District Review Report

Leicester Public Schools

Comprehensive review conducted February 3–6, 2020

Office of District Reviews and Monitoring

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

**Organization of this Report**

[Executive Summary 1](#_Toc40425188)

[Leicester Public Schools District Review Overview 6](#_Toc40425189)

[Leadership and Governance 18](#_Toc40425190)

[Curriculum and Instruction 29](#_Toc40425191)

[Assessment 44](#_Toc40425192)

[Human Resources and Professional Development 52](#_Toc40425193)

[Student Support 58](#_Toc40425194)

[Financial and Asset Management 66](#_Toc40425195)

[Appendix A: Review Team, Activities, Schedule, Site Visit 72](#_Toc40425196)

[Appendix B: Enrollment, Attendance, Expenditures 74](#_Toc40425197)

[Appendix C: Instructional Inventory 78](#_Toc40425198)

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Executive Summary

The Leicester public school district enrolled 1,605 students in 2015 and 1,536 students in 2019, a decrease of 4.3 percent. During that four-year period, the proportion of economically disadvantaged students in the district rose from 17.5 percent in 2015 to 25.7 percent in 2019. The proportion of students with disabilities increased from 16.4 percent in 2015 to 17.4 percent in 2019. The population of English learners rose from 1.2 percent in 2015 to 2.7 percent in 2019, and the population of students whose first language is not English rose from 3.3 percent in 2015 to 6.5 percent in 2019.

Between 2015 and 2019, the proportion of white students decreased from 87.5 percent in 2015 to 80.1 percent in 2019, but the proportion of African American students increased from 3.4 percent in 2015 to 5.4 percent in 2019 and the proportion of Latinx students from 5.3 percent in 2015 to 10.3 percent in 2019.

At the time of the onsite review in February 2020, the district was struggling through some major shifts. Beginning in September 2019 there were three schools in the district, Leicester Elementary, Leicester Middle, and Leicester High School. Despite spending 14.2 percent above required net school spending in fiscal year 2019, the district faced a bleak financial forecast and so in the spring before the onsite review the decision was made to close Leicester Memorial, (grades 3-5) and merge it with Leicester Primary (Pre-K-2) to form Leicester Elementary (K-4). Fifth graders were moved to Leicester Middle School which had transitioned from serving grades 6-8 to now serving grades 5-8. The high school still serves grades 9-12 but now houses the district’s pre-kindergarten.

In addition to getting used to new school configurations, educators were adjusting to several newly filled administrative positions. In central office there were three new hires, the director of finance, the director of student services, and the director of curriculum, instruction and assessment. The director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment position had been vacant for two years. The elementary principal was now charged with leading an additional group of educators from the primary school, the middle-school principal was in his position for one year, and the middle- and high-school assistant principals were in their first year of their positions.

During all the changes, the district was engaged in planning for the approval, funding, and building of a new Pre-K-8 school. Many of the preliminary steps had already been taken and drawings rendering what the new school would look like hung in the district office and town hall. Information about the status of the project was the focus of the district’s home webpage. The hope is that the new school will open in September 2023.

In 2019 schools in the district did not require assistance or intervention according to the state’s accountability system, each making substantial progress toward targets, and Leicester High School making moderate progress toward targets.

*Curriculum*

As of this review, oversight of K-12 taught curriculum resides at the school and classroom level. A new director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment oversees the development of district curriculum maps aligned with the Massachusetts frameworks.

In July 2019, the director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment updated the district’s curriculum management plan. The plan outlines responsibilities for school administrators to supervise and evaluate curriculum implementation, to support professional development, and to collaborate with teachers in the design, implementation, and review phases of curriculum development. The district’s 2019 revised curriculum management plan recommends adoption of the Understanding by Design (UbD) template. The plan also includes a statement of expectations for budget support. The plan remains aspirational until it is known to all educators and is fully implemented.

*Instruction*

The team observed 58 classes throughout the district: 21 at the high school, 23 at the middle school, and 14 at the elementary school. The team observed two pre-kindergarten classrooms at the elementary school. Those observations affected overall results for the elementary school.The team observed 19 ELA classes, 13 mathematics classes, and 26 classes in other subject areas. Among the classes observed were 3 special education classes, 0 EL classes, and 0 career/technical education classes. The observations were approximately 20 minutes in length. All review team members collected data using DESE’s Instructional Inventory, a tool for recording observed characteristics of standards-based teaching. This data is presented in Appendix C.

The review team observed 58 classrooms across the district that included: pre-kindergarten; substantially separate; push-in and pull-out special education; intervention; world languages; freshman seminar; honors and advanced placement classes; English language arts/literacy; mathematics; science, technology and engineering; history/social sciences, and the arts.

Districtwide in observed classes, all levels showed variations in instructional practices with little consistency across all schools. In the elementary school there was evidence of purposeful student engagement in challenging learning opportunities matched to stated earning objectives. In contrast, in the middle and high schools, there was a low incidence of rigorous learning objectives and opportunities for students to collaborate and take ownership of learning.

During the onsite review, the district requested feedback on specific instructional elements: class talk, explicit academic discourse during group work, cognitive engagement and thinking, student voice, and authentic learning experiences. These instructional elements are aligned with characteristics #2, #4, and #5 through #10 of DESE’s Instructional Inventory (see Appendix C). In addition, the district is focused on developing a shared understanding of rigor and relevance, which also corresponds to characteristic #10 of DESE’s Instructional Inventory. (See Curriculum and Instruction section in this report for the team’s findings related to these characteristics.)

The district does not have coherent, high-quality, comprehensive K-12 curricular materials that are aligned with the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks. The district is missing robust, inclusive professional structures to support educators to implement curriculum. The pace and plans for curriculum alignment work do not reflect a sense of urgency.

Acceleration of the development of fully aligned, high-quality curriculum materials, supports, and common instructional practices and supports is necessary to realize the district’s vision---that the Leicester schools engage every child in rigorous, student-centered learning in a safe and technology-rich environment.

**Strengths**

* In the midst of managing years of large-scale financial cuts, substantial leadership transition, reconfiguration of the district’s schools, and plans for a new school, the superintendent and her leadership team are increasing collaboration with the town, creating a more effective central office, and ensuring that district leaders play leadership roles appropriate to the district’s needs.
* In observed classrooms across the district, the classroom climate was conducive to teaching and learning.
* District educators collect data from a variety of sources to get a picture of students’ academic and non-academic growth and development.
* The district has systems and practices in place to ensure safe and supportive schools.
* The district has conducted six years of connected studies to document the need for and plan for the construction of a new Pre-K-8 school.

**Challenges and Areas for Growth**

* The district does not have a process for developing and using plans that focus on student opportunities and outcomes and can reliably drive improvement.
* In their work together, school committee members, the superintendent, and members of the leadership team are not placing sufficient emphasis on improvement outcomes for all students.
* The district does not have coherent, high-quality, comprehensive K-12 curricular materials that are aligned with the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks. The district is missing robust, inclusive professional structures to support educators to implement curriculum. The pace and plans for curriculum alignment work do not reflect a sense of urgency.
* In observed classrooms districtwide, the quality of instruction was inconsistent.
* The use of data to drive continuous improvement in students’ academic achievement is limited at the district, school, and classroom level.
* The district does not ensure that all stakeholders have clear and timely information about district, school, and student performance.
* The district’s educator evaluation system does not prioritize opportunities for educators to receive high-quality feedback that helps them improve their practice.

The district does not have a proactive approach to meet the needs of its English learners.

* Some district practices do not reflect a culturally responsive district that prioritizes equity.

The district and the town do not have an up-to-date written agreement on municipal expenditures in support of the schools.

**Recommendations**

The district should alter its school improvement and district improvement planning practices to increase the likelihood of their impact. Planning documents should have clear, measurable goals that are based on an analysis of historical, longitudinal, and current disaggregated student data.

In all their collaborations, the superintendent, school committee members, and the leadership team should adopt a deliberate, interactive focus on improvement in student outcomes, with a particular emphasis on student performance, opportunity, and access. District leaders should regularly provide relevant and complete student performance data to the school committee to guide and support its decision-making.

The district should take immediate steps to complete K-12 curricula in all subjects. It should ensure that curricula are high quality, comprehensive, aligned with appropriate standards and are aligned vertically and horizontally across grades and schools.

The district should ensure that all teachers provide evidence-based instruction that challenges and supports all students and that provides all students with access to district curriculum, advanced coursework, and rigorous learning opportunities.

The district should increase educators’ capacity to analyze and use data to improve teaching and learning by increasing sharing of data, training staff in data analysis, and increasing opportunities for administrators and teachers at all levels to review and interpret data. The district should ensure that all stakeholders have clear and timely information about district, school, and student academic achievement.

* The district should promote educators’ growth by fully implementing all components of the educator evaluation system, with a particular emphasis on ensuring that all educators receive high-quality feedback.

The district should create and implement systems and practices to ensure that English learners are provided the instruction and support that meets their needs.

* + - The district should prioritize a focus on cultural responsiveness and implicit bias.

In compliance with 603 CMR 10.04, the district and the town should develop a written agreement that details the calculation process and/or amounts to be used in calculating municipal expenditures that are provided to the district.

Leicester Public Schools District Review Overview

Purpose

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

Methodology

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

Site Visit

The site visit to the Leicester Public Schools was conducted from February 3–6, 2020. The site visit included 33 hours of interviews and focus groups with approximately 70 stakeholders, including school committee members, district administrators, school staff, students, students’ families, and teachers’ association representatives. The review team conducted three focus groups with four elementary-school teachers, five middle-school teachers, and three 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 58 classrooms in 3 schools. The team collected data using DESE’s Instructional Inventory, a tool for recording observed characteristics of standards-based teaching. This data is contained in Appendix C.

**District Profile**

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

The current superintendent has been in the position since August 2017. The district leadership team includes the superintendent; the director of curriculum, instruction and assessment; the director of pupil services; the business manager; and the director of technology and digital learning. Central office positions have been mostly stable in number, increasing by one position over the past year. The district has three principals leading three schools. There are five other school administrators: the director of facilities, the director of food services, and three assistant principals. In the 2018–2019 school year, there were 112 teachers in the district.

In the 2018–2019 school year, 1,536 students were enrolled in the district’s four schools:

**Table 1: Leicester Public Schools**

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

| **School**  | **Type** | **Grades Served** | **Enrollment** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Leicester Primary | EES | Pre-K-2 | 367 |
| Leicester Memorial | ES | 3-5 | 329 |
| Leicester Middle School | MS | 6-8 | 370 |
| Leicester High School | HS | 9-12 | 470 |
| **Totals** | 4 schools | **Pre-K-12** | **1,536** |
| \*As of October 1, 2018*At the time of the review in February 2020, the district had just closed one school (Leicester Memorial) and reconfigured the remaining schools: Leicester Elementary (K-4 ), Leicester Middle School (5-8), and Leicester High School (9-12). Leicester High School also now houses pre-kindergarten students.* |

Between 2015 and 2019 overall student enrollment decreased by 4.3 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 47 K-12 district of similar size (1,000-1,999 students) in fiscal year 2018: $13,711 as compared with $14,582 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

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| **Table 2: Leicester Public Schools****Accountability Percentile, Criterion Reference Target (CRT) Percentage, Reason for Classification** |
| **School** | **Accountability Percentile** | **Cumulative CRT Percentage** | **Overall Classification** | **Reason for Classification** |
| Leicester Primary School | -- | -- | Insufficient data | Insufficient data |
| Leicester Memorial Elementary | 31 | 59 | Not requiring assistance or intervention | Substantial progress toward targets |
| Leicester Middle | 40 | 74% | Not requiring assistance or intervention | Substantial progress toward targets |
| Leicester High | 31 | 48% | Not requiring assistance or intervention | Moderate progress toward targets |
| District | -- | 66% | Not requiring assistance or intervention | Substantial progress toward targets |

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| **Table 3: Leicester Public Schools****Next-Generation MCAS ELA Scaled Scores Grades 3--8, 2017--2019** |
| **Group** | **N (2019)** | **2017** | **2018** | **2019** | **Change** | **State (2019)** | **Above/Below** |
| All | 697 | 492.1 | 493.8 | 495.8 | 3.7 | 501.2 | -5.4 |
| African American/Black | 42 | 484.8 | 485.9 | 482.9 | -1.9 | 491.2 | -8.3 |
| Asian | 21 | 492.1 | 500.3 | 505.6 | 13.5 | 512.8 | -7.2 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 71 | 488.6 | 490.2 | 489.9 | 1.3 | 490.6 | -0.7 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hisp./Lat. | 22 | 495.4 | 494.2 | 494.1 | -1.3 | 503.6 | -9.5 |
| White | 539 | 492.8 | 494.4 | 497.1 | 4.3 | 504.9 | -7.8 |
| High Needs | 303 | 484.5 | 484.4 | 487.7 | 3.2 | 490.7 | -3.0 |
| Econ. Dis. | 215 | 486.6 | 485.1 | 488.9 | 2.3 | 490.6 | -1.7 |
| SWD | 122 | 475.4 | 474.8 | 477.7 | 2.3 | 481.1 | -3.4 |
| EL  | 54 | 483.7 | 486.0 | 490.4 | 6.7 | 489.3 | 1.1 |
| 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: Leicester Public Schools****Next-Generation MCAS Math Scaled Scores Grades 3--8, 2017--2019** |
| **Group** | **N (2019)** | **2017** | **2018** | **2019** | **Change** | **State (2019)** | **Above/Below** |
| All | 694 | 490.8 | 493.4 | 495.4 | 4.6 | 499.2 | -3.8 |
| African American/Black | 42 | 481.7 | 482.9 | 484.5 | 2.8 | 487.8 | -3.3 |
| Asian | 21 | 500.9 | 502.7 | 506.5 | 5.6 | 516.4 | -9.9 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 71 | 487.3 | 485.7 | 489.0 | 1.7 | 488.2 | 0.8 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hisp./Lat. | 22 | 490.8 | 491.2 | 496.9 | 6.1 | 500.8 | -3.9 |
| White | 536 | 491.5 | 494.6 | 496.5 | 5.0 | 502.7 | -6.2 |
| High Needs | 301 | 483.1 | 484.6 | 487.3 | 4.2 | 488.8 | -1.5 |
| Econ. Dis. | 213 | 484.2 | 484.6 | 487.3 | 3.1 | 488.1 | -0.8 |
| SWD | 121 | 474.5 | 476.7 | 477.4 | 2.9 | 479.5 | -2.1 |
| EL  | 54 | 484.5 | 481.9 | 489.1 | 4.6 | 489.3 | -0.2 |
| 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: Leicester Public Schools****Next-Generation MCAS ELA Percent Meeting or Exceeding Expectations Grades 3--8, 2017--2019** |
| **Group** | **N (2019)** | **2017** | **2018** | **2019** | **Change** | **State (2019)** | **Above/Below** |
| All | 697 | 34% | 36% | 40% | 6 | 52% | -12 |
| African American/Black | 42 | 22% | 18% | 21% | -1 | 33% | -12 |
| Asian | 21 | 35% | 42% | 62% | 27 | 72% | -10 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 71 | 27% | 28% | 28% | 1 | 33% | -5 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hisp./Lat. | 22 | 35% | 35% | 32% | -3 | 56% | -24 |
| White | 539 | 35% | 38% | 42% | 7 | 59% | -17 |
| High Needs | 303 | 20% | 18% | 23% | 3 | 32% | -9 |
| Econ. Dis. | 215 | 23% | 19% | 26% | 3 | 33% | -7 |
| SWD | 122 | 8% | 7% | 8% | 0 | 16% | -8 |
| EL  | 54 | 12% | 17% | 30% | 18 | 32% | -2 |

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| **Table 6: Leicester Public Schools****Next-Generation MCAS Math Percent Meeting or Exceeding Expectations Grades 3--8, 2017--2019** |
| **Group** | **N (2019)** | **2017** | **2018** | **2019** | **Change** | **State (2019)** | **Above/Below** |
| All | 694 | 30% | 35% | 39% | 9 | 49% | -10 |
| African American/Black | 42 | 8% | 16% | 17% | 9 | 28% | -11 |
| Asian | 21 | 45% | 58% | 67% | 22 | 76% | -9 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 71 | 22% | 19% | 25% | 3 | 29% | -4 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hisp./Lat. | 22 | 39% | 35% | 50% | 11 | 51% | -1 |
| White | 536 | 31% | 37% | 40% | 9 | 56% | -16 |
| High Needs | 301 | 18% | 18% | 22% | 4 | 29% | -7 |
| Econ. Dis. | 213 | 19% | 18% | 23% | 4 | 29% | -6 |
| SWD | 121 | 8% | 10% | 10% | 2 | 15% | -5 |
| EL  | 54 | 26% | 17% | 22% | -4 | 32% | -10 |

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| **Table 7: Leicester Public Schools****Next Generation MCAS ELA and Math Scaled Scores in Grade 10, 2019** |
|  | **ELA** | **Math** |
| **Group** | **N (2019)** | **2019** | **State** | **Above/Below** | **N (2019)** | **2019** | **State** | **Above/Below** |
| All | 105 | 496.8 | 506.2 | -9.4 | 104 | 494.8 | 505.1 | -10.3 |
| African American/Black | 3 | -- | 493.8 | -- | 3 | -- | 492.3 | -- |
| Asian | 4 | -- | 516.8 | -- | 4 | -- | 522.5 | -- |
| Hispanic or Latino | 11 | 497.6 | 492.0 | 5.6 | 11 | 487.2 | 491.0 | -3.8 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hisp./Lat. | 2 | -- | 509.0 | -- | 2 | -- | 506.7 | -- |
| White | 84 | 497.2 | 510.7 | -13.5 | 83 | 495.8 | 509.0 | -13.2 |
| High Needs | 45 | 487.9 | 492.6 | -4.7 | 44 | 485.8 | 491.6 | -5.8 |
| Econ. Dis. | 32 | 490.4 | 493.4 | -3.0 | 31 | 488.9 | 492.1 | -3.2 |
| SWD | 4 | -- | 486.2 | -- | 4 | -- | 483.8 | -- |
| EL  | 20 | 482.5 | 480.6 | 1.9 | 20 | 475.4 | 485.4 | -10.0 |

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| **Table 8: Leicester Public Schools****Next Generation MCAS ELA and Math Percent Meeting or Exceeding Expectations in Grade 10, 2019** |
|  | **ELA** | **Math** |
| **Group** | **N (2019)** | **2019** | **State** | **Above/Below** | **N (2019)** | **2019** | **State** | **Above/Below** |
| All | 105 | 39% | 61% | -22 | 104 | 33% | 59% | -26 |
| African American/Black | 3 | -- | 38% | -- | 3 | -- | 35% | -- |
| Asian | 4 | -- | 78% | -- | 4 | -- | 82% | -- |
| Hispanic or Latino | 11 | 45% | 37% | 8 | 11 | 18% | 33% | -15 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hisp./Lat. | 2 | -- | 65% | -- | 2 | -- | 60% | -- |
| White | 84 | 39% | 69% | -30 | 83 | 35% | 67% | -32 |
| High Needs | 45 | 20% | 36% | -16 | 44 | 14% | 33% | -19 |
| Econ. Dis. | 32 | 25% | 38% | -13 | 31 | 19% | 35% | -16 |
| SWD | 20 | 10% | 22% | -12 | 20 | 0% | 18% | -18 |
| EL  | 4 | -- | 18% | -- | 4 | -- | 24% | -- |

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| **Table 9: Leicester Public Schools****Next Generation MCAS Science Meeting or Exceeding Expectations in Grades 5 and 8,** **and MCAS Science Proficient or Advanced in Grade 10, 2019** |
|  | **Next-Generation MCAS 5 and 8** | **MCAS Grade 10** |
| **Group** | **N (2019)** | **2019** | **State** | **Above/ Below** | **N (2019)** | **2019** | **State** | **Above/ Below** |
| All | 243 | 44% | 48% | -4 | 97 | 70% | 74% | -4 |
| African American/Black | 14 | 14% | 24% | -9 | 3 | -- | 54% | -- |
| Asian | 3 | 67% | 67% | 0 | 4 | -- | 88% | -- |
| Hispanic or Latino | 25 | 28% | 26% | 2 | 11 | 55% | 53% | 2 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hisp./Lat. | 7 | 57% | 51% | 6 | 2 | -- | 76% | -- |
| White | 194 | 47% | 56% | -9 | 76 | 72% | 81% | -9 |
| High Needs | 98 | 26% | 27% | -2 | 42 | 50% | 53% | -3 |
| Econ. Dis. | 71 | 28% | 27% | 2 | 30 | 60% | 54% | 6 |
| SWD | 35 | 14% | 17% | -3 | 20 | 30% | 38% | -8 |
| EL  | 13 | 15% | 23% | -7 | 3 | -- | 39% | -- |

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| **Table 10: Leicester Public Schools****Next-Generation MCAS ELA Percent Meeting or Exceeding Expectations in Grades 3-8, 2017--2019** |
| **Grade** | **N (2019)** | **2017** | **2018** | **2019** | **Change** | **State (2019)** | **Above/Below** |
| 3 | 92 | 44% | 36% | 48% | 4 | 56% | -8 |
| 4 | 106 | 21% | 43% | 41% | 20 | 52% | -11 |
| 5 | 127 | 32% | 38% | 41% | 9 | 52% | -11 |
| 6 | 114 | 36% | 36% | 37% | 1 | 53% | -16 |
| 7 | 142 | 37% | 28% | 40% | 3 | 48% | -8 |
| 8 | 116 | 29% | 38% | 36% | 7 | 52% | -16 |
| 3--8 | 697 | 34% | 36% | 40% | 6 | 52% | -12 |
| 10 | 105 | -- | -- | 39% | -- | 61% | -22 |

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|  **Table 11: Leicester Public Schools****Next-Generation MCAS Math Percent Meeting or Exceeding Expectations in Grades 3—8, 2017--2019** |
| **Grade** | **N (2019)** | **2017** | **2018** | **2019** | **Change** | **State (2019)** | **Above/Below** |
| 3 | 92 | 37% | 37% | 41% | 4 | 49% | -8 |
| 4 | 104 | 18% | 37% | 28% | 10 | 50% | -22 |
| 5 | 127 | 35% | 31% | 34% | -1 | 48% | -14 |
| 6 | 114 | 30% | 41% | 44% | 14 | 52% | -8 |
| 7 | 141 | 29% | 32% | 43% | 14 | 48% | -5 |
| 8 | 116 | 29% | 34% | 41% | 12 | 46% | -5 |
| 3--8 | 694 | 30% | 35% | 39% | 9 | 49% | -10 |
| 10 | 104 | -- | -- | 33% | -- | 59% | -26 |

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| **Table 12: Leicester Public Schools****MCAS Science Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grades 5, 8, and 10, 2016--2019** |
| **Grade** | **N (2019)** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **2019** | **4-yr Change** | **State (2019)** |
| 5 | -- | 51% | 45% | 40% | -- | -- | -- |
| 8 | -- | 43% | 36% | 32% | -- | -- | -- |
| 10 | 97 | 84% | 85% | 81% | 70% | -14 | 74% |

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| **Table 13: Leicester Public Schools****English Language Arts and Math Mean Student Growth Percentile, 2018-2019** |
|  | **ELA** | **Math** |
| **Grade** | **N (2019)** | **2018** | **2019** | **State (2019)** | **N (2019)** | **2018** | **2019** | **State (2019)** |
| 3 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| 4 | 100 | 45.1 | 45.7 | 49.7 | 100 | 52.3 | 36.4 | 49.8 |
| 5 | 122 | 51.0 | 45.0 | 50.0 | 122 | 60.4 | 49.4 | 50.0 |
| 6 | 108 | 49.2 | 50.1 | 50.0 | 107 | 56.7 | 58.2 | 50.0 |
| 7 | 129 | 50.5 | 56.5 | 49.9 | 131 | 57.4 | 55.1 | 50.1 |
| 8 | 112 | 52.4 | 53.8 | 49.9 | 112 | 48.6 | 72.6 | 49.9 |
| 3--8 | 571 | 49.8 | 50.4 | 49.9 | 572 | 54.5 | 54.6 | 49.9 |
| 10 | 94 | 47.1 | 36.6 | 49.4 | 93 | 52.5 | 36.0 | 49.7 |

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| **Table 14: Leicester Public Schools****Next-Generation MCAS ELA Percent Meeting or Exceeding Expectations by School and Grade, 2019** |
| **School** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** | **3--8** | **10** |
| Leicester Primary | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Leicester Memorial | 47% | 42% | 41% | -- | -- | -- | 43% | -- |
| Leicester Middle | -- | -- | -- | 37% | 40% | 37% | 38% | -- |
| Leicester High | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 38% |
| District | 48% | 41% | 41% | 37% | 40% | 36% | 40% | 39% |
| State | 56% | 52% | 52% | 53% | 48% | 52% | 52% | 61% |

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| **Table 15: Leicester Public Schools****Next-Generation MCAS Math Percent Meeting or Exceeding Expectations by School and Grade, 2019** |  |
| **School** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** | **3-8** | **10** |
| Leicester Primary | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Leicester Memorial | 39% | 29% | 35% | -- | -- | -- | 34% | -- |
| Leicester Middle | -- | -- | -- | 45% | 44% | 43% | 44% | -- |
| Leicester High | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 33% |
| District | 41% | 28% | 34% | 44% | 43% | 41% | 39% | 33% |
| State | 49% | 50% | 48% | 52% | 48% | 46% | 49% | 59% |

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| **Table 16: Leicester Public Schools****Science Next-Generation MCAS Percent Meeting or Exceeding Expectations and** **MCAS Percent Proficient or Advanced by Grade and School, 2019** |
|  | **Next-Generation MCAS** |  | **MCAS** |
| **School** | **5** | **8** | **5 & 8** |  | **10** |
| Leicester Primary | -- | -- | -- |  | -- |
| Leicester Memorial | 46% | -- | 46% |  | -- |
| Leicester Middle | -- | 44% | 44% |  | -- |
| Leicester High | -- | -- | -- |  | 72% |
| District | 46% | 42% | 44% |  | 70% |
| State | 49% | 46% | 48% |  | 74% |

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| **Table 17: Leicester Public Schools****3—8 Next-Generation MCAS ELA Percent Meeting and Exceeding Expectations by School, 2019** |
| **School** | **All** | **High Needs** | **Econ. Dis.** | **SWD** | **EL** | **African American** | **Asian** | **Hispanic** | **Multi-race** | **White** |
| Leicester Primary | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Leicester Memorial | 43% | 24% | 28% | 13% | 24% | 19% | -- | 36% | -- | 45% |
| Leicester Middle | 38% | 20% | 23% | 5% | 26% | 18% | 58% | 16% | 33% | 41% |
| Leicester High | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Leicester | 40% | 23% | 26% | 8% | 30% | 21% | 62% | 28% | 32% | 42% |
| State | 52% | 32% | 33% | 16% | 32% | 33% | 72% | 33% | 56% | 59% |

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| **Table 18: Leicester Public Schools****3—8 Next-Generation MCAS Math Percent Meeting and Exceeding Expectations by School, 2019** |
| **School** | **All** | **High Needs** | **Econ. Dis.** | **SWD** | **EL** | **African American** | **Asian** | **Hispanic** | **Multi-race** | **White** |
| Leicester Primary | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Leicester Memorial | 34% | 17% | 19% | 8% | 14% | 14% | -- | 25% | -- | 36% |
| Leicester Middle | 44% | 27% | 27% | 14% | 30% | 12% | 75% | 27% | 53% | 46% |
| Leicester High | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| District | 39% | 22% | 23% | 10% | 22% | 17% | 67% | 25% | 50% | 40% |
| State | 49% | 29% | 29% | 15% | 32% | 28% | 76% | 29% | 51% | 56% |

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| **Table 19: Leicester Public Schools****ELA Meeting or Exceeding Expectations in Grade 10, 2019** |
| **School** | **All** | **High Needs** | **Econ. Dis.** | **SWD** | **EL** | **African American** | **Asian** | **Hispanic** | **Multi-race** | **White** |
| Leicester High | 38% | 19% | 23% | 11% | -- | -- | -- | 45% | -- | 38% |
| District | 39% | 20% | 25% | 10% | -- | -- | -- | 45% | -- | 39% |
| State | 61% | 36% | 38% | 22% | 18% | 38% | 78% | 37% | 65% | 69% |

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| **Table 20: Leicester Public Schools****Math Meeting or Exceeding Expectations in Grade 10, 2019** |
| **School** | **All** | **High Needs** | **Econ. Dis.** | **SWD** | **EL** | **African American** | **Asian** | **Hispanic** | **Multi-race** | **White** |
| Leicester High | 33% | 14% | 21% | 0% | -- | -- | -- | 18% | -- | 35% |
| District | 33% | 14% | 19% | 0% | -- | -- | -- | 18% | -- | 35% |
| State | 59% | 33% | 35% | 18% | 24% | 35% | 82% | 33% | 60% | 67% |

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| **Table 21: Leicester Public Schools****Next-Generation MCAS Science Percent Meeting and Exceeding Expectations by School in Grades 3-8, 2019** |
| **School** | **All** | **High Needs** | **Econ. Dis.** | **SWD** | **EL** | **African American** | **Asian** | **Hispanic** | **Multi-race** | **White** |
| Leicester Primary | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Leicester Memorial | 46% | 26% | 26% | 22% | 0% | 22% | 100% | 33% | 0% | 50% |
| Leicester Middle | 44% | 26% | 35% | 7% | 14% | 0% | 50% | 20% | 67% | 47% |
| Leicester High | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| District | 44% | 26% | 28% | 14% | 15% | 14% | 67% | 28% | 57% | 47% |
| State | 48% | 27% | 27% | 17% | 23% | 24% | 67% | 26% | 51% | 56% |

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| **Table 22: Leicester Public Schools****MCAS Science Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Science by School and Student Group, 2016--2019** |
| **School** | **N (2019)** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **2019** | **4-yr Change** |
| Leicester High | 95 | 84% | 85% | 82% | 72% | -12% |
| African American/Black | 3 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Asian | 4 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Hispanic | 10 | -- | -- | 70% | 60% | -- |
| Multi-race, non-Hisp./Lat. | 2 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| White | 75 | 84% | 87% | 82% | 73% | -11% |
| High Needs | 40 | 72% | 65% | 56% | 53% | -19% |
| Econ. Dis. | 28 | 79% | 68% | 55% | 64% | -15% |
| SWD | 18 | 50% | 38% | 36% | 33% | -17% |
| EL | 3 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |

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| **Table 23: Leicester Public Schools****Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rates by Student Group, 2016–-2019** |
| **Group** | **N****(2019)** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **2019** | **4-yr Change** | **State (2019)** |
| All | 105 | 85.3 | 90.5 | 96.4 | 91.4 | 6.1 | 88.0 |
| African American/Black | 5 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 79.9 |
| Asian | 2 | -- | 100.0 | -- | -- | -- | 95.2 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 4 | -- | 50.0 | -- | -- | -- | 74.4 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hisp./Lat. | 2 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 87.6 |
| White | 91 | 87.4 | 93.0 | 97.0 | 92.3 | 4.9 | 92.7 |
| High needs | 38 | 78.7 | 85.7 | 95.2 | 81.6 | 2.9 | 78.8 |
| Economically Disadvantaged\* | 31 | 80.4 | 84.9 | 97.1 | 77.4 | -3.0 | 78.5 |
| SWD | 15 | 47.6 | 73.7 | 85.7 | 60.0 | 12.4 | 73.9 |
| EL | 1 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 64.6 |

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| **Table 24: Leicester Public Schools****Five-Year Cohort Graduation Rates by Student Group, 2015–-2018** |
| **Group** | **N****(2018)** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **4-yr Change** | **State (2018)** |
| All | 112 | 88.8 | 91.4 | 93.3 | 98.2 | 9.4 | 89.7 |
| African American/Black | 4 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 84.5 |
| Asian | 2 | -- | -- | 100.0 | -- | -- | 95.5 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 5 | 100.0 | -- | 50.0 | -- | -- | 77.6 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hisp./Lat. | 1 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 88.7 |
| White | 99 | 87.4 | 91.3 | 96.5 | 98.0 | 10.6 | 93.4 |
| High needs | 42 | 82.8 | 88.5 | 90.5 | 97.6 | 14.8 | 81.4 |
| Economically Disadvantaged\* | 34 | 83.7 | 88.2 | 88.7 | 100.0 | 16.3 | 81.0 |
| SWD | 14 | 80.0 | 71.4 | 84.2 | 92.9 | 12.9 | 76.4 |
| EL | 2 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 69.7 |

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| **Table 25: Leicester Public Schools****In-School Suspension Rates by Student Group, 2016–-2019** |
| **Group** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **2019** | **4-yr Change** | **State (2019)** |
| All | 1.0 | 1.7 | 1.5 | 1.0 | 0.0 | 1.9 |
| African American/Black | -- | -- | -- | 4.6 | -- | 3.4 |
| Asian | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 0.5 |
| Hispanic or Latino | -- | 3.6 | -- | 0.0 | -- | 2.3 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hisp./Lat. | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 2.3 |
| White | 0.7 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 1.0 | 0.3 | 1.6 |
| High Needs | 1.5 | 3.0 | 2.6 | 1.9 | 0.4 | 2.7 |
| Economically disadvantaged\* | 1.6 | 3.1 | 2.9 | 2.3 | 0.7 | 2.9 |
| SWD | 1.9 | 3.7 | 3.1 | 2.1 | 0.2 | 3.3 |
| EL | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 1.7 |

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| **Table 26: Leicester Public Schools****Out-of-School Suspension Rates by Student Group, 2016–-2019** |
| **Group** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **2019** | **4-yr Change** | **State (2019)** |
| All | 1.4 | 1.2 | 1.8 | 2.2 | 0.8 | 3.0 |
| African American/Black | -- | -- | -- | 6.9 | -- | 6.2 |
| Asian | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 0.8 |
| Hispanic or Latino | -- | 0.7 | -- | 4.0 | -- | 5.0 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hisp./ Lat. | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 3.5 |
| White | 1.0 | 1.2 | 1.7 | 1.7 | 0.7 | 2.0 |
| High Needs | 2.0 | 2.5 | 3.2 | 3.7 | 1.7 | 4.7 |
| Economically disadvantaged\* | 2.3 | 3.1 | 3.5 | 4.6 | 2.3 | 5.4 |
| SWD | 2.7 | 2.2 | 3.8 | 3.9 | 1.2 | 5.7 |
| EL | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 3.6 |

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| **Table 27: Leicester Public Schools****Dropout Rates by Student Group, 2016-–2019** |
| **Group** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **2019** | **4-yr Change** | **State (2019)** |
| All | 0.9 | 0.4 | 1.3 | 1.5 | 0.6 | 1.8 |
| African American/Black | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 2.6 |
| Asian | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.5 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 9.5 | 4.5 | 3.0 | 2.7 | -6.8 | 4.3 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hisp./ Lat. | -- | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | -- | 1.8 |
| White | 0.5 | 0.3 | 1.3 | 1.6 | 1.1 | 1.0 |
| High Needs | 1.7 | 1.5 | 3.9 | 4.1 | 2.4 | 3.5 |
| Economically disadvantaged | 2.7 | 0.0 | 0.9 | 4.0 | 1.3 | 3.8 |
| SWD | 2.0 | 3.6 | 8.3 | 6.1 | 4.1 | 3.1 |
| EL | 0.0 | 0.0 | 8.3 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 7.1 |

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| **Table 28: Leicester Public Schools****Advanced Coursework Completion by Student Group, 2018-2019** |
| **Group** | **N (2019)** | **2018** | **2019** | **Change** | **Target** |
| All | 232 | 63.6 | 59.1 | -4.5 | 67.9 |
| African American/Black | 9 | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Asian | 5 | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Hispanic or Latino | 15 | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Multi-Race, non-Hisp./ Lat. | 10 | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| White | 191 | 66.2 | 60.7 | -5.5 | 70.4 |
| High Needs | 78 | 35.1 | 39.7 | 4.6 | 42.4 |
| Economically disadvantaged | 58 | 38.6 | 41.4 | 2.8 | 46.0 |
| SWD | 31 | 14.8 | 29.0 | 14.2 | 21.8 |
| EL | 5 | -- | -- | -- | -- |

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| **Table 29: Leicester Public Schools****Progress toward Attaining English Language Proficiency, 2018-2019** |
|  | **Non-high school** | **High school** |
| **Group** | **N (2019)** | **2018** | **2019** | **Change** | **Target** | **N (2019)** | **2018** | **2019** | **Change** | **Target** |
| All | 24 | 50.0 | 62.5 | 12.5 | 51.6 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| EL | 24 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |

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| **Table 30: Leicester Public Schools****Chronic Absence\* Rates by Student Group, 2018-2019** |
|  | **Non-high school** | **High school** |
| **Group** | **N (2019)** | **2018** | **2019** | **Change** | **Target** | **N (2019)** | **2018** | **2019** | **Change** | **Target** |
| All | 938 | 6.4 | 5.5 | -0.9 | 5.4 | 491 | 18.0 | 17.7 | -0.3 | 16.4 |
| African American/Black | 57 | -- | -- | -- | -- | 21 | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Asian | 27 | -- | -- | -- | -- | 12 | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Hispanic or Latino | 93 | -- | -- | -- | -- | 39 | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Multi-Race, non-Hisp./Lat. | 28 | -- | -- | -- | -- | 15 | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| White | 731 | 6.7 | 5.5 | -1.2 | 5.5 | 401 | 17.4 | 18.5 | 1.1 | 15.6 |
| High needs | 413 | 11.6 | 8.2 | -3.4 | 9.8 | 182 | 27.9 | 24.7 | -3.2 | 25.0 |
| Economically Disadvantaged | 245 | 13.1 | 10.6 | -2.5 | 10.7 | 121 | 25.9 | 24.8 | -1.1 | 21.4 |
| SWD | 158 | 11.8 | 7.0 | -4.8 | 9.4 | 74 | 26.3 | 24.3 | -2.0 | 22.8 |
| EL | 78 | -- | -- | -- | -- | 15 | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| \* Chronic absence is defined as the percentage of students absent 10 percent or more of their total number of student days of membership in a school. |

Leadership and Governance

***Contextual Background***

*District and School Leadership*

The district has experienced a high rate of leadership turnover in the past several years, a process made more challenging by the closure of one school in the summer of 2019, the reconfiguration of all three remaining schools for the 2019-2020 school year, and the multi-year process, still underway at the time of the onsite in February 2020, for designing, approving, and funding a new elementary and middle school.

At the time of the onsite, while the superintendent had been leading the district for two and a half years, multiple district and school leaders were new to their positions. In the period between February and July 2019, the district hired three key district leaders: the directors of curriculum, instruction and assessment; student support; and finance. The principal of the elementary school led Leicester Memorial School with grades 3-5 for five years. That school closed in 2018-2019. That principal now heads the district’s new K-4 school. The former middle-school assistant principal is in his first year as principal, leading a former grades 6-8 school that now serves grades 5 through 8. The high-school principal, a veteran of five years, is also managing transition. In fall 2019, the high school added the district’s pre-kindergarten program, which had been formally housed at the Primary School. Each of these school leaders has an assistant principal who has been on the job since the summer of 2019.

*School Committee Governance*

The five members of the school committee routinely engage in their roles as policymakers, supervisors and evaluators of the superintendent, and stewards of the district’s finances. School committee members meet at least once per month and regularly convene meetings of the school committee called “workshops,” which they use for deliberative purposes, rather than decision-making. They have no standing committees, convening ad hoc committees as needed. Four members of the school committee are parents of current Leicester students, and at least two are former students. Members sometimes attend meetings of the town meeting or select board in their capacity as members of the school committee. In the eyes of both district leaders and town officials, the school committee is respected for its supportiveness, and the seriousness with which it takes its responsibilities. In considering the role of the school committee, several administrators expressed the hope that the school committee would take an even more “proactive” stance in its promotion of the district within the town.

A review of school committee minutes and videos of meetings indicated that school committee members rarely used their meeting time to review outcomes for all students, review disaggregated student data, or study achievement, access, and opportunity gaps. It appears that the last conversation of this kind, a review of MCAS assessment student data, took place in 2018.

*District and School Improvement Planning*

The leadership team, or L Team, consists of the superintendent; the directors of curriculum, instruction, and assessment; student services; technology; finance and operations; food services; facilities; and all principals and assistant principals. This group meets approximately twice a month and addresses issues of curriculum, instruction, professional development, assessment, student services, and a wide range of other concerns. In 2019-2020, at the behest of the superintendent, the leadership team has been engaged in a job-embedded leadership development program focusing on rigor, relevance, and instructional improvement.

In addition to the principal and assistant principal, each school has a school council with membership of staff and parents. Many teacher leaders have designated responsibilities in schools, serving as grade heads in the elementary school or content area heads in the middle and high schools. Two team chairpersons are responsible for leadership of special education teams within schools: there is one team for the elementary school and one team for the middle and high schools.

The district experienced repeated financial crises over the two and a half years before the onsite and has made a series of difficult decisions involving major cuts. In 2018, the district addressed a large shortfall by outsourcing 15 custodial positions and laying off 2 assistant principals and 1 teacher. While substantial annual savings were realized by these changes, the outsourcing of the custodial positions affected many people, creating hard feelings among district and town employees alike. Interviewees told the team that these feelings lingered in the town. In 2019, faced with the prospect of steep cuts in staffing and teaching personnel, the district opted to close a school rather than lay off as many as 18 teachers. As they have made these hard calls, central office and school leaders have consistently attempted to make cuts “the farthest away from the classroom.” The superintendent said that she expected to continue with this classroom-focused approach in the face of likely future cuts, noting “We are keeping people in front of kids.”

Every student and teacher have been making adjustments in the 2019-2020 school year, since all three remaining schools have experienced reconfigurations of students, grade levels, and staff. Many educators reported that the transitions to new schools have been challenging.

The superintendent actively supports leaders, educators, and students in the district who are recovering from the disruption and distress associated with recent layoffs, a school closing, and a wave of personnel changes. She characterizes the district as “healing” from the effects of these recent transitions.Echoing this view, an administrator, a member of the teacher’s association, and a school committee member all referred to a healing process that was underway.

***Strength Finding***

**1. In the midst of managing years of large-scale financial cuts, substantial leadership transition, reconfiguration of the district’s schools, and plans for a new school, the superintendent and her leadership team are increasing collaboration with the town, creating a more effective central office, and ensuring that district leaders play leadership roles appropriate to the district’s needs.**

1. Between February and July 2019, the superintendent concluded successful searches for the directors of three critical areas of district work: finance and operations; student services; and curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
2. The director of finance and operations has been central to the superintendent’s effort to improve collaboration with town administrators.
3. Town staff reported that they had more frequent communications with district finance staff, experienced increased accountability, and found the district doing proactive problem solving.
4. Multiple interviewees, including the superintendent, district administrators, and town staff, attributed improved ties to the town to these efforts of the director of finance and operations.
5. For example, the district has partnered with the town to secure a new agreement to have the town highway department mow all the district’s fields and plow all its roads and surfaces.
6. District leaders, members of the school committee, and town officials reported that the police department, working closely with the director of finance and operations, has taken the lead in the pursuit of a new grant to fund a school resource officer position.

**C.** To improve services to students with disabilities, support English learners more effectively, and create a systems approach to student services, the director of student services has implemented a series of improvements.

1. Action steps included starting a central office sign off on all Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) to build a calibrated districtwide practice; creating a handbook of protocols and expectations for supporting students with disabilities; and organizing English learner documentation to meet the requirements of the 2019 Tiered Focused Monitoring Report from DESE’s Office of Language Acquisition (OLA). (See the Curriculum and Instruction Contextual Background below.)

**D.** In 2019, the district chose to fund and hire a full-time director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment position–--a position that was effectively vacant for two years during a time of extreme financial pressure. That it did so demonstrated the importance that district leaders attached to this role.

1. The director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment works with principals and teacher teams to develop more effective professional development, bring coherence to district curriculum, and improve instruction.

2. As the Curriculum and Instruction and Assessment sections of this report detail, the review team sees the director role as critical for necessary improvements in these areas.

**Impact**: When central office leaders establish clear-cut common practices and bring a reliable set of leadership practices to bear on district and town relationships, communication likely improves. When procedures and protocols establish clear expectations for the treatment of underserved students, educators and students across the district can more readily access tools and resources, leading to the prospect of higher academic achievement. When central office leaders set districtwide expectations and assume responsibility for leadership of critical areas of work, practices across the district likely improve and are aligned with one another, leading to the emergence of a higher functioning, more effective school district.

***Challenges and Areas for Growth***

**2. The district does not have a process for developing and using plans that focus on student opportunities and outcomes and can reliably drive improvement.**

1. District and school improvement plans generally do not have a clear and measurable focus on improving performance, opportunities, and outcomes for all students. Most plans focus on process activities involving adults, such as the production of documents, plans, rubrics, and maps. In the few instances when plans cite a student outcome that will improve as a result of the planned work, the plans do not set a concrete goal or omit baseline student data from which to measure success.

1. The elementary school SIP (School Improvement Plan) sets a goal that students “demonstrate overall writing improvement as measured by grade level assessments,” but does not specify a baseline from which to measure progress or state what would constitute “overall improvement.”

2. The middle school SIP pledges that 100 percent of students will participate in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) courses, but leaves out any mention of how many students currently participate. While concrete and measurable, this goal is about output–the delivery of programming–not about its effects on students.

 3. The high school SIP sets out to improve “student engagement… and attainment of 21st century skills,” but does not include baseline measures or any targeted, measurable improvements in student engagement or student skills. The only measurable item is an adult-focused, process goal: an increase in the proportion of staff using Google tools, from 25 to 80 percent, which is not linked to student impact.

1. The current district planning schedule is so long that the district and each school must operate without a District Improvement Plan (DIP) or SIP for as much as a third of each school year.
2. In recent years, the district has had schools finalize their SIPs in November. This means the critical first quarter of the school year takes place in the absence of a clear and well-understood SIP.
3. Staff do not regularly use the DIP or SIPs to guide their practice or correct course.

1. Interviewees reported limited use of improvement plans. Some administrators reported consulting the SIP in January, but none claimed it as a core tool for their ongoing work. Some administrators described the SIP as an “afterthought” and an “exercise in compliance.”

2. One administrator observed that “the last time we looked at the DIP was in August.” Several referred to limits on the utility or use of plans. One school committee member characterized the DIP as “a little by the wayside” because of the focus on the new school building in the 2019-2020 school year.

**D.** While many of the district’s current planning difficulties are a continuation of past planning practices, the district has demonstrated a capacity to produce strong plans in a timely way.

1. DESE’s 2014 review of the district stated that the district did not have a DIP, and that SIPs were still in preparation in November of the school year that they covered. The district’s 2014-2017 DIP included 21 action steps, only 1 of which involved measuring student performance against benchmarks. Of the 39 achievements claimed in a 2014-2016 DIP update and report, none addressed student performance.
2. By contrast, in 2015, the district produced an ambitious three-year “vision and strategies” document that included clear SMART[[1]](#footnote-1) goals; tied them to student outcome targets in reading proficiency, literacy, algebra success, and technology; and set numerical goals for reductions in suspensions and increases in the graduation rate. This document was replaced by a three-year (2020-2022) DIP.
3. Multiple educators and administrators reported that in recent years, the schedule for DIP production began in January and concluded in the spring, so that SIPs could be built on the DIP and completed by June, well before the start of the planned school year.
4. The DIP and the SIPs do not include any practices to ensure equitable access to resources.
5. The DIP and the three SIPs do not address or provide for equitable allocation of available staffing, financial, material, and operational resources.
6. The district does not prepare an annual district action plan, detailing how the current year of DIP goals and work will be implemented and monitored for progress.

**Impact**: Without planning documents with measurable targets 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. When annual plans do not address the equitable allocation of resources, student learning is jeopardized, and gaps between groups of students can widen, rather than narrow. In the absence of reliably used annual action plans, schools and teams likely have difficulty sticking to timelines, aligning their work, tracking and reporting progress toward benchmarks, and meeting goals.

**3. In their work together, school committee members, the superintendent, and members of the leadership team are not placing sufficient emphasis on improvement outcomes for all students.**

 **A.** The superintendent, school committee members, and leadership team members rarely work together to review the performance of students or the improvement of teaching practice.

1. Interviews and a review of school committee minutes and videos indicated that participants dedicated a lot of time to administrative detail: accounts of recent or upcoming programming, grants applied for and received, recent events in schools, personnel developments, and the like. District leaders’ reporting to the school committee is infrequent and procedural in nature.

2. District leaders rarely mention or discuss student learning or outcomes data. From January to November 2019, detailed school committee minutes did not show substantive discussions of student learning or outcomes data.

**B.** School committee members have not sought out and studied student data, and learned about student progress, both to help them set district budget and policy, and to serve them in their role as primary communicators with the community at large.

1.Several school committee members said that they have recently begun to request additional student outcomes data, for example, STAR assessment results.

2. School committee members reported that they saw value in studying student data more often, although they had not done much of this work.

**C.**  Interviews and a review of leadership team (L Team) notes and meeting agendas from July through December 2019 indicated that leadership team members were not setting aside time to study student data together, or using student outcomes data, as a team, to plan next steps.

1. District leaders acknowledged that although the leadership team periodically looked at data from each school, they did so primarily as a recipient of a report from the school. They reported that L Team members did not study this data as a team, craft L Team responses to individual school data reports, or develop a shared analysis of data to drive districtwide changes in practice.

a. One central office leader said that when it came to critically reviewing districtwide data, L Team members were not “doing what we aspire to do.” This leader said that district leaders and principals were not engaging in critical professional dialogue as a normal, commonplace practice.

2. Principals agreed that the leadership team needed to improve its practice. One principal observed that while some L Team time was spent looking at data, L Team members were not effectively using data as a team to improve instruction.

3. Principals and district leaders told the team that some of the limitations of the L Team’s work on improvement was a result of recent transitions and the absence of well-established relationships between new and veteran leaders at the school and district levels. Several leaders expressed the hope that these relationships would get stronger and improve over time, leading to higher levels of trust and a more effective use of data.

**Impact**: When leaders limit their work together to procedural and administrative functions, they forego the opportunity to use measures of student progress to advance district and school improvement efforts. School committee members unfamiliar with student performance data and outcomes and the district’s efforts to improve them struggle to serve as knowledgeable, high-impact stewards of the district’s policies, budget, and leadership, and as effective advocates for the district in the community. The superintendent and the leaders of the district and its schools---the L Team---are not likely to lead successful efforts to improve student outcomes if data on student results are not the subject of frequent, routine, and critical review at their meetings, and if that regular review does not directly lead to adjustments in practice, at every level of the district.

***Recommendations***

**1. The district should alter its school improvement and district improvement planning practices to increase the likelihood of their impact. Planning documents should have clear, measurable goals that are based on an analysis of historical, longitudinal, and current disaggregated student data.**

1. Under the leadership of the superintendent, the district should convene a representative group of stakeholders to develop measurable goals, including specific targets for improving student performance, opportunities, and 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.

1. In each planned year within the DIP, the district should include goals that target student opportunity, access, and/or performance outcomes.

a. Each year of DIP goals should include specific student performance baselines and targets on specified measures of academic achievement, using the preferred measures of the district.

b. Each year of DIP goals should include specific student access baselines and targets. Possible examples, for illustration purposes only, include access of English learners to high quality curriculum or access of all students to tier one instruction.

1. Each year the district should develop an annual action plan that provides district and school leaders and staff throughout the district with a detailed, one-year map of all major activity needed to implement the current year of the three-year DIP.

1. This action plan should be completed in advance of the school year to which it applies, so that all district personnel and leaders can use it to plan.

1. Principals and school councils should ensure that each School Improvement Plan (SIP) is aligned with the DIP and includes specific measures to determine the progress of school-based initiatives.
2. The district should ensure that all plans for the upcoming school year---the DIP, the SIPs, and the annual action plan---are completed before the end of the current school year.
3. The district should use the current DIP, and progress toward DIP goals, as a resource in its annual budget planning for the following school year. Each school should use its current SIP in the same way.
4. District and school leaders should provide frequent, timely, and thorough information to the school committee, staff, students, and families on progress toward the achievement of plan goals.

**Benefits**: Implementing this recommendation will mean that the district will ensure that its priorities are based on evidence, and that its improvement plans drive the development, implementation, and modification of educational programs and practices. Once staff and school committee members have each of these plans ready for use, well before the school year begins, their leadership and decision-making will likely share a common focus, effect common changes in practice, and achieve a positive impact on student outcomes. Aligning district and school improvement plans with the budgeting process will help the district to ensure effective and equitable allocation of resources.

**Recommended resources:**

* DESE’s *District Standards and Indicators* ([www.doe.mass.edu/accountability/district-review/district-standards-indicators.pdf](http://www.doe.mass.edu/accountability/district-review/district-standards-indicators.pdf)) identify the characteristics of effective districts in supporting and sustaining school improvement.
* DESE’s *Planning for Success* tools (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/research/success/>) support the improvement planning process by spotlighting practices, characteristics, and behaviors that support effective planning and implementation and meet existing state requirements for improvement planning.
* *Focused Planning for Accelerating Student Learning* (<http://www.mass.gov/edu/docs/ese/accountability/dsac/focused-planning.pdf>) provides guidance for districts to accelerate achievement for all students through the development of a focused, actionable and sustainable Accelerated Improvement Plan (AIP).
	+ - *District Accelerated Improvement Planning - Guiding Principles for Effective Benchmarks* (<http://www.mass.gov/edu/docs/ese/accountability/turnaround/level-4-guiding-principles-effective-benchmarks.pdf>) provides information about different types of benchmarks to guide and measure district improvement efforts.
* *Turnaround Practices in Action* (<http://www.mass.gov/edu/docs/ese/accountability/turnaround/practices-report-2014.pdf>) is a practice guide that highlights practices and strategies observed in turnaround schools that have shown significant and rapid gains in student achievement. It presents key practices for consideration as avenues to improve and sustain ongoing and future turnaround efforts.

**2. In all their collaborations, the superintendent, school committee members, and the leadership team should adopt a deliberate, interactive focus on improvement in student outcomes, with a particular emphasis on student performance, opportunity, and access. District leaders should regularly provide relevant and complete student performance data to the school committee to guide and support its decision-making.**

1. Under the leadership of the superintendent, the school committee should regularly set aside time to review the improvement of students’ performance, opportunities, and outcomes.
2. School committee meetings should feature regular presentations from all principals and their chosen school team.
3. School committee members and staff should use the new DIP and the new School Improvement Plans (SIPs) and the annual action plan to focus all improvement conversations and deliberations.
4. The school committee should adopt the regular practice of using its meetings to inquire into and track progress on identifying and closing opportunity, achievement, and access gaps in students’ learning experiences.
5. Under the leadership of the superintendent, the leadership team should regularly use its twice-a-month “L Team” meetings to review and track student progress using the DIP, the annual action plan, and each SIP, as well as other tools and resources.

1. When conducting these inquiries, the L Team should make regular use of the student performance, opportunity, and outcomes data that schools have collected and analyzed.

1. The leadership team should regularly assess the district’s progress on efforts to identify and close achievement, access, and opportunity gaps in students’ learning experiences.
2. The leadership team should link its reviews of student outcomes data to action steps that result in adjustments to practice, both within schools and across the district.

**Benefits:** When school committee members and other district leaders reliably review and report on student outcomes, they build up the district’s effort to make student learning and experience its central focus. When district leaders study the evidence of a district’s efforts at closing gaps in achievement, access, and opportunity, they set a clear priority and increase the likelihood of action on these challenges. A leadership team that uses student data to inform and drive its action steps sets a standard for staff across the district, especially when it makes use of school- and teacher-driven insights into students’ learning and experience. When the L Team shares evidence of a curricular or instructional practice’s positive impact on student learning in a school, it encourages the use of that practice in other contexts. When the L Team uses districtwide student outcomes data to alter a curricular, assessment, professional development, or student services practice that has not worked, it makes decisions based on the experiences of the student, rather than on the activities or programs of the educator or school.

**Recommended resources:**

* *Advisory on School Governance* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/advisory/cm1115gov.html>) explains state law as it applies to particular functions of school governance, and provides recommendations on the important role that each partner in this endeavor plays in advancing collaboration and school improvement.
* The *District Governance Program* (<http://www.masc.org/field-services-2/district-governance-project>), provided by the Massachusetts Association of School Committees, is designed to focus on continuous improvement and to build understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the school committee and the superintendent.

Curriculum and Instruction

**Contextual Background**

*Curriculum Selection and Use and Classroom Instruction*

Between 2014 and July 2019, the district did not maintain continuous oversight of curriculum and instruction. At the time of the review in February 2020, the district did not have a coherent, comprehensive, horizontally and vertically aligned K-12 curriculum. In addition, curricular materials were not aligned with the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks. Some teachers have created curriculum and others have used textbook units of study with pacing guides as curriculum.Educator supports and equitable, differentiated Tier 1 instructional practices to meet all learners’ needs were not in place. The district did not provide a coherent sequence of all elements of high-quality, standards-based curricular materials, support, and instructional practices.

Attention to developing cultural proficiencies in all teachers and administrators is missing, and the district does not have a plan to increase capacity to recognize implicit bias. Evidence-based culturally and linguistically responsive practices are not embedded in curricular materials, supports, and instruction. The district does not have a plan to align and monitor K-12 opportunities that ensure equitable access to rigorous coursework and all learning opportunities.

During the 2018-2019 school year, Leicester participated in a Tiered Focused Monitoring Review conducted by the Department’s Office of Language Acquisition (OLA). The purpose of the Tiered Focused Monitoring Review is to monitor compliance with regulatory requirements focusing on English Learner Education. Pages 14-15 of the February 2019 Leicester Tiered Focused Monitoring Report states: “*Interviews and a review of documentation indicate that the district does not have an ESL [English as a Second Language] curriculum. ESL teachers use reading and literacy programs to provide ESL instruction to ELs [English learners]. Reading and literacy programs and materials help students improve their reading skills and can be used as resources; however, they cannot replace an ESL curriculum or ESL curricular materials that are integral to an effective ELE [English learner education] program in which ELs of all grades and proficiency levels become English proficient at a rapid pace. Furthermore, the district did not submit a Castañeda plan, which indicates that the district ELE program is not based on research, has adequate resources for success, nor that it regularly conducts regular evaluations.”*

As of this review, oversight of K-12 taught curriculum resides at the school and classroom level. A new director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment oversees the development of district curriculum maps aligned with the Massachusetts frameworks.

In July 2019, the director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment updated the district’s curriculum management plan. The plan outlines responsibilities for school administrators to supervise and evaluate curriculum implementation, to support professional development, and to collaborate with teachers in the design, implementation, and review phases of curriculum development. The district’s 2019 revised curriculum management plan recommends adoption of the Understanding by Design (UbD) template. The plan also includes a statement of expectations for budget support. The plan remains aspirational until it is known to all educators and is fully implemented.

The plan outlines three phases in the curriculum review process, which takes place over six years. In phase one, which takes place during the first year of the review process, educators evaluate and plan, completing time frames for curriculum units and select instructional materials. Content-specific trends and best practices, student performance data, financial investment for materials, and professional support and design work are considered.

In phase two, which takes place during year two of the review process, educators adopt and design curriculum, using the UbD model and identifying formative and summative assessments.

In phase three, which takes place during years three through six of the review process, educators implement curricula, reflect, and revise. Multiple curricula are slated for phase one of the review process: evaluate and plan in the same year.

District leaders reported that the 2018 History and Social Science Curriculum Frameworks, and the music curriculum—part of the 2019 Curriculum Framework for the Arts—were in the second phase (year two) of the review process. ELA and literacy, mathematics, and science, technology, and engineering were identified in various stages of phase three (years three through six) of the review process. The district has scheduled phase one (evaluate and plan) for ELA and literacy to begin in 2021-2022, mathematics in 2022-2023, and science, technology, and engineering in 2022-2023. The district has also planned to begin phase one for foreign languages and health and physical education in 2023.

The director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment reported not having a budget and limited money for curriculum and instruction work. Budgets for curriculum materials and professional development are line items in school-based budgets. In the 2019-2020 school year, three music and nine history/social science teachers[[2]](#footnote-2) developed recommended curriculum. The teachers received stipends for 10 hours of work. Interviewees reported that the past curriculum design template was being used in the review of the 2018 History and Social Science Curriculum Frameworks.

The district’s integrated pre-kindergarten classes, housed at the high school, are staffed with appropriate trained educators with appropriate supports to meet the needs of students in inclusive classroom environments. The recent consolidation of the district’s elementary schools helps the district plan for continuous implementation of aligned curriculum and instruction in pre-kindergarten through grade 4, in grades 5-8, and in grades 9-12. Acceleration of the development of fully aligned, high-quality curriculum materials, supports, and common instructional practices and supports is necessary to realize the district’s vision---that the Leicester schools engage every child in rigorous, student-centered learning in a safe and technology-rich environment.

*Student Access to Coursework*

Access to dual-enrollment courses at Becker College, Holy Cross, virtual high school, internships and externships, and volunteer opportunities are available to some high-school students. The middle school provides Project Lead the Way (PLTW), a technology and engineering course, to most students in grades 6 through 8. The district provides digital access to all students in the middle and high schools and is increasing access at the elementary school.The director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment told the team that the district wanted to build on its one-to-one technology and create a “future forward” district for 21st century learners, involving increased use of digital technology to support curriculum materials and instruction.

At the time of the onsite, interviews and a document review indicated that the district had proposed reconfiguring high-school course pathways for implementation in fall 2020. Concept, a new grade 9 course to complement the district’s course pathways towards high-school graduation,[[3]](#footnote-3) was described as “a level below college.” District leaders reported that the Concept course offered students an option for learning at a slower pace while maintaining rigor. The Concept course was described as a model used in other districts.

The decision to redesign graduation pathways was reported to be based on evidence of low student performance in advanced placement (AP) courses at the high school. According to DESE data, 49.1 percent of the district’s 114 AP test takers in the 2018-2019 school year scored 1-2 (lowest band of scores). Placement of students in the proposed Concept course is based on recommendations by principals, teachers, and guidance counselors and final grade 8 course grades and test scores. Principals described Concept as potentially eliminating Freshman Seminar---a time built into the day to support some learners.

**Strength Finding**

1. **In observed classrooms across the district, the classroom climate was conducive to teaching and learning.**

 **A.** The review team noted sufficient and compelling evidence showed that classroom routines and positive supports were in place to ensure that students behaved appropriately (characteristic #11) in 86 percent of observed elementary classrooms, in 82 percent of middle-school classrooms, and in 86 percent of high-school classrooms.

 1. In a mixed grade high-school math class, observers noted evidence of strong routines and rituals in place.

**B.** Review team members found sufficient and compelling evidence that classroom climate was conducive to teaching and learning (characteristic #12) in 93 percent of elementary classes, in 83 percent of middle-school classes, and in 81 percent of high-school classes.

 1. In a preschool class, the use of communications boards allowed non-verbal students to participate in morning meeting greetings via sing assistive technologies. Students responded to a prompt from a classmate. Student learned to value class members’ voices, including those without language, and how to be inclusive and share ideas with others.

2. In an observed grade 4 ELA class, students were “very quiet and engaged” and classroom expectations were “internalized.”

**Impact**: Well-managed classrooms with established routines and behavioral expectations likely provide optimal conditions for teaching and learning.

**Challenges and Areas for Growth**

**2. The district does not have coherent, high-quality, comprehensive K-12 curricular materials that are aligned with the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks. The district is missing robust, inclusive professional structures to support educators to implement curriculum. The pace and plans for curriculum alignment work do not reflect a sense of urgency.**

1. The team reviewed more than 40 district curriculum maps and calendars available on the district’s webpage and the district’s materials inventory.
2. The district’s curricular materials are not aligned with the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks.

a. The director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment described the district’s curricular materials as rewrites of textbook units of studies with pacing guides.

 2. Most district curricular materials do not have cultural relevance. The district does not have in place supports for educators to implement culturally and linguistically responsive curricula in order to promote academic achievement among all learners.

* 1. Students told the team that the curriculum did not reflect diverse histories and perspectives and could reinforce negative images and stereotypes.
	2. District curricula do not adequately support diverse learning styles and language and students’ cultural, linguistic, and social emotional needs.

**B.** The superintendent appointed a new director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment in summer 2019.

1. The superintendent identified vertical integration and pathways as two foci for the new director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

2. The director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment articulated a vision for curricular materials to include more digitally supported curricula as the drivers of instruction.

**C.** At the time of the onsite, a district K-12 social-emotional learning (SEL) curriculum and district curricular materials for English learners (ELs) were not available for review.

1. District administrators reported that the district had not developed a comprehensive K-12 SEL curriculum*.*

2. During the 2018-2019 school year, a Tiered Focused Monitoring Review conducted by the Department’s Office of Language Acquisition found that the district did not have an English as a Second Language (ESL) curriculum. (See the Contextual Background above.) The district is missing key curricula.

3. The district is missing key curricula.

**D.** Thedistrict is in the process of recentralizing curriculum, instruction, and assessment functions, but this process lacks clarity.

1. In multiple interviews, teachers and administrators expressed shared beliefs and expectations that teachers were responsible for aligning their units of study with the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks.
2. Curriculum development was described as “siloed” across all schools, and at times within schools and classrooms.
	1. Most teachers and teacher leaders said that they embraced change as an opportunity to vertically align curriculum. Teacher leaders described the need for a mindsetshift among some staff.

**E.** Interviews and a document review indicated that the district was missing robust, inclusive professional structures to support educators to implement curriculum aligned with the Massachusetts frameworks and evidence-based instructional practices.

1. Professional development takes place three times a year. Principals described the budget for the delivery of professional supports to implement curriculum as inadequate.
	1. District leaders told the team that they were preparing/discussing professional development around strategies and support to improve English learner engagement in the future.
2. District leaders reported that all staff had Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) certification. However, culturally sustaining and linguistic practices associated with English learners and English language development were not present in all observed classrooms.
3. Common planning time (CPT) is scheduled for 3-4 hours a month in the high school, and once every seven days at the middle school. The elementary school does not have CPT.
	1. Staff reported that new school reconfigurations and the loss of class sections necessitated reductions in the number of CPT meetings.
	2. The superintendent said that common planning time was difficult to schedule because of financial and logistical barriers. At the time of the onsite review, the district did not have proposed remedies.

4. District leaders described the district’s at-risk students as “becoming our failing students” in the absence of a comprehensive plan for aligning curricular materials and providing high-quality educator supports.

**Impact:** The absence of coherent, comprehensive, standards-aligned curricular materials and professional structures to support educators affects how curriculum and instruction are implemented across the district, leading to widely variable learning experiences, pedagogies, and expectations for student learning. This means that the district cannot guarantee all students access to high-quality learning environments responsive to their cognitive, social-emotional, behavioral, and identity-development needs. Teachers cannot routinely engage in professional learning communities to ensure that all learners receive the necessary supports and enhancements. The district cannot achieve coherence under loosely coupled curriculum design and implementation practices.

**3. In observed classrooms districtwide, the quality of instruction was inconsistent. The district is missing high-quality, core instruction.**

1. During the onsite review in February 2020, the district requested feedback on specific instructional elements: class talk, explicit academic discourse during group work, cognitive engagement and thinking, student voice, and authentic learning experiences. These instructional elements are aligned with characteristics #2, #4, and #5 through #10 of the DESE’s Instructional Inventory.

**B. Focus Area #1: Learning Objectives & Expectations** Instructional practices that reflected elements of effective instructional design---including clearly articulated learning targets and success criteria, activities that support and are adjusted to meet intended learning targets, checks for understanding, and opportunities to receive and give feedback, including student self-reflection---varied across grade levels.

1. The review team found sufficient and compelling evidence that teachers demonstrated knowledge of the subject matter (characteristic #1) in 85 percent of observed elementary classes, in 65 percent of middle-school classes, and in only 43 percent of observed high-school classes.
	1. In a middle-school class, knowledge of subject matter was matched to learning targets and learning sequences. Multiple hands-on activities requiring experimentation were accompanied by a balance of teacher directed instruction through lecture followed with one on one coaching supports and challenges for students.
	2. In contrast, students in a middle-school class were taking an online quiz. The teacher answered questions incorrectly and sought assistance from students on how to determine the correct responses.
2. The review team found sufficient and compelling evidence that teachers ensured that students understood what they should be learning and why (characteristic #2) in 57 percent of observed elementary classes, in 52 percent of middle-school classes, and in only 24 percent of high-school classes.
	1. In a middle-school ELA class, varying clarifying questions were asked and responded to by students during the introduction to a multi-part assignment on perspective taking to reinforce the connection between the learning experience and the learning targets.

b. In an observed high-school ELA class, students struggled to make connections to learning targets after a lecture and read aloud.

1. The review team observed sufficient and compelling evidence of appropriate learning experiences well-matched to the learning objective(s) (characteristic #3) in 86 percent of observed elementary classes, in 61 percent of observed middle-school classes, and in only 38 percent of observed high-school classes.
	1. In a pre-kindergarten class, students had a variety of structured free play choices using manipulatives and other construction toys. Students knew routines. The transition from play to work on early literacy was seamless. The lesson offered multiple opportunities to assess and develop student competencies in segmenting words and isolating letter sounds in a morning message. The pacing and content of the meeting enabled students to turn and talk, do movement, and engage in age-appropriate learning guided by the teacher’s predictable routines and plans.
	2. In contrast, in a high-school class the lesson was slow paced and most of the time was spent on logistics. Students would complete a test, wait for others to finish, and then complete another test. There was no evidence of a plan for pacing. There was evidence of lost time on learning.
2. The review team observed sufficient and compelling evidence that teachers conduct frequent checks for understanding, provide feedback, and adjust instruction (characteristic #4) in 42 percent of observed elementary classes, in 35 percent of middle-school classes, and in 48 percent of high-school classes.
	1. In a middle-school ELA class, instruction was adjusted and scaffolded using a gradual-release model as students were beginning the vocabulary section of the assignment. Students shared challenging ideas that were incorporated into the lesson indicating a deep understanding of learning outcomes.
	2. In a high-school class, students used Chromebooks to view the same video. They were giving a warning to expect questions to populate on the screen. No other interaction was observed with the teacher. All students used earbuds. The text was recorded for less proficient readers. The teacher did not adjust practice.

 **C. Focus Area #2: Student Engagement & Higher-Order Thinking** In observed classrooms*,* the use of strategies to promote engagement and higher-order thinking was least evident at the high school. These strategies provide students with the opportunity to: be active agents of learning responsible for doing the thinking in structured individual, small-group, and whole-class arrangements; write to activate thinking; engage in structured discussions; respond to and question ideas and perspectives; and participate in consistent exchanges with peers and teachers while engaging in real-world tasks.

Team members found sufficient and compelling evidence of students assuming responsibility for learning and engaging in the lesson (characteristic #5) in 79 percent of observed elementary classes, in 57 percent of middle-school classes, and in only 38 percent of high-school classes.

In an observed grade 2 science class about building a tower, students sat in small groups of 3-4. Learning targets were explicitly discussed. Planned student engagement and academic discourse routines were observed. Students discussed the construction and properties of their tower. Students worked to convert an idea into concrete multidimensional models consistent with science standards practices.

In contrast, an observed high-school ELA lesson did not encourage active student or cognitive engagement. Students followed from a text as it was read aloud. Only recall questions such “Who is X?”, “What does X mean?” were asked intermittently following the reading of a few paragraphs. Students were not given opportunities to do close reading or to deconstruct and challenge interpretations of the text. Strategies to use context clues were not employed. Questions were limited and did not extend to higher-order questioning that required depth of knowledge.

* + - 1. The review team observed sufficient and compelling evidence of students engaged in tasks requiring critical thinking (characteristic #6) in 50 percent of observed elementary classrooms, in 48 percent of middle-school classrooms, and in only 38 percent of high-school classes.
	1. In an observed high-school ELA class, the lesson involved students finishing the questions that they had developed and circulating the room to get responses from peers. There was an on-task buzz of student engagement. The routines were so embedded that the students did not need the teacher to take the lead because the students were taking the lead. Students knew what was expected, had ownership of the questions that they developed, and met the lesson targets. This was one of the few observed high-school classes with compelling evidence for this characteristic.
	2. The review team noted student passive disengagement behaviors in some classes. The absence of engagement was not disruptive to classroom learning. The teacher did not attempt to re-engage students during the observed period.

 3. Observers found sufficient and compelling evidence that students communicated their ideas and thinking with each other (characteristic #7) in 64 percent of observed elementary classrooms, in 48 percent of middle-school classrooms, and in only 24 percent of high-school classes.

 a. In an observed middle-school science class, students tested hypothesis and variables working in collaborative groups and experimenting with equipment and materials. Students kept running records of steps and data collection and did data analysis. There was evidence of academic discourse and higher-order thinking. The classroom noise levels were appropriate for active student engagement.

b. In contrast, in another observed middle-school class, teacher talk dominated during the reading of a PowerPoint slide deck. Students read sections out loud as well. Recall and literal questioning predominated the teaching routines. Responses were limited between teacher and student. There was no response when a student made a request for more relevant topics. There were limited opportunities for student engagement and communicating critical thinking with one another.

4. The review team found sufficient and compelling evidence that students had opportunities to engage with meaningful tasks connected to their lives (characteristic #8) in 64 percent of observed elementary classes, in 74 percent of middle-school classes, and in only 15 percent of high-school classes.

1. In an observed middle-school class, students were provided with a variety of social problem scenarios and were asked to determine an adaptive response to an aggressive communication received from a peer. Students worked in small groups. While not a lesson from a social-emotional curriculum, the lesson keyed on relevant, real-life situations that middle schoolers encounter.
2. In a substantially separate high-school classroom, students had multiple opportunities to engage in social exchanges with their peers. Students completed a cooking activity they would return to later. Some students engaged in an activity to sort animal habitats, sometimes with prompting. Volunteer opportunities within the community, including a local animal shelter and a tractor supply company, were listed on a board.
3. In contrast, in an example of less effective instruction, students in a grade 10 history class had limited opportunities to connect content to their everyday lives and the real world.

 **D. Focus Area #3: Inclusive Practices & Classroom Culture** The district is focused on developing a shared understanding of rigor and relevance. The use of these strategies was most evident at the elementary level, while least evident at the high school.

* + - 1. Team members found sufficient and compelling evidence of students engaged in challenging tasks regardless of learning needs (characteristic #9) in 71 percent of observed elementary classrooms, in only 35 percent of middle-school classrooms, and in only 29 percent of observed high-school classes.

a. In an elementary class, students had to construct and solve their own problem sets. The learning task accompanied by “I can statement” and a grouping assignment remained visible for the students to refer to throughout the lesson. Differentiated, flexible small groups were composed of students with varying degrees of proficiency, including a student with neuro-cognitive challenges.

* 1. In a high-school class, ineffective supports were in place as a few students struggled during the lesson. Student consultations with peers, teacher talk, and student exploration were present, but observers did not find evidence of scaffolded routines or small-group support to adjust instruction. All students could not access content when predictable, appropriate routines and strategies were not present.
		+ 1. The review team found sufficient and compelling evidence that teachers used a variety of instructional strategies (characteristic #10) in 85 percent of observed elementary classes, in 52 percent of middle-school classes, and in only 29 percent of observed high-school classes.
1. A middle-school class was well paced. At least three learning tasks were assigned. Students were given at least six options to create a game for a culminating, independent reading project. The lesson allowed students to choose a preferred style and students could offer additional styles. There were multiple points of entry for all learners. All options maintained clear expectations for the content of the product and its purpose. The interactions between teacher and students remained respectful, personal, and focused.

**Impact:** Without consistent delivery of effective, evidence-based tier 1 instructional strategies and routines that meet the diverse needs of all students, the district cannot optimize students’ learning or provide equitable opportunities for all students. All students will not be assured of access to rigorous and compelling learning opportunities. This compromises the district’s goal of preparing students for college, career, and civic participation.

**Recommendations**

**The district should take immediate steps to complete K-12 curricula in all subjects. It should ensure that curricula are high quality, comprehensive, aligned with appropriate standards and are aligned vertically and horizontally across grades and schools.**

The district should review all taught curricula to establish a baseline and assess curriculum development needs.

1. The district should use a timely, efficient, and effective process to assess the alignment between the taught curriculum and current standards and learner outcomes.
2. The district should assess the status of taught curricula for relevance and to eliminate stereotypical, reductive resources (or those that reinforce negative images).

The district should adjust its curriculum management plan to accelerate curriculum development.

 1. Roles, responsibilities, and action steps for principals, teacher leaders, teachers of English learners, special educators, and other key stakeholders should be clearly outlined and documented. The plan should include mechanisms to encourage teacher leaders to be co-developers of the district’s curriculum.

 2. The plan should include financial projections for curriculum materials, resources, and supports for educators.

 3. The plan should prioritize and delineate the professional structures to support educators.

 4. The curriculum management plan should be informed by district and MCAS performance data, district administrative walkthrough data, and input from teacher leaders.

 **C.** The district should provide teachers at all schools with high-quality and ongoing professional development to build their capacity to use the high-quality curricular materials made available by the district.

The updated literacy standards should be used to focus these early efforts. A focus on evidence-based literacy practices should provide a common entry point for the review and revision of all curriculum content.

The curriculum management plan should prioritize the adoption of an English as a Second Language curriculum.

 **D.** The district should take steps to align plans and communicate progress related to curriculum and instruction.

 1. The curriculum management plan should incorporate curriculum and instruction initiatives identified in the 2020-2023 DIP, with implementation start dates aligned to the DIP.

2. The district should ensure alignment within and between the DIP and SIPS, as well as among all other district documents and efforts that support students’ learning and development outcomes.

3. The district should initiate ongoing, focused communication about curriculum and instruction, perhaps through a digital platform, to support engagement with all educators, school department stakeholders, and the Leicester community.

4. The district should maintain a singular focus on its vision for curriculum and instruction, invite input on implementation of curriculum and instruction, report progress on outcomes, and showcase successes in teaching and learning for adults and students.

**Benefits:** Implementing this recommendation will help to accelerate the development of curriculum based on student needs and current frameworks. It will define responsibilities, promote collaboration, improve and sustain communication, and institutionalize and share ownership for a districtwide approach to curriculum design, implementation, and review.

**Recommended resources:**

**•** *DESE’s Curriculum and Instruction Quick Reference Guide: Assessing Your Curriculum Landscape* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/impd/qrg-assessing-curriculum.pdf#search=%22Curriculum Instruction Quick Reference Guide%22>) is a brief guide to decision-making about curriculum and rethinking practices for developing curriculum. Developing curricular materials from scratch should not be the burden of individual teachers. Providing every teacher with high-quality curricular materials is a system-level condition for success that depends on administrators and teachers playing their parts. School and district administrators set up the structures to make decisions about curricular materials and support teachers to evaluate and use them effectively.

**•** *Quick Reference Guide:* [*Aligning Curriculum to Massachusetts Standards*](http://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/impd/qrg-aligning-curriculum.pdf) ([www.doe.mass.edu/turnaround/level4/align-curriculum-mass-standards.pdf#search=%22Aligning Curriculum to Massachusetts standards%22](http://www.doe.mass.edu/turnaround/level4/align-curriculum-mass-standards.pdf#search=%22Aligning Curriculum to Massachusetts standards%22)) is designed to support teachers, coaches, administrators, and curriculum developers in aligning curriculum products with Massachusetts standards.

* *Standards Navigator* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/search/>): The learning standards in the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks set expectations for what all students should know and be able to do by the end of each school year. Educators, students, families, and others can use the Standards Navigator to explore the Massachusetts learning standards and find related resources such as student work exemplars, quick reference guides, and definitions of terms. It is a quick easy approach to support curriculum development and alignment.

**•** DESE’s Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks web page (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html>) provides information about the 2019 Arts Framework, the 2018 History and Social Science Framework, and the 2017 ELA/Literacy and Mathematics Frameworks.

# **•** *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. The handbook includes: customizable survey asking teachers about the texts they assign in their classes; instructions for adapting the survey to align with local goals, priorities, and initiatives; guidance for communicating about the survey and acting effectively on data collected; and resources for identifying texts diverse in representation and rich in content knowledge. The goal is to examine how teachers' choices fit together, identifying connections to emphasize, gaps, and redundancies to address, and other opportunities for increasing the coherence and variety of students' experiences with text.

• EdReports.org (<http://www.edreports.org/>) provides reviews of K-12 instructional materials.

# **•** 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.

**2. The district should ensure that all teachers provide evidence-based instruction that challenges and supports all students and that provides all students with access to district curriculum, advanced coursework, and rigorous learning opportunities.**

1. The district should identify and provide support to educators to ensure they can provide student-centered instructional practices that are responsive to a range of needs and that challenge and support all students.

1. The district is encouraged to provide opportunities for educators to learn about instructional expectations. These opportunities might include common planning time, professional learning communities, faculty meetings, and professional development days.

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

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

 **B.** Teachers should receive appropriate guidance, embedded support, and structured feedback as they implement the district’s instructional expectations.

 1. The district should provide teachers with specific, timely, and actionable feedback that helps them to improve instruction.

 **C.** The district should provide supports to teachers to help strengthen sheltered English immersion (SEI) practices in all classrooms.

 **D.** The district should intensify its focus on implicit bias and provide continuous, ongoing educator support at the district and school level using no-cost/low cost options available to them.

1. The district should use its educator evaluation system to support the growth of cultural proficiency in all educators.
2. The district should ensure that culturally and linguistically responsive practices are identified and incorporated into a suite of universal accommodations for all learners.
3. The district should convene a representative group of students, teachers, administrators, and community members to support the district’s work to promote cultural proficiency and understand implicit bias.

**E.** District leadersshould consider the proposal to implement the Concept course carefully. Because of their placement at the high school in courses below the college-prep level, students may not be given access to the same content and held to the same expectations in preparation for college, careers, and civic involvement as their peers.

**Benefits:** Implementing this recommendation will mean attention to developing teachers’ instructional practices. Teachers will be better prepared to meet the district’s expectations for instruction. Students will have access to rigorous coursework, and experience equity as they explore interests along college and career pathways.

**Recommended resources:**

# *Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Schools and Classrooms* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/odl/e-learning/culturally-resp-sust/content/index.html#/>) Across Massachusetts, our students are becoming increasingly diverse. Our education system is steeped in norms, traditions, and a lens that too often does not reflect and may not support this diversity. All students, families, and communities should have access to schools that are inclusive of, responsive to, and reflective of their cultural backgrounds. The guidance in this document from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) is intended to define cultural responsiveness, address its importance in our schools and classrooms, and provide examples of resources to support this work.

# *Social and Emotional Learning for All:**Access, Cultural Proficiency, and Cultural Responsiveness* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/sel/sel-all.docx>) is a guidance document that addresses the critical intersection of social emotional learning (SEL) and culturally responsive teaching (CRT). It includes tools, resources, and information for district leaders and teachers.

# *Transforming Education’s SEL Integration Approach for Classroom Educators Quick Reference Guide* (<https://www.transformingeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/SEL-Integration-Approach-Quick-Reference-Guide.pdf>) provides guidance around six key components that are critical to supporting the whole learner: conducive environments, strong relationships, explicit instruction, thoughtful modeling, practice opportunities, and teachable moments. Using the SEL Integration Approach, educators can integrate SEL in a way that is flexible, equitable, responsive to their students’ needs, and can be easily aligned with ongoing academic instruction in the classroom.

# **•** *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. The handbook includes: customizable survey asking teachers about the texts they assign in their classes; instructions for adapting the survey to align with local goals, priorities, and initiatives; guidance for communicating about the survey and acting effectively on data collected; and resources for identifying texts diverse in representation and rich in content knowledge. The goal is to examine how teachers' choices fit together, identifying connections to emphasize, gaps and redundancies to address, and other opportunities for increasing the coherence and variety of students' experiences with text.

## **•** *Curriculum Heat Maps* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/impd/>) are meant to support cross-district collaboration on curriculum and related professional learning in Massachusetts. They show which curricular materials district leaders tell us are most widely used to support instruction in their schools.

**•** *What Does Equitable Access in Math and Science Classrooms Look Like?* (<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/127UL8WWXgKHGR0g0il6KemEzPpdlRdqr>): This Google folder includes resources and tools from a session titled “What Does Equitable Access in Math and Science Classrooms Look Like?” at DESE’s 2019 Leading with Access & Equity conference.

Assessment

***Contextual Background***

*Data Collection*

The district collects results from commonly used English language arts (ELA) and mathematics assessments in kindergarten through grade 9; ELA, mathematics, history, and science common assessments in grades 9-12; universal mental health screeners in kindergarten through grade 8; and information from student support teams at each level in kindergarten through grade 12. Assessments administered in the three schools include Renaissance STAR reading and math in kindergarten through grade 9 (with a plan to extend it to grade 10 in 2020-2021). In addition, the Behavior Intervention Monitoring Assessment (BIMASS), which is given in kindergarten through grade 8, helps identify students presenting with social-emotional concerns. This range of data helps guide educators in the development and assignment of interventions.

*Data Use*

While the review team found that the district was collecting data from a variety of sources, data was not regularly shared among schools or with the school committee. There was an absence of data analysis or aspirational performance goals as measured by Renaissance STAR or MCAS assessments in district and school improvement plans. In addition, the team found limited evidence of educators’ use of student performance data to drive continuous improvement. There was little evidence or acknowledgment of student group test results or efforts to target professional development to improve the achievement results of specific student groups, especially the small but growing English learner population.

*Sharing Results*

Student data, including grades, assessment results, and attendance, is stored and communicated digitally on the PowerSchool portal and Google Classroom. The review team was told that some parents were not regularly using the portals and if parents needed translations, they were directed to another link.

The review team believes that with the addition of the newly appointed director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment (a position that has been vacant for two years) and the range of regularly administered assessments, the district is positioned to become more data driven.

***Strength Finding***

1. **District educators collect data from a variety of sources to get a picture of students’ academic and non-academic growth and development.**
2. Educators use common assessments in reading and math to measure students’ academic progress and needs and other measures and practices to monitor social-emotional and behavioral progress and needs.
3. Interviews and a document review indicated consistently administered assessments in reading and math at the elementary, middle, and high schools.
4. The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Literacy Skills (DIBLES) and EnVision math assessments are administered three time a year in kindergarten through grade 1. Results are kept on a shared Google drive overseen by the principal and accessible to teachers. Excel files provided to the review team by the district included charts with color-coded data indicating student’s performance above, at, and below benchmark. Students identified for push-in or pull-out support are indicated directly on the charts.
5. Renaissance STAR Reading and Math assessments are administered three times a year in grades 2 through 9 (with a plan to expand to grade 10 next year). STAR results are generated by the Renaissance assessment platform and housed in the district’s PowerSchool portal.

 i. Renaissance STAR data is used to create small groups for in-class and pull-out instruction at the elementary school and for scheduling intervention blocks at the middle school.

1. The district provided the review team with data files that showed that teachers in some grades documented cohort performance from one year to another.
2. MCAS ELA and math assessment data is collected for students in grades 3 through 10 and science in grades 5, 8, and 10. Results are available in Edwin Analytics (DESE’s data warehouse) and the district’s PowerSchool portal.
3. One way in which the high school uses Renaissance STAR and MCAS assessment results is to identify students who would benefit from Freshman Seminar. Students placed in the seminar receive additional instruction in ELA, mathematics, science, research, and study skills.
4. In addition to the MCAS assessments in grade 10, the high school administers a range of other assessments, including AP, PSAT, and SAT exams, and common assessments in ELA, mathematics, history, and biology.
5. The elementary, middle, and high schools collect data that provides information about students’ social-emotional and behavioral progress and needs.
	1. Interviewees reported that the district had a K-8 universal mental health screener in place. The Behavioral Intervention Monitoring Assessment (BIMASS) identifies students who may be presenting with social-emotional issues. School psychologists oversee this data and use it to identify interventions and progress monitor.
	2. School-based teams, referred to as the Child Study Team at the elementary school, Student Support Team (SSTs) at the middle school, and Students in Need (SIN) at the high school, meet weekly to discuss, plan, support students who are referred for academic and non-academic concerns. Information about students who are discussed and actions that have been taken are recorded in a log and monitored by teams.
	3. The high school’s truancy team proactively collects and acts on attendance data. Students are identified from 5- and 10-day unexcused absence reports. The truancy team discusses and plans interventions for those students.

Impact: Having commonly used ELA and mathematics assessments in all three schools provides the district with a way to look at longitudinal student achievement and monitor students’ growth and improvement over time. Theses assessments also help educators make decisions about appropriate interventions and support. Measuring students’ social-emotional needs and monitoring student behavior likely provides students with needed support and better preparedness to learn.

***Challenges and Areas for Growth***

1. **The use of data to drive continuous improvement in students’ academic achievement is limited at the district, school, and classroom level.**
2. Interviews and a document review indicated that analyzing students’ academic performance data and using it to set district and school goals was limited districtwide.
3. While the District Improvement Plan (DIP) states a commitment to improving achievement, it does not include past, present, or aspirational achievement goals as measured by state and district assessments administered in the district.
	1. For example, strategic objective #1 in the DIP is: “Design engaging instruction grounded in rigorous and relevant curricula in order to improve overall achievement.” This objective does not include measurable achievement goals to indicate where student performance is and where the district wants it to be.
	2. Principals told the review team that the DIP had not been mentioned at leadership team meetings since August 2019.
4. Principals reported that the leadership team needed to improve the use of data. Data discussions take place in “silos,” not collectively. Principals also said that they spent a lot of time looking at data and less time using it to improve instruction.

 a. There was little mention of data or evidence of discussion of student achievement tests results in the leadership team agendas provided to the review team.

 b. Included on the July 2019 leadership team agenda was discussion to reset the Renaissance STAR benchmark to align it better with the MCAS assessment. The agenda did not include evidence of discussion of how students performed on the MCAS or Renaissance STAR assessments across the district.

1. School Improvement Plans (SIPs) provided to the review team were similar to the DIP in that they did not include past, present, or aspirational achievement goals as measured by MCAS or Renaissance STAR. These two assessments are given regularly and can provide valuable information about students’ academic progress.
	1. Although the middle-school SIP does not contain data, it states that writing is insufficiently strong in the 2019 MCAS assessment results even though it has improved from 2018. In addition, the middle school SIP notes a decline in the number of students scoring in the Exceeding Expectations Category in the Next-Generation MCAS assessment.
	2. In the district’s self-assessment submitted in advance of the onsite, district leaders stated that although improvement plans had ambitious strategies for improving performance, they were not driven and informed by data.
2. Interviews and a document review indicated that teachers’ use of data to inform and drive instructional change was limited.
3. When teachers were asked whether they were sufficiently trained and had the resources of time and guidance in effective use of data to drive instructional change in the classroom, their responses were mixed.
4. Elementary teachers reported that they analyzed data at grade-level meetings after each assessment. In addition to helping to create groupings within the class the analysis also identifies what areas need more attention. Elementary teams use a data protocol as they discuss data.

 i. Boldface headings on the data protocol include: “What do you see (5 minutes),” “What does the data suggest (5 minutes),” “What does this mean for our work (5 minutes), and “Next Steps/What are we going to do (5 minutes).”

1. Middle-school teachers reported that although efforts were in place in 2019-2020 to use data to drive instructional change and they had more data than they have had in the past, they still did not believe that their work was data driven. They told the review team that the use of data was not consistent across the school.
2. High-school teachers reported that although they started talking about data, there was no directive to look data and teachers were left to their own devices. They said that they have only made “baby steps.”
3. The superintendent reported that going forward, teachers needed to increase their use of data rather than having this responsibility rest on principals.
4. In the district’s self-assessment submitted in advance of the onsite, district leaders stated that it was unclear whether the data collected informed instruction “in the way we want it to.”
5. The review team found little evidence of disaggregation of data.
	1. Documents and data shared with the review team showed limited evidence of disaggregation of assessment data.
		1. PowerPoint presentations of elementary and high-school MCAS tests results included student performance in comparison with state results. The PowerPoints did not include disaggregation of data within the schools, or any summary that suggested an awareness of the performance of various student groups, especially the growing English learner population.
		2. In contrast, kindergarten screening files had a column that identified English learners and students with disabilities.

**Impact**: Without disaggregated data analysis and a comprehensive documentation of how students are performing now, the district does not know how students are progressing. The district may miss opportunities to target interventions for specific student groups and to identify the specific professional development needed by educators. Without intentional and proactive use of data to drive continuous improvement, achievement results are likely to stay flat.

1. **The district does not ensure that all stakeholders have clear and timely information about district, school, and student performance**.
	* + - 1. District performance data is not regularly shared with the school committee.
2. Interviews and a document review indicated that over the year before the onsite visit, student achievement data was not shared at school committee meetings. School committee members reported that the last presentation about MCAS assessment results was in 2018, noting that there was a need for more data in relation to student achievement.
3. When asked about the role of the school committee in monitoring achievement, interviewees reported that while a lot of information was given to the school committee it did not include specific and regular data.
4. The district’s self-assessment (which included input from individual school committee members) stated that the district could improve its data sharing with the school committee.
	* + - 1. Data sharing in and among schools is limited.
5. Administrators reported that data use was “siloed,” noting that each school was doing an effective job of collecting its own data but not much data was shared across schools.
6. The superintendent reported that there was resistance from some teachers to sharing their data with other teachers.
	* + - 1. The current process for communicating student performance data with parents does not ensure that all families, especially the increasing number of families whose first language is not English, have understandable and timely information about their children’s academic performance.
7. While the district sends letters home after the administration of schoolwide assessments such as Renaissance STAR, administrators reported that communicating with parents was digital. The district uses the PowerSchool portal and Google Classroom to post daily attendance, grades, and report cards.
	1. Information shared with families is primarily written in English; parents/guardians are given a link to tools for translations.
	2. When the review team asked students whether their parents accessed PowerSchool, only one of the seven students answered “Yes.” Only two students thought that their parents knew how to use PowerSchool.
	3. High-school students expressed the view that technology such as PowerSchool and Google Classroom was one of the barriers causing parents to not be as engaged as they could be with the high school.
	4. Parents reported that timeliness of grades was sometimes an issue with PowerSchool.
	5. Parents also reported that face-to-face parent teacher conferences were getting shorter, noting that they happened only once a year and each conference ranged from 5 to 10 minutes.

**Impact**: Without clear and regular communication about academic performance from the district to stakeholders, the school committee and the greater Leicester community do not have a complete understanding of students’ academic strengths and challenges. Parents and families who cannot or who do not access digital portals, or who prefer face-to-face meetings, or those whose first language is not English, may miss valuable opportunities to support their children. This may lead to the most at-risk students not improving.

***Recommendation***

**The district should increase educators’ capacity to analyze and use data to improve teaching and learning by increasing sharing of data, training staff in data analysis, and increasing opportunities for administrators and teachers at all levels to review and interpret data. The district should ensure that all stakeholders have clear and timely information about district, school, and student academic achievement.**

**A.** The districtshould strengthen leaders’ and teachers' data analysis skills.

 1. The superintendent and the leadership team should develop and communicate expectations for data discussions districtwide and for the use of the district’s data analysis protocol.

 **B.** The district should provide professional development for all educators in data analysis, including the analysis of disaggregated student data to identify student groups that would benefit from targeted support and to inform targeted professional development for educators to better meet the needs of different groups of students in the classroom.

 **C.** District leaders should regularly provide relevant and complete student performance data to the school committee to guide and support its decision-making.

1.School committee meetings should have a standing agenda item that includes regular reports on district and school achievement results.

**D.** Leadership team meetings should provide opportunities for each school to present and share data including student performance improvements and challenges.

 1. The superintendent and the leadership team should model for its educators regular discussions about student performance during leadership team meetings and meetings with the school committee.

**E.** The district should take immediate steps to ensure that all families have clear and timely information about their children’s academic progress, including guidance on the use of parent portals.

**Benefits:** Implementing this recommendation will help district administrators, school leaders, and educators to use data to inform instruction, create effective interventions, and identify necessary professional development focused on cultural proficiency and culturally responsive teaching in order to improve student achievement. In addition, it will likely ensure that parents understand students’ individual progress and know how to better support their children to achieve at higher levels.

**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 *RETELL: Extending the Learning* web page (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/retell/courses.html>) provides a registry of SEI-related courses which have been reviewed and approved by the Department's Office of English Language Acquisition and Academic Achievement. These courses provide opportunities for educators to extend their learning and practice beyond the Sheltered English Instruction (SEI) Endorsement course.
		- In particular, Course EEC104: Data-Driven Instruction for English Language Learners is a course designed to help participants to apply a structured process of data inquiry to appropriately target instruction, analyze multiple sources of data of academic proficiency and language proficiency, including formative and summative assessments.

* The Massachusetts Tools for Schools webpage (<https://matoolsforschools.com/resources/2019-access-equity>) includes the resources and tools from a session titled “Promoting Culturally Responsive Education” at DESE’s 2019 Leading with Access & Equity conference.

Human Resources and Professional Development

***Contextual Background***

*Recruitment, Hiring, and Assignment*

Human resource responsibilities in the district are dispersed among central office staff. The district has a comprehensive hiring guide which outlines procedures for hiring, including timelines and the composition of hiring committees. Central office staff have protocols for enrolling new staff in health insurance and the Massachusetts Teachers’ Retirement System. The district does not have a strategy to recruit new teachers and despite increased student diversity in recent years,[[4]](#footnote-4) the district does not have a documented strategy to attract a diverse workforce.

There is little teacher turnover in the district; in 2019 the teacher retention rate was 95.7 percent. In contrast, there has been high administrator turnover at both the schools and the central office. In 2019-2020, the district has a new director of student services and a new director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. There is one new principal in the district and all three assistant principals are new to their positions. The superintendent has been in place for two years as has the director of finance.

*Supervision, Evaluation, and Educator Development*

Evaluation and supervision of teachers is in a state of flux, with the recent closing of a school and the reconfiguration of grades resulting in many teachers having new evaluators in 2019-2020. Interviewees told the team that the district used to have an evaluation committee. Administrators are participating in professional development (PD) which is intended to change the ways in which they perform classroom observations and evaluate teachers. The district is in the process of implementing these changes.

The delivery of PD is also changing. In 2019-2020 the district moved to full-day districtwide PD after previously having half days at the school level. There was some difference of opinion among school leaders as to the impact of losing the half days of PD. Administrators and teachers told the team that with the closing of a school and the reconfiguration of the grades, school-based half days would be useful. The district has forwarded a plan to the school committee that would amend this calendar. Beginning in 2020-2021, the district plans to provide three districtwide full days of PD and two half days of PD at the school level.

The district’s PD plan is, generally speaking, a statement of beliefs that does not lay out timelines or outcomes for PD in the district. A PD committee advises the director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment on districtwide PD offerings, which are linked to goals in district and school improvement plans. Principals plan school-based PD, which is not linked to goals in school improvement plans. The review team did not find evidence of PD in the district about cultural competence or implicit bias.

The district has contracted for training that included a focus on understanding the rigor/relevance framework as well as conducting calibration visits to classrooms in the district. The superintendent stated that one of the goals of this training was to improve each administrator’s capacity to observe lessons and give constructive feedback. District leaders stated that through the training the leadership team was trying to develop a common lens that all six leaders would use to provide consistent and clear feedback to educators. As part of the district’s Leadership and Instructional Growth plan, the district has built a relationship with a national organization that provides “targeted professional learning and support for multiple roles across a school or district,” and with its local affiliate.

The district has a mentoring program. In year 1 of the mentoring program, mentors are trained and meet with new teachers monthly. In the second year, the mentors maintain their relationship with their mentees, but with an informal meeting schedule.

**Challenges and Areas for Growth**

**1. The district’s educator evaluation system does not prioritize opportunities for educators to receive high-quality feedback**[[5]](#footnote-5)**that helps them improve their practice.**

* 1. The team reviewed the evaluative documents of 34 randomly chosen teachers in TeachPoint, the district’s educator evaluation management system, and found that they were not being used effectively to improve teacher performance and professional growth.
1. In 26 of the 34 evaluations, teachers had written professional practice goals as well as student learning goals that met SMART goal[[6]](#footnote-6) criteria.
2. While 23 of the 34 summative evaluations were informative (e.g., they provided details of the teacher’s practice and supporting evidence), only 3 contained specific and actionable recommendations for professional growth and improvement.
3. In general, evaluations included comments that detailed what teachers had said or done during observations but did not include substantive recommendations to promote teacher’s professional growth or to improve instruction.
4. Formative evaluations conducted every other year for teachers on a two-year self-directed plan were limited to short comments related to the teachers’ progress toward achieving their student learning and professional practice goals. As currently practiced, formative evaluation gives teachers limited feedback that might contribute to professional growth.

 **B.** The team also reviewed the evaluative documentation for all administrators in 2018-2019 and for the two administrators who were evaluated in 2019-2020. These evaluations did not contain high-quality feedback.

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

1. The team did not find evidence that student and staff feedback was used in the district’s education evaluation process.

 **D.** The review team did not find evidence that the district used evidence of an educator’s impact on student learning in the education evaluation process.[[7]](#footnote-7)

 **E.** While the 2017-2020 collective bargaining agreement with the teachers’ association stipulates that the district use the evaluation forms designed as part of the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Framework, the district’s observation form does not comply with this stipulation.

The district’s observation form, which was revised in 2017, includes the following rating scale: “not observed, unsatisfactory, basic, proficient and distinguished.” There is no rubric attached to this form. The DESE observation form prompts the observer to identify a focus for the observation, record evidence, and write a feedback comment. The DESE observation form does not prompt evaluators to rate individual observations.

In addition to rating each observation (using a scale that is also different from the four-point performance rating scale used for final evaluation ratings), the evaluator must determine a rating for 14 different indicators of knowledge, skills, and performance and produce comments after being in the classroom for only a short time. This process is often characterized informally in the district as a “walkthrough.”

The majority of the two-page form is taken up with ratings of indicators. The review team noted that comments on the observation form were cursory, were missing evidence, and did not have the potential to contribute to improvement in teacher practice or professional growth.

**F.** When the district closed the primary school and merged the staff and students with the elementary school, and then moved grade 5 students to the middle school, many teachers experienced a change in the administrators serving as their evaluators. This has resulted in some teachers’ discomfort with the evaluation process, as many teachers had new evaluators in 2019-2020 who followed different processes and emphasized different aspects of the evaluation process.

1. Some teachers said that many teachers at the elementary school were not receiving the “glowing reviews” that they used to, and that the observation form was seen as a checklist, rather than as authentic feedback. At the same time, some teachers at the elementary school told the team that some of the evaluative comments in 2019-2020 have been tough.

2. Other teachers stated that there had been “evaluation inflation,” made to make teachers “feel good.”

3. In contrast, some teachers from another school stated that they had received constructive criticism and that in fact evaluators “could be too nice.” Other teachers said that they felt respected by administrators when they were evaluated.

**Impact**: When high-quality feedback to improve instructional practices and student performance is not an essential component of an educator’s performance evaluation, the district has limited opportunities to cultivate a culture of continuous learning and student achievement.

**Recommendation**

1. **The district should promote educators’ growth by fully implementing all components of the educator evaluation system, with a particular emphasis on ensuring that all educators receive high-quality feedback.**
2. The district should re-activate its evaluation committee to provide an ongoing platform for communication between teachers and administrators.

1. The district should consider continuing the professional development (PD) for administrators focused on the educator evaluation processes, and should consider how the committee might leverage and communicate key ideas from the PD to the entire district staff so that everyone is operating under a common framework and set of expectations.

1. The district should support and monitor the skills and practices of evaluators to ensure that the feedback they provide is specific, actionable, and relevant to professional growth and student outcomes.
2. The district should adopt DESE’s observation evidence collection tool. This would ensure compliance with the teachers’ association’s collective bargaining agreement, eliminate the need for observation ratings, and promote more focused observations that yield evidence-based, actionable feedback.
3. The district should adopt a growth model for evaluation where all educators understand that they can grow, including those who are judged to be proficient or exemplary.

1. The district should clearly articulate this model districtwide.

 **E.** Evaluators should continue to participate in calibration training and activities to ensure consistency, quality, and accuracy in the evaluation process and documentation.

**Benefits:** A fully implemented educator evaluation system that prioritizes high-quality feedback will likely promote professional growth, improve skills and knowledge, and lead to improved student performance and outcomes. Providing professional development for evaluators likely improves the quality and consistency of feedback and judgments, both within and across schools.

**Recommended resources:**

* *Calibration Training for Evaluators* *and Teachers*: [OPTIC](http://www.ma-optic.com/), the Online Platform for Informed Teaching and Calibration, ([www.ma-optic.com](http://www.ma-optic.com)) is a professional development tool that allows groups of educators to develop a shared understanding of effective, standards-aligned instructional practice and high-quality feedback. Districts can use this platform in a variety of ways – with groups of teachers, evaluators, coaches, and mentors – to establish a collective understanding of effective practice. Additional calibration training resources are available at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/calibration/>.
* *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.
* The Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Framework web page (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/>) includes descriptions of the components of the Framework, implementation resources, and frequently asked questions. The site includes links to instructive videos and forms on most components of the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Framework.

Student Support

***Contextual Background***

Many Leicester students come to school each day with unique programmatic and support needs. In 2019, 38.8 percent of the district’s students were part of the high needs student group because they were in one or more of the following groups: economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and English learners (ELs) or former ELs, compared with 46.6 percent of statewide enrollment. In 2019, ELs made up 2.7 percent of the total student population, compared with the state average of 10.5 percent. Since 2015, the proportion of ELs has steadily grown in the district, from 1.2 percent in 2015 to 3.5 percent in 2020. Economically disadvantaged students represented 25.7 percent of the district population in 2019, compared with 31.2 percent statewide. In addition, students with disabilities made up 17.4 percent of enrollment, compared with 18.1 percent across the state. In each year since 2015, the district’s in-school suspension rates, out-of- school suspension rates, and annual dropout rates have been lower than the state averages. In 2019, the district’s four-year cohort graduation rate was 96.4 percent, compared with the state average of 87.9 percent. In 2019, the district’s rate of chronic absence[[8]](#footnote-8) was 10 percent, compared with the state rate of 12.9 percent. In 2018-2019, the rates of chronic absence for grades 9-12 were 13.2 percent, 18.8 percent, 15.7 percent, and 25.7 percent, respectively. In addition, in 2018-2019, the rates of chronic absence were 16.2 percent for economically disadvantaged students and 17.5 percent for ELs.

*Safe and Supportive School Climate and Culture*

Many stakeholders, including teachers, administrators, and students, noted the safe and welcoming cultures within each of the three district schools. The elementary school has recently started using the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) framework to build a positive school culture and to support students in demonstrating positive behavioral outcomes. The middle and high school have each used school core values to represent and uphold some of the key elements of a safe and welcoming school community. While this work has helped to build safe and welcoming cultures within each of the schools, the district still has much more work to do to become culturally responsive and reflective of the cultures and identities of all students in the district. This work includes developing a plan to address implicit bias, creating a system to analyze the performance of groups of students, and ensuring a curriculum that reflects the various identities of students across the district.

The district recently adopted a co-teaching model at the high school and the review team observed a few classrooms where special education and general education teachers were working side by side in classrooms to support students with disabilities. In addition, Title I paraprofessionals and interventionists lead small-group instruction and support Tier 1 classroom instruction. While pull-out services are provided, English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers also work with ELs within the general education setting. In order to support ELs, all teachers across the district have received Sheltered English Instruction (SEI) endorsements. However, despite this certification, there has been inconsistent implementation of SEI strategies to support ELs within the classroom. This inconsistency at the Tier 1 level, paired with several other barriers and limitations (see finding 2 below), has limited the potential academic progress of ELs within the district.

The district’s approach to student support is marked by common practices across the three schools to identify students who need additional support. In each of the three district schools a student support team--composed of multiple stakeholders, including teachers, administrators, and counselors--reviews referrals from teachers about students who need additional academic, behavior, or social-emotional support. This team is called the Child Study Team at the elementary school, the Student Support Team at the middle school, and the Student in Need Team at the high school. These teams each meet weekly and use several different data points, including data from a universal mental health screener for kindergarten through grade 8 and academic formative assessment data (Renaissance STAR) for grades 2 through 9, to identify students for additional interventions. While these teams have been effective in identifying students who need additional supports, in some cases, these interventions prevent students from taking an art, music, or foreign language class with their peers. More work needs to be done to provide these interventions equitably for students.

*Family and Community Engagement and Partnerships*

The review team noted several of the community partnerships that have been designed to expand learning opportunities for students. For example, the district has partnerships with several local colleges and businesses that are helping students to achieve their college and career goals. Access to dual-enrollment course work at Becker College, Holy Cross, virtual high school (VHS), internships, and externships and volunteer opportunities are available to some high-school students. In addition, the district has a variety of ways for families to become involved in the life of the school community, including through PTOs, school councils, athletics, concerts, and curriculum nights. The district has not developed a plan to ensure that all families, especially the increasing number of families whose first language is not English, have clear and timely information about their children’s academic progress.

***Strength Findings***

**1. The district has systems and practices in place to ensure safe and supportive schools.**

* 1. The district and the town maintain physically safe schools.
1. The district possesses a comprehensive crisis handbook and meets regularly to review and update the plan. The handbook reflects a collaborative effort between the district, the town, the fire department, and the police department.
2. Administrators, teachers, and parents noted the regular use of protocols to effectively prepare schools in the event of an active shooter.
3. All seven high-school students in a focus group stated that they felt physically safe at school, with one student providing a specific recent example of the support and presence of the police department when a student made a threat on social media.

 a. When asked how the school makes sure students feel safe, one high-school student said, “We have…trainings” and another student confirmed “We have two trainings a year. . . and conduct the training with an administrator.”

1. The schools generally implement practices that lead to supportive and welcoming classroom communities.
	* 1. In 84 percent of the 58 observed classrooms, the review team noted sufficient and compelling evidence that the classrooms were conducive to teaching and learning.
		2. Many parents and staff reported examples of the supportive school communities. For example, one parent noted how his children with disabilities thrived in the theater program, and one administrator noted that the district was a member of Best Buddies and had just started unified sports programs.[[9]](#footnote-9)
		3. Several stakeholders, including students, teachers, and administrators emphasized that one of the district’s greatest strengths was its sense of community. For example, several parents and staff noted the sense of community at the middle school, including a mentoring program to help welcome and transition the 5th grade students into the school community.
		4. Teachers, administrators, and students stated that students generally knew that there was someone in the schools who cared about them. For example, a student said, “I feel that almost everyone has at least one teacher they can talk to.” A teacher stated “I think our kids get a lot of individual attention. We know them all personally and what they like to do after school.”
2. Each of the three schools has built systems designed to promote positive behavioral outcomes.

In 84 percent of the 58 observed classrooms, the review team noted sufficient and compelling evidence that classroom routines and positive supports were in place to ensure that students behaved appropriately.

 2. Leicester Elementary School uses the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) framework to support schoolwide positive behavioral outcomes. The PBIS Leadership Team, which includes school administrators, teachers, and paraprofessionals from various disciplines, continually monitors this work*.*

3. Leicester Middle School holds the core values of Kindness, Achievement, Respect, Responsibility, and Service (KARRS) and reinforces these through a variety of methods. For example, the school has a Student of the Month program, and the selection of students is aligned with the school’s core values. The students who are recognized are invited to a breakfast with their families and school staff.

4. Leicester High School uses the core values of Respect, Excellence, Academics, Commitment, and Honesty (REACH). Students said that students knew these core values, which were posted throughout the school.

**Impact**: Districts that take a proactive approach to creating safe and supportive school climates have students who generally feel safe, welcomed, and included.

**Challenges and Areas for Growth**

**The district does not have a proactive approach to meet the needs of its English learners.**

1. The district is not effectively meeting the needs of its growing English learner population.
2. The district does not possess a clear strategy or plan for meeting the needs of English learners (ELs).
3. The District Improvement Plan does not mention or focus on ELs.In addition, the School Improvement Plans at the elementary, middle, and high schools do not mention or focus on ELs.
4. The district’s professional development (PD) documents do not focus on meeting the needs of ELs. The district’s PD plan lists some of the goals of PD as well as some of the ongoing PD initiatives, with none connected to ELs.

 2. Many district staff do not feel prepared to meet the needs of ELs.

* + - 1. Some administrators said that in terms of schoolwide systems of supports for ELs they were “building the plane as they are flying it,” noting that they needed help in this area. For example, several district and school administrators stated that if a Level 1 EL arrived at their school, the school did not have systems, protocols, or expectations for how to support the student.
			2. Some administrators said that some teachers did not understand how to meet the needs of ELs in their classrooms. Many teachers told the team about their challenges of meeting the needs of ELs within current structures.
				1. For example, several district leaders noted the difficulty for staff in determining whether challenges in student learning related to a disability or language proficiency. This sometimes led to unnecessary special education referrals or ELs not being referred to special education services when appropriate.
				2. Some teachers said that despite possessing SEI endorsements, they did not think that they were trained to meet ELs’ needs within the classroom.

 3. The district does not ensure that schools support two-way communication with ELs’ families.

1. The district does not have a comprehensive strategy to translate information for ELs’ families in their primary language. Some district leaders and teachers reported relying on software on an iPad or a teacher to translate documents.
2. One district administrator noted that the district did not have an approach to communicating with non-English speaking families, and several teachers stated that they are not aware of any district/school strategies to build relationships with the families of ELs.

 4. The limited staffing of ESL teachers (1.8 FTE in the district) significantly affects the day-to-day experience for ELs.

 a. School leaders reported that supporting ELs was challenging because each ESL teacher had to support students in two schools.

 b. District leaders and teachers told the team that ELs did not consistently receive the direct ESL instruction that is required for their respective English proficiency levels. State regulations outline how much direct ESL instruction time is required for students depending on their English proficiency levels. One teacher said that given the limitations with staffing, “the required number of minutes [was] not possible” and was a “state issue.”

1. One member of the school committee noted the need for hiring more ESL teachers.
	* 1. The district does not have an ESL curriculum.

 a. DESE’S Tiered Focused Monitoring Review Report[[10]](#footnote-10) issued to the district on February 29th, 2019, states “*Interviews and a review of documentation indicate that the district does not have an ESL curriculum. ESL teachers use reading and literacy programs to provide ESL instruction to ELs. Reading and literacy programs and materials help students improve their reading skills and can be used as resources; however, they cannot replace an ESL curriculum that is integral to an effective ELE program in which ELs of all grades and proficiency levels become English proficient at a rapid pace.*”

6. Tier 1 instruction is not consistently designed and implemented to meet the needs of ELs.

 a. Several district leaders stated that teachers did not possess all of the skills and strategies that they needed to meet the needs of all students. More specifically, several district leaders noted that teachers did not consistently use SEI practices within the classroom. For example, one administrator said, “Every teacher has been SEI endorsed, but am I seeing those practices lived out, absolutely not.”

1. District and school administrators noted that although teachers had SEI endorsements, they needed additional PD and training to effectively implement SEI strategies in their classrooms. One district leader stated, “Teachers have a hard time supporting the needs at the classroom level, Tier 1.” A second district leader confirmed this view.
2. In only 24 out of the 58 observed classrooms did the review team note sufficient and compelling evidence that the teacher ensured that students were engaging in challenging tasks regardless of learning need (characteristic #9).

 **E.** In only 30 out of the 58 observed classrooms did the review team note sufficient and compelling evidence that the teacher used a variety of instructional strategies (characteristic #10).

**3. Some district practices do not reflect a culturally responsive district that prioritizes equity.**

 **A.** A review of the district’s professional development plan indicated that it did not demonstrate any attention to building cultural competence or addressing implicit bias.

 **B.** In the district’s self-assessment submitted in advance of the onsite, district leaders stated “LPS [Leicester Public Schools] exhibits a commitment to access and equity for all students to varying degrees…I think we are as a district a ‘work in progress’ for developing staff capacity to examine and dismantle implicit biases and systemic inequalities.

 1. District leaders also noted that the administrative team participated in a training in these areas a few years ago, and that they envisioned doing some training for the entire staff across the district sometime in the future.

**C.** Various staff comments underscored the need to address cultural competence and implicit bias within the district.

1. One district leader stated, “Our teachers understand disability when it’s visible, but the things they don’t see, such as trauma and emotional disability, are harder for them to understand.”

2. Another district leader told the team “I still have many teachers saying things like ‘Why are these kids still in the school? Shouldn’t they be in a different placement?”

3. School administrators said, “We do hear from students that teachers don’t understand, there are microaggressions,” noting “With racial identity we can do better.”

**D.** The district does not have systems in place to support students’ sense of belonging and to ensure that the identities of all students are reflected in the school experience.

 1. In the high-school focus group, when asked to provide a thumbs up if there was someone in the district they could go to when they needed support, all but two students put their thumbs up, and the two who did not were students of color.

 2. In the same focus group, one student of color noted that the biggest challenge in the school community was “diversity and inclusion.” This student said that the curriculum focused more on white culture, and less on cultures of Native Americans or people of color.

**Impact**: Without a district focus on culturally responsive practices, students of color, students with disabilities, and English learners are denied the full opportunity to make significant academic gains. Given the absence of access to high-quality and consistent SEI and ESL instruction, English learners have very limited opportunities to make strong academic progress.

**Recommendations**

**The district should create and implement systems and practices to ensure that English learners are provided the instruction and support that meets their needs.**

* 1. The district should focus on building the capacity of teachers and administrators to meet the needs of English learners (ELs), with an explicit focus on Tier 1 instruction.
	2. All teaching and support staff should receive focused professional development in effectively using differentiation and accommodations to create classrooms where all students have equal access to high-quality curriculum.

 1. General education teachers should continue to pursue SEI training to improve their skills in how to effectively teach ELs.

* 1. The district should seek guidance and assistance for building strong working relationships and two-way communication with families of ELs.
	2. The district should evaluate the staffing structure and ensure that it enables all ELs to receive appropriate instruction.
	3. The district should adopt an evidence-based ESL curriculum.

**Benefits:** By implementing this recommendation, the district will provide ELs a well-planned program, which can lead to increased student achievement and help ensure that the district provides all students with a high-quality education. This may also provide a smoother entrance of ELs to the district and help students’ academic progress and emotional well-being.

**Recommended resources:**

* *Blueprint for English Learner Success (*<http://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/>) provides some of the foundational elements at the classroom, school, and district level required to ensure success for EL students.
* *English Learner Education Program Resources (*<http://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/resources/program-dev-eval.html_>) provides resources to develop and evaluate a program designed to support EL students.
	+ 1. **The district should prioritize a focus on cultural responsiveness and implicit bias.**
			- 1. The district should consistently disaggregate student data and analyze patterns and trends across different groups of students.
				2. The district should build a curriculum across all content areas that reflects the various identities of the students in the district.
				3. The district should use PD structures to promote more culturally responsive practices and address implicit bias.

**Benefits:** Implementing this recommendation will provide the district with a more precise picture of student achievement trends across groups of students, more responsive curriculum, and teachers who can more effectively meet the needs of their students.

**Recommended resources:**

* Promoting Culturally Responsive Education (<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Q6MVI-Tt20AT78CxCyWUWvtiyatE20b9?usp=sharing>): This Google folder includes the resources from a session titled “Promoting Culturally Responsive Education” at DESE’s 2019 Leading with Access & Equity conference. This folder includes resources, tools, frameworks, and examples from across the state in how to promote more culturally responsive practices across districts and schools.

Financial and Asset Management

**Contextual Background**

*Budget Documentation and Reporting*

The Leicester Public Schools have a municipal budget appropriation of $16,667,839 to support a Pre-K-12 district of 1,536 students. The budget is developed in a transparent, participatory manner during the school year beginning with analysis of staffing needs by principals and directors. In consultation with those administrators, the superintendent and the central office develop a budget to be submitted to the school committee. From that point the budget progresses to a public hearing and school committee approval. Finally, the school committee budget is reviewed by the selectmen and finance committee and then approved by the town meeting.

The District Improvement Plan, although not monetized, has several budget implications. These items are referred to in the budget presentation and in some places explicitly linked. The School Improvement Plans have little reference to budget needs and budget presentations do not include an explicit link to them.

*Adequate Budget*

In fiscal year 2019, the district was 19.4 percent above its foundation budget. In addition, the district spent 14.2 percent above required net school spending, compared with a state average of 14.9 percent above required net school spending. From fiscal year 2008 to fiscal year 2019 Leicester spent above the required minimum, but by less than 1 percent in fiscal year 2012. In recent years, 54 percent of net school spending dollars comes from the state’s Chapter 70 aid program.

The district and the town have an out-of-date agreement detailing municipal expenditures on behalf of schools, signed in 2008. The district uses Infinite Visions for financial accounting software and the town uses VADAR.

The district has three schools covering pre-kindergarten through grade 12. In June of 2019, a fourth school, Leicester Memorial, which was built in 1954, was closed. Leicester Elementary School (formerly Leicester Primary) was built in 1974 and Leicester Middle School was built in 1961. Leicester High School was built in 1995.

The district is in the final steps of finalizing approval for a new Pre-K-8 school. The district has a one-year capital plan, rather than a long-term capital plan.

**Strength Finding**

**1. The district has conducted six years of connected studies to document the need for and plan for the construction of a new Pre-K-8 school.**

* 1. A series of professional studies have indicated that the Leicester Middle School and Elementary School need to be replaced. Leicester High School is in good condition and only needs general maintenance.
		1. In 2014, the district hired an architectural firm to create a facilities master plan for the district. The firm conducted a physical conditions assessment, confirmed enrollment projections, analyzed grade restructuring, and developed a master plan process.
		2. In 2016, the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) employed architectural and engineering experts to assess the general condition of all school buildings in the state.
		3. In 2016, the district submitted a statement of interest to MSBA for building a new middle school. In 2017, MSBA accepted Leicester into the planning process and approved and partially funded the district to conduct a feasibility study.
		4. The feasibility study concluded that the best option for dealing with the aging Leicester Elementary School (formerly Leicester Primary) was to build a new Pre-K-8 school, instead of the anticipated middle school. The study further concluded that this was the best long-term financial option for the district. The study demonstrated that renovation of the two old schools would have a substantial cost, while leaving the district with inferior facilities. This study persuaded the MSBA to approve the design of a Pre-K-8 school for Leicester.
		5. The district expects MSBA’s final approval of scope and budget for the school in April 2020. This approval will include a grant from the state to Leicester of approximately $41.5 million.
	2. The various studies concluded that the Leicester Middle School was in poor condition, had exceeded its useful life, and that renovation was not economically feasible.
		1. The architectural firm’s report concluded that the overall current condition ranged from poor to very poor. The school’s materials have exceeded their expected life and require repair or replacement.
		2. The MSBA 2016 School Survey Report rated the Leicester Middle School as level 3 for condition, “fair to poor.”
		3. The feasibility study concluded that the middle school was in poor condition, particularly in the areas of safety, security, and accessibility.
		4. The review team observed the building as part of its review and concluded it was in poor condition. Interior ramped hallways were too steep. Areas for instruction for English learners (ELs) and students with disabilities were inequitable. HVAC[[11]](#footnote-11) systems were antiquated and not working properly.
1. The various studies concluded that the elementary school was in fair to poor condition with several features approaching the end of their expected life.
	* 1. The architectural firm’s report concluded that the buildings materials were near the end of their expected life.
		2. The MSBA 2016 School Survey Report rated the Leicester Elementary School’s condition as level 2 “a few building systems that may need attention,” It was also rated at level 2 for environment, “a few conditions may make learning and teaching less than ideal.”
		3. The review team observed the building as part of its review and concluded that it was in fair condition. The open gymnasium did not have an appropriate sound barrier from classrooms. Some special needs and EL facilities were in sub-standard, inequitable locations. Window panels provided inadequate insulation.
2. The studies concluded that the 25-year-old high school was well maintained and in good condition.
	* 1. The architectural firm’s study stated that the high school’s overall current condition ranged from good to very good.
		2. The MSBA 2016 School Survey Report rated the high school level 1 for condition and environment.
		3. The review team observed the building as part of its review and concluded that it was in good condition.

**Impact**: Replacing the elementary and middle schools with a new building, while continuing to properly maintain the high school provides a cost-effective solution that ensures that the district has facilities that are conducive to teaching and learning. Construction of a new school ensures that educational and program facilities districtwide are accessible, clean, safe, secure, well-lit, well-maintained, and conducive to student learning, including adequate access to technology.

**Challenges and Areas for Growth**

**The district and the town do not have an up-to-date written agreement on municipal expenditures in support of the schools.**

**A.** The district and the town do not have a current written agreement on a method for determining the cost of municipal services that are provided to the district by the town, as required by state regulation 603 CMR 10.04. This regulation requires an approved written agreement detailing services provided by the municipality for the school district to be reported to DESE by September 30 each year.

1. To account for these expenditures in the district’s end of year report, the town submits data to the district for the previous year’s expenditures on behalf of district schools and the coming year’s budgeted expenditures. Some of these costs are actual expenditures, such as the cost of interest on district construction bonds. Some of these costs are allocations of municipal costs, such as a percentage of the town’s finance office cost.
2. District leaders and finance staff said that the town used actual expenditure calculations for many of these costs, but documentation for these calculations was not submitted to the district, such as for unemployment bills.
3. The town prorates the cost of some areas such as the town finance office. There is no current written agreement documenting this proration, and the details of some of the prorations are not submitted to the district.
4. The FY18 EOY Report Compliance Supplement stated that the agreement between the district and the town on municipal expenditures on behalf of the district should be updated.
5. The school committee often requests updates on the progress of reaching a new agreement.
	1. District leaders and finance staff reported that they had prepared a draft of a new agreement and forwarded it to the town.
	2. Town officials told the team that they had a draft of a new agreement and were analyzing it.
6. The district and the town have been collaborating on providing basic services.

Town officials said that the department of public works would provide snow plowing and groundskeeping services.

Town officials told the team that the police department was investigating the possibility of hiring a school resource officer.

The district and the town have had discussions about sharing information technology services.

**Impact**: Without a current written agreement between the district and the town on municipal expenditures in support of the schools, the district cannot effectively monitor and internally audit costs for education-related services and ensure the accuracy of these expenditures.

**Recommendations**

**In compliance with 603 CMR 10.04, the district and the town should develop a written agreement that details the calculation process and/or amounts to be used in calculating municipal expenditures that are provided to the district.**

1. The appropriate representatives of the district and the town should meet annually to develop a written agreement that details the calculation process and/or amounts to be used in calculating the cost of services provided by the town to the district.

For services that require allocation, such as the town finance office, the district and the town should agree on an allocation method.

For actual expenditure categories such as debt and employee benefits, district administrators and town officials should develop a method to determine the actual expenditures.

 3. Any disputes about determination of allocation or actual costs should be referred to DESE for resolution.

 4. The city and district should review 603 CMR 10.04 (1) for examples of costs included in a municipal agreement. Examples include the salaries of health services or public safety personnel who provide direct services or instruction to students.

1. The appropriate district leaders and town officials should review and sign the agreement.
2. The district and the town should continue to collaborate on providing basic services. The review team recommends that they continue to investigate collaboration in the areas of facilities management, public and school safety, and information technology.

**Benefits:** By implementing this recommendation, the district will align its budget documents with state regulation 603 CMR 10.04; ensure that the district and the town have a clear understanding of municipal expenditures that are provided to the district; and be able to monitor and internally audit costs for education-related services and ensure the accuracy of these expenditures.

**Recommended resources:**

* DESE’s webpage on school finance laws and regulations (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr10.html?section=04>) provides a list of municipal payments commonly made on behalf of school districts.
* DESE’s Chart of Accounts: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/finance/accounting/eoy>
* Compliance Supplement for Massachusetts School Districts: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/finance/accounting>

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

Review Team Members

The review was conducted from February 3–6, 2020, by the following team of independent DESE consultants.

1. Andrew Bundy, Leadership and Governance
2. Marilynne Smith Quarcoo, Curriculum and Instruction
3. Lenora Jennings, Assessment, *review team coordinator*
4. John Retchless, Human Resources and Professional Development
5. Tom Milaschewski, Student Support
6. David King, Financial and Asset management

District Review Activities

The following activities were conducted during the review:

The team conducted interviews with the following financial personnel: director of finance and operations, accounts payable assistant, payroll assistant, town administrator, assistant to the town administrator, town accountant, and assistant town accountant.

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

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

The team conducted interviews/focus groups with the following central office administrators: the superintendent; the director of curriculum, instruction and assessment; the director of pupil services; the director of technology and digital learning; and the director of facilities.

The team visited the following schools: Leicester Elementary (K-4), Leicester Middle School (grades 5-8), and Leicester High School (grades 9-12 and pre-kindergarten).

During school visits, the team conducted interviews/focus groups with students, students’ families, and three principals, and focus groups with four elementary-school teachers, five middle-school teachers, and three high-school teachers.

The team observed 58 classes in the district: 21 at the high school, 23 at the middle school, and 14 at the elementary school (including two pre-kindergarten classrooms).

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**02/03/2020 | **Tuesday**02/04/2020 | **Wednesday**02/05/2020 | **Thursday**02/06/2020 |
| Orientation with district leaders and principals; interviews with district staff and principals; document reviews; interview with teachers’ association; and visits to Leicester Elementary and Leicester Middle schools for classroom observations. | Interviews with district staff and principals; review of personnel files; teacher focus groups; students and students’ families focus groups; and visits to Leicester Elementary and Leicester High School for classroom observations. | Interviews with town or city personnel; interviews with school leaders; interviews with school committee members; visits to Leicester Middle School and Leicester High School for classroom observations. | Interviews with school leaders; follow-up interviews; district review team meeting; visits to Leicester High School for building walkthrough; district wrap-up meeting with the superintendent. |

Appendix B: Enrollment, Attendance, Expenditures

**Table B1a: Leicester Public Schools**

**2019–2020 Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Group** | **District** | **Percent****of Total** | **State** | **Percent of****Total** |
| African-American | 81 | 5.4% | 87,053 | 9.2% |
| Asian | 44 | 3.0% | 67,527 | 7.1% |
| Hispanic | 153 | 10.3% | 205,136 | 21.6% |
| Native American | 1 | 0.1% | 2,081 | 0.2% |
| White | 1,164 | 78.2% | 549,006 | 57.9% |
| Native Hawaiian | 1 | 0.1% | 781 | 0.1% |
| Multi-Race, Non-Hisp./Lat.  | 44 | 3.0% | 37,244 | 3.9% |
| All  | 1,488 | 100.0% | 948,828 | 100.0% |
| Note: As of October 1, 2019 |

**Table B1b: Leicester Public Schools**

**2019–2020 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 | 253 | 43.1% | 16.7% | 176,741 | 37.9% | 18.4% |
| Econ. Dis. | 393 | 67.0% | 26.4% | 310,873 | 66.6% | 32.8% |
| EL | 52 | 8.9% | 3.5% | 102,861 | 22.0% | 10.8% |
| All high needs students | 587 | 100.0% | 38.8% | 466,930 | 100.0% | 48.7% |
| Notes: As of October 1, 2019. District and state numbers and percentages for students with disabilities and high needs students are calculated including students in out-of-district placements. Total district enrollment including students in out-of-district placement is 1,511; total state enrollment including students in out-of-district placement is 959,394. |

**Table B2a: Leicester Public Schools**

**Attendance Rates by Student Group, 2016–2019**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Group** | **N (2019)** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **2019** | **4-yr Change** | **State (2019)** |
| African American/Black | 90 | 97.3 | 95.6 | 95.7 | 96.0 | -1.3 | 94.1 |
| Asian | 41 | 98.6 | 96.9 | 96.9 | 97.9 | -0.7 | 96.2 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 152 | 96.6 | 94.1 | 94.9 | 95.2 | -1.4 | 92.7 |
| Multi-Race, Non-Hisp./Lat. | 44 | 97.9 | 93.6 | 94.2 | 94.0 | -3.9 | 94.4 |
| White | 1,270 | 96.9 | 94.7 | 95.2 | 95.1 | -1.8 | 95.1 |
| High Needs | 681 | 96.5 | 93.7 | 94.0 | 94.4 | -2.1 | 93.3 |
| Econ. Dis. | 494 | 96.3 | 93.4 | 93.6 | 93.9 | -2.4 | 92.7 |
| SWD | 279 | 96.6 | 93.3 | 94.1 | 94.6 | -2.0 | 93.0 |
| EL | 57 | 96.5 | 93.6 | 92.9 | 95.2 | -1.3 | 93.2 |
| All  | 1,602 | 97.0 | 94.8 | 95.2 | 95.2 | -1.8 | 94.6 |
| Notes: The attendance rate is calculated by dividing the total number of days students attended school by the total number of days students were enrolled in a particular school year. A student’s attendance rate is counted toward any district the student attended. In addition, district attendance rates included students who were out placed in public collaborative or private alternative schools/programs at public expense. Attendance rates have been rounded; percent change is based on unrounded numbers. |

**Table B2b: Leicester Public Schools**

**Chronic Absence Rates\* by Student Group, 2016–2019**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Group** | **N (2019)** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **2019** | **4-yr Change** | **State (2019)** |
| African American/Black | 90 | 1.4 | 8.7 | 7.9 | 8.9 | 7.5 | 16.2 |
| Asian | 41 | 0.0 | 4.3 | 7.1 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 7.5 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 152 | 7.1 | 15.1 | 9.2 | 9.2 | 2.1 | 21.7 |
| Multi-Race, Non-Hisp./Lat. | 44 | 2.8 | 10.8 | 15.2 | 15.9 | 13.1 | 13.7 |
| White | 1,270 | 3.4 | 11.3 | 10.0 | 10.2 | 6.8 | 9.7 |
| High Needs | 681 | 5.4 | 17.0 | 16.3 | 14.4 | 9.0 | 19.4 |
| Econ. Dis. | 494 | 5.9 | 19.3 | 17.7 | 16.2 | 10.3 | 22.5 |
| SWD | 279 | 5.0 | 16.2 | 15.2 | 13.6 | 8.6 | 20.3 |
| EL | 57 | 10.0 | 15.9 | 15.6 | 17.5 | 7.5 | 20.3 |
| All  | 1,602 | 3.4 | 11.3 | 10.0 | 10.0 | 6.6 | 12.9 |
| \* Chronic absence is defined as the percentage of students absent 10 percent or more of their total number of student days of membership in a school. |

**Table B3: Leicester Public Schools**

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

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|   | **FY17** | **FY18** | **FY19** |
|   | **Estimated** | **Actual** | **Estimated** | **Actual** | **Estimated** | **Actual** |
| Expenditures |
| From local appropriations for schools: |  |
| By school committee | $16,264,095 | $15,737,398 | $15,936,800 | $15,927,672 | $16,264,095 | $16,624,763 |
| By municipality | $5,204,485 | $5,777,338 | $4,325,201 | $4,772,926 | $5,204,485 | $5,344,649 |
| Total from local appropriations | $21,468,580 | $21,514,736 | $20,262,001 | $20,700,598 | $21,468,580 | $21,969,412 |
| From revolving funds and grants | -- | $2,700,158 | -- | $3,047,857 | -- | $2,657,388 |
| Total expenditures | -- | $24,214,894 | -- | $23,748,455 | -- | $24,626,800 |
| Chapter 70 aid to education program |
| Chapter 70 state aid\* | -- | $9,661,287 | -- | $9,708,447 | -- | $9,755,847 |
| Required local contribution | -- | $7,913,187 | -- | $7,799,077 | -- | $8,057,611 |
| Required net school spending\*\* | -- | $17,574,474 | -- | $17,507,524 | -- | $17,813,458 |
| Actual net school spending | -- | $19,370,980 | -- | $19,070,597 | -- | $19,949,160 |
| Over/under required ($) | -- | $1,796,506 | -- | $1,563,073 | -- | $2,135,702 |
| Over/under required (%) | -- | 10.2% | -- | 8.9% | -- | 12.0% |
| \*Chapter 70 state aid funds are deposited in the local general fund and spent as local appropriations.\*\*Required net school spending is the total of Chapter 70 aid and required local contribution. Net school spending includes only expenditures from local appropriations, not revolving funds and grants. It includes expenditures for most administration, instruction, operations, and out-of-district tuitions. It does not include transportation, school lunches, debt, or capital.Sources: FY16, FY17, and FY18 District End-of-Year Reports, Chapter 70 Program information on DESE websiteData retrieved 1/13/20 |

**Table B4: Leicester Public Schools**

**Expenditures Per In-District Pupil**

**Fiscal Years 2017–2019**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Expenditure Category** | **2017** | **2018** | **2019** |
| Administration | $611 | $633 | $499 |
| Instructional leadership (district and school) | $852 | $878 | $764 |
| Teachers | $5,038 | $5,127 | $5,547 |
| Other teaching services | $863 | $924 | $1,086 |
| Professional development | $328 | $307 | $123 |
| Instructional materials, equipment and technology | $462 | $264 | $216 |
| Guidance, counseling and testing services | $513 | $569 | $533 |
| Pupil services | $1,365 | $1,544 | $1,498 |
| Operations and maintenance | $868 | $722 | $1,205 |
| Insurance, retirement and other fixed costs | $2,250 | $2,109 | $2,293 |
| Total expenditures per in-district pupil | $13,150 | $13,078 | $13,765 |
| Sources: [Per-pupil expenditure reports on DESE 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** | 0% | 14% | 64% | 21% | 3.1 |
| **MS** | 13% | 22% | 43% | 22% | 2.7 |
| **HS** | 0% | 57% | 29% | 14% | 2.6 |
| **Total #** | 3 | 19 | 25 | 11 | 2.8 |
| **Total %** | 5% | 33% | 43% | 19% |  |
| 2. The teacher ensures that students understand what they should be learning in the lesson and why. | **ES** | 0% | 43% | 50% | 7% | 2.6 |
| **MS** | 9% | 39% | 43% | 9% | 2.5 |
| **HS** | 24% | 52% | 19% | 5% | 2.0 |
| **Total #** | 7 | 26 | 21 | 4 | 2.4 |
| **Total %** | 12% | 45% | 36% | 7% |  |
| 3. The teacher uses appropriate classroom activities well matched to the learning objective(s). | **ES** | 0% | 14% | 57% | 29% | 3.1 |
| **MS** | 9% | 30% | 52% | 9% | 2.6 |
| **HS** | 5% | 57% | 24% | 14% | 2.5 |
| **Total #** | 3 | 21 | 25 | 9 | 2.7 |
| **Total %** | 5% | 36% | 43% | 16% |  |
| 4. The teacher conducts frequent checks for student understanding, provides feedback, and adjusts instruction. | **ES** | 0% | 57% | 21% | 21% | 2.6 |
| **MS** | 9% | 57% | 22% | 13% | 2.4 |
| **HS** | 19% | 33% | 43% | 5% | 2.3 |
| **Total #** | 6 | 28 | 17 | 7 | 2.4 |
| **Total %** | 10% | 48% | 29% | 12% |  |
| **Total Score For Focus Area #1** | **ES** |  |  |  |  | 11.5 |
| **MS** |  |  |  |  | 10.3 |
| **HS** |  |  |  |  | 9.4 |
| **Total** |  |  |  |  | 10.3 |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **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% | 21% | 50% | 29% | 3.1 |
| **MS** | 0% | 43% | 48% | 9% | 2.7 |
| **HS** | 24% | 38% | 24% | 14% | 2.3 |
| **Total #** | 5 | 21 | 23 | 9 | 2.6 |
| **Total %** | 9% | 36% | 40% | 16% |  |
| 6. Students engage in higher-order thinking. | **ES** | 0% | 50% | 29% | 21% | 2.7 |
| **MS** | 13% | 39% | 39% | 9% | 2.4 |
| **HS** | 24% | 38% | 38% | 0% | 2.1 |
| **Total #** | 8 | 24 | 21 | 5 | 2.4 |
| **Total %** | 14% | 41% | 36% | 9% |  |
| 7. Students communicate their ideas and thinking with each other. | **ES** | 14% | 21% | 43% | 21% | 2.7 |
| **MS** | 22% | 30% | 48% | 0% | 2.3 |
| **HS** | 33% | 43% | 19% | 5% | 2.0 |
| **Total #** | 14 | 19 | 21 | 4 | 2.3 |
| **Total %** | 24% | 33% | 36% | 7% |  |
| 8. Students engage with meaningful, real-world tasks. | **ES** | 7% | 29% | 43% | 21% | 2.8 |
| **MS** | 17% | 9% | 52% | 22% | 2.8 |
| **HS** | 33% | 52% | 10% | 5% | 1.9 |
| **Total #** | 12 | 17 | 20 | 9 | 2.4 |
| **Total %** | 21% | 29% | 34% | 16% |  |
| **Total Score For Focus Area #2** | **ES** |  |  |  |  | 11.3 |
| **MS** |  |  |  |  | 10.1 |
| **HS** |  |  |  |  | 8.2 |
| **Total** |  |  |  |  | 9.7 |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **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** | 7% | 21% | 50% | 21% | 2.9 |
| **MS** | 22% | 43% | 26% | 9% | 2.2 |
| **HS** | 29% | 43% | 24% | 5% | 2.0 |
| **Total #** | 12 | 22 | 18 | 6 | 2.3 |
| **Total %** | 21% | 38% | 31% | 10% |  |
| 10. The teacher uses a variety of instructional strategies. | **ES** | 7% | 7% | 64% | 21% | 3.0 |
| **MS** | 17% | 30% | 39% | 13% | 2.5 |
| **HS** | 43% | 29% | 24% | 5% | 1.9 |
| **Total #** | 14 | 14 | 23 | 7 | 2.4 |
| **Total %** | 24% | 24% | 40% | 12% |  |
| 11. Classroom routines and positive supports are in place to ensure that students behave appropriately. | **ES** | 0% | 14% | 50% | 36% | 3.2 |
| **MS** | 0% | 17% | 52% | 30% | 3.1 |
| **HS** | 0% | 14% | 67% | 19% | 3.0 |
| **Total #** | 0 | 9 | 33 | 16 | 3.1 |
| **Total %** | 0% | 16% | 57% | 28% |  |
| 12. The classroom climate is conducive to teaching and learning. | **ES** | 0% | 7% | 57% | 36% | 3.3 |
| **MS** | 0% | 17% | 61% | 22% | 3.0 |
| **HS** | 0% | 19% | 62% | 19% | 3.0 |
| **Total #** | 0 | 9 | 35 | 14 | 3.1 |
| **Total %** | 0% | 16% | 60% | 24% |  |
| **Total Score For Focus Area #3** | **ES** |  |  |  |  | 12.4 |
| **MS** |  |  |  |  | 10.9 |
| **HS** |  |  |  |  | 10.0 |
| **Total** |  |  |  |  | 10.9 |

1. SMART goals are specific and strategic; measurable; action-oriented; rigorous, realistic, and results-focused; and timed and tracked. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Four elementary teachers, four middle-school teachers, and one high-school teachers developed recommended curriculum. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The district provides college prep, honors, and AP classes for its students. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Between 2016 and 2020, the proportion of Hispanic students increased from 5.4 percent to 10.3 percent of enrollment. The proportion of English learners increased from 1.4 percent to 3.5 percent, while the proportion of economically disadvantaged students increased from 19.3 percent to 26.4 percent. The proportion of students with disabilities increased from 15.5 percent to 16.7 percent. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. High-quality feedback is specific, timely, and actionable. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. SMART goals are specific and strategic; measurable; actionable; rigorous, realistic, and results focused; and timed and tracked. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. 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-7)
8. Chronic absence is defined as the percentage of students absent 10 percent or more of their total number of student days of membership in a school. See Table 30 in the Student Performance section of this report for chronic absence rates over time, disaggregated by student group. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. According to the National Federation of State High School Associations (<https://nfhslearn.com/courses/coaching-unified-sports>), Unified Sports is an inclusive sports program that unites Special Olympics athletes (individuals with intellectual disabilities) and partners (individuals without intellectual disabilities) as teammates for training and competition. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. During the 2018-2019 school year, Leicester participated in a Tiered Focused Monitoring Review conducted by the Department’s Office of Language Acquisition (OLA). See the Student Support and the Curriculum and Instruction Contextual Backgrounds above. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. HVAC stands for heating, ventilation, and air conditioning. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)