District Review Report

Assabet Valley Regional Vocational Technical School District

Review conducted May 26–29, 2015

Center for District and School Accountability

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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Assabet Valley RVTSD District Review Overview

Purpose

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

Districts reviewed in the 2014-2015 school year include districts classified into Level 2, Level 3, or Level 4 of ESE’s framework for district accountability and assistance. Review reports may be used by ESE and the district to establish priority for assistance and make resource allocation decisions.

Methodology

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

Site Visit

The site visit to the Assabet Valley Regional Vocational Technical School District was conducted from May 26–29, 2015. The site visit included 34 hours of interviews and focus groups with approximately 95 stakeholders, including school committee members, district administrators, school staff, parents, students, and teachers’ association representatives.

A list of review team members, information about review activities, and the site visit schedule are in Appendix A, and Appendix B provides information about enrollment, student performance, and expenditures. The team observed classroom instructional practice in 36 classrooms: 20 in the academic program and 16 in the vocational/technical program. These were limited to grade 10 in the academic program and grades 9 and 11 in the vocational/technical program.[[1]](#footnote-1) Grade 10 students were taking final exams during the site visit. The review team collected data using an instructional inventory, a tool for recording observed characteristics of standards-based teaching. This data is contained in Appendix C.

**District Profile**

The Assabet Valley Regional Vocational Technical School District provides a vocational/technical education to students from the seven member communities of Berlin, Hudson, Marlborough, Maynard, Northborough, Southborough, and Westborough. The school district also admits about one-third of its students from the five communities of Boylston, Clinton, Leicester, Shrewsbury, and West Boylston.

Marlborough is classified as a city with a mayor-council form of government; the other six member communities operate as towns governed by a board of selectmen and a town manager. The chair of the school committee is elected. The seven school committee members, one from each member community, meet monthly. The current superintendent/director has been in the position since January 1, 2015.

The district central office team includes the superintendent/director, the principal, the director of vocational programs, the director of academic programs, the director of student services, two assistant principals, the coordinator of the licensed practical nursing program, the director of continuing education, and the director of business. The new superintendent/director told the review team that he intends to streamline the group to a six-person executive team beginning in the 2015–2016 school year. Central office positions have been mostly stable in number over the past five years. The district has one principal leading the school. In the 2014–2015 school year, there were 101.5 teachers in the district.

In the 2014–2015 school year, 1,058 students were enrolled in the district’s one vocational technical high school:

**Table 1: Assabet Valley RVTSD**

**Schools, Type, Grades Served, and Enrollment\*, 2014–2015**

| **School Name** | **School Type** | **Grades Served** | **Enrollment** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Assabet Valley Regional Vocational High School\*\* | HS | 9–12 and post graduate | 1,058 |
| \*As of October 1, 2014  \*\*Although the district uses the term “vocational technical school district,” the school identifies itself as a vocational high school. | | | |

Between 2011 and 2015 overall student enrollment increased by 6.1percent. Enrollment figures by race/ethnicity and high needs populations (i.e., students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged students, and English language learners (ELLs) and former ELLs) as compared with the state are provided in Tables B1a and B1b in Appendix B.

Total in-district per-pupil expenditures were similar to the median in-district per pupil expenditures for vocational technical high schools of similar size in fiscal year 2014: $18, 365 as compared with $18, 290 (see [District Analysis and Review Tool Detail: Staffing & Finance](http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/dart/default.html)). From 2012 to 2014, actual net school spending was slightly below and slightly above what is required by the Chapter 70 state education aid program, shown in Table B8 in Appendix B.

Student Performance

**Assabet Valley Regional Vocational is a Level 2 district because Assabet Valley Regional Vocational High School is in Level 2 for not meeting gap narrowing targets.**

* Assabet Valley Regional Vocational High School is in the 34th percentile of high schools and is in Level 2 with a cumulative Progressive Performance Index (PPI) of 64 for all students and 59 for high needs students; the target is 75.

**The ELA Composite Performance Index (CPI) was 94.4 in 2014 and considered on the district’s target of 95.2, and its ELA proficiency rate was below the state rate.**

* 10th grade ELA proficiency rates increased from 82 percent in 2011 to 85 percent in 2014, 5 percentage points below the state rate of 90 percent.

**The math CPI was 85.5 in 2014 below the district’s target of 92.1, and its math proficiency rate was below the state rate.**

* 10th grade math proficiency rates declined 9 percentage points from 77 percent in 2011 to 68 percent in 2014, 11 percentage points below the state rate of 79 percent.

**The science CPI was 87.4 in 2014 below the district’s target of 91.5, and its science proficiency rate was equal to the state rate.**

* 10th grade science proficiency rates were 73 percent in 2011 and 71 percent in 2014, equal to the state rate of 71 percent.

**Students’ growth on the MCAS assessments on average is slower than that of their academic peers statewide in ELA and comparable to that of their academic peers statewide in mathematics.**

* On the 2014 MCAS assessments, the districtwide median student growth percentile (SGP) for ELA was 40.0; the state median SGP was 50.0.
* On the 2014 MCAS assessments, the districtwide median student growth percentile (SGP) for mathematics was 46.0; the state median SGP was 50.0.

**Assabet Valley reached the 2014 four-year cohort graduation target of 80.0 and the five-year cohort graduation target of 85.0 percent.[[2]](#footnote-2)**

* The four-year cohort graduation rate increased from 85.6 percent in 2011 to 93.6 percent in 2014, above the 2014 state rate of 86.1 percent.
* The five-year cohort graduation rate was 93.8 percent in 2010 and 94.1 percent in 2013, above the 2013 state rate of 87.7 percent.
* The annual drop-out rate for Assabet Valley Regional Vocational High School has consistently been below the state rate and was 0.8 percent in 2014, below the statewide rate of 2.0 percent.

Assabet Valley RVTSD District Review Findings

Strengths

***Leadership and Governance***

**1. The recently appointed superintendent/director has a supportive, collaborative, and open leadership style. The superintendent/director has assumed leadership for planning and budgeting functions.**

**A.** Leadership in the school district has gone through a period of transition.

1. The previous superintendent/director submitted a letter of resignation on July 22, 2014, to the school committee. A joint press release from the school committee and the superintendent/director noted an amicable parting because of philosophical differences about the direction of the school. The resignation was effective August 1, 2014.

2. The prior superintendent/director was hired as interim superintendent/director. She prepared the preliminary budget and settled three-year collective bargaining agreements (BBAs) for Units A and B.

3. Following a search process that included internal and external stakeholders, the new superintendent/director was given a contract for January 1, 2015, to June 30, 2016.

**B.** Interviewees said that the superintendent/director has implemented an open-door policy characterized by accessibility and site-based management.

1. The superintendent/director said that he supports the autonomy of the principal and directors to manage building operations and areas of responsibility. He said that he is careful not to circumvent administrators’ authority. The superintendent/director said that when issues are brought to his attention, he inquires whether the individual who has directly approached him has contacted the responsible administrator.

2. The principal told the team that he is very comfortable making the operational decisions for the school and noted that the superintendent/director supports his decisions. The principal said that has unlimited access to the superintendent/director and feels comfortable presenting a different point of view or philosophy.

3. The principal and directors described the superintendent/director as communicative, visible, and respectful of their autonomy.

**C.** District and school leaders view the superintendent/director as supportive, collaborative, and open.

1. One district leader characterized the superintendent/director as collaborative and accessible.

2. School leaders described the superintendent/director as having an understanding of vocational education, using the administrative team to assess the strengths and challenges of the district, and determining the direction for improvement.

**D.** Interviews and a document review indicated that the superintendent/director has assumed leadership for planning and budgeting functions.

1. The principal and school directors are actively involved in the budget development process. With the superintendent/director and the director of business operations the principal has participated in fiscal year 2016 budget presentations to the regional district’s member communities. Six of the seven member communities approved the fiscal year 2016 budget, which reflected a 3.51 percent increase in spending.

2. The principal said that the superintendent/director has restarted the three- to five-year strategic planning process that will inform school improvement planning. The superintendent/director has established five sub-committees of the strategic planning committee to meet independently to develop two goals each.

a. A lead person will be selected for each sub-committee representing student achievement, alumni, community relations, school culture, and facilities.

b. District leaders told the team that they anticipated the strategic plan and action plan to be completed by the fall of 2015, noting that it will inform school improvement planning in a timely way.

**E.**  Teachers’ association officers and teachers echoed other stakeholders’ positive comments about the new superintendent/director.

1. Association officers stated that the superintendent/director is approachable and communicative about association matters.

2. Several teachers characterized the superintendent/director as visible, supportive, and communicative. They told the team that the superintendent/director is frequently seen in the school and at school functions and provides information via e-mail.

**F.** School committee members spoke about the positive impact of the superintendent/director on school culture and climate.

1. School committee members described the superintendent/director as engaging and communicative.

2. School committee members said that they have received comments from parents that the superintendent/director is visible and very well received.

3. Interviews and a document review indicated that the school committee has received reports from the superintendent/director about the state of the school and his ideas about meeting the challenges.

4. Two school committee members serve on the strategic planning committee.

**G.** Town officials, community members, and parents have responded positively to the new leadership.

1. Town officials reported that the superintendent/director is knowledgeable, congenial, and responsive to budget questions.

2. A school committee member recounted a very positive meeting of the Southborough town administrator and finance committee members with the superintendent/director and the favorable town meeting that followed.

3. Two community representatives serve on the strategic planning committee.

**H.** An administrative group is in place to consider district and strategic issues.

1. The administrative group known as the central office team consists of the superintendent/director, the principal, the director of vocational programs, the director of academic programs, the director of student services, two assistant principals, and the coordinator of the licensed practical nursing (LPN) program, the director of continuing education, and the director of business operations. The team meets weekly.

a. The superintendent/director told the team that because his focus is on more global or strategic issues the central office team is being changed to the executive team consisting of the superintendent/director, the principal, the director of vocational programs, the director of academic programs, the director of student services, and the director of business operations.

b. The superintendent/director now meets twice monthly with the coordinator of the LPN program and twice monthly with the director of continuing education.

2. The superintendent/director sets meeting agendas with input from administrators. A review of central office team meeting agendas for March, April, and May 2015 showed that discussion topics included: an update to the fiscal year 2016 budget meetings, the three- to-five-year strategic planning committee, the scheduling of the summer administrator retreat, and electronic grading (iPass).

3. At the time of the review a two-day administrator retreat was planned for July, 2015, to review and modify the school improvement plan, to further develop technology initiatives, to build communication skills and teamwork, and to discuss human resource issues. A three-day off-campus administrator retreat was scheduled for August, 2015, to address district vision, goals, and strategic planning.

**Impact**: A supportive district superintendent/director is responsive to the needs of district and school leaders. An open relationship between the superintendent/director and administrators fosters the collaboration needed to address the district’s challenges. District leaders and stakeholders are involved in the fiscal year 2016 budget process and poised to collegially develop strategic plans to improve student achievement.

***Curriculum and Instruction***

**2. The school is in the midst of a multi-year process to develop a new curriculum based on the Understanding by Design (UbD) framework for both academic and vocational/technical programs, linking curriculum, assessment, and instruction.**

1. The school’s systematic initiative on UbD as a framework to develop and implement curriculum began with the appointment of the academic director in July 2013. A school leader told the team that district achievement results had created a sense of urgency to develop curriculum based on the backward design format linking the evaluation process to the use of formative assessments and essential questions.
   * 1. School leaders reported that before 2013 the school’s curriculum documentation in math and ELA consisted of scope and sequence documents aligned to the 2011 Frameworks.
     2. Before introducing the UbD backward design format to staff and to ensure a deep understanding of the process, in 2013 the academic director and other staff members took an online course in UbD and developed units. An *ad hoc* group of teachers, one from each subject and electives, met for a day at the Assabet Valley Collaborative to discuss essential questions.
     3. During the summer of 2013, teachers and the academic director researched and selected Rubicon Atlas (Atlas) as the school’s online platform for curriculum.
2. At the start of the 2013–2014 school year, the academic director formed the Core Curriculum Team (CCT) to help drive the development of UbD as a curriculum design framework and to begin to develop new units.
   * 1. The CCT is composed of one representative from each of the four core academic departments (math, ELA, science, and social studies) as well as 1 representative from PE/health, 1 from ELA special education, 1 from math special education, 1 elective teacher, and 4 vocational/technical teachers who are responsible for communicating with 13 other vocational/technical areas. Some members from the *ad hoc* group also are on the CCT.

a. A document review indicated that staff apply for a position on the CCT; CCT members, who receive a stipend, are selected annually on the basis of their curriculum knowledge, experience with UbD, expertise with Atlas, and interest.

2. The CCT meets formally each month with the academic director and informally weekly and sometimes daily with him. CCT members in academic departments work with teachers on curriculum during common prep time in teams according to courses taught. All academic teachers (math, ELA, science, and social studies) have a daily common prep. They also meet once a week as a department during common prep time.

1. Ongoing professional development has been provided to the CCT, administrators, and all teachers, to ensure that all staff has a solid understanding of UbD, Stage 1, and Atlas.
   * 1. At the start of the 2013–2014 school year, the CCT received 12 hours of training on Atlas with team members becoming the Atlas trainers for their departments. CCT members, along with the academic director, are responsible for uploading units to the Atlas site.
        1. The CCT adjusted the format and designed the UbD template used in Atlas. For example, Stage 1 of UbD usually consists of standards, enduring understandings, essential questions, content, and skills. The CCT placed the standards in Stage 3 (the learning plan) while language objectives and language development were temporarily placed in Stage 1 (to ensure that the staff were aware of these curricular components for future development).
     2. All staff participated in professional development on essential questions in the fall of 2013 and in Atlas training in June of 2014. In the fall of 2014, a consultant provided all teachers training on Stage 1 (enduring understandings and essential questions) with the CCT doing the training on Atlas (five and one-half hours total). In January 2015, two and one-half hours of professional development time were devoted to Atlas work by department.
     3. School leaders told the team that additional professional development in Stage 2 on assessments was scheduled for the fall of the 2015–2016 and would involve all academic and vocational teachers. CCT members would lead the discussions. Formative, summative, and performance assessments would subsequently be uploaded into Atlas.

a. During the summer of 2015, English and math teachers in grades 9 and 10 are scheduled to spend 5 days working on common assessments. Work is to be completed remotely to be ready for Stage 2 in September 2015.

b. During the 2015–2016 school year Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is to be introduced for the entire faculty as the school moves to develop UbD Stage 3.

1. Interviews and a document review indicated that the school is making good progress in documenting the ELA, math, science, and social studies curriculum in Stage 1 of UbD; progress has not been as steady in most vocational programs.
   * 1. The district has completed Stage 1 in the core subjects. Some units, for example, in social studies, also contain well-developed Stage 2 assessments. The Stage 3 (the learning plan including strategies) is to be addressed in 2016. Literacy standards, in most cases, have been uploaded in their entirety from the 2011 Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and are not specific to units.
     2. While vocational/technical teachers were introduced to the UbD framework in 2013–2014 and have had in-depth conversations about UbD, because vocational/technical teachers do not have common prep time opportunities for collaboration on curriculum are limited to before or after school or during professional development days.

a. All CVTE programs are standards based by design and vocational/technical teachers follow the newly revised 2014 Massachusetts CVTE Frameworks. Interviewees told the team that many of the vocational/technical teachers were involved in 11 of the 2014 frameworks teams during the 2013–2014 school year. Teachers also participated in additional curriculum implementation training for the new standards.

* + 1. Most vocational/technical teachers have not completed Stage 1 in their unit designs. Teachers reported that they do post essential questions, which was confirmed in class observations.

1. Teachers and students told the team that they can see the benefits of a curriculum that is a living document, is standards based, and is focused on understanding.
   * 1. Teachers reported that it is a huge shift having the curriculum on Atlas with everyone having access to it. Teachers stated that they anticipate more interdisciplinary work across the school as a result. In addition, science teachers are able to have links to Gizmo assessments, Power Point presentations, and web links. They said that because the core curriculum team can easily edit and make changes to the curriculum on Atlas they anticipate an easy shift to the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS).
     2. Students told the team that posted essential questions and objectives make them stop and think about what they are learning. They said that they know what they will be doing in class and what they should know by the end of the class.

**Impact**: The comprehensive standards-based curriculum effort based on understanding represents a major shift in how the school thinks about and works to develop curriculum and in how teachers teach and consider how students learn. By providing sufficient time, teacher leadership, and ongoing high quality professional development to train and prepare teachers, the school can equip all stakeholders with a solid foundation and understanding of the UbD framework to document the district’s new curriculum. By having an online platform such as Atlas, the curriculum is accessible to all and is a living document that can be easily modified based on students’ performance and teachers’ new information. Finally, with UbD’s strong connection to ensuring that learning and understanding is taking place through a balanced system of assessments, including performance assessments, student achievement in the district can likely improve.

***Assessment***

**3. The school has made progress in structuring and implementing a comprehensive and balanced assessment system to determine academic placement, career and vocational skill levels, and academic performance. There are plans to expand the assessment system using Understanding by Design (UbD) Stage 2.**

**A.** New students take a battery of ELA and mathematics placement tests to identify their academic strengths and challenges.

1. Leaders noted that entering students arrive with different backgrounds from a dozen school districts. Also, it is difficult for the school to obtain complete and accurate information from some sending districts about entering students. To assess students’ academic levels, the school convenes new students on two Saturdays after admission to take placement tests.

2. Entering students take the GRADE reading assessment of comprehension and vocabulary and a local writing prompt and a numeracy and algebra placement test.

* + 1. Placement tests are used to place students in appropriate ELA sections, and, if added literacy support is needed, in Title I reading and Writers Workshop. The mathematics test helps assign students to appropriate levels of algebra and, if needed, to a Title I numeracy class.
  1. Vocational programs assess students using summative, formative, certification, and some nationally competitive assessments.
     1. An administrator said that common vocational technical program assessments are trade specific and meet 2014 Massachusetts career vocational technical education (CVTE) standards.
     2. Teachers assess student’s progress in attaining program-specific competencies using skills-based performances and knowledge-based assessments aligned to CVTE standards.
     3. Students also take certificate assessments such as Serve-Safe certification in culinary arts and Microsoft certification. Also, some participate in nationally competitive Skills USA assessments. Teachers also noted using Skills Plus each trimester to track competencies.
     4. Teachers and administrators said that District-Determined Measures (DDMs) have been developed for all vocational programs and are being implemented this year for the first time. DDMs may include common assessments such as the American Welding Society examination for the Metal Fabrication and Welding Program. Other vocational DDMs follow a pre-test, mid-term and post-test/final exam model to enable students to see progress in their learning. Other DDMs may be performance based to demonstrate skill development.
     5. With the introduction of the 2014 Massachusetts CVTE standards, the vocational programs now require students to write more. To assess writing, vocational teachers reported seeking rubrics from English teachers or from the “best practices” section of the school’s “hard drive.”
     6. An administrator pointed out that the common assessments and all summative assessments now require modified versions for all English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities.

1. Interviews and a document review indicated that in the academic programs, teachers diagnose students’ needs, review progress, and evaluate their achievement using multiple assessment formats.
   * 1. In the four core academic subjects, all students in grades 9–11 take teacher-developed mid-term and final exams. Interviewees said that the goal for next year is to have common assessments by course.
     2. Because of the decline in students’ writing results on MCAS open-response items,[[3]](#footnote-3) the school has focused attention across the curriculum on writing by having students practice weekly open-response items. (See the third Assessment Strength finding below.)

a. During each academic week in ELA, mathematics, and science courses, freshmen and sophomores complete “MCAS weeklies.” These assessments include several released MCAS questions and an open-response writing prompt.

b. Twice a year in ELA, all students complete a three-paragraph open-response essay and a five-paragraph critical essay. These essays also now serve as DDMs for ELA.

* + 1. The GRADE assessment is used to assess progress in reading for Title I students in grades 9–12. In mathematics, grade 9 Title I students take the Stanford 10 assessment. In 2015–2016, grade 10 Title I students will also do so.
    2. In ELA, mathematics, and science, grade 10 students complete benchmark assessments each term, i.e., three times a year.
    3. Students in algebra I, geometry, and algebra II take midterms and finals as well as a pre-test at the start of the year and a post-test at the end of the year. For grade 10 students, this “mock MCAS” pre- and post-test uses MCAS-formatted items. These are teacher-developed tests; all are now used as DDMs in mathematics. Students in grades 11 and 12 take final exams in pre-calculus and Introduction to calculus.

6. Students in grades 11 and 12 also take the Accuplacer mathematics test to assess their problem solving abilities in college-level mathematics.

7. Science courses also provide multiple measures of student progress and achievement. Students in cellular evolutionary lab biology, systemic biology lab, and physics take pre- and post-tests; these are now used by science teachers as DDMs. Mid-terms are given in physics, and final exams are given in cellular evolutionary lab biology and chemistry.

**D.** Teachers and leaders reported that they are preparing for the development of new assessments under UbD’s Stage 2 (Assessment).

1. In 2015–2016, the school plans to focus on the development of new assessments, once staff have had professional development and practice in Stage 2.

2. This school year, teachers have been asked to post current assessments on the Rubicon Atlas platform. These will be discussed next year as new assessments are created with the goal of developing more common assessments and new curriculum-embedded performance assessments that assess students’ understanding and application of knowledge.

**Impact**: By developing and administering a thoughtful and varied set of diagnostic, benchmark, formative, and summative assessments, educators are able to understand students’ learning needs, can better monitor their progress, and can measure achievement in multiple ways. In addition, the range of diagnostic and formative assessments ensures that entering students and struggling students are appropriately assigned to courses and levels. In addition, with a balanced assessment system, teachers, students and families can better understand students’ strengths and learning challenges. In the vocational area specifically, students are assured of multiple opportunities to demonstrate what they know and can do in order to achieve higher and higher competency levels and to attain various certifications in their chosen vocations.

**4. The school has identified formative assessments as a key classroom strategy to check for students’ understanding and teachers have made good progress in using them.**

1. The school has identified formative assessments as an essential component of the Understanding by Design (UbD) framework and has supported teachers in learning to use them.

When the school introduced UbD in 2013, it began with three elements of the framework: essential questions (to guide teaching and identify important ideas for the subject/topic); formative assessments (to check understanding); and backward design (to ensure that teachers identify desired results, determine acceptable evidence of understanding, and plan learning experiences and instruction).

An administrator stated that the school set the expectation for broad use of formative assessments and then provided professional development to help teachers learn to design them. Also, common prep time in the academic program and less frequent “Aztec Time” in the vocational program offered teachers time to collaborate and develop formative assessments.

Teachers 21 provided a four-session professional development class on the use of formative assessments. The participating 22 teachers are now sharing their learning with colleagues.

The mentor program for first- and second-year teachers includes classes on assessments and formative assessments to help new teachers develop their assessment skills.

1. Formative assessment is one of the seven indicators (out of a possible 33) that the district has identified as “power indicators” to use in the educator evaluation process.

The walkthrough form used for both academic and vocational observations includes several indicators to observe formative assessments such as “evidence of formative assessment(s)” in the well-structured lesson plan section and “formative assessment” in the variety of assessment methods section. When noting types of assessments observed, the evaluator can indicate the frequency of “checks for understanding.”

Teachers reported receiving quick feedback on formative assessments after walkthroughs. A vocational teacher noted that the feedback showed him where his challenges were and how to improve instruction. An academic teacher said that instant feedback provided useful information and she now knew “how [her] teaching looked through someone else’s eyes.”

1. Teachers reported a more frequent use of formative assessments and described how these assessments indicate how well students have understood lesson objectives.

Vocational teachers told the team that formative assessments are now more intentional and help identify where and how to improve teaching.

One teacher reported that in a recent survey of students about teaching, when asked whether teachers check for understanding students noted an absence of formative assessments. As a result, the teacher now uses more formative assessments, provides clearer explanations, and does not assume that students understand the lesson.

**D.** In the vocational programs, the notion of formative assessments is embedded in how classes are structured and taught and in how students learn. Vocational lessons require students to progress through sequential and scaffolded steps in skills, projects and assignments to demonstrate competency.

**E.** Teachers and leaders described various formative assessment strategies used in lessons.

1. Technology-assisted assessments such as Socrative enable teachers to engage and to assess students on tablets, laptops, and smartphones in real time. The use of interactive clickers for instant feedback, exit tickets, Google forms for a short quiz, spreadsheet data, and other devices such as putting a poker chip in a box help measure understanding. Some teachers use “Gist” to summarize students’ reading comprehension. Science teachers use “Gizmo” to check understanding and, if needed, to regenerate a quiz.

2. Pre- and post-tests in algebra, geometry, and in the vocational programs are used formatively to inform teachers about students’ growth, strengths, and challenges and also to help guide instruction and curriculum planning.

**F.**  The school has worked to develop teachers’ skills in using formative assessments. During lesson observations, review team members noted that teachers conducted frequent formative assessments to check for understanding and inform instruction in 87 percent of vocational classes and in 90 percent of academic classes.

**Impact**: The school’s prioritization of formative assessments and its commitment to supporting teachers in their use can result in improved teaching and learning. Many teachers can now meet students at their current level of understanding by identifying learning gaps before moving on to next steps in teaching and lesson planning. Good formative assessments can provide useful and actionable information about where students are in the learning progression and where adjustments and fine-tuning need to take place in curriculum and instruction.

**5. The school has analyzed MCAS results, prioritized strengthening students’ writing skills on open-response items, and developed strategies to improve students’ performance.**

1. MCAS results are reported to staff in a timely and thorough presentation that describes comparative achievement and growth scores, including those for subgroups.

1. The academic director presents MCAS results at a fall faculty meeting and also has follow-up discussions with each department. In addition, he discusses MCAS results at team meetings with lead teachers and the core curriculum team.

2. Interviewees told the team that students have not performed well on MCAS open-response items in recent years compared with state rates, with ELA and mathematics results showing an overall decline between 2012 and 2014.

a. According to ESE data, in 2012 84 percent of students districtwide averaged 2 or above on open-response ELA items compared with 85 percent for the state; in 2013, 88 percent averaged 2 or above, compared with 88 percent for the state; and in 2014, 72 percent averaged 2 or above, compared with 83 percent for the state.

b. In 2012, 82 percent of students averaged 2 or above on open-response math items compared with 76 percent for the state; in 2013, 68 percent averaged 2 or above, compared with 76 percent for the state; and in 2014, 58 percent averaged 2 or above, compared with 72 percent for the state.

**B.** Teachers discuss MCAS results and other assessments during common prep time or department meetings to develop strategies to improve curriculum and instruction. A number of newly instituted strategies have been developed to improve student students’ performance on open- response items in MCAS tests.

1. Each week, grade 9 and 10 students practice MCAS-type assessments in ELA, mathematics, and science, called “MCAS Weeklies.” These assessments consist of released MCAS questions and open-response writing prompts. Next year, social studies will also require these assessments.
2. In ELA, mathematics, science, social studies, and health classes, students also complete weekly open-response questions using a graphic organizer to organize their ideas. These writing prompts are based on class content. Teachers assess students’ writing using a common short-answer essay rubric.
3. In addition, the school has put in place MCAS Across the Curriculum class (MCAS ATC) for grade 10 students during vocational weeks. Students do open-response writing in vocational classes using Study Island MCAS preparation software.
4. In ELA, teachers have sequenced the development and assessment of writing skills by requiring that all students write a three-paragraph open-response essay twice a year and a five-paragraph critical essay twice a year. In addition, juniors complete a research paper and seniors submit a capstone project, a research essay related to their vocational shop.
5. With the implementation of the 2014 Massachusetts CVTE standards, teachers in the vocational areas have enhanced student writing in all programs. In addition, some grade 10 students are pulled out of technical programs twice a month to work on writing with a literacy or math teacher who can help them with writing or math, depending on their needs.

**C.** The school has provided professional development to improve the teaching of open-response writing.

1. In October 2014, Seaside Consulting provided three hours of professional development for ELA and social studies teachers to strengthen the teaching of open response writing.

**D.** The team did not find evidence that the school has developed a writing program to improve students’ writing skills across the curriculum.

**Impact**: With a clear and timely analysis of MCAS results, the school has identified writing as a skill in need of added support, particularly students’ abilities to respond well to open-response items. By introducing frequent open-response writing assignments, teachers can help more students succeed in MCAS open-response questions in particular and improve their writing skills in general. As the school continues to develop curriculum based on the Understanding by Design framework it is poised to develop a common writing program to fully develop students’ writing skills using multiple genres of writing across the curriculum. Building strong thinking and communication skills through good writing can serve all students well in careers, future work, and study.

***Human Resources and Professional Development***

**6. The school has implemented its educator evaluation system consistent with educator evaluation regulations. Administrators and teachers have worked closely to design and implement the system’s components.**

**A.**  As a Race to the Top (RTTT) district, Assabet Valley was an early implementer of an evaluation system aligned to the educator evaluation regulations passed by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education in June 2011. Administrators and teachers told the review team that in 2011–2012 the then superintendent formed a broad-based labor-management committee composed of administrators, lead teachers, and Assabet Valley Federation of Teachers (Federation) representatives to oversee the development and implementation of the system.

1. Administrators said that the process was´” collaborative and transparent” and Federation representatives confirmed their participation in the design and implementation of all major components of the system.

2. In 2014–2015, the third year of implementation, the committee membership was reduced to one administrator and two teachers (one academic and one vocational), because much of the work had been completed.

**B**. Assabet Valley has implemented the components of the educator evaluation system incrementally and completely.

1. Interviewees told the review team and documents confirmed that the school adopted ESE’s model system and the state’s model collective bargaining contract language in 2012 and there have been no substantive changes since in the collective bargaining contract language.

2. The school provided the ESE-required training for teachers and administrators during the summer and fall of 2012.

3. The school has developed standard protocols and procedures to collect, log, and store evaluative data and documents and has purchased a database to track and monitor the components, stages, and timelines.

a. The review team was told that the principal is responsible for overall management of the system, including conformance with the timelines.

1. b. The school provided the review team anonymous examples of teacher evidence collections for the family and community engagement and professional culture standards, because this evidence is not currently stored on the database. Administrators said that teachers were also required to furnish evidence of their progress toward re-certification under their individual professional development plans and of the extra help they had given to students who had failed a class. They added that teacher attendance was considered in the overall evaluation of teacher performance.

4. Administrators said that the principal, two assistant principals, the director of academic programs, the director of vocational programs, and the director of student services each observe and evaluate approximately 20 teachers.

a. The school keeps a detailed master schedule, which lists administrative assignments and the due dates for self-assessments, educator plans, observations, and evaluations.

b. A review of a random sample of 20 teachers’ personnel files indicated that self-assessments, educator plans, and formative assessments/evaluations and summative evaluations were completed and timely for all teachers.

5. Administrators told the review team that although their caseloads were high, observing and conferring with teachers was a high priority and they “made the time to do it.” They added that they often discussed the quality of instruction at their weekly meetings and sometimes conducted schoolwide learning walks immediately following these meetings to determine the prevalence of a particular instructional practice under discussion.

a. Administrators said and a document review indicated that they observed teachers without professional status six to ten times annually and more often when teachers struggled or requested targeted feedback.

6. Administrators told the review team that in order to narrow the focus for the current year they had emphasized 7 of the 33 elements of the 4 standards in ESE’s teacher rubric. They said that doing this had “made the long list less overwhelming” for both teachers and administrators. A document review indicated that the focus elements selected for each standard were as follows:

a. Well Structured Lessons and Variety of Assessment Methods (for Curriculum Planning and Assessment);

b. Student Engagement, Meeting Diverse Needs, and Collaborative Learning Environment (for Teaching All Students) ;

c. Two-Way Communication (for Family and Community Engagement); and

d. Professional Collaboration (for Professional Culture).

7. Evidence for each of the seven elements included Think/Pair/ Share, exit tickets, quizzes, and thumbs up/down.

8. Interviews with administrators and a document review indicated that District-Determined Measures (DDMs) were administered in each academic course and career vocational area at two points to determine student growth.

a. The academic course DDMs included: a research plan submitted in the fall and a final project completed in the spring in biotechnology, both of which were evaluated with a rubric; three-paragraph essays written in September and April, and five-paragraph essays written in December and May in English 11, all of which were evaluated with a rubric; and pre- and post-tests for social studies units at multiple grade levels to determine prior knowledge and learning gains.

b. The vocational area DDMs in plumbing, carpentry, and auto body consisted of an assessment of prior knowledge and skill in the fall and a spring project evaluated with a rubric.

9. The school piloted an eight-question student survey in May 2015. This survey will be used to inform teachers’ evaluations. Students in each teacher’s first period class responded to questions based on the seven focus areas, such as whether the teacher posted and explained objectives and whether the teacher checked for student understanding. The eighth question was open ended.

a. Administrators told the review team that they provided teachers with the results for their own students and suggested that in this initial year these data might be useful in the self-analysis and goal-setting phases of the evaluation process.

b. Administrators said that most teachers were not ready to share student survey results with colleagues. They added that the questionnaire needed refinement and standardization and would be administered to more than one class in the future.

c. Teachers told the review team that the student survey was enlightening, especially students’ comments in the open-response section.

10. The review team was told that the school would administer a staff survey in June 2015. This survey will be used to inform administrators’ evaluations.

**C.** Teachers and administrators have embraced the new educator evaluation system as a means for professional improvement.

1**.** Administrators told the review team that an open, collaborative approach, which they called “the growth model,” has helped to foster acceptance and understanding of the system. They went on to say that since the implementation of the system, decisions about teaching and learning were based on evidence and teachers and administrators were using a common vocabulary to describe the characteristics of high-quality instruction.

2. Federation representatives said that the new educator evaluation system has met a need in the school to enhance supervision and evaluation because “too little had been done in the past.”

3. In multiple interviews, teachers were positive about the new educator evaluation system and expressed receptivity to feedback. A typical comment was: “It’s always good to see my class through the eyes of another person.”

**Impact**: The district has demonstrated a strong commitment to implementing the educator evaluation system with fidelity. If district leaders remain fully committed to the collaborative implementation of the educator evaluation system and to providing ongoing support structures and targeted training for teachers and administrators, the likely result will be continuous and comprehensive improvement in learning opportunities and academic programs and outcomes for all students.

**7. Professional development planning is broad based and inclusive. The professional development program is informed by the School Improvement Plan, student performance, teacher evaluation results, and industry requirements, and is evaluated.**

**A.** Administrators told the review team that the school’s professional development plan is developed collaboratively by the core curriculum team consisting ofadministrators, special educators, academic, and vocational teachers as well as the leadteachers in the career and vocational areas.Administrators finalize plans in the summer and publish a yearly calendar.

**B.** A document review indicated that the school schedules professional development on full days in August, October, and January. Administrators said that professional development also takes place during a portion of the faculty meetings held in September, November, February, March, April, and June, and during monthly departmental meetings from September through May.

**C.** In addition, the school also offers voluntary extended-day professional development sessions. These sessions are often devoted to technology training. Each semester, by arrangement with a local college, the school offers an undergraduate or graduate-level course onsite in the late afternoon or early evening. The course topics are determined by a faculty-needs assessment. The collective bargaining agreement contains a provision for tuition reimbursement of up to $3,400 per teacher over three contract years.

**D.** The professional development plan is informed by multiple sources.

1. The topics of the professional development program are closely correlated with the goals of the School Improvement Plan. For example, the sessions on Understanding by Design are aligned with the goals on development of the academic and career vocational curricula (Curriculum, Planning and Assessment, Goal #4) and those on the educator evaluation system are aligned with the goals on improving teaching and learning (School Improvement Action Plan on Professional Culture.)

a. In multiple interviews, administrators and teachers said that these critical offerings had enabled staff to understand and implement the school’s curriculum development and educator evaluation initiatives.

2. The professional development program is informed by student performance results. For example, sessions on writing and reading across the curriculum and on close reading are in direct response to student performance results on open-response sections of MCAS tests. Offerings on numeracy and Algebra II directly respond to declining math proficiency. These programs are also in alignment with the MCAS performance goals in the school improvement plan (Curriculum, Planning and Assessment, Goals 1-3).

3. Administrators told the review team that the program advisory committees in career and vocational areas recommend offerings to keep teachers current with industry standards and expectations. Assabet Valley underwrites fees for workshops, conferences, and organization memberships. A document review indicated that Assabet Valley also has underwritten an extensive and wide-ranging list of external programs attended by career and vocational teachers this school year and last. Some were national conferences held out of state.

a. In multiple interviews, administrators and teachers stated that these offerings resulted in increased third-party certifications for students in their trades, awards for high programmatic standards and quality, such as in auto body, and high post-secondary education and employment rates for Assabet students.

4. Administrators said that the sessions offered in the current year on differentiation, classroom management, and formative assessment were in direct response to teachers’ needs identified through walkthroughs.

**E.** Administrators and teachers stated and a document review indicated that teachers complete surveys about the effectiveness of onsite professional development programs. Teachers’ evaluations of external programs determine whether the school continues to sponsor these programs.

**F.** Of those Assabet Valley teachers who responded to the 2014 TELL Massachusetts Survey, 99 percent agreed that professional development opportunities are aligned with the school’s improvement plan; 90 percent agreed that professional development enhances teachers’ ability to implement instructional strategies that meet diverse student learning; and 92 percent agreed that professional development enhances teachers’ abilities to improve student learning.

**Impact:** Involving all stakeholders in the formulation of the district’s professional development offerings ensures that professional development opportunities are designed to meet differentiated teacher needs in order to expand and improve their professional competencies. The explicit connection between the School Improvement Plan and the professional development program positions the school to meet educational goals and improve student achievement.

***Student Support***

**8. The school has created a compassionate and welcoming environment for students from a variety of sending districts. Staff and parents work to use and add to every available resource in this endeavor. Students feel cared for and supported*.***

**A.** District leaders have put in a place a program to ensure a smooth transition to this regional school.

1. The school invites parents and entering students to an informational meeting in late June.

2. Freshmen benefit from a two-day orientation session. During orientation, students learn their way around the school and attend two exploratory sessions, one on curriculum and another on vocational/technical programs. They experience a typical day at the school and meet guidance staff who participate actively in the orientation.

3.During orientation, freshmen become acquainted with their Teacher Advisory Group (TAG) counselors. Each teacher/counselor serves as an advisor to a group of 10 to 12 students. TAG counselors assist with various activities such as scavenger hunts as well as with discussions on safety. Throughout the school year, TAG counselors meet with their groups of freshman six times throughout the school year to review topics such as bullying, time management, note-taking skills, and shop selection.

**B.** The principal meets monthly with high-risk seniors to help keep them in school and on track for receiving their diplomas.

1. Saturday School has been revamped to help students with credit recovery after excessive absence. Students use APEX to access coursework and practice assignments so this time can be spent on assignments coordinated with current coursework and in line with the *2011 Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks*.

2. Both the four-year graduation rate (93.6 percent) and the drop-out rate (4.3 percent) for the four-year cohort of students are better than the state rates for this cohort, 86.1 percent and 5.6 percent, respectively.

**C.** The school offers opportunities for student support.

1. Academic teachers hold afternoon sessions twice weekly and vocational teachers hold afternoon sessions once weekly, on Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday. Students are encouraged to attend and administrators ensure that sessions take place.

2. The school also offers MCAS academies and an after-school homework help session in the library several days midweek. MCAS academies are also offered during the summer.

3. Parents reported that teachers return emails and phone calls quickly and phone parents at the first sign of lagging student performance.

4. Teachers frequently serve as official or unofficial mentors to students. Students reported going to particular teachers or guidance counselors for guidance. The school provides stipends to teachers who serve as official at-risk mentors for eight weeks to students identified and referred by the Student Support Team. Students often continue to check in with their mentor after the assigned period.

5. The guidance department serves as a liaison with the parents and between teachers and the Student Support Team. Counselors locate learning resources for students, and the school psychologist makes referrals for families about health and housing.

6. Several parents mentioned supportive coaches and counselors and described the ways in which the staff went to extraordinary lengths to help their children, including processing a last-minute admission and assisting students with special needs after school. They also reported that career planning starts early.

1. The school and the guidance department have provided additional support services for children and families. Through a program known as Assabet Valley Cares a clinician offers special services for children transitioning back to school from hospitalization for social, emotional, or medical reasons. The school also has a relationship with Assabet Valley collaborative, the Family Success Partnership, which brings together representatives from education, social work, medicine, and state government to support students and families whose medical health challenges hinder their wellbeing and success in school. These services help to stabilize the home life of some students.
2. Parents reported feeling confident that their children are safe. One parent recounted special planning made for her daughter who has physical limitations.
3. Parents said that the school encourages parent involvement and works with them to promote student success.
   * 1. Parents have established an auxiliary to support a new JROTC Marine Corps program and reported many benefits to the cadets in that program.
     2. Parents are also members of the Booster Club, Parent Advisory Committee, and mentor school clubs. Community members provide co-op jobs to students as well as volunteer for ad hoc committees for various school events, which are well attended by the school community.

**G.** Students reported feeling safe at school. They have been taught the ALICE (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate) protocol. Students also reported feeling welcome in the school. They told the team that they are happy with the opportunities to gain a head start on college and career, and with the free sports, absence of bullying, new friendships, which were easily made, supportive teachers, and helpful guidance counselors.

**Impact**: In providing thoughtful programs to integrate students into the life of the school, supporting them in their studies, addressing social/emotional and family needs as well as involving parents in their child’s education, the school has created a nurturing and welcoming environment for students where they can learn and thrive.

**Challenges and Areas for Growth**

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

Curriculum and Instruction

**9. The school does not have explicit mid-level leadership roles in the academic program to provide curricular and instructional expertise and support to teachers in the core content areas.**

**A.** Interviews and a document review indicated that the academic director has multi-faceted responsibilities connected to all aspects of the curricular and instructional needs of the academic program.

1. One of the primary roles of the academic director is to oversee the academic curriculum, assessments, and data. The academic director primarily leads all curriculum endeavors, including the initiative to implement the Understanding by Design (UbD) framework schoolwide.

2. The academic director plays a key role in the planning and delivery of professional development relating to teaching and learning and to supporting the UbD initiative. In addition, the academic director oversees the Title I program and the AP program.

3. As one of five primary evaluators in the school, the academic director also supervises and evaluates half of the teachers in the academic program.

**B.** While lead teachers have a number of responsibilities related to curriculum and instruction in their job description, teachers and school leaders said that they viewed the role as a largely managerial one, without requiring content and instructional expertise.

1. The academic lead teacher job description covers a range of managerial tasks, but also includes a number of responsibilities that support curriculum and instruction. They include dealing with problems that affect the curriculum; assisting staff members in matters relating to instruction; analyzing standardized assessment data, including identifying areas of strengths and challenges; and making recommendations for program improvements.

2. Academic lead teacher is a yearly, appointed, stipended position held by full-time teachers who give up a half of a prep period to fulfill responsibilities. There are seven academic lead teachers, one in each core academic subject as well as in physical education, special education, and guidance. They meet monthly as a group with the academic director, lead monthly department meetings, and meet weekly with teams of teachers during common prep time.

3. When asked about the role of lead teachers, interviewees described them as a conduit to explain and share information from the academic director to teachers in their departments to ensure that everyone has a common understanding. Organizational information is shared as well as information about curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

4. School leaders told the team that the role of lead teachers is primarily organizational and includes ordering textbooks and materials, scheduling subs, participating in hiring decisions, and recommending professional development for the department.

5. The team was told that the role of lead teachers varies by department. For example, in the English department the lead teacher guides the team as members look at data and discuss strengths and challenges. Best practices and effective strategies are discussed at department meetings. Interviewees said that one outcome of discussions was a schoolwide graphic organizer for MCAS open-response practice essays.

6. Teachers reported and a document review confirmed that lead teachers do not have an evaluative or supervisory role. Lead teachers do not conduct walkthroughs or give formative feedback to teachers.

**C**. The Core Curriculum Team (CCT) was created to drive the UbD initiative. Academic CCT members also provide curricular support to teachers.

1. A document review indicated no job description for CCT members.

2. The CCT is composed of 12 teachers, one from each of the four core departments, plus special education teachers in ELA and math, one elective teacher, and four vocational/technical teachers. For a full description of the CCT, see the Curriculum and Instruction Strength finding above.

a. School leaders described CCT members as generally having stronger curriculum expertise than lead teachers.

3. The CCT meets formally each month with the academic director. CCT members in academic departments work with teachers on curriculum development using the backward design format during department meetings and in daily common prep time. School leaders named the CCT members as content experts. They also are experts in Atlas and they, along with the academic director, vet units as a team and upload curriculum onto Atlas.

4. When the team asked school leaders who teachers go to for academic content support, they identified CCT members from ELA, math, science, and social studies as the curriculum experts. Teachers noted they also rely on each other for content support during common prep time.

**D**. There is an absence of clarity about instructional leadership in the academic program.

1.Teachers and school leaders described different sources of instructional support.

a. When the team asked school leaders to identify instructional leaders, they named the principal, the two directors (academic and vocational/technical), the two assistant principals, and the director of student services. All supervise and evaluate.

b. When teachers were asked to identify instructional leaders, some named the academic director, while others suggested that the director sets direction, but is not an instructional leader.

c. Teachers did not identify other administrators who conduct observations and give them feedback on instruction as instructional leaders. Nor did they name lead teachers as having any role in instructional leadership. CCT members suggested that instructional leadership comes from the team itself.

**Impact**: Without clearly defined mid-level curricular and instructional leadership, it is challenging for the school to implement the UbD initiative with fidelity and to provide teachers with strong content support to do so. Without identified mid-level leadership roles, the school is missing the opportunity to provide a strong training ground for future curricular and instructional leaders. Finally, without clearly defined mid-level instructional leadership, teachers may not be getting the consistent instructional support required to effectively implement standards-based teaching and learning practices.

**10. The school has not developed a strategy to implement College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Literacy in all core content areas and in the vocational/technical programs.**

1. The school has 90 days during the school year to cover academic content because of the split schedule of one week of academics and one week of vocational programs. This makes it challenging to addressing all components of the *2011 Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks*.

1. School leaders reported that ELA and math were aligned to the 2011 state frameworks with scope and sequence documents developed to reflect the shift (2012–2013) to the new framework. With 90 days to cover content, the school has focused on the power standards in ELA and in math. This alignment of curriculum to the 2011 state frameworks did not include a strategy to address literacy anchor standards across the curriculum.

2. The team was told that although teachers received professional development on anchor literacy standards, implementing them is a “work in progress.”

3. The current strategy to address anchor literacy standards is to embed them in all chosen power standards. An administrator noted, “There is not a single standard we teach that should not have reading, writing, speaking, listening and assessment components to it.”

1. As the school has developed Understanding by Design (UbD), the literacy anchor standard texts have been uploaded onto Atlas in academic units, and to a lesser extent in vocational/ technical units. However, literacy anchor standards have not been well integrated into teaching and learning.

1. A document review indicated that the academic units contain anchor standards, but the standards in most units are not specific to the learning activities. School leaders said that as the school progresses with UbD and moves into Stage 3 (the learning plan) in 2016–2017, anchor literacy standards are to be more specific to units.

a. Academic teachers stated that literacy standards have not been addressed systematically, but that teachers have included more reading and writing in the curriculum. Teachers gave the example of weekly MCAS open- response practice in math, ELA, and science, in grades 9 and 10.

2. A document review indicated that literacy anchor standards have not been uploaded in most career/vocational units. While a number of units did contain literacy standards, most were not specific to the unit; just the uploaded text of the standards was present.

a. Vocational/technical teachers reported that the new CVTE standards (July 2014) have embedded ELA and math academic standards.

b. The team was told that without a cohesive approach to literacy, individual vocational/technical teachers are addressing literacy. For example, teachers reported that they are enhancing opportunities for students to write. In one program, students write a blog and follow a rubric. In another program, students interpret code items in their own words, and write them in a notebook.

c. School leaders described the literacy standards in the vocational/technical programs as a work in progress with more professional development needed for reading and writing.

1. School leaders have focused on writing to open-response prompts.

For example, MCAS Across the Curriculum (MCAS ATC) takes place weekly for one hour for all grade 10 students during vocational weeks. Students work on open-response questions in math, ELA, and science.

2. Students in grades 9 and 10 do MCAS weekly open-response items in ELA, math, and science.

3. School leaders reported that beginning in September 2015, ELA students in grades 9 and 10 will be required to “log and blog” during both academic and shop weeks about specific reading excerpts to enhance their reading, writing, speaking, and listening experiences.

**D**. The school has not developed common rubrics for the range of literacy tasks and genres.

1. The school has not developed additional common resources for literacy across the curriculum to help teachers plan instruction and give students guidance as they develop their skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening. For example, the school has not developed common rubrics such as one for oral presentations aligned with the literacy standards.

2. When asked about schoolwide common rubrics, teachers gave the single example of the schoolwide graphic organizer and rubric used to grade 3 and 5 paragraph essays for MCAS open-response practice essays.

3. Teachers also told the team that when they need a rubric (for literacy assignment) they turn to the online repository of best practices.

**Impact:** Without developing a strategy to embed literacy anchor standards across the curriculum, the district cannot guarantee that students have the reading comprehension, writing, speaking and listening skills needed to succeed in college and career.

**11. The school’s instructional goals for well-structured lessons, a variety of assessments, student engagement, meeting the needs of diverse learners, and collaborative learning were not consistently reflected in observed classrooms. Additional instructional practices that are characteristic of standards-based teaching and learning were also inconsistently observed.**

The team observed 36 classes at the vocational/technical high school: 6 ELA classes, 7 mathematics classes, 4 science classes and 3 classes in other subject areas, and 16 classes in the vocational/technical program. The observations were approximately 20 minutes in length. All review team members collected data using ESE’s instructional inventory, a tool for recording observed characteristics of standards-based teaching. This data is presented in Appendix C. The team observed a smaller number of academic classes than usual because of the schedule. Classroom observations in academic subjects were limited to grade 10. Grade 10 students were taking final exams at the time of the onsite review. The team also observed students in grade 9 and 11 in classes in vocational/technical programs. However, a number of shops were providing offsite community services and were not available. Grade 12 students had already completed their final exams and were no longer present at school.

**A.** Well-structured lessons that include learning objectives and essential questions were identified by school leaders as one of the instructional expectations for the school.

1. Observers found clear and consistent evidence of teachers communicating learning clear objectives aligned to the *2011 Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks* (# 8) in 69 percent (25 of 36) of classes observed in the school.

2. In most vocational/technical classes, learning objectives and essential questions along with 2014 CVTE standards were posted. For example, in one shop, the essential question asked, “How does manufacturing contribute to the economy?” Observers noted that, when asked, students were able to explain the learning objectives in their own words.

3. Both essential questions and learning objectives were also posted in most academic classes. For example, the essential question in one ELA class asked, “How do people choose between honesty and dishonesty?” and the learning objective was “Examine the significance and purpose of propaganda.” In addition, observers noted examples of teachers referencing learning objectives at transition points during lessons.

**B**. Classroom observations reflected an emerging use of formative assessments to check for understanding and to inform instruction (# 15).

1. Observers found clear and consistent evidence that teachers frequently used formative assessments in 56 percent (20 of 36) of classes observed.

a. Examples of effective formative assessment practices in academic classes included the use of learning Gizmos to check on students’ and group performance, think-pair-share activities with the teacher checking in continually, multiple formative assessments culminating in an “Exit” ticket, and iPads used for a formative test.

b. Examples of effective formative assessments in vocational/technical classes included teachers checking continually on students as they worked on projects and assessing and recording their progress and students in a cosmetology class completing performance assessments for District-Determined Measures (DDMs).

2. Observers noted classes where formative assessments were less effective. For example, in one class a single exit ticket was used at the end of the class. In another class, formative assessments were limited to the teacher asking, “Any questions?”

**C**. While student engagement is a focus of the school, the team did not consistently observe academic tasks that challenged and fully engaged students.

1. Observers found clear and consistent evidence that students were fully engaged in academic tasks that reflected rigor and high expectations (# 7) in 47 percent (17 of 36) of classes observed.

a. Examples of challenging academic tasks that fully engaged students included a “do now” activity requiring students to synthesize newspaper articles, students involved in a close reading assignment, and students reflecting on the objectives of the lesson. In a vocational/technical class, students in a CAD class demonstrated their interpretation of selected children’s poems by creating illustrations of the poems.

b. Tasks observed by the team that were not challenging include students answering questions based exclusively on factual recall and students copying material from a white board for the entire class period with no provisions made for students finishing early.

**D**. Although meeting the diverse needs of learners is an instructional goal, the team did not consistently observe modifications to meet students’ learning needs.

1. The team found clear and consistent evidence of meeting the needs of all learners (# 10) in only 39 percent (14 of 36) of classes observed**.** In most academic classes, observers noted students all doing the same thing with little evidence of activities purposefully selected to meet students’ needs.

a. Appropriate modifications in academic classes were more often limited to providing students with graphic organizers and rubrics. The team observed few examples of explicit instruction in vocabulary and only one example of content presented in multiple levels of complexity.

b. In vocational/technical classes, the team observed limited examples of content differentiation and explicit instruction in technical vocabulary for students with disabilities.

2. Observers found clear and consistent evidence of multiple resources available to meet all students’ diverse learning needs (# 5) in 53 percent (19 of 36) of classes observed. However, the team noted that while vocational/technical classes were well equipped with multiple resources, resources were often sparse in academic classrooms, with the exception of a newly renovated science lab.

a. Observers did not see resources such as posters containing anchor standards or classroom libraries. For example, one ELA classroom did not have any visible literacy connections.

3. Observers found students clearly and consistently assuming responsibility for their learning (# 23) in 83 percent (30 of 36) of classes. In most instances, students took responsibility for their learning individually with almost no interaction or collaboration with fellow students.

a. The team observed limited examples of typical paired practices, such as think-pair-share or peer review of work or collaborative problem solving. However, observers noted that in one class, students did work in small groups analyzing propaganda posters and sharing opinions. Observers frequently saw students working together on projects in vocational/technical classes.

**E**. Additional standards-based practices in support of understanding were inconsistently observed.

Observers clearly and consistently noted questioning techniques that required thoughtful responses that demonstrate understanding (# 12) in just 36 percent (13 of 36) of classes observed. Linked to questioning techniques are students’ responses. Students elaborated about content and ideas when responding to questions in 31 percent (11 of 36) of classes observed.

Practices that did not support students’ use of expressive language and understanding included students answering questions with one or two words or short answers, an entire class answering at once, teachers not asking students to elaborate, teachers not calling on students at random, and one student answering all questions.

Examples of practices that supported students’ understanding and expression included teachers asking “why” questions consistently and asking students to share and elaborate on their answers.

2. The team found that students clearly and consistently had opportunities to articulate their thinking orally and in writing (# 18) in 47 percent (17 of 36) of classes observed. Effective practices observed included students working in small groups sharing and brainstorming their ideas about babysitting in anticipation of writing slogans; in one ELA class, students were writing opinion essays.

3. Observers noted that students clearly and consistently inquired, explored, applied, synthesized and/or evaluated knowledge or concepts (#19) in 50 percent (18 of 36) of classes. Students were more likely to use a range of these higher-order thinking skills in vocational/technical classes.

a. In both academic and vocational/technical classes, dominant teachers’ voices diminished students’ opportunities to demonstrate higher-order thinking. For example, classes where teachers did all of the explaining left little opportunity for students to practice thinking skills and elaborate on ideas.

**F.** The use of technology as a tool for teaching and learning was not consistently observed.

1. Students clearly and consistently used technology as a tool for learning and/or understanding (# 22) in only 39 percent (14 of 36) of classes observed.

a. Observers were more likely to see a high level use of technology by students in vocational/technical classes in specific technical programs. For example, students worked with state-of-the-art equipment to create websites for businesses and deftly used CAD equipment and 360 Reality Programs.

b. In academic classes, examples of students using technology included the use of iPads for writing, formative tests, and learning Gizmos. In a science class, students created a PowerPoint presentation with video links and used a smart board to project it.

While most classes were equipped with technology, the team observed teachers clearly and consistently using available technology to support instruction (# 16) in just 31 percent (11 of 36) of classes observed.

**Impact**: Without systematically addressing appropriate questioning techniques, opportunities for student expression, promotion of higher-order thinking, and technology use, the district is not adequately preparing students for career and college. Finally, without differentiation of instruction to meet the diversity of learning needs, the district is not ensuring that all learners have maximum opportunities to master the curriculum.

Assessment

**12. The school has not developed a systematic procedure to collect, analyze, and disseminate common assessment data and other pertinent data to improve curriculum and instruction.**

**A.** The school has made a strategic choice to implement Understanding by Design’s (UbD’s) three stages gradually across several academic years. The school has accomplished much in implementing Stage 1. However, it has not addressed Stage 2 (Assessment) at a level that ensures a complete range of common assessments, rubrics, and other evidence to help guide decision-making within the UbD framework.

1. Common midterms, finals, and assessments for understanding have not been developed and introduced in UbD units for all core subjects, although interviewees told the team that there is the intent to do so.

2. Teachers and leaders described their work this year for Stage 2 as posting current assessments on the Rubicon Atlas site in preparation for professional development for UbD Stage 2, beginning in the summer of 2015 and extending into the 2015–2016 school year.

a. Stage 2 professional development is to focus on developing more authentic performance assessments, rubrics and other evidence to evaluate students’ mastery of standards-based knowledge, skills, and understandings.

b. A review of assessments currently posted on Atlas indicated that most are traditional quizzes and worksheets, many with multiple-choice and short-answer tests and essays. Some notable exceptions could serve as exemplars.

**B.** Teachers acknowledged the absence of UbD common assessment data for analysis across course sections.

1. Teachers described focusing on particular students’ results when looking at data rather than focusing on patterns and historic trends across sections through data analysis. They acknowledged the need to share and analyze common assessment data from multiple class sections with colleagues teaching the same course.

2. Teachers expressed the view that almost all UbD units are incomplete and will likely not be completed this year or next.

a. Units and lessons do not have assessments and performances (Stage 2) to evaluate student mastery of essential questions and enduring understandings.

b. Most units also are missing appropriate UbD lesson design with rich teaching strategies and resources to implement the unit as intended (Stage 3).

3. Teachers described the need to develop more common rubrics to better and more reliably calibrate their assessment of student work and the needed performance assessments.

4. Another view expressed was the need to support and prepare teachers for a shift to a more open and trusting culture in which they could share their work and students’ work with colleagues without feeling threatened. Interviewees mentioned the reluctance by some to compare and discuss results of a recent pilot survey that each teacher have to one of her/his classes.

**C.** The school also has not designed and implemented a systematic approach to collect, analyze, and use assessment data and information to routinely guide and inform decision-making.

1. Although common prep time is regularly scheduled for academic teachers to meet and discuss their work, there is no equivalent time for vocational teachers to collaborate within vocational colleagues or with teachers in other programs to discuss and evaluate progress.

2. Interviews and a document review indicated that the academic director, with assistance from the school’s data technician, is the primary analyst and communicator about data in the academic program.

3. The current data analysis protocol in the academic program is to present analyzed data to staff at department meetings, common prep time, and lead teacher meetings. MCAS open-response data was discussed and tracked throughout the year during department and team meetings. This resulted in some curricular changes, mainly the addition of weekly open- response questions to curriculum in all content areas.

**D.** The school’s student information system is in a transitional phase. Currently, teachers use various formats, software, and platforms to record student grades and to post student data. This has made it difficult to access and share common data across sections.

1. Interviewees told that team that some teachers have learned to use the school’s I-Pass system. Starting in September 2015, all teachers are to be required to use it, which will enable more shared data. At the time of the onsite professional development was to be offered in the spring and summer 2015 to improve teachers’ ability to do this.

**Impact**: In this interim phase of implementing Understanding by Design (UbD), the curriculum is presented without the requisite assessments, performance tasks, and full complement of rubrics aligned to standards and to the unit’s enduring understandings and essential questions. Without a systematic data analysis protocol, teachers and students are not fully informed about students’ progress, their challenges, and their understanding and ability to use and apply knowledge. And without a common platform for posting student data it is difficult to staff to access and share data. The school is poised to address these challenges over the next two years, as planned in its sequencing of Stages 2 and 3 of UbD.

Human Resources and Professional Development

**13. The school has not maximized the potential of the new educator evaluation system to increase professional growth and improve educator effectiveness. Most educators’ evaluations did not include recommendations for professional growth and improvement.**

**A.** The team reviewed 20 randomly selected teachers’ personnel files.

1. All files were complete and included self-evaluations, SMART goals, and formative assessments/evaluations and summative evaluations.

2. All summative evaluations described teachers’ progress toward the accomplishment of their student learning and professional practice goals; however, fewer than half (nine) contained specific recommendations for improvement such as the following: “Ask questions that require a reasoned response and get broad involvement by asking students whether they agree with what another student has said and why.” Almost all evaluations contained commendations and encouragement to continue good practices, but most did not include targeted suggestions.

**B.** The team also reviewed the personnel files of all eight administrators.

1. Three of the eight administrators have not been evaluated under the new educator evaluation system. The principal had not been evaluated since 2012.

a. The then superintendent did not evaluate the principal in her last year of service in 2012–2013; her successor served for only one year in 2013–2014, and did not evaluate the principal.

b. The business manager is in his second year of service and has not been evaluated.

c. The team was told that the school committee will not formally evaluate the current superintendent/director, who began his tenure in January 2015, in 2014–2015, although he will receive written comments from the school committee.

2. The five administrators evaluated under the new system completed self-assessments and SMART goals and received summative evaluations at the end of the year. These evaluations consisted of descriptions of progress toward accomplishing student learning and professional practice goals, commendations, and encouragement to continue good work. There were few specific recommendations for professional growth and improvement.

**Impact**: The potential impact of the new educator evaluation system as a lever for change is limited when teachers and administrators are not given the benefit of targeted recommendations for improvement, growth and development.

Student Support

**14. The district provides a single model of service for all students with disabilities. Data, interviews, and observations of 36 classrooms suggested that the district may not be sufficiently supporting these students.**

**A.** According to ESE data, all students with disabilities are taught in full inclusion in the school (in 2014–2015, compared with 60 percent statewide).

1. At this school, no students are in partial inclusion or in substantially separate placements. In 2014–2015, students with disabilities make up 33.6 percent of the enrollment, compared with 17.1 percent statewide. Between 2010 and 2015, the proportion of students with disabilities fluctuated between 28 percent and 33.6 percent of enrollment, with the general trend being up.

2. The percentage of students with disabilities enrolled at vocational/technical schools often exceeds the state average. According to ESE data, Assabet has the second highest proportion of students with disabilities registered among 11 comparable vocational/technical schools in Massachusetts.[[4]](#footnote-4)

3. Among these 11 comparable vocational/technical schools, in 2013–2014 (the latest available data) students with disabilities at Assabet were the second lowest ranking in ELA and math proficiency. Similarly, Nashoba and Tri County had the third and fourth highest proportion of students with disabilities, respectively, but students with disabilities in each of these schools outranked students with disabilities at Assabet in both ELA and math proficiency.[[5]](#footnote-5)

**B.** A document review indicated that in 2014–2015 the school reported two students with intellectual disabilities. It also reported 13 students with an autism diagnosis, 30 with neurological impairments, and 170 with learning disabilities, all of whom require specially designed instruction.

**C.** Staff indicated that the proportion of students with multiple disabilities has grown in recent years. A review of a list of disability typology provided to the team indicated that the district identified only three students with multiple disabilities for the 2014–2015 school year.

**D.** Interviewees said that getting a full picture of students’ needs can be challenging because some files are missing needed documents.

1. The district receives incomplete information about students with disabilities from some sending districts. (See the next Student Support finding.)

**E.** Some parents said that when students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) are evaluated at this school, recommendations for services sometimes decrease in number or in type. Staff said that reassessments later in the year sometimes increase caseloads by as much as 9 percent.

**F.** The school does not have academic support classes for specific learning challenges.

* + - 1. Students with disabilities have access to Title I courses. The study-skills course is an additional resource for students with disabilities; this is scheduled during a portion of the physical education/health time block.

a. District leaders reported that Study Skills is a stand-alone support class that students attend for a full five academic days for 90 days of the school year.

**G.** The school does not run a vocational/technical program for students with the greatest cognitive impairments, usually identified as an “activities of daily living” (ADL) class.

**H.** The school does not form inclusion classes according to the commonly accepted model.

Inclusion classes, rather than being smaller classes with students with disabilities making up 40 or 50 percent of the class or less, routinely are larger. Interviews and observations by the review team indicated that in most inclusion classes, students with IEPs represented at least 50 percent of the class and more often made up 70 percent or more of the class. These classes also often held 20 or more students while general education classes were smaller.

**I.** In observed inclusion classes, students with disabilities were not consistently ensured access to the full curriculum, although inclusion classes form large portions of ELA and math courses.

1. Approximately one half of the English and math courses taught each week---grades 9 and 11 one week and grades 10 and 12 the next---are co taught. This represents approximately half of the English and math courses at each grade level.

Review team members noted that lessons in some observed co-taught classes were significantly behind the typical curriculum expectations for the subject, particularly in math where pace and level were more typical of lessons early in the year rather than late in May, the time of the onsite review.

3. In some observed co-taught courses, quizzes and class work involved heavily language-based materials and were the same for all students. Students with disabilities did not receive modified materials.

**J.** Special education teachers, called liaisons, often co-teach nearly a full class load; in addition they have liaison duties for a caseload of students. A smaller number of liaisons serve as consultants to teachers who instruct students with disabilities in other core areas of academic and vocational/technical programs. Additional assistance for students with IEPs is limited.

The inclusion classes in ELA and math are co-taught by a general education teacher and a liaison. However, students with disabilities in social studies and science are scheduled for full-inclusion classes with no co-teachers. There is a special education consultant for both science and social studies.

Liaisons co-teach four periods one week and three the alternate week. In addition, they have liaison duties for a caseload of 30 students for whom they write the IEP, attend the annual and reevaluation meetings, and consult with teachers, students, and guidance and other staff.

Interviewees said that liaisons without co-teaching duties have chosen, on occasion, to spend time in a social studies or science classroom for the benefit of a specific group of students. However, these liaisons also serve as consultants to teachers for the approximately 150 students for whom they are responsible.

In total, 10 liaisons provide services for approximately 350 students with disabilities categorized at various levels of severity.

Approximately 40 percent of vocational students are identified for support in the vocational/technical classes. There are no co-taught classes in the vocational/technical program.

While some vocational/technical teachers reported that they have enough support for their classes, others indicated that more support is needed to help students meet the learning objectives of the vocational skills.

General and special education staff told the team that only a small number of students with IEPs are enrolled in general education (not co-taught) classes.

Five paraprofessionals assist in co-taught academic classes. In 2014–2015 two paraprofessionals assist in the vocational/technical classes and two more are planned for 2015–2016.

Co-teachers have time to plan for the following week. Teachers may produce graphic organizers to tier writing assignments. Both general and special education teachers (liaisons) can access curriculum on Atlas and in long-standing partnerships. Teachers reported that previous year’s worksheets with accommodations are also available on Atlas.

* + - 1. The school’s website identifies special education services as co-teaching (supported English and math), counseling (vocational, adjustment, and therapeutic), consultancy (science, social studies, and vocational), social-skills group, diagnostic evaluation, and achievement testing.

**K.** Administrators told the team that teachers know what accommodations look like and that they receive feedback on differentiation as a result of walkthroughs. However, teachers clearly and consistently used appropriate modifications for English language learners and students with disabilities, including presentation of content at multiple levels of complexity and differentiation of content, process, and/or products, in only 39 percent of observed classes.

The review team’s classroom observations last for 20 minutes or more. In many cases, the team observed all students receiving the same presentation or doing the same assignment. General and special education teachers (liaisons) circulated to offer individual assistance.

**Impact**: Many students can meet educational and career goals with serious study and extra help from teachers. However, students with disabilities require additional targeted help. As the proportion of students with disabilities and the severity of their disabilities have increased over the last few years, the school has not made sufficient changes to respond to the new reality. Placement in an inclusion class that is principally composed of other students who face equally daunting but perhaps different challenges does not adequately meet the needs of most of those children.

**15. The school has not maximized the potential of its resources to provide targeted support for general students and students with disabilities.**

* + 1. Students with disabilities face a challenging transition to and from the school.
       1. Special education staff said that with most sending districts, they are able to attend team meetings with school district staff, parents, and students during the period of April through June. However, it can be challenging to arrange meetings with special education departments in some member districts. Interviewees said that as a result, the school receives incomplete information about students with disabilities from some sending districts.
       2. Incoming students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) take the same tests as general education students---GRADE, a reading comprehension test, a writing prompt, and a local math assessment for math (algebra or numeracy).
       3. The review team was told that the special education department does not plan special orientation activities for incoming students with disabilities unless parents request them.
       4. The review team was also told that the special education department does not routinely plan transition or exiting activities for graduating students with disabilities or initiate referrals for services for students with disabilities from an adult human services agency such as the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission under Chapter 688.

1. Interviewees said that the school’s six-period per day schedule for five required subjects---the core courses and physical education/heath---leaves little time for scheduling support classes for general education students and those with IEPs, especially in grades 9 and 10. Space in classes to support general education students during the school day is limited.
2. The support courses for ELL, Title I services, reading and numeracy, must be allotted on a priority basis and in the order mentioned. Students who need help in both literacy and math cannot receive help in both. According to established priorities, ELL support and reading intervention will be assigned first.

a. District leaders reported that they have reworked many schedules so that students can receive extra support in both math and literacy during the school day.

1. There are three Title I reading courses in grades 9 and 10 and one each in grades 11 and 12. Numeracy, a Title I course in math, is offered in grade 9. The plan is to offer a Title I math course in grade 10 next year. Writing Workshop and the study-skills class do not fall under the Title I umbrella.
   1. Students with disabilities almost exclusively fill seats in the Title I reading and math courses as well as in the study-skills class.
   2. There are no academic support classes to assist students with disabilities with their learning needs.
2. MCAS support classes are held after school and during the summer. Extra help by individual teachers or with the homework coach is available after school on Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday. These after- school sessions are required for some children.
3. Interviewees said that this year, because of the increasing enrollment of students with disabilities,[[6]](#footnote-6) the school piloted a program to offer 180 days of math to 22 students in grade 10. These students were identified by the weekly MCAS practice tests and teacher recommendation in addition to their entry testing and MCAS scores. The pilot is to be extended to 60 students next year.
   * + - 1. As a result of the limited options for support and to provide more time for ELA and math, district leaders are considering offering all students these two subjects during both A and B weeks, which will result in a 180-day sequence of study.
   1. Proficiency rates for all students on the ELA MCAS showed very little increase in recent years and have fallen in math for all students as well as for students with disabilities (See.

1. The overall percentage of students scoring proficient or higher in ELA was 82 percent in 2011, 89 percent in 2012, 93 percent in 2013, and 85 percent in 2014. The percentage of students with disabilities scoring proficient or higher was 45 percent in 2011, 70 percent in 2012, 86 percent in 2013, and 64 percent in 2014.

2. The overall percentage of students scoring proficient or higher in math was 77 percent in 2011, 81 percent in 2012, 77 percent in 2013, and 68 percent in 2014. The percentage of students with disabilities scoring proficient or higher was 40 percent in 2011, 59 percent in 2012, 51 percent in 2013, and 38 percent in 2014.

**Impact**: Many students cannot fully benefit from instruction and targeted support as delivered in the academic and vocational programs.

Assabet Valley RVTSD District Review Recommendations

Curriculum and Instruction

**1.** **The school should ensure sufficient mid-level leadership to provide expertise and support to teachers in the core content areas.**

**A.** The school should identify content specialists in ELA, math, science, and social studies and define their role to provide mid-level curriculum leadership.

1. The school should consider amending the job description of lead teacher to include the responsibility of providing ongoing content support and expertise to core subject teachers.

2. The school should consider having the curriculum content specialists provide embedded professional development to fully implement the school’s curriculum initiative and to build teachers’ ability to faithfully address all aspects of Stages 2 and 3 in the Understanding by Design (UbD) framework (see Assessment recommendation below).

3. An additional role for the curriculum content specialist could be to lead conversations about curriculum, instruction, and assessments so that the school can make meaningful progress and ongoing adjustments to the curriculum when required.

**B.** The school should ensure sufficient released time for mid-level leaders to support teachers in curriculum development and to monitor instruction and provide frequent formative feedback to improve instructional practice.

**Benefits** from implementing this recommendation will include clearly defined mid-level curriculum leadership to ensure the consistent use, alignment, and effective delivery of the core curriculum. Instructional practices will be more consistent with all teachers benefiting from additional time and support and frequent non-evaluative feedback. There will be increased opportunities for deep and substantive conversations about teaching and learning during common planning time, department meetings and lead teachers meetings with the academic director. The school’s curriculum and instructional priorities will be achieved with fidelity which will likely lead to improved student achievement.

**2. The school should develop a plan to incorporate the literacy anchor standards across the curriculum, communicate this districtwide, and support teachers in its implementation.**

1. The school should convene a representative group of teachers to develop common expectations about literacy – in reading, writing, speaking and listening – across the curriculum. Using faculty meetings, department meetings, faculty meetings, and/or professional development days, the school is encouraged to discuss ideas and strategies linked to the literacy anchor standards.

**B.** Once a plan is developed, district administrators should communicate expectations with staff.

**C.** Teacher leaders who have embedded literacy anchor standards into lessons and units might collaborate with this representative group to create schoolwide rubrics linked to these standards in reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

1. When the rubrics have been developed, teachers and administrators should receive training about the rubrics to help calibrate expectations.

**D.** As the school moves forward in developing Stages 2 and 3 of Understanding by Design (UbD) units, teachers should collaboratively develop content-specific strategies linked to the literacy anchor standards.

**Benefits** from implementing this recommendation include a common understanding of the literacy anchor standards and expectations for their application in all content areas. Teachers can build a repertoire of literacy strategies linked to the anchor standards. Students can use common rubrics for literacy assignments and assessments, such as for oral presentations or for informative/explanatory essays. Enhanced literacy opportunities for all students can lead to improved reading, writing, speaking, and listening for all students, and serve all students well in work, careers, and post-secondary education.

**3. The school should identify and articulate a district instructional model, communicate this to the full educational community, and support teachers in its implementation.**

* 1. The school should convene a representative group of teachers and administrators to define the characteristics of good instruction.

1. Key instructional practices should be prioritized as the district’s non-negotiables.

2. The recommended product of these meetings is a model that promotes high levels of student engagement, uses multiple strategies to promote higher-order thinking, and benefits from frequent assessment of student performance.

**B.** Once a model of instructional practice is identified and defined, district administrators should develop a plan for sharing instructional expectations with staff.

1.Using faculty meetings, grade-level meetings, department meetings, and/or professional development days, the district is encouraged to discuss ideas and strategies from the instructional model.

a. Equitable opportunities should be provided by level for teachers to share best practices reflective of the instructional model.

b. Teachers and administrators might consider watching videos of effective teaching and discussing instructional strategies as a way to calibrate expectations.

c. The administrative team is encouraged to conduct non-evaluative walkthroughs in pairs/small groups, to generalize and share feedback about trends observed, and to discuss improvement strategies regularly with teachers.

**C.** The school should support teacher leadership and growth by creating opportunities for exemplary teachers to have responsibility for instructional leadership and mentoring.

**D.** Teachers should be provided with appropriate guidance and feedback as they implement the model.

1. Professional development should focus on elements of the instructional model.
2. The district should consider adding support in the form of instructional coaches to provide embedded professional development for teachers.

a. Job-embedded professional development should focus on elements of the instructional model, and especially skills associated with differentiation and modifications to instruction.

1. The principal, as the instructional leader, should ensure that teachers have the information and support necessary to meet the district’s expectations for instruction.
2. Teachers should receive frequent, helpful feedback that helps them to continually improve their instruction (see Human Resources and Professional Development recommendation below).
3. The district should review and, if possible, modify teaching schedules so that all teachers have regular, frequent department and/or grade-level common planning and meeting time that can be used to collaboratively reflect on and improve curriculum and instruction.

**E.** Administrators should ensure that the frequency of learning walks is sufficient to monitor and calibrate the implementation of best teaching practices throughout the school.

1. Data from these learning walks should be discussed with the faculty and used to document strengths, areas for growth, trends, and patterns.

**Recommended resources:**

* *Learning Walkthrough Implementation Guide* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/dart/walk/ImplementationGuide.pdf>) is a resource to support instructional leaders in establishing a learning walkthrough process and a culture of collaboration.
* *Characteristics of Standards-Based Teaching and Learning: Continuum of Practice* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/dart/walk/04.0.pdf>) provides an overview of 17 characteristics of standards-based practice, along with related indicators to suggest the level at which the practice is implemented, from Not Evident to Developing to Providing to Sustaining.
* The March 2014 ESE Educator Evaluation e-Newsletter (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/communications/newsletter/2014-03.pdf>) includes a section called *Implementation Spotlight: Strategies for Focusing Observations and Providing Consistent, Constructive Feedback*.

**Benefits** from implementing this recommendation include clear and articulated expectations schoolwide of what constitutes good teaching. This will provide a common language that will facilitate more focused feedback and professional development. When teachers provide high-quality instruction for all students in a culture of continuous improvement, there is a strong likelihood of professional growth and increased student achievement.

**4. The school should ensure that the Understanding by Design (UbD) framework for curriculum development is implemented in all areas of the vocational/technical program.**

1. The school should ensure that vocational/technical teachers have sufficient support and time to develop curriculum using the UbD framework.

1. Teachers should be provided with appropriate guidance and feedback as they implement the framework. Professional development should focus on unit development.

The school should identify exemplar units from vocational/technical programs to share and discuss during department meetings, grade-level meetings, and faculty meetings.

The school should support teacher leadership and growth by creating opportunities for exemplary teachers to have responsibility for developing units.

**Recommended resource**:

* ESE’s *Model Curriculum Units* [*(*http://www.doe.mass.edu/candi/model/download\_form.aspx](http://www.doe.mass.edu/candi/model/download_form.aspx)*)* provide exemplars that can be useful as the district continues to develop curriculum. Supplemental presentations (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/candi/model/resources/>) provide more information about the units.

**Benefits:** Curriculum designed with a framework that focuses students’ learning on the understanding and application of knowledge and skills can improve learning for all students.

Assessment

**5. The district should continue to develop the Understanding by Design (UbD) Framework through Stages 2 and 3 by creating the needed performance tasks, rubrics, and other assessments. Furthermore, it should develop uniform and integrated policies, structures, and practices for the continuous collection, analysis, and dissemination of student performance and other pertinent data.**

**A.** The district is encouraged to create a data team with representation from both the leadership and teaching staff. Another option is to create two data teams: one for the academic program and one for the vocational program.

1. The data team(s) should develop specific strategies, timelines, and clear expectations for the use of data districtwide.
2. Ongoing, targeted training in the collection, analysis, and use of student performance data should be provided for staff in each grade level and subject area.
3. The district should explore options for providing vocational teachers with sufficient time to collaborate, analyze data, and use data to inform planning.

**B.** The district is encouraged to continue its work on technology initiatives.

**Recommended resources**:

* ESE’s Assessment Literacy Self-Assessment and Gap Analysis Tool (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/ddm/webinar/PartI-GapAnalysis.pdf>) is intended to support districts in understanding where their educators fit overall on a continuum of assessment literacy. After determining where the district as a whole generally falls on the continuum, the district can determine potential next steps.
* *District Data Team Toolkit* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/ucd/ddtt/toolkit.pdf>) is a set of resources to help a district establish, grow, and maintain a culture of inquiry and data use through a District Data Team.
* The *Edwin Analytics* web page (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edwin/analytics/>) includes links to a Getting Started Guide, as well as a video tutorial series.

**Benefits** from implementing these recommendations will include a full set of UbD teaching and learning components. With appropriate assessments, rubrics, and performance tasks, students and teachers will participate in teaching and learning that is both rigorous and engaging, two goals identified by the school. An expanded group of educators responsible for data collection, analysis, dissemination, and discussions for improvement will ensure that assessments can be used to improve teaching, curriculum, and student achievement. Building a more robust data and technology system and practices can also help create a data-driven culture that can more accurately inform decision-making about teaching and learning.

Human Resources and Professional Development

**6. The school should provide ongoing, targeted professional development for evaluators and ensure that all administrators are evaluated.**

**A.** The school should support and monitor the skills and practices of the principal and supervisors to ensure that they are providing all staff with high-quality instructional feedback that is timely, informative, instructive, and capable of promoting individual growth and overall effectiveness.

**B.** Administrators should receive ongoing training to enhance their ability to observe and analyze instruction and to provide feedback focused directly on professional practice, growth, and student achievement.

**C.** The school should ensure that all administrators are evaluated following the five-step cycle of the educator evaluation system.

**Recommended resources:**

* *Quick Reference Guide: Educator Evaluation & Professional Development* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/QRG-ProfessionalDevelopment.pdf>) describes how educator evaluation and professional development can be used as mutually reinforcing systems to improve educator practice and student outcomes.
* *On Track with Evaluator Capacity (*[*http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/pln/OnTrack-EvaluatorCapacity.pdf*](http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/pln/OnTrack-EvaluatorCapacity.pdf)*)* profiles eight Massachusetts districts that participated in ESE’s 2014–2015 Professional Learning Network for Supporting Evaluator Capacity. Each district developed a new initiative to support evaluators. The document includes lessons learned and links to district-created artifacts and tools.
* *The Relationship between High Quality Professional Development and Educator Evaluation* (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R-aDxtEDncg&list=PLTuqmiQ9ssqt9EmOcWkDEHPKBqRvurebm&index=1>) is a video presentation that includes examples from real districts.
* ESE’s *Educator Evaluation Implementation Surveys for Teachers and Administrators* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/implementation/>) are designed to provide schools and districts with information about the status of their educator evaluation implementation. Information from these surveys can be used to target district resources and supports where most needed to strengthen implementation.
* *Rating Educator Impact: The Student Impact Rating* ([www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/ddm/EducatorImpact.pdf](http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/ddm/EducatorImpact.pdf)) is a guide to assist educators and evaluators in the determination of Student Impact Ratings.
  + - ESE’s *Student and Staff Feedback* webpage (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/feedback/>) provides guidance on the incorporation of student and staff feedback into the evaluation process and includes a set of valid and reliable student and staff surveys aligned to the Massachusetts Standards of Effective Practice.

**Benefits**: Providing evaluators with guidance on observing and analyzing instruction and providing educators with timely, relevant, and continuous feedback will likely enhance professional competencies and improve student achievement.

Student Support

**7. Leaders, teachers, and staff should work collaboratively to improve and customize practices and programs so that they are more effective in supporting and improving learning for all students.**

**A.** District leaders should work collaboratively with teachers, staff, and other stakeholdersto closely review and modify practices for the entry and transition of students with disabilities.

1. District policy might require a release of records signed by the parents of incoming students. It might also require sending districts to release records by a specific date so that the school can obtain the information necessary for implementing or adjusting Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs).

2. Teachers and staff might provide entry activities for students with disabilities such as small group tours, introductions to staff, and review of services.

3. The special education department should provide transition planning for special education students with disabilities as specified by Chapter 688.

**B.** All teaching and support staff should receive focused professional development in effectively using differentiation and accommodations to create classrooms where all students have equal access to high-quality curriculum.

**C.** The school should offer a full continuum of services based on students’ evaluations and IEPs, making Title I and other support services more available to the general student population.

* + - 1. The school should make Tier 2 services available for its general student body.

a. General education students should have full access to Title I classes and Writer’s Workshop.

2.Assignment to and exit from Tier 2 services should be based on valid and reliable assessments.

a. Students’ scores on placement tests and assessment results should be used to determine individual remedial and enrichment opportunities for students.

3. Whether in full inclusion or in co-taught inclusion classes, students with disabilities should have access to academic support classes that offer the specific kind of support indicated by their identified disability and IEP.

Title I services and Writing Workshop should serve as a Tier 2 intervention rather than as a primary support for students with disabilities.

1. The school should search for additional ways to provide interventions and remediation.
   * + 1. It might consider the use of software programs as well as explore more fully the possibilities of reordering the daily schedule.

One example is the pilot program that provides 180 days of math. The academic schedule could be changed to provide variable blocks of time to accommodate the needs of the school and its students.

1. The school should identify students who can succeed in a non-co-taught inclusion class with academic support offered at another time during the school day and those who currently thrive in general education classrooms without support.
2. The school should reorganize the co-taught classes to more closely follow the standard model.
3. Co-taught classes should provide a somewhat smaller learning environment where students with disabilities compose less than 50 percent of the class.
4. The school should ensure that co-taught classes provide students access to the full curriculum.
5. Co-taught classes should use differentiated instruction strategies. While all students may listen to a presentation together, practice work should be tailored to students’ needs and done in small groups with teachers, paraprofessionals, individually, or in groups with other students. Students with disabilities should receive modifications that make content more accessible while general education students should not do modified assignments.
6. The school should reassess its use of special education liaisons in order to provide more direct instructional services to students.

In addition to working in co-taught classes, some special education staff should be designated to provide academic support.

The school should provide adequate support for students with disabilities in vocational/ technical programs.

Special education teachers should work closely with paraprofessionals to ensure the use of appropriate learning activities.

**Recommended resources:**

* The*Massachusetts Tiered System of Support (MTSS)* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/mtss/>) isa 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.
* ESE’s *Early Warning Indicator System*(<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edwin/analytics/ewis.html>) isa tool to provide information to districts about the likelihood that their students will reach key academic goals. Districts can use the tool in conjunction with other data and sources of information to better target student supports and interventions and to examine school-level patterns over time in order to address systemic issues that may impede students’ ability to meet academic goals.

**Benefits** from implementing this recommendation can include the creation of a learning environment where students with disabilities have access to the full curriculum. With complete background information available to school staff, specialized orientation activities, and support in both academic and vocational/technical classrooms, students with disabilities will receive a quality education and develop career skills. At the same time, Tier 2 services already provided will now be available to general education students who need support.

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

Review Team Members

The review was conducted from May 26–29, 2015, by the following team of independent ESE consultants.

1. Wilfrid Savoie, E. T. D. (hon.), leadership and governance and financial and asset management
2. Suzanne Kelley, curriculum and instruction
3. Linda L. Greyser, Ed. D., assessment and *review team coordinator*
4. Jim McAuliffe, Ed. D., human resources and professional development
5. Katherine Lopez Natale, Ph. D., student support

District Review Activities

The following activities were conducted during the review:

The team conducted interviews with the following financial personnel: the business manager, the business office clerical staff, the district treasurer, the assistant treasurer/bookkeeper, and finance committee members from Hudson, Maynard, and Southborough.

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

The review team conducted interviews with the following representatives of the teachers’ association: the president, two vice-presidents, the treasurer, and the secretary.

The team conducted interviews/focus groups with the following central office administrators: the superintendent/director, the principal, two assistant principals/deans, the director of academics, the director of the vocational programs, the director of student services, and the business manager.

The team visited the Assabet Valley Regional Vocational School and observed classes in grade 10 of the academic program and in grades 9 and 11 of the vocational/technical program. Senior students had already completed their work for the year and graduation took place the day after the site visit.

During school visits, the team conducted interviews with the principal and included 14 academic teachers and 17 vocational teachers in interviews.

The team observed 36 classes at the school: 20 in the academic program and 16 in the vocational/ technical program.

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, drop-out, retention, suspension, and attendance rates.
  + Data on the district’s staffing and finances.
  + Published educational reports on the district by ESE, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), and the former Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA).
  + District documents such as district and school improvement plans, school committee policies, curriculum documents, summaries of student assessments, job descriptions, collective bargaining agreements, evaluation tools for staff, handbooks, 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

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Tuesday**  05/26/2015 | **Wednesday**  05/27/2015 | **Thursday**  05/28/2015 | **Friday**  05/29/2015 |
| Orientation with district leaders and principals; interviews with district staff and principals; document reviews; interview with teachers’ association. | Interviews with district staff and principals; interview with personnel from several member towns; review of personnel files; student interview, parent focus group; and classroom observations. | Interviews with school leaders and school staff; interviews with school committee members; and classroom observations. | Interviews with school leaders; follow-up interviews; district review team meeting; classroom observations; emerging themes meeting with district leaders and principal. |

Appendix B: Enrollment, Performance, Expenditures

**Table B1a: Assabet Valley RVTSD**

**2014–2015 Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Student Group** | **District** | **Percent**  **of Total** | **State** | **Percent of**  **Total** |
| African-American | 12 | 1.1% | 83,556 | 8.7% |
| Asian | 10 | 0.9% | 60,050 | 6.3% |
| Hispanic | 127 | 12.0% | 171,036 | 17.9% |
| Native American | 5 | 0.5% | 2,238 | 0.2% |
| White | 879 | 83.1% | 608,453 | 63.7% |
| Native Hawaiian | -- | -- | 930 | 0.1% |
| Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic | 25 | 2.4% | 29,581 | 3.1% |
| **All Students** | 1,058 | 100.0% | 955,844 | 100.0% |
| Note: As of October 1, 2014 | | | | |

**Table B1b: Assabet Valley RVTSD**

**2014–2015 Student Enrollment by High Needs Populations**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Student Groups** | **District** | | | **State** | | |
| **N** | **Percent of High Needs** | **Percent of District** | **N** | **Percent of High Needs** | **Percent of State** |
| Students w/ disabilities | 355 | -- | 33.6% | 165,060 | -- | 17.1% |
| Economically disadvantaged | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| ELLs and Former ELLs | 15 | -- | 1.4% | 81,146 | -- | 8.5% |
| All high needs students | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Notes: As of October 1, 2014. 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 1,058; total state enrollment including students in out-of-district placement is 966,391. | | | | | | |

**Table B2a: Assabet Valley RVTSD**

**English Language Arts Performance, 2011–2014**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Grade and Measure** | | **Number Included (2014)** | **Spring MCAS Year** | | | | | **Gains and Declines** | |
| **4-Year Trend** | **2 Year Trend** |
| **2011** | **2012** | **2013** | **2014** | **State 2014** |
| 10 | CPI | 262 | 93.6 | 96.7 | 97.3 | 94.4 | 96 | 0.8 | -2.9 |
| P+ | 262 | 82.0% | 89.0% | 93.0% | 85.0% | 90.0% | 3.0% | -8.0% |
| SGP | 242 | 51 | 51 | 54 | 40 | 50 | -11 | -14 |
| All | CPI | 262 | 93.6 | 96.7 | 97.3 | 94.4 | 86.7 | 0.8 | -2.9 |
| P+ | 262 | 82.0% | 89.0% | 93.0% | 85.0% | 69.0% | 3.0% | -8.0% |
| SGP | 242 | 51 | 51 | 54 | 40 | 50 | -11 | -14 |
| Notes: The number of students included in CPI and percent *Proficient* or *Advanced* (P+) calculations may differ from the number of students included in median SGP calculations. A median SGP is not calculated for students in grade 3 because they are participating in MCAS tests for the first time. | | | | | | | | | |

**Table B2b: Assabet Valley RVTSD**

**Mathematics Performance, 2011–2014**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Grade and Measure** | | **Number Included (2014)** | **Spring MCAS Year** | | | | | **Gains and Declines** | |
| **4-Year Trend** | **2 Year Trend** |
| **2011** | **2012** | **2013** | **2014** | **State 2014** |
| 10 | CPI | 265 | 89.5 | 92.8 | 89.8 | 85.5 | 90 | -4 | -4.3 |
| P+ | 265 | 77.0% | 81.0% | 77.0% | 68.0% | 79.0% | -9.0% | -9.0% |
| SGP | 245 | 56 | 63 | 50 | 46 | 50 | -10 | -4 |
| All | CPI | 265 | 89.5 | 92.8 | 89.8 | 85.5 | 80.3 | -4 | -4.3 |
| P+ | 265 | 77.0% | 81.0% | 77.0% | 68.0% | 60.0% | -9.0% | -9.0% |
| SGP | 245 | 56 | 63 | 50 | 46 | 50 | -10 | -4 |
| Notes: The number of students included in CPI and percent *Proficient* or *Advanced* (P+) calculations may differ from the number of students included in median SGP calculations. A median SGP is not calculated for students in grade 3 because they are participating in MCAS tests for the first time. | | | | | | | | | |

**Table B2c: Assabet Valley RVTSD**

**Science and Technology/Engineering Performance, 2011–2014**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Grade and Measure** | | **Number Included (2014)** | **Spring MCAS Year** | | | | | **Gains and Declines** | |
| **4-Year Trend** | **2 Year Trend** |
| **2011** | **2012** | **2013** | **2014** | **State 2014** |
| 10 | CPI | 243 | 88.6 | 91.8 | 89.6 | 87.4 | 87.9 | -1.2 | -2.2 |
| P+ | 243 | 73.0% | 79.0% | 76.0% | 71.0% | 71.0% | -2.0% | -5.0% |
| All | CPI | 243 | 88.6 | 91.8 | 89.6 | 87.4 | 79.6 | -1.2 | -2.2 |
| P+ | 243 | 73.0% | 79.0% | 76.0% | 71.0% | 55.0% | -2.0% | -5.0% |
| Notes: P+ = percent *Proficient* or *Advanced*. Students participate in STE MCAS tests in grades 5, 8, and 10 only. Median SGPs are not calculated for STE. | | | | | | | | | |

**Table B3a: Assabet Valley RVTSD**

**English Language Arts (Grade 10)**

**Performance for Selected Subgroups Compared to State, 2011–2014**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Group and Measure** | | | **Number Included (2014)** | **Spring MCAS Year** | | | | **Gains and Declines** | |
| **4 Year Trend** | **2-Year Trend** |
| **2011** | **2012** | **2013** | **2014** |
| High Needs | District | CPI | 156 | 88.4 | 94.5 | 95.4 | 90.7 | 2.3 | -4.7 |
| P+ | 156 | 68.0% | 81.0% | 88.0% | 76.0% | 8.0% | -12.0% |
| SGP | 144 | 50 | 44 | 57 | 40 | -10 | -17 |
| State | CPI | 31,870 | 86.9 | 91.0 | 93.1 | 91.5 | 4.6 | -1.6 |
| P+ | 31,870 | 68% | 76% | 81% | 79% | 11.0% | -2.0% |
| SGP | 26,030 | 46.0 | 46.0 | 54.0 | 46.0 | 0 | -8 |
| Econ. Disad. | District | CPI | 107 | 91.9 | 96.5 | 96.3 | 91.4 | -0.5 | -4.9 |
| P+ | 107 | 77.0% | 88.0% | 90.0% | 79.0% | 2.0% | -11.0% |
| SGP | 99 | 49.5 | 58 | 59 | 38 | -11.5 | -21 |
| State | CPI | 25,024 | 87.4 | 91.3 | 93.5 | 91.8 | 4.4 | -1.7 |
| P+ | 25,024 | 69% | 77% | 82% | 79% | 0.1 | -0.03 |
| SGP | 20,487 | 46.0 | 45.0 | 54.0 | 45.0 | -1 | -9 |
| Students w/ disabilities | District | CPI | 86 | 79.6 | 91.7 | 94 | 87.5 | 7.9 | -6.5 |
| P+ | 86 | 45.0% | 70.0% | 86.0% | 64.0% | 19.0% | -22.0% |
| SGP | 80 | 43 | 40 | 55.5 | 35 | -8 | -20.5 |
| State | CPI | 11,851 | 80.2 | 85.8 | 88.4 | 86.0 | 5.8 | -2.4 |
| P+ | 11,851 | 49% | 60% | 66% | 63% | 14.0% | -3.0% |
| SGP | 9,523 | 43.0 | 45.0 | 51.0 | 44.0 | 1 | -7 |
| English language learners or Former ELLs | District | CPI | 12 | 0 | 90 | 0 | 68.8 | 68.8 | 68.8 |
| P+ | 12 | 0.0% | 80.0% | 0.0% | 50.0% | 50.0% | 50.0% |
| SGP | 7 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| State | CPI | 2,823 | 63.4 | 71.3 | 74.6 | 69.2 | 5.8 | -5.4 |
| P+ | 2,823 | 28% | 35% | 43% | 36% | 8.0% | -7.0% |
| SGP | 1,221 | 52.5 | 54.0 | 62.0 | 46.0 | -6.5 | -16 |
| **All students** | District | CPI | 262 | 93.6 | 96.7 | 97.3 | 94.4 | 0.8 | -2.9 |
| P+ | 262 | 82.0% | 89.0% | 93.0% | 85.0% | 3.0% | -8.0% |
| SGP | 242 | 51 | 51 | 54 | 40 | -11 | -14 |
| State | CPI | 70,465 | 93.9 | 95.8 | 96.9 | 96.0 | 2.1 | -0.9 |
| P+ | 70,465 | 84% | 88% | 91% | 89% | 5.0% | -2.0% |
| SGP | 61,694 | 50.0 | 50.0 | 57.0 | 50.0 | 0 | -7 |
| Notes: The number of students included in CPI and percent *Proficient* or *Advanced* (P+) calculations may differ from the number of students included in median SGP calculation. State figures are provided for comparison purposes only and do not represent the standard that a particular group is expected to meet. | | | | | | | | | |

**Table B3b: Assabet Valley RVTSD**

**Mathematics (Grade 10)**

**Performance for Selected Subgroups Compared to State, 2011–2014**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Group and Measure** | | | **Number Included (2014)** | **Spring MCAS Year** | | | | **Gains and Declines** | |
| **4 Year Trend** | **2-Year Trend** |
| **2011** | **2012** | **2013** | **2014** |
| High Needs | District | CPI | 157 | 82.6 | 89.7 | 83.2 | 79.5 | -3.1 | -3.7 |
| P+ | 157 | 63.0% | 74.0% | 62.0% | 56.0% | -7.0% | -6.0% |
| SGP | 145 | 54 | 61 | 49 | 45 | -9 | -4 |
| State | CPI | 31,957 | 79.1 | 80.4 | 80.3 | 80.6 | 1.5 | 0.3 |
| P+ | 31,957 | 56% | 59% | 61% | 60% | 4.0% | -1.0% |
| SGP | 26,226 | 48.0 | 48.0 | 45.0 | 47.0 | -1 | 2 |
| Econ. Disad. | District | CPI | 108 | 86.2 | 91.9 | 86.5 | 81.9 | -4.3 | -4.6 |
| P+ | 108 | 68.0% | 80.0% | 70.0% | 61.0% | -7.0% | -9.0% |
| SGP | 100 | 55.5 | 64 | 53 | 45 | -10.5 | -8 |
| State | CPI | 25,068 | 79.7 | 81.3 | 81.2 | 81.1 | 1.4 | -0.1 |
| P+ | 25,068 | 58% | 62% | 63% | 62% | 0.04 | -0.01 |
| SGP | 20,632 | 48.0 | 47.0 | 45.0 | 46.0 | -2 | 1 |
| Students w/ disabilities | District | CPI | 87 | 70 | 83.2 | 78.3 | 71 | 1 | -7.3 |
| P+ | 87 | 40.0% | 59.0% | 51.0% | 38.0% | -2.0% | -13.0% |
| SGP | 81 | 36 | 53 | 46 | 41 | 5 | -5 |
| State | CPI | 11,906 | 70.1 | 71.4 | 70.0 | 70.8 | 0.7 | 0.8 |
| P+ | 11,906 | 39% | 41% | 40% | 40% | 1.0% | 0.0% |
| SGP | 9,588 | 46.0 | 47.0 | 42.0 | 45.0 | -1 | 3 |
| English language learners or Former ELLs | District | CPI | 12 | 0 | 90 | 0 | 70.8 | 70.8 | 70.8 |
| P+ | 12 | 0.0% | 80.0% | 0.0% | 42.0% | 42.0% | 42.0% |
| SGP | 7 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| State | CPI | 2,886 | 61.6 | 61.6 | 55.2 | 59.6 | -2 | 4.4 |
| P+ | 2,886 | 35% | 32% | 27% | 31% | -4.0% | 4.0% |
| SGP | 1,256 | 56.0 | 56.0 | 41.0 | 46.0 | -10 | 5 |
| **All students** | District | CPI | 265 | 89.5 | 92.8 | 89.8 | 85.5 | -4 | -4.3 |
| P+ | 265 | 77.0% | 81.0% | 77.0% | 68.0% | -9.0% | -9.0% |
| SGP | 245 | 56 | 63 | 50 | 46 | -10 | -4 |
| State | CPI | 70,607 | 89.4 | 90.0 | 90.2 | 90.0 | 0.6 | -0.2 |
| P+ | 70,607 | 77% | 78% | 80% | 78% | 1.0% | -2.0% |
| SGP | 61,969 | 50.0 | 50.0 | 51.0 | 50.0 | 0 | -1 |
| Notes: The number of students included in CPI and percent *Proficient* or *Advanced* (P+) calculations may differ from the number of students included in median SGP calculation. State figures are provided for comparison purposes only and do not represent the standard that a particular group is expected to meet. | | | | | | | | | |

**Table B3c: Assabet Valley RVTSD**

**Science and Technology/Engineering (Grade 10)**

**Performance for Selected Subgroups Compared to State, 2011–2014**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Group and Measure** | | | **Number Included (2014)** | **Spring MCAS Year** | | | | **Gains and Declines** | |
| **4 Year Trend** | **2-Year Trend** |
| **2011** | **2012** | **2013** | **2014** |
| High Needs | District | CPI | 142 | 81.6 | 86.5 | 83.1 | 81.3 | -0.3 | -1.8 |
| P+ | 142 | 59.0% | 67.0% | 63.0% | 57.0% | -2.0% | -6.0% |
| State | CPI | 30,661 | 73.9 | 76.0 | 77.7 | 77.5 | 3.6 | -0.2 |
| P+ | 30,661 | 0.43 | 0.46 | 0.49 | 0.49 | 6.0% | 0.0% |
| Econ. Disad. | District | CPI | 97 | 85.4 | 91.4 | 86.5 | 84.8 | -0.6 | -1.7 |
| P+ | 97 | 66.0% | 77.0% | 67.0% | 63.0% | -3.0% | -4.0% |
| State | CPI | 24,018 | 73.9 | 76.2 | 78.0 | 77.5 | 3.6 | -0.5 |
| P+ | 24,018 | 0.44 | 0.47 | 0.5 | 0.49 | 5.0% | -1.0% |
| Students w/ disabilities | District | CPI | 83 | 70.5 | 78.3 | 79.3 | 74.4 | 3.9 | -4.9 |
| P+ | 83 | 38.0% | 48.0% | 56.0% | 42.0% | 4.0% | -14.0% |
| State | CPI | 11,735 | 67.1 | 68.8 | 70.3 | 70.0 | 2.9 | -0.3 |
| P+ | 11,735 | 0.3 | 0.32 | 0.33 | 0.33 | 3.0% | 0.0% |
| English language learners or Former ELLs | District | CPI | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| P+ | 7 | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| State | CPI | 2,322 | 53.6 | 55.2 | 54.5 | 53.7 | 0.1 | -0.8 |
| P+ | 2,322 | 0.15 | 0.16 | 0.16 | 0.13 | -2.0% | -3.0% |
| **All students** | District | CPI | 243 | 88.6 | 91.8 | 89.6 | 87.4 | -1.2 | -2.2 |
| P+ | 243 | 73.0% | 79.0% | 76.0% | 71.0% | -2.0% | -5.0% |
| State | CPI | 68,495 | 85.7 | 87.0 | 88.0 | 87.9 | 2.2 | -0.1 |
| P+ | 68,495 | 0.67 | 0.69 | 0.71 | 0.71 | 4.0% | 0.0% |
| Notes: Median SGPs are not calculated for STE. State figures are provided for comparison purposes only and do not represent the standard that a particular group is expected to meet. | | | | | | | | | |

**Table B4: Assabet Valley RVTSD**

**Annual Grade 9-12 Dropout Rates, 2011–2014**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **School Year Ending** | | | | **Change 2011–2014** | | **Change 2013–2014** | | **State (2014)** |
|  | **2011** | **2012** | **2013** | **2014** | **Percentage Points** | **Percent** | **Percentage Points** | **Percent** |
| All students | 1.9% | 1.4% | 1.3% | 0.8% | -1.1 | -57.9% | -0.5 | -38.5% | 2.0% |
| Notes: The annual dropout rate is calculated by dividing the number of students who drop out over a one-year period by the October 1 grade 9–12 enrollment, multiplied by 100. Dropouts are those students who dropped out of school between July 1 and June 30 of a given year and who did not return to school, graduate, or receive a GED by the following October 1. Dropout rates have been rounded; percent change is based on unrounded numbers. | | | | | | | | | |

**Table B5a: Assabet Valley RVTSD**

**Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rates, 2011–2014**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Group** | **Number Included (2014)** | **School Year Ending** | | | | **Change 2011–2014** | | **Change 2013–2014** | | **State (2014)** |
| **2011** | **2012** | **2013** | **2014** | **Percentage Points** | **Percent Change** | **Percentage Points** | **Percent Change** |
| High needs | 151 | 83.8% | 90.5% | 88.3% | 90.1% | 6.3 | 7.5% | 1.8 | 2.0% | 76.5% |
| Econ. Disad. | 107 | 81.3% | 88.9% | 89.7% | 87.9% | 6.6 | 8.1% | -1.8 | -2.0% | 75.5% |
| Students w/ disabilities | 73 | 87.7% | 90.3% | 85.1% | 94.5% | 6.8 | 7.8% | 9.4 | 11.0% | 69.1% |
| English language learners or Former ELLs | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 63.9% |
| All students | 235 | 85.6% | 92.0% | 90.8% | 93.6% | 8.0 | 9.3% | 2.8 | 3.1% | 86.1% |
| Notes: The four-year cohort graduation rate is calculated by dividing the number of students in a particular cohort who graduate in four years or less by the number of students in the cohort entering their freshman year four years earlier, minus transfers out and plus transfers in. Non-graduates include students still enrolled in high school, students who earned a GED or received a certificate of attainment rather than a diploma, and students who dropped out. Graduation rates have been rounded; percent change is based on unrounded numbers. | | | | | | | | | | |

**Table B5b: Assabet Valley RVTSD**

**Five-Year Cohort Graduation Rates, 2010–2013**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Group** |  | **School Year Ending** | | | | **Change 2010–2013** | | **Change 2012–2013** | | **State (2013)** |
| **Number Included (2013)** | **2010** | **2011** | **2012** | **2013** | **Percentage Points** | **Percent Change** | **Percentage Points** | **Percent Change** |
| High needs | 137 | 93.1% | 89.4% | 91.9% | 94.2% | 1.1 | 1.2% | 2.3 | 2.5% | 79.2% |
| Econ. Disad. | 97 | 89.9% | 87.9% | 89.8% | 94.8% | 4.9 | 5.5% | 5.0 | 5.6% | 78.3% |
| Students w/ disabilities | 74 | 93.2% | 93.2% | 93.1% | 90.5% | -2.7 | -2.9% | -2.6 | -2.8% | 72.9% |
| English language learners or Former ELLs | -- | 71.4% | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 70.9% |
| All students | 239 | 93.8% | 88.9% | 93.7% | 94.1% | 0.3 | 0.3% | 0.4 | 0.4% | 87.7% |
| Notes: The five-year cohort graduation rate is calculated by dividing the number of students in a particular cohort who graduate in five years or less by the number of students in the cohort entering their freshman year five years earlier, minus transfers out and plus transfers in. Non-graduates include students still enrolled in high school, students who earned a GED or received a certificate of attainment rather than a diploma, and students who dropped out. Graduation rates have been rounded; percent change is based on unrounded numbers. Graduation rates have been rounded; percent change is based on unrounded numbers. | | | | | | | | | | |

**Table B6: Assabet Valley RVTSD**

**Attendance Rates, 2011–2014**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Group** | **School Year Ending** | | | | **Change 2011–2014** | | **Change 2013–2014** | | **State (2014)** |
| **2011** | **2012** | **2013** | **2014** | **Percentage Points** | **Percent Change** | **Percentage Points** | **Percent Change** |
| All students | 94.4% | 94.4% | 94.2% | 94.4% | 0.0 | 0.0% | 0.2 | 0.2% | 94.9% |
| Notes: The attendance rate is calculated by dividing the total number of days students attended school by the total number of days students were enrolled in a particular school year. A student’s attendance rate is counted toward any district the student attended. In addition, district attendance rates included students who were out placed in public collaborative or private alternative schools/programs at public expense. Attendance rates have been rounded; percent change is based on unrounded numbers. | | | | | | | | | |

**Table B7: Assabet Valley RVTSD**

**Suspension Rates, 2011–2014**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Group** | **School Year Ending** | | | | **Change 2010–2013** | | **Change 2012–2013** | | **State (2014)** |
| **2011** | **2012** | **2013** | **2014** | **Percentage Points** | **Percent Change** | **Percentage Points** | **Percent Change** |
| In-School Suspension Rate | 17.8% | 13.8% | 9.7% | 8.3% | -9.5 | -53.4% | -1.4 | -14.4% | 2.1% |
| Out-of-School Suspension Rate | 9.3% | 8.9% | 8.1% | 5.4% | -3.9 | -41.9% | -2.7 | -33.3% | 3.9% |
| Note: This table reflects information reported by school districts at the end of the school year indicated. Suspension rates have been rounded; percent change is based on unrounded numbers. | | | | | | | | | |

**Table B8: Assabet Valley RVTSD**

**Expenditures, Chapter 70 State Aid, and Net School Spending**

**Fiscal Years 2012–2014**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **FY12** | | **FY13** | | **FY14** | |
|  | Estimated | Actual | Estimated | Actual | Estimated | Actual |
| Expenditures | | | | | | |
| From school committee budget | $17,300,000 | $17,043,947 | $17,600,000 | $17,477,459 | $17,802,829 | $17,862,115 |
| From revolving funds and grants | -- | $1,917,025 | -- | $1,733,481 | -- | $1,814,506 |
| Total expenditures | -- | $18,960,972 | -- | $19,210,940 | -- | $19,676,621 |
| Chapter 70 aid to education program | | | | | | |
| Chapter 70 state aid\* | -- | $3,066,115 | -- | $3,688,750 |  | $3,773,901 |
| Required local contribution | -- | $7,640,401 | -- | $8,265,701 |  | $8,174,105 |
| Required net school spending\*\* | -- | $10,706,516 | -- | $11,954,451 | -- | $11,948,006 |
| Actual net school spending | -- | $10,520,522 | -- | $11,795,355 | -- | $12,208,973 |
| Over/under required ($) | -- | -$185,994 | -- | -$159,096 | -- | $260,967 |
| Over/under required (%) | -- | -1.7 | -- | -1.3 | -- | 2.2 |
| \*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: FY12, FY13. FY14 District End-of-Year Reports; Chapter 70 Program information on ESE website.  Data retrieved April 27, 2015 | | | | | | |

**Table B9: Assabet Valley RVTSD**

**Expenditures Per In-District Pupil**

**Fiscal Years 2011–2013**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Expenditure Category** | **2011** | **2012** | **2013** |
| Administration | $922 | $884 | $951 |
| Instructional leadership (district and school) | $837 | $952 | $1,020 |
| Teachers | $6,769 | $6,655 | $7,052 |
| Other teaching services | $221 | $301 | $285 |
| Professional development | $523 | $599 | $597 |
| Instructional materials, equipment and technology | $1,229 | $1,068 | $1,173 |
| Guidance, counseling and testing services | $852 | $797 | $908 |
| Pupil services | $2,168 | $2,030 | $1,977 |
| Operations and maintenance | $1,766 | $1,655 | $1,713 |
| Insurance, retirement and other fixed costs | $2,222 | $2,412 | $2,543 |
| Total expenditures per in-district pupil | $17,508 | $17,353 | $18,220 |
| Sources: [Per-pupil expenditure reports on ESE website](http://www.doe.mass.edu/finance/statistics/) | | | |

Appendix C: Instructional Inventory

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Learning Environment & Teaching** | **By Program** | **Evidence** | | |
| **None** | **Partial** | **Clear & Consistent** |
| **(0)** | **(1)** | **(2)** |
| 1. Tone of interactions between teacher and students and among students is positive & respectful. |  |  |  |  |
| **V/Tech** | 0% | 0% | 100% |
| **Acad.** | 0% | 0% | 100% |
| **Total #** | 0 | 0 | 36 |
| **Total %** | 0% | 0% | 100% |
| 2. Behavioral standards are clearly communicated and disruptions, if present, are managed effectively & equitably. |  |  |  |  |
| **V/Tech** | 0% | 0% | 100% |
| **Acad.** | 0% | 0% | 100% |
| **Total #** | 0 | 0 | 36 |
| **Total %** | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| 3. The physical arrangement of the classroom ensures a positive learning environment and provides all students with access to learning activities. |  |  |  |  |
| **V/Tech** | 0% | 6% | 94% |
| **Acad.** | 5% | 0% | 95% |
| **Total #** | 1 | 1 | 34 |
| **Total %** | 3% | 3% | 94% |
| 4. Classroom rituals and routines promote transitions with minimal loss of instructional time. |  |  |  |  |
| **V/Tech** | 0% | 13% | 88% |
| **Acad.** | 5% | 0% | 95% |
| **Total #** | 1 | 2 | 33 |
| **Total %** | 3% | 6% | 92% |
| 5. Multiple resources are available to meet all students’ diverse learning needs. |  |  |  |  |
| **V/Tech** | 6% | 13% | 81% |
| **Acad.** | 35% | 35% | 30% |
| **Total #** | 8 | 9 | 19 |
| **Total %** | 22% | 25% | 53% |
| 6. The teacher demonstrates knowledge of subject and content. |  |  |  |  |
| **V/Tech** | 0% | 0% | 100% |
| **Acad.** | 0% | 15% | 85% |
| **Total #** | 0 | 3 | 33 |
| **Total %** | 0% | 8% | 92% |
| 7. The teacher plans and implements a lesson that reflects rigor and high expectations. |  |  |  |  |
| **V/Tech** | 25% | 13% | 63% |
| **Acad.** | 30% | 40% | 30% |
| **Total #** | 10 | 10 | 16 |
| **Total %** | 28% | 28% | 44% |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Teaching** | **By Program** | **Evidence** | | |
| **None** | **Partial** | **Clear & Consistent** |
| **(0)** | **(1)** | **(2)** |
| 8. The teacher communicates clear learning objective(s) aligned to the *2011 Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks*. |  |  |  |  |
| **V/Tech** | 19% | 0% | 81% |
| **Acad.** | 10% | 30% | 60% |
| **Total #** | 5 | 6 | 25 |
| **Total %** | 14% | 17% | 69% |
| 9. The teacher uses appropriate instructional strategies well matched to learning objective (s) and content. |  |  |  |  |
| **V/Tech** | 6% | 25% | 69% |
| **Acad.** | 10% | 10% | 80% |
| **Total #** | 3 | 6 | 27 |
| **Total %** | 8% | 17% | 75% |
| 10. The teacher uses appropriate modifications for English language learners and students with disabilities such as explicit language objective(s); direct instruction in vocabulary; presentation of content at multiple levels of complexity; and, differentiation of content, process, and/or products. |  |  |  |  |
| **V/Tech** | 44% | 13% | 44% |
| **Acad.** | 50% | 15% | 35% |
| **Total #** | 17 | 5 | 14 |
| **Total %** | 47% | 14% | 39% |
| 11. The teacher provides opportunities for students to engage in higher order thinking such as use of inquiry, exploration, application, analysis, synthesis, and/or evaluation of knowledge or concepts (Bloom’s Taxonomy). |  |  |  |  |
| **V/Tech** | 25% | 19% | 56% |
| **Acad.** | 40% | 20% | 40% |
| **Total #** | 12 | 7 | 17 |
| **Total %** | 33% | 19% | 47% |
| 12. The teacher uses questioning techniques that require thoughtful responses that demonstrate understanding. |  |  |  |  |
| **V/Tech** | 31% | 38% | 31% |
| **Acad.** | 25% | 35% | 40% |
| **Total #** | 10 | 13 | 13 |
| **Total %** | 28% | 36% | 36% |
| 13. The teacher implements teaching strategies that promote a safe learning environment where students give opinions, make judgments, explore and investigate ideas. |  |  |  |  |
| **V/Tech** | 6% | 31% | 63% |
| **Acad.** | 10% | 10% | 80% |
| **Total #** | 3 | 7 | 26 |
| **Total %** | 8% | 19% | 72% |
| 14. The teacher paces the lesson to match content and meet students’ learning needs. |  |  |  |  |
| **V/Tech** | 13% | 19% | 69% |
| **Acad.** | 20% | 40% | 40% |
| **Total #** | 6 | 11 | 19 |
| **Total %** | 17% | 31% | 53% |
| 15. The teacher conducts frequent formative assessments to check for understanding and inform instruction. |  |  |  |  |
| **V/Tech** | 13% | 31% | 56% |
| **Acad.** | 10% | 35% | 55% |
| **Total #** | 4 | 12 | 20 |
| **Total %** | 11% | 33% | 56% |
| 16. The teacher makes use of available technology to support instruction and enhance learning. |  |  |  |  |
| **V/Tech** | 50% | 6% | 44% |
| **Acad.** | 65% | 15% | 20% |
| **Total #** | 21 | 4 | 11 |
| **Total %** | 58% | 11% | 31% |
| **Learning** | **By Program** | **Evidence** | | |
| **None** | **Partial** | **Clear & Consistent** |
| **(0)** | **(1)** | **(2)** |
| 17. Students are engaged in challenging academic tasks. |  |  |  |  |
| **V/Tech** | 31% | 25% | 44% |
| **Acad.** | 25% | 25% | 50% |
| **Total #** | 10 | 9 | 17 |
| **Total %** | 28% | 25% | 47% |
| 18. Students articulate their thinking verbally or in writing. |  |  |  |  |
| **V/Tech** | 38% | 19% | 44% |
| **Acad.** | 25% | 25% | 50% |
| **Total #** | 11 | 8 | 17 |
| **Total %** | 31% | 22% | 47% |
| 19. Students inquire, explore, apply, analyze, synthesize and/or evaluate knowledge or concepts (Bloom’s Taxonomy). |  |  |  |  |
| **V/Tech** | 13% | 25% | 63% |
| **Acad.** | 25% | 35% | 40% |
| **Total #** | 7 | 11 | 18 |
| **Total %** | 19% | 31% | 50% |
| 20. Students elaborate about content and ideas when responding to questions. |  |  |  |  |
| **V/Tech** | 44% | 25% | 31% |
| **Acad.** | 45% | 25% | 30% |
| **Total #** | 16 | 9 | 11 |
| **Total %** | 44% | 25% | 31% |
| 21. Students make connections to prior knowledge, or real world experience, or can apply knowledge and understanding to other subjects. |  |  |  |  |
| **V/Tech** | 25% | 6% | 69% |
| **Acad.** | 15% | 25% | 60% |
| **Total #** | 7 | 6 | 23 |
| **Total %** | 19% | 17% | 64% |
| 22. Students use technology as a tool for learning and/or understanding. |  |  |  |  |
| **V/Tech** | 38% | 6% | 56% |
| **Acad.** | 70% | 5% | 25% |
| **Total #** | 20 | 2 | 14 |
| **Total %** | 56% | 6% | 39% |
| 23. Students assume responsibility for their own learning whether individually, in pairs, or in groups. |  |  |  |  |
| **V/Tech** | 6% | 13% | 81% |
| **Acad.** | 10% | 5% | 85% |
| **Total #** | 3 | 3 | 30 |
| **Total %** | 8% | 8% | 83% |
| 24. Student work demonstrates high quality and can serve as exemplars. |  |  |  |  |
| **V/Tech** | 25% | 25% | 50% |
| **Acad.** | 75% | 20% | 5% |
| **Total #** | 19 | 8 | 9 |
| **Total %** | 53% | 22% | 25% |

1. At Assabet Valley, students alternate weekly, by grade level, academic classes and vocational programs: grades 9 and 11 are paired and grades 10 and 12 are paired. During the week of the site visit, only grade 10 students were in academic classes because the grade 12 students had already completed the school year. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 2014 graduation targets are 80 percent for the four-year and 85 percent for the five- year cohort graduation rates and refer to the 2013 four-year cohort graduation rate and 2012 five-year cohort graduation rates. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. According to ESE data, the percentage of students averaging 2 or above on ELA open-response items decreased from 83 percent in 2011 to 72 percent in 2014. The percentage of students averaging 2 or above on math open-response items decreased from 65 percent in 2011 to 58 percent in 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. For the 2014–2015 school year, the 11 comparable vocational/technical districts and their percentages of students with disabilities are as follows: **Assabet Valley, 33.6%**; Blue Hills, 23.3%; Bristol-Plymouth, 17.4%; Cape Cod, 26.4%; **Minuteman, 50.8%**; Nashoba Valley, 32.7%; Northeast Metropolitan, 24.8%; Southeastern, 22.4%; Southern Worcester County, 18.5%; Tri County, 27.5%; and Whittier, 24.5%. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. See ESE’s [School/District Profiles](http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/search/search.aspx?leftNavId=). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The proportion of students with disabilities has increased steadily in recent years, from 27.9 percent in 2011–2012 to 30.2 percent in 2012–2013 to 31.6 percent in 2013–2014 to 33.6 percent in 2014–2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)