Comprehensive District Review Report

Ware Public Schools

Review conducted Jan. 29–Feb. 1, 2018

Office of District Reviews and Monitoring

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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Executive Summary

The Ware Public Schools superintendent and many district staff members have established strong ties to the community and have built positive relationships with district families and town and business leaders. Parents and students view the district as a caring, welcoming, and supportive community. Although principals and program leaders at all levels share common concerns about the well-being and learning of all Ware students---and veteran leaders and staff have deep knowledge of students and families--- district leaders do not routinely work together as a K–12 team to improve student achievement throughout the district. The district has not effectively set goals for short and long-range improvement that are measurable.

At the time of the onsite review in late January/early February 2018, the district was in the process of setting district goals and identifying next steps. In collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders and a representative from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s District and School Assistance Center, the district was developing a multi-year District Improvement Plan.

**Instruction**

The team observed 62 classes throughout the district: 28 at the junior senior high school in grades 7–12, 16 at the middle school in grades 4–6, and 18 at the elementary school in kindergarten through grade 3. The team observed 28 ELA classes, 18 mathematics classes, and 16 classes in other subject areas. Among the classes observed were four special education classes and one career-technical education class. The observations were approximately 20 minutes in length. All review team members collected data using ESE’s Instructional Inventory, a tool for recording observed characteristics of standards-based teaching. This data is presented in Appendix C.

Districtwide in observed lessons, the quality of classroom instruction was inconsistent across all levels. In general, all teachers demonstrated knowledge of their subject matter. Classroom routines and positive supports were in place to ensure that students behaved appropriately, and classroom climate was conducive to teaching and learning. Significant instructional challenges for the district include providing opportunities for students to communicate their ideas and thinking with each other, increasing student engagement in challenging tasks that require higher-order thinking of all students regardless of their learning needs, and teachers’ use of a variety of instructional strategies. Other areas for improvement include students’ understanding of learning objectives, teachers conducting frequent checks for student understanding and then adjusting instruction, and students engaging in meaningful, real-world tasks.

**Strengths**

* The district has engaged the broader community in developing an improvement plan.
* District leaders and staff have established caring and supportive relationships with students and their families.
* The district develops partnerships with community groups and businesses to extend educational opportunities and participates with neighboring districts in collaborative bidding.

**Challenges and Areas for Growth**

* The district has not effectively set goals for short and long-range improvement that are measurable.
* It has not established an effective process to ensure ongoing review and revision of curriculum.
* The district has not developed uniform and integrated practices to collect, analyze, and disseminate student achievement data and other data sources to monitor students’ progress, to inform instructional practice, to provide interventions, and to inform its decision-making.
* The district has not achieved consistency in the implementation of its educator evaluation system or connected its educator evaluation system to its professional development program.
* Student supports throughout the district are not well integrated or well-coordinated. District policies and practices are not sufficiently meeting the social-emotional and behavioral needs of all students. The district has few formal structures in place to address issues such as low graduation rates and high chronic absence.
* The district loses many students to choice, charter, and private schools resulting in substantial tuition costs to the district.
* The district does not have a complete, transparent, and usable budget document.
* The town and district do not have a written agreement about indirect costs for municipal services that are provided to the district.

**Recommendations**

* The district should finalize the District Improvement Plan in order to guide school improvement planning for the 2018–2019 school year.
* The district should establish, document, and share a multi-year process for the regular and timely review of K–12 curricula.
* The district should take steps to help teachers continually improve instruction, with particular attention to areas noted in the review team’s classroom observation data.
* The district should develop uniform and integrated policies, structures, and for the continuous collection, analysis, and dissemination of student performance data and other data sources.
* The district should fully and effectively implement all components of the state’s Educator Evaluation Framework.
* The district should revise its approach to professional development to ensure that it is collaboratively planned and aligned with district, school, and educator goals.
* The district should define and implement a multi-tiered system of supports for all learners K–12.
* The district should consider surveying students and families about the reasons for high absence rates and possible ways of improving attendance.
* The district should develop a budget document that is detailed, complete, and current, understandable by the general public, and easily accessible to all constituents.
* In compliance with 603 CMR 10.4, district administrators and town officials should finalize a written agreement that details the calculation process and/or amounts to be used in calculating indirect charges to the district from the town.

Ware Public Schools Comprehensive District Review Overview

Purpose

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

Methodology

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

Site Visit

The site visit to the Ware Public Schools was conducted from January 29–February 1, 2018. The site visit included 31.75 hours of interviews and focus groups with approximately 67 stakeholders, including school committee members, district administrators, school staff, students, and teachers’ association representatives. The review team conducted three focus groups with four elementary-school teachers, two middle-school teachers, and seven junior senior high-school teachers.

A list of review team members, information about review activities, and the site visit schedule are in Appendix A, and Appendix B provides information about enrollment, attendance, and expenditures. The team observed classroom instructional practice 62 classrooms in 3 schools. The team collected data using ESE’s Instructional Inventory, a tool for recording observed characteristics of standards-based teaching. This data is contained in Appendix C.

**District Profile**

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

The current superintendent has been in the position since 2014. The district leadership team includes the superintendent, the director of special education, and the director of accountability, professional development, Title I, Title IIA, and grants. Central office positions have been mostly stable in number, decreasing by .5 (director of curriculum) over the four years before the onsite. The district has three principals leading three schools. There are two assistant principals. In the 2017–2018 school year, there were 91 teachers in the district.

In the 2017–2018 school year, 1,213 students were enrolled in the district’s schools:

**Table 1: Ware Public Schools**

**Schools, Type, Grades Served, and Enrollment\*, 2017–2018**

| **School**  | **School Type** | **Grades Served** | **Enrollment** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Stanley M. Koziol Elementary School | ES | Pre-K–3 | 412 |
| Ware Middle School | MS | 4–6 | 335 |
| Ware Junior Senior High School | JSHS | 7–12 | 466 |
| **Totals** | **3 schools** | **K–12** | **1,213** |
| \*As of October 1, 2017 |

Between 2013 and 2017 overall student enrollment decreased by 5.4 percent. Enrollment figures by race/ethnicity and high needs populations (i.e., students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged students, and English language learners (ELLs) and former ELLs) as compared with the state are provided in Tables B1a and B1b in Appendix B.

Total in-district per-pupil expenditures were lower than the median in-district per-pupil expenditures for 50 K–12 districts of similar size (1,000–1,999 students) in fiscal year 2016; $13,341 as compared with $13,565 (see [District Analysis and Review Tool Detail: Staffing and Finance](http://www.doe.mass.edu/dart/)). Actual net school spending has been above what is required by the Chapter 70 state education aid program, as shown in Table B3 in Appendix B.

Student Performance

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

**The average scaled score on the Next-Generation MCAS assessment for all students was below the state rate by 8.2 points in ELA and below the state rate by 10.6 points in math.**

| **Table 2: Ware Public Schools****Next-Generation MCAS ELA and Math Average Scaled Score (SS) Grades 3–8, 2017** |
| --- |
|  | **N** | **ELA SS** | **State SS** | **N** | **Math SS** | **State SS** |
| High Needs | 336 | 485.2 | 488.5 | 336 | 482.2 | 488.1 |
| Econ. Dis. | 304 | 486.6 | 489.2 | 304 | 483.6 | 488.1 |
| SWD | 100 | 468.1 | 480.0 | 100 | 468.7 | 479.8 |
| ELLs | 10 | 486.2 | 484.9 | 10 | 484.2 | 486.8 |
| All | 614 | 490.9 | 499.1 | 613 | 488.2 | 498.8 |
| Next Generation MCAS Achievement Levels: 440-–470 Not Meeting Expectations; 470-–500 Partially Meeting Expectations; 500–530 Meeting Expectations; 530–560 Exceeding Expectations |

**The percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations on the Next-Generation MCAS assessment in grades 3–8 was below the state rate by 16 percentage points in ELA (33 percent vs. 49 percent) and below the state rate by 22 percentage points in math (26 percent vs. 48 percent).**

* The percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations was below the state rate in ELA for high needs students and economically disadvantaged students by 3 percentage points, and below the state by 9 percentage points for students with disabilities.
* The percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations was below the state rate in math for high needs students, economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and English language learners by 10 to 16 percentage points.

| **Table 3: Ware Public Schools****Next-Generation MCAS ELA and Math Percent Meeting or Exceeding (M/E) Expectations Grades 3–8, 2017**  |
| --- |
| **Group** | **N** | **ELA M/E** | **State M/E** | **Above/Below State** | **N** | **Math M/E** | **State M/E** | **Above/Below State** |
| High Needs | 336 | 24% | 27% | -3 | 336 | 16% | 27% | -11 |
| Econ. Dis. | 304 | 26% | 29% | -3 | 304 | 17% | 27% | -10 |
| SWD | 100 | 4% | 13% | -9 | 100 | 3% | 14% | -11 |
| ELLs | 10 | 30% | 23% | 7 | 10 | 10% | 26% | -16 |
| All | 614 | 33% | 49% | -16 | 613 | 26% | 48% | -22 |

**The percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced on the MCAS assessment in 10th grade was 3 and 2 percentage points below the state rate in ELA and math, respectively.**

* In ELA, the percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced was below the state rate by 1 and 2 percentage points for high needs students and economically disadvantaged students and below the state rate by 30 percentage points for students with disabilities.
* In math, the percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced was above the state rate by 8 and 11 percentage points for high needs students and economically disadvantaged students, respectively, and below the state rate by 21 percentage points for students with disabilities.

| **Table 4: Ware Public Schools****MCAS ELA and Math Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grade 10, 2017** |
| --- |
| **Group** | **N** | **ELA** | **State** | **Above/Below State** | **N** | **Math** | **State** | **Above/Below State** |
| High Needs | 36 | 78% | 79% | -1 | 38 | 66% | 58% | 8 |
| Econ. Dis. | 33 | 79% | 81% | -2 | 35 | 71% | 60% | 11 |
| SWD | 13 | 38% | 68% | -30 | 14 | 21% | 42% | -21 |
| ELLs | 0 | -- | 59% | -- | 0 | -- | 39% | -- |
| All | 72 | 88% | 91% | -3 | 74 | 77% | 79% | -2 |

**Between 2014 and 2017, science proficiency for all students and students with disabilities improved by 2 and 4 percentage points, respectively, and was below the 2017 state rate by 7 and 15 percentage points, respectively.**

| **Table 5: Ware Public Schools****MCAS Science Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grades 5, 8, and 10, 2014-–2017** |
| --- |
| **Group** | **N (2017)** | **2014** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **4-yr change** | **State (2017)** |
| High Needs | 152 | 34% | 34% | 32% | 32% | -2 | 31% |
| Econ. Dis. | 139 | -- | 38% | 35% | 35% | -- | 32% |
| SWD | 49 | 2% | 4% | 12% | 6% | 4 | 21% |
| ELLs | 2 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 20% |
| All | 281 | 44% | 46% | 43% | 46% | 2 | 53% |

**In ELA, the percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations on the Next-Generation MCAS assessment was 16 percentage points below the state rate in grades 3–8 as a whole and 5 percentage points in the 5th grade, and from 14 to 21 percentage points in the 3rd, 4th, 6th, 7th, and 8th grades.**

**In math, the percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations on the Next-Generation MCAS assessment was 22 percentage points below the state rate in grades 3–8 as a whole and 14 to 29 percentage points below the state rate in each tested grade.**

| **Table 6: Ware Public Schools****Next-Generation MCAS ELA and Math Percent Meeting or Exceeding (M/E) Expectations in Grades 3–8, 2017** |
| --- |
| **Grade** | **N** | **ELA M/E** | **State ELA** | **Difference** | **N** | **Math M/E** | **State Math** | **Difference** |
| 3 | 98 | 33% | 47% | -14 | 98 | 21% | 49% | -28 |
| 4 | 116 | 30% | 48% | -18 | 116 | 20% | 49% | -29 |
| 5 | 112 | 44% | 49% | -5 | 112 | 32% | 46% | -14 |
| 6 | 96 | 33% | 51% | -18 | 96 | 30% | 50% | -20 |
| 7 | 92 | 29% | 50% | -21 | 91 | 21% | 47% | -26 |
| 8 | 100 | 29% | 49% | -20 | 100 | 30% | 48% | -18 |
| 3–8 | 614 | 33% | 49% | -1 | 613 | 26% | 48% | -22 |

**Between 2014 and 2017, in science, the percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced on the MCAS assessment improved by 2 percentage points in the district as a whole and in the 8th grade, and improved by 9 percentage points in the 10th grade, and declined by 6 percentage points in the 5th grade.**

| **Table 7: Ware Public Schools****MCAS Science Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grades 5, 8, and 10, 2014-–2017** |
| --- |
| **Grade** | **N (2017)** | **2014** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **4-yr change** | **State (2017)** |
| 5 | 112 | 44% | 34% | 47% | 38% | -6 | 46% |
| 8 | 100 | 32% | 38% | 27% | 34% | 2 | 40% |
| 10 | 69 | 69% | 75% | 64% | 78% | 9 | 74% |
| All | 281 | 44% | 46% | 43% | 46% | 2 | 53% |

**Between 2014 and 2017, in ELA the median student growth percentile (SGP) declined by 31 points in the 7th grade, by 30 points in the 8th grade, and by 24 points in the 10th grade.**

| **Table 8: Ware Public Schools****ELA Median Student Growth Percentile, 2014-–2017** |
| --- |
| **Grade** | **N (2017)** | **2014** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **4-yr change** | **State (2017)** |
| 3 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| 4 | 107 | 38.5 | 59.0 | 45.0 | 39.0 | 0.5 | 50.0 |
| 5 | 109 | 65.0 | 80.0 | 63.0 | 59.0 | -6.0 | 50.0 |
| 6 | 92 | 41.0 | 59.0 | 61.0 | 36.5 | -4.5 | 50.0 |
| 7 | 84 | 54.5 | 31.0 | 16.0 | 23.5 | -31.0 | 50.0 |
| 8 | 88 | 54.0 | 35.0 | 28.0 | 24.0 | -30.0 | 50.0 |
| 10 | 52 | 49.0 | 48.0 | 26.0 | 25.0 | -24.0 | 50.0 |
| Changes in SGP of 10 points or more are considered meaningful. |

**Between 2014 and 2017, in math the median SGP improved by 10 points in the 8th grade and declined by 16 and 39.5 points in the 7th and 10th grades, respectively.**

| **Table 9: Ware Public Schools****Math Median Student Growth Percentile, 2014–2017** |
| --- |
| **Grade** | **N (2017)** | **2014** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **4-yr change** | **State (2017)** |
| 3 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| 4 | 107 | 33.0 | 37.0 | 36.0 | 31.0 | -2.0 | 50.0 |
| 5 | 108 | 62.0 | 69.0 | 68.0 | 66.0 | 4.0 | 50.0 |
| 6 | 92 | 40.0 | 51.0 | 47.0 | 46.0 | 6.0 | 50.0 |
| 7 | 84 | 43.0 | 40.0 | 26.0 | 27.0 | -16.0 | 50.0 |
| 8 | 88 | 52.0 | 49.0 | 62.0 | 62.0 | 10.0 | 50.0 |
| 10 | 53 | 80.5 | 60.5 | 67.0 | 41.0 | -39.5 | 50.0 |
| Changes in SGP of 10 points or more are considered meaningful. |

**In ELA, the percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations on the Next-Generation MCAS assessment was 34 percent in the 3rd grade at Koziol, and was 31, 43, and 34 percent in the 4th, 5th, and 6th grades, respectively, at Ware Middle. The percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations in ELA was 30 and 28 percent in the 7th and 8th grades, respectively, at Ware Junior Senior** **High.**

| **Table 10: Ware Public Schools****Next-Generation MCAS ELA Percent Meeting or Exceeding Expectations by Grade and School, 2017** |
| --- |
| **School** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** | **3-–8** |
| Koziol | 34% | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 34% |
| Ware Middle | -- | 31% | 43% | 34% | -- | -- | 36% |
| Ware Junior Senior High | -- | -- | -- | -- | 30% | 28% | 29% |
| District | 33% | 30% | 44% | 33% | 29% | 29% | 33% |
| State | 47% | 48% | 49% | 51% | 50% | 49% | 49% |

**In math, the percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations on the Next-Generation MCAS assessmen**t **was 22 percent in the 3rd grade at Koziol, and was 21, 32, and 30 percent in the 4th, 5th, and 6th grades, respectively, at Ware Middle. The percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations in math was 21 and 32 percent in the 7th and 8th grades, respectively, at Ware Junior Senior** **High.**

| **Table 11: Ware Public Schools****Next-Generation MCAS Math Percent Meeting or Exceeding Expectations by Grade and School, 2017** |
| --- |
| **School** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** | **3–8** |
| Koziol | 22% | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 22% |
| Ware Middle | -- | 21% | 32% | 30% | -- | -- | 28% |
| Ware Junior Senior High | -- | -- | -- | -- | 21% | 32% | 27% |
| District | 21% | 20% | 32% | 30% | 21% | 30% | 26% |
| State | 49% | 49% | 46% | 50% | 47% | 48% | 48% |

**On the MCAS assessment in the 10th grade, the percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced at Ware Junior Senior** **High was equal to the state rate in ELA and above the state rate by 3 percentage points in math**.

| **Table 12: Ware Public Schools****MCAS ELA and Math Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grade 10, 2017** |
| --- |
| **School** | **ELA** | **Math** |
| Ware Junior Senior High | 91% | 82% |
| State | 91% | 79% |

**In science, the percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced on the MCAS assessment was 38 percent in the 5th grade at Ware Middle, and was 35 percent in the 8th grade and 82 percent in the 10th grade at Ware Junior Senior** **High.**

| **Table 13: Ware Public Schools****MCAS Science Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced by School and Grade, 2017** |
| --- |
| **School** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** | **10** | **Total** |
| Koziol | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Ware Middle | -- | -- | 38% | -- | -- | -- | -- | 38% |
| Ware Junior Senior High | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 35% | 82% | 54% |
| District | -- | -- | 38% | -- | -- | 34% | 78% | 46% |
| State | -- | -- | 46% | -- | -- | 40% | 74% | 53% |

**In ELA, the percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations on the Next-Generation MCAS assessment ranged from 29 to 36 percent in the district’s schools.**

* The percentage of high needs students meeting or exceeding expectations ranged from 19 to 27 percent in the district’s schools.
* The percentage of economically disadvantaged students meeting or exceeding expectations ranged from 21 to 30 percent in the district’s schools.
* The percentage of students with disabilities meeting or exceeding expectations ranged from 0 to 6 percent in the district’s schools.
* The percentage of English language learners meeting or exceeding expectations was 30 percent for the district as a whole.

**In math, the percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations on the Next-Generation MCAS assessment ranged from 22 to 28 percent in the district’s schools.**

* The percentage of high needs students meeting or exceeding expectations ranged from 12 to 18 percent in the district’s schools.
* The percentage of economically disadvantaged students meeting or exceeding expectations ranged from 13 to 19 percent in the district’s schools.
* The percentage of students with disabilities meeting or exceeding expectations ranged from 0 to 4 percent in the district’s schools.
* The percentage of English language learners meeting or exceeding expectations was 10 percent for the district as a whole.

| **Table 14: Ware Public Schools****Next-Generation MCAS ELA and Math Percent Meeting and Exceeding Expectations by School, 2017** |
| --- |
|  | **ELA** | **Math** |
| **School** | **All** | **High Needs** | **Econ. Dis.** | **SWD** | **ELLs** | **All** | **High Needs** | **Econ. Dis.** | **SWD** | **ELLs** |
| Koziol | 34% | 27% | 30% | 0% | -- | 22% | 12% | 13% | 0% | -- |
| Ware Middle | 36% | 26% | 28% | 6% | -- | 28% | 18% | 19% | 4% | -- |
| Ware Junior Senior High | 29% | 19% | 21% | 0% | -- | 27% | 17% | 19% | 0% | -- |
| District | 33% | 24% | 26% | 4% | 30% | 26% | 16% | 17% | 3% | 10% |

**Between 2014 and 2017, ELA proficiency at Ware Junior Senior** **High declined by 5 percentage points for all students and by 10 percentage points for high needs students.**

**Between 2014 and 2017, math proficiency at Ware Junior Senior** **High did not improve for all students and high needs students.**

| **Table 15: Ware Public Schools****MCAS ELA and Math Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grade 10, 2014-–2017** |
| --- |
|  | **ELA** | **Math** |
| **School** | **2014** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **4-yr Change** | **2014** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **4-yr Change** |
| Ware Junior Senior High | 96% | 86% | 83% | 91% | -5 | 82% | 83% | 77% | 82% | 0 |
| High Needs | 91% | 70% | 63% | 81% | -10 | 72% | 63% | 50% | 72% | 0 |
| Econ. Dis. | -- | 81% | 67% | 83% | -- | -- | 81% | 58% | 77% | -- |
| ELLs | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| SWD | -- | 40% | 20% | -- | -- | -- | 20% | -- | -- | -- |

**Between 2014 and 2017, in science, the percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced on the MCAS assessment declined by 8 percentage points in Ware Middle, and improved by 7 percentage points at Ware Junior Senior** **High.**

* Science proficiency for high needs students declined by 15 percentage points at Ware Middle and improved by 8 percentage points at Ware Junior Senior High.
* In 2017, science proficiency for economically disadvantaged students was 25 percent at Ware Middle and 44 percent at Ware Junior Senior High.
* In 2017, science proficiency for students with disabilities was 5 percent at Ware Middle and 8 percent at Ware Junior Senior High.

| **Table 16: Ware Public Schools****MCAS Science Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Science by School and Subgroup, 2014–2017** |
| --- |
| **School** | **N (2017)** | **2014** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **4-yr Change** |
| Koziol | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Ware Middle | 111 | 46% | 35% | 47% | 38% | -8 |
| High Needs | 61 | 40% | 30% | 34% | 25% | -15 |
| Econ. Dis. | 55 | -- | 33% | 38% | 25% | -- |
| SWD | 19 | 6% | 8% | 0% | 5% | -1 |
| ELLs | 1 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Ware Junior Senior High | 163 | 47% | 54% | 40% | 54% | 7 |
| High Needs | 84 | 32% | 39% | 27% | 40% | 8 |
| Econ. Dis. | 78 | -- | 43% | 29% | 44% | -- |
| SWD | 24 | 0% | 4% | 13% | 8% | 8 |
| ELLs | 1 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |

**Between 2014 and 2017, the district’s four-year cohort graduation rate improved by 10.3 percentage points for all students and improved by 0.4 to 13.5 percentage points for each subgroup with reportable data.**

| **Table 17: Ware Public Schools****Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rates, 2014–2017** |
| --- |
| **Group** | **N** **(2017)** | **2014** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **4-yr Change** | **State (2017)** |
| High needs | 43 | 61.5% | 60.5% | 63.4% | 69.8% | 8.3 | 80.0% |
| Economically Disadvantaged\* | 40 | 63.8% | 60.6% | 64.1% | 72.5% | 8.7 | 79.0% |
| ELLs | 2 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 63.4% |
| SWD | 13 | 38.1% | 35.7% | 33.3% | 38.5% | 0.4 | 72.8% |
| African American | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 80.0% |
| Asian | 1 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 94.1% |
| Hispanic or Latino | 6 | -- | -- | -- | 66.7% | -- | 74.4% |
| Multi-Race, non-Hisp./Lat. | 2 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 85.2% |
| White | 65 | 71.1% | 69.2% | 77.0% | 84.6% | 13.5 | 92.6% |
| All | 75 | 72.4% | 70.0% | 76.5% | 82.7% | 10.3 | 88.3% |
| \* Four-year cohort graduation rate for students from low income families used for 2014, and 2015 rates. |

**Between 2013 and 2016, the district’s five-year cohort graduation rate declined by 4.7 percentage points for all students, and by 4.3 to 25.0 percentage points for each subgroup with reportable data.**

| **Table 18: Ware Public Schools****Five-Year Cohort Graduation Rates, 2013–2016** |
| --- |
| **Group** | **N** **(2016)** | **2013** | **2014** | **2015** | **2016** | **4-yr Change** | **State (2016)** |
| High needs | 41 | 73.7% | 69.2% | 60.5% | 65.9% | -7.8 | 82.9% |
| Economically Disadvantaged\* | 39 | 72.2% | 72.3% | 60.6% | 66.7% | -5.5 | 82.1% |
| ELLs | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 70.9% |
| SWD | 12 | 66.7% | 47.6% | 35.7% | 41.7% | -25.0 | 76.5% |
| African American | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 83.4% |
| Asian | 1 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 94.8% |
| Hispanic or Latino | 5 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 76.8% |
| Multi-Race, non-Hisp./Lat. | 1 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 87.4% |
| White | 61 | 81.3% | 78.9% | 71.2% | 77.0% | -4.3 | 93.5% |
| All | 68 | 82.6% | 79.3% | 71.7% | 77.9% | -4.7 | 89.8% |
| \* Five-year cohort graduation rate for students from low income families used for 2013, and 2014 rates. |

**Between 2014 and 2017, in-school suspension rates declined by 0.9 percentage point for all students and by 0.7 to 2.3 percentage points for each subgroup with reportable data.**

* Between 2015 and 2017, in-school suspension rates increased for all students and for students in the high needs, economically disadvantaged, Hispanic or Latino, and White subgroups.

| **Table 19: Ware Public Schools****In-School Suspension Rates by Subgroup, 2014–2017** |
| --- |
| **Group** | **2014** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **4-yr Change** | **State (2017)** |
| High Needs | 4.1% | 2.0% | 1.9% | 3.1% | -1.0 | 2.6% |
| Economically disadvantaged\* | 4.1% | 1.9% | 1.9% | 3.1% | -1.0 | 2.9% |
| ELLs | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 1.7% |
| SWD | 5.0% | 2.9% | 3.0% | 2.7% | -2.3 | 3.1% |
| African American | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 3.3% |
| Asian | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 0.5% |
| Hispanic or Latino | 5.6% | 0.0% | 2.9% | 4.7% | -0.9 | 2.5% |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic or Latino | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 2.1% |
| White | 2.8% | 1.5% | 1.2% | 2.1% | -0.7 | 1.3% |
| All  | 3.2% | 1.4% | 1.4% | 2.3% | -0.9 | 1.7% |

\*Suspension rates for students from low income families used for 2014 rates.

**Between 2014 and 2017, out-of-school suspension rates declined by 0.5 percentage point for all students.**

* Between 2015 and 2017, out-of-school suspension rates increased for students in the high needs, economically disadvantaged, and White subgroups.

| **Table 20: Ware Public Schools****Out-of-School Suspension Rates by Subgroup, 2014–2017** |
| --- |
| **Group** | **2014** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **4-yr Change** | **State (2017)** |
| High Needs | 4.4% | 4.2% | 7.0% | 4.6% | 0.2 | 4.5% |
| Economically disadvantaged\* | 4.6% | 3.8% | 6.5% | 4.9% | 0.3 | 5.3% |
| ELLs | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 3.8% |
| SWD | 4.2% | 6.7% | 10.9% | 5.4% | 1.2 | 5.5% |
| African American | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 6.3% |
| Asian | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 0.7% |
| Hispanic or Latino | 4.5% | 7.9% | 10.8% | 4.7% | 0.2 | 5.2% |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic or Latino | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 3.1% |
| White | 3.4% | 2.6% | 3.9% | 2.7% | -0.7 | 1.6% |
| All | 3.5% | 3.0% | 4.6% | 3.0% | -0.5 | 2.8% |

\* Suspension rates for students from low income families used for 2014 rates.

**Between 2014 and 2017, the dropout rate declined 3.7 percentage points for all students and in 2017 was 1.8 percent for all students, equal to the 2017 state rate. Between 2014 and 2017, the dropout rate declined by 3.4 to 12.0 percentage points for each subgroup with reportable data, except for multi-race, non-Hispanic or Latino students.**

| **Table 21: Ware Public Schools****Drop-out Rates by Subgroup, 2014–2017** |
| --- |
| **Group** | **2014** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **4-yr Change** | **State (2017)** |
| High Needs | 7.8% | 9.7% | 10.2% | 3.8% | -4.0 | 3.5% |
| Economically disadvantaged\* | 8.0% | 8.8% | 8.1% | 4.5% | -3.5 | 3.6% |
| ELLs | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 6.5% |
| SWD | 16.7% | 19.1% | 19.6% | 4.7% | -12.0 | 3.3% |
| African American/ | 28.6% | -- | -- | -- | -- | 2.9% |
| Asian | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 0.6% |
| Hispanic or Latino | 9.1% | 0.0% | 5.0% | 0.0% | -9.1 | 4.2% |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic or Latino | 0.0% | -- | -- | 25.0% | 25.0 | 1.7% |
| White | 4.7% | 6.1% | 4.8% | 1.3% | -3.4 | 1.1% |
| All | 5.5% | 5.4% | 4.7% | 1.8% | -3.7 | 1.8% |
| \*Drop-out rates for students from low income families used for 2014 rates. |

Leadership and Governance

***Contextual Background***

The district’s superintendent has held the position since 2014 and served as the Ware Junior Senior High School principal from 2011–2014 and as the Stanley M. Koziol Elementary School principal from 2008–2011. This progression of leadership positions within the district has provided the superintendent with the opportunity to build positive relationships with district families and to work with various town and business leaders.

The academic leadership team consists of three principals, the director of special education, and the director of accountability, Title I and IIA, professional development, grants, and curriculum. The director of accountability position represents the merging of several areas of responsibility and reflects the shrinking of central office positions by .6 FTE in recent years. The principal of the junior senior high school, hired in 2014, is the longest serving principal; the principal of the middle school was appointed in 2016, and the elementary principal, in November 2016, following the departure of a three-month appointee. Teachers stated that administrative turnover concerned them because it has meant continuous changes in leaders’ expectations, shifts in schools’ climates, and an absence of follow-through in some programs.

Although the superintendent and her team meet regularly, the agenda is primarily administrative rather than collaborative and focused on addressing issues of districtwide concern. The superintendent and principals acknowledged that they worked in isolation. Nevertheless, principals shared common concerns about improving instruction and student achievement and told the team that they faced similar challenges in bringing about change that could lead to improvement. Principals told the team that the district did not provide formal professional development for principals and that they learned by doing. The superintendent has provided the two newer principals with mentors from outside of the district.

In February 2017, focus groups began helping school leaders to identify district goals and bridges to next steps. At the time of the review in late January/early February 2018, the district was working with a representative from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s District and School Assistance Center (DSAC) to develop a multi-year District Improvement Plan (DIP). School Improvement Plans for 2017–2018 listed improvement activities but did not include measurable goals, an analysis of student performance data, or standard, formal procedures and timelines for monitoring the progress of SIP benchmarks and goals and reporting progress toward SIP goals to school councils, staff, and families.

***Strength Finding***

**1. To build a culture of transparency in the district and broader community, the district is participating in an open and collaborative process to engage stakeholders in the development of a multi-year District Improvement Plan.**

1. Interviews and a document review indicated that at the time of the onsite review in late January/early February 2018, the district was in the process of drafting a three-year District Improvement Plan (DIP) for completion by the end of the 2017–2018 school year.[[1]](#footnote-1)

1. The superintendent invited participants from throughout the community to participate in this process: selectmen; the town manager; school committee members; hospital, fire and police representatives; business representatives; teachers’ association representatives; and families. The district held monthly meetings throughout the spring of 2017 and an administrative summer retreat where leaders looked at student data. The district had scheduled a family focus group for February 2018.

 2. The future protocol process asked focus group participants to create three charts: one chart to project what they would like their future school district to look like, a second to describe the current state of the district, and a third chart with ideas to help them “bridge the future.” The team viewed these three charts, which listed numerous ideas from the focus groups. The superintendent said that participants’ ideas would inform improvement planning for the district.

 3. The superintendent said that the district tentatively planned to complete the DIP by the end of the 2017–2018 school year.

* 1. The use of focus groups as part of the district’s improvement planning addresses two of the superintendent’s 2014–2015 entry plan goals: “Engaging parents further in the schools and working to change the negative perception of schools held by some members of the community.”
		1. Interviewees told the team that overall the future protocol process was open, collaborative, and positive. The superintendent said that she found this process instructive and that she learned from the participants. For example, she learned that some families saw the same need for an assistant principal at the middle school that she saw. A school committee member valued hearing from families about suggested system improvements to benefit their children.
		2. The superintendent noted that the process was a “critical lens” through which to look at the schools and what they were doing.

 **C.** School leaders said that in the process of developing a District Improvement Plan they were trying to find the root causes of challenges, and were looking at trends in absences and suspensions across grade levels to gain a better understanding of ways to improve.

1. Following a summer retreat work session to look at this data and work on the new DIP, the superintendent said, “That was the first retreat and we’ll do something again.”

 2. Citing the success of one districtwide meeting on English language learners, the superintendent noted that she would like a districtwide meeting to happen more often.

**Impact**: By engaging stakeholders in setting goals for long-range improvement, the district taps into a source of shared responsibility and advocacy for the achievement of all students.

***Challenges and Areas for Growth***

**2. The district does not set measurable goals in its district and school plans.**

 **A.** Interviews and a document review indicated that at the time of the onsite review in late January/early February 2018, the district was in the process of drafting a three-year District Improvement Plan (DIP) for completion by the end of the 2017–2018 school year.

 **B.** Each school has an improvement plan.

 1. The goals in the School Improvement Plans (SIPs) are not SMART goals (Specific and Strategic; Measurable; Action-Oriented; Rigorous, Realistic, and Results-Focused; and Timed and Tracked), and because the district does not have a DIP, the SIPs are not aligned with any districtwide goal.

 a. For example, goal 1 in the Ware Junior Senior High School 2016–2017 Improvement Plan is “Increase communication with Parents, Families, and Other Stakeholders.”

 b. Goal 1 in the Ware Middle School 2017–2018 Improvement Plan is “Provide meaningful instruction to support student academic growth.”

 2. The SIPs list activities and strategies to achieve the goals.

 a. For example, Goal 1 in the Ware Middle School SIP (“Provide meaningful instruction to support student academic growth”) lists four activities: “Use grade level data meetings to design center-based tiered instruction in classrooms, use scientific based targeted intervention, use testing data to form intervention and enrichment groups, form a committee to research successful implementation of the NGSS.”

 **C.** The SIPs do not include an analysis of student performance data or formal procedures and timelines for monitoring the progress of SIP benchmarks and reporting progress toward SIP goals to school councils, staff, and families.

 1. The SIPs do not address critical district issues such as high chronic absence and low graduation rates.[[2]](#footnote-2) [[3]](#footnote-3)

 2. While all three SIPs have goals related to supporting social, emotional, and physical safety, none of the SIPs references behavioral data that could help measure progress toward those goals.

 **D.** District and school leaders do not collaborate to address districtwide issues.

Principals told the team that they developed the SIPs independently and did not regularly meet for collaboration to address districtwide issues.

The superintendent and principals stated that while they met every other week as members of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), these meetings were designed to accomplish a number of management tasks and to hear progress reports from other district departments. A review of a sample of SLT meeting minutes provided by the district supported the superintendent and school leaders’ description of these meetings.

**Impact**: Without aligned improvement plans with data-based SMART goals, stakeholders do not know the direction in which district schools are heading, the plans to achieve their goals, or the extent to which progress is being made.

***Recommendations***

**District and school improvement planning should be collaborative, strategic, and driven by student achievement data. The district should finalize District Improvement Plan (DIP) in order to guide school improvement planning for the 2018–2019 school year.**

1. The district should continue its work with the District and School Assistance Center to ensure that the district and school improvement plans are based on SMART goals that are aligned, data-driven, and include measures to monitor progress.
2. The superintendent and the members of her senior leadership team should consider shifting the focus of their meeting time from sharing information about administrative issues to developing and modifying systemwide strategies to address priority goals to improve teaching, learning, and student achievement, opportunities, and outcomes.

1. This should include a process for reflecting on progress toward improvement plan goals and adjusting systems and practices accordingly.

2. The district might consider including additional perspectives (for example, teachers’ association representatives, students, and students’ families) in some leadership team meetings and initiatives in order to generate innovative and feasible plans for improvement.

 **C.** The DIP’s performance goals for students should drive the development, implementation, and modification of the district’s educational programs.

1. School Improvement Plans (SIPs) should be created in alignment with the strategic plan and based on an analysis of student data.

 a. SIPs goals should be based on an analysis of student outcome and achievement data and should be SMART (Specific and Strategic; Measurable; Action-Oriented; Rigorous, Realistic, and Results-Focused; and Timed and Tracked).

 b. Principals should provide the superintendent, the school committee, and staff with regular updates on progress toward SIP goals.

 c. Principals should use the SIP to inform their self-assessment and goal setting process when creating the Educator Plan, and progress toward Educator Plan goals should be used as evidence during implementation.

 2. Professional development should be designed to support the initiatives and goals in the DIP.

**D.** The DIP should be used as a tool for continuous improvement.

 1. The superintendent should periodically report to the school committee, staff, families, and community on progress toward achieving the goals in the DIP.

 2. The district should establish procedures to review the DIP on a regular basis. Strategic activities and benchmarks should be adjusted when necessary to meet current conditions.

 3. The superintendent and the school committee should consider aligning some goals in the Superintendent’s Educator Plan (as part of the district’s educator evaluation system) with the goals in the DIP

**Benefits**: A focused, representative effort to develop and implement data-based and actionable district and school improvement plans will help district stakeholders to better understand and participate in the changes needed to improve student outcomes. When DIPs and SIPs are aligned, resources are more likely to be used more efficiently and to be strategically targeted to improving achievement for all students. The District Improvement Plan and the School Improvement Plans will provide guidance and ensure that the work at each level is designed to accomplish the district’s short- and long-term goals.

**Recommended resources:**

* ESE’s *Planning for Success* tools (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/research/success/>) support the improvement planning process by spotlighting practices, characteristics, and behaviors that support effective planning and implementation and meet existing state requirements for improvement planning.
* *Focused Planning for Accelerating Student Learning* (<http://www.mass.gov/edu/docs/ese/accountability/dsac/focused-planning.pdf>) provides guidance for districts to accelerate achievement for all students through the development of a focused, actionable and sustainable Accelerated Improvement Plan (AIP).
	+ - *District Accelerated Improvement Planning - Guiding Principles for Effective Benchmarks* (<http://www.mass.gov/edu/docs/ese/accountability/turnaround/level-4-guiding-principles-effective-benchmarks.pdf>) provides information about different types of benchmarks to guide and measure district improvement efforts.
* *What Makes a Goal Smarter?* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/presentations/SMARTGoals/Handout5.pdf>) is a description of SMART goals with accompanying examples. The handout was designed to support educators in developing goals as part of the educator evaluation system, but could also be a useful reference for the district as it develops or refines its DIP and SIPs.
* The *Turnaround Practices Field Guide* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/turnaround/howitworks/turnaround-practices-field-guide.pdf>) provides educators with examples of school specific practices, in authentic school contexts, which have contributed to turnaround success, so that those engaged in turnaround can apply these practices in their own schools and accelerate turnaround efforts.
	+ - The *Turnaround Practices in Achievement Gain Schools Video Series* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/turnaround/howitworks/achievement-gains.html>) highlights the work of Achievement Gain schools referenced in the Turnaround Practices Field Guide. In these videos, the school staff and leadership tell their unique turnaround story through the lens of the four high leverage turnaround practices (leadership, intentional practices, student specific support, and climate and culture). Each video has an accompanying Viewing Guide.

Curriculum and Instruction

***Contextual Background***

In the district self-assessment submitted in advance of the onsite review and in interviews, district leaders said that they were trying to ensure that students had access to the classes and extracurricular programs that will provide a “rich high school (and beyond) experience” to ready students for college, careers, and civic responsibility. However, the district has historically not had a process for ongoing curriculum review and revision that would help it evaluate and enrich its current program. At the time of the onsite review in late January/early February 2018, the district had not developed a strategic and inclusive process for curriculum review and revision. The ELA, mathematics, and science curriculum documents were a work in progress. Their alignment with current curriculum frameworks was incomplete. The district maintains an online repository (Office365) for all curriculum documents where teachers can access documents for development, revisions, and updates.

In addition, Curriculum leadership positions have not been clearly articulated or placed within an instructional leadership framework. Members of the senior leadership team make curriculum decisions and principals are expected to monitor this work in their schools. While there are opportunities for teachers to work on curriculum during the school day, sufficient time has not been allocated and most curriculum development in recent years has taken place during professional development (PD) days. The district has not developed a plan or internal capacity to review, revise, and evaluate the curriculum.

The district does not have sufficient leadership structures in place to adequately coordinate and monitor the curriculum or support instruction. Instructional support personnel vary by level. Administrators and teachers told the team that at one time the district funded a curriculum director and the position was cut approximately 10 years before the onsite review. There has been intermittent support since then with the hire of a part-time curriculum coordinator who was also responsible for the district PD program. In 2016–2017, this part-time curriculum coordinator was appointed principal of the middle school and at the time of the onsite review in January 2018 held the position of middle-school principal. Since then the director of accountability has assumed the role of curriculum coordinator in addition to her many other responsibilities. These many changes in persons responsible for curricular oversight have resulted in limited progress in aligning district curricula with current curriculum frameworks.

***Challenges and Areas for Growth***

**The district does not have an established process to ensure the ongoing review and revision of curriculum and instructional materials. K–12 ELA, mathematics, and science curriculum documents are not comprehensive or fully aligned with the current frameworks.**

* 1. The current process for curriculum review and revision does not provide adequate coordination and oversight.
1. The district does not have a curriculum director. The director of accountability has assumed this role among her many other responsibilities. Administrators and teachers from all levels expressed the need for a full-time curriculum coordinator.

2. Curriculum support positions vary by school. At the high school, department heads are responsible for curriculum review and revision. At the middle school, the district literacy specialist and the math coach support ELA/literacy and math teachers in this work. The district does not have curriculum support positions for the other academic areas. The elementary literacy interventionist and the principal support teachers in curriculum oversight.

a. Teachers and administrators stated that math and/or literacy coaches were needed at all levels.

 3. When the team asked interviewees who was responsible for oversight of curriculum development, responses ranged from the central office to principals, department heads, and classroom teachers.

* 1. One group of educators stated that the district put in place a new curriculum review and revision process in 2016; others said that they were unaware of a formal review process or described curriculum review and revision as an informal process.

b. Teachers said that effective curriculum resulted from grade-level team work and that the age/copyright date of instructional resources informed decisions to update curriculum.

 4. Interviewees stated that budget constraints often had an impact on curriculum work and the district relied on grant monies or available classroom teachers for this work.

 5. Many teachers said that they did not have essential core instructional resources such as anthologies, elementary science materials, and updated technology for administering online assessments, or sufficient texts so students did not have to share and could bring textbooks home to complete assignments.

Some teachers told team members that they made their own materials or purchased materials out of pocket to supplement instruction.

 6. While there are structures in place at each level for collaboration, the district has not provided adequate dedicated time for curriculum development. Teachers and administrators at all levels said that recurrent, dedicated time for vertical curriculum articulation was a long-standing need in the district.

* 1. The process for curriculum review and acquisition of instructional resources is not inclusive. While central office administrators expressed the belief that teachers were included in the curriculum development process, they said that discussions were initiated at the senior leadership meeting and principals were expected to follow up with decisions in their schools.

1. Teachers said that the curriculum development process was often top down and administrators did not seek their opinions on most decisions about the curriculum development process or the adoption of instructional materials.

a. Teachers expressed concerns about decisions made at the administrative level without teacher input about curriculum template design, the adoption of curriculum materials, instructional delivery models, and programs, including the Workshop Model, guided reading, district progress monitoring assessments, and the John Collins writing program.

* 1. The alignment of ELA, mathematics, and science curricula with the current frameworks is a work in progress at all levels.

1. At the time of the review in late January/early February 2018, documents were missing elements of a comprehensive curriculum including essential questions, key instructional vocabulary, learning objectives, and instructional strategies. Many documents referred only to generic unit or topic resources, activities, and assessments, and did not include pacing guidelines.

2. In its self-assessment submitted in advance of the onsite review, the district stated that the alignment of K–12 ELA, math, and science curriculum was in progress and the district was working to complete the update of all curriculum documents by November 2018.

**Impact**: Without an inclusive, clearly documented, and articulated process for the timely review and revision of curriculum, including opportunities for vertical and horizontal collaboration at each level, the district cannot ensure that all students have access to high-quality, challenging curricula that will lead to high levels of achievement. Further, it does not provide a process where teachers have a voice in curriculum development or plans to improve their skills in delivering curricula.

**2. In observed classrooms, the quality of instruction was inconsistent across the district.**

1. **Focus Area #1: Learning Objective & Instruction** In observed classrooms,the team found a higher incidence of the use of student learning objectives, classroom activities aligned with learning objectives, and frequent checks for student understanding including feedback to students and adjustments to instruction in middle-school classrooms than in elementary and junior senior high classrooms.

Observers saw sufficient and compelling evidence that teachers provided and regularly referenced learning objectives during the lesson to ensure that students understood what they should be learning and why (characteristic #2) in only 39 percent of elementary classrooms, in 56 percent of middle-school classrooms, and in only 25 percent of junior senior high school classrooms.

1. Teachers who provided clear objectives shared them orally with students throughout the lesson; many also posted learning objectives in a prominent location in the room. Objectives often started with “students will …” When asked, students could explain what they were learning and place it within a context. For example, one told an observer: “It’s 100 day and we’re doing things that show how much 100 is, what 100 looks like, [for example,] 10 groups of 10.”
2. Many teachers posted an agenda---a list of activities that would be completed during class---and did not refer to student learning objectives. Some students were able to restate what they were learning but not tell observers why it was important.
3. Review team members found sufficient and compelling evidence that lesson activities were well matched to the learning objective (characteristic #3) in 44 percent of elementary, in 62 percent of middle-school, and in 43 percent of junior senior high school lessons. In these classrooms, activities were aligned with the expected learning objective and required students to identify, explain, and generate examples to demonstrate their understanding. Activities generally included student choice and collaboration, and required deep thinking on a topic.
4. The team saw sufficient and compelling evidence that teachers conducted frequent checks for student understanding, provided feedback, and adjusted instruction (characteristic #4) in 39 percent of elementary, in 56 percent of middle-school, and in 36 percent of junior senior high school classrooms.
	1. Teachers circulated among students and groups, asked probing questions to reinforce thinking or tease out misconceptions and used dipsticking strategies to check students’ understanding.
	2. Classrooms that did not reflect strong evidence of this practice were often characterized by lecture-style delivery of instruction and use of worksheets. Teachers did not circulate, or focused on one or two students only. Some feedback to students was negative rather than positive.
5. **Focus Area #2: Student Engagement & Higher-Order Thinking** A critical challenge across the district is the design of instruction that engages students in higher-order thinking and meaningful, real-world tasks; provides opportunities for students to communicate their ideas and thinking with each other; and enables students to assume responsibility for their own learning. This challenge was of significant concern in observed classrooms at the junior senior high school.

Observers found sufficient and compelling evidence that students had opportunities to be responsible for their learning and were engaged in the lesson (characteristic #5) in 50 percent of elementary classrooms and in 63 percent of middle-school classrooms but in only 28 percent of junior senior high school classrooms.

* 1. In lessons that reflected these characteristics, students actively participated in small- group and whole-class discussions and were comfortable asking questions reflective of higher-order thinking. Students were also engaged in small-group center activities and technology was often incorporated into the lesson design. Teachers provided a context for student learning by asking questions such as, “Why is this important? How does it impact…?”
	2. In contrast, instruction in many classrooms across all levels was largely teacher directed. Students were often attentive but did not actively engage in their learning. They independently completed tasks, often worksheets, with limited opportunities to participate or volunteer responses or questions.
1. The team saw sufficient and compelling evidence that lessons were designed to engage students in meaningful, real-world tasks (characteristic #8) in just 39 percent of elementary and middle-school classrooms, and in only 28 percent of junior senior high school classrooms.

 a. In a high-school social studies class where students were engaged in a meaningful, real-world task, observers noted that the discussion was relevant to contemporary society; however, in a high-school math class students were not given opportunities to engage with tasks connected to the real world.

 3. Observers found sufficient and compelling evidence of instruction that encouraged students to communicate their ideas and thinking with each other (characteristic #7) in 11 percent of elementary classrooms, in 50 percent of middle-school classrooms, and in 15 percent of junior senior high school classrooms.

Students at the elementary and junior senior high schools had the least opportunity to engage in meaningful discourse. When students did respond to questions, teachers did not consistently ask them to extend their thinking by having them elaborate on their thoughts. Most exchanges were short answers between teacher and student and often reflected a low level of critical thinking.

In contrast, middle-school students communicated their ideas with their peers through turn and talk, and small-group or whole-class discussions. These exchanges were sustained and deeply connected to content. Teachers conferred with their students and regularly probed for deeper thinking and elaboration of ideas. “How is our weather discussion related to your everyday lives?” “Why did you do this step first? Did you have to?” “What are some ways we can support each other when we feel sad?”

 4. Review team members observed sufficient and compelling evidence of students engaged in challenging higher-order thinking that required analysis, synthesis, problem-solving, evaluation, or application of new knowledge (characteristic #6) in in 22 percent of elementary, in 8 percent of middle-school, and in 22 percent of junior senior high school classes.

* 1. In an exemplary classroom, students were actively engaged in a foundational algebra lesson. The teacher shared her thinking as she solved an equation using order of operations. The teacher posed questions about the process and students generated alternate pathways to the same solution. After student groups solved increasingly complex problems, the teacher presented a challenge---to use the distributive property to solve an equation---and students were able to meet the challenge.
	2. The majority of observed classrooms did not reflect this characteristic. Lessons were often presented in a lecture-style format followed by low-level cognitive tasks, primarily worksheets. Most questions posed to students required yes or no responses and teachers did not probe to extend student thinking. Teachers did not ask students to explain, to analyze, to apply or to evaluate their work or the lesson content.
1. **Focus Area #3: Differentiated Instruction & Classroom Culture** Classroom climate was conducive to teaching and learning in the majority of observed classrooms across the district. Classroom routines and positive supports were in place to ensure that students were focused on the task of learning. In observed classrooms, the team found limited evidence of lessons designed to ensure that students were engaged and challenged regardless of their learning needs, and limited use of varied instructional strategies.

Observers saw sufficient and compelling evidence of lessons designed to support and challenge students regardless of their learning needs (characteristic #9) in only 17 percent of elementary, in just 38 percent of middle-school, and in only 25 percent of junior senior high school classes.

 a. Some teachers modified homework and allowed students to take pictures of board work so they could assess information at home or complete class notes. In one classroom, students completed a lab activity individually, in pairs, or in small groups. The teacher served as a facilitator of student learning.

 b. Some teachers modeled their thinking before student “turn and talks” where students shared their ideas and offered feedback to their “turn and talk” partner. Activities in these classrooms often incorporated technology, student choice in lesson activities and in how students chose to demonstrate their understanding.

 c. In contrast, often teacher talk predominated and students were not engaged in challenging work.

Team members found sufficient and compelling evidence that teachers used a variety of instructional strategies (characteristic #10) in just 39 percent of elementary and in only 25 percent of middle-school and junior senior high school classrooms.

a. Teachers who had facility using multiple strategies incorporated group work, technology, targeted small-group instruction, and movement breaks into their lesson design. One teacher used music to promote student learning (alphabet song).

b. In many classrooms, observers noted mainly whole-class instruction.

**Impact**: Without high-quality, research-based instruction in place across the district, the district is not creating and sustaining optimum conditions for student learning and high academic achievement.

***Recommendations***

**1. The district should establish, document, and share a multi-year process for the regular and timely review and revision of K–12 curricula. This process should be collaborative in nature and include the necessary resources to support this work including dedicated time and updated instructional resources.**

1. The district should develop a system that includes a multi-year plan for curriculum review and include teachers in all aspects of the plan’s development.

The curriculum review plan should provide a timeline for when K–12 curricula in each discipline will be reviewed, aligned, and updated. Leaders should prioritize when each content area will be addressed to ensure responsive and timely review and adjustments to documents based on data analysis and state frameworks.

a. English language arts and mathematics curricula should be aligned with the 2017 Massachusetts ELA/Literacy and the 2017 Massachusetts Mathematics Frameworks.

b. Science curricula should be aligned with the 2016 Massachusetts Science and Technology/Engineering (STE) Standards.

c. The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education approved revised History and Social Science standards in June 2018. The district should make plans to revise curriculum documents in this content area after ELA, mathematics, and science document alignment is complete.

d. The curriculum cycle should include other subject areas as well.

The district’s plan should identify who will complete the work at each level, as well as multiple opportunities for vertical articulation and collaboration.

The plan should identify the leadership positions (administrative and/or teacher leader) responsible for monitoring and facilitating the process for each content area. Toward this end, it is also recommended that the district investigate reallocation of existing resources in order to support a dedicated district curriculum coordinator position.

 **B.** The plan should also include time for teachers to research current best practices and resources in each of the content areas and make recommendations for instructional materials and other resources to support standards-aligned instruction.

**Benefits**: A clearly articulated and comprehensive curriculum review process will help to ensure that curriculum is current, comprehensive, and high quality. A cycle of curriculum improvement and renewal ensures that curricula are dynamic and will continuously evolve as frameworks are revised at the state level. Further, the curriculum review process ensures that all students have access to a full curriculum that meets their diverse learning needs and supports high academic achievement.

**Recommended resources:**

* + - ESE’s *Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks* web page (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/>) provides information about the 2017 ELA/Literacy and Mathematics Frameworks, including grade-by-grade comparisons between the 2010 and 2017 Frameworks and a slide deck supporting implementation of the 2017 Frameworks.
		- ESE’s STEM home page (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/stem/>) provides the 2016 Science and Technology/Engineering Framework and resources supporting its implementation.
		- ESE’s *Instructional Materials and Professional Development* page ([www.doe.mass.edu/candi/impd/](http://www.doe.mass.edu/candi/impd/)) provides resources for improving and collaborating on curriculum, including quick reference guides and maps designed to facilitate cross-district communication about curriculum.
* *ESE’s STE Quality Review Rubric* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/candi/model/rubrics/STE.pdf>) is designed to help educators determine the quality, rigor, and alignment of lessons and units to the 2016 MA STE Curriculum Framework.
	+ - *EdReports.org* (<http://www.edreports.org/>) provides free, independent reviews of K-12 education materials. The reviews focus on alignment to the Common Core and other indicators of high quality as recommended by educators.
		- *Quick Reference Guide: Aligning Curriculum to Massachusetts Standards* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/candi/impd/qrg-aligning-curriculum.pdf>) is designed to support teachers, coaches, administrators, and curriculum developers in the work of considering the ways in which curricular materials may diverge from the Massachusetts standards.

**2. The district should take steps to strengthen teachers’ understanding and implementation of effective instruction.**

**A.** District and school leaders and teachers should identify the specific skills and information that teachers need in order to improve their instructional practice, with particular attention to the areas noted in the challenge finding above. It should provide focused, content- and grade- specific guidance and support to help teachers grow in these areas.[[4]](#footnote-4)

 1. The district’s approach should include clearly communicated expectations and regular opportunities for teachers to discuss, explore, and share content-specific best practices.

 2. The district and each school should provide professional development and effective follow-up support to ensure that teachers have ample and regular opportunities to reflect on and strengthen instruction.

3. The district should ensure that supervisory and evaluation procedures facilitate effective monitoring of instruction and that evaluators provide frequent, useful feedback so that teachers have continued guidance to improve their practice.

**Benefits:** Implementing this recommendation will mean clear and articulated expectations for administrators and teachers for what constitutes high-quality teaching. This will provide a common language that will facilitate more focused feedback and professional development. A district that provides high-quality instruction for all students creates and sustains a culture of continuous improvement that has the potential to result in professional growth and increased student achievement.

**Recommended resources:**

* + - DESE’s Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks web page [(http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/)](http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/) provides information about the 2017 ELA/Literacy and Mathematics Frameworks, including grade-by-grade comparisons between the 2010 and 2017 Frameworks and a slide deck supporting implementation of the 2017 Frameworks.
* DESE’s STEM home page ([www.doe.mass.edu/stem/](http://www.doe.mass.edu/stem/)) provides the 2016 Science and Technology/Engineering Framework and resources supporting its implementation.
	+ - DESE’s Instructional Materials and Professional Development page ([www.doe.mass.edu/candi/impd/](http://www.doe.mass.edu/candi/impd/)) provides resources for improving and collaborating on curriculum, including quick reference guides and maps designed to facilitate cross-district communication about curriculum.
* *Quick Reference Guide: Establishing an Effective Science and Technology/Engineering (STE) Program* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/stem/ste/STEprogram.docx> ): ESE has identified five components districts should attend to when designing a rigorous, coherent and relevant pre-K-12 STE education program. Educators, administrators and curriculum designers can refer to this guide for brief descriptions and resources for each component.
	+ - * *Time for Deeper Learning: Lessons from Five High Schools* (<http://www.timeandlearning.org/publications/time-deeper-learning>) from Mass2020, examines how schools that prioritize deeper learning are using whatever time they have available—whether through an expanded day or during a traditional school schedule—to reach their educational goals.
		- *Time for Teachers:* *Leveraging Time to Strengthen Instruction & Empower Teachers* (<http://www.timeandlearning.org/sites/default/files/resources/timeforteachers.pdf>) describes the systems and practices implemented at 17 schools to provide students with more time for learning and teachers with more time to collaborate, reflect, and plan.
		- EdReports.org (<http://www.edreports.org/>) provides free, independent reviews of K-12 education materials. The reviews focus on alignment to college- and career-ready standards and other indicators of high quality as recommended by educators.
		- *Quick Reference Guide: Aligning Curriculum to Massachusetts Standards* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/candi/impd/qrg-aligning-curriculum.pdf>) is designed to support teachers, coaches, administrators, and curriculum developers in the work of considering the ways in which

Assessment

***Contextual Background***

The district’s director of accountability oversees the major student assessment processes for the district. Her responsibilities also include professional development and management of grants in the district. Two administrative assistants provide central office support, while administrators and instructional coaches support data collection and dissemination activities within their schools. During the 2016–2017 school year, the district’s regional District and School Assistance Center (DSAC) has provided educators with formal training and support on effective ways of using student data.

Educators from kindergarten through grade 8 use a variety of assessments to determine students’ needs.[[5]](#footnote-5) They use these data to group students by skill levels for targeted reading and math instruction for a portion of their day in walk-to-read and walk-to-math groups. These educators use assessment data to determine tiered intervention groupings and regroupings. Students identified as being at-risk for academic failure are referred to the Student Assistance Teams (SATs). Team members use data to determine whether more in-depth testing or referrals are necessary. The district monitors the progress of all students at-risk throughout the year. Assessment policies and practices are mostly consistent at the elementary and middle-school levels.

Interviewees across the district acknowledged that the district needed to improve the overall collection and analysis of student assessment data. The district has not established data teams, or analyzed student assessment data in a timely and ongoing way. As a result, the district has not been able to make dynamic use of these data to improve student achievement and inform key aspects of its decision-making, including policy development and implementation, instructional programs, assessment practices, procedures, and supervision.

Many interviewees expressed a desire to use data more effectively. District administrators acknowledged this and recognized that it would require additional time and resources.

***Challenges and Areas for Growth***

**1. The district does not have an effective system for continuously collecting, analyzing, and disseminating student assessment data to monitor students’ progress, to inform instructional practice, to provide interventions, and to inform its decision-making.**

1. A limited amount of designated staff time is devoted to collecting, analyzing, and disseminating student assessment data.
2. Interviewees frequently said that the district needed more resources (i.e., time and money) to establish better district and school-wide data systems. As an example of resources being stretched too thinly, they noted that the director of accountability also oversaw major district functions in the areas of assessment, curriculum, professional development, and grants.
3. The district does not have data teams. Data discussions take place as part of other school-based meetings (e.g., grade-level meetings, Professional Learning Communities, department meetings, and faculty meetings) and do not take place routinely.
4. While some achievement data is available, district and school leaders do not collect, analyze, and disseminate these data in ways that can have a positive impact on the quality of school programs, policies, and instruction.
5. Interviewees acknowledged that districtwide, principals and teachers needed additional help with training on using data to analyze students’ progress and needs; integrating more enhanced technology systems for prompt collection and distribution of student data; making assessment results available to staff on a more timely basis; and producing user-friendly and detailed reports for internal and external stakeholders.
6. In contrast to the elementary- and middle-schools, the team found limited evidence of continuous collection and timely dissemination of data at the junior and senior high-school level; the data analysis process was focused almost exclusively on annual MCAS assessment results.
7. Educators and other stakeholders do not have access to locally produced and user-friendly reports on student achievement and other relevant assessment data.

Elementary- and middle-school level coaches and central office administrators make student assessment data available to teachers in spreadsheets without key student demographics or deeper analysis such as student growth by school, grade, or classroom.

The review team found limited evidence that the district provided the school committee and community with critical information about student achievement other than district MCAS assessment data and individual students’ scores provided to families.

**C**. The team found limited evidence of administrators and teachers using student assessment data to adjust or make key decisions related to instructional practice and pedagogy, programs, policies, services, or supervision practices.

While some schools effectively use assessment data for tiered intervention groupings, team members found limited use of formative assessment data in driving instructional practice in classrooms.

1. The team found sufficient and compelling evidence of teachers conducting frequent checks for student understanding, providing feedback, and adjusting instruction (characteristic # 4) in 39 percent of observed elementary, in 56 percent of middle-school, and in 36 percent of junior and senior high school classrooms.

**D.** The district uses limited data to inform its decision-making.

Interviewees said that the superintendent was a proponent of using data as part of the decision-making process. However, her vision has not translated to setting expectations and developing systems to use student assessment data to inform instructional practice.

1. Some teachers questioned the amount of time spent assessing students, noting that the district was missing opportunities to analyze the data that these assessments provide in order to improve lesson planning and delivery of instruction.

District leaders and school committee members rely on limited data to inform their decision-making.

1. School committee members said that they did not take a systematic approach to reviewing various sources of data and using these data to inform policy and budget issues.

**Impact**: The absence of consistent training, support structures, and dissemination of user‐friendly and timely student outcome and achievement data hampers the district’s ability to maximize the impact of programs, policies, and instruction. Without sufficient data, educators, school committee members, and other stakeholders are missing important information about student learning, challenges, and opportunities, which is necessary for effective short- and long-term planning and decision-making.

***Recommendation***

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

1. District and school leaders, in collaboration with teachers, should develop specific strategies, timelines, and clear expectations for the use of data districtwide.
2. Building on existing practices (for example, the use of data to determine flexible tiered intervention groupings), the district should establish systematic, consistent processes and tools for the use of data districtwide.
3. The data system should provide professional staff with convenient, real-time access to student performance data, as well as other relevant academic and demographic data, as appropriate.
4. Ongoing training in the collection, analysis, and use of student performance data should be provided for staff in every school, grade level, and content area.
5. District and school leaders should systematically incorporate student assessment results and other pertinent data into all aspects of policy, prioritization, and decision-making, including budget development, district and school improvement plans, and the evaluation of educational programs and services.

1. Principals, as instructional leaders, should play an active role in data teams and other structures that support the analysis and use of data in their schools.

**Benefits:**  Implementing this recommendation will help the district to continuously monitor student progress, to accurately measure outcomes and achievement, to better inform decision-making---and ultimately to provide all students with greatly improved learning opportunities and academic outcomes.

**Recommended resources:**

* + - ESE’s *Assessment Literacy Self-Assessment and Gap Analysis Tool* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/ddm/webinar/PartI-GapAnalysis.pdf>) is intended to support districts in understanding where their educators fit overall on a continuum of assessment literacy. After determining where the district as a whole generally falls on the continuum, districts can determine potential next steps.
		- ESE’s *District Data Team Toolkit* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/accountability/toolkit/district-data-toolkit.pdf> ) is a set of resources to help a district establish, grow, and maintain a culture of inquiry and data use through a District Data Team.

Human Resources and Professional Development

***Contextual Background***

ESE last reviewed the district in April 2011. That report identified significant challenges in the district’s educator evaluation and professional development systems. The 2011 report noted, “The evaluation process was not universally helpful to teachers;” interviewees described the evaluation process as an “event” rather than a process. The report went on to state that the teacher evaluation system “is not delivering the results described as its purposes….such as accountability, improvement of instruction by means of professional development, or examination of the effects of teaching on student achievement.” Further, the report stated that the “current evaluation process does not have the capacity to collect sufficiently regular and substantive data about teaching” and concluded that “continued use of the system….will not provide the kind of data required to improve student achievement.”

The 2011 report identified similar concerns with the district’s professional development program. For example, the district had not developed a comprehensive multi-year professional development (PD) plan but rather “episodic offerings (that) are scattered throughout the year.” The report noted that there was “no common scaffolding to structure PD for teachers or administrators.” The report concluded by stating that the district’s “failure to explicitly align the changing organizational and competency needs of the staff to a comprehensive, multi-year, written PD plan will weaken (its) efforts to bring scale to its successes with student learning.”

Many of the specific concerns and areas for growth identified in this 2018 report are similar to those identified in ESE’s 2011 report. A number of factors have compromised the district’s educator evaluation system and PD program. These include the absence of targeted training and ongoing support for principals and administrators, and an absence of collaborative systems and coordinated structures that would enable faculty to participate actively and appropriately in policy and decision-making.

***Challenges and Areas for Growth***

**1. The district has not achieved consistency in the implementation of its educator evaluation system.**

**A**. Overall implementation has been uneven and inconsistent. [[6]](#footnote-6)

1. The team reviewed the 2015–2017 evaluative documentation of 30 teachers selected randomly from across the district. Teacher goals, self-assessments, and evidence were appropriate, timely, and complete. Formative assessments/evaluations and summative evaluations were generally evidence based and addressed teacher performance in the Massachusetts Standards and Indicators of Effective Teaching Practice.

a. Although some teacher evaluations did contain instructive[[7]](#footnote-7) feedback and concrete recommendations for improved classroom practice, the majority contained generic suggestions or were not specific.

1. Some feedback in evaluations from administrators’ unannounced classroom observations was targeted and instructive. Teachers reported, however, that these visits and the subsequent feedback were infrequent. Principals acknowledged that in general they were unable to meet the minimum contractual requirements for unannounced observations.
2. Analysis of data entered in the district’s Teach Point system indicated that among the 30 teachers whose evaluative documentation the team had reviewed, the average number of classroom observations by evaluators during the school year was 1.85 per teacher.

2. Some teachers expressed concern that the district had not trained principals sufficiently to use the educator evaluation system effectively.

 a. Principals reported that they have received little formal evaluation training in the educator evaluation system. They indicated an interest in targeted professional growth opportunities, calibration exercises, and other training designed to expand their evaluative competencies and leadership capacity.

3. Principals stated that because of the many competing demands on their time and attention and the limited number of evaluators in the schools, they were unable to get into classrooms as much as they would have liked. This situation is particularly acute at the middle school where the principal is without an assistant and must administer all components of the educator evaluation system herself.[[8]](#footnote-8)

**B.** Team members also reviewed the 2015–2017 formative assessments/evaluations and summative evaluations of all the district’s principals. In general, these evaluative documents were informative and completed in a timely manner. As with teachers’ evaluative documents, however, they rarely contained specific, actionable feedback or concrete recommendations with the capacity to contribute to professional growth, overall effectiveness, or enhanced leadership capacity.

 1. Feedback took the form of broad generalizations rather than recommendations for specific, timely, and actionable leadership actions.

**Impact**: Without frequent classroom observations and high-quality feedback that contributes to professional growth, educators are challenged to build their skills and to create improved learning experiences and outcomes for students.

**2. The district has not taken formal action on the components of the Massachusetts Education Evaluation Framework that require the collection and use of multiple sources of evaluative evidence. Some teachers in some schools have started the process.**

**A.** As of the 2015–2016 school year, state regulations (603 CMR 35.07) call for districts to collect and use student feedback as evidence in the teacher evaluation process and staff feedback as evidence in the administrator evaluation process.[[9]](#footnote-9) This feedback may also be used to inform an educator’s self-assessment, goal setting, or as evidence to demonstrate growth over time.

1. Interviewees stated that a number of teachers have begun to use surveys to collect student feedback. They said that although practices and instruments vary, all high-school students are surveyed each semester and that K–6 students are surveyed at the end of the year.

2. Interviewees also said that some teachers share their “student satisfaction” data with their colleagues or principal and that teachers are encouraged to use the data when setting their goals for the subsequent school year. They acknowledged, however, that practices, procedures, and instruments were not formalized or standardized and that the district did not plan to use the data for the specific purposes described in the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Framework.

**B.** The educator evaluation regulations also require the identification of multiple measures of student learning, growth, and achievement, including common and standardized assessments.

 1. Administrators stated that student assessment data was not used in the teacher evaluation process, noting that they were unaware of any district plans to do so.

**Impact**: Without the collection and use of multiple sources of evaluative evidence, the district is unable to provide all educators with a comprehensive and accurate description of their overall effectiveness.

* + 1. **The district’s professional development program is missing collaborative leadership; comprehensive and coordinated planning; clear, measurable goals; and sustained alignment with district priorities.**

**A.** Interviews and a document review indicated thatthe district’s professional development (PD) program was missing key components of the Massachusetts Standards for Professional Development. Among those principles is that PD should be a systematic and purposeful process directed by effective and collaborative leadership.

1. The district does not have a PD steering committee or designated leadership group to plan and coordinate PD. Interviewees said that the PD director also serves as the district’s director of curriculum, accountability, grants, Title I, and Title II A. PD planning is conducted as needed at the superintendent’s senior leadership team meetings.
	1. Teachers said that PD planning was not collaborative and that they had little meaningful input. They expressed a desire to create a PD committee composed of teachers and administrators to plan PD.
2. The district has not developed a comprehensive and coordinated PD plan with clearly articulated goals and objectives, directly aligned with District Improvement Plan (DIP) priorities and the improvement goals of the schools and individual educators.

a. Teachers described PD programming as “disjointed.” Presentations seemed to be about unrelated topics, without follow-up by the district. Teachers said that most PD time involved curriculum review and revision.

1. Administrators and teachers expressed concern about the adequacy of resources, including embedded time and funding, to properly support and sustain professional growth. The district has made efforts to provide opportunities for staff to meet regularly, including some scheduled common planning time for teachers in pre-kindergarten through grade 6, Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), weekly grade-level meetings in the elementary school, and coaching supports. However, the amount of time embedded in an educator’s daily work currently varies widely across the district.

Although the district has four early-release PD days included in its calendar, three of those days are used to review and revise curriculum.

Interviewees expressed the belief that some of the current issues with the district’s PD program resulted from limited funding.

 4. Topics offered during districtwide PD days have largely focused on curriculum development, social-emotional learning, domestic violence, trauma, and state mandated trainings. The district has not routinely offered PD to teachers and administrators that focuses on instructional strategies.

Administrators stated that in 2013 teachers received PD in backwards design and differentiation of instruction. In 2012, the district offered training in the use of Understanding by Design. Teachers new to the district have not formally received this training.

Principals stated that instruction needed to be more dynamic and improvement was not progressing at the pace needed to have a positive impact on teaching and learning.

 **B.** Educators spoke about limited opportunities to explore and expand their instructional repertoire, and stated that they would benefit from additional training on implementing the educator evaluation system.

Some educators expressed concerns that principals may not have received sufficient training in implementing the educators’ evaluation rubric, noting that more coherence was needed across the district. In addition, administrators expressed the view that this training was essential for their ongoing professional growth.

Administrators told the team that some principals have not had National Institute for School Leadership (NISL) training. They also said that the district did not analyze observation data to identify instructional strategies that PD should focus on.

The district does not require or offer the administrative team calibration activities or exercises involving the gathering and analysis of evidence. Some principals have initiated calibration activities in their own schools with their assistant principals. Administrators at all levels stated that calibration activities would promote greater inter-rater consistency and professional growth for evaluators.

**Impact**: By missing the opportunity to create, sustain, and adequately support a PD plan designed to build a professional learning community capable of supporting educators at all stages of their career, the district limits its ability to enhance professional practice, to build local capacity, to improve classroom instruction, and to systematically advance district priorities. Ultimately, the limitations of the PD program mean that the district is challenged to provide enhanced educational opportunities and academic achievement for all students.

***Recommendations***

**1. The district should fully and effectively implement all components of the state’s Educator Evaluation Framework.**

**A.** The district should develop systems and support structures to ensure that all teachers are provided with regular and frequent observations and concrete, targeted feedback for improving classroom practice. Teachers and administrators should receive formative assessments/evaluations and summative evaluations that provide meaningful and actionable recommendations that contribute to professional growth and expanded skills.

1**.**  The district should provide continuous professional development (PD), coaching, and support to improve the supervisory practices and evaluative skills of all administrators and evaluators.

 2**.** The district should provide ongoing, systematic and formal calibration training for evaluators, using tools such as ESE’s observation calibration video and related calibration protocols and activities.

 3. The superintendent should provide regular and targeted feedback, as well as appropriate supports, to principals to build their capacity to provide their teachers with effective and timely supervision and evaluation.

 4. The district should consider ways to provide teachers with more frequent classroom observations, increased support, and meaningful feedback. Options could include adjusting schedules, reallocating responsibilities, or widening the pool of evaluators.

 **B.** The district should implement the components of the state’s Educator Evaluation Framework that require the collection and use of multiple sources of evidence to inform the evaluations of both teachers and principals.

The district should establish formal policies and procedures for the collection and use of student and staff feedback as evidence for teacher and administrator evaluations.

The district should develop an effective process and supports for incorporating evidence of student learning into the educator evaluation process.

**Benefits:** By improving the quality, consistency, and comprehensiveness of the evaluation process, the district will create a powerful mechanism by which to produce enriched learning experiences and increased academic achievement for all students.

**Recommended resources:**

* *On Track with Evaluator Capacity* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/pln/OnTrack-EvaluatorCapacity.pdf>) is an interactive document that provides specific strategies, lessons learned, and links to district-created resources. It was produced by eight districts that were part of a Professional Learning Network for Supporting Evaluator Capacity.
* *Quick Reference Guide: Opportunities to Streamline the Evaluation Process* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/QRG-Streamline.pdf>) is designed to help districts reflect on and continuously improve their evaluation systems:
	+ What’s working? What are the bright spots?
	+ How can we streamline the process to stay focused on professional growth and development?
	+ What do we need to adjust to ensure our system is valuable to educators and students?
* *Quick Reference Guide: Student and Staff Feedback* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/QRG-Feedback.pdf>) provides information about how to select feedback instruments and use feedback as part of the educator evaluation system, along with links to relevant resources.
* ESE’s *Calibration Video Library* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/calibration/>) is a collection of professionally created videos of classroom instruction produced by the School Improvement Network. These videos depict a range of practice (this is NOT a collection of exemplars) to support within-district calibration activities that promote a shared understanding of instructional quality and rigor.
* ESE’s *Online Calibration Training Tool* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/calibration/tool/>) uses videos of classroom instruction from ESE’s Calibration Video Library to simulate brief, unannounced observations. Groups of educators, such as a district leadership team, watch a video together and then individually assess the educator’s practice related to specific elements from the Model Classroom Teacher Rubric and provide the educator with written feedback. Through real-time data displays, the group members can then see how their conclusions compare to each other, as well educators throughout the state.
	+ 1. **The district should revise its approach to professional development to ensure that it is collaboratively planned and aligned with district, school, and educator goals.**

**A.** Professional development (PD) should be aligned with the Massachusetts Standards for Professional Development, with particular attention focused on the following:

The district’s PD program should be planned and coordinated by a joint committee composed of administrators and teacher representatives from the three district schools. The committee should take steps to ensure wide input into PD planning.

The committee, with the guidance of the PD director, should ensure that designated PD time is used for training, coaching, and collaborative learning that is informed by student and educator data and aligned with district, school, and/or educator goals.

The district should review its current resource allocation choices and identify ways to support a comprehensive and fully effective PD program.

**Benefits:** The creation of a strong, collaborative, well defined professional leadership structure will help ensure that all resources, including embedded time, personnel, and related support structures and services, are deployed in a more coordinated, strategic, and equitable manner. The involvement and formal collaboration of teachers in the process can contribute directly to the creation of an authentic professional community and promote a model of shared leadership within the district.

**Recommended resources:**

* *The Massachusetts Standards for Professional Development* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/pd/standards.pdf>) describe, identify, and characterize what high quality learning experiences should look like for educators.
* Professional development case studies (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/pd/CaseStudies/>) highlight districts implementing meaningful professional development programs that support educators throughout the entire career continuum. Watch examples of PD programs that are job-embedded, teacher-led, data-driven, and aligned to educator and district needs.
* ESE’s Information for Professional Development Providers web page (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/dsac/profdev.html>) provides links to professional development course parameters and a self-assessment.
* *Identifying Meaningful Professional Development* (<https://youtu.be/zhuFioO8GbQ>) is a video in which educators from three Massachusetts districts discuss the importance of targeted, meaningful professional development and the ways districts can use the evaluation process to identify the most effective PD supports for all educators.

Student Support

***Contextual Background***

The district faces significant challenges in order to provide academically strong programs and coordinated, targeted supports and services to improve student outcomes. Many students come to school each day with high programmatic and support needs. In the 2017–2018 school year, 56.5 percent of students are part of the high-needs subgroup because they are in one or more of the following groups: economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and English language learners (ELLs) or former ELLs. Students with disabilities represent 19.9 percent of student enrollment, compared with 17.7 percent of their peers in the state; ELLs make up 0.8 percent of the total student population, compared with 10.2 percent of the state; and 50.5 percent of students come from economically disadvantaged households, compared with 32 percent across the state.

The district’s schools reflect a range of progress and student achievement results. For example, according to ESE data, while the four-year and five-year cohort graduation rates are low, they have improved in recent years.[[10]](#footnote-10) In addition, the district’s in-school and out-of-school suspension and dropout rates have improved.[[11]](#footnote-11) [[12]](#footnote-12)At the same time, the overall chronic absence rate has increased and the chronic absence rates at the junior senior high school are of significant concern.[[13]](#footnote-13) And the percentages of students meeting or exceeding expectations on the 2017 Next-Generation MCAS assessment or attaining proficient or advanced scores on the 2017 science and grade 10 MCAS assessment were below state averages for every tested grade and content area, except in ELA and math in grade 10.

The district has not established an effective, comprehensive and coordinated system of academic and non-academic programs and supports. There are some programs and supports in place, including the Student Assistance Teams (SATs), which are used in every school to provide support for struggling students, and a tiered system of reading instruction at the elementary and middle schools. However, the availability of programs and supports varies from school to school. The review team did not find evidence that the district monitors the effectiveness of the support programs and services in place. The district does not have a vision or plan for an integrated system of student support K–12.

***Challenges and Areas for Growth***

**1. The district has not established an integrated system of support to address the academic needs of all students.**

**A.** Interviews and a document review indicated that academic support services varied from level to level.

1. The district has a three-tiered model of academic support in place for reading instruction at both the elementary (K–3) and middle (grades 4–6) schools.
2. Tier one instruction focuses on presenting the core reading program at each school.
3. Tier two instruction focuses on supplemental instruction for those students deemed somewhat at-risk or at below grade level performance in each school.
4. Tier three instruction focuses on intensive interventions. The specific approaches, staff, and materials used in this tier differ between the elementary and middle schools.

i. At the elementary level, the specific interventions used are left to the special education teachers who are responsible for the delivery of services at this tier. The most commonly used interventions are Lindamood Phoneme Sequencing Program (LIPS) and Seeing Stars, since all elementary special education teachers have received training in these programs.

ii. At the middle school, special education teachers support students in the classroom based on need and data and only pull out students with significant needs.

1. The district has not established a comprehensive tiered model of instruction at the junior senior high school. Students most at risk receive academic support through a co-teaching model and/or a study skills period.
	1. The co-teaching model pairs specific ELA and mathematics teachers with a special education teacher or a paraprofessional to deliver differentiated instruction.
	2. The students assigned to the co-teaching classrooms are students experiencing academic difficulties.
	3. The study skills class is an additional period assigned to those students who continue to struggle academically.

**Impact**: The absence of a comprehensive continuum of targeted academic services and supports is leaving some students without the academic support they need to be successful.

**2. District policies and practices are not sufficiently meeting the social-emotional and behavioral needs of all students.**

1. Interviews indicated that the district did not have a comprehensive model of progressive classroom management and social-emotional learning.
2. At the elementary school, each teacher implements his/her own discipline program using a positive behavior reward system such as Second Step or The Six Pillars of Character Education.

2. At the middle school, programs include the Six Pillars of Character Education and Bucket Tickets reward programs.

3. The junior senior high school does not have a comprehensive model of progressive classroom management and social-emotional learning.

4. Student support staff expressed a need and desire for professional development for all staff on how to relate and connect with students, as well as training on specific classroom and behavioral interventions.

 **B.** Interviews and a document review showed that The Structured Learning Center (SLC) model was in place at all three schools to address the most severe social-emotional and behavioral needs of students.

 1. The Student Learning Center (SLC), as defined in a brochure from the junior senior high school, “is a regular education therapeutic learning environment designed to meet the social, emotional, behavioral needs of students….”

 2. From kindergarten through grade 6, the principal or assistant principal at the elementary school and the principal at the middle school assign students to the SLC for sensory breaks, check-ins, or de-escalation of behavior.

 a. The elementary SLC is staffed by a paraprofessional on a long-term substitute assignment.

 b. The middle-school SLC is staffed by a certified special education teacher and a paraprofessional.

 3. In grades 7–12, two SLCs provide social-emotional support for students. The assistant principal assigns students as needed, on a part-time or full-time basis.

 a. One SLC at the junior senior high school serves students in grades 7 and 8; the second serves students in grades 9 through 12.

 b. A special education teacher and an interventionist staff each SLC.

 c. The interventionists supports the social-emotional and behavioral needs of students.

 d. The special education teacher provides academic support to the students assigned to the center. During the onsite visit, team members noted that the special education teacher had seven students at the time; the students were working on various assignments from different teachers and courses.

 **C.** The district does not evaluate these programs and strategies.

 **D.** Interviews and a document review showed an absence of practices in place in the junior senior high school to address the needs of chronically absent students.[[14]](#footnote-14)

1. When staff have concerns about chronic absence, guidance counselors at the junior senior high school or adjustment counselors at the elementary or middle school follow up with families.

2. The district also attempts to contact chronically absent students and their families via phone calls and letters.

 3. Chronically absent students can be placed on probation or lose course credits.

 **E.** The junior senior high school has limited programs for dropout prevention and re-engagement. Programs are mainly provided after students have dropped out, rather than supporting students proactively.

1. The district has Title I credit recovery online courses with a teacher to supervise and manage the program. Students can access coursework from home but must attend a weekly after-school program onsite.

2. A four-week summer program allows students to take up to two classes so that they can get back on track and make up missed credits.

3. The Summer Jobs and Beyond Program at the senior high school provides internships and opportunities for participating students to explore the world of work and careers in an effort to keep them engaged in school.

4. The Work-Based Learning program enables students to do internships and externships with local businesses to gain experience in different career placements. This program is built into students’ schedules and students receive a grade.

**Impact:** The absence of coordinated and comprehensive support systems, structures and practices have resulted in high levels of chronic absence, and a low graduation rate for the past four years. By not addressing these troubling trends over time, and analyzing the effectiveness of current programs, it is unlikely that the district will make progress in reversing these trends.

***Recommendation***

* + 1. **The district should define and implement a multi-tiered system of supports for all learners in the district K–12.**

 **A**. The district should put practices in place to ensure that all students are provided with instruction and support that meets their needs.

1. It should use student performance and outcome data to determine additional interventions that are necessary to more directly address students’ needs.

 **B.** As a first step, it would be useful to complete ESE’s Systems for Student Success self-assessment.

 1. Based on findings from the self-assessment, the district should determine action steps to address the systems and practices that need strengthening.

 2. The district should continue to work toward a shared understanding of flexible tiers and define instructional and social-emotional interventions and supports for each tier.

 3. The tiered system should include interventions and strategies to address attendance and persistence through graduation.

 **C.** The district should systematically evaluate the effectiveness of its tiered systems of support and modify it as appropriate.

 **D.** The district should implement clear schoolwide positive behavioral systems and expectations, in which specific rules, behaviors, and expectations are taught, modeled, and rewarded, while using an ongoing data-monitoring system to evaluate progress and inform practices.

 **E.** The district should consider surveying students and families about the reasons for high absence rates and possible ways of improving attendance.

**Benefits:** Implementing this recommendation will enhance the ability of district educators to meet the learning needs of all students.

**Recommended resources:**

* ESE’s *Early Warning Indicator System* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edwin/analytics/ewis.html> ) is a tool to provide information to districts about the likelihood that their students will reach key academic goals. Districts can use the tool in conjunction with other data and sources of information to better target student supports and interventions and to examine school-level patterns over time in order to address systemic issues that may impede students’ ability to meet academic goals.
* The *Early Warning Implementation Guide* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edwin/analytics/implementation-guide.pdf>) provides information on how to use early warning data, including the Massachusetts Early Warning Indicator System (EWIS), to identify, diagnose, support and monitor students in grades 1-12. It offers educators an overview of EWIS and how to effectively use these data in conjunction with local data by following a six-step implementation cycle.
* The *Massachusetts Systems for Student Success (SfSS)* ([www.mass.gov/ese/mtss](http://www.mass.gov/ese/mtss)) is a blueprint for school improvement that focuses on systems, structures and supports across the district, school, and classroom to meet the academic and non-academic needs of all students. The SfSS website includes links to a self-assessment and a variety of helpful resources.
* *Supporting and Responding to Behavior: Evidence-Based Classroom Strategies for Teachers* (<https://www.osepideasthatwork.org/evidencebasedclassroomstrategies/>) summarizes evidence-based, positive, proactive, and responsive classroom behavior intervention and support strategies that can help teachers capitalize on instructional time and decrease disruptions.
* *Every Student, Every Day: A Community Toolkit to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism* (<http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/chronicabsenteeism/toolkit.pdf>) is a set of Action Guides that provide information and resources to help ensure that all young people are in school every day and benefitting from coordinated systems of support.
* *Guiding Principles: A Resource Guide for Improving School Climate and Discipline* (<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/school-discipline/guiding-principles.pdf>) highlights ways in which states and school districts can promote academic excellence by creating safe and productive learning environments for all students.

Financial and Asset Management

***Contextual Background***

At least 10 years before the onsite review in late January/early February 2018, district administrators outsourced the business office function to a consulting company, which operates in central and western Massachusetts. The consultant business manager is not a member of the senior leadership team but attends meetings on request. The consultant is in the district offices one day per week. The district employs a full-time payroll and accounts payable clerk. This business office model has resulted in a decentralized business function with some traditional responsibilities of the business manager resting with the superintendent, including food services and maintenance. The superintendent stated that she was comfortable with this business model, especially since she has competent food service and maintenance directors.

The district has three school buildings located on a single campus. The elementary school was built in 1971 and the middle school in 1960. These two buildings have not had major renovations and none is planned. They are in good condition and well maintained. The high school was built in 1998 and is well maintained. The town has a capital improvement plan, as does the school district. The two plans differ and it does not appear that the town and district work together on capital planning.

***Strength Finding***

**1. The district develops partnerships with community groups and businesses to extend educational opportunities and participates with neighboring districts in collaborative bidding.**

* 1. In an effort to increase the selection of electives at the high-school level, the superintendent is working with community and business leaders to design new course offerings for Ware students.

1. Together with the Ware fire chief, in 2017–2018 the superintendent developed a fire science course that is offered at only one other Massachusetts high school.

* + - 1. The addition of the fire science course attracted 11 students in the first year.
			2. The superintendent solicited the help of a local bank to pay for the textbooks and half of the student’s tuition for the fire science course. The course includes a financial literacy component to teach students about healthy financial practices.

 2. The superintendent is attempting to build on the success of the fire science course by exploring the possibility of adding emergency medical technician (EMT), medical assistant, and criminal justice electives in the future.

 a. The superintendent is in discussions with the president of Baystate Wing Hospital about a partnership on developing EMT (Emergency Medical Technician) and nursing aide and assistant programs.

 b. The student resource officer at the high school, a member of the Ware Police Department, is exploring a criminal justice course for the high school level.

* 1. Local community and business groups contribute educational materials and services to the district.

1. Educational materials received from local businesses include books donated by a local bank for both the school library and for homeless students, Kindle Fires for summer reading from the same bank, and student dictionaries from the Grange.

2. Holyoke Community College, which has a satellite campus in Ware, provides tutoring for students.

3. A group of dental hygienists from a local dental office visits the schools to clean students’ teeth. A dentist will also provide services to district students, at no cost to the families or the district.

* 1. The district participates in collaborative bids for services such as heating oil, electricity, rubbish removal, and student transportation.
		1. In the spring of 2017, the district participated in a fiscal year 2018–2020 student transportation bid with the neighboring school districts of Granby and Belchertown. Five bus companies responded, which resulted in a more competitive bid.
			1. Based on the difference between the proposed fiscal year 2018 level-service budget amount for transportation of $1,624,711 and the approved budget allocation of $1,545,000, the district appears to have saved over $79,000 with the accepted bid.
		2. The district has also used the services of an educational consulting company to participate in joint bids for rubbish removal and electricity, which provided lower costs than participating in the county collaborative bid.

**Impact**: Partnerships with community businesses and agencies have provided needed courses, materials, and services that the district may otherwise not have been able to pay for. Collaborative bidding with neighboring districts has helped lower costs for services, utilities, and transportation.

***Challenges and Areas for Growth***

**2. The district loses many students to choice, charter, and private schools resulting in substantial tuition costs to the district.**

**A.** Between fiscal year 2015 and fiscal year 2017, many students chose to attend school out of the district resulting in substantial tuition costs to the district.

1. The table below represents the losses of students and tuition for out-of-district school choice for fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2017.

**Table 22: Ware Public School District**

**Losses in Enrollment and Tuition from Out-of-District School Choice**

**Fiscal Year 2015 through Fiscal Year 2017**

| **Fiscal Year** | **Number of Out-of-District** **Choice Students** | **Choice-Out Tuition** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 2014–2015 | 180 | $1,050,672 |
| 2015–2016 | 184 | $1,057,969 |
| 2016–2017 | 165 | $964,837 |

 Source: End-of-Year Reports and MA ESE School Choice Trends in Enrollment and Tuition

 **B.** When asked why so students choose to attend school out of the district, interviewees mentioned the limited number of electives and extracurricular activities such as band in lower grades. They also mentioned the desire to attend a school with division 1 athletic teams.

 **C.** District administrators and school committee members said that they were encouraged by the recent drop in the number of choice-out students.

**Impact:** School choice enrollments continue to reduce the funding that the schools have to support all children’s education.

**3. The district does not have a complete, transparent, and usable budget document. The district and the town do not have a written agreement about indirect costs for municipal services that are provided to the district.**

**A.** Interviews and a document review indicated that the district uses several budget documents and formats, which together contain the essential information about the financial operations of the district.

1. When the review team asked for a copy of the fiscal year 2018 adopted line-item budget, the review team was provided with an Excel budget document dated 04.05.17. When the team asked whether this document was the adopted budget, the review team was told that it was not. The review team was then told that the adopted budget numbers were included in the 17-page monthly budget vs. actual report submitted to the superintendent and the school committee.

2. When the team asked an administrator what he would give someone who requested the budget document, he said that he would provide a “packet of documents” and adjustments made after adoption of the final budget.

3. When asked the same question, the superintendent answered that the line-item budget is not the real budget because grants and revolving funds are not included. The superintendent said that she would blend all the documents together if someone needed a clearer financial picture.

**B.** The line-item budget document does not include other funding sources such as revolving accounts or estimated grant amounts.

1. These supplemental expenses are included in the budget vs. actual account presented monthly to the school committee.

 **C.** At the time of the onsite in late January/early February 2018, the district’s website provided some financial documents but they were not current or complete. The documents were not readily available at the district administration office or at school committee meetings.

 1. The school year 2017–2018 budget on the district’s website at the time of the onsite visit was dated 1.05.17; it was not the final adopted fiscal year 2018 budget and did not include all revenue sources such as grants and revolving accounts.

2. The other financial documents on the district’s website at the time of the onsite visit were the fiscal year 2016 final budget, the proposed fiscal year 2017 budget, and the April 2017 Transportation Bid.

* + 1. An interviewee stated that there has been mistrust between the town and the school district about finances in the past although he said it was getting better. He attributed the mistrust to the absence of detail the town receives in the school budget.

**D.** The district and town do not have a written agreement about indirect costs for municipal services that are provided to the district, as required by state regulation 603 CMR 10.04.

* + 1. An administrator and a town official told the review team that a written agreement did not exist.

The district’s auditors included a finding in the audit of the fiscal year 2016 End-of-Year Report stating the district did not meet Specific Requirement #11.a: “The School Department does not have a signed written agreement with Municipal officials regarding agreed upon methodologies to be used when allocating, distributing or assigning Municipal expenditure to the School Department.”

**Impact**: The absence of a clear, comprehensive, and usable budget document hinders the district’s ability to give stakeholders a clear picture of how resources are allocated in support of the district’s priorities. Without a written agreement about indirect costs for municipal services that are provided to the district, the district cannot effectively monitor and internally audit costs for education-related services and ensure the accuracy of these expenditures.

***Recommendations***

**1. The district should develop a budget document that is detailed, complete, current, understandable by the general public, and easily accessible to all constituents.**

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

1. All funding sources should be included with detailed spending plans. Estimated grant amounts, circuit breaker, school choice, and expenses from other revolving accounts would be included in this section.

2. A column for budget amounts adopted at town meeting should be clearly identified as the final, approved budget.

**B**. This recommended formal budget document does not preclude the use of other informational strategies such as PowerPoint presentations that may be useful as a narrative to explain accomplishments or key priorities.

**C.** In compliance with 603 CMR 10.4, district administrators and town officials should finalize a written agreement that details the calculation process and/or amounts to be used in calculating indirect charges to the district from the town.

**D.** To provide transparency, the district should have both proposed and final budget documents available and accessible to the public.

* + 1. After final budget adoption, copies of the complete budget document should be available at district administrative offices.[[15]](#footnote-15)
		2. After final budget adoption, copies of the complete budget document should be available at district administrative offices.
		3. During the budget development process and after final budget adoption, the district should include the budget document and related presentations on the district’s website.

**Benefits** from implementing this recommendation will include the district having a comprehensive budget document that clearly presents the district’s current education efforts. In addition, the document, and the process used to create it, would both inform budget development and create trust and confidence among all stakeholders in the district’s sound stewardship of scarce public funds.

**Recommended resources:**

* The Rennie Center’s *Smart* *School Budgeting* (<http://www.renniecenter.org/sites/default/files/2017-01/SmartSchoolBudgeting.pdf>) is a summary of existing resources on school finance, budgeting, and real­location.
* In *Spending Money Wisely: Getting the Most from School District Budgets* ([https://dmgroupk12.com](https://dmgroupk12.com/)/ ; scroll down to Research section), authors Nathan Levenson, Karla Baehr, James C. Smith, and Claire Sullivan identify and discuss the top ten opportunities for districts to realign resources and free up funds to support strategic priorities. Drawing on the wisdom of leading thinkers, district leaders, and education researchers from across the country, the authors gathered a long list of opportunities for resource reallocation. To distill these down to the ten most high-impact opportunities, each opportunity was assessed based on its financial benefit, its impact on student achievement, its political feasibility, and its likelihood of success relative to the complexity of implementation. (Page 63 of this resource contains an example of a comprehensive budget that includes grant spending detail. This format could also be used for special revenue and revolving accounts.)

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

Review Team Members

The review was conducted from January 29–February 1, 2018, by the following team of independent ESE consultants.

1. Christine Brandt, Leadership and Governance, *review team coordinator*
2. Michele Kingsland-Smith, Curriculum and Instruction
3. Lonnie Kaufman, Assessment
4. Frank Sambuceti, Human Resources and Professional Development
5. Maria Iglesias, Student Support
6. Marge Foster, Financial and Asset Management

District Review Activities

The following activities were conducted during the review:

The team conducted interviews with the following financial personnel: the business consultant and the bookkeeper.

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

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

The team conducted interviews/focus groups with the following central office administrators: the superintendent, the director of special education, and the director of accountability, professional development, Title I, Title IIA, and grants.

The team visited the following schools: the Stanley M. Koziol Elementary School (Pre-K–3), Ware Middle School (grades 4–6), and Ware Junior Senior High School (grades 7–12).

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

The team observed 62 classes in the district: 18 at the elementary school, 16 at the middle school, and 28 at the junior senior high school.

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

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

Site Visit Schedule

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Monday**1/29/2018 | **Tuesday**1/30/2018 | **Wednesday**1/31/2018 | **Thursday**2/1/2018 |
| Orientation with district leaders and principals; interviews with district staff and principals; document reviews; interview with teachers’ association; and visits to Ware Middle School and Ware Junior Senior High School for classroom observations. Review of personnel files. | Interviews with district staff and principals; review of personnel files; teacher focus groups; parent focus group; and visits to Koziol Elementary School, Ware Middle School, and Ware Junior Senior High School for classroom observations. | Interviews with town or city personnel; interviews with school leaders; interviews with school committee members; visits to Koziol Elementary School, Ware Middle School, and Ware Junior Senior High School for classroom observations. | Interviews with school leaders; follow-up interviews; district review team meeting; visits to Koziol Elementary School, Ware Middle School, and Ware Junior Senior High School for classroom observations; district wrap-up meeting with the superintendent. |

Appendix B: Enrollment, Attendance, Expenditures

**Table B1a: Ware Public Schools**

**2017–2018 Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity**

| **Group** | **District** | **Percent****of Total** | **State** | **Percent of****Total** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| African-American | 23 | 1.9% | 86,305 | 9.0% |
| Asian | 6 | 0.5% | 65,667 | 6.9% |
| Hispanic | 81 | 6.7% | 191,201 | 20.0% |
| Native American | 1 | 0.1% | 2,103 | 0.2% |
| White | 1,049 | 86.5% | 573,335 | 60.1% |
| Native Hawaiian | 4 | 0.3% | 818 | 0.1% |
| Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic  | 49 | 4.0% | 34,605 | 3.6% |
| **All Students** | 1,213 | 100.0% | 954,034 | 100.0% |
| Note: As of October 1, 2017 |

**Table B1b: Ware Public Schools**

**2017–2018 Student Enrollment by High Needs Populations**

| **Group** | **District** | **State** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **N** | **Percent of High Needs** | **Percent of District** | **N** | **Percent of High Needs** | **Percent of State** |
| Students w/ disabilities | 243 | 35.2% | 19.9% | 171,061 | 38.0% | 17.7% |
| Econ. Dis. | 613 | 88.7% | 50.5% | 305,203 | 67.9% | 32.0% |
| ELLs and Former ELLs | 10 | 1.4% | 0.8% | 97,334 | 21.6% | 10.2% |
| All high needs students | 691 | 100.0% | 56.5% | 449,584 | 100.0% | 46.6% |
| Notes: As of October 1, 2017. District and state numbers and percentages for students with disabilities and high needs students are calculated including students in out-of-district placements. Total district enrollment including students in out-of-district placement is 1,224; total state enrollment including students in out-of-district placement is 964,806. |

**Table B2: Ware Public Schools**

**Attendance Rates, 2014–2017**

| **Group** | **N (2017)** | **2014** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **4-yr Change** | **State (2017)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| High Needs | 730 | 93.5 | 93.2 | 92.8 | 91.9 | -1.6 | 93.1 |
| Econ. Dis. | 650 | -- | 93.1 | 93.0 | 91.8 | -- | 92.6 |
| ELLs | 16 | 94.3 | 93.0 | 88.4 | 93.1 | -1.2 | 93.5 |
| SWD | 229 | 91.7 | 90.5 | 91.2 | 91.8 | 0.1 | 93.0 |
| African American | 24 | 93.9 | 94.6 | 94.6 | 93.7 | -0.2 | 94.0 |
| Asian | 9 | 98.2 | 98.2 | 97.5 | 96.8 | -1.4 | 96.3 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 106 | 94.7 | 93.8 | 92.7 | 92.2 | -2.5 | 92.8 |
| Multi-Race | 60 | 96.6 | 94.9 | 94.9 | 93.8 | -2.8 | 94.5 |
| White | 1,131 | 94.3 | 93.8 | 94.1 | 93.4 | -0.9 | 95.1 |
| All | 1,335 | 94.4 | 93.9 | 94.1 | 93.3 | -1.1 | 94.6 |
| Notes: The attendance rate is calculated by dividing the total number of days students attended school by the total number of days students were enrolled in a particular school year. A student’s attendance rate is counted toward any district the student attended. In addition, district attendance rates included students who were out placed in public collaborative or private alternative schools/programs at public expense. Attendance rates have been rounded; percent change is based on unrounded numbers. |

**Table B3: Ware Public Schools**

**Expenditures, Chapter 70 State Aid, and Net School Spending Fiscal Years 2015–2017**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|   | **FY15** | **FY16** | **FY17** |
|   | **Estimated** | **Actual** | **Estimated** | **Actual** | **Estimated** | **Actual** |
| Expenditures |
| From local appropriations for schools: |  |
| By school committee | $12,326,061 | $12,345,955 | $12,700,000 | $12,771,995 | $13,198,724 | $13,280,515 |
| By municipality | $6,229,777 | $6,373,987 | $5,706,800 | $6,579,190 | $5,265,449 | $6,135,420 |
| Total from local appropriations | $18,555,838 | $18,719,942 | $18,406,800 | $19,351,185 | $18,464,173 | $19,415,935 |
| From revolving funds and grants | -- | $1,935,151 | -- | $1,749,856 | -- | $1,830,147 |
| Total expenditures | -- | $20,655,093 | -- | $21,101,041 | -- | $21,246,082 |
| Chapter 70 aid to education program |
| Chapter 70 state aid\* | -- | $8,736,718 | -- | $8,871,298 | -- | $9,369,357 |
| Required local contribution | -- | $5,575,059 | -- | $5,507,809 | -- | $5,469,680 |
| Required net school spending\*\* | -- | $14,311,777 | -- | $14,379,107 | -- | $14,839,037 |
| Actual net school spending | -- | $14,693,898 | -- | $15,221,272 | -- | $15,683,420 |
| Over/under required ($) | -- | $6,637 | -- | $842,165 | -- | $8444,383 |
| Over/under required (%) | -- | 0.0% | -- | 5.9% | -- | 5.7% |
| \*Chapter 70 state aid funds are deposited in the local general fund and spent as local appropriations.\*\*Required net school spending is the total of Chapter 70 aid and required local contribution. Net school spending includes only expenditures from local appropriations, not revolving funds and grants. It includes expenditures for most administration, instruction, operations, and out-of-district tuitions. It does not include transportation, school lunches, debt, or capital.Sources: FY15, FY16, and FY17 District End-of-Year Reports, Chapter 70 Program information on ESE websiteData retrieved 12/13/17 and 6/6/18 |

**Table B4: Ware Public Schools**

**Expenditures Per In-District Pupil**

**Fiscal Years 2014–2016**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Expenditure Category** | **2014** | **2015** | **2016** |
| Administration | $452 | $603 | $492 |
| Instructional leadership (district and school) | $923 | $814 | $764 |
| Teachers | $4,326 | $4,485 | $4,439 |
| Other teaching services | $1,256 | $1,219 | $1,425 |
| Professional development | $63 | $81 | $42 |
| Instructional materials, equipment and technology | $284 | $309 | $383 |
| Guidance, counseling and testing services | $387 | $424 | $360 |
| Pupil services | $1,515 | $1,899 | $1,882 |
| Operations and maintenance | $996 | $1,058 | $946 |
| Insurance, retirement and other fixed costs | $2,462 | $2,577 | $2,609 |
| Total expenditures per in-district pupil | $12,664 | $13,467 | $13,341 |
| Sources: [Per-pupil expenditure reports on ESE website](http://www.doe.mass.edu/finance/statistics/ppx.html)Note: Any discrepancy between expenditures and total is because of rounding. |

Appendix C: Instructional Inventory

| **Focus Area #1: Learning Objectives & Expectations** |  | Insufficient Evidence | Limited Evidence | Sufficient Evidence | Compelling Evidence | Avg Number of points |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (1 to 4) |
| 1. The teacher demonstrates knowledge of the subject matter. | **ES** | 6% | 44% | 44% | 6% | 2.5 |
| **MS** | 6% | 19% | 69% | 6% | 2.8 |
| **Jr/Sr HS** | 7% | 36% | 50% | 7% | 2.6 |
| **Total #** | 4 | 21 | 33 | 4 | 2.6 |
| **Total %** | 6% | 34% | 53% | 6% |   |
| 2. The teacher ensures that students understand what they should be learning in the lesson and why. | **ES** | 11% | 50% | 39% | 0% | 2.3 |
| **MS** | 13% | 31% | 50% | 6% | 2.5 |
| **Jr/Sr HS** | 11% | 64% | 18% | 7% | 2.2 |
| **Total #** | 7 | 32 | 20 | 3 | 2.3 |
| **Total %** | 11% | 52% | 32% | 5% |   |
| 3. The teacher uses appropriate classroom activities well matched to the learning objective(s). | **ES** | 6% | 50% | 44% | 0% | 2.4 |
| **MS** | 6% | 31% | 56% | 6% | 2.6 |
| **Jr/Sr HS** | 7% | 50% | 36% | 7% | 2.4 |
| **Total #** | 4 | 28 | 27 | 3 | 2.5 |
| **Total %** | 6% | 45% | 44% | 5% |   |
| 4. The teacher conducts frequent checks for student understanding, provides feedback, and adjusts instruction. | **ES** | 11% | 50% | 39% | 0% | 2.3 |
| **MS** | 13% | 31% | 56% | 0% | 2.4 |
| **Jr/Sr HS** | 18% | 46% | 32% | 4% | 2.2 |
| **Total #** | 9 | 27 | 25 | 1 | 2.3 |
| **Total %** | 15% | 44% | 40% | 2% |   |
| **Total Score For Focus Area #1** | **ES** |  |  |  |  | **9.4** |
| **MS** |  |  |  |  | **10.3** |
| **Jr/Sr HS** |  |  |  |  | **9.4** |
| **Total** |  |  |  |  | **9.7** |

| **Focus Area #2: Student Engagement & Higher-Order Thinking** |  | Insufficient Evidence | Limited Evidence | Sufficient Evidence | Compelling Evidence | Avg Number of points |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (1 to 4) |
| 5. Students assume responsibility to learn and are engaged in the lesson. | **ES** | 0% | 50% | 50% | 0% | 2.5 |
| **MS** | 0% | 38% | 63% | 0% | 2.6 |
| **Jr/Sr HS** | 21% | 50% | 21% | 7% | 2.1 |
| **Total #** | 6 | 29 | 25 | 2 | 2.4 |
| **Total %** | 10% | 47% | 40% | 3% |   |
| 6. Students engage in higher-order thinking. | **ES** | 39% | 39% | 22% | 0% | 1.8 |
| **MS** | 31% | 31% | 38% | 0% | 2.1 |
| **Jr/Sr HS** | 39% | 39% | 18% | 4% | 1.9 |
| **Total #** | 23 | 23 | 15 | 1 | 1.9 |
| **Total %** | 37% | 37% | 24% | 2% |   |
| 7. Students communicate their ideas and thinking with each other. | **ES** | 17% | 72% | 11% | 0% | 1.9 |
| **MS** | 38% | 13% | 50% | 0% | 2.1 |
| **Jr/Sr HS** | 39% | 46% | 11% | 4% | 1.8 |
| **Total #** | 20 | 28 | 13 | 1 | 1.9 |
| **Total %** | 32% | 45% | 21% | 2% |   |
| 8. Students engage with meaningful, real-world tasks. | **ES** | 22% | 39% | 28% | 11% | 2.3 |
| **MS** | 13% | 44% | 44% | 0% | 2.3 |
| **Jr/Sr HS** | 43% | 29% | 21% | 7% | 1.9 |
| **Total #** | 18 | 22 | 18 | 4 | 2.1 |
| **Total %** | 29% | 35% | 29% | 6% |   |
| **Total Score For Focus Area #2** | **ES** |   |   |   |   | **8.6** |
| **MS** |   |   |   |   | **9.1** |
| **Jr/Sr HS** |   |   |   |   | **7.7** |
| **Total** |   |   |   |   | **8.3** |

| **Focus Area #3: Inclusive Practice & Classroom Culture** |  | Insufficient Evidence | Limited Evidence | Sufficient Evidence | Compelling Evidence | Avg Number of points |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (1 to 4) |
| 9. The teacher ensures that students are engaging in challenging tasks regardless of learning needs. | **ES** | 28% | 56% | 17% | 0% | 1.9 |
| **MS** | 13% | 50% | 38% | 0% | 2.3 |
| **Jr/Sr HS** | 32% | 43% | 21% | 4% | 2.0 |
| **Total #** | 16 | 30 | 15 | 1 | 2.0 |
| **Total %** | 26% | 48% | 24% | 2% |   |
| 10. The teacher uses a variety of instructional strategies. | **ES** | 22% | 39% | 39% | 0% | 2.2 |
| **MS** | 6% | 69% | 19% | 6% | 2.3 |
| **Jr/Sr HS** | 32% | 43% | 21% | 4% | 2.0 |
| **Total #** | 14 | 30 | 16 | 2 | 2.1 |
| **Total %** | 23% | 48% | 26% | 3% |   |
| 11. Classroom routines and positive supports are in place to ensure that students behave appropriately. | **ES** | 0% | 28% | 67% | 6% | 2.8 |
| **MS** | 0% | 6% | 69% | 25% | 3.2 |
| **Jr/Sr HS** | 4% | 29% | 57% | 11% | 2.8 |
| **Total #** | 1 | 14 | 39 | 8 | 2.9 |
| **Total %** | 2% | 23% | 63% | 13% |   |
| 12. The classroom climate is conducive to teaching and learning. | **ES** | 0% | 22% | 72% | 6% | 2.8 |
| **MS** | 0% | 13% | 69% | 19% | 3.1 |
| **Jr/Sr HS** | 11% | 18% | 64% | 7% | 2.7 |
| **Total #** | 3 | 11 | 42 | 6 | 2.8 |
| **Total %** | 5% | 18% | 68% | 10% |   |
| **Total Score For Focus Area #3** | **ES** |  |  |  |  | **9.7** |
| **MS** |  |  |  |  | **10.8** |
| **Jr/Sr HS** |  |  |  |  | **9.4** |
| **Total** |  |  |  |  | **9.8** |

1. The district reported that a three-year DIP with measurable goals was completed in June 2018 and would be presented to the school committee for approval in September 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Between 2012 and 2017, the district’s chronic absence rate fluctuated from 15.3 percent in 2012 to 20.6 percent in 2017. In 2017, the chronic absence rates at the junior senior high school were as follows: 14 percent in grade 7; 28.3 percent in grade 8; 35.7 percent in grade 9; 27.7 percent in grade 10; 34.3 percent in grade 11; and 36.9 percent in grade 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Between 2012 and 2017, the district’s four-year cohort graduation rate fluctuated from 73 percent in 2012 to 77.9 percent. Between 2011 and 2016, the district’s five-year cohort graduation rate fluctuated from 72.2 percent in 2011 to 77.9 percent in 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The district reported that in August 2018 the district began a professional development (PD) initiative for all teachers focused on supporting struggling students. The district plans to follow up on this initiative during four half days and one full day of PD in the 2018–2019 school year. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Assessments include the Bracken School Readiness Assessment (Bracken), Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), Benchmark Assessment System (BAS), and Measures of Academic Progress (MAP). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The district reported that principals and assistant principals would receive educator evaluation training in 2018–2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. An informative evaluation is factual and cites instructional details such as methodology, pedagogy, Standards and Indicators of Effective Teaching Practice or instruction of subject-based knowledge that is aligned with the state curriculum frameworks. It does not commit to improvement strategies. An instructive evaluation includes comments intended to improve instruction. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. According to data from the 2017 VISTA (Views on Instruction, State Standards, Teaching, and Assessment) Principal Survey sponsored by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, on average principals spend 29 percent of their time over the course of a school week on evaluation activities. Schools with single administrators appear to spend more time on evaluation than those with assistant principals. 2018 VISTA data indicate that elementary principals spend the most time on evaluation activities: on average, seven more hours each week than high-school principals, and five more than middle-school principals. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. On Tuesday, February 28, 2017, after collecting public comment since November 2016, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education voted 9-1 to amend the educator evaluation regulations. The most significant change in the regulations is the elimination of a separate student impact rating. Under the [amended regulations](http://www.doe.mass.edu/boe/docs/FY2017/2017-02/item6.html), evaluators do not have to make a separate judgment about an educator’s impact on student learning. Instead, student learning is embedded as an indicator within one of the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Framework’s four standards. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Between 2012 and 2017, the district’s four-year cohort graduation rate fluctuated from 73 percent in 2012 to 77.9 percent. Between 2011 and 2016, the district’s five-year cohort graduation rate fluctuated from 72.2 percent in 2011 to 77.9 percent in 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Between 2013 and 2017, the district’s in-school suspension rate fluctuated from 4.4 percent in 2013 to 2.3 percent in 2017. The out-of-school suspension rate fluctuated from 5.3 percent in 2013 to 3.0 percent in 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Between 2012 and 2017, the district’s dropout rate fluctuated with an overall decrease from 3.8 percent in 2012 to 1.8 percent in 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Chronic absence is defined as being absent 10 percent or more of “days of membership” in the school district. Between 2012 and 2017, the district’s chronic absence rate fluctuated from 15.3 percent in 2012 to 20.6 percent in 2017. In 2017, the chronic absence rates at the junior senior high school were as follows: 14 percent in grade 7; 28.3 percent in grade 8; 35.7 percent in grade 9; 27.7 percent in grade 10; 34.3 percent in grade 11; and 36.9 percent in grade 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Chronic absence is defined as being absent 10 percent or more of “days of membership” in the school district. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. A district leader reported that budget documents were available upon request. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)