



District Review Report

Methuen Public Schools

Comprehensive review conducted January
22–25, 2019

Office of District Reviews and Monitoring

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and
Secondary Education

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Executive Summary

Methuen Public Schools is a district with four Pre-K–8 schools (referred to by the district as “grammar schools”) and one high school. The district enrolled 6,935 students in 2017–2018, including 50.5 percent White, 39.4 percent Hispanic/Latino, 0.1 percent Native American, 4.9 percent Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino, and 1.2 percent African American/Black students. In addition, 8.8 percent of the students enrolled were English learners and 26.3 percent of students were from homes whose language was not English. Students with disabilities made up 17.8 percent of students enrolled and students from economically disadvantaged families, 34.8 percent.

The state’s 2018 Official Accountability Report classified the district as “partially meeting targets”; the district’s overall criterion-referenced target percentage toward improvement targets was 43 percent.

At the time of the onsite in January 2019, the district was still recovering from two major disruptions. In the spring of 2018, a significant budget deficit led to the layoff of 50 staff. While many of the layoffs were rescinded and the budget issues were temporally resolved with state intervention, staff were aware of lingering municipal finance issues.

Some school committee members told the team that there has been a positive shift this school year in the relationship between the city council and the school committee. An administrator told the team that the school committee and municipal officials did not have a collaborative relationship. However, one municipal official expressed the view that they were getting more information about school spending because the interim city auditor “demands information,” and the “two sides are working together now.”

In addition to financial concerns, there was a leadership shift before the opening of school. The superintendent unexpectedly resigned August 30, 2018, leading to the ultimate appointment of the assistant superintendent as the interim superintendent on August 31, 2018, and appointment of the department chair for English as the interim assistant superintendent in November 2018. A search for the permanent superintendent was underway at the time of the onsite.

Other leadership losses in the two years before the onsite in January 2019 include the cutting of all four grammar school instructional coaches, followed by the cutting of four (of four) grammar school deans. The team repeatedly was told that the loss of these positions affected grammar school leadership. Grade-level teams no longer had the leadership and guidance of instructional coaches. The loss of grammar school deans resulted in associate principals taking on a larger role in discipline in schools leaving less time to focus on teaching and learning.

Instruction

The team observed 76 classes throughout the district: 20 at the high school, 28 in the upper grades (5–8) at the four grammar schools, and 28 in the lower grades (K–4) at the four grammar schools. The team observed 24 ELA classes, 33 mathematics classes, and 19 classes in other subject areas. Among the classes observed were 15 special education/inclusion classes, and 1 ELL class. The observations were approximately 20 minutes in length. All review team members collected data using DESE’s Instructional Inventory, a tool for recording observed characteristics of standards-based teaching. This data is presented in Appendix C.

Districtwide in observed lessons, review team members found sufficient and compelling evidence that positive behavioral supports were in place in 85 percent of classrooms. In addition, observers noted sufficient and compelling evidence that classroom environments were conducive to teaching and learning in 87 percent of observed classrooms across the district. However, components of observed academic rigor varied by level. For example, in 75 percent of observed lower grammar classrooms (K–4) there was sufficient and compelling evidence of most students actively participating in activities and volunteering ideas and questions (characteristic #5). In contrast, in only 57 percent of upper grammar classrooms (grades 5–8) and in 60 percent of high-school classrooms (grades 9–12) were students engaged and actively responsible for their learning. In addition, districtwide team members found sufficient and compelling evidence of students engaged in higher-order thinking such as analysis, synthesis, problem-solving, evaluation, or application of new knowledge (characteristic #6) in only 58 percent of observed classrooms.

Strengths

- The interim superintendent is developing a collaborative working relationship with the school committee and other district and school leaders.
- The district collects a range of data about students’ performance and well-being, uses data to inform the supports provided to students, and shares data widely.
- The district makes effective use of goal setting in the teacher evaluation process.
- The high school provides equitable access to a wide range of rigorous coursework and programs of interest.

Challenges and Areas for Growth

- The district and school improvement planning process is missing input from teachers, families, and the community. The plans are not grounded in root cause analysis and data analysis, and do not include measurable outcomes. The improvement plans do not include benchmarks to monitor progress and measure impact during implementation.
- The district's four Pre-K–8 grammar schools are missing the leadership structure to provide effective instructional and curriculum support to staff.
- The district does not have systems and supports in place to equitably coordinate and sustain the ongoing development, review, and revision of K–12 curricula and its implementation.
- The district has not clearly articulated the district's instructional expectations K–12, developed clear instructional expectations, or used its educator evaluation rubric as a tool for promoting professional growth.
- In observed classrooms, the quality of instruction was inconsistent, particularly in the areas of student engagement, academic rigor, and inclusive practices.
- The district is missing some K–8 assessments and a common data protocol, and does not have consistent structures for discussions to ensure that data is effectively used across the district.
- The district does not prioritize opportunities for educators to receive high-quality feedback.¹
- Opportunities for effective job-embedded, sustained professional development at the K–8 level are limited and have decreased in recent years.
- The district has far too few bilingual staff and staff of color. The district has not made sufficient efforts to build the cultural competence of staff.
- The district is challenged by high chronic absence and suspension rates.
- The district's public budget documents do not clearly provide historical spending data or detail how funds and staffing are allocated to schools and programs. The budget

¹ High-quality feedback is specific, timely, and actionable.

documents are not clearly aligned with district and school goals. The budget document does not summarize anticipated grants and other revolving funds.

- The monthly financial reports provided to the superintendent, the school committee, and the city do not provide sufficient information to enable stakeholders to understand the financial status of the district.

Recommendations

- The district should ensure that the improvement planning process is inclusive and that plans are grounded in root cause analysis and district data analysis. Plans should set specific, measurable goals and identify benchmarks to monitor progress and measure impact during implementation.
- The school committee, the city council, and municipal officials should maximize their effort to work together to develop a culture of collaboration and cooperation.
- The district should complete as soon as possible its K–12 curriculum. It should ensure that curricula are adopted/developed and reviewed in a timely way, are aligned with appropriate standards, and are aligned vertically, with coherent student learning progressions.
- The district should ensure that all teachers provide effective instruction that challenges and supports all students.
- District leaders should develop educators’ capacity to analyze and use data. The district should provide guidance, establish consistent structures for discussions of data, and communicate clear expectations for the use of data districtwide.
- The district should implement, support, and monitor practices that ensure that all educators receive high-quality feedback.
- The district should expand opportunities for job-embedded professional development for K–8 classroom teachers, and ensure adequate direction and support so that all available time is used effectively.
- The district should take a more proactive approach to recruiting bilingual staff and staff of color.
- The district should strengthen its efforts to improve student attendance and reduce the need to rely on suspension as a response to misconduct.

- The district should develop a budget document that is clear, comprehensive, and details how the budget supports district and school goals, how much schools and programs cost, and how outside funds are used.
- The district should develop monthly financial statements that provide stakeholders understand clear picture of the financial status of the district's budget.

Methuen Public Schools 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 (DESE): 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. In addition to providing information to each district reviewed, DESE uses review reports to identify resources and/or technical assistance to provide to the district.

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, students, and students' families. Team members also observe classroom instruction. Subsequent to the onsite review, the team meets for two days to develop findings and recommendations before submitting a draft report to DESE. DESE edits and fact-checks the draft report and sends it to the district for factual review before publishing it on the DESE website.

Site Visit

The site visit to the Methuen Public Schools was conducted from January 22–25, 2019. The site visit included approximately 30 hours of interviews and focus groups with approximately 91 stakeholders, including school committee members, district administrators, school staff, students, students' families, and teachers' association representatives. The review team conducted 3 focus groups with 5 teachers in the lower grades (K–4) and 4 teachers in the upper grades (5–8) at the grammar schools, and with 4 high-school teachers (9–12).

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, attendance, and expenditures. The team observed classroom instruction in 76 classrooms in 5 schools. The team collected data using DESE's Instructional Inventory, a tool for

recording observed characteristics of standards-based teaching. This data is contained in Appendix C.

District Profile

Methuen has a mayor-city council form of government and the mayor chairs the school committee. The seven members of the school committee meet twice per month.

The interim superintendent has been in the position since August 31, 2018. The district's central office leadership team includes the interim superintendent, the interim assistant superintendent, the director of the language acquisition department, the director of student services, the business administrator, the director of human resources, and the director of instructional technology. Central office positions have been mostly stable in number in recent years; however, the resignation of the superintendent in August 2018 led to the appointment of interims for both the superintendent and assistant superintendent positions. The district has five principals leading five schools. There are approximately 18 other school administrators, including associate principals, directors, and curriculum department heads. In the 2017–2018 school year, there were 489 teachers in the district.

In the 2017–2018 school year, 6,935 students were enrolled in the district's 5 schools:

**Table 1: Methuen Public Schools
Schools, Type, Grades Served, and Enrollment*, 2017–2018**

School	Type	Grades Served	Enrollment
Comprehensive Grammar School	ESMS	Pre-K–8	1,081
Marsh Grammar School	ESMS	Pre-K–8	1,199
Tenny Grammar School	ESMS	Pre-K–8	1,354
Timony Grammar School	ESMS	Pre-K–8	1,352
Methuen High School	HS	9–12	1,949
Totals	5 schools	Pre-K–12	6,935
*As of October 1, 2017			

Between 2014 and 2018, student enrollment remained relatively stable, with 6,937 students in 2014 and 6,935 students in 2018. Enrollment figures by race/ethnicity and high needs populations (i.e., students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged

students, and English learners (ELs) and former ELs) as compared with the state are provided in Tables B1a and B1b in Appendix B.

The total in-district per-pupil expenditure was lower than the median in-district per-pupil expenditure for 32 K–12 districts of similar size (5,000–7,999 students) in fiscal year 2017: \$12,688 as compared with \$13,809 (see [District Analysis and Review Tool Detail: Staffing & Finance](#)). Actual net school spending has been above what is required by the Chapter 70 state education aid program, as shown in Table B3 in Appendix B.

Student Performance

Note: The Next-Generation MCAS assessment is administered to grades 3–8 in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics; it was administered for the first time in 2017. (For more information, see <http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/parents/results-faq.html>.) The MCAS is administered to grades 5 and 8 in science and to grade 10 in ELA, math, and science. Data from the two assessments are presented separately because the tests are different and cannot be compared.

Table 2: Methuen Public Schools
Accountability Percentile, Criterion Reference Target (CRT) Percentage, Reason for Classification

School	Accountability Percentile	CRT Percentage	Overall Classification	Reason For Classification
Marsh Grammar	42	52%	Not requiring assistance or intervention	Partially meeting targets
Comprehensive Grammar	37	55%	Not requiring assistance or intervention	Partially meeting targets
Tenney Grammar	20	40%	Not requiring assistance or intervention	Partially meeting targets
Timony Grammar	21	37%	Not requiring assistance or intervention	Partially meeting targets
Methuen High	24	28%	Not requiring assistance or intervention	Partially meeting targets
Methuen (District)	--	43	Not requiring assistance or intervention	Partially meeting targets

**Table 3: Methuen Public Schools
Next-Generation MCAS ELA Scaled Scores Grades 3–8, 2017–2018**

Group	N (2018)	2017	2018	Change	State (2018)	Above/Below
African American/Black	43	483.8	485.7	1.9	490.3	-4.6
Asian	119	507.3	508.2	0.9	511.6	-3.4
Hispanic or Latino	1,350	489.7	489.6	-0.1	489.7	-0.1
Multi-Race, non-Hisp./Lat.	179	496.7	502.2	5.5	502.8	-0.6
White	1,682	500.5	502.7	2.2	504.2	-1.5
High Needs	1,793	486.8	488.5	1.7	490.1	-1.6
Econ. Dis.	1,294	488.7	489.5	0.8	490.2	-0.7
SWD	665	475.8	477.5	1.7	480.8	-3.3
EL	620	481.0	484.9	3.9	488.4	-3.5
All	3,376	496.5	497.4	0.9	500.5	-3.1

Next Generation MCAS Achievement Levels: 440–470 Not Meeting Expectations; 470–500 Partially Meeting Expectations; 500–530 Meeting Expectations; 530–560 Exceeding Expectations

**Table 4: Methuen Public Schools
Next-Generation MCAS Math Scaled Scores Grades 3–8, 2017–2018**

Group	N (2018)	2017	2018	Change	State (2018)	Above/Below
African American/Black	42	480.1	486.4	6.3	486.9	-0.5
Asian	118	511.6	512.3	0.7	514.3	-2.0
Hispanic or Latino	1,353	490.1	487.3	-2.8	487.4	-0.1
Multi-Race, non-Hisp./Lat.	180	498.3	499.6	1.3	499.7	-0.1
White	1,678	502.5	499.9	-2.6	501.8	-1.9
High Needs	1,792	487.6	486.5	-1.1	488.2	-1.7
Econ. Dis.	1,292	488.8	487.3	-1.5	487.7	-0.4
SWD	668	478.1	475.0	-3.1	479.2	-4.2
EL	620	482.0	484.0	2.0	488.5	-4.5
All	3,375	497.9	495.2	-2.7	498.4	-3.2

Next Generation MCAS Achievement Levels: 440–470 Not Meeting Expectations; 470–500 Partially Meeting Expectations; 500–530 Meeting Expectations; 530–560 Exceeding Expectations

**Table 5: Methuen Public Schools
Next-Generation MCAS ELA Percent Meeting or Exceeding Expectations Grades 3–8,
2017–2018**

Group	N (2018)	2017	2018	Change	State (2018)	Above/Below
African American/Black	43	13%	26%	13	31%	-5
Asian	119	64%	62%	-2	71%	-9
Hispanic or Latino	1,350	30%	31%	1	31%	0
Multi-Race, non-Hisp./Lat.	179	43%	51%	8	54%	-3
White	1,682	52%	54%	2	58%	-4
High Needs	1,793	24%	28%	4	31%	-3
Econ. Dis.	1,294	28%	30%	2	32%	-2
SWD	665	7%	10%	3	14%	-4
EL	620	15%	22%	7	30%	-8
All	3,376	44%	45%	1	51%	-6

**Table 6: Methuen Public Schools
Next-Generation MCAS Math Percent Meeting or Exceeding Expectations Grades 3–8,
2017–2018**

Group	N (2018)	2017	2018	Change	State (2018)	Above/Below
African American/Black	42	6%	21%	15	26%	-5
Asian	118	69%	71%	2	74%	-3
Hispanic or Latino	1,353	29%	25%	-4	27%	-2
Multi-Race, non-Hisp./Lat.	180	43%	47%	4	49%	-2
White	1,678	54%	49%	-5	55%	-6
High Needs	1,792	25%	23%	-2	28%	-5
Econ. Dis.	1,292	27%	25%	-2	27%	-2
SWD	668	10%	7%	-3	14%	-7
EL	620	17%	21%	4	30%	-9
All	3,375	44%	40%	-4	48%	-8

**Table 7: Methuen Public Schools
MCAS ELA Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grade 10, 2017–2018**

Group	N (2018)	2017	2018	Change	State (2018)	Above/Below
African American/Black	5	--	--	--	85%	--
Asian	18	100%	100%	0	95%	5
Hispanic or Latino	177	79%	80%	1	78%	2
Multi-Race, non-Hisp./Lat.	30	78%	80%	2	93%	-13
White	246	94%	94%	0	94%	0
High Needs	211	75%	79%	4	79%	0
Econ. Dis.	171	78%	82%	4	81%	1
SWD	38	44%	55%	11	69%	-14
EL	53	35%	55%	20	64%	-9
All	477	88%	88%	0	91%	-3

**Table 8: Methuen Public Schools
MCAS Math Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grade 10, 2017–2018**

Group	N (2018)	2017	2018	Change	State (2018)	Above/Below
African American/Black	5	--	--	--	60%	--
Asian	18	83%	89%	6	91%	-2
Hispanic or Latino	177	59%	56%	-3	56%	0
Multi-Race, non-Hisp./Lat.	30	52%	70%	18	79%	-9
White	247	80%	79%	-1	85%	-6
High Needs	213	53%	52%	-1	57%	-5
Econ. Dis.	170	57%	57%	0	59%	-2
SWD	41	15%	17%	2	40%	-23
EL	54	18%	31%	13	44%	-13
All	478	71%	71%	0	78%	-7

**Table 9: Methuen Public Schools
MCAS Science Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grades 5, 8, and 10, 2015–2018**

Group	N (2018)	2015	2016	2017	2018	4-yr Change	State (2018)
African American/Black	14	31%	26%	--	7%	-24	30%
Asian	53	45%	51%	56%	58%	13	68%
Hispanic or Latino	611	22%	22%	28%	27%	5	30%
Multi-Race, non-Hisp./Lat.	86	61%	33%	30%	44%	-17	54%
White	833	47%	46%	51%	50%	3	60%
High Needs	757	21%	20%	23%	25%	4	31%
Econ. Dis.	578	24%	22%	27%	28%	4	32%
SWD	239	9%	8%	7%	8%	-1	21%
EL	218	9%	8%	7%	14%	5	20%
All	1,600	39%	37%	42%	41%	2	53%

**Table 10: Methuen Public Schools
Next-Generation MCAS ELA Percent Meeting or Exceeding Expectations in Grades 3–8,
2017–2018**

Grade	N	2017	2018	Change	State (2018)	Above/Below
3	503	41%	47%	6	52%	-5
4	551	45%	49%	4	53%	-4
5	585	42%	48%	6	54%	-6
6	561	46%	44%	-2	51%	-7
7	586	45%	34%	-11	46%	-12
8	590	41%	46%	5	51%	-5
3–8	3,376	44%	45%	1	51%	-6

**Table 11: Methuen Public Schools
Next-Generation MCAS Math Percent Meeting or Exceeding Expectations in Grades 3–8,
2017–2018**

Grade	N	2017	2018	Change	State (2018)	Above/Below
3	508	43%	47%	4	50%	-3
4	547	52%	38%	-14	48%	-10
5	586	42%	38%	-4	46%	-8
6	560	43%	38%	-5	47%	-9
7	585	46%	37%	-9	46%	-9
8	589	41%	42%	1	50%	-8
3–8	3,375	44%	40%	-4	48%	-8

**Table 12: Methuen Public Schools
MCAS Science Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grades 5, 8, and 10, 2015–2018**

Grade	N (2018)	2015	2016	2017	2018	4-yr Change	State (2018)
5	586	37%	28%	32%	39%	2	47%
8	587	27%	29%	30%	25%	-2	35%
10	427	65%	61%	71%	66%	1	74%
All	1,600	39%	37%	42%	41%	2	52%

**Table 13: Methuen Public Schools
ELA and Math Mean Student Growth Percentile, 2018**

Grade	ELA			Math		
	N (2018)	2018	State (2018)	N (2018)	2018	State (2018)
3	--	--	--	--	--	--
4	498	51.9	50.0	496	45.9	50.1
5	528	48.5	50.1	528	40.3	50.0
6	508	49.4	50.1	508	42.0	50.0
7	532	46.5	50.0	532	48.7	50.0
8	543	51.4	50.0	546	45.1	50.0
10	418	48.5	49.9	418	52.0	49.9

**Table 14: Methuen Public Schools
Next-Generation MCAS ELA Percent Meeting or Exceeding Expectations by Grade and School, 2018**

School	3	4	5	6	7	8	3–8
Marsh Grammar	53%	66%	58%	53%	37%	55%	53%
Comprehensive Grammar	58%	52%	57%	45%	47%	48%	51%
Tenney Grammar	48%	45%	45%	40%	32%	41%	42%
Timony Grammar	37%	40%	42%	43%	26%	46%	39%
District	47%	49%	48%	44%	34%	46%	45%
State	52%	53%	54%	51%	46%	51%	51%

**Table 15: Methuen Public Schools
Next-Generation MCAS Math Percent Meeting or Exceeding Expectations by Grade and School, 2018**

School	3	4	5	6	7	8	3–8
Marsh Grammar	48%	41%	44%	45%	41%	48%	44%
Comprehensive Grammar	53%	32%	44%	45%	42%	50%	44%
Tenney Grammar	50%	36%	33%	33%	43%	28%	37%

Timony Grammar	44%	46%	37%	34%	27%	46%	39%
District	47%	38%	38%	38%	37%	42%	40%
State	50%	48%	46%	47%	46%	50%	48%

**Table 16: Methuen Public Schools
MCAS ELA and Math Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grade 10, 2018**

School	ELA	Math
Methuen High	89%	72%
State	91%	78%

**Table 17: Methuen Public Schools
MCAS Science Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced by School and Grade, 2018**

School	3	4	5	6	7	8	10	Total
Marsh Grammar	--	--	52%	--	--	33%	--	43%
Comprehensive Grammar	--	--	43%	--	--	25%	--	34%
Tenney Grammar	--	--	39%	--	--	21%	--	30%
Timony Grammar	--	--	29%	--	--	21%	--	25%
Methuen High	--	--	--	--	--	--	67%	67%
District	--	--	39%	--	--	25%	66%	41%
State	--	--	47%	--	--	35%	74%	52%

**Table 18: Methuen Public Schools
Next-Generation MCAS ELA Percent Meeting and Exceeding Expectations by School, 2018**

School	All	High Needs	Econ. Dis.	SWD	EL	African American	Asian	Hispanic	Multirace	White
Marsh Grammar	53 %	30 %	32 %	11 %	25 %	--	60 %	31 %	69 %	60 %
Comprehensive Grammar	51 %	29 %	33 %	13 %	19 %	--	60 %	34 %	58 %	60 %
Tenney Grammar	42 %	30 %	32 %	10 %	24 %	--	62 %	31 %	55 %	51 %

Timony Grammar	39 %	27 %	29 %	7% 	22 %	--	70 %	31 %	42 %	46 %
District	45 %	28 %	30 %	10 %	22 %	26 %	62 %	31 %	51 %	54 %
State	51 %	31 %	32 %	14 %	30 %	31 %	71 %	31 %	54 %	58 %

**Table 19: Methuen Public Schools
Next-Generation MCAS Math Percent Meeting and Exceeding Expectations by School, 2018**

School	A ll	H igh N e e d s	E c o n . D i s .	S W D	E L	A f r i c a n A m e r i c a n	A s i a n	H i s p a n i c	M u l t i - r a c e	W h i t e
Marsh Grammar	44 %	23 %	26 %	6% 	19 %	--	63 %	25 %	53 %	50 %
Comprehensive Grammar	44 %	23 %	25 %	11 %	15 %	--	74 %	24 %	52 %	53 %
Tenney Grammar	37 %	25 %	26 %	7% 	26 %	--	62 %	24 %	50 %	49 %
Timony Grammar	39 %	25 %	27 %	7% 	23 %	--	82 %	28 %	46 %	47 %
District	40 %	23 %	25 %	7% 	21 %	21 %	71 %	25 %	47 %	49 %
State	48 %	28 %	27 %	14 %	30 %	26 %	74 %	27 %	49 %	55 %

**Table 20: Methuen Public Schools
MCAS ELA and Math Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grade 10, 2015–2018**

School/Group	ELA					Math				
	2015	2016	2017	2018	4-yr Change	2015	2016	2017	2018	4-yr Change
Methuen High	90%	91%	89%	89%	-1	72%	74%	72%	72%	0
African American/Black	100%	71%	--	--	--	83%	57%	--	--	--
Asian	94%	86%	100%	100%	6	88%	91%	88%	88%	0
Hispanic or Latino	72%	87%	79%	81%	9	51%	57%	59%	58%	7

Multi-race, non-Hisp./Lat.	--	--	78%	79%	--	--	--	52%	75%	--
White	97%	95%	95%	95%	-2	80%	84%	81%	80%	0
High Needs	77%	81%	77%	79%	2	51%	55%	54%	55%	4
Econ. Dis.	82%	85%	78%	82%	0	58%	57%	57%	59%	1
SWD	42%	51%	47%	50%	8	8%	26%	17%	15%	7
EL	29%	61%	37%	57%	28	24%	26%	19%	34%	10

Table 21: Methuen Public Schools**MCAS Science Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Science by School and Student Group, 2015–2018**

School	N (2018)	2015	2016	2017	2018	4-yr Change
Marsh Grammar	260	37%	37%	41%	43%	6
African American/Black	4	--	--	--	--	--
Asian	4	--	--	45%	--	--
Hispanic or Latino	49	23%	14%	25%	33%	10
Multi-race, non-Hisp./Lat.	12	--	--	23%	67%	--
White	191	42%	41%	48%	45%	3
High Needs	101	23%	20%	21%	28%	5
Econ. Dis.	71	28%	23%	28%	32%	4
SWD	45	14%	13%	8%	16%	2
EL	20	9%	0%	8%	10%	1
Comprehensive Grammar	264	42%	32%	33%	34%	-8
African American/Black	--	--	--	--	--	--
Asian	13	63%	40%	38%	46%	-17
Hispanic or Latino	81	13%	20%	18%	20%	7
Multi-race, non-Hisp./Lat.	11	--	--	30%	27%	--
White	158	50%	40%	41%	41%	-9
High Needs	117	14%	12%	15%	17%	3
Econ. Dis.	84	17%	15%	19%	17%	0
SWD	52	9%	0%	5%	10%	1
EL	39	0%	8%	6%	8%	8
Tenney Grammar	312	25%	29%	31%	30%	5
African American/Black	7	--	25%	--	--	--
Asian	9	--	20%	47%	--	--
Hispanic or Latino	159	13%	14%	19%	19%	6
Multi-race, non-Hisp./Lat.	14	--	--	28%	57%	--
White	123	33%	42%	43%	42%	9
High Needs	159	13%	11%	13%	18%	5
Econ. Dis.	115	15%	10%	15%	14%	-1
SWD	51	6%	7%	7%	10%	4
EL	49	6%	7%	3%	18%	12
Timony Grammar	300	26%	21%	23%	25%	-1

African American/Black	1	--	--	--	--	--
Asian	13	23%	45%	--	54%	31
Hispanic or Latino	151	17%	11%	14%	17%	0
Multi-race, non-Hisp./Lat.	20	--	--	6%	15%	--
White	114	33%	28%	32%	34%	1
High Needs	169	12%	9%	9%	17%	5
Econ. Dis.	134	12%	10%	10%	19%	7
SWD	39	4%	0%	4%	0%	-4
EL	64	11%	4%	0%	8%	-3
Methuen High	424	66%	62%	71%	67%	1
African American/Black	1	64%	54%	--	--	--
Asian	13	63%	71%	87%	92%	29
Hispanic or Latino	145	51%	47%	59%	52%	1
Multi-race, non-Hisp./Lat.	27	--	--	58%	59%	--
White	237	72%	69%	79%	75%	3
High Needs	174	47%	43%	51%	49%	2
Econ. Dis.	146	52%	46%	55%	54%	2
SWD	30	10%	19%	14%	3%	-7
EL	35	27%	27%	33%	34%	7

**Table 22: Methuen Public Schools
Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rates by student Group, 2014–2017**

Group	N (2017)	2014	2015	2016	2017	4-yr Change	State (2017)
African American/Black	--	90.9	83.3	89.5	--	--	80.0
Asian	18	100.0	100.0	95.2	100.0	0.0	94.1
Hispanic or Latino	156	75.2	73.6	75.7	73.1	-2.1	74.4
Multi-Race, non-Hisp./Lat.	17	100.0	--	60.0	94.1	-5.9	85.2
White	267	90.6	92.4	91.8	92.1	1.5	92.6
High needs	278	78.4	77.5	79.6	78.1	-0.3	80.0
Economically Disadvantaged*	244	79.4	79.1	79.9	79.1	-0.3	79.0

SWD	63	49.2	61.2	65.1	58.7	9.5	72.8
EL	39	73.5	53.8	62.5	59.0	-14.5	63.4
All	459	86.4	86.6	86.6	85.8	-0.6	88.3

*Four-year cohort graduation rate for students from low-income families used for 2014 and 2015 rates.

**Table 23: Methuen Public Schools
Five-Year Cohort Graduation Rates by Student Group, 2013–2016**

Group	N (2016)	2013	2014	2015	2016	4-yr Change	State (2016)
African American/Black	19	76.9	90.9	83.3	89.5	12.6	83.4
Asian	21	92.9	100.0	100.0	95.2	2.3	94.8
Hispanic or Latino	144	75.4	79.7	75.0	77.1	1.7	76.8
Multi-Race, non-Hisp./Lat.	10	88.9	100.0	--	70.0	-18.9	87.4
White	294	87.1	92.4	92.8	92.2	5.1	93.5
High needs	304	75.4	82.2	78.3	80.6	5.2	82.9
Economically Disadvantaged*	273	76.2	83.7	80.0	81.0	4.8	82.1
SWD	83	53.1	54.2	62.7	67.5	14.4	76.5
EL	32	78.6	79.4	53.8	65.6	-13.0	70.9
All	491	83.7	89.0	87.2	87.4	3.7	89.8

* Five-year cohort graduation rate for students from low-income families used for 2014 rates.

**Table 24: Methuen Public Schools
In-School Suspension Rates by Student Group, 2015–2018**

Group	2015	2016	2017	2018	4-yr Change	State (2018)
African American/Black	3.4	8.0	--	5.1	1.7	3.4
Asian	--	--	--	--	--	0.6
Hispanic or Latino	4.8	4.0	1.8	3.1	-1.7	2.4
Multi-Race, non-Hisp./Lat.	2.2	3.4	1.4	4.9	2.7	2.3
White	3.8	2.7	0.8	2.0	-1.8	1.4
High Needs	4.4	4.2	1.8	3.1	-1.3	2.7
Economically disadvantaged*	5.0	4.8	2.0	3.5	-1.5	2.9

SWD	4.7	4.1	1.9	2.9	-1.8	3.3
EL	3.7	3.0	0.3	2.2	-1.5	1.8
All	4.0	3.3	1.2	2.6	-1.4	1.8

**Table 25: Methuen Public Schools
Out-of-School Suspension Rates by Student Group, 2015–2018**

Group	2015	2016	2017	2018	4-yr Change	State (2018)
African American/Black	4.3	6.0	--	0.9	-3.4	6.0
Asian	--	--	--	--	--	0.7
Hispanic or Latino	5.1	4.1	3.7	4.7	-0.4	5.1
Multi-Race, non-Hisp./Lat.	2.2	4.1	1.1	4.3	2.1	3.3
White	3.1	2.5	1.9	2.4	-0.7	1.9
High Needs	5.2	4.4	3.8	4.6	-0.6	4.6
Economically disadvantaged*	5.7	4.6	3.7	4.8	-0.9	5.4
SWD	7.0	5.9	5.9	6.7	-0.3	5.8
EL	4.0	4.9	3.5	4.7	0.7	3.7
All	3.7	3.2	2.6	3.3	-0.3	2.9

**Table 26: Methuen Public Schools
Dropout Rates by Student Group, 2014–2017**

Group	2014	2015	2016	2017	4-yr Change	State (2017)
African American/Black	3.4	0.0	0.0	--	--	2.9
Asian	1.6	0.0	0.0	1.3	-0.3	0.6
Hispanic/ Latino	4.3	2.7	3.4	2.8	-1.5	4.2
Multi-Race, non-Hisp./ Lat.	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.1	2.1	1.7
White	1.5	0.9	1.5	1.0	-0.5	1.1
High Needs	3.5	2.6	4.5	2.7	-0.8	3.5
Economically disadvantaged*	3.5	2.4	4.2	2.7	-0.8	3.6
SWD	4.1	3.3	5.7	3.3	-0.8	3.3
EL	6.9	5.8	7.1	3.5	-3.4	6.5
All	2.4	1.3	2.0	1.8	-0.6	1.8

*Dropout rates for students from low-income families used for 2014 rates.

**Table 27: Methuen Public Schools
Advanced Coursework Completion by Student Group, 2017–2018**

Group	N (2018)	2017	2018	Change	Target
African American/Black	7	--	--	--	--
Asian	41	--	--	--	--
Hispanic/Latino	316	37.5	41.5	4.0	46.1
Multi-Race, non-Hisp./Lat	49	47.2	38.8	-8.4	51.8
White	541	60.3	58.4	-1.9	65.4
High Needs	360	25.7	30.8	5.1	32.7
Economically disadvantaged	299	30.8	35.8	5.0	39.9

SWD	83	1.1	2.4	1.3	6.6
EL	68	19.7	23.5	3.8	25.3
All	957	53.0	52.9	-0.1	57.6

Table 28: Methuen Public Schools
Progress toward Attaining English Language Proficiency, 2017–2018

Group	Non-high school					High school				
	N (2018)	2017	2018	Change	Target	N (2018)	2017	2018	Change	Target
EL	377	51.9	55.4	3.5	69.2	82	35.6	31.7	-3.9	43.1
All	377	51.9	55.4	3.5	69.2	82	35.6	31.7	-3.9	43.1

Table 29: Methuen Public Schools
Chronic Absence Rates by Student Group, * 2017–2018

Group	Non-high school					High school				
	N (2018)	2017	2018	Change	Target	N (2018)	2017	2018	Change	Target
African American/ Black	68	--	--	--	--	20	--	--	--	--
Asian	162	--	--	--	--	85	--	--	--	--
Hispanic/ Latino	1,928	14.3	13.0	1.3	11.5	743	44.6	40.4	4.2	41.8
Multi-Race, non-Hisp./ Lat.	238	9.4	4.2	5.2	8.3	109	32.0	33.9	-1.9	30.9
White	2,224	9.9	8.9	1.0	8.9	1,094	38.4	35.8	2.6	37.4
High needs	2,503	16.8	13.9	2.9	14.9	917	49.8	45.0	4.8	47.9
Econ. Dis.	1,616	19.0	16.4	2.6	16.4	629	50.4	47.2	3.2	47.8
SWD	913	18.8	14.7	4.1	16.4	208	48.6	39.4	9.2	46.2
EL	933	12.2	11.8	0.4	8.8	211	43.7	37.4	6.3	40.3
All	4,624	11.4	10.1	1.3	10.3	2,056	39.6	36.6	3.0	38.5

*The percentage of students absent 10 percent or more of their total number of student days of membership in a school

Leadership and Governance

Contextual Background

Methuen has a seven-member school committee chaired by the mayor. At the time of the onsite in January 2019, three members, including the chair, were relatively new, having assumed their positions in January 2018. The committee meets twice a month for business meetings and adds workshop business meetings for budget development. The school committee has convened a budget subcommittee, which includes the district's business manager and two school committee members.

In its self-assessment submitted in advance of the onsite, the district rated the school committee's establishment of a culture of collaboration as "Not at All Well" described by the indicator "The committee maintains collaborative working relationships and engages stakeholders in the district improvement process. District and municipal leaders engage in open, frequent communication and have positive relationships." Possible ratings are "Very Well," "Well," "Somewhat Well," and "Not at All Well."

The team was told that school committee members did not have a shared vision for district improvement.

The district's central office leadership team meets weekly and is made up of the interim superintendent, the interim assistant superintendent, the director of the language acquisition department, the director of student services, the director of instructional technology, the director of human resources, and the business administrator. The district leadership team meets biweekly and is composed of the central office leadership team and five supervising principals² who lead Methuen schools.

A review of length of service indicated longevity among administrators in the system except at the Marsh Grammar School. At the time of the onsite, 12 of the 14 district and school administrators had been in the system for at least 10 years. One of the fourteen had been in the system for seven and a half years. Eleven of the fourteen had been in their current administrative positions for four or more years. The interim superintendent told the review team that one strength of the district was that "many of us have a historical perspective."

The school committee voted on August 30, 2018, to accept the resignation of the former superintendent, who had led the district since 2010, and appointed the assistant superintendent as acting superintendent. On October 9, 2018, school committee members voted the acting superintendent to be interim superintendent while they

² Supervising principals oversee the associate principals in the district. Each associate principal is responsible for a grade span in the school.

searched for a permanent superintendent. The chair of the English department was named interim assistant superintendent in November 2018.

Each of the four Pre-K–8 grammar schools has a supervising principal and two associate principals. The Pre-K–8 schools do not have department chairs or curriculum coordinators. There is one high school with a supervising principal, four associate principals, and content-specific coordinators or department chairs for every subject, including social studies and the arts. All schools have a special education administrator. The district has four systemwide supervisors for fine arts; physical education, health, and wellness; Title I; and language acquisition. The grammar schools' instructional coaches and deans were cut from the fiscal year 2018 and fiscal year 2019 school budgets, respectively.

The district developed a 2013–2016 District Improvement Plan (DIP) which has been updated annually through 2018. The grammar schools and the high school have aligned their School Improvement Plans (SIPs) with the DIP.

The fiscal year 2018 budget ended in a \$3.8 million deficit that surprised city officials and the city council, and put a strain on their relationship with the school committee. At the time of the onsite, the interim superintendent was working with school committee members and other district leaders to monitor all expenditures very closely and to develop and pass a needs-based school budget.

Strength Finding

1. The interim superintendent is developing a collaborative working relationship with the school committee and other district and school leaders.

A. The interim superintendent has been establishing a collaborative working relationship with the school committee and other district and school leaders since she began leading the district on August 31, 2018.

1. The interim superintendent was the assistant superintendent for 6 years and has been in the district for 17 years.

a. As the assistant superintendent, the interim superintendent was responsible for curriculum, instruction, assessment, grant writing, and other duties. She regularly attended school committee meetings and reported many times on MCAS assessment reports and other student achievement data.

b. The interim superintendent has also had other roles in the district, including principal of the Comprehensive Grammar School.

2. School committee members told the review team that they had open lines of communication with the interim superintendent. They said that they supported her and described the relationship as extremely positive.
- B. The interim superintendent has a long history of working collaboratively with others in the district.
 1. The interim superintendent is transitioning from performing the duties of the assistant superintendent to those of the superintendent.
 - a. District and school leaders described a smooth transition of leadership.
 - b. Administrators told the review team that the transition was smooth and seamless because the assistant superintendent had a long history working collaboratively with others in the district.

Impact: When the district's leader has a collaborative working relationship with school committee members and other district and school leaders, they likely share responsibility for student learning and can focus on district priorities.

Challenges and Areas for Growth

2. **The district and school improvement planning process is missing input from teachers, families, and the community. The plans are not grounded in root cause analysis and data analysis, and do not include measurable outcomes. The improvement plans do not include benchmarks to monitor progress and measure impact during implementation.**
 - A. In 2013, the assistant superintendent developed the framework for the district improvement plan (DIP) and brought it to the district leadership team.
 1. The district leadership team helped develop the 2013–2016 DIP; annual improvement plans for 2017, 2018, and 2019³ were developed thereafter. However, the plans did not mention staff or family input.
 2. School Improvement Plans (SIPs) are developed by the school leadership team and are closely aligned with the DIP. However, input from teachers and families is missing from the SIPs.
 - a. School leaders told the team that they worked on goals and shared their drafts with and received feedback from district leaders. School leaders also share their work with school councils and with school staff.

³ The district sets priority improvement objectives each year.

- b. The interim superintendent told the team that each school council met four times a year. She said that she expected parents to have a say in that setting. However, other interviewees said that the school councils did not make changes to the SIPs.
- 3. The DIP provides the staff with goals, objectives, and activities to implement during the school year. However, the DIP does not refer to root cause analysis or benchmarks for achieving annual goals.
 - a. A review of the DIP indicated seven district goals and corresponding conditions based on DESE's Conditions for School Effectiveness. However, the team did not find evidence that the district evaluated its progress toward DIP goals.
 - b. The DIP and the SIP goals are not specific, and are not based on root cause analysis.
 - c. Each goal has a set of actions that provide direction and guidance during the school year. However, the DIP does not provide benchmarks to monitor progress.
 - d. The DIP provides three strategic objectives to address each of the district's three priority improvement initiatives for 2018–2019.⁴
 - a. A document review indicated that SIPs did not use historical data. When asked whether the plans evaluated what happened last year, the interim superintendent responded, "No."
 - b. A review of the minutes of the October 22, 2018, school committee meeting indicated that school committee members believed that the DIP and the SIPs were missing specificity.
- 4. School committee members may have varying views of the vision for the district.
 - a. Some school committee members told the team that the district did not have a vision.
 - b. Some members expressed the opinion that they were "on the same page" because of the budget.

⁴ For example, the three strategic objectives provided to address the district's first priority objective "Improve academic achievement of underperforming students" are "Provide appropriate curriculum and assessments for each grade level for data-driven decision making," "Implement the use of data-driven decision making in all grades," and "provide students with leveled interventions as needed throughout the year."

- c. Some school committee members told reviewers that the vision of the district was up to the superintendent.
- d. The review team did not find evidence that the school committee sufficiently used the district's vision and improvement plans to guide decisions.

Impact: When improvement plans are not grounded in root cause analysis and data analysis, do not include benchmarks to monitor progress, and do not include wide and meaningful input from key district stakeholders, the district cannot ensure that its improvement plans effectively drive the development, implementation, monitoring, and refinement of educational programs and practices. Without a clear and common vision to guide its policies, deliberations, and decisions, the school committee cannot effectively focus on improving outcomes for all students and act as a primary and consistent advocate in the community for meeting students' needs.

3. The district's four Pre-K-8 grammar schools are missing the leadership structure to provide effective instructional and curriculum support to staff.⁵

- A. The leadership structure in the district's grammar schools is not adequate.
 - 1. The district's four grammar schools have a lean leadership structure to provide oversight of staff and students.
 - a. Each grammar school's leadership structure includes the supervising principal, two associate principals, and the special education administrator, for enrollment in 2017–2018 of between 1,065 and 1,381 students. In contrast, the high school leadership structure has four associate principals and subject area department chairs who provide content specific support, curriculum oversight, professional development, and data analysis, for enrollment in 2017–2018 of 1,949 students.
 - i. The associate principals are the administrators who have broad roles in their schools and work the most closely with teachers.
 - b. Between 2018 and 2019, the district eliminated deans and instructional coaches in the grammar schools. Associate principals in the grammar schools assumed the responsibilities of the former instructional coaches and deans (See the Curriculum and Instruction Contextual Background below).
 - i. Grammar school deans had provided support to students with social-emotional wellbeing and behavior. Their elimination likely

⁵ See the recommendation in the Curriculum and Instruction section below.

means that principals and associate principals at the grammar schools have less time available to work with teachers.

- ii. Instructional coaches had supported initiatives, worked with teachers and conducted demonstration lessons, provided professional development, helped develop School Improvement Plans, and participated in data analysis.
- c. The district has a thin administrative team compared with districts statewide, and the difference has grown.
 - i. In 2017–2018, before the elimination of the dean positions, the district’s ratio of administrators/instructional leaders to students was 1:167, 46 percent higher than the statewide ratio of 1:114.
 - ii. In 2017–2018, after eliminating the K–8 instructional coaches, the district had only 3.0 FTE instructional coaches, a ratio of instructional coaches to students of 1:2,312, compared with the statewide ratio of 1:556.

Impact: Without an adequate leadership structure at the grammar schools, district and school leaders are challenged to provide staff, students, and families with the support they need in pursuit of excellence for all students.

Recommendations

- 1. The district should ensure that the improvement planning process is inclusive and that plans are grounded in root cause analysis and district data analysis. Plans should set specific, measurable goals and identify benchmarks to monitor progress and measure impact during implementation.**
 - A.** Under the leadership of the superintendent, the district should convene a representative group of stakeholders to develop measurable goals (including progress benchmarks and final outcomes) for its planning documents.
 1. The goals should be based on an analysis of historical, longitudinal, and current disaggregated data related to student performance, opportunities, and outcomes.
 2. The goals should be SMART (Specific and Strategic; Measurable; Action Oriented; Rigorous, Realistic, and Results Focused; and Time and Tracked).

3. The district should develop a process for using the most recent student data to continually monitor and update District and School Improvement Plans (DIP and SIPs).
- B.** Principals, in collaboration with school councils, should ensure that each SIP includes specific measures to determine the progress of school-based initiatives.
1. Similar to the DIP, these measures should be SMART.
- C.** District and school leaders should provide frequent, timely, and thorough information to the school committee, staff, students, families, and the community on progress toward the achievement of plan goals.

Benefits: By using an inclusive planning process, and developing, communicating, and using measurable goals based on an analysis of historical, longitudinal, and current disaggregated student data and other data sources, the district will ensure that it is focused on the most important areas for improvement. By making a commitment to the yearly amount of change that it plans to achieve, the district will be able to plan and regularly monitor the impact of key improvement strategies, instructional practices, and the use of resources on student performance, opportunities, and outcomes.

Recommended resources:

- DESE'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.
 - *Selecting Outcome Measures and Setting Targets* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/research/success/setting-outcomes-targets.docx>) might be particularly helpful as the district analyzes data in order to establish measurable goals.
- *What Makes a Goal Smarter?* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/eval/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.
- *District Accelerated Improvement Planning - Guiding Principles for Effective Benchmarks* (<http://www.mass.gov/edu/docs/ease/accountability/turnaround/level-4-guiding-principles-effective-benchmarks.pdf>) provides information about different types of benchmarks to guide and measure district improvement efforts.

2. The school committee, the city council, and municipal officials should maximize their effort to work together to develop a culture of collaboration and cooperation.

- A.** Inviting members to each other's meetings is an extremely positive first step. The new superintendent, district and school leaders, staff, students, families, and city leaders should work together to advocate for and help students accelerate their progress.
1. The school committee, municipal officials, and the city council should meet and discuss how they can work together on behalf of students. This includes how to develop an authentic culture of collaboration and cooperation.
 2. An experienced facilitator could be helpful to support the effective collaboration of the school committee, the city council, and municipal officials.

Benefits: When there is a culture of collaboration and cooperation among key stakeholders, it is more likely that the school committee, the city council, and municipal officials will work strategically together so that their actions will effectively address the needs of students.

Recommended resource:

- The *District Governance Program* (<http://www.masc.org/field-services/district-governance-project>), provided by the Massachusetts Association of School Committees, is designed to focus on continuous improvement and to build understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the school committee and the superintendent.

Curriculum and Instruction

Contextual Background

The district has made efforts to ensure greater curriculum consistency among the four K–8 grammar schools. At the time of the onsite in January 2019, the district was piloting two K–6 integrated, balanced literacy programs, ReadyGEN by Pearson and Wonders by McGraw Hill, at the Tenney and the Comprehensive grammar schools with an adoption decision anticipated by the close of the 2018–2019 school year. The following instructional resources are consistently used in all grammar schools: Foundations (kindergarten), Lucy Caulkins writing units, Newsela, and Reading Plus (reading interventions K–10).

Pearson’s Mystery Science has been the K–5 science program at all grammar schools since the fall of 2017. Two programs from Pearson, Interactive Science and Elevate, are being piloted in grades 6–8. The online program provides units and lessons that are aligned with the 2016 state science standards. The district has created science kits to complete unit activities. However, review team members were told that kit consumables were not consistently replaced in a timely manner and teachers were limited in the investigations they could offer students, particularly in grades 6–8.

The district adopted Eureka Math in 2016 as its mathematics program. The Eureka Math program also supports the advanced mathematics classes in grades 6–8.

At Methuen High School, the ELA, mathematics, and science departments have a robust system of supports for curriculum selection, review, and revision, including instructional materials. In addition to adopting course textbooks, these departments access open domain/digital texts and other online resources to supplement their curricula. Curriculum needs are consistently monitored and as needs arise, they are prioritized and documented in a multi-year department curriculum action plan.

The district’s K–12 curriculum maps are aligned with the 2017 Massachusetts English Language Arts and Mathematics frameworks. While some alignment discussions have begun around history and social science topics, particularly at the secondary level, K–12 science curriculum maps are not fully aligned with the 2016 Massachusetts Science and Technology/ Engineering Framework. The district’s Language Acquisition department recently developed English language development (ELD) curriculum maps for upper grammar school grades and the high school. These maps are aligned with the WIDA ELD⁶ Standards and the state’s 2017 ELA framework. At the time of the onsite, the district was transitioning from Atlas to the Google platform to house its curricula, providing easy access for all educators.

⁶ WIDA ELD stands for World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment English Language Development.

Students in Methuen have access to a range of rigorous coursework. A review of the high school's program of studies indicated a variety of core and elective courses that appeal to students' interests and ambitions. Graduation requirements are aligned with MassCore requirements. All students have access to accelerated learning pathways. The district has expanded its AP course options and students have taken advantage of the district's AP open-enrollment policy. The high school offers an AP Enhancement course that enables students to complete projects or receive extra help. The high school partners with UMASS Lowell for enriched science opportunities for students. The high school partners with Northern Essex Community College to offer students dual enrollment. The school's Alpha Program is designed for students who may be unable to participate in a traditional high-school experience because of work, family or personal health issues, learning style, a need for credit recovery, etc. This program enables students to meet graduation requirements, and many graduate with their class. Advanced mathematics pathways are available for students at the upper grammar school level (grades 5–8) and Spanish is included in the grade 8 course of studies.

The assistant superintendent of schools is responsible for the oversight of all curriculum and instructional initiatives. While this responsibility has not changed over time, designated K–8 curriculum/instructional support positions have been eliminated. Educators stated that the district once had a K–8 curriculum director and that each grammar school had ELA and mathematics instructional coaches. The director and coaches met regularly with the assistant superintendent to coordinate and support K–8 curriculum efforts.

Approximately 10 years before the onsite in January 2019, the K–8 curriculum coordinator's position was eliminated and replaced by deans. The deans oversaw student discipline, freeing up associate principals to assume more curriculum oversight in their schools. Until the 2017–2018 school year, associate principals regularly met with the assistant superintendent to manage this work. The grammar school instructional coaches were eliminated in the 2017–2018 school year and the deans in the 2018–2019 school year. At the time of the onsite, associate principals in the grammar schools were struggling to assume the responsibilities of the former instructional coaches and deans. In contrast, the high-school's curriculum and instructional support system—primarily content department chairs—has not been faced staff reductions partly because of the district's desire to improve teaching and learning in the school after it was designated by DESE as a Level 3 school.

The loss of the K–8 instructional coaches and deans has significantly jeopardized the district's ability to adequately provide ongoing curriculum review, revision, and implementation support. In addition, science and social studies teachers at the grammar schools have not had the benefit of content instructional coaches despite the district's ongoing challenge to meet state-determined MCAS science performance targets.

Families indirectly expressed their concern with instructional practice in the district. In a focus group, parents said that instruction was designed to help struggling students and that other students were not being challenged. The review team observed several lessons where students who finished class assignments early were not provided with challenging or enrichment opportunities related to the lesson content.

Challenges and Areas for Growth

1. The district does not have systems and supports in place to equitably coordinate and sustain the ongoing selection, review, and revision of K–12 curricula and its implementation.

- A. At the time of the onsite in January 2019, the oversight of K–12 curricula was in transition while personnel moved into new leadership positions. Systems previously in place to coordinate K–12 curricula efforts (leadership positions and roles) had been reduced or were not functioning.
 - 1. The interim superintendent, the former assistant superintendent, was responsible for K–12 curriculum oversight. Systems had been established for this work that included dedicated meetings with the interim superintendent and administrators who supported this oversight.
 - 2. Educators at all levels reported that with the transition of the former ELA department chair to the role of interim assistant superintendent in November 2018, the coordination for this critical work has not been defined or reestablished including administrative/leadership meetings with the interim assistant superintendent.
- B. The district’s system of curriculum coordination reflects inequitable support structures across levels creating two separate systems within the district— the high school (9–12) and the grammar schools (K–8). The high-school system provides comprehensive curriculum oversight and supports for teachers. While there are discussions about including grades 7 and 8 in the high school’s system, K–8 coordination and oversight is limited because of the elimination of the ELA and mathematics instructional coaches and deans.
 - 1. The high school has a robust system of supports for curriculum selection, review, and revision. Department chairs are responsible for the oversight and coordination of curriculum within their departments, including curriculum selection and implementation, professional development, promoting effective teaching strategies, and the supervision and evaluation of teachers. High-school teachers identified their department chairs as part of the

administration responsible for curriculum and instruction at the high-school level.

- a. The high school has dedicated time for teachers to discuss curriculum during monthly department meetings, grade 9 common planning time, grades 9–12 collaboration time (1/2 hour per week), and at yearly grades 6–12 vertical/horizontal articulation meetings. Administrators stated that department chairs had periodically used release days for grades 7–12 curriculum collaboration and articulation.
 - b. The high school’s designation by DESE as a Level 3 school spurred the district and state to provide additional resources to help the high school improve curricula, including DSAC⁷ services and supports.
2. The loss of ELA and mathematics instructional coaches in 2017–2018 school year has had a significant impact on the quality and depth of curriculum oversight in the K–8 grammar schools. Teachers and administrators said that supervising principals or associate principals now oversaw curriculum work.
 - a. Instructional coaches were responsible for coordinating the selection and implementation of curriculum in ELA and mathematics. They served as school and district resources K–8. Responsibilities included data analysis, facilitation of data discussions, professional development, and curriculum and instructional supports for teachers.
 - b. Curriculum oversight is now one of many responsibilities assumed by grammar school principals (supervising or associate).⁸ Teachers and administrators said that the loss of these positions has meant the absence of consistency in curriculum oversight and coordination in the grammar schools.
 3. The loss of the dean positions in the 2018–2019 school year has further limited principals’ ability to effectively oversee curricula development.
 - a. With the elimination of deans who were responsible for discipline, associate principals have also taken over this role further challenging principals’ effectiveness in overseeing curricula development.
 4. Interviews and a document review indicated that although the K–8 schedule included common planning time, schools used this time in various ways.

⁷ DSAC stands for District and School Assistance Center. This DESE program is now called the Statewide System of Support.

⁸ For example, principals told the review team that it was not uncommon for associate principals to substitute teach in classrooms— sometimes for a full day— because of a shortage of substitute teachers in the district.

- a. K–8 teachers stated that opportunities to discuss curriculum was limited or ad hoc.
 - b. Administrators said that in kindergarten through grade 4, teachers generally did not have dedicated time to meet to discuss curriculum. However, time was provided so that teachers in grades 4 and 5 could meet to discuss transition issues.
- C. While the district has proactively applied for grants to support curriculum work in case funding was not available in the operating budget, once funds were expended curriculum work halted until additional funding was allocated, further impeding the district’s ability to update curricula in a timely manner.
 - 1. The Title IIA grant previously paid for summer curriculum revisions, which were prioritized based on state revisions of curriculum frameworks and the district’s progress toward aligning its curriculum maps with these updated frameworks. Other curriculum projects were completed through Level 3 resources such as DSAC support. Both resources are no longer available to the district.
 - 2. Administrators and teachers stated that little curriculum work could take place without additional funding.
 - 3. Teachers have been unable to update/revise curriculum work or complete the selection and alignment of K–12 science curriculum because of the absence of funds.
 - a. At the time of the onsite, the district was transitioning from Atlas to the Google platform for sharing documents.
- D. Updated curricular materials are not consistently available to teachers to support curriculum implementation.
 - 1. Teachers across the district told the team that they did not always have the curricular materials necessary to support the implementation of content curricula. Review team members were told that core curricular resources across all levels, schools, and content areas have not consistently been made available to support high-quality curricula.
 - a. In addition, some teachers said that they often paid out of pocket for materials needed to complete experiments or for texts for classroom libraries.
 - b. Others said that their department received materials from other departments, which were not always grade appropriate.

Impact: Without adequate systems and supports for curriculum, including sufficient personnel, dedicated time for collaboration at each level and necessary resources for this work, the district cannot ensure that all students have access to current, aligned, high-quality curricula.

2. In observed classrooms, the quality of instruction was inconsistent, particularly in the areas of student engagement, academic rigor, and inclusive practices.

- A. In most observed classrooms, classroom routines and positive supports were in place to ensure that students behaved appropriately and the classroom climate was conducive to teaching and learning (Instructional Inventory, Appendix C, characteristics #11 and #12).
- B. In observed classrooms, reviewers found sufficient and compelling evidence that students assumed responsibility to learn and were engaged in the lesson (characteristic #5) in 75 percent of lower grammar school (K–4) classrooms, in 57 percent of upper grammar school (5–8) classrooms, and in 60 percent of high-school (9–12) classrooms. Most students actively participated in the activities and volunteered their ideas and questions. Students also had multiple opportunities for doing the thinking in the classroom.
 - 1. In classrooms where students assumed responsibility to learn and were engaged in the lesson, teachers encouraged students to self-check their work and provided them with tools to complete their work accurately. Once given directions, students completed tasks independently or in small groups, were on task, and engaged in the lesson activities. Team members often saw students in content-connected centers or engaged in investigations and projects. Students were self-directed and moved seamlessly from one center or task to another.
 - 2. In contrast, in many upper grammar (5–8) and high-school classrooms, lessons were primarily teacher directed, students were off task or engaged only when the teacher was working directly with them, and students often worked individually on packets or worksheets (hardcopy and digital).
- C. Observers saw sufficient and compelling evidence of students engaging in higher-order thinking such as analysis, synthesis, problem-solving, evaluation, or application of new knowledge (characteristic #6) in 61 percent of lower grammar school classrooms, in 50 percent of upper grammar school classrooms, and in 65 percent of high-school classrooms.
 - 1. In a grade 12 ELA class, students analyzed poetry and other literature.

2. In a grade 4 ELA/reading class, students were not engaged in activities that required higher-order thinking. They did not have opportunities to summarize, infer, analyze, or apply new knowledge of what was happening in the book that they were reading.
- D.** Team members found sufficient and compelling evidence that students were given opportunities to engage meaningfully with tasks connected to their lives or with the larger world (characteristic # 8) in 75 percent of lower grammar school classrooms, in 61 percent of upper grammar school classrooms, and in 65 percent of high-school classrooms.
1. In lessons designed to promote higher-order thinking and connections to real-world tasks, students edited writing assignments, shared their revisions with classmates, and received and considered their feedback. In other classrooms, students were challenged to create a plant or animal cell from a variety of materials and be able to name the cell parts. Students also used probability to figure out the odds of winning the lottery or analyzed DNA samples to identify which high-school teacher kidnapped the district's mascot.
 2. Conversely, lessons that were not reflective of higher-order thinking and connections to real-world tasks were often characterized by whole-class teacher-directed instruction that required limited student interaction. Examples included extended instructional time for homework review, low-level questioning, and the teacher showing students what needed to be done followed by hardcopy or digital worksheets.
- E.** The review team observed sufficient and compelling evidence of students communicating their ideas and thinking with each other (characteristic #7) in 61 percent of lower grammar classrooms, in 50 percent of upper grammar classrooms, and in 45 percent of high-school classrooms.
1. In a grade 1 writing class, students shared with each other what they did well in their writing and what they needed to change.
 2. In a high-school math class, there was no group work and students did not exchange ideas.
- F.** In observed classrooms, the team noted sufficient and compelling evidence that the teacher conducted frequent checks for student understanding, provided feedback, and adjusted instruction (characteristic #4) in 57 percent of observed lower grammar school classrooms, in 50 percent of upper grammar school classrooms, and in 70 percent of high-school classrooms.

1. In many observed classrooms, teachers periodically or consistently checked in with students and/or groups of students to ensure that they understood the assigned task, provided them with actionable and relevant feedback, and made seamless adjustments to instruction.
 2. In some observed classrooms, the teacher infrequently checked for student understanding during the lesson, provided students with little feedback, and made little adjustment to instruction.
- G.** The review team found sufficient and compelling evidence that the teacher designed the lesson to support and challenge students with varied learning needs (characteristic #9) in 61 percent of lower grammar school classrooms, in 54 percent of upper grammar school classrooms, and in 60 percent of high-school classrooms.
1. In a grade 12 math class, the teacher provided individualized instruction to small groups of students.
 2. In contrast, in a grade 6 social studies class, all students were completing the same task, using the same materials.
- H.** In observed classrooms, the team saw sufficient and compelling evidence that teachers used a variety of instructional strategies in their lesson design and delivery (characteristic #10)) in 79 percent of lower grammar school classrooms, in 50 percent of upper grammar school classrooms, and in 55 percent of high-school lessons.
1. In most observed classrooms, teachers used multiple instructional approaches or formats. Students were often working in pairs or groups to complete activities/projects, manipulatives and other instructional tools and materials were readily available, students had time to reflect on and then share their thinking, and technology was used to enhance and extend learning.
 2. In some observed classrooms, the teacher used one approach or format.

Impact: Without providing high-quality instruction that challenges and supports all students and promotes student engagement regardless of students' learning styles, the district cannot optimize students' learning opportunities and adequately prepare students for college, careers, and civic participation.

Recommendations

1. **The district should complete as soon as possible its K–12 curriculum. It should ensure that curricula are adopted and reviewed in a timely way, are aligned with appropriate standards, and are aligned vertically, with coherent student learning progressions.**
 - A. District leaders should develop a process for the regular review and revision of curriculum.
 1. District leaders should develop and implement a formal and cyclical planning process to review and update curricula.
 2. As part of its planning process, the district should consider specifying the roles that central office staff, principals, and school-based staff will perform in this work. It should also provide regular opportunities for horizontal and vertical collaboration.
 3. The district should document the process for the regular review and revision of curricula and share it with the educational community.
 - B. The district should ensure that the K–8 grammar schools have sufficient leadership oversight and content support so that teachers can complete map alignments, update curricula as needed, and provide ongoing content and implementation support.
 1. Reconfiguring the roles and responsibilities of current district and high-school leaders may provide opportunities to help support grammar-school teachers.
 - C. The district should identify resources to ensure an effective and sustainable curriculum review, revision, and implementation process for all levels.
 1. Resources should include ongoing opportunities for teachers to update curriculum work in Atlas and/or Google curriculum files.

Benefits: Implementing this recommendation help to ensure that teachers and students have access to an updated, full, and rigorous curriculum that prepares students for success in high school and beyond.

Recommended resource:

- *DESE's STE Quality Review Rubric* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/candi/model/rubrics/STE.pdf>) is designed to help educators determine the quality, rigor, and alignment of lessons and units to the 2016 MA STE Curriculum Framework.

2. The district should ensure that all teachers provide effective instruction that challenges and supports all students.

- A.** The district should convene a representative group of teachers and instructional leaders to identify the district's instructional strengths and challenges.
 - 1. The district's educator evaluation rubric can support this work.
 - 2. Areas of focus should include challenging and engaging students regardless of students' learning styles, promoting higher-order thinking and student discourse, and using multiple formats or approaches.
 - 3. Professional development should focus on instructional areas that need strengthening as applied to the specific curricula that students and teachers work with every day.
 - 4. The district should consider revising its planning documents to address the identified instructional challenges and should require that teachers consider these areas when they develop student learning or professional practice goals.
- B.** The district is encouraged to provide equitable opportunities by level for teachers to share best practices.
- C.** Teachers should receive appropriate guidance and feedback as they enhance instruction so that it challenges and supports all students.
 - 1. Principals and other instructional leaders should ensure that teachers have the information and support necessary to strengthen identified areas of challenge.
 - 2. The district should provide teachers with high-quality feedback⁹ that helps them to improve instruction.

Benefits: Implementing this recommendation will mean deeper understanding of instructional strengths and challenges, a stronger culture of professional growth and improvement and set the stage for a districtwide professional learning community around best practice. A district that provides high-quality instruction for all students creates and sustains a culture of continuous improvement in schools, resulting in increased student achievement and growth.

Recommended resources:

⁹ High-quality feedback is specific, timely, and actionable.

- DESE's *Calibration Resources: OPTIC and DESE Video Library* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/eval/resources/calibration/>). *OPTIC* is a dynamic professional learning platform that supports educators to develop and refine a shared understanding of high-quality teaching and feedback using over 100 videos of classroom instruction aligned to the MA Curriculum Frameworks and the Model Classroom Teacher Rubric. The *DESE video library* is a collection of professionally created videos of classroom instruction produced by the School Improvement Network. These videos, accompanied by related calibration training protocols, depict a range of practice (this is NOT a collection of exemplars) to support within-district calibration activities that promote a shared understanding of instructional quality and rigor.
- The *Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS): A Blueprint for Massachusetts Educators* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/sfss/mtss-blueprint.pdf>) focuses on systems, structures and supports across the district, school, and classroom to meet the academic and non-academic needs of all students.
- DESE's *"What to Look For" Observation Guides* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/candi/observation/>) describe what observers should expect to see in a classroom at a particular grade level in a specific subject area. This includes the knowledge and skills students should be learning and using (as reflected in state learning standards) and best practices related to classroom curriculum, instruction, and assessment for each subject area. The guides are not designed to replace any evaluation system or tools districts currently use but are a resource to help classroom observers efficiently identify what teachers and students should be experiencing in specific subjects and grade levels.
- DESE's *Learning Walkthrough Implementation Guide* ([http://www.mass.gov/edu/docs/ease/accountability/dart/walkthrough/implementation-guide.pdf#search=%22Learning Walkthrough Implementation Guide%22](http://www.mass.gov/edu/docs/ease/accountability/dart/walkthrough/implementation-guide.pdf#search=%22Learning%20Walkthrough%20Implementation%20Guide%22)) is a resource to support instructional leaders in establishing a *Learning Walkthrough* process in a school or district. It is designed to provide guidance to those working in an established culture of collaboration as well as those who are just beginning to observe classrooms and discuss teaching and learning in a focused and actionable manner. (The link above includes a presentation to introduce Learning Walkthroughs.)

Assessment

Contextual Background

The district has established an enhanced assessment system to measure and monitor students' social-emotional health; the system is aligned with the Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) programs across the district.

District leaders including the director of mental health and behavior services have collected data through surveys of students and teachers to assess the social-emotional needs of students in grades 3–12. Data results from these surveys are analyzed, reported, and used to identify and assign tiered supports for students districtwide.

The district collects and uses a range of academic and non-academic data, but the district's assessment program is missing some critical assessments. The district does not have a common ELA assessment in grades 5–8. At the time of the review in January 2019, a new reading program and assessment were being piloted in grades 5 and 6 at 2 of the district's 4 grammar schools.

In the 2017–2018 school year, the district's grammar schools lost instructional coaches who had been key in assisting school leaders and grade-level teams in analysis, dissemination, and use of assessment data. Associate principals and grade-level teams now do much of that work.

Structures for the ongoing use of data are not consistent across the district. The district does not have districtwide or schoolwide (K–8) data teams that regularly review and analyze student achievement data. Grade-level teams do not have a standard format or protocol to guide data discussions.

The district uses technology to support its assessment program. It recently adopted the Infinite Campus, a student management software platform that enables educators, families, and students to access student data anywhere at any time. This platform is used districtwide.

Strength Finding

- 1. The district collects a range of data about students' performance and well-being, uses data to inform the supports provided to students, and shares data widely.**
 - A.** Interviews and a document review indicated that educators across the district had access to a range of academic and non-academic data.

1. Assessments at the grammar schools include Marie Clay Letter ID (K–1), FUNdations (K), DIBELS¹⁰ (K–1), DRA¹¹ (K–4), writing prompts from the Lucy Caulkins Writing Program (K–8), and Eureka mathematics mid- and end-of-unit module assessments (K–8).
 2. Common assessments are administered at the high school in each core content area including foreign languages.
 3. The review team was told that in addition to ACCESS¹² results, ESL teachers use WIDA¹³ writing rubrics and reading tools to monitor English learners' (ELs) English language proficiency.
 4. Data from student mental health assessments (grades 3–12) is available.
- B. Interviews and a document review indicated that district and school leaders used data to inform the supports and interventions provided to students.
1. Data results from surveys about students' social-emotional health were shared with the review team. The district looks at trends and uses results to measure school climate and to focus supports and assign individual interventions for students.
 2. Schools use assessment results to identify students for Title I reading and math support and other in-class interventions in grammar schools, and to schedule students for focused support courses at the high school.
 3. The high school has established a Data Driven Discussions team that meets monthly to analyze and monitor student attendance, grades, and teacher feedback, and to identify and schedule appropriate interventions.
- C. Data is regularly shared with educators, families, students, and the community.
1. A technology platform enables educators, families, and students to readily access student data including report cards, grades, schedules, behavior, and attendance.
 - a. Multiple interviews and a review of documents and the district's website indicated that the district used Infinite Campus, a web-based software program. Beginning in grade 7, all students (including those who attend the alternative high school Alpha Program) and their families have access to grades at any time.

¹⁰ Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills

¹¹ Development Reading Assessment

¹² Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners

¹³ World-class Instructional Design and Assessment

- b. District leaders told the team that through the use of Infinite Campus administrators could immediately access data about prior behavioral infractions reported by teachers when they were meeting with a student about an incident.
2. The review team observed teachers in high-school classrooms using Google Classroom to provide immediate responses to the work students submitted from their iPads.
3. Families receive report cards and progress reports that are aligned with student learning standards K–6 in the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks. Report cards are distributed three times a year and provide families with detailed information about their children’s progress toward mastering the Massachusetts student learning standards.
4. District leaders formally present data to the school committee on an annual basis.
 - a. A review of documents provided to the team indicated a formal annual presentation to the school committee on district and school performance. The superintendent reported that district administrators presented district and school report cards as issued by DESE every year.
 - b. The superintendent reported that each fall the school committee received an overview of student achievement based on the MCAS assessment results. The district provided to the school committee PowerPoint presentations of MCAS assessment results from 2016–2017 and 2017–2018.
 - c. School committee members reported and a review of the minutes of a school committee meeting indicated that committee members have had discussions about student achievement, particularly about student performance on the MCAS assessment.

Impact: Having multiple sources of data, using data to inform interventions, and sharing data with educators, families, students, and the community in ways that are reliable and easily understandable likely helps to ensure that the district meets students’ unique needs, helps families understand how to support their children to perform at a high level, and helps to improve students’ performance, opportunities, and outcomes.

Challenges and Areas for Growth

2. The district is missing some K–8 assessments and a common data protocol, and does not have consistent structures for discussions to ensure that data is effectively used across the district.

A. The district is missing some assessments to monitor the academic growth and development of students K–8.

1. Administrators reported that they needed districtwide common assessments in grades 5–8.
2. While the review team found that data analysis and tiered interventions for students' non-academic needs were clearly documented in reports and School Improvement Plans (SIPs) for all students in grades 3–12, it was not clear to the team in SIPs whether a parallel lens was analyzing and monitoring overall achievement and ensuring appropriate interventions were in place.
3. MCAS, a summative annual assessment, is the only measure in place in the district to monitor the longitudinal growth and academic progress of all K–8 students.
 - a. The review team was told that the district's grammar schools worked independently to administer and analyze DRA¹⁴ K–4 for reading, and that grade-level teams looked at results not as a whole school or as a whole district.
 - b. Teachers and administrators told the team that ELA assessments for grades 5–8 were "fragmented," noting that they were piloting two different assessments in grades 5 and 6.
 - c. Teachers and administrators said that educators relied on Eureka mid- and post-assessment modules K–8 to monitor students' math achievement.

B. The district does not have practices and structures in place to ensure ongoing consistent data discussions districtwide.

1. The district does not have a district data team that collects, analyzes, or discusses data used across the district.
2. Protocols and procedures for school-based data discussions are not consistent across the district.

¹⁴ Developmental Reading Assessment

- a. Teachers and administrators told the team that in the past, instructional coaches in partnership with principals drove data discussion.
 - b. Administrators and teachers said that those conversations now happened at grade-level team meetings and were spearheaded by associate principals. Teachers reported that data analysis and discussions did not happen consistently, noting that they had not received training on how to analyze assessment results.
 - c. High-school teachers reported that while they administered quarterly assessments, they did not have time to discuss and compare results.
3. School administrators said that the district did not have a formal process or consistently used protocol for data discussions across the district and that individuals have adopted their own.
- a. One of the superintendent's approved goals on her evaluation is to establish a districtwide system of common data analysis protocols and procedures for all grammar schools and the high school.

Impact: Without a comprehensive system of assessments and regularly scheduled opportunities for educators to analyze and discuss results with a clearly outlined protocol, educators across the district are challenged to effectively pinpoint students' needs, identify appropriate improvement strategies, and monitor students' progress.

Recommendation

- 1. District leaders should develop educators' capacity to analyze and use data. The district should provide guidance, establish consistent structures for discussions of data, and communicate clear expectations for the use of data districtwide.**
- A. The district should provide educators with ongoing, targeted training in the collection, analysis, and use of student performance data.
 - 1. The district should ensure that educators use data strategically to inform instruction, ongoing curriculum revision, program evaluation, and the educator evaluation system.
 - B. The district should provide equitable opportunities by level for teachers to collaborate with colleagues in analyzing data.

1. The district's first priority should be to allocate common planning time (CPT) for all teachers within each content area frequently and regularly to analyze data.
- C. District leaders, in collaboration with teachers, should develop specific strategies, timelines, and clear expectations for the use of data districtwide.
- D. The district should consider convening a district data team, which would be responsible for the collection, analysis, and dissemination of student performance and other data sources.
- E. District leaders should systematically incorporate student assessment results and other pertinent data in all aspects of policy, prioritization, and decision-making, including budget development, the District Improvement Plan, and the evaluation of educational programs and services.
- F. The superintendent should pursue her goal to develop common data analysis protocols and procedures to be used districtwide.
- G. The district should make Infinite Campus accessible to families with students in kindergarten through grade 6.

Benefits: Implementing this recommendation will mean clarity and consistency in the district's use of data for decision-making. It will increase educators' opportunities to learn, communicate, and reflect about student performance and outcome data, and will help the district to provide all students with greatly improved learning opportunities and academic outcomes.

Recommended resources:

- DESE'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.
- DESE's *District Data Team Toolkit* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/accountability/toolkit/district-data-toolkit.pdf>) is a set of resources to help a district establish, grow, and maintain a culture of inquiry and data use through a District Data Team.

Human Resources and Professional Development

Contextual Background

The director of human resources, with support from an administrative assistant, oversees implementation of the technical and routine aspects of human resources. For example, she ensures that positions are posted on *School Spring* and contract and district policy requirements are met. When asked, the director will conduct an initial screening of applicants in *School Spring* for an administrator or provide information about employees such as attendance patterns, but she does not routinely analyze data and provide school and department leaders with information that can guide strategic, data-based decision-making.

Interviewing and selecting candidates are done at the school and department level. The director's primary 2018–2019 goal is to develop a new personnel handbook to bring greater consistency and efficiency to district practice. The district is piloting the use of the HR module of Infinite Campus in 2018–2019 and is already seeing efficiencies. The director participates in collective bargaining agreement negotiations with the district's labor attorney, the superintendent, and two members of the school committee. Collective bargaining agreements with seven units expired on June 30, 2018, and negotiations are ongoing.

The assistant superintendent has been responsible for overseeing implementation of the educator evaluation system as well as the planning and implementation of professional development (PD) efforts, and the grants that pay for participation and providers. Responsibility is shared between the interim superintendent (the former assistant superintendent) and the current interim assistant superintendent. Principals and other administrators are guided and supported in dealing with more complex personnel issues, particularly those related to performance, by the interim superintendent (for educators) and the business manager (for support staff).

Administrators reported challenges recruiting staff of color, teachers in certain hard-to-fill fields, and substitute teachers. They attributed the cause to the absence of applicants as well as to the absence of flexibility on the part of the district to hire staff at higher levels on the salary schedule. Similarly, they noted challenges retaining program assistants with the skills and knowledge needed to serve students well because of low pay and bumping and transfer provisions in the program assistants' collective bargaining agreement.

The district takes evaluation of its 450 teachers seriously. Particularly strong attention has been paid to developing and assessing student learning and professional practice goals tied to district and school priorities. Less consistent attention has been paid to providing robust feedback or recommendations for teachers. Principals and directors, on the other hand, have not had the benefit of being evaluated until the fall of 2018–2019

when the interim superintendent began work with principals and directors to develop student learning, professional practice and school improvement goals, and started formal observations with feedback.

PD at the high-school level is more job-embedded and varied than at the K–8 level where leadership is thinner, coordination more challenging, and collaboration time more limited.

Strength Findings

1. The district makes effective use of goal setting in the teacher evaluation process.

- A.** The team review of the evaluative documentation of nearly 10 percent of teachers (45) randomly selected from across the district for 2017–2018 indicated that virtually every file reviewed had student learning and professional practice goals.
 - 1. The goals typically included the action steps that the teachers would take to accomplish them and the measures that would be used to assess whether they were met.
 - 2. In almost every case, teachers’ self-assessments reported details about the progress that they had made on each goal and the evaluations described the progress.
 - 3. Administrators reported that teachers made use of data from student assessments such as DRA (Developmental Reading Assessment) and DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills), as well as MCAS, to establish student learning goals.
 - 4. The goals were almost always tied to school and district priorities.
 - a. For 2017–2018, most student learning goals were focused on addressing the needs of all or some portion of the lowest performing 25 percent of students.
 - b. For 2017–2018, for example, most professional practice goals were focused on implementing Universal Design for Learning (UDL) at the high school and Positive Behavioral and Intervention Supports (PBIS) at the K–8 level.
- B.** Team goals are the norm, not the exception, in the Methuen Public Schools.
 - 1. Teachers and administrators reported extensive use of team goals.

2. Administrators said that the goals have been helpful in moving district initiatives like PBIS forward, as well as strengthening classroom management.
3. Teachers and administrators stated that teachers often determined goals at faculty or department meetings and discussed progress on team goals at their grade-level or department meetings.

Impact: Tying student learning and professional practice goals to school and district priorities and encouraging grade-level and content teams to pursue goals together serve to accelerate effective implementation of district priorities.

Challenges and Areas for Growth

2. The district does not prioritize opportunities for educators to receive high-quality feedback.¹⁵

- A. The team reviewed the evaluative documentation of nearly 10 percent of teachers (44) randomly selected from across the district for 2017–2018.
 1. In every case but one, evaluation documentation—including self-assessments, evidence collection references, educator goals, and formative and summative evaluations—were completed on time. However, the team found considerable variation in the nature, quantity, and quality of feedback and recommendations for action.
 2. In 23 of 44 instances (52 percent), there were actionable recommendations for next steps.
- B. The team also reviewed the evaluative documentation of all 12 administrators.
 1. The team’s review of administrators’ evaluations indicated considerable variation in the quantity of information and the presence and quality of feedback and actionable recommendations.
 - b. Of the 12 evaluations, 5 contained growth-oriented recommendations for actionable next steps.
 2. Administrators reported that the previous superintendent did not complete the five-step evaluation process for any of the administrators she was responsible for evaluating.

¹⁵ High-quality feedback is specific, timely, and actionable.

- a. The team did not find evidence of evaluation documents for principals or directors, except for the goals they developed with the interim superintendent for 2018–2019, along with observations of practice conducted since summer of 2018 for several.
- C. The district has devoted limited time guiding and supporting administrators to limit the number and type of evidence, provide feedback, and offer actionable recommendations.
 - 1. Administrators reported that initial training for implementation of the teacher evaluation system involved viewing videos and calibrating standards and learning to give evidence, feedback, and suggestions. They noted that there has been little follow up.
 - 2. Administrators devoted one half day of their 2018 three-day summer leadership retreat to supervision and evaluation.
 - 3. Administrators said that their twice-monthly meetings with central office administrators during the school year focused on managerial issues.
- D. As of the 2015–2016 school year, state educator evaluation regulations (603 CMR 35.07) call for districts to collect and use student feedback as evidence in the teacher evaluation process and staff feedback as evidence in the administrator evaluation process. This feedback may also be used to inform an educator’s self-assessment, goal setting, or as evidence to demonstrate growth over time.
 - 1. The team did not find evidence that student feedback was used in the teacher evaluation process.
 - 2. The team did not find evidence that staff feedback was used in the administrator evaluation process.
- E. The team did not find evidence of the use of educators’ impact on student learning in the educator evaluation process.¹⁶

Impact: Without thoughtful, written guidance, and monitoring and support from the superintendent, principals, and directors are unlikely to achieve their potential as highly effective leaders of the district’s work. Without clear expectations, on-going monitoring, and adequate training and support, few evaluators can provide educators with the

¹⁶ On Tuesday, February 28, 2017, after collecting public comment since November 2016, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education voted 9-1 to amend the educator evaluation regulations. The most significant change in the regulations is the elimination of a separate student impact rating. Under the amended regulations, evaluators do not have to make a separate judgment about an educator’s impact on student learning. Instead, student learning is embedded as an indicator within one of the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Framework’s four standards.

quantity and quality of actionable feedback they need, want, and deserve to continue to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to effectively enhance learning for all the district's students.

3. Opportunities for effective job-embedded, sustained professional development at the K–8 level are limited and have decreased in recent years.

- A.** Interviews and a review of documents and the district's website indicated that K–8 teachers had limited opportunities to engage in job-embedded, collaborative professional development (PD).
1. All K–8 teachers and specialists participate in one full professional day in November and four half-day release sessions.
 - a. Time available has been reduced.
 - i. The collective bargaining agreement permits nine half-day release sessions for PD.
 - ii. Six PD days were planned in 2017–2018, but only four were scheduled for 2018–2019.
 - b. Teachers and administrators reported that half-day release sessions have been used primarily for work on instructional practices and curriculum, including Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS).
 - c. Some teachers and administrators said that the half-day release sessions were not used well.
 2. In addition, teachers meet weekly for grade-level common planning time (CPT) typically led by an associate principal.
 - a. K–4 teachers typically meet for 45 minutes while 5–8 teachers typically meet for 60 minutes.
 - b. K–8 teachers and specialists stated that little CPT was spent on curriculum and instruction.
 3. Administrators and teachers reported that each school held one monthly after-school faculty meeting, typical agendas were informational and included primarily operational issues, as well a discussion of teachers' mutual concerns.
 4. Although high-school teachers have an opportunity to observe colleagues during the school day, first and second year teachers only meet monthly after

school with school-based mentors as part of the district's school-based mentor program.

- a. Administrators said that the mentor program offered K–8 teachers the only opportunity to observe each other.
- B.** K–8 teachers have limited support to make effective use of the time available for PD, and that support has been reduced in recent years.
1. Administrators reported that the district used to have a position for a director for the coaches, a role they described as “critical to consistency and direction.”
 2. Administrators and teachers said that the elimination of instructional coaching positions at the end of the 2016–2017 school year left schools without a critical resource that supported teachers to develop their teaching skills, and learn and implement curriculum with fidelity.
 3. Administrators and teachers stated that the elimination of the dean positions at each school at the end of the 2017–2018 school year led to supervising principals and associate principals having far less time to complete teacher evaluations or support curriculum and instruction improvement efforts at the schools.
 4. Administrators said that teachers on curriculum committees were prepared to share the curriculum work around the district, noting that the absence of structured time “led to inconsistency.”
- C.** K–8 teachers reported limited support for effective and consistent implementation of the many new programs and strategies that the district has introduced in recent years.
1. Some teachers described the major theme of conversations about mutual concerns at the grammar schools and district as “the amount of initiatives thrown at us with little training.”
 2. Some teachers reported “instructional expectations are different in every building” and “there is no consistency about delivery of curriculum throughout the district.”

Impact: Without adequate job-embedded and sustained PD, teachers' development of the skills and knowledge needed to implement teaching strategies and curriculum effectively and with fidelity is slow and often incomplete.

4. The district has far too few bilingual staff and staff of color. The district has not made sufficient efforts to build the cultural competence of staff.

- A.** According to DESE data, the district's teaching staff does not reflect the demographics of the student body.
 - 1. In 2017–2018, the district enrolled 6,935 students. The student body was 50.5 percent White, 39.4 percent Hispanic/Latino, 5 percent Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino, 3.8 percent Asian, and 1.2 percent African American/Black.
 - a. Of the district's students in 2017–2018, 8.8 percent were English learners and 26.3 percent had a language other than English as their first language.
 - 2. In 2017–2018, the district had 798.1 staff members, including administrators, teachers, program assistants, clerks, custodians and other staff.
 - a. Of these staff members, 780.7 (98 percent) were white and 17.4 (2 percent) were staff of color. Of the 17.4 staff of color, 15.4 were Hispanic/Latino, 1 was African American/Black, and 1 was Asian.
- B.** The district does not have an aggressive approach to diversifying its workforce.
 - 1. District administrators reported that the district relied almost exclusively on applications from School Spring as the district's candidate pool.
 - 2. Administrators and teachers identified one reason for the low number of staff of color as the priority for hiring given by both school committee policy and practice to Methuen residents, thus limiting the potential wide range of candidates of color from outside Methuen.
- C.** District and School Improvement Plans do not prioritize recruiting staff of color or building the cultural competence of staff.
 - 1. There was no mention of recruiting staff of color or building cultural competence in the district's Goals and accompanying Priority Improvement Initiatives 2018–2019 in the District Improvement Plan.
- D.** Interviews and a document review indicated limited attention to cultural celebrations beyond school celebrations of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Black History Month, a grade-level cultural food fair at one grammar school, and a Quinceanera at the high school.
 - 1. Students said that they wanted to see more diversity in the curriculum.

Impact: Without an adequate representation of bilingual staff and staff of color at all levels and staff who are developing their cultural competence, the district is not likely to effectively meet the needs of its increasingly diverse student body and address a root cause of its opportunity and achievement gaps.

Recommendations

- 1. The district should implement, support, and monitor practices that ensure that all educators receive high-quality feedback.**
 - A.** The district should support and monitor the skills and practices of evaluators to ensure that the feedback that they provide is specific, timely, and actionable and relevant to instructional practice, professional growth, and student outcomes.
 1. The superintendent and assistant superintendent should review on a regular basis the quality of feedback submitted by the district’s evaluators and work with them to calibrate the expectations for feedback across the district.
 - B.** The district should ensure that evaluators and educators have a shared understanding of what constitutes helpful evidence and that the amount of evidence is limited and manageable. Setting expectations for how to describe and document evidence will help maximize the time that evaluators have to prepare high-quality feedback.

Benefits: By implementing an educator evaluation system that prioritizes high-quality feedback, the district will help educators improve their practice. This will likely lead to improve student performance and outcomes. The inclusion of student and staff feedback and student learning indicators as evidence in the educator evaluation process will enable teachers and principals to reflect more accurately and comprehensively on their professional efficacy and more accurately identify areas of strength and areas for growth.

Recommended resources:

- *Principal supervisor resources and best practices resources* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/supervisor/default.html>) focus on the effective evaluation of school leaders.
- *DESE’s Calibration Resources: OPTIC and DESE Video Library* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/calibration/>). [OPTIC](http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/calibration/) is a dynamic professional learning platform that supports educators to develop and refine a shared understanding of high-quality teaching and feedback using over 100 videos of classroom instruction aligned to the MA Curriculum Frameworks and the Model Classroom Teacher Rubric. The [DESE video library](#) is a collection of professionally

created videos of classroom instruction produced by the School Improvement Network. These videos, accompanied by related calibration training protocols, depict a range of practice (this is NOT a collection of exemplars) to support within-district calibration activities that promote a shared understanding of instructional quality and rigor.

- *Quick Reference Guide: Opportunities to Streamline the Evaluation Process* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/eval/>) is designed to help districts reflect on and continuously improve their evaluation systems.

2. The district should expand opportunities for job-embedded professional development for K–8 classroom teachers, and ensure adequate direction and support so that all available time is used effectively.

- A.** The district should identify ways to provide more collaborative planning time for classroom teachers.
1. The district should seek out expertise in K–8 scheduling to see if there are alternatives to present staffing and scheduling practices that will yield more grade level and content common planning time (CPT).
 2. The district should consider revisiting collective bargaining agreement language to determine if there are underused resources of time and/or opportunities to negotiate modifications that can yield more CPT.
- B.** The district should ensure that district and school-based leaders with specialized expertise in instruction and curriculum are consistently available to support principals and teachers to make maximum effective use of CPT.
1. The district should review the job responsibilities of associate principals and should consider revising them in order to make it possible for them to plan and attend CPT sessions.
 2. The district should consider reorganizing and/or expanding leadership in mathematics, English language arts, science, and social studies in order to ensure that leaders with content-area expertise are available to provide ongoing guidance and support for principals and teachers.
 3. Classroom teachers should receive regular coaching in planning with their grade-level and/or content team and in content-specific instructional practice. (See also the second recommendation in the Curriculum and Instruction section of this report.)

Benefits: Expanding K–8 classroom teacher access to well-facilitated and well-supported CPT and to content-area leaders will hasten effective implementation of district priorities

for improving teaching and curriculum and will likely lead to educator growth and improved students' performance.

Recommended resources:

- *The Massachusetts Standards for Professional Development* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/pd/standards.html>) describe, identify, and characterize what high quality learning experiences should look like for educators.
- DESE'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.

3. The district should take a more proactive approach to recruiting bilingual staff and staff of color.

A. The district should develop a more systematic and strategic outreach effort.

1. District administrators should consider developing a program that offers bilingual program assistants of color a pathway to teacher licensure.
2. District administrators should consult with area districts that have successfully recruited a diverse applicant pool, and use what they learn to develop and implement a comprehensive, multi-year outreach strategy.

B. The district should incorporate recruiting staff of color and building the cultural competence of staff as a major priority in its District and School Improvement Plans.

Benefits: By implementing this recommendation, the district likely will help teachers and other staff to engage students and to provide effective instruction that challenges and supports all students.

Recommended resources:

- DESE's *National Models for Recruiting/Retaining a Diverse Educator Workforce* web page (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/teach/NationalModels.html>) lists several notable programs focused on recruiting/retaining a diverse educator workforce, along with a brief description and links for each.
- DESE's *Massachusetts Local Models for Recruiting/Retaining a Diverse Educator Workforce* web page (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/teach/MAlocalModels.html>) lists

successful recruitment/retention programs implemented by Massachusetts school districts, along with a brief description and links for each.

Student Support

Contextual Background

Methuen is a large school district with overall student enrollment that has been relatively stable in size over the past few years; the district's enrollment decreased by .03 percent between 2014 and 2018, from 6,937 students in 2014 to 6,935 students in 2018. Many students come to school each day with unique programmatic and support needs. In 2018, 48.6 percent of the district's students were part of the high needs student group because they were in one or more of the following student groups: economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and English learners (ELs) or former ELs. ELs made up 8.8 percent of the total student population, compared with the state average of 10.2 percent. Economically disadvantaged students represented 34.8 percent, compared with 32.0 percent statewide. In addition, students with disabilities made up 17.8 percent of enrollment, compared with 17.7 percent across the state. In 2018, the district's rate of chronic absence¹⁷ was 18.2 percent, compared with the state rate of 13.2 percent. The percentages of chronically absent high-school students in the district were as follows: 22.0 percent in grade 9; 34.6 percent in grade 10; 39.8 percent in grade 11; and 57.2 percent in grade 12. The chronic absence rates for some student groups are high. In 2018, the student groups with the highest chronic absence rates were as follows: 24.9 percent for economically disadvantaged students; 20.8 percent for Hispanic/Latino students; 19.4 percent for students with disabilities; and 17.8 percent for English learners. In addition, the district's overall in- and out-of-school suspension rates exceed state rates.¹⁸

The district has implemented Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) districtwide and provides Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 social-emotional support to students in all schools. Academic support has been provided to grammar school students but the team found that implementation of student support and access to enriching curriculum was stronger at the high school. The district has established partnerships with the Psychology Department at UMASS Amherst, the University of Maryland, and the University of Connecticut for Tier 1, 2, and 3 behavioral support.

The district also partners with the Lahey Clinic, which provides mental health services to students and families. When families do not have insurance, the Clinic provides student intern services to ensure that all students have access to these services.

A tiered system of support at the high school provides academic support to students. Tier 1 support includes but is not limited to academic interventions through reading

¹⁷ The chronic absence rate is defined as the percentage of students absent 10 percent or more of their total number of student days of membership in a school. See the Student Performance section and Table B2b in Appendix B of this report.

¹⁸ See Tables 24 and 25 in the Student Performance section of this report for in-school and out-of-school suspension rates, respectively, disaggregated over time by student group.

enhancement, supplemental math in grades 9 and 10, and supplemental math in grades 11 and 12. MCAS assessment support is provided for students in grades 9 and 10. The Ninth Grade Academy Program meets two times per week to give students additional academic help.

Tier 2 provides support for students who have not sufficiently benefitted from academic supports provided through Tier 1 interventions. GradPoint is used for ELA, science, math, and social studies credit recovery. Teachers use small-group interventions for general education students, students with disabilities, and English learners, and monitor progress frequently.

Tier 3 interventions include intensive instruction to support students with the highest needs. Teachers use intensive monitoring coupled with corrective reading in ESL classes. The Alpha Program, an alternative high school program, enables academically and emotionally struggling students to complete high school while working during the school day. A credit recovery program at the high school enables students to make up course credit during the regular school day.

The district has safe, well-maintained, clean schools; buildings and doors are locked to enhance student safety. Full-time school resource officers at each grammar school and the high school provide students with Alert Lockdown Inform Counter Evacuate (ALICE) Training, guidance about topics such as winter and ice safety and how to use the emergency telephone number 911, and programs about gun safety and Stranger Danger.

Strength Finding

- 1. The high school provides equitable access to a wide range of rigorous coursework and programs of interest.**
 - A.** Interviews and a document review indicated that the high school provided all high-school students access to rigorous curriculum.
 1. The high school partners with UMASS Lowell for enriched science opportunities for students.
 2. The high school provides open enrollment in Advanced Placement Courses.
 - a. To ensure student success, daily Advanced Placement enhancement periods provide a consistent time when students can get extra help.
 3. The high school partners with Northern Essex Community College to offer students dual enrollment.

- a. Students told the review team that college courses for credit were taught at the high school.
 4. All high-school students can take the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) in grade 10.
 - a. High-school students said that the PSAT test was free and was given during the school day.
 5. All students can participate in Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) preparation.
- B.** Interviews with district leaders and teachers indicated that the high school provided students opportunities for exposure to the arts and sports programs at no cost to families.
1. The district has purchased technology, which enables students to learn how to play the piano at school and practice while out of school.
 - a. Observations of classrooms dedicated to extracurricular activities showed that students used iPads to practice and create music when they were not in the general classroom.
 2. District leaders and teachers said that students had opportunities to participate in drama and theater programs, chorus, choir, and band.
 3. Review team members noted an ice-skating rink at the high school.

Impact: A high school that provides a range of challenging academic coursework and engaging experiences encourages choice, addresses students’ diverse interests, skills, and readiness levels, and helps to ensure that all students have equitable access to a high-quality, rigorous education.

Challenges and Areas for Growth

2. The district is challenged by high chronic absence and suspension rates.

- A. According to DESE data, in recent years the district’s chronic absence rates have fluctuated with an overall increase and have been consistently higher than state rates. In 2018, the district’s chronic absence rate was 18.2 percent, with 1,262 students missing 10 percent or more of their days in membership.

**Table 30: Methuen Public Schools
Chronic Absence Rates,* 2014–2018**

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Methuen	12.9	14.0	13.7	19.5	18.2
State	12.3	12.9	12.3	13.5	13.2

*These data reflect the percentage of students absent for 10 percent or more of their days of membership in a school.

1. The 2018 chronic absence rates are particularly high for grades 9–12.
 - a. In 2018, the grade levels in the district with the highest chronic absence rates were as follows: 22.0 percent for grade 9; 34.6 percent for grade 10; 39.8 percent for grade 11; and 57.2 percent for grade 12.
 2. The chronic absence rates for some student groups are high.
 - a. In 2018, the student groups in the district with the highest chronic absence rates were as follows: 24.9 percent for economically disadvantaged students; 20.8 percent for Hispanic/Latino students; 17.8 percent for English learners; and 19.4 percent for students with disabilities.
- B.** The district’s in- and out-of-school suspension rates have fluctuated with an overall increase.¹⁹

**Table 31: Methuen Public Schools and State
In-School and Out-of-School Suspension Rates,* 2014–2018**

¹⁹ See Tables 24 and 25 in the Student Performance section of this report for in-school and out-of-school suspension rates, respectively, disaggregated over time by student group.

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
In-School Suspension Rates (IS)					
District IS suspension rate (all grades)	0.6	4.0	3.3	1.2	2.6
State IS suspension rate (all grades)	2.1	1.8	1.9	1.7	1.8
Out-of-School Suspension Rates (OOS)					
District OOS suspension rate (all grades)	2.3	3.7	3.2	2.6	3.3
State OOS suspension rate (all grades)	3.9	2.9	2.9	2.8	2.9

*Suspension rates represent the percentage of students suspended one or more times during the year.

Source: DESE data

Impact: Chronic absence is an early indicator for low achievement and dropping out of school. Frequent absences interfere with sustained student learning, achievement, and progress toward college and career readiness and civic participation. Frequent suspensions likely mean that students fall behind academically, become disengaged from school, and drop out.

Recommendation

1. **The district should strengthen its efforts to improve student attendance and reduce the need to rely on suspension as a response to misconduct.**
 - A. The district should analyze attendance data and determine the root cause(s) of chronic absence.
 1. The district should use disaggregated data to examine attendance rates and analyze the extent to which specific student groups have disproportionate rates of chronic absence.

2. The district should gather input from students and families--through focus groups, surveys, and possibly other strategies--about the reasons for high absence rates and possible ways to address the challenge of students missing too much instruction.
 3. The district should determine the root causes of high and disproportionate absence rates and take steps to address them, including reviewing current initiatives to improve attendance and adjusting efforts as needed.
- B.** The district should analyze suspension data and determine the root cause(s) of suspension.
1. The district should use disaggregated data to examine suspension rates and analyze the extent to which specific student groups are suspended disproportionately.
 2. The district should determine the root causes of high and disproportionate suspension rates and take steps to address them, including reviewing current initiatives to improve suspension and adjusting efforts as needed.
 3. The district should continue to implement the PBIS model to teach and reinforce behavioral expectations, and should evaluate whether PBIS is contributing to a reduction in suspensions.
 4. The review team strongly recommends that the district take advantage of opportunities to participate in DESE-sponsored professional development on rethinking discipline.
- C.** The district should consider that addressing attendance and suspension may involve a range of wider initiatives such as improving instruction and its relevance to post-graduation goals; fostering a positive school climate; and building or strengthening relationships with students and their families.
1. The district might consider ways to increase students' agency, personalize their learning, and increase their understanding of the connections and relevance of their current coursework to their future success.

Benefits: The primary benefit of implementing this recommendation is that if students are in school, they are more likely to succeed. Engaging students and families in identifying the causes of student absence and suspensions and in suggesting ways to improve attendance and lower suspension likely will help raise attendance, decrease suspensions, and promote students' growth and development.

Recommended resources:

- *Addressing the Root Causes of Disparities in School Discipline* (<https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/addressing-root-causes-disparities-school-discipline>) is a guide that describes how to carry out a descriptive analysis of disparities in school discipline and how to conduct a root cause analysis to systematically address school-based factors that contribute to disparities. These analyses should result in an actionable understanding of the following:
 - Who is being disparately disciplined and what is happening to them
 - The systemic causes of disparities in school discipline and why they occur
 - How you can reduce and eliminate disparities in school discipline
- *Resource Guide for Superintendent Action* (<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/school-discipline/rethink-discipline-resource-guide-supt-action.pdf>) is designed to highlight the role that superintendents and school leaders play in developing safe and supportive school climate and discipline; offer possible district- and school-level action steps for initiating and enhancing local efforts to create safe and supportive school climate and discipline systems and practices; and share promising practices and useful resources for implementing and sustaining safe and supportive school climate and discipline in collaboration with local stakeholders.
- *Positive School Discipline* (<http://positiveschooldiscipline.promoteprevent.org/course>) is an interactive, self-paced course for school leaders that includes skill-building activities, real-world examples, and key strategies for creating a positive school climate.
- *Every Student, Every Day: A Community Toolkit to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism* (<http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/chronicabsenteeism/toolkit.pdf>) is a set of Action Guides that provide information and resources to help ensure that all young people are in school every day and benefitting from coordinated systems of support.
- The Attendance Works website (<https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/>) provides several resources to help address chronic absenteeism, including district- and school-level self-assessments and planning tools, webinars, and toolkits.
- *My Career and Academic Plan (MyCAP)* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/ccr/initiatives/>) is a student-directed, multi-year planning tool and process that allows students to map academic plans, document personal/social growth, and engage in career development activities consistent with the student's unique, self-identified interests, needs, and goals for the attainment of post-secondary success.

Financial and Asset Management

Contextual Background

The Methuen Public Schools have a municipal budget appropriation of \$78,000,000 to support a K–12 district of 6,935 students in 2017–2018. The budget is developed during the school year beginning with analysis of staffing needs by principals and directors. The budget is not explicitly connected to district improvement planning. In consultation with those administrators, the central office develops a budget for submission to the school committee’s finance sub-committee. From that point, the budget progresses to a public hearing and school committee approval. Finally, the school committee budget is reviewed by the mayor and city council and funded.

Recently the city’s financial support of schools has enabled the district to exceed the foundation budget and required net school spending levels. The district was 8.5 percent over its required net school spending in fiscal year 2018. From fiscal year 2010 to fiscal year 2016, Methuen spent below the required net school spending because of a dispute with DESE over the accounting for retired teacher health insurance benefits. This issue has been resolved. Total in-district per-pupil spending was lower than the median in-district per-pupil spending for 32 K–12 districts of similar size (5,000–7,999 students) in fiscal year 2017: \$12,688, compared with \$13,809. The city was \$362,818 below its tax levy limit and had a \$42.3 million override capacity in 2017.

The city and the district have a signed agreement detailing municipal expenditures on behalf of schools. The city has also agreed to phase in returning Medicaid reimbursements to the district, rather than absorbing them into the city’s general fund. At the time of the onsite in January 2019, the city and the district had different, unconnected financial software systems. Both the city and the district were working with consultants to rectify this issue.

The district finished the fiscal year 2018 fiscal year with a deficit of \$3.8 million. Of that total, \$1.9 million was for instructional salaries, \$1.3 million was for out- of-district tuitions, \$.4 million was for special needs transportation, and \$.2 million was in several other areas. The city sought and received home rule legislation to borrow \$4 million to cover the deficit. The legislation mandated Department of Revenue oversight of Methuen’s finances.

The district has five schools covering the Pre-K–12 grade range. The four grammar schools were built or renovated in the 30 years before the onsite. The high school was renovated in 2014. The Massachusetts School Building Authority’s 2016 School Building Survey rated the high school, and the Comprehensive and Marsh grammar schools as level 1 for condition; the buildings were in good condition with few or no building systems needing attention. The Timony and Tenney grammar schools were rated as level 2; the

buildings were in generally good condition with a few building systems that may need some attention. All five Methuen schools were rated level 1 for general environment and rated average for space utilization.

The district has a long-term capital plan for building maintenance, which was created in 2016. The plan is regularly updated. The plan does not cover technology needs. To date the plan has been funded by extraordinary maintenance funds in the district budget; it has not been funded by the city's capital budget.

Challenges and Areas for Growth

- 1. The district's public budget documents do not clearly provide historical spending data or detail how funds and staffing are allocated to schools and programs. The budget documents are not clearly aligned with district and school goals. The budget document does not summarize anticipated grants and other revolving funds.**
 - A.** The public budget documents do not include trend information and other information needed to have a complete and usable budget document.
 1. The public proposed budget documents are a large spreadsheet with a six-page budget message from the superintendent and a copy of the District and School Improvement Plans (DIP and SIPs). The approved budget, appearing on the district's website, is a summary of the spreadsheet.
 2. The public budget detail document only shows the planned budget for the upcoming year and three previous years of budget data. There is no actual expenditure history. For example, the budget document shows a fiscal year 2018 budget with a line item of \$6,423,798 for out-of-district tuitions, but does not show the actual expenditure of \$7,638,175, a difference of \$1,214,377. This makes it difficult for stakeholders to perceive the actual increase in expenditures over the previous years.
 3. The budget does not include full-time equivalent (FTE) data in the personnel sections or FTE history for previous years. This makes it difficult for stakeholders to see the changes in staffing levels.
 - a. Many personnel line items show large dollar increases and others show large decreases, without any FTE staffing numbers to explain the increases or the decreases.
 4. The budget document does not include information about all sources of funds such as local revolving funds and grants.

- a. The district spent Circuit Breaker funds of \$3,192,985 on out-of-district tuitions in fiscal year 2018, and allotted \$3,753,866 for fiscal year 2019. The budget document does not contain this information.
 - b. The district spent in excess of \$3 million from grants and revolving funds on teachers' salaries in fiscal year 2018 and planned to spend a similar amount in fiscal year 2019. The staffing levels and the expenditures do not appear in the budget document.
- B.** The review team did not find evidence that budget development was driven by the DIP and the SIPs. The budget does not demonstrate how resources are allocated to meet the district's planning goals.
1. The DIP is attached to the budget document, but the budget spreadsheet and the superintendent's budget message do not explicitly connect the DIP to the budget's resource allocations.
 2. When the team asked district leaders to describe the budget development process, they did not refer to the DIP or the SIPs.
 3. In its self-assessment submitted in advance of the onsite, district leaders stated, "Our budget documents... are not always user-friendly and are not explicitly related to student data."

Impact: A proposed budget without an explicit connection to district and school goals, and without student performance data and clear information about funding and staffing, does not give stakeholders a clear picture of how resources are allocated to support the district's priorities.

2. The monthly financial reports provided to the superintendent, the school committee, and the city do not provide sufficient information to enable stakeholders to understand the financial status of the district.

- A.** The district submits monthly financial reports to the superintendent, school committee, and the city in order for them to monitor the budget.
1. The financial report does not have sufficient detail and explanations to enable clear understanding of the budget's status.
 - a. The report is not broken down by school or program and line item labels do not clearly describe the category of expenditure. The line items cover very broad areas of the budget, such as \$44.7 million for instructional professional salaries.

- b. Budget labels in the report do not clearly identify accompanying accounts.
 - c. The business administrator does a monthly oral presentation at school committee meetings and meets regularly with the superintendent, but the financial report does not include a narrative documenting potential deficits, surpluses, or changes in the budget.
- 2. The financial report on revolving funds does not show how the funds will be used during the year.
 - a. The report does not show a budget for the fund or projected revenue and expenditures. It only shows current fund balance data.
 - b. The revolving funds are not connected to the budget.
 - i. The report does not indicate how the circuit breaker receipts will affect the special education budget.
 - ii. The report does not indicate how the athletic receipts will affect the athletic budget.
 - iii. Rental receipts typically are partially used to offset budget expenditures such as utilities. The report does not explain that connection.
 - iv. The expenditure report includes a fund called “other student activities.” There is also a separate report on student activity accounts. This separation may not be allowable by statute.
- 3. The financial report on grants does not have sufficient detail.
 - a. The report does show total grant budget and revenue.
 - b. The report does not have connections to budget programs, departments, or schools.
 - c. The report does not have details such as staffing, contracted services, supplies, etc.

Impact: Without detailed data and appropriate narratives on key budget categories, along with explanations of budget deviations, stakeholders do not have a clear understanding of the status of its funds. This may lead to unexpected surpluses, deficits, or misallocation of funds.

Recommendations

1. The district should develop a budget document that is clear, comprehensive, and details how the budget supports district and school goals, how much schools and programs cost, and how outside funds are used.

- A.** The district should develop a budget document that contains all the essential information about the financial operations of the district.
 - 1. All funding sources should be included with detailed spending plans. Estimated grant amounts, circuit breaker, school choice, and expenses from other revolving accounts would be included in this section.
 - 2. The district may wish to consider any separate department budgets such as special needs or ELL, or they may wish to express those funds by school in order to enhance transparency.
 - 3. The public budget should show actual line item expenditures for the previous completed school year at a minimum. An estimate of the current year's expenditures should also be included. Previous year's expenditures or current year-to-date expenditures should also be considered.
 - 4. The payroll line items should show staffing levels, in full time equivalents (FTEs), for the previous, current, and projected year at a minimum.
 - 5. The district should consider showing the requests of principals and department heads for additional transparency.
- B.** The budget document should include information about how the budget supports district and school goals as well as descriptors and subtotals for school and program staffing and costs.
 - 1. The budget document should demonstrate how student outcomes data, particularly data related to performance, access, and opportunity outcomes and gaps, have been used to set budget priorities.
 - 2. The district should consider including in the budget document narratives explanations underlying assumptions and major changes.

Benefits: By implementing this recommendation, the district will have a comprehensive budget document that clearly presents the district's current education efforts. In addition, the budget document, and the process used to create it, will inform budget development and likely create trust and confidence among stakeholders in the district's sound stewardship of public funds.

Recommended resources:

- *Transforming School Funding: A Guide to Implementing Student-Based Budgeting* (https://www.erstrategies.org/library/implementing_student-based_budgeting), from Education Resource Strategies, describes a process to help districts tie funding to specific student needs.
 - The Rennie Center's *Smart School Budgeting* (<http://www.renniecenter.org/research/reports/smart-school-budgeting-resources-districts>) 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.
- 2. The district should develop monthly financial statements that provide stakeholders a clear picture of the financial status of the district's budget.**
- A.** The monthly report on the status of the budget should have sufficient detail and explanations to present a clear picture of the budget's status.
1. The report should be broken down by school and/or program.
 2. Budget labels should clearly describe the account. The reader should not need knowledge of account numbers in order to understand the report.
 3. The report should include a written narrative of any key areas.
 4. The following areas should be addressed in the narrative, at a minimum:
 - a. Staffing and any significant staff changes,
 - b. Significant budget impacts from leaves and overtime,
 - c. Special need tuitions and the impact of circuit breaker funds,
 - d. Special needs contracted services,
 - e. Transportation, and
 - f. Maintenance and utility costs.

- B.** The sections of the financial report on revolving funds and grants should demonstrate how these funds are used during the year and how they affect the budget.
1. For each fund, the report should show the anticipated expenditures, revenues, and end-of-year balance.
 2. The report should demonstrate where revolving funds, such as circuit breaker, and grants, such as Title I, supplement the budget.
 3. The report should describe the use of athletic receipts to support the athletic budget.
 4. The report should demonstrate the use of rental receipts.
 5. The district should seek guidance from its CPA firm as to whether the “other student activities” revolving account should be merged with the district’s student activity accounts.

Benefits: Implementing this recommendation will enable the superintendent, the school committee, and the city to proactively respond to changes in budget status. This could mean early detection and prevention of a budget deficit or it could enable appropriate reallocation of budget surpluses to enhance students’ performance, opportunities, and outcomes.

Recommended resources:

- The Rennie Center’s *Smart School Budgeting* (<http://www.renniecenter.org/sites/default/files/2017-01/SmartSchoolBudgeting.pdf>) is a summary of existing resources on school finance, budgeting, and reallocation.
- *Smarter School Spending for Student Success* (<http://smarterschoolspending.org/>) provides free processes and tools to help districts use their resources to improve student achievement.

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

Review Team Members

The review was conducted from January 22–25, 2019, by the following team of independent DESE consultants.

1. Marc Kerble, Ed.D., Leadership and Governance
2. Michele Kingsland-Smith, Curriculum and Instruction
3. Lenora Jennings, Assessment, *review team coordinator*
4. Karla Brooks-Baehr, Ed.D., Human Resources and Professional Development
5. Kahris McLaughlin, Ph. D., Student Support
6. David King, Financial and Asset Management

District Review Activities

The following activities were conducted during the review:

The team conducted interviews with the following municipal officials: the mayor of Methuen, a senior analyst at the Department of Revenue (DOR), the fiscal stability officer at the DOR, the interim city auditor, and the deputy director of budget and finance. The team also conducted interviews with the following district financial personnel: the business manager, the bookkeeper, the food service director, and the director of student services.

The team conducted interviews with the following members of the school committee: the vice chairperson and four members.

The review team conducted interviews with the following representatives of the teachers' association: the president, the first vice president, the second vice president, the secretary, and the treasurer.

The team conducted interviews/focus groups with the following central office administrators: the interim superintendent, the interim assistant superintendent, the director of student services, the business administrator, the director of human resources, and the director of language acquisition.

The team visited the following schools: Marsh Grammar (Pre-K–8), Comprehensive Grammar (Pre-K–8), Tenny Grammar (Pre-K–8), Timony Grammar (Pre-K–8), and Methuen High School (grades 9–12).

During school visits, the team conducted interviews/focus groups with students, students' families, and all five principals, and focus groups with five elementary-school teachers, three middle-school teachers, and four high-school teachers.

The team observed 76 classes in the district: 20 at the high school, and 28 in the upper grades (5–8) and 28 in the lower grades (K–4) at the four grammar 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 DESE, 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

Tuesday 01/22/2019	Wednesday 01/23/2019	Thursday 01/24/2019	Friday 01/25/2019
Orientation with district leaders and principals; interviews with district staff and principals; document reviews; interview with teachers' association; and visits to the Comprehensive and Tenny grammar schools for classroom observations.	Interviews with district staff and principals; review of personnel files; teacher focus groups; students and students' families focus groups; and visits to the Marsh and Timony grammar schools and Methuen High School, for classroom observations.	Interviews with town or city personnel; interviews with school leaders; interviews with school committee members; visits to the Tenny and Marsh grammar schools and Methuen High School for classroom observations.	Interviews with school leaders; follow-up interviews; district review team meeting; visits to Methuen High School, and the Tenny, Marsh, Comprehensive, and Timony grammar schools for classroom observations; district wrap-up meeting with the superintendent.

Appendix B: Enrollment, Attendance, Expenditures

**Table B1a: Methuen Public Schools
2017–2018 Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity**

Group	District	Percent of Total	State	Percent of Total
African-American	86	1.2%	86,305	9.0%
Asian	265	3.8%	65,667	6.9%
Hispanic	2,731	39.4%	191,201	20.0%
Native American	4	0.1%	2,103	0.2%
White	3,505	50.5%	573,335	60.1%
Native Hawaiian	5	0.1%	818	0.1%
Multi-Race, Non-Hisp./Lat.	339	4.9%	34,605	3.6%
All	6,935	100.0%	954,034	100.0%

Note: As of October 1, 2017

**Table B1b: Methuen Public Schools
2017–2018 Student Enrollment by High Needs Populations**

Group	District			State		
	N	Percent of High Needs	Percent of District	N	Percent of High Needs	Percent of State
Students w/ disabilities	1,257	36.6%	17.8%	171,061	38.0%	17.7%
Econ. Dis.	2,410	70.2%	34.8%	305,203	67.9%	32.0%
EL and Former EL	612	17.8%	8.8%	97,334	21.6%	10.2%
All high needs students	3,433	100.0%	48.6%	449,584	100.0%	46.6%

Notes: As of October 1, 2017. District and state numbers and percentages for students with disabilities and high needs students are calculated including students in out-of-district placements. Total district enrollment including students in out-of-district placement is 3,433; total state enrollment including students in out-of-district placement is 964,806.

**Table B2a: Methuen Public Schools
Attendance Rates, 2015–2018**

Group	N (2018)	2015	2016	2017	2018	4-yr Change	State (2018)
African American/Black	120	96.1	95.8	96.6	96.3	0.2	94.1
Asian	277	96.6	96.6	95.6	95.4	-1.2	96.2
Hispanic or Latino	2,969	93.9	94.2	92.4	92.9	-1.0	92.7
Multi-Race, non-Hisp./Lat.	360	95.3	94.9	94.4	94.4	-0.9	94.4
White	3,647	94.6	94.5	93.2	93.4	-1.2	95.1
High Needs	3,859	93.8	93.7	92.0	92.6	-1.2	93.2
Econ. Dis.	2,966	93.4	93.3	91.4	92.1	-1.3	92.5
SWD	1,322	93.6	93.5	92.3	92.9	-0.7	92.9
EL	712	94.4	94.5	93.1	93.8	-0.6	93.3
All	7,384	94.5	94.5	93.1	93.4	-1.1	94.5

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

**Table B2b: Methuen Public Schools
Chronic Absence Rates,* 2015–2018**

Group	N (2018)	2015	2016	2017	2018	4-yr Change	State (2018)
African American/Black	120	10.2	9.0	3.6	7.5	-2.7	16.4
Asian	277	8.2	7.3	13.5	10.1	1.9	7.6
Hispanic or Latino	2,969	17.8	16.4	22.5	20.8	3.0	22.5
Multi-Race, non-Hisp./Lat.	360	9.4	12.0	15.8	13.3	3.9	14.2
White	3,647	12.4	12.6	18.4	17.5	5.1	10.0
High Needs	3,859	18.2	19.0	24.7	22.4	4.2	20.1
Econ. Dis.	2,966	20.1	21.1	27.1	24.9	4.8	22.9
SWD	1,322	17.2	20.4	23.4	19.4	2.2	20.7
EL	712	17.7	14.8	20.2	17.8	0.1	20.4
All	7,384	14.0	13.7	19.5	18.2	4.2	13.2

* The percentage of students absent 10 percent or more of their total number of student days of membership in a school

**Table B6: Methuen Public Schools
Expenditures, Chapter 70 State Aid, and Net School Spending Fiscal Years 2016–2018**

	FY16		FY17		FY18	
	Estimated	Actual	Estimated	Actual	Estimated	Actual
Expenditures						
From local appropriations for schools:						
By school committee	\$71,330,224	\$71,306,353	\$73,470,127	\$73,470,133	\$72,000,000	\$75,790,864
By municipality	\$23,318,441	\$24,695,197	\$23,431,049	\$27,699,032	\$21,253,819	\$21,122,526
Total from local appropriations	\$94,648,665	\$96,001,550	\$96,901,176	\$101,169,165	\$93,253,819	\$96,913,390
From revolving funds and grants	--	\$11,919,927	--	\$11,662,311	--	\$13,247,078
Total expenditures	--	\$107,921,477	--	\$112,831,476	--	\$110,160,468
Chapter 70 aid to education program						
Chapter 70 state aid*	--	\$41,119,363	--	\$42,147,523	--	\$42,360,163
Required local contribution	--	\$34,357,316	--	\$34,166,160	--	\$35,661,626
Required net school spending**	--	\$79,195,276	--	\$76,313,683	--	\$78,021,789
Actual net school spending	--	\$78,092,685	--	\$81,657,657	--	\$84,656,241
Over/under required (\$)	--	-\$1,102,591	--	\$44,241,384	--	\$6,634,452
Over/under required (%)	--	-1.4%	--	5.5%	--	8.5%

*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: FY16, FY17, and FY18 District End-of-Year Reports, Chapter 70 Program information on DESE website

Data retrieved 11/13/18 and 5/23/19

**Table B7: Methuen Public Schools
Expenditures Per In-District Pupil
Fiscal Years 2015–2017**

Expenditure Category	2015	2016	2017
Administration	\$339	\$367	\$338
Instructional leadership (district and school)	\$919	\$920	\$919
Teachers	\$5,223	\$5,450	\$5,455
Other teaching services	\$882	\$910	\$943
Professional development	\$81	\$83	\$81
Instructional materials, equipment and technology	\$150	\$190	\$187
Guidance, counseling and testing services	\$401	\$418	\$438
Pupil services	\$1,421	\$1,491	\$1,520
Operations and maintenance	\$942	\$885	\$900
Insurance, retirement and other fixed costs	\$1,592	\$1,732	\$1,905
Total expenditures per in-district pupil	\$11,950	\$12,444	\$12,688

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

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

Appendix C: Instructional Inventory

Focus Area #1: Learning Objectives & Expectations		Insufficient Evidence	Limited Evidence	Sufficient Evidence	Compelling Evidence	Avg Number of points
		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(1 to 4)
1. The teacher demonstrates knowledge of the subject matter.	ES	0%	4%	82%	14%	3.1
	MS	0%	18%	71%	11%	2.9
	HS	0%	0%	80%	20%	3.2
	Total #	0	6	59	11	3.1
	Total %	0%	8%	78%	14%	
2. The teacher ensures that students understand what they should be learning in the lesson and why.	ES	0%	25%	64%	11%	2.9
	MS	0%	11%	82%	7%	3.0
	HS	0%	25%	70%	5%	2.8
	Total #	0	15	55	6	2.9
	Total %	0%	20%	72%	8%	
3. The teacher uses appropriate classroom activities well matched to the learning objective(s).	ES	0%	18%	75%	7%	2.9
	MS	0%	29%	64%	7%	2.8
	HS	0%	45%	40%	15%	2.7
	Total #	0	22	47	7	2.8
	Total %	0%	29%	62%	9%	
4. The teacher conducts frequent checks for student understanding, provides feedback, and adjusts instruction.	ES	0%	43%	46%	11%	2.7
	MS	7%	43%	43%	7%	2.5
	HS	5%	25%	65%	5%	2.7
	Total #	3	29	38	6	2.6
	Total %	4%	38%	50%	8%	
Total Score For Focus Area #1	ES	0	25	75	12	11.5
	MS	2	28	73	9	11.2
	HS	1	19	51	9	11.4
	Total	3	72	199	30	11.4

Focus Area #2: Student Engagement & Higher-Order Thinking		Insufficient Evidence	Limited Evidence	Sufficient Evidence	Compelling Evidence	Avg Number of points
		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(1 to 4)
5. Students assume responsibility to learn and are engaged in the lesson.	ES	4%	21%	68%	7%	2.8
	MS	4%	39%	50%	7%	2.6
	HS	15%	25%	50%	10%	2.6
	Total #	5	22	43	6	2.7
	Total %	7%	29%	57%	8%	
6. Students engage in higher-order thinking.	ES	4%	36%	61%	0%	2.6
	MS	0%	50%	43%	7%	2.6
	HS	10%	25%	55%	10%	2.7
	Total #	3	29	40	4	2.6
	Total %	4%	38%	53%	5%	
7. Students communicate their ideas and thinking with each other.	ES	7%	32%	57%	4%	2.6
	MS	14%	36%	43%	7%	2.4
	HS	20%	35%	35%	10%	2.4
	Total #	10	26	35	5	2.5
	Total %	13%	34%	46%	7%	
8. Students engage with meaningful, real-world tasks.	ES	4%	21%	71%	4%	2.8
	MS	0%	39%	54%	7%	2.7
	HS	0%	35%	40%	25%	2.9
	Total #	1	24	43	8	2.8
	Total %	1%	32%	57%	11%	
Total Score For Focus Area #2	ES	5	31	72	4	10.7
	MS	4	45	53	8	10.3
	HS	9	24	36	11	10.5
	Total	18	100	161	23	10.5

Focus Area #3: Inclusive Practice & Classroom Culture		Insufficient Evidence	Limited Evidence	Sufficient Evidence	Compelling Evidence	Avg Number of points
		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(1 to 4)
9. The teacher ensures that students are engaging in challenging tasks regardless of learning needs.	ES	4%	36%	43%	18%	2.8
	MS	4%	43%	43%	11%	2.6
	HS	5%	35%	40%	20%	2.8
	Total #	3	29	32	12	2.7
	Total %	4%	38%	42%	16%	
10. The teacher uses a variety of instructional strategies.	ES	4%	18%	61%	18%	2.9
	MS	0%	50%	46%	4%	2.5
	HS	5%	40%	40%	15%	2.7
	Total #	2	27	38	9	2.7
	Total %	3%	36%	50%	12%	
11. Classroom routines and positive supports are in place to ensure that students behave appropriately.	ES	0%	7%	68%	25%	3.2
	MS	0%	18%	68%	14%	3.0
	HS	5%	15%	50%	30%	3.1
	Total #	1	10	48	17	3.1
	Total %	1%	13%	63%	22%	
12. The classroom climate is conducive to teaching and learning.	ES	0%	7%	68%	25%	3.2
	MS	0%	18%	71%	11%	2.9
	HS	5%	10%	55%	30%	3.1
	Total #	1	9	50	16	3.1
	Total %	1%	12%	66%	21%	
Total Score For Focus Area #3	ES	2	19	67	24	12.0
	MS	1	36	64	11	11.0
	HS	4	20	37	19	11.6
	Total	7	75	168	54	11.5