District Review Report

South Middlesex RVTSD

Targeted Review conducted October 29–31, 2018

Office of District Reviews and Monitoring

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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Executive Summary

The municipalities of Ashland, Framingham, Holliston, Hopkinton, and Natick are members of the South Middlesex Regional Vocational School District, which consists of one school, Joseph P. Keefe Technical High School. (For purposes of this report and for clarity, the South Middlesex Regional Vocational Technical School District is referred to as “Keefe.””)

According to DESE data, in the 2018–2019 school year 69.9 percent of Keefe’s students are part of the high-needs group because they are in one or of the following groups: students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged students, and English learners (ELs) or former ELs. Many students come to school each day with unique programmatic and support needs. For example, students with disabilities represent 43.9 percent of the total student enrollment, ELs make up 9.2 percent of enrollment, and economically disadvantaged students make up 40.5 percent of enrollment.

Between 2014 and 2017, the four-year cohort graduation rate improved 4.7 percentage points, from 88.0 percent in 2014 to 92.7 percent in 2017. In 2017, the annual dropout rate was 0.3 percent.

Keefe offers a dual academic and career, vocational, technical education (CVTE) program. The school’s academic program includes the four core academic subjects (English, mathematics, science, and social studies), physical education, health education, entrepreneurship, and electives in the core subject areas. The school offers 16 CVTE programs including automotive technology, carpentry, cosmetology, culinary arts, dental assisting, design and visual communication, electrical, graphic communication, health careers, horticulture and landscaping management, information technology, metal fabrication, plumbing, and programming and web technology. Keefe also provides a substantially separate program for students with moderate to severe disabilities known as the Job Entry Training (JET) program. Nine of the sixteen CVTE programs have articulation agreements with area colleges, including Massachusetts Bay Community College, Quinsigamond Community College, and Wentworth Institute of Technology.

The school offers a dual-enrollment program with Framingham State University and Massachusetts Bay Community College that is conducted during the school year and summer. Keefe’s cooperative education program allows eligible students to gain relevant experience in their career fields through paid employment during their CVTE weeks. Cooperative students are graded on their performance by their employers and school personnel.

Keefe’s 180-day school year is organized around a week-about schedule that consists of academic and CVTE classes on alternating weeks. Students in grades 10–12 have 90 days of academic instruction and 90 days of CVTE instruction annually. Students in grade 9 attend English, mathematics, and science classes for all 180 days in the morning or the afternoon block of their schedule. This schedule provides consistent core academic instruction and facilitates the transition from a middle school schedule to a vocational technical high school schedule.

Grade 9 students begin the year by participating in Keefe’s career exploratory program, which enables them to select 8 of the 16 CVTE programs to explore. At the completion of the exploratory program, grade 9 students are placed in their permanent CVTE program based on their interest and exploratory experience. Administrators told the team that over 90 percent of grade 9 students were placed in their first-choice program.

The Keefe facility was constructed in 1973 and at the time of the onsite review in October 2018 was 45 years old. According to Massachusetts School Building Authority data, the school was last renovated in 2009. The renovations consisted of a roof replacement and repair of mechanical systems. Administrators expressed concern about the funding of future capital improvements.

***Instruction***

The team observed 46 high-school classes: 28 academic classes and 18 CVTE classes. The team observed 5 ELA classes, 6 mathematics classes, and 8 science classes. Among the classes observed were 4 special education classes and 1 English learner class. The observations were approximately 20 minutes in length. All review team members collected data using ESE’s Instructional Inventory, a tool for recording observed characteristics of standards-based teaching. This data is presented in Appendix C.

 In observed classes, the climate was conducive to teaching and learning and was characterized by respectful relationships, behaviors, tones, and discourse. In almost all observed classes, teachers were fair, caring, and respectful in their interactions with students. Students were polite and cooperative with their teachers, considerate of each other, and task-oriented.

In observed classes, the quality of instruction was inconsistent. Lessons were typically prescriptive and learning activities were missing rigor, except in certain advanced placement, engineering, and computer technology classes where the expectations for student learning were higher. Many teachers posed only literal comprehension questions and provided students limited opportunities for analysis, synthesis, problem-solving, evaluation, or application of new knowledge. Teachers often relied upon the lecture mode of instruction and students had few opportunities to ask their own questions and voice their opinions. Teachers did not check for student understanding routinely throughout the observation.

**Strengths**

* The school has aligned its academic and career, vocational, technical education (CVTE) curriculum maps with the Massachusetts Frameworks and the Massachusetts Vocational Technical Education Frameworks, and teachers use these maps for instructional planning. Keefe has also taken progressive steps to increase the rigor and relevance of its courses to better prepare students for initial employment, postsecondary education, and careers.
* In observed classes, rituals and positive supports encouraged appropriate student behavior and reinforced students’ self-management skills.
* Keefe CVTE programs use a variety of complementary assessments---including in-class formative assessments and continuous observations, teacher-made unit and final examinations, projects, portfolios, and external qualifying examinations---to determine student proficiency and improve instructional and curricular effectiveness**.**
* The school’s guidance curriculum provides students with school counseling and college and career planning in each grade.

**Challenges and Areas for Growth**

* In most observed classes, students were minimally engaged in analysis, problem solving and application of new knowledge, limiting their opportunities to develop and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills.
* In observed classrooms, teachers did not consistently use a variety of instructional approaches. The majority of observed academic classrooms relied on direct instruction with limited student participation and interaction with each other.
* Formative and summative assessments are not always the same in every section of the same course. The school does not have a procedure to ensure the validity of common assessments.
* The school does not administer external diagnostic assessments to identify students’ strengths and needs as part of a universal screening program and to help monitor students’ progress in response to interventions.
* The school does not have a proactive, systematic approach to meet students’ academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs.
* The school does not have a proactive universal screening procedure to identify student’s strengths and needs, a defined continuum of interventions for all students, and a guidance document to help teachers provide for individual differences*.*

**Recommendations**

The district should improve instruction by building teachers’ capacity, especially in the areas of promoting higher-order thinking skills, increasing student communication of their ideas and thinking, and using a variety of instructional strategies.

Keefe should create structures to support the development of common assessments and provide academic teachers with professional development on creating and improving assessments.

Keefe should consider selecting and administering external diagnostic literacy and mathematics assessments to identify students’ strengths and needs and to monitor the progress of struggling students in response to interventions. The school should provide an assessment to help juniors and seniors determine their readiness for introductory college-level courses.

The school should develop and implement a formal tiered system of support.

South Middlesex RVTSD Targeted District Review Overview

Purpose

Conducted under Chapter 15, Section 55A of the Massachusetts General Laws, targeted 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 three district standards used by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). Targeted reviews address one of the following sets of three standards: **Governance and Administrative Systems** (Leadership and Governance, Human Resources and Professional Development, and Financial and Asset Management standards) or **Student-Centered Systems** (Curriculum and Instruction, Assessment, and Student Support standards). All targeted reviews include finding(s) about instruction based on classroom observations. A targeted review identifies systems and practices that may be impeding improvement as well as those most likely to be contributing to positive results. In addition, the targeted district review is designed to promote district reflection on its own performance and potential next steps. This targeted review by the Office of District Reviews and Monitoring focused on the following standards: Curriculum and Instruction, Assessment, and Student Support.

DESE and the district collaboratively identify the focus of a targeted district review.

Methodology

Reviews collect evidence for each of the three district standards identified as the focus of the targeted review. Team members also observe classroom instructional practice. A district review team consisting of independent consultants with expertise in the district standards reviews documentation, data, and reports for two days before conducting a three-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. Subsequent to the onsite review, the team meets for two days to develop findings and recommendations before submitting a draft report to DESE.

Site Visit

The site visit to the South Middlesex Regional Vocational Technical School District was conducted from October 29–31, 2018. The site visit included 20 hours of interviews and focus groups with approximately 67 stakeholders, including school committee members, district administrators, school staff, students, students’ families, and teachers’ association representatives. The review team conducted a focus group with 17 high-school teachers.

A list of review team members, information about review activities, and the site visit schedule are in Appendix A, and Appendix B provides information about enrollment, attendance, and expenditures. The team observed classroom instructional practice in 46 classrooms. Of the 46 observed classes, 28 were academic classes and 18 were career, vocational, technical education (CVTE) classes. The team collected data using ESE’s Instructional Inventory, a tool for recording observed characteristics of standards-based teaching. This data is contained in Appendix C.

**District Profile**

The South Middlesex Regional Vocational Technical School District has a school committee form of government. The members elect the chair of the school committee. The 16-member regional school committee consists of 8 members from Framingham (the largest member community) and two from each of the other four communities: Ashland, Holliston, Hopkinton, and Natick. The committee meets monthly, except in October.

The current superintendent-director has been in the position since 2014. The district leadership team includes the superintendent-director, the principal, the assistant principal/dean of students, the academic assistant principal, the director of finance and business operations, the director of satellite programs and facilities, the director of guidance and admissions, the director of special education, and director of career and technical education. Central office positions have been mostly stable in number over the past five years. In 2017–2018, there were 81 teachers in the district.

In the 2017–2018 school year, 731 students were enrolled in the district’s one school, the Joseph P. Keefe Technical High School.

Between 2015 and 2018, overall student enrollment increased by 5.8 percent. Enrollment figures by race/ethnicity and high needs populations (i.e., students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged students, and English learners (ELs) and former ELs) as compared with the state are provided in Tables B1a and B1b in Appendix B.

The total in-district per-pupil expenditure was higher than the median in-district per-pupil expenditure for 14 vocational/agricultural districts of similar size (<1,000 students). In fiscal year 2017, the total in-district per-pupil expenditure was $26,748 as compared with a median of $22,171 (see [District Analysis and Review Tool Detail: Staffing & Finance](http://www.doe.mass.edu/dart/) ). Actual net school spending has been well above what is required by the Chapter 70 state education aid program, as shown in Table B3 in Appendix B.

Student Performance

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

| **Table 1: South Middlesex RVTSD****Accountability Percentile, Criterion Reference Target (CRT) Percentage, Reason for Classification** |
| --- |
| **School** | **Accountability Percentile** | **CRT Percentage** | **Overall Classification** | **Reason For Classification** |
| Keefe Technical High School | 38 | 72% | Not requiring assistance or intervention | Partially meeting targets |
| South Middlesex RVTSD | -- | 72% | Not requiring assistance or intervention | Partially meeting targets |

| **Table 2: South Middlesex RVTSD****MCAS ELA Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grade 10, 2017–2018** |
| --- |
| **Group** | **N (2018)** | **2017** | **2018** | **Change** | **State (2018)** | **Above/Below** |
| African American/Black | 15 | -- | 100% | -- | 85% | 15 |
| Asian | 1 | -- | -- | -- | 95% | -- |
| Hispanic or Latino | 74 | 76% | 82% | 6 | 78% | 4 |
| Multi-Race | 7 | -- | -- | -- | 93% | - |
| White | 83 | 86% | 86% | 0 | 94% | -8 |
| High Needs | 134 | 73% | 81% | 8 | 79% | 2 |
| Econ. Dis. | 79 | 72% | 82% | 10 | 81% | 1 |
| SWD | 84 | 66% | 77% | 11 | 69% | 8 |
| EL | 25 | 48% | 68% | 20 | 64% | 4 |
| All | 182 | 80% | 86% | 6 | 91% | -5 |

| **Table 3: South Middlesex RVTSD****MCAS Math Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grade 10, 2017–2018** |
| --- |
| **Group** | **N (2018)** | **2017** | **2018** | **Change** | **State (2018)** | **Above/Below** |
| African American/Black | 15 | -- | 33% | -- | 60% | -27 |
| Asian | 1 | -- | -- | -- | 91% | -- |
| Hispanic or Latino | 73 | 44% | 58% | 14 | 56% | 2 |
| Multi-Race | 7 | -- | -- | -- | 79% | -- |
| White | 83 | 64% | 67% | 3 | 85% | -18 |
| High Needs | 133 | 41% | 50% | 9 | 57% | -7 |
| Econ. Dis. | 78 | 42% | 50% | 8 | 59% | -9 |
| SWD | 83 | 32% | 41% | 9 | 40% | 1 |
| EL | 25 | 20% | 36% | 16 | 44% | -8 |
| All | 181 | 53% | 60% | 7 | 78% | -18 |

| **Table 4: South Middlesex RVTSD****MCAS Science Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grade 10, 2015–2018** |
| --- |
| **Group** | **N (2018)** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **4-yr change** | **State (2018)** |
| African American/Black | 14 | -- | 27% | -- | 50% | -- | 30% |
| Asian | 1 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 68% |
| Hispanic or Latino | 68 | 48% | 54% | 48% | 62% | 14 | 30% |
| Multi-Race | 6 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 54% |
| White | 78 | 64% | 70% | 75% | 74% | 10 | 60% |
| High Needs | 124 | 49% | 51% | 53% | 58% | 9 | 31% |
| Econ. Dis. | 73 | 55% | 58% | 52% | 55% | 0 | 32% |
| SWD | 80 | 40% | 37% | 45% | 50% | 10 | 21% |
| EL | 20 | 36% | 42% | 26% | 45% | 9 | 20% |
| All | 169 | 56% | 60% | 63% | 67% | 11 | 53% |

| **Table 5: South Middlesex RVTSD****MCAS Science Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grades 5, 8, and 10, 2015–2018** |
| --- |
| **Grade** | **N (2018)** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **4-yr change** | **State (2018)** |
| 5 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 47% |
| 8 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 35% |
| 10 | 169 | 56% | 60% | 63% | 67% | 11 | 74% |
| All | 169 | 56% | 60% | 63% | 67% | 11 | 52% |

| **Table 6: South Middlesex RVTSD****English Language Arts and Math Mean Student Growth Percentile, 2018** |
| --- |
|  | **ELA** | **Math** |
| **Grade** | **N (2018)** | **2018** | **State (2018)** | **N (2018)** | **2018** | **State (2018)** |
| 10 | 161 | 56.5 | 49.9 | 162 | 50.1 | 49.9 |

| **Table 7: South Middlesex RVTSD****MCAS ELA and Math Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grade 10, 2018** |
| --- |
| **School** | **ELA** | **Math** |
| Keefe Technical High School | 86% | 60% |
| State | 91% | 78% |

| **Table 8: South Middlesex RVTSD****MCAS Science Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced by School and Grade, 2018** |
| --- |
| **School** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** | **10** | **Total** |
| Keefe Technical High School | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 67% | 67% |
| State | -- | -- | 47% | -- | -- | 35% | 74% | 52% |

| **Table 9: South Middlesex RVTSD****MCAS ELA and Math Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grade 10, 2015–2018** |
| --- |
|  | **ELA** | **Math** |
| **School/Group** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **4-yr Change** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **4-yr Change** |
| Keefe Technical High School | 84% | 83% | 80% | 86% | 2% | 57% | 58% | 53% | 60% | 3% |
| African American/Black | -- | 75% | -- | 100% | -- | -- | 25% | -- | 33% | -- |
| Asian | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Hispanic | 77% | 81% | 76% | 82% | 5 | 48% | 60% | 44% | 58% | 10 |
| Multi-race | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| White | 92% | 87% | 86% | 86% | -6 | 69% | 59% | 64% | 67% | -2 |
| High Needs | 80% | 79% | 73% | 81% | 1 | 50% | 48% | 41% | 50% | 0 |
| Econ. Dis. | 82% | 85% | 72% | 82% | 0 | 56% | 53% | 42% | 50% | -6 |
| SWD | 73% | 73% | 66% | 77% | 4 | 41% | 34% | 32% | 41% | 0 |
| EL | 71% | 63% | 48% | 68% | -3 | 39% | 41% | 20% | 36% | -3 |

| **Table 10: South Middlesex RVTSD****MCAS Science Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Science by School and Student Group, 2015–2018** |
| --- |
| **School/Group** | **N (2018)** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **4-yr Change** |
| Keefe Technical High School | 169 | 56% | 60% | 63% | 67% | 11 |
| African American/Black | 14 | -- | 27% | -- | 50% | -- |
| Asian | 1 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Hispanic | 68 | 48% | 54% | 48% | 62% | 14 |
| Multi-race | 6 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| White | 78 | 64% | 70% | 75% | 74% | 10 |
| High Needs | 124 | 49% | 51% | 53% | 58% | 9 |
| Econ. Dis. | 73 | 55% | 58% | 52% | 55% | 0 |
| SWD | 80 | 40% | 37% | 45% | 50% | 10 |
| EL | 20 | 36% | 42% | 26% | 45% | 9 |

| **Table 11: South Middlesex RVTSD****Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rates, 2014–2017** |
| --- |
| **Group** | **N** **(2017)** | **2014** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **4-yr Change** | **State (2017)** |
| African American/Black | 7 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 85.7 | -14.3 | 80.0 |
| Asian | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 94.1 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 72 | 87.1 | 83.3 | 90.9 | 90.3 | 3.2 | 74.4 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hisp./Lat. | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 85.2 |
| White | 64 | 88.5 | 86.0 | 96.1 | 95.3 | 6.8 | 92.6 |
| High needs | 134 | 88.7 | 84.2 | 93.1 | 91.8 | 3.1 | 80.0 |
| Economically Disadvantaged\* | 107 | 88.5 | 84.3 | 92.9 | 93.5 | 5.0 | 79.0 |
| SWD | 84 | 88.6 | 86.1 | 92.3 | 88.1 | -0.5 | 72.8 |
| EL | 11 | 87.5 | 80.0 | 85.7 | 81.8 | -5.7 | 63.4 |
| All | 150 | 88.0 | 85.3 | 93.9 | 92.7 | 4.7 | 88.3 |
| \* Four-year cohort graduation rate for students from low-income families used for 2014 and 2015 rates. |

| **Table 12: South Middlesex RVTSD****Five-Year Cohort Graduation Rates, 2013–2016** |
| --- |
| **Group** | **N** **(2016)** | **2013** | **2014** | **2015** | **2016** | **4-yr Change** | **State (2016)** |
| African American/Black | 7 | -- | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | -- | 83.4 |
| Asian | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 94.8 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 77 | 91.0 | 92.9 | 85.9 | 94.8 | 3.8 | 76.8 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hisp./Lat. | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 87.4 |
| White | 76 | 95.0 | 91.8 | 93.0 | 96.1 | 1.1 | 93.5 |
| High needs | 145 | 93.7 | 93.7 | 88.7 | 95.2 | 1.5 | 82.9 |
| Economically Disadvantaged\* | 113 | 93.7 | 93.4 | 87.8 | 94.7 | 1.0 | 82.1 |
| SWD | 78 | 92.4 | 93.7 | 91.7 | 93.6 | 1.2 | 76.5 |
| EL | 14 | 90.9 | 100.0 | 90.0 | 92.9 | 2.0 | 70.9 |
| All | 164 | 93.4 | 93.0 | 89.3 | 95.7 | 2.3 | 89.8 |
| \* Four-year cohort graduation rate for students from low-income families used for 2013 and 2014 rates. |

| **Table 13: South Middlesex RVTSD****In-School Suspension Rates by Student Group, 2015–2018** |
| --- |
| **Group** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **4-yr Change** | **State (2018)** |
| African American/Black | 8.9 | 9.8 | 6.4 | -- | -- | 3.3 |
| Asian | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 0.5 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 4.0 | 3.1 | 2.1 | 0.6 | -3.4 | 2.5 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic or Latino | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 2.1 |
| White | 3.0 | 1.6 | 4.7 | 0.3 | -2.7 | 1.3 |
| High Needs | 3.7 | 2.6 | 3.7 | 0.6 | -3.1 | 2.6 |
| Economically disadvantaged\* | 4.8 | 3.0 | 3.6 | 0.6 | -4.2 | 2.9 |
| SWD | 4.7 | 2.7 | 4.0 | 0.3 | -4.4 | 3.1 |
| EL | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 1.7 |
| All | 3.9 | 2.7 | 3.4 | 0.5 | -3.4 | 1.7 |

| **Table 14: South Middlesex RVTSD****Out-of-School Suspension Rates by Student Group, 2015–2018** |
| --- |
| **Group** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **4-yr Change** | **State (2018)** |
| African American/Black | 11.1 | 7.3 | 8.5 | -- | -- | 6.3 |
| Asian | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 0.7 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 6.3 | 10.0 | 8.3 | 11.0 | 4.7 | 5.2 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic or Latino | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 3.1 |
| White | 7.6 | 7.9 | 6.6 | 9.9 | 2.3 | 1.6 |
| High Needs | 7.9 | 9.3 | 8.6 | 11.5 | 3.6 | 4.5 |
| Economically disadvantaged\* | 8.3 | 9.7 | 10.1 | 12.8 | 4.5 | 5.3 |
| SWD | 8.9 | 10.9 | 10.0 | 12.3 | 3.4 | 5.5 |
| EL | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 3.8 |
| All | 7.0 | 8.9 | 7.6 | 10.5 | 3.5 | 2.8 |

| **Table 15: South Middlesex RVTSD****Dropout Rates by Student Group, 2014–2017** |
| --- |
| **Group** | **2014** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **4-yr Change** | **State (2017)** |
| African American/Black | 0.0 | 2.3 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 2.9 |
| Asian | 0.0 | -- | -- | -- | -- | 0.6 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 0.9 | 3.6 | 2.4 | 0.3 | -0.6 | 4.2 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic or Latino | 0.0 | 5.9 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 1.7 |
| White | 0.7 | 1.4 | 0.3 | 0.3 | -0.4 | 1.1 |
| High Needs | 0.5 | 2.7 | 1.8 | 0.2 | -0.3 | 3.5 |
| Economically disadvantaged\* | 0.4 | 2.8 | 2.0 | 0.4 | 0.0 | 3.6 |
| SWD | 0.6 | 2.6 | 2.5 | 0.3 | -0.3 | 3.3 |
| EL | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 6.5 |
| All | 0.7 | 2.6 | 1.3 | 0.3 | -0.4 | 1.8 |
| \*Dropout rates for students from low income families used for 2014 rates.

| **Table 16: South Middlesex RVTSD****Advanced Coursework Completion** |
| --- |
| **Group** | **N (2018)** | **2017** | **2018** | **Change** | **Target** |
| African American/Black | 20 | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Asian | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Hispanic or Latino | 157 | 56.9 | 52.9 | -4.0 | 64.4 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic or Latino | 8 | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| White | 153 | 57.2 | 65.4 | 8.2 | 63.9 |
| High Needs | 219 | 52.6 | 50.2 | -2.4 | 58.9 |
| Economically disadvantaged | 127 | 56.6 | 53.5 | -3.1 | 63.1 |
| SWD | 133 | 51.9 | 44.4 | -7.5 | 57.9 |
| EL | 52 | 59.6 | 55.8 | -3.8 | 63.8 |
| All | 340 | 56.7 | 59.1 | 2.4 | 62.8 |

 |

| **Table 17: South Middlesex RVTSD****Progress toward Attaining English Language Proficiency** |
| --- |
|  | **Non-high school** | **High school** |
| **Group** | **N (2018)** | **2017** | **2018** | **Change** | **Target** | **N (2018)** | **2017** | **2018** | **Change** | **Target** |
| EL | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 55 | 20.0 | 29.1 | 9.1 | 23.1 |
| All | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 55 | 20.0 | 29.1 | 9.1 | 23.1 |

| **Table 18: South Middlesex RVTSD****Chronic Absence Rates,\* 2017–2018** |
| --- |
|  | **Non-high school** | **High school** |
| **Group** | **N (2018)** | **2017** | **2018** | **Change** | **Target** | **N (2018)** | **2017** | **2018** | **Change** | **Target** |
| African American/Black | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 45 | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Asian | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 1 | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Hispanic or Latino | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 326 | 26.3 | 22.7 | 3.6 | 22.4 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hisp./Lat. | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 23 | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| White | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 342 | 13.2 | 15.5 | -2.3 | 10.0 |
| High needs | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 529 | 23.3 | 21.6 | 1.7 | 20.1 |
| Economically Disadvantaged | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 288 | 28.5 | 26.4 | 2.1 | 25.2 |
| SWD | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 310 | 21.6 | 21.3 | 0.3 | 18.1 |
| EL | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 145 | 27.2 | 22.8 | 4.4 | 22.2 |
| All | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 745 | 19.6 | 18.9 | 0.7 | 17.2 |
| \* The percentage of students absent 10% or more of their total number of student days of membership in a school |

Curriculum and Instruction

Contextual Background

Keefe is in the second year of a three-year curriculum development and revision cycle set forth in the School Improvement Plans (SIPs) for 2017–2018 and 2018–2019, including a description of the current status, key actions, and the persons responsible and benchmarks. Administrators reported that the impending New England Association of Schools and Colleges review in 2018 made curriculum development timely. In the first year of the cycle (2017–2018), lead teachers and teachers constructed standards-based curriculum maps under the direction of the principal, the predecessor to the current academic assistant principal, and the director of career and technical education. The school’s academic and career, vocational, technical education (CVTE) curricula are now fully aligned with the 2017 Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and the 2014 Massachusetts Vocational Technical Education Frameworks.

In the second year of the cycle (2018–2019), lead teachers and teachers are developing assessments to determine students’ mastery of the standards under the direction of the administrators referenced above.

Keefe stores its curriculum maps on the Google G Suite for Education platform, and teachers have immediate access to them for instructional planning. Administrators and teachers reported that this web-based platform facilitated ongoing curricular revision, but were unclear about how frequently revisions would be made, the procedure, and the persons responsible. They said that the district would clarify the curricular revision process in the third year of the cycle (2019–2020).

Keefe has diversified and strengthened its course offerings over the five years before the onsite review in October 2018. The school added advanced placement courses in literature, language, computer science, and environmental science and created a continuum of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) courses that are aligned with Project Lead the Way (PLTW) courses. PLTW courses are designed to help students develop problem-solving, communication, and collaboration skills through project-based learning. Keefe has also added CVTE programs in dental assisting and legal and protective services in direct response to local market demand.

Strength Findings

**1. The school has aligned its academic and career, vocational, technical education (CVTE) curriculum maps with the Massachusetts Frameworks and the Massachusetts Vocational Technical Education Frameworks, and teachers use these maps for instructional planning. Keefe has also taken progressive steps to increase the rigor and relevance of its courses to better prepare students for initial employment, postsecondary education, and careers.**

* 1. In 2017–2018, administrators, lead teachers, and teachers worked collaboratively to map the academic and CVTE curricula.
		1. Administrators and teachers reported that time was set aside for curriculum mapping during twice-monthly department meetings, monthly faculty meetings, and half-day professional development sessions.
		2. Administrators and teachers revised the school’s CVTE mapping template and adopted an academic mapping template.
		3. The completed curriculum maps reviewed by the team on the school’s web-based platform contain standards, mastery objectives, timelines, essential questions, and teaching strategies.
		4. Administrators and teachers told the team that the curriculum maps ensured that teachers of the same course presented the same content at the same pace. They added that teachers were working to achieve consistency in evaluating student work.
			1. The team found that the content and pacing of lessons on the Great Depression in two United States history classes and lessons on slope and acceleration in two physics classes were highly consistent.
			2. English teachers reported that they exchanged student essays at the conclusion of the unit on the Odyssey in grade 9, graded them, and compared and discussed the results to increase inter-rater reliability.

**B**. The school has taken steps to increase the rigor and relevance of course offerings.

1. In 2016–2017, Keefe introduced advanced placement (AP) courses in literature and computer science; in 2017–2018, the school added AP language and environmental science courses.

 a. Although the 2018–2019 program of studies cites course prerequisites, administrators and teachers reported that the district has eliminated the prerequisites for honors level and AP courses. Administrators and teachers expressed the view that all students should have access to rigorous learning. They added that they were more concerned about the quality of the educational experience for students than the results of final and qualifying examinations.

 2. In 2012–2013, the school began to offer the Project Lead the Way (PLTW) continuum in grades 9–12. This continuum consists of a sequence of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) courses including: exploring computer science, introduction to engineering design, principles of engineering, and advanced placement computer science. According to data provided by the school, 67 students were enrolled in at least one PLTW course in 2018–2019.

 3. The school received Chapter 74 approval of its legal and protective services curriculum in 2015 and its dental assisting curriculum in 2017. Administrators told the team that employment opportunities were high in both these fields.

 4. Administrators and teachers reported that all CVTE teachers reinforced literacy, writing, and mathematical skills by including math problems and open-response questions in their lessons at least twice weekly. The team confirmed this practice: in one observed CVTE class, students were responding to an open-ended question and in another, solving math problems.

 5. The CVTE curriculum specifies the skills and technical knowledge that students must demonstrate for promotion to the next grade level. Administrators said that mastery learning ensured that students were adequately prepared for postsecondary education and employment.

**2. In observed classes, rituals and positive supports encouraged appropriate student behavior and reinforced students’ self-management skills**.

 **A**. The team found sufficient and compelling evidence that rituals, routines, and positive supports were in place to ensure that students behave appropriately (characteristic #11) in 83 percent of observed career, vocational, technical education (CVTE) classes and in 79 percent of observed academic classes.

1. In many observed classes, rules were posted and students abided by them. Teachers provided warnings to signal the transition from one activity to another, such as by turning the lights off and on. In one academic class, the use of sticky notes to record evidence from a text was routine, and in many CVTE classes students returned equipment at the end of the period without teacher direction. Without disrupting the instructional flow, a teacher quietly acknowledged a student who entered an academic class late.

 2. Routines and rituals in CVTE classes are often linked to student safety. In observed CVTE classes, all students wore eye protection. In classes that went outdoors, students were reminded to check the weather in the morning to ensure that they came to school dressed appropriately. In one CVTE classroom, a student stopped the review team member from entering the work environment until the team member was provided with eye protection.

 **B**. In observed classes, the climate was positive, respectful, and conducive to teaching and learning which supported students’ situational awareness and relationship skills.

 1. The review team saw sufficient and compelling evidence of a positive class climate including respectful relationships between students and between students and teachers (characteristic #12) in 94 percent of CVTE classes and in 82 percent of academic classes.

 2. Many teachers commended students on their progress and encouraged them to persevere. In one class, a poster stating, “We agree to be respectful and understanding” characterized the cordial tone. In another, the chairs were arranged in a semi-circle that enabled the teacher and all students to see each other, promoting discourse and broad participation.

 3. In CVTE classes, students were frequently observed to be working cooperatively with each other and checking each other’s work.

 4. A senior assisted grade 9 students in an exploratory class.

 5. The motto, “All Day, Every Day” characterized the climate and focus of one observed CVTE class where learning time was maximized, creating a sense of urgency.

**Impact**: Fully aligned academic and CVTE curricula ensure that students have access to cohesive content and learning that increases their achievement levels and readiness for initial employment, postsecondary education, and careers. When teachers use a curriculum map that is fully aligned with the content and rigor of the Massachusetts frameworks to plan instruction, students are likely to experience greater rigor and higher achievement.Creating a positive learning environment built on strong relationships and predictable routines creates a safe classroom where students are engaged and participate in the instructional activities.

**Challenges and Areas for Growth**

**3. In most observed classes, students were minimally engaged in analysis, problem solving and application of new knowledge, limiting their opportunities to develop and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills.**

* 1. The team observed sufficient and compelling evidence of students demonstrating or engaging in higher-order thinking (characteristic #6) in 50 percent of the career, vocational, technical education (CVTE) classes and in 40 percent of academic classes.

 1. Most observed instruction in both academic and CVTE classes was teacher directed, and there were limited opportunities for student participation. CVTE teachers often explained procedures and tasks at length without engaging students, such as by asking them to anticipate the next step, and rarely checked for student understanding, such as by asking them to explain a procedure in their own words. The questions teachers posed usually required only factual recall and students had limited opportunities to exercise higher-level thinking such as analysis, synthesis and prediction.

 2. Students listened quietly to their teachers and typically gave brief unelaborated responses to teachers’ questions, often stating “yes” or “no.” Teachers rarely asked students to explain or expand upon their responses and called almost exclusively upon volunteers.

 3. The learning activities in academic classes were typically low level, except in advanced placement and Project Lead the Way (PLTW) classes. For example, in one observed class, students copied definitions from the board and drew pictures representing them. In another, the Do Now activity consisted of true or false questions.

 4. In one observed class, the teacher offered a student a completely unrelated activity when the assignment he was working on proved to be too difficult.

 5. In some observed CVTE classes, the activities were not challenging, including review questions focusing on basic recall and a cutting and a gluing activity in an exploratory class.

 6. The review team found that instruction in CVTE classes was frequently teacher directed.

**B.** In focus groups,families and students expressed the view that the expectations for student learning were not consistently rigorous at Keefe.

 1. Parents told the team that not all teachers held students accountable for doing high-quality work that would prepare them for college.

 2. When asked to cite examples of challenging work and high expectations, students referenced only their advanced placement classes.

**4. In observed classrooms, teachers did not consistently use a variety of instructional approaches.[[1]](#footnote-1) The majority of observed academic classrooms relied on direct instruction with limited student participation and interaction with each other.**

 **A.** The team observed sufficient and compelling evidence of teachers using multiple instructional approaches (characteristic #10) in 78 percent of career, vocational, technical education (CVTE) classes and in 43 percent of academic classes.

 **B.** The format of paired or small-group instruction varied significantly in academic classes, with some students sitting together, but engaging in parallel activities instead of interacting with each other on a common task. In a number of academic classes observed by the team, students completed worksheets as the primary activity.

 **C.** In most of the core academic subject classes observed by the team, teachers relied upon the lecture mode.

 **D.** The team found evidence of multiple instructional approaches in 13 of 17 observed CVTE classes. The range of methods in these classes included direct instruction, hands-on experiential activities, teacher demonstrations, instructional videos, and guided student practice.

 **E.** CVTE classes that relied upon only one approach were characterized by direct instruction with little student participation and interaction with each other. In these classrooms, students worked independently with little teacher monitoring and teachers infrequently checked for student understanding.

**Impact**: Without ensuring that teachers engage students in higher-order thinking and provide them with sufficient opportunities to communicate their ideas and thinking with each other, the district is not ensuring that all students are receiving instruction that challenges them and helps them develop deeper understanding of course content and advanced skills that would enable them to achieve at higher levels. Using a limited variety of instructional strategies likely reduces access to the curriculum and compromises the quality of learning outcomes.

**Recommendation**

**The district should improve instruction by building teachers’ capacity, especially in the areas of promoting higher-order thinking skills, increasing student communication of their ideas and thinking, and using a variety of instructional strategies.**

1. The district should provide high-quality professional development (PD) to deepen teachers’ understanding of instructional practices and increase their repertoire and use of instructional strategies to promote higher-order thinking skills and student discourse.

The district should use multiple sources of data including needs assessments, teacher evaluations, student performance data, and other relevant sources to identify professional development topics. PD should be aligned with the instructional materials used in the district.

The school should consider providing training for teachers on accountable talk to improve students’ ability to communicate their ideas and thinking with each other.

Administrators are encouraged to expand opportunities for teachers to observe peers who demonstrate expertise, especially in promoting higher-order thinking skills, increasing student communication, and using a variety of instructional strategies.

Teachers should be encouraged to watch videos of effective instructional strategies and follow up with discussion during PD and/or department meetings. Shared professional readings and subsequent discussions may strengthen teachers’ understanding of key instructional strategies.

1. The district should consider identifying areas for instructional improvement as goals in the School Improvement Plan together with resources, implementation strategies, and monitoring responsibilities. Teachers are encouraged to include SMART goals[[2]](#footnote-2) related to instruction in their own PD plans and educator evaluation documents.
2. The school should consider implementing learning and data walks to focus on specific instructional elements that have been identified as priorities for schoolwide improvement.

1. Administrators might use the findings from learning and data walks to facilitate discussion with teachers and identify improvement strategies. The school is encouraged to consider the following topics for learning and data walks: promoting higher-order thinking skills, increasing student discourse, and employing a variety of instructional strategies.

2. The district should consider ways to use classroom observations, including learning walks, to determine the effectiveness of PD related to instructional practice, and adjust PD planning accordingly.

**Benefits:** Implementing this recommendation will mean that students will experience more challenging instruction that further develops higher-order thinking skills and is designed to accommodate their specific learning needs. A district that prioritizes high-quality instruction for all students creates and sustains a culture of continuous improvement resulting in professional growth for educators and increased student achievement.

**Recommended resources:**

* ESE’s *Learning Walkthrough Implementation Guide* (<http://www.mass.gov/edu/docs/ese/accountability/dart/walkthrough/implementation-guide.docx>) is a resource to support instructional leaders in establishing a *Learning Walkthrough* process in a school or district. It is designed to provide guidance to those working in an established culture of collaboration as well as those who are just beginning to observe classrooms and discuss teaching and learning in a focused and actionable manner.
	+ Appendix 4, *Characteristics of Standards-Based Teaching and Learning: Continuum of Practice* (<http://www.mass.gov/edu/docs/ese/accountability/dart/walkthrough/continuum-practice.pdf>) is a framework that provides a common language or reference point for looking at teaching and learning.
* ESE’s *Calibration Video Library* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/calibration/>) is a collection of professionally created videos of classroom instruction produced by the School Improvement Network. These videos depict a range of practice (this is NOT a collection of exemplars) to support within-district calibration activities that promote a shared understanding of instructional quality and rigor.
* ESE’s *Online Calibration Training Tool* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/calibration/tool/>) uses videos of classroom instruction from ESE’s Calibration Video Library to simulate brief, unannounced observations. Groups of educators, such as a district leadership team, watch a video together and then individually assess the educator’s practice related to specific elements from the Model Classroom Teacher Rubric and provide the educator with written feedback. Through real-time data displays, the group members can then see how their conclusions compare to each other, as well educators throughout the state.
* ESE’s *"What to Look For" Observation Guides* ***(Updated August 2017)*** (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/candi/observation/>) describe what observers should expect to see in a classroom at a particular grade level in a specific subject area. This includes the knowledge and skills students should be learning and using (as reflected in state learning standards) and best practices related to classroom curriculum, instruction, and assessment for each subject area. The guides are not designed to replace any evaluation system or tools districts currently use, but are a resource to help classroom observers efficiently identify what teachers and students should be experiencing in specific subjects and grade levels.
* The *Educator Effectiveness Guidebook for Inclusive Practice* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/guidebook/>) includes tools for districts, schools, and educators that are aligned to the MA Educator Evaluation Framework and promote evidence-based best practices for inclusion following the principles of Universal Design for Learning, Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, and Social and Emotional Learning. On-line course provided for educators.

Assessment

Contextual Background

The team found a robust and well-established student performance assessment system in the career, vocational, technical education (CVTE) program, consisting of multiple measures such as written tests, structured observations, performance assessments, and projects evaluated by rubrics and portfolios. The academic program relies primarily upon teacher-made quizzes, unit tests, and final examinations. The team found in interviews that academic teachers varied widely in their knowledge of the principles of written-test construction, and teachers told the team that they had not received related professional development. Consequently, the team found that some academic disciplines were much farther ahead than others in the development of common assessments. The common assessments in English, history, mathematics and science reviewed by the team varied widely in quality, raising questions about their validity.

Administrators said that by design the school does not have a data team so that all staff are included in the data analysis process. When asked, teachers were unclear about who in the school was primarily responsible for data collection, analysis, and dissemination. They said that many people assumed a role including themselves, but roles for data collection, analysis, and dissemination were not formally defined.

The team did not find a systematic process for the regular review of student performance data. When asked, administrators and teachers were unclear how the district used graduation, positive placement, dropout, chronic absence, and suspension rates to identify needs and direct resources. Administrators said that they did not review disaggregated student data to determine over- and under-representation in areas such as advanced placement and honors course enrollment; the superintendent said that Keefe focused on all students having access to all opportunities. However, the district did not meet its accountability targets for advanced coursework completion, and the percentage of 11th and 12th graders completing advanced coursework declined from 2017 to 2018 for many student groups.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Strength Finding

**1. Keefe CVTE programs use a variety of complementary assessments---including in-class formative assessments and continuous observations, teacher-made unit and final examinations, projects, portfolios, and external qualifying examinations---to determine student proficiency and improve instructional and curricular effectiveness.**

**A.** CVTE program teachers use in-class formative assessment techniques to assess students’ immediate understanding of task requirements and intended outcomes.

 1. In observed CVTE classes, teachers circulated as students completed tasks and asked individual students to state what they were doing, why they were doing it, and the next steps. Teachers interrupted the work period to reteach concepts and procedures when they determined that students were experiencing common difficulties.

 2. Teachers sometimes used checklists to record their observations of students’ work products and work habits. CVTE teachers told the team that students’ daily performance guided their [teachers’] planning of the next lesson. They said that they customized the next lesson by making appropriate accommodations for accelerated and struggling students.

 **B**. The school provided the team with unit tests and final examinations from several career areas, including health careers, programming and web development, and information technology. Teachers said that the results of these tests and examinations were used to modify the emphasis, sequencing, and pacing of the curriculum and to identify and address individual student’s strengths and needs.

  **C**. Administrators and CVTE teachers told the team that CVTE teachers used rubrics to rate long-term projects. The school provided the team with examples of five-point scale rubrics for projects in metal fabrication, plumbing, and business technology.

 **D**. Administrators reported that projects were components of students’ portfolios. Portfolios document students’ skills with examples of their work products in support of their applications for employment or admission to post-secondary institutions. All seniors complete a project and present it to a panel of teachers who evaluate the project according to a detailed rubric reviewed by the team.

  **E**. Administrators and CVTE teachers stated that CVTE teachers rated students’ progress toward mastery of the CVTE standards regularly using SkillsPlus, a web-based program for maintaining, tracking, and reporting skills-based curricula and tracking the progress of students as they made attempts at reaching levels of proficiency in their fields. When asked by team members, students could state their level of proficiency.

 **F**. Students and families told the team that students developed a goal-based career plan and tracked their progress toward the accomplishment of these goals. Teachers referred to these plans as individual competency-based student educational plans. When asked, students expressed understanding of the career pathway in their field, which extends from the entry level upon graduation from high school to the professional level upon graduation from college with a bachelors’ or advanced degree. Administrators and teachers told the team that they encouraged students to explore their fields thoroughly and to aspire to lifelong learning.

**G**. Students in certain fields, including dental assisting, health careers, and plumbing, take licensure or certification examinations to qualify for initial employment. Administrators and teachers reported that they used the results of industry-recognized qualifying examinations to assess program effectiveness and to modify the curriculum. Administrators provided examples of modifications of the plumbing and health careers curricula following an analysis of qualifying examination results.

**Impact**: The Keefe CVTE program is using student assessment to improve students’ understanding of intended learning outcomes and to support students in becoming self-directed learners. By using internal and external assessment results strategically to adapt instruction to students’ strengths and needs and to modify CVTE curricula, administrators and teachers are taking steps to improve students’ performance, opportunities, and outcomes.

**Challenges and Areas for Growth**

**2. Formative and summative assessments are administered in every core academic course; however, these assessments are not always the same in every section of the same course. Academic teachers are currently developing common assessments aligned to the curriculum, but the school does not have a procedure to ensure the validity of these assessments.**

**A**. The team examined a sample of assessments linked to the school’s NEASC Self-Evaluation, assessment documents provided by administrators and the assessment component of a sample of curriculum documents from every core discipline.

**B**. The team found through a review of these documents and through interviews with administrators and teachers that there were more common assessments in mathematics and science courses than in English and history courses.

1. Keefe instituted a three-year curriculum revision cycle that began in 2017–2018 with the selection of a template and the development of standards-based curriculum maps in all academic courses and career, vocational, technical education (CVTE) areas.
2. Administrators and teachers told the team that although almost all CVTE areas had common assessments, common assessments were missing in some academic disciplines. They said that the second year of the curriculum revision cycle is devoted to the development of common academic assessments, as stated in the second goal of the 2018–2019 School improvement Plan “During the 2018-19 school year, academic departments will implement common assessments.”

**C**. The school does not have a procedure to ensure the validity of common academic assessments.

Administrators reported that teams of teachers within a discipline developed common assessments collaboratively, primarily during professional development time. Although administrators have provided some guidance, such as by defining the types of formative assessments, they told the team that they did not routinely review and provide feedback on the common assessments that teachers develop.

Administrators said that the assessment expertise of academic departments varied and described some veteran teachers as “resistant” to the development of common assessments.

3. When asked, administrators and teachers said that test item and scoring criteria varied by discipline and sometimes within disciplines.

**Impact**: The curriculum addresses the objectives identified in the standards, and student assessments focus on mastery of the standards. When common assessments are not carefully and consistently aligned with the curriculum and the standards and when item difficulty and grading standards are not calibrated, the results may not help educators determine how well students are learning, identify their needs, and make changes that improve students’ performance.

**3. The school does not administer external diagnostic assessments to identify students’ strengths and needs as part of a universal screening program and to help monitor students’ progress in response to interventions.**

 **A**. Administrators and teachers told the team that the school heavily relied upon teacher-constructed tests, such as quizzes, unit tests, and final examinations to identify students’ strengths and needs.

 **B**. The school administers and analyzes the results of a variety of external assessments including the MCAS tests, Advanced Placement (AP) tests, the PSAT, and the ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery Test); however, these assessments are not diagnostic and the results cannot be used to inform instructional planning.

 **C**. The school does not administer an assessment to determine students’ readiness for introductory college courses.

**Impact**: By not administering commercial external assessments to identify students’ strengths and needs as part of a universal screening program and to help monitor students’ progress in response to interventions, the district is not ensuring that educators and students have access to a comprehensive picture of student, school, and district performance. In the absence of some external assessments, the school has little basis for comparing its results to other reference groups, such as schools with similar demographics and other vocational schools. The absence of external diagnostic assessments impairs the school’s universal screening program and reduces its ability to identify the challenges of struggling students and to measure their progress in response to interventions.

**Recommendations**

**Keefe should create structures to support the development of common assessments and provide academic teachers with professional development on creating and improving assessments.**

1. The district should continue to implement its curriculum cycle, with particular attention to the systems and practices that will support the development of common assessments.

1. The district’s approach should include an emphasis on ensuring alignment and consistency of assessments and data use across classrooms.

1. The district should provide academic teachers with professional development (PD) about valid written test construction.

1. PD might include the following topics: identifying major learning objectives, content and concepts to be covered by common unit tests; writing test items in the objective format (multiple choice, matching), short answer format (sentence completion, brief response) and essay format; assessing item difficulty; and determining the number and order of test items.

2. The district should consider differentiating PD, since teachers are at various levels of expertise. More experienced teachers might serve as coaches for other educators.

3. Keefe should consider compiling a bank of high-quality test items categorized by discipline and make it available on the school’s G Suite platform.

1. As part of the PD, career, vocational, technical education (CVTE) teachers should share with academic teachers the range of assessment techniques they employ in addition to written tests, including performance assessments, projects, and portfolios.

**Benefits:** Students benefit when their teachers are directly involved in the development of assessments and analysis of results. The development and use of valid, high-quality common assessments will contribute to consistency in expectations and will provide educators with useful data to inform decision-making and planning. Professional development will ensure that teachers develop and administer valid, aligned assessments to identify students’ strengths and needs, inform instructional planning, and direct changes in the emphasis and/or sequencing of the school’s academic curricula. Balancing written tests with other assessment methods in the academic disciplines will provide students with a variety of ways to demonstrate mastery.

* + 1. **Keefe should consider selecting and administering external diagnostic literacy and mathematics assessments to identify students’ strengths and needs and to monitor the progress of struggling students in response to interventions. The school should provide an assessment to help juniors and seniors determine their readiness for introductory college-level courses.**

**A.** The district should consider adopting an external diagnostic assessment in reading and mathematics such as I-Ready, the Star 360 assessment suite, or another assessment based on the district’s research.

1. The district could administer this assessment to admitted grade 8 students before the beginning of the school year. The results might be used in combination with grades, teachers’ recommendations, and other relevant data to place grade 9 students in English and mathematics courses and to identify students who would benefit from academic support targeted to their identified areas of challenge.

* 1. The district could re-administer the same diagnostic assessment to students in the spring of grade 9 to measure their progress, help them select grade 10 courses, and help school staff provide continuing support and enrichment based on students’ needs.
	2. The school should consider a diagnostic assessment such as the ACCUPLACER or another college readiness assessment to help juniors and seniors determine their readiness for introductory college courses.

**Benefits:** Standardized assessments provide a broader perspective by comparing district students’ performance against the performance of a national norm group that consists of students at the same grade level. Because a diagnostic assessment provides information about the knowledge and skills students have as they enter a course, implementing these assessments will help teachers to plan instruction that targets students’ needs. They can also help school staff design appropriate support for students and evaluate curricular effectiveness. In addition, readiness assessments can help students to understand their progress as learners.

Student Support

Contextual Background

Keefe has initiated several intervention programs. The school offers academic support and learning strategies classes for struggling students. Keefe also allows students with excessive absences opportunities to earn back time lost time. The district provides credit recovery sessions on Saturdays, during vacation weeks, and over the summer.

Keefe’s attendance team meets regularly to monitor student attendance. In a preventative approach, parents are notified periodically as absences near the limit set in the attendance policy. The school confers with families and students about the reasons for excessive absences and develops a plan to help students attend school more regularly. According to DESE data, from 2016 to 2018 Keefe’s student attendance rate hovered around 93 percent. Although the school’s chronic absence rate[[4]](#footnote-4) improved from 19.4 percent in 2015–2016 to 17.6 percent in 2017–2018, the 2018 chronic absence rates for grades 11 and 12 are high at 22.6 percent and 25.8 percent, respectively.

According to DESE data, between 2015 and 2018 the school’s out-of-school suspension rate has increased by 3.5 percentage points, from 7.0 percent in 2014–2015 to 10.5 percent in 2017–2018. Keefe is moving toward an approach to student discipline based upon restorative justice principles with a focus on building relationships with students and families.

Parents, students, and staff reported feeling physically safe at school. The district has put in place several security measures. The school employs a full-time resource officer and a hall monitor. The school’s doors are locked and a staff member is stationed at the front entrance to monitor for safety and permit visitors to enter the building. Visitors sign a register and receive an identification badge.

The school also promotes an emotionally safe environment for students. For example, school adjustment counselors conduct group sessions for at-risk students. The topics include positive decision-making strategies. The school holds monthly class advisory periods intended to inform students about school activities, recognize student successes, and provide opportunities for collaboration. Student accomplishments and successes are often celebrated at these assemblies. The school has designated a gender-neutral restroom and has developed a use policy with the participation of staff, students, and families.

Strength Finding

1. **The school’s guidance curriculum provides students with school counseling and college and career planning in each grade.**

**A.** Keefe guidance counselors serve as liaisons with the middle schools of the towns of residence of admitted students; consult with middle-school counselors to help determine appropriate course selections for admitted students; and identify students who are struggling with academic and/or social-emotional problems.

1. Students are assigned to a guidance counselor who follows the student for all four years at Keefe. When issues arise, the guidance counselor serves as the first contact for students, their teachers, and their families. In interviews and focus groups, administrators, teachers, parents, and students identified the guidance counselor as the first point of contact when concerns arise.
2. Guidance counselors are members of the Student Assessment and Resource Team (START), which also includes adjustment counselors, the school psychologist, the consulting clinical psychologist, special educators, the substance abuse counselor, and the school nurse.

a. The START team meets monthly to discuss the needs of students experiencing challenges and determine the resources available for additional student support. A memo from the principal to the faculty dated September 12, 2017 clearly defines the process and purpose of the START team and the resources available for student interventions.

 **B.** The college and career guidance curriculum includes the following components:

* grade 9 orientation;
* orientation to Naviance, a software program with college planning and career assessment tools, including a career interest survey;
* PSAT and ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery Test) testing;
* Financial Aid Night with Spanish and Portuguese interpreters;
* grade 9 career, vocational, technical education (CVTE) decision-making lessons;
* scholarship opportunities for seniors;
* an “on the spot” Massachusetts Bay Community College admissions opportunity; and
* individual post-secondary college and career planning.

 **C.** Interviews and a review of the guidance curriculum indicated that guidance counselors delivered monthly college and career planning lessons at each grade level.

**Impact:** Comprehensive school counseling helps students and their families address developmental concerns and has the potential to increase student performance and outcomes. The college and career planning program helps students make meaningful and informed decisions.

**Challenges and Areas for Growth**

**2. The school does not have a proactive universal screening procedure to identify student’s strengths and needs, a defined continuum of interventions for all students, and a guidance document to help teachers provide for individual differences*.***

 **A**. Administrators and student support staff reported that the school did not administer scientifically validated assessments periodically to monitor the performance of all students in the academic disciplines.

1. At the time of the onsite review in October 2018, academic teachers were developing common assessments. However, the school does not have a formal procedure for analyzing the results within and across disciplines.

 **B**. Administrators stated that the school recently established a student attendance team composed of administrators and student support staff. This team meets weekly to identify and assist students who are frequently absent.

1.The attendance team conducts a conference at school or during a home visit to determine and resolve the challenges that interfere with regular attendance.

 **C.** The student support team, which is composed of counselors, social workers, the school psychologist, the clinical psychologist, the school nurse, and administrators, meets every six weeks to discuss the needs of students referred by administrators, teachers, or families.

1.Administrators reported that the team did not develop written intervention plans or other formal documentation of recommended interventions for referred students, except when students were placed on 504 accommodation plans or Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs).[[5]](#footnote-5)

 **D**. The school provides a range of support services, but these services are not clearly defined and organized. It was not clear to the review team how students progressed along a continuum of services proportionate to their needs extending from universal services for all students in general education classrooms (Tier 1) to supplementary research-based interventions (Tier 2), some of which are more customized, intense, and frequent (Tier 3).

1. Administrators and student support staff said that services were designed case by case.

 **E.** The school does not havea current and accessible guidance document to help teachers provide for individual differences.

1.Administrators reported that the District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP) developed in 2010 was under revision.

 2. Teachers said that they were aware that the school had a DCAP, but were uncertain how to access it.

 3. The latest version of the DCAP contains a range of suggested instructional strategies. In most observed academic classes, teachers lectured and did not use any of the other strategies to vary their instruction.

**Impact**: Without a universal screening procedure and a clearly defined tiered system of support that includes data-driven decision-making, progress monitoring, and evidence-based supports in conjunction with a variety of instructional strategies, the ability of the school to improve all students’ performance, opportunities, and outcomes is limited.

**Recommendation**

**1. The school should develop and implement a formal tiered system of support.**

 **A**. The school should develop a coordinated, proactive approach to meet the needs of all students by ensuring that schools use data-driven decision-making, progress monitoring, and evidence-based supports and strategies with increasing intensity to sustain students’ academic, behavioral, and social-emotional growth.

 **B.** The school should consider providing high-quality professional development (PD) for all staff on the implementation of a formal tiered system of support.

 **C.** The school should complete the update of the DCAP, make it readily available to staff, and provide teachers with PD on the accommodations and instructional strategies identified in the DCAP.

 **D.** The school should ensure that school leadership teams systematically evaluate the effectiveness of its tiered system of support to inform planning.

**Benefits:** A data-driven tiered system of supports will ensure that all students receive high-quality core instruction as well as targeted interventions as needed. In this way, the district will be better able to improve all students’ performance, opportunities, and outcomes.

**Recommended resources:**

* The *Massachusetts Systems for Student Success (SfSS)* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/sfss/>) is a blueprint for school improvement that focuses on systems, structures and supports across the district, school, and classroom to meet the academic and non-academic needs of all students. The SfSS website includes links to a self-assessment and a variety of helpful resources.
* The *Early Warning Implementation Guide* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edwin/analytics/implementation-guide.pdf>) provides information on how to use early warning data, including the Massachusetts Early Warning Indicator System (EWIS), to identify, diagnose, support and monitor students in grades 1-12. It offers educators an overview of EWIS and how to effectively use these data in conjunction with local data by following a six-step implementation cycle.
* The *Educator Effectiveness Guidebook for Inclusive Practice* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/guidebook/>) includes tools for districts, schools, and educators that are aligned to the MA Educator Evaluation Framework and promote evidence-based best practices for inclusion following the principles of Universal Design for Learning, Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, and Social and Emotional Learning
* *Every Student, Every Day: A Community Toolkit to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism* (<http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/chronicabsenteeism/toolkit.pdf>) is a set of Action Guides that provide information and resources to help ensure that all young people are in school every day and benefitting from coordinated systems of support.
* *Making the Case for the Importance of School Climate and Its Measurement* (<http://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/events/webinar/making-case-importance-school-climate-and-its-measurement>) is a recorded webinar, along with a detailed PowerPoint presentation, that addresses: the linkages between school climate and students’ development; models of school climate; best practices in communicating the importance of school climate to stakeholders; and characteristics of good school climate measures.
* The *Conditions for School Effectiveness Self-Assessment* (<http://www.mass.gov/edu/docs/ese/accountability/school-effect-self-assessment.pdf>) is a tool for conducting a scan of current practice, identifying areas of strength, and highlighting areas requiring greater focus.
* ESE’s *District Data Team Toolkit* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/accountability/toolkit/>) is a set of resources to help a district establish, grow, and maintain a culture of inquiry and data use through a District Data Team.

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

Review Team Members

The review was conducted from October 29–31, 2018, by the following team of independent ESE consultants.

1. Marta Montleon, Instruction
2. Mary Jo Nawrocki, Curriculum
3. Dr. James McAuliffe, Assessment, *review team coordinator*
4. Valerie Murphy, Student Support
5. George Gearhart, classroom observation only

 District Review Activities

The following activities were conducted during the review:

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

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

The team conducted interviews/focus groups with the following central office administrators: the superintendent-director, the principal, the assistant principal/dean of students, the academic assistant principal, the director of guidance and admissions, the director of special education, and the director of career and technical education.

The team visited the following schools: Joseph P. Keefe Technical High School (grades 9–12).

During school visits, the team conducted interviews with students, students’ families, and the principal and a focus group with 17 high-school teachers.

The team observed 46 classes in the district at the high school.

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

* + Student and school performance data, including achievement and growth, enrollment, graduation, dropout, retention, suspension, and attendance rates.
	+ Data on the district’s staffing.
	+ Published educational reports on the district by ESE, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), and the former Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA).
	+ District documents such as district and school improvement plans, school committee policies, curriculum documents, summaries of student assessments, job descriptions, handbook, and the school schedule.

Site Visit Schedule

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Monday**10/29/2018 | **Tuesday**10/30/2018 | **Wednesday**10/31/2018 |
| Orientation with district leaders and principals; interviews with district staff; document reviews; teacher focus group, school committee; town officials; and visits to classrooms for observations. | Interviews with district and school staff including principals, lead teachers, student support staff, and teachers; teachers association; parent focus group; and visits to classrooms for observations. | Student focus group; classroom observations; interviews with school administrators; closing meeting with superintendent-director |

Appendix B: Enrollment, Attendance, Expenditures

**Table B1a: South Middlesex RVTSD**

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

| **Group** | **District** | **Percent****of Total** | **State** | **Percent of****Total** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| African-American | 44 | 6.0% | 86,305 | 9.0% |
| Asian | 1 | 0.1% | 65,667 | 6.9% |
| Hispanic | 317 | 43.4% | 191,201 | 20.0% |
| Native American | 8 | 1.1% | 2,103 | 0.2% |
| White | 338 | 46.2% | 573,335 | 60.1% |
| Native Hawaiian | -- | -- | 818 | 0.1% |
| Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic  | 23 | 3.1% | 34,605 | 3.6% |
| All | 731 | 100.0% | 954,034 | 100.0% |
| Note: As of October 1, 2017 |

**Table B1b: South Middlesex RVTSD**

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

| **Group** | **District** | **State** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **N** | **Percent of High Needs** | **Percent of District** | **N** | **Percent of High Needs** | **Percent of State** |
| Students w/ disabilities | 321 | 62.8% | 43.9% | 171,061 | 38.0% | 17.7% |
| Econ. Dis. | 296 | 57.9% | 40.5% | 305,203 | 67.9% | 32.0% |
| EL and Former EL | 67 | 13.1% | 9.2% | 97,334 | 21.6% | 10.2% |
| All high needs students | 511 | 100.0% | 69.9% | 449,584 | 100.0% | 46.6% |
| Notes: As of October 1, 2017. District and state numbers and percentages for students with disabilities and high needs students are calculated including students in out-of-district placements. Total district enrollment including students in out-of-district placement is 731; total state enrollment including students in out-of-district placement is 964,806. |

**Table B2a: South Middlesex RVTSD**

**Attendance Rates, 2015–2018**

| **Group** | **N (2018)** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **4-yr Change** | **State (2018)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| African American/Black | 46 | 93.1 | 92.5 | 94.0 | 94.1 | 1.0 | 94.1 |
| Asian | 1 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 96.2 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 327 | 91.7 | 92.3 | 92.0 | 92.6 | 0.9 | 92.7 |
| Multi-Race | 24 | 93.9 | 93.9 | 94.6 | 95.0 | 1.1 | 94.4 |
| White | 346 | 94.0 | 93.8 | 94.2 | 94.4 | 0.4 | 95.1 |
| High Needs | 501 | 92.5 | 92.7 | 92.6 | 93.2 | 0.7 | 93.2 |
| Econ. Dis. | 292 | 92.8 | 91.9 | 91.4 | 91.9 | -0.9 | 92.5 |
| SWD | 312 | 92.6 | 92.8 | 93.2 | 93.4 | 0.8 | 92.9 |
| EL | 77 | 91.3 | 90.9 | 92.4 | 92.7 | 1.4 | 93.3 |
| All  | 752 | 92.8 | 93.0 | 93.2 | 93.6 | 0.8 | 94.5 |
| Notes: The attendance rate is calculated by dividing the total number of days students attended school by the total number of days students were enrolled in a particular school year. A student’s attendance rate is counted toward any district the student attended. In addition, district attendance rates included students who were out placed in public collaborative or private alternative schools/programs at public expense. Attendance rates have been rounded; percent change is based on unrounded numbers. |

**Table B2b: South Middlesex RVTSD**

**Chronic Absence Rates,\* 2015–2018**

| **Group** | **N (2018)** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **4-yr Change** | **State (2018)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| African American/Black | 45 | 24.4 | 19.5 | 19.1 | 20.0 | -4.4 | 16.4 |
| Asian | 1 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 7.6 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 326 | 26.5 | 25.7 | 26.5 | 22.7 | -3.8 | 22.5 |
| Multi-Race | 23 | 16.7 | 16.7 | 12.0 | 21.7 | 5.0 | 14.2 |
| White | 342 | 16.3 | 16.4 | 13.2 | 15.5 | -0.8 | 10.0 |
| High Needs | 529 | 24.0 | 22.4 | 23.5 | 21.6 | -2.4 | 20.1 |
| Econ. Dis. | 339 | 24.5 | 24.6 | 28.7 | 25.1 | 0.6 | 22.9 |
| SWD | 310 | 23.5 | 22.1 | 21.5 | 21.3 | -2.2 | 20.7 |
| EL | 76 | 25.0 | 32.6 | 23.3 | 22.4 | -2.6 | 20.4 |
| All  | 745 | 21.8 | 20.9 | 19.7 | 18.9 | -2.9 | 13.2 |
| \* The percentage of students absent 10% or more of their total number of student days of membership in a school |

**Table B3: South Middlesex RVTSD**

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

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|   | **FY16** | **FY17** | **FY18** |
|   | **Estimated** | **Actual** | **Estimated** | **Actual** | **Estimated** | **Actual** |
| Expenditures |
| From local appropriations for schools: |  |
| By school committee | $17,644,007 | $17,407,350 | $18,090,852 | $17,929,898 | $18,602,440 | $18,539,184 |
| From revolving funds and grants | -- | $2,595,601 | -- | $2,876,760 | -- | $2,859,938 |
| Total expenditures | -- | $20,002,951 | -- | $20,806,658 | -- | $21,399,122 |
| Chapter 70 aid to education program |
| Chapter 70 state aid\* | -- | $4,090,859 | -- | $4,386,161 | -- | $4,407,641 |
| Required local contribution | -- | $7,823,272 | -- | $7,592,237 | -- | $7,850,604 |
| Required net school spending\*\* | -- | $11,914,131 | -- | $11,978,398 | -- | $12,258,245 |
| Actual net school spending | -- | $15,615,226 | -- | $15,970,023 | -- | $17,016,032 |
| Over/under required ($) | -- | $3,701,095 | -- | $3,991,625 | -- | $4,757,787 |
| Over/under required (%) | -- | 31.1% | -- | 33.3% | -- | 38.8% |
| \*Chapter 70 state aid funds are deposited in the local general fund and spent as local appropriations.\*\*Required net school spending is the total of Chapter 70 aid and required local contribution. Net school spending includes only expenditures from local appropriations, not revolving funds and grants. It includes expenditures for most administration, instruction, operations, and out-of-district tuitions. It does not include transportation, school lunches, debt, or capital.Sources: FY16, FY17, and FY18 District End-of-Year Reports, Chapter 70 Program information on ESE websiteData retrieved 11/13/18 and 1/25/19 |

**Table B4: South Middlesex RVTSD**

**Expenditures Per In-District Pupil**

**Fiscal Years 2015–2017**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Expenditure Category** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** |
| Administration | $1,401 | $1,428 | $1,367 |
| Instructional leadership (district and school) | $1,682 | $1,882 | $1,834 |
| Teachers | $8,623 | $8,812 | $9,000 |
| Other teaching services | $984 | $987 | $1,062 |
| Professional development | $112 | $129 | $207 |
| Instructional materials, equipment and technology | $1,438 | $1,422 | $1,852 |
| Guidance, counseling and testing services | $1,213 | $1,293 | $1,408 |
| Pupil services | $2,737 | $2,783 | $2,696 |
| Operations and maintenance | $3,599 | $3,295 | $3,410 |
| Insurance, retirement and other fixed costs | $3,968 | $4,364 | $3,950 |
| Total expenditures per in-district pupil | $25,758 | $26,396 | $26,786 |
| Sources: [Per-pupil expenditure reports on ESE website](http://www.doe.mass.edu/finance/statistics/ppx.html)Note: Any discrepancy between expenditures and total is because of rounding. |

Appendix C: Instructional Inventory

| **Focus Area #1: Learning Objectives & Expectations** |  | Insufficient Evidence | Limited Evidence | Sufficient Evidence | Compelling Evidence | Avg Number of points |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (1 to 4) |
| 1. The teacher demonstrates knowledge of the subject matter. | **V/Tech.** | 6% | 0% | 33% | 61% | 3.5 |
| **Acad.** | 0% | 25% | 57% | 18% | 2.9 |
| **Total #** | 1 | 7 | 22 | 16 | 3.2 |
| **Total %** | 2% | 15% | 48% | 35% |  |
| 2. The teacher ensures that students understand what they should be learning in the lesson and why. | **V/Tech.** | 6% | 22% | 33% | 39% | 3.1 |
| **Acad.** | 0% | 18% | 68% | 14% | 3.0 |
| **Total #** | 1 | 9 | 25 | 11 | 3.0 |
| **Total %** | 2% | 20% | 54% | 24% |  |
| 3. The teacher uses appropriate classroom activities well matched to the learning objective(s). | **V/Tech.** | 0% | 6% | 50% | 44% | 3.4 |
| **Acad.** | 4% | 18% | 61% | 18% | 2.9 |
| **Total #** | 1 | 6 | 26 | 13 | 3.1 |
| **Total %** | 2% | 13% | 57% | 28% |  |
| 4. The teacher conducts frequent checks for student understanding, provides feedback, and adjusts instruction. | **V/Tech.** | 6% | 33% | 28% | 33% | 2.9 |
| **Acad.** | 0% | 25% | 50% | 25% | 3.0 |
| **Total #** | 1 | 13 | 19 | 13 | 3.0 |
| **Total %** | 2% | 28% | 41% | 28% |  |
| **Total Score For Focus Area #1** | **V/Tech.** |   |   |   |   | **12.8** |
| **Acad.** |   |   |   |   | **11.8** |
| **Total** |   |   |   |   | **12.2** |

| **Focus Area #2: Student Engagement & Higher-Order Thinking** |  | Insufficient Evidence | Limited Evidence | Sufficient Evidence | Compelling Evidence | Avg Number of points |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (1 to 4) |
| 5. Students assume responsibility to learn and are engaged in the lesson. | **V/Tech.** | 0% | 11% | 33% | 56% | 3.4 |
| **Acad.** | 0% | 7% | 64% | 29% | 3.2 |
| **Total #** | 0 | 4 | 24 | 18 | 3.3 |
| **Total %** | 0% | 9% | 52% | 39% |  |
| 6. Students engage in higher-order thinking. | **V/Tech.** | 6% | 44% | 50% | 0% | 2.4 |
| **Acad.** | 18% | 43% | 29% | 11% | 2.3 |
| **Total #** | 6 | 20 | 17 | 3 | 2.4 |
| **Total %** | 13% | 43% | 37% | 7% |  |
| 7. Students communicate their ideas and thinking with each other. | **V/Tech.** | 17% | 39% | 33% | 11% | 2.4 |
| **Acad.** | 18% | 46% | 25% | 11% | 2.3 |
| **Total #** | 8 | 20 | 13 | 5 | 2.3 |
| **Total %** | 17% | 43% | 28% | 11% |  |
| 8. Students engage with meaningful, real-world tasks. | **V/Tech.** | 6% | 0% | 11% | 83% | 3.7 |
| **Acad.** | 0% | 43% | 36% | 21% | 2.8 |
| **Total #** | 1 | 12 | 12 | 21 | 3.2 |
| **Total %** | 2% | 26% | 26% | 46% |  |
| **Total Score For Focus Area #2** | **V/Tech.** |   |   |   |   | **12.0** |
| **Acad.** |   |   |   |   | **10.6** |
| **Total** |   |   |   |   | **11.2** |

| **Focus Area #3: Inclusive Practice & Classroom Culture** |  | Insufficient Evidence | Limited Evidence | Sufficient Evidence | Compelling Evidence |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) |
| 9. The teacher ensures that students are engaging in challenging tasks regardless of learning needs. | **V/Tech.** | 6% | 17% | 61% | 17% |
| **Acad.** | 4% | 39% | 50% | 7% |
| **Total #** | 2 | 14 | 25 | 5 |
| **Total %** | 4% | 30% | 54% | 11% |
| 10. The teacher uses a variety of instructional strategies. | **V/Tech.** | 6% | 17% | 61% | 17% |
| **Acad.** | 14% | 43% | 36% | 7% |
| **Total #** | 5 | 15 | 21 | 5 |
| **Total %** | 11% | 33% | 46% | 11% |
| 11. Classroom routines and positive supports are in place to ensure that students behave appropriately. | **V/Tech.** | 0% | 17% | 11% | 72% |
| **Acad.** | 4% | 18% | 36% | 43% |
| **Total #** | 1 | 8 | 12 | 25 |
| **Total %** | 2% | 17% | 26% | 54% |
| 12. The classroom climate is conducive to teaching and learning. | **V/Tech.** | 0% | 6% | 11% | 83% |
| **Acad.** | 0% | 18% | 43% | 39% |
| **Total #** | 0 | 6 | 14 | 26 |
| **Total %** | 0% | 13% | 30% | 57% |
| **Total Score For Focus Area #3** | **V/Tech.** |   |   |   | **13.1** |
| **Acad.** |   |   |   | **11.4** |
| **Total** |  |  |  | **12.0** |

1. District leaders reported that lesson plans provided in advance to the review team included evidence of a variety of instructional strategies and noted that the district had provided professional development about instructional strategies. In observed classrooms, team members found that teachers did not consistently use a variety of instructional approaches. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. SMART goals are Specific and Strategic; Measurable; Action Oriented; Rigorous, Realistic, and Results Focused; and Timed and Tracked. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. District and school accountability determinations include a measure of advanced coursework completion. This indicator is reported as the percentage of all students enrolled in 11th and 12th grade that achieve a passing score in at least one advanced course, including but not limited to Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), dual enrollment for credit, and other selected rigorous mathematics and science courses. See <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/> for more information. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. 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. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. District leaders reported that the START team did not use a singular form or a prescribed document but that responsible parties developed measurable action plans including DCAPs. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)