District Review Report

Lowell Public Schools

Comprehensive review conducted April 1–4, 2019

Office of District Reviews and Monitoring

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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Executive Summary[[1]](#footnote-1)

Located in one of the state’s original 11 gateway cities, the Lowell Public Schools have proudly carried on a long tradition of educating the children of immigrants – starting with the Irish who came in the early 1820s to work in the newly-built mills that turned Lowell into a world leader in textile manufacturing until well into the last century. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Irish were followed by French Canadians, Italians, Greeks, Poles, Portuguese, Swedes, and Jews. By the end of the 1900s, Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, and Cambodians made their homes in Lowell, finding work in the light industrial, commercial and high technology ventures of the Merrimack Valley. Now, in the first decades of the 21st century, the latest newcomers to Lowell – an influx of Brazilians, Central Americans, and Africans – continues to settle in the community. There are 47 different languages spoken in the schools; the two most common are Spanish at 37.2 percent and Khmer at 31 percent. All of these ethnicities and racial groups are represented in the highly diverse 14,548 students who attend the Lowell Public Schools today.

In contrast to many Massachusetts school districts, Lowell’s enrollment has increased by 2.9 percent over the last four years to 14,548 students in the 2019 school year. The district includes 27 schools with a variety of grade configurations: one early childhood center, twelve elementary schools, six middle schools, one Pre-K-7 school, one K-7 school, two Pre-K-8 schools, one high school, one career academy, and three schools for students with disabilities (one for grades Pre-K-7, one for grades 1-7, and one for grades 9-12). In school year 2019, the student population is 7.9 percent African American, 28.7 percent Asian, 33.1 percent Hispanic, 26.4 percent White, and 3.9 percent Multi-Race Non-Hispanic. Currently, 72.4 percent of students are part of the high needs group because they are in one or more of the following groups: English learners or former English learners, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students. Although the percentage of English learners has decreased since the 2014-2015 school year, from 26.6 to 23.7 percent, the percentage of students with disabilities has increased from 15.1 to 17.3 percent, as did the percentage of economically disadvantaged students, from 49.0 percent to 53.8 percent.

The district has demonstrated mixed success in boosting student achievement, based on the state’s new accountability metric, the percentage of improvement toward targets. The state’s 2018 Official Accountability Report classified the district as “partially meeting targets;” the district’s overall criteria-referenced target percentage toward improvement targets was 58 percent. Among the student groups in several district schools, there are wide ranges and gaps in key performance and outcome indicators.

Three schools--Murkland Elementary School, McAvinnue Elementary School, and Greenhalge Elementary School--have already received state assistance for being low performing and have made notable progress. In 2018-19, the partnership with the Statewide System of Support (SSoS) has focused on improving practices and achievement in four of the six middle schools: Robinson Middle School, Butler Middle School, Sullivan Middle School, and Stoklosa Middle School. SSoS staff is helping develop turnaround plans and assisting to draft a proposal for a federal school redesign grant for $1 million over three years for Robinson Middle School, the lowest performing middle school, which is rated in the third percentile of all middle schools in the state. High school and district leadership are also partnering with the Collaborative for Educational Services (CES) to develop a turnaround plan for the high school’s two lowest performing student groups: Asian students and students with disabilities. Lowell High School was rated in the 13th percentile of all Massachusetts high schools.

Fiscal management problems in 2017 and 2018 contributed to a $6.8 million deficit in the fiscal year 2019 district budget and reductions in many needed services, programs, and personnel. The superintendent and the assistant superintendent for finance left the district in June and July 2018. In addition, the human resources (HR) director resigned and in the fall the assistant HR director retired. By the start of the 2018–2019 school year, the budget shortfall had forced the elimination of 40 positions, including 7 administrators, 6 teachers, and 27 support staff. Furthermore, these reductions followed several years of fiscal constraints that had already downsized personnel such as content coordinators, reading specialists and librarians, even though the district’s actual net school spending had surpassed required net school spending since FY2015.

In July 2018, the school committee appointed an experienced Lowell administrator as acting superintendent. She also continued to serve in her prior role as assistant superintendent for student support. By early fall, an acting assistant superintendent for finance and operations was on board and later in the year, was permanently hired. By improving financial systems and administrative oversight and through budget cuts and staff reductions, district leaders have balanced the budget part way through the academic year, but the losses have been impacted the educational process and morale in the district.

The reductions caused by the financial strain led to a decrease in key personnel as well as programmatic and support systems. School improvement planning was unproductive in most schools and many plans were placed “on the shelf.” With curricular and instructional leadership spread thinner across this large district, curricular leadership has, until most recently, failed to address important issues—for example, the fact that most high school courses beyond the introductory level in math and science are not yet aligned to the content and pedagogy of the most recent Massachusetts frameworks. With limited data programming staff, data entry is diffused to multiple unintegrated platforms that make data more difficult to access and less efficiently and effectively used, overall. The district’s failure to include a highly valued diagnostic assessment system in ELA and math in the 2019 budget this year has left teachers in grades K-8 with less information to use to understand students’ strengths and weaknesses in ELA and math in order to adjust instruction and set instructional groups. Some useful professional development for school leaders has also been eliminated. To compensate, principals have met in self-selected cohorts to discuss topics and issues of interest, which can sometimes provide needed support, but in the longer term, does not always offer the necessary expertise on best practices to improve student achievement.

Some district systems and practices are starting to move in a more positive direction. For example, as noted above, the district has improved financial management and controls. The acting superintendent has recently aligned the format for 2019-2020 school improvement planning with the design of typical turnaround plans. There are efforts in place to repair and upgrade some older schools and completely renovate the high school. The elementary and middle schools employ a well-structured coaching model to support teachers and guide instruction. Several elementary schools, with support from SSoS, have had success in using data-driven decision-making to raise student achievement and meet improvement targets. Lowell’s staff is supported by a well-developed Teachers Academy and a mentoring program for new staff. The schools are safe and secure learning environments for both children and adults.

**Instruction**

The review team observed 149 classes throughout the district: 40 in grades 9–12, 42 in grades 5–8, and 67 in kindergarten through grade 4.[[2]](#footnote-2) The team observed 76 ELA classes, 52 mathematics classes, 14 science classes, and 7 classes in other subject areas. Among the classes observed were 5 special education classes and 8 ELE classes. The observations were approximately 20 minutes in length. All review team members collected data using DESE’s Instructional Inventory, a tool for recording observed characteristics of standards-based teaching. This data is presented in Appendix C.

In observed lessons districtwide, the review team found most students ready to learn and a classroom climate that often supported learning and teaching. Observations indicated, however, stronger evidence of the characteristics of high-quality instruction at the elementary schools and less effective instructional practices at the high school. Teachers provided clarity to elementary students on what they were learning and why it was important. Elementary students often took responsibility for their learning, working collaboratively with each other to understand lesson objectives and perform tasks and activities. Elementary teachers tended to use multiple engaging instructional strategies to achieve lesson goals. They more frequently determined whether students understood lesson objectives and concepts, and compared to other levels, elementary level students engaged in dialogue, or small group discussions with each other, rather than relying on the teacher to prompt them to speak.

At all school levels, there were limited opportunities for students to develop higher-order thinking skills. Teachers did not use research-based, differentiated strategies to support students’ diverse learning needs in many observed lessons at the secondary level. Although nearly a quarter (23.7 percent) of Lowell students are English learners, observers did not consistently see an instructional emphasis on content-based or skill-based vocabulary as lessons progressed, except in several observed classes where vocabulary instruction was highly effective. In general, high school classes were teacher-centered and students rarely interacted with each other to probe complex ideas and apply their knowledge and understandings in new ways.

**Update to the Comprehensive District Review Report**

At the time of the onsite review in April 2019, the district was in a period of administrative change and financial constraint. The previous superintendent had been placed on administrative leave in July of 2018 and the assistant superintendent for student support was filling the position as acting superintendent. In addition, the district was in a difficult financial position which required some administrative positions to remain unfilled and several purchases to be put on hold.

Since the time of the visit, the district has hired a new superintendent, implemented many new initiatives, further developed curriculum materials, and changed the administrative structures to increase supports to students, families and staff. According to district leaders:

* On May 6, 2020, the district adopted a five-year strategic plan that includes measurable student improvement outcomes, identified resources, an action plan, and clear processes for monitoring, reporting on, and revising planning activities.
* The district requires annual school improvement plans, referred to as Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), to be developed at the school level with the participation of multiple stakeholders to include school site councils. QIPs include disaggregated student performance data; measurable outcomes; monitoring and revision procedures; and reporting of outcomes. QIPs are presented annually to a team of district leaders composed of the chief academic officer, chief schools officer, director of special education and chief financial officer. In preparation for this new school improvement planning structure, the chief equity officer worked with school leaders to develop a process for school site councils to ensure membership represents our diverse school communities.
* The district established a data and accountability office to support the development of uniform and integrated policies, structures, and practices for the efficient collection, use, and sharing of data districtwide. The data and accountability office staff are establishing systems to provide staff with convenient, real-time access to student performance data, demographic data, and other relevant data to support decision making at all levels.

**Strength Findings**

* The acting superintendent, district leaders, principals, and teachers responded to crises in leadership and finance with resiliency and worked collaboratively to overcome obstacles and improve students’ learning.
* The district has structured a coaching model for kindergarten through grade 8 to improve teaching and learning, ensure data-based decision-making, and provide instructional strategies and resources that challenge and support all students.
* In over 75 percent of observed lessons at every grade and school level, the review team observed classroom routines and rituals that encouraged appropriate behaviors, as well as respectful and warm teacher-to-student and student-to-student interactions.
* Some schools in the district have implemented assessment practices that help school leaders and teachers plan instruction and provide effective support for students.
* Elementary and middle-school leaders and teachers develop whole school, grade level, and classroom plans to support student achievement through data summits and coaching.
* The district has developed a vehicle and model for the support and professional growth of new teachers and paraprofessionals.
* The district has prioritized the physical and emotional safety of all students and supports schools to foster safe and secure, and supportive learning environments.
* The district is recovering from a $6.8 million financial deficit, and is implementing improved financial management, controls, reporting systems, and communications.

**Challenges and Areas for Growth**

* The school committee does not review and update its policies regularly. There is a perception among some stakeholders that school committee members involve themselves too much with matters that would best be handled by the superintendent and the administration.
* School committee members do not regularly review disaggregated data to gauge students’ progress in order to close gaps in achievement, performance, and access for student groups including students of color, economically disadvantaged students, English learners, and students with disabilities.
* The district’s strategic plan is missing many quality components, including disaggregated data, measurable student improvement outcomes, identified resources, staff responsible for conducting plan activities, an annual action plan, and clear processes for monitoring, reporting on, and revising planning activities. The school committee has not used the district’s strategic plan effectively to guide policy development and decision-making.
* School improvement plans (SIPs) are compliance driven and not developed with the participation of multiple stakeholders. SIPS vary in the inclusion of essential components such as disaggregated student performance data; measurable outcomes; monitoring and revision procedures; and reporting of outcomes.
* Most high-school curricula for mathematics and science and technology/engineering are not aligned with the current Massachusetts frameworks.
* The district currently has limited infrastructure and personnel with the expertise to develop, review, and renew the curriculum and guide instructional improvement, especially at the high school.
* In observed classrooms, the quality of instruction was inconsistent. There was consistently stronger instruction at the elementary schools than at the high school, especially in the extent to which students communicated ideas and thinking with each other and teachers implemented multiple instructional strategies.[[3]](#footnote-3)
* The district does not have systemwide standardized diagnostic assessments in reading and mathematics to identify students’ strengths and needs, target instruction towards improving students’ weakest skills, and measure growth.
* The district uses multiple data management systems, some of which are not inter-operational. Support personnel have been reduced, planning time is limited, and administrators, teachers, students, and families do not have easy access to student performance data.
* At the time of the review, the district had insufficient infrastructure and personnel to implement human resources policies and practices effectively.
* The district does not have an effective recruiting, hiring, and assignment system to create a qualified pool of applicants that reflect the diversity in the schools.
* The district’s educator evaluation system does not prioritize opportunities for educators to receive high-quality feedback that helps them improve their practice.[[4]](#footnote-4)
* The district’s professional development program does not have clear goals and objectives related to student outcomes, is not informed by educator data from multiple sources, and is not evaluated.
* The district has not developed a systematic approach to identifying and addressing students’ academic and social-emotional needs.
* The district has not fully established collaborative relationships with family and community partners to support students’ academic progress and healthy social-emotional and physical development.
* Fiscal management problems in 2017 and 2018 contributed to a $6.8 million deficit in the fiscal year 2019 school district budget and reductions in many needed services, programs, and personnel.
* School buildings are not well maintained, with complaints about heating, leaking roofs, and mice; in some cases, state and local agencies have ordered the city to do repairs and the district has had to close buildings temporarily until repairs were completed.
* District leaders have expressed concerns about funding for the district schools and the district’s agreement with the city on indirect costs for education.

**Recommendations**

* The new superintendent and school committee should develop, approve, and disseminate procedures that clarify internal and external communications among the superintendent, school committee members, school-based staff, and community stakeholders.
* The district should ensure that its planning documents have clear goals that are based on an analysis of historical, longitudinal, and current disaggregated student data.
* In order to improve the review and continuous renewal of the high school curricula, the district should consider ways to re-instate required oversight and dedicated expertise in curriculum and instruction districtwide, or to establish new roles for this purpose, especially at the high school.
* The district should develop and implement an ongoing, rigorous, transparent, and inclusive curriculum review and revision process, and ensure that the taught curriculum challenges and supports all learners.
* The district should ensure that all teachers provide effective instruction that challenges and supports all students.
* The district should develop uniform and integrated policies, structures, and practices for the efficient and purposeful collection, use, and sharing of a range of assessments districtwide.
* The district should develop and sustain an adequate infrastructure and hire and retain the personnel to effectively implement human resources policies and practices.
* The district should take a more proactive approach to recruiting, hiring, and assigning staff to build a qualified pool of applicants that reflect the diversity of the schools and meet all students’ needs.
* The district should fully and effectively implement all components of the state’s Educator Evaluation Framework to promote educators’ growth, with particular emphasis on ensuring that all educators receive high-quality feedback.
* The district should develop a professional development plan aligned with district and school goals with SMART[[5]](#footnote-5) goals and measurable student outcomes.
* The district should develop and implement a districtwide system to identify at-risk students using assessment data, provide multi-tiered academic interventions, and employ ongoing progress monitoring to meet the needs of all students.
* The district should ensure all schools enhance their current practices to strengthen collaborative relationships with families, community partners, and other stakeholders that support students’ academic and behavioral progress and well-being.
* The district should continue its work on improving financial controls, especially for payroll, and on improving the monitoring and forecasting for accounts that may result in a deficit.
* The district and the city should continue its work to plan and implement regularly scheduled maintenance of school buildings and develop a long-range capital plan to schedule needed renovations of schools.
* District leaders and city officials should increase their advocacy within city government and within the community for district resources and continue to improve their communications with each other about district needs, budgets, the district’s agreement with the city on indirect costs for education, financial management, and facilities.

Lowell Public Schools District Review Overview

**Purpose**

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

Methodology

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

Site Visit

The site visit to the Lowell Public Schools was conducted from April 1–4, 2019. The site visit included 35 hours of interviews and focus groups with approximately 92 stakeholders, including school committee members, district administrators, school staff, students, students’ families, and teachers’ union representatives. The review team conducted 6 focus groups with 13 elementary-school teachers, 7 middle-school teachers, and 7 high-school teachers.

A list of review team members, information about review activities, and the site visit schedule are in Appendix A, and Appendix B provides information about enrollment, attendance, and expenditures. The team observed classroom instruction in 149 classrooms in 23 of the district’s 27 schools.[[6]](#footnote-6) The team collected data using DESE’s Instructional Inventory, a tool for recording observed characteristics of standards-based teaching. This data is contained in Appendix C.

**District Profile**

Lowell is one of three cities in the Commonwealth[[7]](#footnote-7) that follow a form of government under which citizens elect the city council and school committee. The city council appoints the city manager and elects a council member as mayor who serves ex-officio as chair of the school committee. The seven-member school committee meets twice monthly.

The assistant superintendent for student support has also been serving as acting superintendent since July 2018. The district leadership team includes an assistant superintendent for curriculum, instruction and assessment; an assistant superintendent for finance and operations; and a director of special education. The district has K–12 coordinators for English language education; language and literacy; mathematics; science/social studies (combined); and research, testing, and assessment. Central office positions have been unstable in number and have decreased over the four years before the onsite. The district has 23 principals leading 27 schools (including the head of school at Lowell High School and the principal of The Career Academy). There are 108 other school administrators, including coordinators for each of the three therapeutic day schools and an early childhood coordinator of pre-school education who leads the early learning center. In addition, the district has 15 assistant principals, 4 house deans and a coordinator of student support services at the high school, a director of the freshman academy, a student services specialist at the freshman academy, 8 high-school department chairs, a director of guidance, 19 guidance counselors assigned to the middle and high schools, 41 social workers (5 at the high school), a director of physical education, 8 school psychologists, 3 board certified behavior analysts, and 1 behavior specialist. In the 2018–2019 school year, there were 1,052.9 FTE teachers in the district.

In the 2018–2019 school year, 14,548 students were enrolled in the district’s 27 schools:

**Table 1: Lowell Public Schools**

**Schools, Type, Grades Served, and Enrollment\*, 2018–2019**

| **School** | **Type** | **Grades Served** | **Enrollment** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Cardinal O’Connell Early Learning Center | EES | Pre-K | 104 |
| Abraham Lincoln Elementary School | ES | Pre-K–4 | 509 |
| Charles W. Morey Elementary School | ES | Pre-K–4 | 511 |
| Charlotte M. Murkland Elementary School | ES | Pre-K–4 | 509 |
| Dr. Gertrude Bailey Elementary School | ES | Pre-K–4 | 508 |
| Greenhalge Elementary School | ES | Pre-K–4 | 502 |
| John J. Shaughnessy Elementary School | ES | Pre-K–4 | 493 |
| Joseph McAvinnue Elementary School | ES | Pre-K–4 | 469 |
| Pawtucketville Memorial Elementary School | ES | Pre-K–4 | 496 |
| S. Christa McAuliffe Elementary School | ES | Pre-K–4 | 506 |
| Washington Elementary School | ES | Pre-K–4 | 240 |
| Moody Elementary School | ES | K–5 | 277 |
| Peter W. Reilly Elementary School | ES | K–5 | 575 |
| Dr. Janice Adie Therapeutic Day School\*\*\* | ES/MS | Pre-K–7 | 46 |
| Rogers STEM Academy | ES/MS | K–7 | 738 |
| Bartlett Community Partnership School | ES/MS | Pre-K–8 | 474 |
| Pyne Arts Magnet School | ES/MS | Pre-K–8 | 487 |
| Laura Lee Therapeutic Day School | ES/MS | 2–8 | 20 |
| Dr. An Wang Middle School | MS | 5–8 | 688 |
| B. F. Butler Middle School | MS | 5–8 | 567 |
| Henry J. Robinson Middle School | MS | 5-–8 | 638 |
| James S. Daley Middle School | MS | 5–8 | 695 |
| Kathryn P. Stoklosa Middle School | MS | 5–8 | 675 |
| James Sullivan Middle School | MS | 6–8 | 494 |
| Lowell High School | HS | 9–12 + SP\*\* | 3,174 |
| The Career Academy | HS | 9-–12 + SP\*\* | 118 |
| Leblanc Therapeutic Day School | HS | 9–12 | 35 |
| **Totals** | **27 schools** | **Pre-K–12 + SP** | **14,548** |
| \* As of October 1, 2018  \*\* Grades 9–12 and special programs (SP) for students beyond grade 12  \*\*\* The Janice Adie Therapeutic Day School is also known as the Lowell Day School on Broadway. | | | |

Between 2016 and 2019 overall student enrollment increased by 2.8 percent. Enrollment figures by race/ethnicity and high needs populations (i.e., students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged students, and English learners (ELs) and former ELs) as compared with the state are provided in Tables B1a and B1b in Appendix B.

The total in-district per-pupil expenditure was lower than the median in-district per-pupil expenditure for 12 Pre-K–12 districts of similar size (8,000–26,000 students) in fiscal year 2017: $14,078 as compared with $15,350 (See [District Analysis and Review Tool Detail: Staffing & 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 is administered to grades 5 and 8 in science and to grade 10 in ELA, math, and science. Data from the two assessments are presented separately because the tests are different and cannot be compared.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Table 2: Lowell Public Schools**  **Accountability Percentile, Criterion Reference Target (CRT) Percentage, Reason for Classification** | | | | |
| **School** | **Accountability Percentile** | **CRT Percentage** | **Overall Classification** | **Reason For Classification** |
| Laura Lee Therapeutic | -- | -- | Requiring assistance or intervention | In need of focused/targeted support: Low participation rate for students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged students, high needs students, and all students |
| Lowell Day School on Broadway | -- | -- | Insufficient data | Insufficient data |
| Bailey Elementary | 57 | 54% | Not requiring assistance or intervention | Partially meeting targets |
| McAvinnue Elementary | 14 | 82% | Not requiring assistance or intervention | Meeting targets |
| Greenhalge Elementary | 10 | 69% | Requiring assistance or intervention | In need of focused/targeted support: Among the lowest performing 10% of schools |
| Lincoln Elementary | 26 | 73% | Not requiring assistance or intervention | Partially meeting targets |
| Moody Elementary | 15 | 15% | Not requiring assistance or intervention | Partially meeting targets |
| Morey Elementary | 67 | 80% | Not requiring assistance or intervention | Meeting targets |
| Pawtucketville Memorial Elementary | 61 | 69% | Not requiring assistance or intervention | Partially meeting targets |
| Reilly Elementary | 19 | 40% | Not requiring assistance or intervention | Partially meeting targets |
| Shaughnessy ES | 40 | 40% | Not requiring assistance or intervention | Partially meeting targets |
| Washington ES | 60 | 49% | Not requiring assistance or intervention | Partially meeting targets |
| McAuliffe ES | 36 | 54% | Not requiring assistance or intervention | Partially meeting targets |
| Murkland ES | 33 | 75% | Not requiring assistance or intervention | Meeting targets |
| Rogers STEM Academy | 13 | 61% | Not requiring assistance or intervention | Partially meeting targets |
| Pyne Arts K–8 | 42 | 43% | Not requiring assistance or intervention | Partially meeting targets |
| Bartlett Community Partnership | 9 | 63% | Requiring assistance or intervention | In need of focused/targeted support: Among the lowest performing 10% of schools and Low subgroup performance for Asian students and White students |
| Butler Middle | 6 | 37% | Requiring assistance or intervention | In need of focused/targeted support: Among the lowest performing 10% of schools and Low subgroup performance for Asian students and White students |
| Daley Middle | 47 | 76% | Not requiring assistance or intervention | Meeting targets |
| Robinson Middle | 3 | 27% | Requiring assistance or intervention | In need of focused/targeted support: Among the lowest performing 10% of schools and Low subgroup performance for Asian. White, Hispanic/Latino, Economically disadvantaged, High Needs students and students with disabilities |
| Sullivan Middle | 6 | 28% | Requiring assistance or intervention | In need of focused/targeted support: Among the lowest performing 10% of schools and Low subgroup performance for Asian students and White students |
| Wang Middle | 38 | 76% | Not requiring assistance or intervention | Meeting targets |
| Stoklosa Middle | 12 | 53% | Requiring assistance or intervention | In need of focused/targeted support: Low subgroup performance for Asian and White students |
| Leblanc Therapeutic | -- | -- | Insufficient data | Insufficient data |
| Lowell High | 13 | 31% | Requiring assistance or intervention | In need of focused/targeted support: Low subgroup performance for Asian students and students with disabilities and Low participation for students with disabilities |
| The Career Academy | -- | -- | Requiring assistance or intervention | In need of focused/targeted support: Low participation rate for economically disadvantaged students, high needs students, and all students |
| District | -- | 58% | Not requiring assistance or intervention | Partially meeting targets |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Table 3: Lowell Public Schools**  **Next-Generation MCAS ELA Scaled Scores Grades 3–8, 2017–2018** | | | | | | |
| **Group** | **N (2018)** | **2017** | **2018** | **Change** | **State (2018)** | **Above/Below** |
| African American/Black | 491 | 487.4 | 488.4 | 1.0 | 490.3 | -1.9 |
| Asian | 1,914 | 495.3 | 497.9 | 2.6 | 511.6 | -13.7 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 2,399 | 485.3 | 486.1 | 0.8 | 489.7 | -3.6 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 296 | 495.8 | 496.7 | 0.9 | 502.8 | -6.1 |
| White | 1,868 | 496.7 | 497.1 | 0.4 | 504.2 | -7.1 |
| High Needs | 5,522 | 487.5 | 489.1 | 1.6 | 490.1 | -1.0 |
| Econ. Disadvantaged | 4,320 | 487.2 | 488.5 | 1.3 | 490.2 | -1.7 |
| Students w/ Disabilities | 1,249 | 470.9 | 471.8 | 0.9 | 480.8 | -9.0 |
| English Learners | 2,805 | 484.6 | 487.4 | 2.8 | 488.4 | -1.0 |
| All | 6,971 | 491.9 | 492.9 | 1.0 | 500.5 | -7.6 |
| Next Generation MCAS Achievement Levels: 440–470 Not Meeting Expectations; 470–500 Partially Meeting Expectations; 500–530 Meeting Expectations; 530–560 Exceeding Expectations | | | | | | |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Table 4: Lowell Public Schools**  **Next-Generation MCAS Math Scaled Scores Grades 3–8, 2017–2018** | | | | | | |
| **Group** | **N (2018)** | **2017** | **2018** | **Change** | **State (2018)** | **Above/Below** |
| African American/Black | 493 | 486.6 | 486.0 | -0.6 | 486.9 | -0.9 |
| Asian | 1,910 | 498.7 | 499.6 | 0.9 | 514.3 | -14.7 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 2,401 | 485.6 | 484.8 | -0.8 | 487.4 | -2.6 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 298 | 495.9 | 495.6 | -0.3 | 499.7 | -4.1 |
| White | 1,867 | 496.6 | 495.8 | -0.8 | 501.8 | -6.0 |
| High Needs | 5,526 | 488.7 | 489.0 | 0.3 | 488.2 | 0.8 |
| Econ. Disadvantaged | 4,324 | 488.0 | 487.8 | -0.2 | 487.7 | 0.1 |
| Students w/ Disabilities | 1,248 | 474.0 | 473.4 | -0.6 | 479.2 | -5.8 |
| English Learners | 2,808 | 487.4 | 489.0 | 1.6 | 488.5 | 0.5 |
| All | 6,973 | 492.8 | 492.4 | -0.4 | 498.4 | -6.0 |
| Next Generation MCAS Achievement Levels: 440–470 Not Meeting Expectations; 470-–500 Partially Meeting Expectations; 500-–530 Meeting Expectations; 530–560 Exceeding Expectations | | | | | | |

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| **Table 5: Lowell Public Schools**  **Next-Generation MCAS ELA Percent Meeting or Exceeding Expectations Grades 3–8, 2017-–2018** | | | | | | |
| **Group** | **N (2018)** | **2017** | **2018** | **Change** | **State (2018)** | **Above/Below** |
| African American/Black | 491 | 27% | 28% | 1 | 31% | -3 |
| Asian | 1,914 | 40% | 45% | 5 | 71% | -26 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 2,399 | 24% | 24% | 0 | 31% | -7 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 296 | 43% | 44% | 1 | 54% | -10 |
| White | 1,868 | 44% | 44% | 0 | 58% | -14 |
| High Needs | 5,522 | 27% | 30% | 3 | 31% | -1 |
| Econ. Disadvantaged | 4,320 | 26% | 28% | 2 | 32% | -4 |
| Students w/ Disabilities | 1,249 | 5% | 5% | 0 | 14% | -9 |
| English Learners | 2,805 | 22% | 29% | 7 | 30% | -1 |
| All | 6,971 | 35% | 36% | 1 | 51% | -15 |

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| **Table 6: Lowell Public Schools**  **Next-Generation MCAS Math Percent Meeting or Exceeding Expectations Grades 3–8, 2017–2018** | | | | | | |
| **Group** | **N (2018)** | **2017** | **2018** | **Change** | **State (2018)** | **Above/Below** |
| African American/Black | 493 | 26% | 25% | -1 | 26% | -1 |
| Asian | 1,910 | 47% | 48% | 1 | 74% | -26 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 2,401 | 24% | 22% | -2 | 27% | -5 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 298 | 43% | 41% | -2 | 49% | -8 |
| White | 1,867 | 42% | 43% | 1 | 55% | -12 |
| High Needs | 5,526 | 28% | 29% | 1 | 28% | 1 |
| Econ. Disadvantaged | 4,324 | 28% | 27% | -1 | 27% | 0 |
| Students w/ Disabilities | 1,248 | 7% | 7% | 0 | 14% | -7 |
| English Learners | 2,808 | 26% | 30% | 4 | 30% | 0 |
| All | 6,973 | 36% | 36% | 0 | 48% | -12 |

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| **Table 7: Lowell Public Schools**  **MCAS ELA Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grade 10, 2017–2018** | | | | | | |
| **Group** | **N (2018)** | **2017** | **2018** | **Change** | **State (2018)** | **Above/Below** |
| African American/Black | 87 | 75% | 82% | 7 | 85% | -3 |
| Asian | 234 | 89% | 91% | 2 | 95% | -4 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 197 | 74% | 70% | -4 | 78% | -8 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 18 | 89% | 89% | 0 | 93% | -4 |
| White | 220 | 86% | 84% | -2 | 94% | -10 |
| High Needs | 506 | 72% | 74% | 2 | 79% | -5 |
| Econ. Disadvantaged | 393 | 73% | 76% | 3 | 81% | -5 |
| Students w/ Disabilities | 86 | 42% | 37% | -5 | 69% | -32 |
| English Learners | 258 | 59% | 68% | 9 | 64% | 4 |
| All | 757 | 83% | 82% | -1 | 91% | -9 |

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| **Table 8: Lowell Public Schools**  **MCAS Math Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grade 10, 2017–2018** | | | | | | |
| **Group** | **N (2018)** | **2017** | **2018** | **Change** | **State (2018)** | **Above/Below** |
| African American/Black | 90 | 41% | 61% | 20 | 60% | 1 |
| Asian | 232 | 80% | 79% | -1 | 91% | -12 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 197 | 46% | 45% | -1 | 56% | -11 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 18 | 72% | 83% | 11 | 79% | 4 |
| White | 215 | 73% | 72% | -1 | 85% | -13 |
| High Needs | 502 | 50% | 56% | 6 | 57% | -1 |
| Econ. Disadvantaged | 393 | 51% | 55% | 4 | 59% | -4 |
| Students w/ Disabilities | 87 | 11% | 15% | 4 | 40% | -25 |
| English Learners | 260 | 38% | 52% | 14 | 44% | 8 |
| All | 753 | 65% | 66% | 1 | 78% | -12 |

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| **Table 9: Lowell Public Schools**  **MCAS Science Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grades 5, 8, and 10, 2015—2018** | | | | | | | |
| **Group** | **N (2018)** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **4-yr Change** | **State (2018)** |
| African American/Black | 270 | 25% | 29% | 24% | 20% | -5 | 30% |
| Asian | 840 | 35% | 35% | 32% | 35% | 0 | 68% |
| Hispanic or Latino | 909 | 17% | 15% | 15% | 18% | 1 | 30% |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 115 | 30% | 33% | 36% | 32% | 2 | 54% |
| White | 819 | 42% | 40% | 38% | 36% | -6 | 60% |
| High Needs | 2,258 | 22% | 19% | 17% | 21% | -1 | 31% |
| Econ. Disadvantaged | 1,766 | 23% | 20% | 18% | 21% | -2 | 32% |
| Students w/ Disabilities | 481 | 5% | 5% | 6% | 4% | -1 | 21% |
| English Learners | 1,210 | 15% | 11% | 12% | 19% | 4 | 20% |
| All | 2,956 | 31% | 30% | 28% | 28% | -3 | 53% |

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| **Table 10: Lowell Public Schools**  **Next-Generation MCAS ELA Percent Meeting or Exceeding Expectations in Grades 3-–8, 2017—2018** | | | | | | |
| **Grade** | **N** | **2017** | **2018** | **Change** | **State (2018)** | **Above/Below** |
| 3 | 1,268 | 44% | 43% | -1 | 52% | -9 |
| 4 | 1,223 | 37% | 42% | 5 | 53% | -11 |
| 5 | 1,193 | 30% | 36% | 6 | 54% | -18 |
| 6 | 1,188 | 32% | 34% | 2 | 51% | -17 |
| 7 | 993 | 34% | 27% | -7 | 46% | -19 |
| 8 | 1,106 | 33% | 34% | 1 | 51% | -17 |
| 3–8 | 6,971 | 35% | 36% | 1 | 51% | -15 |

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| **Table 11: Lowell Public Schools**  **Next-Generation MCAS Math Percent Meeting or Exceeding Expectations in Grades 3–8, 2017—2018** | | | | | | |
| **Grade** | **N** | **2017** | **2018** | **Change** | **State** | **Above/Below** |
| 3 | 1,269 | 45% | 40% | -5 | 50% | -10 |
| 4 | 1,225 | 40% | 37% | -3 | 48% | -11 |
| 5 | 1,189 | 29% | 33% | 4 | 46% | -13 |
| 6 | 1,191 | 34% | 30% | -4 | 47% | -17 |
| 7 | 992 | 34% | 32% | -2 | 46% | -14 |
| 8 | 1,107 | 34% | 42% | 8 | 50% | -8 |
| 3–8 | 6,973 | 36% | 36% | 0 | 48% | -12 |

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| **Table 12: Lowell Public Schools**  **MCAS Science Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grades 5, 8, and 10, 2015–2018** | | | | | | | |
| **Grade** | **N (2018)** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **4-yr Change** | **State (2018)** |
| 5 | 1,190 | 27% | 19% | 21% | 26% | -1 | 47% |
| 8 | 1,105 | 22% | 20% | 16% | 13% | -9 | 35% |
| 10 | 661 | 55% | 63% | 62% | 59% | 4 | 74% |
| All | 2,956 | 31% | 30% | 28% | 28% | -3 | 52% |

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| **Table 13: Lowell Public Schools**  **English Language Arts and Math Mean Student Growth Percentile, 2018** | | | | | | |
|  | **ELA** | | | **Math** | | |
| **Grade** | **N (2018)** | **2018** | **State 2018** | **N (2018)** | **2018** | **State 2018** |
| 3 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| 4 | 1,078 | 46.0 | 50.0 | 1,083 | 44.0 | 50.1 |
| 5 | 1,059 | 42.2 | 50.1 | 1,057 | 43.1 | 50.0 |
| 6 | 1,050 | 47.0 | 50.1 | 1,050 | 48.4 | 50.0 |
| 7 | 884 | 49.3 | 50.0 | 880 | 53.0 | 50.0 |
| 8 | 982 | 46.6 | 50.0 | 984 | 56.8 | 50.0 |
| 10 | 548 | 42.1 | 49.9 | 543 | 39.6 | 49.9 |

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| **Table 14: Lowell Public Schools**  **Next-Generation MCAS ELA Percent Meeting or Exceeding Expectations by School and Grade, 2018** | | | | | | | |
| **School** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** | **3–8** |
| Laura Lee Therapeutic | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 0% |
| Lowell Day School on Broadway | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Bailey Elementary | 58% | 51% | -- | -- | -- | -- | 55% |
| McAvinnue Elementary | 40% | 27% | -- | -- | -- | -- | 34% |
| Greenhalge Elementary | 36% | 32% | -- | -- | -- | -- | 34% |
| Lincoln Elementary | 36% | 37% | -- | -- | -- | -- | 37% |
| Moody Elementary | 31% | 34% | -- | -- | -- | -- | 33% |
| Morey Elementary | 53% | 61% | -- | -- | -- | -- | 57% |
| Pawtucketville Memorial Elementary | 64% | 65% | -- | -- | -- | -- | 65% |
| Reilly Elementary | 38% | 48% | -- | -- | -- | -- | 42% |
| Shaughnessy Elementary | 51% | 44% | -- | -- | -- | -- | 47% |
| Washington Elementary | 65% | 67% | -- | -- | -- | -- | 66% |
| McAuliffe Elementary | 31% | 46% | -- | -- | -- | -- | 38% |
| Murkland Elementary | 36% | 41% | -- | -- | -- | -- | 39% |
| Rogers STEM Academy | 41% | 37% | 22% | 38% | -- | -- | 34% |
| Pyne Arts K–8 | 59% | 40% | 53% | 66% | 48% | 51% | 53% |
| Bartlett Community Partnership | 18% | 15% | 28% | 24% | 8% | 28% | 20% |
| Butler Middle | -- | -- | 35% | 24% | 25% | 27% | 28% |
| Daley Middle | -- | -- | 57% | 49% | 42% | 45% | 49% |
| Robinson Middle | -- | -- | 29% | 16% | 16% | 26% | 22% |
| Sullivan Middle | -- | -- | 48% | 20% | 18% | 19% | 26% |
| Wang Middle | -- | -- | 44% | 51% | 42% | 57% | 49% |
| Stoklosa Middle | -- | -- | 21% | 32% | 21% | 32% | 27% |
| District | 43% | 42% | 36% | 34% | 27% | 34% | 36% |
| State | 52% | 53% | 54% | 51% | 46% | 51% | 51% |

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| **Table 15: Lowell Public Schools**  **Next-Generation MCAS Math Percent Meeting or Exceeding Expectations by School and Grade, 2018** | | | | | | | |
| **School** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** | **3–8** |
| Laura Lee Therapeutic | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 0% |
| Lowell Day School on Broadway | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Bailey Elementary | 55% | 43% | -- | -- | -- | -- | 49% |
| McAvinnue Elementary | 39% | 26% | -- | -- | -- | -- | 33% |
| Greenhalge Elementary | 35% | 26% | -- | -- | -- | -- | 31% |
| Lincoln Elementary | 32% | 33% | -- | -- | -- | -- | 33% |
| Moody Elementary | 34% | 41% | -- | -- | -- | -- | 38% |
| Morey Elementary | 53% | 70% | -- | -- | -- | -- | 61% |
| Pawtucketville Memorial Elementary | 64% | 40% | -- | -- | -- | -- | 52% |
| Reilly Elementary | 24% | 33% | -- | -- | -- | -- | 28% |
| Shaughnessy Elementary | 48% | 38% | -- | -- | -- | -- | 43% |
| Washington Elementary | 51% | 50% | -- | -- | -- | -- | 51% |
| McAuliffe Elementary | 33% | 49% | -- | -- | -- | -- | 40% |
| Murkland Elementary | 35% | 41% | -- | -- | -- | -- | 38% |
| Rogers STEM Academy | 33% | 18% | 19% | 32% | -- | -- | 25% |
| Pyne Arts K–8 | 43% | 44% | 43% | 48% | 36% | 56% | 45% |
| Bartlett Community Partnership | 32% | 17% | 12% | 13% | 29% | 28% | 22% |
| Butler Middle | -- | -- | 39% | 21% | 22% | 46% | 32% |
| Daley Middle | -- | -- | 55% | 46% | 52% | 59% | 53% |
| Robinson Middle | -- | -- | 26% | 17% | 24% | 32% | 25% |
| Sullivan Middle | -- | -- | 41% | 23% | 18% | 23% | 26% |
| Wang Middle | -- | -- | 30% | 42% | 36% | 59% | 42% |
| Stoklosa Middle | -- | -- | 29% | 28% | 41% | 46% | 36% |
| District | 40% | 37% | 33% | 30% | 32% | 42% | 36% |
| State | 50% | 48% | 46% | 47% | 46% | 50% | 48% |

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| **Table 16: Lowell Public Schools**  **MCAS ELA and Math Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grade 10, 2018** | | |
| **School** | **ELA** | **Math** |
| Leblanc Therapeutic | -- | -- |
| The Career Academy | 42% | 15% |
| Lowell High | 84% | 69% |
| State | 91% | 78% |

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| **Table 17: Lowell Public Schools**  **MCAS Science Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced by School and Grade, 2018** | | | | | | | | |
| **School** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** | **10** | **Total** |
| Laura Lee Therapeutic | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Lowell Day School on Broadway | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Bailey Elementary | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| McAvinnue Elementary | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Greenhalge Elementary | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Lincoln Elementary | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Moody Elementary | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Morey Elementary | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Pawtucketville Memorial Elementary | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Reilly Elementary | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Shaughnessy Elementary | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Washington Elementary | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| McAuliffe Elementary | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Murkland Elementary | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Rogers STEM Academy | -- | -- | 31% | -- | -- | -- | -- | 31% |
| Pyne Arts K–8 | -- | -- | 40% | -- | -- | 15% | -- | 27% |
| Bartlett Community Partnership | -- | -- | 22% | -- | -- | 8% | -- | 15% |
| Butler Middle | -- | -- | 16% | -- | -- | 9% | -- | 12% |
| Daley Middle | -- | -- | 34% | -- | -- | 25% | -- | 30% |
| Robinson Middle | -- | -- | 13% | -- | -- | 7% | -- | 10% |
| Sullivan Middle | -- | -- | 47% | -- | -- | 9% | -- | 26% |
| Wang Middle | -- | -- | 30% | -- | -- | 20% | -- | 25% |
| Stoklosa Middle | -- | -- | 16% | -- | -- | 11% | -- | 13% |
| Leblanc Therapeutic | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Lowell High School | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 61% | 61% |
| The Career Academy | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 9% | 9% |
| District | -- | -- | 26% | -- | -- | 13% | 59% | 28% |
| State | -- | -- | 47% | -- | -- | 35% | 74% | 52% |

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| **Table 18: Lowell Public Schools**  **Next-Generation MCAS ELA Percent Meeting and Exceeding Expectations by School, 2018** | | | | | | | | | | |
| **School** | **All** | **High Needs** | **Econ. Disadvantaged** | **SWD** | **English Learners** | **African American** | **Asian** | **Hispanic** | **Multi-race** | **White** |
| Laura Lee Therapeutic | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Lowell Day School on Broadway | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Bailey Elementary | 55% | 47% | 47% | 9% | 63% | 20% | 62% | 40% | 58% | 62% |
| McAvinnue Elementary | 34% | 28% | 27% | 4% | 20% | -- | 52% | 22% | -- | 51% |
| Greenhalge Elementary | 34% | 32% | 33% | 8% | 24% | 38% | 47% | 25% | -- | 38% |
| Lincoln Elementary | 37% | 32% | 31% | 6% | 29% | 50% | 44% | 23% | -- | 33% |
| Moody Elementary | 33% | 32% | 31% | -- | 35% | -- | 50% | 36% | -- | 20% |
| Morey Elementary | 57% | 46% | 43% | 20% | 52% | -- | 57% | 40% | -- | 55% |
| Pawtucketville Memorial Elementary | 65% | 58% | 55% | 16% | 63% | 80% | 79% | 47% | 75% | 64% |
| Reilly Elementary | 42% | 28% | 33% | 8% | 11% | -- | 50% | 22% | 60% | 60% |
| Shaughnessy ES | 47% | 41% | 41% | 6% | 43% | -- | 58% | 29% | -- | 51% |
| Washington ES | 66% | 56% | 56% | 21% | 54% | -- | 75% | 50% | -- | 72% |
| McAuliffe ES | 38% | 30% | 31% | 15% | 31% | 31% | 36% | 34% | -- | 42% |
| Murkland ES | 39% | 36% | 31% | 6% | 33% | -- | 53% | 25% | -- | 19% |
| Rogers STEM Academy | 34% | 31% | 32% | 7% | 27% | 19% | 42% | 29% | 30% | 40% |
| Pyne Arts K–8 | 53% | 46% | 47% | 5% | 47% | 50% | 65% | 47% | 50% | 55% |
| Bartlett Community Partnership | 20% | 15% | 15% | 0% | 12% | 24% | 23% | 12% | -- | 26% |
| Butler Middle | 28% | 25% | 24% | 4% | 26% | 21% | 42% | 17% | 34% | 26% |
| Daley Middle | 49% | 40% | 40% | 8% | 41% | 19% | 51% | 30% | 53% | 62% |
| Robinson Middle | 22% | 18% | 17% | 3% | 16% | 26% | 34% | 14% | 21% | 26% |
| Sullivan Middle | 26% | 18% | 18% | 1% | 13% | 13% | 27% | 17% | 33% | 40% |
| Wang Middle | 49% | 39% | 36% | 3% | 42% | 43% | 66% | 36% | 79% | 54% |
| Stoklosa Middle | 27% | 24% | 23% | 4% | 24% | 17% | 34% | 17% | 23% | 29% |
| District | 36% | 30% | 28% | 5% | 29% | 28% | 45% | 24% | 44% | 44% |
| State | 51% | 31% | 32% | 14% | 30% | 31% | 71% | 31% | 54% | 58% |

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| **Table 19: Lowell Public Schools**  **Next-Generation MCAS Math Percent Meeting and Exceeding Expectations by School, 2018** | | | | | | | | | | |
| **School** | **All** | **High Needs** | **Econ. Disadvantaged** | **SWD** | **English Learners** | **African American** | **Asian** | **Hispanic** | **Multi-race** | **White** |
| Laura Lee Therapeutic | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Lowell Day School on Broadway | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Bailey Elementary | 49% | 41% | 41% | 9% | 55% | 20% | 60% | 31% | 67% | 51% |
| McAvinnue Elementary | 33% | 26% | 24% | 12% | 21% | -- | 60% | 22% | -- | 49% |
| Greenhalge Elementary | 31% | 28% | 27% | 15% | 26% | 43% | 50% | 20% | -- | 30% |
| Lincoln Elementary | 33% | 29% | 31% | 6% | 32% | 30% | 42% | 20% | -- | 29% |
| Moody Elementary | 38% | 38% | 37% | -- | 35% | -- | 44% | 36% | -- | 40% |
| Morey Elementary | 61% | 49% | 40% | 27% | 53% | -- | 60% | 45% | -- | 68% |
| Pawtucketville Memorial Elementary | 52% | 42% | 35% | 16% | 42% | 53% | 69% | 30% | 58% | 58% |
| Reilly Elementary | 28% | 18% | 21% | 8% | 8% | -- | 38% | 16% | 10% | 42% |
| Shaughnessy Elementary | 43% | 38% | 37% | 9% | 41% | -- | 54% | 32% | -- | 44% |
| Washington Elementary | 51% | 40% | 38% | 7% | 46% | -- | 63% | 17% | -- | 67% |
| McAuliffe Elementary | 40% | 31% | 31% | 12% | 27% | 23% | 54% | 38% | -- | 42% |
| Murkland Elementary | 38% | 37% | 33% | 16% | 35% | -- | 49% | 25% | -- | 31% |
| Rogers STEM Academy | 25% | 21% | 21% | 2% | 16% | 16% | 34% | 13% | 50% | 36% |
| Pyne Arts K–8 | 45% | 36% | 35% | 4% | 38% | 50% | 52% | 33% | 42% | 53% |
| Bartlett Community Partnership | 22% | 17% | 16% | 0% | 17% | 12% | 28% | 14% | -- | 28% |
| Butler Middle | 32% | 28% | 25% | 3% | 35% | 26% | 49% | 18% | 38% | 32% |
| Daley Middle | 53% | 42% | 41% | 7% | 45% | 15% | 54% | 36% | 47% | 69% |
| Robinson Middle | 25% | 22% | 20% | 6% | 23% | 32% | 43% | 15% | 25% | 27% |
| Sullivan Middle | 26% | 20% | 19% | 6% | 17% | 7% | 34% | 17% | 38% | 38% |
| Wang Middle | 42% | 34% | 32% | 10% | 34% | 40% | 63% | 25% | 68% | 49% |
| Stoklosa Middle | 36% | 33% | 30% | 5% | 34% | 19% | 47% | 24% | 41% | 31% |
| District | 36% | 29% | 27% | 7% | 30% | 25% | 48% | 22% | 41% | 43% |
| State | 48% | 28% | 27% | 14% | 30% | 26% | 74% | 27% | 49% | 55% |

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| **Table 20: Lowell Public Schools**  **MCAS ELA and Math Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grade 10, 2015–2018** | | | | | | | | | | |
|  | **ELA** | | | | | **Math** | | | | |
| **School/Group** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **4-yr Change** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **4-yr Change** |
| Leblanc Therapeutic | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Career Academy | -- | -- | 36% | 42% | -- | -- | -- | 0% | 15% | -- |
| African American/Black | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Asian | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Hispanic | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Multi-race, non-Hispanic/Latino | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| White | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| High Needs | -- | -- | 38% | 36% | -- | -- | -- | 0% | 8% | -- |
| Econ. Disadvantaged | -- | -- | 38% | 40% | -- | -- | -- | 0% | 9% | -- |
| Students w/ Disabilities | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| English Learners | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Lowell High | 86% | 85% | 85% | 84% | -2% | 72% | 72% | 68% | 69% | -3% |
| African American/Black | 84% | 79% | 74% | 83% | -1% | 63% | 61% | 41% | 64% | 1% |
| Asian | 89% | 89% | 89% | 91% | 2% | 81% | 79% | 81% | 80% | -1% |
| Hispanic | 77% | 73% | 77% | 72% | -5% | 54% | 50% | 50% | 49% | -5% |
| Multi-race, non-Hispanic/Latino | -- | 100% | 94% | 89% | -- | -- | 100% | 76% | 83% | -- |
| White | 88% | 91% | 90% | 86% | -2% | 75% | 79% | 77% | 75% | 0% |
| High Needs | 78% | 76% | 75% | 76% | -2% | 60% | 56% | 54% | 59% | -1% |
| Econ. Disadvantaged | 80% | 77% | 76% | 78% | -2% | 62% | 58% | 55% | 59% | -3% |
| Students w/ Disabilities | 28% | 35% | 40% | 33% | 5% | 9% | 20% | 11% | 15% | 6% |
| English Learners | 71% | 63% | 59% | 69% | -2% | 49% | 38% | 39% | 54% | 5% |

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| **Table 21: Lowell Public Schools**  **MCAS Science Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Science by School and Group, 2015--2018** | | | | | | |
| **School** | **N (2018)** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **4-yr Change** |
| Bailey Elementary | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| McAvinnue Elementary | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Greenhalge Elementary | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Lincoln Elementary | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Moody Elementary | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Morey Elementary | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Pawtucketville Memorial Elementary | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Reilly Elementary | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Shaughnessy Elementary | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Washington Elementary | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| McAuliffe Elementary | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Murkland Elementary | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Laura Lee Therapeutic | 9 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| African American/Black | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Asian | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Hispanic | 5 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Multi-race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 1 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| White | 3 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| High Needs | 9 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Econ. Disadvantaged | 8 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Students w/ Disabilities | 9 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| English Learners | 2 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Lowell Day School on Broadway | 4 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| African American/Black | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Asian | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Hispanic | 1 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Multi-race, non-Hispanic/Latino | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| White | 3 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| High Needs | 4 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Econ. Disadvantaged | 3 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Students w/ Disabilities | 4 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| English Learners | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Rogers STEM Academy | 99 | -- | -- | 38% | 31% | -- |
| African American/Black | 14 | -- | -- | -- | 14% | -- |
| Asian | 25 | -- | -- | 46% | 40% | -- |
| Hispanic | 42 | -- | -- | 21% | 26% | -- |
| Multi-race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 1 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| White | 17 | -- | -- | 41% | 41% | -- |
| High Needs | 87 | -- | -- | 27% | 29% | -- |
| Econ. Disadvantaged | 76 | -- | -- | 26% | 32% | -- |
| Students w/ Disabilities | 13 | -- | -- | -- | 23% | -- |
| English Learners | 40 | -- | -- | 25% | 23% | -- |
| Pyne Arts K–8 | 99 | 44% | 24% | 29% | 27% | -17 |
| African American/Black | 3 | -- | -- | 10% | -- | -- |
| Asian | 6 | 44% | 14% | 31% | -- | -- |
| Hispanic | 26 | 31% | 19% | 19% | 42% | 11 |
| Multi-race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 5 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| White | 59 | 54% | 29% | 36% | 22% | -32 |
| High Needs | 64 | 31% | 19% | 21% | 22% | -9 |
| Econ. Disadvantaged | 47 | 29% | 21% | 24% | 21% | -8 |
| Students w/ Disabilities | 14 | 11% | 4% | 0% | 0% | -11 |
| English Learners | 32 | 28% | 10% | 21% | 16% | -12 |
| Bartlett Community Partnership | 109 | 34% | 7% | 11% | 15% | -19 |
| African American/Black | 11 | 30% | -- | 18% | 18% | -12 |
| Asian | 35 | 37% | 13% | 3% | 14% | -23 |
| Hispanic | 36 | 30% | 8% | 13% | 3% | -27 |
| Multi-race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 2 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| White | 25 | 38% | 0% | 19% | 32% | -6 |
| High Needs | 88 | 32% | 6% | 9% | 9% | -23 |
| Econ. Disadvantaged | 70 | 35% | 6% | 8% | 9% | -26 |
| Students w/ Disabilities | 23 | 10% | 5% | 3% | 0% | -10 |
| English Learners | 35 | 16% | 0% | 6% | 14% | -2 |
| Butler Middle | 264 | 20% | 20% | 15% | 12% | -8 |
| African American/Black | 19 | 8% | 17% | 13% | 11% | 3 |
| Asian | 81 | 25% | 19% | 20% | 14% | -11 |
| Hispanic | 68 | 10% | 13% | 12% | 7% | -3 |
| Multi-race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 17 | 29% | 20% | -- | 12% | -17 |
| White | 78 | 23% | 29% | 16% | 15% | -8 |
| High Needs | 218 | 14% | 15% | 12% | 9% | -5 |
| Econ. Disadvantaged | 146 | 15% | 18% | 9% | 9% | -6 |
| Students w/ Disabilities | 44 | 3% | 3% | 13% | 0% | -3 |
| English Learners | 133 | 12% | 8% | 11% | 9% | -3 |
| Daley Middle | 331 | 43% | 40% | 28% | 30% | -13 |
| African American/Black | 12 | 30% | -- | 7% | 17% | -13 |
| Asian | 152 | 38% | 42% | 26% | 27% | -11 |
| Hispanic | 66 | 24% | 25% | 9% | 15% | -9 |
| Multi-race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 17 | 38% | 60% | 29% | 29% | -9 |
| White | 83 | 62% | 46% | 46% | 48% | -14 |
| High Needs | 239 | 27% | 27% | 17% | 20% | -7 |
| Econ. Disadvantaged | 177 | 27% | 29% | 18% | 19% | -8 |
| Students w/ Disabilities | 56 | 2% | 8% | 5% | 5% | 3 |
| English Learners | 142 | 22% | 23% | 12% | 16% | -6 |
| Robinson Middle | 325 | 14% | 10% | 8% | 10% | -4 |
| African American/Black | 34 | 10% | 10% | 7% | 9% | -1 |
| Asian | 64 | 18% | 13% | 10% | 17% | -1 |
| Hispanic | 137 | 7% | 3% | 2% | 8% | 1 |
| Multi-race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 14 | -- | -- | 27% | 14% | -- |
| White | 76 | 21% | 19% | 14% | 8% | -13 |
| High Needs | 268 | 12% | 5% | 7% | 9% | -3 |
| Econ. Disadvantaged | 224 | 13% | 5% | 8% | 8% | -5 |
| Students w/ Disabilities | 58 | 0% | 2% | 0% | 3% | 3 |
| English Learners | 135 | 8% | 3% | 1% | 10% | 2 |
| Sullivan Middle | 321 | 25% | 21% | 17% | 26% | 1 |
| African American/Black | 30 | 24% | 26% | 12% | 3% | -21 |
| Asian | 40 | 24% | 26% | 12% | 45% | 21 |
| Hispanic | 121 | 13% | 10% | 11% | 18% | 5 |
| Multi-race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 16 | -- | -- | -- | 38% | -- |
| White | 114 | 41% | 29% | 26% | 33% | -8 |
| High Needs | 247 | 16% | 14% | 12% | 22% | 6 |
| Econ. Disadvantaged | 194 | 18% | 13% | 12% | 23% | 5 |
| Students w/ Disabilities | 56 | 9% | 3% | 8% | 5% | -4 |
| English Learners | 135 | 9% | 8% | 8% | 17% | 8 |
| Wang Middle | 331 | 25% | 21% | 26% | 25% | 0 |
| African American/Black | 27 | 33% | 24% | 40% | 11% | -22 |
| Asian | 63 | 37% | 30% | 37% | 38% | 1 |
| Hispanic | 122 | 8% | 12% | 12% | 16% | 8 |
| Multi-race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 7 | -- | 29% | 60% | -- | -- |
| White | 112 | 31% | 26% | 31% | 27% | -4 |
| High Needs | 239 | 18% | 15% | 18% | 18% | 0 |
| Econ. Disadvantaged | 186 | 16% | 14% | 16% | 17% | 1 |
| Students w/ Disabilities | 49 | 6% | 4% | 2% | 2% | -4 |
| English Learners | 131 | 16% | 10% | 17% | 19% | 3 |
| Stoklosa Middle | 324 | 14% | 10% | 13% | 13% | -1 |
| African American/Black | 30 | 10% | 5% | -- | 3% | -7 |
| Asian | 153 | 18% | 10% | 14% | 18% | 0 |
| Hispanic | 95 | 7% | 5% | 7% | 4% | -3 |
| Multi-race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 12 | -- | 36% | 30% | 17% | -- |
| White | 34 | 13% | 19% | 14% | 21% | 8 |
| High Needs | 287 | 11% | 7% | 8% | 11% | 0 |
| Econ. Disadvantaged | 232 | 12% | 9% | 10% | 12% | 0 |
| Students w/ Disabilities | 43 | 0% | 2% | 9% | 0% | 0 |
| English Learners | 177 | 9% | 5% | 5% | 10% | 1 |
| Leblanc Therapeutic | 7 | 9% | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| African American/Black | 1 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Asian | 1 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Hispanic | 4 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Multi-race, non-Hispanic/Latino | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| White | 1 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| High Needs | 7 | 9% | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Econ. Disadvantaged | 7 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Students w/ Disabilities | 7 | 9% | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| English Learners | 3 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Lowell High | 631 | 56% | 64% | 65% | 61% | 5 |
| African American/Black | 77 | 51% | 55% | 41% | 47% | -4 |
| Asian | 209 | 55% | 64% | 70% | 70% | 15 |
| Hispanic | 142 | 44% | 42% | 48% | 44% | 0 |
| Multi-race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 18 | -- | 90% | 75% | 61% | -- |
| White | 184 | 66% | 78% | 78% | 70% | 4 |
| High Needs | 408 | 43% | 46% | 45% | 50% | 7 |
| Econ. Disadvantaged | 313 | 47% | 50% | 47% | 51% | 4 |
| Students w/ Disabilities | 54 | 10% | 21% | 15% | 9% | -1 |
| English Learners | 220 | 25% | 26% | 24% | 42% | 17 |
| The Career Academy | 11 | -- | -- | 0% | 9% | -- |
| African American/Black | 1 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Asian | 1 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Hispanic | 6 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Multi-race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 1 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| White | 2 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| High Needs | 10 | -- | -- | 0% | 0% | -- |
| Econ. Disadvantaged | 9 | -- | -- | 0% | -- | -- |
| Students w/ Disabilities | 1 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| English Learners | 4 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |

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| **Table 22: Lowell Public Schools**  **Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rates by Student Group, 2015–2018** | | | | | | | |
| **Group** | **N**  **(2018)** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **4-yr Change** | **State (2018)** |
| African American/Black | 96 | 91.4 | 75.6 | 85.7 | 79.2 | -12.2 | 80.1 |
| Asian | 264 | 80.9 | 81.2 | 89.9 | 89.4 | 8.5 | 94.3 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 192 | 71.1 | 68.8 | 70.9 | 61.5 | -9.6 | 73.8 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 16 | 85.7 | 55.6 | 60.0 | 87.5 | 1.8 | 86.5 |
| White | 269 | 77.3 | 86.7 | 83.2 | 82.5 | 5.2 | 92.2 |
| High Needs | 538 | 73.0 | 74.7 | 78.5 | 69.5 | -3.5 | 78.0 |
| Economically Disadvantaged\* | 482 | 73.5 | 75.0 | 78.3 | 70.3 | -3.2 | 77.4 |
| Students w/ Disabilities | 114 | 33.3 | 45.6 | 52.3 | 43.9 | 10.6 | 72.4 |
| English Learners | 148 | 66.7 | 67.8 | 68.9 | 54.1 | -12.6 | 64.1 |
| All | 838 | 78.8 | 78.8 | 82.4 | 79.6 | 0.8 | 87.9 |
| \* Four-year cohort graduation rate for students from low-income families used for 2015 rates. | | | | | | | |

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| **Table 23: Lowell Public Schools**  **Five-Year Cohort Graduation Rates by Student Group, 2014–2017** | | | | | | | |
| **Group** | **N**  **(2017)** | **2014** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **4-yr Change** | **State (2017)** |
| African American/Black | 84 | 79.2 | 95.1 | 80.5 | 88.1 | 8.9 | 84.2 |
| Asian | 237 | 84.0 | 86.8 | 83.7 | 90.7 | 6.7 | 95.4 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 182 | 70.4 | 75.0 | 71.4 | 73.1 | 2.7 | 77.4 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 10 | 72.7 | 85.7 | 55.6 | 70.0 | -2.7 | 87.7 |
| White | 268 | 77.1 | 80.3 | 90.3 | 86.2 | 9.1 | 93.9 |
| High Needs | 615 | 73.9 | 78.4 | 78.2 | 81.1 | 7.2 | 83.0 |
| Economically Disadvantaged\* | 589 | 74.3 | 78.6 | 78.3 | 80.8 | 6.5 | 82.0 |
| Students w/ Disabilities | 128 | 33.6 | 44.4 | 51.5 | 55.5 | 21.9 | 76.8 |
| English Learners | 183 | 69.0 | 74.6 | 72.7 | 71.6 | 2.6 | 69.0 |
| All | 782 | 77.9 | 82.9 | 81.9 | 84.5 | 6.6 | 90.1 |
| \* Five-year cohort graduation rate for students from low-income families used for 2014 rates. | | | | | | | |

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| **Table 24: Lowell Public Schools**  **In-School Suspension Rates by Student Group, 2015–2018** | | | | | | |
| **Group** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **4-yr Change** | **State (2018)** |
| African American/Black | 6.6 | 5.2 | 7.3 | 5.6 | -1.0 | 3.4 |
| Asian | 2.6 | 2.7 | 2.2 | 1.8 | -0.8 | 0.6 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 6.2 | 5.1 | 4.9 | 5.0 | -1.2 | 2.4 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 2.1 | 2.7 | 2.7 | 2.7 | 0.6 | 2.3 |
| White | 4.4 | 3.2 | 3.0 | 3.0 | -1.4 | 1.4 |
| High Needs | 4.8 | 4.0 | 4.1 | 3.9 | -0.9 | 2.7 |
| Economically Disadvantaged\* | 5.0 | 4.4 | 4.4 | 4.3 | -0.7 | 2.9 |
| Students w/ Disabilities | 6.5 | 5.8 | 5.2 | 4.8 | -1.7 | 3.3 |
| English Learners | 3.0 | 1.7 | 1.8 | 2.2 | -0.8 | 1.8 |
| All | 4.5 | 3.8 | 3.7 | 3.5 | -1.0 | 1.8 |

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| **Table 25: Lowell Public Schools**  **Out-of-School Suspension Rates by Student Group, 2015–2018** | | | | | | |
| **Group** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **4-yr Change** | **State (2018)** |
| African American/Black | 8.5 | 6.6 | 7.4 | 5.5 | -3.0 | 6.0 |
| Asian | 2.1 | 2.9 | 2.5 | 1.7 | -0.4 | 0.7 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 10.1 | 8.8 | 9.1 | 8.2 | -1.9 | 5.1 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 6.4 | 5.6 | 5.3 | 5.3 | -1.1 | 3.3 |
| White | 5.6 | 5.3 | 5.2 | 4.7 | -0.9 | 1.9 |
| High Needs | 7.2 | 6.8 | 7.0 | 6.1 | -1.1 | 4.6 |
| Economically Disadvantaged\* | 7.8 | 7.4 | 7.6 | 6.8 | -1.0 | 5.4 |
| Students w/ Disabilities | 14.5 | 12.8 | 11.3 | 10.4 | -4.1 | 5.8 |
| English Learners | 6.3 | 5.0 | 5.7 | 4.4 | -1.9 | 3.7 |
| All | 6.2 | 5.8 | 5.8 | 5.1 | -1.1 | 2.9 |

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| **Table 26: Lowell Public Schools**  **Dropout Rates by Student Group, 2015—2018** | | | | | | |
| **Group** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **4-yr Change** | **State (2018)** |
| African American/Black | 1.2 | 2.0 | 0.5 | 1.6 | 0.4 | 2.9 |
| Asian | 0.9 | 1.3 | 0.7 | 1.1 | 0.2 | 0.6 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 3.5 | 2.5 | 2.2 | 5.1 | 1.6 | 4.5 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 5.7 | 8.3 | 0.0 | 5.7 | 0.0 | 1.9 |
| White | 1.4 | 1.5 | 1.3 | 2.7 | 1.3 | 1.0 |
| High Needs | 2.4 | 2.9 | 2.0 | 4.2 | 1.8 | 3.6 |
| Economically Disadvantaged | 2.0 | 3.0 | 1.9 | 4.2 | 2.2 | 3.6 |
| Students w/ Disabilities | 7.0 | 5.9 | 3.6 | 8.9 | 1.9 | 3.4 |
| English Learners | 2.7 | 4.0 | 2.5 | 6.5 | 3.8 | 7.6 |
| All | 1.8 | 1.8 | 1.2 | 2.8 | 1.0 | 1.9 |

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| **Table 27: Lowell Public Schools**  **Advanced Coursework Completion by Student Group, 2017–2018** | | | | | |
| **Group** | **N (2018)** | **2017** | **2018** | **Change** | **Target** |
| African American/Black | 191 | 64.9 | 72.8 | 7.9 | 73.3 |
| Asian | 512 | 77.8 | 81.1 | 3.3 | 84.2 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 384 | 50.3 | 50.3 | 0.0 | 58.9 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 35 | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| White | 481 | 71.9 | 75.5 | 3.6 | 77.0 |
| High Needs | 838 | 50.1 | 48.3 | -1.8 | 57.1 |
| Economically Disadvantaged | 709 | 52.2 | 48.0 | -4.2 | 61.3 |
| Students w/ Disabilities | 146 | 14.0 | 15.1 | 1.1 | 19.5 |
| English Learners | 502 | 57.8 | 55.0 | -2.8 | 63.4 |
| All | 1,604 | 68.4 | 70.6 | 2.2 | 73.0 |

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| **Table 28: Lowell Public Schools**  **Progress toward Attaining English Language Proficiency, 2017–2018** | | | | | | | | | | |
|  | **Non-high school** | | | | | **High school** | | | | |
| **Group** | **N (2018)** | **2017** | **2018** | **Change** | **Target** | **N (2018)** | **2017** | **2018** | **Change** | **Target** |
| English Learners | 2,496 | 49.9 | 54.8 | 4.9 | 69.2 | 262 | 35.7 | 26.0 | -9.7 | 33.9 |
| All | 2,496 | 49.9 | 54.8 | 4.9 | 69.2 | 262 | 35.7 | 26.0 | -9.7 | 33.9 |

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| **Table 29: Lowell Public Schools**  **Chronic Absence Rates by Student Group,\* 2017–2018** | | | | | | | | | | |
|  | **Non-high school** | | | | | **High school** | | | | |
| **Group** | **N (2018)** | **2017** | **2018** | **Change** | **Target** | **N (2018)** | **2017** | **2018** | **Change** | **Target** |
| African American/Black | 712 | 8.8 | 8.3 | 0.5 | 5.9 | 414 | 15.5 | 17.1 | -1.6 | 12.6 |
| Asian | 2,691 | 4.5 | 5.3 | -0.8 | 2.6 | 1,044 | 17.1 | 16.6 | 0.5 | 15.2 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 3,509 | 17.6 | 17.0 | 0.6 | 14.8 | 976 | 37.3 | 40.4 | -3.1 | 34.5 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 421 | -- | -- | -- | -- | 91 | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| White | 2,692 | 12.7 | 12.1 | 0.6 | 11.7 | 1,026 | 19.7 | 23.5 | -3.8 | 18.7 |
| High Needs | 7,810 | 13.8 | 14.0 | -0.2 | 11.9 | 2,260 | 30.4 | 33.6 | -3.2 | 28.5 |
| Economically Disadvantaged | 5,566 | 16.3 | 16.4 | -0.1 | 13.7 | 1,594 | 33.7 | 35.3 | -1.6 | 31.1 |
| Students w/ Disabilities | 1,737 | 19.9 | 17.8 | 2.1 | 17.5 | 441 | 42.4 | 48.8 | -6.4 | 40.0 |
| English Learners | 4,021 | 10.4 | 10.6 | -0.2 | 7.0 | 1,316 | 25.6 | 29.9 | -4.3 | 22.2 |
| All | 10,032 | 11.7 | 11.8 | -0.1 | 10.6 | 3,554 | 23.2 | 25.5 | -2.3 | 22.1 |
| \* The percentage of students absent 10 percent or more of their total number of student days of membership in a school | | | | | | | | | | |

Leadership and Governance

***Contextual Background***

At the time of the onsite, the City of Lowell was at a critical juncture as the school committee hired its fifth superintendent in the last 11 years. Lowell’s first-time mayor, a retired 44-year school district employee who chaired the city council and the school committee, and first-year city manager, a former Lowell city councilor, mayor, and state senator, would be working with the new superintendent on the building of a new $343.4 million high school.

The Lowell school committee has seven voting members including the mayor who serves as the chair. School committee members are elected at-large every two years. The committee has 12 sub-committees that meet infrequently. The committee regularly meets twice monthly and schedules special meetings and executive sessions as needed. At the time of this review in April 2019, the school committee was in the process of carrying out one of its major responsibilities, selecting a superintendent.

Based on their past and recent experiences, district staff and community stakeholders were apprehensive about the selection of the new superintendent and his or her chances of surviving Lowell’s powerful political forces. Both district staff and community stakeholders expressed the view that elected officials frequently fought and feuded rather than fixed. The new superintendent would inherit unclear lines of internal and external communications in part because of the elimination of many central office positions. In addition, chain of command procedures, including communications among staff and school committee members, were not followed with fidelity. Meanwhile, the acting superintendent and her depleted central office staff were keeping the district functioning by repairing and bringing back its systems to stable, efficient, and effective states.

At the time of the onsite, the new assistant superintendent for finance and operations was actively implementing the external auditors’ recommendations for major areas needing internal controls. She was also developing the district’s fiscal year 2020 budget that allocates funding both equally to ensure that all schools have the same baseline services and equitably to ensure that all students have the opportunities, services, and support that they need to succeed.

In response to an audit of its human resource operations, the district was in the process of hiring a new human resources director who would improve the district’s expertise and capacity to properly manage and support its 1,953 employees and accelerate recruitment strategies intended to increase the district’s racial and ethnic diversity in all staffing categories.

Implementation of the district’s Five Pillars strategic plan stalled with the dismissal of the previous superintendent. Principals completed and submitted 2018–2019 School Improvement Plans (SIPs) in compliance with a central office directive. These plans do not include clear, thoughtful, and inclusive processes for improving student achievement and performance. Flawed planning processes also result in little coherence and alignment of school and district plans.

***Strength Findings***

1. **The acting superintendent, district leaders, principals, and teachers responded to crises in leadership and finance with resiliency and worked collaboratively to overcome obstacles and improve students’ learning.**

**A.** Beginning in July 2018, the district experienced major crises in leadership and finance. On July 18, 2018, the school committee voted to take four actions: place the superintendent on administrative leave, prepare a notice for terminating the superintendent’s contract, appoint the assistant superintendent for student support services as acting superintendent, and initiate a comprehensive and independent audit based on school committee members’ concerns about the district’s budget and finances.

1. A review of school committee meeting minutes indicated that the district was in a financial crisis with a structural deficit of approximately $6.8 million because of a “significant lack of internal controls surrounding accounts payable, payroll, budgeting journal entries, transfers and procurement.” Despite an agreement with DESE for a phased-in repayment of $2.1 million and increased funding from Hurricane Relief and emergency aid funds, the district faced a budget deficit of $2.5 million at the beginning of the 2018–2019 school year. (See the Financial and Asset Management standard in this report.)
2. The acting superintendent reduced positions and resource allocations affecting all schools and central office operations to offset the newly discovered deficits, while continuing to perform the duties of assistant superintendent of student support services.
3. In order to reduce the budgetary impacts to schools, the acting superintendent eliminated 10 positions at the central office, mostly by not filling positions made vacant by retirements or resignations. The eliminated positions included the assistant superintendent of student support services, the director of accountability and school improvement, the human resources director, the assistant human resources director, the Title I director, the database administrator, a part-time data assistant, the district support specialist for English learners, a district social worker, and an elementary counselor. One alternative school program was closed.

b. Interviews with district and school leaders and teachers and a document review indicated that the elimination of central office positions greatly reduced the supports and resources that the central office could provide to school-based personnel.

1. School leaders and teachers expressed their concerns about the district’s fiscal and managerial difficulties and the future.
2. Principals and teachers described their experience as “hunkered down,” “hodgepodging,” “in survival mode,” “putting out fires,” “shielding students” from the cutback’s impacts, “hanging on,” “going above and beyond,” “bartering for supplies,” and “constantly doing more with less.”
3. The Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) March 20, 2019 focus group report noted that Lowell’s stakeholders were virtually unanimous in commending the level and quality of services that principals, teachers, and support staff provided to students.
4. One school leader expressed the view that although principals loved their challenging jobs, they were having difficulty sustaining morale and encouraging staff to do more.
5. While staff acknowledged that the remaining central office leaders had helped to improve morale by working very hard, principals and teachers wondered what was to come.

**Impact:** By focusing on the needs of studentsand contributing to the efforts of resilient teams**,** district leaders, principals, and teachers mitigated the effects of unexpected reductions in personnel, support services, and resources to the extent possible.

***Challenges and Areas for Growth***

1. **The school committee does not review and update its policies regularly. There is a perception among some stakeholders that school committee members involve themselves too much with matters that would best be handled by the superintendent and the administration.**
2. The district does not have a procedure for reviewing and updating its policies.

1. School committee policy BGC-Policy Revision and Review states that “In an effort to keep its written policies updated so that they can be used consistently as a basis for school committee action and administrative decisions, the committee will review its policies on a regular basis.”

* 1. The policy sub-committee reviews policies on an *ad hoc*, as needed basis rather than according to an established schedule.
  2. A review of the school committee’s online policy manual indicated that that most policies were undated or had not been reviewed since the date of approval. For example, more than 80 policies are dated 1978. The dates of other policies in relevant areas are as follows: IA-Instructional Goals and objectives (1974); IK-R, Academic Achievement (1975); GBA- Equal Opportunity Employment (1975); IGA- Curriculum Development (1975); ID-School Day (July 7, 1975); ACE-Non-Discrimination (1978); GCCB-1: Employment of Principals (1993); AC- Non-Discrimination (2006); ADDA-CORI (2008); Field Trips (2009); GBAA- Sexual Harassment (2010); and Social Media Policy (2012).
  3. A review of meeting minutes indicated that the policy sub-committee met on April 3, 2019 to revise policies concerning service animals in the schools and the time allowed for speakers during the public participation portion of school committee meetings.
  4. Administrators and school committee members reported that the school committee did not review its policies regularly.

2. At its meeting on December 19, 2018, the school committee voted to delay contracting with the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) for a full review of the policy manual because of the budget crisis.

**B.** The Massachusetts Educational Reform Act of 1993 requires that school committees govern through the establishment of broad-based policies that provide direction for the administration without direct involvement in the daily operation of the school system. The Lowell school committee appears to be overstepping its role by being directly involved in the daily operations of the school system through school committee members’ recent visits to schools and a personnel policy concerning hiring procedures.

1. School committee members reported that three Lowell school committee members visited all Lowell schools during the 2018–2019 school year. They said that the purpose was to thank staff members for the work that they were doing and to provide members who are not educators an opportunity to better understand educational practices.

2. On September 5, 2018, the school committee voted unanimously to amend its policy and procedures concerning school committee members making school visits unaccompanied by the superintendent of schools. The school committee also expanded this policy to permit meetings of school committee members with department heads, administrators and all central office personnel.

3. School-based staff expressed mixed reactions to school committee member’s visits. Some staff were happy that school committee members toured their school and said thank you. Others expressed the view that the visits had a political agenda, or needed to be more structured. One leader expressed the view that school visits were not as harmless as they seemed since school committee members might exert a subtle form of pressure, or evaluate the performance of teachers and principals.

4. On August 20, 2016, the Lowell school committee approved a personnel policy that states, “Lowell residents holding Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary certifications and the necessary qualifications receive interviews when they apply for positions of any kind in the Lowell Public Schools.”

* + - * 1. It was explained to the review team that a school committee member made this motion in response to the many calls the member had received from constituents to get them jobs in the school department. Since MA educational law has limited school committee’s role and authority in hiring of employees, the school committee member thought that this new policy would please constituents by helping them get interviews for jobs in the school department.
        2. Administrators responsible for hiring said that the implementation of the mandatory interview policy could require them to conduct more interviews than necessary because in addition to the candidates selected, all Lowell applicants with appropriate qualifications must be interviewed. Lowell applicants who have been interviewed previously for a position must be interviewed again for the same position as often as they apply for it. Staff members expressed the view that this policy was intended to skirt the law restricting school committee involvement in personnel matters.

5. Several Lowell staff and stakeholders expressed the view that the school committee was involved in nepotism and patronage and referred to the school committee as an employment agency.

6. School committee members reported that they were aware of and wanted to change the community perception that school committee members hired their friends for jobs in the district.

**Impact:** The absence of a documented and implemented process for reviewing and updating district policies compromises the district’s effectiveness and efficiency. Without current school committee policies district staff might miss the opportunity to implement new mandates and regulations that support students’ health, welfare, and learning. In addition, the question of whether members of the school committee are fulfilling their proper role and responsibilities distracts all stakeholders from their proper duties and diminishes the capacity of the superintendent, school leaders, and the SC to contribute to and build a culture of collaboration around the educational mission.

1. **School committee members do not regularly review disaggregated data to gauge students’ progress in order to close gaps in achievement, performance, and access for student groups including students of color, economically disadvantaged students, English learners, and students with disabilities.**

**A.** Two school committee members reported that they did not recall receiving information about student performance gaps. One member reported that student performance data were not presented and discussed at most school committee meetings and added that without disaggregated student performance data the school committee could not identify student needs.

**B.** At the time of the onsite in April 2019, the most recent presentation to the school committee on the state’s 2018 Official Accountability Report about Lowell on January 19, 2019, did not include results for student groups.

* + - 1. While the district’s overall criterion-referenced target percentage toward improvement targets was 58 percent, the improvement of student groups varied as follows: Asian students, 73 percent; students with disabilities, 50 percent; English learners, 48 percent; African-American students, 45 percent; White students, 45 percent; and Hispanic students, 43 percent.

**Impact**: When school committee members do not regularly review disaggregated data, they cannot determine whether all students are improving their performance and achievement. Disaggregated data can demonstrate how well the district is supporting equity among all of the district’s student groups and helps inform decisions about resource allocation.

**4. The district’s strategic plan is missing many quality components, including disaggregated data, measurable student improvement outcomes, identified resources, staff responsible for conducting plan activities, an annual action plan, and clear processes for monitoring, reporting on, and revising planning activities. The school committee has not used the district’s strategic plan effectively to guide policy development and decision-making.**

**A.** The Lowell Public Schools 44-page strategic plan entitled Our Pillars of Urban Excellence and Mission covers a seven-year period from 2014–2015 to 2020–2021. The plan addresses five Pillars of Excellence.

* Pillar 1: Excellent Teaching and Learning, Everywhere
* Pillar 2: Students Learn in a Respectful and Joyful Community that Attends to the Whole Child
* Pillar 3: Students learn from a Highly Qualified, Expert and Diverse Workforce
* Pillar 4: Every Educator Engages Parents, the Community and Partners
* Pillar 5: All Schools have Adequate, Equitable and Safe Facilities and Resources

**B.** The five-Pillar strategic plan does not include student performance data, measurable outcomes, the staff responsible for conducting plan activities, identified resources, an annual action plan, and clear processes for monitoring, reporting on, and revising planning activities.

1. The strategic plan does not contain historical, longitudinal, and current disaggregated data on the performance and achievement of the district’s major student groups: male and female, Asian, African American, Hispanic, White, students with disabilities, and English learners.

2. The plan contains 12 outcomes, entitled key performance indicators (KPIs), that measure the cumulative results of the plan’s many strategic objectives and activities.

a. The KPIs do not have challenging objectives. For example, a KPI objective for out-of-school suspensions stated that the district would decrease the percentage of out-of-school suspensions for all students from 6.2 percent in 2014–2015 to 5.0 percent by 2020–2021, a reduction of 1.2 percent percentage points over a 7-year period. The 5.0 percent target would likely exceed the statewide average in 2020–2021, since the 2017–2018 statewide average was 2.9 percent. Other KPIs measured students’ growth rather than their performance on the MCAS tests. The desired seven-year outcome was a student growth percentile (SGP) of 51 percent, only one percentage point above the statewide average percentile of 50 percent.

b. Most KPIs are not specific to student groups.

3. The strategic plan does not specify resources required to implement the strategies.

4. While the five Pillars are listed in the district’s fiscal year 2019 budget document, there is no explanation of how fiscal year 2019 budget decreases and increases are connected to the strategic plan’s activities and outcomes.

5. The district did not develop an annual action plan for implementing the strategic plan.

6. The district did not develop and implement clear and consistent procedures for monitoring, reporting on, and revising strategic plan activities and outcomes.

The district has developed and has posted on its website a data-dashboard document, entitled Lowell Public Schools’ Strategic Plan and Key Performance Indicators. The dashboard contains many visual presentations of yearly data outcomes for the strategic plan’s KPIs. For example, Pillar 1 displays many graphs showing MCAS ELA test results for grades 3 and 4 by school. For Pillar 2, the dashboard data displays longitudinal data on chronic absence, out-of-school suspension, and dropout rates.

However, the district’s data dashboard does not provide measurable outcomes for student groups.

Except for the KPI data dashboard, the administration did not periodically report on the implementation of the strategic plan. For example, a review of 21 school committee agendas for one year (from April 4, 2018, to April 11, 2019) did not show any school committee items addressing the implementation of the district’s strategic plan.

1. **School improvement plans (SIPs) are compliance driven and not developed with the participation of multiple stakeholders. SIPS vary in the inclusion of essential components such as disaggregated student performance data; measurable outcomes; monitoring and revision procedures; and reporting of outcomes.**
2. Principals stated that the 2018–2019 SIPs were prepared and submitted to the central office in compliance with a directive. They said that they did not use them to develop, implement, and modify educational practices and programs.
   * + 1. District leaders accepted the 2018–2019 SIPs as submitted without reviewing them. The acting superintendent reported that revision of the SIP process and format would be a topic at future leadership meetings.

2. The school committee also did not review the 2018–2019 SIPs.

**B.** Most SIPs are partially aligned with the strategic plan.

Most 2018–2019 SIPs did not include identified needs, relevant data, action steps, timelines, and measurable outcomes.

Most SIPs contained a narrative, which described how school initiatives addressed all or some of the strategic plan’s five Pillars.

Most SIPs addressed Pillar 1 . SIPs described data summits at which staff identified the high-priority, high-leverage skills and standards that their students needed to improve. Most SIPs did not address Pillar 2’s key performance indicators (KPIs), which measure the cumulative results of the strategic plan’s many objectives and activities. For example, the first KPI for Pillar 2 is “The rate of chronic absenteeism will be at or below the state average (Baseline –15.3, Target 12.7 by 2021).”

**C.** Most school councils did not address SIP-related matters in their agendas and/or minutes.

1. When asked whether school council members represented the diverse school community, the acting superintendent reported that they [the school councils] were not as diverse as the district wanted them to be.

2. A review of online agendas and/or minutes from 23 school councils from 2017 through 2019 showed that only six school councils (32 percent) had agenda items on SIP development. Five of these councils met twice to develop the SIP and one met once.

1. Only a few teachers reported that they had participated in the development of their schools’ SIPs, and many teachers said that they did not recall having read their schools’ SIPs.

**E**. About 75 percent of the SIPs did not include measurable student outcomes expressed in SMART goal format.

1. About 50 percent of the SIPs did not contain data disaggregated on the student groups enrolled in the school.

**F**. Few SIPs contained implementation-focused activities for monitoring, reporting on, and revising the plans.

* + - 1. A review of school councils’ agenda/minutes indicated that four school councils (21 percent) had updating the SIP on meeting agendas, with a range of the number of meetings to update SIPs.

**G**. At the time of the onsite in April 2019, SIPs were not posted on school websites.

**Impact:** When district planning processes are not inclusive, the district misses opportunities to help stakeholders understand and participate in the changes needed to improve student outcomes. Without planning documents with measurable goals based on an analysis of historical, longitudinal, and current disaggregated student performance, opportunity, and outcome data, the district cannot ensure that its priorities are based on evidence and that its improvement plans drive the development, implementation, and modification of educational programs and practices.

***Recommendations***

1. **The new superintendent and school committee should develop, approve, and disseminate procedures that clarify internal and external communications among the superintendent, school committee members, school-based staff, and community stakeholders.**
2. The new superintendent, district leaders, and the school committee should develop, approve and disseminate a chain of command that defines the lines of both internal and external communications and responsibilities among the superintendent, school committee members, all school-based staff, and community stakeholders.
3. In order to operate with transparency and maintain a clear and appropriate division of roles between the new superintendent and the school committee, the superintendent and the school committee should jointly review and revise current school committee policies regarding school visits by school committee members and the interviewing of all Lowell applicants for school department positions.
4. In accordance with school committee policy BGC: Policy Revision and Review, the superintendent should collaborate with the school committee to develop a schedule for reviewing and revising those policies that are out of date and/or require timely revisions.

**Benefits:** By implementing this recommendation, the new superintendent and school committee members will clarify their mutual roles and jointly identify clear procedures for internal and external communications.

**2. The district should ensure that its planning documents have clear goals that are based on an analysis of historical, longitudinal, and current disaggregated student data.**

**A.** Under the leadership of the superintendent, the district should convene a representative group of stakeholders to develop measurable goals (including progress benchmarks and final outcomes) for its planning documents.

1. The goals should be based on an analysis of historical, longitudinal, and current disaggregated data related to student performance, opportunities, and outcomes.

2. The goals should be SMART (Specific and Strategic; Measurable; Action Oriented; Rigorous, Realistic, and Results Focused; and Timed and Tracked).

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

**B.** All district plans should provide concrete and ambitious steps to close achievement, access, and opportunity gaps for student groups and address performance indicators such as graduation, chronic absence, suspension, and dropout rates, and social-emotional learning.

**C.** Once the new strategic plan has been developed and approved, the new superintendent and school committee members should ensure that the district’s strategic plan guides its policies, deliberations, and decisions for improving the achievement and performance of all student groups.

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

1. Similar to the DIP, these measures should be SMART.

2. 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.

a. Before developing the SIP, each principal should work with school council members to ensure that the makeup of the school council represents the diverse school community. Principals should also provide appropriate translation services for parents who serve on school councils.

b. The agendas for school council meetings should include development of the SIP, periodic updates on the manner of implementation of SIP activities, and progress toward the intended outcomes.

3. The superintendent and central office staff should design a process for SIP review and revision. The superintendent should track their progress toward realization of SIP goals with the principal.

4. The superintendent and school committee should design a process and schedule for annual school committee reviews of SIPS.

5. The superintendent and central office staff should provide professional development for principals, school staff, school council members, and school committee members on SIP development.

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

**Benefits:**  By developing, communicating, and using measurable goals based on an analysis of historical, longitudinal, and current disaggregated student data and other data sources, the district will ensure that it is focused on the most important areas for improvement. By making a commitment to the yearly amount of change that it plans to achieve, the district will be able to plan and regularly monitor the impact of key improvement strategies, instructional practices, and the use of resources on student performance, opportunities, and outcomes. Effective plans help make the path toward equity visible. The district and school plans can show where and how student groups are making progress toward measurable outcomes for achievement and performance and identify barriers to progress that need to be addressed.

**Recommended resources:**

* DESE’s *Planning for Success* tools (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/research/success/>) support the improvement planning process by spotlighting practices, characteristics, and behaviors that support effective planning and implementation and meet existing state requirements for improvement planning.
  + *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.
    - *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.

Curriculum and Instruction

***Contextual Background***

At the time of the onsite in April 2019, the district’s systems and practices for curriculum and instruction were at a turning point because of budget constraints and a $6.8 million deficit at the beginning of the 2018–2019 school year. Both had driven a cascade of reductions in key leadership positions that support teaching and learning. Although the acting superintendent and the newly appointed assistant superintendent for finance and operations had managed to stabilize the budget, cuts resulted in a reduced leadership staff to manage district academic programs.

The assistant superintendent for curriculum, instruction, and assessment oversees and directs educational programs and provides support and guidance to district and school leaders. Most other districtwide and school-based leadership positions responsible for teaching, learning, and the curriculum have either been eliminated or consolidated over the past several years because of fiscal constraints. No system was left untouched. The extent of the cuts is severe.

Beginning in 2015, elementary reading specialist positions were eliminated over time. The district has consolidated and dispersed the leadership duties and responsibilities for the discharged staff among the assistant superintendent for curriculum, instruction, and assessment, the kindergarten through grade 12 content area coordinators, the high-school principal, high-school department chairs, the special education director, and the English Learner coordinator. In the fall of 2016, half of the content area coordinator positions for pre-kindergarten through grade 4 and for grades and 5 through 12 were eliminated and the coordinator role was expanded to pre-kindergarten through grade 12 in every content area, with science and social studies combined. In 2018–2019, the district eliminated the districtwide director of accountability and school improvement; the high-school director of curriculum instruction and assessment; high-school lead teachers in the academic departments; a key central office position in special education, and another in English language education.

Purchased academic programs mainly make up the core academic curricula for pre-kindergarten through grade 8 in ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies. The kindergarten early literacy program is guided by the Boston Public Schools’ Focus on K2 curriculum. For ELA in grades 1 through 8, the district uses the Readers and Writers WorkshopModel (Teachers College, Columbia University) mainly resourced by teacher-created thematic units based on literary genres and aligned with the 2017 Massachusetts English Language Arts and Literacy Framework.[[8]](#footnote-8) Writers Workshop materials are those created by Lucy Calkins WritersWorkshop (Teachers College, Columbia University). The ELA program is also supported by Fountas and Pinnell’s Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) framework with its balanced assessment system (BAS).

For mathematics in kindergarten through grade 8, the district relies on Eureka Mathmodules (Engage NY) which the mathematics department has annotated in a separate document to align with the 2017 Massachusetts Mathematics Framework. Teachers are beginning to apply the Workshop Model to teach mathematics. Elementary and middle-school students study science using inquiry-based FOSS kits (Delta Education) with thematic units aligned with the core ideas and principles of the 2016 Massachusetts Science and Technology/Engineering Curriculum Framework. Elementary students study science and social studies 90 minutes weekly. For social studies, elementary students use Discovering Justice’s thematic units, Children Discovering Justice. At the middle schools, units from National Geographic and DESE’s model units developed with Race to the Top funding (2012) guide social studies*.*

Support for data-driven instructional improvement at the grade and classroom levels for elementary and middle schools depends heavily on the work of a cadre of ELA and math coaches in every school. These coaches interface regularly with the content coordinators who guide and monitor their work and meet with teachers during weekly common planning time at the elementary schools, and almost daily at the middle schools. Part-time classroom tutors also provide some support for struggling students and English learners in ELA and mathematics.

At the high school, alignment with the appropriate Massachusetts curriculum framework varies by content area. Only a limited number of courses in most core content areas meet the requirement of alignment with both the content and ambitious pedagogy of the most current standards. Several departments are gradually engaging in curriculum alignment and more importantly, aligning teaching practices with current state frameworks, particularly in mathematics and science. The social studies department has also initiated a process to align its curricula with the 2018 History and Social Science Framework.

At the time of the onsite visit, the district had engaged with DESE to conduct a curriculum audit of the district’s K–8 mathematics curriculum and produce a report of findings and recommendations. The audit process included surveys, focus groups and interviews, and classroom observations. The audit was intended “to enable an authentic determination regarding the extent to which the taught curriculum demonstrates strong alignment with the district-adopted and highly rated math curriculum (Eureka Math) and, in turn, the Massachusetts learning standards.”[[9]](#footnote-9)

As a community that has always welcomed immigrants, Lowell continues to enroll large numbers of students whose first language is not English and nearly a quarter of all students[[10]](#footnote-10) are identified as English learners (ELs) who receive support through push-in and pull-out services by English Language Education (ELE) staff and tutors. This group of students is fluid and continually expanding with new arrivals every month, including refugees. General education staff and school leaders expressed the belief that there were insufficient resources, including trained staff, adequate instructional time, and instructional resources, to meet ELs’ programmatic needs.

***Strength Findings***

**1. The district has structured a coaching model for kindergarten through grade 8 to improve teaching and learning, ensure data-based decision-making, and provide instructional strategies and resources that challenge and support all students.**

* 1. Teachers and leaders stated that the elementary and middle schools had literacy and math coaches responsible for working with teachers at each school on data-driven curricular and instructional improvement. Research for Better Teaching (RBT) has provided training for these coaches.
     1. There are 23 full-time ELA coaches and 23 full-time math coaches in the district. Each is assigned to one school.
     2. In addition, 24 English Learner lead teachers provide guidance and coaching in addition to their full-time teaching responsibilities.
  2. Literacy and math coaches meet monthly with their content coordinator by level; in addition, all coaches and coordinators meet together twice during the year.
     1. Interviewees stated that these monthly meetings addressed instructional dialogue, engagement strategies, strengthening content knowledge, bringing best practices and implementation strategies to teachers, book studies, and sharing information with teachers.
     2. Coaches also meet with tutors assigned to each school who support struggling students identified by teachers through analysis of assessment data.
        1. Tutors are often retired teachers trained in the district to work with students in small groups or during interventions. Tutors also give one-to-one support to students who have fallen far behind. Not all schools have both literacy and math tutors.
        2. Administrators stated that tutors were most effective when schools had a plan and provided training. Training, the nature of the school’s expectations, and the number of students assigned are among the variables that determine the effectiveness of tutors.
     3. Coaches meet with teachers during common planning time (CPT), which is sometimes referred to as PLCs in the district, in grade-level teams at the elementary schools and in content-level teams by grade level at the middle schools. At the elementary level, CPT takes place for 45 minutes weekly. At the middle schools, CPT takes place daily with a focus on the content areas approximately three times weekly.
  3. Coaches structure their work using a coaching continuum or cycle during CPT.
     1. Coaches attempt to synchronize CPT meetings with end-of-unit assessment schedule to maximize understanding and use of the results. Coaches stated that end-of-unit assessments provided important data to use with teachers to identify achievement trends by grade-level and classroom and evidence to “push” schools to a higher level.
     2. The typical five-week coaching cycle is apportioned as follows: two weeks for addressing topics and concerns in ELA and mathematics, two weeks for reviewing assessment data, and one week for tracking student achievement and growth.
        1. During CPT, teachers often bring student work or assessments to review and score. The results are used to compose student instructional groups.
        2. Some elementary teachers reported that literacy and math coaches helped and supported them and were instrumental in improving their work.

3. Protocols guide how coaches and teachers look at assessment data and student work.

For a formal review of data, such as at data summits held three times annually, Instructional Leadership Teams (ILTs) composed of leaders, coaches, and teachers use the ORID protocol to pose a series of questions that are objective, reflective, interpretive, and decision-making.

In less formal data analyses, coaches and teachers use the Data Wise protocol for collaborative goal-setting, planning, implementation, assessment, analysis/progress monitoring, and new goal setting.

**D.** Principals described their weekly meetings with coaches as a time to look at data, discuss unit and lesson pacing, ensure vertical and horizontal curriculum alignment, and discuss instructional support and how to provide feedback to teachers.

**Impact**: Research shows that coaching has a positive and significant effect on teacher development and on student learning. Coaching provides a regular collaborative learning opportunity for teachers to review student achievement and work, set goals, and adopt or adapt effective instructional practices aligned with academic goals under the guidance of an experienced leader, typically based on the analysis of data and other evidence.

1. **In over 75 percent of observed lessons at every grade and school level, the review team observed classroom routines and rituals that encouraged appropriate behaviors, as well as respectful and warm teacher-to-student and student-to-student interactions.**
2. Review team members noted sufficient and compelling evidence that classroom routines and positive supports were in place to ensure that students behaved appropriately as learners (characteristic #11) in 94 percent of observed elementary classrooms, in 76 percent of middle-school classrooms, and in 80 percent of high-school classrooms.

In an effective example of an effective classroom routine at the elementary level, after the teacher and paraprofessionals had to get some students back on track during the lesson, the teacher asked all students to put away their notebooks and stand, stretch, and take a deep breath during the transition time between activities. Then the teacher divided the students into four reading groups.

In an observed middle school lesson, students managed a complicated set of group assignments because the teacher had prepared them well. When one student acted out, the teacher had a short conversation with the student.

In a high-school class where students were working on a writing assignment either individually or in pairs, the teacher and the assistant helped students with classwork and signed off on each group’s work.

1. Observers found sufficient and compelling evidence of a classroom climate conducive to teaching and learning (characteristic #12) in 94 percent of observed elementary, and in 76 percent of middle-school and high-school classes.

1. Several team members noted examples of classroom climate that was conducive to teaching and learning. These included the following: This teacher has great rapport with this class of CP students; When one student was reluctant to recite a poem and recited only two lines, the rest of the students encouraged him to continue; This teacher has a good relationship with the students; and The talking among students is constructive and the groups are ready with the answers when asked.

**Impact:** Students’ opportunities to learn and teachers’ abilities to address students’ individual and group learning needs as well as their social-emotional and behavioral needs can be enhanced in a well-managed and supportive classroom. Well-understood routines and rituals and clear expectations for behavior and classroom norms can maximize teaching and support positive learning experiences for students.

***Challenges and Areas for Growth***

**3. Most high-school curricula for mathematics and science and technology/engineering are not aligned with the current Massachusetts frameworks.**

**A.** All high-school mathematics and science curricula are not fully aligned with the 2017 Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for Mathematics and the 2016 Massachusetts Science and Technology/Engineering Curriculum Framework.

A review of documents indicated that only four of the high school’s mathematics courses were aligned with the current framework: Grade 9 Transition Math, Financial Math, Honors Algebra 2, and Honors Pre-Calculus. Other more advanced mathematics courses might be aligned in content, but the team found little evidence that they were aligned with the teaching strategies set forth in the 2017 framework. Most district mathematics curricula are dated 2013 and 2015.

District leaders, coordinators, coaches, and specialists told the team that students in mathematics and science classes were not exposed to anchor literacy standards or given opportunities to write and make presentations in mathematics classes in accordance with the new standards.

The science department has mapped one science course following the adoption of the 2016 Science and Technology/Engineering Framework. This is a grade 9 integrated science and engineering course with college, honors and high honors sections that covers basic earth science, biology, physics, chemistry, and general inquiry concepts.

The review team was told that science courses would eventually be aligned with the 2016 Massachusetts Science and Technology/Engineering Framework. In addition to creating aligned curriculum maps, the science department also intends to align pedagogy with the requirements of this framework.

**B.** Limited time to collaborate and the absence of dedicated curriculum leadership and expertise have contributed to limited alignment with the current frameworks at the high school.

1. Interviews with district leaders, department chairs, coordinators, and teachers and a document review indicated that limited time, personnel, and funding have left the high-school curriculum largely dependent on revisions completed in 2013 and 2015.

2. There is no frequently scheduled or regular collaborative time for high-school teachers to work in teams on curricular revisions and to discuss instruction, assessment data, and student progress.

3. The district eliminated the positions of high-school director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment as well as the lead teachers in each content area in 2018–2019. These roles have traditionally been responsible for curriculum review and revision. The responsibilities have been reallocated to the high-school principal and department chairs. It should be noted, however, that when these positions were operational, curricular alignment was incomplete.

**Impact:** Limited alignment of math and science and technology/engineering curricula with the content and rigor of the appropriate Massachusetts curriculum frameworks means that students do not have the same access to the high-quality and rigorous learning progressions as their peers statewide to prepare them for college and career. Without curricular alignment, mathematics and science teachers may teach content without building students’ ability to develop and apply more complex skills and knowledge.

**4. The district currently has limited infrastructure and personnel with the expertise to review and renew the curriculum and guide instructional improvement, especially at the high school.**

1. The district has eliminated several districtwide and high-school curricular and instructional leadership roles and consolidated and/or reallocated the responsibilities to other leaders.

1. Through the 2015–2016 school year, the district deployed elementary (kindergarten through grade 4) and secondary (grades 5 through 12) coordinators for ELA/English, mathematics, and science/social studies combined. In the 2016–2017 school year, the district eliminated half of these positions and expanded the remaining coordinators’ roles to kindergarten through grade 12 because of fiscal constraints.

a. The district combined some responsibilities in the new kindergarten through grade 12 coordinator roles and reallocated some to other leaders, including the assistant superintendent for curriculum instruction, and assessment.

2. In 2018–2019, the district eliminated the district director of accountability and school improvement, the position responsible for supporting low performing schools and providing monthly leadership professional development for principals. These responsibilities have shifted to the assistant superintendent for curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

3. In 2018–2019, the district eliminated the position of high-school director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The responsibilities were distributed to the head of schools, department chairs, and the director of student support.

a. High-school department chairs have traditionally been minimally involved in curriculum renewal. The team was told that in addition to teaching one or more courses, department chairs spent much of their time on other departmental responsibilities, such as counseling students and evaluating teachers.

4. In 2018–2019, the district eliminated the positions of high-school lead teachers because of the budget deficit. Lead teachers worked with the high school’s director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment and department chairs to manage and support the academic program.

5. Administrators reported that the district gradually eliminated the positions of elementary reading specialists over time because of funding constraints. Certified in early literacy, these specialists supported struggling readers and consulted with classroom teachers. Reading support now comes mainly from part-time tutors.

a. Tutors, who are often retired teachers, now support struggling readers in Tier 1 and Tier 2 instruction. District leaders, coaches, coordinators, and specialists told the team that coaches provided tutors with training and support.

b. At the time of the onsite visit in April 2019, there were 76 tutors distributed equitably to all schools based on enrollment numbers. In addition to local funding, Title I funds underwrite the salaries of 22 supplemental tutors for schools based on their allocations and demonstrated needs.

c. Teachers reported that tutors were usually assigned to provide reading support. They expressed the view that there were not enough tutors to provide support for struggling students in mathematics.

d. In 2018–2019, the district reduced the number of tutors and the time they work in schools because of financial constraints. Tutors now work 15 instead of 18 hours weekly, start the year three weeks later, and end the year three weeks earlier.

6. School leaders, teachers, and parents expressed the view that there was a shortage of English Learner Education (ELE) teachers and not enough programmatic support for English learners (ELs).

a. School leaders said that the district did not have a formal system to work with newly arrived students with limited or no English skills. They stated that the schools had autonomy to create self-contained newcomer programs or could implement “push-in” programs in general education classrooms. The district targets more resources to schools that have new immigrants.

b. School administrators said that no one was identifying best practices and the most effective instruction for non-English speakers and ways of measuring their progress, beyond the state-mandated ACCESS assessment. [[11]](#footnote-11)

c. Administrators told the review team that the high school’s foreign language chair was responsible for the ELE program for the high-school’s 410 ELs.

7. All elementary and middle schools have EL lead teachers. Lead teachers are full-time teachers with limited time to be leaders, even though they are charged with supporting EL instruction. District leaders reported that they arranged coverage to allow EL lead teachers to go into classrooms to guide and coach classroom teachers. EL lead teachers also meet with classroom teachers before and after school.

a. In fiscal year 2019, the district employed 59 EL teachers. The district increased the number of EL teachers from 59 to 69 for fiscal year 2020.

b. Principals and teachers described the EL lead teachers’ work as largely compliance driven, such as maintaining and updating ACCESS records to ensure that they were accurate before they were sent to the central office.

c. Teachers reported that meetings between EL lead teachers and general education teachers were mainly clerical in nature in order to gather data and were not focused on how general education teachers could best work with ELs.

d. In addition, 53 part-time EL tutors (29 funded by local funds and 24 by grants) also work with ELs in small groups and pull-out sessions.

e. The district has also eliminated the districtwide EL support person, leaving the districtwide ELE coordinator to provide programmatic leadership as well as manage the recordkeeping and testing program for an initiative that addresses the English language needs of 23.7 percent of the district’s students.

8. In addition to the loss of key leadership personnel, scarce resources have also made an impact on educational programs.

a. There is no regularly scheduled common planning time at the high school. High-school teachers have nine, two-hour early-release days annually for scheduled collaborative work.

9. Because of financial constraints, the district has limited funds for supplementary texts and materials.

District and school leaders, coordinators, coaches, and specialists reported insufficient funds to purchase reading selections for elementary-school classroom libraries that reflected the cultural diversity of the student body and the community. Although some attempts have been made to introduce more culturally representative materials, there are not enough for all schools.

The district has also eliminated elementary and middle-school library aides, causing these libraries to be unstaffed.

The high school has introduced electives such as Race and Ethnicity, The Holocaust, and an elective course on gender. In several interviews, teachers and leaders expressed the need to further expand and diversify instructional materials and courses to ensure that the academic program better reflected diverse races and cultures, but the funds available to purchase educational materials did not match the needs.

**Impact**: The scarcity of resources has limited the district’s and each school’s ability to implement proven practices that can help all students learn and be deeply engaged in work at school. Budget reductions have made an impact on all students’ education and opportunities to learn. Students who have the most demanding learning needs have had the most to lose in terms of support when resources are scarce. It is likely that without the needed support, not all district students may be able to do more with less, especially the most vulnerable learners.

**5. In observed classrooms, the quality of instruction was inconsistent. There was consistently stronger instruction at the elementary schools than at the high school, especially in the extent to which students communicated ideas and thinking with each other and teachers implemented multiple instructional strategies.[[12]](#footnote-12)**

**A. Focus Area #1: Lesson Objectives & Expectations** Observers saw inconsistencies in how well teachers explained learning objectives and criteria for success, and in how they linked lesson activities to these learning objectives. There was also wide variation across schools and levels in teachers checking for student understanding during lessons; providing feedback to students; and making teaching adjustments based on how well students grasped key concepts and skills.

1. The team observed sufficient and compelling evidence that teachers demonstrated knowledge of subject matter by explaining lesson content and context so that all students understood (characteristic #1) in 80 percent of elementary classes, in 62 percent of middle-school classes, and in 73 percent of high-school classes.

1. In a grade 3 lesson on identifying main ideas in a story, the teacher consistently returned to the lesson objective to reinforce learning when asking students to provide evidence of a main idea.
2. In a grade 7 class, the teacher presented clear objectives for finishing their rough drafts. She reviewed what students had learned about the beginning, middle, and end of a memoir and reminded them to use their graphic organizers for guidance.
3. In many classes, observers noted that lesson objectives were posted. However, at the start of lessons or during lessons, teachers often focused on tasks or activities without explaining tasks in the context of the unit, or in relation to what students already knew, or would learn that day.

2. Observers found sufficient and compelling evidence that teachers ensured that students understood what they were learning in the lesson and why (characteristic #2) in 64 percent of elementary classrooms, in 52 percent of middle-school classrooms, and in 50 percent of high-school classrooms.

a. At the end of a three-week poetry unit in a high-school class, students were preparing to present their poems to the class. The teacher reviewed positive attributes of presenting a poem and respectful audience behavior and then modeled the expectations for students by presenting her own poem, before asking students to present their poems.

b. In contrast, in a middle-school class where objectives were not posted, students told the observer that they did “morning work” while the teacher worked with individual students, and read a book when they finished. The “morning work” consisted of a worksheet with 20 questions about mathematics, most of which were multiple- choice questions. The posted agenda for the day merely listed the time frames for classes without specifying the learning goals and activities.

3. Review team members observed sufficient and compelling evidence that teachers used classroom activities well matched to lesson objectives in both content and cognitive demand (characteristic #3) in 81 percent of elementary classrooms, in 50 percent of middle-school classrooms, and in 63 percent of high-school classrooms.

a. In a middle school reading lesson, students were finding main ideas and evidence in a text using several strategies: answering questions in a whole-class question and answer session with the teacher about the objective; completing a worksheet independently at their desks; and reading short articles and responding to the cues: What is the thesis? Provide the evidence.

b. In an elementary mathematics lesson on line plots, the teacher began by asking students to turn-and-talk with a partner about what they already knew about line plots, and then asked them to share with the whole class what they had talked about, using mathematics vocabulary about line plots to express the information. The students then worked on developing a line plot together and placed data points on the line.

c. However, in a high-school class, the teacher used one strategy to find the area of trapezoids and solved all the examples on the board, narrating her solutions while the students copied them on worksheets.

4. Observers saw sufficient and compelling evidence that teachers frequently and skillfully checked for student understanding (characteristic #4) in 66 percent of elementary classrooms, in just 47 percent of middle-school classrooms, and in 63 percent of high-school classrooms.

a. In a number of observed classrooms, teachers circulated while students worked independently or in groups. They checked how well students responded to questions on a worksheet, completed tasks, and shared ideas and responses with each other. Sometimes they would stop to help or discuss an item with one student, or a group. However, it was rare to see a teacher summarize what was positive about his/her observations to reinforce effective learning, or to reteach either a small group or the whole class when it was clear not everyone had understood.

b. In an elementary lesson on fractions, the teacher asked many higher-order “why” questions about the lesson. The teacher adjusted instruction when it was clear that some ideas were not well understood by the students.

**B. Focus Area #2: Student Engagement & Higher-Order Thinking** This focus areaconcerns student engagement and the development of higher-order thinking skills such as analytical thinking, problem-solving, and the evaluation and application of knowledge, skills, and understandings. Observers look to see whether students have opportunities to share their ideas with each other and are involved in tasks related to real life and the larger world. At all school levels, observers saw more instances of these characteristics at the elementary level than at the middle- and high-school levels.

The review team found sufficient and compelling evidence that students had opportunities to take responsibility for their learning and were engaged in lesson activities (characteristic #5) in 88 percent of elementary-school classrooms, in 57 percent of middle-school classrooms, and in 76 percent of high-school classrooms.

1. Middle-school mathematics students were highly engaged in applying measures of center to real-life problems by finding medians, means and ranges for the number of hours a person worked each day over five days. The teacher circulated to small groups, posed questions, gave students time limits to complete tasks, and count-down warnings when the time was almost up. Students told the observer that they could easily do the expressions but needed practice on the more difficult real-life problems (word problems).
2. However, in a middle-school ELA lesson where discipline had broken down, the teacher seemed oblivious to the chaos, even when a mouse ran across the floor. The teacher gave instructions but did not attempt to gain students’ attention. Twenty minutes later, some students were managing to work in groups while others continued to yell across the room.

Observers identified sufficient and compelling evidence that students engaged in activities requiring the use of higher-order thinking skills (characteristic #6) in 47 percent of elementary school classrooms and in 43 percent of middle-school and high-school classrooms.

Students in a high-school social studies class were deeply engaged in a lesson about the relationship of one’s self to the government and of the government to the people. They had already read *Into the Wild* as an anchor text about a young man’s attempt to find happiness in nature and solitude because he was disillusioned by society. During the class, small groups of students had animated discussions on the topic using additional readings.

In a middle-school ELA lesson, students worked in “cooperative group clubs” doing close reading. Groups searched for “signpost” strategies (literary devices in the texts each group read that helped them to better understand character and plot). The teacher explained how to: “stop, notice, and note” the “sign posts” related to a character such as “contrasts and contradictions”; “aha moments”; “tough questions” that made students wonder; “words of the wiser” or a lesson about life; “again and again,” when words or situations kept taking place; and a “memory moment,” when the author interrupted the action by sharing a memory. All “clubs” immersed themselves in these analytical tasks.

However, in a middle-school math class, where students worked in groups to calculate solutions to word problems, the teacher worked with one group during the entire time of the observation and did not scan the room, circulate, or work with another group. Several students were copying other students’ work on their worksheets.

The review team found sufficient and compelling evidence that students communicated their ideas and thinking with each other, rather than just with the teacher (characteristic #7), in 54 percent of elementary-school classrooms, in only 45 percent of middle-school classrooms, and in just 30 percent of high-school lessons. For many high-school classes, observers noted that the lesson design focused on whole-class, teacher-centered instruction, followed by questions and answers with little opportunity for students to process complex knowledge, use content-based or skill-based vocabulary, and challenge each other’s thinking.

In a high-school science lesson, students were writing a final essay using guiding questions that the teacher had thoroughly explained. The teacher clearly responded to students’ questions about what they were doing and encouraged them to talk with each other while they were completing the task.

In a high-school science lesson on osmosis, students were conducting an experiment on the difference between osmosis and diffusion. Instructions were posted and the students engaged in the task of dissolving sugar in water, and responding to questions about what might be moving as it dissolved, and how they knew whether the sugar dissolved into the water, or the water into the sugar.

However, in a grade 5 math lesson where the teacher worked with individual students on multiplying fractions, structure was not provided for other students to communicate about the lesson content. Many students yelled at and pushed each other and walked around the room.

Review team members found sufficient and compelling evidence that students had meaningful opportunities to engage in tasks connected to their own lives or the real world (characteristic #8) in 73 percent of elementary -school classrooms, in 62 percent of middle -school classrooms, and in 68 percent of high-school classrooms.

When exploring abstract concepts from the novel *Huckleberry Finn*, students wrote statements about the author’s message on topics such as friendship, power, guilt, loyalty, and justice.

Elementary students were studying “weathering” in small groups in a science class. They acted as scientists as they learned to predict and explain weather and made connections to their real-world experiences with weather.

Often, students were interested because the topics were compelling and connected to the world they live in. Such was the case in a science presentation on the effect of smoking and vaping on lung function: students hung on every word. However, in a number of high-school classes, students were not given the opportunity to engage with tasks connected to their lives or the real world. This was often the case in mathematics classes.

**C. Focus Area #3: Inclusive Practice & Classroom Culture** This areafocuses on students engaging in challenging lesson activities taught using a variety of strategies that support and challenge all students and account for their diverse learning needs, competencies, interests, and levels of readiness.

The review team noted sufficient and compelling evidence that teaching ensured that students engaged in challenging tasks regardless of learning needs (characteristic #9) in 59 percent of elementary-school classrooms, in 48 percent of middle-school classrooms, and in only 33 percent of high-school lessons. As noted earlier, high-school lessons were rarely student centered and infrequently immersed students in learning at a level that built upon their strengths and addressed their learning challenges.

1. Students in a middle-school ELA lesson were reading about leaders of color in sports, the arts, and history. Although students’ readings were aligned with their assessed reading levels, all of the students could participate in the ensuing discussion of inferences.
2. An example of a class that did not address students’ needs was a lesson on the periodic table. It was a missed opportunity that used a whole-class teacher-directed question and answer format, consisting of low-level questions. Students did not appear to be engaged or appropriately challenged.

Observers found sufficient and compelling evidence that teachers used a variety of instructional strategies (characteristic #10) in 63 percent of elementary classrooms, in 43 percent of middle-school classrooms, and in 35 percent of high-school classrooms.

a. In an elementary class, small groups of students made a poster of the synopsis of a book they had read, including several quotations. One student from each group presented the synopsis to the whole class. The student groups then circulated to examine each poster and left one question and one comment on a sticky for the group that made that poster. During this timed activity, each student got to listen, speak, read, write and collaborate with other students.

b. However, in a high-school ELA class, the lesson activity and the ensuing homework was to read 45 pages in a novel and take notes. Students appeared to be busy and on task. During the class, the teacher called up students individually to go over missing work.

**Impact**: When lesson objectives are not clear and/or are not rigorous, students cannot develop skills to think more critically and analytically. Without a variety of lesson activities with collaborative opportunities to solve problems, and discuss and debate concepts and ideas, students cannot practice taking responsibility and ownership for their learning. Without consistent delivery of effective, research-based instruction in all grades and subjects, the district cannot ensure that students are well prepared to achieve at high levels and to succeed in college, careers, and civic involvement.

***Recommendations***

**In order to improve the review and continuous renewal of the high school curricula, the district should consider ways to re-instate required oversight and dedicated expertise in curriculum and instruction districtwide, or to establish new roles for this purpose, especially at the high school.**

A. Although it may be efficient, the district should reflect upon the effectiveness of assigning one person to oversee curriculum and instruction systemwide in each content area.

The content and pedagogy of elementary and secondary education are different, especially in a large district.

The district should reconsider the effectiveness of combining districtwide leadership of science, technology/engineering with history and social studies.

* 1. The district should consider restructuring the roles for curricular and instructional leadership at the high school.

Under the financial constraints, the district should determine how best to address the responsibilities previously held by the director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment and lead teachers, including curriculum review, renewal, and implementation, and data-driven instructional improvement.

The high school requires clear lines of leadership to oversee and organize a coherent, standards-based academic program that is rigorous; develops complementarity across subject areas in content, skills and understandings; and challenges and supports a diverse community of learners. It also needs to provide teachers and leaders time to accomplish the hard work of reinvigorating the curriculum.

This planning will need to address the role and responsibilities of the head of school, the department chairs, and the focus required by coordinators for oversight and improvement of curriculum and instruction.

**C.** As the school district and the city develop plans for the renovation of the high school, the district should make decisions about how the new facilities can best support the academic program.

**Benefits** from implementing this recommendation will include focused curricular and instructional leaders who can provide informed oversight, make effective curricular and instructional decisions, and ensure the alignment of the curriculum with state standards.

* + 1. **The district should develop and implement an ongoing, rigorous, transparent, and inclusive curriculum review and revision process, and ensure that the taught curriculum challenges and supports all learners.**

**A.** The district should develop and implement a more rigorous and inclusive curriculum review and renewal process that takes a deeper and more thorough look at content and pedagogy. This process should ensure that the curriculum encourages higher-order thinking; is culturally relevant; incorporates current research and technology; and provides the ambitious learning opportunities identified in the most current Massachusetts curriculum frameworks.

1. Resources should reflect the cultural backgrounds of the student population and the rich history of the community in order to increase the relevancy of the curricula and student engagement.

1. Curricular resources and texts should include a variety of genres, media, perspectives, and levels of complexity.
2. Curricular resources in all content areas should provide opportunities for students to listen, speak, read, write, and use content and skill-based vocabulary across the content areas.

**B.** The district should institute a multi-year curriculum renewal cycle for all content areas that results in research-based decisions on pedagogy, resources, and instructional materials.

1. The district should include a representative group of teachers from each level on curriculum review teams.

**C.** The district should adopt a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) or a similar approach to designing units and lessons that reduce barriers to learning.

Curriculum reviewers should pay attention to the learning and language needs of English learners, students with disabilities, and other underserved groups when designing units of study and selecting instructional resources and strategies.

**D.** The district should provide professional development and support to help educators to implement new structures, content and systems.

**Benefits** from this recommendation include a more rigorous, expansive, and current curriculum that will encourage students to develop and use higher-order thinking. The curriculum will have the potential to better engage all students in their studies. A revitalized curriculum will address students’ diverse learning needs, interests, and talents more effectively.

**Recommended resources:**

* *Quick Reference Guide: The Case for Curricular Coherence* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/impd/qrg-ensuring-coherence.pdf>) describes three types of curricular coherence that support student learning: vertical coherence, aligned tiers of instruction, and cross-subject coherence.
* CURATE (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/curate/>) convenes panels of Massachusetts teachers to review and rate evidence on the quality and alignment of specific curricular materials, then publish their findings for educators across the Commonwealth to consult.
* EdReports (<https://edreports.org/>) provides reviews of K-12 instructional materials.
* DESE’s *Text Inventory Handbook* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/impd/text-inventory.pdf>) guides school and district leaders through an inventory process designed to gather information about the texts students encounter in grades 9–12.
* *Quick Reference Guide: Establishing an Effective Science and Technology/Engineering (STE) Program* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/stem/ste/STEprogram.docx>): DESE has identified five components districts should attend to when designing a rigorous, coherent and relevant pre-K-12 STE education program. Educators, administrators and curriculum designers can refer to this guide for brief descriptions and resources for each component.
  + 1. **The district should ensure that all teachers provide effective instruction that challenges and supports all students.**

1. The district should convene a representative group of teachers and instructional leaders to collaboratively identify key instructional practices.

1. The district’s educator evaluation rubric can support this work.

2. The recommended product of these meetings is a set of expectations that challenges and engages students in higher-order thinking and reflects an emphasis on the rigor and relevance of lesson tasks, particularly tasks linked to the culturally diverse world represented by the community and the student population;.

**B.** Once a setof instructional expectations has been defined, district leaders should develop a plan for communicating these expectations with staff.

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

a. The district should provide for more regular and frequent common planning time at the high school level to ensure a more collaborative culture and to promote the engagement of the entire staff toward reaching improvement goals.

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

a. Opportunities should be provided by level for teachers to share best practices.

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

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

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

The district should continue to provide teachers with high-quality feedback[[13]](#footnote-13) that helps them to improve instruction.

1. The team recommends that the task force consider reinstituting or updating the walkthrough process that was previously used in the district. DESE’s State System of Support (SSoS) team are a useful resource for designing a useful walkthrough process.

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

**Recommended resources:**

* The *Students at the Center* framework (<https://studentsatthecenterhub.org/interactive-framework/>) includes four research-backed tenets, or principles, for powerful teaching and learning, meant to ensure that all students develop the sort of high-level knowledge and skills they need to succeed in college, careers, and civic life. Drawn from the mind/brain sciences, learning theory, and research on youth development, these tenets are overlapping and complementary. In combination, and when guided by a coherent and rigorous set of educational goals, they provide a strong foundation for the pursuit of deeper learning.
* DESE’s *OPTIC: Online Platform for Teaching and Informed Calibration* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/calibration/>) is a professional development tool supporting Massachusetts educators to refine a shared understanding of effective, standards-aligned instructional practice and high quality feedback.
* DESE’s *Calibration Video Library & Protocols* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/calibration/>) is a collection of professionally created videos of classroom instruction produced by the School Improvement Network, along with sample training protocols and activities. These videos depict a range of practice—this is not a collection of exemplars—to support within-district calibration activities that promote a shared understanding of instructional quality and rigor.
* CURATE (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/curate/>) convenes panels of Massachusetts teachers to review and rate evidence on the quality and alignment of specific curricular materials, then publish their findings for educators across the Commonwealth to consult.
* Jobs for the Future’s *Common Instructional Framework* (<https://www.jff.org/resources/common-instructional-framework/>), a core component in Early College Designs for schools, contains six powerful teaching and learning strategies to build college readiness.
* *Increasing Access to Advanced Coursework* (<https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/2018/04/ESSA-IncreasingAccesstoAdvancedCoursework.pdf>) describes how school districts can use the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to expand access to advanced coursework and increase students’ achievement in these courses.
* DESE’s *My Career and Academic Plan (MyCAP)* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/ccte/ccr/mycap/>) is a student-centered, multi-year planning tool designed to provide students with ongoing opportunities to plan for their academic, personal/social and career success.
  + - * DESE’s *High Quality College and Career Pathways Initiative* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/ccte/ccr/hqccp/>) serves as an overarching strategy for significantly expanding student access to high-quality career pathways.
      * The Middle College National Consortium (<http://mcnc.us/>) provides resources to support increasing the number of high-school students who have access to early colleges, middle colleges, and dual enrollment.
      * DESE’s "What to Look For" Observation Guides (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/observation/> describe what observers should expect to see in a classroom at a particular grade level in a specific subject area. This includes the knowledge and skills students should be learning and using (as reflected in state learning standards) and best practices related to classroom curriculum, instruction, and assessment for each subject area. The guides are not designed to replace any evaluation system or tools districts currently use, but rather, are a resource to help classroom observers efficiently identify what teachers and students should be experiencing in specific subjects and grade levels.
      * *Time for Teachers:* *Leveraging Time to Strengthen Instruction & Empower Teachers* (<https://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.
      * *Time Well Spent* (<https://www.timeandlearning.org/sites/default/files/resources/timewellspent.pdf>) offers an in-depth examination of 30 expanded-time schools serving high-poverty populations with impressive track records of student success, and demonstrates how these schools leverage their additional time in order to implement other critical reforms.

Assessment

***Contextual Background***

The district administers assessments throughout the school year, collects student performance data, and makes it available to teachers and administrators. Elementary and middle schools use the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Reading System in kindergarten through grade 4 and for at-risk students in grades 5 through 8; end-of-module math assessments in kindergarten through grade 8; and FOSS science pre- and post-tests in grades 3 through 8. The district assesses written language skills with writing prompts in kindergarten through grade 8. In 2017–2018, the district used i-Ready, a standards-based diagnostic assessment for reading and mathematics. However, i-Ready was discontinued in 2018–2019 because of budget constraints.

District leaders and coaches discuss district assessments and the assessment calendar with staff at the beginning of the school year. Teachers administer formative assessments periodically throughout the school year. District staff have developed end-of-module mathematics assessments and writing assessments based on reading prompts.

The high school administers midterms and final assessments, depending upon subject and grade, but these assessments are not aligned with middle-school subjects or assessments. At the high school, assessments are mostly “idiosyncratic to the class.”

The district enters MCAS tests and Fountas and Pinnell results into the Aspen X2 student information management system. However, other assessment results are entered into Google Docs or other spreadsheets. The schools use multiple data management systems, some of which are not inter-operational.

School leaders and teachers review assessment results to make decisions about improvement goals and interventions, and to monitor student progress. School leaders conduct data summits with teachers several times a year to make data-driven decisions. Instructional coaches provide support for teachers at the elementary and middle schools and help build data literacy at the school level. The process for using data meetings to monitor whole- school and grade-level progress varies by school across the district.

Families receive MCAS tests results, progress reports, and report cards throughout the year. Teachers share additional assessment results with families during intervention meetings, or upon request. Teachers also discuss assessment results and academic progress with students, but this practice varies among teachers and schools. There is limited information about the district assessment program on district and school websites.

***Strength Findings***

**1. Some schools in the district have implemented assessment practices that help school leaders and teachers plan instruction and provide effective support for students.**

**A.** Some schools have met their improvement targets and have developed highly effective data analysis practices that provide actionable information to support all students in making progress toward achieving state and local standards.

1. For example, the literacy team at Morey Elementary School decided to focus on students who scored slightly below grade level on the spring administration of the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System.

a. These students were placed in leveled literacy intervention reading groups with the goal of moving them to grade level proficiency and reintegrating them into grade-level reading groups as quickly as possible.

2. The coaching team at Murkland Elementary School analyzed summative data from the prior school year and ongoing formative assessment data from internal and district assessments and disaggregated the data to determine the effectiveness of instruction. Trends and findings from the data were shared with staff and reflected upon using the ORID protocol to pose a series of questions that are objective, reflective, interpretive and decision-making.

* + - 1. The math resource teacher and the literacy coach work with all staff members to improve both instructional practices and content knowledge. During coaching sessions, teachers co-plan and/or co-teach lessons with instructional support personnel focusing on process improvement. Student data is reviewed both before and following the coaching cycle to determine the effectiveness of instruction.

3. The Daley Middle School data team meets several times to review and analyze MCAS tests data before the schoolwide data summit. The data team reviews trends in achievement and growth scores for all students and groups including English learners, students with disabilities, male and female students.

a. Following this review, teachers collaborate to create and implement strategies and guides for struggling students. Teachers create reference sheets for students that include step-by-step directions for problem-solving as well as the content vocabulary for a unit or module.

b. Grades 7 and 8 students also participate in a morning mathematics program that provides students with the opportunity for additional practice. The teacher works with small groups of students and individual students, using online i-Ready lessons that target specific needs.[[14]](#footnote-14)

4. Staff at the An Wang Middle School coordinate the analysis of data and student work to improve instructional practices. They use formative assessments to identify students in need of intervention and to drive daily instruction. This school’s collaborative approach for planning and instruction is central to improving student learning and achievement.

a. The An Wang School increased the time for teacher teams to meet by 50 percent from prior years. The additional meeting time is intended to help teachers differentiate lessons, integrate common core standards, and develop common formative assessments collaboratively.

**Impact:** When schools use data analysis to drive instruction across grade level and subject areas, it is more likely that the data results will provide actionable information that will support all students in making progress towards achieving state and local standards.

**2**. **Elementary and middle-school leaders and teachers develop whole school, grade level, and classroom plans to support student achievement through data summits and coaching.**

1. School leaders and teachers review historical and current data to determine student growth and make plans to increase student achievement at data summits.
   * + 1. Interviews and a review of SIPs indicated that data summits were conducted throughout the school year in most schools to determine students’ needs.
          1. One SIP stated that staff used end-of-year data to identify whole school and grade level needs at a data summit held in the summer. The needs are categorized, and those areas with the largest discrepancies are chosen as priorities.
          2. Another SIP stated that grade-level teams, special educators, the literacy specialist, the principal, and assistant principal meet to analyze MCAS data*,* i-Ready scores, end of year module and benchmark data, and other pertinent data to identify strengths, concerns, and apparent patterns. This information helps teachers to determine the areas to focus on during daily interventions.
          3. Administrators told the team that elementary teachers discussed data in vertical teams during data summits and frequently reviewed data to determine the progress of all students and student groups.
2. School leaders told the team that data summits were contractual and part of the teacher evaluation process. Teachers participate in one team or grade level data summit before their goals are due on November 1. This enables them to address their students’ strengths and needs in their goals. The team was told that instructional coaches played an important role in data analysis and helped leaders and teachers to improve the quality of instruction. Coaches help teachers become more data literate, review student work, and make decisions about lesson content and instructional strategies.
3. Coaches work with teachers to analyze student-teacher conference notes and provide direction to students.
4. School leaders told the review team that coaches across the district met monthly with coordinators to better align literacy and mathematics curricula and shared the revisions with teachers.

**Impact**: When schools consistently provide a process and support for reviewing and analyzing data, they are more likely to promote a culture of shared responsibility and accountability for assessing performance and taking actions that lead to building a culture of data-driven decision-making and improved outcomes for all students.

***Challenges and Areas for Growth***

**3. The district does not have systemwide standardized diagnostic assessments in reading and mathematics to identify students’ strengths and needs, target instruction towards improving students’ weakest skills, and measure growth.**

1. The district discontinued i-Ready testing in 2018–2019 because of budgetary constraints.

1. This toolwas usedas a diagnostic and instructional program in reading and mathematics for students in kindergarten through grade 8. The i-Ready assessment identifies students’ strengths and needs and helps teachers to target instruction toward a student's weakest skills.

* 1. Interviewees told the review team that the loss ofi-Readywas very difficult for teachers and they characterized the change as “demoralizing.” Teachers reported that they relied heavily upon i-Readyresults to plan instruction.
  2. District and school leaders expressed the need for standards-aligned assessments that identify students’ skill weaknesses and said that they were “missing the i-Ready component.”
  3. Interviewees reported that i-Readywere objective assessments that enabled schools to “push themselves” in comparison with other schools.”

d. Leaders and teachers reported that they had triangulated data at the data summits using i-Ready results. They added that although the data summits were still held, evidence of student progress was now more anecdotal.

e. The acting superintendent expressed the view that the district had lost the ability to better understand student growth without i-Ready.

f. Teachers told the team that i-Ready results were an important consideration at TAT (teacher assistance team) meetings.

g. The Massachusetts Association of School Committees memo to the school committee concerning the superintendent search contains a specific recommendation for the district to adopt or develop benchmark assessments that monitor student progress.

**Impact**: The absence of diagnostic standardized assessment tools in reading and mathematics hampers the district in identifying skill weaknesses and appropriate instructional strategies, and in monitoring and reporting on student growth and development.

**4. The district uses multiple data management systems, some of which are not inter-operational. Support personnel have been reduced, planning time is limited, and administrators, teachers, students, and families do not have easy access to student performance data.**

1. The district uses many platforms to maintain data.
2. Some schools use EdCat for intervention data; SWIS and Aspen X2 for historical and behavior data; Tableau to for attendance and academic data; Journal in Aspen X2 for anecdotal data; and Google Docs and spreadsheets for teacher-developed assessment data.
3. Although Aspen X2 is compatible with Tableau, the district’s student information system, and is designed to report out assessment and other student performance data, such as attendance in real time, the team was told that the district no longer has a programmer to customize it.
4. The acting superintendent told the team that the district needed one system that could provide access to all of the needed data on demand.

a. Although schools have access to MCAS tests and Fountas and Pinnell results, the district does not have a single platform for maintaining these data.

* 1. School leaders expressed the view that one of the platforms the district uses is ineffective because it is confusing, inefficient, and not user-friendly.

1. School leaders told the team that they entered documents and assessments such as the spreadsheets for end-of-module math units into Google Docs.
2. Administrators, teachers, families, and students do not have easy access to achievement data.

The team was told that administrators often do not have easy access to data and often needed to ask for help in accessing MCAS tests and school assessment results.

The district has not trained teachers to use Aspen X2.

Teachers have access to only two years of historical academic data and do not have access to attendance and disciplinary data.

Grade Book is not a required feature in Aspen X2. Therefore, some families and students do not have access to grades online.

**C.** The time available for educators to review data and use it to inform instruction varied.

**D.** Reductions in personnel compromised the assessment system.

1. Lead teachers were responsible for coordinating the review of data and other student information at the high school, but this role was eliminated during the budget crisis.

2. At the time of the onsite in April 2019, the director of accountability and school improvement position was vacant. This administrator was the district’s liaison to its turnaround schools. District and school leaders told the team that the position remained vacant and would not be funded in the fiscal year 2020 budget.

3. The high school director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment and departmental teacher leaders were also eliminated from the budget. Those duties have been redistributed to other positions. District and school leaders stated that much of their work was not being done, including curriculum review, alignment with standards, and analysis of assessment data.

**Impact**: When data sources and staff are not easily accessible or available to school staff, staff do not have sufficient actionable information to support all students in making progress toward achieving standards and improving performance and outcomes.

***Recommendations***

* + - 1. **The district should develop uniform and integrated policies, structures, and practices for the efficient and purposeful collection, use, and sharing of a range of assessments districtwide.**

**A.** The superintendent, principals, and program leaders, in collaboration with teachers, should ensure that specific strategies, timelines, and clear expectations for the use of data are in place districtwide.

Building on the practices in place in some grade levels, the district should establish systematic, consistent processes for the collection, analysis, use, and sharing of student performance results.

The district should ensure that educators at all levels use data strategically to inform instruction, ongoing curriculum revision, program evaluation, and the educator evaluation system.

**B.** Ongoing targeted training in the collection, analysis, and use of student performance data should be provided to all staff.

**C.** The district should consider how it might increase support for K–8 teachers who are hampered in identifying students’ strengths and skill weaknesses to target instruction without standards-based diagnostic literacy and mathematics assessment tools.

**D.** The district should establish a data system that provides all educators with convenient, real-time access to student performance data, as well as other relevant and demographic data, as appropriate.

1. The district should collaborate regularly with the Statewide Systems of Support (SSoS) staff who are working with the district’s turnaround schools to identify ways to use the system and practices of SSoS’s data-driven turnaround processes and share these models with other Lowell schools.

**E.** The district should continue to support the various configurations of the school data summits by providing all staff with exemplars and models as they analyze state accountability, ACCESS test, and local assessment results.

**F.** The district should provide all leaders and staff with clear expectations, protocols, and models for sharing student performance data with students and their families.

**Benefits:** Implementing this recommendation will mean clarity and consistency in the use of data for decision-making. It will provide educators with professional development for the analysis and use of data to improve opportunities and outcomes for students.

**Recommended resources:**

* + - DESE’s *Assessment Literacy Self-Assessment and Gap Analysis Tool* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/assessment/continuum.pdf>) is intended to support districts in understanding where their educators fit overall on a continuum of assessment literacy. After determining where the district as a whole generally falls on the continuum, districts can determine potential next steps.
    - DESE’s *District Data Team Toolkit* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/accountability/toolkit/>) 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. There are six modules in this toolkit. Module four has a section on root cause analysis that will help a district to identify specific issues interfering with achievement. Module five will help a district think through specific actions that affect growth and development. Module six will help a district to think through the evaluation of results with specific templates.

Human Resources and Professional Development

***Contextual Background***

At the time of the review in April 2019, the district had endured several losses in human resources staffing and the human resources department had experienced an especially difficult year. During the 2018–2019 school year, with the position of human resources director remaining unfilled and the resignation of the assistant director of human resources, the department was left with an executive secretary and one assistant to perform its functions under the supervision of the assistant superintendent for finance and operations. The district has recently hired an external recruiting firm to lead the search for a new human resources director and the process was underway at the time of the onsite.

The Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Framework was adopted in 2013 by the Lowell Teachers’ Union and an abbreviated version of the teacher rubric was agreed upon for use in evaluations. In 2017, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education amended the framework, eliminating the requirement for a separate student impact rating.[[15]](#footnote-15) The district focuses on student learning through the student goals set by teachers, although the consistency and measurability of those goals varies across the district.

The district’s induction and mentoring program is part of a teacher academy that supports beginning teachers throughout their first three years in the district. In 2018–2019, the district assigned more than one teacher to each mentor because of budget constraints.

Professional development (PD) is varied, often embedded, and provided at both the district and school levels with responsibility for planning assigned to the principal of each school. Curriculum coordinators, coaches, and department chairs also contribute to PD planning and implementation. There are several formats for PD, including monthly release days, common planning time at the elementary and middle- school levels, and after-school offerings. One full day of PD before the opening of school tends to focus mainly on regulations, and a full-day session on Election Day has recently been negotiated with the teachers’ union.

***Strength Findings***

**1. The district has developed a vehicle and model for the support and professional growth of new teachers and paraprofessionals.**

1. Interviews and a document review indicated that the district’s teacher academy was a multi-year induction and mentoring program for teachers in the first three years of practice that was designed to advance personal and professional learning. Through this program, new teachers are matched with trained mentors.
   * + 1. Teachers expressed the view that the teacher academy was an effective induction program conducted for and by teachers, and that it has been helpful to new teachers.
       2. Teachers work with their mentors on projects assigned in academy courses, such as lesson planning, data collection and observation, and reflection on classroom instruction.
       3. Mentors participate in a course entitled Mentoring in a Community of Learners and attend a monthly mentor seminar through the academy.
       4. In 2017–2018, the retention rate for teachers in the district was 90.7 percent and had been close to or above that level between 2013 and 2017.

**B.** The district offers workshops for paraprofessionals through the teacher academy in areas such as communication and literacy for the Massachusetts Tests for Educational Licensure (MTEL), designed to support paraprofessionals who are considering earning a teacher license. It is the district’s hope that this initiative will increase the diversity of the teaching staff.

In addition to providing support, the teacher academy offers financial incentives to retain teachers.

Teachers can earn a master’s degree through Fitchburg State College through the teacher academy to assist them in moving from provisional or initial licensure to professional licensure.

The tuition for courses offered through the teacher academy may be reimbursed up to the contractual rate of $1,000, as stipulated in the teachers’ and paraprofessionals’ collective bargaining agreements.

Teachers participating in the teacher academy program receive a salary increase when they are at a halfway point in their participation and again upon program completion.

**Impact**: If supported adequately, including through funding, the Lowell Teacher Academy can provide the support and assistance to prepare and retain teachers to become more effective in meeting students’ needs.

***Challenges and Areas for Growth***

**2. At the time of the review, the district had insufficient infrastructure and personnel to implement human resources policies and practices effectively.**

**A.** The position of human resources director remained vacant for the 2018–2019 school year, and the assistant human resources director resigned during the year.

1. The human resources department was staffed with one executive secretary and an assistant.

1. Administrators told the team that they were concerned that there was no support when dealing with difficult personnel issues.
2. District leaders and principals expressed frustration in dealing with the human resources department, and an audit of the department cited the absence of response to department and school needs in a timely fashion.
3. A question in the human resources audit asked staff members if there was a designated person they could talk to about human relations matters. In 20 of the 22 responses, the person whom respondents identified was no longer in the district.
4. The limited staffing in the human resources department resulted in a delay in the completion of retirement forms, negatively affecting several retiring teachers.
5. At the time of the onsite in April 2019, the district was in the process of a search for a human resources director.
6. Current reporting and maintenance of employment-related records varies and is ineffective.

Human resources records are kept in a variety of ways and places.

Data, such as the current number of paraprofessionals and teachers, is difficult to access because of various collection methods. A district staffing chart provided to the team reported 1,082 teachers while the district’s data system, reported 1,106 teachers. According to DESE data, in 2017–2018 there were 1,065.9 teachers in Lowell.

The staff member who entered information into the state’s Education Personnel Information Management System (EPIMS) has also left the district.

The team was told that clerks in the schools were responsible for keeping teacher attendance and entering into Aspen X2. Because the district uses multiple data collection platforms the numbers may vary.

Ineffective reporting and recordkeeping have incurred costs in the past, resulting in the district continuing to pay former employees.

The district is anticipating using additional functions of the MUNIS program that is currently used for payroll and financial functions to improve the flow and sharing of data.

**Impact**: An inadequate infrastructure for the human resources department diminishes district capacity to perform the functions that attract, support, and retain qualified staff.

**3. The district does not have an effective recruiting, hiring, and assignment system to create a qualified pool of applicants that reflect the diversity in the schools.**

* 1. The district has no short-term or long-term plans to identify and recruit qualified educators.

1. While the district makes some effort to attract highly qualified educators, it does not have systematic method to create a pipeline of qualified staff, particularly those who reflect the diversity of the student population.

a. Interviews and a review of documents indicated that many positions were difficult to fill and remained unfilled for the 2018–2019 academic year.

* 1. Per the terms of the teachers’ collective bargaining agreement and confirmed by human resources staff, the district posts difficult-to-fill positions internally at first. Lowell teachers have an opportunity to request a transfer to a position prior to an external posting.
  2. The team was told that the human resources department has hosted a job fair in the past and human resources staff have also attended job fairs throughout Massachusetts. However, because of limited staff in the department, the district is unable to host or participate in job fairs this year.

**B.** According to 2018–2019 ESE data, 93.2 percent of the district’s 848.6 FTE teachers are White. Efforts to attract a more diverse staff have not been successful.

1. When asked about the status of efforts to increase diversity in the teaching staff, teachers’ union members said, “Look around,” indicating that the largely white staff assembled was the norm, and that because of the void in the human resources department, there was nobody to target diversity in hiring.

2. School committee members told the team that the former human resources director tried to create diversity among staff by helping paraprofessionals already in the district to advance, but they expressed concern that the job fairs staff attended were too distant from Lowell to attract viable candidates.

3. Students reported that they had never experienced having a teacher of color in their classes.

4. In interviews, parents observed that the student population was diverse, but the staff was not. Participants in focus groups held to inform the selection of the new superintendent stated that their superintendent of choice would be bilingual and bicultural.

**C.** The district’s hiring procedures and policies often do not promote hiring and assigning the most qualified candidate for positions.

Union members, central office administrators, school administrators, and school committee members differ about the autonomy and fairness of the hiring process.

Administrators reported that under the terms of the collective bargaining agreement, principals often had to accept staff members who had been removed from other schools. In some instances, the assignment of teachers to a school was completed before the hiring of the principal.

Teachers and administrators told the team that school committee members often involved themselves in the hiring process.

School committee members told the team that they were not involved in hiring and had adopted a policy that requires the interviewing of all qualified residents who apply for a school department position to ensure that the school committee was removed from the hiring process.

The principals reported that the hiring process was cumbersome and often difficult for them.

1. Administrators reported having to wait for the central office to post vacancies and, in some instances, they went to the district office to ensure that this was done in a timely manner.
2. The district human resources office is formally responsible for vetting candidates by verifying licensure, completing CORI[[16]](#footnote-16) background checks, and determining the step on the salary schedule. Principals said that they themselves currently performed many of these functions.
3. Administrators told the team that, because of the school committee policy of interviewing all qualified residents who apply, the process of screening and interviewing candidates is unduly time consuming and unproductive.
4. There is no consistent process for teacher assignment.

Administrators reported that although they tried to assign teachers based on students’ needs, the best teacher was not always assigned to the neediest students, since teacher preference was often a factor in the assignment of teachers.

**Impact**: Without a comprehensive and efficient recruitment, hiring, and assignment system, the district likely is unable to hire and retain qualified, diverse, and effective educators.

**4. The district’s educator evaluation system does not prioritize opportunities for educators to receive high-quality feedback that helps them improve their practice.[[17]](#footnote-17)**

1. The state’s Educator Evaluation Framework uses a teacher evaluation rubric that features four standards under which there are 16 indicators and 33 elements to rate teachers. There is confusion among staff concerning which indicators are used in the district.

**B.** The team reviewed the 2017–2019 evaluative documentation of 50 teachers selected randomly from across the district in TeachPoint, the district’s educator evaluation management system. Evaluations were usually completed within contractual timelines. In general, teachers included a self-assessment, professional and student goals, and evidence. However, evaluations were somewhat limited in the elements to promote professional growth.

1. While teachers included goals in their evaluations, in 15 of the 50 evaluations reviewed, those goals were not measurable, or did not have a student focus and outcome. For example, student goals included statements such as “to increase opportunities for students to…” or “to collect data” as opposed to statements expressed as student outcomes.
2. Many of the teachers’ evaluations were evidence-based, but few included high-quality feedback that would contribute to professional growth. Feedback was often congratulatory with thanks from the evaluator; however, the majority of evaluations did not contain comments that would promote growth. Comments such as “collaborate with others” or “continue to …” did not provide concrete ways in which teachers might improve their practice.
3. Teachers’ perceptions of the feedback they receive varied widely. Some expressed the view that they received very useful feedback that helps them improve, while others expressed the view that the feedback and the system were used punitively.
4. Administrators told the team that the evaluator system had great potential for teacher growth, but that they did not have the support to fully use it and that there was a high variability in its use across the district.
5. Administrators have participated in Research for Better Teaching training to improve their evaluation skills and have focused on feedback in 2018–2019, but principals said that they needed more support to improve their practice.
6. Administrators stated that they needed additional help to effectively use the teacher evaluation system. Many reported that they were focused on compliance, such as entering the required forms in TeachPoint in a timely manner, but with their many responsibilities, it was difficult to meet individually with teachers to give useful feedback.
7. Some administrators told the team that their ability to have conversations with teachers and provide them with feedback was compromised by the added responsibilities resulting from teacher absences and eliminated positions.

**C.** The team reviewed the 2017–2019 evaluative documentation of all district principals and district-level administrators. In general, the evaluations were complete, but little feedback to promote the growth of administrators was evident.

1. Principals told the team that they have received little feedback as leaders.

**D.** The district does not evaluate all staff.

* + - 1. The district does not evaluate the 412 paraprofessionals whose work is defined as supporting student learning.

Administrators reported that while paraprofessionals were instrumental in helping to improve student achievement, administrators did not have an opportunity to evaluate them because an evaluation system was not in the paraprofessionals’ collective bargaining agreement.

Teachers also expressed the view that it would be helpful to evaluate paraprofessionals given the variations in their performance.

**E.** The district has not taken action on the components of the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Framework that require the collection and use of multiple sources of evaluative evidence.

1. As of the 2015–2016 school year, state educator evaluation regulations (603 CMR 35.07) call for all districts to collect and use student feedback as evidence in the teacher evaluation process and staff feedback in the administrator evaluation process.

**F.** Teachers’ union members told the team that, while the evaluation tool had merit and could promote collaboration, it could also be used as a “weapon.” They added that the process was very inconsistent from school to school. In some schools, there are no conversations with the evaluator about the evaluation; the evaluation is simply posted on TeachPoint.

**Impact**: Without evaluating all aspects of teaching and learning and promoting growth by providing high-quality (specific, timely, and actionable) feedback, the district misses opportunities to help educators build their skills and improve students’ learning experiences and outcomes.

* + 1. **The district’s professional development program does not have clear goals and objectives related to student outcomes, is not informed by educator data from multiple sources, and is not evaluated.**

**A.** The district’s professional development program is missing key components of the Massachusetts Standards for Professional Development (PD).

The district does not have a PD plan with clear goals and objectives related to desired student outcomes, district and school improvement goals, and the means to evaluate them.

1. A review of PD documents and interviews with administrators indicated that while there was a calendar of PD topics, the district did not have an underlying PD plan.
2. There is no ongoing plan to provide PD to the teachers and administrators who move to new levels and new schools, or are new to the district.
3. There are some ad hoc evaluations of PD, such as coordinators and coaches checking for implementation, but the district does not have a systematic way of evaluating the effectiveness of the district’s PD program.

Administrators have few opportunities to practice their learning and receive feedback.

a. Principals stated that because the position of director of accountability and school improvement was eliminated, they lost opportunities to share strategies and engage in meaningful PD. While they appreciate their current work with Research for Better Teaching, several principals have created their own “cohorts” to discuss shared issues, such as providing feedback to teachers.

b. Principals told the review team that the district did not have a formal onboarding or mentoring program for them.

**Impact**: Without a PD plan developed in a collaborative manner, with clear goals, outcomes, and an evaluation process, the district is unable to fully support educator effectiveness and student learning.

***Recommendations***

**1. The district should develop and sustain an adequate infrastructure and hire and retain the personnel to effectively implement human resources policies and practices.**

**A.** The district should provide the new human resources director appropriate training and support as the director assumes responsibility for the district’s human resources department.

1. The district should consider hiring an assistant director of human resources.

1. The district should create an effective system of maintaining and reporting employment records.

1. An expanded use of MUNIS or other software programs that will ensure accurate reporting and the ability to review data in real time should be further considered for implementation.

2. Roles and responsibilities should be clearly defined, and adequate training provided to guarantee accurate reporting. Care should be taken not to add new responsibilities to existing positions which are already taxed.

**Benefits:** By improving the infrastructure of the human resources department through trained and qualified staffing, clear roles and responsibilities, and the technological tools to operate, the district can obtain accurate data in real time and support the human resources needs of its staff.

**Recommended resources:**

* Membership in professional organizations such as the American Association of School Personnel Administrators (<https://aaspa.org/>) or job-alike groups through a collaborative or other regional or state entity offers resources and opportunities to consider various structures and technologies that may improve HR operations.
  + 1. **The district should take a more proactive approach to recruiting, hiring, and assigning staff to build a qualified pool of applicants that reflect the diversity of the schools and meet all students’ needs.**

1. Once in place, the human resources director should identify effective ways to create a pipeline of qualified and diverse staff in collaboration with a team of administrators, teachers, parents, students, and community representatives.

The venues and media outlets used for recruiting should be expanded and should include those that may increase the diversity of the pool of candidates.

The district should continue to pursue the development and advancement of interested paraprofessionals.

The district should strengthen its partnerships with higher education institutions beyond job fairs, particularly those institutions that prepare candidates for difficult to fill positions.

1. The district should develop explicit steps for hiring and assigning the most qualified candidates for positions.

As part of collective bargaining, the human resources department and Lowell Teachers’ Union should review and agree upon the processes for hiring and assigning staff.

The hiring process should be transparent, inclusive, and based on district priorities.

The school committee should reconsider the policy of granting an interview to all qualified residents who apply for positions.

Principals and other administrators should utilize data to match teachers’ strengths and skills with students’ needs.

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

**Recommended resources:**

* *Diversifying the Teaching Profession Through High-Retention Pathways,* from The Learning Policy Institute (<https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/diversifying-teaching-profession-brief>), examines how the lack of diversity in the teaching workforce impacts students, and offers district and state policy solutions.

**3. The district should fully and effectively implement all components of the state’s Educator Evaluation Framework to promote educators’ growth, with particular emphasis on ensuring that all educators receive high-quality feedback.**

**A.** The district should support and monitor the skills of evaluators to ensure that the feedback they provide is specific, timely, and actionable and relevant to professional growth and student outcomes.

1. District leaders should review on a regular basis the quality of feedback submitted by the district’s evaluators and work with them to calibrate the expectations for feedback across the district.

2. The district should examine ways to provide principals with additional help to focus on meaningful evaluation and feedback while meeting building school needs.

1. The district should revise its educator evaluation system in order to incorporate components of the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Framework that require the collection and use of multiple sources of evaluative evidence.
2. The district should work with the unions to develop and institute an evaluation tool and process for other staff roles, including paraprofessionals and, possibly, other staff.

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

**Recommended resources:**

* DESE’s *Calibration Resources: OPTIC and DESE Video Library* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/calibration/>). [OPTIC](http://www.ma-optic.com/) is a dynamic professional learning platform that supports educators to develop and refine a shared understanding of high-quality teaching and feedback using over 100 videos of classroom instruction aligned to the MA Curriculum Frameworks and the Model Classroom Teacher Rubric. The [DESE video library](http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/calibration/videos.html) is a collection of professionally created videos of classroom instruction produced by the School Improvement Network. These videos, accompanied by related calibration training protocols, depict a range of practice (this is NOT a collection of exemplars) to support within-district calibration activities that promote a shared understanding of instructional quality and rigor.
* *Quick Reference Guide: Opportunities to Streamline the Evaluation Process* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/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.

1. **The district should develop a professional development plan aligned with district and school goals with SMART[[18]](#footnote-18) goals and measurable student outcomes.**
   1. The district’s PD program should be guided by a plan with measurable goals, student outcomes, and a means of evaluation. This plan may be a component of the district’s action plan.
   2. The plan should provide a set of learning experiences that is varied, systematic, informed by student and educator data, and aligned with teachers’ professional goals.

1. The district should continue to survey teachers to obtain feedback on their learning experiences and needs.

2. The district utilizes coordinators, coaches, and principals at the elementary level to determine whether teachers are using the new knowledge and skills they learned through the PD program. It should review how to institute this model or a similar design at the middle- and high-school levels to determine how well PD is achieving its purposes.

3. The PD should also be evaluated according to the student outcomes identified in the PD plan.

**Benefits:** Implementing this recommendation will help to ensure that educators at all stages of their careers will receive high-quality, appropriately targeted PD that improves their knowledge, skills, and ability to meet the learning needs of all students.

**Recommended resources:**

* DESE’s *Professional Development Self-Assessment Guidebook* (<http://www.mass.gov/edu/docs/ese/accountability/dsac/professional-development-self-assessment-guide.pdf>) provides tools for analyzing professional development offerings’ alignment with the Massachusetts Standards for Professional Development, the Educator Evaluation Framework, and the *District Standards and Indicators*.

Student Support

***Contextual Background***

Many students come to school with unique academic, language, and support needs. According to DESE data, in 2018–2019, 72.4 percent of district students are part of the high needs group because they are in one or more of the following groups: English learners (ELs) or former ELs, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students. While the percentage enrollment of ELs in Lowell decreased by 2.9 percent from 26.6 percent in 2014-–2015 to 23.7 percent in 2018–2019, as compared with the 2018–2019 statewide average of 10.5 percent, the percentage enrollments of other high needs student groups have increased. During the same interval, the district enrollment of students with disabilities increased by 2.3 percent, from 15.2 percent in 2014–2015 to 17.5 percent in 2018–2019, as compared with the 2018–2019 statewide average of 18.3 percent; and the district enrollment of economically disadvantaged students increased by 4.8 percent from 49.0 percent in 2014-–2015 to 53.8 percent in 2018–2019, as compared with the 2018–2019 statewide average of 31.2 percent.

The district offers a continuum of programs and services to meet students’ needs including inclusion classes, supplemental instruction, self-contained classes, therapeutic day programs, and an alternative high school program.[[19]](#footnote-19) The district also provides paraprofessionals and tutors to support the learning of struggling students. Programs at the high school such as Upward Bound, GEAR UP, and Naviance help to promote college and career readiness.

Across the district, there is inconsistent use of data and diagnostic evidence to identify and provide academic and SEL interventions and supports. The district also does not have a universal screening system consisting of diagnostic and benchmark assessments to identify students’ needs, and monitor their progress in response to interventions. Elementary and middle-school teachers have structured common planning time and access to some student performance data.

The district has made steady progress in implementing a positive approach to behavior management in kindergarten through grade 9.

The Lowell High School Freshman Academy was instituted to promote a positive transition for students going from grade 8 into their first year at Lowell High School. The house configuration for grades 10 through 12 was intended increase student connections and a sense of belonging in a large high school with 3,154 students. The high-school schedule includes a 20-minute daily advisory period intended to support the development of students’ academic and social skills.

However, under current conditions, the four houses do not have distinctive identities, or house-specific themes, programming, and activities to connect students to the school. The assignment of students to houses is random. The advisory program is missing a structured curriculum to foster academic and social-emotional skill development and team building.

Student outcome measures show persistent achievement gaps that present challenges. For example, in 2017–2018, Lowell’s four-year high school graduation rate for all students was 79.6 percent as compared with the statewide average of 87.9 percent. The graduation rates for some student groups were lower than the rate for all students.[[20]](#footnote-20) In 2017–2018, Lowell’s dropout rate for all students was 2.8 percent as compared with the statewide average of 1.9 percent. The dropout rates for most student groups were higher than comparable statewide rates.[[21]](#footnote-21)

Every school has an electronic entry system and the district has installed surveillance cameras. All staff and volunteers are cleared through a criminal offender check and all staff attend ALICE (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate) training annually.

***Strength Finding***

**1. The district has prioritized the physical and emotional safety of all students and supports schools to foster safe and secure, and supportive learning environments.**

1. The district has made efforts to ensure that all schools are safe, secure, and supported.

1. Interviews and a document review indicated that the schools conducted safety drills several times each year as documented in elementary, middle, and high-school parent and student handbooks and the crisis plan.

a. The district uses a video-camera system to monitor school premises and a security system that screens for sex offenders, alerts staff about custody violations, and provides districtwide reporting for all visitors. It was noted that there is a school security system with key cards.

b. All staff and school volunteers must successfully complete CORI background checks. Staff are also fingerprinted.

c. Interviews and a review of documents indicated that students, parents and staff felt safe in the schools.

d. Lowell High School uses SCORE (Student Conflict Resolution Experts) as a peer mediation program for students and faculty to use to resolve conflicts in a safe and neutral environment.

**B.** District support staff—including guidance counselors, 41 full-time social workers, behavioral specialists, nurses, 9 school resource officers, and school psychologists—as well as the high school engagement center provide multiple levels of support to increase students’ engagement in school.

1. Lowell High School consists of a freshman academy and four grades 10 through 12 houses. The freshman academy is staffed by a director, four-guidance counselors, one-social worker and one-student support specialist. Each of the high school’s four houses is staffed by a dean, two guidance counselors, and one social worker. A coordinator of student support services oversees student support staff at the high school.

2. Lowell HS and the An Wang Middle School each have an advisory program. According to 2017-2018 DESE data, the An Wang Middle School had the sixth highest attendance rate in the district (95.2 percent), exceeding the statewide average 94.6 percent.

3. The high school health center operated by Lowell Community Health Center provides easy and immediate access to a range of comprehensive primary care and preventive services during school hours for eligible students, including physical exams and immunizations.

4. The high school offers a variety of extracurricular activities and clubs that promote student engagement including the black unity, South Asian and women’s clubs and the Gay Straight Alliance.

5. The high school career center, GEAR UP and Upward Bound programs promote successful high school completion and post-secondary attainment.

**C.** Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) staff and consultants from the University of Connecticut's Center for Behavioral Education and Research helped freshman academy staff to develop a PBIS manual known as "RIDER" (responsibility, integrity, determination, engagement, and respect). The school's core values are listed on students’ identification badges.

**Impact**: The district has personnel, programs, and resources in place that provide a safe and supportive environment.

***Challenges and Areas for Growth***

**2. The district has not developed a systematic approach to identifying and addressing students’ academic and social-emotional needs.**

**A**. Although teachers may make referrals to the teacher assistance team and the crisis intervention team when students are experiencing academic and/or social-emotional difficulties, teachers do not have research-based interventions that they can implement in their classrooms.

**B.** The district does not have a system for tracking students’ social-emotional development.

1. PBIS is currently implemented in kindergarten through grade 9 in nine district schools; eight schools are receiving PBIS training; and the district intends to extend the program to all schools.

2. However, the team was told that the district did not have a system for identifying students with social-emotional challenges, especially in grades 10 through 12. According to documents and interviewees, there are no districtwide social emotional learning screeners, progress monitoring or assessments.

**C**. Interviews and document and data review indicated that the high school did not provide equitable access to higher-level courses and programs.

1. According to DESE data for 2017–2018, the percentage of 11th and 12th graders completing advanced courses[[22]](#footnote-22) was uneven across student groups in the district.

a. While 70 percent of 11th and 12th graders in the district completed advanced courses, just 15.2 percent of students with disabilities; 50.6 percent of Hispanic/Latino students; 54.2 percent of English learners and former English learners; and 59.1 percent of economically disadvantaged students completed advanced courses.

2. According to DESE data for 2017–2018, there is evidence of over and underrepresentation of certain student groups in the percentages of students who took at least one advanced placement (AP) test.

a. For example, 9.9 percent of the district’s AP test-takers were Hispanic/Latino, while 33.1 percent of students enrolled in the district were Hispanic/Latino.

b. Economically disadvantaged students represented 27.9 percent of AP test-takers but 55.9 percent of district enrollment.

c. Just 0.2 percent of English learners took at least one AP test, even though 24.2 percent of students in the district were English learners.

d. Students with disabilities represented 0.5 percent of AP test-takers but 16.6 percent of the student body in the district.

3. The high school’s Latin Lyceum program is a selective admissions program composed of 84 percent White and Asian students.

a. Out of 147 total students in the Latin Lyceum program, none are students with disabilities, 5 percent (7 students) are Hispanic, and 9 percent (14 students) are English learners.

**D.** According to the district’s latest CPR (2018), there were students in the district who did not receive English language development instruction regardless of their proficiency levels. In addition, at a number of schools, part-time English language tutors were being used to support small group instruction and pull-out supports.

**E**. The team found limited use of scientifically validated assessments for screening, informing instructional planning, and progress monitoring in the district.

1.ACCESS is the only K–12 administered assessment. i-Ready was previously administered K–8 but was discontinued in the 2018–2019 school year because of budget and procurement constraints.

2. The elementary and middle schools administer Pre-IPT (initial English language placement) in pre-kindergarten, Fountas and Pinnell assessments, process writing, FOSS pre- and post-tests, Eureka math module assessments, and ACCESS for ELs.

3. Interviews and a document review indicated that struggling students at the elementary and middle schools were provided Tier II and III supports via counselors, tutors, Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI), *Lexia, Fundations,* and ST math (a digitized visual math program). The 30-minute intervention block at the elementary and middle schools does not include benchmark assessments and thresholds to determine student success and movement in and out of interventions.

4. The high school does not have universal screeners, progress monitoring, and benchmarks assessments in English, math, and science to adjust curriculum, instruction and placement of students into interventions and exit students out of interventions.

5. Interviewees reported that while high-school departments administered common end of unit exams, they did not have common planning time to discuss the results, make instructional adjustments, and refer struggling students for academic support.

**Impact**: Students who do not have access to timely academic and/or emotional supports and rigorous instruction often become disengaged from school and do not have a sense of belonging. The absence of a systematic intervention process results in persistent achievement and outcome gaps.

**3. The district has not fully established collaborative relationships with family and community partners to support students’ academic progress and healthy social-emotional and physical development.**

1. The current model of family engagement relies upon traditional methods of communication and participation such as conferences and newsletters rather than working collaboratively with external providers and families.
2. Interviews and a documents review indicated that the district sought assistance for families, conducted one-way communication (that is, from the district to the families), and used volunteering as a method to engage families.

The district uses parent liaisons as a conduit between home and school. These part-time staff coordinate workshops, conferences, and events that encourage parents to become active participants in their children’s school community.

The Parent Resource Center and the Lowell City-Wide Family Council help newcomers transition into the district.

Every school offers Catie’s Closet, a program intended to increase attendance by providing clothing and toiletries to students in need within their schools.

1. District efforts to ensure communication with all families, especially non-English speaking families are limited and inconsistent across schools.

1. These efforts include social media and the Class Dojo app. While the parents of students attending therapeutic day schools reported that they received daily communication about their children’s progress, other parents said that the only consistent communication between school and home was the report card.

2. The district does not have consistent interpretation services in student/parent home languages for printed materials, phone calls, or in-person meetings.

3. The special education parent advisory council gives parents throughout the district a voice on issues related to special education. The parent involvement committee provides opportunities for parents districtwide to learn more about their child’s education and sponsors family events that encourage parents to become active participants in their children’s school community.

1. District schools sponsor organizations such as school councils, PTOs, the Latin Lyceum parents’ association, and traditional engagement strategies such as a fall open house, and a report card night with pasta dinner. Interviewees reported that participation was persistently low.
2. The district often establishes community partnerships in order to maintain needed funding and/or programming levels and as a reaction to the needs of students rather than as a proactive strategy aligned with the district’s goals.

District and school leaders and teachers stated that individual district departments initiated efforts to establish partnerships without central coordination. The district often seeks funding to sustain current programs and staffing levels.

The district does not have a clear process to secure and manage partnerships and access community resources to engage during in-school and out-of-school time.

Although the district has a strategic plan, it does not have a process for communicating and updating progress on key priorities to ensure that stakeholders have a shared understanding of goals and strategies.

Project Learn (Lowell Educational Alliance Resource Network) develops and supports innovative programs and services that prepare students with the skills that they need to succeed and become lifelong learners, including sponsoring an early childhood program and coordinating a book drive. Project Learn’s programming is not aligned with district and school-specific goals and identified areas for improvement.

The district does not have a comprehensive asset mapping[[23]](#footnote-23) of partners and resources and a process to assess family and student needs with a goal of equitable support for schools and families.

The district does not work with schools to evaluate partnership effectiveness and make changes when necessary.

The district does not provide guidance to schools on effective practices for managing partnerships.

**Impact**: When families are engaged in their children’s education, students succeed. Research consistently confirms that family engagement is one of the most powerful predictors of children’s development, educational attainment, and success in school and life. Having limited parental engagement perpetuates persistent academic and social-emotional achievement gaps. Community partnerships can provide much needed supports for students and families who are struggling as well as enrich and accelerate the lives of students and families. However, without aligning the pursuit of external resources with district and school improvement plans, the district’s efforts to establish community partnerships may not be well matched with students’ needs.

***Recommendations***

* + 1. **The district should develop and implement a districtwide system to identify at-risk students using assessment data, provide multi-tiered academic interventions, and employ ongoing progress monitoring to meet the needs of all students.**

1. District leaders should ensure that the district’s comprehensive data system includes a dashboard that holds student information, student performance data, and tiered interventions.

The district should establish or build on academic and social-emotional early warning indicators for grades 5–12 and align current and new interventions with each indicator.

**B.** District leaders should identify and schedule administration of research-validated universal screeners and interim/benchmark and summative academic and social-emotional assessments.

The district should establish performance targets for students in kindergarten through grade 12 based on research-validated assessments.

**C.** District leaders should enhance the current system of support by articulating the specific actions of adults and how adults in the district should work in concert with external providers and families to support student success.

**D.** The district should enhance the district’s system of support by clarifying the supports in each tier and providing guidance to educators as they provide support and interventions to ensure students have access to high-quality, core academic instruction and social/emotional/behavioral learning and supports.

1. The district should revisit tiered supports to ensure that students have access to high-quality, core academic instruction and social/emotional/behavioral learning and supports.

2. Tiered supports and interventions should be structured and assigned equitably based on disaggregated student performance data.

* + - 1. District and school leaders should collaboratively identify job-embedded, ongoing professional learning opportunities for teachers and paraprofessionals to learn about and implement Tier I classroom interventions and supports into curriculum and instruction.
      2. District and the high school leaders should revisit the freshman academy and house structures to align with the body of research that suggests smaller schools contribute to student achievement, attainment, and sense of well-being.
      3. District and school leaders should ensure that teachers have adequate time to provide Tiers 2 and 3 interventions and supports.
      4. District should establish protocols for engaging students and families in the tiered support process.
      5. District leaders should revisit the alignment of external and community partnerships that support Tiers II and III to ensure tiered supports and interventions are meeting quality and student outcome measures.
      6. The district should establish expectations for teachers monitoring student academic/social-emotional progress and the role the grade level or content team plays in making tiered decisions on behalf of students and in partnership with families.

4. District and school leadership teams should regularly and systematically evaluate the implementation of tiered instruction, interventions, and supports, including reviewing individual, group, and aggregate data and determining whether interventions are structured and assigned equitably.

5. District leaders should revise current professional learning community processes to include identification of at-risk students and struggling students.

* + - 1. District leaders should identify professional learning opportunities for school leaders, teachers, and paraprofessionals on meeting protocols and data used during PLC time.
      2. The district, in partnership with high-school leaders, should explore ways of instituting PLCs at the high school to allow time for data-driven conversations and identification of struggling students.

**Benefits:** By implementing these recommendations, the district will be better able to identify students at risk of low academic and social-emotional outcomes and intervene promptly.

**Recommended resources:**

* DESE’s *Early Warning Indicator System* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edwin/>) 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.
* *Every Student, Every Day: A Community Toolkit to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism* (<http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/chronicabsenteeism/toolkit.pdf>) is a set of Action Guides that provide information and resources to help ensure that all young people are in school every day and benefitting from coordinated systems of support.
* The *Early Warning Implementation Guide* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edwin/>) 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 *Educator Effectiveness Guidebook for Inclusive Practice* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/guidebook/>) includes tools for districts, schools, and educators that are aligned to the MA Educator Evaluation Framework and promote evidence-based best practices for inclusion following the principles of Universal Design for Learning, Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, and Social and Emotional Learning.
* The *Massachusetts Systems for Student Success (SfSS)* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/sfss/>) 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.
* *Ninth Grade Counts* (<http://www.greatschoolspartnership.org/resources/ninth-grade-counts/>) is a resource to help high schools identify weaknesses in their ninth-grade programs, and then develop a purposeful, proactive plan to strengthen this critical educational transition. The guide is divided into three areas of focus:
  + Strengthening the Transition into High School
  + Strengthening the High School Transition for English Language Learners
  + Using Summer Bridge Programs to Strengthen the High School Transition
* The Office for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/mv/>) works to ensure the enrollment, attendance, and opportunity to succeed in school for homeless children and youth by providing technical assistance and guidance to school districts and families and collaborating with other state agencies and community providers to support homeless families and their students.
* The *Wraparound Replication Cookbook* (<https://sites.google.com/site/masswazcookbook/>) is a practical guide focused on improving academic performance by systematically addressing students’ social emotional and non-academic needs. It is based on the experience of several Massachusetts districts, and is organized according to the following key strategy areas:
  + Addressing School Culture and the Social Emotional Aspects of Learning
  + Rethinking Systems for Identifying and Addressing Academic and Social Emotional Needs
  + Creating Focused Partnerships & Coalitions
    1. **The district should ensure all schools enhance their current practices to strengthen collaborative relationships with families, community partners, and other stakeholders that support students’ academic and behavioral progress and well-being.**

1. The district should establish a research-based framework for family and community engagement that includes what it looks like at the early childhood, elementary, middle, and high-school levels and at the alternative high school.

1. The district should redefine and articulate the purposes of family and community engagement and external partnerships.

a. The district should ensure that family and community engagement practices, programs, and partnerships are aligned with district and school goals.

b. The district should integrate family and community engagement metrics into the district’s improvement process. The district should ensure data is useful, accessible, understandable, and actionable. The district’s framework should indicate when and how often parental and community engagement practices, programs and partnerships will be vetted and evaluated.

* + - 1. The district’s framework should ensure the family and community engagement practices, programs, and partnerships address families’ strengths and cultures.
      2. The district’s framework should connect family and community engagement interventions to comprehensive initiatives such as multi-tiered systems of support.
      3. The district should establish opportunities for student and family leadership that include effective implementation of traditional committees, the school council, and appropriate others.
      4. The district should pay particular attention to increasing the diversity of parents and families represented on committees and councils to ensure that they reflect the community served.

**Benefits** from implementing this recommendation could include encouraging innovative ways for the district and schools to engage with families and community partners who support families. This enhanced engagement will foster a strengths-based collaboration among school, community, and home, which will enable and empower families to be involved in their children’s development and result in improved student outcomes. It will also involve a more diverse group of parents in the life of the school in a more authentic way.

**Recommended resources:**

* DESE’s *Family and Community Involvement* web page (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/FamComm/f_involvement.html>) provides several resources, including ESE’s *Guide to Parent, Family, and Community Involvement*.
* The Global Family Research Project’s overview of resources (<https://globalfrp.org/Articles>) includes links to several articles and videos related to empowering families in children’s learning.
* *Joining Together to Create a Bold Vision for Next-Generation Family Engagement: Engaging Families to Transform Education* (<https://globalfrp.org/Articles/Joining-Together-to-Create-a-Bold-Vision-for-Next-Generation-Family-Engagement-Engaging-Families-to-Transform-Education>) is a report from the Global Family Research Project that identifies five areas that can serve as “building blocks” for family engagement strategies and recommendations for the future of family engagement.
* DESE’s *Special Education* web page (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/>) includes links to guidance, legislation, and resources for parents of children with disabilities.
* Overview, technical assistance documents: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/docs.html>
* Overview, other parent information: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/parents.html>
* *Guidance for Special Education Parent Advisory Councils* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/pac/>) was created to ensure that every PAC operating in the state fully understands the capacity and potential that PACs have to collaborate with the school community to influence special education programs and policies in their school districts.
* *Parents’ Guides to Student* *Success* (<https://www.pta.org/home/family-resources/Parents-Guides-to-Student-Success>) are grade-specific guides from the National PTA (available in English and Spanish) with specific descriptions for parents of what children should be learning once Common Core standards are fully implemented, along with suggestions for helping students at home and communicating with teachers.

Financial and Asset Management

***Contextual Background***

According to DESE data, the district has exceeded required net school spending for education for fiscal years 2015–2019, most recently by 3.3 percent ($6,324,123). Its total in-district per pupil expenditure was lower that the median in-district per-pupil expenditure for 12 Pre-K–12 districts of similar size (8,000–26,000 students) in fiscal year 2017: $14,078 as compared with $15,350. In recent years, the city’s increase in net school spending has been less than the increase in Chapter 70 aid (growing $4.9 million or 2.6 percent for fiscal year 2019 compared with a $5.5 million or a 4.0 percent increase in Chapter 70 aid).

In fiscal year 2019, the district is emerging from a financial emergency created by a $6.8 million budget deficit (see the first Challenge finding below). Resulting budget cuts for fiscal year 2019 included 40 positions. At the end of fiscal year 2018, the district depleted revolving fund balances and other sources of funding and, according to a 2018 audit commissioned by the school committee, it engaged in other questionable financial management practices, including payroll overpayments, mismanaged student activity accounts, and inaccurate records and reports, leading to the deficit. The superintendent and the assistant superintendent for finance left the district in June and July 2018, respectively, and the acting superintendent and new assistant superintendent for finance and operations have imposed a hiring freeze and other cost saving measures to balance the budget. Administrators reported that initial budget estimates for fiscal year 2020 were also less than the funding needed for level services. According to the most recent fiscal year 2019 budget document, the district general fund budget is $166,749,793, which is 2.7 percent more than the fiscal year 2018 budget and less than the estimated level-services budget of $168,545,655.

The business office has implemented several improvements in the management of those areas and in the frequency of reports and forecasts of projected balances, described below.

The district makes use of other funding, especially $18,301,492 in grants for fiscal year 2019. Administrators reported that a grants manager monitored them, applied for payments, and prepared final reports. Applications are made by the administrators and principals who are in charge of expending the grant funds.

Administrators reported that the district had 27 schools housed in 30 buildings. The city takes care of building maintenance and the district handles custodial cleaning. Administrators said that most maintenance was reactive rather than preventative. Many of the school buildings are old, including 3 over 100 years old, and Massachusetts School Business Authority (MSBA) data indicate recent renovations date from 1970 to 2009. From 1992–1994, the district built 14 new schools with heating and roofing systems now at the end of their lifecycles. Most buildings are worn and in need of maintenance and major repairs. Heating problems and water damage have been significant and have led to numerous complaints to the health department and the state; in 2018–2019, the district had to close two schools for one to two days for emergency repairs. The city has supported district applications to the MSBA for a major renovation of the high school and accelerated repairs to nine other school buildings.

***Strength Finding***

**1. The district is recovering from a $6.8 million financial deficit, and is implementing improved financial management, controls, reporting systems, and communications.**

**A.** Administrators reported that the business office personnel held Massachusetts certifications as assistant superintendent, business manager, and procurement officer.

* 1. The district has used several strategies to eliminate the estimated fiscal year 2019 budget deficit of $6,799,511.
     1. According to budget updates, the city passed through new Chapter 70 revenues of $1,149,211 to the school budget.
     2. The district made an agreement with DESE to use one time fiscal year 2018 hurricane relief and emergency aid funds awarded in fiscal years 2018 and 2019 totaling $1,057,460 for fiscal year 2019 expenses.

3. Administrators reported that by reductions of $2,484,269 in personnel and operations they were able to eliminate the remaining deficit.

**C.** The district is improving financial controls in its business operations.

1. Administrators reported that because of instances where personnel were overpaid they have changed some procedures for payroll, posting central office and school personnel data, and reconciling reports.

a. The payroll staff will delete long-term substitutes from the payroll at the end of each school year so their salary does not carry over to the next year.

* + - 1. The human resources department now runs frequent staff attendance reports and checks them against school Aspen X2 attendance reports to prevent excessive sick- leave accruals.
      2. The human resources department tracks leaves of absence and immediately notifies the payroll clerks of changes in order to issue status change reports when personnel go on or off leave.
      3. Clerks and principals at the schools and in the human resources department use the staff roster on Google Docs weekly to track the status of personnel and double check the school roster to ensure that employees are active.
      4. The district is reviewing its MUNIS accounting software and other databases to consolidate them where possible in order to ensure accurate staff lists, payroll, and human resources data. The city is piloting the use of MUNIS to track employee hours and attendance as well as payroll. The long-range plan is to use MUNIS for all payroll purposes to simplify the process and prevent discrepancies in data.
    1. Controls over student activity funds are also tighter, requiring both a school clerk and business office clerk to approve expenditures, track deposits, and reconcile records. In addition, there is an annual audit.

a. Administrators described a system for student activity accounts requiring a separation of duties for withdrawals and deposits. The person who accepts deposits and writes checks should be someone other than the person who approves them and keeps the accounts.

* + 1. The district is improving documentation to track expenditures, such as charging employees to the appropriate grant or fund and position control sheets for schools to document the number of paraprofessionals.
    2. Financial reports to the superintendent and school committee are more frequent— at almost every meeting— and now include projections for high-risk accounts such as sick- leave buyback and transportation, transfers to cover underfunded accounts, and notifications of unexpected expenses such as new out-of-district tuitions and dental insurance.
  1. The district is implementing a budget development procedure to base preliminary staffing and budgets on student and school needs such as enrollments in the EL and special education programs. This is intended to prevent assigning staff such as paraprofessionals to schools to serve students who may have left the district.
  2. District leaders and city officials are communicating more frequently about financial and other issues.

1. The mayor reported that he considered it important that district and city officials communicate better, and the city and school finance subcommittees hold joint meetings.
2. Administrators and city officials stated that district financial administrators attended monthly meetings with their city counterparts.
3. The interim superintendent and the city manager reported that they made it a priority to communicate almost daily. The issues discussed have included maintenance of buildings, MSBA applications for building repairs, and renovation of the high school.
4. City officials stated that they wanted to give the school committee and administrators a better sense of available funding. The school committee communicates with city officials about issues such as building maintenance and school funding; for example, school committee members joined administrators in a recent meeting to discuss the agreement about municipal expenditures for educational services.

**Impact**: The steps taken by the district to balance its budget and communicate with city officials on financial issues likely make future budgets more sustainable and make the availability of funding for current programs and planned initiatives more predictable. District communications with city officials have already contributed to city support for a renovated high school and MSBA applications for nine more projects. More frequent financial reporting to the school committee with projected balances and transfers make the district’s financial condition more transparent and improve financial decision-making. Improved financial controls in payroll and student activity funds help save money, restore transparency, and improve confidence in the running of the district. Budget procedures based on pupil enrollments and needs likely improve efficiency as well as transparency and confidence.

***Challenges and Areas for Growth***

**2. Fiscal management problems in 2017 and 2018 contributed to a $6.8 million deficit in the fiscal year 2019 school district budget and reductions in many needed services, programs, and personnel.**

1. Underfunded accounts and the inappropriate use of revolving accounts in prior years led to a fiscal year 2019 deficit of $6,799,511.
   * + 1. An audit commissioned by the school committee in the fall of 2018 noted that despite notification by DESE, the district continued to make inappropriate indirect charges to the school lunch account for both fiscal year 2017 and fiscal year 2018 ($2,108,571) which must be repaid.
       2. Budget offsets for the fiscal year 2019 recommended budget totaled $1,487,383 but the fund balances were insufficient to cover the expenditures.
          1. For example, the district budgeted to $416,112 from the Use of Facilities revolving account, but as of a June 30, 2018, the balance in this account was $5,648.
          2. The PEG/Cable Franchise fund (not under district control) contributed to the shortfall.
          3. The special education, circuit breaker, and athletic fund balances were depleted in June 2018.
       3. In addition, the fiscal year 2019 budget included underfunded general fund deficits totaling $3,203,557 such as transportation, special education tuition, and sick-leave buyback.
   1. Other issues of financial management were as follows:

Fiscal year 2019 financial reports to the school committee noted unpaid fiscal year 2018 school lunch bills of $1,431,206.

The reports noted other unpaid fiscal year 2018 bills totaling $218,947, most of which the city charged to the fiscal year 2019 school budget.

The audit cited the deferral of fiscal year 2018 sick-leave buybacks to fiscal year 2020 despite collective bargaining language requiring that these buybacks be paid in the year of retirement, underfunding that account by $500,000 compared with fiscal year 2018 actuals. Recent projections increased that deficit by $400,000.

Fiscal year 2018 financial reports to the school committee were not completed every month and did not include projections. At a June 2018 finance subcommittee meeting, members expected a surplus for the fiscal year 2018 budget.

The recommended budget document compares the proposed budget with the current budget for each function; but does not provide budget information about individual schools, or how the budget reflects district and school data, improvement planning, and goals.

School committee members reported that they did not know what was being charged to revolving funds and other accounts.

5. The audit noted inadequate internal controls of payroll, confirmed by administrators, resulting in overpayments to some employees by as much as $35,400.

Administrators reported inconsistencies between budget staff lists and payroll actuals and between school staff attendance and human resources sick-leave accrual reports.

6. School committee budget reports in fiscal year 2019 noted unexpected expenses such as increases in sick-leave buyback costs, new out-of-district tuition placements, and dental insurance.

7. Administrators reported that some grants have not been fully expended, with the balance returned to the state.

8. The auditor described questionable procurement practices for transportation and the rental of pre-kindergarten classroom space.

9. Administrators stated that funds were embezzled from some school student activity accounts, and audits of the accounts were directed to schools unaffected by the embezzlements. An auditor’s report noted that the student activity accounts were not managed in accordance with regulations about deposits with the city treasurer and funds from vending machines, lost books, and staff lunches.

**C.** Because of the budget deficit and financial crisis, the district has had to make reductions in staff and programs.

1. Interviews with administrators and a review of budget updates indicated that the district budget eliminated 40 positions in fiscal year 2019, including 7 administrators, 6 teachers, and 27 support staff positions. Twelve additional positions have been cut in fiscal year 2019 to help offset the deficit.

a. The fiscal year 2019 approved budget was $3.0 million less than the estimated level-services budget, requiring the substantial cuts in personnel and programs.

b. The administrative positions eliminated included the human resources director, the Title I director, the high-school curriculum director, and the assistant business manager. The acting superintendent position was combined with that of the deputy superintendent for support services.

Other eliminated positions included reading teachers, library aides (causing kindergarten through grade 8 libraries to be unstaffed), tutors, substitute teachers, high-school lead teachers, and audio-visual staff.

Teachers and administrators stressed the need for more supports for English learners, a need cited in several school improvement plans.

2. Other cuts in programs were the i-Ready diagnostic assessment program, equipment replacements, and instructional supplies. Administrators reported that schools and offices shared resources such as toilet paper and light bulbs.

a. Teachers and administrators emphasized that cuts have affected their work negatively, especially the loss of i-Ready assessments and libraries.

**Impact**: Reductions in many needed services, programs, and personnel as a result of a $6.8 million deficit in fiscal year 2019 have limited the district’s ability to implement proven practices that can help all students learn and be deeply engaged in school.

**3. School buildings are not well maintained, with complaints about heating, leaking roofs, and mice; in some cases, state and local agencies have ordered the city to do repairs and the district has had to close buildings temporarily until repairs were completed.**

1. The city is responsible for the maintenance of school buildings, and interviewees described the maintenance and repair of buildings as reactive and inadequate.

1. Administrators and city officials reported that the city was responsible for maintaining the school buildings, while the district did custodial cleaning and landscape work.

* + - 1. Administrators, teachers, parents, students, and school committee members voiced concerns about maintenance and the condition of school facilities.
      2. According to DESE’s RADAR[[24]](#footnote-24) Benchmarking, in 2017 district and city expenses on school operations and maintenance were $686 per pupil, the lowest of Lowell’s 10 comparable communities.[[25]](#footnote-25)
      3. During the period from 1992 to 1994, the district built 14 new schools, which are now in need of roofs, boilers, and HVAC[[26]](#footnote-26) work. Other buildings are older, some over 100 years old.

5. Teachers and administrators reported leaking roofs, unreliable boilers and heating control systems, and mice in several school buildings.

a. District leaders and city officials stated that the high school had to be closed for several days in 2017–2018 while gas leaks were repaired, and an elementary school was closed because of water damage caused by a frozen heating unit.

b. Multiple complaints to the Massachusetts Department of Labor about conditions in several schools resulted in required corrective action on boilers and heating control systems and on flooding and water damage. Complaints about heating, deteriorating dry wall, and mice have also been made to the Lowell Board of Health.

6. Review team members observed a roof replacement project underway at the high school.

7. Review team members noted that most schools were clean and safe, but others were not clean, with trash in public spaces and mice.

**B.** Only four of the 30 school buildings were built or renovated during the past 20 years, and the city has applied for MSBA assistance to renovate and repair 10 schools.

1. According to MSBA data, only four school buildings have been renovated since 1999.

2. District leaders and city officials stated that the MSBA and the city had approved an application for renovations to the high school, estimated to begin in fiscal year 2022 at a cost of $343.4 million, and approved by the MSBA in April 2019.

3. Students reported concerns about security at the high school, where doors were sometimes open, and they had to pass outside between buildings.

4. The district and the city have submitted statements of interest to the MSBA for accelerated repairs of heating systems and roofs at nine other schools.

a. City officials stated that because of sufficient tax levy capacity they could fund the high school and other projects without the need for an override.

1. District leaders and city officials described their approach to facility maintenance problems as reactive and did not describe an active preventative maintenance plan or current capital plan.

The city DPW uses the School Dude work order system to respond to custodians’ requests for school maintenance needs and city maintenance staff perform only a few scheduled maintenance tasks such as changing filters and contracted inspections of alarm and security systems.

School committee members stated that the city did not have a maintenance plan for school buildings.

City officials reported that they have commissioned two studies of city and school building and maintenance needs to inform a city five-year capital improvement plan and a scheduled maintenance plan.

**Impact**: Deteriorating buildings and inadequate and unreliable heating systems do not provide facilities that support learning, or a suitable environment for students and staff. Without planning for regular building maintenance, long-range capital needs, and facility improvements, the district cannot ensure appropriate environments or updated facilities for learning, and the associated costs may not be evenly distributed over time.

**4. District leaders have expressed concerns about funding for the district schools and the district’s agreement with the city on indirect costs for education.**

1. Administrators reported that the estimated funding for fiscal year 2020 might not be enough to support a level-services budget, or meet the net school spending requirement.
2. As noted above, the fiscal year 2019 budget was $3.0 million less than the estimated level-services budget, requiring the net reduction of 40 positions and other program reductions.
3. A review of the budget document indicated that the city’s contribution to the district budget declined in fiscal year 2018 and again in fiscal year 2019 from $19,856,851 to $15,736,053 despite the 3.96 percent municipal growth factor reported by city officials.
4. City officials recently discussed the fiscal year 2020 budget outlook with school committee members and expressed concerns that it may be $3 million less than what was needed to cover anticipated expenses.
5. School leaders have questioned the existing agreement about how municipal expenditures are provided to the district.

District administrators voiced concerns that the 2007 memorandum of agreement about indirect costs for municipal services may be obsolete and inaccurate.

School committee members have also raised concerns about the agreement, including two motions at an April 2019 meeting to review it.

At the time of the onsite in April 2019, school administrators and committee members had met with city officials to discuss the agreement but had not agreed on changes to it.

**Impact**: The absence of an agreement between the district and the city about how municipal expenditures are provided to the district means that the district is challenged to effectively monitor and internally audit costs for education-related services and ensure the accuracy of these expenditures.

***Recommendations***

**1. The district should continue its work on improving financial controls, especially for payroll, and on improving the monitoring and forecasting for accounts that may result in a deficit.**

1. The monitoring of payrolls has already improved, especially communications with each school about staff attendance and status.

1. A system where schools report and confirm staff attendance and resignations daily or weekly to the human resources and payroll departments is essential to ensuring accurate payrolls, as is correct reporting of the use of substitute teachers.

2. The use of MUNIS for this purpose could be useful in consolidating the databases necessary to track the status and attendance of employees and relating the information to payrolls and budgets. Continued study and analysis of the city’s pilot will be helpful.

**B.** The district should fully implement asystem for student activity accounts requiring a separation of duties for withdrawals and deposits. The person who accepts deposits and writes checks should be someone other than the person who approves them and keeps the accounts.

The business office should continue to oversee the accounting and audits of the student activity accounts to ensure that the chosen accounts are random, and they are not manipulated to conceal mismanagement.

**C.** Reporting on the financial condition of the district should continue at least monthly to restore transparency and confidence.

Forecasts of final balances for all budget lines with continued emphasis on high-risk accounts are important to limit unanticipated expenses and deficits. The continued use of transfers will help make the financial condition of the district transparent.

Frequent reports on outside funds, such as grants and revolving funds, as well as the school budget should contribute to appropriate monitoring and transparency.

**D.**  Budget documents should give careful attention to comparisons of recommended budgets for all lines with actuals for the previous year in order to prevent underfunded accounts in the approved budget.

1. Similarly, comparisons with previous years’ grants and other revenues are important in monitoring budgets.

**Benefits:** Attention to improved financial management control systems will likely help restore confidence in the management of the district as well as ensure accuracy and sound practice. Frequent and transparent monitoring of financial issues in reports should also improve transparency and confidence.

**Recommended resources:**

* The Massachusetts Association of School Business Officials ([https://www.masbo.org](https://www.masbo.org/)) is a good source for meetings about financial management of school districts and for information about sound practices.
* The Governmental Standards Accounting Board (<https://gasb.org/home>) has established standard procedures for government accounting, including reporting and controls.

**2. The district and the city should continue its work to plan and implement regularly scheduled maintenance of school buildings and develop a long-range capital plan to schedule needed renovations of schools.**

**A.** In order to reduce emergencies for heating, water penetration, and other issues, the district should develop and implement a preventative maintenance plan for each building.

The city maintenance staff should respond promptly to schools’ work orders to ensure safe, secure, clean and appropriate learning environments, and should complete the work in a timely fashion.

District and city maintenance administrators should meet regularly to review preventative maintenance projects and long-range plans as well as immediate needs.

**B.** The district and the city should follow through with the accelerated repair projects in schools proposed to the MSBA so that the needed heating system improvements and roof replacements can be completed soon.

The city should approve the high-school renovation project recently approved by the MSBA so that the school can be made more suitable for education and more secure for students.

* 1. The district and the city should jointly prepare a realistic and prioritized capital plan for building repairs and renovations.
     1. The recently completed studies of city and district facilities can form the basis for prioritizing and scheduling needed improvements.
     2. A realistic plan should include a clear funding component that is affordable and that spreads the costs of repairs and renovations evenly over time.

**Benefits:** Implementing this recommendation will mean safer and improved spaces for learning.

**Recommended resources:**

* DESE’s *School Building Issues* web page (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/finance/sbuilding/>) includes funding opportunities, guidelines, and resources related to school buildings.
* *Planning Guide for Maintaining School Facilities* (<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2003347>), from the National Center for Education Statistics, is intended to help school districts plan for efficient and effective operations. It addresses various topics, including conducting a facilities audit, planning and evaluating maintenance, and managing staff and contractors.
* *The Massachusetts School Checklist* (<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dph/programs/environmental-health/exposure-topics/iaq/iaq-methods/the-mass-school-checklist.html>) is a list of the most important environmental health and safety issues for schools to address. It includes regulations and industry standards/guidelines related to elements on the checklist, as well as additional resources.
* The Green Ribbon Schools Award honors schools that are exemplary in reducing environmental impact and costs, improving the health and wellness of students and staff, and delivering effective environmental and sustainability education. The district might find several related resources useful, including Massachusetts’ *Green Ribbon Schools Award Resource Guide* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/finance/sbuilding/GreenRibbon/ResourcesGuide.pdf>) and the US Department of Education’s *Green Strides* resource list (<http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/green-strides/resources.html).>

**3. District leaders and city officials should increase their advocacy within city government and within the community for district resources and continue to improve their communications with each other about district needs, budgets, the district’s agreement with the city on indirect costs for education, financial management, and facilities.**

* 1. The emphasis on improved communication has helped improve city support for major facility needs at the high school and nine other buildings and should continue as planning for all the projects evolves.

The school committee should increase its advocacy for the funding needed for educational needs and the district schools.

City approval of the high school project is the next big step in a major improvement of learning facilities, and accelerated repairs of the other proposed MSBA projects will also help solve building issues with heating and roof systems.

**B.** Frequent communications between city officials and district administrators should help both groups understand the district’s program needs and the availability of city funding. Similar communications including school committee members would also be helpful.

The city council joint finance subcommittee is an appropriate forum for district and city officials to discuss city and school financial issues.

The meetings about the agreement between the district and the city on indirect costs for education should be helpful in developing better communications and mutual support as well as an agreement all officials can live with. The meetings can lead to further discussions about city support for schools.

**Benefits:** Implementing this recommendation will mean a commitment and plan to improve the school buildings. Communications can lead to better understanding of school program and facility needs by the district and the city and of the availability of city resources to meet those needs and improve the schools. Agreement between the district and the city on indirect costs for education is a good place to start.

**Recommended resource:**

* Massachusetts regulation 603 CMR 10.04 requires cities and municipalities to report municipal expenditures for education by September 30 as part of the district end of year report.  The district and the municipality must agree on the way they are calculated: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr10.html?section=04>

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

Review Team Members

The review was conducted from April 1–4, 2019, by the following team of independent DESE consultants.

1. Jim Caradonio, Ed. D., Leadership and Governance
2. Linda L. Greyser, Ed. D., Curriculum and Instruction and *review team coordinator*
3. Marc Kerble, Ed. D., Assessment
4. Maureen Murray Adamson, Ed. D., Human Resources and Professional Development
5. Carla Hulce, Student Support
6. George Gearhart, Ed. D., 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 assistant superintendent for finance and operations, the grants manager, the payroll clerk, and the facilities manager.

The team conducted interviews with the following members of the school committee: the chairman (mayor) and five members.

The review team conducted interviews with the following representatives of the teachers’ association: the president and 11 members.

The team conducted interviews/focus groups with the following central office administrators: the acting superintendent (who is also the assistant superintendent for student support); the assistant superintendent for curriculum, instruction, and assessment; the assistant superintendent for finance and operations; the director of special education; K–12 coordinators for English language education, English language arts and literacy, mathematics, science/social studies, research, testing, and assessment.

The team visited the following schools: Abraham Lincoln Elementary School (Pre-K–4), Charles W. Morey Elementary School (Pre-K–4), Charlotte M. Murkland Elementary School (Pre-K–4), Dr. Gertrude Bailey Elementary School (Pre-K–4), Greenhalge Elementary School (Pre-K–4), John J. Shaughnessy Elementary School (Pre-K–4), Pawtucketville Memorial Elementary School (Pre-K–4), S. Christa McAuliffe Elementary School (Pre-K–4), Washington Elementary School (Pre-K–4), Moody Elementary School (K–5), Peter W. Reilly Elementary School (K–5), Rogers STEM Academy (K–7), Bartlett Community Partnership School (Pre-K–8), Pyne Arts Magnet School (Pre-K–8), Dr. An Wang Middle School (grades 5–8), B. F. Butler Middle School (grades 5–8), Henry J. Robinson Middle School (grades 5–8), James S. Daley Middle School (grades 5–8), Kathryn P. Stoklosa Middle School (grades 5–8), James Sullivan Middle School (grades 6–8), Lowell High School (grades 9–12 plus special programs), and The Career Academy (grades 9–12, plus special programs).

During school visits, the team conducted interviews with students, students’ families, and 14 principals, and focus groups with 13 elementary-school teachers, 7 middle-school teachers, and 7 high-school teachers. (There were two focus groups each for the elementary and middle schools.)

The team observed 149 classes in the district: 40 at the high school and career academy, 42 at the 6 middle schools and at several elementary schools with grade 5 students, and 67 at the 12 elementary schools.

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

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

Site Visit Schedule

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Monday**  04/01/2019 | **Tuesday**  04/02/2019 | **Wednesday**  04/03/2019 | **Thursday**  04/04/2019 |
| Orientation with district leaders and principals; interviews with district staff and principals; document reviews; interview with teachers’ association; interviews with school committee members; and visits to Murkland Elementary School, Abraham Lincoln Elementary School, Bailey Elementary School, and Lowell High School for classroom observations. | Interviews with district staff and principals; interview with city personnel; review of personnel files; teacher focus groups; students and students’ families focus groups; and visits to Lowell High School, Morey Elementary School, Daley Middle School, Pyne Arts Magnet School, Reilly Elementary School, and Shaughnessy Elementary School for classroom observations. | Interviews with district staff, leaders and school leaders; visits to Bartlett Community Partnership School, Stoklosa Middle School, Greenhalge Elementary School, Morey Elementary School, Washington Elementary School, Butler Middle School, Lowell High School, and McAuliffe Elementary School for classroom observations. | Follow-up interviews; district review team meeting; visits to Lowell High School, Wang Middle School, Rogers STEM Academy, McAvinnue Elementary School, Sullivan Middle School, Pawtucketville Memorial Elementary School, Moody Elementary School, Reilly Elementary School, Daley Middle School, and Robinson Middle School for classroom observations; district wrap-up meeting with the superintendent. |

Appendix B: Enrollment, Attendance, Expenditures

**Table B1a: Lowell Public Schools**

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

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Group** | **District** | **Percent**  **of Total** | **State** | **Percent of**  **Total** |
| African-American | 1,147 | 7.9% | 87,104 | 9.2% |
| Asian | 4,179 | 28.7% | 66,890 | 7.0% |
| Hispanic | 4,810 | 33.1% | 197,644 | 20.8% |
| Native American | 8 | 0.1% | 2,159 | 0.2% |
| White | 3,840 | 26.4% | 561,096 | 59.0% |
| Native Hawaiian | 2 | 0.0% | 802 | 0.1% |
| Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic/Latino | 562 | 3.9% | 35,936 | 3.8% |
| All | 14,548 | 100.0% | 951,631 | 100.0% |
| Note: As of October 1, 2018 | | | | |

**Table B1b: Lowell Public Schools**

**2018–2019 Student Enrollment by High Needs Populations**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Group** | **District** | | | **State** | | |
| **N** | **Percent of High Needs** | **Percent of District** | **N** | **Percent of High Needs** | **Percent of State** |
| Students w/ Disabilities | 2,543 | 24.0% | 17.3% | 173,843 | 38.0% | 18.1% |
| Econ. Disadvantaged | 7,823 | 73.7% | 53.8% | 297,120 | 64.9% | 31.2% |
| EL and Former EL | 3,441 | 32.4% | 23.7% | 99,866 | 21.8% | 10.5% |
| All high needs students | 10,612 | 100.0% | 72.4% | 458,044 | 100.0% | 47.6% |
| Notes: As of October 1, 2018. District and state numbers and percentages for students with disabilities and high needs students are calculated including students in out-of-district placements. Total district enrollment including students in out-of-district placement is 14,663; total state enrollment including students in out-of-district placement is 962,297. | | | | | | |

**Table B2a: Lowell Public Schools**

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

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Group** | **N (2018)** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **4-yr Change** | **State (2018)** |
| African American/Black | 1,266 | 95.5 | 95.5 | 95.1 | 95.3 | -0.2 | 94.1 |
| Asian | 4,322 | 95.7 | 95.9 | 95.6 | 95.5 | -0.2 | 96.2 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 5,109 | 92.4 | 92.7 | 92.4 | 92.4 | 0.0 | 92.7 |
| Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic/Latino | 584 | 94.0 | 94.7 | 94.1 | 93.9 | -0.1 | 94.4 |
| White | 4,232 | 94.0 | 94.2 | 94.0 | 93.8 | -0.2 | 95.1 |
| High Needs | 11,637 | 93.6 | 93.8 | 93.3 | 93.3 | -0.3 | 93.2 |
| Econ. Disadvantaged | 9,457 | 93.3 | 93.3 | 92.8 | 92.9 | -0.4 | 92.5 |
| Students w/ Disabilities | 2,692 | 91.0 | 91.9 | 91.9 | 92.0 | 1.0 | 92.9 |
| English Learners | 3,843 | 94.7 | 95.2 | 94.7 | 94.5 | -0.2 | 93.3 |
| All | 15,523 | 94.1 | 94.3 | 94.0 | 93.9 | -0.2 | 94.5 |
| Notes: The attendance rate is calculated by dividing the total number of days students attended school by the total number of days students were enrolled in a particular school year. A student’s attendance rate is counted toward any district the student attended. In addition, district attendance rates included students who were out placed in public collaborative or private alternative schools/programs at public expense. Attendance rates have been rounded; percent change is based on unrounded numbers. | | | | | | | |

**Table B2b: Lowell Public Schools**

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

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Group** | **N (2018)** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **4-yr Change** | **State (2018)** |
| African American/Black | 1,266 | 13.2 | 10.5 | 13.1 | 13.0 | -0.2 | 16.4 |
| Asian | 4,322 | 10.0 | 9.0 | 9.2 | 9.5 | -0.5 | 7.6 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 5,109 | 24.2 | 21.9 | 23.0 | 23.0 | -1.2 | 22.5 |
| Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic/Latino | 584 | 18.9 | 14.9 | 15.0 | 17.0 | -1.9 | 14.2 |
| White | 4,232 | 16.9 | 15.6 | 15.8 | 16.2 | -0.7 | 10.0 |
| High Needs | 11,637 | 19.4 | 18.2 | 19.8 | 19.5 | 0.1 | 20.1 |
| Econ. Disadvantaged | 9,457 | 20.8 | 20.1 | 21.7 | 21.4 | 0.6 | 22.9 |
| Students w/ Disabilities | 2,692 | 29.9 | 25.4 | 26.6 | 25.8 | -4.1 | 20.7 |
| English Learners | 3,843 | 15.2 | 13.1 | 14.0 | 15.0 | -0.2 | 20.4 |
| All | 15,523 | 16.9 | 15.3 | 16.0 | 16.3 | -0.6 | 13.2 |
| \* The percentage of students absent 10 percent or more of their total number of student days of membership in a school | | | | | | | |

**Table B3: Lowell Public Schools**

**Expenditures, Chapter 70 State Aid, and Net School Spending Fiscal Years 2016–2018**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **FY16** | | | **FY17** | | | **FY18** | | |
|  | **Estimated** | | **Actual** | **Estimated** | **Actual** | | **Estimated** | | **Actual** |
| Expenditures | | | | | | | | | |
| From local appropriations for schools: |  | | | | | | | | |
| By school committee | $154,368,116 | $157,740,374 | | $158,445,232 | | $158,418,366 | | $162,073,324 | $163,078,574 |
| By municipality | $58,783,120 | $61,693,414 | | $64,593,634 | | $62,426,279 | | $64,880,731 | $66,044,701 |
| Total from local appropriations | $213,151,236 | $219,433,788 | | $223,038,866 | | $220,844,646 | | $226,954,055 | $224,123,275 |
| From revolving funds and grants | -- | $29,593,723 | | -- | | $32,557,850 | | -- | $31,091,078 |
| Total expenditures | -- | $249,027,511 | | -- | | $253,402,496 | | -- | $255,214,353 |
| Chapter 70 aid to education program | | | | | | | | | |
| Chapter 70 state aid\* | -- | $135,511,265 | | -- | | $138,588,381 | | -- | $144,067,633 |
| Required local contribution | -- | $43,089,941 | | -- | | $44,649,981 | | -- | $45,829,544 |
| Required net school spending\*\* | -- | $178,601,206 | | -- | | $183,238,362 | | -- | $189,897,177 |
| Actual net school spending | -- | $187,745,932 | | -- | | $191,320,879 | | -- | $197,035,343 |
| Over/under required ($) | -- | $9,144,726 | | -- | | $8,082,517 | | -- | $7,138,166 |
| Over/under required (%) | -- | 5.1% | | -- | | 4.4% | | -- | 3.8% |
| \*Chapter 70 state aid funds are deposited in the local general fund and spent as local appropriations.  \*\*Required net school spending is the total of Chapter 70 aid and required local contribution. Net school spending includes only expenditures from local appropriations, not revolving funds and grants. It includes expenditures for most administration, instruction, operations, and out-of-district tuitions. It does not include transportation, school lunches, debt, or capital.  Sources: FY16, FY17, and FY18 District End-of-Year Reports, Chapter 70 Program information on DESE website  Data retrieved 11/13/18 and 9/16/19 | | | | | | | | | |

**Table B4: Lowell Public Schools**

**Expenditures Per In-District Pupil**

**Fiscal Years 2015–2017**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Expenditure Category** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** |
| Administration | $627 | $438 | $361 |
| Instructional leadership (district and school) | $896 | $903 | $950 |
| Teachers | $5,626 | $5,741 | $5,928 |
| Other teaching services | $1,161 | $1,201 | $1,254 |
| Professional development | $86 | $83 | $88 |
| Instructional materials, equipment and technology | $458 | $791 | $625 |
| Guidance, counseling and testing services | $300 | $305 | $311 |
| Pupil services | $1,301 | $1,502 | $1,585 |
| Operations and maintenance | $758 | $701 | $686 |
| Insurance, retirement and other fixed costs | $2,365 | $2,546 | $2,497 |
| Total expenditures per in-district pupil | $13,578 | $14,211 | $14,286 |
| 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** | 4% | 15% | 40% | 40% | 3.2 |
| **MS** | 14% | 24% | 33% | 29% | 2.8 |
| **HS** | 3% | 25% | 55% | 18% | 2.9 |
| **Total #** | 10 | 30 | 63 | 46 | 3.0 |
| **Total %** | 7% | 20% | 42% | 31% |  |
| 2. The teacher ensures that students understand what they should be learning in the lesson and why. | **ES** | 6% | 30% | 45% | 19% | 2.8 |
| **MS** | 17% | 31% | 40% | 12% | 2.5 |
| **HS** | 3% | 35% | 53% | 10% | 2.7 |
| **Total #** | 12 | 47 | 68 | 22 | 2.7 |
| **Total %** | 8% | 32% | 46% | 15% |  |
| 3. The teacher uses appropriate classroom activities well matched to the learning objective(s). | **ES** | 4% | 15% | 48% | 33% | 3.1 |
| **MS** | 19% | 31% | 31% | 19% | 2.5 |
| **HS** | 10% | 28% | 48% | 15% | 2.7 |
| **Total #** | 15 | 34 | 64 | 36 | 2.8 |
| **Total %** | 10% | 23% | 43% | 24% |  |
| 4. The teacher conducts frequent checks for student understanding, provides feedback, and adjusts instruction. | **ES** | 6% | 28% | 36% | 30% | 2.9 |
| **MS** | 12% | 40% | 26% | 21% | 2.6 |
| **HS** | 8% | 30% | 43% | 20% | 2.8 |
| **Total #** | 12 | 48 | 52 | 37 | 2.8 |
| **Total %** | 8% | 32% | 35% | 25% |  |
| **Total Score For Focus Area #1** | **ES** |  |  |  |  | **11.9** |
| **MS** |  |  |  |  | **10.3** |
| **HS** |  |  |  |  | **11.0** |
| **Total** |  |  |  |  | **11.2** |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **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% | 12% | 51% | 37% | 3.3 |
| **MS** | 7% | 36% | 31% | 26% | 2.8 |
| **HS** | 3% | 23% | 43% | 33% | 3.1 |
| **Total #** | 4 | 32 | 64 | 49 | 3.1 |
| **Total %** | 3% | 21% | 43% | 33% |  |
| 6. Students engage in higher-order thinking. | **ES** | 18% | 34% | 31% | 16% | 2.5 |
| **MS** | 38% | 19% | 36% | 7% | 2.1 |
| **HS** | 13% | 45% | 33% | 10% | 2.4 |
| **Total #** | 33 | 49 | 49 | 18 | 2.3 |
| **Total %** | 22% | 33% | 33% | 12% |  |
| 7. Students communicate their ideas and thinking with each other. | **ES** | 19% | 27% | 39% | 15% | 2.5 |
| **MS** | 33% | 21% | 43% | 2% | 2.1 |
| **HS** | 18% | 53% | 25% | 5% | 2.2 |
| **Total #** | 34 | 48 | 54 | 13 | 2.3 |
| **Total %** | 23% | 32% | 36% | 9% |  |
| 8. Students engage with meaningful, real-world tasks. | **ES** | 3% | 24% | 46% | 27% | 3.0 |
| **MS** | 19% | 19% | 50% | 12% | 2.5 |
| **HS** | 8% | 25% | 50% | 18% | 2.8 |
| **Total #** | 13 | 34 | 72 | 30 | 2.8 |
| **Total %** | 9% | 23% | 48% | 20% |  |
| **Total Score For Focus Area #2** | **ES** |  |  |  |  | **11.2** |
| **MS** |  |  |  |  | **9.6** |
| **HS** |  |  |  |  | **10.4** |
| **Total** |  |  |  |  | **10.5** |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Focus Area #3: Inclusive Practice & Classroom Culture** |  | Insufficient Evidence | Limited Evidence | Sufficient Evidence | Compelling Evidence | Avg Number of points |
|  | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (1 to 4) |
| 9. The teacher ensures that students are engaging in challenging tasks regardless of learning needs. | **ES** | 9% | 31% | 40% | 19% | 2.7 |
| **MS** | 29% | 24% | 38% | 10% | 2.3 |
| **HS** | 20% | 48% | 28% | 5% | 2.2 |
| **Total #** | 26 | 50 | 54 | 19 | 2.4 |
| **Total %** | 17% | 34% | 36% | 13% |  |
| 10. The teacher uses a variety of instructional strategies. | **ES** | 9% | 28% | 45% | 18% | 2.7 |
| **MS** | 17% | 40% | 38% | 5% | 2.3 |
| **HS** | 25% | 40% | 35% | 0% | 2.1 |
| **Total #** | 23 | 52 | 60 | 14 | 2.4 |
| **Total %** | 15% | 35% | 40% | 9% |  |
| 11. Classroom routines and positive supports are in place to ensure that students behave appropriately. | **ES** | 1% | 4% | 33% | 61% | 3.5 |
| **MS** | 14% | 10% | 38% | 38% | 3.0 |
| **HS** | 3% | 18% | 25% | 55% | 3.3 |
| **Total #** | 8% | 14 | 48 | 79 | 3.3 |
| **Total %** | 5 | 9% | 32% | 53% |  |
| 12. The classroom climate is conducive to teaching and learning. | **ES** | 3% | 3% | 34% | 60% | 3.5 |
| **MS** | 12% | 12% | 40% | 36% | 3.0 |
| **HS** | 3% | 23% | 33% | 43% | 3.2 |
| **Total #** | 8% | 16 | 53 | 72 | 3.3 |
| **Total %** | 5% | 11% | 36% | 48% |  |
| **Total Score For Focus Area #3** | **ES** |  |  |  |  | **12.5** |
| **MS** |  |  |  |  | **10.6** |
| **HS** |  |  |  |  | **10.8** |
| **Total** |  |  |  |  | **11.5** |

1. Findings in this report represent the conditions in place at the time of the onsite review in April 2019, and recommendations represent the team’s suggestions to address the issues identified at that time. The Update to the Comprehensive District Review section below details the structures that the district has put in place since the onsite review to address the challenges and areas for growth identified in this report. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The district has multiple grade configurations for its elementary and middle schools.  For purposes of analysis, classroom observations are divided into kindergarten through grade 4, grades 5–8, and grades 9–12.  Review team members observed grade 5 classes in 10 schools (2 K–5 schools, 5 grades 5–8 schools, 2 pre-kindergarten through grade 8 schools, and 1 kindergarten through grade 7 school). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The district has multiple grade configurations for its elementary and middle schools. For purposes of analysis, classroom observations are divided into kindergarten through grade 4, grades 5-8, and grades 9–12. Review team members observed grade 5 classes in 10 schools: 2 K–5 schools, 5 grades 5–8 schools, 2 pre-kindergarten through grade 8 schools, and in 1 kindergarten through grade 7 school. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. High-quality feedback is specific, timely, and actionable. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. SMART goals are Specific and Strategic; Measurable; Action Oriented; Rigorous, Realistic, and Results Focused; and Timed and Tracked. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The review team did not visit classes in the Cardinal O’Connell Early Learning Center and in the three therapeutic day schools (Leblanc, Laura Lee, and Janice Adie). The Janice Adie Therapeutic Day School is also called the Lowell Day School on Broadway. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Worcester and Cambridge are the two other cities. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Two elementary schools that have state-supported turnaround plans principally use curriculum units developed by *Lucy Calkins Readers Workshop.* [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. From the audit report, which was published in June 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. In 2018–2019, English learners made up 23.7 percent of the district’s student enrollment. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. ACCESS stands for Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. The district has multiple grade configurations for its elementary and middle schools. For purposes of analysis, classroom observations are divided into kindergarten through grade 4, grades 5-8, and grades 9–12. Review team members observed grade 5 classes in 10 schools: 2 K–5 schools, 5 grades 5–8 schools, 2 pre-kindergarten through grade 8 schools, and in 1 kindergarten through grade 7 school. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. High-quality feedback is specific, timely, and actionable. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. The Daley Middle School contracted independently with i-Readyto have the diagnostic assessments for use with its lowest performing students. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. On Tuesday, February 28, 2017, after collecting public comment since November 2016, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education voted 9-1 to amend the educator evaluation regulations. The most significant change in the regulations is the elimination of a separate student impact rating. Under the amended regulations, evaluators do not have to make a separate judgment about an educator’s impact on student learning. Instead, student learning is embedded as an indicator within one of the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Framework’s four standards. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Criminal Offender Record Information [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. High-quality feedback is specific, timely, and actionable. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Specific and Strategic; Measurable; Action Oriented; Rigorous, Realistic, and Results Focused; and Timed and Tracked [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. The Adie, Lee, and Leblanc therapeutic day schools serve students with Autism Spectrum Disorder and students with behavioral disorders. The Career Academy serves high-school students with behavioral problems needing a smaller, more flexible learning environment. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. See Tables 22 and 23 in the Student Performance section of this report for four-year and five-year cohort graduation rates, respectively, disaggregated over time by student group. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. See Table 26 in the Student Performance section of this report for dropout rates disaggregated over time by student group. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. The list of courses that are considered “advanced” for the purposes of accountability reporting are listed here: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/accountability/advanced-courses.docx>. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. An asset map is an inventory of the strengths and gifts of the people who make up a community. Asset mapping reveals the assets of the entire community and highlights the interconnections among them, which in turn reveals how to access those assets. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. RADAR stands for Resource Allocation and District Action Report. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. The comparable communities are Brockton, Everett, Lawrence, Lynn, New Bedford, Worcester, Chelsea, Malden, Revere, and Chicopee. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. HVAC stands for heating, ventilation, and air conditioning. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)