District Review Report

Greater Lowell Regional Vocational Technical School District

Targeted Review conducted February 4–6, 2019

Office of District Reviews and Monitoring

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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Executive Summary

The municipalities of Lowell, Dracut, Dunstable, and Tyngsborough are members of the Greater Lowell Regional Vocational Technical School District (”the district”), which consists of a single school, the Greater Lowell Regional Vocational Technical High School. According to DESE data, the district has the highest career, vocational, technical education (CVTE) school enrollment in Massachusetts with 2, 270 students enrolled in school year 2017–2018. The school follows an admissions process required for all technical schools by DESE.

Approximately 95 percent of the students attending the high school are from Lowell and Dracut; the towns of Dunstable and Tyngsborough send the remaining 5 percent of the district’s students.

The school has articulated a set of core values for students and staff called REACH (Respect, Effort, Accountability, Commitment, and Honesty).

The district offers students 23 CVTE programs, such as carpentry, automotive technology, marketing, and cosmetology. Students attend 17 “exploratory” programs in grade 9 before selecting a CVTE program to focus on in grades 10–12. In addition, the district offers advanced placement and dual-enrollment classes as well as college prep and honors courses in ELA, math, science, history, physical education, and health.

Students attend classes on a “week-about” schedule meaning that they attend CVTE classes and academic classes during alternating weeks. Grade 10 mathematics is provided and required during academic and CVTE weeks. The district has articulation agreements with higher education institutions for 11 of its 23 CVTE programs. These agreements enable students to obtain credit at these schools for CVTE classes taken at the high school.

The district is classified by DESE as not requiring assistance or intervention and the school is making moderate progress toward meeting improvement targets.

According to DESE data, in the 2017–2018 school year 60.9 percent of the district’s students were part of a high needs student group because they were in one or more of the following groups: students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged students, and English learners (ELs) or former ELs. Students with disabilities made up 21.3 percent of student enrollment. Between 2014 and 2018, attendance in the high school hovered around 94.5 percent and the four-year graduation rate ranged between 92.7 percent and 96.1 percent. Between 2014 and 2018, the dropout rate was 1.0 percent or below.

Chronic absence rates are high for grades 10–12 (in 2017–2018, 11.5, 15.0, and 16.2, respectively,) and for many student groups. For example, the 2017–2018 rates for economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and Hispanic or Latino students are as follows: 19.3, 15.1, and 16.0.

***Instruction***

The team observed 52 classes during the 3-day visit, 27 academic classes and 25 CVTE classes. The observations were approximately 20 minutes in length. All review team members collected data using DESE’s Instructional Inventory, a tool for recording observed characteristics of standards-based teaching. This data is presented in Appendix C.

In observed classrooms throughout the school, review team members found that teachers had strong subject matter knowledge and students understood what they were learning and why. In observed academic classrooms, team members observed a lower incidence of students engaging in higher-order thinking or communicating their ideas and thinking with each other and of teachers using a variety of instructional strategies than in CVTE classrooms.

**Strengths**

* Throughout the school, instruction benefits from teachers’ knowledge of subject matter, from students understanding what they are learning and why, and from a classroom climate that supports teaching and learning.
* The high school has implemented a balanced system of assessments to measure the academic and career, vocational, technical education (CVTE) competency skills of students and to effectively place incoming and enrolled students in academic and CVTE classes. The district is piloting a data management system to enable teachers to use data more effectively to improve instruction.

The district has a well-resourced tiered system of support that provides academic, behavioral, and emotional support to its students.

* The district has pursued opportunities in outside organizations and industry to enhance the learning experience of its students, to improve opportunities for post-secondary employment, and to support students’ health and wellness.

**Challenges and Areas for Growth**

* The documentation of curriculum is a schoolwide expectation; however, the district does not have a formal and cyclical process/timeline for ongoing curriculum development, review, and revision.
* Academic and career, vocational, technical education curricula in the district are not sufficiently integrated.
* Systems and supports for monitoring instruction do not foster continuous improvement across all curriculum areas. High expectations of performance are not clearly articulated or monitored.
* In observed academic classes, team members observed a lower incidence of students engaging in higher-order thinking and challenging tasks, communicating their ideas and thinking with each other, and of teachers using a variety of instructional strategies than in career, vocational, technical education classrooms. Both academic and CVTE classrooms, overall, demonstrated a need for improvement.
* Academic and career, vocational, technical education (CVTE) cluster and curriculum teams do not have a thorough and consistent approach to using data to improve teaching and learning.

The district’s rates of students’ in-school and out-of-school suspension are generally high compared with the rates for students in grades 9–12 across the state. There is not a consensus in the district on how to address students’ misconduct.

**Recommendations**

* The district should implement a formal process for ongoing curriculum development, review, and revision. It should continue to develop its curriculum to ensure that the district has a fully documented, aligned, and integrated curriculum that is consistently implemented and effectively delivered.
* The district should ensure that all teachers provide effective instruction that challenges and supports all students and should clarify the roles and responsibilities of CVTE leaders.
* The school should build educators’ capacity to analyze and use data to improve teaching and learning.

The district should ensure that its School Improvement Plan includes measurable student performance goals for its social-emotional learning initiative that are based on an analysis of historical, longitudinal, and current disaggregated student data.

* + - The district should strengthen its efforts to improve student attendance. It should build educators’ capacity to identify, understand, and respond to the underlying causes of student behavior in order to reduce the need to rely on suspension as a response to misconduct.

Greater Lowell RVTSD Targeted District Review Overview

Purpose

Conducted under Chapter 15, Section 55A of the Massachusetts General Laws, targeted district reviews support local school districts in establishing or strengthening a cycle of continuous improvement. Reviews consider carefully the effectiveness of systemwide functions, with reference to three district standards used by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). Targeted reviews address one of the following sets of three standards: **Governance and Administrative Systems** (Leadership and Governance, Human Resources and Professional Development, and Financial and Asset Management standards) or **Student-Centered Systems** (Curriculum and Instruction, Assessment, and Student Support standards). All targeted reviews include finding(s) about instruction based on classroom observations. A targeted review identifies systems and practices that may be impeding improvement as well as those most likely to be contributing to positive results. In addition, the targeted district review is designed to promote district reflection on its own performance and potential next steps. DESE also uses review reports to identify resources and/or technical assistance to provide to the district.

This targeted review by the Office of District Reviews and Monitoring focused on the following standards: Curriculum and Instruction, Assessment, and Student Support.

Methodology

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

Site Visit

The site visit to the Greater Lowell Regional Vocational Technical School District was conducted from February 4–6, 2019. The site visit included 22 hours of interviews and focus groups with approximately 65 stakeholders, including school committee members, district administrators, school staff, students, students’ families, and teachers’ association representatives. The review team conducted one focus group with nine high-school teachers.

A list of review team members, information about review activities, and the site visit schedule are in Appendix A, and Appendix B provides information about the district’s enrollment, attendance, and expenditures. The team observed classroom instruction in 52 classrooms in the district’s 1 school. The team collected data using DESE’s Instructional Inventory, a tool for recording observed characteristics of standards-based teaching. This data is contained in Appendix C.

**District Profile**

Greater Lowell Regional Vocational Technical High School, the district’s one school, serves students from the municipalities of Lowell, Dracut, Dunstable, and Tyngsborough. The district follows DESE’s point total admissions process.[[1]](#footnote-1) This process is required of all technical schools in Massachusetts “to ensure equity.” According to information on the school’s website, each year Greater Lowell Regional Vocational Technical High School accept approximately 570 students for the freshman class. Once the school has reached capacity, any student who has met the criteria necessary for admission is placed on a waitlist. Students are then accepted from the waitlist as soon as space becomes available. The nine members of the school committee meet monthly August through June. Four members represent Lowell, two represent Dracut, one member represents Tyngsborough, and one represents Dunstable.[[2]](#footnote-2) The chair of the school committee is elected. At the time of the onsite in February 2019, there was one vacancy on the school committee.

The superintendent has been in the position since August 11, 2017. The district leadership team includes the superintendent, the assistant superintendent/principal, the director of special education, and the director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Central office positions have been mostly stable in number over the past five years. The district has one principal leading one school. There are 11 other school administrators: 8 cluster chairs, a senior assistant principal, an assistant principal, and a dean. In 2017–2018 there were 182 teachers in the district.

In the 2017–2018 school year, 2,270 students were enrolled in the district’s 1 school (grades 9–12).

Between 2014 and 2018, overall student enrollment increased by 7.5 percent. Enrollment figures by race/ethnicity and high needs populations (i.e., students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged students, and English learners (ELs) and former ELs) as compared with the state are provided in Tables B1a and B1b in Appendix B.

The total in-district per-pupil expenditure was lower than the median in-district per-pupil expenditure for 15 vocational/agricultural schools of similar size (1,000+ students) in fiscal year 2017: $18,417 as compared with $19,025 (see [District Analysis and Review Tool Detail: Staffing & Finance](http://www.doe.mass.edu/dart/)). Actual net school spending has been approximately equal to what is required by the Chapter 70 state education aid program, as shown in Table B3 in Appendix B.

Student Performance

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

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| **Table 1: Greater Lowell RVTSD**  **Accountability Percentile, Criterion Reference Target (CRT) Percentage, Reason for Classification** | | | | |
| **School** | **Accountability Percentile** | **CRT Percentage** | **Overall Classification** | **Reason for Classification** |
| Greater Lowell Regional Vocational Technical | 39 | 50% | Not requiring assistance or intervention | Partially meeting targets |
| Greater Lowell Regional Vocational Technical (District) | -- | 50% | Not requiring assistance or intervention | Partially meeting targets |

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| **Table 2: Greater Lowell RVTSD**  **MCAS ELA Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grade 10, 2017–2018** | | | | | | |
| **Group** | **N (2018)** | **2017** | **2018** | **Change** | **State (2018)** | **Above/Below** |
| African American/Black | 20 | 91% | 90% | -1 | 85% | 5 |
| Asian | 85 | 82% | 93% | 11 | 95% | -2 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 181 | 83% | 88% | 5 | 78% | 10 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hisp./Lat. | 18 | 100% | 94% | -6 | 93% | 1 |
| White | 236 | 88% | 92% | 4 | 94% | -2 |
| High Needs | 362 | 79% | 88% | 9 | 79% | 9 |
| Econ. Dis. | 277 | 83% | 89% | 6 | 81% | 8 |
| SWD | 113 | 53% | 72% | 19 | 69% | 3 |
| EL | 135 | 72% | 85% | 13 | 64% | 21 |
| All | 541 | 86% | 91% | 5 | 91% | 0 |

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| **Table 3: Greater Lowell RVTSD**  **MCAS Math Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grade 10, 2017–2018** | | | | | | |
| **Group** | **N (2018)** | **2017** | **2018** | **Change** | **State (2018)** | **Above/Below** |
| African American/Black | 20 | 36% | 35% | -1 | 60% | -25 |
| Asian | 84 | 75% | 79% | 4 | 91% | -12 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 181 | 63% | 61% | -2 | 56% | 5 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hisp./Lat. | 17 | 78% | 65% | -13 | 79% | -14 |
| White | 237 | 75% | 74% | -1 | 85% | -11 |
| High Needs | 360 | 58% | 61% | 3 | 57% | 4 |
| Econ. Dis. | 276 | 64% | 62% | -2 | 59% | 3 |
| SWD | 112 | 24% | 38% | 14 | 40% | -2 |
| EL | 134 | 50% | 57% | 7 | 44% | 13 |
| All | 540 | 70% | 69% | -1 | 78% | -9 |

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| **Table 4: Greater Lowell RVTSD**  **MCAS Science Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grades 5, 8, and 10, 2015–2018** | | | | | | | |
| **Group** | **N (2018)** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **4-yr Change** | **State (2018)** |
| African American/Black | 18 | 53% | 36% | 35% | 33% | -20 | 30% |
| Asian | 78 | 65% | 64% | 60% | 68% | 3 | 68% |
| Hispanic or Latino | 174 | 59% | 58% | 61% | 57% | -2 | 30% |
| Multi-Race, non-Hisp./Lat. | 17 | 63% | 73% | 84% | 71% | 8 | 54% |
| White | 222 | 69% | 70% | 72% | 73% | 4 | 60% |
| High Needs | 341 | 53% | 56% | 53% | 58% | 5 | 31% |
| Econ. Dis. | 261 | 56% | 62% | 59% | 60% | 4 | 32% |
| SWD | 109 | 26% | 30% | 33% | 37% | 11 | 21% |
| EL | 126 | 46% | 44% | 37% | 48% | 2 | 20% |
| All | 510 | 65% | 64% | 65% | 66% | 1 | 53% |

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| **Table 5: Greater Lowell RVTSD**  **MCAS Science Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grades 5, 8, and 10, 2015–2018** | | | | | | | |
| **Grade** | **N (2018)** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **4-yr Change** | **State (2018)** |
| 10 | 510 | 65% | 64% | 65% | 66% | 1 | 74% |
| All | 510 | 65% | 64% | 65% | 66% | 1 | 52% |

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| **Table 6: Greater Lowell RVTSD**  **ELA and Math Mean Student Growth Percentile, 2018** | | | | | | |
|  | **ELA** | | | **Math** | | |
| **Grade** | **N (2018)** | **2018** | **State 2018** | **N (2018)** | **2018** | **State (2018)** |
| 10 | 496 | 49.0 | 49.9 | 495 | 50.3 | 49.9 |

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| **Table 7: Greater Lowell RVTSD**  **MCAS ELA and Math Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grade 10, 2018** | | |
| **School** | **ELA** | **Math** |
| Greater Lowell RVTSD | 91% | 69% |
| State | 91% | 78% |

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| **Table 8: Greater Lowell RVTSD**  **MCAS Science Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced by School and Grade, 2018** | | | | | | | | |
| **School** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** | **10** | **Total** |
| Greater Lowell RVTSD | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 66% | 66% |
| State | -- | -- | 47% | -- | -- | 35% | 74% | 52% |

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| **Table 9: Greater Lowell RVTSD**  **MCAS ELA and Math Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grade 10, 2015–2018** | | | | | | | | | | |
|  | **ELA** | | | | | **Math** | | | | |
| **School/Group** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **4-yr-Change** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **4-yr Change** |
| Greater Lowell RVTSD | 88% | 87% | 86% | 91% | 3 | 74% | 62% | 70% | 69% | -5 |
| African American/Black | 82% | 85% | 91% | 90% | 8 | 59% | 54% | 36% | 35% | -24 |
| Asian | 91% | 86% | 82% | 93% | 2 | 80% | 64% | 75% | 79% | -1 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 82% | 83% | 83% | 88% | 6 | 65% | 59% | 63% | 61% | -4 |
| Multi-race, non-Hisp./Lat. | 90% | 92% | 100% | 94% | 4 | 75% | 92% | 78% | 65% | -10 |
| White | 90% | 90% | 88% | 92% | 2 | 77% | 63% | 75% | 74% | -3 |
| High Needs | 82% | 83% | 79% | 88% | 6 | 65% | 53% | 58% | 61% | -4 |
| Econ. Dis. | 86% | 84% | 83% | 89% | 3 | 70% | 59% | 64% | 62% | -8 |
| SWD | 57% | 60% | 53% | 72% | 15 | 34% | 25% | 24% | 38% | 4 |
| EL | 79% | 81% | 72% | 85% | 6 | 58% | 47% | 50% | 57% | -1 |

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| **Table 10: Greater Lowell RVTSD**  **MCAS Science Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Science by School and Student Group, 2015–2018** | | | | | | |
| **School** | **N (2018)** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **4-yr Change** |
| Greater Lowell RVTSD | 510 | 65% | 64% | 65% | 66% | 1% |
| African American/Black | 18 | 53% | 36% | 35% | 33% | -20% |
| Asian | 78 | 65% | 64% | 60% | 68% | 3% |
| Hispanic or Latino | 174 | 59% | 58% | 61% | 57% | -2% |
| Multi-race, non-Hisp./Lat. | 17 | 63% | 73% | 84% | 71% | 8% |
| White | 222 | 69% | 70% | 72% | 73% | 4% |
| High Needs | 341 | 53% | 56% | 53% | 58% | 5% |
| Econ. Dis. | 261 | 56% | 62% | 59% | 60% | 4% |
| SWD | 109 | 26% | 30% | 33% | 37% | 11% |
| EL | 126 | 46% | 44% | 37% | 48% | 2% |

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| **Table 11: Greater Lowell RVTSD**  **Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rates, 2014–2017** | | | | | | | |
| **Group** | **N**  **(2017)** | **2014** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **4-yr Change** | **State (2017)** |
| African American/Black | 15 | 88.9 | 95.8 | 88.9 | 100.0 | 11.1 | 80.0 |
| Asian | 81 | 96.3 | 95.1 | 93.3 | 97.5 | 1.2 | 94.1 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 139 | 93.9 | 96.2 | 94.0 | 95.0 | 1.1 | 74.4 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hisp./Lat. | 20 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 95.0 | -5.0 | 85.2 |
| White | 228 | 95.6 | 91.3 | 93.5 | 96.1 | 0.5 | 92.6 |
| High needs | 359 | 94.0 | 92.5 | 91.7 | 94.7 | 0.7 | 80.0 |
| Economically Disadvantaged\* | 323 | 93.5 | 93.0 | 91.8 | 95.4 | 1.9 | 79.0 |
| SWD | 98 | 89.1 | 78.8 | 80.9 | 85.7 | -3.4 | 72.8 |
| EL | 55 | 93.8 | 94.0 | 90.9 | 92.7 | -1.1 | 63.4 |
| All | 487 | 95.1 | 93.5 | 93.6 | 96.1 | 1.0 | 88.3 |
| \* Four-year cohort graduation rate for students from low-income families used for 2014 and 2015 rates. | | | | | | | |

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| **Table 12: Greater Lowell RVTSD**  **Five-Year Cohort Graduation Rates, 2013–2016** | | | | | | | |
| **Group** | **N**  **(2016)** | **2013** | **2014** | **2015** | **2016** | **4-yr Change** | **State (2016)** |
| African American/Black | 18 | 94.4 | 88.9 | 95.8 | 88.9 | -5.5 | 83.4 |
| Asian | 75 | 92.0 | 96.3 | 95.1 | 93.3 | 1.3 | 94.8 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 117 | 94.0 | 93.9 | 97.0 | 94.9 | 0.9 | 76.8 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hisp./Lat. | 14 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 0.0 | 87.4 |
| White | 260 | 93.8 | 96.2 | 92.0 | 94.2 | 0.4 | 93.5 |
| High needs | 373 | 92.4 | 94.5 | 93.0 | 92.5 | 0.1 | 82.9 |
| Economically Disadvantaged\* | 340 | 92.2 | 94.1 | 93.2 | 92.4 | 0.2 | 82.1 |
| SWD | 115 | 88.5 | 89.8 | 80.5 | 82.6 | -5.9 | 76.5 |
| EL | 44 | 95.2 | 93.8 | 96.0 | 90.9 | -4.3 | 70.9 |
| All | 486 | 93.8 | 95.5 | 94.1 | 94.2 | 0.4 | 89.8 |
| \* Five-year cohort graduation rate for students from low-income families used for 2014 rates. | | | | | | | |

**Table 13: Greater Lowell RVTSD**

**In-School Suspension Rates by Student Group, 2015–2018**

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| **Group** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **4-yr Change** |
| African American/Black (District) | -- | 19.1 | 15.8 | 5.8 | -- |
| African American/Black (State) | 5.7 | 6.3 | 5.8 | 6.3 |  |
| Asian (District) | 3.9 | 5.4 | 4.4 | 3.8 | -0.1 |
| Asian (State) | 1.5 | 1.6 | 1.2 | 1.1 |  |
| Hispanic or Latino (District) | 11.0 | 12.3 | 10.7 | 7.2 | -3.8 |
| Hispanic or Latino (State) | 5.8 | 6 | 4.8 | 4.4 |  |
| Multi-Race, non-Hisp./Lat. (District) | 10.9 | 6.7 | -- | -- | -- |
| Multi-Race, non-Hisp./Lat. (State) | 4.4 | 4.4 | 4.2 | 4.4 |  |
| White (District) | 8.6 | 8.4 | 6.3 | 4.2 | -4.4 |
| White (State) | 2.5 | 2.6 | 2.3 | 2.6 |  |
| High Needs (District) | 9.5 | 11.4 | 9.8 | 6.4 | -3.1 |
| High Needs (State) | 5.4 | 5.8 | 5 | 5.1 |  |
| Economically disadvantaged (District) | 9.5 | 10.8 | 10.4 | 7.1 | -2.4 |
| Economically disadvantaged (State) | 5.8 | 6.2 | 5.4 | 5.4 |  |
| SWD (District) | 12.3 | 15.3 | 11.9 | 6.4 | -5.9 |
| SWD (State) | 6.4 | 6.7 | 5.7 | 6.1 |  |
| EL (District) | 6.0 | 8.0 | 5.0 | 5.5 | -0.5 |
| EL (State) | 5.3 | 5 | 3.9 | 4.3 |  |
| All (District) | 8.4 | 9.3 | 7.7 | 5.2 | -3.2 |
| All (State) | 3.3 | 3.6 | 3.1 | 3.2 |  |

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| **Table 14: Greater Lowell RVTSD**  **Out-of-School Suspension Rates by Student Group, 2015–2018** | | | | | | |
| **Group** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **4-yr Change** |  |
| African American/Black (District) | -- | 7.4 | 7.9 | 9.3 | -- |  |
| African American/Black (State) | 9.7 | 9 | 8.7 | 8.6 |  |  |
| Asian (District) | 1.7 | 2.7 | 3.3 | 4.9 | 3.2 |  |
| Asian (State) | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.2 | 1.5 |  |  |
| Hispanic or Latino (District) | 5.2 | 4.9 | 7.3 | 7.1 | 1.9 |  |
| Hispanic or Latino (State) | 8.9 | 8.8 | 7.5 | 7.6 |  |  |
| Multi-Race, non-Hisp./ Lat. (District) | 1.8 | 2.7 | -- | -- | -- |  |
| Multi-Race, non-Hisp./ Lat. (State) | 7.2 | 6.8 | 5.7 | 6.1 |  |  |
| White (District) | 3.5 | 2.9 | 4.9 | 4.8 | 1.3 |  |
| White (State) | 3.5 | 3.2 | 3 | 3.4 |  |  |
| High Needs (District) | 4.5 | 4.0 | 7.0 | 7.2 | 2.7 |  |
| High Needs (State) | 8.4 | 8.1 | 7.4 | 7.8 |  |  |
| Economically disadvantaged\* (District) | 4.3 | 3.9 | 7.3 | 7.4 | 3.1 |  |
| Economically disadvantaged (State) | 9.2 | 9.0 | 8.2 | 8.4 |  |  |
| SWD (District) | 6.9 | 5.5 | 7.8 | 9.5 | 2.6 |  |
| SWD (State) | 10.3 | 9.7 | 8.8 | 9.5 |  |  |
| EL (District) | 4.3 | 3.0 | 6.7 | 7.5 | 3.2 |  |
| EL State | 7.4 | 7.6 | 6.8 | 6.9 |  |  |
| All (District) | 3.6 | 3.6 | 5.4 | 5.7 | 2.1 |  |
| All (State) | 4.9 | 4.7 | 4.3 | 4.7 |  |  |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Table 15: Greater Lowell RVTSD**  **Dropout Rates by Student Group, 2014–2017** | | | | | | |
| **Group** | **2014** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **4-yr Change** | **State (2017)** |
| African American/Black | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 2.9 |
| Asian | 0.3 | 0.0 | 1.1 | 0.6 | 0.3 | 0.6 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 0.5 | 0.9 | 0.3 | 0.9 | 0.4 | 4.2 |
| Multi-Race, , non-Hisp./Lat. | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 1.7 |
| White | 0.3 | 1.0 | 0.2 | 0.2 | -0.1 | 1.1 |
| High Needs | 0.5 | 1.1 | 0.6 | 0.5 | 0.0 | 3.5 |
| Economically disadvantaged\* | 0.5 | 1.0 | 0.7 | 0.6 | 0.1 | 3.6 |
| SWD | 0.4 | 1.6 | 0.5 | 0.9 | 0.5 | 3.3 |
| EL | 0.6 | 0.9 | 1.0 | 1.7 | 1.1 | 6.5 |
| All | 0.3 | 0.7 | 0.4 | 0.5 | 0.2 | 1.8 |
| State |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| \*Dropout rates for students from low-income families used for 2014 rates. | | | | | | |

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| **Table 16: Greater Lowell RVTSD**  **Advanced Coursework Completion by Student Group, 2017–2018** | | | | | |
| **Group** | **N (2018)** | **2017** | **2018** | **Change** | **Target** |
| African American/Black | 33 | 50.0 | 90.9 | 40.9 | 58.0 |
| Asian | 179 | 56.3 | 88.3 | 32.0 | 68.1 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 342 | 40.9 | 94.4 | 53.5 | 50.8 |
| Multi-Race, , non-Hisp./Lat. | 37 | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| White | 463 | 54.9 | 94.2 | 39.3 | 61.3 |
| High Needs | 604 | 37.9 | 78.6 | 40.7 | 45.9 |
| Economically disadvantaged | 453 | 38.3 | 82.1 | 43.8 | 48.6 |
| SWD | 203 | 27.6 | 39.9 | 12.3 | 33.0 |
| EL | 294 | 34.7 | 93.2 | 58.5 | 44.1 |
| All | 1,058 | 51.1 | 93.1 | 42.0 | 57.2 |

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| **Table 17: Greater Lowell RVTSD**  **Progress toward Attaining English Language Proficiency, 2017–2018** | | | | | | | | | | |
|  | **Non-high school** | | | | | **High school** | | | | |
| **Group** | **N (2018)** | **2017** | **2018** | **Change** | **Target** | **N (2018)** | **2017** | **2018** | **Change** | **Target** |
| EL | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 137 | 15.5 | 16.1 | 0.6 | 23.1 |
| All | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 137 | 15.5 | 16.1 | 0.6 | 23.1 |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Table 18: Greater Lowell RVTSD**  **Chronic Absence Rates by Student Group,\* 2017–2018** | | | | | | | | | | |
|  | **Non-high school** | | | | | **High school** | | | | |
| **Group** | **N (2018)** | **2017** | **2018** | **Change** | **Target** | **N (2018)** | **2017** | **2018** | **Change** | **Target** |
| African American/Black | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 83 | 10.8 | 10.8 | 0.0 | 7.4 |
| Asian | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 367 | 9.5 | 14.7 | -5.2 | 6.9 |
| Hispanic or Latino | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 724 | 17.5 | 16.0 | 1.5 | 14.3 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hisp./Lat. | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 76 | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| White | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 987 | 11.6 | 10.5 | 1.1 | 9.6 |
| High needs | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 1,364 | 17.1 | 16.8 | 0.3 | 14.5 |
| Economically Disadvantaged | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 918 | 20.2 | 20.3 | -0.1 | 16.5 |
| SWD | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 331 | 17.1 | 15.1 | 2.0 | 13.4 |
| EL | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 627 | 13.1 | 15.5 | -2.4 | 5.4 |
| All | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 2,243 | 13.3 | 13.1 | 0.2 | 11.4 |
| \* The percentage of students absent 10 percent or more of their total number of student days of membership in a school | | | | | | | | | | |

Curriculum and Instruction

Contextual Background

*Curriculum*

Greater Lowell Regional Vocational Technical High School provides students with academic instruction aligned with and driven by the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks, and career, vocational, technical education (CVTE) instruction based on the Massachusetts Vocational Technical Education Frameworks. Curriculum development is collaborative and is overseen by several administrators: the principal; the director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment; and eight cluster chairs. Cluster chairs supervise groups of teachers, or clusters, arranged by academic and CVTE disciplines. In addition to the Frameworks, factors in curriculum development at the school include MCAS assessment performance analysis, district mid-year and end-of-course assessments, information gleaned from learning walks, and ongoing adjustments by teachers, as needed.

Academic curricula are mainly teacher developed. CVTE curricula comprise a combination of teacher-generated and published curricula: e.g., Project Lead the Way (PLTW), Automotive Service Excellence (ASE), and ServSafe. All new academic and CVTE curricula are written to adhere to the format of e DESE’s Model Curriculum Unit template. Teachers meet by department and cluster to collaborate on curriculum development and alignment formally, after school, and informally during the school day as time and the teaching schedules allow. There is common planning time scheduled during the school day for selected inclusion classes and for the 9th grade ELA teams. At the time of the onsite in February 2019, teachers had been working for several years to complete scope and sequence documents for all courses to standardize the documented curricula. Teachers share completed scope and sequence documents and lesson plans through Google Classroom and a shared drive.

In Greater Lowell Regional Vocational Technical High School’s 180-day school year, students in grades 11 and 12 spend alternating one-week blocks in academic and career, vocational, technical education (CVTE) classrooms, with physical education and health provided during the CVTE week. Grade 10 students follow a similar schedule except that they have one period of math daily during both academic and CVTE weeks; health and physical education are provided during the academic week. In grade 9, students have core subjects (English, math, science, and history) every day for a single period, with physical education and teen health in alternating weeks. During grade 9, students visit each CVTE program for one period at the beginning of the year. They then explore 17 of the school’s 23 CVTE programs by spending two periods (88 minutes) each day for 7 days before making their final four choices in the fourth quarter of grade 9. This enables students to make a well-informed decision when choosing the CVTE program that they will spend the remaining three years of high school pursuing.

All academic courses are designated as dual enrollment, college preparation, honors, or advanced placement.  Instruction in the college preparation courses is designed to prepare students primarily for two-year college curriculum, and honors courses prepare students primarily for four-year college curriculum. Depending on their post-secondary college enrollment, students completing advanced placement courses may have the opportunity to receive college credit for these courses. Courses in each core subject area are designed in a sequence from grade 9 through 12. Spanish is offered as an on-line course that students can take and complete during non-school hours.

*Instruction*

The assistant superintendent/principal provides overall instructional leadership. The district has four academic cluster chairs and four CVTE cluster chairs. All cluster chairs are responsible for the evaluation of teachers in their departments.

According to DESE data, 99.5 percent of the teachers at the high school are teaching the subjects in which they are certified, and 90.1 percent are identified as experienced.

CVTE programs generally have either three or four teachers who are responsible for instruction in the CVTE programs and related academic classrooms.[[3]](#footnote-3) Four CVTE teachers provide instruction to grade 9 students in the CVTE 1, 4, 5 and 6 strands (health and safety, employability, entrepreneurship, and technology). Twenty-one special needs teachers provide instruction and support to students. Five teachers provide instruction in the Transitional Occupations Program (TOP) and sixteen teachers provide support through a study-skills class or team teach with core academic teachers. Ten special needs and two Title I teaching assistants provide additional instructional support in CVTE classrooms.

Strength Finding

**1. Throughout the school, instruction benefits from teachers’ knowledge of subject matter, from students understanding what they are learning and why, and from a classroom climate that supports teaching and learning.**

* 1. In observed classrooms, the review team found sufficient and compelling evidence that teachers demonstrated subject matter knowledge (characteristic #1) in 85 percent of the academic classes and in 96 percent of the career, vocational, technical education (CVTE) classes.
     1. In a grade 10 biology class, the teacher paused a video to clarify information and make connections to previously studied material and other fields of science. In a number of observed classes, team members noted the high quality of the explanations that teachers provided. In a grade 9 math class, the teacher helped a student identify homework inaccuracies as related to the calculator he used at home rather than to his understanding of the math concepts.
     2. In observed CVTE classrooms and CVTE programs, teachers provided clear instruction, answered related questions, and connected instruction to real-world tasks.
  2. The team found sufficient and compelling evidence that teachers ensured that students understand what they should be learning in the lesson and why (characteristic #2) in 89 percent of the academic classes and in 96 percent of the CVTE classes observed.
     1. In a number of observed academic classes, learning objectives were posted or the teacher explained the agenda and the purpose of the activities. In some classes, it was clear to team members that students understood the lesson and its value from the class discussion, or from the explanation provided by students to team members.
     2. In some CVTE classrooms and CVTE programs, objectives were posted or students demonstrated specific skills and understanding of concepts through their activity and/or discussions. In others, when asked by review team members, students explained what they were doing, how, and why.

**C.** Team members found sufficient and compelling evidence that classroom climate was conducive to teaching and learning (characteristic #12) in 85 percent of observed academic classes and in 96 percent of CVTE classes.

In core content areas, academic classes had positive climates where there was evidence of mutual respect and students seemed comfortable speaking and participating. In some classes, observers noted a high level of animation and excitement generated by the lesson and a positive anticipation of continuing the activity the next day.

Review team members described the climate in CVTE classrooms and CVTE programs as “collegial,” “pleasant,” and “comfortable.” Students were observed working together, helping each other, and showing mutual respect. One team member noted the positive way students with disabilities were included so that they could be successful.

**Impact**: Teachers’ subject matter knowledge ensures that students learn complex content, concepts, and industry standard competencies. Creating a learning environment where respect is mutual and reciprocal enables students to feel safe to take academic and intellectual risks that stretch their understanding and abilities.

**Challenges and Areas for Growth**

**2. The documentation of curriculum is a schoolwide expectation; however, the district does not have a formal and cyclical process/timeline for ongoing curriculum development, review, and revision.**

**A.** Although all new curriculum is required to adhere to DESE’s Model Curriculum Unit template, administrators have not published a curriculum review calendar or established clear timelines for all curriculum to be written in that format.

1. At the time of the onsite in February 2019, administrators expressed hope that the changes in format would take place over the next three to five years.

**B.** Interviews and a document review indicated that an ongoing process for the development of scope and sequence documents has produced varying results.

* + - 1. Administrators and cluster chairs stated that completed scope and sequence documents varied in content and quality, noting that variations were related to the different levels of expertise of the teachers completing the documents.
         1. Some scope and sequence objectives are written in the “student-will-be-able-to” structure (SWBAT).
         2. Some include a specific, written description of frameworks references.
      2. After-school time is allotted to grade-level, content (course) specific curriculum teams, which meet by department and cluster twice per month (per the collective bargaining agreement). Although curriculum is the intended focus of some of these meetings, curriculum is not an ongoing focus in the meetings and the teams do not consistently document curriculum development.
  1. The ELE, ELA, social studies, and Title I clusters use a specific form to document their curriculum team meeting notes. The form includes two sections: Discussion Notes and Shared Best Practices and Meeting Outcomes to Improve Student Achievement. Meeting notes indicating a response to those headings are not consistent in content or quality.
     + 1. The meeting notes submitted by CVTE clusters and programs do not include curriculum as a standing agenda item. One cluster’s template heading states that the purpose of the meetings is “to review data and housekeeping items.” Another cluster’s meeting summary included the following discussion prompts in the template heading: “How are we doing? Learning walks, what am I seeing? What I would like to see?” These topics are not addressed in the meeting minutes. The feedback loop, or the process by which cluster chairs review the minutes of curriculum team meetings and then relay responses or suggestions to teachers, is not consistently implemented. Administrators stated that cluster chairs had the meeting minutes and that clusters worked together in teams.
          1. When asked whether they received feedback on the contents of the curriculum meeting minutes, teachers stated that minutes were written up and posted to the shared drive, and that cluster leaders would rotate around to department meetings and might bring meeting notes up in a cluster meeting.
       2. District leaders told the team that this type of documented feedback used to be included as part of professional learning communities (PLCs) which are no longer in place in the district.
          1. Teachers stated that when there were PLCs there was more collaboration, but the difficulty of scheduling common planning time for curriculum development made collaboration difficult.

**Impact**: The absence of a systematic process to guide the development, review, and revision of curriculum materials prevents all students from accessing high‐quality teaching and learning.

**3. Academic and career, vocational, technical education curricula in the district are not sufficiently integrated.**

**A**. District documents refer specifically to integration of academic and career, vocational, technical education (CVTE) curricula.

1. In his letter of introduction to the high school’s program of studies, the superintendent states “Students are exposed to an integrated program of instruction which provides them with the opportunity to attain the technical, academic, and social skills needed to be productive and well-adjusted members of society.”

2. The District Curriculum Accommodation Plan includes integration as a topic for professional development “because the goal of the District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP) is to provide educational opportunities that meet the needs of all learners, these professional development programs are crucial to its success….”

3. The Five-Year Focused Visit Report prepared for NEASC[[4]](#footnote-4) by the district in 2015 stated that “increasing integration activities between academic and technical programs beginning at the ninth grade” have been completed. Furthermore, the Report states that “Increasing the integration of mathematics in the academic and technical areas through a formal integration program that strengthens and supports technical curriculums” is in progress.

4. The CVTE scope and sequence documents submitted to the team for review include a column for embedded academics.

**B.** The formal integration efforts detailed in the district’s 2015 Five-Year Focused Visit Report are no longer in place.

* + 1. Administrators stated that literacy coaches had been in place to work with teacher teams.

2. Administrators, cluster chairs, and teachers told the review team that integration was “informal.”

**C.** Cluster chairs and teachers described a need for integration of academic and career, vocational, technical education curricula.

1. Teachers and cluster chairs told the team that there were literacy expectations in CVTE, and that they wanted to “pull integration more to the front.”

**Impact**: Without a shared responsibility for integrating academic and CVTE curricula across all grade levels and disciplines, students are shortchanged. The absence of expectations and support for administrators and cluster chairs to guide—and for teachers to implement—academic and CVTE integration undercuts the commitment that the district has made to fostering collective responsibility among the faculty to ensure that all students succeed.

**4. Systems and supports for monitoring instruction do not foster continuous improvement across all curriculum areas. High expectations of performance are not clearly articulated or monitored.**

**A.** While learning walks can be a productive activity to gauge the instructional climate of the school or assess the implementation of a specific initiative, the use of learning walks at the high school to improve individual teacher instruction is inconsistent.

The learning walk template received from the district suggests that learning walks could provide high-quality, actionable data on classroom climate, instruction, teaching strategies, learning objectives, and level of rigor observed during each classroom visited. The review team did not receive any documentation related to data collection and improvements in instruction related to learning walks.

In focus groups, teachers expressed the opinion that learning walks were used to see what students were doing and not to look at teachers’ practice. They also suggested that there was a “pecking order” and “if it’s a new teacher they might go in.” Although some teachers viewed these activities as a way of building trust, they admitted that there was still a reluctance on the part of others to engage.

Feedback provide to teachers from learning walks is inconsistent. Administrators identified the implementation of a response to learning walks as a challenge. Some teachers want feedback, but others are reluctant to receive it. Administrators who conduct the walks meet with cluster chairs to determine if what they observed is “worthy of feedback.”

CVTE teachers described learning walks as safety walks and said students were not necessarily present in the classroom when the walk was conducted. Cluster chairpersons referred to learning walks conducted to look at student engagement in the past tense.

* 1. The district has not established a common understanding of its expectations for research-based, high-quality instruction.
     + 1. When the review team asked what it could expect to see when observing instruction, administrators said they hoped that the team would see active engagement, students asking questions, and relationship building. The only classroom non-negotiables identified by administrators were kindness and respect.
       2. The superintendent stated that the team should see active learning, checking for understanding, collaboration, and clear expectations throughout the district.
       3. Cluster chairs identified time-on-task as a non-negotiable. They also identified the sharing of class objectives as an expectation.

**C.** District leaders told the team that some teachers had participated in the Research for Better Teaching (RBT) course, The Skillful Teacher.

**D.** There is an absence of clarity about CVTE leadership structure and oversight.

1. The four academic cluster chairs report to the director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment but it is unclear to whom CVTE cluster chairs report.

a. Administrators identified the assistant superintendent/principal as the instructional leader for CVTE. However, CVTE cluster chairs identified the assistant superintendent/principal as their immediate supervisor but said that they contacted the director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment for support and assistance with some aspects of the position.

Citing the need for a CVTE director, the superintendent expressed the opinion that the school needed to devote more resources to curriculum and instruction. Some teachers mentioned the need for a CVTE director saying that the “right person” would be “positive for the school.”

**Impact**: Without establishing a common understanding of the district’s expectations for research-based, high-quality instruction, the district cannot ensure that all students will receive the high-quality instruction that they need to achieve success in careers, college, and civic participation.

**5. In observed academic classes, team members observed a lower incidence of students engaging in higher-order thinking and challenging tasks, communicating their ideas and thinking with each other, and of teachers using a variety of instructional strategies than in career, vocational, technical education classrooms.**

Members of the review team saw sufficient and compelling evidence of students engaging in higher-order thinking (characteristic #6) in only 41 percent of observed academic classes. In contrast, observers found sufficient and compelling evidence of higher-order thinking in 64 percent of the career, vocational, technical education (CVTE) classes observed. While students in some academic classes were engaged in analysis and synthesis, in most academic classes, students demonstrated limited engagement in higher-order thinking such as problem-solving or evaluation. Team members described students as minimally engaged in tasks that required higher-order thinking.

a. In a grade 10 ELA class, students were engaging in higher-order thinking through analysis and synthesis as they explored connections between a nonfiction piece of literature and a novel.

b. In contrast, in a grade 9 science class, the teacher corrected students’ answers rather than facilitating student engagement in higher-order thinking such as problem solving.

c. In a grade 10 math class, students were given opportunities to work together but most conversations did not concern math. Review team members observed that students in CVTE classes were generally engaged in higher-order thinking.

a. Team members described some CVTE classes as skill based with limited communication among students or higher-order thinking.

b. Observers described some CVTE classes as “production based” with students repeating the same task multiple times.

1. Members of the review team saw sufficient and compelling evidence of students communicating their ideas and thinking with each other (characteristic #7) in only 44 percent of observed academic classes but in 72 percent of CVTE classes.
   * + 1. The majority of academic classes were teacher centered. In these classes, teachers lectured, showed videos, or directed students to copy from the board with little collaborative discussion.

a. In an ELA class in which students communicated their ideas and thinking with each other, students collaborated, reviewed, and edited each other’s research papers.

b. In a grade 10 math class, students were given opportunities to work together but most conversations did not concern math.

c. In some classes, when communication took place, it was teacher directed with few student-to-student exchanges or off-task conversations.

d. Some teachers answered their own questions or explained students’ answers rather than encourage students to explain their thinking.

e. In some classes, one student or the same students answered all the questions posed.

* + - 1. Review team members observed that in most CVTE classrooms communication was collaborative and student centered.

1. The team saw sufficient and compelling evidence that the teacher ensures that students are engaging in challenging tasks (characteristic #9) regardless of learning needs in 56 percent of observed academic classes and in 72 percent of CVTE classes.
   * 1. In academic classes, although two teachers made pacing adjustments and another read a problem out loud to a student who was apparently missing vital information necessary to solve the problem, in several classes, team members found that the lesson was minimally designed to support and challenge students with varied learning needs.

a. Teaching assistants were present in five of the observed classes. A team member noted that in one class the assistant circulated, clarifying instructions and checking students’ work. In three classrooms, however, it was not clear to observers what impact teaching assistants had on students’ access to the lesson. In one classroom, the team member described the role of the assistant as controlling students’ behavior.

* + 1. In some observed CVTE classes, all students were engaged in the same activity; the lessons were not designed to support and challenge students with varied learning needs.

In a computer-aided design (CAD) class in which the teacher ensured that students were engaging in challenging tasks, students designed and fabricated a toy and its packaging. One student used a computer to design the toy and its packaging, four students brainstormed the tasks, and one student designed the toy using cardboard.

1. Members of the review team saw sufficient and compelling evidence of teachers using a variety of instructional strategies (characteristic #10) in 52 percent of observed academic classes and in 72 percent of CVTE classes.
   * 1. In many observed academic classrooms, teachers relied on one instructional approach or format. Instruction tended to be teacher centered, whole group, and lecture style. Some math teachers effectively used their interactive white boards, while other teachers based instruction on worksheets.

a. In a grades 11 and 12 science class in which the team observed a variety of instructional strategies, the teacher used a PowerPoint presentation, a textbook, and a hands-on lab.

* + 1. The majority of CVTE teachers used multiple instructional approaches and formats. Teachers used a combination of direct instruction, small group or individual tutorial, hands-on approaches, and guided practice.

1. Although average observation scores were higher for CVTE classes overall as compared with academic classes overall, the review team noted a need for improvement in many CVTE classes. For example, they noted that students in some CVTE classes had little teacher monitoring. Students were observed using cell phones, not using eye protection, and sprinkling shavings on each other like confetti. In one CVTE program, teachers were not in the student work area for the majority of the observation.

**Impact**: Without consistent delivery of effective, research-based instruction in all grades and subjects, the district cannot consistently provide all its students with high-quality instruction, optimize their learning opportunities, and prepare them for college, careers, and civic involvement.

**Recommendations**

**1. The district should implement a formal process for ongoing curriculum development, review, and revision. It should continue to develop its curriculum to ensure that the district has a fully documented, aligned, and integrated curriculum that is consistently implemented and effectively delivered.**

**A.** Thedistrict should consider providing cluster chairs and teachers with ongoing professional development in guiding teachers to develop high‐quality, integrated curriculum.

1. The district should develop a process for the regular review and revision of curriculum. District leaders should develop and implement a formal and cyclical planning process to review and update curricula.

2. The district should ensure that all curriculum teams have sufficient opportunities to focus regularly on curriculum development and that cluster chairs consistently relay feedback from curriculum team meetings to teachers.

**B**. The district should consider expanding its curriculum development templates toinclude expectations foracademic and CVTE integration.

1**.** The district should provide structured opportunities in the curriculum for students to apply their academic skills in the context of their technical majors and their technical skills in academic areas.

1. The district should consider a recommitment to the academic and CVTE integration initiatives outlined in the Five-Year Focused Visit Report to NEASC.

**Benefits:** Implementing this recommendation will mean structured opportunities for students in this vocational technical high school to integrate their academic and technical studies. As a result, students will deepen their understanding of what they are learning. By strategically increasing the focus of teacher collaboration time on curriculum integration, the district likely will create a clearer and more efficient pathway to curriculum integration across all grade levels, ultimately improving teaching and student learning.

**Recommended resources:**

* DESE’s Massachusetts Vocational Technical Education Frameworks (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/cte/frameworks/?section=all>) include Academic Crosswalks as appendices.
* *Quick Reference Guide: Assessing Your Curriculum Landscape* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/candi/impd/qrg-assessing-curriculum.pdf>) is designed to support districts in assessing their curriculum landscape by asking three questions: (1) Do teachers have ready access to high-quality, standards-aligned curricular materials? (2) Do sustained and collaborative professional learning structures empower teachers to use those materials in ways responsive to their students’ needs? (3) Are curriculum review processes regular, rigorous, and responsive to stakeholder input and needs?
  + - The Massachusetts Science and Technology/Engineering Curriculum Framework web page (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/stem/review.html>) provides links to the current frameworks and supporting documents, including updated strand maps, crosswalks, and other guidance materials.
    - EdReports.org (<http://www.edreports.org/>) provides free, independent reviews of K-12 education materials. The reviews focus on alignment to the Common Core and other indicators of high quality as recommended by educators.
    - The *PLC Expansion Project* website (<http://plcexpansionproject.weebly.com/>) is designed to support schools and districts in their efforts to establish and sustain cultures that promote Professional Learning Communities.

**2. The district should ensure that all teachers provide effective instruction that challenges and supports all students and should clarify the roles and responsibilities of CVTE leaders.**

1. The district should clarify the roles and responsibilities of CVTE leaders and should clearly communicate this information to the district community.

The district should consider reallocating resources to re-institute the CVTE director position.

1. The district should convene a representative group of teachers and instructional leaders to identify key instructional practices.

The recommended product of these meetings is a set of practices that challenges and engages students, increases student communication of their ideas and thinking, cultivates higher-order thinking skills, and expands teachers’ use of instructional strategies.

The district should prioritize these instructional strategies as its “non-negotiables.”

1. Once the set of instructional expectations has beendefined, district leaders should develop a plan for communicating these expectations with staff.

1. The district is encouraged to provide opportunities for educators to discuss ideas and strategies from the set of instructional expectations. These opportunities might include grade-level, department meetings, faculty meetings, and professional development days.

2. The district should develop structures to support peer observation to both model instructional feedback and encourage peer feedback.

**D.** Teachers should receive appropriate guidance and feedback as they implement the district’s instructional expectations.

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

2. Instructional leaders should ensure that teachers have the information and support necessary to meet the district’s expectations for instruction.

3. The district should provide teachers with high-quality feedback[[5]](#footnote-5) that helps them to improve instruction.

**E.** The administration should develop a shared understanding of the process and purpose of learning walks and ensure that all educators recognize the goal of the practice.

Administration should determine the primary purpose and goal of learning walks (i.e. individual teacher feedback or determining schoolwide trends) and communicate this to all educators.

Once the purpose and goal of learning walks are determined, district leaders should establish a process and common language for collecting data to identify instructional trends and/or provide individual teacher feedback.

The district should consider including teachers in the learning walks.

The administration should develop a plan and schedule for conducting learning walks that is informed by the goals of this initiative and that is clearly communicated to educators.

The district should document the findings, outcomes, and data relative to improved instruction and student performance as a result of learning walks and communicate these findings with educators.

**Benefits:** Implementing this recommendation will mean clear and articulated expectations for administrators and teachers for best instructional practices. A district that recognizes, supports, and prioritizes high-quality instruction for all students and ongoing professional supports for teachers and administrators creates and sustains a culture of continuous improvement, resulting in professional growth and increased student achievement.

**Recommended resources:**

* *Quick Reference Guide: Opportunities to Streamline the Evaluation Process* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/QRG-Streamline.pdf>) is designed to help districts reflect on and continuously improve their evaluation systems:
  + What’s working? What are the bright spots?
  + How can we streamline the process to stay focused on professional growth and development?
  + What do we need to adjust to ensure our system is valuable to educators and students?
* DESE’s *Online Calibration Training Platform* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/calibration/>) uses videos of classroom instruction to simulate brief, unannounced observations. Groups of educators, such as a district leadership team, watch a video together and then individually assess the educator’s practice related to specific elements from the Model Classroom Teacher Rubric and provide the educator with written feedback. Through real-time data displays, the group members can then see how their conclusions compare to each other, as well educators throughout the state.
* DESE’s *"What to Look For" Observation Guides* ***(Updated August 2017)*** (http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/observation/) describe what observers should expect to see in a classroom at a particular grade level in a specific subject area. This includes the knowledge and skills students should be learning and using (as reflected in state learning standards) and best practices related to classroom curriculum, instruction, and assessment for each subject area. The guides are not designed to replace any evaluation system or tools districts currently use but are a resource to help classroom observers efficiently identify what teachers and students should be experiencing in specific subjects and grade levels.
* The *Educator Effectiveness Guidebook for Inclusive Practice* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/guidebook/>) includes tools for districts, schools, and educators that are aligned to the MA Educator Evaluation Framework and promote evidence-based best practices for inclusion following the principles of Universal Design for Learning, Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, and Social and Emotional Learning.
* DESE’s *Learning Walkthrough Implementation Guide* ( http://www.doe.mass.edu/educators/title-iia/ImplementationGuide2016.pdf) is a resource to support instructional leaders in establishing a *Learning Walkthrough* process in a school or district. It is designed to provide guidance to those working in an established culture of collaboration as well as those who are just beginning to observe classrooms and discuss teaching and learning in a focused and actionable manner. (The link above includes a presentation to introduce Learning Walkthroughs.)

Appendix 4, *Characteristics of Standards-Based Teaching and Learning: Continuum of Practice* (<http://www.mass.gov/edu/docs/ese/accountability/dart/walkthrough/continuum-practice.pdf>) is a framework that provides a common language or reference point for looking at teaching and learning.

Assessment

Contextual Background

The high school has a balanced system of academic and career, vocational, technical education (CVTE) assessments. The director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment has overall responsibility for the collection, analysis, use, and sharing of academic and CVTE assessment data.

The school uses academic and CVTE assessment data to develop interventions for students who need additional support and for teachers to modify instruction. The director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment typically provides academic and CVTE assessment results to the four academic and four CVTE cluster leaders who collaborate with teachers at monthly cluster meetings or more regularly scheduled curriculum team meetings. Administrators stated that the director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment shared MCAS assessment results with CVTE cluster chairs who then passed the information along to their respective teachers. Help for teachers to interpret the scores is available upon a teacher’s request. While cluster and curriculum teams do meet regularly to review/develop curricula and to review assessment results, documentation of the content of these meetings is inconsistent.

The school currently uses the X2 Aspen, which is a secure, web-based school information system to collect and store student data, including attendance, grades, and schedules. While some assessment data is stored in the system, it is not an assessment data warehouse. X2 Aspen is primarily used by students and parents to access grades and assignments. The district is piloting the use of the Illuminate online assessment system, where teachers can upload and administer assessments and analyze multiple sources of data to inform instruction.

The school uses the Stanford 10 assessment to place new students in grade 9 ELA and math classes and to determine students’ eligibility for Title I services. Students in grades 11 and 12 take the Accuplacer assessment to assess their reading, writing, and math skills and to qualify for college-level courses. To measure CVTE skill aptitude, the high school uses the Skills Plus competency tracking program to measure student skill progress in relation to the 2014 Massachusetts vocational technical frameworks.

The school generally does not have weekly common planning time scheduled for teachers to meet and discuss assessment results or review student work.[[6]](#footnote-6) Activities that are normally conducted during common planning time are conducted by teachers during cluster and curriculum meetings.

Strength Findings

**1. The high school has implemented a balanced system of assessments to measure the academic and career, vocational, technical education (CVTE) competency skills of students and to effectively place incoming and enrolled students in academic and CVTE classes. The district is piloting a data management system to enable teachers to use data more effectively to improve instruction.**

**A.** Interviews and a review of documents and the district’s website indicated that the district administered a range of assessments to identify students’ academic and CVTE strengths, challenges, and interest levels.

1. Students in grade 9 take the Stanford 10 test in ELA and math. The school uses the results of the test to place students in appropriate classes and to determine Title I eligibility.

a. Title I students are pre-tested at the beginning of each year using the Fountas and Pinnell benchmark assessment and post-tested at the end of the year to verify Title I placement.

2. ACCESS[[7]](#footnote-7) testing is administered annually to all English learners in grades 9–12.

3. The school offers the Accuplacer diagnostic test in grades 11 and 12 to assess the math, reading, and writing skills of students. The school provides a bus for transportation.

a. Grade 11 Accuplacer results are used to improve students’ skills and grade 12 results are used to place students in appropriate college-level courses.

4. Students in grade 9 participate in the school’s exploratory program as part of the process of CVTE program placement. Students select 17 CVTE programs and spend 2 periods a day for 7 days “exploring” each program. In the fourth marking period, student select a CVTE program to focus on for the rest of high school. Students take a career abilities placement survey to determine vocational abilities and interest.

5. The high school uses the Skills Plus competency tracking program to measure student skill progress in relation to the 2014 Massachusetts Vocational Technical Education Frameworks. The program enables students and families to track competency online.

a. The school has also administered another assessment in grades 10–­12 but found that it did not meet its needs. District administrators and teachers expressed the view that this assessment did not effectively assess competency for Massachusetts CVTE standards.

6. The high school uses the MCAS test, common mid-terms and final examinations, as well as exit tickets, Kahoot,[[8]](#footnote-8) multiple pre-assessments, quizzes, and unit tests to measure academic and technical skill development and plan and guide instruction.

1. In 2018–2019, the district is piloting a robust online assessment system called Illuminate in the math and science department and in the technical early childhood program. The district has provided Illuminate training to approximately 40 teachers.
2. Illuminate can be integrated with X2 Aspen, the school’s student information system. Teachers can upload assessments to Illuminate, create new assessments, and select assessment items from an item bank that are aligned with state standards. The high school collects and evaluates employer and student cooperative education data.

1. Approximately 220 students and 100 companies participate in the cooperative education program.

2. The cooperative education department staff visit three to five workplace sites weekly. To ensure that students remain eligible for the program, cooperative education department staff review student progress reports, grades in the X2 Aspen student information system, term grades, and report cards.

3. Employers evaluate students weekly and students receive mid-term and final evaluations.

**Impact**: Having diagnostic, benchmark, and summative assessments in place enables the district’s teachers to identify and provide support for students and to place students in appropriate course levels. In the CVTE area, having an assessment system that is competency based and aligned with the state’s CVTE standards enhances the school’s ability to track CVTE competency and make instructional adjustments so that students can become certified in their CVTE program.

**Challenges and Areas for Growth**

1. **Academic and career, vocational, technical education (CVTE) cluster and curriculum teams do not have a thorough and consistent approach to using data to improve teaching and learning.**
   * 1. Interviews and a document review indicated that although some effective data analysis practices were in place in the district, rigorous analysis of assessment data to systematically guide instructional and curriculum planning was not consistently practiced throughout the district.
2. In its self-assessment submitted in advance of the onsite, district leaders stated that data practices, in general, could be more consistent across the district.

a. District leaders and teachers described how members of curriculum teams, under the direction of cluster chairs, reviewed data and made instructional changes.

b. When school leaders were asked about declining or static math and science performance of the African American and Asian student groups, they told the team that they have not reviewed math and science performance in the African American and Asian student groups and have been focused on whole-school changes.

1. A review of agendas and minutes of cluster and curriculum team meetings submitted by the district indicated that the meetings did not consistently include the analysis of aggregated or disaggregated student assessment data.

**B.** School leaders told the team that the district had not provided professional development on assessment practices in the two years before the onsite visit in February 2019. School leaders stated that one of the biggest challenges the school faced was the range of teachers’ ability to understand data.

1. CVTE teachers receive MCAS assessment scores, but only get help interpreting them if they request it. A reading specialist is available to help CVTE teachers interpret reading data.

a. Cluster and curriculum teams review MCAS assessment data, which school leaders provide to cluster teams, and TestWiz item analysis reports.

**C.** Cluster teams meet monthly and curriculum teams meet twice monthly. Common planning time is not a consistent practice at the school.

**Impact:** Without consistent data analysis practices, district leaders and teachers cannot effectively track students’ performance and analyze the causes for low achievement. Enhancements to curriculum and instruction may be less targeted and effective. When the district does not provide teachers with the support and structures to routinely analyze data, the district compromises its ability to improve teaching, learning, and decision-making.

**Recommendation**

1. **The school should build educators’ capacity to analyze and use data to improve teaching and learning.**
   * 1. The school should provide teachers with professional development about protocols and processes for analyzing and using disaggregated data to support all students.
2. Some of the district’s current data practices could serve as examples for discussion and possible expansion.
   * 1. The district should use the results of data analysis to inform school improvement goals and to modify curriculum and instruction.
3. The district should consider having cluster teams develop improvement initiatives and action plans targeted to gaps identified by data. The action plans should focus on the needs and learning styles of the students—including particular student groups—and the expertise and strategies needed to improve all students’ performance, opportunities, and outcomes.
   * 1. The district should use the results of data analysis to inform the professional development needed by teachers.
4. The school should consider a train-the-trainer model and identify a skillful teacher or cluster leader who could periodically provide data analysis training to curriculum teams.
   * 1. The district should continue to pilot the Illuminate data management system to provide opportunities for more teachers to analyze assessment data to improve instruction.

**Benefits**: By implementing this recommendation, the district will develop a culture at the school of using data, including disaggregated data, to inform instructional practice and to improve all students’ performance, opportunities, and outcomes.

**Recommended resources:**

* + - DESE’s *Assessment Literacy Self-Assessment and Gap Analysis Tool* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/ddm/webinar/PartI-GapAnalysis.pdf>) is intended to support districts in understanding where their educators fit overall on a continuum of assessment literacy. After determining where the district as a whole generally falls on the continuum, districts can determine potential next steps.

DESE’s *District Data Team Toolkit* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/accountability/toolkit/>) is a set of resources to help a district establish, grow, and maintain a culture of inquiry and data use through a District Data Team.

Student Support

Contextual Background

Greater Lowell Regional Vocational Technical High School has established a positive school climate that is acknowledged by staff and students. An active guidance and school adjustment counseling staff has built an excellent working relationship with classroom and CVTE program teachers. Students told the review team that the guidance and school adjustment counseling staff supported all students' choices—whether to go to college, to work, or to enlist in the military. In 2018, the guidance and school adjustment counseling staff initiated a social-emotional committee to lead the social emotional learning initiative in the school. The district has identified its core values represented by the acronym REACH: respect, effort, accountability, commitment, and honesty. These values are evident throughout the school. A 2016 climate survey administered to students showed some concern about social-emotional support and the district has prioritized this support in its 2018–2019 School Improvement Plan (SIP). The SIP does not contain measurable student performance goals about the school’s social-emotional learning initiative based on an analysis of historical, longitudinal, and current disaggregated student achievement data.

The attention to the social-emotional and behavioral health of students and improving school culture is a priority for the high school and has contributed to creating classroom environments that are conducive to teaching and learning. Students expressed the view that they were academically supported and that teachers wanted them to succeed. For example, they described the school environment as very accepting of lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender (LGBT) students, noting: “Everyone here has a higher standard.” Family members described the school as a place “where kids go who want to be successful.”

There is a clear hierarchy of progressive discipline,[[9]](#footnote-9) which students told the review team was fair and equitable. Positive behavioral supports include “caught being good,”[[10]](#footnote-10) which results in public recognition (and a tee-shirt). To encourage regular attendance, the district offers lunch with a professional disc jockey playing music, when students reach their attendance goals.

Academic support is robust with special education teachers and general education teachers providing Tier 2 and Tier 3 instruction using an inclusion model and a Title I teachers providing Tier 2 support in math and reading. Programs such as the student success program and before- and after-school tutoring are designed to meet the needs of students who are struggling. The RISE (Resilience in Student Effort) program transitions students who have been absent for medical or social-emotional reasons back into the general academic classes over time. Almost all instructional support takes place during the academic week with limited supports in the CVTE programs.

The district has established numerous connections in the business community to provide multiple opportunities for students to gain real-world job experience while attending school. The district has leveraged these connections to bring resources into the school such as the model drug store and the bank.

Engaging parents in the life of the school has been a challenge. An organization of 10 to 15 parents mainly raises funds. The school is forming an EL (English learner) parent organization and has an active SEPAC (Special Education Parents’ Advisory Council). The school is planning three EL parent nights and the Connect ED telephone system is in place to communicate with families. Each year a new student “welcome night” is scheduled for families. Interviewees noted a high attendance of parents at athletic events. A student council with 15 active members is hoping to grow in the coming years.

Strength Findings

**1. The district has pursued opportunities in outside organizations and industry to enhance the learning experience of its students, to improve opportunities for post-secondary employment, and to support students’ health and wellness.**

* + 1. Interviews with district leaders and teachers indicated that the cooperative education program (“co-op”) placed students in over 100 companies, including IBM, CVS, British Aerospace, and Aramark.
       1. The program involves juniors and seniors who must apply for co-op positions and go through an interview process before being accepted by participating employers. District leaders said that as of January 31, 2019, 186 seniors and 17 juniors were enrolled in the program.

2. A full-time coop education director manages the program.

**B.** The district has taken advantage of connections in the community to bring resources to the school. For example, the school has a simulated drugstore, set up and maintained by CVS.

1.District leaders stated that alumni often hired graduates of the school.

**C.** The district has articulation agreements with institutions of higher education that give students credit for work accomplished in 11 of the 23 CVTE program areas. Institutions that have such agreements include the New England Institute of Technology, Central Maine Community College, Connecticut Culinary Institute, and all Massachusetts community colleges under a state agreement.

**D.** The high school coordinates with numerous outside agencies that provide wraparound services to students. Examples include Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, Lowell Mental Health, Lowell Community Health, the Greater Lowell Health Alliance, Middlesex Partnerships for Youth, and independent counselors.

**Impact**: Technical schools that facilitate real workplace experiences and credit opportunities enable students to understand the application of their studies, to appreciate the culture of the workplace, and to gain valuable experience and credibility that enhances their ability to find quality post-secondary employment. By connecting students with wraparound services, the district is likely helping to ensure that students’ unique health and wellness needs are met.

**The district has a well-resourced tiered system of support that provides academic, behavioral, and emotional support to its students.**

1. The district has invested in personnel to provide tiered academic support to students in the classroom and in remedial courses.
2. Sixteen special education teachers provide Tier 2 and Tier 3 instruction in the classroom.
3. Four Title I teachers and two paraprofessionals provide Tier 2 support in reading and mathematics. They work in classrooms and staff the writing/reading workshop, a Tier 2 course.
4. The district provides tutors to students who are struggling. The tutors meet with students before and after school.
5. For English learners (ELs), the district has hired ELE teachers and after-school tutors. The district also has hired interpreters to facilitate communication with families at meetings and to improve communication between teachers and families.
6. Two credit recovery coordinators ensure that students missing credits can attain the necessary credits to graduate.
7. The district has invested in personnel to provide behavioral and social-emotional support to students. There are nine guidance counselors, two adjustment counselors, two school psychologists, and three school nurses.
8. The district provides Tier 1 support through classes for students who are struggling or who might be missing foundational skills. Examples include “essential concepts of reading (math, science),” “math foundations,” “reading /writing workshop,” and “study skills.”

For example, ELs are placed in one of four levels of general education instruction (basic through advanced) and provided with after-school tutoring.

1. Classroom teachers provide Tier 2 support through a variety of strategies, both inside and outside the classroom.

For example, mathematics department teachers regroup students for small-group work depending on skill deficits as determined by a common assessment. The regrouping takes place two to three times a quarter. Science teachers do this once a month.

Teachers are required to stay after school one day a week to provide extra help to students. Multiple district leaders and students told members of the review team that many teachers stayed after school more than one afternoon.

a. Students stated that teachers stayed after school every day to help with homework and to “help you catch up.”

1. The transitional occupations program (TOPS), which combines academic courses with specialized vocational training, is a Tier 3 program for students with significant learning disabilities. The program runs a café at lunchtime as part of the culinary arts program.
2. The guidance and adjustment counseling staffs have created programs that provide social-emotional and academic support with the goal of increasing attendance and creating a climate where students can be productive and successful.
   1. In students’ homerooms, a counselor is present in the morning to check in with the students and work with them to have a successful start to the day. In 2017, the district started RISE, a re-entry program for students returning from medical or mental health absences. RISE, which is staffed by an adjustment counselor and a paraprofessional, enables students to reenter the general classroom at their own pace and with support.

**Impact:** A district that provides consistent academic and social-emotional tiered systems of support provides students with varying needs the support that they need to be successful and achieve at a high level.

**Challenges and Areas for Growth**

**The district’s rates of students’ in-school and out-of-school suspension are generally high compared with the rates for students in grades 9–12 across the state. Staff expressed differing views about the effectiveness of suspensions.**

* 1. According to DESE data, the school’s in- and out-of-school suspension rates have fluctuated with an overall decrease in the in-school suspension rate and an overall increase in the out-of-school suspension rate.

**Table 19: Greater Lowell RVTHS (grades 9–12) and State (grades 9–12)**

**In-School and Out-of-School Suspension Rates,\* 2014–2018**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2014** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** |
| **In-School Suspension Rates (IS)** | | | | | |
| District IS suspension rate (grades 9–12) | 10.6 | 8.4 | 9.3 | 7.7 | 5.2 |
| State IS suspension rate (grades 9–12) | 4.2 | 3.3 | 3.5 | 3.1 | 3.2 |
| **Out-of-School Suspension Rates (OOS)** | | | | | |
| District OOS suspension rate (grades 9–12) | 5.0 | 3.6 | 3.6 | 5.4 | 5.7 |
| State OOS suspension rate (grades 9–12) | 6.7 | 4.9 | 4.7 | 4.3 | 4.7 |

\*Suspension rates represent the percentage of students suspended one or more times during the year. Source: DESE data.

* + 1. In 2018 (latest available data), the in-school suspension rates were high for grades 10 and 12 at 6.3 and 6.8, respectively. The out-of-school suspension rates were high for grades 11 and 12 at 6.1 and 6.4, respectively.

**B.** School leaders told the team that they were aware of the high suspension rates and they have identified the need to reduce suspensions.

1. The superintendent told the review team that the increase of marijuana-related behavior issues because of the vaping of liquid THC[[11]](#footnote-11) in “dab sticks” was a major cause of the high suspension rate.

a. The superintendent stated that out-of-school suspensions routinely meant 3–5 days out of school.

2. District staff stated that one reason the suspension rate was high was that they did not turn a “blind eye” to behavior issues.

**C.** Somedistrictstaff emphasized that there had to be consequences for students’ behavior issues. Others expressed the view that suspension was not effective in dealing with behavior issues.

Some staff expressed the opinion that the school was encouraging students to remain children rather than becoming young adults, noting that the district needed to find consensus about ways to “hold students accountable” for their actions.

Another group of staff agreed that the suspensions were not an effective means of addressing students’ behavior issues.

**D.** The in-school suspension rates for some student groups are higher than state rates (grades 9–12).[[12]](#footnote-12)

1. For example, the 2018 in-school suspension rates were: 7.2 for Hispanic or Latino students (4.4 for the state); 7.1 for economically disadvantaged students (5.4 for the state); 6.4 for high needs students (5.1 for the state); 6.4 for students with disabilities (6.1 for the state); 5.5 for English learners (4.3 for the state); 4.2 for White students (2.6 for the state); and 3.8 for Asian students (1.1 for the state).

2. The 2018 out-of-school suspension rates were: 9.3 for African American/Black students (8.6 for the state); 7.5 for English learners (6.9 for the state); 4.9 for Asian students (1.5 for the state); and 4.8 for White students (3.4 for the state).

3. The superintendent told the review team that the district “did not look at” discipline data or disaggregate data by student group.

**Impact**: Frequent suspensions likely mean that students fall behind academically, become disengaged from school, and drop out. The district’s practice of frequently removing students from the school because of behavior limits its ability to provide a supportive environment and to promote students’ sense of belonging and connection.

**Recommendations**

**The district should ensure that its School Improvement Plan includes measurable student performance goals for its social-emotional learning initiative that are based on an analysis of historical, longitudinal, and current disaggregated student data.**

1. Under the leadership of the superintendent, the district should assemble a representative group of stakeholders to develop measurable goals (including progress benchmarks and final outcomes) for the social-emotional initiative in its School Improvement Plan (SIP).

1. The goals should be based on an analysis of historical, longitudinal, and current disaggregated data related to student performance, opportunities, and outcomes.

2. The goals should be SMART (Specific and Strategic; Measurable; Action Oriented; Rigorous, Realistic, and Results Focused; and Timed and Tracked).

3. The district should develop a process for using the most recent student data to continually monitor and update its SIP.

4. The 2016 climate survey might provide some data to inform SIP goals.

1. The principal, in collaboration with the school council, should ensure that the SIP includes specific measures to determine the progress of its social-emotional initiative.

1. These measures should be SMART.

1. District leader should provide frequent, timely, and thorough information to the school committee, staff, students, families, and the community of progress toward the achievement of the SIP goals for the district’s social-emotional learning initiative.

**Benefits:** By developing, communicating, and using measurable goals about its social-emotional learning initiative that is based on an analysis of historical, longitudinal, and current disaggregated student data and other data sources, the district will ensure that it is focused on the most important areas for improvement. By making a commitment to the yearly amount of change that it plans to achieve, the district will be able to plan and regularly monitor the impact of this key improvement strategy and the use of resources on student performance, opportunities, and outcomes.

**Recommended resources:**

* The National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments’ *School Climate Survey Compendia* (<http://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/topic-research/school-climate-measurement/school-climate-survey-compendium>) is a collection of valid and reliable surveys, assessments, and scales of school climate that can assist educators in their efforts to identify and assess their conditions for learning. Additional surveys and scales are added continually.
* *Supporting and Responding to Behavior: Evidence-Based Classroom Strategies for Teachers* (<https://www.osepideasthatwork.org/evidencebasedclassroomstrategies/>) summarizes evidence-based, positive, proactive, and responsive classroom behavior intervention and support strategies that can help teachers capitalize on instructional time and decrease disruptions.
* The *Behavioral Health and Public Schools Framework* (<http://bhps321.org/viewframework.asp>) is a guidance document to help schools establish supportive environments with collaborative services that will enable all students – including those with behavioral health needs – to achieve at their highest potential.
* The *Wraparound Replication Cookbook* (<https://sites.google.com/site/masswazcookbook/>) is a practical guide focused on improving academic performance by systematically addressing students’ social emotional and non-academic needs. It is based on the experience of several Massachusetts districts, and is organized according to the following key strategy areas:
  + Addressing School Culture and the Social Emotional Aspects of Learning
  + Rethinking Systems for Identifying and Addressing Academic and Social Emotional Needs
  + Creating Focused Partnerships & Coalitions
    1. **The district should strengthen its efforts to improve student attendance. It should build educators’ capacity to identify, understand, and respond to the underlying causes of student behavior in order to reduce the need to rely on suspension as a response to misconduct.**

1. The school should analyze attendance data and determine the root cause(s) of chronic absence.

1. The school should use disaggregated data to review attendance rates and determine the extent to which specific student groups have disproportionate rates of chronic absence.

2. The school should gather input from students and families through focus groups and surveys about the reasons for high absence rates and possible ways to address the challenge of students missing too much instruction.

3. The school should ensure that it supports two-way communication and access for all students’ families.

4. The school should determine the root causes(s) of high and disproportionate absence rates and take steps to address them, including reviewing current initiatives to improve attendance and adjusting efforts as needed.

1. The school should analyze suspension data and determine the root cause(s) of suspension.

1. The school should use disaggregated data to review suspension rates and analyze the extent to which specific student groups are suspended disproportionately.

2. The school should determine the root causes(s) of high and disproportionate suspension rates and take steps to address them, including reviewing current initiatives to improve suspension and adjusting efforts as needed.

3. The school should strengthen its positive behavioral supports and implement strategies including restorative practices and conflict resolution, community service, and alternative education.

4. The review team strongly recommends that the school take advantage of opportunities to participate in DESE-sponsored professional development on rethinking discipline.

1. The school should consider that addressing attendance and suspension may involve a wider range of activities such as improving instruction and its relevance to post-graduation goals.

1. The school might consider ways to increase students’ agency, personalize their learning, and increase their understanding of the connections and relevance of their current coursework to their future success.

2. The school might consider how the learning environment could better cultivate supportive, authentic relationships and a strong sense of belonging and connection.

**Benefits:** If students are in school, they are more likely to succeed. Engaging students and families in identifying the causes of student absence and suspension and in suggesting ways to improve attendance and lower suspension likely will help increase attendance, decrease suspensions, and promote students’ growth and development. Analyzing disaggregated discipline data will help to ensure that behavior management/discipline policies, practices, and procedures are inclusive, equitable, and aligned with the needs of all students. Reflecting about the connection between instruction, the learning environment, and absence and misbehavior can lead to improvements in students’ academic and social-emotional experience of school.

**Recommended resources:**

* *Addressing the Root Causes of Disparities in School Discipline* (<https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/addressing-root-causes-disparities-school-discipline>) is a guide that describes how to carry out a descriptive analysis of disparities in school discipline and how to conduct a root cause analysis to systematically address school-based factors that contribute to disparities. These analyses should result in an actionable understanding of the following:
  + Who is being disparately disciplined and what is happening to them
  + The systemic causes of disparities in school discipline and why they occur
  + How you can reduce and eliminate disparities in school discipline
* *Resource Guide for Superintendent Action* (<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/school-discipline/rethink-discipline-resource-guide-supt-action.pdf>) is designed to highlight the role that superintendents and school leaders play in developing safe and supportive school climate and discipline; offer possible district- and school-level action steps for initiating and enhancing local efforts to create safe and supportive school climate and discipline systems and practices; and share promising practices and useful resources for implementing and sustaining safe and supportive school climate and discipline in collaboration with local stakeholders.
* *Positive School Discipline* (<http://positiveschooldiscipline.promoteprevent.org/course>) is an interactive, self-paced course for school leaders that includes skill-building activities, real-world examples, and key strategies for creating a positive school climate.
* *Every Student, Every Day: A Community Toolkit to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism* (<http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/chronicabsenteeism/toolkit.pdf>) is a set of Action Guides that provide information and resources to help ensure that all young people are in school every day and benefitting from coordinated systems of support.
* The Attendance Works website (<https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/>) provides several resources to help address chronic absenteeism, including district- and school-level self-assessments and planning tools, webinars, and toolkits.
* *My Career and Academic Plan (MyCAP)* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/ccr/initiatives/>) is a student-directed, multi-year planning tool and process that allows students to map academic plans, document personal/social growth, and engage in career development activities consistent with the student's unique, self-identified interests, needs, and goals for the attainment of post-secondary success. (A new MyCAP guidance document will be available in spring 2019 at the website listed above.)

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

Review Team Members

The review was conducted from February 4–6, 2019, by the following team of independent DESE consultants.

1. William Blake, Jr., curriculum
2. Marta Montleon, instruction
3. James Hearns, assessment, *review team coordinator*
4. John Retchless, student support

District Review Activities

The following activities were conducted during the review:

The team conducted interviews with the following members of the school committee: one member from Lowell and one member from Dracut.

The review team conducted interviews with the following representatives of the teachers’ association: the president, the former president, the vice president, and an academic member of the executive board.

The team conducted interviews/focus groups with the following central office administrators: the superintendent; the assistant superintendent/principal; the director of curriculum, assessment and instruction; the director of cooperative education; director of special education; and the interim Title I facilitator.

The team visited the following school: Greater Lowell Regional Vocational Technical High School (grades 9–12).

During school visits, the team conducted interviews with 10 students, 8 family members, the principal, and a focus group with 9 high-school teachers.

The team observed 52 classes in the district: 27 academic classes and 25 career, vocational, technical education (CVTE) classes.

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

* + Student and school performance data, including achievement and growth, enrollment, graduation, dropout, retention, suspension, and attendance rates.
  + Data on the district’s staffing and finances.
  + Published educational reports on the district by ESE, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), and the former Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA).
  + District documents such as district and school improvement plans, school committee policies, curriculum documents, summaries of student assessments, job descriptions, collective bargaining agreements, evaluation tools for staff, handbooks, school schedules, and the district’s end-of-year financial reports.
  + All completed program and administrator evaluations, and a random selection of completed teacher evaluations.

Site Visit Schedule

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Monday**  02/04/2019 | **Tuesday**  02/05/2019 | **Wednesday**  02/06/2019 |
| Orientation with district leaders and principals; interviews with district staff and principals; document reviews; interviews with the teachers’ association and teachers; and visits to the high school for classroom observations. | Interviews with district staff and principal; students’ families; school committee members; and visits to the high school for classroom observations. | Interviews with district and school leaders and students; and visits to the high school for classroom observations. |

Appendix B: Enrollment, Attendance, Expenditures

**Table B1a: Greater Lowell RVTSD**

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

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Group** | **District** | **Percent**  **of Total** | **State** | **Percent of**  **Total** |
| African-American/Black | 85 | 3.7% | 86,305 | 9.0% |
| Asian | 370 | 16.3% | 65,667 | 6.9% |
| Hispanic or Latino | 730 | 32.2% | 191,201 | 20.0% |
| Native American | 6 | 0.3% | 2,103 | 0.2% |
| White | 1,003 | 44.2% | 573,335 | 60.1% |
| Native Hawaiian | -- | -- | 818 | 0.1% |
| Multi-Race, non-Hisp./Lat. | 76 | 3.3% | 34,605 | 3.6% |
| All | 2,270 | 100.0% | 954,034 | 100.0% |
| Note: As of October 1, 2017 | | | | |

**Table B1b: Greater Lowell RVTSD**

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

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Group** | **District** | | | **State** | | |
| **N** | **Percent of High Needs** | **Percent of District** | **N** | **Percent of High Needs** | **Percent of State** |
| Students w/ disabilities | 483 | 34.9% | 21.3% | 171,061 | 38.0% | 17.7% |
| Econ. Dis. | 1,021 | 73.9% | 45.0% | 305,203 | 67.9% | 32.0% |
| EL and Former EL | 143 | 10.3% | 6.3% | 97,334 | 21.6% | 10.2% |
| All high needs students | 1,382 | 100.0% | 60.9% | 449,584 | 100.0% | 46.6% |
| Notes: As of October 1, 2017. District and state numbers and percentages for students with disabilities and high needs students are calculated including students in out-of-district placements. Total district enrollment including students in out-of-district placement is 2,270; total state enrollment including students in out-of-district placement is 964,806. | | | | | | |

**Table B2a: Greater Lowell RVTSD**

**Attendance Rates by Student Group, 2015–2018**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Group** | **N (2018)** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **4-yr Change** | **State (2018)** |
| African American/Black | 83 | 96.9 | 94.4 | 95.7 | 95.4 | -1.5 | 94.1 |
| Asian | 367 | 94.9 | 94.6 | 95.5 | 94.5 | -0.4 | 96.2 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 724 | 93.9 | 93.9 | 93.8 | 94.0 | 0.1 | 92.7 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hisp./Lat. | 76 | 93.6 | 94.7 | 93.8 | 94.1 | 0.5 | 94.4 |
| White | 987 | 94.7 | 94.6 | 94.7 | 95.1 | 0.4 | 95.1 |
| High Needs | 1,364 | 94.0 | 93.7 | 93.7 | 94.0 | 0.0 | 93.2 |
| Econ. Dis. | 1,098 | 93.5 | 93.3 | 93.2 | 93.5 | 0.0 | 92.5 |
| SWD | 331 | 94.2 | 93.8 | 93.7 | 94.6 | 0.4 | 92.9 |
| EL | 141 | 94.0 | 93.9 | 93.7 | 94.0 | 0.0 | 93.3 |
| All | 2,243 | 94.5 | 94.4 | 94.6 | 94.6 | 0.1 | 94.5 |
| Notes: The attendance rate is calculated by dividing the total number of days students attended school by the total number of days students were enrolled in a particular school year. A student’s attendance rate is counted toward any district the student attended. In addition, district attendance rates included students who were out placed in public collaborative or private alternative schools/programs at public expense. Attendance rates have been rounded; percent change is based on unrounded numbers. | | | | | | | |

**Table B2b: Greater Lowell RVTSD**

**Chronic Absence Rates by Student Group,\* 2015–2018**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Group** | **N (2018)** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **4-yr Change** | **State (2018)** |
| African American/Black | 83 | 5.7 | 11.9 | 10.8 | 10.8 | 5.1 | 16.4 |
| Asian | 367 | 13.7 | 13.5 | 10.2 | 14.7 | 1.0 | 7.6 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 724 | 18.4 | 18.4 | 17.7 | 16.0 | -2.4 | 22.5 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hisp./Lat. | 76 | 21.8 | 17.3 | 16.5 | 14.5 | -7.3 | 14.2 |
| White | 987 | 12.6 | 13.4 | 11.7 | 10.5 | -2.1 | 10.0 |
| High Needs | 1,364 | 17.8 | 19.2 | 18.2 | 16.8 | -1.0 | 20.1 |
| Econ. Dis. | 1,098 | 19.7 | 22.1 | 20.6 | 19.3 | -0.4 | 22.9 |
| SWD | 331 | 17.0 | 19.8 | 17.5 | 15.1 | -1.9 | 20.7 |
| EL | 141 | 17.9 | 19.4 | 18.2 | 17.7 | -0.2 | 20.4 |
| All | 2,243 | 14.4 | 15.1 | 13.6 | 13.1 | -1.3 | 13.2 |
| \* Chronic absence is defined as the percentage of students absent 10 percent or more of their total number of student days of membership in a school | | | | | | | |

**Table B3: Greater Lowell RVTSD**

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

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **FY16** | | | **FY17** | | | **FY18** | | |
|  | **Estimated** | | **Actual** | **Estimated** | **Actual** | | **Estimated** | | **Actual** |
| Expenditures | | | | | | | | | |
| From local appropriations for schools: |  | | | | | | | | |
| By school committee | $38,085,640 | $48,232,643 | | $39,033,522 | | $38,991,509 | | $41,951,304 | $41,732,439 |
| From revolving funds and grants | -- | $4,622,631 | | -- | | $3,863,552 | | -- | $4,200,661 |
| Total expenditures | -- | $52,855,275 | | -- | | $42,855,062 | | -- | $45,933,100 |
| Chapter 70 aid to education program | | | | | | | | | |
| Chapter 70 state aid\* | -- | $23,740,502 | | -- | | $23,860,787 | | -- | $25,027,501 |
| Required local contribution | -- | $11,434,404 | | -- | | $11,891,870 | | -- | $12,482,002 |
| Required net school spending\*\* | -- | $35,174,906 | | -- | | $35,838,809 | | -- | $37,674,986 |
| Actual net school spending | -- | $35,088,754 | | -- | | $35,673,325 | | -- | $37,946,786 |
| Over/under required ($) | -- | -$86,152 | | -- | | -$165,483 | | -- | $271,799 |
| Over/under required (%) | -- | -0.2% | | -- | | -0.5% | | -- | 0.7% |
| \*Chapter 70 state aid funds are deposited in the local general fund and spent as local appropriations.  \*\*Required net school spending is the total of Chapter 70 aid and required local contribution. Net school spending includes only expenditures from local appropriations, not revolving funds and grants. It includes expenditures for most administration, instruction, operations, and out-of-district tuitions. It does not include transportation, school lunches, debt, or capital.  Sources: FY16, FY17, and FY18 District End-of-Year Reports, Chapter 70 Program information on DESE website  Data retrieved 11/13/18 and 6/20/19 | | | | | | | | | |

**Table B4: Greater Lowell RVTSD**

**Expenditures Per In-District Pupil**

**Fiscal Years 2015–2017**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Expenditure Category** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** |
| Administration | $810 | $792 | $919 |
| Instructional leadership (district and school) | $952 | $977 | $858 |
| Teachers | $6,854 | $6,946 | $6,730 |
| Other teaching services | $644 | $588 | $565 |
| Professional development | $142 | $159 | $136 |
| Instructional materials, equipment and technology | $1,283 | $1,186 | $1,187 |
| Guidance, counseling and testing services | $803 | $780 | $757 |
| Pupil services | $2,108 | $2,068 | $1,804 |
| Operations and maintenance | $1,561 | $1,458 | $1,365 |
| Insurance, retirement and other fixed costs | $3,973 | $3,842 | $4,079 |
| Total expenditures per in-district pupil | $19,131 | $18,797 | $18,401 |
| Sources: [Per-pupil expenditure reports on ESE website](http://www.doe.mass.edu/finance/statistics/ppx.html)  Note: Any discrepancy between expenditures and total is because of rounding. | | | |

Appendix C: Instructional Inventory

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Focus Area #1: Learning Objectives & Expectations** |  | Insufficient Evidence | Limited Evidence | Sufficient Evidence | Compelling Evidence | Avg Number of points |
|  | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (1 to 4) |
| 1. The teacher demonstrates knowledge of the subject matter. | **V/Tech.** | 4% | 0% | 64% | 32% | 3.2 |
| **Acad.** | 0% | 15% | 85% | 0% | 2.9 |
| **Total #** | 1 | 4 | 39 | 8 | 3.0 |
| **Total %** | 2% | 8% | 75% | 15% |  |
| 2. The teacher ensures that students understand what they should be learning in the lesson and why. | **V/Tech.** | 0% | 4% | 64% | 32% | 3.3 |
| **Acad.** | 0% | 11% | 85% | 4% | 2.9 |
| **Total #** | 0 | 4 | 39 | 9 | 3.1 |
| **Total %** | 0% | 8% | 75% | 17% |  |
| 3. The teacher uses appropriate classroom activities well matched to the learning objective(s). | **V/Tech.** | 0% | 12% | 52% | 36% | 3.2 |
| **Acad.** | 0% | 15% | 78% | 7% | 2.9 |
| **Total #** | 0 | 7 | 34 | 11 | 3.1 |
| **Total %** | 0% | 13% | 65% | 21% |  |
| 4. The teacher conducts frequent checks for student understanding, provides feedback, and adjusts instruction. | **V/Tech.** | 4% | 12% | 60% | 24% | 3.0 |
| **Acad.** | 0% | 26% | 70% | 4% | 2.8 |
| **Total #** | 1 | 10 | 34 | 7 | 2.9 |
| **Total %** | 2% | 19% | 65% | 13% |  |
| **Total Score for Focus Area #1** | **V/Tech.** |  |  |  |  | **12.8** |
| **Acad.** |  |  |  |  | **11.5** |
| **Total** |  |  |  |  | **12.1** |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Focus Area #2: Student Engagement & Higher-Order Thinking** |  | Insufficient Evidence | Limited Evidence | Sufficient Evidence | Compelling Evidence | Avg Number of points |
|  | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (1 to 4) |
| 5. Students assume responsibility to learn and are engaged in the lesson. | **V/Tech.** | 0% | 4% | 56% | 40% | 3.4 |
| **Acad.** | 0% | 30% | 67% | 4% | 2.7 |
| **Total #** | 0 | 9 | 32 | 11 | 3.0 |
| **Total %** | 0% | 17% | 62% | 21% |  |
| 6. Students engage in higher-order thinking. | **V/Tech.** | 4% | 32% | 44% | 20% | 2.8 |
| **Acad.** | 7% | 52% | 37% | 4% | 2.4 |
| **Total #** | 3 | 22 | 21 | 6 | 2.6 |
| **Total %** | 6% | 42% | 40% | 12% |  |
| 7. Students communicate their ideas and thinking with each other. | **V/Tech.** | 0% | 28% | 60% | 12% | 2.8 |
| **Acad.** | 7% | 48% | 44% | 0% | 2.4 |
| **Total #** | 2 | 20 | 27 | 3 | 2.6 |
| **Total %** | 4% | 38% | 52% | 6% |  |
| 8. Students engage with meaningful, real-world tasks. | **V/Tech.** | 0% | 4% | 52% | 44% | 3.4 |
| **Acad.** | 4% | 22% | 70% | 4% | 2.7 |
| **Total #** | 1 | 7 | 32 | 12 | 3.1 |
| **Total %** | 2% | 13% | 62% | 23% |  |
| **Total Score for Focus Area #2** | **V/Tech.** |  |  |  |  | **12.4** |
| **Acad.** |  |  |  |  | **10.2** |
| **Total** |  |  |  |  | **11.3** |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Focus Area #3: Inclusive Practice & Classroom Culture** |  | Insufficient Evidence | Limited Evidence | Sufficient Evidence | Compelling Evidence | Avg Number of points |
|  | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (1 to 4) |
| 9. The teacher ensures that students are engaging in challenging tasks regardless of learning needs. | **V/Tech.** | 0% | 28% | 48% | 24% | 3.0 |
| **Acad.** | 11% | 33% | 52% | 4% | 2.5 |
| **Total #** | 3 | 16 | 26 | 7 | 2.7 |
| **Total %** | 6% | 31% | 50% | 13% |  |
| 10. The teacher uses a variety of instructional strategies. | **V/Tech.** | 0% | 28% | 56% | 16% | 2.9 |
| **Acad.** | 0% | 48% | 48% | 4% | 2.6 |
| **Total #** | 0 | 20 | 27 | 5 | 2.7 |
| **Total %** | 0% | 38% | 52% | 10% |  |
| 11. Classroom routines and positive supports are in place to ensure that students behave appropriately. | **V/Tech.** | 0% | 8% | 56% | 36% | 3.3 |
| **Acad.** | 0% | 19% | 74% | 7% | 2.9 |
| **Total #** | 0 | 7 | 34 | 11 | 3.1 |
| **Total %** | 0% | 13% | 65% | 21% |  |
| 12. The classroom climate is conducive to teaching and learning. | **V/Tech.** | 0% | 4% | 44% | 52% | 3.5 |
| **Acad.** | 0% | 15% | 78% | 7% | 2.9 |
| **Total #** | 0 | 5 | 32 | 15 | 3.2 |
| **Total %** | 0% | 10% | 62% | 29% |  |
| **Total Score for Focus Area #3** | **V/Tech.** |  |  |  |  | **12.6** |
| **Acad.** |  |  |  |  | **10.9** |
| **Total** |  |  |  |  | **11.7** |

1. The district awards students points based on attendance, discipline, achievement, and the local guidance counselor’s recommendation. The point system covers four quarters of the seventh grade and the first two quarters of the eighth grade. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The city of Lowell sends approximately 80 percent of the district’s students; the town of Dracut, about 15 percent; the towns of Dunstable and Tyngsborough send the remaining 5 percent of the district’s students. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Painting and Design and Hospitality each have two instructors. Auto Collision has one instructor. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. NEASC stands for New England Association of Schools and Colleges. The Five-Year Focused Visit Report documented the district’s progress on recommendations made by NEASC in its 2010 evaluation of Greater Lowell Regional Vocation Technical High School. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. High-quality feedback is specific, timely, and actionable. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The 9th grade ELA teams and selected inclusion classes have common planning time. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. ACCESS stands for Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners. Illuminate is an online assessment system. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Kahoot is a game-based learning platform. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. The high school’s 2019–2020 Student Handbook states on p. 49: “A progressive discipline system enables students to correct behavioral problems before they become severe. The process begins with the teacher identifying a problem and taking a number of steps with the student to correct the problem. These increasingly formal steps may include verbal warning, student/teacher conference, parent contact, detention and office referral. If the problem persists, the Main Office becomes involved and additional progressive steps are taken. These steps include detention, in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, and, when available, expulsion. Parent meetings, and counseling sessions may also be utilized during the progressive disciplinary process.” [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. The high school’s Student Handbook notes on p. 30: “In promoting and encouraging our commitment to this mission [to ensure students’ readiness for career and/or college and for citizenship in the 21st century], we have requested that our staff report random, unprovoked acts of citizenship ‘Caught Doing Something Good’ that are displayed by our students on a daily basis. This may include but not be limited to turning in found items, holding the door for another person, sitting with a student at lunch who is eating alone, [and] cleaning up a mess that was made by other students. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. THC is either of two psychologically active isomers C21H30O2 from hemp plan resin; *esp*: one that is the chief intoxicant in marijuana(Meriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 11 ed. Springfield, MA: 2009). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. See Tables 14 and 15 in the Student Performance section of this report for in-school and out-of-school suspension rates, respectively, disaggregated by student group. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)