# Gardner Public Schools

Comprehensive District Review Report

February 2024

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Office of District Reviews and Monitoring

135 Santilli Highway

Everett, MA 02149

781-338-3000

[www.doe.mass.edu](http://www.doe.mass.edu)

American Institutes for Research

Education Systems and Policy

201 Jones Road, Suite 100
Waltham, MA 02451

202-403-5000

[www.air.org](http://www.air.org)



Contents

[Executive Summary 1](#_Toc166245501)

[Gardner Public Schools: District Review Overview 6](#_Toc166245502)

[Leadership and Governance 11](#_Toc166245503)

[Curriculum and Instruction 18](#_Toc166245504)

[Assessment 23](#_Toc166245505)

[Human Resources and Professional Development 26](#_Toc166245506)

[Student Support 33](#_Toc166245507)

[Financial and Asset Management 38](#_Toc166245508)

[Appendix A. Summary of Site Visit Activities A–1](#_Toc166245509)

[Appendix B. Districtwide Instructional Observation Report B–1](#_Toc166245510)

[Appendix C. Resources to Support Implementation of DESE’s District Standards and Indicators C–1](#_Toc166245511)

[Appendix D. Enrollment, Attendance, Expenditures D–1](#_Toc166245512)

[Appendix E. Gardner Public Schools: Student Performance Data E–1](#_Toc166245513)

 

This document was prepared by the American Institutes for Research, in collaboration with the
Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Russell D Johnston

Acting Commissioner

Published July 2024

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, an affirmative action employer, is committed to ensuring that all of its programs and facilities are accessible to all members of the public. We do not discriminate on the basis of age, color, disability, national origin, race, religion, sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation. Inquiries regarding the Department’s compliance with Title IX and other civil rights laws may be directed to the Human Resources Director, 135 Santilli Highway, Everett, MA 02149. Phone: 781-338-6105.

© 2024 Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

*Permission is hereby granted to copy any or all parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes. Please credit the “Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.”*

This document printed on recycled paper.

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

135 Santilli Highway, Everett MA 02149

Phone: 781-338-3000 TTY: N.E.T. Relay 800-439-2370

[www.doe.mass.edu](http://www.doe.mass.edu)

## Executive Summary

In accordance with Massachusetts state law, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) contracted with the American Institutes for Research® (AIR®) to conduct a comprehensive review of the Gardner Public Schools (hereafter, Gardner) in February 2024. Data collection activities associated with the review included interviews, focus groups, and document reviews and were focused on understanding how district systems, structures, and practices operate in support of district continuous improvement efforts. The review focused on the six standards (and related indicators) that DESE has identified as being important components of district effectiveness.[[1]](#footnote-2)

Four observers, who focused primarily on instruction in the classroom, visited Gardner during the week of February 26, 2024. The observers conducted 82 observations in a sample of classrooms across grade levels, focused on literacy, English language arts (ELA), and mathematics. The Teachstone Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) protocol, developed by the Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning at the University of Virginia,[[2]](#footnote-3) guided all classroom observations in the district. These observations used the three grade-band levels of the CLASS protocols: K-3, Upper Elementary (4-5), and Secondary (6‑12). Overall, in the K-5 grade band, instructional observations suggest generally strong emotional support, high classroom organization and student engagement (Grades 4-5), and mixed evidence of consistently rigorous instructional support. In the 6-8 grade band, instructional observations provide mixed evidence of consistently strong emotional support, strong classroom organization and student engagement, and mixed evidence of consistently rigorous instructional support. In the 9-12 grade band, instructional observations provide mixed evidence of strong emotional support, strong evidence of classroom organization, and mixed evidence of student engagement or consistently rigorous instructional support.

### [Leadership and Governance](#_Leadership_and_Governance)

Dr. Mark Pellegrino has been Gardner’s superintendent since February 2017. In leading the district, the superintendent collaborates with the district’s seven-member school committee; the City’s Mayor chairs this committee. A strength of the district is the school committee’s effective collaboration with district leadership, though an area for growth is that some staff members reported feeling like the committee addresses leadership’s concerns before their concerns.

Gardner’s district office comprises various roles, including the superintendent and other director-level roles. The feedback from focus groups suggests a strong sense of collaboration and shared goals among district and school leaders, which is a strength of the district. At the district’s four schools, principals have significant autonomy in building leadership and decision-making. Gardner’s model of distributive leadership includes Building Leadership Teams (BLTs) that support principals and act as a structure for distributed leadership in school buildings. However, some staff reported that BLTs do not consistently share leadership, and addressing this decision-making capacity is an area of growth for the district.

Leadership in Gardner focus their activities around the District Improvement Plan (DIP), which outlines priorities and funding allocations to enhance student outcomes. District leaders described multitiered systems of support (MTSS) as instrumental to these strategies and overall district improvement. District and school leaders actively participate in developing the DIP to align the overarching goals of the district with those of individual schools. Improvement planning is a strength of the district: the district-level plan includes clear, measurable objectives aimed at enhancing student outcomes, while school-level plans align with the priorities of the district plan. However, developing a process for communicating more effectively with teachers around improvement planning is an area for growth.

The district’s process for annual budget planning is clear and collaborative, a strength of the district. Staff described this process, whereby school and district leaders come together with lists of building-level requests and priorities and noted that these are discussed in light of school needs, available resources, and impacts of previous efforts. This reliance on data—particularly student outcomes—is a strength of the district’s budget planning process.

### [Curriculum and Instruction](#_Curriculum_and_Instruction)

The district has a clear, formal process for reviewing and selecting curricula, which is a strength of the district. The process includes a timeline for regularly reviewing each curricular resource in each content area. The superintendent leads curriculum selection and review and receives collaborative assistance from the chief academic officer at the district level. These two individuals also collaborate with school leaders, including principals, instructional coaches, and other staff. Another strength of the district is the degree to which staff feel involved in the curriculum review process and the amount of scaffolding the curriculum provides.

According to the DIP (DIP), the district engages all learners in relevant, academically rigorous instruction. Among school staff, however, teachers varied in reporting familiarly with these instructional priorities. These responses suggest that communicating clearer instructional expectations is an area for growth for the district. Classroom observations revealed an area for growth related to instructional support, particularly at the elementary level, making increasing rigor in instruction an area of growth for the district. Classroom observations also revealed a strength in classroom organization throughout the district.

Gardner provides a range of course offerings and academic pathways, particularly at the high school level. Gardner Elementary School and Gardner Middle School do not offer accelerated courses. Gardner High School provides courses across several levels, including Advanced Placement (AP), honors, and college preparatory, as well as dual enrollment at Mount Wachusett Community College, and internships with local businesses. Access to a variety of advanced coursework for high school students is a strength of the district.

### [Assessment](#_Assessment)

Gardner employs a variety of academic and social-emotional assessments to collect data. At the elementary level, teachers administer assessments such as Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), mClass with DIBELS, WIDA, HMH, and the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS). Middle school teachers use teacher-created formative assessments and the LinkIt benchmark assessment for ELA and mathematics. High school teachers rely primarily on teacher-created formative assessments. Notably, Gardner focuses on understanding students’ social and emotional strengths and needs through formal screening tools, which is a strength of the district.

Data use is a strength within the district at the district level. The district strategy group, which includes the superintendent, the chief academic officer, the director of pupil personnel services, the director of MTSS, and the director of multilingual learners, meet regularly to review and analyze LinkIt, DIBELS, and MCAS data. The district emphasizes data-based decision making aligned with multitiered systems of support (MTSS) principles. Their goal is to improve lessons and meet the needs of all learners through a data-driven process.

Feedback from school-based educators suggests that data use is somewhat less consistent at the individual school or teacher levels. District expectations are that teachers analyze various data sources to inform instruction and targeted instructional groupings, but school staff descriptions varied. Elementary school teachers reported tension between the immediacy of student needs and the timetable for meetings, for example. Middle school teachers received professional development on data use but lacked follow-ups or check-ins. High school teachers found CPT meetings flexible for their planning. However, consistent expectations and practices for school-level data use remain an area for growth within the district.

The district regularly shares student performance data, which is a strength of the district. Families receive timely data through fall and spring MTSS meetings and parent-teacher conferences. Parents attend MTSS meetings to review attendance data, and classroom data are shared during conferences. Teachers post grades on PowerSchool, and Gardner High School sends weekly progress monitoring reports to families. Students receive information about their progress and additional support when needed.

### [Human Resources and Professional Development](#_Human_Resources_and)

Gardner’s human resources department is under the leadership of the human resources manager. The district has intentionally expanded the role of the human resources manager to improve staffing processes and administrative efficiency. Feedback from staff suggests that these changes have made the department more efficient and responsive, which is a strength of the district.

Principals lead recruitment and hiring in Gardner at the school level. These building leaders identify needs within their buildings and discuss these needs with district leaders as part of the annual budgeting process. This level of principal leadership in the recruitment and hiring process is a strength of the district. However, while Gardner has a commitment to hiring, developing, and retaining a diverse workforce, a review of staffing data indicates these efforts have not yet resulted in a workforce that resembles the student body. Recruiting a more diverse workforce is an area of growth for the district.

The supervision and evaluation system in Gardner is a structured and comprehensive framework aligned with DESE guidelines. However, consistency in the teacher evaluation process is an area for growth for the district, particularly in ensuring that all staff receive regular feedback, regardless of where they are in the evaluation cycle or their professional status. Based on a review of teacher and administrative evaluations, a strength of the district is consistently highlighting areas of strength through the evaluation process for all administrators. The district is also approaching consistency for naming strengths or practices to continue among teachers. On the other hand, this evidence also highlights an area for growth for the district in identifying areas for improvement more consistently.

 Gardner’s professional development plan focuses on implementing MTSS and positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS), with a strong emphasis on social-emotional learning and equity. However, some staff reported that professional development could be more tailored to staff’s career stage and areas of responsibility, which is an area for growth for the district.

Several reviewed documents detail Gardner’s commitment to supporting new educators. The mentoring system includes monthly meetings, reflections, and logs to support new educators. Gardner’s induction and mentoring programs provide comprehensive support and guidance to new teachers. Gardner similarly promotes opportunities for leadership development to support distributed leadership and enact district improvement strategies, which generally represent a strength of the district. Some structures, however, do not function as intended, and opportunities for teacher leadership through structures like BLTs or other teams are not as effective as they could be. In Gardner, supporting these initiatives more consistently to provide additional distributed leadership opportunities in an area of growth for the district.

### [Student Support](#_Student_Support)

Gardner commits to providing secure and supportive learning environments in its DIP and School Improvement Plans (SIPs) that place a high priority on social and emotional support for all students. Although expectations for student behavior are articulated, staff and students shared difficulties in managing student behavior. Feedback from staff, students, and parents indicates that more consistent implementation of positive behavioral systems and expectations, particularly at the middle school, is an area for growth for the district.

Multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) are a districtwide priority in Gardner. Each school has an SST that consists of the school psychologist, administrators, counselors, teachers, specialists, and relevant service providers. Each school has time allocated in its schedules to provide interventions and support to students, which is a strength of the district. Although Gardner has a process to determine structured and equitable assignments to interventions, several educators noted an area for growth is more consistent implementation of the MTSS structure across all school sites.

Family and community engagement is another priority in Gardner. All individual SIPs detail the forms of communication and frequency of communicating with families across the district. These written plans for communications and community relations are a strength of the district. Another strength of the district is the way Gardner partners with local community organizations to meet student needs, including recreation centers and a local community college. Finally, opportunities for students to participate in decision-making through entities like their student council are a strength of the district.

### [Financial and Asset Management](#_Financial_and_Asset)

Gardner’s finance office includes the director and the assistant director of finance and operations, and other HR and facilities staff.

Gardner’s budget documentation and reporting practices are comprehensive and consistent. Regular presentations to the school committee and appropriate subcommittees are clear and available to the public and town government partners, making this reporting a strength of the district.

The adequacy of Gardner’s budget was an area of disagreement among interviewed participants, making securing the necessary resources for addressing the needs of Gardner’s changing population an area of growth for the district. In the past five years, Gardner consistently met the requirements for net school spending, generally exceeding this figure by about 3 percent in the past three years. However, sever respondents and a review of state records show that Gardner’s student population has undergone a significant changes in recent years, with an increase in the percentage of students with high needs. These changes prompted some participants to argue that current resources are not adequate

In Gardner, the director of finance and operations oversees the overall financial tracking for the district. The director and his team use a collaborative process for budget forecasting that involves various stakeholders, including school leaders. Gardner’s finance office provides the finance subcommittee with monthly MUNIS reports, offering regular updates on the district’s financial status. During the budget season, the committee reviews spreadsheets comparing past year allocations with current needs. Regular tracking, including the strategic management of grants, is a strength of the district.

Gardner has a comprehensive approach to enhancing the quality and safety of educational facilities. The district earmarked funds for essential projects such as refinishing floors, painting ceilings, and replacing rooftops and HVAC condensers. District leaders also allocated funds for the modernization of science labs, intercom systems, and security cameras. The mayor of Gardner highlighted the strength of the district’s collaborative efforts between the school committee, city officials, and the community in supporting the construction of a new elementary school. This collaboration allowed funding for the project through existing resources without requiring a Proposition 2.5 override. Nevertheless, district leaders indicated that despite efforts to maximize the use of available resources, the district continues to face the challenge of obtaining sufficient funding for capital improvements to existing buildings.

## Gardner Public Schools: District Review Overview

### Purpose

Conducted under Chapter 15, Section 55A of the Massachusetts General Laws, comprehensive district reviews support local school districts in establishing or strengthening a cycle of continuous improvement. Reviews carefully consider the effectiveness of systemwide functions, referring to the six district standards used by DESE: Leadership and Governance, Curriculum and Instruction, Assessment, Human Resources and Professional Development, Student Support, and Financial and Asset Management. Reviews identify systems and practices that may be impeding improvement as well as those most likely to be contributing to positive results. The design of the comprehensive district review promotes district reflection on its own performance and potential next steps. In addition to providing information to each district reviewed, DESE uses review reports to identify resources and/or technical assistance to provide to the district.

### Methodology

A district review team consisting of AIR staff members and subcontractors, with expertise in each district standard, reviews documentation and extant data prior to conducting an on-site visit. On-site data collection includes team members conducting interviews and focus group sessions with a wide range of stakeholders, including school committee members, teachers’ association representatives, district and school administrators, teachers, students, and students’ families. Virtual interviews and focus groups also are conducted as needed. Information about review activities and the site visit schedule is in Appendix A. Team members also observe classroom instruction and collect data using the CLASS protocol. The Districtwide Instructional Observation Report resulting from these classroom observations is in Appendix B.

Following the site visit, the team members code and analyze the data to develop a set of objective findings. The team lead and multiple quality assurance reviewers, including DESE staff, then review the initial draft of the report. DESE staff provides recommendations for the district, based on the findings of strengths and areas of growth identified, before AIR finalizes and submits the report to DESE. DESE previews and then sends the report to the district for factual review before publishing it on the DESE website. DESE also provides additional resources to support implementation of DESE’s District Standards and Indicators, summarized in Appendix C.

### Site Visit

The site visit to Gardner occurred during the week of February 26, 2024. The site visit included 20 hours of interviews and focus groups with approximately 75 stakeholders, including school committee members, district administrators, school staff, students, students’ families, and teachers’ association representatives. The review team conducted four teacher focus groups with seven elementary school teachers, five middle school teachers, and 11 high school teachers, including staff from Gardner High School and Gardner Academy; two student focus groups with eight middle school and 13 high school students, including students from Gardner High School and Gardner Academy; and one family focus group with nine parents. Data collection included distributing a questionnaire to each principal to gather information on district and school processes and operations.

The site team also conducted 82 observations of classroom instruction in four schools. Certified team members conducted instructional observations using the Teachstone CLASS protocol.

### District Profile

Appointed in 2017, Dr. Mark Pellegrino is the superintendent of Gardner. He receives assistance from the chief academic officer and directors of facilities, finance and operations, school health services, multilingual learners, and pupil personnel services. District governance is through a six-member school committee who are elected for four-year terms. The chair of the school committee is the mayor of the city of Gardner, who is elected to a two-year term.

In the 2023-2024 school year, there were 148 teachers in the district, with 2,472 students enrolled in the district’s four schools. Table 1 provides an overview of student enrollment by school.

Table 1. Schools, Type, Grades Served, and Enrollment, 2023-2024

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| School  | Type | Grades served | Enrollment |
| Gardner Elementary School  | Elementary | PK-4 | 1,053 |
| Gardner Middle School | Middle | 5-7 | 483 |
| Gardner High School | High | 8-12 | 809 |
| Gardner Academy for Learning and Technology | High | 9-12 | 127 |
| Total |  |  | 2,472 |

*Note.* Enrollment data as of October 1, 2023.

Between 2021 and 2024, overall student enrollment increased by 261 students. Enrollment figures by race/ethnicity and high needs populations (i.e., students with disabilities, students from low-income families, and English learners [ELs] and former ELs) compared with the state are in Tables D1 and D2 in Appendix D. Appendix D also provides additional information about district enrollment, attendance, and expenditures.

In fiscal year 2022, the total in-district per-pupil expenditure for Gardner was $15,511, which is $4,320 less than the average in-district per-pupil expenditure in districts with similar demographics ($19,831), and $2,205 less than the average in-district per-pupil expenditures in districts of similar wealth ($17,716).[[3]](#footnote-4) In-district per pupil expenditures for Gardner were $4,043 less than the average state spending per pupil ($19,554). Actual net school spending was greater than what is required by the Chapter 70 state education aid program, as shown in Table D4 in Appendix D.

### School and Student Performance

The following section includes selected highlights regarding student performance in Gardner. This section is meant to provide a brief synopsis of data, not a comprehensive analysis of district performance data. For additional details and data on district performance, please see Appendix E and [School and District Profiles (mass.edu)](https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/general/general.aspx?topNavID=1&leftNavId=100&orgcode=01030000&orgtypecode=5).

#### Achievement

* In Grades 3-8 in ELA and mathematics and in Grades 5 and 8 in science, the percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations on the Next Generation Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) was lower than the state rate for each student group.
	+ ELA: the percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations was between 4 and 43 percentage points lower than their statewide peers.
	+ Mathematics: the percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations was between 4 and 35 percentage points lower than the state rate.
	+ Science: the percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations was between 1 and 22 percentage points lower than their statewide peers.
* In Grade 10, the percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations on the 2023 Next Generation MCAS in ELA, mathematics, and science was lower than the state rate for each student group, except for Hispanic/Latino students in ELA, and EL and former EL students in mathematics.
	+ ELA: the percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations was between 8 and 28 percentage points lower than their statewide peers, except for Hispanic/Latino students who were 2 percentage points higher than their statewide peers.
	+ Mathematics: the percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations was between 1 and 23 percentage points lower than the state rate, except for EL and former EL students who were 3 percentage points higher than their statewide peers.
	+ Science: the percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations was between 3 and 33 percentage points lower than their statewide peers.
* White students in Gardner met or exceeded expectations on the Next Generation MCAS at lower rates than their statewide peers in ELA, mathematics, and science.
	+ ELA: the percentage of white students meeting or exceeding expectations was 23 points lower in Grades 3-8 and 28 percentage points lower in Grade 10.
	+ Mathematics: the percentage of white students meeting or exceeding expectations was 21 percentage points lower in Grades 3-8 and 23 percentage points lower in Grade 10.
	+ Science: the percentage of white students meeting or exceeding expectations was 22 percentage points lower in Grades 5 and 8 and 33 percentage points lower in Grade 10.

#### Growth

* Student growth percentiles (SGP)[[4]](#footnote-5) for students with disabilities were low in Grades 3-8 ELA and Grade 10 mathematics and very low in Grade 10 ELA.
* African American/Black students had low SGPs in Grades 3-8 in ELA and mathematics.

#### Other Indicators

* Gardner’s four-year graduation rates declined between 2020 and 2022 by 30.4 percentage points for EL and former EL students and by 0.9 percentage points to 8.3 percentage points for every other student group with reportable data , except for African American/Black students who improved by 13.6 percentage points.
* Gardner’s out-of-school suspensions in 2023 were higher for each student group with reportable data than their statewide peers by 1.3 percentage points to 4.4 percentage points.
* Chronic absenteeism rates in Gardner were higher than the state rates for each student group with reportable data by 2.8 percentage points to 21.9 percentage points and more than double the state rate (17.0 percent) for White students (34.1 percent).
* In 2023, Gardner Middle School was identified as *requiring assistance or intervention* via the state’s accountability system because the overall performance of the White student group was among the lowest performing five percent of White student groups in non-high schools statewide.
* In 2023, Gardner Academy of Learning and Technology was identified as requiring assistance or intervention via the state’s accountability system because the school had a low assessment participation rate (less than 95 percent) for all students on the spring 2023 MCAS assessments.

### Classroom Observations

Four observers, who focused primarily on instruction in the classroom, visited Gardner during the week of February 26, 2024. The observers conducted 82 observations in a sample of classrooms across grade levels, focused on literacy, ELA, and mathematics. The CLASS protocol guided all classroom observations in the district. These observations used the three grade-band levels of CLASS protocols: K-3, Upper Elementary (4-5), and Secondary (6-12).

The K-3 protocol includes 10 classroom dimensions related to three domains: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support. The Upper Elementary and Secondary protocols include 11 classroom dimensions related to three domains: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support, in addition to Student Engagement. The three domains observed at all levels broadly are defined as follows:

* Emotional Support. Describes the social-emotional functioning of the classroom, including teacher-student relationships and responsiveness to social-emotional needs.
* Classroom Organization. Describes the management of students’ behavior, time, and attention in the classroom.
* Instructional Support. Describes the efforts to support cognitive and language development, including cognitive demand of the assigned tasks, the focus on higher order thinking skills, and the use of process-oriented feedback.

When conducting a classroom visit, the observer rates each dimension (including Student Engagement) on a scale of 1 to 7. A rating of 1 or 2 (low range) indicates that the dimension was never or rarely evident during the visit. A rating of 3, 4, or 5 (middle range) indicates that the dimension was evident but not exhibited consistently or in a way that included all students. A rating of 6 or 7 (high range) indicates that the dimension was reflected in all or most classroom activities and in a way that included all or most students.

In Gardner, ratings are provided across three grade bands: K-5, 6-8, and 9-12. For each grade band, ratings are provided across the overarching domains, as well as at individual dimensions within those domains. The full report of findings from observations conducted in Gardner is in Appendix B, and summary results are in Tables 17, 18, and 19 in this appendix.

In summary, findings from the Gardner observations were as follows:

* Emotional Support. Ratings were in the middle range for the K-5, 6-8, and 9-12 grade bands (5.4, 3.9, and 4.4, respectively).
* Classroom Organization. Ratings were in the high range for the K-5 and 9-12 grade bands (6.0 and 6.4, respectively) and high end of the middle range for the 6-8 grade band (5.9).
* Instructional Support. Ratings were in the middle range for all grade bands (3.0, 3.1, and 3.5, respectively).
* Student Engagement. For Grades 4 and up, where student engagement was measured as an independent domain, ratings were in the middle range for all grade bands (5.1 for K-5, 4.4 for 6-8, and 4.7 for 9-12).

Overall, in the K-5 grade band, instructional observations suggest generally strong emotional support, high classroom organization and student engagement (Grades 4-5), and mixed evidence of consistently rigorous instructional support. In the 6-8 grade band, instructional observations provide mixed evidence of consistently strong emotional support, strong classroom organization and student engagement, and mixed evidence of consistently rigorous instructional support. In the 9-12 grade band, instructional observations provide mixed evidence of strong emotional support, strong evidence of classroom organization, and mixed evidence of student engagement or consistently rigorous instructional support.

## Leadership and Governance

Appointed in 2017, Dr. Mark Pellegrino is the superintendent of Gardner. His involvement with the district began 2011 and he has served as principal of the alternative school, high school principal, and dean of students at the middle school. The district leadership team includes several key roles that support the superintendent. District leaders work alongside an elected school committee, chaired by the mayor of Gardner, who serves a two-year term, as well as six additional members, each serving four-year terms.

The superintendent and the school committee collaborate to enhance student outcomes through strategic planning and resource allocation, all guided by the DIP. The school committee annually evaluates the superintendent, focusing on the effective implementation of strategies and the attainment of goals, with an emphasis on student achievement. The finance subcommittee promotes transparency through detailed financial reviews.

The district office encompasses a wide range of roles aimed at supporting various facets of school operations, including academic, operational, and health services. School leaders actively participate in the development of the district’s improvement plans through regular collaborative meetings to create alignment between district objectives and individual school needs. These leaders possess considerable autonomy in key decision-making areas, such as staffing and budgeting.

Gardner’s *District Improvement Plan for 2021-2024* aims to enhance both academic and social-emotional learning outcomes for students. It focuses on high expectations, equitable support for teachers, rigorous analysis of academic and social-emotional learning data to implement tiered supports, and collaboration with families and community partners.

Gardner’s budget development process, which aligns with the DIP and the SIPs, begins with the superintendent setting strategic goals and extends to collaborative discussions with the school committee and city council. The budget development process involves shared governance and strategic planning between principals and district leaders to prioritize needs and resources.

Table 2 summarizes key strengths and areas for growth in leadership and governance.

Table 2. Summary of Key Strengths and Areas for Growth: Leadership and Governance Standard

| Indicator | Strengths | Areas for growth |
| --- | --- | --- |
| [School committee governance](#_School_Committee_Governance) | * The school committee effectively collaborates with district leadership.
 | * Addressing the concerns raised by staff more quickly
 |
| [District and school leadership](#_District_and_School) | * A strong sense of collaboration and shared goals exists among district and school leaders.
* School leaders have a significant degree of autonomy in decision making.
 | * Enhancing the decision-making capacity of BLTs
 |
| [District and school improvement planning](#_District_and_School_2) | * Gardner’s DIP includes clear, measurable objectives that align with both district and state standards, aimed at enhancing student outcomes and ensuring comprehensive success across social, emotional, behavioral, and academic areas.
* The district’s school-level improvement plans align with the plans and priorities of the district plan.
 | * Developing and communicating a process for teachers to engage in district improvement planning and communicating plan priorities to teachers
 |
| [Budget development](#_Budget_Development) | * The district has a clear and collaborative budget development process connected to the DIP and the SIPs.
* Gardner’s approach to budgeting relies on both financial and educational data.
 |  |

### School Committee Governance

The school committee includes the mayor of Gardner as the chairperson and six additional members. School committee members, excluding the mayor, serve four-year terms, with varying start dates. According to the district’s website, their current tenures range from less than a year up to three terms. The school committee collaborates with district leaders to secure funding and update policies, working together to provide classrooms with the resources needed to meet academic standards.

The superintendent and the school committee work in close partnership to address district needs and secure the necessary resources to fulfill district objectives, with a special emphasis on student outcomes. This collaboration revolves around the DIP, through which they establish priorities, outline the allocation of funding to support these priorities, and engage in continuous efforts to improve student achievement. Moreover, they jointly advocate for district funding and emphasize financial transparency. Through active discussions with the city council and the public, they clarify the district’s financial needs in order to fulfill its DIP.

The school committee conducts an annual evaluation of the superintendent’s performance, which adheres to the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Framework. According to interview and focus group responses, at the beginning of each year, the superintendent outlines goals, and updates the school committee midway through the year and presents evidence at the end-of-year, with each target linked to student achievement, such as improving assessment scores or addressing equity in discipline. Concurrently, schools present their improvement plans at monthly meetings; this process is intended to align districtwide goals and the superintendent’s vision. The discussions culminate in an annual evaluation that assesses contributions toward the overarching educational objectives and serves as a basis for the next cycle’s goal refinement and continuous improvement.

Interview and focus group responses suggested that collaboration between the district office and the school committee is a strength of the district. School committee members pointed out the district’s commitment to continuous improvement and proactive response to feedback received from the community. One school committee member shared as follows:

I find that [the superintendent] is very easy to work with. We might not always agree or see eye to eye, but it’s never a negative experience when we’re working together. . . . We have differences of opinions and still respect each other.

Likewise, the superintendent described the relationship with the school committee as strong and productive, and highlighted frequent communication and mutual support:

We have a wonderful relationship . . . There are times when I will turn to them and ask for their input . . . We have this great relationship where it’s an immediate access [to communication] for both of us. We have a very collegial relationship.

Interview and focus group participants also said that a clear division of roles for both entities is evident throughout school committee meetings. Along with school committee members, these meetings typically include the superintendent, the chief academic officer, the director of finance and operations, the director of pupil personnel, and school personnel including principals and student representatives. School committee meeting agendas illustrate a structured division of roles within the school committee and district leadership, including specific responsibilities such as budget presentations, budget approvals, and subcommittee reports. Agenda items commonly include updates on curriculum, grants, special education, and improvement plans, and a structure to encourage discussions on new business, subcommittee reports, and recognitions.

School committee agendas also frequently include a segment for the student advisory board. This process allows the involvement of student representatives in discussions across multiple meetings. However, student attendance and participation at school committee meetings is extremely low. Student focus group responses suggest that although some students seem to know about the opportunities available to attend and participate in these meetings, others appeared completely unaware. None of the students interviewed have actually taken part in any, which indicates possible barriers to student participation.

Despite the strong collaboration between the school committee and district leaders, some school-level instructional staff expressed concerns around the extent to which their concerns are heard and addressed by the school committee. Focus group responses revealed that the school committee has remained largely unchanged for many years and sometimes shows resistance on certain issues. They also noted that agenda items that primarily benefit school administrators are expedited through the approval process, whereas those that would benefit staff members often involve delays. An example these participants cited was issues around staff turnover and addressing what these participants see as causes of that problem, including challenging student behavior. More readily addressing the concerns raised by staff is an area of growth for the district.

### District and School Leadership

Gardner’s district leadership team comprises the superintendent, and a number of other district leaders. The superintendent also works with the district’s four principals, from the city’s elementary, middle, and high schools, including Gardner Academy, the district’s alternative high school.

Feedback from focus groups suggests a strong sense of collaboration and shared goals among district and school leaders, which is a strength of the district. The district improvement planning process addresses specific needs at individual schools; this process fosters a cohesive strategy in which district and school plans complement each other. Consequently, district and school leaders actively participate in developing the DIP to align the overarching goals of the district with those of individual schools. School leaders described the process of developing the DIP: “We meet regularly as a district administrative team, the principals in the central office . . . They guide us on our focus; [what we’ve been focusing on] has been pretty steadfast the last several years.” School leaders regularly meet to discuss their district’s focus areas, strategic planning, and improvement plans, as well as sharing strategies on curriculum and instruction.

School leaders also described a significant degree of autonomy in decision-making processes, which is another strength of the district. They described a strong partnership and open communication channels that facilitate their ability to make independent decisions regarding staffing, scheduling, and budgeting, while still aligning with the district’s overall strategic objectives. “There is a level of trust there, so that [district leaders] feel comfortable with that [level of autonomy],” said one school leader.

However, an area for improvement in the district involves expanding the decision-making capacity of BLTs. Each BLT has staff members that represent the interests and needs of their specific grade level or school. School leaders described the BLTs’ intended role as supporting the academic and operational aspects of their schools. They emphasized that BLTs engage in data-driven decision making, coordinate professional development, and conduct observations of teaching practices. However, during focus groups, teachers expressed frustration that the BLTs have become too “administrator driven.” They reported that their BLTs often pass down decisions from administrators to their teams, rather than having more staff involved in decisions. Some teachers also noted limited opportunities to join their school’s BLT because of stipend restrictions: “You get invited to be on the BLT . . . [but] Right now, because the position pays a stipend, it’s limited to math and ELA teachers.” As a result, some teachers said, the BLTs are more of a “communication conduit” than a meaningful part of the decision-making process. One teacher explained, “The admin tells the [BLT], [then they] tell their colleagues. . . . It sounds like [decisions] are coming from the BLT, but they’re, like, ‘Oh, no, this is what admin told us.’” For some respondents, the building-level autonomy mentioned above does not translate into opportunities for shared teacher leadership. In Gardner, allowing more teacher involvement in the BLT decision-making process is an opportunity for further development.

### District and School Improvement Planning

The *District Improvement Plan for 2021-2024* presents Gardner’s strategy that aims to improve student achievement in several areas, including the following:

* Setting high expectations that align with district and state standards and objectives for social, emotional, and behavioral well-being, as well as academic success for all students.
* Providing teachers with sufficient time, training, support, leadership, and resources to promote equity.
* Collecting, analyzing, and responding to relevant academic and social-emotional-behavioral data for all students, both individually and collectively. This process enables the implementation of tiered supports based on those data.
* Collaborating with families and community partners to engage in shared decision making, which will promote effective educational programming.

The superintendent described the process for developing Gardner’s DIP as a continuation of their focus on MTSS and emphasis on both academic achievement and social-emotional learning. The superintendent explained, “Until we have a fully functioning MTSS program for SEL [social-emotional learning] and academics . . . We have the resources already in place, [and] all teachers know what those moves are . . . [But] we’re gonna have to continue to work on it.”

The DIP stands out as a strength, with its clear, measurable objectives, aimed at enhancing student outcomes and ensuring comprehensive success across social, emotional, behavioral, and academic areas. For example, the plan targets 90 percent of K-4 students to meet early literacy benchmarks and aims to reduce special education referrals by 10 percent. The DIP focuses on addressing equity gaps by aligning the dropout and absenteeism rates of students with disabilities to meet state expectations. Gardner also plans to implement 75 percent of the family engagement practices listed in the Massachusetts MTSS blueprint.

Developing and communicating a process for teachers to engage in district improvement planning is an area for growth for Gardner. During focus groups, teachers expressed uncertainty regarding their role in developing the DIP. When asked about the involvement of teachers in the development of the new DIP, one teacher responded that “I have no idea. I do not know if teachers have been asked to be a part of it . . . that hasn’t been communicated to us.” This sentiment resonated with other focus group participants, indicating a broader uncertainty. Another group of teachers said they vaguely recalled the plan being shared with them, “Probably the first day [of school] when we have 800 slides to go through.” These responses suggest that the district can improve teachers familiarity with, if not involvement in creating, the improvement plan.

According to principals, teachers help develop the SIPs. During focus groups, teachers suggested that each school’s BLT and individual teachers take part in the development of their SIP. In the process of developing SIPs, school leaders incorporate parent input through a designated “parent forum," and the emphasis on collaborative planning and data-driven decision making suggests that teachers also play a role in informing the SIPs through their contributions to discussions on student needs and instructional strategies. However, teachers in focus groups reported limited participation in either BLTs or in the creation of SIPs.

The SIPs for all four schools in the district align with the district’s overall goals and strategies as outlined in the *District Improvement Plan for 2021-2024*. Each SIP addresses the specific needs and context of the school but shares common themes with the DIP, such as implementing an MTSS for academic and social-emotional learning, focusing on equity, using data to inform instruction and interventions, and collaborating with families and community partners for shared decision making and effective educational programming.

During focus groups, school leaders agreed that their SIPs align with and reflect the district’s strategic priorities, emphasizing a systemic focus on MTSS, culturally responsive teaching, and enhancing teacher practice and student learning. School leaders highlighted the autonomy they possess in executing these plans while following the district’s overarching goals, particularly related to MTSS implementation. Speaking about how the DIP impacts each SIP, one school leader stated, “They complement each other for sure.” A review of school-level improvement plans reveals that plans had similar elements, including a focus on safe and welcoming communities for students, and tailored, school-specific goals under the same four categories: academic expectations, behavioral supports, social-emotional learning supports and data analysis, and collaboration with families and community partners. The alignment of these plans and priorities is a strength of the district.

### Budget Development

To develop the district’s budget, the superintendent sets goals for the school year, presents them to the school committee, and emphasizes the alignment between district priorities and budget allocations. The budget process begins in December, with the central office asking principals to complete budget worksheets. As one district leader described it, “We let them know what they spent [last year] and how they spent it and ask them what they’re looking for in the coming year.” Several weeks later, a collaborative process allows the group to collectively set priorities across school buildings and departments.

In Gardner, school leaders have significant autonomy in budget development; this freedom allows them to make financial decisions that align closely with their schools’ strategic priorities and needs. During focus groups, school leaders described their responsibility to craft and manage school budgets; this responsibility includes staffing decisions and resource allocation that support their specific goals. This autonomy is underpinned by a trust-based relationship with district leaders. Principals can customize operations to effectively meet the needs of their student populations.

A notable strength of the district is its transparent and collaborative budget development process, anchored by the DIP and the SIPs. To involve school leaders in this process, the superintendent outlined a systematic approach: school leaders are invited to identify their priorities, which may include proposed cuts and desired budget enhancements that support their SIPs. Following this initial input, district leaders facilitate a collaborative discussion among all school leaders to review and refine these suggestions. The budget process culminates in a consolidated list of essential positions and priorities that align with overarching educational objectives.

Gardner’s approach to budgeting is a strength because it combines districtwide financial and educational data with insights from the SIPs to ground the budget development process. Collaboration between the director of finance and the chief academic officer plays a critical role in supporting budget decisions brought forth by school leaders. The finance office leverages past and present financial data to plan budgets, whereas the superintendent and the chief academic officer use student achievement data to identify and address educational needs, including staffing and resource allocation. In one recent example, the director of finance and operations mentioned that district leaders evaluated the necessity of hiring more reading specialists in response to requests made by school leaders. The chief academic officer’s office, as part of this process, investigated whether adding more specialists would have an impact on student achievement, especially when previous hiring had not yet resulted in measurable improvements. As a result, school leaders went back to their data and examined the expected benefits that additional reading specialists might bring.

### DESE Recommendations

* *District leaders should work with the school committee to develop systems by which educators can voice their concerns and actively engage in district-level decision-making.*
* *The district should first seek to better understand why its BLTs have become less involved in school-based decision-making, and then work with its school leaders to make adjustments and empower these teams.*
* *The district should develop formal opportunities for teachers to contribute to district improvement planning, advertise these opportunities widely, and work with school leaders to communicate plan priorities so that all staff are familiar with the district’s goals.*

## Curriculum and Instruction

Gardner has a clear process in place for reviewing, selecting, and adopting curricular materials in all subjects. The process includes a timeline for regularly reviewing each curricular resource in each content area and emphasizes the use of data-based decision making to support student learning outcomes. Moreover, according to Gardner’s *District Improvement Plan for 2021-2024,* the district engages all learners in relevant, academically rigorous instruction. While the district’s plan aims to incorporate rigorous student tasks, data from focus groups and observations demonstrate inconsistency in implementation.

Gardner currently uses Wonders for Grades K-5 ELA and HMH Into Math for Grades K-8. The district uses Foss Science Kits for science and a variety of teacher-developed curricula for other secondary content areas.

Table 3 summarizes key strengths and areas for growth in curriculum and instruction.

Table 3. Summary of Key Strengths and Areas for Growth: Curriculum and Instruction Standard

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Indicator | Strengths | Areas for growth |
| [Curriculum selection and use](#_Curriculum_Selection_and) | * A clear process is in place for reviewing curricular materials in all subjects.
* Staff feel that recently selected curricula are both rigorous and relevant for students.
 |  |
| [Classroom instruction](#_Classroom_Instruction) | * Classroom expectations are clear to students and are regularly reinforced, resulting in strong classroom organization.
 | * Communicating clearer instructional expectations at all levels, particularly at the elementary and middle levels
* Incorporating instructional supports that lead to more rigorous instruction
 |
| [Student access to coursework](#_Student_Access_to) | * The district offers access to a variety of advanced coursework options at Gardner High.
 |  |

### Curriculum Selection and Use

Gardner uses a combination of teacher-created and published curricula rated by CURATE and EdReports. For ELA, the district uses Wonders in Grades K-5 (meets expectations on CURATE and EdReports) and teacher-developed curricula in Grades 6-12 (not rated on CURATE or EdReports). For mathematics, the district uses HMH Into Math for Grades K-8 (meets expectations on CURATE and EdReports) and teacher-developed curricula for Grades 9-12 (not rated on CURATE or EdReports). For science, Gardner uses Foss Science Kits in Grades K-5 (does not meet expectations on EdReports) and teacher-developed curricula for Grades 6-12 (not rated on CURATE or EdReports).

The district has a clear, formal process for reviewing and selecting curricula, which is a strength of the district. The superintendent leads curriculum selection and review and receives collaborative assistance from the chief academic officer, as described in detail in the district’s *Curriculum Review Plan & Cycle 2021-2026* document. This document lays out a timeline for regularly reviewing each content area. This timeline involves collaboration with school leaders, including principals, instructional coaches, and the grants/English as a second language coordinator. For each content area, the process involves convening district- and school-based staff to form a curricular review team. This team’s responsibilities include overseeing the review cycle’s four phases: planning, articulating/developing, implement/monitor, and evaluation. In addition to the curricular review process, high school teachers noted that they, along with their leaders, review curricula periodically during their planning periods.

According to district leaders and the *Curriculum Review Plan & Cycle* document, the review team considers various factors when selecting a new curriculum, including alignment with district standards and the quality of the instructional materials. District staff also described recent involvement in the curriculum review, implementation, and selection process for ELA and mathematics. Those interviewed mentioned that in selecting curricula across all grade levels, they prioritized selecting curricula that meet expectations on CURATE and EdReports. District leaders also described the team’s process to research and narrow down curricular options. This process includes providing professional development for members of the review team, getting feedback from teachers on implementation of the curriculum, and conducting classroom observations. Once the review team selects a curriculum to pilot, the teachers evaluate the curriculum for strengths and weaknesses during district implementation.

Reports from teachers, school leaders, and district staff indicated staff satisfaction with Gardner’s curricular offerings and their autonomy to design and adjust curricula. Teachers across all grade levels were generally familiar with the status of curriculum review cycles across content areas and grade levels, and therefore, a strength for the district is the degree to which staff felt involved in the curriculum review process and the amount of scaffolding the curriculum provided. For instance, one elementary school teacher explained that a recently adopted curriculum, HMH Into Math, was “really meeting their needs” and that “the way they break [content] down seems very thorough.”

Although the district has a clear, formal process for reviewing and selecting curricula, staff reported ongoing difficulties with aligning curricula to other instructional priorities. Middle school teachers shared their difficulties in aligning curricula with the Massachusetts standards and reported that “everything that’s science in sixth and seventh science is teacher-generated.” For instance, one middle school teacher explained that the district reviewed OpenSciEd as a potential science curriculum but decided not to implement it because, according to a staff member, “it’s aligned [with] Next Generation standards, not [with] the Massachusetts standards.” District staff noted that the district is reviewing literacy curricula for the middle grades (Grades 6-8) to ensure that they have high-quality instructional materials.

Given that some Gardner teachers develop their own curricula, school leaders and teachers reported that they use CPT meetings to give and receive feedback on teacher-developed curricula. Teachers and school leaders also reported that teacher-created curricula across content areas align with the learning standards from the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. Teachers noted that at the high school level, they feel supported by building and district administrators to tailor curricula to their students’ needs.

### Classroom Instruction

According to Gardner’s *District Improvement Plan for 2021-2024,* the district aims to engage all learners in relevant, academically rigorous instruction. The plan aims to “incorporate rigorous student tasks that engage all learners, provoke higher order thinking, monitor student progress, and provide feedback to students for improvement”. District leaders reflected on strategic initiatives to monitor and adapt classroom instruction. One district leader shared, “We created a rubric several years ago so that when we do our learning walks twice a year, we’re measuring the level of high-quality instruction and rigor in the classroom.” Teachers also shared that since the beginning of the school year, the district’s instructional vision has shifted to become more rigorous. One high school teacher elaborated as follows:

“We actually have a rigor rubric from the district that we’ve used, and we’ve done learning walks where teachers and administrators will go through to look to see if the students are engaged and [instruction is] student-centered.”

Teachers and school leaders across grade levels also reported regular formal observations and informal walkthroughs to review teachers’ instructional practices (see further in Human Resources and Professional Development Section.)

District- and building-level staff regularly review data from formative assessments, summative assessments, screeners, and benchmarks to identify students’ learning needs and develop strategies to address these needs (see Data and Assessment Systems for more information). A district staff member described a continuous improvement cycle through which teachers reflect on student performance data and develop action plans for incorporating that information into lesson planning and classroom instruction. Instructional coaches meet with teachers at the elementary and high school levels during their CPT meetings to analyze data and determine which students need interventions. Staff at the middle school said their school was also developing a peer observation model and that they have weekly common planning time.

Across school levels, teachers varied in their shared understanding of instructional priorities. Their responses suggest that communicating clearer instructional expectations, particularly at the elementary and middle school levels, is an area for growth for the district. At the elementary level, teachers said that some instructional expectations—particularly those from district leaders—did not account for developmental differences among students at different grades: “I feel like there isn’t a great distinction or differentiation, as far as what kindergarten looks like compared to what fourth grade looks like. I feel like kindergarten is now expected to look similar to fourth grade,” said one teacher. A colleague continued, “[What is expected is] just not always developmentally appropriate . . . There definitely seems to be a disconnect.” At the middle school level, teachers explained that the inconsistency around priorities stemmed from a change in administration. Teachers confirmed that they are expected to modify instruction for students’ different learning needs, but since they are working with a new administrative team, it is unclear whether the district has the structures in place to support with differentiation. For instance, one middle school teacher explained that they meet with a special education teacher to plan lessons, however, there’s “nothing, like, set for us to meet together and for her to look at things and say…maybe you could try modifying it this way, or this kid really needs this.” Middle school teachers also reported administrative turnover, which has included instructional coaches leaving the district reportedly due to a lack of support and communication from district leadership on instructional expectations. However, high school teachers reported that they review data on student proficiency, and they are currently shifting to focus on targeted grouping, an instructional model that groups students by where they are in the curriculum. This instructional model helps students who are behind move up and advances students who are already proficient forward in the curriculum. One teacher explained that they’re working on different pedagogies that would work for targeted grouping. Gardner Academy teachers shared similar sentiments as Gardner High School teachers, explaining that their instructional vision is competency-based, although Gardner Academy teachers noted that there has been historic misalignment in the school’s instructional vision that they have spent the past year working to address.

Classroom observations revealed an area for growth in the district related to incorporating instructional support, particularly at the elementary level. For Grades K-5, the overall Instructional Support domain score fell in the low range, as did average scores for four of the six dimensions (Concept Development, Analysis and Inquiry, Quality of Feedback, and Language Modeling). Although the overall Instructional Support scores for Grades 6-8 and Grades 9-12 were in the middle range, ratings on three of the five dimensions (Analysis and Inquiry, Quality of Feedback, and Instructional Dialogue) were in the low range. Secondary students noted that although some teachers provide information to help them understand concepts, others merely present content and assignments. Gardner High School students agreed that whether instruction happened individually or in groups depended on the teacher and subject but reported that math and science instruction most frequently focused on individual assignments. Students at Gardner Academy described a classroom setting in which all students worked at their own pace and students could choose whether or not they used a computer or submitted their work on paper.

Classroom observations revealed a strength in classroom organization throughout the district. As described previously (see Classroom Observations), across all grade levels, ratings within the Classroom Organization domain were generally in the high range. Observations provide evidence that rules and guidelines for behavior are clear and consistently reinforced by the teacher, and teachers provide a steady flow of activities to help the classroom run smoothly. Some high school students corroborated these observations, saying that behavior expectations are clear.

### Student Access to Coursework

Gardner provides a range of course offerings and academic pathways to accommodate diverse student needs and interests at the high school level. Gardner High School provides courses across three levels: AP, honors, and college preparatory. According to the *Program of Studies 2023-2024*, the school offers 15 AP courses across ELA, science, social studies, mathematics, and art. The high school offers dual enrollment courses through partnerships with Mount Wachusett Community College. One teacher elaborated as follows:

We have the dual enrollment program open to juniors and seniors, that they can actually go to Mount Wachusett Community College, and they actually spend their mornings there, and then they just come back for the afternoon classes, where they’re actually earning high school and college credits simultaneously.

Moreover, the district provides juniors and seniors with the opportunity to enroll in internships with local businesses and industry- and community-based organizations. Gardner Elementary School and Gardner Middle School do not offer accelerated courses.

In general, district staff said that equity of students’ access to advanced coursework was high. For example, school leaders and high school teachers stated having no requirements to enroll in an AP class, and they encourage students with disabilities to challenge themselves and enroll in AP or honors classes. Data reported annually to DESE reveals that 69.8 percent of all Gardner students complete advanced coursework compared with 65.8 percent of all students in the state. For students with disabilities, 30.8 percent of them complete advanced coursework compared with 36.0 percent across the state. Overall, access to advanced coursework for Gardner High School students is a strength of the district.

### DESE Recommendations

* *The district should work with its school leaders to clarify instructional priorities at all levels.*
* *When developing and implementing instructional priorities, the district should emphasize the use of instructional supports including academic discourse, opportunities for analysis, strong language modeling, and high-quality feedback.*

## Assessment

Gardner collects data from a variety of academic and social-emotional assessments, including DIBELS, WIDA, HMH, and MCAS. Teachers described using multiple formative assessments throughout the year, including teacher-created assessments and those from LinkIt, Into Math, and Wonders. In addition, the district uses school climate surveys, the Behavioral and Emotional Screening System universal screener, and the District Systems Fidelity Inventory (DSFI) to monitor and look at trends for attendance, office referrals, and suspensions.

Assessment results are accessible to a broad range of educators, including classroom teachers, school specialists, and district leaders, to guide decision making. Families regularly receive the results of assessments through PowerSchool and weekly progress monitoring reports.

Table 4 summarizes key strengths and areas for growth in assessment.

Table 4. Summary of Key Strengths and Areas for Growth: Assessment Standard

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Indicator | Strengths | Areas for growth |
| [Data and assessment systems](#_Data_and_Assessment) | * The district employs social-emotional screening tools as well as academic screening tools.
 |  |
| [Data use](#_Data_Use) | * The district leadership team frequently reviews student performance data to drive planning and decision making.
 | * Creating systems for more consistent school-level data use
 |
| [Sharing results](#_Sharing_Results) | * The district regularly shares timely and meaningful data with families about their students’ performance through fall and spring MTSS meetings and parent-teacher conferences.
 |  |

### Data and Assessment Systems

Gardner collects data from a variety of academic and social-emotional assessments. At the elementary level, teachers administer five assessments multiple times throughout the school year: DIBELS (Grades K-4), mClass with DIBELS (Grades K-4), WIDA (W-APT and MODEL) for Kindergarten, HMH Math Inventory formative assessment (Grades K-4); and MCAS (Grades 3-8 and 10) once a year. Middle school teachers described using teacher-created formative assessments and the LinkIt benchmark assessment for ELA and mathematics (Grades K-7) multiple times throughout the year. District leaders said that the Into Math and Wonders curricula have formative assessments that teachers can administer. By comparison, high school teachers rely primarily on teacher-created formative assessments. One high school teacher explained that the district provided high school staff with a book of various formative assessment examples for implementation in classrooms; teachers further noted that this resource included time frames for when to implement the assessments and explanations for the type of data being reviewed.

Gardner also uses a formal screening tool to understand all students’ social and emotional strengths and needs. Student support staff shared that they use school climate surveys and the Behavioral and Emotional Screening System universal screener to monitor and look at trends for attendance, office referrals, and suspensions. The additional use of social-emotional screening tools is a strength of the district.

### Data Use

District staff consistently conduct data review meetings, making data use a strength of the district. The district strategy group, which includes the superintendent, the chief academic officer, the director of pupil personnel services, the director of MTSS, and the director of multilingual learners, meet regularly to review and analyze LinkIt, DIBELS, and MCAS data. According to one district leader, the district strategy group will be expanding to include principals and two elementary-level instructional coaches. District and school leaders explained that they use weekly CPT meetings to use student data to discuss equity gaps. Concerning school data analysis, one school principal shared, “The instructional coaches and the building leadership team, along with admin, designate one of the common planning times per week to data analysis and determining what kids need interventions.”

District staff described a process that emphasizes the use of data-based decision-making to support student learning outcomes for all students. According to the superintendent and district leaders, the district is creating an academic system that applies MTSS principles and entails having a strong core curriculum for all students and using the principles of the core curriculum to create student learning outcomes. A district leader explained that since last year, the district has shifted its focus from taking big ideas and creating student performance tasks and linking them with lessons to a new vision:

As part of the MTSS academic process, one of the things that we are focused on this year is . . . we’re focused on improving the lessons that they currently have aligned to their curriculum from the standpoint of meeting the needs of all learners through a data process.

Another district staff member reflected on the use of data to address needs in core classes: “We’ve really been focused on revising our common planning time and the training and support around teachers collaborating and designing more rigorous lessons and using data [...] drive instructional practices.” District staff also described using student performance data to develop targeted instructional groupings, an instructional model that groups students by where they are in the curriculum.

However, feedback from school-based educators suggests that data use is less consistent across schools and grade levels than among school and district leaders, making consistent school-level data use an area for growth in the district. Elementary school teachers reported that data use expectations varied among district leaders, and data review meetings felt redundant and delayed relative to when results were available or the immediacy of student needs. Middle school teachers noted that although the district provided them with professional development on data use, they have had no follow-ups or check-ins about the implementation of these practices. High school teachers reported that they are adjusting their lessons based on formative assessments in real time to response to student needs. For instance, one high school teacher shared, “. . . we have our own CPT, which includes myself, a school adjustment counselor, and a school psychologist, where we go over social-emotional data, grades, behavior, and that’s a weekly checklist.” However, some school-based staff noted that beyond formal benchmark assessments in ELA and mathematics at the lower grades, the use of data can be less consistent in other subjects and the upper-grade levels. For example, one school leader shared that data cycles supporting the district’s progress monitoring and use of interventions do not always align with the “checks for understanding” that are built into the curriculum,” and that the data cycles for identifying needs and progress monitoring are “not as standardized and formalized as it is with our reading [data cycles]”—compared with other subjects.

### Sharing Results

Feedback from staff indicates that data from student performance assessments are shared with all relevant district staff, educators, and families. District and school-based staff indicated that they knew where and how they could access student performance data. Throughout the year, teachers post students’ grades on PowerSchool, which families can access at any time. In addition, Gardner High School sends out weekly progress monitoring reports to families. Parents commented on the effectiveness of the weekly progress monitoring reports. One parent noted, “I feel like I’m really at the school based on the communication system.” Middle and high school students agreed that teachers share information with them about their progress in the class, and teachers offer supports to students who need extra help. However, not all students agreed that results are easily accessible. Some students—particularly those at Gardner Academy—reported difficulty with accessing their grades through PowerSchool.

The district regularly shares timely and meaningful data with families about student performance through fall and spring MTSS meetings and parent-teacher conferences, making data sharing a strength of the district. Parent partners and community partners are a part of the district MTSS team, which hosts semi-annual MTSS meetings. In focus groups, district and school-based student support staff shared that these MTSS meetings, which are also open to all students, are working groups through which they review attendance data and look for ways to improve family engagement and school-family partnerships. Those interviewed also mentioned that they usually share classroom data during parent-teacher conferences. Similarly, parents explained that they have multiple opportunities to meet with teachers throughout the year, such as parent-teacher conferences and open houses, and that there is an “open-door policy.”

### DESE Recommendations

* *The district should work with school leaders to develop systems that support consistent school-level data use.*

## Human Resources and Professional Development

Gardner’s human resources department is under the leadership of the human resources manager, who has held the position since 2014. Department duties comprise a range of human resources tasks, such as processing payroll and leave requests. School leaders collaborate with district staff to recruit and hire staff throughout the district. The introduction of an electronic onboarding process for new hires and the transition to electronic pay stubs have streamlined administrative tasks.

The district’s commitment to MTSS and PBIS is evident in plans for professional development and educator support. The district supports new teachers’ integration and professional growth through induction and mentoring programs. Leadership development opportunities within Gardner include various roles and pathways for growth through distributed leadership models.

Table 5 summarizes key strengths and areas for growth in human resources and professional development.

Table 5. Summary of Key Strengths and Areas for Growth: Human Resources and Professional Development Standard

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Indicator | Strengths | Areas for growth |
| [Infrastructure](#_Infrastructure) | * The human resources department efficiently responds to school needs.
 |  |
| [Recruitment, hiring, and assignment](#_Recruitment,_Hiring,_and) | * School leaders have autonomy in determining staffing needs and making hiring decisions at the building level.
 | * Recruiting a more diverse workforce
 |
| [Supervision, evaluation, and educator development](#_Supervision,_Evaluation,_and) | * The district consistently highlights areas of strength in administrator evaluations; identifying strengths among teachers is fairly consistent.
 | * Establishing opportunities for experienced teachers to receive more regular feedback
* Articulating areas for improvement more consistently in teacher and administrator evaluations
* Enhancing the effectiveness of professional learning structures for teachers by tailoring to career stage and coordinating among participating teams
 |
| [Recognition, leadership development, and advancement](#_Recognition,_Leadership_Development) | * Gardner promotes opportunities for leadership development to support distributed leadership and enact district improvement strategies.
 | * Partnering with teachers on teacher-led initiative to foster teacher leadership
 |

### Infrastructure

The district’s human resources office efficiently responds to school needs, which is a strength of the district. The human resources manager joined Gardner in 2014, when the role was focused on payroll. By 2017-2018, the manager’s role expanded to include a wider array of human resources functions. This shift from a human resources and payroll coordinator to a more comprehensive, in-house human resources manager created a larger role within the Finance and Operations office. District leaders suggested that this change addressed a need they had for an accessible, in-district human resources representative. In doing so, the district moved away from relying on sharing human resources services with the city of Gardner. This transition established a more focused and dedicated human resources presence within the district. In addition to managing payroll, the human resources manager now manages tasks such as leave requests, whereas the city’s human resources department handles benefits management. Feedback from the principal focus group highlighted the human resources manager’s responsiveness and effectiveness in meeting staff and administrative needs:

Our HR [human resources] coordinator . . . She’s fantastic to work with. I have never had anybody in HR be so responsive, so quick. We were down . . . in staffing at the beginning of this year. It was pretty rough. I have never had anybody be so responsive and so helpful in getting people hired [and] onboarded.

Gardner recently implemented an electronic onboarding process for new hires. Once the principal decides to hire a teacher or staff member, candidate processing involves an online system for approval, which includes details such as salary, step, and licensure status. This online process eliminates the need for physical paperwork. This system creates an electronic employee file, which streamlines the verification process for essential documents such as transcripts and licenses. District leaders suggested that this electronic system, which started in July 2023, enhances efficiency and accessibility for both new and existing staff, whose files are currently being uploaded to this new system. The district also transitioned to electronic pay stubs; district staff expressed satisfaction with this payroll change. They highlighted the inefficiency of the previous system and described the new system as one of the best changes implemented in Gardner. Gardner also uses MUNIS for administrative and payroll management; however, some district staff expressed frustration with MUNIS, noting that it is “not an intuitive system.”

### Recruitment, Hiring, and Assignment

The autonomy granted to principals for determining staffing needs and making hiring decisions is a strength of the district. Principals are responsible for identifying the staffing needs within their buildings and then communicating those needs to the superintendent or the director of finance and operations for approval during the budget development process. This staffing review is part of an annual review during the budget process, during which district leaders seek feedback on needed positions and their justifications. During focus groups, school leaders voiced strong approval for the autonomy granted to them in the hiring process. They emphasized their capacity to independently make critical decisions and spoke positively about the breadth of autonomy they enjoy in the hiring process. One principal said,

Actually, I’m impressed with the level of autonomy. Coming from another district, especially with hiring. I was shocked by how much autonomy I had with hiring. I don’t have to go through HR [human resources]…the whole process is fantastic.

The district aims to maintain consistency and equity across schools in the principal-led interview, selection, and hiring process in Gardner. The process involves creating standardized interview questions for different positions to mitigate the risk of discriminatory hiring practices. In addition, interviews are in the form of panels that include other teachers or stakeholders from the building, which promotes a transparent and fair evaluation of candidates. Although the human resources manager is not directly involved in the interviewing process, staff reported that the human resources manager has helped to put procedures in place to maintain fairness and consistency in recruitment efforts: “[Principals] don’t interview [candidates] alone. [Principals] interview in a panel, …[and] solicit other teachers or other building stakeholders when [the staff] interview—just so that the process is as transparent and fair as it can be.”

The district has a commitment to hiring, developing, and retaining a diverse workforce to advance students’ performance, opportunities, and outcomes. One district leader stated, “It’s important to us as a district to make sure that we are as diverse as we can be.” Efforts to achieve diversity include advertising positions widely to promote a fair and nondiscriminatory hiring process. Gardner posts job openings on various platforms, including the district website, SchoolSpring, Indeed, NEMNET (New England Minority Network) Diversity Recruitment, and social media. Staff also reported that the district uses partnerships with local colleges and universities to try and attract a more diverse set of candidates. However, a review of staffing data indicates these efforts have not yet resulted in a workforce that resembles the student body; the teaching staff is over 90% white while the student body is 58% and nearly one-third of students are Hispanic (29%). Recruiting a more diverse workforce is an area of growth for the district.

### Supervision, Evaluation, and Educator Development

According to district documents, the supervision and evaluation system in Gardner is a structured and comprehensive framework aligned with DESE guidelines. It encompasses several key components, including self-assessment, goal setting, educator plans, formative and summative evaluations, evidence collection, and educator responses. This system aims to promote professional growth, accountability, and improvement through reflective practice, specific and measurable goal setting, continuous feedback, and alignment with statewide standards and local district goals. It supports educators in identifying areas of strength and growth, setting personal and professional objectives, and engaging in activities and professional development to meet these goals.

Some teachers described the evaluation process as “very fair and equitable” and the feedback they receive as “constructive.” One teacher explained as follows:

[The administrator] comes in and does an observation and gives the feedback form, they provide it back to us within the next day or two. We get that feedback. And they always welcome us if you’d like to have any questions, if you want to sit down and discuss anything in there. The door’s always open . . . I think it’s a really great process.

However, some teachers expressed concerns that established teachers may receive fewer observations, and thus less feedback, than newer teachers. At the site visit in late February 2024, one teacher said, “Three weeks ago, I had my first observation since before COVID . . . [School leaders] do more observations and [provide more] support for newer staff.” Further, staff reported that administrators have asked for extensions to deadlines for completing evaluations; they noted that evaluations are not always completed on time as scheduled. Veteran teachers hope to receive more feedback than they do now, either through the evaluation system or through other means. Establishing opportunities for experienced teachers to receive more regular feedback is an area of growth for the district.

District records suggest that teacher evaluations are consistently completed using Vector Solutions, formerly TeachPoint. Simple random sampling was used to select the sample of 10 percent of 160 teachers (16 teachers) due for summative evaluations for the 2022-2023 school year. Nearly all teacher evaluations randomly selected for review (88 percent) had a summative evaluation available for review. However, only 12 of the 14 evaluations (86 percent) were complete and not missing required components, including a rating for each standard or an overall rating. About one quarter of the evaluations reviewed included both student learning and professional practice SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely) goals. Only one evaluation referred to or indicated multiple sources of evidence, such as observations, student work samples, or other evidence used to support ratings of progress toward student learning goals, professional learning goals, standards, and indicators. About three quarters of the evaluations (71 percent) included feedback naming strengths or practices that the teacher should continue, but only four evaluations included feedback indicating an area for growth.

In terms of administrator evaluations, of the 20 administrative district staff who were due for a summative evaluation for the 2022-2023 school year, 17 evaluations were available for review. About three quarters of the administrator evaluations reviewed (14) were completed using forms in the Vector Solutions system, whereas one quarter of the evaluations reviewed differed from the forms in the evaluation system. Of the six administrator reports not using the evaluation system rubric or report, only two of them reported progress toward administrator standards. All summative evaluations available for review (17) were complete with performance ratings and assessment of progress toward goals. About three quarters of the evaluations (71 percent) included student learning, professional practice, and school improvement SMART goals. A large majority of the summative evaluations (14) included evaluator comments or feedback for every standard and the overall rating, whereas the remaining may have evaluator comments or feedback for some standards or none. All evaluations provided administrators with specific, actionable feedback naming each administrator’s strengths, and a large majority of the evaluations reviewed (12) identified areas of improvement for administrative district staff.

Taken together, the review of teacher and administrator evaluations indicates a strength of the district by consistently highlighting areas of strength through the evaluation process for all administrators. The district is approaching consistency for naming strengths among teachers in their educator evaluations. On the other hand, this same review of evaluations also highlights an area for growth for the district in more consistently articulating areas for improvement across both teacher and administrator evaluations.

Gardner’s professional development plan focuses on implementing MTSS and PBIS with a strong emphasis on social-emotional learning and equity. Covering a broad spectrum of topics from district overviews of MTSS, the MTSS-related Interconnected Systems Framework, and social-emotional learning to strategies for managing classroom behaviors, these professional development plans aim to build educator capacity in inclusive practices; the use of data for instruction; and creating supportive, inclusive learning environments. Scheduled throughout the academic year, these professional development sessions cater to a diverse audience, such as district administrators, teacher leaders, and staff at different school levels, with activities designed for actionable implementation and enhancing family-school partnerships. During focus groups, district leaders, school leaders, and teachers expressed a commitment to integrating MTSS and social-emotional learning into teaching practices. They highlighted the importance of data-driven instruction and professional development opportunities that directly impact classroom practices and instructional strategies.

According to the superintendent, teachers, and district leaders, professional development, which the district exclusively provides, is embedded within staff meetings and CPT meetings. The superintendent and district leaders also noted that administrators conduct “learning walks” twice per year. They use the data from these walkthroughs to inform the professional development offerings provided to teachers through school-based BLTs. Teachers across grade levels reported that they receive data-driven professional development that supports them “in their day-to-day teaching.” The district also offers a teacher mentoring program that supports new teachers in their first year within the district.

District leaders described professional development in Gardner as “embedded, ongoing, and relevant to the work that [teachers] are doing.” Relatedly, some teachers expressed appreciation for professional development that emphasizes strategies that are immediately applicable “in [their] day-to-day teaching.” One teacher elaborated,

[School leaders] have been really good at focusing on what our teachers can use . . . What is going to help them with the big picture . . . And during the PD [professional development] we get time to figure out how we’re going to incorporate that into an upcoming lesson so that we have kind of a prepared idea of what we’re going to do with it.

However, some teachers expressed dissatisfaction with the district’s professional development plan, with concerns centering on tailoring and coordinating support more effectively. One teacher said that the district “are constantly getting new programs but then never receiving any real training or time to unpack them,” and “so much of the PD [professional development] is based on entry-level teaching.” Teachers also identified some areas in which more comprehensive training may be necessary. For example, one teacher described a particular initiative as challenging to implement due to the staggered nature of professional development for some staff, saying, “It just can be a challenge when it really relies on the training that [only] one person [on the team] so far has gone through.” This teacher continued that “a lot of the stuff that we’re doing is good, it’s not necessarily structured” in a way that it can be collaboratively implemented. School and district leaders noted that although the district has curricular support systems such as professional development and CPT meetings, implementing these structures is challenging due to high staff turnover. The challenges staff reported, then, stress connecting professional development plans to the needs of staff based on career stage as well as coordinating efforts within teams, schools, departments, or grade levels. Enhancing the effectiveness of professional learning structures to better support both new and veteran teachers is an area of growth for the district.

Gardner’s induction and mentoring programs provide support and guidance to new teachers and is a strength of the district. Gardner details its commitment to supporting new educators in several documents, including the *New Teacher Orientation 2023*, *Induction-Mentor Agenda Day 1 and 2 Orientation*, and the *2023-2024 Meeting Schedule*. The onboarding process for new teachers involves a structured orientation program, during which they become acquainted with the district’s culture, expectations, and essential policies. This program provides new staff members with a thorough introduction to systemwide programs, technology, special services, and discipline protocols. Following the orientation, the *Mentor Training Presentation, Mentor Program Survey 2024, Mentor Letter, Mentee Letter*, and *Agreements for Mentors and Mentees* documents detail the subsequent mentoring phase. Selected for their “dedication to [their] profession and [their] students,” mentors receive specific training to offer guidance in areas such as classroom management and instructional strategies. The mentoring system includes monthly meetings, reflections, and logs to support new educators.

During focus groups, teachers described a system in which mentor teachers support new teachers. This pairing is strategic, with mentors chosen to align with the mentee’s department, thereby providing subject-specific guidance. “We’ve done a really good job pairing [mentees] up within departments . . . with [mentors who] specialize on those instructional models that work best for that subject,” said one teacher. The mentoring program emphasizes regular meetings and feedback, allowing mentors to help their mentees navigate instructional models, implement teaching strategies, and address classroom challenges effectively.

### Recognition, Leadership Development, and Advancement

Gardner promotes opportunities for leadership development to support distributed leadership and enact district improvement strategies, which is a strength of the district. The 2023-2024 *Teacher Leaders* document lists the various roles that teacher leaders undertake in areas such as MTSS, social-emotional learning, PBIS, family engagement, literacy, and mathematics. These positions are all examples of the active involvement of teachers in leadership roles to drive educational improvements. The *Teacher Leadership Program-Barr Grant* document outlines the development of teacher leaders who are part of MTSS teams, which focus on both academic and nonacademic aspects, including promoting social justice and educational equity.

The *Scope of Learning: 2021-2024* document details a comprehensive professional development trajectory—provided in part by Boston College’s Lynch Leadership Academy—for principals, assistant principals, teacher leaders, and those who aspire to become principals, focusing on leadership for equity, instructional improvement, and facilitative and adaptive leadership. This opportunity illustrates Gardner’s commitment to fostering a culture of continuous improvement, leadership development, and educational equity. These opportunities help educators have pathways for growth and the ability to contribute to the district’s mission effectively.

Leadership meeting agendas, such as those outlined in the *Admin Council Retreat Meeting Agenda* throughout 2023, show a structured approach toward enhancing the implementation and sustainability of MTSS frameworks, emphasizing leadership development at various levels of the district. Moreover, the practice of beginning meetings with “Success Stories” serves as a unique form of recognition, emphasizing the importance of celebrating positive outcomes and fostering a culture of appreciation and acknowledgment among school leaders and staff.

Although teachers have some leadership opportunities in the district, some staff expressed frustration with the lack of leadership support around certain teacher-led initiatives. According to some focus group participants, there have been times in which teachers take the lead on initiatives to showcase their leadership skills, but cannot accomplish their goals due to a lack of administrator support. This leads to decreased participation in these initiatives and frustration among teachers. For example, one teacher commented as follows:

The PBIS team, when it first started, was really successful. And then, people kept leaving it because administrators wouldn’t back it up. We would spend time planning things and be, like, “Can we do this?” [The principal is], like, “No, we’re not going to do that.” So, a lot of people were, like, “I’m not doing this team anymore.”

This description was similar to those of other teachers describing their experiences with BLTs (see Leadership and Governance), indicating that the lack of leadership collaboration around teacher-lead initiatives may limit teacher leadership opportunities, which is an area for growth for the district.

### DESE Recommendations

* *The district should continue its efforts to hire more diverse staff and explore additional partnerships and strategies to support this work.*
* *The district should work with school leaders to develop a system of regular teacher observations and feedback to ensure that all teachers receive the support they need to improve their practice.*
* *The district should set and uphold clear expectations around including all required components in teacher and administrator evaluations, including areas for growth.*
* *The district should develop a comprehensive plan for professional learning that includes differentiated professional development sessions that target the skills and knowledge teachers need to implement their curricula effectively.*
* *The district should develop systems and distribute guidance around how teachers and administrators can collaborate around teacher-led initiatives.*

## Student Support

Gardner has structures and systems in place to support the academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs of all students. The DIP and individual SIPs place a high priority on social and emotional support for all students, but implementation of these supports is inconsistent. In alignment with the district’s emphasis on social-emotional learning, Gardner has attempted to integrate social-emotional learning into daily schedules and is currently adopting new curricular resources designed to support social-emotional learning at all grade levels. Each school also has an SST that uses multiple sources of student data to match students with evidence-based supports and services based on their unique academic, behavioral, or social needs. Schools also have time allocated in schedules to provide interventions and supports to students.

Gardner partners with local community organizations to meet student needs. The district has partnered with Care Solace to provide access to mental health care and coordination. District staff described hiring additional support staff to meet increased student needs. Students also have opportunities to have a voice in decision-making through their student council.

Table 6 summarizes key strengths and areas for growth in student support.

Table 6. Summary of Key Strengths and Areas for Growth: Student Support Standard

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Indicator | Strengths | Areas for growth |
| [Safe and supportive school climate and culture](#_Safe_and_Supportive) |  | * Consistently implementing positive behavioral approaches, particularly at the middle school
 |
| [Tiered systems of support](#_Tiered_Systems_of_1) | * Each school has time allocated in schedules to provide interventions and support to students.
 | * Consistently implementing tiered systems of support
 |
| [Family, student, and community engagement and partnerships](#_Family,_Student,_and) | * Each school and the district have a community relations plan.
* The district partners with community organizations to address student needs.
* Students have multiple opportunities to participate in school-level decision-making through student councils.
 |  |

### Safe and Supportive School Climate and Culture

Gardner’s DIP and SIPs place a high priority on social and emotional support for all students. Likewise, feedback from central office and school-based staff reflects a high regard for the district’s commitment to safe and supportive learning environments. One district staff member shared, “I feel that our district has done really phenomenal work in terms of our MTSS, SEL [social-emotional learning], and the system structures that we have in place—the fidelity to that system.” District staff also reported that the district gathers feedback about families’ views of school culture and climate through surveys administered by the family community engagement team. Still, while Gardner has made notable commitments to establishing a safe and supportive culture, outcomes and results have varied.

In alignment with the district’s emphasis on social-emotional learning, Gardner has attempted to integrate social-emotional learning into daily schedules and is currently adopting new curricular resources designed to support social-emotional learning at all grade levels. At the elementary level, teachers shared that they should have a daily 80-90-minute social-emotional learning block to use the recently adopted PATHS Program to support social-emotional learning, but currently, they reported that “no grade has a full SEL [social-emotional learning] block like we’re supposed to,” which results in challenges – especially given scheduled transitions. Teachers also reported “no real training or any kind of overview” when the district purchased and distributed the PATHS Program. At the middle school level, teachers use a 45-minute advisory block twice per week to help students develop social and emotional competencies. The advisory block also includes a provided curriculum, Character Strong, which middle school teachers described as “a little immature” for their students. High school teachers implement the TRAILS Social and Emotional Learning program into their standard core classes once per week.

The district has behavioral and social-emotional systems and support in place, but these are not implemented consistently. In addition to applying MTSS principles to its academic support system, the district is aligning its social-emotional supports and PBIS into “our interconnected system, which is what our MTSS is.” Central office and school-based staff indicated that each school’s core SSTs include PBIS facilitators (i.e., teacher-leaders who help coordinate PBIS efforts), and initiatives such as school assemblies and check-in/check-out help incentivize positive behavior. In addition, the middle school offers a schoolwide Cares Cash system to incentivize positive behavior. However, implementation of positive behavioral systems and expectations is inconsistent. Teachers and students at the middle school noted that they are aware of the schoolwide set of expectations for student behavior, which are to be “responsible, respectful, and kind,” but mentioned ongoing challenges stemming from student behavior. One elementary teacher elaborated, “With the increase of student trauma, we’re seeing a lot of students that are dysregulated and their behaviors are becoming larger. You know, we’re talking about student acts of aggression towards staff members, towards other students.” Middle school teachers and students explained that insufficient consequences exist for student behavior, and most staff do not enforce the behavior expectations consistently. As one teacher said, “I feel like for years now, coming from [the] central office, we get research [that] shows that suspensions don’t work. Show me the research that shows that doing nothing works because we haven’t replaced the suspension with anything.” Teachers cited a range of issues, from students damaging school property, such as bathrooms, to inappropriate language and fighting. One middle school student commented that some students’ attendance suffered for lack of feeling adequately safe in school. In a family focus group, parents reported mixed opinions about how well school staff communicated with them about behavioral expectations and specific incidents involving their children. Feedback from staff, students, and parents indicates that responding to challenging behavior in pursuit of creating a safe and supportive culture—particularly at the middle school—is an area for growth for the district.

Data from classroom observations reveal moderate levels of emotional support for students across the district. The Emotional Support domain includes Positive Climate, Teacher Sensitivity, and Regard for Student Perspectives. Average ratings for the overall domain fall within the middle range for all grades, with scores of 5.4 for Grades K-5, 3.9 for Grades 6-8, and 4.4 for Grades 9-12 on a 7-point scale. Further analysis within the Emotional Support domain indicates that ratings for the Positive Climate measure align with the overall domain average. Specifically, scores for Positive Climate were 5.5 for Grades K-5, 4.4 for Grades 6-8, and 5.0 for Grades 9-12. These ratings suggest that teachers and students share a warm and supportive relationship, but some students may be excluded from this relationship. In focus groups, students provided examples of both positive and negative relationships between teachers and students. One middle school student shared that most of their teachers are really nice, and teachers want them to be good students. On the other hand, another middle student stated that teachers could be mean or yell at them.

Classroom observations indicated that some structures at the district and building levels support broader efforts to create safe and supportive environments. Specifically, ratings from CLASS observations indicate high scores for Negative Climate across grade bands, which represent a consistent absence of negative climate factors across classrooms (6.9 for Grades K-5, 6.6 for Grades 6-8, and 7.0 for Grades 9-12). Similarly, analysis of the Views of Climate and Learning student survey indicates that the overall school climate is moderate across nearly all school levels and student subgroups. Overall school climate scores fall within the “somewhat favorable” range (31 to 50, with a maximum score of 100). Notably, ratings for the engagement climate among ELs averaged within the “favorable” range with a score of 57.

### Tiered Systems of Support

Gardner has structures and systems in place to support the academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs of all students. Each school has an SST that consists of the school psychologist, administrators, counselors, teachers, specialists, and relevant service providers. The SST meets weekly to review multiple sources of student data, identify root causes, and implement tiered services tailored to individual students. As described in Leadership and Governance, district leaders reported that tiered systems of support are a significant district priority. Gardner also uses the DSFI self-assessment to guide their district leadership team in action planning, progress monitoring, and annual evaluation of fidelity of implementation and impact. According to school student support staff, the DSFI gives them a score on how well they are implementing Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 systems, data, and practices.

Each school has time allocated in its schedules to provide interventions and support to students, which is a strength of the district. Across all grade levels, a response to intervention block is built into the schedule to provide interventions at a time that supplements core instruction. At the elementary and middle school levels, core teachers, paraprofessionals, and reading coaches provide Tier 2 academic support to students through small-group instruction. These sessions occur either in class or during pull-out sessions. At the high school level, core teachers provide Tier 2 academic support during the response to intervention block. High school teachers reported that the SSTs communicate with them to track which students move tiers. In describing this communication system, one teacher shared as follows:

[Administrator helped coordinate] since we’re checking in with every kid, we can then better notice when they do need that extra support and we have a system of reporting to our MTSS administrator, which students kind of need to be bumped based on what we’re seeing or at least checked in with to see if they might need a little bit more support or need to be moved up to that tier 2 level.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions, teachers keep records of the interventions used to inform the district’s District Curriculum Accommodation Plan and SST process. School-based student support staff shared that students receive Tier 3 academic support during individual meetings.

Although Gardner has a process to determine equitable structures and assignments for interventions, several educators noted an area for growth in the consistent implementation of the MTSS structure. Elementary school teachers noted that the process of obtaining interventions can take too much time, and students experience delays in receiving supports through the SST process. Another elementary teacher reported that the lengthy process for cataloging and reviewing data is both cumbersome and can delay responding to identified needs within the classroom. One teacher explained that although they referred a student for Tier 2 support, it still took a few weeks to implement the SST process. Middle school teachers reported that support staff often are unavailable to provide support for interventions because of staff turnover. Gardner High School teachers noted that there’s a team for each of their tiered levels: “There’s a Tier 1 support team, Tier 2 support team, Tier 3 support team.” However, Gardner Academy teachers shared that they do not have separate tiered teams and that they are still determining how to implement Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports effectively. The consistent implementation of MTSS is an area for growth for the district.

In addition to academic supports, the district has additional supports for social, emotional, and behavioral health. District staff described hiring multiple support staff to meet increased student needs, noting that (a) the sizes of building-based social-emotional teams align with the size of the school building and (b) schools do not share staff. The district also partners with local organizations (e.g., Haywood Hospital, Brookline Center) to provide therapeutic services across all schools. The district also has partnered with Care Solace, a mental health care coordination service, to provide free access to care.

### Family, Student, and Community Engagement and Partnerships

Gardner’s *District Improvement Plan 2021-2024* and individual SIPs outline the mission, vision, goals, annual priorities, and strategies to support family and student engagement. Relatedly, all individual SIPs further detail the forms of communication and frequency of communicating with families across the district. These written plans for communications and community relations are a strength of the district. During interviews, school-based staff explained that PowerSchool, social media, and digital newsletters are effective communication tools that support communication among parents, teachers, and students. Feedback from parents also reflects a high regard for the district’s communications strategies. One parent shared, “At the high school, we get notifications from our [children’s] teachers on a regular basis. The administration is very good with sending out emails as well as social media posts about items and things that are happening.”

Students have multiple opportunities to participate in decision-making through their student council, which is a strength of the district. Parents shared that their students actively participate in student councils. One parent explained, “Fourth graders have student council. That’s an option where the kids can run for that. And they need teacher recommendations. It’s such a great program for kids to teach them to be responsible.” Middle school students expressed that if they want real change, they can talk to their student council members. When asked if there was something they suggested to the student council that they saw changed, one student shared that the student council hosts events such as Crazy Hair Day and Spirit Weeks.

Another strength of Gardner is building partnerships with community organizations to address student needs. As described previously (see Tiered Systems and Supports), the district has partnerships with community organizations to meet student needs, specifically in areas such as behavioral and mental health supports. According to district staff, the district provides different groups that offer support for substance abuse prevention and mentoring. Similarly, the district partners with local businesses and industry and community-based organizations to provide workforce internships to high school students. Parents reported a partnership with the City of Gardner Recreation Center and that “They have biddy basketball. They have all these things through the Rec department.” Staff reported the district’s dual enrollment relationship with Mount Wachusett Community College as one key example, as well as service and support relationships, such as those with Heywood Hospital. One district leader shared that the district also has a family community engagement team that helps disseminate district information to parent groups and MTSS teams.

### DESE Recommendations

* *The district should support school leaders, particularly at the middle school, in building a robust behavior support system in which students receive appropriate responses to their actions and receive aligned behavioral interventions as part of the district’s MTSS.*
* *The district should restructure its MTSS to provide timely, rapid cycles of intervention to students and, where feasible, identifies specific staff to conduct these tiered supports.*

## Financial and Asset Management

Gardner’s finance office includes the director and the assistant director of finance and operations, the human resources manager, the grants and communications manager, and the facilities maintenance supervisor.

Gardner’s budget documentation and reporting are readily available to the public on the district website. The school committee has a comprehensive procedure for monitoring and reporting on the budget, with regular finance subcommittee meetings featuring presentations from the director of finance and operations. These meetings provide monthly updates to the full school committee.

Gardner’s finance office maintains oversight, providing monthly reports to the school committee and engaging in systematic grant management. The district’s adherence to auditing obligations ensures fiscal accountability, strengthening confidence in its financial management.

Gardner’s focus on payroll and expense account increases in the fiscal year 2024 budget indicates strategic financial planning. The ESSER and the SOA have provided significant budgetary boosts in recent years. Staff said these additional funds mitigated potential shortfalls. However, despite consistently meeting net school spending requirements from 2019 to 2024, the district faces ongoing concerns about having sufficient funding to fully address the educational complexities with its growing and changing student population.

Table 7 summarizes key strengths and areas for growth in financial and asset management.

Table 7. Summary of Key Strengths and Areas for Growth: Financial and Asset Management Standard

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Indicator | Strengths | Areas for growth |
| [Budget documentation and reporting](#_Budget_Documentation_and) | * The school committee demonstrates a commitment to comprehensive financial oversight throughout the year.
 |  |
| [Adequate budget](#_Adequate_Budget_1) |  | * Securing sufficient resources to support educational and capital needs
 |
| [Financial tracking, forecasting, controls, and audits](#_Financial_Tracking,_Forecasting,) | * Gardner demonstrates a systematic and strategic approach to managing grants.
 |  |
| [Capital planning and facility maintenance](#_Capital_Planning_and_1) | * Gardner successfully constructed a new elementary school without requiring a Proposition 2.5 override.
 |  |

### Budget Documentation and Reporting

The school committee’s commitment to comprehensive financial oversight is evident in Gardner’s maintenance of clear, accurate, and easily accessible budget documents that are available to the public, which is a strength of the district. The director of finance and operations oversees the creation and maintenance of these documents. During the budget season, the superintendent delivers a comprehensive budget presentation to both the school committee and the city council, where the superintendent outlines the financial allocations required to meet the district’s strategic objectives. This process involves the school committee’s finance subcommittee, which plays an active role by reviewing spending documentation each month and understanding needs for subsequent budgets.

The director of finance and operations described budget and reporting processes that align with those of the school committee. During focus groups, school committee members acknowledged that district leaders deliver comprehensive, timely, and clear information. One member noted, “Since joining the committee, we’ve revamped the budget presentation to make it publicly accessible, clearly showing where all the money is allocated and its intended uses.” The district also tried to regularly make this information available to partners in the town government through occasional reports to the city council. The mayor of Gardner facilitates communication between the city and the district by being a member of the school committee.

### Adequate Budget

Gardner’s *FY24 Approved Budget* presents a detailed financial plan, with a 5 percent increase (an increase of $1,053,301) from fiscal year 2023. This increase includes growth in salaries for regular and special education instruction. Due to inflationary costs experienced nationally, the Gardner FY24 budget had to increase expense accounts by 20 percent, central administration costs by 50 percent, and other program expenses by 42 percent. The document also specifies revenue streams, including state funding and contributions from the city of Gardner, alongside a planned application of ESSER funding to mitigate shortfalls. It further outlines indirect costs charged by the city of Gardner to the district, covering areas such as administration, pupil support services, and various insurance programs, leading to an overall increase in indirect costs from the previous year.

According to the *FY 2024 Level Services Budget Presentation*, throughout fiscal years 2019 to 2024, Gardner consistently met the requirements for net school spending. Each year, the city provided enough funding to meet or go slightly beyond these requirements, exceeding net school spending requirements by 0.6 percent, 3.4 percent, and 2.7 percent in fiscal years 2020, 2021, and 2022, respectively (see Appendix D). The budget for these years showed that the school system adapted to changes in state and local funding, including increases from state funding (Chapter 70) and contributions from the city.

District leaders said that the SOA helped support the district’s budget. The superintendent highlighted that the district was for fortunate to benefit from the Student Opportunity Act, which contributed to increases in the budget in recent years. A review of state records shows a receipt of $3.1 million in FY24, which the superintendent called a “huge difference” for the district.

The superintendent’s comments also suggest that the SOA allowed the district to avoid significant budgetary gaps that might have necessitated cuts to personnel: “We budgeted very well where we didn’t expand so much that it put us in a gap for this year, or too significant a gap that we can’t overcome without cutting [positions].” The director of finance and operations echoed the superintendent’s sentiments. He said that the SOA was a substantial contribution to the district budget over typical Chapter 70 allocations.

According to a review of state records, Gardner’s student population has undergone significant changes since fiscal year 2015, with the percentage of high-needs students increasing to 72.5 percent in 2024. There was a slight increase in the number of students with disabilities, and ELs also saw a marginal rise from 4.3 percent to 7.2 percent. Consistent with focus group responses, the Resource Allocation and District Action Reports (RADAR) show that Gardner’s spending per pupil is $15,511, which is lower than the statewide spending of $19,554 per pupil. Compared with districts of similar size and demographic makeup, Gardner’s spending is less than similar districts. Gardner’s per pupil spending also is less than districts with similar wealth and in the same region.

Focus group responses, along with extant data, suggest that concerns exist regarding the adequacy of resources in fully addressing educational needs, which is an area for growth. During focus groups, staff at multiple levels of the system voiced concerns about the sufficiency of resources for large class sizes and high caseloads, especially for students with individualized education programs (IEPs) and those experiencing trauma. Some staff also discussed issues with some facilities (see Capital Planning and Facility Maintenance). Teachers indicated a need for more counselors and staff to support students effectively:

Most of [our students] have [experienced trauma] in some capacity . . . We’d see a lot more growth in academics if students were able to be fully self-regulated in the classroom. More counselors and more staff could be beneficial. They have, in the elementary level, gotten us more [staff] than in the past . . . but I still think that there could be some improvements.

In another focus group, teachers shared that long-standing faculty members are considering moving to nearby districts with higher salaries. This growing sense among staff that the district did not have sufficient resources was alarming to the staff participating group because, they said, losing these dedicated teachers could significantly impact a school’s stability and morale. One teacher said,

I think it just comes down to us needing more. We need more resources. We need more support. I know everyone says that. But, honestly, it’s not equitable within the district. We are overwhelmed. Even the coaching. We used to have the math coach and the literacy coach, and now it’s only in [another school]. And, clearly, there is a need here.

Teachers in this group cited more professional development and coaching available at other schools in the district, but not in theirs, as examples of how insufficient resources are not equitably distributed. In summary, district staff across focus groups indicated feeling that district funding and resources were not adequate to support the myriad of student learning needs.

### Financial Tracking, Forecasting, Controls, and Audits

In Gardner, the director of finance and operations oversees the overall financial tracking for the district. The director and his team use a collaborative process for budget forecasting that involves various stakeholders, including school leaders. This method includes assessing current needs, comparing them with previous years’ data, and adjusting forecasts based on changing financial circumstances and revenue estimates. Throughout the school year, the school committee monitors these budget activities through monthly subcommittee meetings. During the budget season, the district not only provides spreadsheets comparing past year allocations to current needs but also works closely with the school committee’s finance subcommittee. District staff include monthly MUNIS reports and in regular updates to the school committee on the district’s financial status. The school committee receives these reports, and they are accessible to the public on the district’s website. The school committee receives comprehensive reports toward the end of the fiscal year, continuing the regular financial oversight practiced throughout the year. A school committee member supported this process by stating, “We get reports consistently, so we always know where things stand.” The director of finance and operations added that

there’s a school committee finance meeting every month. They [reports] are updated with the current year-to-date expenses so they can see how we’re doing according to the budget. I’d check it . . . a minimum biweekly just to see if there’s anything else.

School committee members detailed monthly spreadsheets and reports that compare current needs and proposals with the previous year’s expenditures. These monthly financial reports are then presented to the school committee and made publicly accessible on the district website. In addition to school committee presentations, the financial subcommittee has regular meetings that feature presentations from the director of finance and operations. One school committee member explained as follows:

As a full committee, we’re presented every month with a finance report where we see the warrants that were approved that month, as well as the minutes of the [finance subcommittee] meeting . . . Discussion and questions are allowed, if we have any, about their meetings and what’s going on.

In addition to the monthly finance meetings, where he presents current year-to-date expenses to keep the committee abreast of the budget’s status, the director prepares end-of-year reports for DESE, which involve preparing spreadsheets that capture the district’s financial activities.

Grant management in Gardner employs a systematic and strategic approach, which is a recognized strength of the district. Together, the director of finance and operations and the grants and communications manager oversee the fiscal management of grants secured through the Grants for Education Management System (GEMS). The finance office manages funds such an entitlement grants, ESSER funds, and competitive grants won by the district. The director of finance and operations is responsible for providing financial oversight and ensuring the accurate reporting of grant expenditures. Meanwhile, the grants and communications manager is specifically responsible for the implementation of these grants. The manager ensures that grant spending aligns with district priorities, and reports to the superintendent and the school committee on grant progress to allow leadership to monitor current priorities and plan for future efforts. This task includes managing both federal and state funds accessed through GEMS, alongside ESSER funds and smaller initiatives such as the Barr Foundation School Leadership Grant and an Early College Support Grant. Monthly reports to the school committee detail financial updates and provide qualitative insights into how the grants are supporting various projects and initiatives. The grants and communications manager also makes an end-of-year grant report to the school committee annually, most recently in June 2023. This committee report details grant amounts, describes year-over-year trends, breaks out grants by category, and illustrates grant plans for the forthcoming fiscal year to support strategic planning. Grants are consistently spent “down to the penny” to avoid returning unspent funds. According to the director of finance and operations,

There are revolving funds and grants that all get reported monthly . . . to the school committee . . . I provide the numbers, [the grants and communications manager] provides the numbers and the words, the details . . . So, I can say, “We spent $22,000 on the food supplement grant.” And, she’ll say . . . “This is how it was implemented.” [The grants and communications manager] tells the story.

Auditing helps to externally verify the accuracy of Gardner’s financial tracking efforts. The *FY2022 Audited Statements* document demonstrates Gardner’s fulfillment of its auditing obligations for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2022. Through a comprehensive independent auditor’s report, alongside a detailed management discussion and analysis, the audit reviewed the city’s financial standing in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. This audit provides an overview of Gardner’s financial activities, investments in capital assets, and adherence to fiscal responsibilities, including the management of long-term liabilities such as pension and other postemployment benefits. The report from the most recent audit describes funds acquired from sources such as the Massachusetts School Building Authority to support school construction, and remaining unspent funds from construction at the time of the audit. The report also notes a total net position deficit for the City of Gardner at the time of the audit.

### Capital Planning and Facility Maintenance

Gardner has a comprehensive approach to enhancing the quality and safety of educational and program facilities. The *FY24 Capital Plan Master* document includes a multifaceted effort aimed at improving the physical infrastructure and technological readiness of schools. It includes a focus on accessibility and safety enhancements. It also includes significant investments to “upgrade standby generators and electrical services,” which would allow schools to remain operational during power outages and emergencies, and prioritizes the improvement of exit and emergency lighting and the replacement of restroom partitions.

The district also included other important items in their capital plan. The district earmarked funds for essential projects such as refinishing floors, painting ceilings, and replacing rooftops and HVAC condensers. The refurbishment of auditoriums and gymnasiums complements these efforts. Technological upgrades and facility enhancements are also addressed in the plan. District leaders allocated funds for the modernization of science labs, intercom systems, and security cameras. The plan also addresses the need for quality outdoor and athletic facilities, as evidenced by the allocation of funds for the improvement of athletic fields.

The district’s capital plan includes proposals for future development and improvement needs, including large-scale projects, such as the $89 million investment in Gardner Elementary School and a $5 million investment in the central office building (a former elementary school that currently houses the central office and the alternative high school, Gardner Academy).

The mayor of Gardner discussed the collaborative and strategic approach to capital planning and working with the city to meet the community’s educational needs:

So we’re required to do an annual capital improvement plan by our ordinances, and that includes the school department. It’s making a funding plan for any projects that have a cost of over $5,000 and a lifespan of over 5 to 10 years. That’s all done on an annual basis. It is presented to the city council for them to adopt when they adopt the annual operating budget so they have to vote on it by July first every year.

The mayor also highlighted the importance of direct communication between his office and the district, facilitated by regular meetings with the superintendent. Providing examples of how this collaboration led to significant capital upgrades, the mayor said the following:

Aside from building the new school, [we] make sure the other schools that we have are up to date. The middle school needs a new roof, so we just signed a notice of intent with the school building authority to see if we can get funding to replace that roof. We redid the athletic fields a couple of years ago. Both the main stadium has been fully completed, but we also did the practice fields . . . and the baseball field. The auditorium and the gym . . . are currently under renovation, too.

The mayor highlighted the city’s dedication to a thorough planning process, specifying that the district’s capital plan is part of the city’s annual capital improvement plan, which details priorities and allocates funding for projects affecting the district.

The director of finance and operations highlighted the successful completion of critical capital improvements, financed through ESSER and the SOA, such as maintenance and repair projects. These improvements included critical maintenance and repair projects, such as upgrading the HVAC system at the high school to enhance air quality. As the director of finance and operations stated,

We had an opportunity for a couple of years between ESSER and the SOA to get a lot of the capital needs done . . . If you do capital repairs with temporary funding sources like ESSER, you’re not faced with the challenge of cutting a position when ESSER goes away. We don’t have the fiscal cliff.

Moreover, focus group responses revealed the collaborative involvement of the school committee and the superintendent in planning future initiatives, such as the construction of a new school building to replace two aging structures:

We just went through the whole process of the new elementary building . . . When you’re talking about [capital] planning, that took up so much of the time, and it answered a lot of the issues that we were having because of the two elementary [school] buildings that weren’t where they needed to be.

Another strength of Gardner is the successful construction of a new elementary school without the need for a Proposition 2.5 override, which highlights the effective collaboration among the school committee, city officials, and the community. The mayor of Gardner highlighted these collaborative efforts, which allowed the project to be funded through existing mechanisms and resources, effectively meeting student and community needs without requiring a Proposition 2.5 override—a request made to voters to approve spending money beyond the set property tax increase limit of 2.5 percent per year to fund specific projects. The mayor explained as follows:

People are supportive of the schools . . . Gardner has never passed an override historically, and I didn’t want the project contingent on something that we didn’t know if [it] was gonna pass or not because every time we put an override on the ballot, it has failed . . . I did not want to risk [it] when we knew the need was there . . . But the community has been largely supportive of our schools.

District leaders indicated that, despite efforts to maximize the use of available resources, including the application of ESSER funds for essential projects such as the HVAC air quality enhancement, the district continues to face the challenge of obtaining sufficient funding for capital improvements. “We were able to knock quite a few of the capital items off the list. Still, [there is] not enough money to go around,” said the director of finance and operations.

### DESE Recommendations

* *In partnership with municipal leaders, the district should work with its community to identify additional funding sources so that the district can fund the staff and programming necessary to meet students’ needs.*

## Appendix A. Summary of Site Visit Activities

The AIR team completed the following activities as part of the district review activities in Gardner. The team conducted 82 classroom observations during the week of February 26, 2024, and held interviews and focus groups between February 27 and February 29, 2024. The site visit team conducted interviews and focus groups with the following representatives from the school and the district:

* Superintendent
* Other district leaders, including curriculum, finance, and human resources
* School committee members
* Teachers’ association leaders
* Principals
* Teachers
* Support specialists
* Parents
* Students
* Mayor of Gardner

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

* Student and school performance data, including achievement and growth, enrollment, graduation, dropout, retention, suspension, and attendance rates
* Data on the district’s staffing and finances
* Curricular review process and timeline
* Published educational reports on the district by DESE, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, and the former Office of Educational Quality and Accountability
* District documents such as the DIP and the SIPs, 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

## Appendix B. Districtwide Instructional Observation Report



Gardner Public Schools

Classroom Visits: Summary of Findings

Districtwide Instructional Observation Report

February 2024



201 Jones Road
Waltham, Massachusetts
[www.air.org](http://www.air.org)

Contents

**Page**

[Introduction B-4](#_Toc92194253)

[Positive Climate B-6](#_Toc92194254)

[Teacher Sensitivity B-7](#_Toc92194255)

[Regard for Student Perspectives B-8](#_Toc92194256)

[Negative Climate B-9](#_Toc92194257)

[Behavior Management B-10](#_Toc92194258)

[Productivity B-11](#_Toc92194259)

[Instructional Learning Formats B-12](#_Toc92194260)

[Concept Development B-13](#_Toc92194261)

[Content Understanding B-14](#_Toc92194262)

[Analysis and Inquiry B-15](#_Toc92194263)

[Quality of Feedback B-16](#_Toc92194264)

[Language Modeling B-17](#_Toc92194265)

[Instructional Dialogue B-18](#_Toc92194266)

[Student Engagement B-19](#_Toc92194267)

[Summary of Average Ratings: Grades K-5 B-20](#_Toc92194268)

[Summary of Average Ratings: Grades 6-8 B-21](#_Toc92194269)

[Summary of Average Ratings: Grades 9-12 B-22](#_Toc92194270)

[References B-23](#_Toc92194271)

Introduction

The *Districtwide Instructional Observation Report* presents ratings for the classroom observations that were conducted by certified observers at American Institutes for Research (AIR) as part of the Massachusetts District Reviews.

Four observers visited Gardner Public Schools during the week of February 27, 2024. Observers conducted 82 observations in a sample of classrooms across four schools. Observations were conducted in grades K-12 and focused primarily on literacy, English language arts, and mathematics instruction.

The classroom observations were guided by the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), developed by the Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) at the University of Virginia. Three levels of CLASS Manuals were used: K–3, Upper Elementary, and Secondary. The K–3 tool was used to observe grades K–3, the Upper Elementary tool was used to observe grades 4–5, and the Secondary tool was used to observe grades 6–12.

The K–3 protocol includes 10 classroom dimensions related to three domains: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support (listed in Table 1).

Table 1. CLASS K–3 Domains and Dimensions

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Emotional Support | Classroom Organization | Instructional Support |
| * Positive Climate
* Negative Climate
* Teacher Sensitivity
* Regard for Student Perspectives
 | * Behavior Management
* Productivity
* Instructional Learning Formats
 | * Concept Development
* Quality of Feedback
* Language Modeling
 |

The Upper Elementary and Secondary protocols include 11 classroom dimensions related to three domains: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support (listed in Table 2), in addition to Student Engagement.

Table 2. CLASS Upper Elementary and Secondary Domains and Dimensions

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Emotional Support | Classroom Organization | Instructional Support |
| * Positive Climate
* Teacher Sensitivity
* Regard for Student Perspectives
 | * Behavior Management
* Productivity
* Negative Climate
 | * Instructional Learning Formats
* Content Understanding
* Analysis and Inquiry
* Quality of Feedback
* Instructional Dialogue
 |
| Student Engagement |

When conducting a visit to a classroom, the observer rates each dimension (including Student Engagement) on a scale of 1 to 7. A rating of 1 or 2 indicates that the dimension was never or rarely evident during the visit. For example, a rating of 1 or 2 on Teacher Sensitivity indicates that, at the time of the visit, the teacher was not aware of students who needed extra support or attention, was unresponsive to or dismissive of students, or was ineffective at addressing students’ problems; as a result, students rarely sought support from the teacher or communicated openly with the teacher. A rating of 3, 4, or 5 indicates that the dimension was evident but not exhibited consistently or in a way that included all students. A rating of 6 or 7 indicates that the dimension was reflected in all or most classroom activities and in a way that included all or most students.

Members of the observation team who visited the classrooms all received training on the CLASS protocol and then passed a rigorous certification exam for each CLASS protocol to ensure that they were able to accurately rate the dimensions. All observers must pass an exam annually to maintain their certification.

Research on CLASS protocol shows that students in classrooms that rated high using this observation tool have greater gains in social skills and academic success than students in classrooms with lower ratings (MET Project, 2010; CASTL, n.d.). Furthermore, small improvements on these domains can affect student outcomes: “The ability to demonstrate even small changes in effective interactions has practical implications—differences in just over 1 point on the CLASS 7-point scale translate into improved achievement and social skill development for students” (CASTL, n.d., p. 3).

In this report, each CLASS dimension is defined, and descriptions of the dimensions at the high (6 or 7), middle (3, 4, or 5), and low levels (1 or 2) are presented *(definitions and rating descriptions are derived from the CLASS K–3*, *Upper Elementary, and Secondary Manuals).* For each dimension we indicate the frequency of classroom observations across the ratings and provide a districtwide average of the observed classrooms. In cases where a dimension is included in more than one CLASS manual level, those results are combined on the dimension-specific pages. In the summary of ratings table following the dimension-specific pages the averages for every dimension are presented by grade band (K-5, 6-8, and 9-12). For each dimension, we indicate the grade levels for which this dimension is included.

Positive Climate

Emotional Support domain, Grades K−12

Positive Climate reflects the emotional connection between the teacher and students and among students and the warmth, respect, and enjoyment communicated by verbal and nonverbal interactions (*CLASS K–3 Manual*, p. 23, *CLASS Upper Elementary Manual,* p. 21, *CLASS Secondary Manual*, p. 21). Table 3 (as well as tables for the remaining dimensions) includes the number of classrooms for each rating on each dimension and the district average for that dimension.

Table 3. Positive Climate: Number of Classrooms for Each Rating and District Average

Positive Climate District Average\*: 5.0

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Grade Band | Low Range | Middle Range | High Range | n | Average |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 82 | 5.0 |
| Grades K-5 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 14 | 10 | 7 | 35 | 5.5 |
| Grades 6-8 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 5 | 8 | 2 | 2 | 24 | 4.4 |
| Grades 9-12 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 9 | 2 | 23 | 5.0 |

\*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 3, the district average is computed as:
([2 x 4] + [3 x 8] + [4 x 11] + [5 x 27] + [6 x 21] + [7 x 11]) ÷ 82 observations = 5.0

Ratings in the Low Range. All indicators are absent or only minimally present. Teachers and students do not appear to share a warm, supportive relationship. Interpersonal connections are not evident or only minimally evident. Affect in the classroom is flat, and there are rarely instances of teachers and students smiling, sharing humor, or laughing together. There are no, or very few, positive communications among the teacher and students; the teacher does not communicate encouragement. There is no evidence that students and the teacher respect one another or that the teacher encourages students to respect one another.

Ratings in the Middle Range. There are some indications that the teacher and students share a warm and supportive relationship, but some students may be excluded from this relationship, either by the teacher or the students. Some relationships appear constrained—for example, the teacher expresses a perfunctory interest in students, or encouragement seems to be an automatic statement and is not sincere. Sometimes, teachers and students demonstrate respect for one another.

Ratings in the High Range. There are many indications that the relationship among students and the teacher is positive and warm. The teacher is typically in close proximity to students, and encouragement is sincere and personal. There are frequent displays of shared laughter, smiles, and enthusiasm. Teachers and students show respect for one another (e.g., listening, using calm voices, using polite language). Positive communication (both verbal and nonverbal) and mutual respect are evident throughout the session.

Teacher Sensitivity

Emotional Support domain, Grades K−12

Teacher Sensitivity encompasses the teacher’s awareness of and responsiveness to students’ academic and emotional needs. High levels of sensitivity facilitate students’ abilities to actively explore and learn because the teacher consistently provides comfort, reassurance, and encouragement (*CLASS K–3 Manual,* p. 32, *CLASS Upper Elementary Manual,* p. 27, *CLASS Secondary Manual,* p. 27).

Table 4. Teacher Sensitivity: Number of Classrooms for Each Rating and District Average

Teacher Sensitivity District Average\*: 5.2

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Grade Band | Low Range | Middle Range | High Range | n | Average |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 82 | 5.2 |
| Grades K-5 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 3 | 6 | 12 | 9 | 35 | 5.5 |
| Grades 6-8 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 5 | 9 | 3 | 2 | 24 | 4.6 |
| Grades 9-12 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 6 | 5 | 8 | 3 | 23 | 5.3 |

\*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 4, the district average is computed as:
([2 x 1] + [3 x 10] + [4 x 14] + [5 x 20] + [6 x 23] + [7 x 14]) ÷ 82 observations = 5.2

Ratings in the Low Range. In these sessions, the teacher has not been aware of students who need extra support and pays little attention to students’ needs. As a result, students are frustrated, confused, and disengaged. The teacher is unresponsive to and dismissive of students and may ignore students, squash their enthusiasm, and not allow them to share their moods or feelings. The teacher is not effective in addressing students’ needs and does not appropriately acknowledge situations that may be upsetting to students. Students rarely seek support from the teacher and minimize conversations with the teacher, not sharing ideas or responding to questions.

Ratings in the Middle Range. The teacher is sometimes aware of student needs or aware of only a limited type of student needs, such as academic needs, not social-emotional needs. Or the teacher may be aware of some students and not of other students. The teacher does not always realize a student is confused and needs extra help or when a student already knows the material being taught. The teacher may be responsive at times to students but at other times may ignore or dismiss students. The teacher may respond only to students who are upbeat and positive and not support students who are upset. Sometimes, the teacher is effective in addressing students’ concerns or problems, but not always.

Ratings in the High Range. The teacher’s awareness of students and their needs is consistent and accurate. The teacher may predict how difficult a new task is for a student and acknowledge this difficulty. The teacher is responsive to students’ comments and behaviors, whether positive or negative. The teacher consistently addresses students’ problems and concerns and is effective in doing so. Students are obviously comfortable with the teacher and share ideas, work comfortably together, and ask and respond to questions, even difficult questions.

Regard for Student Perspectives

Emotional Support domain, Grades K−12

Regard for Student Perspectives captures the degree to which the teacher’s interactions with students and classroom activities place an emphasis on students’ interests, motivations, and points of view and encourage student responsibility and autonomy (*CLASS K–3 Manual,* p. 38, *CLASS Upper Elementary Manual,* p. 35, *CLASS Secondary Manual*, p. 35).

Table 5. Regard for Student Perspectives: Number of Classrooms for Each Rating and District Average

Regard for Student Perspectives District Average\*: 3.1

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Grade Band | Low Range | Middle Range | High Range | n | Average |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 82 | 3.1 |
| Grades K-5 | 1 | 5 | 10 | 8 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 35 | 3.7 |
| Grades 6-8 | 2 | 10 | 9 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 24 | 2.6 |
| Grades 9-12 | 4 | 7 | 5 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 23 | 2.9 |

\*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 5, the district average is computed as:
([1 x 7] + [2 x 22] + [3 x 24] + [4 x 14] + [5 x 12] + [6 x 2] + [7 x 1]) ÷ 82 observations = 3.1

Ratings in the Low Range. At the low range, the teacher exhibits an inflexible, rigid adherence to his or her plan, without considering student ideas or allowing students to make contributions. The teacher inhibits student enthusiasm by imposing guidelines or making remarks that inhibit student expression. The teacher may rigidly adhere to a lesson plan and not respond to student interests. The teacher does not allow students any autonomy on how they conduct an activity, may control materials tightly, and may offer few opportunities for students to help out with classroom responsibilities. There are few opportunities for students to talk and express themselves.

Ratings in the Middle Range. The teacher exhibits control at times and at other times follows the students’ lead and gives them some choices and opportunities to follow their interests. There are some opportunities for students to exercise autonomy, but student choice is limited. The teacher may assign students responsibility in the classroom, but in a limited way. At times, the teacher dominates the discussion, but at other times the teacher allows students to share ideas, although only at a minimal level or for a short period of time.

Ratings in the High Range. The teacher is flexible in following student leads, interests, and ideas and looks for ways to meaningfully engage students. Although the teacher has a lesson plan, students’ ideas are incorporated into the lesson plan. The teacher consistently supports student autonomy and provides meaningful leadership opportunities. Students have frequent opportunities to talk, share ideas, and work together. Students have appropriate freedom of movement during activities.

Negative Climate

Emotional Support domain, Grades K− 3
Classroom Organization domain, Grades 4− 12

Negative Climate reflects the overall level of expressed negativity in the classroom. The frequency, quality, and intensity of teacher and student negativity are key to this dimension (*CLASS K–3 Manual*, p. 28, *CLASS Upper Elementary Manual,* p. 55, *CLASS Secondary Manual,* p. 55). For the purposes of this report, we have inversed the observers scores, to be consistent with the range scores across all dimensions. Therefore, a high range score in this dimension indicates an absence of negative climate, and a low range score indicates the presence of negative climate.[[5]](#footnote-6)

Table 6. Negative Climate: Number of Classrooms for Each Rating and District Average

Negative Climate District Average\*: 6.8

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Grade Band | Low Range | Middle Range | High Range | n | Average |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 82 | 6.8 |
| Grades K-5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 30 | 35 | 6.9 |
| Grades 6-8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 17 | 24 | 6.6 |
| Grades 9-12 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 22 | 23 | 7.0 |

\*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 6, the district average is computed as:
([4 x 1] + [5 x 1] + [6 x 11] + [7 x 69]) ÷ 82 observations = 6.8

Ratings in the Low Range.Negativity is pervasive. The teacher may express constant irritation, annoyance, or anger; unduly criticize students; or consistently use a harsh tone and/or take a harsh stance as he or she interacts with students. Threats or yelling are frequently used to establish control. Language is disrespectful and sarcastic. Severe negativity, such as the following actions, would lead to a high rating on negative climate, even if the action is not extended: students bullying one another, a teacher hitting a student, or students physically fighting with one another.

Ratings in the Middle Range. There are some expressions of mild negativity by the teacher or students. The teacher may express irritability, use a harsh tone, and/or express annoyance—usually during difficult moments in the classroom. Threats or yelling may be used to establish control over the classroom, but not constantly; they are used more as a response to situations. At times, the teacher and students may be sarcastic or disrespectful toward one another.

Ratings in the High Range. There is no display of negativity: No strong expressions of anger or aggression are exhibited, either by the teacher or students; if there is such a display, it is contained and does not escalate. The teacher does not issue threats or yell to establish control. The teacher and students are respectful and do not express sarcasm.

Behavior Management

Classroom Organization domain, Grades K−12

Behavior Management refers to the teacher’s ability to provide clear behavioral expectations and use effective methods to prevent and redirect misbehavior (*CLASS K–3 Manual*, p. 45, *CLASS Upper Elementary Manual,* p. 41, *CLASS Secondary Manual*, p. 41).

Table 7. Behavior Management: Number of Classrooms for Each Rating and District Average

Behavior Management District Average\*: 6.0

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Grade Band | Low Range | Middle Range | High Range | n | Average |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 82 | 6.0 |
| Grades K-5 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 7 | 8 | 19 | 35 | 6.3 |
| Grades 6-8 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 10 | 24 | 5.5 |
| Grades 9-12 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 8 | 9 | 23 | 6.1 |

\*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 7, the district average is computed as:
([2 x 1] + [3 x 4] + [4 x 2] + [5 x 17] + [6 x 20] + [7 x 38]) ÷ 82 observations = 6.0

Ratings in the Low Range. At the low range, the classroom is chaotic. There are no rules and expectations, or they are not enforced consistently. The teacher does not monitor the classroom effectively and only reacts to student disruption, which is frequent. There are frequent instances of misbehavior in the classroom, and the teacher’s attempts to redirect misbehavior are ineffective. The teacher does not use cues, such as eye contact, slight touches, gestures, or physical proximity, to respond to and redirect negative behavior.

Ratings in the Middle Range. Although rules and expectations may be stated, they are not consistently enforced, or the rules may be unclear. Sometimes, the teacher proactively anticipates and prevents misbehavior, but at other times the teacher ignores behavior problems until it is too late. Misbehavior may escalate because redirection is not always effective. Episodes of misbehavior are periodic.

Ratings in the High Range. At the high range, the rules and guidelines for behavior are clear, and they are consistently reinforced by the teacher. The teacher monitors the classroom and prevents problems from developing, using subtle cues to redirect behavior and address situations before they escalate. The teacher focuses on positive behavior and consistently affirms students’ desirable behaviors. The teacher effectively uses cues to redirect behavior. There are no, or very few, instances of student misbehavior or disruptions.

Productivity

Classroom Organization domain, Grades K−12

Productivity considers how well the teacher manages instructional time and routines and provides activities for students so that they have the opportunity to be involved in learning activities (*CLASS K–3 Manual,* p. 51, *CLASS Upper Elementary Manual,* p. 49, *CLASS Secondary Manual*, p. 49).

Table 8. Productivity: Number of Classrooms for Each Rating and District Average

Productivity District Average\*: 6.1

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Grade Band | Low Range | Middle Range | High Range | n | Average |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 82 | 6.1 |
| Grades K-5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 11 | 21 | 35 | 6.5 |
| Grades 6-8 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 7 | 5 | 8 | 24 | 5.6 |
| Grades 9-12 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 5 | 12 | 23 | 6.3 |

\*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 8, the district average is computed as:
([3 x 3] + [4 x 3] + [5 x 14] + [6 x 21] + [7 x 41]) ÷ 82 observations = 6.1

Ratings in the Low Range. At the low level, the teacher provides few activities for students. Much time is spent on managerial tasks (such as distributing papers) and/or on behavior management. Frequently during the observation, students have little to do and spend time waiting. The routines of the classroom are not clear and, as a result, students waste time, are not engaged, and are confused. Transitions take a long time and/or are too frequent. The teacher does not have activities organized and ready and seems to be caught up in last-minute preparations.

Ratings in the Middle Range. At the middle range, the teacher does provide activities for students but loses learning time to disruptions or management tasks. There are certain times when the teacher provides clear activities to students, but there are other times when students wait and lose focus. Some students (or all students, at some point) do not know what is expected of them. Some of the transitions may take too long, or classrooms may be productive during certain periods but then not productive during transitions. Although the teacher is mostly prepared for the class, last-minute preparations may still infringe on learning time.

Ratings in the High Range. The classroom runs very smoothly. The teacher provides a steady flow of activities for students, so students do not have downtime and are not confused about what to do next. The routines of the classroom are efficient, and all students know how to move from one activity to another and where materials are. Students understand the teacher’s instructions and directions. Transitions are quick, and there are not too many of them. The teacher is fully prepared for the lesson.

Instructional Learning Formats

Classroom Organization domain, Grades K−3

Instructional Support domain, Grades 4− 12

Instructional Learning Formats refer to the ways in which the teacher maximizes students’ interest, engagement, and abilities to learn from the lesson and activities (*CLASS K–3 Manual*, p. 57; *CLASS Upper Elementary Manual*, p. 63, *CLASS Secondary Manual,* p. 61).

Table 9. Instructional Learning Formats: Number of Classrooms for Each Rating and District Average

Instructional Learning Formats District Average\*: 4.9

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Grade Band | Low Range | Middle Range | High Range | n | Average |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 82 | 4.9 |
| Grades K-5 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 15 | 12 | 3 | 35 | 5.3 |
| Grades 6-8 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 11 | 3 | 0 | 24 | 4.4 |
| Grades 9-12 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 8 | 5 | 2 | 23 | 4.9 |

\*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 9, the district average is computed as:
([2 x 3] + [3 x 7] + [4 x 13] + [5 x 34] + [6 x 20] + [7 x 5]) ÷ 82 observations = 4.9

Ratings in the Low Range. The teacher exerts little effort in facilitating engagement in the lesson. Learning activities may be limited and seem to be at the rote level, with little teacher involvement. The teacher relies on one learning modality (e.g., listening) and does not use other modalities (e.g., movement, visual displays) to convey information and enhance learning. Or the teacher may be ineffective in using other modalities, not choosing the right props for the students or the classroom conditions. Students are uninterested and uninvolved in the lesson. The teacher does not attempt to guide students toward learning objectives and does not help them focus on the lesson by providing appropriate tools and asking effective questions.

Ratings in the Middle Range. At the middle range, the teacher sometimes facilitates engagement in the lesson but at other times does not, or the teacher facilitates engagement for some students and not for other students. The teacher may not allow students enough time to explore or answer questions. Sometimes, the teacher uses a variety of modalities to help students reach a learning objective, but at other times the teacher does not. Student engagement is inconsistent, or some students are engaged and other students are not. At times, students are aware of the learning objective and at other times they are not. The teacher may sometimes use strategies to help students organize information but at other times does not.

Ratings in the High Range.The teacher has multiple strategies and tools to facilitate engagement and learning and encourage participation. The teacher may move around, talk and play with students, ask open-ended questions of students, and allow students to explore. A variety of tools and props are used, including movement and visual/auditory resources. Students are consistently interested and engaged in the activities and lessons. The teacher focuses students on the learning objectives, which students understand. The teacher uses advanced organizers to prepare students for an activity, as well as reorientation strategies that help students regain focus.

Concept Development

Instructional Support domain, Grades K−3

Concept Development refers to the teacher’s use of instructional discussions and activities to promote students’ higher order thinking skills and cognition and the teacher’s focus on understanding rather than on rote instruction (*CLASS K–3 Manual*, p. 64).

Table 10. Concept Development: Number of Classrooms for Each Rating and District Average

Concept Development District Average\*: 2.9

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Grade Band | Low Range | Middle Range | High Range | n | Average |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 26 | 2.9 |
| Grades K-3\*\* | 1 | 11 | 6 | 6 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 26 | 2.9 |

\*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 10, the district average is computed as:
([1 x 1] + [2 x 11] + [3 x 6] + [4 x 6] + [5 x 2]) ÷ 26 observations = 2.9

\*\*Concept Development does not appear in the CLASS Upper Elementary Manual, therefore scores for the Elementary School Level represent grades K-3 only.

Ratings in the Low Range. At the low range, the teacher does not attempt to develop students’ understanding of ideas and concepts, focusing instead on basic facts and skills. Discussion and activities do not encourage students to analyze and reason. There are few, if any, opportunities for students to create or generate ideas and products. The teacher does not link concepts to one another and does not ask students to make connections with previous content or their actual lives. The activities and the discussion are removed from students’ lives and from their prior knowledge.

Ratings in the Middle Range. To some extent, the teacher uses discussions and activities to encourage students to analyze and reason and focuses somewhat on understanding of ideas. The activities and discussions are not fully developed, however, and there is still instructional time that focuses on facts and basic skills. Students may be provided some opportunities for creating and generating ideas, but the opportunities are occasional and not planned out. Although some concepts may be linked and also related to students’ previous learning, such efforts are brief. The teacher makes some effort to relate concepts to students’ lives but does not elaborate enough to make the relationship meaningful to students.

Ratings in the High Range. At the high range, the teacher frequently guides students to analyze and reason during discussions and activities. Most of the questions are open ended and encourage students to think about connections and implications. Teachers use problem solving, experimentation, and prediction; comparison and classification; and evaluation and summarizing to promote analysis and reasoning. The teacher provides students with opportunities to be creative and generate ideas. The teacher consistently links concepts to one another and to previous learning and relates concepts to students’ lives.

Content Understanding

Instructional Support domain, Grades 4− 12

Content Understanding refers to the depth of lesson content and the approaches used to help students comprehend the framework, key ideas, and procedures in an academic discipline. At a high level, this dimension refers to interactions among the teacher and students that lead to an integrated understanding of facts, skills, concepts, and principles (*CLASS Upper Elementary Manual*, p. 70, *CLASS Secondary Manual,* p. 68).

Table 11. Content Understanding: Number of Classrooms for Each Rating and District Average

Content Understanding District Average\*: 3.7

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Grade Band | Low Range | Middle Range | High Range | n | Average |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 56 | 3.7 |
| Grades 4-5\*\* | 0 | 2 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 9 | 3.3 |
| Grades 6-8 | 0 | 6 | 6 | 8 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 24 | 3.5 |
| Grades 9-12 | 0 | 5 | 6 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 1 | 23 | 4.0 |

\*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 11, the district average is computed as:
([2 x 13] + [3 x 17] + [4 x 10] + [5 x 8] + [6 x 7] + [7 x 1]) ÷ 56 observations = 3.7

\*\*Content Understanding does not appear in the CLASS K-3 Manual, therefore scores for the Elementary School Level represent grades 4-5 only.

Ratings in the Low Range. At the low range, the focus of the class is primarily on presenting discrete pieces of topically related information, absent broad, organizing ideas. The discussion and materials fail to effectively communicate the essential attributes of the concepts and procedures to students. The teacher makes little effort to elicit or acknowledge students’ background knowledge or misconceptions or to integrate previously learned material when presenting new information.

Ratings in the Middle Range. At the middle range, the focus of the class is sometimes on meaningful discussion and explanation of broad, organizing ideas. At other times, the focus is on discrete pieces of information. Class discussion and materials communicate some of the essential attributes of concepts and procedures, but examples are limited in scope or not consistently provided. The teacher makes some attempt to elicit and/or acknowledge students’ background knowledge or misconceptions and/or to integrate information with previously learned materials; however, these moments are limited in depth or inconsistent.

Ratings in the High Range. At the high range, the focus of the class is on encouraging deep understanding of content through the provision of meaningful, interactive discussion and explanation of broad, organizing ideas. Class discussion and materials consistently communicate the essential attributes of concepts and procedures to students. New concepts and procedures and broad ideas are consistently linked to students’ prior knowledge in ways that advance their understanding and clarify misconceptions.

Analysis and Inquiry

Instructional Support domain, Grades 4− 12

Analysis and Inquiry assesses the degree to which students are engaged in higher level thinking skills through their application of knowledge and skills to novel and/or open-ended problems, tasks, and questions. Opportunities for engaging in metacognition (thinking about thinking) also are included (*CLASS Upper Elementary Manual*, p. 81, *CLASS Secondary Manual*, p. 76).

Table 12. Analysis and Inquiry: Number of Classrooms for Each Rating and District Average

Analysis and Inquiry District Average\*: 2.4

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Grade Band | Low Range | Middle Range | High Range | n | Average |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 56 | 2.4 |
| Grades 4-5\*\* | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 9 | 2.1 |
| Grades 6-8 | 8 | 10 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 24 | 2.0 |
| Grades 9-12 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 23 | 2.8 |

\*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 12, the district average is computed as:
([1 x 17] + [2 x 18] + [3 x 11] + [4 x 6] + [5 x 1] + [6 x 3]) ÷ 56 observations = 2.4

\*\*Analysis and Inquiry does not appear in the CLASS K-3 Manual, therefore scores for the Elementary School Level represent grades 4-5 only.

Ratings in the Low Range. At the low range, students do not engage in higher order thinking skills. Instruction is presented in a rote manner, and there are no opportunities for students to engage in novel or open-ended tasks. Students are not challenged to apply previous knowledge and skills to a new problem, nor are they encouraged to think about, evaluate, or reflect on their own learning. Students do not have opportunities to plan their own learning experiences.

Ratings in the Middle Range. Students occasionally engage in higher order thinking through analysis and inquiry, but the episodes are brief or limited in depth. The teacher provides opportunities for students to apply knowledge and skills within familiar contexts and offers guidance to students but does not provide opportunities for analysis and problem solving within novel contexts and/or without teacher support. Students have occasional opportunities to think about their own thinking through explanations, self-evaluations, reflection, and planning; these opportunities, however, are brief and limited in depth.

Ratings in the High Range. At the high range, students consistently engage in extended opportunities to use higher order thinking through analysis and inquiry. The teacher provides opportunities for students to independently solve or reason through novel and open-ended tasks that require students to select, utilize, and apply existing knowledge and skills. Students have multiple opportunities to think about their own thinking through explanations, self-evaluations, reflection, and planning.

Quality of Feedback

Instructional Support domain, Grades K− 12

Quality of Feedback refers to the degree to which the teacher provides feedback that expands learning and understanding and encourages continued participation in the learning activity (*CLASS K–3 Manual*, p. 72). In the upper elementary and secondary classrooms, significant feedback also may be provided by peers (*CLASS Upper Elementary Manual*, p. 89, *CLASS Secondary Manual*, p. 93). Regardless of the source, the focus of the feedback motivates learning.

Table 13. Quality of Feedback: Number of Classrooms for Each Rating and District Average

Quality of Feedback District Average\*: 3.0

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Grade Band | Low Range | Middle Range | High Range | n | Average |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 82 | 3.0 |
| Grades K-5 | 4 | 8 | 14 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 35 | 3.0 |
| Grades 6-8 | 6 | 8 | 2 | 1 | 6 | 1 | 0 | 24 | 2.8 |
| Grades 9-12 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 23 | 3.0 |

\*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 13, the district average is computed as:
([1 x 15] + [2 x 21] + [3 x 21] + [4 x 6] + [5 x 14] + [6 x 5]) ÷ 82 observations = 3.0

Ratings in the Low Range. At the low range, the teacher dismisses incorrect responses or misperceptions and rarely scaffolds student learning. The teacher is more interested in students providing the correct answer than understanding. Feedback is perfunctory. The teacher may not provide opportunities to learn whether students understand or are interested. The teacher rarely questions students or asks them to explain their thinking and reasons for their responses. The teacher does not or rarely provides information that might expand student understanding and rarely offers encouragement that increases student effort and persistence.

Ratings in the Middle Range. In the middle range, the teacher sometimes scaffolds students, but this is not consistent. On occasion, the teacher facilitates feedback loops so that students may elaborate and expand on their thinking, but these moments are not sustained long enough to accomplish a learning objective. Sometimes, the teacher asks students about or prompts them to explain their thinking and provides information to help students understand, but sometimes the feedback is perfunctory. At times, the teacher encourages student efforts and persistence.

Ratings in the High Range. In this range, the teacher frequently scaffolds students who are having difficulty, providing hints or assistance as needed. The teacher engages students in feedback loops to help them understand ideas or reach the right response. The teacher often questions students, encourages them to explain their thinking, and provides additional information that may help students understand. The teacher regularly encourages students’ efforts and persistence.

Language Modeling

Instructional Support domain, Grades K− 3

Language Modeling refers to the quality and amount of the teacher’s use of language stimulation and language facilitation techniques (*CLASS K–3 Manual*, p. 79).

Table 14. Language Modeling: Number of Classrooms for Each Rating and District Average

Language Modeling District Average\*: 3.3

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Grade Band | Low Range | Middle Range | High Range | n | Average |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 26 | 3.3 |
| Grades K-3\*\* | 0 | 7 | 11 | 2 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 26 | 3.3 |

\*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 14, the district average is computed as:
([2 x 7] + [3 x 11] + [4 x 2] + [5 x 6]) ÷ 26 observations = 3.3

\*\*Language Modeling does not appear in the CLASS Upper Elementary Manual, therefore scores for the Elementary School Level represent grades K-3 only.

Ratings in the Low Range. In the low range, there are few conversations in the classroom, particularly between the students and the teacher. The teacher responds to students’ initiating talk with only a few words, limits students’ use of language (in responding to questions) and asks questions that mainly elicit closed-ended responses. The teacher does not or rarely extends students’ responses or repeats them for clarification. The teacher does not engage in self-talk or parallel talk—explaining what he or she or the students are doing. The teacher does not use new words or advanced language with students. The language used has little variety.

Ratings in the Middle Range. In this range, the teacher talks with students and shows some interest in students, but the conversations are limited and not prolonged. Usually, the teacher directs the conversations, although the conversations may focus on topics of interest to students. More often, there is a basic exchange of information but limited conversation. The teacher asks a mix of closed- and open-ended questions, although the closed-ended questions may require only short responses. Sometimes, the teacher extends students’ responses or repeats what students say. Sometimes, the teacher maps his or her own actions and the students’ actions through language and description. The teacher sometimes uses advanced language with students.

Ratings in the High Range.There are frequent conversations in the classroom, particularly between students and the teacher, and these conversations promote language use. Students are encouraged to converse and feel they are valued conversational partners. The teacher asks many open-ended questions that require students to communicate more complex ideas. The teacher often extends or repeats student responses. Frequently, the teacher maps his or her actions and student actions descriptively and uses advanced language with students.

Instructional Dialogue

Instructional Support domain, Grades 4− 12

Instructional Dialogue captures the purposeful use of content-focused discussion among teachers and students that is cumulative, with the teacher supporting students to chain ideas together in ways that lead to deeper understanding of content. Students take an active role in these dialogues, and both the teacher and students use strategies that facilitate extended dialogue (*CLASS Upper Elementary Manual*, p. 97, *CLASS Secondary Manual*, p. 101).

Table 15. Instructional Dialogue: Number of Classrooms for Each Rating and District Average

Instructional Dialogue District Average\*: 2.5

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Grade Band | Low Range | Middle Range | High Range | n | Average |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 56 | 2.5 |
| Grades 4-5\*\* | 4 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 9 | 2.6 |
| Grades 6-8 | 9 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 24 | 2.5 |
| Grades 9-12 | 8 | 6 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 23 | 2.6 |

\*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 15, the district average is computed as:
([1 x 21] + [2 x 11] + [3 x 8] + [4 x 8] + [5 x 6] + [6 x 2]) ÷ 56 observations = 2.5

\*\*Instructional Dialogue does not appear in the CLASS K-3 Manual, therefore scores for the Elementary School Level represent grades 4-5 only.

Ratings in the Low Range. At the low range, there are no or few discussions in the class, the discussions are not related to content or skill development, or the discussions contain only simple question-response exchanges between the teacher and students. The class is dominated by teacher talk, and discussion is limited. The teacher and students ask closed-ended questions; rarely acknowledge, report, or extend other students’ comments; and/or appear disinterested in other students’ comments, resulting in many students not being engaged in instructional dialogues.

Ratings in the Middle Range. At this range, there are occasional content-based discussions in class among teachers and students; however, these exchanges are brief or quickly move from one topic to another without follow-up questions or comments from the teacher and other students. The class is mostly dominated by teacher talk, although there are times when students take a more active role, or there are distributed dialogues that involve only a few students in the class. The teacher and students sometimes facilitate and encourage more elaborate dialogue, but such efforts are brief, inconsistent, or ineffective at consistently engaging students in extended dialogues.

Ratings in the High Range.At the high range, there are frequent, content-driven discussions in the class between teachers and students or among students. The discussions build depth of knowledge through cumulative, contingent exchanges. The class dialogues are distributed in a way that the teacher and the majority of students take an active role or students are actively engaged in instructional dialogues with each other. The teacher and students frequently use strategies that encourage more elaborate dialogue, such as open-ended questions, repetition or extension, and active listening. Students respond to these techniques by fully participating in extended dialogues.

Student Engagement

Student Engagement domain, Grades 4−12

Student Engagement refers to the extent to which all students in the class are focused and participating in the learning activity that is presented or facilitated by the teacher. The difference between passive engagement and active engagement is reflected in this rating (*CLASS Upper Elementary Manual*, p. 105).

Table 16. Student Engagement: Number of Classrooms for Each Rating and District Average

Student Engagement District Average\*: 4.6

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Grade Band | Low Range | Middle Range | High Range | n | Average |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 56 | 4.6 |
| Grades 4-5\*\* | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 6 | 1 | 1 | 9 | 5.1 |
| Grades 6-8 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 7 | 8 | 3 | 1 | 24 | 4.4 |
| Grades 9-12 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 11 | 6 | 4 | 1 | 23 | 4.7 |

\*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 16, the district average is computed as:
([2 x 2] + [3 x 5] + [4 x 18] + [5 x 20] + [6 x 8] + [7 x 3]) ÷ 56 observations = 4.6

\*\*Student Engagement does not appear in the CLASS K-3 Manual, therefore scores for the Elementary School Level represent grades 4-5 only.

Ratings in the Low Range. In the low range, the majority of students appear distracted or disengaged.

Ratings in the Middle Range. In the middle range, students are passively engaged, listening to or watching the teacher; student engagement is mixed, with the majority of students actively engaged for part of the time and disengaged for the rest of the time; or there is a mix of student engagement, with some students actively engaged and some students disengaged.

Ratings in the High Range. In the high range, most students are actively engaged in the classroom discussions and activities.

Summary of Average Ratings: Grades K–5

Table 17. Summary Table of Average Ratings for Each Dimension in Grades K–5

|  | Low Range | Middle Range | High Range | n | Average Scores\* |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Emotional Support Domain | 1 | 6 | 15 | 14 | 31 | 27 | 46 | 140 | 5.4 |
| Positive Climate | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 14 | 10 | 7 | 35 | 5.5 |
| Negative Climate\*\* | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 30 | 35 | 6.9 |
| Teacher Sensitivity | 0 | 0 | 5 | 3 | 6 | 12 | 9 | 35 | 5.5 |
| Regard for Student Perspectives | 1 | 5 | 10 | 8 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 35 | 3.7 |
| Classroom Organization Domain | 0 | 0 | 3 | 5 | 23 | 31 | 43 | 105 | 6.0 |
| Behavior Management | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 7 | 8 | 19 | 35 | 6.3 |
| Productivity | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 11 | 21 | 35 | 6.5 |
| Instructional Learning Formats\*\*\* | 0 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 15 | 12 | 3 | 35 | 5.3 |
| Instructional Support Domain | 12 | 32 | 38 | 15 | 14 | 3 | 0 | 114 | 3.0 |
| Concept Development (K-3 only) | 1 | 11 | 6 | 6 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 26 | 2.9 |
| Content Understanding (UE only) | 0 | 2 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 9 | 3.3 |
| Analysis and Inquiry (UE only) | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 9 | 2.1 |
| Quality of Feedback | 4 | 8 | 14 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 35 | 3.0 |
| Language Modeling (K-3 only) | 0 | 7 | 11 | 2 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 26 | 3.3 |
| Instructional Dialogue (UE only) | 4 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 9 | 2.6 |
| Student Engagement (UE only) | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 6 | 1 | 1 | 9 | 5.1 |

\*The district average is an average of the scores. For example, for Positive Climate, the district average is computed as: ([2 x 1] + [4 x 3] + [5 x 14] + [6 x 10] + [7 x 7]) ÷ 35 observations = 5.5

\*\*Negative Climate is rated on an inverse scale. An original score of 1 is given a value of 7. The scoring in the table reflects the normalized adjustment: ([6 x 5] + [7 x 30]) ÷ 35 observations = 6.9. In addition, Negative Climate appears in the Classroom Organization Domain for the Upper Elementary Manual.

\*\*\*Instructional Learning Formats appears in the Instructional Support Domain for the Upper Elementary Manual.

Summary of Average Ratings: Grades 6–8

Table 18. Summary Table of Average Ratings for Each Dimension in Grades 6–8

|  | Low Range | Middle Range | High Range | n | Average Scores\* |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Emotional Support Domain | 2 | 13 | 18 | 12 | 17 | 6 | 4 | 72 | 3.9 |
| Positive Climate | 0 | 2 | 5 | 5 | 8 | 2 | 2 | 24 | 4.4 |
| Teacher Sensitivity | 0 | 1 | 4 | 5 | 9 | 3 | 2 | 24 | 4.6 |
| Regard for Student Perspectives | 2 | 10 | 9 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 24 | 2.6 |
| Classroom Organization Domain | 0 | 1 | 6 | 4 | 12 | 14 | 35 | 72 | 5.9 |
| Behavior Management | 0 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 10 | 24 | 5.5 |
| Productivity | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 7 | 5 | 8 | 24 | 5.6 |
| Negative Climate\*\* | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 17 | 24 | 6.6 |
| Instructional Support Domain | 23 | 30 | 20 | 18 | 23 | 6 | 0 | 120 | 3.1 |
| Instructional Learning Formats | 0 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 11 | 3 | 0 | 24 | 4.4 |
| Content Understanding | 0 | 6 | 6 | 8 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 24 | 3.5 |
| Analysis and Inquiry | 8 | 10 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 24 | 2.0 |
| Quality of Feedback | 6 | 8 | 2 | 1 | 6 | 1 | 0 | 24 | 2.8 |
| Instructional Dialogue | 9 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 24 | 2.5 |
| Student Engagement | 0 | 2 | 3 | 7 | 8 | 3 | 1 | 24 | 4.4 |

\*The district average is an average of the scores. For example, for Positive Climate, the district average is computed as: ([2 x 2] + [3 x 5] + [4 x 5] + [5 x 8] + [6 x 2] + [7 x 2]) ÷ 24 observations = 4.4

\*\*Negative Climate is rated on an inverse scale. An original score of 1 is given a value of 7. The scoring in the table reflects the normalized adjustment: ([4 x 1] + [5 x 1] + [6 x 5] + [7 x 17]) ÷ 24 observations = 6.6

Summary of Average Ratings: Grades 9–12

Table 19. Summary Table of Average Ratings for Each Dimension in Grades 9–12

|  | Low Range | Middle Range | High Range | n | Average Scores\* |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Emotional Support Domain | 4 | 8 | 9 | 13 | 11 | 18 | 6 | 69 | 4.4 |
| Positive Climate | 0 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 9 | 2 | 23 | 5.0 |
| Teacher Sensitivity | 0 | 0 | 1 | 6 | 5 | 8 | 3 | 23 | 5.3 |
| Regard for Student Perspectives | 4 | 7 | 5 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 23 | 2.9 |
| Classroom Organization Domain | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 14 | 43 | 69 | 6.4 |
| Behavior Management | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 8 | 9 | 23 | 6.1 |
| Productivity | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 5 | 12 | 23 | 6.3 |
| Negative Climate\*\* | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 22 | 23 | 7.0 |
| Instructional Support Domain | 19 | 22 | 21 | 15 | 19 | 16 | 3 | 115 | 3.5 |
| Instructional Learning Formats | 0 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 8 | 5 | 2 | 23 | 4.9 |
| Content Understanding | 0 | 5 | 6 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 1 | 23 | 4.0 |
| Analysis and Inquiry | 6 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 23 | 2.8 |
| Quality of Feedback | 5 | 5 | 5 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 23 | 3.0 |
| Instructional Dialogue | 8 | 6 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 23 | 2.6 |
| Student Engagement | 0 | 0 | 1 | 11 | 6 | 4 | 1 | 23 | 4.7 |

\*The district average is an average of the scores. For example, for Positive Climate, the district average is computed as: ([2 x 1] + [3 x 3] + [4 x 3] + [5 x 5] + [6 x 9] + [7 x 2]) ÷ 23 observations = 5.0

\*\*Negative Climate is rated on an inverse scale. An original score of 1 is given a value of 7. The scoring in the table reflects the normalized adjustment: ([6 x 1] + [7 x 22]) ÷ 23 observations = 7.0

References

Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning. (n.d.). *Measuring and improving teacher-student interactions in PK−12 settings to enhance students’ learning*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia. Retrieved from <http://www.teachstone.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/class-mtp-pk-12-brief.pdf>

MET Project. (2010). *The CLASS protocol for classroom observations*. Seattle, WA: Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Retrieved from <http://metproject.org/resources/CLASS_10_29_10.pdf>

Pianta, R. C., Hamre, B. K., & Mintz, S. (2012). *Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) Manual, Secondary.* Charlottesville, VA:Teachstone.

Pianta, R. C., Hamre, B. K., & Mintz, S. (2012). *Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) Manual, Upper Elementary.* Charlottesville, VA:Teachstone.

Pianta, R. C., La Paro, K. M., & Hamre, B. K. (2008). *Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) Manual, K–3.* Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

## Appendix C. Resources to Support Implementation of DESE’s District Standards and Indicators

Table C1. Resources to Support Leadership and Governance

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Resource | Description |
| [Coherence Guidebook](https://www.doe.mass.edu/csdp/guidebook/coherence-guidebook.pdf) | The guidebook illustrates a systems-level path toward deeper learning. School system leaders and teams may use the guidebook, along with its companion self-assessment, to articulate a vision of deeper learning, identify high-leverage instructional priorities, refine tiered supports, and leverage systems and structures—all in service of the articulated vision.  |
| [Principal Induction and Mentoring Handbook](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edeffectiveness/mentor/principal.html) | A series of modules designed to support novice principals and their mentors in the development of antiracist leadership competencies aligned to the Professional Standards for Administrative Leadership. |
| [Planning for Success In Massachusetts](https://www.doe.mass.edu/research/success/) | An inclusive, hands-on planning process designed to build district and school capacity and coherence while also building community understanding and support. |

Table C2. Resources to Support Curriculum and Instruction

| Resource | Description |
| --- | --- |
| [Coherence Guidebook](https://www.doe.mass.edu/csdp/guidebook/coherence-guidebook.pdf) | The guidebook illustrates a systems-level path toward deeper learning. School system leaders and teams may use the guidebook, along with its companion self-assessment, to articulate a vision of deeper learning, identify high-leverage instructional priorities, refine tiered supports, and leverage systems and structures—all in service of the articulated vision. |
| [Curriculum Frameworks Resources](https://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/) | Some of the most frequently used resources include “What to Look For” classroom observation guides; the Family Guides to help families understand what students are expected to know and do by the end of each grade; and the Standards Navigator tool and app, which can be used to explore the standards, see how they connect to other standards and related student work samples, and access reference guides and definitions. |
| [Curriculum Matters Webpage](https://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/impd/default.html) | A suite of resources to support the use of high-quality curriculum, including [IMplement MA](https://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/impd/implement-ma.html), our recommended four-phase process to prepare for, select, launch, and implement new high-quality instructional materials with key tasks and action steps. Also includes [CURATE](https://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/curate/default.html), which convenes panels of Massachusetts teachers to review and rate evidence on the quality and alignment of specific curricular materials and then publish their findings for educators across the Commonwealth to consult. |
| [Digital Literacy and Computer Science (DLCS) Curriculum Guide](https://www.doe.mass.edu/stem/dlcs/curriculum-guide.pdf?v=4/12/2023) | This curriculum guide provides curricular overviews for schools to engage students in learning DLCS concepts and skills aligned to the standards in the 2016 Massachusetts DLCS Framework. |
| [Early Warning Indicator System (EWIS)](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ccte/ccr/ewis/) | Tools for districts to identify students who are at risk of not meeting important academic goals to help students get back on track. This comprehensive system spans first grade through high school graduation and beyond. |
| [Foundations for Inclusive Practices](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/guidebook/) | This guidebook includes tools for districts, schools, and educators that align to the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Framework and promote evidence-based best practices for inclusion. |
| [Guidebook of Culturally Diverse Artists and Artworks](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.doe.mass.edu%2Finstruction%2Farts%2Fdiverse-arts-guidebook.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK) | This resource promotes culturally responsive teaching in the arts through the study of culturally diverse artists and their artworks. This guidebook highlights art made by people with racial identities that historically have been and continue to be marginalized. |
| [Mass Literacy Guide](https://www.doe.mass.edu/massliteracy/) | An interactive site with research, information, and resources on evidence-based practices for early literacy that are culturally responsive and sustaining. There is current information on complex text, fluent word reading, language comprehension, students experiencing reading difficulties, equity in literacy, how to support an MTSS for ELA/literacy, and much more.  |
| [Massachusetts Blueprint for English Learner Success](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/blueprint/default.html) | Framework for EL education in Massachusetts, with embedded Quick Reference Guides and other resources to support implementation. |
| Massachusetts Curricular Resources: * [Appleseeds](https://sites.google.com/view/appleseedsk2/home)
* [Investigating History](https://www.doe.mass.edu/investigatinghistory/)
* [OpenSciEd](https://www.doe.mass.edu/stem/ste/openscied.html)
 | Free, open-source curricular resources aligned to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. |
| [Planning for Deeper Learning](https://www.doe.mass.edu/kaleidoscope/planning/default.html) | KCL worked with educators and leaders across the Commonwealth to develop tools, protocols, examples, and professional learning experiences. |
| [Supporting Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices](https://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/culturally-sustaining/default.html) | Culturally and linguistically sustaining practices are essential for all students in the classroom, regardless of their background, culture, or identity. |
| [Synthesized ILT Framework](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.doe.mass.edu%2Fcsdp%2Fguidebook%2Fappendix-ilt-framework.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK) | District and school teams can use this resource to reflect and identify specific actions they could take to establish or improve their instructional leadership teams (ILTs). |

Table C3. Resources to Support Assessment

| Resource | Description |
| --- | --- |
| [Approved Early Language and Literacy Assessments for Preschool](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/earlylearning/default.html) | DESE’s Early Learning Team in collaboration with the Department of Early Education and Care is working with a vendor to approve preschool language and literacy assessments to support classroom instruction. |
| [Assessment Literacy Continuum](https://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/assessment/continuum.pdf) | Tool to help teachers identify what aspects of assessment literacy they should focus on for their own goal setting. |
| [District Data Team Toolkit](http://www.doe.mass.edu/accountability/toolkit/) | A set of resources to help a district establish, grow, and maintain a culture of inquiry and data use through a district data team. |
| [Early Literacy Universal Screening Assessments](https://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/screening-assessments.html) | Guidance and support for schools and districts to select and use an early literacy universal screening assessment. Grant funding may be available. |
| [Student Assessment](https://www.doe.mass.edu/assessment/) | Statewide assessments help parents, students, educators, and policymakers determine where districts, schools, and students are meeting expectations and where they need additional support. |

Table C4. Resources to Support Human Resources and Professional Development

| Resource | Description |
| --- | --- |
| [Early Literacy Observation Form](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/resources/early-literacy-observation.html) | This tool supports the observation and provision of high-quality feedback to teacher candidates on their practice in evidence-based early literacy. |
| [Educator Evaluation Implementation Resources](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/implementation/default.html) | A suite of resources and practical tools for effective and equitable implementation of educator evaluation, including Focus Indicators, a subset of Indicators from the Classroom Teacher and School Level Administrator Rubrics that represent high-priority practices for the school year. |
| Induction and Mentoring:* [Teacher Induction and Mentoring](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edeffectiveness/mentor/default.html)
* [Principal Induction and Mentoring](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edeffectiveness/mentor/principal.html)
 | Resources that highlight best practices and reinforce the recently updated guidelines and standards for induction and mentoring. |
| [Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure (MTEL)](https://www.doe.mass.edu/mtel/) | Information on MTEL exams, MTEL alternatives, and licensure requirements for educators.  |
| [OPTIC](https://www.ma-optic.com/) | A professional development tool that supports Massachusetts educators to build a shared understanding of high-quality instruction and improve the feedback that teachers receive. |
| [Professional Learning Partner Guide](https://plpartnerguide.org/) | A free, online, searchable list of vetted professional development providers who have expertise in specific sets of high-quality instructional materials. Schools and districts can use this guide to easily find professional development providers to support the launch or implementation of high-quality instructional materials. |
| [“What to Look For” Observation Guides](https://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/observation/) | Observation tools to help district staff observe instruction. |
| [Talent Guide](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edeffectiveness/talent-guide/default.html) | An online hub of resources, considerations, and updates for recruiting, hiring, evaluating, and supporting educators and school staff, with a focus on equity. |
| [WIDA Professional Development](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/prof-learning/wida/default.html) | Provides great information and strategies to support multilingual learners in Massachusetts public schools, and WIDA PDPs satisfy educator licensure renewal requirements. These DESE-sponsored courses are available at no cost to participants and are perfect for teams of teachers seeking impactful collaboration to support students’ access to rigorous course content. |

Table C5. Resources to Support Student Support

| Resource  | Description |
| --- | --- |
| [Bullying Prevention and Intervention](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/bullying/default.html) | DESE’s guidance and technical A=assistance for districts and schools related to state requirements for bullying prevention and intervention.  |
| Emergency Management* [Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools](https://rems.ed.gov/) (federal guidance)
* [Emergency Management Planning](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/emergencyplan/default.html) (state guidance)
 | Guidance and technical assistance for districts and schools related to emergency management planning and implementation.  |
| Family Partnerships* [DESE Family Portal](https://www.doe.mass.edu/families/)
* [Strengthening Partnerships: A Framework for Prenatal through Young Adulthood Family Engagement in Massachusetts](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/family-engagement-framework.pdf)
* [Learning Standards For Families](https://www.doe.mass.edu/highstandards/default.html)
 | Resources for authentically engaging families in their child’s education and centering families’ voices in school and district decision making. |
| [Guidance on Updated Expectations for School and District Leaders Related to Student Discipline](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/discipline/updated-expectations.docx) | Guidance on updated expectations for school and district leaders related to student discipline associated with the 2022 mental health law (G.L. c. 71, §37H¾). |
| MTSS Resources: * [MTSS Blueprint, Self-Assessment, and Resources](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfss/mtss/)
* [Massachusetts Tools for Schools](https://matoolsforschools.com/)
 | MTSS is a framework for how school districts can build the necessary systems to ensure that every student receives a high-quality educational experience. |
| [Resources for Supporting Immigrant and Refugee Students](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/resources/immigrant-refugee.html) | An evolving compilation of resources that can support districts in meeting the needs of immigrant and refugee students. |
| [Safe and Supportive Schools Framework and Self-Reflection Tool](https://www.sassma.org/) | These resources can help guide school- and district-based teams to create safer and more supportive school climates and cultures. Through a phased process (with preliminary and deeper dive self-reflection options), teams can create plans based on local context and data and through examination of six areas of school operation.  |
| [School Breakfast: Breakfast After the Bell Resources](https://www.projectbread.org/resource-directory/breakfast-after-the-bell-resources) | The goal of the Breakfast After the Bell Toolkit Series is to help with the launch and implementation of alternative breakfast models.  |
| [School Wellness Initiative for Thriving Community Health](https://massschoolwellness.org/) (SWITCH) | SWITCH provides resources that support and advance wellness efforts for Massachusetts students, schools, and communities. |
| Social Emotional Learning:* [SEL Resources Grades 1‑3](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/earlylearning/resources/sel1-3/resources-g1-3.docx)
* [SEL Guide](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/bullying/selguide.docx) (K-12)
* [SEL/APL Standards](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/earlylearning/resources/#standards) (PK/K)
* [Playful Learning Institute, Preschool through 3rd Grade](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/earlylearning/pli.html)
* [Culturally Responsive Social-Emotional Competency Development](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/sel/sel-all.docx)
 | These resources provide evidence-based and developmentally appropriate guidance around supporting social emotional learning in schools. |
| [Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/slife/default.html) | Guidance and resources to support districts in meeting the needs of Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education. |

Table C6. Resources to Support Financial and Asset Management

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Resource  | Description |
| [DESE Spending Comparisons Website](https://www.doe.mass.edu/finance/statistics/default.html) | A clearinghouse of school finance data reports and other resources available to district users and the public. |
| [General Resources for Federal Grant Programs](https://www.doe.mass.edu/federalgrants/resources/default.html) | General federal grants resources.  |
| [Massachusetts Farm to School Grant Opportunities](https://www.massfarmtoschool.org/announcement/grant-opportunities/) | A summary of state, regional, and national grant opportunities related to farm to school, school gardens, hydroponics, school food and more. |
| [Office for Food and Nutrition Programs](https://www.doe.mass.edu/cnp/) | Resources for districts, childcare centers, family day care homes, adult day health programs, Summer Eats community organizations, U.S. Department of Agriculture Foods storage and distribution vendors, food banks, and antihunger organizations across the Commonwealth. |
| [Planning for Success](https://www.doe.mass.edu/research/success/) | An inclusive, hands-on planning process designed to build district and school capacity and coherence while also building community understanding and support. |
| [Resource Allocation and District Action Reports (RADAR)](https://www.doe.mass.edu/research/radar/) | RADAR is a suite of innovative data reports, case studies, and other resources that provide a new approach to resource decisions. |
| [Spending Money Wisely: Getting the Most From School District Budgets](https://gtlcenter.org/products-resources/spending-money-wisely-getting-most-school-district-budgets) (scroll down to Research section) | A discussion of the top 10 opportunities for districts to realign resources and free up funds to support strategic priorities.  |
| [Summer Eats | Free Meals for Kids and Teens in Massachusetts](https://www.projectbread.org/summer-eats-program?utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=summereats_pmax&utm_content=english-2023&utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=summereats_pmax&utm_content=english-2023&gclid=CjwKCAjwzo2mBhAUEiwAf7wjkljB4ngm0uZLSTYsl5hK5QGTkC3mKF_4ae_5AUxyrVs6UiPIIrys1RoCQV0QAvD_BwE) | Summer Eats is a free-of-charge program that provides free meals to all kids and teens, ages 18 and under, at locations all across Massachusetts during the summer months. |
| [Transforming School Funding: A Guide to Implementing Student-Based Budgeting (SBB) from Education Resource Strategies](https://www.erstrategies.org/cms/files/2752-student-based-budgeting-guide.pdf%29%2C%20from%20Education%20Resource%20Strategies) | This guide describes a process to help districts tie funding to specific student needs. |

## Appendix D. Enrollment, Attendance, Expenditures

Table D1. Gardner Public Schools: Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity, 2023-2024

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Group | District | Percentage of total | State | Percentage of total |
| All | 2,472 | 100.0% | 914,959 | 100.0% |
| African American | 107 | 4.3% | 88,104 | 9.6% |
| Asian | 33 | 1.3% | 67,847 | 7.4% |
| Hispanic | 711 | 28.8% | 229,930 | 25.1% |
| Native American | 7 | 0.3% | 2,178 | 0.2% |
| White | 1,438 | 58.2% | 484,692 | 53.0% |
| Native Hawaiian | 0 | 0.0% | 790 | 0.1% |
| Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic  | 176 | 7.1% | 41,418 | 4.5% |

*Note*. As of October 1, 2023.

Table D2. Gardner Public Schools: Student Enrollment by High Needs Populations. 2023-2024

|  | District | State |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Group | *N* | Percentage of high needs | Percentage of district | *N* | Percentage of high needs | Percentage of state |
| All students with high needs | 1,809 | 100.0% | 72.5% | 515,939 | 100.0% | 55.8% |
| Students with disabilities | 565 | 31.2% | 22.6% | 187,160 | 36.3% | 20.2% |
| Low-income  | 1,601 | 88.5% | 64.8% | 385,697 | 74.8% | 42.2% |
| English learner | 219 | 12.1% | 8.9% | 119,749 | 23.2% | 13.1% |

*Note*. As of October 1, 2023. District and state numbers and percentages for students with disabilities and high needs are calculated including students in out-of-district placements. Total district enrollment including students in out-of-district placement is 2,495; total state enrollment including students in out-of-district placement is 924,947.

Table D3. Gardner Public Schools: Chronic Absencea Rates by Student Group, 2021-2023

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Group | *N* (2023) | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | State (2023) |
| All students | 2,532 | 31.1 | 41.9 | 35.6 | 22.2 |
| African American/Black | 96 | 41.1 | 32.9 | 28.1 | 25.3 |
| Asian | 38 | 23.2 | 39.0 | 31.6 | 13.9 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 690 | 41.1 | 50.6 | 40.7 | 34.5 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 176 | 32.0 | 40.1 | 33.5 | 23.3 |
| Native American | 8 | — | — | 37.5 | 33.5 |
| Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander | — | — | — | — | 28.3 |
| White | 1,524 | 26.9 | 39.1 | 34.1 | 17.0 |
| High needs | 1,861 | 39.2 | 47.3 | 41.3 | 30.3 |
| Low income | 1,708 | — | 48.1 | 42.0 | 33.5 |
| ELs | 193 | 51.1 | 48.4 | 55.4 | 33.5 |
| Students w/disabilities | 572 | 47.0 | 50.3 | 44.9 | 30.4 |

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

Table D4. Gardner Public Schools: Expenditures, Chapter 70 State Aid, and Net School Spending Fiscal Years, 2020-2022

|   | Fiscal year 2020 | Fiscal year 2021 | Fiscal year 2022 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|   | Estimated | Actual | Estimated | Actual | Estimated | Actual |
| Expenditures |
| From local appropriations for schools |  |
| By school committee | $24,735,159 | $23,857,768 | $24,892,938 | $25,133,181 | $24,944,666 | $24,849,168 |
| By municipality | $9,581,588 | $10,481,942 | $8,391,556 | $12,807,163 | $10,056,679 | $34,133,789 |
| Total from local appropriations | $34,316,747 | $34,339,710 | $33,284,494 | $37,940,344 | $35,001,345 | $58,982,957 |
| From revolving funds and grants | — | $3,964,628 | — | $4,899,542 | — | $6,351,142 |
| Total expenditures | — | $38,304,338 | — | $42,839,886 | — | $65,334,099 |
| **Chapter 70 aid to education program** |
| Chapter 70 state aida | — | $21,003,460 | — | $21,003,460 | — | $21,072,010 |
| Required local contribution | — | $9,418,789 | — | $9,927,325 | — | $10,332,365 |
| Required net school spendingb | — | $30,422,249 | — | $30,930,785 | — | $31,404,375 |
| Actual net school spending | — | $30,615,912 | — | $31,970,247 | — | $32,239,337 |
| Over/under required ($) | — | $193,663 | — | $1,039,462 | — | $834,962 |
| Over/under required (%) | — | 0.6% | — | 3.4% | — | 2.7% |

*Note*. Data as of July 25, 2023, and sourced from fiscal year 2022 district end-of-year reports and Chapter 70 program information on DESE website.

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

Table D5. Gardner Public Schools: Expenditures Per In-District Pupil, Fiscal Years 2020-2022

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Expenditure category | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
| Administration | $430 | $570 | $563 |
| Instructional leadership (district and school) | $777 | $836 | $747 |
| Teachers | $5,398 | $5,691 | $5,768 |
| Other teaching services | $1,287 | $1,310 | $1,620 |
| Professional development | $64 | $265 | $155 |
| Instructional materials, equipment, and technology | $402 | $426 | $367 |
| Guidance, counseling, and testing services | $574 | $665 | $615 |
| Pupil services | $1,352 | $1,110 | $1,414 |
| Operations and maintenance | $1,038 | $1,386 | $1,236 |
| Insurance, retirement, and other fixed costs | $2,793 | $2,945 | $3,119 |
| Total expenditures per in-district pupil | $14,114 | $15,203 | $15,602 |

*Note*. Any discrepancy between expenditures and total is because of rounding. Data are from <https://www.doe.mass.edu/finance/statistics/per-pupil-exp.xlsx>.

## Appendix E. Gardner Public Schools: Student Performance Data

[Table E1. Next-Generation MCAS ELA Achievement by Student Group, Grades 3-8, 2022-2023 E-2](#_Toc158035017)

[Table E2. Next-Generation MCAS ELA Achievement by Student Group, Grade 10, 2022-2023 E-2](#_Toc158035018)

[Table E3. Next-Generation MCAS Mathematics Achievement by Student Group, Grades 3-8, 2022-2023 E-3](#_Toc158035019)

[Table E4. Next-Generation MCAS Mathematics Achievement by Student Group, Grade 10, 2022-2023 E-3](#_Toc158035020)

[Table E5. Next-Generation MCAS Science Achievement by Student Group, Grades 5 and 8, 2022-2023 E-4](#_Toc158035021)

[Table E6. Next-Generation MCAS Science Achievement by Student Group, Grade 10, 2022-2023 E-4](#_Toc158035022)

[Table E7. Next-Generation MCAS ELA Achievement by Grade, 2022-2023 E-5](#_Toc158035023)

[Table E8. Next-Generation MCAS Mathematics Achievement by Grade, 2022-2023 E-5](#_Toc158035024)

[Table E9. Next-Generation MCAS Science Achievement by Grade, 2022-2023 E-6](#_Toc158035025)

[Table E10. Next-Generation MCAS ELA Mean Student Growth Percentile by Student Group, Grades 3-8, 2022-2023 E-7](#_Toc158035026)

[Table E11. Next-Generation MCAS ELA Mean Student Growth Percentile by Student Group, Grade 10, 2022-2023 E-7](#_Toc158035027)

[Table E12. Next-Generation MCAS Mathematics Mean Student Growth Percentile by Student Group, Grades 3-8, 2022-2023 E-8](#_Toc158035028)

[Table E13. Next-Generation MCAS Mathematics Mean Student Growth Percentile by Student Group, Grade 10, 2022-2023 E-8](#_Toc158035029)

[Table E14. Next-Generation MCAS ELA Mean Student Growth Percentile by Grade, 2022-2023 E-9](#_Toc158035030)

[Table E15. Next-Generation MCAS Mathematics Mean Student Growth Percentile by Grade, 2022-2023 E-9](#_Toc158035031)

[Table E16. Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rates by Student Group, 2020-2022 E-9](#_Toc158035032)

[Table E17. Five-Year Cohort Graduation Rates by Student Group, 2019-2021 E-10](#_Toc158035033)

[Table E18. Annual Dropout Rates by Student Group, 2020-2022 E-10](#_Toc158035034)

[Table E19. In-School Suspension Rates by Student Group, 2021-2023 E-11](#_Toc158035035)

[Table E20. Out-of-School Suspension Rates by Student Group, 2021-2023 E-11](#_Toc158035036)

[Table E21. Advanced Coursework Completion Rates by Student Group, 2021-2023 E-12](#_Toc158035037)

[Table E22. Accountability Percentile and Classification, 2023 E-12](#_Toc158035038)

Table E1. Next-Generation MCAS ELA Achievement by Student Group, Grades 3-8, 2022-2023

| Group | # included (2023) | Percentage meeting or exceeding expectations | Percentage partially meeting expectations | Percentage not meeting expectations |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 2022 | 2023 | State (2023) | 2022 | 2023 | State (2023) | 2022 | 2023 | State (2023) |
| All | 1,008 | 26 | 24 | 42 | 48 | 43 | 39 | 26 | 34 | 19 |
| African American/Black | 37 | 25 | 14 | 26 | 47 | 46 | 45 | 28 | 41 | 29 |
| Asian | 14 | 25 | 21 | 64 | 50 | 50 | 27 | 25 | 29 | 9 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 283 | 18 | 17 | 22 | 51 | 43 | 43 | 31 | 40 | 34 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 71 | 26 | 24 | 49 | 53 | 48 | 35 | 20 | 28 | 16 |
| Native American | 3 | — | — | 29 | — | — | 42 | — | — | 28 |
| Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander | — | — | — | 45 | — | — | 37 | — | — | 18 |
| White | 600 | 30 | 27 | 50 | 46 | 42 | 37 | 24 | 31 | 13 |
| High needs | 752 | 20 | 19 | 24 | 48 | 41 | 45 | 32 | 40 | 31 |
| Low income | 690 | 20 | 20 | 24 | 49 | 42 | 44 | 31 | 38 | 32 |
| ELs and former ELs | 112 | 12 | 15 | 20 | 51 | 38 | 42 | 37 | 47 | 38 |
| Students w/disabilities | 256 | 6 | 2 | 12 | 34 | 27 | 40 | 60 | 70 | 48 |

Table E2. Next-Generation MCAS ELA Achievement by Student Group, Grade 10, 2022-2023

| Group | # included (2023) | Percentage meeting or exceeding expectations | Percentage partially meeting expectations | Percentage not meeting expectations |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 2022 | 2023 | State (2023) | 2022 | 2023 | State (2023) | 2022 | 2023 | State (2023) |
| All | 178 | 41 | 40 | 58 | 49 | 45 | 30 | 10 | 15 | 11 |
| African American/Black | 8 | — | — | 42 | — | — | 41 | — | — | 17 |
| Asian | 2 | — | — | 79 | — | — | 16 | — | — | 5 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 47 | 23 | 38 | 36 | 59 | 45 | 39 | 18 | 17 | 24 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 13 | 50 | 54 | 63 | 50 | 38 | 29 | 0 | 8 | 9 |
| Native American | — | — | — | 42 | — | — | 41 | — | — | 18 |
| Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander | — | — | — | 41 | — | — | 47 | — | — | 11 |
| White | 108 | 46 | 39 | 67 | 46 | 46 | 27 | 9 | 15 | 6 |
| High needs | 124 | 28 | 26 | 37 | 56 | 53 | 42 | 15 | 21 | 21 |
| Low income | 114 | 31 | 27 | 39 | 56 | 54 | 40 | 13 | 18 | 21 |
| ELs and former ELs | 12 | 20 | 8 | 16 | 70 | 33 | 39 | 10 | 58 | 45 |
| Students w/disabilities | 38 | 4 | 5 | 22 | 48 | 42 | 47 | 48 | 53 | 31 |

Table E3. Next-Generation MCAS Mathematics Achievement by Student Group, Grades 3-8, 2022-2023

| Group | # included (2023) | Percentage meeting or exceeding expectations | Percentage partially meeting expectations | Percentage not meeting expectations |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 2022 | 2023 | State (2023) | 2022 | 2023 | State (2023) | 2022 | 2023 | State (2023) |
| All | 1,008 | 23 | 23 | 41 | 49 | 45 | 41 | 27 | 32 | 18 |
| African American/Black | 38 | 15 | 5 | 21 | 45 | 42 | 47 | 39 | 53 | 32 |
| Asian | 14 | 25 | 36 | 71 | 56 | 43 | 23 | 19 | 21 | 6 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 282 | 15 | 15 | 19 | 52 | 54 | 47 | 33 | 32 | 34 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 69 | 24 | 22 | 46 | 45 | 41 | 38 | 31 | 38 | 16 |
| Native American | 3 | — | — | 28 | — | — | 46 | — | — | 26 |
| Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander | — | — | — | 41 | — | — | 43 | — | — | 16 |
| White | 602 | 27 | 28 | 49 | 49 | 42 | 40 | 24 | 30 | 11 |
| High needs | 751 | 15 | 17 | 23 | 51 | 45 | 47 | 33 | 38 | 30 |
| Low income | 688 | 16 | 17 | 21 | 52 | 46 | 48 | 32 | 37 | 31 |
| ELs and former ELs | 111 | 17 | 15 | 21 | 51 | 45 | 44 | 32 | 40 | 34 |
| Students w/disabilities | 256 | 6 | 8 | 13 | 31 | 24 | 41 | 63 | 68 | 46 |

Table E4. Next-Generation MCAS Mathematics Achievement by Student Group, Grade 10, 2022-2023

| Group | # included (2023) | Percentage meeting or exceeding expectations | Percentage partially meeting expectations | Percentage not meeting expectations |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 2022 | 2023 | State (2023) | 2022 | 2023 | State (2023) | 2022 | 2023 | State (2023) |
| All | 175 | 47 | 33 | 50 | 39 | 58 | 42 | 14 | 9 | 9 |
| African American/Black | 9 | — | — | 27 | — | — | 58 | — | — | 15 |
| Asian | 2 | — | — | 80 | — | — | 17 | — | — | 3 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 46 | 33 | 24 | 25 | 43 | 70 | 57 | 24 | 7 | 18 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 13 | 60 | 38 | 54 | 20 | 62 | 39 | 20 | 0 | 8 |
| Native American | — | — | — | 32 | — | — | 59 | — | — | 10 |
| Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander | — | — | — | 36 | — | — | 57 | — | — | 7 |
| White | 105 | 48 | 37 | 60 | 41 | 53 | 36 | 11 | 10 | 4 |
| High needs | 121 | 35 | 22 | 27 | 46 | 65 | 57 | 20 | 12 | 16 |
| Low income | 112 | 36 | 24 | 27 | 46 | 63 | 57 | 18 | 13 | 16 |
| ELs and former ELs | 12 | 30 | 17 | 14 | 40 | 67 | 58 | 30 | 17 | 28 |
| Students w/disabilities | 36 | 5 | 0 | 16 | 52 | 75 | 59 | 43 | 25 | 25 |

Table E5. Next-Generation MCAS Science Achievement by Student Group, Grades 5 and 8, 2022-2023

| Group | # included (2023) | Percentage meeting or exceeding expectations | Percentage partially meeting expectations | Percentage not meeting expectations |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 2022 | 2023 | State (2023) | 2022 | 2023 | State (2023) | 2022 | 2023 | State (2023) |
| All | 361 | 28 | 25 | 41 | 50 | 45 | 40 | 23 | 31 | 19 |
| African American/Black | 16 | — | 13 | 21 | — | 50 | 47 | — | 38 | 32 |
| Asian | 2 | — | — | 65 | — | — | 27 | — | — | 8 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 99 | 15 | 19 | 20 | 53 | 44 | 45 | 32 | 36 | 35 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 29 | 30 | 28 | 47 | 48 | 45 | 37 | 22 | 28 | 15 |
| Native American | 3 | — | — | 31 | — | — | 44 | — | — | 25 |
| Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander | — | — | — | 43 | — | — | 41 | — | — | 16 |
| White | 212 | 32 | 28 | 50 | 48 | 44 | 38 | 20 | 28 | 11 |
| High needs | 264 | 19 | 18 | 23 | 52 | 44 | 46 | 29 | 38 | 31 |
| Low income | 242 | 20 | 19 | 22 | 52 | 44 | 46 | 28 | 37 | 32 |
| ELs and former ELs | 37 | 10 | 3 | 18 | 59 | 49 | 43 | 31 | 49 | 39 |
| Students w/disabilities | 89 | 3 | 7 | 14 | 31 | 27 | 40 | 67 | 66 | 45 |

Table E6. Next-Generation MCAS Science Achievement by Student Group, Grade 10, 2022-2023

| Group | # included (2023) | Percentage meeting or exceeding expectations | Percentage partially meeting expectations | Percentage not meeting expectations |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 2022 | 2023 | State (2023) | 2022 | 2023 | State (2023) | 2022 | 2023 | State (2023) |
| All | 144 | 21 | 19 | 47 | 57 | 60 | 42 | 21 | 21 | 11 |
| African American/Black | 3 | — | — | 26 | — | — | 55 | — | — | 20 |
| Asian | 2 | — | — | 75 | — | — | 21 | — | — | 4 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 35 | 18 | 11 | 24 | 41 | 60 | 52 | 41 | 29 | 24 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 14 | — | 21 | 51 | — | 50 | 39 | — | 29 | 10 |
| Native American | — | — | — | 30 | — | — | 58 | — | — | 12 |
| Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander | — | — | — | 31 | — | — | 54 | — | — | 15 |
| White | 90 | 22 | 22 | 55 | 61 | 61 | 39 | 17 | 17 | 6 |
| High needs | 101 | 12 | 9 | 26 | 58 | 64 | 54 | 30 | 27 | 21 |
| Low income | 95 | 13 | 9 | 26 | 59 | 65 | 53 | 28 | 25 | 21 |
| ELs and former ELs | 10 | — | 10 | 13 | — | 40 | 50 | — | 50 | 38 |
| Students w/disabilities | 33 | 0 | 0 | 16 | 26 | 55 | 53 | 74 | 45 | 31 |

Table E7. Next-Generation MCAS ELA Achievement by Grade, 2022-2023

| Grade | # included (2023) | Percentage meeting or exceeding expectations | Percentage partially meeting expectations | Percentage not meeting expectations |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 2022 | 2023 | State (2023) | 2022 | 2023 | State (2023) | 2022 | 2023 | State (2023) |
| 3 | 176 | 27 | 21 | 44 | 47 | 41 | 40 | 26 | 38 | 16 |
| 4 | 156 | 21 | 19 | 40 | 53 | 49 | 43 | 26 | 31 | 17 |
| 5 | 167 | 24 | 25 | 44 | 59 | 50 | 40 | 17 | 26 | 16 |
| 6 | 147 | 20 | 29 | 42 | 42 | 34 | 34 | 37 | 37 | 24 |
| 7 | 165 | 26 | 13 | 40 | 43 | 45 | 40 | 31 | 42 | 19 |
| 8 | 197 | 39 | 34 | 44 | 46 | 38 | 34 | 15 | 28 | 22 |
| 3-8 | 1,008 | 26 | 24 | 42 | 48 | 43 | 39 | 26 | 34 | 19 |
| 10 | 178 | 41 | 40 | 58 | 49 | 45 | 30 | 10 | 15 | 11 |

Table E8. Next-Generation MCAS Mathematics Achievement by Grade, 2022-2023

| Grade | # included (2023) | Percentage meeting or exceeding expectations | Percentage partially meeting expectations | Percentage not meeting expectations |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 2022 | 2023 | State (2023) | 2022 | 2023 | State (2023) | 2022 | 2023 | State (2023) |
| 3 | 176 | 20 | 16 | 41 | 40 | 42 | 39 | 39 | 42 | 20 |
| 4 | 156 | 27 | 29 | 45 | 49 | 43 | 37 | 24 | 28 | 18 |
| 5 | 167 | 26 | 25 | 41 | 56 | 54 | 46 | 19 | 21 | 13 |
| 6 | 148 | 24 | 31 | 41 | 47 | 45 | 42 | 28 | 24 | 17 |
| 7 | 165 | 23 | 16 | 38 | 48 | 44 | 40 | 29 | 40 | 22 |
| 8 | 196 | 19 | 24 | 38 | 56 | 43 | 42 | 25 | 33 | 20 |
| 3-8 | 1,008 | 23 | 23 | 41 | 49 | 45 | 41 | 27 | 32 | 18 |
| 10 | 175 | 47 | 33 | 50 | 39 | 58 | 42 | 14 | 9 | 9 |

Table E9. Next-Generation MCAS Science Achievement by Grade, 2022-2023

| Grade | # included (2023) | Percentage meeting or exceeding expectations | Percentage partially meeting expectations | Percentage not meeting expectations |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 2022 | 2023 | State (2023) | 2022 | 2023 | State (2023) | 2022 | 2023 | State (2023) |
| 5 | 164 | 26 | 16 | 42 | 50 | 48 | 40 | 24 | 36 | 19 |
| 8 | 197 | 29 | 31 | 41 | 49 | 42 | 40 | 22 | 26 | 19 |
| 5 and 8 | 361 | 28 | 25 | 41 | 50 | 45 | 40 | 23 | 31 | 19 |
| 10 | 144 | 21 | 19 | 47 | 57 | 60 | 42 | 21 | 21 | 11 |

Table E10. Next-Generation MCAS ELA Mean Student Growth Percentile by Student Group, Grades 3-8, 2022-2023

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Group | # included (2023) | 2022 | 2023 | State (2023) |
| All students | 766 | 50.2 | 44.6 | 49.7 |
| African American/Black | 26 | 62.7 | 39.2 | 48.0 |
| Asian | 11 | — | — | 56.4 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 209 | 50.7 | 42.3 | 47.5 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 65 | 52.4 | 49.0 | 50.0 |
| Native American | 2 | — | — | 46.7 |
| Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander | — | — | — | 50.5 |
| White | 453 | 49.0 | 45.2 | 50.0 |
| High needs | 553 | 48.0 | 44.3 | 47.3 |
| Low income | 505 | 48.2 | 44.5 | 47.0 |
| ELs and former ELs | 86 | 46.1 | 46.6 | 49.7 |
| Students w/disabilities | 182 | 40.6 | 39.5 | 43.7 |

Table E11. Next-Generation MCAS ELA Mean Student Growth Percentile by Student Group, Grade 10, 2022-2023

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Group | # included (2023) | 2022 | 2023 | State (2023) |
| All students | 125 | 51.7 | 47.1 | 49.5 |
| African American/Black | 4 | — | — | 45.5 |
| Asian | 2 | — | — | 56.2 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 28 | — | 49.7 | 45.1 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 12 | — | — | 51.3 |
| Native American | — | — | — | 46.4 |
| Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander | — | — | — | 45.2 |
| White | 79 | 50.8 | 44.8 | 50.7 |
| High needs | 80 | 47.1 | 43.2 | 44.7 |
| Low income | 76 | 48.6 | 44.1 | 44.9 |
| ELs and former ELs | 5 | — | — | 42.1 |
| Students w/disabilities | 21 | — | 28.5 | 39.9 |

Table E12. Next-Generation MCAS Mathematics Mean Student Growth Percentile by Student Group, Grades 3-8, 2022-2023

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Group | # included (2023) | 2022 | 2023 | State (2023) |
| All students | 769 | 53.1 | 46.5 | 49.8 |
| African American/Black | 27 | 59.8 | 37.2 | 47.8 |
| Asian | 11 | — | — | 57.7 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 207 | 49.8 | 47.4 | 47.5 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 64 | 53.2 | 43.9 | 50.3 |
| Native American | 2 | — | — | 47.1 |
| Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander | — | — | — | 51.5 |
| White | 458 | 53.8 | 47.0 | 50.1 |
| High needs | 555 | 51.2 | 45.1 | 47.8 |
| Low income | 506 | 51.2 | 45.1 | 47.3 |
| ELs and former ELs | 84 | 55.1 | 45.3 | 49.3 |
| Students w/disabilities | 183 | 49.2 | 40.0 | 44.8 |

Table E13. Next-Generation MCAS Mathematics Mean Student Growth Percentile by Student Group, Grade 10, 2022-2023

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Group | # included (2023) | 2022 | 2023 | State (2023) |
| All students | 126 | 63.8 | 55.1 | 49.6 |
| African American/Black | 9 | — | — | 41.4 |
| Asian | 2  | — | — | 55.9 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 28 | — | 59.1 | 41.8 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 13 | — | — | 51.1 |
| Native American | — | — | — | 45.4 |
| Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander | — | — | — | 56.1 |
| White | 79 | 63.9 | 54.0 | 52.9 |
| High needs | 80 | 58.7 | 49.1 | 43.9 |
| Low income | 76 | 59.5 | 50.2 | 43.2 |
| ELs and former ELs | 5 | — | — | 40.2 |
| Students w/disabilities | 21 | — | 31.9 | 41.7 |

Table E14. Next-Generation MCAS ELA Mean Student Growth Percentile by Grade, 2022-2023

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Grade | # included (2023) | 2022 | 2023 | State (2023) |
| 3 | — | — | — | — |
| 4 | 141 | 45.4 | 42.1 | 49.4 |
| 5 | 156 | 43.3 | 42.9 | 49.8 |
| 6 | 136 | 43.5 | 47.2 | 49.9 |
| 7 | 153 | 54.2 | 38.3 | 49.9 |
| 8 | 180 | 63.0 | 51.4 | 49.7 |
| 3-8 | 766 | 50.2 | 44.6 | 49.7 |
| 10 | 125 | 51.7 | 47.1 | 49.5 |

Table E15. Next-Generation MCAS Mathematics Mean Student Growth Percentile by Grade, 2022-2023

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Grade | # included (2023) | 2022 | 2023 | State (2023) |
| 3 | — | — | — | — |
| 4 | 142 | 57.0 | 53.0 | 49.6 |
| 5 | 157 | 52.2 | 44.6 | 50.0 |
| 6 | 138 | 58.4 | 50.4 | 49.9 |
| 7 | 152 | 52.3 | 42.4 | 49.9 |
| 8 | 180 | 46.0 | 43.7 | 49.7 |
| 3-8 | 769 | 53.1 | 46.5 | 49.8 |
| 10 | 126 | 63.8 | 55.1 | 49.6 |

Table E16. Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rates by Student Group, 2020-2022

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Group | # included (2023) | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | State (2022) |
| All | 188 | 83.3 | 86.8 | 80.3 | 90.1 |
| African American/Black | 11 | 50.0 | 85.7 | 63.6 | 86.2 |
| Asian | 2 | — | 100 | — | 96.2 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 36 | 83.3 | 84.0 | 75.0 | 81.2 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 10 | — | 100 | 90.0 | 88.7 |
| Native American | 1 | — | — | — | 82.2 |
| Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander | — | — | — | — | 81.3 |
| White | 128 | 86.7 | 86.2 | 82.0 | 93.2 |
| High needs | 145 | 79.3 | 82.0 | 76.6 | 83.9 |
| Low income | 140 | 76.6 | 82.6 | 75.7 | 83.2 |
| English learner | 8 | 92.9 | 85.7 | 62.5 | 73.1 |
| Students w/disabilities | 38 | 75.5 | 75.7 | 73.7 | 78.0 |

Table E17. Five-Year Cohort Graduation Rates by Student Group, 2019-2021

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Group | # included (2021) | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | State (2021) |
| All | 174 | 80.1 | 89.0 | 91.4 | 91.8 |
| African American/Black | 7 | — | 50.0 | 100 | 88.1 |
| Asian | 7 | — | — | 100 | 97.0 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 25 | 80.0 | 86.1 | 88.0 | 84.0 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 10 | 66.7 | — | 100 | 91.2 |
| Native American | 2 | — | — | — | 84.1 |
| Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander | — | — | — | — | 87.7 |
| White | 123 | 82.4 | 94.0 | 90.2 | 94.4 |
| High needs | 111 | 73.2 | 84.8 | 87.4 | 85.8 |
| Low income | 109 | 70.9 | 83.1 | 88.1 | 85.1 |
| English learner | 7 | 87.5 | 92.9 | 100 | 78.0 |
| Students w/disabilities | 37 | 55.2 | 81.1 | 78.4 | 80.6 |

Table E18. Annual Dropout Rates by Student Group, 2020-2022

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Group | # included (2022) | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | State (2022) |
| All | 648 | 3.6 | 2.1 | 2.2 | 2.1 |
| African American/Black | 32 | 10.5 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 2.8 |
| Asian | 11 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.6 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 140 | 1.7 | 1.6 | 3.6 | 4.3 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 53 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 2.4 |
| Native American | 1 | — | — | — | 4.3 |
| Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander | — | — | — | — | 1.2 |
| White | 411 | 3.9 | 2.6 | 2.2 | 1.3 |
| High needs | 432 | 5.2 | 2.4 | 2.8 | 3.6 |
| Low income | 402 | — | — | 3.0 | 3.8 |
| English learner | 18 | 3.6 | 7.1 | 5.6 | 7.8 |
| Students w/disabilities | 124 | 6.2 | 2.3 | 2.4 | 3.4 |

Table E19. In-School Suspension Rates by Student Group, 2021-2023

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Group | # included (2023) | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | State (2023) |
| All | 2,537 | 0.1 | 0.3 | 1.1 | 1.4 |
| African American/Black | 95 | — | — | 2.1 | 2.1 |
| Asian | 39 | — | — | — | 0.3 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 693 | 0.2 | 0.2 | 1.2 | 1.8 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 176 | — | 0.5 | 0.6 | 1.6 |
| Native American | 8 | — | — | — | 1.5 |
| Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander | 0 | — | — | — | 1.4 |
| White | 1,526 | 0.1 | 0.4 | 1.1 | 1.2 |
| High needs | 1,868 | 0.1 | 0.4 | 1.2 | 2.0 |
| Low income | 1,708 | — | 0.5 | 1.2 | 2.1 |
| English learner | 209 | — | — | — | 1.3 |
| Students w/disabilities | 596 | — | 0.5 | 2.2 | 2.5 |

Table E20. Out-of-School Suspension Rates by Student Group, 2021-2023

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Group | # included (2023) | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | State (2023) |
| All | 2,537 | 0.5 | 2.7 | 5.6 | 2.5 |
| African American/Black | 95 | — | — | 6.3 | 5.0 |
| Asian | 39 | — | — | — | 0.6 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 693 | 1.1 | 2.1 | 5.9 | 3.9 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 176 | — | 3.8 | 7.4 | 3.0 |
| Native American | 8 | — | — | — | 4.1 |
| Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander | 0 | — | — | — | 3.1 |
| White | 1,526 | 0.3 | 2.8 | 5.4 | 1.6 |
| High needs | 1,868 | 0.6 | 3.4 | 6.7 | 3.8 |
| Low income | 1,708 | — | 3.7 | 6.6 | 4.3 |
| English learner | 209 | — | — | — | 2.7 |
| Students w/disabilities | 596 | — | 2.7 | 8.7 | 4.7 |

Table E21. Advanced Coursework Completion Rates by Student Group, 2021-2023

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Group | # included (2023) | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | State (2023) |
| All | 367 | 76.4 | 67.7 | 69.8 | 65.8 |
| African American/Black | 22 | 88.2 | 77.8 | 63.6 | 57.3 |
| Asian | 6 | 81.8 | 75.0 | 66.7 | 84.9 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 82 | 60.8 | 52.2 | 59.8 | 51.2 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 23 | 72.2 | 59.1 | 78.3 | 67.4 |
| Native American | 1 | — | — | — | 50.6 |
| Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander | — | — | — | — | 60.0 |
| White | 233 | 78.9 | 72.2 | 73.0 | 70.4 |
| High needs | 225 | 65.7 | 55.1 | 56.9 | 49.8 |
| Low income | 210 | — | 57.0 | 58.1 | 50.7 |
| English learner | 4 | 16.7 | 50.0 | — | 31.7 |
| Students w/disabilities | 52 | 38.3 | 22.6 | 30.8 | 36.0 |

Table E22. Accountability Percentile and Classification, 2023

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| School | Progress toward improvement targets (%) | Percentile | Overall classification | Reason for classification |
| District | 28 | — | Not requiring assistance or intervention | Moderate progress toward targets |
| Gardner Academy for Learning and Technology | — | — | Requiring assistance or intervention | In need of focused/targeted support: Low participation rate for all students |
| Gardner Elementary School | 45 | 18 | Not requiring assistance or intervention | Moderate progress toward targets |
| Gardner Middle School | 10 | 11 | Requiring assistance or intervention | In need of focused/targeted support: Low student group performance for White students |
| Gardner High School | 22 | 40 | Not requiring assistance or intervention | Limited or no progress toward targets |

1. DESE’s District Standards and Indicators are at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/accountability/district-review/district-standards-indicators.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. For more information on the Teachstone CLASS protocol, visit <https://teachstone.com/class/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Districts with similar demographics and similar wealth are based on [Resource Allocation and District Action Reports (RADAR)](https://www.doe.mass.edu/research/radar/) (retrieved February 2024). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Average student growth percentile (SGP) ranges: Very Low Growth = 1.0—29.9, Low Growth = 30.0—39.9, Typical Growth = 40.0—59.9, Exceeded Typical Growth = 60.0 or higher. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. When observers rate this dimension it is scored so that a low rating (indicating little or no evidence of a negative climate) is better than a high rating (indicating abundant evidence of a negative climate). To be consistent across all ratings, for the purposes of this report we have inversed this scoring. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)