District Review Report

Uxbridge Public Schools

Comprehensive review conducted January 13–16, 2020

Office of District Reviews and Monitoring

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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Executive Summary

The town of Uxbridge is located in the Blackstone Valley of southern Worcester County, close to the Rhode Island border. Settled in 1627 and incorporated in 1727, Uxbridge has deep ties to the currents and movements in American history, including the industrial revolution and public education. As early as 1788, Uxbridge had its first grammar school and in 1797 appropriated funds to create 13 district schools, one for each village and section of town. Three of these one-room schoolhouses still exist, now repurposed for community use. In 2020, there are three schools serving 1,718 students: the Taft Early Learning Center (pre-kindergarten through grade 3), Whitin Intermediate School (grades 4 through 7), and Uxbridge High School (grades 8 through 12).

Over the five years before the onsite review, district enrollment has decreased by 9.5 percent from 1,898 students in 2016 to 1,718 students in 2020. At the same time, the student demographics have changed incrementally. The percentage enrollment of students with high needs, which consists of English learners, students with disabilities, and students identified as economically disadvantaged, increased by 5.4 percent from 28.5 percent in 2016 to 33.9 percent in 2020. Specifically, the percentage enrollment of English learners increased by 1.5 percentage points from 0.7 percent in 2016 to 2.2 percent in 2020; the percentage enrollment of students with disabilities increased by 3.2 percentage points from 14.1 percent in 2016 to 17.3 percent in 2020; and the percentage enrollment of students identified as economically disadvantaged increased by 3.9 percentage points from 16.8 percent in 2016 to 20.7 percent in 2020. Interviewees told the team that the district was learning how to accommodate a wide range of student needs.

Four of the seven key district and school leaders are new to their roles since 2018. The district welcomed a new superintendent in July 2018, following the six-year tenure of his predecessor. A new director of curriculum, instruction, and accountability was appointed in August 2018, the fourth to serve in this role since 2011. The director of pupil services vacated the position in January 2020, and an interim director was quickly appointed. The business manager has served since August 2016. At the school level, one of the three principals was recently appointed. The principal of Taft Early Learning Center began in the 2019-2020 school year.

The district has appointed teachers to augment central leadership in curriculum and instruction. At the Taft Early Learning Center and Whitin Intermediate School, there are curriculum and instruction teacher leaders in preschool, ELA/social studies, and math/science at each grade level in kindergarten through grade 5 and a teacher leader in each of the four core content areas for grades 6 and 7 combined. There are curriculum and instruction leaders in math, science, history, and ELA at Uxbridge High School. There are districtwide teacher leaders for art, music, health/wellness, counseling, world language, special education, technology/library/media, and English learners. All of the teacher leaders are full-time teachers. The principals and the director of curriculum, instruction, and accountability meet regularly with the teacher leaders at each school and with the entire group of teacher leaders to advance the district’s improvement agenda. There are curriculum and instruction leaders in math, science, history, and language at Uxbridge High School.

The number of district schools and the grade configurations changed in 2018 with the closing of the McCloskey Middle School (grades 6-8), because of declining enrollment and the age and condition of the facility which had opened in 1937. The 2018-2019 school year began under the new superintendent, with pre-kindergarten through grade 3 located at the Taft Early Learning Center, grades 4 through 7 located at the Whitin Intermediate School, and grades 8 through 12 located at Uxbridge High School.[[1]](#footnote-1) The former principal of the McCloskey Middle School was appointed to lead the Whitin Intermediate School with the charge to “blend an upper elementary with a middle school philosophy.” Grades 4 and 5 have an elementary school organizational model, with an ELA/social studies and math/science teacher at each grade level, while grades 6 and 7 have a middle-school organizational model, with a teacher for each of the four core subjects at each grade level. District and school leaders spoke openly about the continuing challenges and opportunities of merging the faculties and students from two schools. At Uxbridge High School, grade 8 students take core subjects with their grade 8 peers and choose electives that are open to students from higher grades.

With new leaders in almost every role, a school reorganization, and changing demographics, the district is “reinventing itself from the ground up.” A new three-year strategic plan set the stage for a one-year district improvement plan and three-year school improvement plans – all aligned by vision, core values, initiatives and action steps to strategic plan priorities. Improvement plans as well as professional practice goals now link to three strategic goals broadly stated as excellence in teaching and learning via a comprehensive curriculum aligned to content standards; a data-based approach to teaching and learning using an informative data management system that addresses students’ academic as well as social-emotional strength The number of district schools and the grade configurations changed in 2018 with the closing of the McCloskey Middle School (grades 6-8), because of declining enrollment and the age and condition of the facility which had opened in 1937. The 2018-2019 school year began under the new superintendent, with pre-kindergarten through grade 3 located at the Taft Early Learning Center, grades 4 through 7 located at the Whitin Intermediate School, and grades 8 through 12 located at Uxbridge High School.[[2]](#footnote-2) The former principal of the McCloskey Middle School was appointed to lead the Whitin Intermediate School with the charge to “blend an upper elementary with a middle school philosophy.” Grades 4 and 5 have an elementary school organizational model. Grade 4 classes are self-contained while grade 5 is configured with an ELA/social studies and math/science teacher at each grade level. Grades 6 and 7 have a middle-school organizational model, with three-person teacher teams. District and school leaders spoke openly about the continuing challenges and opportunities of merging the faculties and students from two schools. At Uxbridge High School, grade 8 students take core subjects with their grade 8 peers and choose electives that are open to students from higher grades.

With new leaders in almost every role, a school reorganization, and changing demographics, the district is “reinventing itself from the ground up.” A new three-year strategic plan set the stage for a one-year district improvement plan and one-year school improvement plans – all aligned by vision, core values, initiatives and action steps to strategic plan priorities. Improvement plans as well as professional practice goals now link to three strategic goals broadly stated as excellence in teaching and learning via a comprehensive curriculum aligned to content standards; a data-based approach to teaching and learning using an informative data management system that addresses students’ academic as well as social-emotional strengths and challenges; and the establishment of a collaborative team-based culture grounded in shared goals and challenges.

Good will, hard work, and some progress are evident, but it is clear that well-developed goals have resulted in multiple initiatives and actions, and adjustments will be necessary to fulfill their promise. However, educators and families expressed the view that a more shared approach to problem solving had taken root in the district, consistent with the goal to build a more collaborative team-based school culture.

Much improvement work is taking place in curriculum and instruction, although not all curricula are fully aligned with the most recent Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. Meeting curriculum alignment goals has emphasized the need for more support and professional development (PD) to increase teachers’ understanding of how to use the *Understanding by Design* framework to develop curriculum units. In addition, the transfer of curriculum units to the district’s Google Docs platform has been slow, particularly in the earlier grades, and more time and expertise are needed to accomplish these tasks.

The evidence from classroom observations shows inconsistencies throughout the district. This will likely improve when the district clarifies and shares its expectations for high-quality instruction districtwide and works to make the characteristics of high-quality instruction evident in all schools. This goal is likely attainable through the district’s strong supervisory and evaluation processes, including frequent walkthroughs and observations. A review of educator evaluation documents indicated uniformly high-quality documentation and feedback to both teachers and administrators by their evaluators. In addition, the district has developed a solid collaborative planning procedure for PD. Nevertheless, the district’s PD agenda will need to expand to ensure that instruction at all schools is responsive to the diverse learning needs of all students.

Meeting students’ diverse academic, social-emotional, and behavioral needs is a prerequisite for achieving the district’s improvement goals. A group of thoughtful and caring professionals have designed and implemented services and practices to help students with disabilities plan for life after high school. However, the district has not yet created and implemented a comprehensive multi-tiered system of support to identify and address students’ multiple needs.

The district’s capacity to address gaps in student achievement and opportunities to learn relies largely upon the ability of leaders and teachers to collect, analyze, and use data to guide decision-making. Although the district assessment system is fairly robust and much useful data is collected, only some educators have the expertise required to use data well. While data analysis skills are uneven, the determination and the goals to set them on a path to improvement are set forth in the detailed action steps in both district and school improvement plans. Some of these are in the early stages of implementation, such as the draft of a new data infrastructure and the recent initiative to introduce a new data inquiry protocol to teacher-leaders.

Finally, although the district has been highly effective in budget planning and resource allocation, budget documentation does not adequately and clearly explain how budget requests are connected to district improvement plan goals. Consequently, some voters may not be convinced of the credibility and explicitness of the budget, jeopardizing their support at the Town Meeting.

Uxbridge’s school facilities are in generally good condition. However, systems and maintenance issues may arise in the near future at both the Taft Early Learning Center and the Whitin Intermediate School, given the advanced ages of these facilities.[[3]](#footnote-3) The district has a well-developed five-year capital improvement plan for facilities; yet, in recent years the town has been unable to fund the needs at required levels. The high-school facility opened in 2012 is in excellent condition and should serve well into the future.

There are no late busses, which may limit opportunities to seek academic support and/or participate in after-school athletics and clubs for some students and make it impossible for others. The girls’ high-school softball team must find transportation across town to the Whitin Intermediate School field in order to practice and compete.

*Instruction*

The team observed 77 classes throughout the district: 32 at Uxbridge High school, 28 at the Whitin intermediate School, and 17 at the Taft Early Learning Center. The team observed 26 ELA classes, 23 mathematics classes, 8 Science Technology and Engineering (STE) classes, 10 social studies classes, and 10 classes in other subject areas. Among the classes observed were two special education classes. 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.

The review team found inconsistent instructional practices at all three schools. While there were strengths, even exemplary practices in some observed classes, in others, lessons did not maximize students’ potential to learn at a high level.

Strong practices were evident at the Taft Early Learning Center and at Uxbridge High School in teachers’ ability to use classroom routines and rituals consistently to ensure that students were well behaved and focused on learning. At the Taft Early Learning Center and Uxbridge High School, students and teachers often displayed respectful and even warm relationships characterized by active listening that made the classroom climate conducive to learning. In addition, at both schools teachers often explained lesson content in ways that students could easily understand. Teachers could anticipate or respond to students’ questions related to the content and, at times, broadened the context of the lesson.

The team found instructional practices that prevented students from assuming responsibility for their own learning and engaging in the lesson, especially at the Taft Early Learning Center and Whitin Intermediate School. At both schools, it was most often the teachers who directed lessons. Students were not given the responsibility for doing most of the thinking. Students at all three schools did not frequently experience opportunities that required higher-order thinking such as analysis, synthesis, problem solving, evaluation, and application of new knowledge.

Consistency in lesson design is needed to ensure that tasks engage students in learning activities connected to their lives and the larger world. At all schools, teachers did not regularly design lessons that could support and/or challenge students’ diverse learning needs. Teachers relied heavily upon only one instructional approach or format, usually direct instruction. A student-centered approach that uses multiple, flexible, active-learning formats that address students’ learning strengths and challenges was missing.

**Strengths**

* The district’s annual district and school improvement plans and educator plans are aligned with its three-year strategic plan.
* The district has made progress establishing a culture of collaboration, consistent with the strategic plan goal to establish collaborative and effective teams.
* The district has made a commitment to strengthen its capacity to provide a standards-based curriculum aligned with the Massachusetts frameworks.
* In most classrooms at the Taft Early Learning Center and Uxbridge High School, the review team observed positive student behaviors and classrooms conducive to learning. In addition, observers found notable instructional strengths at the high school where students assumed responsibility for their learning and teachers clearly explained lesson objectives and purpose.
* Guided by the new strategic plan and aligned district and school improvement plans, the district is in the early stages of establishing practices that can strengthen the usage of data to promote improvement.
* The district has made progress in collecting, examining, and using student academic data and student well-being indicators to modify the curriculum, instructional practices, and guidance services at Uxbridge High School.
* The district has instituted comprehensive hiring policies, procedures, and practices and maintains accurate employment records.
* The district’s professional development plan supports a number of the district’s goals and initiatives.
* The district’s educator evaluation system prioritizes opportunities for educators to receive high-quality feedback[[4]](#footnote-4) that helps them improve their practice.
* The district has taken steps to implement services, develop staff capacity, establish teams and procedures, and design curriculum aimed at addressing the academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs of all students.
* The district has systems and practices in place to ensure that students with disabilities are supported in the transition to life after high school.
* The district’s budget development process leads to recommendations to the school committee that are educationally sound and address the goals of the District Improvement Plan (DIP).
* The district has a long-term capital plan that describes future capital development and improvement needs. This plan is reviewed and revised as needed with input from all appropriate stakeholders.

**Challenges and Areas for Growth**

* School Improvement Plans (SIPs) often contain too many goals and strategic activities and the benchmarks and timelines do not facilitate effective implementation and accountability.
* The district’s current allocation of resources does not support equitable conditions and participation in after-school activities, including academic support.
* Observers found inconsistent quality across all schools and grade levels in instructional practices that reflected elements of effective instructional design, including clearly articulated learning objectives and classroom activities that were aligned with learning objectives.
* At all grade levels, observers noted that lesson designs did not consistently provide opportunities for students to communicate their ideas with one another, engage in higher-order thinking, and connect what they were learning to the real world.
* In observed classes, students were not sufficiently engaged in challenging tasks regardless of learning needs and instructional strategies were not sufficiently varied to address students’ diverse learning styles and needs.
* The district’s curricula are not fully aligned with the current Massachusetts curriculum frameworks, making state standards an inconsistent feature of lesson design. Educators are also in the early stages of understanding and implementing the curriculum’s organizational structure, the Understanding by Design (UbD) framework.
* Data-inquiry systems, data analysis expertise, and a data literate culture are not firmly rooted districtwide.
* The district does not systematically include measurable professional practice and student learning goals and evidence of educators’ impact on student learning in its educator evaluation system.
* The district’s PD plan does not incorporate training for staff on addressing the needs of all students.
* The district has not established a coherent or comprehensive districtwide multi-tiered system of support to address students’ academic, behavioral, and social-emotional growth.
* Many students are not receiving instruction in a manner that sufficiently supports their individual academic needs, and some students are losing classroom instructional time because of high rates of chronic student absence.
* The district’s budget documents do not clearly detail how funds and staffing are allocated. They do not provide comparative historical spending data. The budget documents also do not explicitly make connections to district and school goals and do not demonstrate how student performance data have been used to set budget priorities.
* The district’s long-term capital plan, which describes capital development and improvement needs, is not adequately funded. Capital resource allocations are not sufficient to ensure that facilities are conducive to student learning.

**Recommendations**

Building upon the foundation of improvement plan alignment and coherence that has been established, the district should ensure that its planning documents have clear, measurable improvement objectives that are based on an analysis of historical, longitudinal, and current disaggregated student data.

The district should develop procedures that ensure equitable use of district resources.

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

The district should ensure that all teachers have access to high-quality, comprehensive, standards-based, and horizontally and vertically aligned curricula and the support they need to implement the curricula effectively. The district should develop and implement an ongoing process for the review and revision of curriculum and the adoption of new academic programs.

To firmly establish the use of achievement data and other information for improvement, the district should continue its efforts to develop infrastructure for data collection, analysis, and usage and expand educators’ expertise in sharing, analyzing, and using data to guide improvement decisions at all levels.

The district should promote educators’ growth by fully implementing all components of the educator evaluation system, with an emphasis on consistency in professional practice and student learning goals and educators’ impact on student learning.

The district should expand its professional development (PD) plan to provide all educators with opportunities to receive targeted PD to support educators’ and students’ needs.

The district should develop and implement a districtwide tiered system of support for all students.

The district should strengthen its efforts to ensure that all students attend school regularly.

The district should develop a budget document that is clear, complete, and explicitly aligned with district and school improvement plan goals.

The district and the town should develop a plan to fund the school’s long-term capital plan. Sufficient resources should be allocated to ensure that facilities are conducive to student learning.

Uxbridge 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, the comprehensive district review is designed to promote district reflection on its own performance and potential next steps. 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 Uxbridge Public Schools was conducted from January 13–16, 2020. The site visit included 38.5 hours of interviews and focus groups with approximately 83 stakeholders, including school committee members, district administrators, school staff, students, students’ families, and teachers’ association representatives. The review team conducted 3 focus groups with 2 elementary-school teachers, 4 middle-school teachers, and 17 high-school teachers.

A list of review team members, information about review activities, and the site visit schedule are in Appendix A, and Appendix B provides information about enrollment, attendance, and expenditures. The team observed classroom instruction in 77 classrooms in 3 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**

Uxbridge has a town manager form of government and the chair of the school committee is elected by the committee members. The seven members of the school committee meet monthly, with more frequent meetings during the budget season.

The current superintendent has been in the position since July 1, 2018. The district leadership team includes the director of curriculum, instruction, and accountability; the director of pupil services, the pre-K director, the school business manager, the facilities director, the food services director, the daycare director, and the director of technology. At the time of the site visit, the director of pupil services had resigned and would leave the following week for another position. Central office positions have been mostly stable in number over the five years before the onsite review; however, the turnover rate for central office positions has been high.[[5]](#footnote-5) The district has three principals leading three schools. Other school administrators include assistant principals at all schools and a non-evaluative K-5 math coordinator. In the 2019–2020 school year, there were 130 (FTE) teachers in the district.

In the 2019–2020 school year, 1,718 students were enrolled in the district’s three schools and in one off- campus program, Gateway to College, located at nearby Quinsigamond Community College.[[6]](#footnote-6)

**Table 1: Uxbridge Public Schools**

**Schools, Type, Grades Served, and Enrollment, 2019–2020**

| **School**  | **Type** | **Grades Served** | **Enrollment** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Taft Early Learning Center | EES | Pre-K–3 | 573 |
| Whitin Intermediate School | ESMS | 4–7 | 517 |
| Uxbridge High School  | HS | 8–12 | 592 |
| Gateway to College | HS | 10–12 | 36 |
| **Totals** | **3 schools and 1 alternative program**  | **Pre-K–12** | **1,718** |
| \*As of October 1, 2019 |

Between 2016 and 2020 overall student enrollment decreased by 9.5 percent. 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.

In 2018, the total in-district per-pupil expenditure was higher than the median in-district per-pupil expenditure for 43 K–12 districts of similar size (1,000–1,999 students). In fiscal year 2018, the total in-district per-pupil expenditure was $15,071 as compared with a median of $14,582.  Actual net school spending has been well above what is required by the Chapter 70 state education aid program, as shown in Table B3 in Appendix B.

Student Performance

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| **Table 2: Uxbridge Public Schools****Accountability Percentile, Criterion Reference Target (CRT) Percentage, Reason for Classification** |
| **School** | **Accountability Percentile** | **Cumulative CRT Percentage** | **Overall Classification** | **Reason for Classification** |
| Taft ECC | -- | -- | Insufficient data | Insufficient data |
| Whitin Intermediate | 49 | 60% | Not requiring assistance or intervention | Substantial progress toward targets |
| Uxbridge High | 35 | 27% | Requiring assistance or intervention | In need of focused/targeted support: Low performance for high needs students |
| Gateway to College | -- | -- | Insufficient data | Insufficient data |
| District | -- | 40% | Not requiring assistance or intervention | Moderate progress toward targets |

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| **Table 3: Uxbridge Public Schools****Next-Generation MCAS ELA Scaled Scores Grades 3–8, 2017–2019** |
| **Group** | **N (2019)** | **2017** | **2018** | **2019** | **Change** | **State (2019)** | **Above/Below** |
| All | 789 | 500.1 | 500.0 | 498.0 | -2.1 | 501.2 | -3.2 |
| African American/Black | 10 | -- | -- | 491.8 | -- | 491.2 | 0.6 |
| Asian | 12 | 500.1 | 510.4 | 507.6 | 7.5 | 512.8 | -5.2 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 34 | 496.4 | 499.4 | 495.7 | -0.7 | 490.6 | 5.1 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 16 | 497.6 | 499.2 | 494.6 | -3.0 | 503.6 | -9.0 |
| White | 713 | 500.5 | 500.0 | 498.2 | -2.3 | 504.9 | -6.7 |
| High Needs | 267 | 489.5 | 489.1 | 486.8 | -2.7 | 490.7 | -3.9 |
| Econ. Disadvantaged | 169 | 493.0 | 491.3 | 490.6 | -2.4 | 490.6 | 0.0 |
| Students w/ Disabilities | 123 | 479.5 | 480.2 | 476.5 | -3.0 | 489.3 | -12.8 |
| English Learners (EL) and Former EL | 20 | 485.4 | 490.9 | 485.8 | 0.4 | 481.1 | 4.7 |
| Next Generation MCAS Achievement Levels: 440–470 Not Meeting Expectations; 470–500 Partially Meeting Expectations; 500–530 Meeting Expectations; 530–560 Exceeding Expectations |

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| **Table 4: Uxbridge Public Schools****Next-Generation MCAS Math Scaled Scores Grades 3–8, 2017–2019** |
| **Group** | **N (2019)** | **2017** | **2018** | **2019** | **Change** | **State (2019)** | **Above/Below** |
| All | 791 | 499.6 | 497.0 | 498.3 | -1.3 | 499.2 | -0.9 |
| African American/Black | 10 | -- | -- | 490.7 | -- | 487.8 | 2.9 |
| Asian | 13 | 504.1 | 504.6 | 496.9 | -7.2 | 516.4 | -19.5 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 34 | 497.8 | 497.5 | 496.1 | -1.7 | 488.2 | 7.9 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 16 | 498.1 | 493.1 | 495.7 | -2.4 | 500.8 | -5.1 |
| White | 714 | 500.0 | 497.1 | 498.7 | -1.3 | 502.7 | -4.0 |
| High Needs | 268 | 490.2 | 486.4 | 488.0 | -2.2 | 488.8 | -0.8 |
| Econ. Disadvantaged | 169 | 493.1 | 489.4 | 491.0 | -2.1 | 488.1 | 2.9 |
| Students w/ Disabilities | 124 | 480.7 | 477.5 | 479.7 | -1.0 | 489.3 | -9.6 |
| English Learners (EL) and Former EL | 20 | 488.2 | 486.1 | 488.4 | 0.2 | 479.5 | 8.9 |
| Next Generation MCAS Achievement Levels: 440–470 Not Meeting Expectations; 470–500 Partially Meeting Expectations; 500–530 Meeting Expectations; 530–560 Exceeding Expectations |

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| **Table 5: Uxbridge Public Schools****Next-Generation MCAS ELA Percent Meeting or Exceeding Expectations Grades 3–8, 2017—2019** |
| **Group** | **N (2019)** | **2017** | **2018** | **2019** | **Change** | **State (2019)** | **Above/Below** |
| All | 789 | 51% | 49% | 48% | -3 | 52% | -4 |
| African American/Black | 10 | -- | -- | 50% | -- | 33% | 17 |
| Asian | 12 | 60% | 75% | 58% | -2 | 72% | -14 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 34 | 47% | 50% | 47% | 0 | 33% | 14 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 16 | 50% | 31% | 44% | -6 | 56% | -12 |
| White | 713 | 51% | 50% | 48% | -3 | 59% | -11 |
| High Needs | 267 | 27% | 25% | 28% | 1 | 32% | -4 |
| Econ. Disadvantaged | 169 | 36% | 29% | 35% | -1 | 33% | 2 |
| Students w/ Disabilities | 123 | 7% | 10% | 13% | 6 | 32% | -19 |
| English Learners (EL) and Former EL | 20 | 12% | 24% | 30% | 18 | 16% | 14 |

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| **Table 6: Uxbridge Public Schools****Next-Generation MCAS Math Percent Meeting or Exceeding Expectations Grades 3–8, 2017–2019** |
| **Group** | **N (2019)** | **2017** | **2018** | **2019** | **Change** | **State (2019)** | **Above/Below** |
| All | 791 | 48% | 45% | 48% | 0 | 49% | -1 |
| African American/Black | 10 | -- | -- | 20% |  | 28% | -8 |
| Asian | 13 | 53% | 58% | 38% | -15 | 76% | -38 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 34 | 53% | 44% | 32% | -21 | 29% | 3 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 16 | 38% | 40% | 44% | 6 | 51% | -7 |
| White | 714 | 48% | 46% | 50% | 2 | 56% | -6 |
| High Needs | 268 | 30% | 26% | 26% | -4 | 29% | -3 |
| Econ. Disadvantaged | 169 | 39% | 31% | 33% | -6 | 29% | 4 |
| Students w/ Disabilities | 124 | 12% | 13% | 10% | -2 | 32% | -22 |
| English Learners (EL) and Former EL | 20 | 24% | 18% | 25% | 1 | 15% | 10 |

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| **Table 7: Uxbridge Public Schools****Next Generation MCAS ELA and Math Scaled Scores in Grade 10, 2019** |
|  | **ELA** | **Math** |
| **Group** | **N (2019)** | **2019** | **State** | **Above/Below** | **N (2019)** | **2019** | **State** | **Above/Below** |
| All | 111 | 505.1 | 506.2 | -1.1 | 113 | 504.0 | 505.1 | -1.1 |
| African American/Black | 2 | -- | 493.8 | -- | 2 | -- | 492.3 | -- |
| Asian | -- | -- | 516.8 | -- | -- | -- | 522.5 | -- |
| Hispanic or Latino | 6 | -- | 492.0 | -- | 6 | -- | 491.0 | -- |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 2 | -- | 509.0 | -- | 2 | -- | 506.7 | -- |
| White | 101 | 504.2 | 510.7 | -6.5 | 103 | 503.4 | 509.0 | -5.6 |
| High Needs | 29 | 494.9 | 492.6 | 2.3 | 31 | 490.5 | 491.6 | -1.1 |
| Econ. Disadvantaged | 20 | 498.4 | 493.4 | 5.0 | 21 | 494.5 | 492.1 | 2.4 |
| Students w/ Disabilities | 16 | 478.2 | 480.6 | -2.4 | 18 | 476.1 | 485.4 | -9.3 |
| English Learners (EL) and Former EL | 1 | -- | 486.2 | -- | 1 | -- | 483.8 | -- |

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| **Table 8: Uxbridge Public Schools****Next Generation MCAS ELA and Math Percent Meeting or Exceeding Expectations in Grade 10, 2019** |
|  | **ELA** | **Math** |
| **Group** | **N (2019)** | **2019** | **State** | **Above/Below** | **N (2019)** | **2019** | **State** | **Above/Below** |
| All | 111 | 68% | 61% | 7 | 113 | 58% | 59% | -1 |
| African American/Black | 2 | -- | 38% | -- | 2 | -- | 35% | -- |
| Asian | -- | -- | 78% | -- | -- | -- | 82% | -- |
| Hispanic or Latino | 6 | -- | 37% | -- | 6 | -- | 33% | -- |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 2 | -- | 65% | -- | 2 | -- | 60% | -- |
| White | 101 | 66% | 69% | -3 | 103 | 56% | 67% | -11 |
| High Needs | 29 | 45% | 36% | 9 | 31 | 35% | 33% | 2 |
| Econ. Disadvantaged | 20 | 60% | 38% | 22 | 21 | 48% | 35% | 13 |
| Students w/ Disabilities | 16 | 13% | 22% | -9 | 18 | 6% | 18% | -12 |
| English Learners (EL) and Former EL | 1 | -- | 18% | -- | 1 | -- | 24% | -- |

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| **Table 9: Uxbridge Public Schools****Next Generation MCAS Science Meeting or Exceeding Expectations in Grades 5 and 8,** **and MCAS Science Proficient or Advanced in Grade 10, 2019** |
|  | **Next-Generation MCAS 5 and 8** | **MCAS Grade 10** |
| **Group** | **N (2019)** | **2019** | **State** | **Above/ Below** | **N (2019)** | **2019** | **State** | **Above/ Below** |
| All | 261 | 47% | 48% | -1 | 111 | 71% | 74% | -3 |
| African American/Black | 4 | -- | 24% | -- | 2 | -- | 54% | -- |
| Asian | 4 | -- | 67% | -- | -- | -- | 88% | -- |
| Hispanic or Latino | 13 | 54% | 26% | 28 | 4 | -- | 53% | -- |
| Multi-Race, non-Hisp./Lat. | 5 | -- | 51% | -- | -- | -- | 76% | -- |
| White | 234 | 47% | 56% | -9 | 105 | 71% | 81% | -10 |
| High Needs | 95 | 24% | 27% | -3 | 30 | 43% | 53% | -10 |
| Econ. Disadvantaged | 55 | 31% | 27% | 4 | 20 | 50% | 54% | -4 |
| Students w/ Disabilities | 42 | 14% | 17% | -3 | 19 | 26% | 38% | -12 |
| EL and Former EL | 8 | -- | 23% | -- | 1 | -- | 39% | -- |

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| **Table 10: Uxbridge Public Schools****Next-Generation MCAS ELA Percent Meeting or Exceeding Expectations in Grades 3–8, 2017–2019** |
| **Grade** | **N (2019)** | **2017** | **2018** | **2019** | **Change** | **State (2019)** | **Above/Below** |
| 3 | 122 | 56% | 50% | 54% | -2 | 56% | -2 |
| 4 | 130 | 34% | 50% | 53% | 19 | 52% | 1 |
| 5 | 125 | 51% | 46% | 42% | -9 | 52% | -10 |
| 6 | 132 | 58% | 41% | 40% | -18 | 53% | -13 |
| 7 | 143 | 60% | 49% | 46% | -14 | 48% | -2 |
| 8 | 137 | 49% | 59% | 53% | 4 | 52% | 1 |
| 3–8 | 789 | 51% | 49% | 48% | -3 | 52% | -4 |
| 10 | 111 | -- | -- | 68% | -- | 61% | 7 |

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| **Table 11: Uxbridge Public Schools****Next-Generation MCAS Math Percent Meeting or Exceeding Expectations in Grades 3–8, 2017–2019** |
| **Grade** | **N (2019)** | **2017** | **2018** | **2019** | **Change** | **State (2019)** | **Above/Below** |
| 3 | 123 | 46% | 50% | 34% | -12 | 49% | -15 |
| 4 | 130 | 53% | 36% | 57% | 4 | 50% | 7 |
| 5 | 126 | 45% | 45% | 51% | 6 | 48% | 3 |
| 6 | 132 | 55% | 53% | 52% | -3 | 52% | 0 |
| 7 | 143 | 47% | 50% | 54% | 7 | 48% | 6 |
| 8 | 137 | 42% | 37% | 39% | -3 | 46% | -7 |
| 3–8 | 791 | 48% | 45% | 48% | 0 | 49% | -1 |
| 10 | 113 | -- | -- | 58% | -- | 59% | -1 |

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| **Table 12: Uxbridge Public Schools****MCAS Science Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grades 5, 8, and 10, 2016–2019** |
| **Grade** | **N (2019)** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **2019** | **4-yr Change** | **State (2019)** |
| 5 | -- | 55% | 40% | 47% | -- | -- | -- |
| 8 | -- | 39% | 43% | 33% | -- | -- | -- |
| 10 | 111 | 70% | 76% | 81% | 71% | 1 | 74% |

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| **Table 13: Uxbridge Public Schools****English Language Arts and Math Mean Student Growth Percentile, 2018–2019** |
|  | **ELA** | **Math** |
| **Grade** | **N (2019)** | **2018** | **2019** | **State (2019)** | **N (2019)** | **2018** | **2019** | **State (2019)** |
| 3 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| 4 | 121 | 37.8 | 44.8 | 49.7 | 121 | 38.1 | 60.0 | 49.8 |
| 5 | 116 | 47.7 | 36.2 | 50.0 | 115 | 48.3 | 61.9 | 50.0 |
| 6 | 124 | 46.0 | 42.6 | 50.0 | 125 | 55.4 | 49.5 | 50.0 |
| 7 | 136 | 52.0 | 52.1 | 49.9 | 136 | 46.6 | 52.0 | 50.1 |
| 8 | 131 | 60.9 | 43.3 | 49.9 | 131 | 33.1 | 29.5 | 49.9 |
| 3–8 | 628 | 49.1 | 44.0 | 49.9 | 628 | 44.4 | 50.2 | 49.9 |
| 10 | 98 | 47.1 | 42.7 | 49.4 | 99 | 52.5 | 48.9 | 49.7 |

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| **Table 14: Uxbridge Public Schools****Next-Generation MCAS ELA Percent Meeting or Exceeding Expectations by School and Grade, 2019** |
| **School** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** | **3–8** | **10** |
| Taft ECC | 54% | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 54% | -- |
| Whitin Intermediate | -- | 54% | 43% | 39% | 48% | -- | 46% | -- |
| Uxbridge High | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 53% | 53% | 68% |
| Gateway to College | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| District | 54% | 53% | 42% | 40% | 46% | 53% | 48% | 68% |
| State | 56% | 52% | 52% | 53% | 48% | 52% | 52% | 61% |

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| **Table 15: Uxbridge Public Schools****Next-Generation MCAS Math Percent Meeting or Exceeding Expectations by School and Grade, 2019** |
| **School** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** | **3–8** | **10** |
| Taft ECC | 34% | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 34% | -- |
| Whitin Intermediate | -- | 57% | 54% | 54% | 56% | -- | 55% | -- |
| Uxbridge High | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 40% | 40% | 58% |
| Gateway to College | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| District | 34% | 57% | 51% | 52% | 54% | 39% | 48% | 58% |
| State | 49% | 50% | 48% | 52% | 48% | 46% | 49% | 59% |

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| **Table 16: Uxbridge Public Schools****Science Next-Generation MCAS Percent Meeting or Exceeding Expectations and** **MCAS Percent Proficient or Advanced by School and Grade, 2019** |
|  | **Next-Generation MCAS** |  | **MCAS** |
| **School** | **5** | **8** | **5 & 8** |  | **10** |
| Taft ECC | -- | -- | -- |  | -- |
| Whitin Intermediate | 57% | -- | 57% |  | -- |
| Uxbridge High | -- | 39% | 39% |  | 72% |
| Gateway to College | -- | -- | -- |  | -- |
| District | 56% | 38% | 47% |  | 71% |
| State | 49% | 46% | 48% |  | 74% |

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| **Table 17: Uxbridge Public Schools****3—8 Next-Generation MCAS ELA Percent Meeting and Exceeding Expectations by School, 2019** |
| **School** | **All** | **High Needs** | **Econ. Dis.** | **SWD** | **EL and Former EL** | **African American** | **Asian** | **Hispanic** | **Multi-race** | **White** |
| Taft ECC | 54% | 30% | 40% | 12% | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 54% |
| Whitin Intermediate | 46% | 30% | 35% | 14% | 29% | -- | -- | 47% | -- | 46% |
| Uxbridge High | 53% | 23% | 31% | 10% | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 54% |
| Gateway to College | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| District | 48% | 28% | 35% | 13% | 30% | 50% | 58% | 47% | 44% | 48% |
| State | 52% | 32% | 33% | 16% | 32% | 33% | 72% | 33% | 56% | 59% |

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| **Table 18: Uxbridge Public Schools****3—8 Next-Generation MCAS Math Percent Meeting and Exceeding Expectations by School, 2019** |
| **School** | **All** | **High Needs** | **Econ. Dis.** | **SWD** | **EL and Former EL** | **African American** | **Asian** | **Hispanic** | **Multi-race** | **White** |
| Taft ECC | 34% | 27% | 32% | 17% | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 36% |
| Whitin Intermediate | 55% | 32% | 39% | 11% | 36% | -- | -- | 47% | -- | 56% |
| Uxbridge High | 40% | 15% | 21% | 5% | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 43% |
| Gateway to College | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| District | 48% | 26% | 33% | 10% | 25% | 20% | 38% | 32% | 44% | 50% |
| State | 49% | 29% | 29% | 15% | 32% | 28% | 76% | 29% | 51% | 56% |

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| **Table 19: Uxbridge Public Schools****ELA Meeting or Exceeding Expectations 10th Grade by School, 2019** |
| **School** | **All** | **High Needs** | **Econ. Dis.** | **SWD** | **EL and Former EL** | **African American** | **Asian** | **Hispanic** | **Multi-race** | **White** |
| Uxbridge High | 68% | 46% | 60% | 13% | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 67% |
| Gateway to College | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| District | 68% | 45% | 60% | 13% | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 66% |
| State | 61% | 36% | 38% | 22% | 18% | 38% | 78% | 37% | 65% | 69% |

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| **Table 20: Uxbridge Public Schools****Math Meeting or Exceeding Expectations 10th grade by School, 2019** |
| **School** | **All** | **High Needs** | **Econ. Dis.** | **SWD** | **EL and Former EL** | **African American** | **Asian** | **Hispanic** | **Multi-race** | **White** |
| Uxbridge High | 58% | 37% | 48% | 6% | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 57% |
| Gateway to College | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| District | 58% | 35% | 48% | 6% | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 56% |
| State | 59% | 33% | 35% | 18% | 24% | 35% | 82% | 33% | 60% | 67% |

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| **Table 21: Uxbridge Public Schools****Next-Generation MCAS Science Percent Meeting and Exceeding Expectations by School, 2019** |
| **School** | **All** | **High Needs** | **Econ. Dis.** | **SWD** | **EL and Former EL** | **African American** | **Asian** | **Hispanic** | **Multi-race** | **White** |
| Taft ECC | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Whitin Intermediate | 57% | 40% | 52% | 25% | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 57% |
| Uxbridge High | 39% | 13% | 18% | 5% | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 40% |
| Gateway to College | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| District | 47% | 24% | 31% | 14% | 13% | 50% | 50% | 54% | 20% | 47% |
| State | 48% | 27% | 27% | 17% | 23% | 24% | 67% | 26% | 51% | 56% |

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| **Table 22: Uxbridge Public Schools****MCAS Science Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Science by School and Group, 2016–2019** |
| **School** | **N (2019)** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **2019** | **4-yr Change** |
| Uxbridge High | 110 | 71% | 76% | 87% | 72% | 1 |
| African American/Black | 2 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Asian | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Hispanic | 4 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Multi-race, non-Hispanic/Latino | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| White | 104 | 70% | 79% | 86% | 72% | 2 |
| High Needs | 29 | 42% | 43% | 71% | 45% | 3 |
| Economically Disadvantaged | 20 | 56% | 56% | 80% | 50% | -6 |
| Students with Disabilities | 18 | 21% | 31% | 62% | 28% | 7 |
| English Learners | 1 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Gateway to College | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |

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| **Table 23: Uxbridge Public Schools****Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rates by Student Group, 2015–-2018** |
| **Group** | **N****(2018)** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **4-yr Change** | **State (2018)** |
| All | 159 | 70.6 | 82.1 | 84.6 | 84.3 | 13.7 | 87.9 |
| African American/Black | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 80.1 |
| Asian | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 94.3 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 13 | 41.7 | -- | 63.6 | 53.8 | 12.1 | 73.8 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | -- | 33.3 | -- | -- | -- | -- | 86.5 |
| White | 139 | 77.1 | 82.6 | 86.2 | 87.1 | 10.0 | 92.2 |
| High Needs | 65 | 63.8 | 73.2 | 71.0 | 73.8 | 10.0 | 78.0 |
| Economically Disadvantaged\* | 49 | 57.1 | 69.6 | 68.3 | 69.4 | 12.3 | 77.4 |
| English Learners | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 64.1 |
| Students with Disabilities | 26 | 69.6 | 73.7 | 76.7 | 80.8 | 11.2 | 72.4 |
| \* Four-year cohort graduation rate for students from low-income families used for 2015 rates. |

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| **Table 24: Uxbridge Public Schools****Five-Year Cohort Graduation Rates by Student Group, 2014–-2017** |
| **Group** | **N****(2017)** | **2014** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **4-yr Change** | **State (2017)** |
| All | 162 | 88.9 | 81.7 | 86.8 | 88.9 | 0.0 | 90.1 |
| African American/Black | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 84.2 |
| Asian | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 95.4 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 11 | -- | 66.7 | -- | 63.6 | -- | 77.4 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | -- | -- | 83.3 | -- | -- | -- | 87.7 |
| White | 145 | 88.7 | 84.8 | 87.7 | 90.3 | 1.6 | 93.9 |
| High Needs | 62 | 73.3 | 76.6 | 78.6 | 75.8 | 2.5 | 83.0 |
| Economically Disadvantaged\* | 41 | 73.3 | 74.3 | 76.1 | 73.2 | -0.1 | 82.0 |
| English Learners | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 69.0 |
| Students with Disabilities | 30 | 68.0 | 69.6 | 73.7 | 80.0 | 12.0 | 76.8 |
| \* Four-year cohort graduation rate for students from low-income families used for 2014 rates. |

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| **Table 25: Uxbridge Public Schools****In-School Suspension Rates by Student Group, 2016–-2019** |
| **Group** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **2019** | **4-yr Change** | **State (2019)** |
| All | 0.4 | 0.1 | 0.8 | 1.4 | 1.0 | 1.9 |
| African American/Black | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 3.4 |
| Asian | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 0.5 |
| Hispanic or Latino | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 2.3 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/ Latino | -- | -- | -- | 7.9 | -- | 2.3 |
| White | 0.4 | 0.1 | 0.8 | 1.3 | 0.9 | 1.6 |
| High Needs | 0.5 | 0.3 | 1.8 | 3.1 | 2.6 | 2.7 |
| Economically Disadvantaged\* | 0.5 | 0.2 | 1.1 | 3.7 | 3.2 | 2.9 |
| English Learners | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 1.7 |
| Students with Disabilities | 1.0 | 0.7 | 3.2 | 3.1 | 2.1 | 3.3 |

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| **Table 26: Uxbridge Public Schools****Out-of-School Suspension Rates by Student Group, 2016–-2019** |
| **Group** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **2019** | **4-yr Change** | **State (2019)** |
| All | 1.7 | 1.7 | 2.0 | 3.3 | 1.6 | 3.0 |
| African American/Black | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 6.2 |
| Asian | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 0.8 |
| Hispanic or Latino | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 5.0 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/ Latino | -- | -- | -- | 10.5 | -- | 3.5 |
| White | 1.7 | 1.6 | 2.1 | 3.2 | 1.5 | 2.0 |
| High Needs | 3.1 | 2.7 | 2.6 | 5.5 | 2.4 | 4.7 |
| Economically Disadvantaged\* | 3.1 | 2.8 | 2.3 | 5.2 | 2.1 | 5.4 |
| English Learners | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 3.6 |
| Students with Disabilities | 4.3 | 3.1 | 3.8 | 7.8 | 3.5 | 5.7 |

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| **Table 27: Uxbridge Public Schools****Dropout Rates by Student Group, 2015—2018** |
| **Group** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **4-yr Change** | **State (2018)** |
| All | 3.1 | 3.8 | 3.4 | 1.9 | -1.2 | 1.9 |
| African American/Black | -- | 20.0 | 14.3 | 0.0 | -- | 2.9 |
| Asian | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.6 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 5.3 | 18.5 | 28.6 | 12.0 | 6.7 | 4.5 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | -- | 7.7 | 0.0 | 9.1 | -- | 1.9 |
| White | 2.9 | 2.7 | 2.3 | 1.3 | -1.6 | 1.0 |
| High Needs | 5.1 | 9.0 | 5.0 | 4.9 | -0.2 | 3.6 |
| Economically Disadvantaged | 7.1 | 13.3 | 7.4 | 5.2 | -1.9 | 3.6 |
| English Learners | -- | -- | -- | 0.0 | -- | 7.6 |
| Students with Disabilities  | 2.7 | 3.2 | 1.5 | 3.2 | 0.5 | 3.4 |

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| **Table 28: Uxbridge Public Schools****Advanced Coursework Completion by Student Group, 2018–2019** |
| **Group** | **N (2019)** | **2018** | **2019** | **Change** | **Target** |
| All | 280 | 43.7 | 69.3 | 25.6 | 48.0 |
| African American/Black | 5 | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Asian | 6 | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Hispanic or Latino | 17 | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 9 | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| White | 238 | 46.5 | 72.7 | 26.2 | 50.7 |
| High Needs | 81 | 28.9 | 42.0 | 13.1 | 36.2 |
| Economically Disadvantaged | 59 | 35.5 | 37.3 | 1.8 | 42.9 |
| English Learners | 10 | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Students with Disabilities | 25 | -- | -- | -- | -- |

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| **Table 29: Uxbridge Public Schools****Progress toward Attaining English language Proficiency, 2018–2019** |
|  | **Non-high school** | **High school** |
| **Group** | **N (2019)** | **2018** | **2019** | **Change** | **Target** | **N (2019)** | **2018** | **2019** | **Change** | **Target** |
| All | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| EL | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |

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| **Table 30: Uxbridge Public Schools****Chronic Absence\* Rates by Student Group, 2018–2019** |
|  | **Non-high school** | **High school** |
| **Group** | **N (2019)** | **2018** | **2019** | **Change** | **Target** | **N (2019)** | **2018** | **2019** | **Change** | **Target** |
| All | 1,064 | 9.4 | 9.0 | -0.4 | 8.4 | 529 | 15.1 | 18.3 | 3.2 | 13.5 |
| African American/Black | 13 | -- | -- | -- | -- | 11 | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Asian | 14 | -- | -- | -- | -- | 8 | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Hispanic or Latino | 45 | -- | -- | -- | -- | 34 | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 20 | -- | -- | -- | -- | 15 | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| White | 967 | 9.0 | 8.7 | -0.3 | 7.8 | 456 | 15.4 | 19.1 | 3.7 | 13.6 |
| High Needs | 389 | 15.8 | 18.3 | 2.5 | 14.0 | 174 | 30.4 | 28.2 | -2.2 | 27.5 |
| Economically Disadvantaged | 223 | 15.5 | 22.0 | 6.5 | 13.1 | 98 | 30.0 | 27.6 | -2.4 | 25.5 |
| English Learners | 31 | -- | -- | -- | -- | 16 | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Students w/ Disabilities  | 179 | -- | -- | -- | -- | 82 | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| \* Chronic absence is defined as the percentage of students absent 10percent or more of their total number of student days of membership in a school. |

Leadership and Governance

***Contextual Background***

*School Committee Governance*

The five-member Uxbridge school committee focuses its attention on appropriate business as defined by Massachusetts state law. The committee regularly reviews and approves policy, establishes and approves the annual budget, and evaluates the superintendent. While it advocates for the district’s needs in community networks, the committee does not maintain a formal and ongoing relationship with town boards as part of its annual budget process and in the consideration of the district’s capital improvement plan. The committee does not review student performance data and monitor the implementation of the district’s strategic plan regularly.

*District and School Leadership*

The district leaders include the superintendent, the director of curriculum, instruction and accountability (each began service in the 2018­-2019 school year), the director of pupil services, and the school business manager. While the review team gained valuable information from the director of pupil services, the position was vacated at the end of the site visit and an interim replacement arrived the next week. This constitutes a turnover in all district leadership positions except for the business manager in fewer than two years. At the school level, one of the three principals was recently appointed. The principal of Taft Early Learning Center began in the 2019-2020 school year. The principal of the Whitin Intermediate School moved from McCluskey Middle School to Whitin Intermediate as part of the reconfiguration in 2018 and after the principal of the then Whitin Elementary retired.

This district’s level of central office staffing challenges its ability to provide coordination and support for the ambitious improvement initiatives that are underway. The director of curriculum, instruction, and accountability appears to be particularly burdened because she needs to play several roles that are typically fulfilled by other professional staff. Each school is led by a principal and an assistant principal. Teacher leaders support the work of the principals and the director of curriculum, instruction, and accountability. The teacher leaders are full-time teachers.

*District and School Improvement Planning*

Since his hiring in July 2018, the superintendent has worked efficiently to establish a coherent structure and focus for the district. He has guided the development of district and school improvement plans and instituted a comprehensive calendar of administrative meetings to ensure that district and school leaders remain focused on their shared work. The superintendent holds the principals accountable for their work by conducting frequent school visits and providing principals thoughtful and instructive feedback about their performance as part of their formal evaluations. The superintendent has established model evaluative practices through his actionable feedback to principals and monitors to ensure that principals meet evaluation procedures and deadlines as specified by regulation and the collective bargaining agreement. By maintaining a high level of visibility in the schools and frequently communicating with the Uxbridge Teachers’ Association, the superintendent has developed a productive working relationship with teachers.

The district is in the first year of its three-year strategic plan and has developed aligned annual district and school improvement plans. The strategic plan has ambitious goals focused on improving the performance of all students, as specified in the first goal which states, “UPS will design coherent systems to achieve excellence in teaching & learning by ensuring that all students are exposed to a comprehensive curriculum that meets or exceeds content standards and is presented in a manner that maximizes all students’ learning.” Focusing district and school improvement on meeting the needs of all students provides an important opportunity for district and school leaders to consider student equity issues as plans are developed and implemented. However, the district’s planning documents do not have clear, measurable improvement goals that are based on an analysis of historical, longitudinal, and current disaggregated student data. Families and even school staff receive relatively little information about district and school improvement goals and the progress made toward attaining important benchmarks and priorities.

*Budget Development*

The district’s budget development process is clear and transparent. Principals work cooperatively with the superintendent and the business manager to develop budgets that are appropriately focused on district and school goals. The district has established a structured approach to facilities maintenance and improvement. The district has employed a cleaning service to reduce costs and has taken advantage of opportunities to improve building security by replacing doors and installing security cameras. The plant operations manager has been especially aggressive in his attempts to conserve energy and used cost savings to implement a preventive maintenance program and make incremental improvements to facilities. The district has also developed a comprehensive capital improvement plan to address significant issues beyond the scope of its operating budget.

***Strength Findings***

**1. The district’s annual district and school improvement plans and educator plans are aligned with its three-year strategic plan.**

* 1. Interviews and document reviews indicated that the superintendent developed an entry plan to facilitate his transition to the role and initiated a strategic planning process. The process for the entry plan consisted of the three following phases.
		1. *Listening and Learning (June–-December 2018).* In the initial phase, the superintendent familiarized himself with the district’s characteristics and needs by holding meetings with individuals and groups; surveying families to determine the most effective and efficient ways of communicating with them; participating in community tours conducted by key stakeholders; and residing for one week in each school to gain an understanding of its strengths and challenges and to begin to establish connections with the school community.
		2. *Analyzing and Sharing (January–February 2019).* In this phase, the superintendent categorized the information acquired through the listening and learning phase and developed findings and intended next steps in four domains: curriculum, instruction, parent and community relationships, and district resources.
		3. *Planning (March–June 2019).* In the final phase, the findings and next steps in the entry plan were incorporated in the strategic planning process that had been underway since January 2019.
	2. The planning process resulted in a strategic plan intended to guide district improvement during the three-year interval from 2019 to 2022.

1. The process was guided by a facilitator and included input from the administrative council and a 22-member steering committee composed of key stakeholders including administrators, teachers, Uxbridge Teachers’ Association representatives, students, parents, and community members.

 a. The administrative council, which was expanded by the superintendent to include all administrators, met monthly during the school year and for three days in the summer to refine strategic goals, link them with initiatives, and develop strategies to guide organizational growth and improvement.

2. The resulting strategic plan consists of 3 major goals and 10 initiatives together with the proposed years of implementation.

 a. The goals include developing high-quality curriculum and instruction to meet the needs of all students; establishing the conditions necessary to use data effectively to identify and address student needs; and developing a collaborative culture that supports the establishment of effective teams.

1. Under the leadership of the superintendent, the administrative council worked over the summer to create a district improvement plan (DIP) which serves as the annual plan for enacting the strategic plan. The DIP includes intended outcomes, specific actions, necessary resources, responsible staff, and timelines.
	1. Principals are responsible for developing School Improvement Plans (SIPs) that are aligned with the goals of the strategic and district improvement plans and monitoring the ongoing improvement initiatives in their schools.
		1. For example, the team found that the high school SIP goal of establishing a curriculum review cycle for all disciplines was linked to the strategic plan goal of developing a calendar and process for reviewing all content areas/programs and their alignment with new frameworks where applicable.”
		2. The Taft SIP goal that all teachers understand best instructional practices around student engagement was linked to the DIP goal of identifying and implementing research-based instructional practices to maximize student engagement.
	2. The school improvement plans were approved by the school committee in the fall of 2019.
	3. The district has taken steps to create coherence between strategic initiatives and the performance of every professional in the district. This was accomplished by requiring that the superintendent, district and school leaders, and teachers link the goals in their educator plans to district improvement initiatives.

**Impact**: By linking an inclusive needs assessment with a thoughtful planning process that creates coherence among district, school, and educator plans, the district has taken an initial step toward the creation of a culture of accountability that supports improved professional performance and ultimately improved student achievement.

**2. The district has made progress establishing a culture of collaboration, consistent with the strategic plan goal to establish collaborative and effective teams.**

1. In his Entry Plan Report, the superintendent expressed the view that the district was composed of schools separated by practice and intent and operated as a system of schools, rather than as a school system.

Principals reported that they were often in conflict in the past, especially about the allocation of resources.

Teachers reported that the discord over resource allocation was due in part to the varying conditions of the facilities at each level.

1. A culture of collaboration has developed from prioritizing and abiding by the strategic plan.

When asked to specify what unites them as a leadership team, principals responded that grounding their work in the strategic plan has promoted collaboration.

1. Principals stated that the strategic plan provided a common language, reinforced the need for mutual dependence, and promoted consistent practices among the schools.
2. Principals reported that the conflict over resources has diminished because all budget requests were connected to common strategic plan initiatives that are shared across all schools.
3. While some of the ill effects of the merger of faculties in the intermediate school persist, teachers at all levels appear to support the district’s focus and direction and appreciate the superintendent’s high visibility in the schools and his willingness to accept their input.

1. Uxbridge Teachers’ Association representatives expressed the view that the “district has made many improvements and is making great strides.”

2. An elementary teacher told the team that the superintendent solicited teacher input for an action plan for social and emotional learning that the district is developing.

**D.** Parents were enthusiastic about the change in culture, citing the improved quality of communication by the schools and the improved district website as factors that increased their connection to the schools.

**E.** Parents reported that the superintendent has formed a superintendent’s parent council that meets several times yearly to provide information to and seek input from families.

**Impact**: The district has made great strides in establishing a common purpose for its schools and communicating a mission to stakeholders. In doing so, the district has established a strong foundation of trust and collaboration upon which meaningful improvement of educational practice can be built.

***Challenges and Areas for Growth***

**3. School Improvement Plans (SIPs) often contain too many goals and strategic activities and the benchmarks and timelines do not facilitate effective implementation and accountability.**

* 1. The district uses a logical and clear process to align SIPs with the District Improvement Plan (DIP).

1. The DIP consists of 3 goals and 10 strategic initiatives together with action steps.

2. To ensure the alignment of the SIPs with the DIP, school leaders developed school goals correlated with the action steps in the DIP and specified strategies and activities for meeting these goals.

 3. While coherent and logical, this process has resulted in too many SIP goals and strategic activities as shown in the table below.

**Table 31: Uxbridge Public Schools, 2019–2020**

**Number of SIP Improvement Goals and Strategic Activities by School**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **School** | **Improvement Goals** | **Strategic****Activities** |
| Taft Early Learning Center | 18 | 21 |
| Whitin Intermediate School | 15 | 17 |
| Uxbridge High School | 18 | 21 |
| Total | **51** | **59** |

 Source: Uxbridge School Improvement Plans

4. District leaders recognized that SIPs could be overly ambitious and were taking steps to adjust. When asked about potential initiative overload, the superintendent responded that SIP goals should be limited to what could be accomplished by the end of the year.

* 1. SIP benchmarks are not typically expressed in measurable terms.

The measurements used to assess progress toward meeting the benchmarks are often open to interpretation, or difficult to define.

For example, every SIP contains the following means of measuring the extent to which formative assessments will be used to inform instruction: “Use of formative assessments to drive instructional adaptations within the context of a lesson will be consistently observed.”

In one SIP, the measure is vaguely expressed as “…a noticeable increase of lessons connected to standards.”

1. There is no process for incremental and ongoing formative assessment of the progress toward the accomplishment of SIP goals at points during the school year. All SIP goals and activities are assessed via a summative evaluation in June.

**Impact**: To effectively promote district and school-based change, improvement plans must contain attainable goals and measurable benchmarks. When these components are missing, the district struggles to establish the necessary conditions for conducting periodic reviews of the effectiveness of its improvement plans. This will hamper the district’s efforts to create and sustain powerful cycles of continuous improvement of the curriculum, instruction, and student support services, and the significant efforts that the district has made to develop and to align its plans may not result in the intended outcome:­ improved student performance.

**4. The district’s current allocation of resources does not support equitable conditions and participation in after-school activities, including academic support.**

1. The high school does not provide late busses. As a result, students who stay for athletics or other after-school activities must arrange their own transportation home.

 1. Teachers in the high-school focus group expressed the view that this hardship could limit the participation of some students in after-school activities including academic support, especially students identified as economically disadvantaged.

2. The school business manager confirmed that there were no late busses at Uxbridge High School.

1. The high-school grounds encompass a baseball diamond and related athletic facilities. However, there is no softball diamond for a team composed mainly of girls. This requires Uxbridge High School softball players and those from visiting teams to travel to a softball field at Whitin Intermediate School. The district does not provide transportation for the players.
2. The December 2018 NEASC Report of the Visiting Team stated “Some team activities must take place at locations off campus. This results in uneven distribution of field use across athletic teams for both games and practices. The school does not provide transportation to games and practices for some teams, and students must find their own transportation to these events.” Students may use regular school-to-home busses.
3. A teacher in the high-school focus group reported that softball players had to depart the campus to play and make their own travel arrangements.
4. The athletic director reported that the softball team games were played off campus and the players were not provided with transportation by the athletic department.
5. The superintendent said that the district hired a consultant to design a new multi-purpose field that includes a softball diamond. The district is seeking capital funding for the proposed field.

**Impact**: Resource allocation decisions that affect equitable treatment of students interfere with the goal of providing equal access to opportunities and a high-quality school experience for all students.

***Recommendations***

**Building upon the foundation of improvement plan alignment and coherence that has been established, the district should ensure that its planning documents have clear, measurable improvement objectives that are based on an analysis of historical, longitudinal, and current disaggregated student data.**

1. Using the goals articulated in the strategic plan, district and school leaders should develop measurable goals (including progress benchmarks and final outcomes) for district and school 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 Timed and Tracked).

3. Improvement strategies should be broken into sequential steps that are monitored and measured over time.

4. The district should develop a process for using the most recent student data to continually monitor and update district and school improvement plans.

**B.** Principals, in collaboration with school councils, should ensure that each School Improvement Plan includes specific measures, including student performance benchmarks, to determine the progress of school-based initiatives.

 **C.** District and school leaders should provide frequent, timely, and thorough information to the school committee, staff, students, families, and community on progress toward the achievement of plan goals.

**Benefits**: With planning documents with measurable objectives based on an analysis of historical, longitudinal, and current disaggregated student performance, opportunity, and outcome data, the district can ensure that its priorities are based on evidence, and that its improvement plans drive the development, implementation, and modification of educational programs and practices.

**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.
* *Focused Planning for Accelerating Student Learning* (<http://www.mass.gov/edu/docs/ese/accountability/dsac/focused-planning.pdf>) provides guidance for Level 3 districts to accelerate achievement for all students through the development of a focused, actionable and sustainable Accelerated Improvement Plan (AIP).
* *District Accelerated Improvement Planning - Guiding Principles for Effective Benchmarks* (<http://www.mass.gov/edu/docs/ese/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 district should develop procedures that ensure equitable use of district resources.**

**A.** The district should develop a plan to ensure equitable use of high-school athletic fields and facilitate equity under Title IX regulations.

* 1. The district should consider providing late busses in order to provide a ride home for students attending after-school activities, including academic support, clubs, and athletics.
		1. The district should design a late-bus program and add it as an alternate to its next bus bid. Once the costs are known, the district can make an informed decision on how to provide this service.
		2. As part of the late-bus program, the district should investigate whether it can reduce the number of school-to-home busses at dismissal and run them later in the day, after the completion of The Taft Early Learning Center routes. Although a study is needed, it is possible that the number of students riding busses at dismissal is significantly fewer than the morning ridership because of after-school activities.

**Benefits**: Implementing this recommendation will eliminate inequitable use of district resources. Girls will have equal opportunities to participate in athletic activities on high-school grounds. All students will be provided a ride home if they stay for after-school activities.

Curriculum and Instruction

***Contextual Background***

*Curriculum Selection and Use*

The curriculum leadership structure now includes curriculum and instruction teacher leaders in preschool, and English language arts (ELA)/social studies and math/science at each grade level K through 5. There is also a kindergarten through grade 5 math coordinator, two 0.5 K-3 literacy coaches, and one 0.5 grades 4-7 literacy coach. Teacher leaders in each core content area serve in grades 6 and 7 combined and in grades 8 through 12 combined. Curriculum and instruction teacher leaders are full-time teachers. There are also districtwide leaders who focus on special education, English learners, health/wellness, technology/library/media, art, music, guidance, and world languages.

Curriculum and instruction teacher leaders, under the direction of the director of curriculum, instruction, and accountability, are responsible for facilitating the articulation, delivery, and monitoring of grade-level, standards-aligned curriculum in their assigned domain(s). Curriculum and instruction teacher leaders meet monthly with the director of curriculum, instruction, and accountability. At these meetings, they review and finalize the agenda for the district’s vertical curriculum meetings and prepare to facilitate the vertical curriculum meetings. In addition, the preschool through grade 7 teacher leader cohorts meet regularly at their schools and twice weekly with their grade-level/subject-area teachers during common planning time (CPT).

Curriculum and instruction teacher leaders, under the direction of the director of curriculum, instruction, and accountability, are responsible for the articulation, delivery, and monitoring of grade-level, standards-aligned curriculum in their assigned domain(s). Curriculum and instruction teacher leaders meet monthly with the director of curriculum, instruction, and accountability. At these meetings, they review and finalize the agenda for the district’s Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) meetings and prepare to facilitate the ILT meetings at their schools. In addition, the kindergarten through grade 7 teacher leader cohorts meet regularly at their schools and twice weekly with their grade-level/subject-area teachers during common planning time (CPT).

At Uxbridge High School, curriculum and instruction teacher leaders meet with their departments during professional learning community time (PLCs) two or three times during a seven-day cycle. At these meetings, they review and discuss priority standards, instructional strategies, curricular materials and resources, and best practices. A side-bar agreement made with the Uxbridge Teachers’ Association permits scheduling of the high-school PLCs for the 2019–2020 school year. The district’s commitment of time has enabled teachers and leaders to collaborate regularly on teaching and learning topics.

The district’s school improvement plan and professional development plan call for the creation of a calendar and process for curriculum adoption, review, and revision. Uxbridge High School has made some progress on this. The Taft Early Education Center and Whitin Intermediate School have begun to identify priority standards in the core content areas and to develop a curriculum review cycle.

Interviews and a document review indicated that the degree of alignment with the current Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks varied for each subject area and grade. For example, alignment is strong in grades 8 through 12 social studies and a work in progress in kindergarten through grade 7 social studies. Sample curriculum maps and units show alignment for grades 4 through 12 in ELA and grades 4 through 7 in mathematics. Curriculum alignment in ELA for kindergarten through grade 3, in math for kindergarten through grade 3 and in grades 8-10, and in science for kindergarten through grade 12 is still a work in progress. An area in need of serious attention is grade 8 mathematics, which is not aligned to the framework. Teachers and curriculum leaders acknowledged the need for more alignment and said that they had dedicated meeting time to identify priority standards for all content areas and review alignment of curricula with the current frameworks.

Curriculum programs at the Taft Early Learning Center and Whitin Intermediate School include Fountas and Pinnell’s *Readers Workshop* for kindergarten through grade 7, the *Lucy Calkin’s Writers Workshop* for kindergarten through grade 5 and *Fundations* for kindergarten through grade 4. Foss science kits are taught consistently in grades 6 through 8. Grades 2 and 3 study only a few of the units and grades 4 and 5 use *Mystery Science.* The math curriculum includes *Math in Focus* for kindergarten through grade 7 and *ST Math*, a supplemental visual online program, is used in grades 2 through 6.

During the 2018-2019 school year, Uxbridge participated in a Tiered Focused Monitoring Review conducted by the Department’s Office of Language Acquisition (OLA). The purpose of the Tiered Focused Monitoring Review is to monitor compliance with regulatory requirements focusing on English Learner Education. Page 7 of the June 2019 Uxbridge Tiered Focused Monitoring Report states: “*Interviews and a review of documentation indicate that the district does not have an ESL [English as a Second Language] curriculum. ESL teachers use reading and literacy programs to provide ESL instruction to ELs [English learners]. Reading and literacy programs and materials help students improve their reading skills and can be used as resources; however, they cannot replace an ESL curriculum or ESL curricular materials that are integral to an effective ELE program in which ELs of all grades and proficiency levels become English proficient at a rapid pace. Documentation submitted indicated that the district planned to develop curriculum.”*

Curriculum and instruction teacher leaders at the Taft Early Learning Center and the Whitin Intermediate School reported that they intended to develop a formal teacher-centered curriculum adoption process. Teachers stated that in the past they did not have input on curriculum decisions; they were given a curriculum and told to teach it with fidelity. A new curriculum and instruction leadership model that promotes collaboration and teacher involvement is gradually evolving. Teachers are visiting other districts to be better informed to make decisions on the purchase of curriculum resources, providing input on science and math curricula, and attending training on the integration of ELA/social studies at the intermediate level.

*Student Access to Coursework*

The Uxbridge High School program of studies describes a wide variety of courses for students in grades 8 through 12. These include AP classes and many challenging courses aligned with the school’s Innovation Pathway programs. In May 2018, DESE designated Uxbridge Public Schools as a Pathways district and provided a $28,315 grant to implement an advanced manufacturing program, including Project Lead the Way (PLTW) engineering courses. In 2019–2020, the state awarded the district $45,750 to support two additional pathway programs in biomedical science and digital media. Partnerships with The Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce and Quinsigamond Community College support these innovation programs. All students can enroll in courses such as AP and Project Lead the Way.

*Classroom Instruction*

The team observed 77 classrooms throughout the district. Two of the strength areas included classroom management and a classroom climate conducive to learning at Uxbridge High School and at the Taft Early Learning Center. In addition, most students observed at Uxbridge High School were engaged in and took responsibility for their learning and teachers clearly explained their lessons’ purpose and objectives.

Although many programs and initiatives have been implemented, there is still much work to be done to ensure consistent implementation of high-quality teaching practices throughout the district. The team observed uneven instruction districtwide when recording how well all students engaged in learning activities that required critical thinking, collaboration, problem-solving, and reflected real-world tasks. Observers also noted needed improvement in teachers using a variety of teaching strategies attuned to students diverse learning needs as well as multiple checks for understanding.

***Strength Findings***

**1. The district has made a commitment to strengthen its capacity to provide a standards-based curriculum aligned with the Massachusetts frameworks.**

**A.** In 2018–2019, the newly hired director of curriculum, instruction, and accountability strategically reorganized district curriculum and instruction teacher leadership roles and initiated several promising practices intended to coordinate and support improvement efforts in curriculum and instruction with greater consistency.

1. Interviews and a document review indicated that the district’s curriculum and instruction teacher leader structure included 28 teachers responsible for the articulation, delivery, and monitoring of a grade-level standards-aligned curriculum in their domain(s). Each teacher leader serves as a liaison between grade level or content-area teachers and district and school leaders.
2. In kindergarten through grade 7, grade-level curriculum and instruction teacher leaders in math/science are working with the director of curriculum, instruction, and accountability to research science and math curricula, and ELA/social studies curriculum and instruction leaders are providing continued training in the Workshop Model. All 16 curriculum and instructional leaders are working to identify priority standards and to develop a curriculum review cycle.

 3. Interviews and a document review indicated that ELA, math, science, and social studies curriculum and instruction teacher leaders at Uxbridge High School met with the director of curriculum, instruction, and accountability and school administrators to develop a curriculum review plan, review the plan to implement Project Lead the Way in kindergarten through grade 3, and determine teaching methods appropriate to the backward design approach to writing curriculum.

 4. Curriculum and instruction teacher leaders collaborate with the director of curriculum, instruction, and accountability and with principals to align their curricular domain(s) vertically. A teacher emphasized that this was the first time in 15 years that the math curriculum has been reviewed for vertical alignment. They are also reviewing and revising the health/wellness and fine arts curricula and the guidance program MyCap (My Career and Academic Plan) which is currently being piloted at the Whitin Intermediate School.

 5. Curriculum and instruction teacher leaders reported that the district’s 2017–2020 Literacy Plan led to the adoption and implementation of the *Readers Workshop* curriculum for kindergarten through grade 7 and included leveled guided reading books and the Fountas and Pinnell Balanced Assessment System(BAS).

**Impact**: Well defined roles, coupled with inclusive structures and processes to support curricular improvements, help ensure that all students have access to a comprehensive curriculum and high-quality instruction and provide teachers with a clearer sense of content and instructional expectations.

**2. In most classrooms at the Taft Early Learning Center and Uxbridge High School, the review team observed positive student behaviors and classrooms conducive to learning. In addition, observers found notable instructional strengths at the high school where students assumed responsibility for their learning and teachers clearly explained lesson objectives and purpose.**

1. The team found sufficient and compelling evidence that classroom routines and positive supports were in place to ensure appropriate behavior in 77 percent of observed classes at the Taft Early Learning Center and in 85 percent of classes observed at Uxbridge High School (characteristic #11).

1. At the Taft Early Learning Center, effective management techniques included previews of instruction, a variety of transition strategies, and countdowns to re-focus students’ attention.

2. Uxbridge High School classroom management examples recorded by team members included engaging “hooks” in introducing lessons, teacher explanations of the “why” of the lesson, and posted or articulated class expectations or rules.

**B.** Observers saw sufficient and compelling evidence that classroom climate was conducive to teaching and learning in 77 percent of observed classes at the Taft Early Learning Center and in 81 percent of the observed classes at Uxbridge High School (characteristic #12).

1. Team members observed strong evidence of reciprocal respect on the part of students and teachers. Classrooms reflected an all-inclusive atmosphere where students were comfortable participating.

**C.** In 75 percent of observed high-school classes, observers noted sufficient and compelling evidence that students assumed responsibility to learn and were engaged in the lesson (characteristic #5).

1. For example, in an English class where students were preparing to take a quarterly exam, students were editing other students’ essays using a common writing rubric and conferencing with peers about their writing.

**Impact:** When teachers provide classroom routines/responses and behavioral expectations, create a classroom climate that supports warm and respectful relationships, and provide students with opportunities to assume responsibility for their learning, teaching and learning are maximized and some essential elements for learning are in place for students.

***Challenges and Areas for Growth***

**3. Observers found inconsistent quality across all schools and grade levels in instructional practices that reflected elements of effective instructional design, including clearly articulated learning objectives and classroom activities that were aligned with learning objectives.**

**A.** Although purposefully planned lessons are considered an instructional priority in the district, the review team found sufficient and compelling evidence of well-designed lessons aligned with learning objectives and success criteria in 53 percent of observed Taft Early Learning Center classes, in 46 percent of observed Whitin Intermediate School classes, and in 68 percent of observed high-school classes (characteristic #2).

1. Teachers who taught lessons aligned with learning objectives and success criteria shared them verbally at the beginning of class and/or posted them. When asked what they were learning, students in these classes were able to articulate the purpose of the learning activity and place it in a larger context (e.g. “I am researching the Iran issue.” “I’m creating a video to illustrate the current and past issues between the U. S. and Iran.).

2. In other classrooms, teachers may have posted learning targets but did not refer to them during instruction. Students often worked individually on a Chromebook or worksheet and explained the directions written on the sheet, or pointed to questions or writing on a Chromebook, when asked what they were learning.

**B**. The team found sufficient and compelling evidence of the use of appropriate classroom activities well matched to the learning objectives in 65 percent of observed classes at Taft Early Learning Center, in 50 percent of observed classes at Whitin Intermediate School, and in 59 percent of observed classes at Uxbridge High School (characteristic #3).

1. In an example of effective use of appropriate classroom activities, students in a grade 8 ELA class about the usefulness of peer editing were provided a rubric and examples of how to edit, participated in a discussion about the rubric, and practiced editing an essay.

2. In contrast, in a high-school science class, students were instructed to work on their Chromebooks to answer questions about momentum. Six students complied, while seven were on their phones looking for the lesson link and four continued a conversation in the back of the room. The teacher remained at the front of the room and told students when they completed their work to get their workbooks and continue where they left off.

**Impact:** When learning objectives are not clearly explained and teaching strategies are not aligned with the objectives in both content and cognitive level, students may be unaware of or confused about the purpose of the lesson and ill-prepared to build key knowledge and skills.

**4**. **At all grade levels, observers noted that lesson designs did not consistently provide opportunities for students to communicate their ideas with one another, engage in higher-order thinking, and connect what they were learning to the real world.**

**A.** Observers found sufficient and compelling evidence of students engaged in and responsible for their learning in 59 percent of observed classes at the Taft Early Learning Center, in 46 percent of observed classes at the Whitin Intermediate School, and in 75 percent of observed classes at Uxbridge High School (characteristic #5).

1. A strong high-school level example observed was a three-part performance assessment in a foreign language class where students communicated their ideas and thinking with one another in Spanish. Students took on the roles of interpreters and presenters.

2. Less effective examples of student engagement were observed in classes at all levels where students were busy doing a worksheet or sitting at activity centers working on coloring the countries on a map.

**B.** The review team found sufficient and compelling evidence of students engaged in tasks requiring the use and application of critical thinking in 47 percent of observed classes at the Taft Early Learning Center, in 54 percent of observed classes at Whitin Intermediate School, and in 60 percent of observed classes at Uxbridge High School (characteristic #6).

1. An example of learning activities that require higher-order thinking took place in an elementary level class where students predicted what would happen next in a story and made predictions about the story based on illustrations.

2. Less rigorous thinking tasks observed at all levels included questions requiring yes or no answers, questions asked and answered by the teacher, fill-in-the-blank worksheets, and simple games associated with the material.

**C.** Observers found sufficient and compelling evidence that students were engaged in meaningful real-world tasks in 35 percent of observed classes at the Taft Early Learning Center, in 40 percent of observed classes at Whitin Intermediate School, and in 53 percent of observed classes at Uxbridge High School (characteristic #8).

 1. In a strong example of students engaged in meaningful real-world tasks, high-school students in a language class listened to a video of the daily routine of a native speaker from morning to night. Then each student wrote and narrated his/her own daily routine video.

2. In an example of less effective instruction, an observer at the high-school level noted that the teacher solved all of the problems and did not explain how the formulas she was using could be applied to tasks in the real world. Students merely reviewed the formulas in preparation for a test.

**Impact:** When students are not communicating their ideas and engaging in higher-order thinking, their ability to benefit from sharing knowledge and to achieve at higher levels is compromised. In addition, when students are not provided opportunities to connect their learning to the world in which they live, they miss the opportunity to understand the relevance of instruction, which can inhibit their engagement in learning and retention of information.

**5. In observed classes, students were not sufficiently engaged in challenging tasks regardless of learning needs and instructional strategies were not sufficiently varied to address students’ diverse learning styles and needs.**

**A.** The team found sufficient and compelling evidence of students engaged in challenging tasks regardless of their learning needs in 59 percent of observed classes at the Taft Early Learning Center, in 61 percent of observed classes at Whitin Intermediate School, and in 63 percent of observed classes at Uxbridge High School (characteristic #9).

1**.** In a challenging intermediate-level ELA lesson, as the teacher read, she listed words that were science terms and modeled “stop and jot.” While students worked in pairs, she had them discuss why it is important to have “domain specific vocabulary” in writing and, specifically, in the role and responsibilities of a researcher.

2**.** In contrast, an observer noted in a high-school level class that all students were filling out the same worksheet. At the intermediate level a “one size fits all worksheet” was provided for all students and a paraprofessional was observed watching the class, without providing differentiation or individualized support.

**B.** The review team found sufficient and compelling evidence that teachers used a variety of instructional strategies in 53 percent of observed classes at the Taft Early Learning Center, in 32 percent of the classes observed at Whitin Intermediate School, and in 47 percent of the classes observed at Uxbridge High School (characteristic #10).

1. In an example of a range of instructional strategies, students in a grade 6 science class worked independently and in pairs to classify cells that they saw under a microscope, discuss their findings with each other, and report to the large group.

2.However,in many classes across the district the majority of instruction was teacher led, such as writing information on the white board and asking for student input. Students were observed filling out worksheets (occasionally with a peer) and answering questions or taking a quiz on their Chromebook. There was little student-to-student collaboration focused on problem solving, application of knowledge, and the creation of new knowledge based on what students had learned or understood.

**Impact**: Without consistent delivery of effective evidence-based instruction that meets the diverse needs of all students, the district cannot optimize students’ opportunities to learn, stretch their thinking, and prepare them for college and careers.

**6. The district’s curricula are not fully aligned with the current Massachusetts curriculum frameworks, making state standards an inconsistent feature of lesson design. Educators are also in the early stages of understanding and implementing the curriculum’s organizational structure, the Understanding by Design (UbD) framework.**

**A**. Document reviews and interviews indicated that the curriculum was in various degrees of alignment with the Massachusetts frameworks, except for grade 8 math, which is not aligned.

1. Curriculum leaders reported that teachers infrequently referred to standards. Curriculum leaders stated, “For ELA, they follow the curriculum as it’s based on standards, but they aren’t versed in the actual standards” and “Teachers really do not look at standards, now they are being forced to do so.”

2. Curriculum leaders said that all curriculum needed to be reviewed for alignment, especially math and science.

**B**. The documentation on Google Docs of curriculum using the newly designed UbD mapping template, as referenced in the first goal of the district’s strategic plan, remains a work in progress.

1. There is an absence of clarity around the district’s curriculum mapping initiative. School leaders agreed that teachers did not understand the UbD framework. Teachers said that they have done mapping before and did not understand why they must do it again. They confirmed the administrator’s comments that they did not know what UbD was.

2. Review team members were told that high-school curriculum and instruction teacher leaders would be the first to review the UbD framework and learn to use, copy, and edit the template. They, in turn, will be responsible for teacher training. Pre-K through grade 7 teacher leaders will work with the director of curriculum, instruction and accountability to revise the UbD template for their grade levels and content areas.

**C**. The district’s school improvement plans and professional development plan specify that beginning in the fall of 2019 each department is responsible for developing a calendar and process for reviewing and revising the curriculum, focusing on its alignment with Massachusetts framework.

1. Teachers, administrators, and curriculum leaders agreed that a calendar and process has not been completed in grades pre-kindergarten through grade 7. However, progress has been made on this goal at the grades 8 through12 level.

2. School leaders and curriculum and instruction teacher leaders reported that at the Taft Early Learning Center and Whitin Intermediate School teacher leaders have been providing support for the Workshop Model, researching science curriculum (*3 dimensional curriculum*, *Open Science Ed*), looking at the content of *Math in Focus*, and assisting teachers as they begin to identify priority content standards. The curriculum review and revision process is being developed at the district level.

**Impact**: Without a systematic process to document, monitor, and adopt curriculum and teaching resources, teachers are not well informed about content standards and how they should inform instruction. Consequently, students are less likely to have access to a high-quality comprehensive curriculum and meaningful learning experiences that meet the rigorous requirements of the state’s curriculum frameworks.

**Recommendations**

**1. 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 key instructional practices.

The district can use DESE’s educator evaluation rubric and its instructional inventory tool to support this work.

The recommended product of these meetings is a set of expectations that challenges and engages all students.

The district should prioritize these instructional practices as its “non-negotiables.”

1. Once the set of expectations has been defined, district leaders should develop a plan to communicate these expectations with staff.

The district is encouraged to provide opportunities for educators to discuss ideas and strategies from the set of instructional expectations. These opportunities might include common planning time, professional learning communities, faculty meetings, and professional development days.

 2. The district should develop structures to support peer observation to both model instructional feedback and encourage peer feedback.

Equitable opportunities should be provided by level for teachers to share best practices.

**C.** Teachers should receive appropriate guidance and feedback as they implement the district’s instructional expectations.

 1. Professional development should focus on elements of the instructional expectations as applied to the specific curricula that teachers and students work with every day.

2. Principals and other instructional leaders should ensure that all teachers have the information and support necessary to meet the district’s expectations for high-quality instruction.

3. The district should continue to provide teachers with high-quality feedback[[7]](#footnote-7) that helps them to improve their instruction.

**Benefits:** Implementing this recommendation will result in clearly articulated expectations for teachers and administrators for best instructional practices. A district that provides high-quality instruction for all students, while ensuring ongoing professional support for teachers and administrators, creates and sustains a culture of continuous improvements, resulting in professional growth and increased student achievement.

 **Recommended resources:**

* Appendix 4, *Characteristics of Standards-Based Teaching and Learning: Continuum of Practice* (<http://www.mass.gov/edu/docs/ese/accountability/dart/walkthrough/continuum-practice.pdf>) is a framework that provides a common language or reference point for looking at teaching and learning.
* DESE’s *OPTIC: Online Platform for Teaching and Informed Calibration* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/calibration/>) is a professional development tool supporting Massachusetts educators to refine a shared understanding of effective, standards-aligned instructional practice and high quality feedback.
* DESE’s *Calibration Video Library & Protocols* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/calibration/>) is a collection of professionally created videos of classroom instruction produced by the School Improvement Network, along with sample training protocols and activities. These videos 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.
* CURATE (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/curate/>) convenes panels of Massachusetts teachers to review and rate evidence on the quality and alignment of specific curricular materials, then publish their findings for educators across the Commonwealth to consult.
* EdReports (<https://edreports.org/>) provides reviews of K-12 instructional materials.
* DESE’s *"What to Look For" Observation Guides*  ( http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/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 used but are a resource to help classroom observers efficiently identify what teachers and students should be experiencing in specific subjects and grade levels.

**2. The district should ensure that all teachers have access to high-quality, comprehensive, standards-based, and horizontally and vertically aligned curricula and the support they need to implement the curricula effectively. The district should develop and implement an ongoing process for the review and revision of curriculum and the adoption of new academic programs.**

**A.** The district should develop a process for the regular review and revision of curriculum.

**B.** Alignment of the K-3 ELA, K-3 and grades 8-10 mathematics, K-12 science, and K-7 social studies curricula with the Massachusetts frameworks and development of an ESL curriculum should be a district priority.

 **C.** The district should provide professional development on the Understanding by Design (UbD) framework and planning process to guide curriculum design and instruction.

1. Curriculum and instruction teacher leaders should receive training on the use, implementation, and transition of the UbD curriculum mapping template to the Google Docs platform.

 **D.** The district should develop a consistent protocol for the adoption of new academic programs and resources.

**Benefits:** Aligning all curriculum with the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks and developing a systematic process for its ongoing review and revision will improve the district’s ability to provide high-quality, challenging, and relevant learning experiences for all students. Improvements to the current practice of adopting new curriculum will ensure that all students have access to a rigorous curriculum that can address their diverse leaning needs.

**Recommended resources:**

* + - DESE’s Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks web page [(http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/)](http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/) provides information about the 2017 ELA/Literacy and Mathematics Frameworks, including grade-by-grade comparisons between the 2010 and 2017 Frameworks and a slide deck supporting implementation of the 2017 Frameworks.
* *Quick Reference Guide: Establishing an Effective Science and Technology/Engineering (STE) Program* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/stem/ste/STEprogram.docx>): DESE has identified five components districts should attend to when designing a rigorous, coherent and relevant pre-K-12 STE education program. Educators, administrators and curriculum designers can refer to this guide for brief descriptions and resources for each component.
	+ - *Mathematics Framework Exploration Activities* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/>) are a growing set of activities designed by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education mathematics staff and educators. The activities can be accessed and used to promote discussion and collaborative inquiry.
		- The Massachusetts Science and Technology/Engineering Curriculum Framework web page (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/stem/ste/?section=planning>) provides links to the current frameworks and supporting documents, including updated strand maps, crosswalks, and other guidance materials.

Assessment

***Contextual Background***

*Data Collection System*

The district’s assessment system includes sets of formative, common benchmark, and summative assessments in the core content areas of ELA and math in kindergarten through grade 7. The key ELA assessments in kindergarten through grade7 include the Fountas and Pinnell Balanced Assessment System (BAS) and STAR Reading assessments to measure student achievement and progress in Readers Workshop. STAR Math assessments are used to measure student achievement and progress in the Math in Focus program. Grades 4 and 5 students also take pre-tests and post-tests for Math in Focus.

The district recently instituted Lucy Calkins Writing Benchmarks to assess written language skills in grades 1 through 5, and common writing prompts are administered in grades 6 and 7. A common writing rubric is used in all content areas in grades 8 through 12, as well as optional writing rubrics aligned with specific assignments across the curriculum, such as science labs and document-based questions in history and social studies.

In addition to the common teacher-developed end-of-unit assessments at Uxbridge High School, teachers administer common quarterly tests and final exams for like courses. The comprehensiveness of the assessment system is also indicated by the formative and summative assessments and rubrics used in grades 9 through 12 in world languages, visual arts and music, health and wellness/stress management, physical education, and family and consumer science. Once all educators have sufficient expertise, these assessments can be used to inform teachers, families, and students about student achievement and progress and guide curricular and instructional decision-making.

*Data Use*

The collection and usage of data and other information to improve teaching and learning is emphasized in the second of the district’s three strategic goals. The District Improvement Plan (DIP) includes action steps aligned with this goal, and each School Improvement Plan (SIP) identifies strategies and activities to improve and increase the collection and use of data. The district is in the early stages of fulfilling the promise of these goals and action steps.

The new director of curriculum, instruction, and accountability is developing a data dashboard with the assistance of a consultant. She has also introduced curriculum and instruction teacher leaders to a new collaborative data inquiry protocol and plans to share it with teachers once the leaders have a solid understanding of it. However, teachers have not recently participated in meaningful professional development on the use of data, and in some cases, data does not guide thinking and judgments about how to improve student performance. Incremental progress has been made, especially with the recent implementation of the What I Need (WIN) Block at the Whitin Intermediate School, initiated in December 2019. Student performance data is used to assign students to this twice weekly intervention period. At Uxbridge High School, data is used to drive decisions about instruction and curriculum and to guide programming in both the academic and elective subjects.

*Sharing Results*

Under the district’s new superintendent, communication and collaboration are important values. Consequently, the district shares information about student performance, district issues, and district events with families and students. The district intends to extend standards-based and proficiency-based assessment to the upper grades, and the Uxbridge High School Spanish department is already using these assessments. A new standards-based kindergarten through grade 5 report card informs students and their families about student progress in meeting and mastering grade-level standards. Yet, teachers at the Taft Early Education Center do not routinely share students’ reading levels with students and their families.

All three schools post weekly school newsletters on their websites. These newsletters highlight activities and special programs and contain helpful hints. For example, the Taft Early Learning Center newsletters offer suggestions intended to help families support students’ engagement and efforts in school.

**Strength Findings**

**1. Guided by the new strategic plan and aligned district and school improvement plans, the district is in the early stages of establishing practices that can strengthen the usage of data to promote improvement.**

**A.** Goal 2 of the district’s strategic plan sets forth a broad vision to establish data-based systems and practices and the required infrastructure to address the academic and social-emotional needs of all students.

1. An administrator told the team that the district has analyzed current infrastructure and worked with a consultant to design a data dashboard for school and district use that is now in draft form. The work is ongoing, and the dashboard and a much-needed technology integration specialist position is planned for inclusion in the fiscal year 2020–2021 budget.

2. Curriculum and instruction leaders and teachers at all three schools cited the need for a centralized data dashboard that facilitates access to all student academic and behavioral data.

**B.** The district has created a collaborative structure that can support teachers’ regular use of data to inform decision-making.

1. Teachers at the Taft Early Learning Center and Whitin Intermediate School now have weekly common planning time (CPT) that can be used for the analysis and use of data for decision making and other collaborative work.

2. Uxbridge High School teachers work in professional learning communities (PLCs) that meet once in a seven-day cycle by department and once or twice in a seven-day cycle for teachers of like-courses.

**C.** The district has recognized the importance of identifying a collaborative data inquiry process that all district teams can abide by when analyzing data.

* + 1. Leaders and teachers frequently stated the need for a standard data inquiry protocol for all to use.
		2. The director of curriculum, instruction, and accountability is providing ongoing professional development for all curriculum and instruction leaders to facilitate the implementation of a new data inquiry protocol.
			1. District and curriculum and instruction leaders will soon introduce and support teachers in using the new protocol for analyzing data during CPTs and PLCs.
			2. The team reviewed sample data recording sheets from the new protocol that were completed in training sessions.

**D.** The use of achievement data and other information is emerging in pockets in kindergarten through grade 7. Interviewees identified how teachers and leaders are beginning to use data for improvement during CPT. However, they expressed the view that further support was needed to make these practices more consistent and effective for the improvement of teaching and learning.

* + - 1. Interviewees said that the Fountas and Pinnell Balanced Assessment System (BAS) provided teachers with useful data for grouping students for instruction and selecting interventions.
			2. Reading specialists use BAS data and Fundations assessments to plan small group leveled literacy interventions intended to improve reading comprehension and to track students’ progress.
			3. The math coach reviews ST Math data twice weekly to help teachers support students in meeting ST Math goals and reviews STAR data to help guide conversations with teachers and address schoolwide measures, such as Math Mondays at the Taft Early Learning Center.

**E.** The district has developed and now uses common writing rubrics to assess student writing districtwide. Writing assessment is a developing practice in kindergarten through grade 7.

1. In Grades 8 through 12, teachers use common rubrics to assess writing across the curriculum, and there are other writing rubrics in use depending on the assignment.

2. Kindergarten through grade 7 teachers are beginning to use rubrics and benchmarks to assess writing and will continue to participate in professional development to strengthen their use of Lucy Calkins Writing Workshop, which is new to the district.

**F.** With the support of district leaders, school leaders in kindergarten through grade 7 have established appropriate goals in their school improvement plans to develop data-driven protocols that Student Support Teams (SSTs) will use to refer students for tiered academic and social-emotional and behavioral interventions. However, these procedures are in the early stages of implementation.

1. The SST protocols at the Taft Early Learning Center and Whitin Intermediate School are similar. Teachers said that the referral process was more consistent, and they now had a range of interventions to use, adding that these procedures needed further refinement.

2. The Whitin Intermediate School recently established a WIN (What I Need) Block to provide tiered support for students. This is a developing practice.

**Impact**: As educators become more informed and experienced in the use of data to guide decision-making for instructional planning and interventions, instruction is more likely to address the varied learning and social-emotional needs of individual students and student groups.

**2. The district has made progress in collecting, examining, and using student academic data and student well-being indicators to modify the curriculum, instructional practices, and guidance services at Uxbridge High School.**

**A.** When asked to describe their usage of data, high-school leaders and teachers told the team that they analyzed the results of teacher-developed common assessments in all content areas and formative and summative assessments, including the MCAS tests. Data analysis takes place during PLCs and faculty meetings.

1. Interviews and a review of the NEASC 2018 Accreditation Report indicated that department teams reviewed assessment data and discussed strengths, challenges, and improvement strategies in PLCs.

2. The PLC logs reviewed by the team documented how frequently PLCs addressed data analysis, looked at student work, and discussed instructional strategies. PLCs submit their logs to the principal. In 2019-2020, PLCs must also indicate the district goal that they addressed such as “purposeful use of data.”

**B.** High-school teachers have begun to disaggregate data to address the learning and behavioral needs of individual students and groups.

1. Teachers review behavioral data at full faculty meetings and discuss gaps in opportunity and achievement. They also look at the performance of the school’s high needs students as compared with the entire student population to identify differences to address.

2. Interviewees told the team that teachers disaggregated assessment data to guide the development of improvement strategies. For example, ELA teachers use MCAS test results to identify and improve strategies for helping students to synthesize information.

3. When asked about equitable access to higher-level courses and opportunities to learn for all students, teachers in a focus group reported that an analysis of student group data showed that few students with disabilities were enrolled in AP and honors courses.

**C.** High-school guidance staff analyze student academic and behavioral data to inform decisions about programs and services and record the reasons students come to the guidance office for support to help to identify and categorize students’ needs.

**Impact:** By developing multiple systems and practices for the analysis of academic, social-emotional, and behavioral data to guide decision-making, high school teachers and leaders can improve the strategies they choose and use to improve student performance and well-being. The promising practices in use at the high-school level can serve as a pilot for the district and provide an opportunity for adaptation and adoption at other levels.

**Challenges and Areas for Growth**

**3. Data-inquiry systems, data analysis expertise, and a data literate culture are not firmly rooted districtwide.**

**A.** Interviews and a document review indicated that the district’s assessment system was balanced, comprehensive, and offered multiple forms of data that leaders and teachers could use to drive improvement planning for curriculum, instruction, and student support.

**B.** However, the current data platform does not provide easy access to all student data and the district is in the process of developing a new data dashboard to collect, analyze, and share data.

1. District and teacher leaders reported that individual student data profiles could not be accessed at one location. In addition, Access to SAT and PSAT data is difficult at the high school.

2. When asked if data on attendance, suspension, and graduation rates could be easily accessed, teacher leaders and specialists at the Taft Early Education Center and Whitin Intermediate School replied that they did not have any idea of how or where to locate this information.

3. The district does not have an experienced technology integration specialist who could manage and analyze the district’s data, create in-depth reports for leaders and teachers, and support teachers in the applications and use of technology for instruction.

* 1. Data inquiry protocols and procedures are inconsistent throughout the district.

Kindergarten through grade 7 leaders and teachers reported that they did not use a data inquiry protocol, although teachers at one grade level told the team that they had an “awesome structure” because their team had been together for a long time.

Some high-school teachers told the team that they used a protocol the principal had shared with them, while others described the use of protocols as the “flavor of the month.”

One teacher told the team that PLCs had opportunities to provide reflective feedback in “organic conversations” about what went well and what did not go well by looking at assessment data and student work.

In another interview, the team was told that the principal had shared multiple protocols with teachers, including a “success analysis protocol” derived from the School Reform Initiative (SRI) to analyze student work.

**D.** Kindergarten through grade 7 teachers do not routinely disaggregate data to learn more about the achievement, social-emotional, and behavioral needs of individual students and to close the achievement gap for marginalized student groups.

1. Kindergarten through grade 7 teacher leaders reported that while special educators routinely reviewed data on students with disabilities and students who receive Title I services, disaggregated data on other student groups was not customarily reviewed.
2. In another focus group, teachers reported that although the principal was working on this area, usage of disaggregated student data was still a work in progress. Teachers did not express a clear understanding of the disaggregation of data.
3. English learner (EL) specialists reported that they reviewed ACCESS for ELLs,[[8]](#footnote-8) [[9]](#footnote-9) MCAS, and grade-level assessment results and reached out to general education teachers “in an organic way.” However, educators who work with ELs in general education classrooms, but are not EL specialists, stated that there was much work to do to use EL data well.”

4. When asked about equitable access to higher level courses by traditionally underserved student groups, administrators stated that there were no barriers and all students could enroll in courses such as Advanced Placement (AP); Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics (STEAM); [[10]](#footnote-10)and Project Lead the Way. However, an administrator added that the enrollments of student groups in higher level courses were not tracked well.

It was not clear to the team that the district offered sufficient support for students enrolled in higher level courses.

a. Teachers stated that although they modified the curriculum, traditionally underserved students needed additional support to succeed.

b. Other interviewees expressed the view that the performance expectations for all student groups should be uniformly high, and the current disparity in performance resulted from the low performance expectations for certain student groups in the earlier grades.

**E.** District educators have had limited professional development (PD) on data analysis and usage in recent years.

The team noticed postings about PD on data-driven practices and strategies including differentiation, inclusive practices, support for ELs, classroom social-emotional learning practices, and effective co-teaching in a meeting room.

When asked, district leaders said that these posters described topics that were addressed in the trainings conducted in the second year of the two-year mentoring program. They added that while some veteran teachers attended these trainings 5 or 10 years ago, there was a need to revisit them for all teachers.

District leaders reported that a data training session was scheduled for April 2020. They added that training on data analysis and usage was a high priority and more training would be provided.

Teachers from the Taft Early Learning Center reported that they had been trained to use *Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessments*. Whitin Intermediate School teachers stated that they were not confident about using data and did not spend a lot of time looking at it.

* 1. School committee members reported that they did not routinely review student performance data to guide their decision-making.

**Impact**: Closing opportunity and achievement and gaps for all students, particularly those who have been traditionally underserved, cannot take place unless leaders and teachers are fully informed about the strengths and needs of individual students and groups of students and are able to use this information to differentiate instruction.

***Recommendation***

**1. To firmly establish the use of achievement data and other information for improvement, the district should continue its efforts to develop infrastructure for data collection, analysis, and usage and expand educators’ expertise in sharing, analyzing, and using data to guide improvement decisions at all levels.**

**A.** The district should follow through with its plans to develop and implement a more expansive and user-friendly data dashboard that is easily accessible to all.

1. The district’s data dashboard should ensure easy access to state, district, and school achievement data and data on indicators of student performance including attendance, behavior, enrollments of student groups in higher level courses, and dropout and graduation rates.

2. The district should ensure that all educators have appropriate training to use the new dashboard.

**B.** The district should continue to strengthen leaders’ and teachers’ data analysis skills.

1. The district should provide educators professional development in analyzing aggregate and disaggregated student achievement data and other student information to inform curricular and instructional decisions and planning.

**C.** The district should establish and articulate expectations for the use of data inquiry protocols districtwide.

1. The district has already identified a useful protocol for analyzing, discussing, and reporting on the use of data to make improvement decisions and has shared it with curriculum and instruction leaders.

2. The district should also provide professional development (PD) for classroom teachers on the new protocol, emphasizing how the use of data can improve their understanding of student performance, especially for struggling students.

**Benefits:** By implementing this recommendation all leaders and teachers will be better able to meet all students’ learning needs through the use of data in multiple pathways. This can result in a richer and more appropriate curriculum, more differentiated instructional strategies, a more data-literate culture and practices districtwide, and more informed governance.

**Recommended resources:**

* DESE’s *Assessment Literacy Self-Assessment and Gap Analysis Tool* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/assessment/continuum.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#search=%22Data Team Toolkit%22>)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***

*Supervision, Evaluation, and Educator Development*

The Uxbridge Public Schools has a multi-year mentoring program for first-year teachers and teachers new to the district. The mentor program is an integral part of the district’s professional development (PD) plan which focuses on supporting beginning teachers and those new to the district. Mentors and mentees meet monthly, observe each other, and participate in co-teaching opportunities and planned workshops. Under the supervision of the director of curriculum, instruction, and accountability, the district’s PD plan is aligned for the most part with the district and school improvement plans. The 2019–2020 PD calendar is available on the district’s website and lists the dates, topics, facilitators, and location for each of the three full days and four half days of professional training scheduled throughout the year. The district’s PD offerings range from in-service, full and half days, professional learning communities, and collaboration with outside school districts and agencies. The district’s annual PD plan includes the required PD hours in special education and ELL[[11]](#footnote-11) training.

During the 2018-2019 school year, Uxbridge participated in a Tiered Focused Monitoring Review conducted by the Department’s Office of Language Acquisition (OLA). The purpose of the Tiered Focused Monitoring Review is to monitor compliance with regulatory requirements focusing on English Learner Education. Page 8 of the June 2019 Uxbridge Tiered Focused Monitoring Report states: “*A review of documentation and the relevant SEI Endorsement data indicated that most core academic teachers assigned to provide sheltered English instruction to English learners hold the SEI Teacher Endorsement, but some do not.”*

Evidence from this review indicated that the district recognized the importance and direct link between the quality of instruction and student learning outcomes. A review of 39 randomly selected educators’ formative assessments/evaluations and summative evaluations showed that in most cases, particularly during the 2019–2020 school year, educators received feedback that could enhance professional growth to improve instruction. Although most of the components of the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Framework are being implemented with fidelity, professional and student learning goals that are specific and measurable are often missing. The district continues to work on the consistency in the feedback provided to district teachers to promote their professional growth and the growth in student learning.

*Recruitment, Hiring, and Assignment*

The Uxbridge Public Schools have a comprehensive hiring manual which provides clear expectations geared toward hiring professional staff and procedures for support. The detailed hiring process maximizes the probability that the best possible candidate will be offered the position and provides consistency for administrators in securing highly qualified candidates who reflect the philosophy and expectations of the district. The human resources department, with oversight by the administrative assistant to the superintendent, maintains accurate records about licensure status, waivers, and timelines for credential renewals. A district focus is to increase the pool of highly diverse candidates. In an effort to address equitable access to talented educators, the district continues to make concerted efforts to expand their recruiting process and network to increase the diversity of candidates and hires.

*Recognition, Leadership Development, and Advancement*

The superintendent meets annually with each principal to establish goals and several times throughout the school year to review their progress toward the accomplishment of the goals. Since two of the administrators were recently hired or appointed to their current position, as part of the process, the superintendent accompanied the principals on classroom walk-throughs to observe instruction and to determine progress toward district goals.

The district provided a Research for Better Teaching course on skillful leadership to help principals coordinate the consistency in implementing the supervision and evaluation process and to ensure that fidelity was maintained.

Administrators reported that there was a professional development (PD) component to administrative team meetings. Evidence-based discussions and readings were used to enhance and improve principals’ practice. In an effort to build leadership capacity, teachers and newly appointed curriculum and instructional teacher leaders are called upon to lead PD and professional book discussions. Curriculum and instructional teacher leaders also provide coaching, co-teaching, and targeted PD during Professional Learning Community (PLC) time.

**Strength Findings**

**1. The district has instituted comprehensive hiring policies, procedures, and practices and maintains accurate employment records.**

**A.** The district has developed a detailed hiring manual for administrators to assist in making hiring decisions based on district priorities and to meet the needs of each school’s student populations.

1. The hiring procedures are clearly articulated with rigorous interview requirements that include interactive situational prompts, writing prompts, 42 sample interview questions, and demonstration protocols.

2. Rubrics have been created for each of the hiring protocols to maintain consistency in the evaluation and quality of candidates hired throughout the district.

 3. Administrators stated that job descriptions were written three years ago and approved by the school committee. All job descriptions are reviewed annually, and revisions approved by the school committee.

4. Administrators have positioned the district to recruit talented and diverse educators by attending local job fairs, posting positions at local college and university placement offices, providing practicum experiences for educators from surrounding colleges and universities, and advertising vacancies on the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents and SchoolSpring websites.

* 1. District employment forms and records are organized and accessible.

 1. All employment forms are available and easily accessible on the district’s website.

2. The administrative assistant to the superintendent is conscientious about notifying the superintendent and employees of their certification status, licensure renewal timelines, and waivers. At the time of the review in January 2020, the district did not have teachers on waivers.

**Impact**: By having consistent systems, policies, and hiring procedures in place, the district increases the likelihood of attracting and retaining highly qualified teachers and administrators**.**

**2. The district’s professional development plan supports a number of the district’s goals and initiatives.**

* 1. The professional development (PD) plan includes a multi-year, well-organized mentoring program that focuses on supporting beginning teachers and teachers new to the district who do not have professional status.
1. Interviews and a document review indicated that beginning teachers (defined as teachers with three or fewer years of teaching experience) were assigned a mentor for three years and experienced new teachers were assigned a mentor for two years.
2. Beginning teachers must complete a three-year mentoring program that includes a one-year induction program and 50 hours of mentoring in order to qualify for professional status.
3. Both beginning teachers and teachers new to the district attend a two-day summer new teacher orientation program that includes a tour of the community; information about the “nut and bolts” of district expectations; the technology set-up for Google Classroom, iPass, and Teachpoint; and time to work with their assigned mentors.
4. Beginning teachers attend monthly new teacher workshops and participate in three or more peer observations during their first year.
5. Teachers new to the district conduct one or more peer observations during their first year and participate in a peer observation exchange partnership and joint PD opportunities with teachers in the Bellingham school district.
6. Principals reported that they selected the mentors, subject to the approval of the director of curriculum, instruction, and accountability. The director of curriculum, instruction, and accountability is responsible for mentor training, meetings, and PD activities.

a. Mentor meetings include weekly meetings with mentees for the first three months, and monthly thereafter to review curriculum and materials, discuss teaching best practices, observe each other, discuss books, and review district protocols/expectations.

**B**. Under the leadership of the director of curriculum, instruction, and accountability, the district’s 2018–2019 and 2019–2020 PD plans incorporate many district strategic plan goals..

1. Uxbridge Teachers’ Association members reported that the district scheduled three full-day PD days, two of which take place before school opens and one full-day in January. In addition, four half days take place in October, November, March, and May.

a. Teachers expressed the view that PD has improved in the two years before the onsite review, with more active learning and improved consistency and follow-through.

b. Teachers reported that they had received PD to address some of the priorities in the strategic plan, specifically on standards and literacy.

2. In accordance with the Uxbridge Teachers’ Association-Unit A collective bargaining agreement, PD topics must include DESE mandated re-certification areas, including special education and English language learning. The district provides three hours of training annually in each area.

3. The district’s PD committee consists of the director of curriculum, instruction, and accountability, the director of pupil services, all principals, and the newly appointed curriculum and instruction teacher leaders.

a. The district develops a detailed annual PD schedule outlining the topics, locations, and facilitators and makes it available at the beginning of the school year on the district’s website.

b. The director of curriculum, instruction, and accountability and principals said that targeted PD to support and meet the needs of teachers was often provided by external consultants.

c. In recognition of the need to provide equity training for district personnel, the district brought in an external consultant to train all faculty on diversity, cultural sensitivity, and trauma on January 17, 2020.

4. The district often relies on and encourages administrators, curriculum leaders, and teachers to serve as facilitators in leading PD and other initiatives.

a. The District Improvement Plan specifies that each curriculum leader is responsible for developing a curriculum review process.

b. Principals are leading after-school professional book discussions and curriculum and instruction teacher leaders provide coaching, co-teaching, and targeted PD during PLC time, team meetings, and on scheduled half days.

c. Time is provided for teachers to participate in peer observations within and outside the district.

**Impact**: The sustainability and effectiveness of a district’s PD program is enhanced by a well-managed, collaborative plan that includes high-quality PD offerings and is aligned with a number of district priorities. When PD offerings are connected and aligned with district goals and priorities and support educators at all stages of their careers, it is likely that teachers’ practice and the district’s professional culture are strengthened, resulting in improvements in all students’ academic performance.

1. **The district’s educator evaluation system prioritizes opportunities for educators to receive high-quality feedback[[12]](#footnote-12) that helps them improve their practice.**
2. The team reviewed the evaluative documentation of 39 randomly selected teachers in TeachPoint, the district’s educator evaluation management system.

1. Teachers’ evaluations included timely and constructive feedback, and provided recommendations to improve

2. Most of the teachers whose files were reviewed were on self-directed year-one or two evaluation plans. All formative assessments/evaluations and summative evaluations met required timelines and were in compliance with the Educator Evaluation Framework.

 **B.** The team also reviewed the evaluative documentation of11 administrators in TeachPoint.

1. The team found that the superintendent’s evaluations of administrators were timely and contained constructive feedback, specific pedagogical suggestions, and actionable recommendations.

 **C.** All of the educator evaluative documentation reviewed on TeachPoint included professional practice goals that were aligned with district and school goals. Most files included team or individual professional practice goals, student learning goals, learning walkthrough feedback, self-reflections, formative assessments/evaluations, and summative assessments.

 **D.** When asked whether the feedback they received formally or informally from school leaders informed their instruction, teachers reported that the feedback they received was instructive, useful, and “helps us go in the right direction.”

 1. Administrators reported that new teachers were observed to be making use of the instructive feedback they received.

 **E.** Administrators complete at least two walkthroughs annually as part of the supervision and evaluation model. The focus is on student engagement, purposefully planned lessons, checks for understanding, and student progress towards learning goals.

 **F.** The superintendent plays an active role in monitoring and supporting administrators to ensure fidelity in the supervision and evaluation of staff.

The superintendent meets with principals every other week, accompanies them on walkthroughs, and visits schools regularly to monitor administrators’ professional and school goals.

 **G.** Administrators said that it was challenging to complete the number of evaluations they are responsible for doing. Administrators expressed the opinion that they were putting a great deal of effort into providing effective feedback and recommendations.

1. As a result, at the time of the onsite review, the superintendent and director of curriculum, instruction, and accountability were meeting with the Uxbridge Teachers’ Association and the leadership team to discuss language revisions to the evaluation process during upcoming negotiation discussions.

 **H.** The superintendent, principals, and the director of curriculum, instruction and accountability monitor the evaluation procedure timelines. Principals abide by the class visit requirements specified in the Uxbridge Teachers’ Association collective bargaining agreement and hold teachers accountable for abiding by the timelines of the evaluation procedure.

1. The superintendent meets often with principals to discuss school-related curriculum, assessment, and supervision and evaluation of staff.

2. Evaluators meet with the superintendent during scheduled administration team time for calibration exercises based on DESE classroom videos that help to ensure inter-rater reliability and the fidelity of the evaluation process.

**Impact**: High expectations and a fully implemented and monitored educator evaluation system that provides high-quality (specific, timely, and actionable) feedback promotes professional growth, improves instruction, and enhances students’ experiences and outcomes.

**Challenges and Areas for Growth**

**4. The district does not systematically include measurable professional practice and student learning goals and evidence of educators’ impact on student learning in its educator evaluation system.**

**A.** Although professional practice goals and student learning goals were included in the educator plan documents reviewed by the team, these goals were not written in SMART (Specific and Strategic; Measurable; Action-Oriented; Rigorous, Realistic, and Results-Focused; and Timed and Tracked) goal format in 20 of the 39 teacher evaluative documents reviewed.

* + 1. Administrators reported that teachers’ goals and benchmarks were often not specific enough to be measurable, adding that some these goals were actual initiatives.
		2. Very few teacher evaluation files included evidence to support teachers’ teaching and learning goals.

 **B.** 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 and staff feedback was used in the educator evaluation process.

 **C.** The team did not find evidence of the use of educators’ impact on student learning in the educator evaluation process.[[13]](#footnote-13)

**Impact**: Without the full implementation of the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Framework components that call for the collection and use of multiple sources of evidence, and measurable professional practice and student learning goals, the district is missing opportunities to enhance educators’ practice and increase student outcomes.

**5. The district’s PD plan does not incorporate training for staff on addressing the needs of all students.**

**A**. The Massachusetts Standards for Professional Development require that the professional development plan is informed by student and educator data and aligned with district, school, and educator needs.

1. Teachers and administrators reported that district co-teachers needed additional training on strategies and techniques for sharing instructional responsibilities and accountability in a co-teaching model. Teachers who identified themselves as co-teachers reported that they received relevant PD training several years ago, but the need was ongoing.

2. School leaders and teachers said that there was a need for more PD on differentiating instruction. Few teachers differentiated instruction in observed classes at all levels. (See Appendix C.)

3. Teachers and administrators have participated in training on usage of the Understanding by Design (UbD) framework. The team was told that with recent staff changes some teachers were unfamiliar with curriculum planning using UbD. To address this, the director of curriculum, instruction, and accountability has developed a template for staff to use to incorporate their curriculum into the UbD framework, but teachers reported, they are uncertain how this would be rolled out.

4. The district collects numerous forms of data, but teachers and administrators reported that they needed additional training on data interpretation and use.

**Impact**: A PD program that does not include differentiated PD opportunities for educators likely is missing opportunities to strengthen the professional learning of educators and improve student achievement.

***Recommendations***

**1. The district should promote educators’ growth by fully implementing all components of the educator evaluation system, with an emphasis on consistency in professional practice and student learning goals and educators’ impact on student learning.**

**A.** The district should implement a process to ensure that all educators develop professional practice and student learning goals in SMART (Specific and Strategic; Measurable; Action-Oriented; Rigorous, Realistic, and Results-Focused; and Timed and Tracked) goal format.

1. Performance ratings for all educators should include the educators’ impact on student learning.

**Benefits:** A fully implementededucator evaluation system will help educators improve their practice.

**Recommended resources:**

* *A Protocol for Developing S.M.A.R.T Goal Statements* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/>) is designed to support educators in developing S.M.A.R.T goal statements using the appropriate evaluation rubric and a DESE-developed protocol.
* Related materials (professional practice goal template, facilitator PowerPoint presentation, and exemplar goal statements) are available on the DESE Educator Evaluation webpage at: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/>.
* The navigation bar on the left of the DESE educator evaluation webpage (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/>) includes specific training for teachers, administrators, and evaluators on self-assessment, SMART goals, and evidence collection. The site also included links to instructive videos and forms on most components of the Massachusetts Frameworks.
* The Student Learning Experience report <http://www.doe.mass.edu/edwin/gateway/slereport-supp.html> will help school and district leaders understand equity gaps in students’ learning experiences with regard to teacher assignments over the past one to five years. It answers questions such as “what types of experiences have students in various groups had with teachers rated Exemplary and Proficient?”

**2. The district should expand its professional development (PD) plan to provide all educators with opportunities to receive targeted PD to support educators’ and students’ needs.**

1. The district’s PD plan should be intentionally matched to educators’ and students’ needs.

The district should provide opportunities for educators to observe effective co-teaching models within and outside the district. Hiring teachers with dual certification and ensuring that the assignment of co-teachers is based on students’ needs will strengthen co-teaching partnerships and support for students.

The district should provide training on basing instruction on students’ readiness, interests, and learning profiles. By differentiating content, processes, work products, and ongoing assessments, students’ learning experiences will be more effective and engaging.

As the district begins to implement the new UbD mapping template, administrators, curriculum and instruction teacher leaders, and teachers should receive support and guidance in the revision of curriculum, assessment, and the development of essential questions.

The district should provide administrators and teachers training in the collection and analysis of data as a means to measure student performance, identify programmatic strengths and challenges, and guide decision-making.

The district should ensure that all teachers assigned to provide sheltered English instruction (SEI) to English learners earn the SEI endorsement.

**Benefits:** A comprehensive and coordinated PD plan that supports district and school priorities as well as the identified needs of educators and students will promote and sustain a culture of continuous improvement for both educators and students.

**Recommended resource:**

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

Student Support

***Contextual Background***

*Tiered Systems of Support*

The district has in place a range of specialized staff and interventions to support students. These include school adjustment counselors, behavior specialists, and a new intervention block at the Whitin Intermediate School, known as the WIN block. In addition, the district has established several special programs and practices to support the educational, behavioral, and emotional needs of all students. These include specific services designed to address the unique needs of students with autism, students with significant behavioral issues, students dealing with mental health issues, and students with significant disabilities. The district has also benefitted from partnerships and associations with nearby health agencies, businesses, education foundations, and city departments.

While the district has some elements of a student support system, including newly designed student support teams at the Taft Early Learning Center and Whitin Intermediate School, it does not have a clearly articulated and comprehensive tiered system of support that ensures that all students who are struggling are identified and provided with effective interventions. The most recent MCAS results demonstrated an achievement gap for certain student groups. The chronic absence rates of certain student groups are also an ongoing challenge in the district.

The district's strategic plan and district and school improvement plans include important aligned goals for meeting students’ academic, behavioral, and emotional needs. However, district and school educators recognized that growth in essential areas was required to realize those goals, including the establishment of a comprehensive districtwide student support system.

***Strength Findings***

1. **The district has taken steps to implement services, develop staff capacity, establish teams and procedures, and design curriculum aimed at addressing the academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs of all students.**

**A.** Interviews and a document review indicated that the district provided a range of specialized services to support high-needs students.

* + 1. The Learning Lab is a substantially separate program that is appropriate to the needs of certain students with disabilities at Uxbridge High School. Learning Lab provides a self-contained environment with consistent educational and behavioral supports. Students are provided access to a modified curriculum aligned with state frameworks that enables them to develop to their maximum potential at their own pace.
		2. The Pathways program provides a consistent and supportive educational and behavioral environment utilizing applied behavioral analysis strategies. Located at the Taft Early Learning Center, Pathways primarily serves students on the autism spectrum, or students who present with similar characteristics that require social-pragmatic, academic, and behavioral support. At the intermediate and high-school levels, Pathways also provide a “home-base” when needed for students with mental health issues.
		3. The Phoenix Program is a highly structured, behavior-oriented educational program for students in grades 10 through 12 at Uxbridge High School. The goal of the Phoenix Program is to develop solutions for the behavioral issues of the students enrolled and to provide them equal access to the general education program.
		4. The PIERS Program (Positive Self-Concept, Independence, Emotional Regulation, Resiliency, and Social Expectations) provides high-school students with clearly defined social-emotional supports, behavioral programming, and specialized instruction. Students participate in a weekly group counseling course with the school psychologist and receive individual counseling when-needed.
		5. The Independence Project provides life skills/transitional services intended to meet the needs of students with moderate to intensive disabilities between the ages of 18 and 22. Students learn a variety of functional life, vocational, and community skills and practice them in community settings.
		6. Through a partnership with a local agency, certified therapists provide in-school counseling services for Uxbridge students who otherwise may not be able to get the help they need. The team was informed that 10 students were receiving these services at the time of the onsite review, and at least that many students were on the waitlist.

**B.** The district is demonstrating a commitment to developing staff capacity to review and dismantle implicit biases and to better identify, understand, and respond to the underlying causes of student behavior.

* + 1. On January 17, 2020, districtwide training was provided to teachers on cultural diversity, including aspects of anti-bias training and ways of teaching students who have experienced trauma.
		2. Several strategies are in place to help ensure that these areas of focus are sustained.
			1. The district has an active Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) team that includes teachers, counselors, and administrators from all schools and the central office. The district has adopted The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) model as its guide to meeting students’ social and emotional needs.
			2. CASEL competencies, including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making, will be rolled out at all three schools in 2020–2021.
			3. Participation in two academies is driving work at the school level. Taft Early learning Center and Whitin Intermediate School staff members are participating in the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) Academy facilitated by the Neag School of Education at the University of Connecticut, and Uxbridge High School staff members are participating in an SEL/Mental Health Academy facilitated by the Education Development Center.

**C.** District staff members have developed curriculum units to intended to foster a safe and supportive school climate and culture for all students in a proactive manner.

* + 1. The Uxbridge High School comprehensive guidance curriculum contains lessons on understanding and dealing with peer pressure and increasing cultural awareness.
		2. Principals told the team that a new grade 8 curriculum unit focusing on student diversity and culture would be taught in physical education/wellness classes at Uxbridge High School.

**D.** Newly developed student support teams (SSTs) are now in place at the Taft Early Learning Center and the Whitin Intermediate School.

 1. Teachers make referrals to the SSTs who design interventions and periodically evaluate students’ progress.

 2. The Taft Early Learning Center has developed a comprehensive referral form containing specific information, including the reason for making a referral to the team; academic, assessment, and school engagement data; behavioral and medical issues, if applicable; current support provided to the student; and a section for the person making the referral to explain concerns and goals to the student support team in greater detail.

 3. The Whitin Intermediate School uses an almost identical referral form that also includes a list of possible academic and behavioral accommodations and interventions to recommend from the 2019 District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP).

 4. Principals spoke positively about the promise of the SST process, often characterizing it as more proactive and inclusive than before. Their comments included, "I’m encouraged by the new SST structure. “This is where [the new structure] has to start;” “[The student support process] is more efficient and effective - Now it’s a consistent process;” and, “I think this is helping; teachers are coming along.

**Impact:** When a district prioritizes the academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs of all students, and invests resources in supporting this priority, the effects likely contribute to improved student well-being, attendance, engagement, and overall performance.

**2. The district has systems and practices in place to ensure that students with disabilities are supported in the transition to life after high school.**

* 1. Central office administrators told the team that individual transition planning for students with disabilities began in grade 7, and planning process became more robust and targeted each year until the students either graduated or turned 22. The district has benefited from collaboration with the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, which has begun to offer students pre-employment transition services.
	2. Interviews and a document review indicated that through the district’s Independence Project, students with moderate to severe disabilities between the ages of 18 and 22 learned functional life, vocational, and community skills, through age-appropriate instruction. Students enrolled in the Independence Project work 3 to 4 days weekly at multiple occupational sites, practice with mock interviews, complete job applications, and learn about appropriate and acceptable workplace behavior.
	3. According to the Uxbridge High School 2019–2020 Program of Study, a course entitled Postsecondary Planning Seminar is available to students with disabilities in grades 11 and 12. The seminar helps students to identify and take necessary action steps toward their postsecondary visions, as they begin the transition to adult life after high school.

**Impact:** By offering programs and support to help students with disabilities explore, experience, and make plans for their lives after high school, the district is strengthening students’ chances for postsecondary success.

***Challenge Findings***

**3. The district has not established a coherent or comprehensive districtwide multi-tiered system of support to address students’ academic, behavioral, and social-emotional growth.**

* 1. Administrators, teachers, and counselors reported that the district has not effectively developed or implemented tiered interventions to support students’ academic growth and development.
		1. When asked to identify the district's greatest student support needs, two school leaders agreed that Tier 1 supports should be a priority, and that more professional development should be provided to enable teachers to meet the needs of all learners.
		2. Other educators identified Tier 2 services as the greatest need. One interviewee said, "We have to make up our own ‘mishmash’ of supports. Things are in place, but nothing really solid. We don't do this well now.” Another said, “We need to bolster our Tier 2 support. We need benchmarks for students.”
		3. In contrast to the recently established Student Support teams (SSTs) at the Taft Early Learning Center and Whitin Intermediate School, indications are that the SST at Uxbridge High School is not operating effectively.

a. Administrators, teachers, and counselors stated that a formal process for referring students to the SST was not in place. One said, “There is a document, but it is not being used.”

b. Several interviewees mentioned that the SST process would benefit from the additional participation of high-school administrators in SST meetings.

* + 1. In its self-assessment submitted in advance of the onsite review, the district rated tiered systems of support as “Not at All Well” as described by the indicator “The district provides evidence-based practices, programs, and systems to students by tier. Schedules and resource allocation are designed to ensure that Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports supplement, and don’t supplant, Tier 1 instruction.”

**Impact:** Without a coherent and comprehensive multi-tiered system of supportsystem in place, the district will continue to be challenged in meeting the academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs of all students.

**4. Many students are not receiving instruction in a manner that sufficiently supports their individual academic needs, and some students are losing classroom instructional time because of high rates of chronic student absence.**

* 1. Based on the team’s observations of classroom instruction, teaching practices did not always support the academic needs of all students.
		1. The team noted sufficient and compelling evidence of teachers using a variety of instructional strategies in 53 percent of observed Taft Early Learning Center classes, in only 32 percent of observed Whitin Intermediate School, classes, and in 47 percent of observed Uxbridge High School classes (characteristic #10).
		2. The team noted sufficient and compelling evidence of teachers conducting frequent checks for student understanding, providing feedback, and adjusting instruction in only 41 percent of observed Taft Early Learning Center classes, in 68 percent of observed Whitin Intermediate School classes, and in 69 percent of observed Uxbridge High School classes (characteristic #4).
		3. The team noted sufficient and compelling evidence of teachers ensuring students are engaging in challenging tasks regardless of learning needs in 59 percent of observed Taft Early Learning Center classes, in 61 percent of observed Whitin intermediate School classes, and in 63 percent of observed Uxbridge High School classes (characteristic #9).
	2. According to DESE data, certain district groups of students are missing substantial instructional time because of their high rates of chronic absence.

1. According to DESE data from the district, 23.9 percent of economically disadvantaged students, 25.7 percent of students with disabilities, and 40.6 percent of English learners were chronically absent[[14]](#footnote-14) in 2019–2020. In 2019–2020, the district’s rate of chronic absence was 12.9 percent, compared with the state rate of 13 percent. The percentages of chronically absent students in the district, by grade, were as follows: 21.7 percent in grade 9; 14.2 percent in grade 10; 18.6 percent in grade 11; and 19.8 percent in grade 12.

**Impact:** The district is facing considerable challenges ensuring that sufficient and effective supports and strategies are provided to meet all students’ academic needs. Without changes to instructional practice, and without strategies to reduce student chronic absence rates, unequal outcomes will likely continue.

***Recommendations***

**1. The district should develop and implement a districtwide tiered system of support for all students.**

* 1. Goal 2 of the District Improvement Plan addresses tiered support for students and contains action steps. However, these and other important steps should be included in a more comprehensive plan with a timeline for implementation. Other key components of the improvement plan that address the needs of all students should be addressed at the same time, especially improved instructional delivery.
	2. The district should use student performance data and other data sources to target short- and long-term student support planning. The superintendent and principals with the assistance of their school councils should use these data to set and track school goals with particular attention to the performance of the district's high needs students.
	3. The district should provide high-quality professional development for all staff to facilitate the development and implementation of a formal system of support that includes providing for individual differences in the general education program and progress monitoring.
	4. District and school leaders should work together to clarify the supports in each tier.
	5. The district should strengthen the Student Support Teams (SSTs) at Uxbridge High School. Many promising models exist, including the recently developed SSTs at the Taft Early Learning Center and Whitin Intermediate School. Whatever model is adopted, the district needs to consider how to make sure all staff are knowledgeable about procedures, follow them with fidelity, monitor the effectiveness and success of the approach, and adjust when necessary. Greater participation from Uxbridge High School administrators at these meetings would strengthen this effort.

**Benefits:** A data-driven tiered system of support will ensure that all students receive high-quality core instruction, using a range of instructional strategies and targeted interventions. As a result, the district will be better able to improve all students’ performance, opportunities, and outcomes.

**Recommended resources:**

* The *Massachusetts Tiered System of Support (*[*http://www.doe.mass.edu/sfss/mtss/blueprint.pdf*](http://www.doe.mass.edu/sfss/mtss/blueprint.pdf)*)* is a blueprint for school improvement that focuses on systems, structures and supports across the district, school, and classroom to meet the academic and non-academic needs of all students. The MTSS website includes links to a self-assessment and a variety of helpful resources.
* The *Educator Effectiveness Guidebook for Inclusive Practice* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/guidebook/>) includes tools for districts, schools, and educators that are aligned to the MA Educator Evaluation Framework and promote evidence-based best practices for inclusion following the principles of Universal Design for Learning, Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, and Social and Emotional Learning.
* *Supporting and Responding to Behavior: Evidence-Based Classroom Strategies for Teachers* (<https://www.osepideasthatwork.org/evidencebasedclassroomstrategies/>) summarizes evidence-based, positive, proactive, and responsive classroom behavior intervention and support strategies that can help teachers capitalize on instructional time and decrease disruptions.
* The *Wraparound Replication Cookbook* (<https://sites.google.com/site/masswazcookbook/>) is a practical guide focused on improving academic performance by systematically addressing students’ social emotional and non-academic needs. It is based on the experience of several Massachusetts districts, and is organized according to the following key strategy areas:
	+ Addressing School Culture and the Social Emotional Aspects of Learning
	+ Rethinking Systems for Identifying and Addressing Academic and Social Emotional Needs
	+ Creating Focused Partnerships & Coalitions

**2. The district should strengthen its efforts to ensure that all students attend school regularly.**

* 1. The district should analyze attendance data and determine the root cause(s) of chronic absence.
		1. The district should use disaggregated data to review 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 and surveys 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 cause(s) of high and disproportionate absence rates and take steps to address them, including reviewing current initiatives to improve attendance and adjusting efforts as needed.

**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:**

* *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
* *My Career and Academic Plan (MyCAP)* <http://www.doe.mass.edu/ccte/> 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***

*Budget Documentation and Reporting*

In fiscal year 2020,the Uxbridge Public Schools have a municipal budget appropriation of $22,406,828 to support a pre-K–12 district of 1,718 students. The budget is developed during the school year, beginning with an analysis of staffing needs by principals and directors. In consultation with these administrators the superintendent and central office administrators develop a proposed budget that is reviewed and discussed by the school committee. The final version of the budget is approved by the school committee following a public hearing. The school committee budget is reviewed by the selectmen and finance committee, approved by the selectmen, and voted on by the annual Town Meeting.

*Adequate Budget*

The town’s financial support of the schools has enabled the district to exceed foundation budget and required net school spending levels from fiscal year 2008 through fiscal year 2019. The district was 45.4 percent above its foundation budget in 2019. In fiscal year 2019, the district was 28.9 percent above the required net school spending compared with the state average of 26.8 percent. The town is $742,000 below its tax levy limit and has a $16.2 million override capacity in fiscal year 2020.

In 2017, the district and the town endorsed an agreement detailing municipal expenditures on behalf of the schools. The town and the district have an interconnected financial platform.

*Capital Planning and Facility Maintenance*

The district currently has three school facilities. The Taft Early Learning Center (pre-K–3) was built in 1954 and the Whitin Intermediate School (4–7) was built in 1960. Both have been renovated and expanded. Uxbridge High School (8–12) was built in 2012. The Taft Early Learning Center and Whitin Intermediate School were described as “generally in good condition with a few building systems that may need some attention” (rated at Level 2) in the 2016 Massachusetts School Building Authority School Building Survey. Uxbridge High School is too new to be rated.

**Strength Findings**

**1. The district’s budget development process leads to recommendations to the school committee that are educationally sound and address the goals of the District Improvement Plan (DIP).**

* 1. Interviews and a document review indicated that budget development in the district was an organized step-by-step sequence that included all stakeholders in a participatory and transparent process.
		1. The school committee is consulted early in the budget development process.
			1. The budget subcommittee reviews state aid and other revenues in the summer and fall.
			2. The subcommittee discusses the budget and strategic plan goals in October.
			3. The full school committee directs the administration on budget development and approves the budget calendar in October.
		2. The superintendent and the business manager meet regularly with administrative staff to develop the budget.
			1. Planning starts at the summer retreat.
			2. Budget preparation packages with instructions are distributed to administrators in October.
			3. Central office administrators meet individually with principals and other budget administrators to discuss their requests.
			4. Based on these meetings, the superintendent makes recommendations to the school committee and the business manager prepares a budget document that describes these recommendations.
	2. Budget decisions are made with reference to the strategic plan and district and school improvement plans (SIPs).
		1. In a January 10, 2019 memo to the school committee, the superintendent outlined how the budget supported the DIP in furthering district goals by enhancing technology, providing professional development, and ensuring students’ health and welfare.
		2. Principals told the team that the business manager required them to connect all financial requests directly to the strategic plan.

**Impact**: Having an organized budget development process that supports the strategic initiatives set forth in the DIP and SIPs is key to assuring that the school committee’s budget is educationally sound and addresses the district’s priorities and goals.

**2. The district has a long-term capital plan that describes future capital development and improvement needs. This plan is reviewed and revised as needed with input from all appropriate stakeholders.**

1. In 2018 the district created a long-term capital improvement plan (CIP).
2. The district hired two firms to conduct a facilities conditions assessment and they produced a 78-page report on Uxbridge’s facility needs in October 2018.
3. Using these data, the district created a five-year, long-term capital plan.
4. The main plan is a one-page spread sheet, organized by school, that lists all capital needs together with estimated costs. The needs are prioritized for completion over the five-year period.
5. An additional document entitled, Capital Improvement Request Rationale, contains narratives that describe and justify the need for each capital project.

3. The technology director has created a 10-year technology plan.

The first spreadsheet details technology needs by year from fiscal year 2020 through fiscal year 2030.

b. The second spreadsheet is a year by year cost analysis.

c. The third spreadsheet displays the funding for a planned Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) phone system for all schools.

There is also a complete inventory of technology equipment.

 **B.** The capital improvement plan is reviewed and revised as needed with input from appropriate stakeholders.

1. Review of the CIP is part of the annual budget calendar.

1. Stakeholders are asked to submit capital budget requests in October.
2. The superintendent, the business manager, and the plant operations manager review the requests and update the CIP.
3. The superintendent recommends a capital budget to the school committee for their approval in November.
4. The approved CIP budget is forwarded to the town manager and town capital improvement committee (CIC).
5. The town manager reviews the submission and holds a hearing in January.
6. The superintendent and staff make a presentation to the CIC in December.
7. The town manager and the CIC make a recommendation to town meeting for funding.
8. The technology director continually updates the 10-year plan.

2. The school committee created a community advisory committee to monitor the district’s facility needs.

The community advisory committee will put together a strategic plan for maintenance and repair of the three schools.

 The plan will be based on the five-year CIP and the 2018 facilities conditions assessment.

 The committee will review a new study of space needs.

 The committee will advocate for municipal funding of school capital projects.

 The committee’s goal is to “secure the existing buildings from requiring major renovations for the next 10–15 years.”

The school committee will appoint a committee composed of two school committee members, one representative from each school, and three community members.

**Impact**: Having a sound capital plan is a key step in ensuring the proper allocation of resources to a high-quality education that fulfills the needs of all students.

**Challenges and Areas for Growth**

**3. The district’s budget documents do not clearly detail how funds and staffing are allocated. They do not provide comparative historical spending data. The budget documents also do not explicitly make connections to district and school goals and do not demonstrate how student performance data have been used to set budget priorities.**

**A.** The district’s budget documents are not clear and user friendly.

1. The budget document overview is a 16-page brochure that contains a five-page spreadsheet of financial detail together with several supporting documents, including the budget calendar, staffing information, and information on revenue sources. Substantial additional information is available on the district’s website, including narratives from the superintendent.

* 1. A town official expressed the view that the district’s budget was hard to understand because it was extensive and constituted a large part of the town budget, adding that hundreds of line items in the budget seemed to be the same from year to year.
	2. A school committee member stated that the committee needed more data from the superintendent to support budget requests.
	3. In the district self-assessment submitted in advance of the onsite review, the district stated that the budget document was not clear.

2. The budget document shows only the proposed budget for the upcoming school year and the budget for the prior year. An accounting of prior year expenditures is missing.

3. The budget document is missing full-time equivalency (FTE) data and FTE history for previous years in the personnel sections. Many personnel line items show large dollar increases or decreases; however, the FTE data to explain them are missing. Consequently, changes in staffing levels are not explicit.

**B.** Although the budget development process addresses the goals in the district improvement plan, the budget document does not make clear how allocations are related to specific improvement goals.

1. While the DIP and SIPs clearly have goals that require funding, there is no explicit connection to those documents in the presentation on the budget document.

2. The superintendent stated that the funding in the budget for an additional teacher of English learners and a technology integration specialist was based on the DIP. Although the DIP was available at the budget presentation on January 8, 2020, the budget document does not establish the relationship between the financial requests and DIP goals.

3. A school committee member expressed the opinion that the budget package had no connection to district goals, adding “I’m going to ask those questions.”

4. Another member stated that while resources should be allocated to ensure the achievement of district goals, the budget does not include a narrative relating student performance and the needs of specific student groups to resource allocation.”

 **C.** The budget documentdoes not demonstrate how student performance data, particularly data related to performance, access, and opportunity outcomes and gaps, have been used to set budget priorities.

**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.

**4.** **The district’s long-term capital plan, which describes capital development and improvement needs, is not adequately funded. Capital resource allocations are not sufficient to ensure that facilities are conducive to student learning.**

 **A.** The district’s long-term capital plan shows needs of approximately $5 million per year in order to properly maintain the buildings. The district has not been able to achieve that level of funding.

* + - 1. The district’s self-assessment submitted in advance of the onsite review stated, “These (capital) plans exist, but long-term plans are not often funded or supported at the community level.”
			2. In fiscal years 2019 and 2020, the town only appropriated $155,000 and $86,000, respectively, for capital improvements. This means that in fiscal years 2019 and 2020, the town appropriated roughly 3 percent and 1.5 percent, respectively, of the demonstrated need per year.

 **B.** A document review indicated thatthe new community school building advisory committee planned to put together a strategic plan, based on the capital plan, and would investigate funding options. The committee plans to concentrate on applying to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) for major capital projects, particularly roofs.

 **C.** Financial staff told the team thatthe district has increased the maintenance and technology budgets in the annual operating budget in order to address capital needs within the annual operating budget.

 1. Major maintenance expenditures are part of the $750,000 maintenance of buildings (4220) line item. Uxbridge does not budget or report expenditures on the extraordinary maintenance (4300) line item.

 2. Technology purchases have not been funded by town capital appropriations. Technology capital projects have been funded through the operating budget’s $480,000 administrative technology (1450) line item. Uxbridge does not budget or report expenditures to the instructional hardware (2450) or technology infrastructure (4450) line items.

* + - 1. The pre-kindergarten and daycare tuition revolving funds and the building rental funds have been used to offset maintenance costs in order to free up the maintenance budget for capital projects.
			2. The district has implemented energy saving measures and is conducting an energy audit in order to free up utility funds for capital projects.
			3. E-rate discounts have been used to support technology capital projects.

**B.** Interviews and a document review indicated that the town’s financial management has not been stable for several years.

1. The Department of Revenue’s Division of Local Services (DLS) has overseen the town for the two years before the onsite.

2. The town manager, treasurer, and town accountant have been town employees for less than 7 months.

3. Municipal officials said that the town’s previous financial problems were under investigation by the Inspector General’s office.

4. At the time of the onsite, the town’s capital improvement committee, which determines funding of capital projects with the town manager, had not met in 2019-2020. The town manager is required to submit a capital budget by January 31.

5. In November 2017, DLS presented a 25-page report, “Capital Planning Analysis, Town of Uxbridge,” criticizing Uxbridge’s missed opportunity to maintain capital assets with sufficient funding. The report suggested many procedural changes for Uxbridge to consider.

**Impact**: The absence of appropriate revenue allocation to the capital needs of district buildings means that facilities may not be accessible, clean, safe, secure, well-lit, well-maintained, and conducive to student learning, with adequate access to technology**.**

**Recommendations**

**1. The district should develop a budget document that is clear, complete, and explicitly aligned with district and school improvement plan goals.**

**A.** The district should produce a budget document that contains all essential information about the financial operations of the district.

1. The district office should use its detailed internal records to enhance the transparency and completeness of the documents.

2. The public budget document should show actual line item expenditures for the prior school year, at a minimum. An estimate of the current year’s expenditures should also be included. Expenditures for previous years or current year-to-date expenditures could also be included.

The payroll line items should show staffing levels in full time equivalents for the prior, current, and projected years.

The district has detailed records of principals’ and directors’ budget requests. The district could include these requests in the public budget document for additional transparency.

**B.** The budget document should include information about how the budget supports district and school goals, as well as descriptions and subtotals for school and program staffing and costs.

 1. The district should demonstrate how student performance 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 explaining underlying assumptions and major changes.

**Benefits:** A transparent and complete budget document that clearly presents the district’s current education efforts will inform budget development and likely create trust and confidence among stakeholders that the district’s funds are being used properly to support the needs of the district’s students.

**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 and the town should develop a plan to fund the school’s long-term capital plan. Sufficient resources should be allocated to ensure that facilities are conducive to student learning.**

**A.** The district should continue to develop strategies to reallocate budget funds to long-term needs that do not meet the capital spending threshold.

1. For transparency and correct DESE accounting, such projects should be enumerated in the budget document and accounted for according to DESE’s Chart of Accounts (Criteria for Financial Reporting).

a. Major maintenance projects under $150,000 should be budgeted to and accounted for under extraordinary maintenance (4300).

b. Technology projects under $150,000 should be budgeted to and accounted for in the appropriate DESE designated accounts in order to appropriately allocate administrative (1450), instructional (2450), and maintenance (4450) costs.

c. Non-instructional purchases over $150,000 should be budgeted to and accounted for as acquisition, improvement, and replacement of fixed assets (7000). Note that such expenditures do not count toward net school spending.

**B.** The new town administration and the town capital improvement committee should work with the district to increase funding of its capital needs.

 1. The town should follow the advice of the Department of Revenue’s Division of Local Services and improve their capital budgeting procedures wherever feasible.

**C.** The community advisory committee should work with all stakeholders to seek MSBA and other grant funding. The committee should become a major advocate for school capital needs to the town government and taxpayers.

**Benefits**: Proper funding of the district’s capital needs will ensure that educational facilities are accessible, clean, safe, secure, well-lit, well-maintained, and conducive to student learning, with adequate access to technology.

* 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.
* DESE Chart of Accounts (Criteria for Financial Reporting) : <http://www.doe.mass.edu/finance/accounting/eoy>

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

Review Team Members

The review was conducted from January 13–16, 2020, by the following team of independent DESE consultants.

1. Tom Pandiscio, Ed. D., Leadership and Governance
2. Mary Jo Nawrocki, Curriculum and Instruction
3. Linda L. Greyser, Ed. D., Assessment and *review team coordinator*
4. Marianne O’Connor, Human Resources and Professional Development
5. Lonnie Kaufman, 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 financial personnel: the business manager, the accounts payable/grants administrator, and the human resources/payroll administrative assistant.

The team conducted interviews with the following members of the school committee: the current chairperson, the secretary, and five members.

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

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

The team visited the following schools: Taft Early Learning Center (pre-kindergarten through grade 3), Whitin Intermediate School (grades 4–7), and Uxbridge High School (grades 8–12).

During school visits, the team conducted interviews/focus groups with students, students’ families, and 3 principals, and focus groups with 2 elementary-school teachers, 4 middle-school teachers, and 17 high-school teachers.

The team observed 77 classes in the district: 17 at the early learning center, 28 at the intermediate school, and 32 at the high school.

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

* + Student and school performance data, including achievement and growth, enrollment, graduation, dropout, retention, suspension, and attendance rates.
	+ Data on the district’s staffing and finances.
	+ 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).
	+ 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.
	+ All completed program and administrator evaluations, and a random selection of completed teacher evaluations.

Site Visit Schedule

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Monday**01/13/2020 | **Tuesday**01/14/2020 | **Wednesday**01/15/2020 | **Thursday**01/16/2020 |
| Orientation with district leaders and principals; interviews with district staff and principals; document reviews; interview with teachers’ association; and visits to Taft Early Learning Center and Whitin Intermediate School for classroom observations. | Interviews with district staff and principals; review of personnel files; teacher focus groups; students and students’ families focus groups; interview with a school committee member, and a visit to Uxbridge High School for classroom observations. | Interviews with town or city personnel; interviews with school leaders; interviews with school committee members; visits to Taft Early Learning Center, Whitin Intermediate School, and Uxbridge High School for classroom observations. | Interviews with school leaders; follow-up interviews; district review team meeting; visits to Taft Early Learning Center, Whitin Intermediate School, and Uxbridge High School for classroom observations; district wrap-up meeting with the superintendent. |

Appendix B: Enrollment, Attendance, Expenditures

**Table B1a: Uxbridge Public Schools**

**2018–2019 Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Group** | **District** | **Percent****of Total** | **State** | **Percent of****Total** |
| African-American | 25 | 1.5% | 87,104 | 9.2% |
| Asian | 24 | 1.4% | 66,890 | 7.0% |
| Hispanic | 79 | 4.6% | 197,644 | 20.8% |
| Native American | 9 | 0.5% | 2,159 | 0.2% |
| White | 1,549 | 90.0% | 561,096 | 59.0% |
| Native Hawaiian | 1 | 0.1% | 802 | 0.1% |
| Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic/Latino | 35 | 2.0% | 35,936 | 3.8% |
| All | 1,722 | 100.0% | 951,631 | 100.0% |
| Note: As of October 1, 2018 |

**Table B1b: Uxbridge Public Schools**

**2018–2019 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 | 298 | 53.4% | 17.1% | 173,843 | 38.0% | 18.1% |
| Econ. Disadvantaged | 325 | 58.2% | 18.9% | 297,120 | 64.9% | 31.2% |
| English Learners  | 28 | 5.0% | 1.6% | 99,866 | 21.8% | 10.5% |
| All High Needs students | 558 | 100.0% | 32.0% | 458,044 | 100.0% | 47.6% |
| Notes: As of October 1, 2018. District and state numbers and percentages for students with disabilities and high needs students are calculated including students in out-of-district placements. Total district enrollment including students in out-of-district placement is 1,744; total state enrollment including students in out-of-district placement is 962,297. |

**Table B2a: Uxbridge Public Schools**

**Attendance Rates by Student Group, 2015–2018**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Group** | **N (2018)** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **4-yr Change** | **State (2018)** |
| African American/Black | 30 | 92.8 | 95.4 | 91.2 | 91.6 | -1.2 | 94.1 |
| Asian | 24 | 96.5 | 95.4 | 94.7 | 94.6 | -1.9 | 96.2 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 87 | 94.5 | 95.3 | 95.4 | 94.8 | 0.3 | 92.7 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 38 | 94.3 | 96.8 | 95.8 | 95.8 | 1.5 | 94.4 |
| White | 1,663 | 95.0 | 95.2 | 95.2 | 94.7 | -0.3 | 95.1 |
| High Needs | 663 | 93.1 | 93.9 | 93.6 | 92.8 | -0.3 | 93.2 |
| Econ. Disadvantaged | 447 | 93.0 | 93.9 | 93.4 | 92.7 | -0.3 | 92.5 |
| Students w/ Disabilities | 316 | 92.9 | 92.9 | 93.3 | 91.9 | -1.0 | 92.9 |
| English Learners | 31 | 93.4 | 96.8 | 95.0 | 93.8 | 0.4 | 93.3 |
| All  | 1,851 | 95.0 | 95.3 | 95.2 | 94.7 | -0.3 | 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: Uxbridge Public Schools**

**Chronic Absence\* Rates by Student Group, 2015–2018**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Group** | **N (2018)** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **4-yr Change** | **State (2018)** |
| African American/Black | 30 | 17.6 | 10.0 | 31.8 | 26.7 | 9.1 | 16.4 |
| Asian | 24 | 2.9 | 6.1 | 16.7 | 12.5 | 9.6 | 7.6 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 87 | 15.7 | 11.4 | 11.7 | 12.6 | -3.1 | 22.5 |
| Multi-Race | 38 | 16.3 | 4.3 | 13.5 | 7.9 | -8.4 | 14.2 |
| White | 1,663 | 11.1 | 10.6 | 9.3 | 11.7 | 0.6 | 10.0 |
| High Needs | 663 | 20.7 | 17.5 | 18.3 | 21.7 | 1.0 | 20.1 |
| Econ. Disadvantaged | 447 | 21.7 | 17.5 | 19.3 | 21.9 | 0.2 | 22.9 |
| Students w/ Disabilities | 316 | 21.0 | 21.2 | 19.9 | 26.6 | 5.6 | 20.7 |
| English Learners | 31 | 25.0 | 4.8 | 8.0 | 16.1 | -8.9 | 20.4 |
| All  | 1,851 | 11.3 | 10.3 | 9.9 | 11.9 | 0.6 | 13.2 |
| \*Chronic absence is defined as the percentage of students absent 10 percent or more of their total number of student days of membership in a school. |

**Table B3: Uxbridge Public Schools**

**Expenditures, Chapter 70 State Aid, and Net School Spending Fiscal Years 2017–2019**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|   | **FY17** | **FY18** | **FY19** |
|   | **Estimated** | **Actual** | **Estimated** | **Actual** | **Estimated** | **Actual** |
| Expenditures |
| From local appropriations for schools: |  |
| By school committee | $21,362,431 | $21,097,886 | $20,580,024 | $21,570,487 | $21,362,431 | $21,762,042 |
| By municipality | $12,040,967 | $11,612,313 | $11,238,894 | $10,493,228 | $12,040,967 | $11,331,842 |
| Total from local appropriations | $33,403,398 | $32,710,199 | $31,818,918 | $32,063,715 | $33,403,398 | $33,093,884 |
| From revolving funds and grants | -- | $2,821,531 | -- | $2,700,664 | -- | $2,432,294 |
| Total expenditures | -- | $35,531,730 | -- | $34,764,379 | -- | $35,526,178 |
| Chapter 70 aid to education program |
| Chapter 70 state aid\* | -- | $9,275,834 | -- | $9,331,904 | -- | $9,385,304 |
| Required local contribution | -- | $10,786,060 | -- | $11,060,991 | -- | $11,363,380 |
| Required net school spending\*\* | -- | $20,061,894 | -- | $20,392,895 | -- | $20,748,684 |
| Actual net school spending | -- | $25,473,326 | -- | $25,831,505 | -- | $26,331,983 |
| Over/under required ($) | -- | $5,411,432 | -- | $5,438,610 | -- | $5,583,299 |
| Over/under required (%) | -- | 27.0% | -- | 26.7% | -- | 26.9% |
| \*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 websiteData retrieved 1/13/20 |

**Table B4: Uxbridge Public Schools**

**Expenditures Per In-District Pupil**

**Fiscal Years 2017–2019**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Expenditure Category** | **2017** | **2018** | **2019** |
| Administration | $700 | $906 | $732 |
| Instructional leadership (district and school) | $751 | $885 | $887 |
| Teachers | $5,255 | $5,520 | $5,790 |
| Other teaching services | $1,581 | $1,530 | $1,714 |
| Professional development | $73 | $51 | $49 |
| Instructional materials, equipment and technology | $109 | $149 | $179 |
| Guidance, counseling and testing services | $447 | $462 | $534 |
| Pupil services | $1,421 | $1,422 | $1,400 |
| Operations and maintenance | $1,070 | $1,569 | $1,606 |
| Insurance, retirement and other fixed costs | $2,516 | $2,578 | $2,904 |
| Total expenditures per in-district pupil | $13,923 | $15,071 | $15,796 |
| Sources: [Per-pupil expenditure reports on DESE website](http://www.doe.mass.edu/finance/statistics/per-pupil-exp.html)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** | 12% | 24% | 47% | 18% | 2.7 |
| **MS** | 14% | 39% | 32% | 14% | 2.5 |
| **HS** | 3% | 16% | 56% | 25% | 3.0 |
| **Total #** | 7 | 20 | 35 | 15 | 2.8 |
| **Total %** | 9% | 26% | 45% | 19% |   |
| 2. The teacher ensures that students understand what they should be learning in the lesson and why. | **ES** | 12% | 35% | 53% | 0% | 2.4 |
| **MS** | 11% | 43% | 32% | 14% | 2.5 |
| **HS** | 3% | 28% | 59% | 9% | 2.8 |
| **Total #** | 6 | 27 | 37 | 7 | 2.6 |
| **Total %** | 8% | 35% | 48% | 9% |   |
| 3. The teacher uses appropriate classroom activities well matched to the learning objective(s). | **ES** | 12% | 24% | 53% | 12% | 2.6 |
| **MS** | 11% | 39% | 39% | 11% | 2.5 |
| **HS** | 9% | 31% | 34% | 25% | 2.8 |
| **Total #** | 8 | 25 | 31 | 13 | 2.6 |
| **Total %** | 10% | 32% | 40% | 17% |   |
| 4. The teacher conducts frequent checks for student understanding, provides feedback, and adjusts instruction. | **ES** | 18% | 41% | 35% | 6% | 2.3 |
| **MS** | 18% | 14% | 50% | 18% | 2.7 |
| **HS** | 3% | 28% | 47% | 22% | 2.9 |
| **Total #** | 9 | 20 | 35 | 13 | 2.7 |
| **Total %** | 12% | 26% | 45% | 17% |   |
| **Total Score For Focus Area #1** | **ES** |   |   |   |   | **10.1** |
| **MS** |   |   |   |   | **10.1** |
| **HS** |   |   |   |   | **11.4** |
| **Total** |   |   |   |   | **10.6** |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **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** | 0% | 41% | 47% | 12% | 2.7 |
| **MS** | 11% | 43% | 32% | 14% | 2.5 |
| **HS** | 6% | 19% | 47% | 28% | 3.0 |
| **Total #** | 5 | 25 | 32 | 15 | 2.7 |
| **Total %** | 6% | 32% | 42% | 19% |   |
| 6. Students engage in higher-order thinking. | **ES** | 29% | 24% | 47% | 0% | 2.2 |
| **MS** | 21% | 25% | 36% | 18% | 2.5 |
| **HS** | 22% | 19% | 38% | 22% | 2.6 |
| **Total #** | 18 | 17 | 30 | 12 | 2.5 |
| **Total %** | 23% | 22% | 39% | 16% |   |
| 7. Students communicate their ideas and thinking with each other. | **ES** | 24% | 35% | 41% | 0% | 2.2 |
| **MS** | 29% | 36% | 32% | 4% | 2.1 |
| **HS** | 31% | 19% | 34% | 16% | 2.3 |
| **Total #** | 22 | 22 | 27 | 6 | 2.2 |
| **Total %** | 29% | 29% | 35% | 8% |   |
| 8. Students engage with meaningful, real-world tasks. | **ES** | 29% | 35% | 35% | 0% | 2.1 |
| **MS** | 25% | 36% | 11% | 29% | 2.4 |
| **HS** | 25% | 22% | 22% | 31% | 2.6 |
| **Total #** | 20 | 23 | 16 | 18 | 2.4 |
| **Total %** | 26% | 30% | 21% | 23% |   |
| **Total Score For Focus Area #2** | **ES** |   |   |   |   | **9.1** |
| **MS** |   |   |   |   | **9.5** |
| **HS** |   |   |   |   | **10.5** |
| **Total** |   |   |   |   | **9.8** |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **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** | 24% | 18% | 59% | 0% | 2.4 |
| **MS** | 21% | 18% | 43% | 18% | 2.6 |
| **HS** | 16% | 22% | 44% | 19% | 2.7 |
| **Total #** | 15 | 15 | 36 | 11 | 2.6 |
| **Total %** | 19% | 19% | 47% | 14% |   |
| 10. The teacher uses a variety of instructional strategies. | **ES** | 12% | 35% | 47% | 6% | 2.5 |
| **MS** | 29% | 39% | 18% | 14% | 2.2 |
| **HS** | 19% | 34% | 31% | 16% | 2.4 |
| **Total #** | 16 | 28 | 23 | 10 | 2.4 |
| **Total %** | 21% | 36% | 30% | 13% |   |
| 11. Classroom routines and positive supports are in place to ensure that students behave appropriately. | **ES** | 6% | 18% | 53% | 24% | 2.9 |
| **MS** | 4% | 29% | 39% | 29% | 2.9 |
| **HS** | 3% | 13% | 47% | 38% | 3.2 |
| **Total #** | 3 | 15 | 35 | 24 | 3.0 |
| **Total %** | 4% | 19% | 45% | 31% |   |
| 12. The classroom climate is conducive to teaching and learning. | **ES** | 6% | 18% | 53% | 24% | 2.9 |
| **MS** | 4% | 32% | 32% | 32% | 2.9 |
| **HS** | 3% | 16% | 53% | 28% | 3.1 |
| **Total #** | 3 | 17 | 35 | 22 | 3.0 |
| **Total %** | 4% | 22% | 45% | 29% |   |
| **Total Score For Focus Area #3** | **ES** |   |   |   |   | **10.7** |
| **MS** |   |   |   |   | **10.6** |
| **HS** |   |   |   |   | **11.3** |
| **Total** |   |   |   |   | **10.9** |

1. Before the 2018-2019 school year, Taft served pre-kindergarten through grade 2; Whitin, grades 3-5; and Uxbridge High School, grades 9-12. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Before the 2018-2019 school year, Taft served pre-kindergarten through grade 2; Whitin, grades 3-5; and Uxbridge High School, grades 9-12. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Taft was built in 1954 and Whitin in 1960. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. High-quality feedback is specific, timely, and actionable. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. See the Executive Summary above and the Contextual Background in the Leadership and Governance standard below. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The Gateway to College Program is a national network offering providing an alternative pathway to earn a high high-school diploma for students who have dropped out of school. The Uxbridge Public Schools is the partner district for the Gateway to College Program located at Quinsigamond Community College. Uxbridge High School audits and affirms that students’ coursework is aligns aligned with Uxbridge High School courses and graduation requirements and the district receives a portion of tuition funds. Upon completion of the program, students earn an Uxbridge High School diploma as well as college credits. Of the 36 students enrolled in the Gateway to College Program at the time of the review, three were residents of Uxbridge. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. High-quality feedback is specific, timely, and actionable. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. ACCESS stands for Accessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. WIDA stands for World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. STEAM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. English learners are called English language learners in Uxbridge. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. High-quality feedback is specific, timely, and actionable. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. 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. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Chronic absence is defined as the percentage of students missing 10 percent or more of their days in membership. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)