****Evaluation of the Wraparound Zones Initiative

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Report Four: Analysis of Progress and Sustainability Plans During Year 3

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# Executive Summary

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) Wraparound Zones (WAZ) Initiative is designed to create coordinated district systems that allow schools to proactively and systematically address students’ nonacademic needs. The four WAZ priority improvement areas follow:

* **Climate and Culture.** Each participating school creates a climate and a culture that promote mental health and positive social, emotional, and intellectual growth for students, resulting in a new standard of practice understood and practiced by every member of the school community.
* **Identification of Student Needs and Efforts to Address Them.** Each participating school implements a proactive system of identifying student needs in key academic and nonacademic areas, leading to both universal supports and targeted interventions.
* **Community Coalitions.** Each participating school integrates a range of resources to tailor student services from within both the school and the larger community. The range of services includes prevention, enrichment, early intervention, and intensive crisis response services.
* **District Systems of Support.** Each participating district develops district-level systems to support the communication, collaboration, evaluation, and continuous improvement of the WAZ initiative.

American Institutes for Research (AIR)[[1]](#footnote-2) has conducted an evaluation of how well the WAZ initiative has achieved these goals. AIR’s research assessed progress on planning, implementation, outcomes, sustainability, and replication related to the initiative’s four priority improvement areas. This evaluation report provides a comprehensive analysis of data collected during the third and final year of WAZ implementation, with a focus on answering the following research questions:

What are the outcomes associated with WAZ implementation?

Is WAZ sustainable at the district and school levels, and what supports or hinders (or will support or hinder) sustainability and replication in other districts and schools?

## Data Sources

The findings in this report are based on analysis of data collected from five WAZ school districts during the 2013–14 school year: Fall River Public Schools, Holyoke Public Schools, Lynn Public Schools, Springfield Public Schools, and Worcester Public Schools. Data sources included (a) interviews with WAZ district coordinators and other district leaders, WAZ school coordinators and school principals, and a sample of external partners in each WAZ district; (b) in a small sample of schools, focus groups with teachers; (c) surveys of students and staff; and (d) district- and school-level documents related to WAZ planning and implementation. All data collection occurred from December 2013 to March 2014, representing the middle of Year 3 of WAZ implementation.

## Findings

Each district reported on the top areas of progress and challenges during the final year of WAZ. Districts also described the ways in which WAZ contributed to their progress and reported on their plans for sustaining the progress they had made. Several common themes emerged across the districts and are captured in the following four cross-district findings:

1. Improvements in student behavior, family engagement, and the student referral process were the most commonly cited areas of progress across the WAZ districts. Improvements related to community partnerships were reported as top areas of progress in three districts.
2. According to interviewees, the key WAZ-driven levers that contributed to their progress were (a) grant-supported staff positions that were deemed essential for moving the work forward and (b) professional development supporting the implementation of social-emotional curricula.
3. Interviewees most commonly reported that family engagement and processes for identifying and addressing student needs were ongoing challenges.
4. All WAZ districts demonstrated positive or partial progress toward the majority, if not all, of the six factors identified in the literature as essential for sustainability.

Overall, analysis of the evaluation data gathered in Year 3, combined with analysis of data gathered during Years 1 and 2, shows that the WAZ initiative has made a significant contribution to student outcomes in WAZ schools, and perhaps more important, has enhanced districts’ capacity to support the implementation of strategies focused on a positive school climate, identifying and addressing student needs, and creating and maintaining meaningful school–community partnerships.

AIR conducted an analysis of the extent to which each district demonstrated positive or partial progress or a lack of it toward six factors identified in the literature as essential for sustainability. This analysis revealed promising results: three of the districts showed positive or partial progress toward all six factors, and two of the districts showed positive or partial progress toward five of the six factors. Planning for sustainability was a central focus of the work that each district engaged in during the final year, with support from ESE and a technical assistance provider, School and Main Institute (SMI).

The data collected for this evaluation demonstrated that this focus on sustainability had resulted in a generally high degree of readiness for sustainability in all the districts. All districts showed the ability to address feedback, and all districts had made some strides toward securing additional funding to sustain key components of the initiative (e.g., staff positions) after the grant period is over. Districts varied, however, on other essential factors of sustainability. Fall River was the only district to demonstrate positive progress toward having a solid reform-support infrastructure in place at the district level. Holyoke, Lynn, Springfield, and Worcester faced some challenges with respect to having a solid district-level infrastructure of support in place. However, Holyoke and Lynn showed positive progress towards having a systems perspective on the work. Finally, Holyoke and Worcester did not yet demonstrate evidence of securing ongoing professional development for WAZ-related strategies, which could lead to difficulties in building staff capacity to carry on the work long-term. Nonetheless, although sustaining this work beyond the grant’s funding period will undoubtedly prove to be challenging, each of the districts has engaged in thoughtful planning for sustainability and is generally well positioned to continue to move the work forward.

## Conclusion

When WAZ began in 2011, the five districts profiled in this report had been designated by the state as Level 4 districts. They therefore began implementing WAZ while engaged in intensive district improvement planning and monitoring to accelerate growth in student achievement and other outcomes. For each of these districts, the WAZ grant represented an opportunity to secure additional state resources to support their overall district improvement planning as well as other, ongoing school reform initiatives that aligned with WAZ goals. In fact, these districts often selected schools to participate in WAZ on the basis of their accountability status (e.g., Level 4 schools) or other indicators of high need and readiness to implement WAZ-related strategies as part of an overall approach to schoolwide reform.

At the end of the WAZ grant, data has shown progress in all five districts, most notably with respect to student behavior, family engagement, the student referral process, and community partnerships. These improvements were reported by interviewees, and in some districts, they also were evident in the survey data. Improvements in family engagement in particular are notable given that this was not an explicit goal of WAZ at its outset. The districts began to focus more heavily on family engagement in Years 2 and 3 as a critical element of an overall positive school climate.

Furthermore, ten WAZ schools that began the initiative as Level 4 schools had exited Level 4 status by the time the grant was over. In fact, among the full 2010 cohort of Level 4 schools, those that were WAZ schools were more likely than non-WAZ schools to exit Level 4 status by 2014 (66 percent in comparison with 40 percent). These data demonstrate the success of WAZ as a school turnaround strategy.

Now, as these five districts move beyond the WAZ grant, they are faced with the task of sustaining the work they have begun and the positive progress they have begun to see. With the support of ESE and technical assistance provided by SMI, the districts spent much of Year 3 focused on sustainability planning. Our analysis showed that all five districts were generally making progress toward six factors identified in the literature as essential for sustainability. Three of the districts showed positive or partial progress toward all six factors, and two of the districts showed positive or partial progress toward five of the six factors. These data are promising and show that each district is generally well positioned to continue to move the work forward.

Despite the positive progress that was reported, and the planning that had been completed with respect to sustainability, each of the districts faces persistent challenges. Specifically, data showed that WAZ districts and schools were continuing to experience challenges with respect to family engagement and their systems for identifying and addressing student needs. It is interesting that in some of the districts that reported these areas of challenges, respondents also reported them as top areas of progress attributable to WAZ. This apparent contradiction is not necessarily surprising. Difficulties engaging families and addressing the significant needs in their student populations were among the reasons these districts applied to be WAZ grantees in the first place. Additionally, these districts learned a great deal about these topics over the course of the grant period, which likely impacted their perspective about the degree to which they had made progress. In other districts, however, the ongoing challenge reflected a lack of sufficient attention to these particular components of WAZ. Although progress was reported, there is still much work to be done, and all districts acknowledged as much. They know that this work must be ongoing, underscoring the importance of their sustainability planning efforts.

This evaluation report is designed to provide formative feedback to ESE, WAZ districts, and other districts interested in implementing programs similar to WAZ. Although we cannot at this time make any definitive causal claims about how WAZ affected outcomes, we can make conclusions about what factors support strong implementation and sustainability. With these conclusions in mind, we offer the following recommendations for the state and districts to consider when planning similar initiatives in the future: (1) Build concrete systems of district support. (2) Plan for sustainability from the start. (3) Embed the initiative into existing district priorities and plans. (4) Dedicate resources to staff positions. (5) Provide ongoing opportunities for professional development.

AIR’s evaluation to date has focused on the conditions and supports that existed prior to WAZ, the ways in which WAZ supported implementation and early indicators of change, and the ways in which districts have ensured sustainability and replication of WAZ. In a forthcoming supplement to this report, AIR will describe results of a quasi-experimental impact study that compares outcomes for students in WAZ schools against those for students in matched non-WAZ comparison schools. Together, these reports will provide a comprehensive assessment of the overall impact and effectiveness of the WAZ initiative.

# I. Introduction

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) Wraparound Zones (WAZ) Initiative is designed to create coordinated district systems that allow schools to proactively and systematically address students’ nonacademic needs. The four WAZ priority improvement areas follow:

* **Climate and Culture.** Each participating school creates a climate and a culture that promote mental health and positive social, emotional, and intellectual growth for students, resulting in a new standard of practice understood and practiced by every member of the school community.
* **Identification of Student Needs and Efforts to Address Them.** Each participating school implements a proactive system of identifying student needs in key academic and nonacademic areas, leading to both universal supports and targeted interventions.
* **Community Coalitions.** Each participating school integrates a range of resources to tailor student services from both within the school and the larger community. The range of services includes prevention, enrichment, early intervention, and intensive crisis response services.
* **District Systems of Support.** Each participating district develops district-level systems to support the communication, collaboration, evaluation, and continuous improvement of the WAZ initiative.

American Institutes for Research (AIR)[[2]](#footnote-3) has conducted an evaluation of how well the WAZ initiative has achieved these goals. AIR’s research assessed progress on planning, implementation, outcomes, sustainability, and replication related to the initiative’s four priority improvement areas.

AIR completed a first evaluation report in fall 2012 that described the 2011–12 WAZ plans, summarized student school climate survey results, and reported school and district coordinator perspectives on strengths and challenges experienced during Year 1. A second evaluation report, in fall 2013, provided a more comprehensive analysis of data collected during Year 1. The third evaluation report built on the second report by adding an analysis of data from Year 2 of WAZ implementation. This fourth report offers analysis of data collected during the third and final year of WAZ implementation.

During AIR’s three-year evaluation, periodic reports have assessed various aspects of WAZ planning, implementation, outcomes, sustainability, and replication. The reports have built on one another, using previously reported findings to contextualize and support future findings and recommendations. Specifically, Reports 1 and 2 focused on answering the first overarching research question:

What are the district, school, and other conditions (e.g., school climate, culture) and supports that are in place at the beginning of the WAZ grants, and how are they facilitating or impeding planning and implementation?

Report 3 focused on answering the second and third overarching research questions that informed the evaluation design:

How are districts and schools progressing on early indicators of WAZ planning and implementation?

What are the outcomes associated with WAZ implementation?

The focus of this report, Report 4, is again on the third research question, about outcomes, in addition to the fourth research question, about sustainability:

Is WAZ sustainable at the district and school levels, and what supports or hinders (or will support or hinder) sustainability and replication in other districts and schools?

Appendix A shows the full list of research questions and subquestions that have guided the three-year evaluation and the data sources that have been used to inform answers to those questions.

In the remainder of this report, we first present the methods and data used to develop findings. Next, we present the findings, organized in two sections: (a) cross-district findings and (b) district profiles. In the cross-district findings section, we identify common and recurring themes across multiple districts. In the district profiles section, we describe, for each of the five districts, findings related to the progress made within that district during the three-year grant period, as well as findings related to sustainability of WAZ there. We conclude with a discussion section focused on the implications of these findings and on strategies that may warrant further study and attention as potential models for other WAZ schools and districts to replicate.

# II. Methods

The findings in this report are based on an analysis of data collected from five WAZ school districts during the 2013–14 school year: Fall River Public Schools, Holyoke Public Schools, Lynn Public Schools, Springfield Public Schools, and Worcester Public Schools.[[3]](#footnote-4) For Lynn and for Holyoke’s Kelly school, which received planning grants in 2011–12, school year 2013–14 represented their second year of WAZ implementation. The other districts were in their third year of implementation, and three of these districts (Fall River, Springfield, and Worcester) added new schools in Year 2 or 3. Appendix B lists the 32 schools across these districts from which AIR gathered data, followed by tables containing demographic data for each of the districts. Table 1 shows the number of schools in each district, including how many were new schools.

Table 1. WAZ Districts and Schools

| School District | Number of WAZ Schools in 2013–14 | Number of New WAZ Schools in 2012–13  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Fall River | 6 | 3 |
| Holyoke | 3 | — |
| Lynn | 4 | — |
| Springfield[[4]](#footnote-5) | 9 | 3 |
| Worcester | 8 | 1 |
| **Total** | **30** | **7** |

## Data Sources

The data sources used in this report are the following:

1. Interviews with WAZ district coordinators and other district leaders, WAZ school coordinators and school principals, and a sample of external partners in each WAZ district
2. Focus groups with teachers in a small sample of “deep-dive” schools
3. A survey of students in 10 of the 30 WAZ schools[[5]](#footnote-6)
4. A survey of the staff in 18 of the 30 WAZ schools[[6]](#footnote-7)
5. District- and school-level documents related to WAZ planning, implementation, outcomes, or sustainability

All data collection occurred from January to June 2014, which represented the second half of Year 3 of WAZ.

### Interviews

AIR conducted interviews with WAZ district and school coordinators, district administrators, school principals, and key community partners. For Year 3, AIR interviewed 5 district coordinators or their proxies (all districts), 22 school wraparound coordinators (Fall River, Holyoke, Springfield, and Worcester), and 27 school staff members taking on WAZ leadership responsibilities in the schools (Lynn and Fall River). AIR also interviewed 30 principals and15 community partners.

The majority of interviews were conducted on-site by a member of the research team, who recorded the audio from the interviews. All site visits were conducted from February to March 2014. Community partner interviews were conducted by telephone. All interviews were transcribed using audio recording. AIR used semistructured interview protocols, guided by the research questions and designed to last approximately 45 minutes. Appendix C shows a sample protocol used for the school coordinator interviews. The protocols included questions asked of all participants to facilitate a systematic analysis of the data, as well as questions specific to each respondent’s role with respect to WAZ.

### Teacher Focus Groups in “Deep-Dive” Schools

In addition to the interviews conducted at each WAZ school, AIR selected (in consultation with ESE) one or two schools in each WAZ district to serve as “deep-dive” schools. These schools were selected because they were considered to represent strong implementation of WAZ or a unique approach or circumstance that was worthy of further study. Researchers conducted a teacher focus group in each of these schools. During the analysis phase, data gathered from these schools were integrated with all other data and were intended to provide a more comprehensive picture of factors that were supporting WAZ implementation.

### Student Survey Data

AIR administered and analyzed data from its *Conditions for Learning* (CFL) student survey. The CFL survey was administered in February 2012 and the again in December 2013 to students in Grades 2–8 in Fall River, Holyoke, and Lynn. The CFL survey is designed to help districts and schools monitor students’ opinions about their schools, including their schools’ climate, perceived levels of student support, levels of challenge, and perceptions about students’ social and emotional learning skills. Data were reported and analyzed as the percentage of students whose responses fell into the “excellent,” “adequate,” and “needs improvement” categories on the following four scales:

* The Challenge Scale. This scale measures how much students report that teachers and other adults in their school encourage them to think, work hard, do their best, and connect what they are learning in school to life outside of it. A challenging curriculum, presented in a way that is relevant to students, will promote student achievement.
* The Peer Social-Emotional Climate Scale. This scale measures students’ perception of their peers’ social and problem-solving skills. Developing students’ social and emotional skills improves their grades, attendance, behavior, and attitudes toward school. Students with good social and emotional skills are less likely to drop out of school.
* The Safe and Respectful Climate Scale. This scale measures how students assess the physical and emotional safety of their schools. Students who attend safe schools are more likely to be academically engaged and are less likely to exhibit problem behaviors such as drug use or violence. Students are less likely to drop out of safe schools.
* The Student Support Scale. This scale measures how much students report they are listened to, cared about, and helped by teachers and other adults in the school. Strong relationships between teachers and students lead to higher academic achievement, even for students who have previously done poorly in school or come from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Table 2 displays the response rate by school, for Years 1 and 3. Overall, CFL survey response rates were high. Response rates were more than 70 percent in all schools and 85 percent or greater in all but three schools. This strong response rate in most schools increases the representativeness of the findings and the likelihood that responses reflect perceptions and experiences of the full student population in each school.

Table 2. CFL Survey School Response Rates[[7]](#footnote-8)

| District | School Name | Year 1Response Rate | Year 3 Response Rate |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Fall River | Carlton M. Viveiros Elementary School | 91% | 85% |
| John J. Doran Elementary School | 91% | 88% |
| Matthew J. Kuss Middle School | 92% | 80% |
| Holyoke | Kelly Elementary School | 85% | 89% |
| Morgan Elementary School | 94% | 89% |
| William R. Peck Full Service Community School | 84% | 70% |
| Lynn | Cobbet Elementary School | 102% | 96% |
| Connery Elementary School | 95% | 96% |
| E. J. Harrington School | 101% | 98% |
| Thurgood Marshall Middle School | 74% | 80% |

### Staff Survey Data

AIR administered a survey to all staff members in participating WAZ schools for the Fall River, Holyoke, Lynn, and Worcester districts. The survey’s purpose was to understand staff members’ perceptions of school conditions during the first year of WAZ implementation. The survey included questions related to seven topic areas: (a) staff attitudes and knowledge about the theory of action behind WAZ, (b) school climate, (c) staff use of data, (d) schoolwide behavior management, (e) student support, (f) family involvement, and (g) community and external provider supports.

The survey was developed in collaboration with ESE, and it included items that were adapted from existing staff surveys of school climate. Items also were included that aligned with items in the CFL survey to facilitate comparison of staff and student perceptions of school climate. A draft version of the survey was pilot-tested with a sample of 10 non-WAZ district school staff members in a wide range of roles to obtain feedback on readability and clarity of purpose and content. AIR administered the survey electronically and worked collaboratively with district and school staff to monitor response rates and follow-up as appropriate with nonrespondents. The survey was administered in spring 2012 and then again in December 2013. Table 3 displays the response rate by school, for Years 1 and 3. School response rates varied from a low of 27 percent to a high of 90 percent.

Table 3. Staff Survey School Response Rates

| District | School Name | Year 1Response Rate | Year 3 Response Rate |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Fall River | Carlton M. Viveiros Elementary School | 80% | 73% |
| John J. Doran Elementary School | 73% | 76% |
| Matthew J. Kuss Middle School | 75% | 59% |
| Holyoke | Kelly Elementary School | 42% | 89% |
| Morgan Elementary School | 80% | 89% |
| William R. Peck Full Service Community School | 53% | 70% |
| Lynn | Cobbet Elementary School | 70% | 90% |
| Connery Elementary School | 74% | 83% |
| E. J. Harrington School | 75% | 95% |
| Thurgood Marshall Middle School | 73% | 61% |
| Worcester | Chandler Elementary School | 72% | 67% |
| Chandler Magnet School | 50% | 36% |
| Goddard Elementary School | 56% | 66% |
| Goddard Scholars Academy | 71% | 27% |
| Union Hill Elementary School | 42% | 53% |
| University Park Campus School | 56% | 78% |
| Woodland Academy | 63% | 67% |
| Burncoat Street Preparatory School | N/A | 71% |

### Review of WAZ-Related Documents

AIR gathered and reviewed several extant school and district documents related to WAZ. They included grant applications, school and district implementation plans, notes from interagency coalition and school meetings, school and district policy manuals or guidance documents related to key wraparound functions (e.g., positive school climate, tiered student support delivery system), district and school monitoring reviews (conducted by ESE), outcome data demonstrating WAZ-related progress (e.g., results of school climate surveys), and district sustainability plans.

The WAZ implementation plans included descriptions of strategies for each of the aforementioned priority improvement areas. The plans provided important baseline information on WAZ initiatives, but not all wraparound-related activities were listed in the WAZ plans. Some wraparound activities were already under way in districts and schools at the start of the WAZ initiative, and districts and schools did not use WAZ resources to fund those activities. The WAZ sustainability plans identified the essential components of WAZ that each district planned to sustain, along with a description of resources they planned to draw upon to sustain them.

The information in this report draws on WAZ plans and other contextual documents to inform the analysis of interview data. For example, if interview data were unclear or offered incomplete information about the background or context of a particular WAZ strategy, researchers often referred to documents as a way to get a better and more thorough understanding of the issue. Documents also were an important resource for obtaining facts that interviewees sometimes did not know (e.g., the timing of a particular initiative).

## Data Analysis

The data analysis for this report focused on identifying a set of findings within each district that reflected a consistent and systematic approach to reviewing the multiple sources of data. Each district profile includes four finding statements, focused on these four aspects of our analysis:

1. Major areas of school-level progress
2. Ways in which WAZ contributed to areas of progress
3. Challenges
4. Sustainability

The first three findings statements are aligned with our third research question, on outcomes, and the fourth is aligned with our fourth research question, on sustainability. We therefore describe our analytic approach in two sections: (1) progress analysis and (2) sustainability analysis. For each type of analysis, researchers coded the data by using a set of codes that aligned topically with the WAZ priorities and the research questions. A copy of the codebook that was used for the Year 3 analysis is in Appendix D.

### Progress Analysis

A primary purpose of this final evaluation report was to use the data gathered to answer our third research question:

What are the outcomes associated with WAZ implementation?

We used the qualitative data gathered in Year 3 and a comparison of survey data gathered in Years 1 and 3 to answer this question. Because we cannot make definite conclusions from these data about concrete *outcomes* associated with WAZ, we instead analyzed the data to identify *areas of progress* associated with WAZ.[[8]](#footnote-9) Framing this analysis around areas of progress more accurately reflected the questions we asked interviewees. Detail on how we examined our data to develop the progress-related findings in this report follows. We describe, first, our method of determining the top areas of progress identified in each district. We then describe our method of identifying the ways in which WAZ contributed to these areas of progress and identifying the major challenges each district was still facing in its final year of WAZ.

#### Areas of Progress

During interviews and focus groups, we asked respondents to identify areas in which they felt their school or district had made the most progress, and for which they could attribute that progress to WAZ. We asked them to comment on 18 areas of progress (see Table 4). Therefore, in our analysis, we began by creating tables that included, for each area of progress, counts of (a) the number of interviews or focus groups in which it was identified as an area of progress and (b) the number of schools in which an interviewee or focus group participant identified it as an area of progress.

Table 4. Areas of Progress Addressed During Interviews

| Priority Improvement Area or Category | Area of Progress |
| --- | --- |
| Climate and Culture | Improvement in school safety |
| Improvements in student behavior |
| Improvement in systems for managing student behavior |
| Improvement in relationships among students |
| Improvement in relationships between students and staff |
| Improvement in relationships among staff |
| Identify and Address Student Needs | Improvements in the student referral process |
| Improvement in the use of data or data systems for identifying and addressing student needs |
| Improvement in the processes for monitoring student progress |
| Improvement in availability and effectiveness of services |
| Greater staff involvement in identifying or addressing student needs |
| Greater family involvement in identifying or addressing student needs |
| Community Coalition | Increase in the quantity of partnerships |
| Improvement in the quality of partnerships |
| Improvement in processes and procedures for developing or maintaining partnerships |
| School Leadership and Staff Support | Greater support from school leadership |
| Greater buy-in among school staff |

After tabulating these counts, we then identified for each district, a set of top areas of progress which ranged from 3–5 from district to district. The top areas of progress were based on a deeper analysis of interview data and an analysis of the survey data, and they reflected those topics that were most *salient* and *consistently described* as areas of progress.

Our first step was to apply the following two rules to the interview counts:

1. The area of progress is identified in at least 65 percent of the schools (in effect, 4 out of 6 in Fall River, 2 out of 3 in Holyoke, 3 out of 4 in Lynn, 6 out of 8 in Springfield, 6 out of 8 in Worcester).
2. The area of progress is identified in at least half of the interviews or focus groups (in effect, 10 out of 20 in Fall River, 6 out of 12 in Holyoke, 11 out of 22 in Lynn, 12 out of 24 in Springfield, 11 out of 21 in Worcester).

For the most part, areas of progress that met these two criteria were identified as the top areas of progress in a district. A deeper analysis of the interview data and analysis of the survey data, however, revealed some exceptions. For example, a deeper analysis of the interview data might reveal that an area of progress identified in only 8 interviews was more salient than an area of progress identified in 10 interviews. Respondents might describe the progress as “critical” and give detailed examples of how it changed practice or culture, whereas in another area of progress, respondents simply answered “yes it improved” when asked whether progress had been made. Or, perhaps multiple respondents within one focus group strongly emphasized a specific area of progress. Analysts therefore took note of the way in which respondents characterized the progress made, and in some cases this resulted in making an exception to the rules just enumerated.[[9]](#footnote-10) Similarly, survey data sometimes revealed improvement between Years 1 and 3 for an area of progress that did not emerge as a top area of progress according to our rules but was close (e.g., mentioned in only 40 percent of the interviews). In many of these cases, the additional data from the survey data lent enough further support to identify it as a top area of progress.

#### WAZ-Driven Levers That Contributed to Progress

The second finding in each of the profiles describes the WAZ-driven levers that contributed to the areas of progress described in the first paragraph. In other words, what were the mechanisms explicitly supported by WAZ that allowed them to make this progress? Analysts conducted a deeper analysis of interviewee and focus group participants’ responses to questions about areas of progress and looked specifically for comments about what they attributed this progress to. Analysts then applied their contextual knowledge of WAZ implementation plans and budgets, as well as data from key district and state-level informants, to identify comments that attributed the progress to factors that were funded or otherwise driven explicitly by the WAZ grant. Analysts then identified the most commonly mentioned WAZ-driven levers and described them in the finding.

#### Challenges

During interviews and focus groups, respondents were asked to comment on challenges they were facing within each of the priority improvement areas. Analysts identified all the challenges identified in the interviews and focus groups and then produced a table similar to the areas of progress table that identified the number of interviews or focus groups in which a challenge was mentioned and the number of schools in which it was mentioned. They then applied a similar method of identifying the top challenges, as they did for areas of progress. The challenges described in the finding are those that emerged as the most salient and consistently described as a challenge. An analysis of survey data was included, when relevant.

### Sustainability Analysis

A major component of our analysis for this report involved examining data for evidence related to answering our fourth research question:

Is WAZ sustainable at the district and school levels, and what supports or hinders (or will support or hinder) sustainability and replication in other districts and schools?

To answer this question, we began by examining the literature on sustainability for innovations broadly defined, and used that literature to identify six factors that have consistently been identified as important for achieving sustainability.[[10]](#footnote-11) We examined the data gathered from WAZ sites for evidence of these six factors, working under the hypothesis that the more factors present, the higher the likelihood that WAZ will be sustained. In each district, we used the data gathered to determine whether a district has demonstrated “positive progress,” “partial progress,” or “lack of progress” toward each factor.

For the purposes of this evaluation, we consider WAZ an innovation; we also recognize, however, that WAZ differs in important ways from the innovations that are considered within the sustainability literature we reviewed. We therefore slightly modified each factor identified in the literature review so that they were applicable to the WAZ initiative and the circumstances under which it was rolled out and is being implemented. There follows a description of each of the six factors, including a brief review of the literature and a description of our approach to applying this literature to our understanding and analysis of the WAZ evaluation data.

It is important to note that this was a retrospective analysis of the data we gathered in Year 3. We did not ask questions in our interviews that explicitly aligned with each factor. The questions we asked did, however, elicit responses related to them all. Furthermore, the examples we present of evidence that might be used to determine “positive,” “partial,” or “lack of” progress are meant to be illustrative examples only. They are not meant to be interpreted as a rubric of factors that need to be in place in order to receive a particular designation.

### Factor 1: Sustainability requires identificati**o**n of the initiative’s critical elements.

#### Literature Review

The first step in planning for and achieving sustainability is identifying what constitutes fidelity of implementation for the innovation or initiative (Fixsen, Naaom, Blase, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005). In other words, what are the critical elements, or essential components (Bergman & Beck, 2011), that indicate complete implementation of the innovation? What are the very specific functions associated with an initiative that are essential for achieving highly valued outcomes (Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2008)? Once these elements have been identified, educators can begin the process of developing specific action steps to sustain those critical elements. Ongoing attention to the critical elements promotes high levels of implementation and better integration of an initiative into the school culture (Jerald, 2005).

#### Application to WAZ Analysis

ESE developed a framework for WAZ that lays out three priority improvement areas: (1) Climate and Culture; (2) Identify and Address Student Needs; and (3) Community Coalition. (See Appendix E for a copy of the full framework.) Although WAZ districts are expected to implement strategies that fall within all priority improvement areas, the specifics may differ. For example, the framework suggests that districts teach and model strong social-emotional skills, but it does not require a specific method or curriculum for doing so. The intent is to allow districts flexibility to operationalize WAZ in a way that is most appropriate and feasible for their unique needs and circumstances. Therefore, our analysis of the critical elements for WAZ focused less on what those elements were and more on the degree to which articulation of those critical elements within any one district was clear and consistent. In examining the data, we looked for evidence from documents and interviews that there was a shared understanding across the district of what WAZ was. Here we offer examples of what evidence might be used to determine that a district had demonstrated positive, partial, or lack of progress toward this factor:

*An example of positive progress would be*

* The district has a WAZ implementation plan that lays out a set of core strategies that will be supported through WAZ. These same core strategies are included in the sustainability plan and are mentioned by multiple interviewees at the district and school levels when describing WAZ.

*An example of partial progress would be*

* The district has a WAZ implementation plan that lays out a set of core strategies that will be supported through WAZ. District interviewees demonstrate a shared understanding of these core strategies, or critical elements, but the ways in which school staff describe what WAZ is are sometimes inconsistent with the district’s understanding.

*An example of lack of progress would be*

* The district has been unable to clearly articulate what WAZ means for them, or there are inconsistent interpretations across many interviewees about what WAZ is.

### Factor 2:Sustainability requires ongoing adaptation and growth of the initiative.

#### Literature Review

Sustainability is not just maintenance—or the ongoing implementation of an initiative or practice beyond the funding period. Programs that are *maintained* have well-established critical elements that are commonly accepted as standard practice, whereas programs that are *sustained* are able to adapt to the changes and external pressures that often occur within districts and schools (Jerald, 2005). For example, turnover in staff and leadership, declining budgets, and high-stakes accountability demands all make it challenging for districts to continue implementing new initiatives. To continue, the initiative needs to adapt to changing circumstances of these kinds. Programs that cannot adapt to new conditions may be susceptible to elimination (Century & Levy, 2002; Chinman, Imm, & Wandersman, 2004; Datnow, 2005).

Adaptation does not mean changing an initiative’s critical elements, however. On the contrary, effective adaptation requires maintaining those critical elements. In fact, Century and Levy (2002, p. 3) define sustainability as “the ability of a program to maintain its core beliefs and values and use them to guide program adaptations to changes and pressure over time.” Jerald (2005, p. 4) explains thus: “organizations that sustain growth over time cling fiercely to their core visions while considering everything else—practices, structures, job definitions, schedules—up for grabs.” The ability to adhere to the essential components but also adapt to local circumstances is an indicator of the health of the initiative (Bergman & Beck, 2011; McLaughlin, 1990).

Adaptability requires that districts continually gather and analyze data to assess the extent to which a program is or is not working. Doing so allows the district to make targeted improvements and to be proactive in anticipating the need for change (Fixsen et al., 2005). Above all, it requires a mindset that improvement is always possible—“a deeply ingrained attitude that ‘good enough never is’” (Jerald, 2005, p. 3).

#### Application to WAZ Analysis

A continuous improvement mindset is embedded in ESE’s WAZ framework, which suggests that districts regularly gather data and make changes on the basis of patterns identified through those data. Districts are encouraged to reflect on their challenges each year and adjust their implementation plans as necessary to address those challenges, all while maintaining fidelity to their self-defined critical elements of WAZ. In our review of the data, we looked for evidence that the district was gathering and reviewing data continually and had made adaptations as necessary on the basis of their analysis of these data. Here we offer examples of what evidence might be used to determine that a district had demonstrated positive, partial, or lack of progress toward this factor.

*An example of positive progress would be*

* The district and schools regularly gather data and use the data to make necessary improvements in WAZ-related strategies. There is evidence that the district or schools have adapted their plans to better integrate WAZ activities into their existing culture or to adapt school- or district-based changes. Multiple interviewees make comments demonstrating that they are thinking about how to adapt WAZ strategies to anticipate future changes in their context.

*An example of partial progress would be*

* The district and schools regularly gather data and use the data to make necessary improvements in WAZ-related strategies. There is some evidence that the district or schools have adapted their plans to better integrate WAZ activities into their existing culture or to adapt school- or district-based changes. There are also instances in which the district or one or more schools have not made adaptations when the data showed they were necessary.

*An example of lack of progress would be*

* The district does not have any processes in place to assess whether the program is working. Or the district and schools regularly gather data, and these data show the need for improvement, but there is no evidence that the district has made any necessary adaptations. The district is facing one or more upcoming challenges that could threaten WAZ’s sustainability (e.g., a turnover in leadership or a budget cut), but interviewees do not make mention of any discussions about how they will adapt WAZ to be sustained in the face of these challenges.

### Factor 3:Sustainability requires a systems perspective.

#### Literature Review

Sustaining an education initiative requires making systemic changes that are rooted in policies, procedures, and practices at the state, district, school, and classroom levels (Stirman et al., 2012). With successful systemic integration, the initiative remains part of the routine practice of the organization, despite changes in leadership and priorities (Johnson, Hays, Center, & Daley, 2004; Scheirer, 2005). Datnow (2005, p. 123) describes this type of integration as one in which “reforms had become taken-for-granted features of daily life at the schools.” Schools are much more likely to sustain reforms when there is accountability for implementation, political support, and strong alignment of the initiative with the existing school and district culture and norms (Datnow, 2005). If an initiative is not considered central to a district’s existing mission and goals, then it is likely to be dropped (Berman & McLaughlin 1974; Chinman et al., 2004).

Approaching sustainability from a systems perspective requires that ownership of, and accountability for, an initiative fall to internal constituents rather than external entities. In other words, authority over the initiative should be the responsibility of the district and school staff who will have the capacity to implement, sustain, and spread the critical elements of the initiative themselves (Coburn, 2003). Chinman et al. (2004, p. 146) explain that “programs that are ‘stand-alone’ or self-contained are less likely to be sustained than programs that are well integrated within the host organization(s).… [P]rogram personnel should work to integrate their programs rather than to isolate and guard their programs.” Buy-in and support for a new initiative is therefore of critical importance. After all, it is unlikely that school and district stakeholders will sustain something they do not think is meaningful and important in achieving their overall goals (Anderson & Stiegelbauer, 1994; Coburn 2003; Datnow, 2005; Moffett, 2000).

#### Application to WAZ Analysis

All WAZ districts applied for WAZ funds in part because it supported work they were already doing or connected to a priority the district had already articulated. In this way, all the districts have approached implementation of WAZ from a systems perspective. Some districts, however, have made more progress than others in the degree to which this full integration of the initiative into their district’s vision, culture, and organizational structure had taken place. In addition, some schools were more successful than others in embodying this systemic approach to implementing and sustaining WAZ, and there was variation across districts in the degree to which staff expressed buy-in to the initiative. In our review of the evidence, we looked for data demonstrating the ways in which districts and their schools already had or were planning to ensure this kind of systemic integration and internal ownership of WAZ. Here we offer examples of what evidence might be used to determine that a district had demonstrated positive, partial, or lack of progress toward this factor.

*An example of positive progress would be*

* The district and its schools have integrated WAZ strategies into their improvement plans. District and school staff have ownership of and feel accountable for the success or failure of WAZ strategies. Interviewees across all WAZ schools consistently report that they are supportive of WAZ and that buy-in is strong among all staff members in their school. Survey data also show large majorities of the staff indicating that they value the importance of WAZ. Systems are in place to support replication of WAZ strategies districtwide.

*An example of partial progress would be*

* The district has integrated WAZ strategies into its overall improvement plans. Most WAZ schools, but not all, have done the same. It is not clear that staff members in leadership positions have fully taken ownership of and responsibility for the success of WAZ. Most interviewees report being supportive of WAZ, but there is some evidence that small pockets of resistance still exist.

*An example of lack of progress would be*

* WAZ strategies are not embedded within district or school improvement plans. Ownership of one or more WAZ strategies falls to an external party and district’s or school’s personnel do not demonstrate the ability or willingness to assume responsibility for the successful implementation of WAZ strategies. There is evidence, either from interviewees or survey data, that buy-in is lacking in at least half the staff at one or more schools.

### Factor 4: Sustainability requires a reform-support infrastructure at the district level.

#### Literature Review

Sustaining reform at the school level requires a reform-support infrastructure at the district level that provides the necessary resources and supports to allow staff to effectively carry out and sustain an initiative (Chinman et al., 2004; Datnow, 2005; Moffett, 2000). Coburn (2003, p. 6) explains: “because classrooms are situated in and inextricably linked to the broader school and system, teachers are better able to sustain change when there are mechanisms in place at multiple levels of the system to support their efforts.” Mechanisms might include a supportive professional community of colleagues, knowledgeable and supportive leadership, a good system for hiring and retaining qualified staff, connections with other schools engaged in similar efforts, a system for ongoing evaluation and reflection, and alignments with district policy (Coburn, 2003; Ucelli, 1999). A well-designed reform-support infrastructure can help ensure that the staff feels ownership of the initiative, secure buy-in from a critical mass of stakeholders, and build capacity for long-term sustainability (Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2008).

#### Application to WAZ Analysis

The importance of having an infrastructure at the district level that can support implementation at the school level is central to ESE’s WAZ framework. In fact, ESE has identified specific actions the districts might take to support schools in all three priority improvement areas. They include, for example, supporting the systematic collection and analysis of school climate data, providing a common set of protocols and forms for identifying student needs, and establishing a mechanism for schools to connect with community partners who might meet their needs. (See Appendix E for the full framework.) In our analysis of the data, we looked for evidence that such district-level supports existed because they are what is necessary to support consistent and ongoing WAZ implementation in schools. Here we offer examples of what evidence might be used to determine that a district had demonstrated positive, partial, or lack of progress toward this factor.

*An example of positive progress would be*

* The district provides sufficient resources to support staff development activities related to WAZ strategies (e.g., social-emotional curricula, strategies for identifying and addressing student needs). The district has a system in place to help schools identify, establish relationships with, and monitor the effectiveness of community partners. School-level staff members describe district-level staff (including the district coordinator, if relevant) as an essential source of support for WAZ implementation and are generally satisfied with the level of resources that the district provides to support WAZ.

*An example of partial progress would be*

* The district provides some resources to support staff development activities related to WAZ strategies (e.g., social-emotional curricula, strategies for identifying and addressing student needs). The district has a partially developed system in place to help schools identify, establish relationships with, and monitor the effectiveness of community partners. There is variation in the extent to which school-level staff members are satisfied with the level of resources that the district provides to support WAZ.

*An example of lack of progress would be*

* School-level staff members do not describe district-level staff as a source of support for WAZ implementation and are generally dissatisfied with the level of resources that the district provides to support WAZ. The district does not have a system in place to support schools in the development and maintenance of community partnerships, nor does it support staff development activities related to WAZ.

### Factor 5:Sustainability requires ongoing professional development.

#### Literature Review

Professional development is an important component of sustainability because it helps to ensure that staff members within the organization will have the necessary skills and capacity to carry on a new initiative and subscribe to the initiative’s core beliefs and values (Century & Levy, 2002). Chinman et al. (2004) explain:

Programs that train people with secure jobs in the organization are more likely to have lasting effects. Those trained can continue to provide programming, train others, and form a constituency to support the program. In other words, if the only people who operate the program are those fully funded by the program, when the funding ends there will be no one left to carry on any of its useful components. (p. 145

Expecting staff to carry the burden of changing their practice on their own is risky (Elmore, 1996). Districts that have been able to plan for and carry out ongoing professional development and support during and after implementation of a new initiative have demonstrated the most success with sustainability (Brown & Spangler, 2006 Giles & Hargreaves, 2006; Moffett, 2000).

Professional development includes a range of activities, such as training for the entire staff on priority issues and specialized training for selected staff (McLaughlin, Leone, Meisel, & Henderson, 1997). It also can include access to ongoing technical assistance and consultation (Greenberg, Domitrovich, Graczyk, & Zins, 2005; McLaughlin & Leone, 1997) and follow-up observations and coaching (Boudah, Logan & Greenwood, 2001). All these activities promote the internalization of practices and support their continued use (Wisconsin Center for Education Research, 2004).

#### Application to WAZ analysis

ESE has offered technical assistance to WAZ grantees through regular convenings and peer learning exchanges. These events have included presentations and trainings on various topics related to the priority improvement areas and opened opportunities for districts to meet with one another and share challenges and effective strategies. The technical assistance also has involved direct support and coaching to the WAZ coordinators in each district. Although many interviewees mentioned the ESE-provided technical assistance as a beneficial source of support, in our analysis, we were interested in professional development activities offered by the districts to their own staff that related to WAZ strategies. We looked for evidence that districts were providing sufficient professional development during implementation and also that they were planning for ongoing professional development after the end of the funding period. Here we offer examples of what evidence might be used to determine that a district had demonstrated positive, partial, or lack of progress toward this factor.

*An example of positive progress would be*

* The district has offered professional development activities related to WAZ since the initiative began and has offered these activities to a broad group of staff members (including teachers, school and district administrators, and support staff). The district has a sustainability plan that clearly specifies how it will continue providing professional development in the absence of WAZ funding.

*An example of partial progress would be*

* The district has offered professional development activities related to WAZ since the initiative began and has offered these activities to a broad group of staff members. The district’s sustainability plan does not, however, clearly specify how it will continue providing professional development in the absence of WAZ funding.

*An example of lack of progress would be*

* Professional development activities related to WAZ have been inadequate, or are limited to staff members who are funded by the initiative (e.g., WAZ coordinators). The district’s sustainability plan does not address professional development.

### Factor 6:Sustainability requires paying close and ongoing attention to funding.

#### Literature Review

Part of creating a comprehensive sustainability plan is identifying *what* is to be sustained, *what resources* are needed, and *how to access* those resources. Sustainability is only partly contingent on replacing funding, but securing funding is important. The Finance Project (2002) argues that it is important to have a “strategic finance orientation” wherein leaders know exactly what it is they need to sustain and what resources they need to sustain those elements and have identified strategies to access those resources.

Some strategies for securing funding are

* Secure funding as early as possible (Chinman et al., 2004).
* Diversify the funding from multiple sources to help prevent the sudden financial drought that often occurs when relying on one funding source (Johnson et al., 2004).
* Have a strategic process for accessing the most appropriate funding source to support each component of the initiative. Analyzing each component separately, and aligning that component with a suitable funding source, may guarantee the initiative’s longevity (Wright & Deich, 2002).
* Regularly discuss accomplishments of the initiative and potential funding sources with a wide range of stakeholders so that all possible options can be considered. Ultimately, a well-informed community of stakeholders can be the most effective advocate for identifying funding to maintain and improve student success (Moffett, 2000).

#### Application to WAZ Analysis

All WAZ districts were required to develop a sustainability plan in which they identified the elements of WAZ they would sustain and a resource strategy for sustaining each of those elements. In addition, some interviewees discussed their plans to secure necessary resources and concerns about the feasibility of the plans. We reviewed the sustainability plans and interviewee comments about funding to analyze the degree to which districts were addressing funding concerns. Here we offer examples of what evidence might be used to determine that a district had demonstrated positive, partial, or lack of progress toward this factor.

*An example of positive progress would be*

* The district has already secured a funding source or found an alternative way to continue supporting key elements of WAZ beyond its funding period. Multiple interviewees express confidence that sustaining the initiative in the absence of funding is feasible. The sustainability plan clearly outlines resource strategies that will continue to sustain WAZ strategies in the long term.

*An example of partial progress would be*

* The district’s sustainability plan clearly outlines resource strategies that will continue to sustain some of the WAZ strategies in the long term. Some interviewees express concerns, however, about the ability to continue to fund certain aspects of WAZ.

*An example of lack of progress would be*

* The district’s sustainability plan does not clearly outline resource strategies that will continue to sustain WAZ strategies in the long term. Many interviewees express serious concerns about the district’s ability to sustain WAZ in the absence of funding.

# III. Findings

## Cross-District Findings

The focus of this evaluation report is on answering the third and fourth overarching research questions:

What are the outcomes associated with WAZ implementation?

Is WAZ sustainable at the district and school levels, and what supports or hinders (or will support or hinder) sustainability and replication in other districts and schools?

Each district reported on major areas of progress, ways in which WAZ contributed to that progress, and challenges they continued to face. Interviewees also discussed their concerns about, and approaches to, being able to sustain the WAZ work after the grant period ends. In this section, we present a set of findings that summarize the common themes that emerged across districts:

1. Improvements in student behavior, family engagement, and the student referral process were the most commonly cited areas of progress across the WAZ districts. Improvements related to community partnerships were reported as top areas of progress in three districts.
2. According to interviewees, the key WAZ-driven levers that contributed to their progress were (a) grant-supported staff positions that were deemed essential for moving the work forward and (b) professional development supporting the implementation of social-emotional curricula.
3. Interviewees most commonly reported that family engagement and processes for identifying and addressing student needs were ongoing challenges.
4. All WAZ districts demonstrated positive or partial progress toward the majority, if not all, of the six factors identified in the literature as essential for sustainability.

In this section, we summarize the evidence supporting the Year 3 cross-district findings. The subsequent district profiles describe the district-specific findings.

### Cross-District Finding 1: Improvements in student behavior, family engagement, and the student referral process were the most commonly cited areas of progress across the WAZ districts. Improvements related to community partnerships were reported as top areas of progress in three districts.

Improvements in student behavior, improvements in family engagement, and improvements in the student referral process were each cited as among the top areas of progress attributable to WAZ in four of the five WAZ districts. Improvements related to community partnerships were cited as among the top areas of progress attributable to WAZ in three of the five WAZ districts. Student behavior, family engagement, and community partnerships also were common areas of progress that emerged in the data collection during Year 2. After the final year of WAZ implementation, interview respondents continued to report these issues as areas of progress, in addition to improvements in the student referral process.

Data gathered in Fall River, Holyoke, Lynn, and Springfield indicated improvements in student behavior since WAZ began in 2011–12. Interviewees reported fewer incidents of bullying, fewer discipline referrals, and a general improvement in school climate; students were following rules and were respectful and supportive of one another. One interviewee in Lynn explained that now students were *“behaving and acting* [better] *because this is their family, their classroom”* and an interviewee in Springfield explained that *“four or five years ago the cool kids were the kids always doing the wrong thing. Now the cool kids are the kids who are on point.…* [T]*hey get recognition for being leaders.”* Data from the staff survey, when available, supported these interview reports. In Fall River, Holyoke, and Lynn, the percentage of staff who “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that students support and respect one another increased between Years 1 and 3.

Family engagement was noted as a top area of progress in Holyoke, Lynn, Springfield, and Worcester. Improvements in family engagement in particular are notable given that this was not an explicit goal of WAZ at its outset. The districts began to focus more heavily on family engagement in Years 2 and 3 as a critical element of an overall positive school climate. In Year 2, interviewees generally characterized improvements in family engagement as improvement in attendance at family events. In Year 3, however, more respondents were giving examples of ways in which their school had become a more open and welcoming environment for parents and how parents were more involved in problem solving to address their child’s academic and nonacademic needs. Respondents in Holyoke reported increases in parent volunteerism, an increase in parent participation in programs offered by community partners (e.g., GED classes), and an improvement in understanding of the importance of education. In Springfield, respondents reported conducting home visits when parents had trouble coming into the school for meetings, and they also reported holding events in locations close to where many of the families lived, including housing projects, for example. An interviewee in Lynn described the improvement this way: *“there isn’t a day that you couldn’t be here and see teachers meeting with parents or parents feeling comfortable asking questions. It’s just a totally different school than it was five years ago.”*

In the final year of data collection, respondents from Fall River, Holyoke, Springfield, and Worcester reported improvements in their student referral process. Specifically, they reported improvement in timeliness, more clarity in referral procedures, greater use of data to inform referrals, and greater staff and family involvement in the referral process. In Worcester, for example, one interviewee described improvement in timeliness and attributed it to having consistent student need meetings every week. In Fall River, several respondents described a consistent and clear set of protocols and procedures that teachers were following to make referrals, and as a result, *“there’s more teachers referring, more teachers relying on that whole process of getting supports for kids.”* Overall, respondents described their referral processes as having become *“more efficient”* and that, as a result, they were doing a better job at identifying students in need of services.

In Fall River and Holyoke, respondents reported improvements in the quality of their community partnerships. In Lynn, respondents reported improvements in their process for establishing and maintaining school-community partnerships. One school leader in Fall River explained, *“we’re better equipped to recognize the difference between a community relationship and a community partnership”* and a leader in Holyoke noted, *“we might not have many new partners…the partners we have we’re using in a different way…we’re targeting our need where we think they could really help.”* In Lynn, WAZ was used to support the establishment of a Community Advisory Committee that has made progress in promoting a more collaborative relationship with community partners than had been the case in the past. One district-level respondent explained that *“before it was more of an invitation—we dictated the work. And it doesn’t feel this way in the community engagement teams at all…I think the level of collaboration at the district level had a different feel for everyone.”*

### Cross-District Finding 2: According to interviewees, the key WAZ-driven levers that contributed to their progress were (a) grant-supported staff positions that were deemed essential for moving the work forward and (b) professional development supporting the implementation of social-emotional curricula.

The WAZ grant proved to be a critical source of support that allowed all five districts to see improvements not only in their reported top areas of progress (student behavior, family engagement, and the student referral process) but in other important areas as well, such as overall school climate and community partnerships. The extra money afforded by WAZ was most typically used by the districts to support staff positions and professional development, and interviewees cited these specific resources as instrumental to their progress.

All five districts used their WAZ grant to fund or partially fund district or school-level coordinators who were responsible for overseeing implementation of the strategies laid out in their WAZ plans. In Holyoke, Springfield, and Worcester, the grant supported full-time coordinator positions in each school. Lynn decided not to hire full-time school coordinators but instead to have existing school staff members serve on WAZ-related teams that would be charged with overseeing implementation of the WAZ strategies. Fall River invested in school coordinators initially for three schools but by the end of the grant was supporting a full-time coordinator in only two out of its six WAZ schools. The other four schools designated existing personnel to take on WAZ oversight and implementation responsibilities. In addition, all districts except Holyoke supported a full-time coordinator at the district level.

Interviewees universally lauded the positive contributions that had been made through these WAZ-supported staff positions, with many respondents arguing that progress would not have been possible without them. This finding is consistent with data gathered in Years 1 and 2. In Fall River, where some schools lacked the coordinator position, some interviewees raised concerns, noting that *“not having that position has had an impact on where we are as opposed to where we could be.”* Although interviewees in schools without coordinators did acknowledge making progress, some expressed frustration that other schools in the districts had coordinators and were able to make progress at a quicker pace. In Lynn, on the other hand, where none of the schools had a coordinator position, school-based staff did not express the need to have one. Nonetheless, district staff in Lynn expressed some concerns that relying on school-based teams to implement the work had the unintended consequence of creating inconsistencies in protocols and procedures that would make it difficult to replicate and sustain the WAZ work districtwide.

In Fall River, Lynn, and Springfield, interviewees reported that WAZ-supported professional development related to the implementation of social-emotional curricula was a key contributor to their progress. For example, in Fall River, the district was supporting professional development for the implementation of Responsive Classroom and Playworks at the elementary school level, as well as Guided Discipline at the middle school level. Lynn was supporting professional development related to Playworks, and Springfield was supporting professional development related to Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports. In all three districts, interviewees noted the benefits of having ongoing training and coaching related to these programs. These districts also included professional development on these programs in their WAZ sustainability plans.

### Cross-District Finding 3: Interviewees most commonly reported that family engagement and processes for identifying and addressing student needs were ongoing challenges.

As stated in Finding 1, data showed improvements in family engagement and processes for identifying and addressing student needs during the grant period. However, data also showed persistent challenges in these areas. This apparent contradiction is not necessarily surprising. Both these areas were among the reasons that the districts applied for the WAZ grant in the first place. Even though they made progress, respondents noted that there was still room for improvement.

Interviewees in Fall River, Springfield, and Worcester reported that family engagement was an ongoing challenge. In Springfield and Worcester, family engagement also was reported as a top area of progress, yet respondents noted that much work still needed to be done. Several staff members reported various barriers to effective family engagement, such as lack of transportation, changing phone numbers, and lack of trust in the school among family members. One interviewee noted that *“family engagement is just a tough thing.”* Nonetheless, each of these districts was committed to continuing to work toward addressing these challenges and improving family engagement.

In Holyoke, Lynn, Springfield, and Worcester, interviewees reported continuing challenges with their systems for identifying and addressing student needs. This was despite reports in Holyoke, Springfield, and Worcester that an improvements in the student referral process was a top area of progress. For example, in Holyoke, interviewees noted improvements in the regularity of their referral meetings, in their data systems, and in staff involvement in the referral process. Interviewees in two schools, however, also reported a general lack of timeliness in the referral process, lack of follow-up communication with teachers about supports being provided, and a lack of coordination between teachers and support providers to minimize disruptions to learning time. In Springfield, despite comments on the success of their whole-class review and student teacher assistance team processes, respondents in more than half of the interviews and focus groups also reported difficulties in getting students access to the services they needed (e.g., long waitlists, limited availability, and high fees for some services). Staff in Worcester described ongoing challenges related to a centralized data system that was intended to make the referral process more efficient but that was, in fact, viewed as inefficient. And finally, in Lynn, district staff members were especially concerned about the lack of a consistent approach to identifying and addressing student needs.

### Cross-District Finding 4: All WAZ districts demonstrated positive or partial progress toward the majority, if not all, of the six factors identified in the literature as essential for sustainability.

At the end of Year 2, interviewees from all five districts had expressed concerns about the sustainability of WAZ. Staff at all levels were aware that WAZ funding was limited and worried about what would happen when the grant period was over. Data collected during Year 3 showed that all districts had taken steps to plan for sustainability and were making generally positive progress toward a set of six factors identified in the literature as essential for sustainability.

The six factors identified in the literature as essential for sustainability are (1) identification of the initiative’s critical elements, (2) adaptability, (3) systems perspective, (4) reform-support infrastructure, (5) ongoing professional development, and (6) funding. A more detailed description of these factors, and the criteria used to establish whether districts demonstrated “positive,” “partial,” or “lack” of progress toward them, is described in detail in the methods section of this report.

Evidence showed that three of the five districts (Fall River, Lynn, and Springfield) demonstrated “positive” or “partial” progress toward all six factors, with Lynn showing positive progress toward five of the six. The other two districts (Holyoke and Worcester) demonstrated “positive” or “partial” progress toward five of the six factors, and for both of these districts, the one factor for which evidence showed a lack of progress was ongoing professional development (see Table 5).

Table 5. Cross-District Summary of Sustainability Analysis

| Essential Factor | Positive Progress | Partial Progress | Lack of Progress |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sustainability requires identification of the initiative’s critical elements. | Fall RiverLynnSpringfield | HolyokeWorcester |  |
| Sustainability requires ongoing adaptation and growth of the initiative. | Fall RiverHolyokeLynnSpringfieldWorcester |  |  |
| Sustainability requires a systems perspective. | HolyokeLynn | Fall RiverSpringfieldWorcester |  |
| Sustainability requires a reform-support infrastructure at the district level. | Fall River | HolyokeLynnSpringfieldWorcester |  |
| Sustainability requires ongoing professional development. | Fall RiverLynnSpringfield |  | HolyokeWorcester |
| Sustainability requires paying close and ongoing attention to funding. |  | Fall RiverHolyokeLynnSpringfieldWorcester |  |

Three of the districts demonstrated positive progress toward the first essential factor—identification of the initiative’s critical elements. The exceptions were Holyoke and Worcester, which demonstrated partial progress toward this factor. Although Holyoke district leaders were clear in articulating that WAZ would support the implementation of the Full Service Community School model and that the critical components of this were *“a planning process, a project manager, and a partnership approach,”* staff at the school level were more likely to include family engagement, and specifically the staff position of family engagement coordinator, as a critical component of WAZ and the full service community school model. In Worcester, interviewees were consistent in identifying the wraparound coordinator position as the essential piece of WAZ, but less consistent in identifying the major activities that WAZ supported.

The essential factor toward which all five districts demonstrated positive progress was the second one—adaptability. All five districts had adopted a continuous improvement mindset about WAZ, as evidenced by ongoing collection and review of data and stakeholder feedback and the adjustment of implementation approaches based on analysis of those data. For example, in Worcester, considerable attention had been paid to refining and clarifying the role of their school coordinator on the basis of feedback during the first year that the role was not being effectively utilized. Springfield also spent time making sure that the role of the school coordinator was adaptable and responsive to unique school needs.

With respect to the third essential factor—systems perspective—we looked for evidence that WAZ strategies were seamlessly integrated into overall district and school improvement processes and plans and that the broad majority of staff was bought in to and supportive of the initiative. In Lynn and Holyoke, this systems perspective was evident, and these districts demonstrated positive progress toward this factor. The other three districts demonstrated partial progress toward this factor. In these districts, there was evidence that WAZ strategies were being integrated into district and schoolwide planning, but each either showed little integration of WAZ into overall planning or struggled with buy-in to some degree. For example, in Fall River, interviewees reported a lack of buy-in in some of the newer WAZ schools or schools with new influxes of students and staff. In Springfield, only two principals had integrated WAZ strategies into their schoolwide plans, and implementation of the initiative in the middle schools was limited to sixth grade only, making it challenging to integrate it fully into school culture. In Worcester, buy-in was reportedly strong at some schools, but not all. Furthermore, the heavy reliance on the school coordinator position in Worcester led several staff members to raise concerns about the extent to which the initiative was truly integrated into the school.

Fall River was the only district that demonstrated positive progress toward the fourth essential factor, reform-support infrastructure. Evidence showed a clear system of support from the district, and school-level staff often referred to this support and how important it was. For example, many staff members in Fall River recognized the critical support provided by the district coordinator. Several interviewees also noted support from the district through common data collection tools and protocols, and through the district level social emotional learning (SEL) team that required representation from each school. The other four districts demonstrated partial progress toward this factor. Three of these districts (Lynn, Springfield, and Worcester) had a district coordinator position, which interviewees described as an essential source of support. Interviewees also reported challenges with respect to district support, including lack of district-level support for coordinating a process around identifying and addressing student needs (Lynn), lack of support for schoolwide implementation at the middle school level (Springfield), and challenges creating districtwide systems for managing services provided by partners (Worcester). In Holyoke, interviewees reported that the lack of a district coordinator was the major piece that was missing from their district system of support.

For two districts—Holyoke and Worcester—evidence showed a lack of progress toward the fifth essential factor, ongoing professional development. In these districts, interviewees described a general lack of professional development related to WAZ. Holyoke made no mention of professional development in its WAZ sustainability plan, and in Worcester, although the sustainability plan did include reference to professional development, the details were vague. The other three districts demonstrated positive progress. In these districts, interviewees described having participated in professional development related to WAZ strategies, and the district had plans to continue this professional development after WAZ was over.

Finally, all five districts demonstrated partial progress toward the sixth factor, funding. In all districts, resources had been identified to sustain the critical elements of WAZ for at least one year (e.g., school or district coordinators, professional development). Plans for how to sustain these critical elements after one year were not clear, however.

### Summary

***The most commonly reported areas of WAZ implementation progress were improvements in student behavior, family engagement, the student referral process, and community partnerships.*** In each of these areas, interview respondents and survey data demonstrated improvements between the first and third year of the grant. Although the degree to which improvements were reported varied by district and school, data gathered from all districts showed improvements in at least two of the four areas.

***Interviewees most commonly described WAZ-funded staff positions and WAZ-supported professional development on social-emotional curricula as the primary ways in which WAZ contributed to the progress they had made.*** Indeed, staff positions and professional development for social-emotional curricula were most typically among the critical elements of WAZ that districts wanted to sustain after the grant period ends.

***Family engagement and processes for identifying and addressing student needs were the most commonly noted challenges.*** It is interesting to note that these two areas also were among the reported top areas of progress—family engagement and the student referral process. Despite the reported progress, interviewees also acknowledged the difficulty in adequately addressing these areas and noted that they were ongoing challenges.

***All districts showed progress toward at least five of six factors identified in the literature as essential for sustainability.*** Three of the districts showed positive or partial progress toward all six factors, and two of the districts showed positive or partial progress toward five of the six factors. Planning for sustainability was a central focus of the work that each district engaged in during the final year, with support from ESE and a technical assistance provider, School and Main Institute (SMI).

The data collected for this evaluation demonstrated that the focus on sustainability had resulted in a generally high degree of readiness for sustainability in all the districts. All districts showed the ability to adapt to address feedback, and all districts had made some strides toward securing additional funding to sustain key components of the initiative (e.g., staff positions) after the grant period is over. Districts varied, however, on other essential factors of sustainability. Fall River was the only district to demonstrate positive progress toward having a solid reform-support infrastructure in place at the district level. Holyoke, Lynn, Springfield, and Worcester also faced some challenges with respect to having a solid district-level infrastructure of support in place. However, Holyoke and Lynn showed positive progress towards having a systems perspective on the work. Finally, Holyoke and Worcester did not yet demonstrate evidence of securing ongoing professional development for WAZ-related strategies, which could potentially lead to difficulties in building staff capacity to carry on the work long-term.

Overall, analysis of the evaluation data gathered in Year 3, combined with analysis of data gathered during Years 1 and 2, shows that the WAZ initiative has made a contribution to student outcomes in WAZ schools, and what is perhaps more important, has enhanced districts’ capacity to support the implementation of strategies focused on a positive school climate, identifying and addressing student needs, and creating and maintaining meaningful school–community partnerships. Although sustaining this work beyond the grant’s funding period will undoubtedly prove to be challenging, each district has engaged in thoughtful planning for sustainability and is generally well positioned to continue to move the work forward.

In the following sections, we present profiles for each district, which include details on the findings unique to each district.

# Profile A: Fall River

## Three-Year WAZ Implementation Overview

Fall River began implementing its WAZ grant during a time of transition. In 2009, the district had undergone a comprehensive district review by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and was implementing an academic recovery plan designed to address areas that the commissioner had found to be deficient. As part of its overall improvement planning, the district also had developed and begun implementing a wellness plan, which emphasized the importance of student’s physical and emotional health as a contributor to learning, and promoted policies and programs designed to support all aspects of student health and well-being. The WAZ grant represented an opportunity to enhance and help move these existing wellness priorities forward. Fall River implemented WAZ in six schools: Fonseca Elementary, Viveiros Elementary, Doran Elementary, Kuss Middle, Talbot Middle, and Durfee High. Viveiros, Kuss, and Doran began as WAZ schools during the first year of the grant, whereas the other three became WAZ schools during the second year of the grant.

Fall River used the WAZ grant to support its wellness initiative, specifically through supporting the implementation of social-emotional programming at the elementary (Playworks, Responsive Classroom) and middle school levels (Guided Discipline), student support coordinator staff positions at some schools and team-based approaches to wellness implementation at others, and family engagement strategies. The district also set up an infrastructure to support WAZ schools, including a WAZ oversight committee that included the superintendent, the assistant superintendent, the Title I director, the WAZ district coordinator, a Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Network that included representatives from school-level SEL teams (at both WAZ and non-WAZ schools), and a process for formalizing relationships with community partners

At the end of WAZ’s third year, data has shown improvements in student behavior, in student referral processes, and in the quality of school–community partnerships. In addition, the two Level 4 schools (Doran and Kuss) exited Level 4 status in 2013, and the district as a whole is no longer monitored closely by ESE. Interview respondents attributed these improvements to an overall district vision that prioritized the social-emotional needs of students and to the concrete support that came in the form of social-emotional curricula and related professional development. In addition, staff in schools that had a student support coordinator position strongly emphasized the importance of that position in being able to make the progress that they did. As the district looks to the future, it plans to focus on expanding the work generated under WAZ to other schools throughout the district and to continue building a district infrastructure that supports schools in being able to effectively address student and family needs.

## Year 3 Findings

In this profile, we describe the major areas of progress made in Fall River during its three years as a WAZ grantee, as well as steps the district has taken toward sustaining components of WAZ after the grant period ends. The data sources used to inform this profile were (a) stakeholder interviews conducted during the winter of 2014, (b) WAZ-related documents provided by the district and schools, and (c) student and staff survey data. The analysis of these data was informed by the findings that emerged in Reports 2 and 3 on conditions and supports during Year 1 of WAZ implementation and implementation progress made during Year 2 of WAZ implementation, respectively. For example, researchers paid particular attention to analyzing the extent to which progress made during Year 2 was sustained in Year 3, and the extent to which challenges identified during early years of the grant have persisted or dissipated and why.

AIR’s analysis of data collected in the three years of its evaluation revealed the following four findings related to progress and plans for sustainability of WAZ in Fall River:

1. Evidence gathered during the final year of WAZ implementation indicated the following as major areas of progress in Fall River:
	1. Improvements in student behavior
	2. Improvement in the student referral process
	3. Improvement in the quality of partnerships
2. The key WAZ-driven levers that contributed to these areas of progress were
	1. Prioritization of the need to address students’ social-emotional needs
	2. Professional development for social-emotional curricula and strategies in all schools
	3. Student support coordinator positions at some schools
3. In the final year of WAZ implementation, the major challenges Fall River was facing included
	1. Implementing WAZ in schools without coordinators
	2. Engaging families
4. Evidence gathered during the final year of WAZ implementation indicated that Fall River had made positive or partial progress toward all six essential factors for sustainability:
	1. Identification of critical elements (positive)
	2. Adaptability (positive)
	3. Systems perspective (partial)
	4. Reform-support infrastructure (partial)
	5. Ongoing professional development (positive)
	6. Funding (partial)

Further details on these findings and the evidence that supports them follow.

### Finding 1: Evidence gathered during the final year of WAZ implementation indicated the following as major areas of progress in Fall River: (a) improvements in student behavior, (b) improvement in the student referral process, and (c) improvement in the quality of partnerships.

Data gathered during this evaluation reveal three major areas of progress in Fall River that can be attributed to WAZ: (a) improvements in student behavior, (b) improvement in the student referral process, and (c) improvement in the quality of partnerships. These major areas of progress were cited by interviewees and, in some cases, demonstrated through an analysis of survey data.

#### Improvements in Student Behavior

When asked about changes in school climate in Fall River, respondents in 8 out of 20 interviews or focus groups, including two district leaders and staff across five schools, reported improvements in student behavior. As one district leader noted when talking about improvements at particular schools, *“there were a lot of issues there and now you walk in and you can feel the calm. You can see the smiles on the kids’ faces.”* Another district leader pointed to Doran’s turnaround from level 4 to level 2 status as a *“really an amazing story”* in which the school is outperforming other schools in the district in behavioral issues and on other performance indicators.

Several school staff members also pointed to improvements in student behavior as a major area of progress:

In a classroom situation, it’s very unlikely for me to see a significant disagreement or two kids getting into an argument during class time. That was one of the things that we measured in the last learning walk, just looking at how students are talking to each other like eye contact. Even when they’re not in the morning meeting and they’re in class and they’re talking about lessons and there's one group sharing out their work, the other kids are good about listening and being respectful.

Another respondent commented that the high school’s freshman academy has led to *“a significant difference* [in student behavior]. *I feel—because they're in one area of the building for the first five time slots of the day, and they're seeing the same people —I think we are able to de-escalate stuff a lot faster because they're familiar with the people that they're running into.”* In addition, a teacher shared that *“I’ve seen a change in the student-to-student interaction, because I feel like when I first came here there were a lot more incidents of bullying and…there were fights pretty frequently.”*

Finally, data from the student and staff surveys showed some improvements in student behavior. On the Conditions for Learning survey, the percentage of students rating their schools as “needs improvement” on the Safe and Respectful Climate scale, which measures the extent to which students feel physically and emotionally safe, decreased from 31 percent in Year 1 to 27 percent in Year 3 (see Table 6). This decrease was statistically significant overall, but varied by school. For example, Kuss showed a large improvement, but Doran saw the opposite, with the percentage of students rating their schools as “needs improvement” on this scale increasing from 24 percent in Year 1 to 33 percent in Year 3. However, it is important to note that Doran added grades 7-8 between Years 1 and 3, and so this increase could partially be explained by the difference in the age range of the students across years.

Another indicator of student behavior is the Social Emotional Learning scale, which measures students’ perceptions of their peers’ ability to effectively solve problems and avoid conflict. On this scale, the percentage of students rating the social-emotional competence of their peers as “needs improvement” decreased from 25 percent in Year 1 to 19 percent in Year 3 (see Table 6). This statistically significant change also was evident in Kuss, where the percentage decreased by 11 percentage points.

Also, although there was not a statistically significant change overall in the percentage of staff who “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that students support and respect one another, at Viveiros there was a large, statistically significant increase of 30 percentage points on this item between Year 1 and Year 3 (see Table 7). Although the data show a decrease on this item for Doran, the percentage of staff who “agreed” or “strongly agreed” was relatively high in both years (73 percent in Year 1 and 64 percent in Year 3).

Table 6. Student Perceptions of School Climate: Fall River

|  | *Percentage of students who rated their school climate as “needs improvement” in the domain of…* |
| --- | --- |
| *Safe and Respectful Climate* | *Social and Emotional Learning* |
| Year 1 | Year 3 | Year 1 | Year 3 |
| **All Fall River WAZ schools** | 31% | 27%\* | 25% | 19%\* |
| **Doran** | 24% | 33%\* | 12% | 11% |
| **Kuss** | 33% | 23%\* | 38% | 27%\* |
| **Viveiros** | 32% | 28% | 15% | 13% |

\*The difference between Year 3 and Year 1 is statistically significant.

*Source:* Conditions for Learning student survey, spring 2012 and fall 2013

Table 7. Staff Perceptions of Student–Student Relationships: Fall River

|  | *Percentage of staff members who “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that students support and respect one another* |
| --- | --- |
| Year 1 | Year 3 |
| **All Fall River WAZ schools** | 57% | 62% |
| **Doran** | 73% | 64% |
| **Kuss** | 56% | 48% |
| **Viveiros** | 49% | 79%\* |

\*The difference between Year 3 and Year 1 is statistically significant.

*Source:* AIR-administered staff survey, spring 2012 and fall 2013

#### Improvement in the Student Referral Process

Respondents in 11 out of 20 interviews and focus groups, including staff from all six schools, a district leader, and an external provider, reported improvement in the student referral process as a major area of progress attributable to WAZ. As one district leader explained, *“with the WAZ schools they have done an amazing job in setting up protocols, processes to address student needs*.*”* A school leader also reported that the referral process has *“become a little bit more comprehensive every year.… We’ve tweaked the forms. Every classroom has a behavior binder so that someone can go in and just slip right through it and see what’s going on, make sure it’s updated*.*”* This school leader noted that school staff now have *“more of a roadmap…something they can refer to,”* which included the school’s various teams (e.g., SEL, mathematics, wellness), which meet to *“discuss and review”* student needs.

Another school leader commented that the referral process in Fall River is now *“more efficient”* in part because of the school’s departmental organization and meetings:

Having the SEL meetings, grade-level team meetings, has really helped for teachers to collaborate and support one another. If they’re sharing students, it’s departmentalized so…it’s an opportunity for all of them to be at the table. Sometimes they’ll bring a child into those meetings if a child is struggling and then they all talk to that child or they’ll bring a parent in and say we’re concerned about this. What do we do? How do we help you? So I think that that piece has been an addition that is a proactive way for us to get at some students and intervene before it turns into something more serious.

Respondents also pointed to improvement in teacher referral of students to services to meet their needs. One interviewee involved in coordinating services noted that, at their school, *“there’s more teachers referring, more teachers relying on that whole process of getting supports for kids*.*”* An external partner also shared these positive perspectives, talking in depth about the improvement in referral of students with nonacademic needs in Fall River:

I would say that there has been a change. In the beginning, we almost only saw the students who were presenting as disruptive or behavioral in class, and that’s how they found their way to the school adjustment and the referral to us. Now, even though that’s still pretty predominant, I do see more students who are there for other symptoms, other than just being disruptive in class. So, both teachers and…the school administrators are much more aware.…I learned that this child is going through a divorce. Let’s see if we can make a referral, even though the child’s not acting out in school. They might be showing more depressive-type symptoms or symptoms that don’t get the attention of the school generally. Now, they are getting the attention of the school.

Some interviewees (*n* = 8) pointed to the improvement in use of data and data systems when describing progress in efforts to identify and address student needs. One district leader asserted that Fall River has *“great data”* from its X2 student information data system,[[11]](#footnote-12) for which the district *“redid a couple of reports*.*”* As another example, when asked about changes in the timeliness and efficiency of referral processes, a school leader affirmed it is *“much better”* and attributed it to the district’s electronic referral process and data system: *“we do it online now with our X2”* system. Another school leader mentioned that staff members have *“learned a lot about data and how meaningful it is in supporting children socially, emotionally, academically*.*”* As one teacher explained, data on student needs and services is helpful for service continuity and teacher involvement in shaping these services as students transition from one grade to another:

Social emotionally I think the school has been pretty proactive, especially when there are kids who have identified needs, even that sort of carryover from one year to the next…because teachers are informed of what particular issues students have and what’s already in place for them and what will carry over the next year and have a sort of involvement in what they think would be helpful this year.

Last, the staff survey data also showed that staff members had been consistently using a systematic process to connect students with needs to services. There was no statistically significant change in the percentage of respondents indicating it is “likely” or “very likely” that they would follow a formal, systematic process for sharing nonacademic concerns with other staff members if they (1) identified a student who needs support in nonacademic areas or (2) identified a student in crisis. These percentages remained very high (89 percent and 96 percent, respectively; see Table 8). There also was no statistically significant change in the percentage of survey respondents indicating they would be “likely” or “very likely” to use data to screen for and confirm a need for nonacademic supports, although this percentage also remained high (82 percent in Year 3; see Table 9).

Table 8. Staff Reports on Their Likelihood of Following a Formal, Systemic Referral Process: Fall River

|  | *Percentage of staff members reporting that they are “likely” or “very likely” to follow a formal, systematic process for sharing their concerns with other staff members if they identify…* |
| --- | --- |
| *a student who needs additional supports* | *a student in crisis* |
| Year 1 | Year 3 | Year 1 | Year 3 |
| **All Fall River WAZ schools** | 93% | 89% | 94% | 96% |
| **Doran** | 93% | 97% | 94% | 97% |
| **Kuss** | 84% | 77% | 92% | 91% |
| **Viveiros** | 100% | 93%\* | 96% | 98% |

\*The difference between Year 3 and Year 1 is statistically significant.

*Source:* AIR-administered staff survey, spring 2012 and fall 2013

Table 9. Staff Reports on Their Use of Data for Screening Students: Fall River

|  | *Percentage of staff members reporting that they would be “likely” or “very likely” to use data to screen for and confirm the need for nonacademic support* |
| --- | --- |
| Year 1 | Year 3 |
| **All Fall River WAZ schools** | 82% | 82% |
| **Doran** | 83% | 86% |
| **Kuss** | 69% | 67% |
| **Viveiros** | 93% | 91% |

\*The difference between Year 3 and Year 1 is statistically significant.

*Source:* AIR-administered staff survey, spring 2012 and fall 2013

#### Improvement in the Quality of Partnerships

Respondents in 16 out of 20 interviews and focus groups across five schools identified improvement in the quality of partnerships as an area of progress in Fall River. Similarly, improvement in availability and effectiveness of services was identified as an area of progress in 12 interviews or focus groups across five schools. Notably, all three external service providers and all three district leaders commented about the growth of the quality of external service provider relationships with schools during the WAZ initiative, and how this growth contributed to improvement in availability and effectiveness of services. As a district leader shared, *“certainly many schools now, the providers are coming into the school to provide the services, much more outreach with that.”* Another noted that *“the quality has gone way up*.*”*

School leaders and staff noted improvement in external services and partnerships too. One school leader explained that *“we’ve created partnerships with social service agencies, opened our doors for them to come in.*… *We used to have one person from Child and Family Services, for instance, stationed here and this year we have two. So the need has grown and we’ve adapted to the need and brought people in*.*”* Another school leader mentioned that now the school is more effectively developing authentic partnerships with providers: *“we’re better equipped to recognize the difference between a community relationship and a community partnership. So we actually have brought partnerships into the school that are specific to our needs* [and] *we want to make sure it’s a true partnership*.*”*

Part of this ability to better identify a “true” partnerships stemmed from the district’s focus on monitoring quality and laying out clear expectations. At the time of Year 3 data collection, Fall River was in the process of piloting its Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which was a means for the school to lay out its needs and expectations including those related to service quality. As a district leader noted, the MOU lays out *“our expected outcomes. This is what I’ll do. This is what you do. And the most important part, let’s evaluate that at the end of the year and see if what we did worked.”* One interviewee reported that their school has had *“to look at quality. The way I found out if certain partnerships were good, I just did an informal check with teachers. If it was a program that went into a classroom…I asked the teachers what they thought of that program and if it helped the kids I think that just talking to kids and talking to teachers about what they liked or didn’t like about it”* has helped to develop partnerships with providers that provided better quality services to the school’s students.

School staff involved in coordinating services coming into their schools also affirmed the improvements in the quality of provider relationships during WAZ: *“It’s* *like night and day. There was nothing here* [before].*”* Another shared that *“building and strengthening existing partnerships has been really helpful for us*,*”* and that these improvements in relationships would help to sustain services for students even if they don’t have schools funds to support programs in some years.

Moreover, external providers reflected this sentiment about improvement in school–community partnerships. One provider, when asked about important outcomes they have observed over the previous three years, noted that their initial relationship with Fall River schools *“was very tentative”* and they were uncertain about whether they *“really wanted to help the schools.”* However, those concerns have *“disappeared”* with *“a different vibe of, sort of, we’re all in this together, which there wasn’t when we first started working”* with the school. When asked this same question, a second provider shared that the progress they have observed has included developing a therapeutic program that serves over 200 students in the district. This provider has moved from basing clinicians outside of the schools to providing both school-based staff and school-based services. According to the provider, this has led to

*stronger relationships with the schools. The schools know that they can call us…Our clinicians now are able to be there. They’re at the IEP meetings. They’re talking to the schools. They’re there when the kid is maybe being suspended or having a success. So the relationship that they have with the teachers, with the school adjustment counselors, with the principal, with everybody there in the building is so much stronger than it can be or ever will be just being office-based.*

This interviewee also talked about how they are working with the schools beyond just direct services: *“We're collaborative with the school. We attend meetings. More recently we've been going to more of the wellness meetings once a month or biweekly depending on the school.”*

### Finding 2: The key WAZ-driven levers that contributed to these areas of progress were (a) prioritization of the need to address students’ social-emotional needs, (b) professional development for social-emotional curricula and strategies in all schools, and (c) student support coordinator positions at some schools.

Data gathered during the AIR evaluation also speak to how WAZ contributed to these major areas of progress. Significantly, in Fall River, key informants pointed to how WAZ enhanced Fall River’s existing priority to address the social-emotional needs of its students. Interviewees also described how WAZ supported professional development on social-emotional curricula, as well as student support coordinators in some schools.

#### Prioritization of the Need to Address Students’ Social-Emotional Needs

The WAZ initiative enhanced Fall River’s existing focus on students’ social-emotional needs that had come about through the district’s “wellness” priorities that preceded WAZ. With the launch of its Recovery Plan in August 2009 to address four areas of deficiency, including teaching and learning, Fall River prioritized supports for students’ social-emotional learning, and called this focus “wellness.” When Fall River received its WAZ grant, this focus on wellness received an even higher priority. When asked about how WAZ affected their school, key informants at the three initial WAZ schools (Doran, Kuss, Viveiros), as well as district leaders and an external service provider, pointed to this prioritization as an important contribution. For example, one school leader emphasized that WAZ has

kept the social-emotional well-being of everyone a high priority in the school, so that it’s something that we talk about all day long.… So, what is it that we can do to support the kids that are in this building? Do they need a mentor? Do they need a psychiatrist? Do they need an adjustment counselor? Do they need a therapist? Who’s the therapist going to be? It has to be just the right match. Is the school aligned to what the therapy that the child is receiving, is the school aligned with the therapy? That’s another big piece. So that everyone’s working to wrap themselves around that one kid based on what they need and keeping it all straight is a huge task, but that’s really what we’ve learned and we’ve put in place and we continue to learn more.… Having the initiative come to Fall River has really put that social-emotional well-being at the forefront of everything that we do.

Another school leader shared that WAZ *“brought to light our need for growing our kids socially, emotionally, and academically. So it really highlighted how all three of them are intertwined. It really, I mean, our kids are better for it because we’ve created opportunities for them to mature and grow by supporting them. So our kids have experiences that they never would have had”* without WAZ.

#### Professional Development for Social-Emotional Curricula and Strategies in All Schools

WAZ also contributed to Fall River’s progress during the past three years by supporting professional development on curricula and strategies designed to improve climate and culture while also addressing students’ social-emotional needs. Significantly, in Year 3, Fall River continued implementing and supporting professional development on Responsive Classroom and Playworks at the elementary school level, as well as Guided Discipline at the middle and high school levels. Many key informants pointed to these supports as important strategies affecting school climate and student outcomes, such as by fostering consistent behavioral expectations and responses to students. One interviewee commented that Guided Discipline has provided a structure for the whole school to *“address behavior and expectations through language, with all teachers being on the same page. Using the same language. Conferencing with kids. Setting expectations with kids.”* Another interviewee at a second school pointed to the benefits of Responsive Classroom and related professional development when talking about improved student behavior and decreased office referrals: *“I think that having the Responsive Classroom piece was a huge part of that. Kids know the expectations and the rules…And teachers go over those expectations during that morning meeting spot at least for the kids from Pre-K to* [Grade] *5.”*

In addition, during the 2013–14 school year, Durfee began implementing a freshman academy with an advisory component. Key informants regularly talked about the district’s commitment to delivering professional development to support social-emotional curricula and strategies, which has helped to improve school climate and culture. One teacher shared that

We had some summer professional development on Guided Discipline about how to go about treating students, disciplining students in a way that’s not attacking it. You know, someone’s first instinct when they’re upset is to yell, and most of the time that’s not a good reaction to have, especially with the middle school student because it creates tension rather than learning from the mistake or the problem. So we’ve been dealing with Guided Discipline, which is a whole…way of treating students.

Several interviewees also noted that their schools *“spend a considerable amount of time for professional development on social-emotional issues.”*

#### Student Support Coordinator Positions at Some Schools

During Year 3, Fall River continued to use its WAZ grant to invest in school-level personnel at two of the WAZ schools: Doran and Kuss. These two schools each had a full-time student support coordinator (SSC), who was responsible for overseeing and managing implementation of WAZ-related strategies in their school. Fonseca, which received a coordinator during Year 2, did not have this position during Year 3. As in the Year 2 findings, key informants at the two schools with SSCs shared that these positions were essential for carrying out WAZ strategies in the schools. SSC responsibilities included, for example, collaborating closely with school leadership to address student and family needs, serving on school wellness teams, facilitating the referral process, and coordinating outreach to external service providers to expand services for students and families.

One school leader emphasized that the SSC position would be sustained in future years *“because I see how it affects everything else.”* This leader explained that the SSC *“speaks out for the kids on a social-emotional level”* and understands the importance of that. An external provider also pointed to the important role of the SSCs: *“during the WAZ initiative we’ve been able to have wellness coordinators* [SSCs] *that have really been able to open up eyes for the school and the administrators who don’t just see behavioral problems, but see social-emotional needs of children, which has been really helpful*.*”*

### Finding 3: In the final year of WAZ implementation, the major challenges Fall River was facing were (a) implementing WAZ in schools without coordinators and (b) engaging families.

Although Fall River has clearly made progress in WAZ initiative priority areas as a result of this funding, two challenges remain: implementing WAZ in schools without coordinators and engaging families.

#### Implementing WAZ in Schools Without Coordinators

At the four WAZ schools without SSCs, existing school support personnel were responsible for coordinating WAZ. The district viewed principal involvement and a team-based approach as essential for sustaining the initiative and coordination of school-based services for students and did not think a coordinator was necessary. As one district leader reflected:

It’s the school-based teams that make things work. It’s not one individual person. So…you don’t necessarily need a coordinator. But you do need a good team or a good person, because there’s such overlap in their roles.… You can do this work without a coordinator, but somebody’s got to get the work done, and it’s got to be a team approach. And the principal is central to anything you implement. If you don’t have the principal onboard and if the principal’s not making it a priority and monitoring it, then it’s not going to happen.

During data collection in Years 2 and 3, several school-level interviewees raised concerns about the lack of designated coordinators to implement WAZ. For example, at one school an interviewee noted that it is *“tougher to grow the initiative without that position”* and that although *“the principal was very invested in wellness and wants us to be a healthy and happy school.… Not having that position has had an impact on where we are as opposed to where we could be*.*”* At one school that had lost the SSC position, an interviewee noted that collaboration with external partners *“is more reaction based”* than in the prior school year, when *“it was strategic*.*”* A school leader reinforced this concern: *“without that extra body…our kids are so needy,* [they] *just don’t have the time”* to get services in place to meet all student needs. At another school, an interviewee expressed worry about being able to sustain the WAZ strategies through the team approach.

Concerns about effectively meeting student needs and sustaining WAZ without an SSC were exacerbated at some schools facing challenges related to larger student enrollments. For example, one school received approximately 200 additional students in 2013–14 when another Fall River middle school closed. This brought total enrollment to approximately 800 students, but it still had only one counselor and no SSC despite student mental health (e.g., cutting themselves) and other concerns (e.g., abuse). An interviewee expressed the following:

My concern is that with 800 kids, I know there are some falling through the cracks that [the school doesn’t] have enough support for. So, the highest flyers, they get the attention they need. The kids who might be struggling with a passing thing like a death in the family, they get a day or two of support, and then they don’t get the ongoing support that they might need. So, I’m sure there are kids that we’re missing.

One interviewee also raised concerns about sustaining WAZ through a team-based approach at the elementary school level because of class size: *“in terms of staffing and stuff we’re really concerned with the elementary class size…like 32 kids in every classroom across the district”* (although Fall River was opening a new PK–8 school to alleviate crowding and keep up with the student population’s growth).

#### Engaging Families

As in Year 2, family engagement remained a struggle in Fall River, despite ongoing efforts across schools to expand family involvement through strategies such as parent academies. When key informants were asked to identify aspects of their climate and culture still needing improvement, family engagement emerged as a challenge across all the Fall River WAZ schools. One school interviewee noted that *“family engagement is just a tough thing”* and another interviewee asserted that *“parent involvement is just nonexistent”* at Durfee. One teacher shared an example:

This year fifth grade had a math night for parents and the focus was teaching them the models that their kids were using in working with fractions.… Our turnout was pretty low, because it was all fifth grade, so we had at that time over a hundred students and only a handful of parents. So I think when it comes to things that are more academic or maybe more intense in a way, I think still things are a lot lower than if we have something like the dance. I think we’re still trying to inch toward our parents feeling like they can and want to and are welcome to participate in all aspects of their kids’ lives here. So I think it’s a work in progress.

Even with some successes, family engagement was an ongoing need. One school leader explained that *“with volunteers and parents feeling safe to come in and coming to PTO, that piece we’ve done really well with and we continue to do really well with. I just feel like this year I wish I had more after school events or workshops.”*

Moreover, even with a parent outreach coordinator at one school, engagement remains an area of ongoing challenge. As one respondent explained, *“I think for me that’s been one of the toughest buckets, and we do have a full-time parent support coordinator.”* This interviewee also noted that the parent outreach position could have been better defined, knowing what they know now about what high-quality parent engagement strategies should include. For example, they pointed to a parent academy and workshops as important strategies to engage parents at the school.

Key informants also identified barriers to family engagement, such as transportation. For example, one interviewee commented that

The city itself lends some constraints you know, the city bus service ends at 6 p.m. So, if we have a parent night from 6 to 8…and we are in the northernmost part of the city and the majority of our students are in the southernmost part of the city. So…we've had a parent night sometimes be from 4 to 6. We try—and we did get a decent amount at that time because they'll come and they're—you know, picking up their students or then that's leaving out the parents who work.

At another school, an interviewee clarified that *“kids are tired, for families it’s a long day. And on top of the other just natural barriers that prevent parents from coming in.”*

Data from the staff survey lend further support to the finding that family engagement is an ongoing struggle in Fall River. When asked about the level of involvement that parents and caregivers have in decisions about the delivery of nonacademic supports, the only statistically significant change since Year 1 was the percentage of staff responding “not involved.” This percentage increased from 8 percent in Year 1 to 19 percent in Year 3 (see Table 10). This trend varied across schools, though, with one school (Doran) showing a large statistically significant increase (from 3 percent to 17 percent) in the percentage responding “highly involved.”

Table 10. Staff Perceptions of Family Involvement in Decision Making About Nonacademic Supports: Fall River

|  | *Percentage of staff members reporting parents’ and caregivers’ average involvement in decisions about the delivery of nonacademic supports*  |
| --- | --- |
| *Not Involved* | *Slightly Involved* | *Moderately Involved* | *Highly Involved* |
| Year 1 | Year 3 | Year 1 | Year 3 | Year 1 | Year 3 | Year 1 | Year 3 |
| **All Fall River WAZ schools** | 8% | 19%\* | 48% | 43% | 35% | 25% | 8% | 13% |
| **Doran** | 14% | 22% | 48% | 39% | 34% | 22% | 3% | 17%\* |
| **Kuss** | 10% | 18% | 40% | 53% | 38% | 18% | 12% | 13% |
| **Viveiros** | 4% | 18%\* | 57% | 38%\* | 31% | 33% | 8% | 11% |

\*The difference between Year 3 and Year 1 is statistically significant.

*Source:* AIR-administered staff survey, spring 2012 and fall 2013

The general lack of progress reflected in the survey data could be a function of a more nuanced understanding and expectation around what family engagement should look like, that developed over the course of the grant. During the Year 2 Fall River visit, the district was working to implement strategies to build parents’ capacity to support student learning and contribute to progress toward schools’ academic goals (referred to as “family engagement 2.0”). This priority emerged during Year 2 interviews and strengthening home–school connections was part of the district’s Year 2 WAZ plan. Although Fall River progressed in implementing strategies to engage families with their schools, the district did not systematically support and implement “family engagement 2.0” to the degree that they had hoped. As one interviewee explained

I think as far as the district support this year for that work, we haven’t done much.… I think we need to inform our principals about this work and the importance of this work and what 2.0 looks like. We can’t expect them to start writing it in their school improvement plans if they don’t even know what that means.… They are already starting to move toward that 2.0 work…but it’s not systematic yet, and even those schools that are doing that, I’m not even sure that they understand the importance of it.

Another interviewee reflected on this perspective about family engagement in Fall River: *“I don’t think the schools have done enough to really, you know, improve that work*.*”* As part of its efforts to address this area of need, though, the district is planning to work with principals, to build their understanding about what family engagement 2.0 looks like and to build this into their school improvement plans. Fall River also progressed with administering a parent survey to solicit parents’ input on school climate and culture, began a parent academy at a non-WAZ school, and expanded some early literacy efforts with families in the district.

### Finding 4: Evidence gathered during the final year of WAZ implementation indicated that Fall River had made positive or partial progress toward all six essential factors for sustainability.

The literature on sustainability for education reform initiatives identifies six essential factors for ensuring sustainability. Data gathered during the final year of the WAZ evaluation showed that Fall River made positive progress toward four of these essential factors—identification of critical elements (Factor 1), adaptability (Factor 2), reform-support infrastructure (Factor 4) and professional development (Factor 5). The district made partial progress toward the two other essential factors: systems perspective (Factor 3), and funding (Factor 6). Table 11 summarizes the sustainability analysis for Fall River, and a more detailed description of the evidence follows.

Table 11. Fall River Progress Toward Meeting Six Essential Factors for Sustainability of WAZ

| Sustainability Essential Factor | Positive Progress | Partial Progress | Lack of Progress |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Sustainability requires identification of the initiative’s critical elements.
 | X |  |  |
| 1. Sustainability requires ongoing adaptation and growth of the initiative.
 | X |  |  |
| 1. Sustainability requires a systems perspective.
 |  | X |  |
| 1. Sustainability requires a reform-support infrastructure at the district level.
 | X |  |  |
| 1. Sustainability requires ongoing professional development.
 | X |  |  |
| 1. Sustainability requires paying close and ongoing attention to funding.
 |  | X |  |

#### Positive Progress: Identification of Critical Elements (Factor 1), Adaptability (Factor 2), Reform-Support Infrastructure (Factor 4), and Professional Development (Factor 5)

##### Essential Factor 1. Sustainability requires identification of the initiative’s critical elements.

During interviews, district leaders consistently identified three critical elements of the WAZ work: (1) supporting school-based capacity to implement wellness including SEL/wellness teams in each school and SSCs in some schools, (2) SEL programming and related professional development for school staff in elementary and middle schools (and, at the high school, a freshman academy with a student advisory component), and (3) family engagement efforts.

Fall River’s WAZ-related documents, including their implementation plans and sustainability plans, align with these critical elements. For example, its Year 3 implementation plan names five strategies, including one to create an SEL network to support the implementation of WAZ strategies districtwide and another to continue district-level professional development support for SEL programs at all district schools. The plan does not explicitly address efforts to expand family engagement, though, beyond the use of a parent survey. The sustainability plan does, however, reference family engagement by including implementation of data systems to identify family needs and plan for interventions and programs that will address them.

Evidence also demonstrated that the school staff understood the critical elements of the WAZ initiative. When asked about WAZ-related progress, school staff members described professional development for SEL curricula, coordination of wellness teams and efforts to expand school-community partnerships, and planning of activities to enhance family engagement. As one school interviewee shared, their school has *“spent a lot of time on activities that allow us to address issues of safety, issues around parent engagement”* and has implemented an advisory program *“throughout the whole WAZ process”* to *“infuse our social/emotional curriculum*.*”*

As another example, when asked about their school’s climate and culture strategies, a teacher commented that they *“are a Responsive Classroom school, so all of the teachers received training in Responsive Classroom one and two”* and teachers use these principles to guide their classroom management by modeling positive behavior and addressing negative behavior.

##### Essential Factor 2. Sustainability requires ongoing adaptation and growth of the initiative.

Fall River showed its ability to adapt the WAZ initiative in three ways. First, the district as well as school-level SEL teams have conducted school visits, or “walk-throughs,” with SEL program consultants to assess the quality of SEL interventions and provide feedback to teachers and schools. For example, one district leader commented that *“our next level of work…is monitoring* [implementation of the curricula] *and providing feedback to teachers. Some schools have begun to do that work, like Doran. They do walk-throughs and they provide feedback for teachers, subjective feedback for trends of what they’re seeing in classrooms*.*”* To support this work, the district has revised its monitoring reports, which *“used to be just focused on academics*,*”* so that the reports integrate SEL data such as attendance and office referrals. Another interviewee noted that one school’s SEL team will *“go and do a walk-through for a morning meeting, which is part of Responsive Classroom, just like we do academic walk-throughs*,*”* and that is *“a monitoring tool*.*”*

Another continuous improvement strategy included reflecting on the family engagement and the effectiveness of various approaches to reaching families. Some schools have adapted their family engagement strategies to capitalize on successful efforts and improve in areas of need in response to feedback from families. As a school leader reported,

We reflected at the end of year on what worked and what didn’t work. And we knew that we needed to do some things better and really reach out to our parents, not expect them to just come to us because we offered the opportunity.… I think that we were creating all these opportunities, but we weren’t getting at them and talking to them and creating that conversation to bring them in and explain to them why it was important. So I think that we’re trying to reach out to our parents in a better way.

Finally, the district is using climate and culture data (staff, student, and family surveys) as well as a community partner survey to inform the adaptation of its WAZ strategies. As one district leader shared, the parent survey the district was launching in spring 2014 was intended to move from making *“assumptions”* about parent needs to generating *“some real data to analyze and make some changes based on that data*.*”* Fall River also launched a survey of approximately 25 community organizations. It asked five questions to assess how community partners *“feel collaborating with the school[s]. Do they feel welcome within the school, are the schools holding up their end of the contracts or MOUs with the schools?”*In Year 3, Fall River developed the MOU for partners and schools to use which systematized the alignment of student needs and community services, a focus on student outcomes, and an annual evaluation of the partnership.

##### Essential Factor 4. Sustainability requires a reform-support infrastructure at the district level.

Fall River has established an infrastructure, including district- (coordinator, SEL Network, attendance task force) and school-level supports (SEL teams, SSCs in some schools), to support WAZ implementation. Although there was turnover in the district coordinator position during Year 2 of WAZ, the district has supported the position since the onset of WAZ. The current coordinator has supported various WAZ priorities such as SSCs and school-level wellness teams, as well as the enhancement of school–community partnerships and the development of related protocols. The coordinator also facilitates the Community Partnerships for Children and Families committee, which, during Year 3, combined two previous partnership committees that were meeting separately.

In addition, the district coordinator convenes on a monthly basis a SEL Network comprised of SSCs, School Adjustment Counselors, Guidance Counselors, Psychologists, and other representatives from school-based SEL teams to build the capacity of this staff to lead this work within schools (e.g. sharing resources./community partners/tools, discussing parent/student survey data, reviewing case studies of students identified for extra support, sharing best practices, accessing professional development, etc) The SEL Network, implemented during Year 2 of WAZ, has helped to support school-level SEL efforts and engage WAZ partners. The SEL Network helped to coordinate building-level SEL teams, which, during Year 3, were partly focused on reviewing school climate data and implementing the district’s response-to-intervention model. After they participate in the Network, school-level representatives *“take that information back to their individual SEL teams or principals…and then do the work*.*”* Also, SSCs at two schools during Year 3 were responsible for overseeing and managing implementation of WAZ-related strategies in their schools. Fall River also implemented an attendance task force during Year 3 to engage community partners in an effort to increase student attendance.

##### Essential Factor 5. Sustainability requires ongoing professional development.

District leaders have invested in systematic professional development for school staff to implement social-emotional learning programs (Playworks, Responsive Classroom, Guided Discipline). The district used WAZ funds to pay for this professional development during the grant period but has planned for other funding sources to sustain ongoing professional development related to these programs. As one district leader shared, *“we’ve done a lot of training with Responsive Classroom and Guided Discipline.… we continue to provide PD for new teachers and teachers who need another dose…of the training*.*”* Another reinforced the importance of sustaining professional development for school staff:

We will consider, during the budget process, if [the schools] need more resources. And we certainly will support more training always.… We paid for the Responsive Classroom consultant [to revisit one WAZ school] even though they’ve already been trained.

#### Partial Progress: Systems Perspective (Factor 3) and Funding (Factor 6)

##### Essential Factor 3. Sustainability requires a systems perspective.

In the past three years, the district has maintained a clear, consistent message about wellness and its importance for supporting student well-being and school outcomes. District leaders (e.g., superintendent, chief academic officer) have been strong advocates of WAZ in Fall River, and school-level staff have viewed their vision and support as important for the initiative’s progress and school-level buy-in. Evidence showed nevertheless a lack of staff buy-in to WAZ at some schools, indicating that the wellness initiative had not yet been fully integrated into business as usual within the district.

One district leader shared this: *“The recognition of the need for wellness, that it is part of the district’s mission to help these students. That creates a whole culture throughout the district that it’s being recognized. It’s being addressed. That it’s top down. That it’s important from central office.”* A school leader also noted that addressing students’ social-emotional needs is not just a priority at their school, *“it’s everywhere in the district.”* As noted in its Year 3 sustainability plan, the *“district’s administration and school leadership provide a clear and consistent message consistently throughout the district to all staff and to community partners …that we must incorporate WAZ priorities within our schools as a means to support student achievement.”*

Importantly, the sustainability plan notes that Fall River’s SEL Network and school-based SEL teams will help to infuse best practices in the district, using the WAZ schools as models for districtwide planning/implementation in areas such as wellness teams and parent engagement. A district leader also emphasized that Fall River’s accelerated improvement plan focused on climate and culture, including strategies related to positive school and classroom climate as well as home-school connection. Wellness was infused into school improvement planning as well, which created accountability for school-level practice. When asked if wellness priorities are part of their school’s improvement plan, one school leader replied, “*Oh, yeah. They have been for the last three years. It’s one of the goals for our school improvement plan with defined action steps*.”

Data shows that district leaders have been thinking about how to sustain WAZ within the district’s existing operating budget since the initiative’s onset. This mindset also demonstrates a systems perspective for this work. For example, the district supports wellness teams in the schools (rather than SSCs in each school) and as infused SSC responsibilities into school adjustment counselor roles. To sustain its district-level support, Fall River integrated the district coordinator’s responsibilities into the responsibilities of an existing central office staff member. Fall River also recently integrated WAZ priorities into the district’s response to intervention development work and is developing a three-tiered model to support student academic and behavioral success.

According to a number of respondents, staff buy-in for wellness is growing and is strong at a number of schools. For example, when asked about staff buy-in for WAZ, one school leader commented that *“if we think about last year, the staff recognizes the need and know that it’s a huge body of the work that we do with the kids that we have*.*”* One school leader also stated that *“100% of our staff know that we can’t address our kids’ academic needs without social-emotional support*.*”* When asked about wellness priorities in their school improvement plan, this school leader responded, *“absolutely, it has to be*.*”* Similarly, coordinators and other nonprincipal interviewees reported strong school leader buy-in, describing it as *“100%”* and *“very high*.*”* Numerous school staff also noted that WAZ is part of their ongoing work and is not talked about as a separate initiative.

Despite these strengths, staff buy-in at some schools has been limited by changes in staff and at one school, WAZ’s limited role. Also, respondents did not view buy-in as strongly at the Year 2 WAZ schools. At one of these schools, an interviewee shared that staff buy-in is *“50/50, because I think that some staff only understand the impact of wraparound services from experience. And I think that other staff never had to lean on someone for anything or need wraparound services for anything, so, they by default have not had that experience, so they don’t know the impact and importance of that*.*”* As another interviewee explained, *“we have a few new teachers who are still sort of gaining an understanding of…what we actually do here and how we focus on things*.*”* The addition of new staff at the middle schools because of a school closure likewise led to an influx of new staff with little knowledge about WAZ. For example, one interviewee mentioned that their school started the school year *“with almost 50 percent new staff,” which “was a setback in terms of people learning the whole concept of…*[its behavior management system and] *Guided Discipline*.*”* Furthermore, at Durfee, which began WAZ in Year 2, the newly implemented freshman academy is seen as WAZ’s primary (and limited) contribution at the school. Also, some teachers reported challenges related to staff buy-in for some aspects of WAZ: *“I really buy into it on a personal level and I think that some other teachers do too, but…I don’t think many teachers are quite familiar with what the wraparound zone services are or what they may be*.*”*

##### Essential Factor 6. Sustainability requires paying close and ongoing attention to funding.

As previously noted, Fall River has planned to continue funding WAZ professional development beyond the grant’s life. Notably, it has integrated the WAZ initiatives into its districtwide professional development plan. Also, to sustain school-based WAZ efforts, SSCs were reduced to two positions in the six WAZ schools and coordinator responsibilities were infused into school adjustment counselor positions as well as school-based teams. Although Fall River has made progress in realigning staff responsibilities to support wellness strategies and integrating WAZ strategies into its regular operating budget, district- or school-level efforts to seek additional funding (e.g., from local philanthropy) to support WAZ strategies are not evident. As one interviewee commented, *“Race to the Top’s going away, so we’re going to be in trouble*,*”* but this person also was confident that the district will be able to *“figure it out*.*”* One district interviewee pointed to the need for supplementary funding as their key concern about WAZ sustainability, because of the cost of professional development for training new teachers and teachers at additional elementary schools. Another concluded that WAZ monitoring was their biggest concern about sustaining the initiative, because of the small central office staff that is *“not getting more bodies”* but is *“doing more work”* than districts of similar size in the state. These data suggest that additional funding may be needed to continue Fall River’s momentum with its WAZ initiative.

## Summary

During Fall River’s three years of WAZ participation, the district made substantial progress in several of the initiative’s priority areas. This has included improving school climate and culture, particularly with regard to student behavior. WAZ also has contributed to the major areas of progress in Fall River by (1) expanding visibility of the importance of addressing students’ social-emotional needs, (2) funding professional development for social-emotional curricula and strategies in all schools, and (3) funding student support coordinator positions at some schools. Some challenges persist, however, including the capacity of schools to implement WAZ without designated coordinators and engaging families in addressing students’ academic and nonacademic needs. Notably, Fall River demonstrated progress in all six areas important to the successful sustainability of WAZ, in particular the identification of critical initiative elements, ongoing adaptation of the initiative, a reform-support infrastructure, and planning for and delivering necessary staff professional development. To enhance its potential for sustainability, Fall River may need to work on maintaining more widespread staff buy-in and seek additional funding to support initiative implementation without WAZ funding. This includes expanding professional development for social-emotional curricula to additional schools and for new teachers, as well as resources for district-level monitoring of school-level wellness implementation.

# Profile B: Holyoke

## Three-Year WAZ Implementation Overview

When Holyoke received its WAZ grant, it had recently begun supporting the implementation of the Full Service Community School (FSCS) model in two schools (Peck and Morgan Elementary Schools). The FSCS model reflects a national movement to better coordinate and align school, home, and community resources, all in pursuit of a common goal to improve student achievement. In Holyoke, the implementation of the FSCS model was initiated by the principal at Peck, who, at the time, was charged with leading a new K–8 school that had consolidated an elementary school and a chronically underperforming middle school into one. Building on existing partnerships that both previous schools had with community agencies, the newly constituted Peck Elementary school began an FSCS planning process with an external consultant in fall 2009 and launched full implementation in fall 2010. At around this same time, the principal at Morgan Elementary School developed interest in the FSCS model and decided to participate in a planning process during the 2010–11 school year. Through WAZ funding, Holyoke was able to continue support for FSCS implementation at Peck, first-year implementation at Morgan, and a needs-assessment process at a third school, Kelly Elementary. Kelly would go on to also fully implement the FSCS model in Years 2 and 3 of WAZ.

WAZ supported the implementation of FSCS in Holyoke by funding full-time FSCS managers at each school. The role of the FCSC manager is to ensure that programs and services appropriately address student and family needs, are data-driven, and are aligned with overall school improvement planning. FSCS managers also are responsible for reaching out to and developing partnerships with community agencies, increasing family engagement, and communicating with stakeholders about the FSCS model. The district also used WAZ funds to support additional staff positions, such as one of the three family and engagement coordinators, a behavior intervention case manager, and a “Ready for Peck” coordinator, who was responsible for supporting activities related to readiness of prekindergarten students and their families. Finally, although Holyoke did not establish a WAZ-funded district coordinator staff position, the district did establish and support a community of practice through which FSCS managers shared ideas and jointly developed a common set of materials and procedures for identifying and addressing student needs.

During its third and final year of the WAZ grant, Holyoke was challenged by extenuating circumstances: a new superintendent; the designation of Morgan Elementary as a Level 5, or “chronically underperforming,” school; and the integration of a closed alternative school into what is now Peck–Lawrence Elementary School. All three WAZ schools have struggled with implementing consistent behavior management practices and in being able to effectively meet student needs. Nonetheless, all three schools also have reported improvements in student behavior and student referral processes since the first year of WAZ, as well as ongoing improvements in family engagement and staff buy-in to the FSCS model. Furthermore, the FSCS model was cited as a positive aspect at Morgan and was incorporated into its Level 5 turnaround plan. Holyoke is committed to developing a districtwide FSCS model, as opposed to standalone FSCS schools. It plans to strengthen its infrastructure for supporting the model and has been able to hire a dedicated staff person at the district level to oversee the work.

## Year 3 Findings

In this profile, we describe the major areas of progress made in Holyoke during its three years as a WAZ grantee, as well as steps the district has taken toward sustaining components of WAZ after the grant period ends. The data sources used to inform this profile were (a) stakeholder interviews conducted during the winter of 2014, (b) WAZ-related documents provided by the district and schools, and (c) student and staff survey data. The analysis of these data was informed by the findings that emerged in Reports 2 and 3 on conditions and supports during Year 1 of WAZ implementation and implementation progress made during Year 2 of WAZ implementation, respectively. For example, researchers paid particular attention to analyzing the extent to which progress made during Year 2 was sustained in Year 3 and the extent to which challenges identified during early years of the grant have persisted or dissipated and why.

AIR’s analysis of data collected during the three years of its evaluation revealed the following four findings related to progress and plans for sustainability of WAZ in Holyoke:

1. Evidence gathered during the final year of WAZ implementation indicated the following as major areas of progress in Holyoke:
	1. Improvements in student behavior
	2. Improvement in family engagement
	3. Improvement in the student referral process
	4. Improvement in the quality of partnerships
2. The key WAZ-driven levers that contributed to these areas of progress were
	1. Dedicated resources for family involvement
	2. New opportunities for networking between FSCS schools and support for the FSCS model
3. In the final year of WAZ implementation, the major challenges Holyoke was facing included
	1. Inconsistent implementation of behavior management plans
	2. Lack of effectiveness and timeliness in the student referral process
	3. Lack of a district coordinator
4. Evidence gathered during the final year of WAZ implementation indicated that Holyoke had made positive or partial progress toward five of the six essential factors for sustainability:
	1. Identification of critical elements (partial)
	2. Adaptability (positive)
	3. Systems perspective (positive)
	4. Reform-support infrastructure (partial)
	5. Funding (partial)

Further details on these findings, and the evidence that supports them, follow.

### Finding 1: Evidence gathered during the final year of WAZ implementation indicated the following as major areas of progress in Holyoke: (a) improvements in student behavior, (b) improvement in family engagement, (c) improvement in the student referral process, and (d) improvement in the quality of partnerships.

Data gathered during this evaluation reveal four major areas of progress in Holyoke that can be attributed to WAZ: (a) improvements in student behavior, (b) improvement in family engagement, (c) improvement in the student referral process, and (d) improvement in the quality of partnerships. These major areas of progress were cited by interviewees as well as demonstrated through an analysis of survey data.

#### Improvements in Student Behavior

Respondents in 5 out of 12 interviews and focus groups, including external support providers and district leaders and staff from two of three schools (Morgan and Kelly), identified improvements in student behavior as a major area of progress resulting from the WAZ initiative. Although school-level staff at the third school (Peck–Lawrence) did not cite improvements in student behavior as an explicit area of progress, district leaders did report progress in that area at the school. The districtwide staff survey results offer additional support to these reports of progress; in Year 3 of WAZ, 53 percent of staff “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that students support and respect one another; the comparable figure was only 34 percent in Year 1 of WAZ (see Table 12). According to district leaders, despite the challenges associated with integrating an alternative school (the Center for Excellence) with the existing Peck FSCS to create Peck–Lawrence, *“There’s been really significant reduction* [in behavioral issues] *from the start of the year until recently.”* With regard to the other two schools, district leaders reported that even despite uncertainty surrounding the school’s recent Level 5 designation and impending takeover by an education management organization, Morgan has witnessed *“fifty percent reduction of the disciplinary referrals”* during the past year, *“so kids are spending a lot more time in classrooms*,*”* and Kelly has been displaying a *“positive trend of gradual improvement in disciplinary data”* during the past few years.

Table 12. Staff Perceptions of Student–Student Relationships: Holyoke

|  | *Percentage of staff members reporting that they “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that students respect and support one another*  |
| --- | --- |
| Year 1 | Year 3 |
| **All Holyoke WAZ schools** | 34% | 53%\* |
| **Kelly** | 46% | 52% |
| **Morgan** | 40% | 61%\* |
| **Peck–Lawrence** | 23% | 50%\* |

\* The difference between Year 3 and Year 1 is statistically significant.

*Source:* AIR-administered staff survey, spring 2012 and fall 2013

Morgan and Peck–Lawrence each provided documentation (updated since 2012–13) of behavior expectations and explicit positive rewards-and-consequence structures, and a respondent from Morgan specifically cited Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) as contributing to improvements in student behavior, stating *“I would attribute the reduction in the referrals directly to the PBIS framework.... When we rolled that out last April, there was a huge change in student behavior.”* According to one Kelly staff member, who also attributed improvements to PBIS, *“kids seem to have a better definition of what kind* [of behavior] *was acceptable…*[and] *how their behaviors affect others.”* Another staff member echoed that sentiment, explaining, *“that culture of student ownership and responsibility is growing.”*

In addition to interview reports of improvements in student behavior, survey data showed an improvement in behavior management. Between Year 1 and Year 3, overall and for two of the three schools (Morgan and Peck–Lawrence), there was a statistically significant increase in the percentage of staff members reporting that they “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that their school had a small number of clearly stated and positively worded expectations for student behavior, their school had clearly defined consequences for not meeting expected student behaviors, and all staff in their school taught expected student behaviors (see Table 13). Data for Kelly on these items did not show any statistically significant change. However, it is important to note that difference in Year 1 and 3 response rates for Kelly (42% and 89%) were considerably large, which makes it difficult to make reliable comparisons across time.

Table 13. Staff Perceptions of Schoolwide Behavior Management Policies and Procedures: Holyoke

|  | *Percentage of staff members reporting that they “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that…* |
| --- | --- |
| *Their school has a small number of clearly stated and positively worded expectations for student behavior.* | *Their school has clearly defined consequences for not meeting expected student behaviors.* | *All staff in their school teach expected student behaviors.* |
| Year 1 | Year 3 | Year 1 | Year 3 | Year 1 | Year 3 |
| **All Holyoke WAZ schools** | 56% | 77%\* | 37% | 55%\* | 50% | 66%\* |
| **Kelly** | 68% | 86% | 56% | 50% | 68% | 55% |
| **Morgan** | 67% | 88%\* | 35% | 55%\* | 53% | 80%\* |
| **Peck–Lawrence** | 39% | 70%\* | 28% | 57%\* | 37% | 63%\* |

\* The difference between Year 3 and Year 1 is statistically significant.

*Source:* AIR-administered staff survey, spring 2012 and fall 2013

#### Improvement in Family Engagement

Respondents in 7 out of 12 interviews and focus groups, including staff at all three schools and external support providers, identified improvement in family engagement as a major area of progress resulting from the WAZ initiative. These respondents included teachers who explained that since WAZ the school is *“more accessible and comfortable… for families,”* and as a result, families are *“getting more of a positive experience* [and]… *will connect with the teacher*[s]*.”* According to one school leader, parents are just *“a part of the fabric of our school right now.”*

Respondents from two schools provided specific examples of an increase in parent volunteerism, including parents who *“help in the library* [and]*… help pass out food.”* Respondents from the third school reported an increase in parent participation in programs offered by community partners (e.g., GED classes) and an improvement in understanding of the importance of education.

In addition, five respondents across all three schools indicated that WAZ schools have witnessed greater family involvement in processes for addressing and identifying student needs. In two schools, staff reported that parents are now often contacted as soon as a student is referred for services. One school leader explained that, once a student is referred to the Internal Referral Team, *“that’s when we contact the parent… so we can keep that parent in the loop and in the decision making* [process]*,”* and the other school leader noted that whether the family is involved right away depends on the case, but *“a lot of the* [services] *we have to offer need to involve the parents*.*”* Two schools have implemented new programs specifically related to attendance issues, where *“we invite families in and try and problem solve together*.*”* Although there were no statistically significant increases in staff survey data related to the likelihood of involving family in decisions about nonacademic supports, the percentage of staff districtwide reporting that it would be “likely” or “very likely” for family to be involved in the planning and delivery of nonacademic supports and services remained consistently high from Year 1 of WAZ (70 percent) to Year 3 (73 percent; see Table 14).

Table 14. Staff Reports on the Likelihood of Family Involvements in Planning and Delivery of Nonacademic Supports: Holyoke

|  | *Percentage of staff members reporting that it would be “likely” or “very likely” for family to be involved in the planning and delivery of nonacademic support and services* |
| --- | --- |
| Year 1 | Year 3 |
| **All Holyoke WAZ schools** | 70% | 73% |
| **Kelly** | 71% | 58% |
| **Morgan** | 63% | 77% |
| **Peck–Lawrence** | 76% | 76% |

\* The difference between Year 3 and Year 1 is statistically significant.

*Source:* AIR-administered staff survey, spring 2012 and fall 2013

#### Improvement in the Student Referral Process

Respondents from 7 out of 12 interviews and focus groups, including staff across all three schools and one external support provider, identified an improvement in the student referral process and the use of regular Internal Review Team meetings in particular, as a major area of progress attributable to the WAZ initiative. According to one school leader, referral team members, including *“the vice-principals, the principal, the guidance counselors, the special education team leader, the nurse, the outreach worker, the attendance officer,”* now provide regular updates about what action steps are being taken to address a student’s needs. *“We did not have that previously.”* Although there were mixed reports about whether the referral process has gotten *faster* as a result of recent changes—according to teachers in one school, it now takes longer—respondents from all three schools indicated that the process now is more targeted and streamlined: *“Now we’re not duplicating services.”* According to one external service provider, *“over the last couple of years,* [the student referral process has] *become more refined* [and] *a little bit more expedient in terms of providing services for students.”*

Each school provided examples of their Internal Review Team forms, which illustrate the ways in which the referral process has been streamlined and systematized. In addition to school-specific documents, the district provided documents that clearly distinguish the Internal Review Team from the Building-Based Support Team, the latter of which deals with referrals with higher academic or social-emotional acuity.

In addition to general comments noting an improvement in the student referral process, several interviewees commented on specific aspects of the referral process that had improved. For example, six respondents across all three schools cited improvement in the use of data systems as one specific way the referral process has gotten better during WAZ implementation. According to one school leader, *“we’re looking a lot more at attendance now and seeing how attendance is affecting how well a student is performing.”* Staff from two schools reported referring to data more regularly and systematically once a student has been referred for services to determine whether the student is making progress; *“we’re looking at results, not just identifying the needs.”*

In addition, eight respondents across all three schools, including district leaders, identified greater staff involvement in identifying and addressing student needs as a major area of progress attributable to WAZ. According to district leaders, *“There’s a lot more accountability as far as what* [teachers] *have to fill out* [and]*… they’re provided with… the actual plan for that student.”* One school leader explained that prior to WAZ, *“*[we] *didn’t actually have a mechanism to have teachers say, ‘I’m concerned about this student.’”* As a result of WAZ, *“We have better communication to and from teachers.”*

Staff at all three schools reported greater awareness of the referral process and an improvement of consistency in terms of using the IRT forms. According to one school leader, *“staff* [members] *are more of aware of the process so the referrals are being made on a more regular basis* [this year] *than they were last year.”* Teachers in another school reported that the majority of staff members in the school now know what to do if they have a student who needs support or services, because the process is clear. Although there were no statistically significant increases in staff survey data related to the likelihood of staff following a systematic process for sharing concerns about nonacademic student needs, the percentage of staff members districtwide reporting that they would be “likely” or “very likely” to follow a formal, systematic process for sharing concerns with other staff about students in need of additional nonacademic support remained consistently high from Year 1 of WAZ (85 percent) to Year 3 (87 percent; see Table 15). Staff at one school reported that follow-up with teachers, once a student has been referred, has also increased. “*We have protocols in place to inform them about the status of* [a student],*”* one school leader explained. *“We’ve received this referral, here’s where it is in the process, here’s the plan for the student. So communication has been a huge improvement.”*

Table 15. Staff Reports on Their Likelihood of Following a Formal, Systematic Referral Process: Holyoke

|  | *Percentage of staff members reporting that they are “likely” or “very likely” to follow a formal, systematic process for sharing their concerns with other staff members if they identify a student who needs additional nonacademic support* |
| --- | --- |
| Year 1 | Year 3 |
| **All Holyoke WAZ schools** | 85% | 87% |
| **Kelly** | 90% | 86% |
| **Morgan** | 84% | 87% |
| **Peck–Lawrence** | 82% | 87% |

\* The difference between Year 3 and Year 1 is statistically significant.

*Source:* AIR-administered staff survey, spring 2012 and fall 2013

#### Improvement in the Quality of Partnerships

Respondents in 6 out of 12 interviews and focus groups —including staff across all three schools, external support providers, and district leaders —identified improvement in the quality of partnerships as a major area of progress resulting from the WAZ initiative. Staff at all three schools, and at the district level, reported that although the quantity of partnerships may not have changed, partnerships have become more targeted to meeting the schools’ current needs and priorities. Respondents described the partnerships as more *“rigorous*,*”* *“more invested*,*”* *more “committed*,*”* *“deeper*,*”* and *“more related to student achievement.”* *“Instead of saying, ‘Oh yeah, we work with 17 partners,’”* one school leader explained, now *“I can tell you about three really good ones.”* Another school leader pointed out that, although *“we might not have many new partners the partners we have we’re using in a different way.… We’re targeting our need where we think they could really help,”* which for Holyoke this year is its focus on literacy. According to district leaders, Holyoke has *“something like 50 partner organizations across the three or now four campuses that work on a wide range of things.… There’s another 24…organizations involved in the early literacy work groups that have developed aligned objectives and they’re now working together to achieve those objectives.”*

### Finding 2: The key WAZ-driven levers that contributed to these areas of progress were (a) dedicated resources for family involvement, and (b) new opportunities for networking between FSCS schools and support for the FSCS model.

Data gathered during the AIR evaluation also speak to how WAZ contributed to these major areas of progress. In Holyoke, the most commonly cited ways in which WAZ contributed to progress were a greater focus on family involvement and support for the FSCS model, including new opportunities for networking among FSCS schools.

#### Dedicated Resources for Family Involvement

Several interviewees noted that staff in the FSC schools understood that family involvement was important for student success, but that prior to WAZ they had struggled to find ways to make it a priority. The WAZ initiative gave schools a mechanism through which they could dedicate resources and staff time to focusing on family involvement. All three WAZ schools have a dedicated family engagement coordinator, and in one school, WAZ specifically funded this position in Years 2 and 3. According to one FSCS manager, *“to have someone who is…always having their pulse on what’s going on with the parents. I think that’s huge.”* At another school, the principal reported that one of the family engagement coordinator’s responsibilities had been to train teachers on how to have effective conversations with parents about academic achievement and how parents can be supporting their children academically. As a result, *“actual [parent] engagement in a conversation about improving student achievement is happening where it didn’t happen before.”*

In addition to the family engagement coordinator’s efforts, the WAZ-funded FSCS program manager (school coordinator) at each school also spearheaded many of the family engagement strategies implemented during the past three years. For example, the FSCS managers across all three schools reportedly developed a set of home-school alignment indicators that all three schools are using as a tool for teachers and parents to collaboratively address academic and behavioral issues. The fiscal year 2013–14 WAZ Implementation Budget also included funds allocated to instructional materials related to family engagement. Respondents from two of three WAZ schools specifically cited improvements in family involvement that they attributed to the WAZ initiative. According to one school leader, *“we always want*[ed] *to have parent engagement, and we could never figure out how to do it.* [WAZ] *has enabled us to really engage families on all different levels, whether it’s…teaching families how to speak English or getting parents into the class to support their children or teaching parents what they can do at home.”* As a result in part of more family involvement and the improvement in climate and culture, the WAZ schools have begun to make some academic progress. According to one school leader, *“Maybe I can’t make a direct line* [from the WAZ grant to academic achievement]*, but I can definitely make a dotted line. Supporting students and their families is improving academic achievement.”*

#### New Opportunities for Networking Among FSCS Schools and Support for the FSCS Model

The WAZ initiative encouraged district staff to make time for existing FSC schools in Holyoke to network with each other, sharing strategies and resources, and to establish an effective community of practice. As a result of regular networking opportunities, the three WAZ schools jointly developed materials and procedures for better identifying and addressing student needs. As one school coordinator explained, *“we work very closely together.… We came up with common outcomes and common priority areas and a common theory of action.”* Prior to WAZ, each school used its own forms and processes, which many stakeholders felt could be improved. In Year 3 of WAZ, all three participating schools used a common form and process for identifying and addressing student needs in a timely fashion. In all three schools, the process now involves a broader range of individuals than were involved previously, and ensures timely follow-up with parents, teachers, and students.

In Year 3, citing the successful implementation of the FSCS model in three schools in Holyoke and using the existing network of schools supported by WAZ, the district began to focus efforts and resources on developing a districtwide FSCS model that could be applied to other schools throughout the district. According to one school coordinator, *“WAZ has been the main funder of our full service community school development.… Without WAZ we wouldn’t have had the resources to birth these new full service community schools, so it’s really allowed us to build momentum.”*

### Finding 3: In the final year of WAZ implementation, the major challenges Holyoke was facing included (a) inconsistent implementation of behavior management plans, (b) lack of effectiveness and timeliness of the student referral process, and (c) lack of a designated district coordinator.

Although progress clearly has been made in Holyoke as a result of WAZ, some challenges still remain. These include inconsistencies in behavior management; lack of timeliness and effectiveness of the student referral process; and lack of a district coordinator.

#### Inconsistent Behavior Management

Although student behavior was reported as a major area of progress, respondents from all three schools also indicated that consistent implementation of behavior management strategies continues to be a challenge, and respondents from two schools reported issues specifically with staff buy-in and consistent implementation of the behavior management plan. In one school, teachers reported that staff does not consistently enforce the behavior rules and, although there are rewards for positive behavior, there are no consequences for negative behavior. The school coordinator from another school echoed this sentiment, noting that the “consequence ladder” could be implemented more consistently. Respondents from another school indicated that the *“final frontier”* in terms of behavior management is *“strengthening consistency and cohesiveness around… the expectations in every classroom.”*

All three schools serve students from kindergarten to eighth grade, and staff from two schools indicated that unfortunately the positive rewards associated with PBIS do not work as well with the middle school students as they do with the elementary students. In addition, as one school coordinator explained, *“what happens at a kindergarten classroom is so, so very different* [from] *the expectations and routines in a 7th grade classroom,”* so the same behavior management strategies do not always work.

Respondents from two schools suggested implementing a wider reaching social-emotional curriculum to help improve behavior across all grades. Two of the three schools currently implement social-emotional curricula for Grades K through 3 only, and the third school uses a social-emotional curriculum with only a small portion of students. Unfortunately, staff reported that the social-emotional curricula offered are not necessarily implemented consistently. According to one school leader, *“Some teachers use it. Some teachers do not.”* Teachers, however, noted the importance of social-emotional curricula on student behavior and overall ability to learn and encouraged wider and more consistent use of the curricula with all students in all grades. According to a teacher in one school, *“We’re encouraged to give feathers* [as part of PBIS]*… but we’re not really teaching children what it is to live in a community and what cooperative learning means and what it is to be responsible,”* which is critical to encouraging positive behavior.

#### Lack of Effectiveness and Timeliness in the Student Referral Process

Teachers from two schools reported a lack of follow-up communication with teachers about supports being provided, a lack of coordination between teachers and support providers to minimize disruptions to learning time, and issues with the timeliness of providing supports to students.

Lack of follow-up communication and coordination with teachers about students in need of additional support continued to be an issue cited by teachers across both schools where teachers were interviewed. According to teachers in one school, sometimes *“you don’t get any information back about what’s happening”* with students once a referral is made. In fact, less than 50 percent of staff members surveyed indicated that they would be “likely” or “very likely” to receive follow-up communication about the steps being taken to address a student’s academic or nonacademic needs, and according to the survey data, there was no improvement in this regard from Year 1 to Year 3 (see Table 16). Teachers reported that coordination between them and service providers was lacking as well; according to a teacher in one school, *“I feel like kids are constantly getting pulled* [out of class] *and I don’t know when.”*

Table 16. Staff Reports on Follow-up Communication About Plans to Address Student Needs: Holyoke

|  | ***Percentage of staff members reporting that they would be “likely” or “very likely” to receive follow-up communication about the steps being taken to…*** |
| --- | --- |
| *address a student’s academic needs* | *address a student’s nonacademic needs* |
| **Year 1** | **Year 3** | **Year 1** | **Year 3** |
| **All Holyoke WAZ schools** | 48% | 48% | 41% | 46% |
| **Kelly** | 53% | 35% | 47% | 33% |
| **Morgan** | 50% | 60% | 41% | 51% |
| **Peck–Lawrence** | 42% | 47% | 38% | 48% |

\*The difference between Year 3 and Year 1 is statistically significant.

*Source:* AIR-administered staff survey, spring 2012 and fall 2013

Leaders from one school reported that the poor quality of their referral system may have hampered both teacher buy-in to accurate data collection during the referral process and contributed to challenges in subsequent follow up with teachers. She explained that *“other schools have a better data collection system…instead, we have these buddy sheets and they’re handwritten and they’re hand-delivered,”* which can be tedious and deter staff involvement.

School leaders from two schools also reported issues with students still generally *“falling through the cracks”* and a lack of a wide enough range of potential supports and interventions. According to one school leader, *“we need to increase the number of intervention/action steps that we can use to address student needs.”* Another school leader posited that perhaps *“there’s a more methodical or systemic approach”* to identifying and addressing student needs than the current approach. This leader alsosuggested one specific solution for better dealing with the most challenging population of students—creating a place for those students *“who can’t manage themselves here”* and who would benefit from smaller class sizes that the school cannot currently accommodate.

With regard to timeliness, teachers at one school described the process of connecting students with needed supports as *“such a long process that it might be midyear before a student gets services.”* Teachers in another school speculated that not uncommonly a student could be in third grade before the needs that were identified in first grade were addressed. Less than 50 percent of staff surveyed across all three schools reported that if they identified a student needing additional academic or nonacademic support, the student would be “likely” or “very likely” to receive services and support in a timely manner, and according to the survey data, there was no improvement in this regard from Year 1 to Year 3 (see Table 17).

Table 17. Staff Reports on Timeliness of Services and Supports: Holyoke

|  | ***Percentage of staff members reporting that a student would be “likely” or “very likely” to receive services and supports in a timely manner if it was determined that the student needed…***  |
| --- | --- |
| ***additional academic support*** | ***additional nonacademic support*** |
| **Year 1** | **Year 3** | **Year 1** | **Year 3** |
| **All Holyoke WAZ schools** | 44% | 45% | 44% | 48% |
| **Kelly** | 55% | 39% | 45% | 39% |
| **Morgan** | 38% | 40% | 34% | 38% |
| **Peck–Lawrence** | 42% | 49% | 51% | 56% |

\*The difference between Year 3 and Year 1 is statistically significant.

*Source:* AIR-administered staff survey, spring 2012 and fall 2013

#### District Coordinator Position

In Year 2, staff at all three schools, and at the district level, expressed interest in having a designated district WAZ coordinator. In Year 3, one of the school coordinators, in cooperation with other district staff members, was serving as unofficial district coordinator in addition to serving as school coordinator. Nevertheless,staff from two schools still pointed to the lack of a designated district coordinator as an issue, and the district-level staff agreed. According to one school leader, *“we need somebody outside of the school that sees the 30,000 foot level and also continually engage*[s] *community partners and continually* [tries] *to grow and improve the* [Full-Service Community School] *program.”* Since data collection, Holyoke has created and funded a district-level position to oversee the FSCS work moving forward.

### Finding 4: Evidence gathered during the final year of WAZ implementation indicated that Holyoke had made positive or partial progress toward five of the six essential factors for sustainability.

The literature on sustainability for education reform initiatives identifies six essential factors for ensuring sustainability. Data gathered during the final year of the WAZ evaluation showed that Holyoke had made positive progress toward two of these essential factors—adaptability (Factor 2) and systems perspective (Factor 3). The district had made partial progress toward three of the essential factors: identification of critical elements (Factor 1), reform-support infrastructure (Factor 4), and funding (Factor 6). Data showed a lack of progress toward one factor: ongoing staff development (Factor 5). Table 18 summarizes the sustainability analysis for Holyoke and a more detailed description of the evidence follows.

Table 18. Holyoke Progress Toward Meeting Six Essential Factors for Sustainability With Respect to WAZ

| Sustainability Essential Factor | Positive Progress | Partial Progress | Lack of Progress |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Sustainability requires identification of the initiative’s critical elements.
 |  | X |  |
| 1. Sustainability requires ongoing adaptation and growth of the initiative.
 | X |  |  |
| 1. Sustainability requires a systems perspective.
 | X |  |  |
| 1. Sustainability requires a reform-support infrastructure at the district level.
 |  | X |  |
| 1. Sustainability requires ongoing professional development.
 |  |  | X |
| 1. Sustainability requires paying close and ongoing attention to funding.
 |  | X |  |

#### Positive Progress Toward Sustainability: Adaptability (Factor 2) and Systems Perspective (Factor 3)

##### Essential Factor 2. Sustainability requires ongoing adaptation and growth of the initiative.

Data collected from staff in Holyoke indicates that the district and WAZ schools have purposefully adapted during the three years of WAZ to continue to improve WAZ-related initiatives and are making significant progress toward this essential factor. For example, Peck–Lawrence revised their workgroup structure and membership to address the districtwide focus on literacy in Year 3; in contrast, in Year 2, many of the work groups at Peck and the other schools focused on behavior management issues. Morgan adopted PBIS in Year 2 in response to continued reports from teachers about behavior management issues and by Year 3 was witnessing significant decreases in behavior referrals. Morgan also incorporated an additional “check-in/check-out” system in Year 3 for students with chronic behavior issues. Kelly staff revised how they look at PBIS data; this year they are looking at *“Who are the kids getting in trouble? When are they getting in trouble? What is the correlation there?”*

All three WAZ schools also continued to refine their processes for identifying and addressing student needs to create common forms and systems across the three schools and to address staff concerns about timeliness and follow-up. At the district level, in the absence of a district-level WAZ coordinator and in response to calls for one, the staff formed a team responsible for providing district leadership in Year 3 and established regular meetings between the district support team and school coordinators.

##### Essential Factor 3. Sustainability requires a systems perspective.

District leaders in Holyoke have made progress toward meeting this essential factor and have demonstrated the importance of taking a systems perspective in ensuring WAZ can be sustained. In Year 3, district leaders reported efforts to develop a districtwide FSCS (WAZ) model, as opposed to standalone FSC schools. School coordinators in existing WAZ schools reported already using a community of practice to develop and improve common FSCS processes, procedures, and materials, much of which the district is drawing upon to develop the districtwide model.

Further, when asked whether the WAZ work would be sustained, one school leader indicated that the WAZ work already has become so embedded that it is *“just the way we do things now*.*”* And the WAZ initiative in Holyoke already has proven it can be sustained despite turnover in district leadership, since Holyoke welcomed a new superintendent in Year 3 of WAZ. In fact, since data collection ended, Holyoke has integrated the FSCS work as a major component of its Accelerated Improvement Plan, which is being used to guide all of the district’s activities designed to move the district out of Level 4 accountability status. This plan includes strategies targeting the three WAZ schools, as well as a districtwide early literacy initiative that is modeled after the full service community approach.

In addition, school leaders from all three schools reported that staff buy-in to WAZ, a critical aspect of establishing a systems perspective, has improved over time. One school leader explained, *“When we started,* [buy-in] *was maybe ten* [percent] *and then we move to twenty* [percent. Now] *I believe that more than half the staff believes in the work we are doing.”* School leaders from the other two schools estimated teacher buy-in at 75 to 80 percent. Despite reports of an overall increase in buy-in among staff over time, however, respondents from two schools reported that there is still room for improvement. The school leader at one school explained that teacher turnover has affected buy-in this year, explaining that *“we do have a certain percentage of new faculty and staff this year, so again there’s a group that’s brand new,”* and that affects overall buy-in; some teachers *“see their job as maybe a little bit separated from the work of partnerships and services and programs for kids…* [and] *a smaller percent*[age]*… feels like maybe some of that stuff takes time away from time on learning.… There’s a real spectrum.”* Despite the challenges associated with getting buy-in from new staff, however, the school leader reported that there also are veteran teachers who *“inherently see the value and look for opportunities to partner and collaborate to increase services and opportunities for students.”*

#### Partial Progress Toward Sustainability: Identification of Critical Elements (Factor 1), Reform-Support Infrastructure (Factor 4), and Funding (Factor 6)

##### Essential Factor 1. Sustainability requires identification of the initiative’s critical elements.

The data suggest that Holyoke has made some progress toward meeting this essential factor, but staff members do not yet share a common understanding of what the critical elements of WAZ are. Although district leaders identified three critical elements of the WAZ work in Holyoke, *“a* *planning process, a project manager, and a partnership approach,”* they differed from the critical elements identified by school leaders and teachers.

The critical elements of the WAZ work identified by school leaders varied somewhat across schools, with some staff pointing to WAZ-related positions such as the school coordinator and family access and engagement coordinator. Staff in all three schools noted the importance of sustaining the family access and engagement coordinators and school coordinators, in addition to incorporating a district coordinator, as critical for sustaining WAZ once WAZ funding ends. Other staff members pointed to WAZ-related activities such as a focus on climate and culture and family engagement, processes for identifying and addressing student needs, and use of community partnerships. Teachers in both schools where teachers were interviewed pointed to the family access and engagement coordinator as the most critical component to sustain. According to teachers in one school, *“If we lose* [the family access and engagement coordinator and the WAZ schools coordinator]*, we’re going to lose a lot of parent involvement.”*

##### Essential Factor 4. Sustainability requires a reform-support infrastructure at the district level.

Holyoke has made some progress toward meeting this essential factor, but respondents reported continued challenges in district-level support. Although the vision and commitment to the WAZ initiative exists at the district level, at the time of data collection there was no designated district-level WAZ coordinator, and school leaders from two schools viewed this lack of coordinator as problematic. It is important to note that since data collection, the district has hired a coordinator. Additionally, the Assistant Superintendent is the former principal of Peck. These changes in leadership are likely to lead to a stronger reform-support infrastructure moving forward.

In the absence of a designated district coordinator, however, the district did provide support to WAZ schools via a district-facilitated community of practice, which WAZ schools credited with helping to establish a better, shared, student referral process. As part of the community of practice meetings, schools were required to describe what they had done since the last community of practice meeting to continually improve instruction, student engagement, home–school alignment, and climate and culture.

Both teachers and WAZ school coordinators reported a strong level of commitment to the WAZ initiative by school leaders, but there were some concerns about the level of experience of some newer school leaders and their capacity to implement WAZ. One school coordinator noted the need for the new leaders to develop a better *“understanding of the role of a full-service community school principal”* in order to successfully support and sustain the WAZ work in the future.

##### Essential Factor 6. Sustainability requires paying close and ongoing attention to funding.

District leaders reported that existing Race to the Top funds would be used to partially fund WAZ coordinators at each school and that *“each of the schools has made a really clear commitment…to absorb* [the difference] *into* [their] *budget”* in the future. District leaders expressed less confidence, however, that the family access and engagement coordinator positions would be sustainable. District leaders also reported that, at minimum, they would like to hire an additional counselor for each school—WAZ schools have two and non‑WAZ schools have one—and increase the use of social work interns across schools in the district. Although district leaders expressed interest in finding funding for a district-level WAZ coordinator, they noted that it was *“as much of a budget as a vision conversation”* and depends on the superintendent’s vision for sustaining the work.

Although the WAZ principals have begun to think about funding as it related to sustainability—two of the three schools intend to build room in their school budgets to support family access and engagement coordinator and school coordinator positions—none of the schools reported efforts to seek alternative funding sources to support these positions or other incidental expenses. The district, or individual WAZ schools, would need to seek out alternative funding sources to fully meet this essential factor of sustainability.

#### Lack of Progress Toward Sustainability: Ongoing Professional Development (Factor 5)

##### Essential Factor 5. Sustainability requires ongoing professional development.

The data collected suggest that Holyoke has not made much progress toward incorporating ongoing professional development to ensure the WAZ work is sustained. Although one school leader described weekly professional development, occasionally related to behavior management or family involvement, which are both core components of Climate and Culture, data collected from other stakeholders suggests an overall lack of professional development related to WAZ work. When asked whether they had received any professional development or training on how to identify students in need of additional supports, for example, teacher in one school indicated that they had not received much beyond an optional trauma training.

Less than 20 percent of the staff across the three WAZ schools reported that outside professional development was a “major source of support” for WAZ-related topics in Year 3, and approximately 40 percent of the staff reported that outside professional development was “not a source of support” for WAZ-related topics. In one school, approximately 60 percent of the staff reported that outside professional development was “not a source of support” for any WAZ-related topics in Year 3. Forty-two percent of survey respondents reported that they would like to receive more professional development or technical assistance related to servicing special populations, and 28 percent of survey respondents reported that they would like to receive more professional development or technical assistance related to behavior management.

Since data collection ended, district leaders have taken steps to ensure a more sustained approach to professional development related to WAZ strategies moving forward. For example, they have committed resources to providing FSCS leadership training, monthly early release days so that all staff can attend professional development related to climate and culture, and to the implementation of and training related to Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support s (PBIS) in all schools.

## Summary

During its three years in WAZ, participating schools made substantial progress in terms of improving climate and culture, particularly with regard to student behavior and family involvement, and identifying and addressing student needs. Some challenges still exist, however, including ensuring consistent behavior management and identifying and addressing student needs in an effective and timely manner. Holyoke is demonstrating potential for sustainability primarily in terms of the district’s ability to adapt the initiative and to focus on a systems perspective for implementing and sustaining the WAZ work. To increase its potential for sustainability, Holyoke should incorporate ongoing professional development relevant to WAZ-related work. In addition, the district should continue to communicate the critical components of the WAZ work and focus on building its infrastructure of support and should pursue alternative funding sources for continuing the work without WAZ funding.

# Profile C: Lynn

## Three-Year WAZ Implementation Overview

Lynn was the only one of the WAZ districts to receive a planning grant during the first year of the initiative (2011–12). During that year, the district established two committees to develop a WAZ implementation plan and to begin setting the stage for the work, which officially began in 2012–13. The executive committee met monthly and included the principal from each WAZ school and district administrators. The planning committee met three times during the year and included representatives from the WAZ schools, as well as community representatives. Lynn used this planning year to make key decisions about how they would use the WAZ grant to further their overall district agenda, which was to embed social-emotional supports into all schools’ strategic plans. Although four schools were officially identified as WAZ schools, Lynn was intentional from the beginning about using the grant to support the implementation of WAZ-related strategies districtwide. The four WAZ schools were Cobbet, Connery, and Harrington Elementary Schools and Marshall Middle School. These schools were selected because they were Level 4 schools (Connery and Harrington) or Level 3 schools that were close to Level 4 status (Cobbet and Marshall). In addition, Cobbet and Harrington Elementary Schools are feeder schools for Marshall Middle School, and the district felt that including these schools in the initiative would provide a level of continuity in WAZ-related practices for students as they moved from elementary to middle school.

In lieu of hiring school coordinators as many other WAZ districts did, Lynn established climate and culture teams at each WAZ school, and WAZ funds were used to support teachers’ time for their participation on these teams. Lynn also used WAZ funds to support implementation of the Playworks recess design model in two schools (and in five non‑WAZ schools) and the Academic Parent–Teacher Teams (APTT) model in two schools (and in four non‑WAZ schools). This included funds for consultants to provide the training, some additional staff (e.g., substitutes to provide coverage during trainings, Playworks lunch aides, and stipends for teachers participating in Playworks and APPT teams). WAZ also supported the hiring of a district WAZ coordinator, and provided resources to cover needed interpretation and translation services. Finally, WAZ helped Lynn establish their community coalition by exposing them to, and supporting training for, two district staff on the Alignment Nashville model, a framework for aligning community resources with the district’s strategic goals.

By the end of its second year of WAZ implementation, and the final year of the WAZ grant, interview respondents noted that the district had made significant progress in several areas including school safety, student behavior, and family engagement, largely as a result of the work of the school-based climate and culture teams. Additionally, Lynn had made great strides toward establishing a district-supported community coalition based on the Alignment Nashville model, putting in place an infrastructure that did not exist prior to WAZ. Furthermore, its two Level 4 schools (Connery and Harrington) exited Level 4 status in 2013. Unfortunately, the district made little progress during the two years toward developing a coordinated approach for identifying and addressing student needs, and interviewees expressed some concerns that the district lacked a clear approach for expanding and maintaining community partner engagement for the long term. Leadership in Lynn is aware of these challenges and has established plans to develop districtwide models of practice related to the activities WAZ has supported.

## Year 3 Findings

In this profile, we describe the major areas of progress made in Lynn during its three years as a WAZ grantee, as well as steps the district has taken toward sustaining components of WAZ after the grant period ends. The data sources used to inform this profile were (a) stakeholder interviews conducted during winter 2014, (b) WAZ-related documents provided by the district and schools, and (c) student and staff survey data. The analysis of these data was informed by the findings that emerged in Reports 2 and 3 on conditions and supports during Year 1 of the WAZ planning year, and implementation progress made during Year 2 (the first year of WAZ implementation in Lynn). For example, researchers paid particular attention to analyzing the extent to which progress made during Year 2 was sustained in Year 3, and the extent to which challenges identified during early years of the grant have persisted or dissipated and why.

AIR’s analysis of data collected during the three years of its evaluation revealed the following four findings related to progress and plans for sustainability of WAZ in Lynn:

1. Evidence gathered during the final year of WAZ implementation indicated the following as major areas of progress in Lynn:
	1. Improvements in student behavior
	2. Improvement in family engagement
	3. Improvement in the process and procedures for developing or maintaining partnerships
2. The key WAZ-driven levers that contributed to these areas of progress were
	1. School-based WAZ teams
	2. The implementation of prescribed programs that target climate and culture
	3. The establishment of a district-supported community coalition
3. In the final year of WAZ implementation, the major challenges Lynn was facing included
	1. The lack of a coordinated approach to identifying and addressing student needs
	2. The lack of consistent practices for school climate and culture teams
	3. Lack of a clear approach to engage and maintain new community partners
4. Evidence gathered during the final year of WAZ implementation indicated that Lynn had made positive or partial progress toward all six of the essential factors for sustainability:
	1. Identification of critical elements (positive)
	2. Adaptability (positive)
	3. Systems perspective (positive)
	4. Reform-support infrastructure (positive)
	5. Ongoing professional development (positive)
	6. Funding (partial)

Further details on these findings, and the evidence that supports them, follow.

### Finding 1: Evidence gathered during the final year of WAZ implementation indicated the following as major areas of progress in Lynn: (a) improvements in student behavior, (b) improvement in family engagement, and (c) improvement in the process and procedures for developing and maintaining partnerships.

Data gathered during this evaluation revealed three major areas of progress in Lynn that can be attributed to WAZ: improvements in student behavior, improvement in family engagement, and improvement in the process and procedures for developing and maintaining partnerships. These areas were identified by interviewees and demonstrated through an analysis of survey data.

#### Improvements in Student Behavior

Respondents in 11 out of 22 interviews and focus groups across all four WAZ schools identified improvements in student behavior as an area of progress. Specifically, respondents noted better compliance with school rules and behavior expectations, decreases in office referrals and suspensions, and improvement in peer relationships. One interviewee stated,

the amount of [behavior] cases the principal, vice principal, and the program specialist have to see, it's very different. It's specialized circumstances or those rare circumstances. I've been in other schools when principals are getting people sent to them daily, now teachers have ownership of that.

Another commented, *“Many of the students that we might’ve had some discipline issues in the past are changing and maturing due to, I think, the building, due to the structures that are put in place by the individual teachers and by the support of the administration.”*

Students were described as being more respectful toward each other and the adults in the school and having more school pride. According to one interviewee,

The kids they're not behaving because they are going to get in trouble with the principal. They're behaving and acting a certain way because this is their family, this classroom. This is their team or their family and they know to be a member of that team and what they need to do.

At another school an interviewee stated, *“Overall, the students are much more respectful. They feel safe and they take pride in the school. Before I got here, it was rough. Classroom management was tough because there was no support from outside the classroom.”*

Data from the student and staff surveys also showed statistically significant improvements in factors related to student behavior. For example, staff survey data showed improvement in perceptions of school safety and student support. More staff members reported that students support and respect one another during Year 3 (81 percent) than did so in Year 1 (66 percent). More staff also felt that their school was a safe place for students to learn in Year 3 (83 percent) than did so in Year 1 (69 percent) (see Table 19). Similarly, student survey data showed improvements in the WAZ schools. During Year 3, 48 percent of students rated their school as “excellent” on the Safe and Respectful Climate scale; 34 percent had given this rating in Year 1. In addition, 41 percent of students across schools reported that their peers’ social and problem-solving skills were “excellent” during Year 3, whereas 26 percent had done so in Year 1 (see Table 20).

Table 19. Staff Perceptions of School Climate: Lynn

|  | *Percentage of staff members who “agree” or “strongly agree” that…* |
| --- | --- |
| *Their school is a safe place for students to learn.* | *Students respect and support one another.* |
| Year 1 | Year 3 | Year 1 | Year 3 |
| **All Lynn WAZ schools** | 69% | 83%\* | 66% | 81%\* |
| **Cobbet** | 45% | 47% | 34% | 86%\* |
| **Connery** | 86% | 100%\* | 86% | 94% |
| **Harrington** | 78% | 83% | 71% | 78% |
| **Marshall** | 60% | 93%\* | 66% | 74% |

\*The difference between Year 3 and Year 1 is statistically significant.

*Source:* AIR-administered staff survey, spring 2012 and fall 2013

Table 20. Student Perceptions of School Climate: Lynn

|  | *Percentage of students who rated their school climate as “excellent” in the domain of…* |
| --- | --- |
| *Safe and Respectful Climate* | *Social and Emotional Learning* |
| Year 1 | Year 3 | Year 1 | Year 3 |
| **All Lynn WAZ schools** | 34% | 48%\* | 26% | 41%\* |
| **Cobbet** | 25% | 37%\* | 22% | 34%\* |
| **Connery** | 42% | 55%\* | 37% | 47%\* |
| **Harrington** | 49% | 51% | 34% | 38% |
| **Marshall** | 29% | 50%\* | 20% | 44%\* |

\*The difference between Year 3 and Year 1 is statistically significant.

*Source:* Conditions for Learning student survey, spring 2012 and fall 2013

#### Improvement in Family Engagement

Respondents in 16 out of 22 interviews and focus groups across all four WAZ schools identified improvement in family engagement as an area of progress that has resulted from the WAZ initiative. Through WAZ, schools have established climate and culture teams, engaged in activities that explicitly targeted family engagement, or both. For example, staff at three schools described improvement in communications with parents, largely due to increased interpretation and translation resources provided with the support of WAZ funds. At these schools, respondents reported having more Spanish-speaking staff and community partners to assist with communication and offering Spanish versions of written communications. At one school where staff developed newsletters in English and Spanish, a respondent described these efforts as *“extremely successful because* [parents] *felt more welcome.”* A respondent at another school stated that parents *“just feel more connected and that their opinion matters because there’s someone there to translate it for them.”* Three of the four schools also reported implementing more family-based events at their school (e.g., international night, bingo night, book night) and implementing activities that addressed specific parent needs. For example, one school partnered with the local community college to hold workshops on topics such as drugs, Internet and social media awareness, and getting into college. Another school offered English as a second language classes and another reported plans to implement parent workshops on topics identified as areas of need on parent surveys (e.g., parenting skills).

Family engagement efforts also moved beyond holding events to promoting a more inclusive environment in which parents were encouraged to be an active part of their student’s learning experience. Two of the WAZ schools implemented the APTT model in Year 3. This model combined family engagement with student achievement and replaced the traditional parent–teacher conferences with whole-class meetings held three times during the school year. At these meetings, parents were provided with data that showed how their students were performing on key indicators in relation to their classmates (whose data are presented anonymously) and state standards. Parents also were offered strategies to help support student learning at home. Translators were present at the meetings to ensure better communication and understanding among parents. One interviewee described the benefit of the APTT initiative:

[The APTT model] has been a really positive thing. It really has impacted the culture in terms of parents and what they feel about school now. There isn’t a day that you couldn’t be here and see teachers meeting with parents or parents feeling comfortable asking questions. It’s just a totally different school than it was five years ago.

Another respondent described parent reactions stating, *“It was met with great reviews with the parents that participated saying this is the best parent meeting we’ve ever been to!”* An added benefit of the APTT initiative was that academic data collection and tracking was built into the model, and the approach offered new ways in which teachers could engage parents in a discussion about their students’ academic progress. One respondent described how the overall process was beneficial to staff and parents:

To have a graph and visual representation, having it anonymous, just to the parents knowing who their child is but showing them how they rank against their peers I think is eye-opening for parents, and all that knowledge has come from us and our training through the Wraparound Zone.

Another reported that

The feedback that I’ve been getting in my groups about, well, all of the fun things happening but also especially the APTT is that the parents really like seeing the data which is really interesting. They want it, they want to see it, and it’s almost motivating for them because they want to come back the next time and see their child move up.

Although implementation of the APTT model was labor-intensive,[[12]](#footnote-13) its success helped to secure buy-in from staff at participating schools and district leaders, and both reported plans to sustain the model. For example, at one school, the initiative was fully implemented in the kindergarten and first-grade classes, and some components were implemented in the other grades. After experiencing success in the lower grades, school staff reported that they would like to gradually expand the model to the whole school, and they have already made plans to add second-grade classes to the group who are implementing the full model.

Another school established a teacher-led family engagement council that meets monthly with parents, giving them an opportunity to play a bigger role in deciding what activities and programs to hold during the year. One respondent described this change, stating,

This year we’re putting it more in [parents’] hands and making them feel included in the decision making.… What do you want to see in the school? What would you like to be done? Now we have about 30 people showing up, and I’ve been there, I know that’s a huge improvement.

Staff survey data also provided evidence of greater school efforts to engage families in decisions related to the delivery of nonacademic services, as well as greater family involvement in the decision-making process. During Year 3, 86 percent of staff indicated that, if they identified a students in need of nonacademic supports, the school would be “likely” or “very likely” to make an effort to involve the family in planning and delivery of services, in comparison with 77 percent in Year1 (see Table 21). In addition, 39 percent of staff reported that parents and caregivers were moderately or highly involved in decisions about the delivery of nonacademic supports for their child, in comparison with only 27 percent in Year 1 (see Table 22).

Table 21. Family Involvement in Planning and Delivery of Nonacademic Supports and Services: Lynn

|  | *Percentage of staff members reporting their school is “likely” or “very likely” to involve a students’ family in planning/delivery of supports and services if the student requires additional nonacademic support* |
| --- | --- |
| Year 1 | Year 3 |
| **All Lynn WAZ schools** | 77% | 86%\* |
| **Cobbet** | 68% | 91%\* |
| **Connery** | 91% | 94% |
| **Harrington** | 89% | 82% |
| **Marshall** | 61% | 76% |

\*The difference between Year 3 and Year 1 is statistically significant.

*Source:* AIR-administered staff survey, spring 2012 and fall 2013

Table 22. Family Involvement in Decision Making About Nonacademic Supports: Lynn

|  | *Percentage of staff members reporting that parents and caregivers are “moderately involved” or “highly involved” in decisions about the delivery of nonacademic supports*  |
| --- | --- |
| Year 1 | Year 3 |
| **All Lynn WAZ schools** | 27% | 39%\* |
| **Cobbet**  | 18% | 33% |
| **Connery**  | 33% | 42% |
| **Harrington** | 32% | 49% |
| **Marshall** | 24% | 29% |

\*The difference between Year 3 and Year 1 is statistically significant.

*Source:* AIR-administered staff survey, spring 2012 and fall 2013

#### Improvement in the Process and Procedures for Developing or Maintaining Partnerships

The third major area of progress occurred at the district level with the development of a clear process for establishing and maintaining community partnerships. Although this area of progress was reported in only 6 out of 22 interviews and focus groups, it was emphasized strongly in all 4 of the district and community leader interviews as a major focus and success of the WAZ grant. Furthermore it represents a major shift for the district in terms of establishing a district-level infrastructure to support partnership work long-term. This work began during Lynn’s first year of WAZ, with the creation of a Community Advisory Committee that was charged with conceptualizing the work for the development of school–community partnerships in the district. This committee established two teams —the family engagement and behavioral health education alignment teams —that are made up of district leaders and representatives from various community agencies in the district. Teams started their work during Year 2 with data collection and design of pilot activities. This work continued in Year 3 with the teams establishing partnerships with three schools in the district.

Through their alignment teams, Lynn intentionally promoted a collaborative approach in which community partners, schools, and the district worked together to define the vision for their projects. For example, the family engagement team developed and implemented parent leadership workshops on the basis of results of a parent survey conducted by several community agencies. The behavior health education team focused on the student learning environment at a non‑WAZ school in the district. With the ongoing support of the team and teachers at the school, students developed and administered surveys designed to assess students’ perspectives of their learning environment.

Interviewees indicated that this type of relationship is new to the district and has come about because of the WAZ initiative. One respondent pointed out that this new approach to working with the community was more collaborative: *“If I had to characterize the difference, I would talk about collaboration. I think before, it was more an invitation—we dictated the work, and it doesn’t feel this way in the community engagement teams at all.… I think the level of collaboration at the district level had a different feel for everyone.”* Another interviewee said, *“These projects so far have been successful in terms of strongly engaging core groups of partners who are willing to meet with us very frequently to keep these things moving forward, and we’ve been able to navigate our way to powerful visions for the content of the work.”*

The district’s approach to the coalition work also involved maintaining a narrow focus (by selecting two pilot projects) to ensure that the work was manageable for the teams and to develop a process that kept participants engaged. One district leader reported that *“We’ve wanted to keep things very action oriented to keep the community partners engaged because we asked them to meet twice a month, that’s a lot…. The other good thing about this narrow-focused pilot approach that everyone can buy-into—we’re taking steps at the size that we are able to take them.”* This more focused approach carried over into the decisions about which schools the teams would partner with, with teams selecting schools that demonstrated interest and commitment to implementing the pilot projects. The schools that ended up participating were all non‑WAZ schools, demonstrating the district’s focus on using their WAZ grant to support the implementation of WAZ-related strategies throughout the district. One pilot school was described as being *“at a place where they had the energy and the right kind of staff leaders to move* [the pilot project] *forward.”*

### Finding 2: The key WAZ-driven levers that contributed to these areas of progress were (a) school-based WAZ teams that addressed the WAZ priority areas, (b) implementation of prescribed programs that target climate and culture, and (c) the establishment of a district-supported community coalition.

Data gathered during the AIR evaluation also testify to how WAZ contributed to these major areas of progress. In Lynn, the most significant ways in which WAZ contributed to progress were by funding school-based WAZ teams, by funding the implementation of prescribed programs that targeted climate and culture (Playworks and APTT), and by supporting district efforts to establish a district-supported community coalition.

#### School-Based WAZ teams

A key part of Lynn’s approach to WAZ implementation was the establishment of teams at each school to oversee implementation of various WAZ-related strategies. This team-based approach was adopted in lieu of hiring school coordinators, in order to build school capacity to implement the WAZ initiative independently and promote sustainability. Schools were given the autonomy to determine the number and focus of their teams, and each WAZ school established at least one team that was charged with developing strategies to improve climate and culture. WAZ funds were used to support teachers’ time for their participation on the teams. Teams included a faculty climate and culture team, a student needs identification team, and a partnership team. In addition, three of the four schools established a team that had the explicit goal of improving family engagement. (The fourth school did not have a team that was dedicated to family engagement but did report implementing activities to improve this area of their school culture.)

The school-based teams were generally led by teachers and reportedly had a positive impact on staff culture by creating a mechanism through which teachers could take on active leadership roles in the school. One teacher commented on this by stating *“I would say the biggest thing that Wraparound Zone provided for us was the teacher leadership teams and councils that are happening now and how that’s translating to the culture of the school.”* One school leader described the impact of having teams by stating, *“I believe the culture of the staff has changed due to wraparound strategies because we have teacher-led teams supported by wraparound zone, so when you have teachers lead the building it becomes a very powerful force.”*

Teams played an integral role in school climate and culture improvements because they identified and provided a vehicle for staff who would commit to making sure activities were carried out to improve various aspects of their school’s climate and culture. For example, teams that were charged with addressing family engagement were responsible for coordinating and overseeing implementation of the climate efforts described earlier (e.g., family newsletters, family-based activities, parent workshops, securing translators or interpreters). One of the climate and culture teams developed a survey that was administered to the teachers, and used these data to address issues that emerged (e.g., improved cleanliness of the schools, purchases equipment to encourage more structured play at recess). This team also helped to organize enrichment programs for students. One team’s role was to sustain strategies learned during Playworks training. This team also collected data from students and staff and used data to inform efforts to address student misbehavior.

Teams also had an impact on staff morale. One school established a faculty climate and culture team that helped identify and address staff needs and concerns and boosted staff morale. At this school, interviewees reported improvements in staff morale and perceptions of school climate. Teacher-led teams were described as providing teachers with “a greater voice.” According to one interviewee, *“Just creating these teams and having good representation of all the staff and having voice and making decisions, I think it’s really boosted morale within the building.”* Another stated this:

The change that’s been most visible to me has been the change in the faculty engagement in the work.… Through these teams, they are engaging a large number of faculty in focusing on different areas of culture and climate and I think that that has been very empowering for the faculty.… It really has made it real for the faculty that culture and climate improvement is as integral and as weighty a part of overall school improvement as the instructional side, and creating that structure for them to collaborate in the same way that they are given support and structure to collaborate around instruction, it’s made that very tangible and visible.

At another school, the advisory team led efforts to gather climate and culture data from students, and staff members were involved in developing strategies to address identified needs. As one team member stated, *“*I feel like the culture has improved a lot, especially with the culture and climate team. There’s a lot of things we’ve done in that team to address some of the needs to improve the culture of the building.*”*

Team members at three of the four WAZ school reported that their work had the added benefit of improving overall team functioning. One interviewee reported better communication between teams: *“I think we’ve had a lot more collaboration and a lot more understanding that A needs to speak to B in order for C to happen. So we’ve evolved that way as a team to make sure that everybody’s aware, everybody’s on the same page, everybody knows their options kind of going down that road.”* Data also suggested that the teams have become more inclusive, encouraging the involvement of support staff. For example, at one school, an interviewee reported that the social worker is now a significant part of their team, whereas before WAZ, she was invited to participate only when she was needed. At another school, an interviewee stated that teachers and school resource officers (affiliated with the police department) were encouraged to participate in team meetings. This interviewee stated that the change has *“really brought the group together so that people are not working in isolation.”*

#### Funding Prescribed Climate and Culture Programs

Another key aspect of Lynn’s approach to WAZ implementation was the use of two packaged programs that targeted the WAZ priority improvement areas. Lynn adopted the Playworks recess design model in seven schools (two WAZ schools—Cobbet and Harrington—and five non‑WAZ schools) and APTT model in six schools (two WAZ schools—Harrington and Marshall—and four non‑WAZ schools). Both models offered ongoing professional development and coaching to promote fidelity of implementation. Numerous interviewees described the success of the models in improving student behavior, family engagement, and overall school climate. A respondent at one school stated this: *“I think that bringing in Playworks and the APTT is helping to support building a strong community relationship and the climate and culture.”*

Playworks is designed to promote healthy play during recess and throughout the school day by encouraging positive social skills, cooperation, and conflict resolution among students.[[13]](#footnote-14) Two WAZ schools were implementing Playworks, one of which was in their second year of implementation and the other had just started implementing Playworks and was still in the process of training staff at the time of the site visit. Staff at the school that was fully implementing the model described improvements in student behavior on the playground as well as in the classroom. One respondent noted that *“I have seen huge improvements in the kid’s behavior just coming into the gym class where maybe we’re playing a game, they realize it’s not about the score, it’s about having fun, playing safer.”* Another stated, *“I think with the Playworks recess that’s implemented, I think it’s cut down on a lot of the violence.*

As described earlier, the APTT initiative offers participating schools a new approach for using student data to engage parents in their students’ learning. In describing her experience with this model, one respondent stated the following:

I was skeptical at first because of the amount of work and the parent buy-in, but the parents have bought in. And that we’re able to modify that model throughout our entire school, we wouldn’t have done that without the education and the information that has come from the Wraparound Zone. And it’s really changed how we really addressed our student needs and how we’ve got our parents into understanding that it’s a collaborative effort.

The use of these structured models allowed Lynn to promote common practices across participating schools. Schools implementing the structured models had similar training and similar expectations for implementation, making it easier for the district to replicate and monitor. The selected models had the added benefit of offering ongoing training and support for implementation, and WAZ funds were used to offer this support to schools. For example, Playworks had a very strong coaching component. This level of support was particularly important because WAZ schools did not have school coordinators who could help oversee the work. One respondent reported that with the coaching in place, the district coordinator did not need to be very hands-on. This freed up the coordinator’s time, allowing her to focus on other WAZ-related activities that required more hands-on district leadership, such as the district’s community coalition.

#### Establishment of a District–Community Coalition

Another way in which WAZ contributed to the progress in Lynn was by providing resources (e.g., professional development) that helped the district establish their community coalition. District staff selected the Alignment Nashville model to inform this work, and two district leaders (including the district coordinator) received training on the model. Lynn has used the model to frame the coalition work that the district has done during the past two years, with the main achievement being the development of two teams—family engagement and behavioral health education—to facilitate the work.

Climate and culture efforts are explicitly supported at the district level through the activities of these teams, with district leaders serving as cochairs on both teams. The family engagement team conducted a community-based survey, which collected 464 responses over a three week period, from parents participating in programs at approximately 24 community agencies. In response to survey responses, the district family engagement team sought to help parents become more involved in decision making and to have more of a voice in school improvement. With this goal in mind, the team focused on parent leadership and empowering parents and caregivers. The team partnered with two non‑WAZ schools to implement parent training activities. At the time of the interviews, three parent workshops had been completed, and the core group of parents at each pilot school, along with their administrators had taken the lead on identifying additional workshops for parents at their schools. The group will report back to and receive support from the district’s family engagement team. The family engagement team, with the support of the district superintendent, is now tasked with expanding the work through the development of a parent academy. It was reported that the district would like to have the parent academy started by fall 2015.

The behavioral health education team has focused on the student learning environment (e.g., student voice, student connectedness). At the time of the interviews, the students had administered the survey and were in the process of analyzing the data and determining how to present findings to the school staff. It was reported that the district hopes to use lessons learned from these pilot projects to replicate similar activities in other schools.

### Finding 3: In the final year of WAZ implementation, the major challenges Lynn was facing included (a) the lack of a coordinated approach to identifying and addressing student needs, (b) the lack of consistent practices for school climate and culture teams, and (c) lack of a clear approach for expanding and maintaining community partner engagement.

Although Lynn has made progress in most priority areas as a result of WAZ, some challenges remain: the lack of a coordinated approach to identifying and addressing student needs, little uniformity in the implementation of school climate and culture teams, and the need for a clear plan to maintain existing partner relationships while expanding efforts to include new partners who have expressed interest in working with the schools.

#### Lack of Coordinated Approach to Identifying and Addressing Student Needs

At the district level, interviewees acknowledged that identifying and addressing student needs was the priority improvement area in which the least amount of progress had been made. This lack of progress was attributed to several factors: the lack of a well-defined or prescribed district strategy that schools could adopt, the lack of a district-level staff person to oversee the work of support staff involved with addressing student needs (e.g., someone who would supervise all adjustment counselors and social workers), and general staff discomfort in administering and following up with parents about behavioral assessments. As a result, there was little consistency in schools’ processes and procedures for identifying and addressing student needs. One respondent commented thus on this issue:

A few years back, we began hiring social workers, but really nobody oversees their intervention, so what one social worker does in one building may be very different from how their role is defined in another building. So, in terms of student levels of support, there really is a need to have a district person supervising that and leading it. It’s absent.

It was reported that the superintendent has added this topic to the agenda for the next school year, and the district plans to explore options for addressing the issue. There also is some evidence of plans to engage in strategies to identify and address student nonacademic needs (e.g., use of a behavior assessment tool, ongoing professional development for social workers and adjustment counselors, and twice-monthly clinical consultation groups to support school-based clinicians).

Two schools established WAZ-funded teams to address student needs. Although these teams did address students’ nonacademic needs, their work in this area seemed to have a relatively narrow focus. For example, at one school the Student Need/Academic Rigor team focused on student effort. That school plans to engage in a series of activities to help students understand and integrate effort into their daily activities and to build a school culture in which students were putting forth the appropriate amount of effort in their schoolwork and related activities. At another school, the Student Needs Identification team has focused on nutrition and works with the food pantry.

#### Lack of Consistent Procedures for Climate and Culture Teams

Each WAZ school developed a climate and culture team to address this priority area. Although school staff reported individual success with their teams, Lynn lacked a solid district framework for how the teams should function. District leaders acknowledged that there were no shared expectations, professional development, or planning around team activities. This approach reportedly stemmed from the desire to provide schools with some flexibility in how they implemented WAZ strategies and was in line with the district culture of high autonomy for schools. As a result, there was little to no uniformity in how the teams functioned. One respondent described the expectations for the teams as *“flexible”* and stated that there was *“no training upfront, so the schools never felt connected. They knew that they all had climate and culture teams, but there was no cohesiveness beyond that.”* Thus, as district leaders began thinking about sustaining the initiative, they realized that it was more difficult to secure buy-in for establishing common practices once schools had already established and implemented teams. Furthermore, they did not have a clearly defined strategy for climate and culture teams that they could replicate across schools in the district. These challenges have played a key role in the district’s decision to adopt more prescribed models to meet their needs.

#### Lack of a Clear Approach to Engaging and Maintaining New Community Partnerships

Lynn has made significant progress in involving community partners in their work with schools. The district has a core group of partners who meet regularly to engage in work related to family engagement and behavioral health education. Although the narrow focus on the two pilot projects has been successful, there was concern that this narrow focus has not generated much opportunity to engage new partners in these projects.

It was reported that the superintendent supports the replication of the two pilot projects in additional schools during the next school year, but some interviewees expressed concern that the limited focus of the existing teams might unintentionally exclude potential community partners who are interested in working with the schools or would lead existing partners to become disengaged with the work. According to one district leader,

We knew that once we boiled down to a couple projects and had committed partners attached to these projects, there was going to be some tradeoff in terms of other partners who were still going to be on the sidelines and we were going to be so busy working on these projects that we weren’t going to necessarily be able to engage [additional] partners…. A challenge for us is we have to find a way to make this to expand the opportunities so that we can engage more partners in this work.

Lynn is currently exploring options to address this issue, one of which is the development of a parent academy. The superintendent supports the development of such an academy as part of Lynn’s efforts to be responsive to parent needs and increase family engagement. The academy would sponsor workshops on topics of interest and areas of need identified in the parent survey. The hope is that the parent academy workshops would be broad enough to engage multiple community partners, thereby providing more diverse opportunities for community participation.

### Finding 4: Evidence gathered during the final year of WAZ implementation indicated that Lynn had made positive or partial progress toward all six of the essential factors for sustainability.

The literature on sustainability for education reform initiatives identifies six essential factors for ensuring sustainability. Data gathered during the final year of the WAZ evaluation showed that Lynn had made positive progress toward four of these essential factors: identification of critical elements (Factor 1), adaptability (Factor 2), systems perspective (Factor 3), and ongoing staff development (Factor 5. The district had made partial progress toward two factors, reform-support infrastructure (Factor 4), and funding (Factor 6).

Table 23 summarizes the sustainability analysis for Lynn, and a more detailed description of the evidence follows.

Table 23. Lynn Progress Toward Meeting Six Essential Factors for Sustainability of WAZ

| Sustainability Essential Factor | Positive Progress | Partial Progress | Lack of Progress |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Sustainability requires identification of the initiative’s critical elements.
 | X |  |  |
| 1. Sustainability requires ongoing adaptation and growth of the initiative.
 | X |  |  |
| 1. Sustainability requires a systems perspective.
 | X |  |  |
| 1. Sustainability requires a reform-support infrastructure at the district level.
 |  | X |  |
| 1. Sustainability requires ongoing professional development.
 | X |  |  |
| 1. Sustainability requires paying close and ongoing attention to funding.
 |  | X |  |

#### Positive Progress Toward Sustainability: Identification of Critical Elements (Factor 1), Adaptability (Factor 2), Systems Perspective (Factor 3), and Ongoing Professional Development (Factor 5)

##### Essential Factor 1. Sustainability requires identification of the initiative’s critical elements.

The data suggests that Lynn has made positive progress toward identifying critical elements of the WAZ initiative. Interviewees at both the district and school levels indicated that a specific set of partnerships and climate and culture strategies were essential to sustain: teacher-led climate and culture teams, Playworks, APTT, and the district–community partnerships activities. These activities have demonstrated success in a relatively short amount of time, have achieved widespread buy-in, and were identified by several interviewees as key components of WAZ. The district’s sustainability plan suggests that there is a consistent understanding of the critical elements of WAZ. This plan demonstrates a commitment to improving climate and culture and includes strategies to sustain the aforementioned strategies.

School, district, and community stakeholders also agreed that it was critical to sustain the district coordinator position because the coordinator has played an important role in moving the initiative forward. The district coordinator was described as *“a great support”* and *“an amazing resource.”* Staff acknowledged that in order to maintain the momentum of WAZ and continue to build on the progress of the last two years, there needed to be someone at the district level who was responsible for overseeing this work.

##### Essential Factor 2. Sustainability requires ongoing adaptation and growth of the initiative.

Data collected from staff in Lynn indicate that the district and WAZ schools have demonstrated an ability to adapt and grow the initiative. District leaders have learned from their experiences during the last two years and are and adapting their efforts to maximize success. For example, its experience with the school-based climate and culture teams, Playworks, and APTT led Lynn to realize that its efforts encouraged greater buy-in and were easier to document, monitor, and replicate when they involved more district involvement and oversight. According to one interviewee,

Our typical experience has been we dive into interesting PD initiatives and then we don’t know exactly what our follow on supports are, then we really should with things that are more prescriptive—packaged strategies where the coaches come in and they’ve got a really well-designed program and schools buy into it because it’s very attractive. It has immediate impact.

District leaders also have realized the importance of setting up clear expectation at the start of a new initiative; thus, they are adopting a new approach for the future. For example, with the implementation of Playworks, the district is setting up expectations about data collection, monitoring, and training. Participating schools will be required to participate in a peer observation and feedback system*.*

##### Essential Factor 3. Sustainability requires a systems perspective.

District and school leaders in Lynn have made significant progress toward meeting this essential factor. Data from previous years revealed that Lynn has approached the WAZ work with a systems-based perspective for sustainability from the start. Comments about sustainability and having strong systems in place to carry out the initiative were a common part of the dialogue and have continued into Year 3.

Lynn’s efforts to approach this work from a systems perspective also was evident in their work with non‑WAZ schools, which have been included in all WAZ efforts. At the time of the interviews, five non‑WAZ schools were implementing Playworks and four were implementing APTT. In addition, all three of the schools involved in the community coalition’s pilot project are non‑WAZ schools. Further, to promote systematic replication and consistency, district leaders also are expanding plans for documenting current and planned practices. The district currently documents all their district–community coalition meetings and activities online. A district leader reported plans to develop guidance documents (e.g., implementation rubric, planning template) for the implementation of Playworks and APTT. Finally, there also was evidence that WAZ schools are integrating WAZ strategies into their processes and procedures. Staff at three of the four schools reported plans to sustain teams, suggesting that the work is becoming integrated into regular school activities.

In addition, buy-in, a key component in developing systems change, was strong among school, district, and community stakeholders. This level of buy-in has remained consistent during the grant period. Staff at all schools described strong buy-in from school administrators and school staff. Buy-in was attributed in part to staff’s understanding of the importance of meeting students’ nonacademic needs, observed commitment from school leadership, and the positive outcomes of WAZ strategies that emerged. According to one interviewee,

I think that when the principal and the program specialist, when they have buy-in, it’s easier for the rest of the building to buy into it. It’s talked about in every meeting, it’s revisited and it’s focused on, and it’s continually [woven] into the school and the day and the structure.

Another reported that *“A lot of teachers have taken ownership over different parts of* [WAZ]*.”* In instances where buy-in was lower, interviewees attributed it to a lack of understanding about the initiative or that certain strategies were “WAZ” strategies. For example, one interviewee reported this:

Honestly, most of our staff wouldn’t know what WAZ is…. we don’t communicate down to them this is part of WAZ that we’re doing. We don’t really tell them who’s funding it or supporting it. We just tell them it’s a school initiative. So I would say the same high percentages of people buy into the initiatives that are here. They just wouldn’t don’t know it’s WAZ.

 *Essential Factor 5. Sustainability requires ongoing professional development.*

The data collected suggests that WAZ has helped district leaders to expand their view of professional development, and Lynn has made progress toward establishing a system of ongoing professional development. First, the district is including ongoing professional development in their sustainability framework. One of the essential elements of the framework is “District supervision or coaching, utilizing peer observation as the primary ongoing support.”This peer-based model of professional development will involve setting new expectations for participation and collaboration, an approach that is reportedly new to the district. By taking these steps, however, district leaders are demonstrating explicit support for WAZ. The model will initially be applied to help sustain the district’s investment in Playworks and APTT.

Next, data suggests that district leaders are thinking beyond WAZ and exploring their processes for professional development in other areas. For example, one district leader described how WAZ has helped them to become more thoughtful about professional development, *“WAZ is really beginning to impact our work in terms of looking at how we do professional development. And in the planning, are we fully immersing the school community? Are we planning it so that we have district levels of support beyond just the initial PD? So, wraparound zone has touched many, many district layers and* [is] *making us rethink things.*

Finally, Lynn devoted WAZ funds to training. This included professional development in the implementation of Playworks and APTT, as well as professional development for support staff (social workers, counselors).

#### Partial Progress Toward Sustainability: Reform-Support Infrastructure (Factor 4) and Funding (Factor 6)

##### Essential Factor 4. Sustainability requires a reform-support infrastructure at the district level.

Lynn has demonstrated partial progress towards this essential factor. Although data suggest that the district has taken a purposeful approach in thinking about how to build district-level support for WAZ-related strategies, data also suggest some challenges with respect to district-level support, specifically a lack of consistency in procedures across schools and a lack of sufficient oversight for staff involved in addressing student needs.

Recognizing the importance of having focused district-level leadership on supporting students’ nonacademic needs, district leaders reported plans to support the district coordinator position for at least another year. The district coordinator has been critical in helping to conceptualize and develop the district-level infrastructure for implementing WAZ-related activities. She was actively engaged in all aspects of WAZ and has brought visibility to WAZ within the community and across non‑WAZ schools. Other district leaders also have been visibly involved with WAZ through various activities, namely participation on the district–community teams (family engagement and behavioral health education). It was reported that the work of these teams is driven by the superintendent’s district priorities. Thus, although teams worked together to establish the vision and subsequent team activities, the underlying direction is driven by district needs. For example, one interviewee reported this:

The underlying principle of the model, which has been very powerful, is the district leadership piece of it.… It cuts through a lot of decision-making difficulties and it’s going to mean we’re not going to try to develop a separate strategic plan for this collaboration. We are going to be responsive to the district central office. That’s the principle, and that has been really powerful and it’s allowed us to continue navigating in a very, very flexible fashion.”

In addition, the district engages in ongoing communication about the initiative with both WAZ and non‑WAZ schools. According to one respondent, *“The deputy superintendent attends all the meetings and she comes to the school, so when we’re in the meetings she’s very active in talking about that process, she’s very invested in the wraparound zone and gives us guidance,”* Another reported, *“I feel like if I need anything or have a question, I don’t hesitate to call either* [the deputy superintendent, district coordinator, or superintendent], *for that matter. I’m listened to and I’m given the support that I need. I’ve not had a problem with that at all.”*

##### Despite these mechanisms of support, Lynn faced challenges in ensuring accountability for the work schools were engaged in. Leadership in Lynn is aware of these challenges and has included specific action steps related to these challenges in its sustainability plan. The plan focuses on establishing districtwide models of practices in supporting the implementation of Playworks, APTT, and community coalition culture and climate efforts. The plan also includes strategies for establishing better accountability and promoting fidelity of implementation across schools (e.g., developing common rubrics for monitoring implementation progress and developing common outcome measures), both of which promote the development of an infrastructure that supports the new WAZ-related strategies. This effort remains a work in progress.

##### Essential Factor 6. Sustainability requires paying close and ongoing attention to funding.

Although some school staff reported that additional funding would be useful for sustaining the WAZ teams, most acknowledged that they would find a way to sustain their teams with no additional funds. Thus, there were no explicit comments about seeking additional funding sources to support WAZ-related work. District-level staff also did not report any immediate plans to seek additional financial support for WAZ, but the district was able to secure funds to maintain the district coordinator for at least another year.

## Summary

The final year of the initiative was Lynn’s second year of WAZ implementation, and the district has made significant progress in several areas, including school safety, student behavior, and family engagement. WAZ contributed to these efforts by funding staff time and professional development to implement the work. The district also made great strides toward establishing a district-supported community coalition. With ongoing district leadership and support for this coalition, Lynn has been able to gain and maintain community engagement in key projects that also have addressed climate and culture in non‑WAZ schools. Lynn has also experienced some challenges, however. Specifically, the district made little progress toward developing a coordinated approach for identifying and addressing student needs and establishing consistent practices for school climate team, and there were some concerns that the district lacked a clear approach for expanding and maintaining community partner engagement beyond the existing pilot projects. From the start, Lynn has approached the initiative with sustainability in mind. This approach has involved a high level of district involvement and support in each aspect of WAZ and has culminated in an emerging sustainability framework that focused on establishing districtwide models of practice. This effort, coupled with a shared understanding of the essential components of WAZ and strong buy-in among stakeholders, suggests that Lynn has created a solid foundation that could help promote the longevity of the initiative once funding ends.

# Profile D: Springfield Public Schools

## Three-Year WAZ Implementation Overview

In 2010–11, just prior to receiving its WAZ grant, Springfield formed a partnership with City Connects, an organization that supports implementation of a model to address the in-school and out-of-school factors that affect students’ academic, social-emotional, family, and physical well-being. Springfield chose to partner with City Connects because its model aligned with the philosophy of the newly developed Springfield Improvement Framework, a plan for district improvement that emphasized positive school climate and culture as a critical factor contributing to academic achievement. After an initial planning year, Springfield rolled out the City Connects model in six Level 4 elementary schools in 2011–12: Brightwood, Brookings, Gerena, Homer,[[14]](#footnote-15) White Street, and Zanetti. The district was able to use the WAZ grant, which began at the same time, to fund a City Connects school site coordinators in each school. In 2012–13, Springfield began implementing WAZ and City Connects in three middle schools in addition to five of the six original elementary schools, and in 2013–14, it began implementing WAZ in another newly designated Level 4 elementary school (DeBerry). Nine schools, including all the district’s Level 4 elementary and middle schools, were implementing WAZ during the third year of the grant.

Springfield used its WAZ grant to support implementation of the City Connects model and Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS). At the core of the City Connects model is a full-time school site coordinator in each school who works with classroom teachers and other school staff members to systematically assess every student in the school and develop tailored student support plans. The school site coordinator also facilitates and enhances partnerships with community agencies and families and often participates as part of the school’s PBIS team and Student and Teacher Assistance Team (STAT). Although most schools were implementing a STAT process prior to WAZ, the WAZ grant allowed Springfield to revitalize and enhance the STAT process. During Year 3, the district also began using WAZ funds to partially pay for district-level behavior specialists that supported the WAZ schools with PBIS implementation.

At the end of WAZ’s third year, data has shown improvements in school safety, student behavior, and family engagement, as well as reports of improvements in the student referral process. In addition, four of the WAZ schools (Brightwood, Brookings, Gerena and Zanetti) have exited Level 4 status. Interview respondents attributed improvements in school safety and student behavior in particular to the improvement in the student referral process itself, including the use of whole-class reviews and the STAT, noting that they are now better able to identify and support students with the most severe mental health needs, resulting in fewer disruptions during school. Unfortunately, Springfield still is struggling to provide students with timely access to the services they need; the staff continued to report long waitlists, particularly for counseling or mental health services, tutoring, and mentoring. The district also continues to struggle with high turnover among school site coordinators and implementation of the City Connects model in the middle schools, where school site coordinators do not support the full range of grade levels. Nonetheless, the district has committed to funding the school site coordinator position and WAZ-related professional development for school site coordinators and other staff once the WAZ grant ends. The district has also expanded the City Connects model to three additional schools (using non-WAZ funds) and additional grades in some of the middle schools (WAZ and non-WAZ).

## Year 3 Findings

In this profile, we describe the major areas of progress made in Springfield during its three years as a WAZ grantee, as well as steps the district has taken toward sustaining components of WAZ after the grant period ends. The data sources used to inform this profile were (a) stakeholder interviews conducted during winter and spring 2014; (b) WAZ-related documents provided by City Connects, the district, and schools; and (c) Harris Poll data provided by the district for the 2010–11 and 2012–13 school years. The analysis of these data was informed by the findings that emerged in Reports 2 and 3 on conditions and supports during Year 1 of WAZ implementation and implementation progress made during Year 2 of WAZ implementation, respectively. For example, researchers paid particular attention to analyzing the extent to which progress made during Year 2 was sustained in Year 3, and the extent to which challenges identified during early years of the grant have persisted or dissipated and why.

AIR’s analysis of data collected in the three years of its evaluation revealed the following four findings related to progress and plans for sustainability of WAZ in Springfield:

1. Evidence gathered during the final year of WAZ implementation indicated the following as major areas of progress in Springfield:
	1. improvement in school safety
	2. improvements in student behavior
	3. improvement in family engagement
	4. improvements in the student referral process
	5. greater support and buy-in for WAZ from school leadership and school staff
2. The key WAZ-driven levers that contributed to these areas of progress were
	1. a school site coordinator in each school
	2. the implementation of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) in each school
3. In the final year of WAZ implementation, the major challenges Springfield was facing included
	1. limited access to services
	2. challenges engaging families
	3. school site coordinator turnover
	4. challenges specific to the middle school implementation of the City Connects model
4. Evidence gathered during the final year of WAZ implementation indicated that Springfield had made positive or partial progress toward all six essential factors for sustainability:
	1. Identification of critical elements (positive)
	2. Adaptability (positive)
	3. Systems perspective (partial)
	4. Reform-support infrastructure (partial)
	5. Ongoing professional development (positive)
	6. Funding (partial)

Further details on these findings and the evidence that supports them, follow.

### Finding 1: Evidence gathered during the final year of WAZ implementation indicated the following as major areas of progress in the Springfield WAZ schools: (a) improvement in school safety, (b) improvements in student behavior, (c) improvement in family engagement, (d) improvement in the student referral process, and (e) greater support and buy-in for WAZ from school leadership and school staff.

Data gathered during this evaluation reveal six major areas of progress in Springfield that can be attributed to WAZ: (a) improvement in school safety, (b) improvements in student behavior, (c) improvement in family engagement, (d) improvement in the student referral process, and (e) greater support and buy-in for WAZ from school leadership and school staff. These major areas of progress were cited by interviewees and demonstrated through an analysis of survey data.

#### Improvement in School Safety

Respondents in 6 out of 24 interviews or focus groups across five schools —including principals, school site coordinators, and teachers —identified school safety as an area of progress. For example, one principal said, *“From what I understand, prior to when I was here; there were outrageous numbers of arrests. I could give you a figure but it would be too shocking to say. We’ve only had two this year*.*”* A school site coordinator reported, *“I felt safe previously at this school, but I’ve seen an increase in the safety. I’ve seen an increase in the security*.*”* Two respondents specifically reported a decrease in student fighting. And, according to the Harris Poll, the percentage of teachers reporting student fighting as a problem at their school decreased for all WAZ elementary schools except one. For example, 63 percent of teachers at White Street reported that student fighting was a problem at their school in 2010–11; the figure was 45 percent in 2012–13 (see Table 24).[[15]](#footnote-16)

Table 24. Percentage of Teachers Reporting Student Fighting as a Problem at Their School for the 2010–11 and the 2012–13 School Years: Springfield

|  | 2010–11 | 2012–13 |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **All Springfield WAZ elementary schools** | 37% | 27% |
| **Brightwood** | 54% | 41% |
| **Elias Brookings** | 25% | 5% |
| **German Gerena** | 31% | 29% |
| **White Street** | 63% | 45% |
| **Zanetti Montessori** | 13% | 15% |

*Source:* Springfield district–administered Harris Poll 2010–11 and 2012–13.

Four respondents in four schools attributed the improvement in safety to the fact that their school had been able to identify and support students with the most severe mental health needs, resulting in fewer disruptions during school. For example, one principal said, *“I think it might have been three years ago we built a padded room and staff were in there with students and we used it a lot. I don’t think we’ve used it maybe once or twice this year…. I think that level of kid and the functioning of their behavior is way decreased.… So that has been a huge improvement in what’s going on and more kids feel safe because it happens less.”* Another principal reported, *“I can say as they* [school site coordinator and counselors] *work with each family of these very involved students that need extensive services outside, the classroom becomes a safer place to be. The children in that room aren’t afraid to come to school*.*”* A third principal also noted that there had been a reduction in the number of *“real big incidents”* in the classroom and that safety had improved because more students were receiving needed mental health and outside community agency support.

Respondents at three WAZ schools attributed improvement in safety at their school in part to safety modifications (e.g., adjustments to safety procedures, installing cameras, installing locks) made during Years 2 and 3 of WAZ. For example, one school site coordinator reported that new procedures were instituted: visitors need to be buzzed in and have to announce their identity. Another coordinator noted that they had conducted new safety drills at the school, including lock-down procedures. A principal reported hearing from teachers and parents that the safety modifications had increased school safety and also made students feel safer coming to school.

#### Improvements in Student Behavior

Respondents in 7 out of 24 interviews and focus groups, including principals, school site coordinators, and teachers in five schools, as well as one district-level respondent, reported that improvements in student behavior was as an area of progress. Evidence cited for improvements in student behavior included a decrease in the number of students being referred to the principal’s office and a decrease in the number of suspensions. For example, one principal said, *“We had about 400 office referrals last year. We’ve cut that in half this year so far*.*”* Another respondent specifically reported that there had been significant decreases in suspensions and significant increases in attendance across all WAZ schools in the district.

Teachers at two schools reported that they were handling student behavior and managing their classrooms better than in previous years. For example, one teacher said that *“communication has gotten a lot better, and we’re* [the teachers] *all on the same page, so the kids can’t get away with the things they used to*.*”* Coordinators at three schools agreed with the teachers and reported that staff in their schools were making progress in terms of managing student behavior. For example, one coordinator reported, *“Teachers aren’t calling for support.… they’re able to manage behaviors in the classroom better*.*”* Another coordinator said, *“I can’t say there are no disruptions at all because we do have kids with severe behavior problems, but something is being done about it. I would say another change within the last year and a half is the turnaround of getting them* [the students with disruptive behavior] *back to class versus staying out of the class the whole day*.*”* One teacher summed up the progress in student behavior nicely when she said, *“I think it’s funny because four or five years ago the cool kids were the kids always doing the wrong thing—now the cool kids are the kids who are on point, the kids on the wall—they get recognition for being leaders*.*”*

Data from the Harris Poll lend further support to the finding that student behavior had improved. According to these data, 64 percent of teachers in WAZ elementary schools reported that disorderly student behavior was a problem at their school in 2012–13; the figure was 78 percent in 2010–11. This represents an overall decrease in the percentage of teachers who perceived student behavior to be a problem, with two schools experiencing dramatic decreases in teachers’ perceptions of disorderly student behavior. For example, 40 percent of teachers at Brookings reported that disorderly student behavior was a problem at their school in 2012–13, in comparison with 79 percent in 2010–11. Zanetti also experienced a sizable decrease in the percentage of teachers reporting that disorderly student behavior was a problem at their school between 2012–13 and 2010–11 (56 percent in 2010–11, in comparison with 42 percent in 2012–13; see Table 25).

Table 25. Percentage of Teachers Reporting Disorderly Student Behavior as a Problem at Their School for the 2010–11 and the 2012–13 School Years: Springfield

|  | 2010–11 | 2012–13 |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **All Springfield WAZ elementary schools** | 78% | 64% |
| **Brightwood** | 79% | 73% |
| **Elias Brookings** | 79% | 40% |
| **German Gerena** | 77% | 71% |
| **White Street** | 98% | 92% |
| **Zanetti Montessori** | 56% | 42% |

*Source:* Springfield district–administered Harris Poll 2010–11 and 2012–13.

#### Improvement in Family Engagement

Respondents in seven out of 24 interviews and focus groups —including principals, school site coordinators, and teachers in six schools —as well as one district-level respondent, identified improvement in family engagement as an area of progress. For example, the district respondent reported that schools are becoming more welcoming for parents and that this year in particular the school site coordinators have tried to engage parents when it comes to solving problems about students. In addition, five respondents reported specific strategies that they had used during the past school year to try to increase parent or family engagement, including making home visits and holding events where families live. For example, a principal reported having more success at engaging families because the school’s parent facilitator was reaching out to housing project managers to see whether the school could use housing project space to hold events or meetings with parents to make it easier for them to attend. One coordinator reported involving parents in tier 2 intervention or check-in/check-out procedures for PBIS by sending materials home to parents and requiring students to bring them back to school and also having more phone conversations with parents about these materials. Teachers at one school reported that *“Parents are starting to see that ‘oh all right, I can come in and I can be respected*.’*”* In addition, these teachers reported that *“if parents don’t come to STAT meetings, then teachers or other staff do home visits*.*”*

Respondents at two schools reported having “high turnout” for events hosted at the school for parents. For example, one principal said, *“Our open house this year was one of our larger open houses*.*”* At the other school, the principal reported that the reason the school had such a great turnout for one of their events was that students did the ConnectEd[[16]](#footnote-17) call to parents. One coordinator reported that there had been an improvement in attendance at parent–teacher conferences and said, *“We had 12 parent–teacher conferences scheduled last week. Eight of those 12 took place. I would say that is a large improvement from last year*.*”*

#### Improvements in the Student Referral Process

Springfield’s implementation of WAZ includes two key referral processes: Student Teacher Assistance Teams (STAT) and whole-class reviews. Most WAZ schools were implementing a STAT process prior to WAZ, but the focus was primarily on academics. With the implementation of WAZ, Springfield chose to broaden the STAT process so that during a STAT the teams would discuss the whole child. In addition, a key component of the City Connects model is conducting whole-class reviews. Through whole-class reviews, school site coordinators work with teachers, students, and other staff members to systematically assess every student in the school[[17]](#footnote-18) and develop tailored student support plans that include referrals for services and enrichment activities, if necessary. If there is an immediate concern that comes out of the whole-class reviews, a student often is referred to STAT, and so the team can strategize about a plan for addressing the student’s needs. Through the STAT process, a team of teachers, administrators, counselors, other school staff, and often parents meet to discuss students that are most in need of intervention or struggling in school and develop strategic student support plans (including referrals for services) with specific follow-up time periods (e.g., follow-up meetings every six weeks to check on student progress). Although whole-class reviews typically take place only at one point during the school year, teachers and other staff members can refer students to STAT throughout the school year.

An improvement in the student referral process was identified as an area of progress in 11 out of 24 interviews or focus groups —including principals, school site coordinators, and teachers in six schools —as well as one district level respondent. These respondents reported on improvements to two referral processes used in Springfield: (1) the STAT process and (2) the whole-class review process.

Six respondents in five schools identified improvements in the STAT process: in the frequency of meetings, in the number of teachers referring students to STAT, in the collaboration among staff, in students’ needs being addressed, and in the attendance of parents at the meetings. For example, a teacher at one school said, *“Before I don’t think I ever STATted* [referred a student to STAT] *anyone, so now it is consistent, there’s a problem, STAT them. This year I have used STAT quite a bit*.*”* One principal also reported that there is more collaboration and communication among the STAT team. Rather than teachers or counselors “doing their own thing,” staff members now engage with each other in meeting students’ needs and solving behavior problems. Another principal reported that not only was the STAT team collaborating better but that school staff in general was collaborating and communicating more effectively with community partners that provide services to the students. This principal said, *“We have a lot of issues with students with mental health diagnosis and serious medication issues so they’re* [the counselors and school site coordinator] *able to work with the community agencies more effectively to get students what they need or if they lost services to help them gain back services*.*”* The principal also reported that the school counselors and the coordinator are all working together and “in tandem” with the community agencies and that *“That has never happened before*.*”*

In addition to describing an improvement in the STAT process, four respondents in two schools reported that coordinators were doing a better job of following up on referrals made as part of the whole-class review process and working to ensure that students received services in a timely manner. For example, one teacher reported that this year *“the whole-class reviews were effective…it was efficient. I was in and out in the allotted time. And* [the school site coordinator] *followed up on every child that I asked her to. And I had numerous kids who received counseling and therapy and so on*.*”* One coordinator reported that that whole-class review was much smoother this year. For example, she said, *“Teachers come to us before the whole-class review is even scheduled. We have also built relationships with community partners so students don’t automatically go on waitlists*.*”* A principal reported that whole-class review had allowed school staff to pay attention and *“learn about things going on with students that we would not normally have a way of finding out*.*”*

#### Greater Support and Buy-in for WAZ From School Leadership and School Staff

Greater support from school leadership was identified as an area of progress by respondents in seven interviews or focus groups in six schools, and greater buy-in among school staff was identified as an area of progress by respondents in 13 interviews or focus groups in six schools, including principals, school site, coordinators, and teachers. Both school leadership support and school staff buy-in were cited as challenges during Year 1, and inconsistent progress was reported for these areas in Year 2. In Year 3, however, improvements were reported in nearly all schools.

In six of the WAZ schools, respondents reported that greater support from school leadership was a major area of progress in the past three years. In the other two schools, school leaders were new during the 2013–14 school year and were less familiar with the WAZ strategies. Respondents in these schools did not mention either challenges or progress related to leadership support.

At one school, the coordinator had previously reported not feeling supported by a principal who *“did not see the value”* in the WAZ strategies. However, in Year 3, the coordinator reported that the principal *“gave me a very welcoming presentation during our extended day with the teachers, and I really feel as though he supports the program*.*”* A coordinator at another school where school leader buy-in had previously been relatively low said, *“I think that our school leader recognizes the value of this. I think she supports and plays a role in forming community partnerships. She provides positive feedback regarding work related to the role*.*”* A teacher summed up the importance of school leader support for WAZ strategies by saying, *“If they did not support it we would not have it*.*”* Another teacher said, *“If the administration wasn’t hands-in, ‘this is what we’re doing,’ we* [the teachers] *wouldn’t have bought it*.*”*

Greater staff buy-in also was identified as an area of progress in six schools. In one of the other two schools, more than half the teachers were new during the 2013–14 school year, and in the other, the coordinator was new. Respondents in one of these schools mentioned challenges related to staff buy-in and respondents in the other school did not mention either challenges or progress related to staff buy-in.

School site coordinators and one principal at these six schools reported that most teachers wanted to participate in whole-class reviews, in contrast to previous years, during which buy-in for whole-class reviews was low or more varied. One teacher reported that 90 to 95 percent of staff were buying into whole-class reviews and the other WAZ strategies and said, *“It’s better now*.*”* Several respondents reported that the school site coordinators had been more successful with whole-class reviews than in the previous years because they exercised more flexibility and creativity in coming up with strategies for obtaining the necessary information. Strategies that respondents reported for conducting whole-class reviews more efficiently and gaining staff buy-in included conducting student surveys ahead of meetings with teachers, coordinators attending teacher planning meetings, meeting with teachers during hall duty, and obtaining information from student mentors (e.g., Big Brothers/Big Sisters, AmeriCorps volunteers) or tutors who work in small groups with students.

Data from the City Connects Teacher Survey lend further support to the finding that greater staff buy-in was an area of progress. According to these data,[[18]](#footnote-19) teachers surveyed consistently agreed that the whole-class review was helpful to them (88 percent of elementary teachers agreed strongly or somewhat in both Year 1 and Year 2) and that the whole-class review process added to their knowledge of the nonacademic aspects of their students’ lives (85 percent of elementary teachers agreed strongly or somewhat in both Year 1 and Year 2).

### Finding 2: The key WAZ-driven levers that contributed to these areas of progress were (a) a school site coordinator in each school and (b) the implementation of PBIS in each school.

Data gathered during the AIR evaluation also speak to how WAZ contributed to these major areas of progress. In Springfield, the most commonly cited ways in which WAZ contributed to progress were: (1) the integral role that the school site coordinators play in identifying student needs and connecting students with services, building and expanding relationships with community partners, and engaging families; and (2) the implementation of PBIS. In combination, the role of the school site coordinators and the implementation of PBIS resulted in improvement in school safety, student behavior, family engagement, and the student referral process.

#### Role of the School Site Coordinators

Principals and teachers in six schools, as well as community partners identified the school site coordinator as a key contributor to the major areas of progress. The coordinators played an integral role with respect to implementing the City Connects model, connecting student to services, establishing and maintaining relationships with partners, and engaging families.

Three respondents in three schools reported that coordinators played an integral role in connecting students to services. According to these respondents, coordinators expanded knowledge of student needs and identified student needs that would not have otherwise been addressed, through their implementation of whole-class reviews. For example, one principal said, *“I don’t think we would ever have the depth of information that we get now by having those whole-class reviews. I mean, teachers do their best but there’s no way a teacher is going to really get to know at that. depth that it happens with the whole-class reviews*.*”* Another principal reported on the role of the school site coordinator in connecting students to services and said, *“The City Connects coordinator* [school site coordinator] *really supports the success we’re seeing in the school.… All those kids that you think don’t have those extra opportunities, we’re finding those opportunities. We have great student attendance because of those wraparound services*.*”* In addition, two respondents in two schools and two community partners reported that school site coordinators were responsible for connecting more students to services. These respondents reported that these connections enabled students to receive services such as counseling that helped to improve student behavior in the classroom. Two respondents also attributed connecting students with services to a decrease in fights and improvement in school safety more generally.

Four respondents in two schools and two community partners reported that school site coordinators had helped improve communication and collaboration between the school and community partners and also among school staff. For example, one principal reported that the coordinator had *“done a great job”* working to bring in committed community partners to the school and that *“it’s the organizations that have really helped us move the kids along*.*”* In addition, all three community partners interviewed reported it is easier for them to establish and build relationships with schools that have a school site coordinator. For example, one community partner said, *“When I see that a school has a City Connects site coordinator, I feel as though we have a door into that school that might not otherwise be available to us. The administrators are busy. Teachers are very busy.… But if there is somebody that I can meet and sit down with, I know that they are focused on finding the resources that fit the needs of that school, then we have an instant connection*.*”* Another community partner reported this: *“So there’s a lot more communication having worked with them* [school site coordinators] *than sometimes you send it to another person’s school, let’s say a vice principal and it may or may not get seen and it may or may not get responded to*.*”*

Three respondents in three schools specifically reported on the contribution that school site coordinators have made to their ability to engage families and make families feel more welcome in the school. For example, one coordinator reported that *“Our school has had a tough rap for a long time, for many years, and many parents have felt that they couldn’t connect with the school.… This year has been a big change for our school and we’ve had parents talk about that they’ve seen the improvement.”*

#### PBIS Implementation

Springfield’s WAZ implementation plans across the three years indicate that PBIS implementation is one way the district hoped to improve school climate and culture across WAZ schools, as well as in the district more broadly. PBIS is a schoolwide system of support that includes proactive strategies for defining, teaching, and supporting appropriate student behaviors to create positive school environments. PBIS uses a continuum of positive behavior support for all students that is implemented both in the classroom and nonclassroom settings (such as hallways, buses, and restrooms). For example, through PBIS, rather than telling students what not to do, the school focuses on reinforcing or rewarding preferred behaviors. During Year 1 and 2, all but one of the WAZ schools were implementing PBIS. During the third year, this other school began implementing PBIS as well. During Year 3, the district began funding behavior specialist positions, partially through WAZ funding, to help support PBIS implementation in each WAZ school.

Four respondents reported that the implementation of PBIS contributed to improvements in student behavior, decreases in suspensions, increases in attendance, and decreases in student fighting. Two respondents in two schools specifically reported that the implementation of PBIS contributed to improvements in student behavior. One was a principal who noted a decrease in office referrals because teachers were better able to manage classroom behavior as a result of PBIS. This principal said, *“We also have our PBIS.… We are in a very good place with it. We have had a significant drop in our office referrals*.*”* Both the district coordinator and district leader reported that implementation of PBIS had contributed to improvements in student behavior, decreases in suspensions, and increases in attendance. One of these respondents said, *“We’ve seen huge, huge progress in the implementation and the fidelity of the implementation of PBIS.… We have…25 to 26 schools in some stage of implementation of that, and as a result of that we’ve seen a significant decrease in some of our behavioral suspensions. We’ve seen improvements in attendance*.*”* Two of these four respondents also reported a decrease in student fighting as a result of both PBIS and to new safety procedures instituted by the schools. One of these respondents said, *“fights were somewhat regular; they* [students] *would automatically not use words. I think we have had one fight so far this year*.*”* This respondent went on to explain that students were *“using words”* rather than physically fighting as a result of a more positive school culture that arose from PBIS implementation.

### Finding 3: In the final year of WAZ implementation, the major challenges Springfield was facing included (a) limited access to services, (b) challenges engaging families, (c) school site coordinator turnover, and (d) challenges specific to the middle school implementation of the City Connects model.

Although progress clearly had been made in Springfield as a result of WAZ, some challenges still remained: limited access to services, challenges engaging families, school site coordinator turnover, and challenges specific to the middle school implementation of the City Connects model.

#### Limited Access to Services

A total of 13 respondents in six schools —including principals, school site coordinators, teachers, district leaders, and community partners —identified getting students access to services as a challenge. For example, respondents reported long waitlists, particularly for counseling or mental health services, tutoring, and mentoring. In addition, respondents reported that the number of students in need of services often did not match the number of slots in programs or that programs charged fees that parents could not afford. These challenges also were reported by respondents interviewed during the first two years of WAZ, indicating that the challenge had been ongoing.

Although the availability of services was reported as a challenge, respondents at four schools also reported that school site coordinators were being creative about addressing the challenge and finding ways to address students’ needs. For example, one principal reported that when the school site coordinator found that there was a waitlist for tutors and that the tutoring site was not conveniently located, the coordinator worked with a community partner to train local high school students to be tutors and to have the tutors come to the school. Another principal reported that it was typical to encounter waitlists, particularly for mental health services. This principal reported that having the coordinator continue calling additional clinics until the coordinator found one that had an open spot effectively addressed the challenge. Other interviewees reported that coordinators were leveraging their relationships with community agencies to get around waitlists, or get assistance in identifying other resources they could call upon. These examples demonstrate the critical importance of the school site coordinator role in Springfield.

#### Challenges Engaging Families

Although family engagement was noted as a major area of progress in Springfield, six respondents in four schools and a district-level respondent also reported that engaging families was a challenge. These respondents noted challenges related to frequently changing phone numbers, difficulty building trust, and difficulties increasing parent attendance at school events. For example, one school coordinator reported on the challenge of frequently changing phone numbers *“sometimes you do try to reach out to parents but their numbers change, but I don’t feel like the school can really change that. It’s hard to communicate with parents because some of their numbers do change a lot*.*”* One teacher reported on the difficulty of building trust with parents, especially because of the reputation of the school prior to implementing WAZ and other reform strategies. This teacher said, *“we have to earn their* [the parents’] *trust*.*”* One district-level respondent reported that parent engagement was challenging when she said, *“We try to have parent nights. Our parents’ responses actually are not great. We were just talking with our outside community partners about maybe helping us with that*.*”*

#### School Site Coordinator Turnover

Four respondents in four schools, as well as two district-level respondents, reported that the turnover of school site coordinators posed a challenge to effective WAZ implementation. For example, one principal reported having an “exceptional” coordinator and when that coordinator left for another job, *“what was hard is she* [the new coordinator] *didn’t know the model. So she’s learning as she goes*.*”* Another principal reported that losing the school site coordinator who built the program, especially after only a year, meant that the school had to start over.

One principal reported on the reasons for the turnover:

in some buildings it’s [the City Connects or school site coordinator position] just not valued. So I’m not sure what the City Connects person does once they’re hired, but I do know a lot of counselors who didn’t get jobs that take a City Connects job because they’re open and they don’t pay well, so they take that for a year. They get experience, get their foot in the door, then they move on. I don’t know how you can sustain a program with high turnover like that.

Because the coordinator is a grant-funded position rather than a standard district personnel position, coordinators reportedly left to take positions with higher salaries and better benefits.

Both district respondents reported on the challenges related to school site coordinator turnover. One, however, reported on how she might try to address the challenge with new schools implementing WAZ: *“there are different reasons for the turnover. But I think if we were to change anything or I had control over anything, the one thing I think we would do is make sure the principals…were at the table during even the screening process”* for school site coordinators. This respondent also reported that, if the *“goodness of fit”* between the principal and the school site coordinator was present, coordinators would be more likely to be valued and to stay in their roles longer.

#### Middle School Implementation of the City Connects Model

In Year 2, one of the major challenges reported by respondents had to do with implementation of the City Connects model at the middle school level. Respondents specifically reported the following as challenges: scheduling whole-class reviews when students see more than one teacher, limited availability of services to meet the needs of this age group, and having school site coordinators in each school who worked only with Grade 6 students. In Year 3, data demonstrated that these challenges had persisted. Overall, five respondents in two schools and two district-level respondents reported challenges related to addressing students’ needs in middle schools.

Although some respondents reported that progress had been made in scheduling whole-class reviews, respondents in two middle schools and one district-level respondent reported that scheduling continued to be challenging. One district respondent reported and summed up the challenge of implementation in middle schools when she said, *“Middle schools are a whole different animal than elementary schools. Not only are the kids older and going through some developmental changes themselves, but I think it’s a national phenomenon that middle schools are tough…. You’re looking at…trying to implement in large school settings versus smaller school settings, that’s trickier.… schedule changes they have in the middle schools are a little bit different*.*”* One coordinator explained the challenge of conducting whole-class reviews at the middle school level when she said, *“Then I’ve had to gather information from their* [the students’] *separate math teachers, social studies, science, whereas, in elementary school, you meet with one or two teachers and that’s it*.*”*

Two respondents in two schools reported on the limited availability of services for the middle school age group. One coordinator reported on the lack of availability of services for this age group when she said, *“I’d say it’s harder to connect…the middle school students to services than it is for the elementary grades.… There aren’t as many after school programs.”* Another coordinator reported, similarly, that *“I think for our age group it can be challenging, because for instance tutoring. There’s a wonderful tutoring program, but it’s geared more toward elementary school level*.*”*

Two respondents reported that having school site coordinators in each school who worked only with Grade 6 students was challenging. One principal reported that the needs of seventh and eighth graders *“who have some social issues and emotional issues”* were not being addressed, and that the school could benefit from City Connects addressing all grade levels in the middle school. The principal reported, however, that, although the coordinator’s main responsibility was for the sixth grade, she tried to address the needs of students in other grades. The principal also noted that because there were so many students in the sixth grade that needed the coordinator’s attention, it was difficult for her to address the needs of students in other grades.

### Finding 4: Evidence gathered during the final year of WAZ implementation indicated that Springfield had made positive or partial progress toward all six essential factors for sustainability.

The literature on sustainability for education reform initiatives identifies six essential factors for ensuring sustainability. Data gathered during the final year of the WAZ evaluation showed that Springfield had made positive progress toward three of these essential factors—identification of critical elements (Factor 1), adaptability (Factor 2), and ongoing professional development (Factor 5). The district had made partial progress toward three of the essential factors: systems perspective (Factor 3), reform-support infrastructure (Factor 4), and funding (Factor 6). Table 26 summarizes the sustainability analysis for Springfield, and a more detailed description of the evidence follows.

Table 26. Springfield Progress Toward Meeting Six Essential Factors for Sustainability of WAZ

| Sustainability Essential Factor | Positive Progress | Partial Progress | Lack of Progress |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Sustainability requires identification of the initiative’s critical elements.
 | X |  |  |
| 1. Sustainability requires ongoing adaptation and growth of the initiative.
 | X |  |  |
| 1. Sustainability requires a systems perspective.
 |  | X |  |
| 1. Sustainability requires a reform-support infrastructure at the district level.
 |  | X |  |
| 1. Sustainability requires ongoing professional development.
 | X |  |  |
| 1. Sustainability requires paying close and ongoing attention to funding.
 |  | X |  |

#### Positive Progress Toward Sustainability: Identification of Critical Elements (Factor 1), Adaptability (Factor 2), and Ongoing Professional Development (Factor 5)

##### Essential Factor 1: Sustainability requires identification of the initiative’s critical elements.

According to Springfield’s WAZ plans across the three years and interviews with district-level respondents, Springfield defines WAZ as comprising the following key elements: (1) the City Connects model (including having at least one school site coordinator at each school), (2) PBIS, (3) STAT, (4) forming partnerships with community partners to help address student needs, and (5) working to engage parents in addressing student needs and in the school more broadly. At the center of Springfield’s approach to WAZ implementation is the school site coordinator, who is charged with implementing the City Connects model, connecting with community partners, engaging parents in addressing student needs, and assisting with PBIS implementation.

During Year 1 of WAZ, the majority of respondents in Springfield (other than district-level respondents) struggled to explain the key strategies of the WAZ initiative other than having a school site coordinator or aspects of the City Connects model (e.g., whole-class reviews). For example, most respondents equated WAZ with City Connects in Year 1. In fact, one respondent in Year 1 asked the evaluator during an interview how the two were connected and wanted to know more about what WAZ was; she indicated only being familiar with City Connects.

By Year 3 of WAZ, most respondents indicated that WAZ included more than just City Connects and the school site coordinator. These respondents described WAZ as including PBIS, the school site coordinator, and the connections the school was making with community partners, as well as engaging parents in the school and in addressing students’ needs. In fact, three principals reported that PBIS and the City Connects model *“went hand in hand.”* One of these principals described the connection between City Connects and PBIS: *“I would kind of say that it’s like a wheel and there’s a hub. City Connects* [school site coordinators] *are the middle that are actually in the school. Then each spoke in the wheel could be PBIS, it could be wraparound services, the things at the district. But the people that are physically in the building hold all those things together*.*”*

##### Essential Factor 2: Sustainability requires ongoing adaptation and growth of the initiative.

Evidence shows that Springfield has been adapting the WAZ initiative with the goal of ongoing improvement. For example, when district staff recognized that schools were facing challenges in implementing PBIS, they began funding behavior specialists in the schools to support PBIS.

Most notably, however, the school coordinators were continually modifying their approaches to address or “get around” implementation challenges reported in Years 1 and 2. Principals at two of the middle schools and two elementary schools and the district coordinator reported that school site coordinators were being creative about scheduling whole-class reviews and trying to accommodate teachers’ busy schedules in flexible and new ways. For example, at one middle school, the coordinator conducted a teacher survey and a student survey to collect information for the whole-class reviews to shorten the time spent meeting in person with teachers. Another coordinator reportedly collected information on students from tutors and mentors who work with students in smaller groups as an alternative to collecting information from teachers.

Although waitlists and availability of services were reported as challenges in Year 3, at four of the six schools that reported this challenge, respondents (including principals, school site coordinators, and district leaders) also reported that school site coordinators were being creative about addressing this challenge and finding ways to address students’ needs and ensure that students received needed services. For example, coordinators were able to avoid waitlists with some partners if they had strong relationships with them, or were able to seek alternative resources for help (e.g., high school tutors, private practices).

In previous years, some principals reported struggling with the fact that, although coordinators reported to the principal, the coordinator’s supervisor was the district coordinator. Two principals reported that they started regular check-in meetings with school site coordinators during Year 3 to try to include the coordinators in school improvement planning. These principals reported that they started these meetings as a way for coordinators to share the responsibility of helping the school achieve its goals for the school year.

##### Essential Factor 5: Sustainability requires ongoing professional development.

Springfield has provided a variety of ongoing professional development opportunities for school site coordinators and other staff members in the schools, including training and technical assistance from City Connects in Boston, district supervision and support for coordinators, training for new coordinators, district-funded behavioral specialists, and time for school PBIS teams to meet. The district coordinator reported that the district receives a lot of support from City Connects in Boston in the form of providing training and ongoing assistance to the school site coordinators on the model.

Seven respondents in five schools reported that the district provided support for WAZ strategies by providing professional development for teachers, counselors, and school site coordinators. One coordinator explained what the school or district leadership had done to ensure that the WAZ strategies are sustained: *“A lot of data collection, training us, professional development, checking in with us, or even my supervisor had several visits to our school to just see that I’m implementing the model with fidelity*.*”* Another coordinator reported that coordinators are provided professional development for their role as coordinators: *“As far as my position would go, they* [the district] *check in on us, they hold meetings every other week with us, and almost every other week we have a new provider come into the meeting to discuss a different resource that might be out in the community and what they offer*.*”*

All school site coordinators and two principals reported that school site coordinators met as a group twice a month with the district coordinator. School site coordinators reported that during these meetings they learn about community partners and resources, share ideas about what is working and not working, and brainstorm solutions to problems coordinators are facing, and the district coordinator provides additional training or relays information about implementation of the City Connects model from City Connects in Boston. The new school site coordinators in Year 3 reported receiving a combination of training from the district coordinator, from City Connects in Boston, and through opportunities to observe and share experiences with other, more experienced coordinators.

The district coordinator as well as five other respondents reported that the district had provided behavior specialists in Year 3 to assist with PBIS implementation. One principal reported that the behavior specialist was helping the school to implement PBIS *“the right way”* and also had assisted teachers with problem solving for particularly challenging student behaviors. According to documentation provided by Springfield (e.g., district budgets, sustainability plan) and interviews with school level staff, the district also provides funding for school PBIS teams to meet and plan PBIS implementation. According to coordinators, principals, and teachers, during PBIS team meetings the team plans PBIS events to recognize positive behavior and also to discuss and address implementation challenges. The behavior specialists are part of these school PBIS teams. The behavior specialists function as the primary link between the district and the school PBIS teams. The specialists also provide technical assistance to team members and other teachers in the school. The specialists meet regularly with a PBIS consultant.

According to the district level respondents and Springfield’s sustainability plan, the district plans to continue supporting these ongoing professional development opportunities once grant funding ends. The district plans to fund these opportunities through a combination of district funding and additional grants. The district applied for a federal grant to help continue supporting the school site coordinators and the implementation of the City Connects model.

#### Partial Progress Toward Sustainability: Systems Perspective (Factor 3), Reform-Support Infrastructure (Factor 4), and Funding (Factor 6)

##### Essential Factor 3: Sustainability requires a systems perspective.

Evidence indicates that Springfield had made partial progress toward the third factor, systems perspective. Evidence of progress toward the third factor includes that the district, through the work of the district coordinator, has pushed out implementation of the City Connects model and PBIS in Level 4 elementary and middle schools. In addition, the district has integrated WAZ into the superintendent’s strategic plan for the district as well as Level 4 school turnaround plans. The progress is only partial, however, because the district’s approach to pushing out implementation met with some initial school leader and staff resistance; and the City Connects model is not fully part of the culture in the middle schools because it is being implemented only in the sixth grade.

Springfield has worked to integrate the City Connects model and PBIS into the *“way the district and each school does business*.*”* For example, the district coordinator is a district employee who helped write the WAZ grant and is charged with supervising the implementation of City Connects in the schools. It also is important to note that City Connects is a model that the district of Springfield is responsible for implementing. The district coordinator often consults with City Connects employees in Boston, but she oversees implementation in the district. In addition, the district coordinator is charged with overseeing implementation of PBIS in the schools. She and other members of the district PBIS team work closely with PBIS consultants, but it is the district team that works with the schools to provide technical assistance and training for PBIS implementation. The decision to implement the City Connects model in Level 4 schools happened at the district level. Although schools were not directly involved in choosing City Connects as a partner, it was possible for them to opt out if they wished. This approach contributed to some initial school leader and staff resistance. In contrast, schools were offered the opportunity to implement PBIS and almost all chose to implement PBIS initially because of reports of success with PBIS at other schools in the district.

District-level respondents reported on how the WAZ strategies were part of the district’s overall plan to help schools improve. For example, one district-level respondent reported that the City Connects, PBIS, and other WAZ strategies were a part of the superintendent’s five-year plan for the district. The other district-level respondent reported that *“the superintendent…is more than just somebody who likes it* [WAZ]*. He’s behind it. And this is something that he has mandated as part of the strategic plan and he sees this as an integral part of making Springfield a high-performing school district*.*”* Only two principals, however, reported on how the WAZ strategies were part of their school improvement plans, indicating that WAZ has not yet been fully integrated into the schools’ cultures.

In the three WAZ middle schools, the school site coordinator was responsible for only the sixth-grade students. This decision was made because of limited resources (the model specifies a ratio of 1 coordinator for every 400 students). School-level respondents in the middle schools across both implementation years indicated that this was challenging for the school culture because students in the other grades had needs as well. The district recognized the challenges inherent in implementing the City Connects model only in the sixth grade, but moved forward with the decision in order to provide some level of support and to ensure continuity for entering students who had previously been served by a City Connects coordinator in elementary school. Although Springfield is currently working on ways to address this challenge, the lack of schoolwide implementation of WAZ strategies at the middle school level has hindered its progress toward the third factor, a systems perspective.

##### Essential Factor 4: Sustainability requires a reform-support infrastructure at the district level.

Springfield has established multiple district-level supports for WAZ implementation: district support and monitoring of PBIS implementation, school site coordinator meetings, principal meetings to share best practices, district support for collection and analysis of school climate data, common protocols for identifying student needs, and mechanisms for schools to connect with community partners who might meet their needs. There also is evidence, however, that some district policies and implementation decisions impeded implementation and therefore sustainability: for example, having the middle school site coordinators responsible for one grade level; and having implementation depend on one person, the school site coordinator.

District and school-level respondents reported that the district provides support and monitoring of PBIS implementation in four ways: (1) providing each school with a behavior specialist, (2) providing funding for PBIS teams to meet outside of school hours if necessary, (3) providing funding for PBIS student incentives (e.g., items for PBIS school stores, funding for special events for students), and (4) monitoring PBIS implementation through the use of a standard monitoring tool, the Schoolwide Evaluation Tool. One principal described the support that the district provides for PBIS: *“the behavior specialist that’s on our PBIS team. They* [the district] *funded us for paying teachers to stay after school and do all the work for PBIS. They* [the district] *help provide training for us for PBIS.… They’ve* [the district] *helped us analyze our data. They’ve* [the district] *helped us with just processes and how we structure our team.”*

Structured meetings among school site coordinators and among principals were other ways in which the district established an infrastructure to support WAZ implementation. For example, all school site coordinators and both district-level respondents reported that school site coordinators met regularly with the district coordinator to share best practices in WAZ strategies. Coordinators reported that the bimonthly meetings with coordinators from the other schools and the district coordinator were where they strategized about addressing implementation challenges. One coordinator reported learning about community partners that had been effective in another school in one of these meetings and then reaching out to work with this partner after the meeting. Another coordinator reported learning about strategies other coordinators were using to make scheduling whole-class reviews easier for teachers. During principal meetings, principals shared successful WAZ practices and experiences.

Evidence from interviews and documents reveal a variety of ways that the district provided support for collection and analysis of school climate data. For example, one district-level respondent reported that the district was assisting schools in analyzing Schoolwide Information System (SWIS)[[19]](#footnote-20) data on student behavior such as suspensions, office referrals, and attendance. Springfield plans from all three years indicate that the district funded and assisted with the administration of the Organizational Health Inventory and the Harris Poll in the schools. One district-level respondent also reported that the district does *“a variety of parent polls and surveys looking at climate and culture*.*”* Three principals reported receiving support from the district in analyzing school climate data from SWIS, the Organizational Health Inventory, and PBIS.

All respondents reported that the district provided common protocols for identifying student needs by having the school site coordinators implement the City Connects model (e.g., whole-class reviews). School site coordinators also reported that teachers also identified and directly referred students to them or to STAT, as appropriate. Respondents generally agreed that the main way that the district provided common protocols for identifying student needs was through training the school site coordinators to implement the City Connects model and having the district coordinator monitor the implementation of the model.

Evidence from interviews indicates that Springfield supported schools in connecting with community partners by providing a directory of community resources to school site coordinators, through the City Connects data system, and through bimonthly meetings with coordinators, where community organizations are introduced to school coordinators. Two community partners reported working with the district coordinator to provide information about the services their organization provides to school coordinators. One principal reported that the district supported schools in connecting with community partners by *“allowing schools to have freedom over who they’d like to be involved with*.*”*

Although there was evidence that Springfield made progress toward sustainability through a reform-support infrastructure at the district level, there also was evidence that some district policies and implementation decisions did not support the smooth implementation of WAZ strategies. For example, respondents in the middle schools reported on challenging implementation issues resulting from the district decision for middle school site coordinators to be responsible for one grade level (sixth grade) and not the entire student population. Two respondents in middle schools reported that having the school site coordinator primarily be responsible for one grade was challenging because students in the other grades have needs as well. Respondents in the middle school also reported on this challenge during Year 2 (the first year of implementation in the middle schools). These respondents also reported not knowing why the district had decided to have the school site coordinator responsible for only the sixth grade. One of these respondents suspected that it *“had something to do with funding*.*”* In contrast, one district-level respondent reported that the rationale for having the school site coordinator primarily be responsible for the sixth grade was that *“a coordinator’s caseload should be somewhere between 400 or 500 kids. So, one coordinator for a large middle school isn’t enough. So, our rationale was we would start with the sixth grade kids because obviously if we could get them early, get them services that they need, you may not be dealing with as many seventh and eighth grade needs*.*”* In addition to the school level respondents not knowing the rationale for the district decision, the district decision to effectively implement the City Connects model only in the sixth grade at the middle schools did not support implementation of the WAZ strategies schoolwide and may have contributed to principal and teacher buy-in challenges in these schools.

Finally, although the school site coordinators were central to the implementation of WAZ strategies in the schools, their high turnover rates proved problematic from a sustainability perspective. New coordinators had to start over and build relationships with school staff and community partners, as well as learn the City Connects model. As a result of these challenges, schools may continue to struggle with implementation, and sustainability of the WAZ strategies may prove difficult.

##### Essential Factor 6: Sustainability requires paying close and ongoing attention to funding.

Respondents in Springfield reported two ways that the district was working to replace and secure funding to continue WAZ strategies: (1) district commitment to funding the school site coordinator position and (2) school leaders’ commitment to seeking funding or ways of continuing implementation without funding.

All principals and school site coordinators reported that the district had committed to funding the school site coordinator position in the year following the end of WAZ funding. One district-level respondent reported that the superintendent is committed to *“not cutting funding”* for City Connects and PBIS. She also reported that the district might move to a different model of training in which more training would be conducted by district staff rather than outside consultants. She noted that the funding would come from the general fund. One community partner reported meeting with the superintendent and that the superintendent was enthusiastic about continuing to support or fund the school site coordinators. This community partner also, however, reported concerns that district budgets “were tight” and was not convinced that the district would be able to continue funding these positions indefinitely from the general fund.

Some principals and one district-level respondent reported that some principals were seeking alternative funding or ways of continuing implementation without funding. For example, one principal reported that it would be possible to sustain PBIS without financial help because PBIS had been built into the culture of the school. This principal acknowledged, however, that this was not the case at all schools, and other schools would need additional funding for training. A district-level respondent reported that she was encouraged by one principal’s initiative to seek alternative grant funding to continue to fund the school site coordinator beyond the end of WAZ funding. Similarly, one principal reported that, if the district was unable to continue funding, the school planned to shift responsibilities into a school counselor position so that students could continue to be supported by the City Connects model.

## Summary

Evidence gathered during the final year of WAZ implementation indicated the following as major areas of progress: improvement in school safety, improvements in student behavior, improvement in family engagement, improvements in the student referral process, greater support from school leadership, and greater buy-in among school staff. Evidence also indicated that the role of the school site coordinator and the implementation of PBIS resulted in some of these major areas of progress, including improvements in school safety, student behavior, family engagement, and the student referral process. Although Springfield made progress during the three-year grant, during the third year, Springfield faced several challenges in implementing WAZ strategies: getting students access to services, engaging families, school site coordinator turnover, and challenges specific to the middle school implementation of the City Connects model. Evidence gathered during the final year of WAZ implementation also indicated that the district was making positive or partial progress toward sustainability, particularly through identifying critical elements of the reform effort, providing ongoing professional development, adapting WAZ strategies so that schools could more easily implement them and address students’ needs, and replacing or securing funding. To enhance its potential for sustainability, Springfield may need to strengthen its district-level infrastructure of support to WAZ schools, and better integrate WAZ into broader district and school priorities and initiatives.

# Profile E: Worcester

## Three-Year WAZ Implementation Overview

When Worcester originally applied for the WAZ grant, they were in the planning stages of applying for a United Way Promise Neighborhood grant, which would have allowed three schools to provide wraparound supports and to serve as hubs for community improvement and development. Although Worcester did not ultimately receive the United Way grant, the district’s work on the proposal helped shape their eventual WAZ implementation plans. Worcester implemented WAZ in seven schools during Year 1: Chandler Elementary and Union Hill (Level 4 schools) and Chandler Magnet, Goddard School of Science and Technology, Sullivan Middle School, University Park Campus School, and Woodland Academy (innovation schools). An eighth school, Burncoat Preparatory School, was added in Year 2 because it became a Level 4 school in 2012–13. WAZ was being implemented in all eight schools during Year 3 of the grant.

Worcester used the WAZ grant to fund a Wraparound coordinator (WAC) at each school. The Wraparound coordinator was solely responsible for spearheading family engagement efforts and developing and implementing a Wraparound referral system to address the needs of students with nonacademic issues. All Worcester schools already had a Student Support Process (SSP) in place for referring and servicing students with academic problems, and many of the WACs used this referral system as a starting place to find students in need of nonacademic services as well. Many staff members reported that, in addition to the WAC’s explicit responsibilities just described, the ways in which WACs were able to communicate and interact effectively with students and their families served as an example to the whole staff and had the unintended positive consequence of improving relationships among staff and between staff and students throughout their schools.

At the end of WAZ’s third year, data show that the role of the WAC has helped the district make considerable progress on improving climate and culture, particularly with regard to family engagement and relationships between staff and between staff and students, as well as on improving student referral processes. Two schools (Chandler and Union Hill) also exited Level 4 status in 2014 and 2013, respectively. Although staff reported that WAZ has helped schools improve family engagement, data suggest there is still substantial room for improvement in this area. The district also continued to struggle with the implementation of one component of a centralized data system, which was designed to facilitate communication between schools and community partners. For the future, Worcester has committed to continuing funding the WAC position at the WAZ schools for at least one year to provide professional development for teachers and staff for the social and emotional needs of students.

## Year 3 Findings

In this profile, we describe the major areas of progress made in Worcester during its three years as a WAZ grantee, as well as steps the district has taken toward sustaining components of WAZ after the grant period ends. The data sources used to inform this profile were (a) stakeholder interviews conducted during winter 2014, (b) WAZ-related documents provided by the district and schools, and (c) student and staff survey data. The analysis of these data was informed by the findings that emerged in Reports 2 and 3 on conditions and supports during Year 1 of WAZ implementation, and implementation progress made during Year 2 of WAZ implementation, respectively. For example, researchers paid particular attention to analyzing the extent to which progress made during Year 2 was sustained in Year 3, and the extent to which challenges identified during early years of the grant have persisted or dissipated and why.

AIR’s analysis of data collected during the three years of its evaluation revealed the following four findings related to progress and plans for sustainability of WAZ in Worcester:

1. Evidence gathered during the final year of WAZ implementation indicated the following as major areas of progress in Worcester:
	1. Improvement in family engagement
	2. Improvements in the student referral process
	3. Improvement in relationships among staff and between staff and students
	4. Greater buy-in for WAZ among staff
2. The key WAZ-driven lever that contributed to these areas of progress was

The creation and funding of the wraparound coordinator (WAC) position at each WAZ school

1. In the final year of WAZ implementation, the major challenges Worcester was facing included
2. Struggles with implementation of the iNsight component of the Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (HMH) data system
3. Parent engagement
4. Evidence gathered during the final year of WAZ implementation indicated that Worcester had made positive or partial progress toward five of the six essential factors for sustainability:
5. Identification of critical elements (positive)
6. Adaptability (positive)
7. Systems perspective (partial)
8. Infrastructure to support reform(partial)
9. Funding (partial)

Further details regarding these findings, and the evidence that supports them, follow.

### Finding 1: Evidence gathered during the final year of WAZ implementation indicated the following as major areas of progress in Worcester: (a) improvement in family engagement, (b) improvements in the student referral process, (c) improvement in relationships among staff and between staff and students, and (d) greater buy-in for WAZ among staff.

Data gathered during this evaluation reveal four major areas of progress in Worcester that can be attributed to WAZ: (a) improvement in family engagement, (b) improvements in the student referral process, (c) improvement in relationships among staff and between staff and students, and (d) greater buy-in for WAZ among staff. These major areas of progress were cited by interviewees and demonstrated through an analysis of survey data.

#### Improvement in Family Engagement

Family engagement was the most frequently mentioned area of progress, mentioned by respondents in 14 of the 21 focus groups or interviews, both at the district level and at seven of the eight schools. A district leader noted improvements in parent involvement and school outreach to families:

*I think parent involvement, the way [school staff] communicate with parents, the way they involve parents in certain facets of the school, the communication practice between a teacher and a particular parent, I think that has been one of the things that [has] changed. As a result of that, the schools are now more open and inviting to parents. Some of the schools that we had in the past were very closed to parents. I think they were not inviting. So if you’re not invited, chances are you’re not going to show up. So I think there’s an attitude piece like a mindset that comes from the administration and the staff…once you open communication in the way that you’re not just giving out information to parents, [then] you’re actually eliciting information back and [talking about] How do we work together?*

According to the WAZ district coordinator and documents reviewed by the research team, family engagement became a strong focus of the program by its third year. In addition to offering parent empowerment trainings, the schools logged parent visibility and participation, increased their number of family events, and established partnerships within the community to help further engage parents in their children’s learning. School-level interviewees agreed that their efforts at family engagement had improved because of WAZ. One school leader noted, *“The last principal just didn’t want parents in the school at all and was very aggressive in that way. I think that having…an open door policy that parents and kids are the first priority and they know that they can come in and talk to us. I think that’s made a big difference.”* At another school, the WAC said that family engagement was difficult during Year 1, but that now, *“with me being here the parents do know that they’re supported here…they know that they can come and ask for me and if they need any outside referrals I help them with that, so they feel more comfortable. So now when we have events or even just having them come in to pick up information they’re more willing than Year 1.”*

A WAC from another school discussed changing school events that happened before WAZ to appeal to more families and increase involvement*. “We’ve always had a Know Your School night but it was largely academic focused. And after my first year here it was kind of clear that folks maybe were in need of resources they didn’t know existed. So we really change the Know Your School night to really being a Know Your Community night. So in addition to meeting the teachers and meeting the staff here we also have several outside agencies come in for that to meet with parents.“* One school leader described offering events to engage parents in project-based learning, including one in which students researched famous Americans, wrote reports, and then dressed up as their American for a “wax museum” open to families. By changing the format of events to better engage families, WACs have helped bring more parents into the schools. One school leader said, *“The more we do it, the better we get at it. And the more we do it, the more parents are attending.”*

In addition, according to the staff survey, 84 percent of staff members reported that, if they identified a student in need of nonacademic support, it was “likely” or “very likely” that the school would make an effort to involve the family in planning and delivery of supports and services (see Table 27). Although there was no improvement in this regard between Years 1 and 3, the percentage of staff reporting thus was high in both years.

Table 27. Staff Reports on Family Involvement in Planning and Delivery of Nonacademic Supports: Worcester

|  | *Percentage of staff members reporting their school is “likely” or “very likely” to involve a students’ family in planning/delivery of supports and services if the student requires additional nonacademic support* |
| --- | --- |
| Year 1 | Year 3 |
| **All Worcester WAZ schools** | 84% | 84% |
| **Chandler Elementary** | 81% | 84% |
| **Chandler Magnet** | 80% | 78% |
| **Goddard Scholars** | 80% | 69% |
| **Goddard Science and Technology** | 86% | 100%\* |
| **Union Hill** | 74% | 92% |
| **University Park** | 92% | 100% |
| **Woodland Academy** | 87% | 86% |
| **Burncoat Prep** | — | 100% |

\*The difference between Year 3 and Year 1 is statistically significant.

*Source:* AIR-administered staff survey, spring 2012 and fall 2013

#### Improvements in the Student Referral Process

Respondents in 13 of the 21 focus groups or interviews, across six of the eight schools, mentioned improvements in the student referral process. When commenting on the improvements in the referral process, most of these staff members noted more frequent and consistent meetings about student needs. One WAC explained that in Year 1, meetings were infrequent and had to be triggered by a referral, but in Year 3, the school had consistent meetings every week. At another school, the principal described how these more frequent meetings were keeping student referrals consistently in the forefront and resulting in actions taken to get students services faster than in the past. *“The timeliness is a lot better than it was.”*

Interviewees also noted that systems and processes for referrals had improved. All Worcester schools already had the Student Support Process (SSP) in place for referring and servicing students with academic problems, and many of the WACs used this referral system to find students in need of nonacademic, or Wraparound, services as well. One WAC noted, *“Before I came, they didn’t have a Wraparound referral system and they did have an SSP, but it wasn’t in place where someone facilitated it, which I do since I have the time to [deal with] the nonacademic.… I set the meeting date and I also do the follow-ups, especially with outside agencies.”* At another school, the WAC created a whole new form for Wraparound needs and has found it effective in facilitating conversations about assigning supports to these students, reporting, *“Even that simple template forces you, whenever you pull that out with a parent, it forces you to have a certain kind of conversation.”*

Survey data also indicate that staff members were satisfied with the referral process, in both Years 1 and 3. For example, more than 90 percent of staff members reported that they would be “likely” or “very likely” to follow a “formal, systematic process for sharing my concerns with other staff” if they identified a student in need of nonacademic support or in crisis (see Table 28).

Table 28. Staff Reports on the Likelihood of Following a Formal, Systematic Referral Process: Worcester

|  | *Percentage of staff members reporting that they are “likely” or “very likely” to follow a formal, systematic process for sharing their concerns with other staff if they identify…* |
| --- | --- |
| *a student who needs additional nonacademic supports* | *a student in crisis* |
| Year 1 | Year 3 | Year 1 | Year 3 |
| **All Worcester WAZ schools** | 91% | 91% | 97% | 96% |
| **Chandler Elementary** | 96% | 90% | 97% | 94% |
| **Chandler Magnet** | 86% | 83% | 92% | 100% |
| **Goddard Scholars** | 100% | 87%\* | 100% | 94%\* |
| **Goddard Science and Technology** | 89% | 100%\* | 100% | 100% |
| **Union Hill** | 90% | 96% | 95% | 96% |
| **University Park** | 85% | 94% | 92% | 100% |
| **Woodland Academy** | 97% | 89% | 100% | 97% |
| **Burncoat Prep** | — | 100% | — | 100% |

\*The difference between Year 3 and Year 1 is statistically significant.

*Source:* AIR-administered staff survey, spring 2012 and fall 2013

#### Improvement in Relationships Among Staff and Between Staff and Students

Respondents in 11 of 21 focus groups or interviews and at seven of the eight schools said that there were improvements in relationships among staff in WAZ schools. In addition, respondents in 10 focus groups or interviews and at six schools said that there were improvements in relationships between staff or students since the WAZ initiative began. Staff survey data demonstrate no significant change between Years 1 and 3 with respect to staff–staff and student–staff relationships, but they do demonstrate consistently positive perceptions about these relationships (see Table 29). Overall, these data demonstrate an improvement in school climate and one in which relationships are strong and supportive.

Table 29. Staff Perceptions of Staff–Staff and Student–Staff Relationships: Worcester

|  | *Percentage of staff members reporting that they “strongly agree” or “agree” that…*  |
| --- | --- |
| *Staff is collegial, collaborative, and supportive of one another.* | *Staff is caring toward and respect students.* |
| Year 1 | Year 3 | Year 1 | Year 3 |
| **All Worcester WAZ schools** | 95% | 90%\* | 97% | 94% |
| **Chandler Elementary** | 97% | 83% | 94% | 83% |
| **Chandler Magnet** | 93% | 100% | 95% | 100% |
| **Goddard Scholars** | 100% | 73%\* | 100% | 90%\* |
| **Goddard Science and Technology** | 95% | 100% | 97% | 90% |
| **Union Hill** | 95% | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| **University Park** | 100% | 100% | 93% | 100% |
| **Woodland Academy** | 91% | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| **Burncoat Prep** | — | 100% | — | 100% |

\*The difference between Year 3 and Year 1 is statistically significant.

*Source:* AIR-administered staff survey, spring 2012 and fall 2013

School staff members reported that their relationships with one another improved both socially and professionally. One school leader discussed a focus on building community among staff through monthly events and said*, “People appreciate being able to collaborate and work together.”* At another school, a leader noted a change in dynamics that resulted in *“teachers…more willing to collaborate and visit each other’s classrooms, which was something that we wouldn’t have seen here about 10 years ago.”* An interviewee from another school noted that an increase in collaboration and a shift in culture had contributed to improvements in relationships: *“The culture became of collaboration, high expectations, and trust, I think. That was a big part of it. Kids began to trust us. Teachers began to trust that this wasn’t about an ‘I gotcha, I’m going to get you fired.’ This was about, you know, you can tell me how you feel and I will work with you to try to help you be the best that you could be.”*

One district leader discussed noticing that a shift occurred in conversations and how staff spoke about students:

*This whole process gave opportunities for staff to talk about [issues], but in a meaningful way. Even when we have common planning time or grad- level meetings, it’s not just the talking about [a student] needing to increase the reading level. It’s more who’s [this student] as a person? What else does he need, and having the Wraparound coordinator who could then bring that information to a different level, to a parent, or to the principal, or a group of teachers. So I think in that regard, we gave opportunities for staff to talk in a way that is different from before.*

WACs discussed evidence of positive relationships between students and staff that they witness regularly. One WAC said, *“The students feel safe. They know that if anything, even at home, when there’s problems at home they feel safe to just come and talk to the teachers, or talk to me, or talk to the counselor. They feel safer here. They know they have a lot of support. So we have a great relationship.”* At another school, the WAC mentioned the connections seen between staff and students. *“This is a positive place for them. They are clingy with the staff, not in like an unhealthy way but in a way where you know that they don’t just—they think of them as people that they can look up to and that they need them in their life and just understanding things, like asking about life situations, college, just what is it like to have a car.”*

Even at schools in which staff members still feel they have work to do on their student–staff relationships, leaders noted great progress that had been made during the WAZ initiative. One school leader noted, *“We might, as teachers, not always be in the most positive place. However, I feel like interactions with kids are from a much more positive perspective.”* At another school, the principal attributed their positive relationships between students and staff to consistency. *“Consistent staff develop richer relationships with families and siblings. So every year, if the staff is sustainable and the same and they’re well trained and equipped to handle and work with the population that we work with, then that alone to me is the number one—good relationships.”*

#### Greater Buy-in Among Staff

Respondents in 11 of 21 focus groups or interviews and at six of the eight schools said that there was greater staff buy-in to the WAZ initiative. In Year 1, there was not a clear and consistent definition of the role and responsibilities of the WAC, which resulted in confusion and delays in progress. Now that the role of the WAC was clear and staff members were seeing the benefits of WAZ through the work of the WAC, they reported that buy-in has grown. At some schools, all groups reported strong buy-in to the WAZ initiative and, as one school leader said, *“I don’t think you’d find anybody that didn’t buy into it. I think if you did, I’d be like very surprised. I would say it’s 100 percent.”* Other schools admitted it took a bit of time getting consistent understanding across staff, but found this problem to be alleviated by Year 3. A WAC recalled that *“The principal didn’t know to allocate certain things to me at one point, but now that she knows, forget it. I get forwarded like everything. You know that once she realized the potential, she was like right on board.”*

In addition, seven out of 21 respondents at five of eight schools reported that there was greater support from school leadership than when WAZ first began. Individuals at many schools noted that to truly boost staff buy-in, boosting must begin at the leadership level. One school leader noted, *“If I’m sending the message that this is an important piece to maintaining the healthy school community, inviting our families in, contacting, having them be part of the process and they see how valuable that role is and how is has helped them and helped the students then they buy into it. And that has happened over the past three years.”* A WAC echoed this sentiment, saying, *“What WAZ is able to provide really needs to come from administration, and if it’s not there…, then it’s not going to work.”* At schools where both staff and leadership reported very high buy-in, some staff reported finding it almost unimaginable that high buy-in is not universal across the district. One teacher mused, *“I think I hesitated when you said does the administration have buy-in [because I thought,] Are there schools where the administration doesn’t buy into that position? Like, I can’t imagine.”*

### Finding 2: The key WAZ-driven lever that contributed to these areas of progress was the creation and funding of the wraparound coordinator (WAC) position at each WAZ school.

Data gathered during the AIR evaluation also speak to how WAZ contributed to these major areas of progress. In Worcester, the most commonly cited way in which WAZ contributed to progress was through its support of the wraparound coordinator (WAC) position, which helped the schools more effectively engage families and more systematically meet the nonacademic needs of students.

Each WAZ school in Worcester has a WAC who leads all WAZ work in his or her school. Two of the chief responsibilities of the WACs are heading up family engagement efforts and working to create and implement a Wraparound referral system to address the needs of students with nonacademic issues. In addition, in many schools staff noted that the example set by the WAC through their interactions with other staff members, students, and families has helped improve relationships throughout their schools.

The WACs led the family engagement work at most schools by making connections, bringing more parents into the schools, and understanding the needs of their students’ families. Many school leaders discussed the impact of this aspect of the WAC’s role. As one principal said, *“One of the things that has been extremely helpful is the parent piece where our WAC has made those connections, especially with those families that are needier, that need help to access services, and also families who are struggling with their kids in attendance.”*

In addition to family engagement work, having a WAC in their schools has given teachers a person they know they can approach to get students support if they notice a nonacademic need. One teacher recalled seeing students come to school in sandals when it was snowing and said she was so happy to be able to send this student to the WAC to get boots to wear for the walk home. In the past, she as the teacher had no recourse to help a student with a need like this.

WACs also are deeply involved in developing and overseeing systems to meet students’ nonacademic needs, such as creating a referral system to receive alerts about students who are in need of services and making sure monitoring and follow-up on supports offered takes place. One school leader reported that the WAC changed teachers’ perception of SSP as the beginning of a special education referral to being instead a part of a consistent weekly meeting in which they will talk about data and interventions. *“We’re going to talk about who can provide the intervention and when and where. And then we’re going to discuss how do we know if it worked, and when do we measure it, and what do we use, what tool do we use to measure it? So it [changed from a] teacher is coming in [and saying] ‘He needs a [special education] referral’ into ‘Okay, we need to look at this child and decide what are strengths, what are weaknesses.’”*

In addition, good examples set by WACs have contributed to improvement in relationships. At one school, teachers said that, although relationships among staff have always been good, *“I think that [our WAC] enhances that. It has made a good thing better…. We witnessed [our WAC’s] ability to interact seamlessly with our culture with the students, acting as a mediator in situations and being able to relate to kids nicely. We value that and depend on [the WAC] to serve that role.”* A leader at a different school recalled the example their WAC set through forming relationships with families: *“I think that it also brings the children closer to [our WAC] and therefore to all of us knowing that their parent has that connection, that they have that connection, that we’re all fully committed to this child’s education.”*

##### As one community partner staff member said about the WACs, “Their roles really reinforce the ability to do and have the flexibility to do things outside of day-to-day within the education [system] when you have a small staff and a large amount of kids.” The community partner staff member went on to say that talking with the district Wraparound coordinator about the future of their partnerships without the WACs, the district Wraparound coordinator indicated that principals would be the main point of contact, even though principals are often already overbooked. The community partner staff member concluded, “So my concerns were kind of validated in that way that without the Wraparound Zone coordinators that we’re going to have a real issue going forward.”

### Finding 3: In the final year of WAZ implementation, the major challenges Worcester was facing included (a) struggles with implementation of the iNsight component of the Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (HMH) data system and (b) parent engagement.

Although progress clearly had been made in Worcester as a result of WAZ, some challenges still remained. They included struggles with implementation of one component of the HMH data system and the need to continue improving parent engagement.

#### HMH iNsight Data System

As part of its WAZ implementation plan, Worcester had included a goal to use a new data management system to assist in early identification of student needs, provide data pattern analysis, track referrals, and monitor the impact of services. In addition, the system was intended to facilitate two-way communication between schools and community partners and to track data from the partners providing services. Starting in 2012, the WAZ leadership team in Worcester collaborated with HMH to create a customized tool called iNsight that would serve as a way to track student services. Data collected in Years 1 and 2 showed that iNsight was not yet up and running and that the delay in implementation was resulting in frustrations among staff as well as hindering efforts to track student progress and monitor follow-up on students receiving supports. However, in Year 3, the system was finally working and all WACs and principals were trained.

Although several interviewees and both the school and district levels shared positive comments about iNsight’s potential, four of the WACs and staff at six of the schools expressed frustrations related to its implementation. One WAC said, *“It’s not a quick way to collect data. It’s a little complicated to be honest with you and not in the sense of intellectual like I don’t get this, not that it’s hard, but it’s complex in the sense that there is a lot of information that’s not necessary.“* Another WAC saw potential, saying, *“I think that perhaps it could be [useful] in the future, depending on how it’s used,”* but said that limiting access to only the WAZ team members has meant that, currently, *“the information isn’t necessarily going anywhere.”*

One WAC explained that, at the time of data collection, the system wasn’t accessible to teachers. However, this WAC also hypothesized that even if it were accessible, teachers might resist it because they wanted to rely on the WAC to input and track that information. Overall, this posed a heavy burden of time on the WAC. Another WAC acknowledged how beneficial iNsights could be: *“I think iNsight has its own, you know if we ever use it school-wide it would need to be adjusted but I do think it’s a promising program to deal with just this process of the referrals and all that. I think it definitely has its benefits.”* At the same time, however, this WAC explained being resistant to recommend it widely to teachers because of a lack of clarity around how long the system would actually be around: *“iNsight is not used at all* [by teachers]*. I use iNsight as a record keeping sort of just to put in but again I’m not recommending nor would I until I know that it’s going to last beyond the end of the year. Because there’s a learning curve and an amount of good faith that’s put into that that you really don’t want to kind of use up.”*

In fact, most WACs elected to use a different data system, called SAGE, that teachers and administrators can access. The SAGE system was praised for being more useful, with more staff members having access and being able to use it on their personal computers. A school leader said, *“To be honest with you, the HMH system has been really difficult to deal with. The data has not always been accurate. They don’t always have proper student data for us. We’ve really struggled with it…. We use our SAGE system here, which is constantly improving.”*

One WAC explained: *“Ideally, [HMH iNsight] would be a great program, but right now I would be entering in the referral, and then, I’d have to go log out and approve it as an administrator, and then log back in. So, it was just a very long process and not realistic for a six-and-a-half-hour day, and so I was just trying to find out simpler ways. So, using SAGE for me worked and my principal was happy with that, so that’s what I do.”*

#### Parent Engagement

Although parent engagement was the most frequently mentioned area of progress, WACs, school leaders, and teachers at five schools also said that there were still issues related to family outreach that needed to be addressed. Survey data also revealed family engagement to be an area of challenge; the percentage of staff members reporting that parents and caregivers are moderately or highly involved in decisions about the delivery of nonacademic supports to the students they teach dropped from 53 percent in Year 1 to 39 percent in Year 3 (see Table 30).One school leader said, *“Some of the parents are so fearful. You know, a lot of them are illegal. They think that if they come into the school, that somebody is going to find out or that we’re going to report them. It’s really complicated.”* A WAC from another school discussed the need for two-way communication: *“The issue of communication and really having an effective means of forwards and back of engaging with parents in a way that’s more; I think to some extent we’re still in that model of talking to parents when we need to talk to parents. And I think the school wants to move to one where we’re talking to parents period; where there’s a dialogue going on. I definitely know that that’s where they want to go. They just still haven’t figured out how we get there.”* Although WAZ has definitely helped schools improve on family engagement, challenges remain, and the work in that area continues to be evolving.

Table 30. Staff Perceptions of Family Involvement in Decisions About Nonacademic Supports: Worcester

|  | *Percentage of staff members reporting that parents and caregivers are “moderately involved” or “highly involved” in decisions about the delivery of nonacademic supports*  |
| --- | --- |
| Year 1 | Year 3 |
| **All Worcester WAZ schools** | 53% | 39%\* |
| **Chandler Elementary** | 50% | 38% |
| **Chandler Magnet** | 56% | 24%\* |
| **Goddard Scholars** | 50% | 36% |
| **Goddard Science and Technology** | 49% | 50% |
| **Union Hill** | 45% | 43% |
| **University Park** | 61% | 53% |
| **Woodland Academy** | 64% | 32%\* |
| **Burncoat Prep** | — | 64% |

\*The difference between Year 3 and Year 1 is statistically significant.

*Source:* AIR-administered staff survey, spring 2012 and fall 2013

### Finding 4: Evidence gathered during the final year of WAZ implementation indicated that Worcester had made positive or partial progress toward five of the six essential factors for sustainability.

The literature on sustainability for education reform initiatives identifies six essential factors for ensuring sustainability. Data gathered during the final year of the WAZ evaluation showed that Worcester had made positive progress toward one of these essential factors—adaptability (Factor 2). The district had made partial progress toward four of the essential factors: identification of critical elements (Factor 1), systems perspective (Factor 3), reform-support infrastructure (Factor 4), and funding (Factor 6). Data showed a lack of progress toward one of the factors: ongoing professional development (Factor 5). Table 31 summarizes the sustainability analysis for Worcester, and more detailed description of the evidence follows.

Table 31. Worcester Progress Toward Meeting Six Essential Factors for Sustainability With Respect to WAZ

| Sustainability Essential Factor | Positive Progress | Partial Progress | Lack of Progress |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Sustainability requires identification of the initiative’s critical elements.
 |  | X |  |
| 1. Sustainability requires ongoing adaptation and growth of the initiative.
 | X |  |  |
| 1. Sustainability requires a systems perspective.
 |  | X |  |
| 1. Sustainability requires a reform-support infrastructure at the district level.
 |  | X |  |
| 1. Sustainability requires ongoing professional development.
 |  |  | X |
| 1. Sustainability requires paying close and ongoing attention to funding.
 |  | X |  |

#### Positive Progress Toward Sustainability: Adaptability (Factor 2)

##### Essential Factor 2: Sustainability requires ongoing adaptation and growth of the initiative.

Worcester’s WAZ implementation has adapted some over the years, as evidenced by their plans, which build on elements implemented from one year to the next. For example, parents, students, and staff completed a climate survey in Year 1, the results of which were built into the Year 2 plan as “Create a set of strategies in each school to address results from 2012 data, including opportunities for engaging more student and teacher ‘voice.’”

The role of the WACs also was better defined as the years went on. By Year 3, school leaders who were unclear about how to integrate the WAC into their staff in Year 1 often could not imagine how to maintain all the responsibilities he or she managed without the WAC position. A better understanding of the WAC responsibilities and contributions, including matching students to external agencies to provide nonacademic supports, engaging parents, and acting as a liaison between the school and community agencies, helped increase staff buy-in. Teachers and school leaders regularly enlisted the WACs for these purposes and many more by Year 3.

#### Partial Progress Toward Sustainability: Identification of Critical Elements (Factor 1), Systems Perspective (Factor 3), Reform-Support Infrastructure (Factor 4), and Funding (Factor 6)

##### Essential Factor 1: Sustainability requires identification of the initiative’s critical elements.

Staff in Worcester consistently described the most essential element of the WAZ effort as *“a person to do the work.”* The necessity of the WAC was explicitly mentioned at seven of the eight schools and respondents across the district were in agreement that the WAC was the critical element of the WAZ effort. A teacher from one school said, *“If you don’t have that one person where it all filters into, I’m not sure what happens,”* while a teacher at another school said, *“I can’t do it without a wraparound [coordinator]. It’s just too needy of a population.”* Although there was widespread agreement about the importance of the WAC, there was a relative lack of discussion or shared understanding of the key elements of the WAZ initiative. WAZ was rarely, if ever, described separately from the WAC.

##### Essential Factor 3: Sustainability requires a systems perspective.

Leadership and buy-in for WAZ was strong at most schools, indicating its integration into the culture of the schools. Staff reported high levels of buy-in at six schools, with teachers, WACs, and school leaders saying that the majority of school staff buy into WAZ (percentages ranged from 75% to 100%). Interviewees at two schools, however, reported lower buy-in, hovering around 50 percent. At these schools, it was often indicated that the leaders were less bought into WAZ, which then translated to lower buy-in among the rest of school staff.

Furthermore, with the WAC role being the essential element of Worcester’s WAZ efforts and housed at the school level, WAZ has not been as widely integrated into the overall system as might have been possible. At two of the schools, staff reported that systems have been created to sustain the work of the WAC, including the creation of forms and templates for student referrals for nonacademic supports if the position is eliminated from their schools. Staff at other schools, however, said that losing the WAC *“would hurt the progress that we’ve made, and I do not believe that we could sustain and get better.”*

Another planned way of integrating WAZ into the larger district vision was indicated in the Year 3 plan, where it said that WAZ would “work with WPS Supplemental Support Services to strengthen a common methodology for partnership development and management” and “to identify where district would like to have common partnership practices or tools.” It is unclear whether this happened.

Worcester’s sustainability plan does, however, describe ways in which it plans to integrate WAZ more systematically into districtwide initiatives. Professional development for teachers and staff on the social and emotional needs of students is slated for all district schools in the 2014–15 school year, and it is noted in the district’s sustainability plan that many Worcester schools, *“which have experienced increasing challenges with student mobility issues, homelessness, mental health, food and clothing, and other poverty-related road blocks to learning, have reached out to our [WACs] to seek support and strategies.”* Worcester also has developed a districtwide focus on chronic absenteeism and plans to develop a districtwide *“Common Tiered System of Support for academic and nonacademic identification of students in need.”* These initiatives are not reliant on WAZ staff for implementation but rather to be led entirely by district staff, including the chief academic officer, and community organizations.

##### Essential Factor 4: Sustainability requires a reform-support infrastructure at the district level.

The biggest form of district-level support for WAZ implementation in Worcester was the district coordinator. His facilitation of monthly meetings for all WACs was mentioned as one of the main opportunities for collaboration and sharing between WAZ schools. He worked on the community mapping, compiling, and sharing lists of community agencies with the school WAZ coordinators and continues to keep them updated on available resources they could access to address student needs. The district coordinator also offered ad hoc support to WACs such as bringing over paper copies of data from the district office if systems were down or putting them in contact with Cradles to Crayons if they needed extra winter coats. Although this position was clearly essential, the heavy reliance on him could be seen as somewhat problematic from a sustainability perspective. If this position is not sustained, it is unclear whether district-level leadership support would remain.

Beyond the district coordinator, some limited progress has occurred in trying to create a districtwide infrastructure of support. This was most notable in the iNsight component of the HMH data system implemented in the Year 3 to create a uniform structure and system for tracking student needs and supports. iNsight, however, met with a lukewarm response from staff members, and many expressed frustration with the limited access to the system and additional work that using the system required and also expressed an unwillingness to invest time into learning and using a new system that many were uncertain would be maintained after the end of the WAZ.

School staff members said that the community partnerships were of higher quality and quantity at many schools than they were before WAZ. WACs were able to use the Resource and Referral Center through the Worcester Community Connections Collaborative as a way to connect families with partners. However, some staff reported that this centralized resource was underutilized. When asked about the extent to which they relied on the district as a resource for connecting them to community organizations, the majority of school-level interviewees responded that they did so minimally. One interviewee explained that an initial resource mapping done by the district was helpful, but that *“the specific problems that we wound up having in our school…required us to look into community resourcing in a different way [and develop independent partnerships].”* Another explained, “*WAZ has helped somewhat with that in just trying to clarify the differences between the different levels of partnerships, but I can’t say that there’s really been any improvement other than that and just sort of a little bit more clarity. The school has maybe a few formal partnerships but other than that, they’re pretty informal.”* One staff member at a community organization mused, *“I think it…settles right back to what I said in the beginning when we were having difficulties it’s because it’s…a staff member talking to another staff member. It’s not really an organized arrangement.”*

##### Essential Factor 6: Sustainability requires paying close and ongoing attention to funding.

At the time of data collection, whether funding would continue was unknown for any parts of the WAZ initiative in Worcester. Since then, district budgets have been finalized to continue funding the WAC position at the WAZ schools for the 2014–15 school year. Because the position of the WAC at each school is central, the elimination of this role because funds were unavailable could be extremely detrimental and an inexorable obstacle to sustainability. Continuing this position for an additional year should allow for more sustainability planning to take place, but the uncertainty of the position from year to year could continue to be an issue if funding is secured only at the eleventh hour and schools are unable to count on having a WAC from one year to the next. Only one school had a concrete idea of which positions it was willing to give up in future years to ensure that it could continue to have a WAC if the district no longer funded the position. Staff at all other schools reported that the WAC was essential and irreplaceable but were unable to say how the position would be sustained in the absence of funding from the WAZ initiative.

#### Lack of Progress Toward Sustainability: Ongoing Professional Development (Factor 5)

##### Essential Factor 5: Sustainability requires ongoing professional development.

Professional development was cited only at the district level as a support received during WAZ. This included professional development related to iNsight and parent engagement. A district leader mentioned that support from the state in the form of ongoing professional development would be needed after WAZ ends, but no respondents at the school level mentioned professional development as having been a part of WAZ. According to the staff survey, less than a quarter of staff felt that professional development was a major source of support —and more than a third of staff said professional development was not a source of support —for WAZ-related topics. Only the WACs received training on using the HMH data systems, leaving no trained staff in the schools if the WAC position is eliminated. In addition, when asked about any training they received on identifying students in need of additional supports, teachers responded that did not get anything like it and that they identify students to be referred for Wraparound services just by “knowing the students.” Nonetheless, professional development is a part of the sustainability plan for Worcester’s WAZ, which includes “professional development of teachers and staff around the social and emotional needs of students” as a school-level activity to be embedded at all district schools.

## Summary

During its three years in WAZ, participating Worcester schools made substantial progress in improving climate and culture, particularly with regard to family engagement and relationships between staff and between staff and students, and in improving student referral processes. Data showed that the WAZ position was critical in supporting progress in these areas. Some challenges remain, including continuing to improve family involvement and creating a user-friendly and accessible data management system. Worcester is demonstrating potential for sustainability primarily in terms of showing the ability to adapt and revise the initiative. To increase its potential for sustainability, Worcester should incorporate ongoing professional development relevant to WAZ-related work, and determine how or whether new funding will be secured and what can be continued with the available funds. In addition, the district should continue to work to build buy-in at the school level and create district-level leadership and infrastructure.

# IV. Conclusion

This report’s findings can help ESE, school districts, individual schools, and other stakeholders understand the ways in which the WAZ initiative contributed to progress related to its four priority improvement areas: climate and culture, identification of student needs and efforts to address them, community coalitions, and district systems of support. The findings also describe the ways in which districts have planned for sustainability of WAZ strategies and WAZ-related progress beyond the grant’s funding period.

When WAZ began in 2011, the five districts profiled in this report had been designated by the state as Level 4 districts. They therefore began implementing WAZ while engaged in intensive district improvement planning and monitoring to accelerate growth in student achievement and other outcomes. For each of these districts, the WAZ grant represented an opportunity to secure additional state resources to support their overall district improvement planning, as well as other ongoing school reform initiatives that aligned with WAZ goals. In fact, these districts often selected schools to participate in WAZ on the basis of their accountability status (e.g., as Level 4 schools) or other indicators of high need and readiness to implement WAZ-related strategies as part of an overall approach to schoolwide reform.

At the end of the WAZ grant, data has shown progress in all five districts. Respondents in four of five districts reported progress with respect to student behavior, family engagement, and the student referral process, and respondents in three of five districts reported progress with respect to community partnerships. These improvements were reported by interviewees, and in some districts they also were evident in the survey data. Furthermore, ten WAZ schools that began the initiative as Level 4 schools had exited Level 4 status by the time the grant was over. In fact, among the full 2010 cohort of Level 4 schools, those that were WAZ schools were more likely than non-WAZ schools to exit Level 4 status by 2014 (66 percent, in comparison with 40 percent). These data demonstrate the success of WAZ as a school turnaround strategy.

Now, as these five districts move beyond the WAZ grant, they face the task of sustaining the work they have begun and the positive progress they have begun to see. With the support of ESE and technical assistance provided by SMI, the districts spent much of Year 3 focused on sustainability planning. They identified aspects of WAZ that they felt were essential to sustain and began planning for resources and strategies to sustain them. This sustainability planning has been illustrative in that it has highlighted the concrete and tangible aspects of WAZ that district leaders believe have contributed most to their progress (and that data gathered during the evaluation also indicated were essential). For example, all districts have made plans to continue to fund staff positions previously supported by WAZ, and most districts have made plans to support ongoing professional development related to WAZ strategies (e.g., behavior management, social-emotional curricula, family engagement, identifying student needs).

In fact, our analysis showed that all five districts were generally making progress toward six factors identified in the literature as essential for sustainability. Three of the districts showed positive or partial progress toward all six factors, and two of the districts showed positive or partial progress toward five of the six factors. These data are promising and show that each district is generally working to position itself to continue to move the work forward.

Despite the positive progress that was reported, and the planning that had been completed with respect to sustainability, each district faces persistent challenges. Specifically, data showed that WAZ districts and schools were continuing to experience challenges with family engagement and their systems for identifying and addressing student needs. It is interesting that in some of the districts that reported these areas of challenges, respondents also reported them as top areas of progress attributable to WAZ. This apparent contradiction is not necessarily surprising. Difficulties engaging families and addressing the significant needs in their student populations were among the reasons these districts applied to be WAZ grantees in the first place. Additionally, these districts learned a great deal about these topics over the course of the grant period, and hence they are likely more critical of their own progress and have high expectations of themselves at the end of the grant than they did at the beginning. In other districts, however, the ongoing challenge reflected a lack of sufficient attention to these particular components of WAZ. Although progress was reported, there is still much work to be done, and all districts acknowledged as much. They know that this work must be ongoing, underscoring the importance of their sustainability planning efforts.

## What’s Next for ESE and Wraparound Zones?

Stakeholders at all levels would largely agree that the Wraparound Zones Initiative was a success. Not only did district and school-level participants report positive progress that they would attribute to the program, but two-thirds of the Level 4 schools that participated in WAZ have now exited Level 4 status. This turnaround rate is higher than non-WAZ schools (66% compared to 40%). Furthermore, many of the non-WAZ schools that recently exited Level 4 status also placed a heavy emphasis on WAZ-related strategies such as community partnerships and a positive school climate.

ESE recognizes the role that WAZ has played in supporting school improvement and has taken several steps to expand and build upon this program’s success. First, the state is launching a new Urban Network for School Culture and Student Support. This network, modeled after similar networks for math, literacy, science, English Language Learners, and Urban Superintendents, will offer opportunities for urban district and school staff from around the state to convene regularly for training and peer learning exchanges focused on strategies for improving school climate as well as systems of student support. The launch of this network is significant because it reflects what one interviewee described as a *“slow burn”* within the state towards the realization that school climate is intimately connected with academic achievement, and that in order to be successful, efforts to improve low performing schools must include a focus on issues such as mental health, behavior, social-emotional learning and student support. And, as more and more stakeholders in the field began to recognize this link, *“people were looking to see where the state stands”* as a way to legitimize and build a broader base of support around these key issues that they were already promoting within their own districts. Urban Superintendents had for several years been requesting support from the state focused on these issues, and the school and district staff that had been attending the WAZ peer learning exchanges were providing positive feedback about the value of coming together to share and exchange ideas with others engaged in similar work. This new Urban Network is the state’s next strategy to create a more coherent, statewide approach to supporting this work that responds to the increased demand and demonstrates the extent to which ESE is prioritizing it.

In addition to the Urban Network, there are now greater attempts within ESE to integrate and embed the WAZ work within other ESE units. For example, a focus on social-emotional learning and school climate will be integrated into professional development provided statewide as part of the annual ESE-sponsored Curriculum and Instruction Summit and Spring Convening. ESE leaders are developing intra-agency workgroups that bring together staff focused on similar issues, for example staff overseeing WAZ and staff within the Office of Tiered Systems of Support. Additionally, ESE is looking into ways to more concretely embed assessment of school climate into their accountability system. Although this system does currently include a focus on social emotional learning as one of its eleven “Conditions for School Effectiveness,” ESE staff has felt like they didn’t have a strong enough sense of what the “look-fors” should be when conducting monitoring visits. ESE is building off what they have learned from WAZ as well as looking at models from other states to make these “look fors” more explicit in their monitoring materials.

And finally, in collaboration with SMI, ESE is developing a “Replication Cookbook” to chronicle the stories of the six WAZ districts and offer practical tips and advice for other districts interested in replicating some of the strategies and practices that have been effective. ESE’s overall goal is to build off of WAZ by making school climate, student support, and social-emotional learning central components of their overall vision and system of support for supporting all of the lowest performing schools and districts in the state.

## Recommendations

Pending one final, forthcoming report that will present results from a summative impact analysis of WAZ, AIR’s evaluation has been designed to provide formative feedback to ESE, WAZ districts, and other districts interested in implementing programs similar to WAZ. Although we cannot at this time make any definitive causal claims about how WAZ affected outcomes, we can make conclusions about what factors support strong implementation and sustainability. With these conclusions in mind, we offer the following four recommendations for the state and districts to consider when planning similar initiatives in the future.

### Recommendation 1: Build Concrete Systems of District Support

Data from the evaluation showed that schools benefitted when their districts provided concrete support in the form of resources, common protocols and procedures, and formal monitoring and assistance. Some of the challenges reported by interviewees stemmed from a lack of sufficient support from the district. For example, a lack of a centralized data system or common protocols has prevented some schools from effectively tracking and monitoring services provided by community partners. In some districts, a lack of sufficient support for staff positions (e.g., funding a district coordinator position or addressing factors contributing to coordinator turnover) has impeded progress. Strong systems of centralized support can help to mitigate the consequences of inevitable challenges such as staff turnover and variability in staff capacity and expertise.

### Recommendation 2: Plan for Sustainability From the Start

All five districts spent their final year of WAZ planning for sustainability. The planning was clearly beneficial, for all five also demonstrated good progress toward most, if not all, of the six factors identified in the literature as essential for sustainability. During their final year as grantees, with the support of ESE and SMI, each district developed a sustainability plan. In these plans, they identified the critical components of the initiative that they would sustain, as well as who would be responsible for making sure it was sustained and how they would secure resources to sustain them. The district coordinators from each district (and one school coordinator from Holyoke) met regularly throughout the year with each other and with a TA provider from SMI, to share ideas and continue to refine their sustainability plans. This emphasis on sustainability planning has been helpful to the districts as they transition into a phase of implementing WAZ strategies without the WAZ grant funds.

### Recommendation 3: Embed the Initiative Into Existing District Priorities and Plans

All five districts viewed WAZ as a strategy that could support broader district and school reform goals. The ability to make the connection between WAZ and other goals and priorities was important, because it made it easier to secure buy-in among a broad base of stakeholders. The more that WAZ could be framed as part of the “business as usual”—or *“just the way we do things,”* as one interviewee put it—the more likely it would be that staff would not view it as simply another fad that would go away. Stronger support and buy-in from staff then led to smoother implementation. Data showed that implementation in several schools was easier once staff became committed and understood WAZ as a major component of their school’s overall strategic plan.

### Recommendation 4: Dedicate Resources to Staff Positions

Although supporting new staff positions requires resources, data from the evaluation showed that grant-supported staff positions were essential for ensuring that WAZ was implemented as intended and that progress was made. At the school level, WAZ-supported coordinators typically (1) developed and managed processes for identifying and addressing student needs; (2) worked directly with families and planned activities to engage and support families; (3) established, maintained, and monitored the school’s relationships with community partners; (4) and generally worked with staff to address any needs related to school climate and student needs. At the district level, WAZ-supported coordinators typically (1) oversaw and provided support to school coordinators, (2) worked directly with other district administrators on integrating WAZ into overall district strategy and improvement planning, and (3) led efforts to develop districtwide systems (e.g., data systems, community coalitions) to support schools in the implementation of WAZ strategies. In all three years of this evaluation, interviewees reported that these positions were critical and that they would not have been able to make the progress that they did without them. Interviewees also consistently reported concerns about how they would sustain their WAZ work if these positions went away, and at the end of Year 3, all five districts had secured funding to partially or fully support these positions as they moved forward without the WAZ grant.

**Recommendation 5: Provide Ongoing Opportunities for Professional Development**

Finally, data from the evaluation showed that supporting ongoing professional development is critical for ensuring progress. School- and district-level interviewees cited WAZ-supported professional development as a contributor to the progress they made. This included both professional development provided to staff in the WAZ schools on specific social-emotional curricula or other programs, as well as the technical assistance provided to district leaders by ESE. Sustainability literature also emphasizes the importance of professional development for ensuring that staff implementing new programs continues to build and share program-related knowledge and skills.

AIR’s evaluation to date has focused on the conditions and supports that existed prior to WAZ, the ways in which WAZ supported implementation and early indicators of change, and the ways in which districts have ensured sustainability and replication of WAZ. After three years of data collection, our analysis has found that WAZ has contributed to progress in several areas prioritized by the initiative (e.g, on student behavior, family engagement, and the student referral process in 4 districts and community partnerships in 3 districts), but that challenges still remain with respect to family engagement and effectively addressing student needs. Analyses of these data also reveal that the districts have appropriately planned for sustainability, with all five districts planning to continue funding staff positions previously supported by the WAZ grant. In a forthcoming supplement to this report, AIR will describe results of a quasi-experimental impact study that compares outcomes for students in WAZ schools against those of students in matched non-WAZ comparison schools. Together, these reports will provide a comprehensive assessment of the overall impact and effectiveness of the WAZ initiative.

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# Appendix A: Research Questions, by Data Source

| Research Questions | Data Sources |
| --- | --- |
| Document Reviews | Stakeholder Interviews | Teacher Focus Groups | Observations of Technical Assistance | Extant Data Analysis | Student Survey | School Staff Survey |
| *Research Question Set A: Conditions and Supports.* What are the district, school, and other conditions (e.g., school climate and culture) and supports that are in place at the beginning of the WAZ grants, and how are they facilitating or impeding planning and implementation? |
| A1. What *practices* do the WAZ plans include? | ✓ |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| A2. What *initial assessment* occurred at the district and school levels to inform planning and implementation? Were assets, capacities, and other resources assessed? What are students’ needs in the implementing schools, and to what extent are the WAZ plans a good fit for these needs?  | ✓ | ✓ |  |  |  |  |  |
| A3. What *policies/protocols* are currently in place at the state, district, and school levels that support the WAZ initiative?  | ✓ | ✓ |  |  |  |  |  |
| A4. What is the *current awareness and understanding of WAZ and its theory of action* among district and school staff, as well as community partners? For example, do stakeholders understand the connection between mental health and learning?  |  | ✓ | ✓ |  |  |  | ✓ |
| A5. How does the *ESE* support districts and schools in WAZ planning and implementation (e.g., planning grants, support, guidance, monitoring functions)? |  | ✓ |  | ✓ |  |  |  |
| A6. What types of *external technical assistance* do *WAZ grantees request* *or need* to support WAZ planning/implementation? What types of technical assistance needs have ESE and the WAZ technical assistance provider, School and Main Institute (SMI), identified for the districts and schools? |  | ✓ |  | ✓ |  |  |  |
| A7. What types of support does the *WAZ technical assistance provider* (SMI) provide to districts and schools in planning for and implementing the WAZ? What other WAZ-related technical assistance support do districts/schools receive? Does the technical assistance align with identified technical assistance needs of districts/schools? How does it facilitate planning and implementation?  | ✓ | ✓ |  | ✓ |  |  |  |
| A8. What is the role of the *District Wraparound Coordinator* in each district and to what extent are there similarities and differences in their roles across districts? What are their initial skills and experiences relative to WAZ and working in districts and schools? How are these coordinators securing resources, engaging stakeholders and the interagency coalition, communicating and collaborating within the district office as well as schools and service providers, and coordinating activities to ensure successful WAZ implementation? | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |  |  |  |
| A9. What is the role of the ***School Wraparound Coordinator*** in each school and to what extent are there similarities and differences in their roles across schools? What are their initial skills and experiences relative to WAZ and working in districts and schools? How are these coordinators ensuring that the appropriate resources and community services are deployed at the school level to promote positive school climate and the implementation of universal and targeted student supports? How are these coordinators interacting with the interagency coalitions and families? | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |  |  | ✓ |
| A10. What roles do ***interagency coalitions and community partners*** have in WAZ planning and implementation? How are the ***interagency coalitions*** bringing together and facilitating coordination of the appropriate community partners to provide services in WAZ schools? What, if any, challenges do the interagency coalitions and community partners experience in supporting WAZ planning and implementation? | ✓ | ✓ |  | ✓ |  |  |  |
| A11. How have ***families*** been involved in planning and early implementation of WAZ supports? What has supported or impeded their engagement? | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |  |  |  | ✓ |
| A12. ***At the district level***, what other factors contribute to WAZ planning and implementation? What is district leadership’s role (i.e., superintendent and other key leaders) and how is it best characterized (including its quality)? Others? Which resources are most necessary to support planning and implementation? What is the ***initial quality and strength of leadership and advocacy*** for the WAZ in districts? | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |  |  |  |  |
| A13. ***At the school level***, what other factors contribute to WAZ planning and implementation? What is school leadership’s role and how is it best characterized (including its quality)? Staff’s role? Others? Which resources are most necessary to support planning and implementation? What is the ***initial quality and strength of leadership and advocacy*** for the WAZ in schools? | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |  |  | ✓ | ✓ |
| A14. Which ***conditions/supports*** are most important to facilitating planning and implementation? Why and how so? |  | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |  | ✓ |
| A15. What are ***barriers*** to WAZ planning and implementation (in particular for the District and School Wraparound Coordinators)?  |  | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |  | ✓ |
| A16. What are key ***lessons learned*** as the WAZ in each district were/are planned and plans are revisited?  |  | ✓ | ✓ |  |  |  |  |
| ***Research Question Set B: Early Evidence of Change*.** How are districts and schools progressing on **early indicators of WAZ planning and implementation**? |
| B1. How have ***policies/procedures*** changed to support WAZ implementation? | ✓ | ✓ |  |  |  |  |  |
| B2. How much ***professional development*** and ***external technical assistance*** are ***WAZ grantees receiving***, and in what areas (topics) are they receiving technical assistance?  |  | ✓ |  | ✓ |  |  | ✓ |
| B3. What types of ***systems for student support*** are WAZ schools implementing, or planning to implement as a result of the WAZ initiative and their plans?  | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |  |  |  | ✓ |
| B4. How are WAZ grantees ***using (or planning to use) data to screen and monitor student progress*** as a result of the WAZ initiative and their plans? | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |  |  |  | ✓ |
| B5. How are the roles of ***community providers*** changing over the course of planning and implementation? Are they used more strategically and do they act more strategically? What types of services are they providing differently? How often are they meeting? | ✓ | ✓ |  |  |  |  |  |
| B6. How is the ***intersection of district and school factors*** contributing to or hindering WAZ planning and implementation? How are the roles of district and school leadership changing over the course of planning and implementation? In what ways are the roles or quality of leadership at the district and school levels seemingly contributing to or hindering WAZ planning and implementation? How so? | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |  |  |  |  |
| B7. Are there any state-level or ESE-related factors (e.g., state practices, policies, procedures) that are contributing to or impeding district and school progress toward WAZ implementation? | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |  |  |  |  |
| B8. Are districts and schools ***implementing WAZ with fidelity***, based on their plans? If not, what are the changes and why have the changes occurred? | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |  |  |  | ✓ |
| B9. What are key ***lessons learned*** as the WAZ in each district are implemented?  |  | ✓ | ✓ |  |  |  |  |
| ***Research Question Set C: Outcomes*.** What are the **outcomes** associated with WAZ implementation? |
| After receiving a WAZ implementation grant, is there evidence of: |  |
| C1. Greater ***knowledge of WAZ and its theory of action*** among district and school staff as well as community partners? |  | ✓ | ✓ |  |  |  | ✓ |
| C2. Increased ***interagency collaboration***? | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |  |  |  |  |
| C3. Improved ***practices, policies, and procedures*** for the delivery of student supports? | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |  |  |  | ✓ |
| C4. Greater ***coordination of service delivery*** for students and their families?  | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |  |  |  | ✓ |
| C5. Improved ***systems for assessment and monitoring of student progress and well-being***?  | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |  |  |  | ✓ |
| C6. Increased ***use of programmatic evaluation data for continuous quality improvement***? | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |  |  |  |  |
| C7. Greater ***financial efficiency*** (e.g., alignment of resources)? Likelihood of financial sustainability? | ✓ | ✓ |  |  |  |  |  |
| C8. Increased ***family involvement*** in the delivery of supports to students? How are they involved? |  | ✓ | ✓ |  |  |  | ✓ |
| C9. Greater ***leadership and advocacy*** for the WAZ in districts and schools? |  | ✓ | ✓ |  |  |  |  |
| C10. ***Enhanced capacity for delivering student support systems*** to: |  |
| Increase ***school and district staff knowledge*** of the functions and resources necessary to maintain WAZ supports? |  | ✓ | ✓ |  |  |  | ✓ |
| Promote positive school climate, implement proactive systems for identifying student needs, and provide universal and targeted supports, over the long term at the school level? | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |  |  | ✓ | ✓ |
| Increase key community partner involvement in long-term relationships with WAZ schools? How are they involved? |  | ✓ | ✓ |  |  |  | ✓ |
| C11. Barriers/challenges that inhibit the development of any of the above, C1-C10? |  | ✓ | ✓ |  |  |  |  |
| C12. Do stakeholders in WAZ schools experience improved perceptions of school climate after WAZ implementation?  |  | ✓ | ✓ |  |  | ✓ | ✓ |
| C13. What student outcomes are associated with WAZ implementation? Specifically, compared to non-WAZ schools and controlling for selected background characteristics, do WAZ schools experience: |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Improved academic outcomes? |  |  |  |  | ✓ |  |  |
| Improved attendance rates? |  |  |  |  | ✓ |  |  |
| Improved promotion rates? |  |  |  |  | ✓ |  |  |
| Improved graduation rates? |  |  |  |  | ✓ |  |  |
| Lower dropout rates? |  |  |  |  | ✓ |  |  |
| Lower suspension rates? |  |  |  |  | ✓ |  |  |
| Fewer incidents of violence? |  |  |  |  | ✓ |  |  |
| C14. In what ways is early evidence of change (Research Question Set B) associated with these outcomes? |  | ✓ | ✓ |  |  | ✓ | ✓ |
| C15. What are key lessons learned from our analysis of outcomes associated with the WAZ in each district?  |  | ✓ | ✓ |  |  |  |  |
| ***Research Question Set D: Sustainability/Replication*.** Are WAZ sustainable at the district and school levels, and what supports or hinders (or will support/hinder) **sustainability and replication** in other districts and schools? |
| D1. Do districts and schools have ***WAZ sustainability plans***? At what point in WAZ planning/ implementation does sustainability planning begin? Do sustainability plans address the ***major challenges*** that individual schools/districts have experienced? | ✓ | ✓ |  |  |  |  |  |
| D2. What do key stakeholders identify as the ***biggest challenges to sustaining*** the WAZ supports after the *Race to the Top* funding has ended? In what ways have schools/districts prepared for these challenges? |  | ✓ | ✓ |  |  |  |  |
| D3. What ***resources from ESE*** support, or are needed to support, districts and schools in the implementation of integrated, comprehensive systems for student support, after WAZ funding ends? What should ESE do to ***support expansion*** of WAZ to other districts after *Race to the Top* funding ends? |  | ✓ | ✓ |  |  |  |  |
| D4. What aspects of WAZ do key ***stakeholders believe are sustainable***? Is there evidence that ***non-WAZ schools in WAZ districts are implementing*** wraparound services during the program funding period? For example, in what ways are non-WAZ schools, in WAZ grantee districts, beginning to implement stronger student support delivery systems, focused on non-academic needs? |  | ✓ | ✓ |  |  |  |  |
| D5. What plans, funding, and infrastructure are present to continue ***interagency collaborations*** after WAZ funding ends?  |  | ✓ |  |  |  |  |  |
| D6. In what ways are ***families*** participating in development of district and school WAZ sustainability plans?  | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |  |  |  |  |
| D7. What plans, funding, and infrastructure are present to ensure that the ***responsibilities and functions performed by the District and School Wraparound Coordinators*** continue after WAZ funding ends?  | ✓ | ✓ |  |  |  |  |  |
| D8. What plans, funding, and infrastructure are present to ensure that ***professional development and technical assistance*** related to the delivery of integrated comprehensive student supports continue after WAZ funding ends? To ensure ***knowledge of WAZ*** is sustained? | ✓ | ✓ |  | ✓ |  |  |  |
| D9. How will the ***quality and strength of leadership and advocacy*** for WAZ be sustained?  | ✓ | ✓ |  |  |  |  |  |
| D10. What ***continuous quality improvement*** ***strategies*** are districts and schools implementing and planning to continue to sustain WAZ? |  | ✓ | ✓ |  |  |  |  |
| D11. How have ***barriers to WAZ planning, implementation, and sustainability/replication*** changed over time? How have districts and schools ***responded to these changing barriers***?  |  | ✓ | ✓ |  |  |  |  |
| D12. What are key ***lessons learned*** relative to WAZ replication and sustainability planning?  |  | ✓ | ✓ |  |  |  |  |

# Appendix B: 2013–14 Wraparound Zones Initiative Districts and Schools

| **District** | **School** | **Grade Level** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Fall River | BMC Durfee High School | 9–12 |
| Fall River | Carlton M. Viveiros Elementary School2 | K–5 |
| Fall River | Edmond P. Talbot Middle School | 6–8 |
| Fall River | John J. Doran Elementary School | PK–6 |
| Fall River | Mary Fonseca Elementary School | K–5 |
| Fall River | Matthew J. Kuss Middle School2 | 6–8 |
| Holyoke | Kelly Full Service Community School (2011–12 planning grant) 2 | K–8 |
| Holyoke | Morgan Full Service Community School | K–8 |
| Holyoke | Peck-Lawrence Full Service Community School2 | K–8 |
| Lynn | Cobbet Elementary (2011–12 planning grant) 2 | K–5 |
| Lynn | E.J. Harrington School (2011–12 planning grant) | PK–5 |
| Lynn | Thurgood Marshall Middle School (2011–12 planning grant) 2 | 6–8 |
| Lynn | William P. Connery (2011–12 planning grant) | K–5 |
| Springfield | Alfred G. Zanetti School2 | PK–8 |
| Springfield | Brightwood School | K–5 |
| Springfield | Chestnut Accelerated Middle School2 | 6–8 |
| Springfield | DeBerry Elementary School1 | K–5 |
| Springfield | Elias Brookings School | PK–5 |
| Springfield | Gerena School2 | PK–5 |
| Springfield | John F. Kennedy Middle School | 6–8 |
| Springfield | M. Marcus Kiley Middle School | 6–8 |
| Springfield | White Street | K–5 |
| Worcester | Burncoat Street Preparatory School | K–6 |
| Worcester | Chandler Elementary Community School | K–6 |
| Worcester | Chandler Magnet  | PK–6 |
| Worcester | Goddard Elementary  | PK–6 |
| Worcester | Goddard Scholars Academy (@ Sullivan Middle School) 2 | 6–8 |
| Worcester | University Park Campus School2 | 7–12 |
| Worcester | Union Hill School2 | PK–6 |
| Worcester | Woodland Academy | PK–6 |

1 Added as WAZ implementation schools in 2013–14

2 Selected for targeted school visits in Years 2 and 3

**Fall River WAZ School and District Demographics, 2013–14**

|  | Doran ElementaryPK–8 | Viveiros ElementaryK–5 | Kuss Middle6–8 | Durfee High School9–12 | Fonseca ElementaryK–5 | Talbot Middle6–8 | Cross-WAZ School Average | Fall River District |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Accountability status | Level 2 | Level 3 | Level 1 | Level 3 | Level 3 | Level 3 | N/A | Level 4 |
| Enrollment | 556 | 762 | 793 | 2,253 | 804 | 755 | 4,364 | 10,319 |
| Percentage English language learners | 18.5% | 9.3% | 3.2% | 5.9% | 11.3% | 16.6% | 9.3% | 8.5% |
| Percentage low-income | 89.9% | 92.5% | 76.9% | 69.7% | 90.7% | 81.6% | 79.9% | 78.3% |
| Percentage with disabilities | 19.8% | 15.5% | 20.3% | 19.4% | 10.7% | 22.4% | 18.3% | 20.4% |
| Percentage scoring proficient or higher on the English language arts section of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) | 34.6% | 38.4% | 63.0% | 82.9% | 31.9% | 45.6% | 53.1% | 47.4% |
| Percentage scoring proficient or higher on mathematics section of MCAS | 33.5% | 41.4% | 53.8% | 60.4% | 31.4% | 23.2% | 41.9% | 37.5% |
| Percentage African American / Black  | 6.3% | 8.7% | 6.2% | 9.1% | 9.3% | 6.9% | 8.1% | 7.2% |
| Percentage Asian | 2.7% | 2.6% | 2.6% | 4.7% | 6.2% | 6.9% | 4.5% | 4.4% |
| Percentage Hispanic | 31.8% | 24.7% | 18.7% | 18.5% | 24.9% | 24% | 22.1% | 21.1% |
| Percentage White  | 52.3% | 53.5% | 67.3% | 65.3% | 50.9% | 57.2% | 59.9% | 61.3% |
| Percentage Other | 6.8% | 10.5% | 5.2% | 2.4% | 8.7% | 5.0% | 5.4% | 5.7% |

*Source:* Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

**Holyoke WAZ School and District Demographics, 2013–14**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Kelly Full Service Community SchoolK–8** | **Morgan Full Service Community School K–8** | **Peck-Lawrence Full Service Community School4–8\*** | **Cross-WAZ School Average** | **Holyoke District** |
| Accountability status | Level 3 | Level 5 | Level 3 | N/A | Level 4 |
| Enrollment | 593 | 400 | 389 | 1382 | 5,573 |
| Percentage English language learners | 49.4% | 46.8% | 39.6% | 45.9% | 29.2% |
| Percentage low-income | 97.6% | 98.2% | 93.3% | 96.6% | 85.3% |
| Percentage with disabilities | 21.1% | 19% | 38% | 25.3% | 25.1% |
| Percentage scoring proficient or higher on the English language arts section of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) | 19.1% | 19.8% | 21.3% | 20.2% | 33.9% |
| Percentage scoring proficient or higher on mathematics section of MCAS | 23.4% | 14.2% | 29.3% | 23.3% | 29.9% |
| Percentage African American/black | 0.8% | 3.5% | 2.3% | 2.0% | 2.8% |
| Percentage Asian | 1.2% | 0.2% | 1% | 0.9% | 1% |
| Percentage Hispanic | 96% | 92.5% | 90.5% | 93.4% | 78.7% |
| Percentage White | 1.7% | 2.8% | 5.9% | 3.2% | 16.8% |
| Percentage Other | 0.3% | 1.0% | 0.3% | 0.5% | 0.7% |

*Source:* Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

\*Data from ESE were only available for grades 4–8.

**Lynn WAZ School and District Demographics, 2013–14**

|  | **Cobbet ElementaryK–5** | **Connery ElementaryPK–5** | **Harrington ElementaryPK–5** | **Marshall Middle6–8** | **Cross-WAZ School Average** | **Lynn District** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Accountability status | Level 3 | Level 3 | Level 3 | Level 3 | N/A | Level 3 |
| Enrollment | 594 | 583 | 623 | 957 | 2757 | 14,378 |
| Percentage English language learners | 37.2% | 33.8% | 30.8% | 15.3% | 27.4% | 17.8% |
| Percentage low-income | 94.1% | 95.9% | 89.6% | 94.6% | 93.6% | 83% |
| Percentage with disabilities | 11.8% | 6% | 14.4% | 17% | 13.0% | 15.8% |
| Percentage scoring proficient or higher on the English language arts section of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) | 14.1% | 39.7% | 30.5% | 45.5% | 37.6% | 49.7% |
| Percentage scoring proficient or higher on mathematics section of MCAS | 35.1% | 39.5% | 32.0% | 18.0% | 25.7% | 40.9% |
| Percentage African American/black | 9.6% | 6.3% | 11.7% | 12.4% | 10.4% | 11% |
| Percentage Asian | 9.6% | 12.3% | 5% | 6.8% | 8.2% | 9.5% |
| Percentage Hispanic | 70.9% | 73.1% | 69.5% | 64.5% | 68.8% | 54.5% |
| Percentage White | 7.4% | 6.7% | 10.9% | 12.6% | 9.9% | 20.9% |
| Percentage Other | 2.5% | 1.5% | 2.9% | 3.7% | 2.8% | 3.7% |

*Source:* Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

**Springfield WAZ School and District Demographics, 2013–14**

|  | Brightwood ElementaryK–5 | Brookings ElementaryPK–5 | Marcus Kiley Middle6–8 | Deberry ElementaryK–5 | Chestnut Middle School6–8 | Kennedy Middle 6–8 | Gerena ElementaryPK–5 | White StreetK–5 | ZanettiPK–8 | Cross-WAZ School Average | Springfield District |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Accountability status | Level 4 | Level 4 | Level 4 | Level 4 | Level 4 | Level 4 | Level 3 | Level 4 | Level 1 | N/A | Level 4 |
| Enrollment | 358 | 328 | 730 | 310 | 847 | 580 | 690 | 389 | 413 | 4645 | 25,826 |
| Percentage English language learners | 32.1% | 20.7% | 17% | 25.5% | 27.9% | 15.9% | 24.5% | 29.8% | 4.6% | 21.9% | 17% |
| Percentage low-income | 99.4% | 97.3% | 90.5% | 98.1% | 95.3% | 93.1% | 92.9% | 96.9% | 65.4% | 92.0% | 87.3% |
| Percentage with disabilities | 8.1% | 19.5% | 20% | 16.5% | 22.9% | 20.7% | 14.9% | 13.9% | 5.6% | 16.9% | 19.3% |
| Percentage scoring proficient or higher on the English language arts section of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) | 21.6% | 19.0% | 31.1% | 22.8% | 32.5% | 26.4% | 18.7% | 17.6% | 62.2% | 29.7% | 40.5% |
| Percentage scoring proficient or higher on mathematics section of MCAS | 20.9% | 27.0% | 18.2% | 23.0% | 17.4% | 9.4% | 22.8% | 34.5% | 57.8% | 20.8% | 32.0% |
| Percentage African American/black | 14.5% | 21% | 23.3% | 21% | 13.7% | 22.2% | 13.2% | 15.9% | 25.7% | 18.5% | 20.2% |
| Percentage Asian | 0% | 0.6% | 2.6% | 0.3% | 1.8% | 0.2% | 0.6% | 7.2% | 1.5% | 1.6% | 2.6% |
| Percentage Hispanic | 83.8% | 71.6% | 52.7% | 72.9% | 72.1% | 60% | 80.6% | 65.8% | 46% | 66.9% | 62.2% |
| Percentage White | 1.1% | 5.5% | 15.8% | 3.9% | 9.7% | 13.8% | 4.3% | 8.5% | 20.6% | 9.9% | 12.4% |
| Percentage Other | 0.6% | 1.2% | 5.6% | 1.9% | 2.7% | 3.8% | 1.3% | 2.6% | 6.3% | 3.1% | 2.5% |

*Source:* Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

**Worcester WAZ School and District Demographics, 2013–14**

|  | Burncoat StreetK–6 | Chandler ElementaryK–6 | Chandler MagnetPK–6 | Sullivan Middle School6–8 | Goddard School of Science & TechnologyPK–6 | Union HillPK–6 | University Park Campus School7–12 | Woodland AcademyPK–6 | Cross-WAZ School Average | Worcester District |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Accountability status | Level 3 | Level 4 | Level 3 | Level 3 | Level 3 | Level 3 | Level 2 | Level 3 | N/A | Level 4 |
| Enrollment | 188 | 414 | 431 | 868 | 533 | 468 | 230 | 554 | 3686 | 24,562 |
| Percentage English language learners | 46.8% | 59.2% | 76.1% | 24.3% | 58.2% | 42.3% | 17.4% | 66.4% | 48.5% | 31.7% |
| Percentage low-income | 91.5% | 93.2% | 87% | 83.4% | 93.1% | 97.4% | 82.2% | 97.3% | 90.5% | 73% |
| Percentage with disabilities | 26.1% | 12.6% | 19.3% | 21.7% | 18.4% | 17.5% | 10.9% | 16.4% | 18.1% | 20% |
| Percentage proficient or higher on the ELA section of the (MCAS) | 21.7% | 26.1% | 22.9% | 54.4% | 20.6% | 36.9% | 76.0% | 26.1% | 39.8% | 51.3% |
| Percentage proficient or higher on math section of MCAS | 21.7% | 26.1% | 22.9% | 54.4% | 20.6% | 36.9% | 76.0% | 26.1% | 39.8% | 51.3% |
| Percentage African American/black | 14.9% | 11.6% | 4.4% | 14.9% | 12.8% | 13.9% | 7.4% | 9.7% | 11.6% | 14.5% |
| Percentage Asian | 1.1% | 8.9% | 7.9% | 12.4% | 13.7% | 4.3% | 23.9% | 8.8% | 10.3% | 7.7% |
| Percentage Hispanic | 59% | 63.8% | 69.8% | 37.3% | 55.7% | 55.3% | 48.3% | 67.5% | 55.4% | 38% |
| Percentage White | 21.8% | 13.5% | 14.6% | 29.8% | 13.9% | 20.1% | 18.3% | 11.2% | 18.7% | 35.8% |
| Percentage Other | 3.2% | 2.2% | 3.2% | 5.50% | 3.9% | 6.4% | 2.2% | 2.7% | 4.0% | 3.8% |

*Source:* Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

# Appendix C: Sample Interview ProtocolIntroduction

Thanks again for taking the time to speak with me today. My name is [name] and I am from the American Institutes for Research, or AIR. AIR has been contracted by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to conduct a third party, independent evaluation of the planning, implementation, outcomes, and sustainability of the Wraparound Zones strategies in districts and schools. Please note that this is not a monitoring visit of any kind. Rather, this evaluation is intended to produce findings and recommendations to support district and school improvement efforts. Also, during the interview I will use “WAZ” as an abbreviation for your school’s Wraparound Zone.

Before we start, I’d like to give you a moment to review and sign the consent form, and answer any questions you might have for me. As the consent form explains, AIR has and will continue to share evaluation findings at various times during the three-year evaluation including a final report.

I want to assure you that all information obtained today will be kept confidential and will only be used for the purposes of this evaluation. In our reporting, we will not use your name or attribute any quotes to you. We will identify districts and schools, but all information reported will be aggregated at the district or school level.

If you don’t mind, we would like to record this interview simply for note-taking purposes only. No one outside of our research team will have access to or hear the recording, it would be for the AIR team’s reference only. If you would like me to turn off the recorder at any point, just let me know. If that is OK, please note this on the consent form.

Because we are in the last year of WAZ funding, the questions I am going to ask you today are focused on outcomes and sustainability. So first I am going to go through each of the four priority improvement areas for WAZ and ask you some specific questions about what kinds of progress you have seen in that area, what you attribute that progress to, and how the district has supported schools in implementing strategies in that area. At the end I’ll ask some questions about sustainability of WAZ after this year is over.

Do you have any questions before we get started?

*[Begin recording if OKed on the signed consent form]*

**WAZ Priority Areas**

**Climate and Culture (WAZ Priority Improvement Area 1)**

I’d like to start by focusing on the first WAZ priority improvement area which is Climate and Culture. By climate and culture, we are referring to school safety, effective management of student behavior, family engagement, and cultivating a school-wide climate of positive regard between leadership, staff, and students.

1. First, can you provide some background information about your school’s current practices around climate and culture?

*Data Collection*

* + From whom does your school collect climate and culture data (students? staff, parent?)
	+ How often is this data collected?
	+ Are there any specific examples of how this data has been used to inform decision making?

*Behavior Management*

* + Does your school have clearly stated expectations for student behavior?
	+ Is there a system of rewards and consequences? If yes, how well do you think this system is aligned to the behavioral expectations?
	+ To what extent do staff implement your school’s behavior management plan? (Is implementation consistent across staff? Please explain)
	+ On average, how well do you think student behavior is managed—using a scale of 1 to 10 (1 = poorly managed, a lot of classroom disruptions; 10 = well managed, little to no classroom disruptions)
1. Over the past three years, what important changes or outcomes have you seen in terms of climate and culture your school that you would attribute to any specific WAZ related strategies? (*Go through the bulleted list, prompt for which WAZ strategies, Encourage interviewee to refer to data/evidence where relevant, and respond for each school if possible)*

*Note that for this question and related questions below, you should let the participant know these can also be changes that resulted solely from WAZ strategies or a combination of strategies that included WAZ. For the latter be sure to probe for details about how WAZ was integrated into other new or existing strategies*

* Changes or progress in school safety?
	+ To what extent do you view crime and violence as an issue at your school?
	+ To what extent are bullying and teasing an issue at your school?
	+ On a scale of 1-10 how would you rate the safety of this school (1 = unsafe, 10 = very safe)?
* Changes or progress in student behavior?
* Changes or progress in relationships among students? Please explain.
* Changes or progress in relationships among staff? Please explain.
* Changes or progress in relationships between staff and students? Please explain.
	+ In your opinion, do teachers have high expectations for all students? *[If participant does not quantify response ask]* Do you think this is true of All or most teachers, about half of teachers, or fewer than half?
* Changes or progress in family engagement?
	+ What strategies have been implemented to help improve family engagement?
* Other?
1. Did your school implement any new WAZ strategies related to climate and culture this year? What were they and why did you implement them?
2. Are there aspects of your school’s climate and culture that still need improvement?
* If yes, please describe. What challenges have you and your colleagues experienced in your efforts to improve these areas?
* Are there any plans in place to address these challenges? *(if yes, probe for details about these plans, including specific steps they are taking or plan to take and who will be involved)*
1. In what ways has the district been involved in helping your school improve their climate and culture?
* What has worked well in terms of district-level support for improving school culture and climate?

**Identifying and Addressing Student Needs (WAZ Priority Improvement Area 2**)

The second WAZ priority improvement area is Identifying and Addressing Student Needs. For this, we are referring to structures and systems that address the universal needs of all students, as well as create, monitor and adapt plans for students requiring targeted assistance, for academic or non-academic needs.

1. First, I’d like to learn more about your school’s current system for identifying student needs.
	* Are *all* students screened for nonacademic risks or just a subset of students? [if a subset] Which ones? Are all students screened for academic risks?
	* Who monitors the *delivery of services* to students? Can you describe this process (i.e. are there specific protocols or procedures for monitoring?)
	* In what ways, if any, does staff monitor the *progress* of students who receive services? What types of data are collected? How often is this data reviewed?
2. Over the past three years, what important changes or outcomes have you seen in terms of identifying and addressing student needs at your school, that you would attribute to any specific WAZ related strategies? (*Go through the bulleted list, prompt for which WAZ strategies, Encourage interviewee to refer to data/evidence where relevant, and respond for each school if possible)*
* Changes or progress with respect to timeliness/efficiency of referral processes?

*[If not already answered]*

* + Is there a clear process for staff to follow when they identify a student in need of additional assistance? Please describe
* Changes or progress with respect to data systems used to identify and address needs?
	+ Does your school currently collect data to monitor the *effectiveness* of student interventions and support? If yes, please describe. What types of data are collected, how is this data stored?)
* Changes or progress with respect to availability/effectiveness of services to address needs?
* Changes or progress with respect to staff involvement in procedures for identifying and addressing needs?
* Changes or progress with respect to family involvement in procedures for identifying and addressing needs?
* Changes in how teams function or collaborate to ensure that students get the services they need?
* Other?
1. Did your school implement any new WAZ strategies related to identifying and addressing student needs this year? What were they and why were they implemented?
2. What else needs to happen to improve your school’s current system of identifying student needs and making sure they receive appropriate services? Are there currently plans in place help make this happen? *(Probe for details)*
3. In what ways has the district been involved in helping WAZ schools improve their procedures for identifying and addressing student needs *(e.g. any district based policies or practices about the referral process, data collection and use, guidance on assessing students, supporting professional development etc…)*?
* What has worked well in terms of district-level support for improving procedures for identifying and addressing student needs? What type of additional district support would be useful moving forward?

**Community Partners and Coalitions (WAZ Priority Improvement Area 3)**

Next we have Community Coalition. This improvement area refers school-community agency partnerships to help address student needs, and also the establishment of district-level systems and structures to support schools in developing and maintaining relationships with community partners.

1. Is there a system in place to identify potential community partners (e.g. resource mapping, a district resource guide)?
2. How does staff go about accessing services from external providers? (Is there a school or districtwide MOU in place? Is there a specific referral process? A school liaison?)
3. Over the past three years, what important changes or outcomes have you seen in terms of community partnerships at your school that you would attribute to any specific WAZ-related strategies? Be specific. *(Go through the bulleted list, prompt for which WAZ strategies, ; Encourage interviewee to refer to data/evidence where relevant, and respond for each school if possible)*
* Changes or progress with respect to *quantity* of partnerships?
* Changes or progress with respect to *quality* of partnerships?
* Changes or progress with respect to procedures for developing and maintaining partnerships (e.g. MOU’s)?
1. Is there a system in place to assess the effectiveness of a community partner? If yes, please describe this process (What data is collected to assess effectiveness? How is this data collected?)
	* Have you or other staff at this school used this data to make decisions about how you work with a partner? If yes, please provide an example
2. Has your school established partnerships with any new community agencies within the past 12 months? How did the partnerships come about? What was your role? What services do these partners provide?
3. For what areas of student need is your school still in need of community partners? Are there specific challenges that have made it difficult to establish these partnerships? *(Probe for details)*
4. In what ways has the district been involved in helping WAZ schools develop and maintain partnerships with community agencies*?*
* What has worked well in terms of district-level support for helping schools to establish and maintain partnerships?
* Moving forward, how could the district help facilitate this process?
1. *If district has a coalition or regularly convenes community partners*

Can you describe the activities the coalition has engaged in during the past school year?

* + Have there been any specific decisions, changes that have occurred as the result of this group?

**Replication and Sustainability**

1. How would you characterize the level of school leader buy-in or support for WAZ?

*[If school leaders supportive]* In what way have school leaders demonstrated commitment to the initiative?

To what extent does schools staff buy into WAZ? (In your opinion, what percentage of staff are not on board (Most 80%-100%? More than half (50%-80%), less than half)?

1. Given your experience working with the WAZ initiative, what aspects of WAZ do you feel are the most essential to be sustained and why?
2. [FOR SCHOOL COORDINATORS ONLY]: Do you know if the school coordinator position will be continued next year? *(If yes, probe on how it will be sustained, through what funding source etc.; if no, probe on whether and how the work will be sustained in the school without the position)*
3. [FOR OTHER STAFF OR TEAM MEMBERS PERFORMING THE FUNCTION OF A SCHOOL COORDINATOR]: Given that you do not have a full-time person in the building serving as WAZ coordinator, what strategies have you used to effectively integrate your WAZ responsibilities into your regular job? In what ways has it been challenging to do this?
4. Which components of WAZ do you think will be sustained? Why or why not? What has the school or district leadership done to ensure that it is sustained?
5. Now that you are in your last year of WAZ funding, what are your biggest concerns about sustaining the initiative? Which components of WAZ do you worry most about the school and/or district being able to sustain? Why?
6. Are you aware of any plans for the districtwide expansion of WAZ-related activities to some or all non-WAZ schools? If yes, please describe.
7. In your opinion, what needs to happen in order to achieve successful districtwide expansion of some or all WAZ-related strategies?

**Closing**

1. Are there any lessons learned from your experience with your school WAZ efforts that you would share with districts embarking on a similar initiative? *(Probe for lessons about the planning stage as well as implementation of the priority areas, Probe for specifics and details—don’t want to hear things like, “District Leadership buy-in was essential,” want to know what that looked like concretely—what actions were taken, what was done, particularly beyond, “They gave us a shout out at a meeting.”)*
* *Anything you would have done differently or sooner?*
1. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences with the WAZ initiative?

**That was my last question. Thank you again for taking the time to be interviewed.**

# Appendix D: Coding Guide

**MA WAZ Year 3 Interview Coding Guide**

| **Code** | **Description** | **Exclude** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1. **Climate and Culture**
 | **General comments about climate and culture that does not fit under any of the nodes below** |  |
| **1.1.Background** | General background information related to culture and climate, that does not fit under the child nodes; include comments about team roles (e.g. role of the team) |  |
| * + 1. Data Collection
 | Comments about the data collection processes and procedures (e.g. from whom they collect data, frequency  |  |
| * + 1. Examples (data use)
 | Comments of examples about how data has been used to inform decision making around climate and culture issues | Comments about how data has been used to address other priority areas |
| * + 1. Behavior Management
 | Comments about the school’s behavior management system |  |
| * + - 1. Clearly stated expectations
 | Comments about a school’s behavioral expectations; including whether the school has clearly stated expectations about behavior |  |
| * + - 1. Rewards and consequences
 | Comments about the school’s system of rewards and consequences; comments that describe or provide examples of rewards or consequences used to address student behavior include comments about alignment with behavioral expectations  |  |
| * + - 1. Staff implementation
 | Comments about the level/quality of staff implementation of the behavior management plan (e.g. is plan implemented consistently across teachers/staff) |  |
| * + - 1. How well behavior managed
 | Comments about how well behavior is managed; ratings on behavior management |  |
| * + 1. Social emotional curriculum
 | Comments about the whether the school has a social-emotional curriculum; included descriptions about the curriculum |  |
| 1.1.4.1. Staff training | Comments about staff trained on the social emotional curriculum; include comments about the number of staff trained |  |
| 1.1.4.2. Usefulness of curriculum | Comments about the usefulness of the training; including the impact on student behavior and classroom and/or school culture  |  |
| **1.2.Changes and Progress**  | Comments about changes and progress in climate and culture that do not fit under the categories listed below |  |
| 1.2.1. School Safety | Comments about changes or progress in school safety | Ratings on overall school safety |
| 1.2.1.1. Crime and violence | Comments about crime and violence (e.g. the extent to which crime and violence is an issue) |  |
| 1.2.1.2. Bullying | Comments about bullying (e.g. the extent to which bullying is an issue) |  |
| 1.2.1.3. Safety (general) | Comments about perceptions of overall school safety; include ratings of school safety | Comments about *changes* *or progress* in school safety |
| 1.2.2. Student behavior | Comments about changes or progress in student behavior |  |
| 1.2.3. Student relationships | Comments about changes or progress in student-student relationships |  |
| 1.2.4. Staff relationships | Comments about changes or progress in staff-staff relationships |  |
| 1.2.5. Student-staff relationships | Comments about changes or progress in school student-staff relationship |  |
| 1.2.6. Family engagement | Comments about changes or progress in family engagement |  |
| 1.2.6.1. Existing strategies | Comments about family engagement strategies that were implemented during years 1 and 2 | Comments about new family engagement strategies (implemented during year 3) |
| 1.2.6.2. New strategies implemented | Comments about family engagement strategies implemented during year 3 or since the last site visit |  |
| 1.2.7. Approach or vision | Comments about changes in the overall vision or approach to school climate and culture |  |
| **1.3. Expectations** | **Comments about teacher/staff expectations for students** |  |
| **1.4. New Strategies Implemented** | **Comments about new strategies implemented to improve climate and culture** | **Comments about strategies implemented to improve family engagement** |
| **1.5. Areas for improvement** | Comments about aspects of school or district’s culture and climate that still need improvement; include comments about plans to address reported challenges | **Comments about improvements needed in other priority areas** |
| **1.5.1. Plans to address improvement areas** | Comments about plans to address the aspects of school climate and culture that are still in need of improvement |  |
| **1.6. District Support** | **Comments about district support for climate and culture improvement effort; include comments about support from district coordinators and other district leaders** |  |
| **1.6.1. Challenges** | Comments by district leaders about challenges around providing district-level support for improving culture and climate; comments from other participants regarding challenges around getting district-level support for culture and climate efforts |  |
| 1. **ID and Addressing Student Needs**
 | General comments about identifying and addressing student needs that do not fit under any of the categories below |  |
| **2.1 Process and Procedures** | General comments about the process and procedures for identifying and addressing student needs, that do not fit into any of the categories below |  |
| * + 1. Screening – Nonacademic
 | Comments about screening of students for nonacademic risks |  |
| * + 1. Screening – Academic
 | Comments about screening of students for academic risks  |  |
| * + 1. Monitoring-service delivery
 | Comments about who monitors the delivery of services; include comments that describe the process (e.g. comments about specific protocols or procedures for monitoring service delivery) |  |
| * + 1. Monitoring – progress
 | Comments about monitoring the progress of students who receive services; include comments about data collection done as part of the progress monitoring process |  |
| * + 1. Monitoring effectiveness
 | Comments about the collection and use of data to monitor the effectiveness of non-academic student interventions | Comments about monitoring the effectiveness of academic interventions |
| * + 1. Process for identifying student needs
 | Comments about whether there is a process for staff to follow when they identify a student in need of assistance; include comments that describe the process |  |
| * + - 1. Process clearly articulated
 | Comments about whether the student referral process is clearly articulated |  |
| **2.2. Changes or Progress** | Comments about changes and progress in efforts related to identifying or addressing student needs, that do not fit under any of the categories listed below |  |
| 2.2.1. Efficiency of referral process | Comments about changes or progress in the timeliness or efficiency of the referral process |  |
| 2.2.2. Data systems | Comments about changes or progress in the data systems used to identify student needs and track services |  |
| 2.2.3. Availability and effectiveness | Comments about changes or progress in the availability or effectiveness of services that address students’ nonacademic needs | effectiveness of services that address students’ academic needs |
| 2.2.4. Staff Involvement | Comments about changes or progress in staff involvement in the process for identifying and addressing students’ nonacademic needs |  |
| 2.2.5. Family involvement | Comments about changes or progress in family engagement or involvement in the process for identifying and addressing student needs |  |
| 2.2.6. Function and collaboration | Comments about changes or progress in how teams function or collaborate around meeting student needs |  |
| 2.2.7. Approach or vision | Comments about changes to the school or district’s approach or vision for identifying and/or addressing student needs |  |
| 2.2.8. Impact of changes | Comment about how changes to the process for identifying and addressing student needs has impacted the classroom, school, district etc… |  |
| * 1. **New strategies**
 | Comments about new strategies implemented to identify and address student needs; include a description of strategies and reasons why they were implemented |  |
| * 1. **Support for teachers**
 | Comments about the support teachers received around identifying student who may need additional assistance, identifying or addressing/responding to student needs |  |
| * 1. **Teacher involvement**
 | Comments about teacher involvement in identifying and addressing student needs; include comments about whether teachers are informed of student treatment and treatment progress |  |
| * 1. **Areas for improvement**
 | Comments about additional needs in the area of identifying and addressing student needs |  |
| * + 1. **Plans to address improvement areas**
 | Comments about plans to address the aspects student needs process are still in need of improvement |  |
| * 1. **District Support**
 | Comments about district support for helping schools identify and address student needs |  |
| * + 1. **Challenges**
 | Comments by district leaders about challenges around providing district-level support for identifying and addressing student needs; comments from other participants regarding challenges around getting district-level support for addressing student  |  |
| 1. **Community Partners and Coalition**
 | General information about community partners and coalitions; responses where a participant lists the partners that the school or district is working with or describes the role of a partner without speaking about changes or progress; other comments that do not fit under the categories below |  |
| **3.1 Background** |  |  |
| 3.1.1. Identifying partners | Comments that describe a system for identifying potential community partners  |  |
| 3.1.2. Accessing services | Comments that describe how staff access services from external providers (include comments about the use of a specific referral process or MOUs) |  |
| **3.2. Changes and Progress** | General comments about changes and progress in community partnerships or a community coalition, that do not fit under the categories below |  |
| 3.2.1. Quantity | Comments about changes in the number of partners that schools or the district are working with (this can be an increase or a decrease in the number of partners) |  |
| 3.2.2. Quality | Comments about changes to the quality of partnerships; include comments about how partnerships have been strengthened |  |
| 3.2.3. Process and procedures | Comments about changes or progress related to the process of developing and maintaining partnerships |  |
| 3.2.4. Impact of changes | Comments on the impact of school or districts’ work with partners |  |
| **3.3. Assessing Effectiveness** | Comments about whether there are systems in place to assess partner effectiveness; include descriptions of this system (e.g. what types of data are collected; include examples of how data was used to make decisions about partner relationships |  |
| **3.4. New partnerships** | Comments about new partnerships that have been established during the past school year (year 3); include comments about the services provided by the new partners | Comments about partnerships that were in place prior to year 2 |
| **3.5. Areas of need** | Comments about areas of student needs for which the schools/district still need community partners |  |
| **3.6. District Support** | Comments about district support for developing and maintaining community partnerships; include comments about what the district is doing and what the district needs to do |  |
| **3.6.1. District-level systems in place** | Comments about district-level systems for identifying, accessing or evaluating the services of community partners |  |
| **3.6.2. Challenges** | Comments by district leaders about challenges around providing district-level support for establishing partnerships or a coalition; comments from other participants regarding challenges around getting district-level support for partnerships and establishing a coalition |  |
| **3.7. District Coalition** | Comments about the district coalition’s activities; include examples of decisions or changes that were made because of this group |  |
| **3.7.1. Coalition activities** | Comments about coalition activities |  |
| **3.7.2. Changes or progress** | Comments about changes, progress or decisions that have come about because of the work of the district coalition |  |
| **3.7.3. Challenges** | Comments about challenges with the coalition or challenges with establishing a coalition |  |
| **3.8. Data-based decision making** | **Comments about the use of data to make decisions about working with partners** |  |
| 1. **Sustainability**
 | General comments about sustainability that do not fit under the categories below |  |
| * 1. **Buy-in**
 |  |  |
| * + 1. School leader buy-in
 | Comments about school leaders’ the buy-in or support for WAZ |  |
| * + 1. School staff buy-in
 | Comments about school staffs’ buy-in or support for WAZ |  |
| * 1. **Aspects to be sustained**
 | **Comments about aspects of WAZ that the participant believes will be sustained; include comments about aspects of WAZ that are most essential to sustain and plans for sustainability** | **Comments about sustaining teams, school coordinator position and district coordinator position** |
| * + 1. Essential to sustain
 | Comments about which aspects of WAZ are essential to sustain |  |
| * + 1. Sustaining teams
 | Comments about sustaining school-based WAZ teams |  |
| * + 1. Sustaining school coordinator position
 | Comments about sustaining the school coordinator position |  |
| * + 1. Sustaining – district coordinator position
 | Comments about sustaining the district coordinator position |  |
| * + 1. Systems in place
 | Comments about systems that are in place to ensure sustainability (e.g. reallocation of funds, integration of WAZ into school improvement plan) | Comments about sustaining the school and/or district coordinator |
| * 1. **Concerns about sustainability**
 | **Comments that describe concerns about sustainability** |  |
| * 1. **District support for sustainability**
 | **Comments about what the district has done or plans to do to sustain WAZ or various aspects of WAZ** |  |
| * 1. **Data collection and monitoring**
 | **Comments about processes in place to , monitor school activities or measure progress WAZ-related activities** |  |
| * 1. **ESE (state) support**
 | **Comments about how the state can best support current WAZ or WAZ related efforts and support once funding ends** |  |
| 1. **Replication and Expansion**
 | **General comments about replication and expansion that do not fit under the categories below** |  |
| * 1. Existing replication
 | Comments that describe the implementation of WAZ to all or some non-WAZ schools | Comments about plans for replication or expansion |
| * 1. Planned replication
 | Comments about plans to replicate WAZ in non-WAZ schools | Comments about ways in which the district is already replicating WAZ in non-WAZ schools |
| * 1. District support for expansion
 | Comments about the districts role in or support for expanding WAZ to non-WAZ schools |  |
| * 1. Achieving successful expansion
 | Comments about what needs to happen at the district or school levels to successfully expand to non-WAZ school |  |
| * 1. Challenges
 | Comments about challenges associated with expanding WAZ to all or some non-WAZ schools |  |
| 1. **Lessons Learned ad Suggestions for Improvement**
 | **Comments about lessons learned or suggestions for improvement** |  |
| 1. **WAZ impact**
 | **Comments about the overall impact of WAZ on schools, district, staff, other stakeholders etc..** |  |
| 1. **Miscellaneous**
 | **Code comments that may be important to the overall understanding of how WAZ is implemented in the district but does not fit into any of the categories above** |  |
| 1. **Quotes**
 | **Quotes that could potentially be used in the report to clearly illustrate a point or a theme**  |  |
| 1. **School coordinator**
 | **General comments about the school coordinator or the WAZ-related team** | **Comments about support provided by the school coordinator or WAZ team, comments about sustaining the school coordinator or WAZ team** |
| * 1. School coordinator support
 | Comments about the support provided by the WAZ school coordinator or WAZ team |  |
| 1. **District specific questions**
 | **Responses to district specific questions (double code these comments to the appropriate node when appropriate** |  |
| 1. **Other**
 | **Code all other comments that do not fit under any of the previous nodes and do not add to the understanding of WAZ implementation**  |  |

# Appendix E: Wraparound Zone Framework



LOCATIONS

Domestic

Washington, D.C.

Atlanta, GA

Baltimore, MD

Chapel Hill, NC

Chicago, IL

Columbus, OH

Frederick, MD

Honolulu, HI

Indianapolis, IN

Naperville, IL

New York, NY

Portland, OR

Sacramento, CA

San Mateo, CA

Silver Spring, MD

Waltham, MA

International

Egypt

Honduras

Ivory Coast

Kenya

Liberia

Malawi

Pakistan

South Africa

Zambia

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1. AIR (www.air.org) is a behavioral and social science research organization founded in 1946. AIR carries out its work with strict independence, objectivity, and nonpartisanship. AIR’s mission is to conduct and apply the best behavioral and social science research and evaluation to improve people’s lives, with a special emphasis on the disadvantaged. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
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3. Lawrence Public Schools was one of the original six WAZ grantees, but this district did not apply for continuation funds after Year 2. This report therefore does not include any data for Lawrence. This report also does not include data for a seventh WAZ district (Wareham) because that district did not receive WAZ funding until 2012–13. This evaluation is limited to original grantee districts (e.g., received funding starting in 2011–12). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Springfield began implementing WAZ-related strategies (e.g., a school site coordinator) in four additional schools during the 2013-14 school year; however these positions were not funded through the WAZ grant. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Springfield, Worcester, and the three second-year Fall River schools did not participate in the student survey. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Springfield and the three second-year Fall River schools did not participate in the staff survey. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. The response rate is calculated by comparing the number of used surveys to the number of surveys initially assigned to students at each school. Each teacher received additional survey instruments not assigned to specific students so that students not listed in the rosters AIR received ahead of survey administration could complete the survey. If teachers used any of these unassigned surveys during the administration (i.e., for new students), and all or most students in the preidentification file completed the survey as well, response rates could exceed 100 percent. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. A supplement to this report will answer this question by describing results of a comparative interrupted time series analysis, comparing outcomes for students in WAZ schools with those for students in non-WAZ schools. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. It is important to note that the way in which Lynn had structured WAZ oversight responsibilities necessitated a slightly different approach to the analysis. In the Lynn WAZ schools, there were no WAZ coordinators, and so researchers conducted group interviews with members of each of the school-based WAZ teams. Because each team had a specific focus (e.g., school climate, family engagement), questions for these interviews included only those related to the group’s topical focus. Identifying “top areas of progress” in Lynn therefore relied more heavily on analyses of the salience of comments and less heavily on the frequency of comments, compared to the analysis of data from other districts. Furthermore, Lynn used the WAZ grant to support some district-level activity that school staff could not comment on. Responses from district-level staff with respect to these activities were therefore given somewhat more weight when determining top areas of progress and challenges. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. The process and structure for this literature review is adapted from a similar review conducted in 2009 by RMC Corporation, as part of their evaluation of the Reading First initiative: <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/readingfirst/support/litreview.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. X2 houses various student data, such as student grades and attendance. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. Teachers required afterschool hours to plan for each meeting. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. http://www.playworks.org/ [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. Participated in WAZ only for the first year of the grant. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. Data are presented for the WAZ elementary schools only, because we did not have access to 2010–11 data for the middle schools. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. ConnectEd is an automated phone system that allows schools to call all homes and leave an automated message. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. In middle schools, whole-class reviews are limited to sixth-grade students. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. About half (51 percent) of the 106 teachers invited to participate in the survey took part in Year 2. Approximately 87 of these teachers identified themselves as elementary school teachers, 18 as middle school teachers, and 1 as other (“multigrade assignment”). In Year 1, only 50 percent of the 96 teachers invited to participate in the survey took part. All these teachers were elementary and K–8 teachers. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. SWIS is a PBIS-related Web-based information system designed to help school personnel to use office referral data to design schoolwide and individual student interventions. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)