameworks. However, some realignment is in process to revise some units overloaded with standards and to realign standards with new novels that teachers want to teach. Several history teachers told the team that they are meeting on their own time to incorporate the literacy anchor standards into units and lessons, noting that history should reinforce the skills that other teachers are teaching.
 - a. Interviewees said that vertical alignment between middle and high school curricula is a “struggle.” Three meetings are scheduled in 2016-2017 for grade 7 and 8 teachers to meet with high-school teachers to discuss vertical alignment. Horizontal alignment is monitored mainly through grade-level team meetings and evaluation observations.
 - b. The middle school is developing Year-at-a-Glance curriculum maps in ELA, math, and science; interviewees described these as works in progress. A review of all three Year-at-a-Glance documents indicated that they were all incomplete.
- F. School committee members and administrators said that given the current allocation of financial resources, the district does not have the financial flexibility to provide separate leadership and supervision for curriculum, instruction, and PD at the district level, which would lighten the current workload of school leaders.
1. The team was told that there was concern about giving the principals so much additional work and worry that the district might lose them to positions in other communities.
 2. Some school committee members expressed the view that the community’s finances are limited and the school committee is not in a position to advocate for more funding for the schools.

Impact: The divided responsibilities for curricular and instructional leadership across schools affect the ability of the district to have a fully coordinated educational program. In addition, it stretches thin the efforts of school leaders to manage all aspects of the educational process thoroughly and effectively.

Assessment

Contextual Background

Winchendon's organizational structure does not include central responsibility for assessment. Reduced resources and financial challenges have resulted in the reduction of central office administration to the superintendent, the director of pupil services, and the business manager. Principals and assistant principals have assumed responsibility for curriculum, instruction, and professional development, but there has been no formal designation of an individual to oversee assessment.

The availability and use of student achievement data varies across the schools. Each school implements the MCAS or PARCC summative assessments and analyzes the results to some degree. At the same time, opportunities to discuss assessment data varies widely from level to level and the analysis of these student achievement results takes place only at the individual schools. Little assessment data beyond MCAS and PARCC reaches the district office. Recently, the superintendent and the administrative team have recognized that without the availability and analysis of districtwide data, they cannot effectively function as a district. Without districtwide data, the district cannot make data-based decisions concerning staffing, resource allocation, program implementation, and planning. The superintendent told the review team that the administrative team is beginning to analyze district data and is relying on the middle and high school administrators to guide them as they begin to use data to make instructional decisions.

Challenges and Areas for Growth

- 1. The use of assessment data is uncoordinated in the district. Data is being used in various ways in the schools with varying opportunities at different levels for teachers to discuss data; however, there is limited use of data by district administrators and the school committee to make instructional decisions, allocate resources, and develop the budget.**

A. Staff in all schools reported examples of data collection and analysis.

1. High school staff reported instances of data collection and analysis.
 - a. The principal and teachers spoke of in-depth analysis of MCAS results.
 - b. Learning walks yield data on certain instructional focus areas. Summary data is shared with all teachers and is then used in various meetings.
 - c. Teachers schoolwide administer the TEACH writing assessment and bring data to professional development sessions for analysis.
2. Middle-school staff reported regular grade-level and content-area data meetings.
 - a. Interviewees said that student progress in ELA and math is monitored monthly in staff meetings attended by general and special education teachers, guidance counselors, and the assistant principal.

- b. Teachers participate in lesson study three times a year.
- 3. The middle school assistant principal is providing the two interim elementary principals and their teachers with data training.
- 4. Student support teams in both elementary schools and at the middle school use available data to identify support for struggling students brought forward by their teachers.
- B.** Opportunities to discuss assessment data by grade level and across content areas vary by school.
 - 1. At the elementary schools, teachers have daily prep periods that periodically become common planning times. This limits elementary teachers' opportunities to frequently analyze data by grade level or content area with their peers.
 - 2. At the middle school, teachers have common planning time and meet regularly to analyze data, frequently with the principal present.
 - 3. At the high school, teachers have daily common planning time to discuss assessment data.
 - 4. Common planning time is also the time allocated for work on lessons, common assessments, data analysis, and the curriculum.
- C.** At the district level, the review team found little evidence of the analysis and use of data.
 - 1. At the time of the site visit, school assessment data was not being forwarded to the district office. As a result, assessment data was not being analyzed at the district level.
 - a. The superintendent indicated that he is at the beginning stages of using data.
 - b. When asked about the use of data in making instructional decisions, the superintendent said that the administrative team is beginning to analyze district data and is relying on the middle and high school administrators to guide them as they begin to use data to make instructional decisions.
 - c. The superintendent reported that he is in the process of determining which data might be relevant in budget development. He suggested the possibility of looking at class size, reading scores, and district demographics.
 - d. When school committee members were asked about the budget development process, they did not provide evidence that data is used in making budget decisions.

Impact: Without adequate time to analyze data, teachers cannot know how students are progressing so cannot provide appropriate support to students to help them learn to the best of their ability. Without collection and analysis of data at the district level, the district cannot make appropriate and effective decisions about priorities, goals, and allocation of resources.

Recommendation

1. The district should develop uniform and integrated policies, structures, and practices for the continuous collection, analysis, and dissemination of student performance and other data sources.

- A.** The superintendent, principals, and program leaders, in collaboration with teachers, should develop specific strategies, timelines, and clear expectations for the use of data across the district.
 - 1. Building on the practices in place at some grade levels, the district should establish systematic, consistent processes for the analysis and use of assessment data.
 - 2. The district should ensure that educators at all levels use data strategically to inform instruction, ongoing curriculum revision, program evaluation, and the educator evaluation system.
 - 3. The district should ensure sufficient time at all levels to analyze data.
- B.** Ongoing, targeted training in the collection, analysis, and use of student performance data should be provided for staff in each school, grade level, and subject area.
- C.** District and school leaders should systematically incorporate student assessment results and other pertinent data into all aspects of policy, prioritization, and decision making, including budget development, and district and school improvement plans, and the evaluation of educational programs and services.

Benefits from implementing this recommendation will include clarity and consistency in the district's use of data for decision making. Implementing this recommendation will help district leaders and teachers to understand, and provide professional development for, the analysis and use of data to improve instructional skills and student achievement. It will help all stakeholders to evaluate programs, texts, and services. It will enable the district to provide all students with greatly improved learning opportunities and academic outcomes.

Recommended resource:

- ESE's *Assessment Literacy Self-Assessment and Gap Analysis Tool* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/ddm/webinar/PartI-GapAnalysis.pdf>) is intended to support districts in understanding where their educators fit overall on a continuum of assessment literacy. After determining where the district as a whole generally falls on the continuum, districts can determine potential next steps.

Human Resources and Professional Development

Contextual Background

The district has not achieved consistency in the implementation of its educator evaluation system. For example, a review of teachers and administrator evaluation folders showed that feedback provided to educators by evaluators was not always actionable and substantive. As a result, some teachers were not given recommendations or suggestions that would improve classroom instruction or promote professional growth. In addition, some educators had not completed a self-assessment and goal setting documents did not always include measureable student learning goals. Also, the process of evaluating school and district leaders is less well-developed than that of teachers. Most of the evaluations of administrators reviewed, including the evaluation of the superintendent, included general narrative about accomplishments, but did not make recommendations that pertained directly to improved classroom practice or professional growth.

The district has in place a three-year mentoring program for teachers new to teaching and for all new teachers in the district. The program has an organized structure which includes elementary and secondary school mentor coordinators and approximately 17 trained mentors. The district has developed a mentor manual, which describes the roles and responsibilities of mentors, mentees, mentor coordinators, and principals.

Four full days and several half days are scheduled for professional development (PD) for teachers; two of the days are scheduled before school starts. Because the district does not have central office staff to guide PD, school principals are responsible for determining PD offerings in the schools. District and school leaders and teachers mentioned numerous opportunities for professional learning besides scheduled PD. For example, the district works with the DSAC (District and School Assistance Center) on learning walks and lesson studies and teachers and administrators emphasized the value of this work. District leaders said that each department does at least two lesson studies. The process includes teachers collaborating on the development of a lesson; one teacher teaches it and the rest of the department observes. PD is also an integral part of common planning time, faculty and grade-level meetings, and the mentoring program.

The district does evaluate the quality of professional development offerings. The district has a PD committee made up of representatives from the schools and central office. Although the committee has not been meeting regularly, at the time of the onsite in late November/early December 2016, district leaders planned to reengage the committee in PD decision making.

Strength Finding

1. The district has in place a new teacher induction program that includes a three-year mentoring component.

A. Interviews and a document review indicated that the district provides an induction program to teachers new to teaching or new to the district.

1. The new teacher induction program includes an orientation day before the start of the school year and a three-year mentoring program.
 - a. The day includes an orientation to the community, the district, the curriculum, and the schools that teachers are assigned to. Teachers learn about the history of the community, the philosophy and goals of the curriculum, and school district policies and procedures. In addition, they receive a tour of their school buildings.
 - b. New teachers participate in 50 hours of mentoring activities during the first year and another 50 hours combined during years 2 and 3.
2. The mentoring program is overseen by two mentor coordinators: one for the elementary schools and one for the middle and high schools. Both are new to the positions in 2016-2017.
 - a. During the first year of the mentoring program, the mentee meets with the mentor program coordinator for a minimum of 15 hours. In addition, during the first half of the school year the mentee meets with the mentor daily or weekly for a total of 17 hours. During the second half of the year mentors and mentees meet approximately one half hour per week.
 - i. A teacher new to the district confirmed that mentees meet regularly with mentors and mentors meet with mentor coordinators monthly.
 - b. The mentor handbook states that mentors observe new teachers two times during the school year. Mentor coordinators said that mentors observe classes and complete a form describing what they saw.
 - c. During years two and three, teachers have similar but less frequent meetings with the mentor coordinator and their mentor.
3. The mentor coordinators said that the district has approximately 17 trained mentors who each receive a \$750 stipend for mentoring a teacher in the first year and \$375 in subsequent years.
 - a. The coordinators stated that they collaborate with principals when assigning mentors to mentees. The mentor coordinators also said that their goals include having mentors

trained in each grade and subject area and assigning mentors to mentees who work in the same school. They also consider matching personalities when assigning mentors to new teachers.

- b. The mentor coordinators told the team that four teachers were in their first year of mentoring at the elementary schools and seven were in the first year at the middle and high schools.

B. Mentors and a coach have been assigned to new administrators.

1. The superintendent said that he is participating in the New Superintendent Induction Program conducted by ESE and the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents and has been assigned a coach.
2. The interim principals at the elementary schools have been assigned mentors.

Impact: A high-quality and well-sourced induction and mentoring program that assigns experienced teachers to support new teachers is important to the retention of teachers as well as to improved instruction. A mentoring program creates a culture of support for teachers and administrators across the district. The return on this investment likely is realized with higher rates of teacher retention, which likely leads to more consistent instruction and improved student achievement.

Challenges and Areas for Growth

2. Evaluators are not consistently providing educators with actionable and specific feedback that enhances practice or contributes to professional growth.

A. The onsite team reviewed the folders of 21 teachers randomly selected from across the district.

1. The evaluation folders reviewed by the team did not always include actionable feedback to improve classroom instruction or promote professional growth.
2. Evaluative documentation reviewed in TeachPoint, the district's evaluation management tool, generally included documentation of goal setting, self-assessments, observations, formative or summative assessments/evaluations, and evidence folders. Several files did not include self-assessments.
3. Evaluations were for the most part informative, in that they included information related to student and professional practice goals and narrative on goal progress and information about the accomplishments of teachers; however, 6 of the 21 teacher folders did not include, in formative and summative assessments/evaluations, high-quality, actionable feedback that would lead to improved practice or professional growth.
4. Teachers in focus groups told the team that they did receive helpful oral feedback from evaluators, principals, or mentors during scheduled or unannounced observations. High-school teachers said that teachers are comfortable asking for feedback or being observed.

- B.** Approximately one-third of folders reviewed did not have a goal setting document or the goal setting documents did not include SMART goals (Specific and Strategic; Measureable; Action-Oriented; Rigorous, Realistic, and Results-Focused; and Timed and Tracked).
 - 1. Examples of goals that were not SMART include: “to continue to implement a workshop model in ELA...” and “all students will show an increase in basic reasoning skills....”
 - 2. One school leader expressed the view that teachers understood what SMART goals were, but had difficulty developing goals that are measureable. Another stated that the focus now is on the collection of meaningful evidence related to goal progress.
- C.** Because of administrator turnover at the schools and central office, the process of evaluating administrators is in the developing stage. Most of the eight administrator evaluation folders reviewed did include self-assessment, goal setting, and evidence documents; summative evaluations of administrators included information about administrator accomplishments but did not include recommendations that contributed to improved practice and professional growth.
- D.** Interviewees said the district has approximately eight evaluators.
 - 1. School leaders told the team that conducting evaluations is a priority and all evaluators have been trained in evaluation techniques.
 - 2. Teachers are trained in the educator evaluation process during summer orientation.
 - 3. Interviews of school and district leaders and a review of administrator team meeting agendas indicated that evaluators calibrate evaluation ratings during learning walks and during administrator meetings using ESE observation videos as a resource.
 - 4. The school committee’s an end-of-cycle summative evaluation of the superintendent for school year 2015-2016 did not include recommendations that might mean improved practice and professional growth. The superintendent was appointed permanent superintendent in December of 2015 after serving as interim superintendent. An update on the professional practice, student learning, and district improvement goals of the superintendent was appended to the evaluation.

Impact: An educator evaluation system that does not consistently provide high-quality, actionable feedback limits the ability of teachers and administrators to enhance their professional practice and improve student learning opportunities and achievement.

3. The district does not have a well-resourced professional development program consistently aligned with district, school, and educator goals.

- A.** School and district leaders told the review team that the district does not have a professional development (PD) plan and PD is primarily school based.

1. Interviewees told the team that several years ago the district had a PD director and an active PD committee that recommended PD offerings and PD allocations across the district.
 - a. Because of declining resources and reductions in central office staff, in recent years the PD committee has had fewer meetings; responsibility for PD was assigned to the high-school principal after the director of curriculum left the district.
 - b. Interviewees stated that the PD committee is becoming more active and each school has representatives on the PD committee. At the time of the onsite, the PD committee had met once in 2016-2017 and more meetings were planned.
- B.** Interviews with district and school leaders and a review of district and school calendars indicated that the district has four full days scheduled for PD. Two of the four days are scheduled in August before classes begin. In addition, several half days are scheduled during the year.
- C.** PD at the middle and high schools is built around the goals in the School Improvement Plan (SIP).
 1. On November 8, 2016, a jigsaw activity on co-teaching a lesson was held the high school. This activity was connected to an activity in the SIP related to improving educator collaboration, which is connected to the school's overall goal of increasing student achievement.
 2. Examples of PD at the middle school include learning walk training and sessions related to developing a growth mindset.
- D.** At the elementary schools, the new interim principals have focused PD on new math programs and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS).
- E.** The 2015-2018 Investment Plan of District (IPOP) indicates that school administrators are to develop annual PD plans based on an assessment of needs by June of each year.
 1. At the time of the onsite, only the high and middle schools had developed PD calendars for school year 2016-2017. Because the interim elementary principals were appointed to their positions just before school opened, they had not developed calendars.
- F.** The draft strategic plan being developed by the superintendent includes a strategic objective to create a PD plan that will increase educator effectiveness.
 1. To begin the process of developing a PD program, district administrators participated in a summer "boot camp" to receive training in Edviate, an on-demand professional learning system that enables teachers to differentiate PD by accessing online videos on specific topics.

- a. Some administrators indicated that Edviate is an effective way to differentiate instruction and opens up more opportunities for relevant PD, but noted that the district has not assigned responsibility for oversight of the Edviate system.

Impact: When PD programs are uncoordinated, not developed collaboratively, and are not consistently informed by district and school goals and priorities, staff needs, and student achievement data, the professional growth of teachers is limited and the district cannot make effective progress toward goals and improved student outcomes.

Recommendations

1. The district should develop policies and practices to effectively promote the culture of growth oriented collaborative supervision and evidence-based evaluation that is the goal of the educator evaluation system.

- A. The district should review its current supervisory policies, practices, and expectations to ensure that the quantity and quality of evaluative feedback, both written and oral, is enhanced.
 1. The district should support and monitor the skills and practices of evaluators to ensure that they are regularly providing all staff with high-quality instructional feedback that is timely, informative, instructive, and capable of promoting individual growth and overall effectiveness. All administrators should receive ongoing training to enhance their ability to observe and to analyze instruction and to provide feedback focused on professional practice, growth, and student achievement.
- B. The administrative team should develop a feedback rubric for evaluators that would ensure all feedback is high quality. The rubric should consider feedback priorities, what is actionable, relationship to goals, and timeliness.
- C. The administrative team should continue to calibrate evaluation ratings and feedback---for example, by watching videos from the ESE educator effectiveness video library.

Benefits: Implementing this recommendation will improve the quality of educator evaluations, reinforce the importance of the role that educator evaluation plays in helping teachers and administrators improve their practices and grow professionally, and improve student achievement.

Recommended resources:

- Educator Evaluation Implementation Surveys for Teachers (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/eval/resources/implementation/TeachersSurvey.pdf>) and Administrators (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/eval/resources/implementation/AdministratorsSurvey.pdf>) are designed to provide schools and districts with information about the status of their educator evaluation implementation. Information from these surveys can be used to target district resources and supports where most needed to strengthen implementation.

- The *Educator Effectiveness Guidebook for Inclusive Practice* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/guidebook>) includes tools for districts, schools, and educators that are aligned to the MA Educator Evaluation Framework and promote evidence-based best practices for inclusion following the principles of Universal Design for Learning, Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, and Social and Emotional Learning.
- ESE's "What to Look For" Observation Guides (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/candi/observation/>) describe what observers should expect to see in a classroom at a particular grade level in a specific subject area. This includes the knowledge and skills students should be learning and using (as reflected in state learning standards) and best practices related to classroom curriculum, instruction, and assessment for each subject area. The guides are not designed to replace any evaluation system or tools districts currently use, but are a resource to help classroom observers efficiently identify what teachers

2. The district should align its professional development program with district improvement initiatives.

- A. The superintendent should continue to develop the strategic objective to create a professional development (PD) program to improve educator effectiveness.
- B. District leaders should reactivate the district's professional development committee to plan and oversee PD for the district.
 - 1. The committee should develop a PD plan for the district that is aligned with the district's goals and initiatives and the district's instructional model (see Leadership and Governance recommendation above).
 - a. As part of this effort, the committee should outline and document a set of learning experiences for its educators that is systematic, sustained, and aligned with district goals.
 - 2. The plan should identify specific PD needs, determine how they might be met, and recommend adjustments in PD practices to meet them.
 - 3. The plan should address needs indicated by student achievement data and trends from classroom observations. It should include goals focused on improving teacher practice and student outcomes.
 - 4. The plan should include an evaluation component---perhaps building on the evaluation tool that the district currently uses---to ensure that PD is effective and that it improves classroom instruction.
 - 5. Professional development requires a long-term commitment by administrators and embedded support structures, such as facilitated team meetings, to convey and promote a common understanding of instructional practices expected from all educators.

- C. The district might consider scheduling more full or early release PD.
- D. The district might consider implementing train-the-trainer sessions as way to build on the existing culture of collaboration.

Benefits: Developing a districtwide PD plan that is driven by district improvement efforts and includes expected learning experiences for educators and student achievement outcomes will likely enhance the skills of teachers and improve student achievement.

Recommended resources:

- *The Massachusetts Standards for Professional Development* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/pd/standards.pdf>) describe, identify, and characterize what high quality learning experiences should look like for educators.
- *Quick Reference Guide: Educator Evaluation & Professional Development* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/eval/resources/QRG-ProfessionalDevelopment.pdf>) describes how educator evaluation and professional development can be used as mutually reinforcing systems to improve educator practice and student outcomes.
- *ESE's Professional Development Self- Assessment Guidebook* (<http://www.mass.gov/edu/docs/ease/accountability/dsac/professional-development-self-assessment-guide.pdf>) provides tools for analyzing professional development offerings' alignment with the Massachusetts Standards for Professional Development, the Educator Evaluation Framework, and the Standards and Indicators of Effective Practice.

Student Support

Contextual Background

Currently, pull-out and push-in models are used to provide instructional interventions for students. In some cases, special education teachers pull students out of the classroom for extra help during special time periods for interventions. Special educators and paraprofessionals provide push-in services; some general education teachers reported that more special education support is needed in their classrooms and paraprofessionals are not evenly deployed across the district schools. Most paraprofessionals are positioned from pre-kindergarten through grade 2. Some teachers mentioned relying on special education staff either through co-teaching or through interventions to help them resolve student behavior issues in the classroom.

The district has provided recent professional development (PD) and training related to social-emotional and behavior support strategies but has not offered recent PD about differentiating instruction. Some educators reported that teachers know how to differentiate instruction, noting that newer teachers have had adequate training in differentiation as part of their professional preparation.

Educators in the district expressed the view that college feels out of reach for many families, especially because of limited Advanced Placement (AP) course offerings at the high school that would alleviate some college tuition expenses. Administrators reported that the district offers nine AP courses. These educators also spoke of limited public transportation to local post-secondary institutions. Mount Wachusett Community College does offer transportation and dual enrollment to high school students.

Overall chronic absence and drop-out rates outpace state rates and graduation rates are below state rates. To address this, the district has established an alternative high school, Murdock Academy for Success (the Academy), located in the same building as the high school. At Murdock Academy students can receive small-group instruction and MCAS preparation in math and ELA from general education teachers, and high-school students at risk for not graduating can recover credits via Edviate, an online learning system. Students who have dropped out can re-enter and make up credits for graduation.

Strength Finding

- 1. The district is in the early stages of implementing a comprehensive tiered system of supports, and has mapped all services, both academic and behavioral, for each academic level.**
 - A.** Interviews and a document review indicated that pre-K–8 educators are building a system of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) with professional development for teachers and interventions for students based on data.
 1. Interviewees reported that both Memorial and Toy Town elementary schools have school-based PBIS teams who participate in student support team (SST) meetings about students' behavior.

2. Interviewees told the team that educators in the elementary and middle schools have implemented PBIS practices and received PBIS training through Tier 1. They have successfully implemented PBIS Tier 1, enabling them to receive training for Tier 2 implementation.
 - a. One interviewee reported that the middle school assistant principal has created a binder for all teachers from which to pull PBIS activities to implement in classes.
 3. District staff reported that at the middle school Tier 1 and Tier 2 teams regularly review School-Wide Information System (SWIS) data, i.e., office referral data on student behaviors, along with teacher referrals, to group students for interventions.
- B. Co-teaching with special education teachers and general education teachers is an emerging districtwide practice to support tiered instructional and behavioral interventions in the classroom for all students.**
1. Co-teaching in core subject classes along with supporting professional development are in place at the middle and high schools.
 - a. An administrator reported that for the past several years a special education teacher has been assigned as a co-teacher in four of the five core areas at the high schools.
 - b. Teachers reported that at the high school, special education teachers meet with other teachers during department common planning time.
- C. At the high-school level, a tiered system of interventions focuses on fulfillment of academic requirements for graduation and provides resources and interventions for support, using data analysis. Although the tiered system does not have a behavioral component, the high school implements other strategies addressing behavior, including the use of a restorative justice approach and the support and guidance of the school resource officer.**
1. Tier I is for general education students who are not struggling. The high school has an advisory period for academic interventions, has developed common assessments, holds collaborative data reviews leading to classroom intervention plans, and offers a freshman orientation and check-ins that may lead to referrals to a guidance counselor.
 2. Tier II is for students failing a course. Students in this tier are expected to participate in, for example, an academic contract, conferences with the principal and a parent, after-school tutoring, online credit recovery, and/or special education testing.
 3. Tier III is for students at school who are not sufficiently engaged in learning. Students in this tier participate, for example, in meetings with the principal and a parent, in academic in-house suspensions, and/or in a support class. They may be mentored by a peer who supports their success or may be referred to the Murdock Academy for Success.

- a. Interviewees described the Academy as a blended approach to instruction featuring core high school classes in math and ELA taught in small groups by Murdock High School teachers and/or a variety of self-paced online courses that students complete on their own.
- b. Students at the high school who are at risk for not having enough credits to graduate on time can recover credits via online courses at the Academy, which is located in the same building as the high school.
- c. A district leader reported that the Academy is also an educationally appropriate placement to “recapture” dropouts and provide them support to recover credits and work toward graduation.

Impact: A comprehensive districtwide system of student supports, addressing academics as well as discipline and behavior practices, creates a learning environment that addresses the needs of all students and reflects high expectations for all students’ learning.

Challenges and Areas for Growth

2. The district has not established a culture of continuous learning that supports all students’ participation in learning at each school level. Chronic student absence and drop-out rates outpace state rates and district graduation rates lag state rates.

- A.** Student attendance has decreased in recent years, and chronic absence has increased and is high, especially at the high school.
 1. According to ESE data, the student attendance rate has decreased steadily, from 94.3 percent in 2014 to 94.1 percent in 2015 to 93.9 percent in 2016, compared with the 2016 state rate of 94.6 percent. The chronic absence rate has increased steadily, from 12.6 percent in 2014 to 13.1 percent in 2015 to 16.2 percent in 2016, compared with the 2016 state rate of 12.3 percent. The percentages of chronically absent students were as follows: 22.6 for grade 9; 30.0 for grade 10; 37.2 for grade 11; and 23.9 for grade 12.
 2. Administrators and staff reported that at the high school staff have some practices in place to increase attendance, particularly for chronically absent students.
 - a. The school social worker goes to the homes of chronically absent students---sometimes with the school resource officer---to offer students a ride to school and determine why they are not coming to school.
 - b. The high school assistant principal has created an attendance committee. He assigns a peer mentor to chronically absent students who will help them manage their arrival to school. The school rewards students whose attendance increases. Students whose attendance does not improve are told that they “owe” hours of instructional time to be made up via tutoring after school.

- c. In the case of chronic absence, the high school principal, supported by the school resource officer, files 51A forms¹¹ when needed.
- B.** High-school policies related to the number of acceptable absences do not promote regular attendance.
 - 1. The high-school student-parent handbook states that nine unexcused absences per semester will result in a loss of credit.
 - a. As long as they can be validated, absences for injury or illness, serious personal or family problems, professional appointments, and college, vocational, and military appointments do not count toward the total number of absences that trigger consequences.
 - 2. Students who have exceeded the maximum number of absences receive a letter informing them that they must apply for a waiver of the loss of credit.
- C.** Although the rate of students completing MassCore¹² requirements has grown in recent years, it has consistently and substantially lagged the state rate.
 - 1. According to ESE data, the percentage of high school graduates who completed MassCore was 22.9 percent in 2011, 21.1 percent in 2012, 20.7 percent in 2013, 27.8 percent in 2014, and 31.8 percent in 2015, compared with the 2015 state rate of 72.3 percent.
 - 2. According to information provided by the district, the district's elimination of two graduation requirements, four years of math and two years of foreign language, prevents students from completing MassCore requirements, compromising their preparation for opportunities after high school.
 - 3. Administrators reported that recently graduation requirements were changed so that starting with the class of 2020 the full recommended Massachusetts High School Program of Studies (MassCore) is required for graduation.
- D.** Many students in the district do not graduate in four years.

¹¹ "Report of Child(ren) Alleged to be Suffering from Abuse or Neglect." This form states that "mandated reporters are required to submit this form when they have reasonable cause to believe that a child is suffering from abuse and/or neglect."

¹² The Massachusetts High School Program of Studies (MassCore) is intended to help high-school graduates arrive at college or the workplace well prepared and reduce the number of students taking remedial courses in college. MassCore recommends a comprehensive set of subject area courses and units as well as other learning opportunities to complete before graduating from high school. The recommended program of studies includes: four years of English, four years of math, three years of a lab-based science, three years of history, two years of the same foreign language, one year of an arts program and five additional "core" courses such as business education, health, and/or technology. MassCore also includes additional learning opportunities including AP classes, dual enrollment, a senior project, online courses for high-school or college credit, and service or work-based learning.

1. According to ESE data, although the district's 4-year graduation rate has improved slightly in recent years, from 74.5 percent in 2011 to 73.9 percent in 2012 to 84.5 percent in 2013 to 80.0 percent in 2014 to 75.0 percent in 2015, it consistently lags the state's 4-year graduation rate, which has improved from 83.4 percent in 2011 to 84.7 percent in 2012 to 85.0 percent in 2013 to 80.0 percent in 2014 to 87.3 percent in 2015.
 2. Similarly, although the district's 5-year graduation rate has improved in recent years, from 75.8 percent in 2010 to 76.4 percent in 2011 to 76.1 percent in 2012 to 86.6 percent in 2013 to 83.2 percent in 2014, it is lower than the state's 5-year graduation rate, which has improved from 84.7 percent in 2010 to 86.3 percent in 2011 to 87.5 percent in 2012 to 87.7 percent in 2013 to 88.5 percent in 2014.
- E. According to ESE data, between 2011 and 2015 the district's drop-out rate rose, from 3.6 percent in 2011 to 2.6 percent in 2012 and 2013 to 2.8 percent in 2014 to 5.5 percent in 2015. The district's drop-out rate was consistently higher than the state rate, which was 2.7 percent in 2011, 2.5 percent in 2012, 2.2 percent in 2013, 2.0 percent in 2014, and 2.0 percent in 2015.

Impact: In a district without an established culture of continuous learning, students may struggle in school because of inadequate preparation and support at each level and may not be sufficiently engaged in learning, may not persist in their education through graduation, and so may not be prepared for post-secondary education and career options.

Recommendation

1. **District leaders, teachers, staff, and members of the larger community should work collaboratively to establish a culture of continuous learning that spans all academic levels and consistently supports student attendance, course completion and grade promotion, encourages on-time graduation, and ensures that all students are college-and-career ready.**
 - A. District leaders should work collaboratively with teachers, staff, and other stakeholders to improve practices with the goal of full integration and continuity of support services.
 1. District leaders should analyze student performance data from multiple sources over time to better target student supports and to plan improvements in programs and services.
 2. The district should continue to pursue its goal of providing all teaching and support staff with focused professional development in effectively using differentiation and accommodations to create classrooms where all students have equal access to high-quality curriculum.
 - B. The strategic plan should include goals and strategies related to establishing a culture of continuous learning in the district.

Benefits: By carrying out these recommendations the district likely will be able to improve programs and practices so that all students have equal access to high-quality instruction that meets their individual needs.

Financial and Asset Management

Contextual Background

Student enrollment in the district has declined over the past decade, with a loss of 463 students between 2006 and 2016. The rate at which Winchendon resident students are choosing to attend charter, vocational, and other area schools presents a serious financial concern to the district. The numbers of school choice-out students are much higher than the numbers of school choice-in students. In fiscal years 2013, 2014, and 2015, for example, the number of Winchendon students choosing to attend other public and charter schools resulted in net decreases of 138, 125, and 125, respectively. In addition, a review of minutes of school committee meetings indicated that Winchendon regularly exceeds its original annual “quota” of 24 students at Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical School (Montachusett) and annually sends 30-40 students per grade to Montachusett.

The town of Winchendon has experienced severe financial difficulties in recent years. In fiscal year 2014, the town was unable to meet operating obligations of approximately \$5 million. After appropriating nearly \$1.7 million of free cash, the town had to borrow over \$3 million dollars from the commonwealth through emergency legislation. The financial crisis was attributed primarily to health insurance claims at a time when the town was self-insured. The town has since joined the state’s group insurance commission for health insurance coverage. At the time of the onsite in late November/early December 2016, the town had paid back one-half of the loan and had been steadily building back its free cash to address emergencies.

The district met required net school spending in fiscal years 2016 and 2017.

Strength Finding

1. The superintendent, school committee members, and town officials have worked to improve the relationship between the district and the town.

- A.** Interviews and a document review indicated that because of a crisis in town finances in fiscal year 2014, the working relationship between district administrators and town officials became strained and “contentious.”
 - 1. A substantial budget deficit caused by town and school financial management issues required the town to spend all of its free cash and borrow money from the state through special legislation.
 - 2. The FY15 Management Letter from the town’s auditors stated that an obstacle to address as the town dealt with its financial issues was “The continued lack of poor communication between the departments; more specifically between the School Department and the Town Accountant’s Office.”
- B.** Many stakeholders stated that the superintendent has worked to address budget issues and to restore trust between the town and the schools.

1. The superintendent meets monthly with town officials and telephones the town manager as necessary to keep him updated on issues. In addition, the school committee holds quarterly public meetings with both the selectmen and the town's finance committee.
2. Many constituents told interviewers that the superintendent has improved the relationship between the town and schools.
 - a. A school committee member stated that the relationship has improved with the hiring of a new town manager and town accountant.
 - b. Teachers stated that the relationship has become more positive noting that the new town manager attended a school council meeting and is working cooperatively with the superintendent.
 - c. The new town manager stated that the superintendent has turned around the school department's relationship with the town.
- C. The new business manager is working with the superintendent and town officials to resolve accounting and reporting issues.
 1. A full-time business manager was hired by the district in July 2016 after the school committee voted at its March 3, 2016 meeting not to renew the contract for outsourced business services.
 2. The new business manager communicates with the new town manager and new town accountant regularly.
 3. Working with the town accountant, the business manager is setting up a new chart of accounts in the MUNIS accounting system to better account for line item expenses.
 4. Long-standing payroll problems have been resolved through meetings between the business manager and the payroll service company.

Impact: With improved communication and a better working relationship between district leaders and town officials, district leaders are more focused on improving student achievement, and all the district's stakeholders and the community at large likely have a clearer understanding of the district's challenges and goals.

Challenges and Areas for Growth

2. **Declining enrollment and the loss of financial resources have resulted in staff reductions and reassignments as well as decreased program resources.**
 - A. Enrollment in the district is declining.

1. According to ESE data, in-district enrollment has decreased by 20 percent, from 1,626 in 2010 to 1,291 in 2016.
- B.** The number of Winchendon student residents choosing to attend other public schools (including charter schools) far exceeds the number of out-of-district students choosing to attend Winchendon schools, resulting in substantial revenue losses.

**Table 20: Winchendon Public Schools
Number of Choice-In and Choice-Out Students, 2011-2015**

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Choice-In	25	31	29	27	36
Choice-Out	149	162	167	152	161
Net	-124	-131	-138	-125	-125

**Table 21: Winchendon Public Schools
School Choice Revenue and Expenses, 2011-2015**

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Choice In	\$164,936	\$196,470	\$176,333	\$146,214	\$305,721
Choice Out	\$918,319	\$1,010,913	\$999,937	\$986,462	\$1,121,490
Net	-\$753,383	-\$814,443	-\$823,604	-\$840,248	-\$815,769

1. In addition to Winchendon students choosing to attend other public schools, the district sends 30-40 students per grade each year to Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical School (Montachusett) of which it is a member and sending district. In fiscal year 2015, 146 Winchendon students attended Montachusett; in fiscal year 2016, 152 Winchendon students attended, and in fiscal year 2017, 155 Winchendon students attended Montachusett.
- C.** The superintendent stated that in fiscal year 2017 a total of 280 Winchendon students are attending school in other communities.
- D.** In response to financial restrictions, district administrators have found it necessary to reduce the number of districtwide staff and school administrators as well as to make other reductions in programs and materials.
1. The superintendent stated that the district has reduced district administrators from 15 to 11 because of budget restrictions. The curriculum director position was eliminated in academic

- year 2014-2015 and the middle school principal position was replaced with an assistant principal in 2016-2017.
2. Staff expressed concern about the reductions to programs and classroom materials that have resulted from budget constraints.
 - a. Naviance software for college and career readiness is not offered to 9th graders because of an absence of funds.
 - b. The district does not have a K-5 ELA program. Teachers expressed hope that a more comprehensive program would be achieved when funding became available.
 - c. Principals stated that the district does not have money for science supplies, noting that they will need to find grant money for those supplies.
 - d. Teachers said that English textbooks are old and in disrepair.
 - E. The recent financial crisis that necessitated the borrowing of several million dollars from the commonwealth may prevent the town from appropriating additional money to the school department in the near future.
 1. A town official stated that the school department is very sensitive to the town's financial position as the town repays the loan obtained through the debt legislation.
 - a. The town official added that the superintendent has discussed sharing services such as maintenance and technology with the town to leverage human and financial resources.

Impact: The significant loss of funds because of the large number of students choosing to attend other schools has required the district to reduce administrative staff, programs, and essential materials. These reductions likely have a negative impact on student progress and may mean that even more students will choose a school other than the Winchendon Public Schools. This adverse spiral could further decrease tuition revenue and greatly affect the ability of the district to address its student achievement goals.

3. Accounting software problems and faulty accounting and financial practices have resulted in numerous errors in district financial accounts and reports.

- A. Interviews with town officials and a document review indicated that because of systemic problems with the town's accounting software, district administrators and town officials continue to have difficulty producing accurate financial reports.
 1. Auditors' reports in fiscal years 2014 and 2015 identified obstacles to accurately identifying account deficits.
 - a. The FY14 Management Letter from the auditors stated that "The most significant issue is the inefficiencies in the Town's operating system. While MUNIS is often considered the most powerful municipal operating system on the market, the manner in which it was

set up at the Town has historically required a work around approach to efficiently analyze data and available fund balance amounts. This was exacerbated by an upgrade made in fiscal 2013 that resulted in the functionality of MUNIS being adversely impacted and causing incorrect data anomalies regarding carryover funds and their proper carryover balances.”

- b. The FY15 Management Letter from the auditors stated that “...while some improvements over the prior year were observed, the Town continued to struggle.” Included in a list of major obstacles identified was “The continued struggle with the MUNIS operating system and the workarounds necessary to properly understand the posted activity.”
 2. Town officials began work on obtaining a more current version of MUNIS during fiscal year 2016. At the time of the review in late November/early December 2016, a town official said that set-up of the newer version of MUNIS was continuing.
 - a. The town official acknowledged that improvements in financial reporting on the town’s side would enable better financial reports for the school department.
 3. The district’s new business manager said that he is learning the MUNIS accounting software, noting that he finds it cumbersome and difficult to find historical data.
- B.** Accounting practices used by the previous business manager (an external company) created errors in recordkeeping and financial reporting.
 1. Interviewees said that the previous business manager operated on a bottom-line budget method, paid bills out of incorrect accounts, and did not process budget-line transfers in a timely manner.
 2. Accurate records of teachers’ lane change salary increases were not maintained resulting in inaccurate compensation and difficulty in recreating past salary history.
 3. Fiscal year 2016 grant expenses were erroneously charged to the operating budget causing several grants to be underspent and precipitating the probable return of grant money to the state and federal governments.
 4. The new business manager found many unpaid invoices going back as far as 2008. The special town meeting in November 2016 did not approve payment of these past due expenses. District administrators told the team that they would attempt to get funds to pay the past due bills at the annual town meeting in the spring 2017.
 5. The new business manager has requested an extension to complete the fiscal year 2016 end-of-year report because of his unfamiliarity with the accounting system and because “he’s working with someone else’s numbers.”
- C.** Although progress has been made, the new business manager continues to have difficulty producing accurate expense reports and creating better systems and controls because of the time and difficulty involved in correcting past inaccuracies.

1. Financial reports provided periodically for principals contain inaccurate negative balances related to budgeted compared with actual expenditures.
2. The business manager stated that he would like to make the business office more responsible to the staff and put controls in place to ensure that the district complies with state purchasing requirements. However, he finds that he is spending so much of his time trying to find and correct past accounting errors that there is little time for these new initiatives.

Impact: Time and effort spent on understanding and correcting accounting and recordkeeping errors have slowed the efforts of district administrators to achieve sound financial management.

4. Budget and financial documents are incomplete, contain errors, and do not include historical trends or all sources of revenue.

- A. The district's FY17 proposed budget document does not include actual expense amounts for previous years.
 1. The FY17 Proposed Budget contains a column for the FY16 budget, the FY17 proposed amounts, and the FY16-17 change.
 2. When asked about budget documents that contained actual expenses for previous years, the business manager said he was not aware that those budget documents existed.
- B. The FY17 Proposed Budget document contains errors in FY16, FY17 and the Total Grants S/R columns.
 1. A column titled "Total Grants S/R" is meant to show grant expenses but is incomplete or inaccurate on some budget lines. When asked about the \$119,535 operating budget reduction in 8th grade teachers' salaries and a \$128,689 charge to grants salaries in the same line, an administrator stated that the salaries were reclassified to a grant but that the reclassification was wrong.
 2. When asked about a software budget increase of \$26,192 in the Toy Town Elementary Technology FY17 budget, an administrator stated that the amount was not an increase but was also budgeted in fiscal year 2016 although the amount shown in the budget that year was \$0.
- C. The district does not have a revolving account budget document.
 1. When asked about the revolving funds budget, the business manager stated that there was no budget for those funds; he acknowledged that some salaries are paid from the school choice revolving fund and there is activity in school lunch, extended day program, and athletics revolving funds among others.

2. In addition to school choice and other common revolving fund accounts, the district has received substantial funds from two local trusts in the past on which it depends for the purchase of educational materials.
 - a. The FY17 Proposed Budget document for “Other Funding Sources (Non-Grants)” includes \$200,000 in anticipated revenue from the Robinson Broadhurst Foundation and \$175,000 from the Murdock Trust.

Impact: When actual expenses and all revenue sources from previous years are not readily available in budget documents, district administrators and school committee members do not have a clear understanding of the district’s financial picture and are unable to analyze financial trends and identify areas where the reallocation of funds may serve continuous improvement. In addition, the absence of a revolving fund budget document to account for substantial spending from these sources hinders transparency and planning.

Recommendations

1. **Aligned to the strengthened strategic planning process recommended under Leadership and Governance above, budget development should take a hard look at how well current resource allocation directly supports strategic improvement and what reallocations may be needed . The district should develop a plan to increase the number of students attending school in the district.**
 - A. The district should study the multiple assigned responsibilities of school and district leaders as it explores how best to support continuous improvement.
 - B. In the district’s current environment of declining enrollment and corresponding decreases in Chapter 70 state aid, district administrators should analyze the present allocation of resources to find areas of savings and to maximize efficiency.
 1. District leaders and town officials should continue discussions about sharing services to leverage human and financial resources.
 2. Key aspects of the strategic plan should be included in the budget narrative, and specific statements about resources should be made in the plan document for initiatives that have financial implications, for example, staffing changes, changes in class size, or new professional development.
 - C. District administrators should continue to explore establishing relationships with local community groups and joining purchasing collaboratives to find savings on services and supplies.
 - D. The superintendent, in collaboration with the administrative team, should develop a plan to increase the number of students attending school in the district.

1. The district should collect school choice data and formally collect feedback (for example, through exit interviews) from stakeholders, including parents who have enrolled their children in other districts and parents who choose to keep their children in the district's schools.
 - a. The district should determine from which schools and grades students are "choicing out."
 - b. The district should collect feedback from a large enough number of families to understand the range of reasons why families are leaving the district.
2. District leaders should analyze results and formulate recommendations for change.
 - a. The district should inform stakeholders of planned changes.

Benefits: Implementing this recommendation will help the district to build on the work it has completed by identifying areas for improvement, will likely increase the community's awareness of the district's priorities and its instructional improvements, and will likely assure stakeholders that the district is a responsible steward of public funds.

Recommended resources:

- *Best Practices in School District Budgeting* (<http://www.gfoa.org/best-practices-school-district-budgeting>) outlines steps to developing a budget that best aligns resources with student achievement goals. Each step includes a link to a specific resource document with relevant principles and policies to consider.
- *Transforming School Funding: A Guide to Implementing Student-Based Budgeting* (<https://www.erstrategies.org/cms/files/2752-student-based-budgeting-guide.pdf>), from Education Resource Strategies, describes a process to help districts tie funding to specific student needs.
- *In Spending Money Wisely: Getting the Most from School District Budgets* (<https://dmgroupk12.com/>) authors Nathan Levenson, Karla Baehr, James C. Smith, and Claire Sullivan of The District Management Council identify and discuss the top ten opportunities for districts to realign resources and free up funds to support strategic priorities. Drawing on the wisdom of leading thinkers, district leaders, and education researchers from across the country, the authors gathered a long list of opportunities for resource reallocation. To distill these down to the ten most high-impact opportunities, each opportunity was assessed based on its financial benefit, its impact on student achievement, its political feasibility, and its likelihood of success relative to the complexity of implementation.
- *Smarter School Spending for Student Success* (<http://smarterschoolspending.org/>) provides free processes and tools to help districts use their resources to improve student achievement.

- *Per-Pupil Expenditure Reports* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/finance/statistics/ppx.html>) is a report series that provides summary and detail per pupil spending data for each school district.
 - ESE's *School Finance Statistical Comparisons* web page (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/finance/statistics/>) provides comparisons of per-pupil expenditure, long-term enrollment, teacher salaries, and special education direct expenditure trends.
 - ESE's webpage on school finance laws and regulations (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr10.html?section=04>) provides a list of municipal payments commonly made on behalf of school districts.
- 2. The district should create complete and transparent budget documents that include historical data and all sources of revenue. The new business manager's priorities should be to continue his collaboration with the town accountant to revise and clarify the chart of accounts and seek assistance to attain proficiency in the district's accounting system.**
- A.** The district's budget document should include actual revenue and expenses for the past two to three years.
 - 1. Actual revenue and expenses should include dollar amounts and percentage increases or decreases to enable the identification of significant trends.
 - B.** The district's budget document should also include actual revenue and expenses for grants and revolving accounts and estimated projections for the proposed budget year.
 - 1. Grant and Revolving account budgets could be separate or combined under a "Special Revenue" budget document. The budget document should include estimated revenue for each grant and revolving account and the proposed expenses to be charged against the revenue.
 - C.** The business manager should consider meeting more frequently with the town accountant to update the MUNIS chart of accounts to more quickly and accurately include and define the active budget account lines used by the school department.
 - 1. Together the town accountant and the business manager should discontinue the account numbers that do not contain recent activity to reduce the number of MUNIS account lines for the school department.
 - D.** The business manager should review the town's current Tyler Technology/MUNIS contract to find out whether technical support is included. Such support is typically offered to new employees or when upgrades are purchased.

Benefits: Implementing this recommendation will mean a comprehensive budget document that accurately reflects the district's financial picture and the responsible use of all resources. Financial transparency will likely encourage confidence and trust in the district's efforts to improve student achievement through effective management of limited financial resources.

Recommended resources:

- The Rennie Center's *Smart School Budgeting* (http://www.renniecenter.org/topics/smart_school_budgeting.html) is a summary of existing resources on school finance, budgeting, and reallocation.
- *Best Practices in School District Budgeting* (<http://www.gfoa.org/best-practices-school-district-budgeting>) outlines steps to developing a budget that best aligns resources with student achievement goals. Each step includes a link to a specific resource document with relevant principles and policies to consider.

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

Review Team Members

The review was conducted from November 28-December 1, 2016, by the following team of independent ESE consultants.

1. Dr. Charles Burnett, leadership and governance
2. Dr. Linda Greyser, curriculum and instruction
3. Patricia Williams, assessment
4. James Hearn, human resources and professional development, *review team coordinator*
5. Dr. Janet Smith, student support
6. Marge Foster, financial and asset management

District Review Activities

The following activities were conducted during the review:

The team conducted interviews with the following financial personnel: business manager, assistant business manager, town manager, and town accountant.

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

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

The team conducted interviews/focus groups with the following central office administrators: superintendent, director of pupil services, director of technology, director of facilities, and the business manager.

The team visited the following schools: Memorial (K-2), Toy Town Elementary (grades 3-5), Murdock Middle School (grades 6-8), Murdock High School (grades 9-12), and Murdock Academy for Success (grades 9-12).

During school visits, the team conducted interviews with four principals and two directors and focus groups with eight elementary-school teachers, seven middle-school teachers, and eight high-school teachers.

The team observed 69 classes in the district: 23 at the high school level, including 2 at the academy, 16 at the middle school, and 30 at the elementary schools.

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

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

Site Visit Schedule

Monday 11/28/2016	Tuesday 11/29/2016	Wednesday 11/30/2016	Thursday 12/1/2016
Orientation with district leaders and principals; interviews with district staff and principals; review of personnel files; document reviews; interview with teachers' association; and visits to Toy Town Elementary for classroom observations.	Interviews with district staff and principals; review of personnel files; teacher focus groups; parent focus group; and visits to Memorial, Murdock Middle School, and Murdock High School for classroom observations.	Interviews with town or city personnel; interviews with school leaders; interviews with school committee members; visits to Memorial, Murdock Middle School, and Murdock High School for classroom observations.	Interviews with school leaders; interview with a school committee member; follow-up interviews; district review team meeting; visits to Murdock Middle School and Murdock High School for classroom observations; district wrap-up meeting with the superintendent.

Appendix B: Enrollment, Performance, Expenditures

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

Student Group	District	Percent of Total	State	Percent of Total
African-American	22	1.7%	83481	8.8%
Asian	29	2.2%	61584	6.5%
Hispanic	71	5.5%	176873	18.6%
Native American	4	0.3%	2179	0.2%
White	1,134	87.8%	597502	62.7%
Native Hawaiian	1	0.1%	888	0.1%
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	30	2.3%	30922	3.2%
All Students	1,291	100.0%	953,429	100.0%

Note: As of October 1, 2015

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

Student Groups	District			State		
	N	Percent of High Needs	Percent of District	N	Percent of High Needs	Percent of State
Students w/ disabilities	263	42.6%	20.0%	165,559	39.4%	17.2%
Econ. Disad.	464	75.1%	35.9%	260,998	62.2%	27.4%
ELLs and Former ELLs	16	2.6%	1.2%	85,763	20.4%	9.0%
All high needs students	618	100.0%	47.1%	419,764	100.0%	43.5%

Notes: As of October 1, 2015. District and state numbers and percentages for students with disabilities and high needs students are calculated including students in out-of-district placements. Total district enrollment including students in out-of-district placement is 1,312; total state enrollment including students in out-of-district placement is 964,026.

**Table B2a: Winchendon Public Schools
English Language Arts Performance, 2013–2016**

Grade and Measure		Number Included (2016)	MCAS Year			PARCC		Gains and Declines
			2013	2014		2015	2016	2-Year Trend
3	CPI	105	79.1	80.1	CPI	76.1	85.4	9.3
	P+	105	43%	52%	Lv 4&5	40%	47%	7
4	CPI	88	72.6	71.9	CPI	69.9	70.8	0.9
	P+	88	37%	38%	Lv 4&5	37%	44%	7
	SGP	84	34.0	45.0	SGP	30.0	49.5	19.5
5	CPI	94	78.2	84.1	CPI	76.0	80.4	4.4
	P+	94	51%	61%	Lv 4&5	35%	51%	16
	SGP	90	50.0	52.0	SGP	39.0	40.5	1.5
6	CPI	99	76.3	76.2	CPI	83.9	71.5	-12.4
	P+	99	49%	46%	Lv 4&5	58%	38%	-20
	SGP	92	54.0	30.0	SGP	58.0	35.5	-22.5
7	CPI	101	77.8	77.7	CPI	81.8	80.8	-1.0
	P+	101	48%	53%	Lv 4&5	49%	51%	2
	SGP	95	34.0	41.0	SGP	63.0	34.0	-29.0
8	CPI	108	81.8	83.3	CPI	86.9	86.1	-0.8
	P+	108	60%	63%	Lv 4&5	44%	44%	0
	SGP	102	43.0	47.0	SGP	60.0	36.0	-24.0

**Table B2b: Winchendon Public Schools
English Language Arts Performance, 2013–2016¹³**

Grade and Measure		Number Included (2016)	MCAS/Accountability Year				State (2016)	Gains and Declines	
			2013	2014	2015	2016		4-Year Trend	2-Year Trend
10	CPI	74	90.8	95.6	91.8	86.8	96.7	-4.0	-5.0
	P+	74	78%	86%	79%	73%	91%	-5	-6
	SGP	58	54.0	46.0	25.5	31.5	50.0	-22.5	6.0
All	CPI	681	78.9	80.8	80.7	80.2	87.2	1.3	-0.5
	P+	--	51%	56%	--	--	--	--	--
	SGP	524	44.0	43.0	47.5	38.0	50.0	-6.0	-9.5

¹³ In the All category 2015 and 2016 CPI and SGP are based on MCAS and PARCC test scores.

**Table B2c: Winchendon Public Schools
Mathematics Performance, 2013–2016**

Grade and Measure		Number Included (2016)	MCAS Year			PARCC		Gains and Declines
			2013	2014		2015	2016	2-Year Trend
3	CPI	105	77.2	86.3	CPI	80.8	90.7	9.9
	P+	105	51%	73%	Lv 4&5	35%	63%	28
4	CPI	88	72.8	76.4	CPI	75.3	77.5	2.2
	P+	88	38%	40%	Lv 4&5	45%	47%	2
	SGP	84	32.0	52.0	SGP	42.0	55.5	13.5
5	CPI	91	69.7	71.1	CPI	68.8	76.4	7.6
	P+	91	40%	47%	Lv 4&5	31%	40%	9
	SGP	89	41.0	36.0	SGP	35.0	30.0	-5.0
6	CPI	98	66.9	60.4	CPI	66.7	62.1	-4.6
	P+	98	36%	26%	Lv 4&5	26%	23%	-3
	SGP	92	34.0	25.0	SGP	32.0	25.5	-6.5
7	CPI	101	56.9	55	CPI	59.2	61.7	2.5
	P+	101	26%	22%	Lv 4&5	25%	31%	6
	SGP	93	38.0	42.0	SGP	59.5	50.0	-9.5
8	CPI	110	63.6	61.7	CPI	67.5	57.6	-9.9
	P+	110	34%	31%	Lv 4&5	35%	25%	-10
	SGP	101	54.0	66.0	SGP	51.0	33.0	-18.0

**Table B2d: Winchendon Public Schools
Mathematics Performance, 2013–2016¹⁴**

Grade and Measure		Number Included (2016)	MCAS/Accountability Year				State (2016)	Gains and Declines	
			2013	2014	2015	2016		4-Year Trend	2-Year Trend
10	CPI	71	78.6	78.7	77.7	75.7	89.7	-2.9	-2.0
	P+	71	60%	61%	57%	52%	78%	-8	-5
	SGP	57	44.0	45.0	48.0	44.0	50.0	0.0	-4.0
All	CPI	678	68.6	68.4	69.6	71.0	81.5	2.4	1.4
	P+	--	39%	41%	--	--	--	--	--
	SGP	519	40.0	42.0	44.0	39.0	50.0	-1.0	-5.0

¹⁴ In the All category 2015 and 2016 CPI and SGP are based on MCAS and PARCC test scores.

**Table B2e: Winchendon Public Schools
Science and Technology/Engineering Performance, 2013–2016**

Grade and Measure		Number Included (2016)	Spring MCAS Year					Gains and Declines	
			2013	2014	2015	2016	State (2016)	4-Year Trend	2-Year Trend
5	CPI	93	79.9	76.5	77.6	68.8	76.4	-11.1	-8.8
	P+	93	52%	50%	49%	35%	47%	-17	-14
8	CPI	113	64.7	68.4	64.3	59.5	71.3	-5.2	-4.8
	P+	113	34%	35%	25%	20%	41%	-14	-5
10	CPI	65	79.7	79.3	77.3	78.5	88.9	-1.2	1.2
	P+	65	51%	50%	45%	49%	73%	-2	4
All	CPI	271	74.3	74.1	71.6	67.3	78.7	-7.0	-4.3
	P+	271	45%	44%	37%	32%	54%	-13	-5

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

**Table B3a: Winchendon Public Schools
English Language Arts (All Grades)
Performance for Selected Subgroups Compared to State, 2013–2016¹⁵**

Group and Measure			Number Included (2016)	Accountability					2-Year Trend	4-Year Trend
				MCAS			PARCC			
				2013	2014		2015	2016		
High Needs	District	CPI	338	72.6	73.9	CPI	72.2	71.6	-0.6	-1.0
		P+	--	39%	44%	Lv 4&5	--	--	--	--
		SGP	250	44.0	40.0	SGP	42.5	35.0	-7.5	-9.0
	State	CPI	222,707	76.8	77.1	CPI	76.3	77.1	0.8	0.3
		P+	--	48%	50%	Lv 4&5	--	--	--	--
		SGP	165,487	47.0	47.0	SGP	47.0	47.0	0.0	0.0
Econ. Disad.	District	CPI	270	--	--	CPI	63.7	66.1	2.4	--
		P+	--	--	--	Lv 4&5	--	--	--	--
		SGP	205	--	--	SGP	43.0	36.0	-7.0	--
	State	CPI	152,877	--	--	CPI	77.6	78.2	0.6	--
		P+	--	--	--	Lv 4&5	--	--	--	--
		SGP	114,361	--	--	SGP	46.0	46.0	0.0	--
SWD	District	CPI	126	56.3	60.6	CPI	58.0	58.3	0.3	2.0
		P+	--	16%	23%	Lv 4&5	--	--	--	--
		SGP	87	44.0	46.5	SGP	37.0	30.0	-7.0	-14.0
	State	CPI	91,177	66.8	66.6	CPI	67.4	68.2	0.8	1.4
		P+	--	30%	31%	Lv 4&5	--	--	--	--
		SGP	66,633	43.0	43.0	SGP	43.0	43.0	0.0	0.0
ELL or Former ELLs	District	CPI	19	75.0	75.0	CPI	--	--	--	--
		P+	--	36%	33%	Lv 4&5	--	--	--	--
		SGP	10	--	--	SGP	--	--	--	--
	State	CPI	52,960	67.4	67.8	CPI	68.9	70.7	1.8	3.3
		P+	--	35%	36%	Lv 4&5	--	--	--	--
		SGP	35,109	53.0	54.0	SGP	53.0	54.0	1.0	1.0
All students	District	CPI	681	78.9	80.8	CPI	80.7	80.2	-0.5	1.3
		P+	--	51%	56%	Lv 4&5	--	--	--	--
		SGP	524	44.0	43.0	SGP	47.5	38.0	-9.5	-6.0
	State	CPI	491,267	86.8	86.7	CPI	86.8	87.2	0.4	0.4
		P+	--	69%	69%	Lv 4&5	--	--	--	--
		SGP	388,999	51.0	50.0	SGP	50.0	50.0	0.0	-1.0

¹⁵ 2015 and 2016 CPI and SGP are based on MCAS and PARCC test scores.

**Table B3b: Winchendon Public Schools
Mathematics (All Grades)
Performance for Selected Subgroups Compared to State, 2013–2016¹⁶**

Group and Measure			Number Included (2016)	Accountability					2-Year Trend	4-Year Trend
				MCAS			PARCC			
				2013	2014		2015	2016		
High Needs	District	CPI	336	61.2	60.9	CPI	60.3	63.5	3.2	2.3
		P+	--	29%	31%	Lv 4&5	--	--	--	--
		SGP	245	42.0	38.0	SGP	44.0	38.0	-6.0	-4.0
	State	CPI	222,349	68.6	68.4	CPI	67.9	68.8	0.9	0.2
		P+	--	40%	40%	Lv 4&5	--	--	--	--
		SGP	165,191	46.0	47.0	SGP	46.0	46.0	0.0	0.0
Econ. Disad.	District	CPI	270	--	--	CPI	63.7	66.1	2.4	--
		P+	--	--	--	Lv 4&5	--	--	--	--
		SGP	203	--	--	SGP	44.0	35.0	-9.0	--
	State	CPI	152,560	--	--	CPI	69.2	70.0	0.8	--
		P+	--	--	--	Lv 4&5	--	--	--	--
		SGP	114,091	--	--	SGP	46.0	45.0	-1.0	--
SWD	District	CPI	123	45.5	47.7	CPI	42.3	48.4	6.1	2.9
		P+	--	13%	14%	Lv 4&5	--	--	--	--
		SGP	83	37.0	37.5	SGP	25.0	41.0	16.0	4.0
	State	CPI	91,049	57.4	57.1	CPI	57.3	58.1	0.8	0.7
		P+	--	22%	22%	Lv 4&5	--	--	--	--
		SGP	66,511	42.0	43.0	SGP	43.0	44.0	1.0	2.0
ELL or Former ELLs	District	CPI	19	61.4	53.8	CPI	--	--	--	--
		P+	--	45%	23%	Lv 4&5	--	--	--	--
		SGP	10	--	--	SGP	--	--	--	--
	State	CPI	53,048	63.9	63.8	CPI	64.5	65.8	1.3	1.9
		P+	--	35%	36%	Lv 4&5	--	--	--	--
		SGP	35,290	53.0	52.0	SGP	51.0	50.0	-1.0	-3.0
All students	District	CPI	678	68.6	68.4	CPI	69.6	71.0	1.4	2.4
		P+	--	39%	41%	Lv 4&5	--	--	--	--
		SGP	519	40.0	42.0	SGP	44.0	39.0	-5.0	-1.0
	State	CPI	490,612	80.8	80.3	CPI	80.7	81.5	0.8	0.7
		P+	--	61%	60%	Lv 4&5	--	--	--	--
		SGP	388,423	51.0	50.0	SGP	50.0	50.0	0.0	-1.0

¹⁶ 2015 and 2016 CPI and SGP are based on MCAS and PARCC test scores.

**Table B3c: Winchendon Public Schools
Science and Technology/Engineering (All Grades)
Performance for Selected Subgroups Compared to State, 2013–2016**

Group and Measure			Number Included (2016)	Spring MCAS Year				Gains and Declines	
				2013	2014	2015	2016	4-Year Trend	2-Year Trend
High Needs	District	CPI	138	67	67.9	63.5	60	-7.0	-3.5
		P+	138	33%	34%	26%	21%	-12	-5
	State	CPI	89,857	66.4	67.3	66.3	65.4	-1.0	-0.9
		P+	89,857	31%	33%	32%	31%	0	-1
Econ. Disad.	District	CPI	107	--	--	66.7	60.3	--	-6.4
		P+	107	--	--	31%	23%	--	-8
	State	CPI	61,476	--	--	67.1	65.8	--	-1.3
		P+	61,476	--	--	33.0%	29%	--	-4
Students w/ disabilities	District	CPI	53	56.3	54.2	48.8	52.8	-3.5	4.0
		P+	53	17%	11%	10%	8%	-9	-2
	State	CPI	38,109	59.8	60.1	60.2	59.7	-0.1	-0.5
		P+	38,109	20%	22%	22%	21%	1	-1
English language learners or Former ELLs	District	CPI	7	--	--	--	--	--	--
		P+	7	--	--	--	--	--	--
	State	CPI	18,594	54	54	53.9	54.1	0.1	0.2
		P+	18,594	19%	18%	18%	19%	0	1
All students	District	CPI	271	74.3	74.1	71.6	67.3	-7.0	-4.3
		P+	271	45%	44%	37%	32%	-13	-5
	State	CPI	208,262	79	79.6	79.4	78.7	-0.3	-0.7
		P+	208,262	53%	55%	54%	54%	1	0

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

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

Group	School Year Ending				Change 2012–2015		Change 2014–2015		State (2015)
	2012	2013	2014	2015	Percentage Points	Percent Change	Percentage Points	Percent Change	
High Needs	3.5	3.1	3.3	8.2	4.7	134%	4.9	148%	3.4
Econ. Disad. ¹⁷	4.0	3.1	3.2	8.6	4.6	115%	5.4	169%	3.3
Students w/ disabilities	4.5	6.0	1.4	6.2	1.7	38%	4.8	343%	3.5
ELL	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	--	0	--	5.7
All students	2.6	2.6	2.8	5.5	2.9	112%	2.7	96%	1.9

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

**Table B5: Winchendon Public Schools
Attendance Rates, 2013–2016**

Group	School Year Ending				Change 2013–2016		Change 2015–2016		State (2016)
	2013	2014	2015	2016	Percentage Points	Percent Change	Percentage Points	Percent Change	
All students	93.8%	94.3%	94.1%	93.9%	0.1	0.1%	-0.2	-0.2	94.9%

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

¹⁷ Low income numbers used for economically disadvantaged for 2012, 2013, and 2014

**Table B6: Winchendon Public Schools
Expenditures, Chapter 70 State Aid, and Net School Spending Fiscal Years 2014–2016**

	FY14		FY15		FY16	
	Estimated	Actual	Estimated	Actual	Estimated	Actual
Expenditures						
From local appropriations for schools:						
By school committee	\$12,873,169	\$12,962,957	\$13,176,674	\$13,176,673	\$6,897,753	\$12,775,077
By municipality	\$6,906,906	\$3,261,050	\$5,355,751	\$5,820,904	--	\$6,077,670
Total from local appropriations	\$19,780,075	\$16,224,007	\$18,532,425	\$18,997,577	--	\$18,852,747
From revolving funds and grants	--	\$2,612,067	--	\$2,994,854	--	\$2,739,172
Total expenditures	--	\$18,836,074	--	\$21,992,431	\$19,275,499	\$21,591,919
Chapter 70 aid to education program						
Chapter 70 state aid*	--	\$11,215,085	--	\$11,251,885	--	\$11,288,335
Required local contribution	--	\$5,083,175	--	\$5,109,025	--	\$4,931,923
Required net school spending**	--	\$16,298,260	--	\$16,360,910	--	\$16,220,258
Actual net school spending	--	\$16,103,544	--	\$16,517,541	--	\$17,027,945
Over/under required (\$)	--	-\$194,716	--	\$156,631	--	\$807,687
Over/under required (%)	--	-1.2%	--	1.0%	--	5.0%

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

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

Sources: FY14, FY15, and FY16 District End-of-Year Reports, Chapter 70 Program information on ESE website

Data retrieved 12/13/16

**Table B7: Winchendon Public Schools
Expenditures Per In-District Pupil
Fiscal Years 2013–2015**

Expenditure Category	2013	2014	2015
Administration	\$756	\$741	\$521
Instructional leadership (district and school)	\$1,148	\$1,106	\$1,020
Teachers	\$5,613	\$5,915	\$5,760
Other teaching services	\$580	\$1,020	\$739
Professional development	\$42	\$78	\$250
Instructional materials, equipment and technology	\$398	\$177	\$604
Guidance, counseling and testing services	\$311	\$301	\$373
Pupil services	\$1,474	\$302	\$1,479
Operations and maintenance	\$1,164	\$1,260	\$1,145
Insurance, retirement and other fixed costs	\$1,607	\$1,540	\$1,820
Total expenditures per in-district pupil	\$13,093	\$12,441	\$13,711

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

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

Appendix C: Instructional Inventory

		Insufficient	Minimal	Moderate	Strong	Avg. Number of points
		(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(0 to 3)
Focus Area #1: Learning Objectives & Instruction						
1. The teacher demonstrates knowledge of subject matter and content.	ES	0%	13%	40%	47%	2.3
	MS	0%	13%	44%	44%	2.3
	HS	0%	22%	39%	39%	2.2
	Total #	0	11	28	30	2.3
	Total %	0%	16%	41%	43%	
2. The teacher provides and refers to clear learning objective(s) in the lesson.	ES	7%	27%	40%	27%	1.9
	MS	0%	6%	44%	50%	2.4
	HS	4%	39%	17%	39%	2.0
	Total #	3	18	23	25	2.0
	Total %	4%	26%	33%	36%	
3. The teacher implements a lesson that reflects high expectations aligned to the learning objective (s).	ES	7%	17%	53%	23%	1.9
	MS	0%	13%	69%	19%	2.1
	HS	4%	26%	39%	30%	2.0
	Total #	3	13	36	17	2.0
	Total %	4%	19%	52%	25%	
4. The teacher uses appropriate instructional strategies well matched to the learning objective(s).	ES	0%	20%	47%	33%	2.1
	MS	0%	25%	69%	6%	1.8
	HS	4%	22%	43%	30%	2.0
	Total #	1	15	35	18	2.0
	Total %	1%	22%	51%	26%	
	MS					8.6
	HS					8.0
	Total					8.3

Focus Area #2: Student Engagement & Critical Thinking		Insufficient	Minimal	Moderate	Strong	Avg. Number of points
		(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(0 to 3)
5. Students are motivated and engaged in the lesson.	ES	0%	23%	20%	57%	2.3
	MS	0%	19%	69%	13%	1.9
	HS	4%	39%	17%	39%	1.9
	Total #	1	19	21	28	2.1
	Total %	1%	28%	30%	41%	
6. The teacher facilitates tasks that encourage students to develop and engage in critical thinking.	ES	7%	17%	50%	27%	2.0
	MS	0%	25%	63%	13%	1.9
	HS	4%	39%	22%	35%	1.9
	Total #	3	18	30	18	1.9
	Total %	4%	26%	43%	26%	
7. Students assume responsibility for their own learning whether individually, in pairs, or in groups.	ES	3%	33%	37%	27%	1.9
	MS	6%	19%	63%	13%	1.8
	HS	9%	35%	26%	30%	1.8
	Total #	4	21	27	17	1.8
	Total %	6%	30%	39%	25%	
Total Score For Focus Area #2	ES					6.2
	MS					5.6
	HS					5.6
	Total					5.8

Focus Area #3: Differentiated Instruction & Classroom Culture		Insufficient	Minimal	Moderate	Strong	Avg. Number of points
		(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(0 to 3)
8. The teacher appropriately differentiates instruction so the lesson content is accessible for all learners.	ES	7%	40%	37%	17%	1.6
	MS	19%	56%	25%	0%	1.1
	HS	26%	22%	22%	30%	1.6
	Total #	11	26	20	12	1.5
	Total %	16%	38%	29%	17%	
9. The teacher uses appropriate resources aligned to students' diverse learning needs. (e.g., technology, manipulatives, support personnel).	ES	7%	17%	50%	27%	2.0
	MS	0%	3%	81%	6%	1.9
	HS	9%	39%	35%	17%	1.6
	Total #	4	16	36	13	1.8
	Total %	6%	23%	52%	19%	
10. The classroom climate is characterized by respectful behavior, routines, tone, and discourse.	ES	3%	7%	50%	40%	2.3
	MS	0%	13%	63%	25%	2.1
	HS	9%	22%	26%	43%	2.0
	Total #	3	9	31	26	2.2
	Total %	4%	13%	45%	38%	
11. The teacher conducts appropriate formative assessments to check for understanding and provide feedback to students.	ES	0%	17%	47%	37%	2.2
	MS	0%	19%	63%	19%	2.0
	HS	0%	30%	22%	48%	2.2
	Total #	0	15	29	25	2.1
	Total %	0%	22%	42%	36%	
Total Score For Focus Area #3	ES					8.1
	MS					7.1
	HS					7.4
	Total					7.6