

Finding Statements:

Leadership and Governance

- 1. The school committee assumes responsibility for issues that are better addressed through policies or by administrators, while devoting too little time to addressing important educational issues for which it is responsible.**
- 2. The central office does not have adequate leadership and capacity to support an improving educational system.**
- 3. Without a shared understanding of the district's direction or adequate support for their roles as educational leaders, principals have to work too independently to improve student learning in their schools.**
- 4. Principals are not held sufficiently accountable for their work; they are not being annually evaluated as required by Massachusetts law.**

Curriculum and Instruction

- 5. New Bedford teachers are not provided sufficient leadership, supervision, common planning time, and instructional coaching support to maximize their potential as professional educators.**
- 6. New Bedford has developed curriculum maps in mathematics and science at all grade levels that are based on the curriculum frameworks and aligned horizontally and vertically.**
- 7. The ELA curriculum is incomplete in kindergarten through grade 8, providing teachers with inadequate information to consistently deliver a standards-based education.**
- 8. Curriculum development and revision processes are not being well managed to complete the missing curriculum components and to improve curricular alignment.**
- 9. Teachers are without a shared definition of high quality instruction and have too little guidance as they face the enormous task of providing the most appropriate instructional strategies to meet the varied needs of their students. In many classrooms observed, the review team found little evidence of multiple characteristics of effective teaching; the quality of instruction was lowest at the high school level.**

Assessment

- 10. With a limited amount of assessment data to work with, leaders and teachers must make educational decisions without adequate student performance data to inform their work.**
- 11. There is little evidence of a districtwide function to collect, examine, and disseminate all pertinent data for the purposes of informing instruction and having an impact on student**

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performance. The district is more advanced in using data to assess mathematics achievement in grades 3-9 than in using data to assess performance in English language arts.

Human Resources and Professional Development

12. The contract between the New Bedford School Committee and the New Bedford Educators Association, its interpretation, and established past practices inhibit the efforts of principals to improve instructional quality.
13. Because district-level professional development priorities have not been adequately defined, professional development is too unfocused and schools' initiatives are not sufficiently coordinated.

Student Support

14. The district's high school students have low attendance and graduation rates as well as high dropout rates and rates of chronic absence, retention, and suspension. The 2010 four-year graduation rate was only 53.5 percent, one of the five lowest in the state for multiple-school districts. None of these rates has shown any appreciable improvement over time, many are worsening, and there is little evidence that the district is addressing them effectively.
15. Proficiency gaps between district special education and ELL students and their counterparts statewide are wider in the upper grades; graduation rates for both district subgroups are extremely low.

Financial and Asset Management

16. New Bedford struggles to make its \$102.6 million local budget and other sources of funding meet school and student needs.
17. Principals have little input and limited authority concerning the school budget.
18. The central office administration determines the budget priorities, but there was little evidence that budget decisions are determined by an analysis of student needs.
19. Given some school buildings' poor condition and some school buildings' underutilization, it is a challenge to provide an environment conducive to learning. The school district does not have a multiple-year capital improvement plan that addresses the dual needs for facility consolidation and renovation/construction.

Recommendation Statements:

Leadership and Governance

- 1. The school committee should focus more attention and allocate more meeting time to strengthen its understanding of district performance and its practice in using the data to make high-level decisions related to district goals, the budget, and policy. Policies and practices should be updated to better reflect district needs, current practice, and the Education Reform Act.**
- 2. The district should reorganize, re-culture, and staff the central office to provide more support and to work more collaboratively to improve teaching and learning.**
- 3. The district needs to hold principals more accountable for meeting high professional standards and raising student achievement, in accordance with new regulations for educator evaluation.**

Curriculum and Instruction

- 4. The district needs to further develop the curriculum in a way that better prepares and engages school leaders and teachers, is collaborative, is informed by student achievement data, and prioritizes development of the English language arts curriculum.**
- 5. Principals should actively monitor instruction more regularly to provide teachers with sufficient feedback for professional growth. Any written or perceived contractual barriers to the conducting of informal observations should be removed, and the district should establish clear expectations for teacher supervision.**
- 6. New Bedford should make every effort to restore instructional coaching positions and implement a more effective coaching model.**

Assessment

- 7. New Bedford Public Schools need to develop a systemwide approach to assessments that equips district and school staff to adjust academic programs and instructional practices to respond to the needs of their students.**

Human Resources and Professional Development

- 8. The New Bedford School Committee and the New Bedford Educators Association must take steps to ensure that principals have the authority to place the best qualified teachers in open positions; the ability to establish a community of teachers with a shared commitment to instructional improvement without unnecessary turnover as the result of**

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the practice of “ownership”; and the ability to hold staff accountable for improvements in practice and student achievement.

9. Teacher common planning time should be increased and directed by principals.

Student Support

10. The district and schools should work together more effectively and with a greater sense of urgency to determine and address the root causes of high school students’ poor growth, proficiency, attendance, retention, suspension, dropout, and graduation rates.
11. The district should be more deliberate in implementing much stronger practices to meet the needs of its English language learners and students with disabilities.

Financial and Asset Management

12. A five-year financial plan should be developed that incorporates capital needs and reflects consideration of ways to increase revenue and decrease expenses through greater attention to operational efficiencies.
13. The development of the district budget should be based on a more thorough analysis of student achievement and program evaluation data and involve principals more throughout the process.
14. In addition to having input into decisions on budget development, principals should have authority over the use of resources in the budgets of the schools they oversee.