

**Wachusett Regional School District**

**Tiered Focused Monitoring Report**

**Continuous Improvement and Monitoring Plan**

**For** **Group B Universal Standards**

**Tier Level** **2**

**Dates of Onsite Visit:** **February 7-8, 2022**

**Date of Final Report: June 10, 2022**



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**MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**

**TIERED FOCUSED MONITORING REPORT**

**Wachusett Regional School District**

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**MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**

# **TIERED FOCUS MONITORING REPORT INTRODUCTION**

During the 2021-2022 school year, Wachusett Regional School District participated in a Tiered Focused Monitoring Review (TFM) conducted by the Department’s Office of Public School Monitoring (PSM). The purpose of the Tiered Focused Monitoring Review is to monitor compliance with regulatory requirements focusing on special education and civil rights.

Each school district, charter school, vocational school, and virtual school undergoes a Tiered Focused Monitoring Review every three years. The statewide Tiered Focused Monitoring cycle is posted at <<https://www.doe.mass.edu/psm/tfm/6yrcycle.html>>.

Regularly monitored standards are divided into two groups, known as Group A Universal Standards and Group B Universal Standards. Districts and schools are monitored on an alternate set of Universal Standards every three years.

Group A Universal Standards address:

* Student identification
* IEP development
* Programming and support services
* Equal opportunity

Group B Universal Standards address:

* Licensure and professional development
* Parent/student/community engagement
* Facilities and classroom observations
* Oversight
* Time and learning
* Equal access

The Department has also reserved a specific set of criteria, collectively known as Targeted Standards, employed if LEA or school level risk assessment data indicate there is a potential issue; the identified Targeted Standards are assessed in addition to the Universal Standards.

Universal Standards and Targeted Standards are aligned with the following regulations:

Special Education (SE)

* Selected requirements from the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA-2004); the federal regulations promulgated under that Act at 34 CFR Part 300; M.G.L. c. 71B, and the Massachusetts Board of Education’s Special Education regulations (603 CMR 28.00), as amended effective March 1, 2007.

Civil Rights Methods of Administration and Other General Education Requirements (CR)

* Selected federal civil rights requirements, including requirements under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA); Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, together with selected state requirements under M.G.L. c. 76, Section 5 as amended by Chapter 199 of the Acts of 2011 and M.G.L. c. 269 §§ 17 through 19.
* Selected requirements from the Massachusetts Board of Education’s Physical Restraint regulations (603 CMR 46.00).
* Selected requirements from the Massachusetts Board of Education’s Student Learning Time regulations (603 CMR 27.00).
* Various requirements under other federal and state laws.

**PSM Team:**

Depending upon the size of a school district and the number of special education programs to be reviewed, a team of one to four Department staff members conducts onsite activities over one to five days in a school district or charter school.

**Tier Level:**

The level of monitoring varies based on tier designation, aligning supports to the level of need and ensuring that districts and schools with greater needs receive appropriate supports to make sustained improvements.

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| Tier | Title | Description | Level of Risk |
| 1 | Self-Directed Improvement | Data points indicate no concern on compliance and student outcomes. | Meets requirements |
| 2 | Directed Improvement | No demonstrated risk in areas with close link to student outcomes. | Low |
| 3 | Corrective Action | Areas of concern include both compliance and student outcomes. | Moderate |
| 4 | Cross-unit Support and Corrective Action | Areas of concern have a profound effect on student outcomes and ongoing compliance. | High |

For the 2021-2022 school year, the tier assignments are based on:

* Five-year cohort graduation rate for students with disabilities
* Public School Monitoring compliance data from the previous review
* Problem Resolution System data, specifically findings of noncompliance
* Special education State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Reports (SPP/APR) compliance Indicator data for Indicators 11, 12, and 13 (Group A only)
* Indicator 11: Child Find
* Indicator 12: Early Childhood Transition
* Indicator 13: Secondary Transition
* Special education SPP/APR performance Indicator data for Indicators 5 & 6
* Indicator 5: Education Environments (6-21)
* Indicator 6: Preschool Environments
* Significant Disproportionality data 2019-2020 & 2020-2021

Tiering adjustments may be made for districts engaged in work with the Department’s Statewide System of Support and have schools identified as requiring assistance and intervention. Tiering assignments may also be adjusted for schools and districts unable to remedy noncompliance within one year of the previous TFM review, as well as for charter schools requiring additional oversight based on conditions of their charter.

**Report: For Tier 1 & 2 Tiered Focused Monitoring Reviews**

Following the onsite visit, the PSM team holds an informal exit meeting to summarize the review for the superintendent or charter school leader. Within approximately 20 business days of the onsite visit, the chairperson forwards the TFM Feedback Summary that includes findings from the Tiered Focused Monitoring Review to the superintendent or charter school leader.

As part of the reporting process, all districts/charter schools in Tiers 1 and 2, then develop a Continuous Improvement and Monitoring Plan (CIMP) for any criteria receiving a rating of "Partially Implemented," "Not Implemented," and “Implementation in Progress.” The CIMP is due to the Department within 20 business days after the issuance of the Feedback Summary and is subject to the Department’s review and approval.

The CIMP outlines an action plan, identifies the success metric, describes the measurement mechanism and provides a completion timeframe to bring those areas into compliance with the controlling statute or regulation. Department staff provide support and assistance to districts and charter schools on the development of a CIMP.

Once the CIMP is approved, it is issued as the Final Report.

Department staff also provide ongoing technical assistance as the school or district is implementing the approved CIMP or CAP. **School districts and charter schools must demonstrate effective resolution of noncompliance identified by the Department as soon as possible but in no case later than one year from the issuance of the Department’s Feedback Summary.**

For more information regarding the TFM Review Process, including district and parent resources, please visit < <https://www.doe.mass.edu/psm/tfm/default.html>>.

# **TIERED FOCUSED MONITORING FINAL REPORT**

**Wachusett Regional School District**

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education conducted a Tiered Focused Monitoring Review in the Wachusett Regional School District during the week of February 7, 2022, to evaluate the implementation of Group B Universal Standards in the program areas of special education, civil rights, and other related general education requirements. The team appreciated the opportunity to interview staff and parents, to observe classroom facilities, and to review the programs underway in the district.

In preparing this report, the team reviewed extensive written documentation regarding the operation of the district's programs, together with information gathered by means of the following Department program review methods:

**Self-Assessment Phase:**

* District review of special education and civil rights documentation for required elements including document uploads.
* Upon completion of the self-assessment, the district submitted the data to the Department for review.

**On-site Verification Phase:**

* Interviews of staff consistent with those criteria selected for onsite verification.
* Interview of a parent advisory council (PAC) representative.
* Review of additional documents for special education and civil rights.
* Surveys of parents of students in special education: Parents of students in special education were sent a survey that solicited information regarding their experiences with the district’s implementation of special education programs, related services, and procedural requirements.
* Observations of classrooms and other facilities: The onsite team visited a sample of classrooms and other school facilities used in the delivery of programs and services to determine general levels of compliance with program requirements.

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| The Tiered Focused Monitoring Report includes those criteria that were found by the team to be implemented in a “Commendable” manner, as well as criteria receiving a rating of "Partially Implemented," "Not Implemented," and “Implementation in Progress.” (Refer to the “Definition of Compliance Ratings” section of the report.) The Tiered Focused Monitoring Reports do not include criteria receiving a rating of “Implemented” or “Not Applicable.” This will allow the district and the Department to focus their efforts on those areas requiring corrective action. Districts are expected to incorporate the corrective actions into their district and school improvement plans, including their professional development plans. |
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# **DEFINITION OF COMPLIANCE RATINGS**

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| **Commendable** | Any requirement or aspect of a requirement implemented in an exemplary manner significantly beyond the requirements of law or regulation. |
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| **Implemented** | The requirement is substantially met in all important aspects. |
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| **Implementation in Progress** | This rating is used for criteria containing new or updated legal requirements; the district has implemented any old requirements contained in the criterion and is training staff or beginning to implement the new requirements in such a way that the onsite team anticipates that the new requirements will be implemented by the end of the school year. |
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| **Partially Implemented** | The requirement, in one or several important aspects, is not entirely met. |
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| **Not Implemented** | The requirement is totally or substantially not met. |
| **Not Applicable** | The requirement does not apply to the school district or charter school. |

**Wachusett Regional School District**

# **SUMMARY OF COMPLIANCE CRITERIA RATINGS**

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|  | **Universal Standards**  **Special Education** | **Universal Standards**  **Civil Rights and Other General Education Requirements** |
| **IMPLEMENTED** | SE 15, SE 32, SE 35,  SE 36, SE 50, SE 51,  SE 52, SE 54, SE 55,  SE 56 | CR 3, CR 7, CR 7A, CR 7B,  CR 7C, CR 8, CR 10B, CR 12A, CR 16, CR 17A, CR 20, CR 21, CR 22, CR 23, CR 24, CR 25 |
| **PARTIALLY IMPLEMENTED** |  | CR 10A, CR 10C |
| **NOT IMPLEMENTED** | None |  |
| **NOT APPLICABLE** | SE 52A |  |

The full list of criteria and information regarding the requirements can be found in Appendix B of the Tiered Focused Monitoring Toolkit available at < <https://www.doe.mass.edu/psm/resources/tfm-toolkit.docx>>.

| **CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT AND MONITORING PLAN** |
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| **Improvement Area** **1** |
| **Criterion:** CR 10A - Student handbooks and codes of conduct |
| **Rating:** Partially Implemented |
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| **Description of Current Issue:** A review of documents and staff interviews indicated that the school district handbooks do not contain all required content.  The Dawson Elementary School, Houghton Elementary School, Naquag Elementary School, and Central Tree Middle School handbooks do not contain the following:   * Required elements of M.G.L. c. 71, section 37H ¾, assuring due process in student disciplinary proceedings; * Complete procedures for the suspension of students with disabilities and students with Section 504 Accommodation Plans; or * Updated definition of bullying to include staff as potential aggressor.   In addition, the Dawson Elementary School, Houghton Elementary School, and Central Tree Middle School handbooks contain outdated information on the notification of restraints to the Department and allowing waivers of the restraint policy.  The Davis Hill Elementary School, Glenwood Elementary School, Mayo Elementary School, Paxton Center School, Thomas Prince School, Chocksett Middle School, and Mountainview Middle School handbooks do not contain the following:   * Required elements of M.G.L. c. 71, section 37H ¾, assuring due process in student disciplinary proceedings; or * Complete procedures for the suspension of students with disabilities and students with Section 504 Accommodation Plans.   The Wachusett Regional High School Handbook does not contain the following:   * Complete procedures for the suspension of students with disabilities and students with Section 504 Accommodation Plans.   The Paxton Center School Handbook, including the code of conduct, has not been updated since the 2019-2020 school year. |
| **LEA Outcome:** Student handbooks from Central Tree Middle School, Chocksett Middle School, Davis Hill Elementary School, Dawson Elementary School, Glenwood Elementary School, Houghton Elementary School, Mayo Elementary School, Mountview Middle School, Naquag Elementary School, Paxton Center School, and Thomas Prince School will be updated with the required elements of M.G.L. c. 71, section 37H ¾, assuring due process in student disciplinary procedures.  These same handbooks, as well as the Wachusett Regional High School Handbook, will be updated to include complete procedures for the suspension of students with disabilities and students with Section 504 Accommodation Plans.  The Dawson Elementary School, Houghton Elementary School, Naquag Elementary School, and Central Tree Middle School student handbooks will be updated so that the definition of bullying includes staff as potential aggressor.  The Paxton Center School Handbook, including the code of conduct, will be updated for the 2022-2023 school year.  Dawson Elementary School and Houghton Elementary School student handbooks will be updated to remove outdated information on the notification of restraints to the Department and allowing waivers of the restraint policy.  Information on the notification of restraints to the Department and allowing waivers of the restraint policy have been eliminated from the Central Tree Middle School handbook. |
| **Action Plan:** By July 19, 2022, school administration will meet with the district's attorney to review the sample language related to the suspension of students with disabilities and students with Section 504 Accommodation Plans. The district will submit the proposed language to the Department for review prior to incorporating it into the student handbooks.  By August 31, 2022, the district will revise all student handbooks so that they include:  • Required elements of M.G.L. c. 71, section 37H ¾, assuring due process in student disciplinary proceedings;  • Complete procedures for the suspension of students with disabilities and students with Section 504 Accommodation Plans;  • Updated definitions of bullying to include staff as potential aggressor; and  • Corrected information on the notification of restraints to the Department and allowing waivers of the restraint policy.  The district will submit copies of the revised handbooks and/or provide links to the handbooks on the district’s websites.    By August 31, 2022, the district will inform staff and parents of the changes to the newly published handbooks and how to access them. The district will submit verification from all staff members that they reviewed the updated handbooks and evidence of dissemination to the school community. |
| **Success Metric:** By the start of the 2022-2023 school year and beyond, the Wachusett Regional School District handbooks for all schools will contain all required policy and procedural requirements.  Evidence:  • Proposed procedures for the suspension of students with disabilities and students with Section 504 Accommodation Plans  • Updated handbooks or links to the posted handbooks  • Notification to staff and parents  • Verification of staff member handbook review |
| **Measurement Mechanism:** The Director of Social Emotional Learning and Equity will meet with school principals in the spring of each school year to review handbooks and ensure they are properly updated for the following school year. |
| **Completion Timeframe:** 08/31/2022 |
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| **Improvement Area 2** |
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| **Criterion:** CR 10C - Student Discipline |
| **Rating:** Partially Implemented |
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| **Description of Current Issue:** A review of documents and staff interviews indicated that the district has not developed student discipline policies and procedures that meet all requirements of M.G.L. c. 71, s. 37H¾ and 603 CMR 53.00, including the following:   * Emergency removal of a student; * Principal hearings for both short and long-term suspension; * In-school suspension of a student; and * Superintendent hearing.   Furthermore, a review of documents indicated that the district's notice of suspension and hearing is not addressed to both the student and the parent; does not offer a hearing to the student and parent prior to imposing a suspension; and does not include the potential length of the suspension.  A review of documents and staff interviews also indicated that the district has not developed a School-wide Education Service Plan to ensure that students who are expelled or on long-term suspension have the opportunity to receive educational services and make academic progress. |
| **LEA Outcome:** Wachusett Regional School District will ensure that the discipline policies, procedures, and related documents meet all requirements of M.G.L. c. 71, s. 37H¾ and 603 CMR 53.00, including the following:  • Emergency removal of a student;  • Principal hearings for both short and long-term suspension;  • In-school suspension of a student; and  • Superintendent hearing.  The district's notice of suspension and hearing will be updated so that it is addressed to both the student and the parent; offers a hearing to the student and parent prior to imposing a suspension; and includes the potential length of the suspension.  The Administrator of Special Education and Director of Social Emotional Learning and Equity will collaborate to develop a School-wide Education Service Plan to ensure that students who are expelled or on long-term suspension have the opportunity to receive educational services and make academic progress. |
| **Action Plan:** By July 19, 2022, school administration will consult with the district’s attorney to ensure that all requirements of M.G.L. c. 71, s. 37H¾ and 603 CMR 53.00 are included in the district’s student discipline policies and procedures. The district will submit the updated student discipline policy and procedures.  By August 31, 2022, the district will submit a copy of the updated notice of suspension that includes all requirements and a copy of the School-wide Education Service Plan.  By August 31, 2022, the district will submit evidence of staff training on the student discipline policy and procedures. |
| **Success Metric:** By the start of the 2022-2023 school year and beyond, the district's student discipline policies and procedures will meet all requirements of M.G.L. c. 71, s. 37H¾ and 603 CMR 53.00.  Evidence:  • Updated student discipline policies and procedures  • Updated notice of suspension  • School-wide Education Service Plan  • Agendas, training materials, and attendance sheets |
| **Measurement Mechanism:** The Director of Social Emotional Learning and Equity will meet with school principals each spring to review the district's student discipline policies and procedures to ensure they meet all requirements. |
| **Completion Timeframe:** 08/31/2022 |
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