

# Enhancing Professional Development at Easthampton High School

Evidence-Based Collaborative Inquiry in Action

Christine A. Paulsen, Ph.D., *Concord Evaluation Group*

Jane G. Coggshall, Ph.D., *American Institutes for Research*

May 2015

Contents

[About This Project 1](#_Toc419710364)

[Executive Summary 2](#_Toc419710365)

[Building a High Quality Professional Development System in Melrose Public Schools: Getting Started 3](#_Toc419710366)

[The History of Collaborative Inquiry-Based Professional Learning at EHS 3](#_Toc419710367)

[Fostering a Growth Mindset Through Collaboration 4](#_Toc419710368)

[Laying the Foundation Through the Formation of a Professional Development Management Structure 5](#_Toc419710369)

[Professional Development at Easthampton High School Today: Inquiry-Based and Strategic 6](#_Toc419710370)

[Inquiry-Based Professional Learning as the Foundation 6](#_Toc419710371)

[Making Time for and Embedding Professional Learning 8](#_Toc419710372)

[Strategic Implementation of the Learning Walks 9](#_Toc419710373)

[Planning High Quality Professional Development at Easthampton High School 11](#_Toc419710374)

[Professional Development Plan and Crosswalk 11](#_Toc419710375)

[Using Data to Plan and Assess High Quality Professional Development 12](#_Toc419710376)

[Connections Between Educator Evaluation and Professional Development at Easthampton High School 16](#_Toc419710377)

[Educator Plans Are Used to Identify Professional Development Needs for Individuals and Groups 16](#_Toc419710378)

[Educator Evaluation Performance Ratings Are Used to Assess Professional Development Needs 16](#_Toc419710379)

[Artifacts That Are Created During Professional Development Activities Inform Evaluation 17](#_Toc419710380)

[What Teachers Are Saying About Professional Development at EHS 17](#_Toc419710381)

[Plans for Continuous Improvement at Easthampton High School 19](#_Toc419710382)

[References 20](#_Toc419710383)

[Appendix A: Interview Protocols A-1](#_Toc419710384)

[Appendix B: Easthampton High School Inquiry Group Example Proposal (2014-15) B-1](#_Toc419710385)

[Appendix C:Easthampton High School 2014-15 Professional Development Plan and Crosswalk C-1](#_Toc419710386)

## About This Project

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) contracted with American Institutes for Research (AIR) to profile three districts and one school that are leaders in the state in ensuring that all their educators have access to high quality professional development.

The purpose of this project is to help educators across Massachusetts envision how the [Massachusetts Standards for Professional Development](http://www.doe.mass.edu/pd/standards.html) can be used to plan, implement, and monitor results-oriented professional learning, including how educator evaluation data can be used to inform professional development planning and assessment.

The profiles are based on interviews with knowledgeable individuals at each site and a review of key district or school documents. Three districts and one school were profiled. Sites include Cambridge Public Schools, Lexington Public Schools, Melrose Public Schools, and Easthampton High School in Easthampton Public Schools.

Sites were selected through the following process. First, members of the statewide Teacher and Principal Advisory Cabinets were invited to nominate districts or schools that were demonstrating one of the following best practices for ensuring educators have access to high quality professional development:

* Consistently using the Massachusetts Standards for Professional Development to help ensure educators receive only high quality professional learning, such as:
  + Building internal staff capacity to facilitate high quality, results-oriented professional development in innovative or forward-thinking ways, and
  + Doing an exceptional job coordinating/managing professional development and creating the conditions for teachers to engage in deep learning; and/or
* Thoughtfully using educator evaluation data to inform the planning and delivery of professional development.

Nominators were asked to submit a site nomination form explaining how the chosen site demonstrates one or both of the best practices. ESE, in collaboration with AIR, selected four sites from among those nominated, based on the comprehensiveness of their approach to ensuring that educators have access to high quality professional development.

AIR, in partnership with the Concord Evaluation Group, conducted up to three interviews with knowledgeable individuals at each site in November 2014, as well as follow-up interviews as needed. Interviewers followed a semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix A for the three protocols that were used for coordinators, principals, and teacher leaders) that focused primarily on the coordination of professional development for teachers, rather than for school leaders or specialized instructional support personnel. Interviews were recorded and transcribed, and data from all stakeholders interviewed at each site were used to develop each district or school profile. For each profile, key staff from the site provided feedback on a draft of the site’s profile, and AIR revised accordingly before finalizing the profile.

## Executive Summary

Easthampton High School (EHS) is located in western Massachusetts, about 15 miles north of Springfield. The school employs approximately 34 educators and serves roughly 455 students. It is the only high school within the district. At EHS, the leadership team—which consists of the principal, vice principal, and a teacher who also serves as the professional development coordinator—has cultivated among staff a growth mindset (Dweck, 2007) related to professional learning through collaboration and the extensive use of data to drive decision making and assess its progress. A professional development team—which includes the leadership team, a data team, and a learning walk team—manages professional learning at EHS.

The professional development team has implemented an inquiry-based approach to professional learning. Under the umbrella of action research, this approach provides teachers with multiple opportunities for learning and development, all of which are tied explicitly to district, school, teacher, and student goals. Opportunities for professional development are embedded in a variety of activities, including staff meetings, department meetings, dedicated professional development days, meetings with supervisors, and classroom observations.

The school’s progress toward meeting its myriad school goals is measured using a variety of data and evidence. The most crucial source of information, according to the professional development team, is the learning walk (learning walks are often referred to as “Learning Walkthroughs” in other Massachusetts districts). Using data from the learning walk, the team can assess the degree to which professional learning is taking place and identify any additional professional development needs that teachers, as a group, may have. Other sources of data include test results, formative and summative assessments, and teacher surveys. The data team continually reviews all the data as they become available, and teachers are included in discussions about the findings and are asked to assist with interpreting those findings.

The professional development team at EHS has created a professional learning system that attempts to directly connect student outcomes with professional development, all within a supportive environment of teamwork and collaboration. Goals at all levels (including Educator Plan goals) are set using all the available data (including student outcome data), and the professional development opportunities that are provided directly address the needs identified by the data. Progress toward meeting goals at all levels is determined through a collaborative review of existing data. This cycle is continuous and evolves over time as needs shift.

According to teachers, the current professional development system is better aligned with teachers’ individual needs and their professional goals (including those outlined in their Educator Plans) than it was several years ago. Brian Miller, a physical education teacher and member of the learning walk team, explained:

With the action research approach, I can see how a complex task in my class is different than complex tasks in another subject, but I can see how *I* can work on complex tasks with my students. So, the new system enables teachers to tailor the learning to their disciplines.

Eric Colbeck, a mathematics teacher and data team member, commented on the continuing nature of professional development:

I like that professional development has some continuity now. It’s not something we focus on for one year, and the next year it’s something else, and the next year it’s something else. We’re doing something that has long-term meaning attached to it.

## Building a High Quality Professional Development System in Melrose Public Schools: Getting Started

Easthampton High School (EHS) is a medium sized secondary school located in western Massachusetts, approximately two hours west of Boston. (See Table 1 for a brief demographic description of the school’s student body.) Currently, members of a professional development team work together to plan and assess collaborative, inquiry-based professional development for the school’s roughly 34 educators.

### The History of Collaborative Inquiry-Based Professional Learning at EHS

*School leaders’ approach to professional development for EHS teachers has, in some ways, come full circle.* When Principal Vito Perrone first arrived at the school more than six years ago, teachers were engaged in an inquiry-based (action research) model of professional development. While it was teacher-centered and based on research and best practice, the inquiry-based model lacked an explicit connection with district goals. Working with district leadership and a new data team (borne out of grant funds and supported by the state’s District and School Assistance Center [DSAC]), the leadership team at EHS identified a new focus for educator professional development related to preparing students for the new Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS). Specifically, many EHS students were not performing as expected on open-response items, and this prompted the district and school to focus their professional development efforts on teaching practices designed to elicit better constructed responses from students.

Table 1. Easthampton High School Demographic Profile

|  | Easthampton High School | Massachusetts High School Average |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Total enrollment | 451 | 735.2 |
| Total instructional staff | 34.2 | 45.7 |
| Percent low income | 30.3 | 39 |
| Percent English language learners | 0.2 | 8 |
| Accountability level | 1 | -- |

*Source:* District Analysis, Review, and Assistance Tool (DART) at [*http://www.doe.mass.edu/dart/*](http://www.doe.mass.edu/dart/) *.*

At that time, the district’s preferred approach to professional development was a top-down, workshop-based approach, which, upon subsequent evaluation, was determined to lack the consistent follow-through and teacher collaboration that the inquiry-based model had afforded. *The district concluded that it did not realize a return on its investment in professional development.* For example, professional development consisted of some teachers attending conferences outside the district, but these were costly trips and the learning gained by small groups of teachers was rarely transferred to other teachers.

After a couple of years, the EHS principal and his professional development team were able to regain some control over professional development at the high school by finding an opportunity to closely align their chosen inquiry-based model with district priorities. When Superintendent Nancy Follansbee decided to focus on the “instructional core” as a districtwide priority, the principal and his team viewed this directive both as an opportunity to revitalize the inquiry-based approach previously used, *and* as an opportunity to tie the model to district goals (which were previously lacking). The team, spearheaded by Kelley Brown, a full-time social studies teacher and the school’s professional development coordinator, then revitalized the inquiry model (which educators at EHS also call action research) based on *The Data Coach’s Guide to Improving Learning for All Students* (Love, Stiles, Mundry, & DiRanna, 2008). As the principal explained:

We used the directive to gather data around the issue [of the instructional core] and provide professional development to help teachers meet the needs of the students. With this, the control then came back to the site, and Kelley [the professional development coordinator] again played a pivotal role in developing a cohesive plan that, under the umbrella of the instructional core, tied it all together—all those initiatives that are out there—and made sure that our professional development is cohesive and makes connections to educator evaluation.

Kelley Brown, the school’s professional development coordinator, recalled:

We had this opportunity to move back to something that was a little more site-based that we could bring back into the classroom. The nice thing was [that] we were able to look back on the action research work we had done years ago, look at what the strengths were but also look at what the weaknesses were and try again.

She further posited: “I think that acceptance of us moving back to this model had to do with the fact that we were able to closely align it with all of these district initiatives that were going on.”

Today, professional development at EHS is coordinated primarily at the school level. Although district leaders meet to discuss professional development in the district, decisions on how professional development is approached are made building by building. As the principal explained:

There’s a big umbrella that the superintendent has established, with input from the leadership team, based on data that we’re looking at. That umbrella gives us enough freedom and flexibility to determine our own little umbrellas within the school sites that meet the needs of our kids.

### Fostering a Growth Mindset Through Collaboration

At EHS, the professional development team has tried to foster a growth mindset based on the belief that teachers’ basic qualities and skills can be developed through concerted effort, that everyone can grow and change through application and experience, and that professional development activities at EHS should encourage and foster that growth.

School leaders have fostered this mindset by being open and responsive to teachers’ needs and input, making it acceptable for teachers to identify areas in which they need help and ask for professional learning to address those needs. EHS leadership fosters collaboration by providing multiple opportunities for staff to work together toward a common student learning goal. The professional development coordinator reported:

It’s the culture shift that’s so exciting. So many teachers are saying, “We want to get out and see each other. If I could be pushing kids more, I want to see what it looks like. I want to get in there and see somebody else’s classroom.” That is pushing us to seek resources to try to make that happen. So, the nice thing is that when you have a collaborative problem and you’re working on it together and it’s a real problem, and teachers are thinking about it in their classroom—that then guides where we seek resources to build in more support.

The professional development coordinator credits teachers with much of the success of the inquiry-based model—citing their willingness to assume leadership roles, embrace collaboration, and take shared responsibility for identifying and solving student learning problems—along with Principal Vito Perrone and Vice Principal Kevin Burke, who have fostered a positive, growth-oriented mindset among EHS teachers.

With respect to encouraging collaboration, the principal described his working relationship with faculty in the following way:

We have some real master teachers that are in their prime. It’s great to see. It’s great to be a part of. It’s really nice energy and we respect each other and we work well with each other.

The professional development coordinator added:

The fact that our administrators are so open to teamwork and to supporting the process of teacher leadership, and teacher guidance, and teachers taking on active roles is incredibly important. If the power dynamics were different, then none of this would happen because we wouldn’t be able to collaborate. There are multiple perspectives coming in, but when we sit down as a team, we’re actually really collaborating. If that can’t happen in a district, then teacher leadership can’t really happen. That’s a really important message to share with districts. There has to be willingness for collaboration, for *authentic* collaboration.

### Laying the Foundation Through the Formation of a Professional Development Management Structure

In addition to building a strong, supportive culture, a management structure was put in place to facilitate professional development. At EHS, professional development is now managed by the **professional development team** (consisting of the principal, vice principal, and professional development coordinator), members of the data team, and the learning walk team.

The **data team** (which was originally formed using Race to the Top grant funding) consists of teachers and administrators. To help ensure consistency and cohesion, some individuals are members of both the data team and the learning walk team. The data team meets on a monthly basis to review any and all available data (as discussed in the following section), and to determine how to present data to EHS faculty.

The **learning walk team** includes seven teachers, two administrators, one or two District and School Assistance Centers (DSAC) members, and one or two teachers or administrators from other schools. The learning walk team essentially collects data on observable teaching and student behaviors (via learning walks) that will ultimately be reviewed and analyzed by the data team. A member of the learning walk team described the learning walk methodology in the following way:

We’ve asked the teachers to open up their classrooms to allow us to come in and observe. A few of us were selected to do the learning walks. When we go into the classroom, there are very specific things we’re looking for within the lesson. Teams of three or four people observe (for 20 minutes) and use their own check sheets to record behaviors that we observe. Then we get together and review what we observed. We take all that information and give it to the data team. The data team goes through it all, then the team brings its findings back to the staff and reports what it has found during the learning walks.

Three learning walks are conducted annually (in October, January, and March), enabling the professional development team to gather critical data about classroom practice and student behavior in order to assess both professional development needs and the effectiveness of professional development at the school.

## Professional Development at Easthampton High School Today: Inquiry-Based and Strategic

This section describes the kind of professional development offerings and venues provided at EHS today, including high quality professional development (HQPD).

EHS did not use the Massachusetts Standards for Professional Development (see Figure 1) when developing its professional development system because the system predates the creation of the standards. However, the leadership team noted that the system it created aligns “exactly” with the standards. The professional development coordinator attributes this alignment to the fact that they spent a lot of time looking at research and best practices when developing their system.

Nellie Donohue, a mathematics teacher and former member of the learning walk team, commented: “I feel like we’re really strong on so many of the standards. I’m actually surprised that our system and these standards were not connected initially. I’m really impressed with how many of these we just nail.”

| Figure 1. Massachusetts Standards for Professional Development  HQPD has clear goals and objectives relevant to desired student outcomes.  HQPD aligns with state, district, school, and/or educator goals or priorities.  HQPD is designed based on analysis of data relevant to the identified goals, objectives, and audience.  HQPD is assessed to ensure that it meets the targeted goals and objectives.  HQPD promotes collaboration among educators to encourage the sharing of ideas and working together to achieve the identified goals and objectives.  HQPD advances an educator’s ability to apply learnings from the professional development to his/her particular content or context.  HQPD models good pedagogical practice and applies knowledge of adult learning theory to engage educators.  HQPD makes use of relevant resources to ensure that the identified goals and objectives are met.  HQPD is taught or facilitated by a professional who is knowledgeable about the identified objectives.  HQPD sessions connect and build upon each other to provide a coherent and useful learning experience for educators. |
| --- |

### Inquiry-Based Professional Learning as the Foundation

At EHS, professional development is embedded in all the work teachers do at the school, rather than being provided as a collection of course offerings (although professional development courses are provided). Under the umbrella of **collaborative inquiry or action research**, teachers are provided with multiple opportunities for learning and development, all of which are explicitly tied to district, school, professional, and student goals. Progress toward meeting these goals is measured using a variety of data. The most crucial source of data, according to the professional development team, is the **learning walk**, through which the team can assess the degree to which professional learning is taking place and identify any additional professional development needs that teachers may have. As the principal explained:

The learning walk is so rich for us. It’s where we get into the classroom and see what teachers are doing to engage kids. What are teachers doing to make sure that their activities are rigorous and are challenging their students? That’s where we capture it.

EHS uses the “Inquiry Cycle” model (Love, Stiles, Mundry, & DiRanna, 2008) as the basis for its inquiry-based approach to professional development and learning. This model includes five major steps:

1. Building the foundation (such as a culture of growth);
2. Identifying a student learning problem;
3. Verifying the causes of a student learning problem;
4. Generating solutions; and
5. Implementing, monitoring, and achieving results.

As its first step in building the foundation for inquiry (Step 1 in the Inquiry Cycle model), EHS established the professional development management structure described previously. The district leadership team then identifies (on an annual basis) one or more student learning problems that it wishes to address districtwide, and the EHS data team and professional development team meet to review theirschool’s data and refine the district-identified problem, so that it is relevant to EHS teachers (Step 2). This allows the school’s professional development team to consider district goals in its own planning, while simultaneously ensuring that the school’s goals remain relevant to its teachers.

For example, for the 2014–15 school year, the district and EHS are focused on improving student learning on complex tasks across all subject areas. The school’s data team reviewed the results of learning walks, MCAS and PSAT data, and teacher comments gathered in meetings and through surveys, and, after analyzing and triangulating these measures, summarized the student learning problem as follows: “All students need more access to complex active learning.” (Complex active learning occurs when students demonstrate higher order thinking; use multiple steps; access prior knowledge; and select a path, strategy, or method for approaching a task.)

With the learning problem identified, the school’s professional development team focused on Step 3 of the Inquiry Cycle—reviewing and verifying causes—with all the teachers at the school early in the school year (September and October 2014). The team led discussions with teachers to explore questions such as: “What does it mean to redefine complex learning based on revised questions?” and “What does it look like to revisit complex learning and access for all students?” As a result of these discussions, the professional development team selected Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as a research-based model for increasing access to, and improving, student outcomes on complex tasks.[[1]](#footnote-1)

In October and November 2014, teachers began collaboratively exploring shifts they could make to their instruction, using UDL to meet the schoolwide goal of giving all students access to complex tasks. The professional development team designed multiple opportunities early in the school year for teachers to develop their [Educator Plan](http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/QRG-EducatorPlans.pdf) goals (which EHS teachers wrote as team goals) and integrate initiatives as they defined their inquiry projects. Small groups of three to six teachers formed based on their interests and goals, and the teams electronically submitted proposals for their inquiry projects to a shared drive for review by the professional development team. The principal and assistant principal then provide teachers with feedback on the proposals, based on the review.

For example, one team proposed focusing on threat reduction strategies in mathematics. They devised a survey to assess how their students felt when they were engaging in complex tasks before and after the teachers implemented the threat reduction strategy. Another team composed of social studies and art teachers focused on using multiple and varied representations of class materials to provide students access to complex tasks (see Appendix B for this team’s inquiry project proposal). They devised measures of how well the students completed the tasks to see whether their strategies worked, and a student survey to see whether students thought that multiple representations helped them engage with the tasks.

Once the each inquiry team comes together, the projects move to Step 4, generating solutions through group inquiry meetings. The professional development coordinator explained what occurs during these meetings:

We are in the stage right now (November 2014) where … we’re finding scholarly articles, and then in December we’re going to share those articles with each other in our small group, and we’re going to choose an intervention that we think will help our students with complex tasks. We’re going to try it, we’re going to collect data, and then we’re going to bring it back into our group, analyze that data, and then by March we share best practices.

From October 2014 through March 2015, teachers worked in their differentiated inquiry project groups to implement the research-based intervention (or teaching practice) under inquiry in their classrooms.

After testing out their research-based practices, EHS teachers are expected to use formative and summative data to assess their growth or progress toward meeting the goal of improving student access to complex tasks. Data collected by teachers includes pre-intervention student work (which illustrates students’ needs) and post-intervention student work (which demonstrates change or growth). Teachers are expected to analyze the data collaboratively with their small groups and adjust their practices accordingly. A learning walk team will simultaneously gather data on “implementation of actions” through learning walks that take place three times per year.

Finally, in spring (March through June 2015), teachers will work collaboratively in their small groups to evaluate best practices, mainly by sharing the data gathered through the learning walks, and will come to consensus on which school-wide best practices should be further implemented to address the need for more active complex learning at the school (Step 5 of the Inquiry Cycle). As summarized in a later section of this profile, this process is closely tied in to educator evaluation at EHS—providing crucial artifacts to be used as evidence of meeting individual and team Educator Plan goals.

The professional development coordinator summarized this work as follows:

Now, we have an inquiry model where teachers are required to study a problem based on data, bring it back to the classroom, try something out, bring that data back, and share it in small teams. To ensure cohesiveness, we have a data team that’s identified key issues within our school, and we are collectively taking on the problem of complex learning as a school, as opposed to a model where teachers work on strategies in isolation.

### Making Time for and Embedding Professional Learning

*Opportunities for professional development at EHS are widespread and are an integral part of teachers’ day-to-day work.* Professional learning happens during time already designated for teachers’ professional development, including school meetings, department meetings, and professional development days. At department meetings, for instance, teachers work together to analyze school-wide and departmental data and develop and review student learning goals, as well as professional practice goals from their [Educator Plans](http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/QRG-EducatorPlans.pdf). Throughout the year, on professional development days, during department meetings, and in other meetings, teachers participate in small-group inquiry projects, develop and review district-determined measures and learning goals, and develop and review their goals on a regular basis.

As the principal explained:

It’s not just about our professional development days. We use our faculty time and some department time for professional development. Every month, we have three meetings—faculty, team leader, and department. Every faculty meeting that we have has at least 45 minutes focused on professional development. After 10 minutes of “administrivia,” we say, “Let’s check out this data that the data team sat down with and let’s hear your input on it.” We really are trying to use the time beyond the full and half professional development days that are available to us.

### Strategic Implementation of the Learning Walks

*Learning walks are a crucial new aspect of inquiry-based professional learning at EHS.* When the leadership team decided to implement learning walks in 2013, it thought carefully about how to gradually introduce the walks to teachers. As the professional development coordinator recalled:

We started with volunteers. We did that the first couple of times and then we said, “Now, we’re going to throw a schedule out and if you can’t do it, then let us know.” So we did that, and for the first time this year we made a schedule and said, “This is what we’re going to do. If there’s an issue, let us know.” We had only one teacher who had a scheduling conflict, but at this point, people are willing.

Initially, the team introduced the learning walks by asking teachers who were well respected among their peers to participate as leaders in the learning walk team. The professional development coordinator explained:

They were leaders, but did not hold formal leadership roles within their departments or within the school. We were pretty intentional about it. We invited one of the union reps to be on it as well, so they could speak from experience about the process. It makes a difference to have teachers standing up in front of other teachers saying things like, “This is our problem. We have to own it. If we don’t solve this problem, no one’s going to solve it for us.”

Another strategy the team used to introduce the learning walks involved the principal presenting the concept to staff as a tool that would help them achieve alignment with the educator evaluation system, as well as other initiatives. The vice principal recalled that the principal told staff: “This is going to align with all the other initiatives that are coming down from the state and from our district, so this is going to benefit you.” The principal added that he explained to his staff:

Let’s take ownership of this right now. Let’s be intentional in what we’re doing and transparent in what we’re doing. It’s going to fulfill part of the educator evaluation system, but the learning walks are *not* evaluative. We really had to make that distinction clear for everybody.

He also emphasized:

We are professionals and we need to act that way. Just like a surgeon is going to be in the operating room doing best practice and sharing those practices with other doctors, it’s the same thing in the classroom. We want to spread best practice the best way we can, and this is a great platform to do it.

It appears that the deliberative, gradual, and carefully planned introduction of the learning walks was effective in mitigating any anxiety that teachers may have had about being observed. The learning walk team reported that teachers who opt out of being observed do so for simple logistical reasons, not because they have not bought into the concept. Ed Zuchowski, a Spanish teacher and member of the learning walk team, explained that these teachers are *not* saying, “I’m uncomfortable with having my peers come in.” Rather, they are saying, “You know, I’m actually not going to be there in that period,” or “We’re taking a test so you’re not going to get any real good data to really help the professional development.” Zuchowski described this as “refreshing.”

A learning walk team member added:

As a staff, we’ve decided that this is something important to us. So, there’s more buy-in and it’s not threatening to them. Teachers know that we’re not out to “get” anyone. We’re just gathering data. We don’t even know, at the end, who we’re talking about really because it’s just data on a sheet. I think teachers see the value of it and they’re seeing the fruit of this now. They’re saying, “I want to be a part of that. Let’s get a bigger, a broader sample.” So, the whole staff bought into the whole thing, and they want to be a part of it. I don’t think anyone’s afraid of us coming in.

Another member of the learning walk team explained:

This is a paradigm change for us. At first there was—I wouldn’t say resistance—but just an unsettling feeling about this new type of professional work that we’re doing. Having the opportunity for teachers to go into other teachers’ classrooms wasn’t the norm before. Since last year (2013), we’ve seen more willingness on the part of the staff to allow their doors to be opened and to allow the teams to come through.

In fact, the only “complaints” the team received came from teachers who wanted individual feedback from the learning walks, which the learning walk model does not provide. As the professional development coordinator explained: “It’s an aggregate tool. That’s the thing I think that teachers struggle the most with. But the exciting part is they’re saying, ‘We want feedback. We want to know if it’s us that are not doing the complex tasks.’”

This was confirmed by a data team member: “[After the learning walks], we gave all the teachers surveys, and they basically said to us, ‘We want feedback. So when you guys visit our rooms, we want to know how well we did.’” This suggests that teachers at the high school have embraced a growth mindset.

## Planning High Quality Professional Development at Easthampton High School

### Professional Development Plan and Crosswalk

The cohesive system of professional development that has been introduced at EHS is captured in the *Easthampton High School Professional Development Plan and Crosswalk* (hereafter referred to as “the crosswalk”), which was developed by the professional development coordinator and is revisited by the school’s professional development team on an annual basis (see Appendix C for EHS’s 2014–15 crosswalk). The crosswalk articulates the vision, the theory of action, the school-wide student learning problems on which they will focus, and the overarching school-wide goal for any given year, depending on the inquiry-based (action research) focus the school takes:

* **Data team vision:** EHS will continue to work collaboratively to create a culture of rigor and collaborative-inquiry based on data.
* **Theory of action:** Faculty, administrators, and paraprofessionals will use the Using Data Process model (Love et al., 2008) and Universal Design for Learning to engage in regular inquiry about data in order to improve student learning on complex tasks, and to close the achievement gap school-wide and within each classroom.
* **School-wide student learning problems:** Questions asked include: “How do we increase student exposure to complex tasks?” “How do we provide access to active complex learning to each student?” “How do we increase all student achievement on complex tasks?”
* **School-wide goal:** Teachers will adjust the instructional core in order to increase access to and proficiency in complex learning for each student.

The crosswalk highlights both district and school goals and delineates professional development goals for all EHS teachers. For 2014–15, these goals include the following:

* Continue to increase the use of data in daily practice with a focus on collective inquiry (focus on classroom data);
* Increase understanding of student learning problems by collectively using the data cycle;
* Increase teacher comfort and capacity to collect evidence for the educator evaluation system by integrating the Massachusetts Standards for Professional Development, student learning (S.M.A.R.T.) goals, and educator evaluation professional practice (S.M.A.R.T.) goals into the school-wide professional development programming;
* Increase exposure and access to complex learning by using inquiry initiatives;
* Increase proficiency in complex learning for all students;
* Establish a system for recognizing and integrating best practices for complex learning; and
* Move toward a culture of rigor with clear expectations that, in each classroom, each student can achieve complex learning.

The crosswalk further illustrates how these professional development goals tie into various state initiatives:

* **Educator evaluation system:** All teachers must fully engage with the new educator evaluation system by establishing student learning (S.M.A.R.T.) goals and educator evaluation professional practice (S.M.A.R.T.) goals, as well as collecting evidence to demonstrate proficiency on the Educator Evaluation Teacher Rubric.
* **Level 1 status:** EHS should improve the achievement of high needs students and work to improve the number of students scoring “Advanced” or moving up a category. Complex tasks are a common area of weakness across student scores.
* Common Core State Standards/Partnership for Assessment for Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC): Students will be required to engage in complex tasks on the new PARCC assessment.
* **New England Association of Schools and Colleges accreditation:** EHS must begin preparing for the 2017 accreditation team and self-evaluation based on the teaching and learning standards.
* **District-determined measures:** All teachers must implement district-determined measures for all of their courses and use the data to inform instruction.
* **Massachusetts Tiered System of Support:** This blueprint for school improvement, realized through a targeted intervention system, must be used by all teachers to ensure that all students are achieving.

### Using Data to Plan and Assess High Quality Professional Development

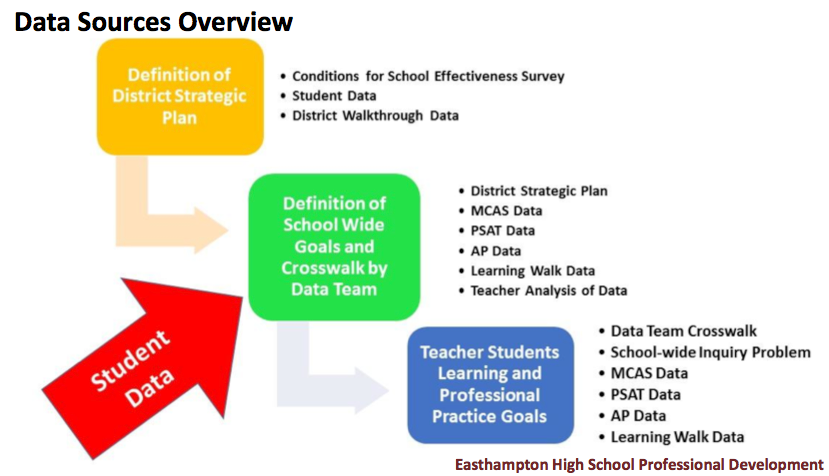
According to the school’s professional development coordinator:

What drives us is this idea of asking: “What are our data saying, what are teachers being asked to do, and how can we merge those into a program that is actually going to promote improving the instructional core and promote good teaching?” We are developing a “culture” of data.

As shown in Figure 2, the leadership team, data team, and all staff review multiple types of data to gauge the success of the school’s professional development efforts, including:

* Benchmark and high-stakes results;
* Results from the three annual data team learning walks;
* Classroom data on inquiry work (including formative and summative assessments, as well as observations by peers);
* District-determined measures;
* TELL MASS survey results;
* School-specific teacher surveys;
* Professional development activity surveys; and
* The annual professional development survey.

Figure 2. Data Sources Overview



The principal argued:

It can’t just be about MCAS at the high school level, it’s got to be about MCAS and PSAT and SAT and AP. And it’s also got to be about what’s happening in the classroom. It’s not just about summative assessments.

The professional development coordinator explained that the process of reviewing data is crucial and ongoing:

We ask ourselves: “How does the data affirm what you were working on last year? What’s new in the data?” Early in the year, through October, we are focused on establishing what we are doing, how we are aligning it with our student learning goals and our professional practice goals, and what’s going on in our classrooms. It’s also the point where we begin to define our focus for group inquiry.

According to a data team member, at each data team meeting:

We look at the last chunk of data that we collected, and, typically, we’ll make a plan for how we’re going to share that with staff. It sort of depends what it is, but we may create a short presentation, and usually we create some way for staff to interact with the data. I’m thinking about our most recent presentation, when they looked at data and we tried to let them know what we found as an overview, and then we asked them what they thought and asked for their input in terms of how to move the process forward. And then we take all that input as *more* data that we’re currently looking through and deciding how to process and interpret, and then we will share it with staff again. So it’s an iterative process.

As summarized in Table 2, educator evaluation data represent an important data point that the school leadership and data team use to monitor and assess the quality of professional development activities. According to the principal:

After our first full year, where all teachers were required to produce evidence for both goals and rubric elements, our teacher survey data and administrative conclusions demonstrated the need to support teachers in goal setting, artifact collection, and initiative integration. The professional development and data teams created activities to support teachers in these areas. These early activities helped teachers see the big picture and create cohesion.

Table 2 contains all of the different data and information sources that professional development committee members take into account as they plan, implement, and evaluate professional learning in the school.

Table 2. Data Sources That Easthampton High School Leaders Use to Make Decisions Concerning Professional Development

|  | Set Goals for Professional Development | |  | Plan Professional Development | |  | Assess & Reflect on Professional Development | |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Data and Information Sources Used in Professional Development Decisions | For Individuals | District-wide | | For Individuals | District-wide | | Individual Offerings, Initiatives, and Courses | Overall System Check | |
| **School and District Needs** |  |  | |  |  | |  |  | |
| District and school strategic goals | • | • | | • | • | | • | N/A | |
| Changes in curriculum, assessments, interventions, or technologies | • | • | |  | • | | • | N/A | |
| **Student Outcome Data** |  |  | |  |  | |  |  | |
| Student achievement data from large scale and districtwide assessments | • | • | | • |  | |  | • | |
| Reviews of student work | • |  | | • |  | | • |  | |
| **Educator Evaluation Data** |  |  | |  |  | |  |  | |
| Educator professional practice S.M.A.R.T. goals | • | • | | • | • | | • | • | |
| Educator student learning S.M.A.R.T. goals | • | • | | • | • | | • | • | |
| Educator performance ratings by standard or element |  |  | |  |  | |  |  | |
| Educator student impact ratings\* |  |  | |  |  | |  |  | |
| **Educator Self-Reports/ Feedback** |  |  | |  |  | |  |  | |
| Educator surveys (e.g., TELL MASS, district surveys) | • |  | | • |  | |  | • | |
| Professional development entrance or exit surveys |  | • | |  | • | | • |  | |
| Ad hoc educator feedback provided in professional development committee meetings or other formal or informal settings | • | • | | • | • | | • | • | |
| **Other data** |  |  | |  |  | |  |  | |
| Learning walkthroughs |  | • | |  | • | |  | • | |
| **Professional Development Standards** |  |  | |  |  | |  |  | |
| Massachusetts Standards for Professional Development | N/A | N/A | |  |  | |  | • | |
| Learning Forward Standards | N/A | N/A | | • | • | |  | • | |

\*2014–15 is the first year of data collection; student impact ratings should be available for each educator in 2015–16.

## Connections Between Educator Evaluation and Professional Development at Easthampton High School

The professional development system at EHS is connected directly to the [Massachusetts Model System for Educator Evaluation](http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/model/). In addition to the learning that takes place through the feedback and professional conversations that educators have throughout the evaluation cycle, the connections between evaluation and professional development at EHS are described in this section.

### Educator Plans Are Used to Identify Professional Development Needs for Individuals and Groups

Through self-assessment, goal setting, and the formative and summative evaluation components of the [5-Step Cycle](http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/QRG-5StepCycle.pdf) of educator evaluation, teachers—in collaboration with their evaluators—are determining their individual needs for professional learning. These needs are listed in their [Educator Plans](http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/QRG-EducatorPlans.pdf) as part of their professional practice (S.M.A.R.T.) goals and student learning (S.M.A.R.T.) goals. Teams of teachers within departments also work together to establish team-level student goals and team-level professional practice goals.

In August of each year, the EHS data team examines all available data (described above) to establish and redefine the school-wide learning problem. Introduced through professional development at the beginning of the school year and reinforced in meetings with supervisors, EHS teachers learn about district and school goals, as well as the school-wide learning problem developed by the data team. Teachers’ individual and team professional practice and student learning goals flow from these three elements.

As a member of the learning walk team explained:

The professional development team has worked to tie things in and actually suggests strongly to us that we use the professional development as part of our educator evaluation. They help us tie together the things that we should be working on when we identify our professional goals and student goals. This is helpful because it makes the work a little less for us, and it makes it relevant to what we’re trying to do professionally as a person and in our classroom for the students. There’s not as much pushback from teachers because we’re all working on this together, with the professional development team’s support. I can’t think of any person that wouldn’t be open to it and embrace it.

### Educator Evaluation Performance Ratings Are Used to Assess Professional Development Needs

On an aggregate level, school and district leadership teams review educator evaluation performance ratings to assess professional development needs for all teachers at the site and district level. Performance data are compiled using a server-based platform (TeachPoint) and are analyzed at district and sited-based leadership team meetings. This analysis is then used to inform professional development needs and direct professional development offerings. For example, it was through this process that the superintendent determined, with input from the district leadership team, that the instructional core should be the focus for all educators’ professional practice and student learning goals last year.

### Artifacts That Are Created During Professional Development Activities Inform Evaluation

Throughout the year, teachers’ progress toward meeting their goals is assessed using artifacts. These artifacts are typically products of the inquiry-based action research process (in an effort to ensure that the inquiry-based process does not create extra work for teachers), which helps to tie teachers’ work with the expectations placed on them by the evaluation system, while simultaneously helping them satisfy the requirements of the system. In addition, for every professional development activity, the professional development coordinator provides teachers with the indicator and element that the activity fulfills, so that they can see the connection between the work they are doing and the standards.

The professional development coordinator summed up these connections as follows:

We’re looking at the educator evaluation standards as a growth model. This is not a punitive evaluation model. Is there a piece of it in which your evaluation is tied to your job? Of course there is, but the whole point of this is that we have now identified what good teaching looks like. There is valuable information in those standards about how we can improve, and if we’re tying all these pieces together, then you’re going to have evidence for that. This isn’t a separate thing where you have to come up with some list of things that you’re pretending to be doing. We’re actually trying to foster an environment where all of these things are happening and this model is used for growth. The more that we can get the “busy work” done for the teachers, the more they can use the standards to promote growth and improvement in learning.

As a member of the learning walk team confirmed, “it all works hand in hand.”

| **Making Do With Limited Funding for Professional Development**  According to the professional development coordinator:  We’re trying to think creatively about accessing funds, so I went to the (local) Five College Consortium (which includes Amherst College, Hampshire College, Smith College, Mount Holyoke College, and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst), because they can write for grants and they also offer some less expensive resources. For example, getting somebody a substitute for the day to go and visit another school isn’t going to be cost-prohibitive. We’re also thinking about trying to get access to some of the college professors to do some content work with teachers, or even just doing it in the classrooms. We’re also looking for grants where we might be able to access some money based on the fact that we’re doing some innovative work. Now that we’ve identified what teachers need, how do we get the funds that we need in order to do that?  The vice principal applauds the professional development coordinator and others who “donate” lots of extra time to supporting professional development at the school: “The professional development coordinator’s afterschool time, and the work with the data team, and the work in the summer is a huge resource, and [it is a resource] that’s donated, if you will, because she’s certainly not getting paid for it.” |
| --- |

### What Teachers Are Saying About Professional Development at EHS

According to teachers, the professional development system is now better aligned with teachers’ individual needs. As a member of the learning walk team explained:

[Before], I sat through a lot of professional development where you’re just like, “Great, but this has nothing to do with anything I will ever do, but I’m going to sit here and experience it.” But with the action research approach, I can see how a complex task in my class is different than complex tasks in another subject, but I can see how *I* can work on complex tasks with my students. So, the new system enables teachers to tailor the learning to their disciplines.

A data team member reflected:

I like that that professional development has some continuity now. It’s not something we focus on for one year, and the next year it’s something else, and the next year it’s something else. We’re doing something that has long-term meaning attached to it.

The new educator evaluation system also provides leverage for the school leadership to make changes to professional development. Professional development helps to support teachers in meeting the expectations of the new evaluation system, and, perhaps for this reason, there has been less pushback from teachers about the new expectations for professional development instituted by the professional development team.

## Plans for Continuous Improvement at Easthampton High School

The professional development team is contemplating ways to redesign the “sharing” component of the inquiry-based action research model. As the professional development coordinator explained:

In the past, we’ve had staff do presentations, but we don’t feel like there’s very good carryover from that because people pick and choose what they’re going to do. We left more time in the schedule this year for best practice so that we can get people out into each other’s classrooms so we can actually get people to see it, try it, and engage in it.

A former member of the learning walk team added:

This year (2014–15), they’ve actually modified the timeline a little bit so that we’ll have our presentations of inquiry projects and how they worked out in our classrooms or any new strategies that we’ve tried. The presentations will happen earlier in the school year so that there is still time for us to implement someone else’s strategy and test something new before the end of the school year.

Another goal for the professional development team at EHS is to try and reach out to the middle school to help them adopt a similar model of professional development. The professional development coordinator reported that she has been “working a little bit more with them about following a similar model with a different focus. So I’ve just been trying to work with the principal there to try to help her envision what that big picture might look like.”

Finally, it is likely that EHS will begin collaborating more closely with other districts in the region as the professional development coordinator continues her discussions with local school districts and local colleges. As a member of the learning walk team suggested: “It would be great to share professional development between Easthampton and the Northampton, Hampshire Regional, Hatfield, Hadley schools, where we could create a larger pool and get different educators together, sharing ideas and strategizing.”

## References

Dweck, C. (2007). *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. New York: Ballantine Books.

Love, N., Stiles, K. E., Mundry, S., & DiRanna, K. (Eds.) (2008). *The data coach’s guide to improving learning for all students: Unleashing the power of collaborative inquiry.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

## Appendix A: Interview Protocols

* Interview Protocol for District Professional Development Coordinators
* Interview Protocol for Principals
* Interview Protocol for Teacher Leaders With Role in Professional Development Management

**District Profiles:**

**Interview Protocol for District Professional Development Coordinators**

**October 2014**

Thank you again for taking the time to speak with me today. As you know, American Institutes for Research (AIR) is working with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to better understand how leading schools and districts select, plan, manage, and implement high-quality professional development (PD). DESE also intends to share this information with other educators around the state, through a set of Web-based resources, including site profiles, PowerPoint presentations of cross-cutting findings, and video vignettes.

We understand that your time is limited, and we will keep this conversation to no more than 45 minutes [one hour for a group interview].

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

**Questions for District-Level Professional Development Coordinators**

1. To get started, tell me about your role in professional development planning at [site].

Probe for details if a professional development committee is mentioned. If a committee is not mentioned, ask if there is one, who participates, what they do, who coordinates the committee, and so forth.

1. Please walk me through the PD planning process from your perspective. What time of year does the process start?

Probe for details about the timeline, as follows:

When does [site] identify PD needs?

When does PD selection take place?

When does the PD committee meet?

Is the timeline pretty much the same every year, or does the timeline change?

How is the quality of PD monitored at [site] so that you know what PD to engage in again?

1. Are you familiar with the Massachusetts Standards for Professional Development (or HQPD standards for short)? [If so] How did you first learn about the HQPD standards?
2. To what extent are the HQPD standards informing your PD–related work, including planning for PD?

How are you making use of the standards at your district?

Probe for how, if at all, the standards have been shared with other teachers, PD vendors, mentors, coaches, and other staff.

[If not mentioned] How are the HQPD standards informing how you or other staff at your district assess or monitor the quality of the PD teachers at your district receive?

[If the standards have not had an impact] How has how the way you track the quality of your PD changed during the past year or two?

1. Here is a list of the HQPD standards [handout—see Protocol Appendix]. Which standard or standards would you say [site] excels at? How so? Was that always the case?

Do you have any data or other evidence you can point to or share that demonstrates this?

Which standard is the biggest challenge to implement? Why? How has [site] addressed, or planned to address, that challenge?

1. How does [site] ensure *coherent* and *ongoing* PD for teachers? What supports are available for coherent PD? What are the challenges?
2. What are the barriers to using the HQPD standards in your planning, coordinating, or monitoring of PD at your district?

What are the barriers to aligning the PD that your educators engage in to the standards? What have you done to overcome those barriers?

1. How does [site] use (or plan to use) educator evaluation data to plan PD?

Probe for how the district uses the data to plan PD for individual teachers or for department- or grade-level or schoolwide PD.

Are they able to drill down to the *element* level to determine PD needs across grades, schools, and so forth? Do they do this systematically?

Do they use a particular software package to allow them to analyze the data this way? If so, which software package?

Probe for how or whether they use evaluation data to identify teachers exemplary in different areas to lead PD.

1. What are the challenges in using educator evaluation data to plan PD?

How is [site] staff overcoming these challenges? What supports or resources are in place to help overcome those challenges?

1. What other connections have you made between educator evaluation data and PD planning, coordination, or evaluation?
2. How many PD days do teachers have throughout the school year, and how much dedicated time do they have during the school day?

Was that always the case, or is that amount of time a recent change? If so, why?

Are teachers able to observe other teachers from time-to-time?

Work with coaches?

Engage in professional learning communities?

1. [If not already discussed] To what extent is the teachers union involved in PD planning or implementation? How do negotiations related to PD for teachers play out at [site]?
2. Are there any documents that speak to any of the questions we just discussed that would be useful for us to better understand your PD planning processes and impact? Would you be willing to share the documents with us (for example, strategic PD planning documents, participant surveys, facilitator surveys)?
3. Is there anything else we should know about PD planning or the connection between educator evaluation data and PD at [site]?

Thank you for your time and insight today. During the next few weeks, we will be developing written site profiles for each of the districts we visit. As we draft the profiles, we may find that we have additional follow-up questions for you. Would it be okay if we contacted you again for a brief phone conversation? We plan to share drafts of these profiles with you or someone at [site] to make sure we captured your story correctly.

Also, as you know, we will likely be returning this spring to film educators engaged in professional development. I look forward to talking with you again then!

**Protocol Appendix:**

**Massachusetts Standards for Professional Development**

1. **Has SMART goals relevant to student outcomes.** High quality professional development (HQPD) has clear goals and objectives relevant to desired student outcomes.
2. **Aligned with goals and priorities.** HQPD aligns with state, district, school, and/or educator goals or priorities.
3. **Designed based on analysis of data.** HQPD is designed based on the analysis of data relevant to the identified goals, objectives, and audience.
4. **Assessed to ensure goals are met.** HQPD is assessed to ensure that it is meeting the targeted goals and objectives.
5. **Promotes collaboration.** HQPD promotes collaboration among educators to encourage sharing of ideas and working together to achieve the identified goals and objectives.
6. **Advances an educator’s ability to apply learnings.** HQPD advances an educator's ability to apply learnings from the professional development to his/her particular content and/or context.
7. **Models good pedagogical practice.** HQPD models good pedagogical practice and applies knowledge of adult learning theory to engage educators.
8. **Makes use of relevant resources to meet goals.** HQPD makes use of relevant resources to ensure that the identified goals and objectives are met.
9. **Facilitated by knowledgeable professionals.** HQPD is taught or facilitated by a professional who is knowledgeable about the identified objectives.
10. **Is coherent and connected.** HQPD sessions connect and build upon each other to provide a coherent and useful learning experience for educators.

**District Profiles:**

**Interview Protocol for Principals**

**October 2014**

Thank you again for taking the time to speak with me today. As you know, American Institutes for Research (AIR) is working with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to better understand how leading schools and districts select, plan, manage, and implement high-quality professional development (PD). DESE also intends to share this information with other educators around the state, through a set of Web-based resources, including site profiles, PowerPoint presentations of cross-cutting findings, and video vignettes.

We understand that your time is limited, and we will keep this conversation to no more than 45 minutes [one hour for a group interview].

If you don’t mind, we would like to record this interview simply for note-taking purposes only. No one outside of our research team will have access to or will hear the recording; the recording would be for the AIR team’s reference only. If you would like me to turn off the recorder at any point, just let me know. Is this okay with you?

**Questions for Principals**

1. To get started, tell me about your role in the professional development of the teachers at your school.

Probe for details if a professional development committee is mentioned. If a committee is not mentioned, ask if there is one, who participates, what they do, who coordinates it, and so forth.

1. How much influence would you say you have over the quality of the PD that your teachers engage in at [site].
2. Please walk me through the PD planning process from your perspective. What time of year does process start?

Probe for details about the timeline, as follows:

When does [site] identify PD needs?

When does PD selection take place?

When does the PD committee meet?

Is the timeline pretty much the same every year, or does the timeline change?

How is the quality of PD monitored at [site] so that you know what PD to engage in again?

1. Are you familiar with the Massachusetts Standards for Professional Development (or HQPD standards for short)? [If so] How did you first learn about the HQPD standards?
2. To what extent are the HQPD standards informing your professional development–related work?

How are you making use of the standards at your school?

Probe for how, if at all, the standards have been shared with other teachers, PD vendors, mentors, coaches, and other staff.

[If not mentioned] How are the standards informing how you or other staff at your school assess or monitor the quality of the PD teachers at your school receive?

[If the standards have not had an impact] How has the way you track the quality of your PD changed during the past year or two?

1. Here is a list of the HQPD standards [handout—see Protocol Appendix]. Which standard or standards would you say [site] excels at? How so? Was that always the case?

Do you have any data or other evidence you can point to or share that demonstrates this?

Which standard is the biggest challenge to implement? Why? How has [site] addressed, or planned to address, that challenge?

1. How does [site] ensure *coherent* and *ongoing* PD for teachers? What supports are available for coherent professional development? What are the challenges?
2. What are the barriers to using the HQPD standards in your planning, coordinating, or monitoring of PD at your school?

What are the barriers to aligning the PD that your educators engage in to the standards? What have you done to overcome those barriers?

1. How do you use educator evaluation data to plan PD?

Probe for how the principal uses the data to plan PD for individual teachers or for department- or grade-level or schoolwide PD. Does the principal analyze the data using software or plan according to what he or she learns during evaluation conferences with teachers?

Probe for how or whether the principal uses evaluation data to identify teachers exemplary in different areas to lead PD.

1. What are the challenges in using educator evaluation data to plan PD?

How is [site] staff overcoming these challenges? What supports or resources are in place to help overcome those challenges?

1. I understand that there are [number] early-release days for PD and [number] full days, and I understand that teachers get [amount of time] during the school day. How is that time used? How do you know how that time is used?
2. How do you coordinate what happens during districtwide PD days with what happens during school-based PD?
3. Are there any documents that speak to any of questions we just discussed that would be useful for us to better understand your PD planning processes and impact? Would you be willing to share the documents with us (for example, strategic PD planning documents, participant surveys, facilitator surveys)?
4. Is there anything else we should know about professional development planning or the connection between educator evaluation data and professional development at [site]?

Thank you for your time and insight today. During the next few weeks, we will be developing written site profiles for each of the districts we visit. As we draft the profiles, we may find that we have additional follow-up questions for you. Would it be okay if we contacted you again for a brief phone conversation? We plan to share drafts of these profiles with you or someone at [site] to make sure we captured your story correctly.

Also, as you know, we will likely be returning this spring to film educators engaged in professional development. I look forward to talking with you again then!

**Protocol Appendix:**

**Massachusetts Standards for Professional Development**

1. **Has SMART goals relevant to student outcomes.** High quality professional development (HQPD) has clear goals and objectives relevant to desired student outcomes.
2. **Aligned with goals and priorities.** HQPD aligns with state, district, school, and/or educator goals or priorities.
3. **Designed based on analysis of data.** HQPD is designed based on the analysis of data relevant to the identified goals, objectives, and audience.
4. **Assessed to ensure goals are met.** HQPD is assessed to ensure that it is meeting the targeted goals and objectives.
5. **Promotes collaboration.** HQPD promotes collaboration among educators to encourage sharing of ideas and working together to achieve the identified goals and objectives.
6. **Advances an educator’s ability to apply learnings.** HQPD advances an educator's ability to apply learnings from the professional development to his/her particular content and/or context.
7. **Models good pedagogical practice.** HQPD models good pedagogical practice and applies knowledge of adult learning theory to engage educators.
8. **Makes use of relevant resources to meet goals.** HQPD makes use of relevant resources to ensure that the identified goals and objectives are met.
9. **Facilitated by knowledgeable professionals.** HQPD is taught or facilitated by a professional who is knowledgeable about the identified objectives.
10. **Is coherent and connected.** HQPD sessions connect and build upon each other to provide a coherent and useful learning experience for educators.

**District Profiles:**

**Interview Protocol for Teacher Leaders With Role in Professional Development Management**

**October 2014**

Thank you again for taking the time to speak with me today. As you know, American Institutes for Research (AIR) is working with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to better understand how leading schools and districts select, plan, manage, and implement high-quality professional development. DESE also intends to share this information with other educators around the state, through a set of Web-based resources, including site profiles, PowerPoint presentations of cross-cutting findings, and video vignettes.

We understand that your time is limited, and we will keep this conversation to no more than 45 minutes [one hour for a group interview].

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

**Questions for Teacher Leaders**

1. Before we get started, can you briefly describe your role at the school and your specific role and responsibilities as they pertain to planning or implementing professional development?

Probe for details if a PD committee is mentioned. If a committee is not mentioned, ask if there is one, who participates, what they do, who coordinates it, and so forth.

1. How much influence would you say you have over your own PD? How about in terms of the *quality* of the PD you engage in?

In your role as [a teacher leader], how much influence would you say you have over your colleagues’ PD? In terms of type of offerings or the quality?

1. How has PD changed from your perspective since you began teaching in this district?
   1. Probe for how it has changed in terms of delivery method, quality, and impact.
2. Could you walk me through the PD planning process from your perspective? What time of year does the process start?

Probe for details about the timeline, as follows:

When does [site] identify PD needs?

When does PD selection take place?

When does the PD committee meet?

Is the timeline pretty much the same every year, or does the timeline change?

How is the quality of PD monitored at [site] so that you know what PD to engage in again?

1. Are you familiar with the Massachusetts Standards for Professional Development (or HQPD standards for short)? [If so] How did you first learn about the HQPD standards?
2. To what extent are the HQPD standards informing your professional development–related work, including PD planning?

How are you making use of the standards at your school?

Probe for how, if at all, the standards have been shared with other teachers.

[If not mentioned] How are the standards informing how you or other staff at your school assess or monitor the quality of the PD teachers at your school receive?

[If the standards have not had an impact] How has the way you track the quality of your PD changed during the past year or two?

1. Here is a list of the HQPD standards [handout—see Protocol Appendix]. Which standard or standards would you say [site] excels at? How so? Was that always the case?

Do you have any data or other evidence you can point to or share that demonstrates this?

Which standard is the biggest challenge to implement? Why? How has [site] addressed, or planned to address, that challenge?

1. How does [site] ensure *coherent* and *ongoing* PD for teachers?
2. What are the barriers to using the HQPD standards in your planning, coordinating, or monitoring of PD at your school?

What are the barriers to aligning the PD that your educators engage in to the standards? What have you done to overcome those barriers?

1. How does [site] use educator evaluation data to plan PD?

Probe for how the PD committee or administrators use the data to plan PD for individual teachers or for department- or grade-level or schoolwide PD.

Probe for how or whether they use evaluation data to identify teachers exemplary in different areas to lead PD.

1. What are the challenges in using educator evaluation data to plan PD?

How is [site] staff overcoming these challenges? What supports or resources are in place to help overcome those challenges?

1. I understand that there are [number] early-release days for PD and [number] full days, and I understand that teachers get [amount of time] during the school day. How is that time used?

Was that always the case, or is that amount of time a recent change? If so, why?

Are teachers able to observe other teachers from time-to-time?

Work with coaches?

Engage in professional learning communities?

1. Are there any documents that speak to any of questions we just discussed that would be useful for us to better understand your PD planning processes and impact? Would you be willing to share the documents with us (for example, strategic PD planning documents, participant surveys, facilitator surveys)?
2. Is there anything else we should know about PD planning or the connection between educator evaluation data and PD at [site]?

Thank you for your time and insight today. During the next few weeks, we will be developing written site profiles for each of the districts we visit. As we draft the profiles, we may find that we have additional follow-up questions for you. Would it be okay if we contacted you again for a brief phone conversation? We plan to share drafts of these profiles with you or someone at [site] to make sure we captured your story correctly.

Also, as you know, we will likely be returning this spring to film educators engaged in professional development. I look forward to talking with you again then!

**Protocol Appendix:**

**Massachusetts Standards for Professional Development**

1. **Has SMART goals relevant to student outcomes.** High quality professional development (HQPD) has clear goals and objectives relevant to desired student outcomes.
2. **Aligned with goals and priorities.** HQPD aligns with state, district, school, and/or educator goals or priorities.
3. **Designed based on analysis of data.** HQPD is designed based on the analysis of data relevant to the identified goals, objectives, and audience.
4. **Assessed to ensure goals are met.** HQPD is assessed to ensure that it is meeting the targeted goals and objectives.
5. **Promotes collaboration.** HQPD promotes collaboration among educators to encourage sharing of ideas and working together to achieve the identified goals and objectives.
6. **Advances an educator’s ability to apply learnings.** HQPD advances an educator's ability to apply learnings from the professional development to his/her particular content and/or context.
7. **Models good pedagogical practice.** HQPD models good pedagogical practice and applies knowledge of adult learning theory to engage educators.
8. **Makes use of relevant resources to meet goals.** HQPD makes use of relevant resources to ensure that the identified goals and objectives are met.
9. **Facilitated by knowledgeable professionals.** HQPD is taught or facilitated by a professional who is knowledgeable about the identified objectives.
10. **Is coherent and connected.** HQPD sessions connect and build upon each other to provide a coherent and useful learning experience for educators.

## Appendix B: Easthampton High School Inquiry Group Example Proposal (2014-15)

| PD Group Proposal **(DUE Friday, January 9th)**  **Easthampton High School Professional Development 2014-15**  **School-wide Student Learning Problems:**  How do we increase student exposure with complex tasks?  How do we provide access to active complex learning to each student?  How do we increase all student achievement on complex tasks?  **School-wide Goal:** Teachers will adjust the instructional core in order to increase access to and proficiency in complex learning for each student. |
| --- |
| **Directions:** From January-March, you will be choosing one action/intervention to use in your classroom. The action/intervention should be a best practice of your topic. You will implement, measure, analyze and assess its effectiveness in helping students complete complex tasks. |
| **Research Topic:**  **Group members: *(Names redacted)*** |
| **Based on your research (readings) and understanding of our topic, what are some topic relevant actions/interventions that we could take in our classrooms/work with students?** *(brainstorm all possible ideas—see Research Topic Background Information Organizer that you just completed)*  -Using multiple forms of media (text, media, size/method of text, audio, using inquiry, putting it in a context that is accessible to students, using student work as a means of representation, multiple entry points, different “challenge levels”  -Immediate feedback  -Making complex tasks for accessible to students through multiple means of representation. |
| **Based on your discussion, what interventions will be used and by whom?** *(Ideally, you will all pick one intervention to track and evaluate* ***BUT*** *you might pick a couple, depending on the needs of the group. Weigh the benefits and drawbacks of doing either.)*  ALL:  Increase accessibility to COMPLEX TASKS by   1. providing supports (1 strategy per complex task) 2. increasing the choice (2-4 options per complex task) and 3. providing levels of resources (at least 2 per complex task) available to students and 4. varying the representations (at least 2 different media) of material so that students have multiple means of accessing the same material. |
| **What data will we collect?**  Samples of student work, performance on all complex tasks, personal reflections by teachers  **How will we analyze/measure the effectiveness of our intervention?**  **Quantitatively: (e. g. pre/post scores, assignment scores, tallies, etc.)**  We will measure student completion scores on all complex tasks and compare them to the refined complex tasks.  Follow 4-5 students specifically to track their progress  Survey to students on whether or not they believe multiple means of representation impacted their learning  **Qualitatively: (e.g. collaborative analysis of student work, peer observation, etc.)**  Survey to students on whether or not they believe the multiple means of representation impacted their learning  Teacher observation/reflection  Follow 4-5 students specifically to track their progress |
| **Who will be responsible for what?** *(This is just a place to make notes for any individual responsibilities. All group members are expected to implement the intervention/action and measure in their classroom or work with students.)*  Each group member will implement their own complex tasks and are expected to keep their data  (Name) will create a graphic organizer for the group  Group will work on survey and reconvene |

| PD Group Proposal **(DUE Friday, January 9th)**  **Easthampton High School Professional Development 2014-15 (Continued from previous page)** |
| --- |
| **How can we help each other implement and collect?** *(e.g. request sub to observe, ask for an intern to video tape, help with data collection, review assignments, etc.)*  Observe each other |
| **Connection Back to Goals** |
| **How does our proposed action link back to our three focus questions and the school-wide goal?**  **School-wide Student Learning Problems:**  **How do we increase student exposure with complex tasks?**  We are committing to doing at least 4 complex tasks during the period  **How do we provide access to active complex learning to each student?**  By providing choice, levels and supports each student will increase their accessibility.  Teachers will work to help students pick appropriate materials, supports and levels to access the material.  **How do we increase all student achievement on complex tasks?**  We will measure the success rate of all students on complex tasks with the resources provided. We will follow a small number of students who are at risk. We will also provide high level choices.  **School-wide Goal:** Teachers will adjust the instructional core in order to increase access to and proficiency in complex learning for each student by making changes to our instruction based on the evidence we find. We will offer more options (scaffold) to meet the needs of all learners at all levels and abilities. |
| To Do List: (This is just a place to list future action for all group members and/or individual responsibilities)  -Make survey  -Fill in graphic organizer for 4 complex tasks |
| **January-March: Inquiry Project Professional Development Schedule/Timeline:** *(Please note: the dates listed are times when you will be able to work together during regularly scheduled meeting times, but you can also schedule other times to talk, observe each other, and discuss if you wish.)*  **January:**  **1/5: Faculty Meeting:** Complete Group Proposal for Jan-March Inquiry Implementation  **January-March:** Teachers/Staff implement their chosen interventions and keep data  Each teacher/faculty member observes at least one other group member in relation to the Inquiry Project  **1/8: 2nd Learning Walk**  **1/26 ½ Day PD:** Share and analyze progress on Inquiry Project/Intervention, share student work  **February:**  **2/2 Faculty Meeting:** Analyze student work and share group progress. Schedule classroom visits.  **March:**  **3/2 Faculty Meeting:** Group reviews action plan, student work and student progress on complex tasks.  **3/11: 3rd Learning Walk**  **3/24 ½ Day PD**: Time will be used to process data findings (student work, quantitative data, video, etc.) and begin discussion about best practices |

| **Evidence of Standards:**  **IV-A-1/2: Reflection, IV-B Professional Growth, IV-C-1: Professional Collaboration, IV-D-1: Decision Making, IV-E-1: Shared Responsibility** |
| --- |

## Appendix C: Easthampton High School 2014-15 Professional Development Plan and Crosswalk

**Easthampton High School 2014-15 Professional Development Plan and Crosswalk**

**Data Team Vision:** Easthampton High School will continue to work collaboratively to create a culture of rigor and collaborative inquiry based on data.

**Theory of Action:** Faculty, administrators and paraprofessionals will use the Using Data Process model (2008) and Universal Design for Learning to engage in regular inquiry about data in order to improve student learning on complex tasks and close the achievement gap school-wide and within each classroom.

**School-wide Student Learning Problems:**

How do we increase student exposure with complex tasks?

How do we provide access to active complex learning to each student?

How do we increase all student achievement on complex tasks?

**School-wide Goal:** Teachers will adjust the instructional core in order to increase access to and proficiency in complex learning for   
each student.

| **EHS Professional Development Goals:** | **Statewide Professional Initiatives:** |
| --- | --- |
| 1. Continue to increase use of data in daily practice with a focus on collective inquiry (focus on classroom data). 2. Increase understanding of student learning problems by collectively using the data cycle. 3. Increase teacher comfort and ability to collect evidence for the EES by integrating the standards, SLG and PPG into the school-wide professional development programming. 4. Increase exposure and access to complex learning by using inquiry initiatives. 5. Increase proficiency in complex learning for each and all students. 6. Establish a system for recognizing and integrating best practices for complex learning. 7. Move toward a culture of rigor with a clear expectations that in each classroom, each student can achieve  complex learning. | **Educator Evaluation System:** All teachers must fully engage with the new Educator Evaluation System by establishing SLGs and PPGs as well as collecting evidence to demonstrate proficiency on the Educator Evaluation Teacher Rubric.  **Level 1 Status:** Easthampton High School should improve the achievement of high needs students and work to improve the number of students scoring advanced and/or moving up a category. Complex tasks are a common area of weakness across student scores.  **Common Core/PARCC:** Students will be required to engage in Complex Tasks on the new PARCC assessment.  **NEASC:** Easthampton High School must begin preparing for the 2016 Accreditation Team and Self-Evaluation based on the Teaching and Learning Standards. (See key connections to standards below.)  **DDMS:** All teachers must implement district determined measures for all of their courses and use the data to inform instruction.  **Massachusetts Tiered System of Support (MTSS):** Blueprint for school improvement through a targeted intervention system to ensure that each student can achieve. |

**Guiding Documents**

| **District Goals** | **Standards for Teachers and Administrators** | **Conditions for School Effectiveness (DSAC** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Superintendent’s Goals**  **District Improvement Goal 1: Equity and Excellence-** By the end of the 2014-2015 school year, develop a systemic approach to best practices in teaching and learning to meet the needs of all learners.  **District Improvement Goal 2: Data Driven Decisions-** Collect, analyze, and use data district-wide to improve student learning.  **Principal’s Goals**  **School Improvement Goal 1: Data**- All EHS staff will use data to implement and monitor targeted interventions that close achievement gaps and move students up performance hierarchies.  **School Improvement Goal 2: Instructional Core**- All EHS staff will improve the instructional core in order to increase learning outcomes for all students. | **Educator Evaluation System Rubrics (DESE EES)**  **Administrators:**  Standard IV: Professional Culture  **Teachers:**  Standard I: Curriculum, Planning and Assessment  Standard II: Teaching All Students  Standard IV: Professional Culture  **Principal’s Goals**  **Standard 2: Curriculum:** The curriculum emphasizes depth of understanding and application of knowledge through: inquiry and problem-solving, higher order thinking, cross-disciplinary learning, authentic learning opportunities both in and out of school informed and ethical use of technology.  **Standard 3: Instruction**:   * Teachers’ instructional practices support the achievement of the school’s 21stcentury learning expectations by: personalizing instruction; engaging students in cross-disciplinary learning; engaging students as active and self-directed learners; emphasizing inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking; applying knowledge and skills to authentic tasks; engaging students in self-assessment and reflection; integrating technology. * Teachers adjust their instructional practices to meet the needs of each student by: using formative assessment, especially during instructional time; strategically differentiating; purposefully organizing group learning activities; providing additional support and alternative strategies within the regular classroom. * Teachers, individually and collaboratively, improve their instructional practices by: using student achievement data from a variety of formative and summative assessments; examining student work; using feedback from a variety of sources, including students, other teachers, supervisors, and * Parents; examining current research; engaging in professional discourse focused on instructional practice. * Teachers, as adult learners and reflective practitioners, maintain expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional practices.   **Support Standard 5: School Culture and Leadership:** In order to improve student learning through professional development, the principal and professional staff: engage in professional discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning; use resources outside of the school to maintain currency with best practices; dedicate formal time to implement professional development; apply the skills, practices, and ideas gained in order to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment. | ***V. Student assessment:*** *The school uses a balanced system of formative and benchmark assessments.*  **Analysis of assessment data:** Instructional staff analyzes assessment data to identify promising practices, determine enrichment and remediation needs, and assess needs for systems change.  **Use of assessment data:** Leaders and instructional staff use data for individual and organizational learning, not just external compliance. (See also CSE VII, *PD and Structures for Collaboration*.)   * Instructional staff works in teams to delve into the implications of data and to make changes to instructional practice. (See also CSE VII, *PD and Structures for Collaboration*.) * Leaders use assessment data to target PD activities. (See also CSE VII, *PD and Structures for Collaboration*.)   ***VII. Professional Development and Structures for Collaboration:*** *The school has structures for regular, frequent collaboration to improve implementation of the curriculum and instructional practice. Professional development and structures for collaboration are evaluated for their effect on raising student achievement.*   * **Accessing PD:** All staff access relevant PD (both voluntary and required PD) that is tied to specific professional learning goals. * Time is built into the school schedule for staff collaboration, and collaboration serves as PD. * Collaborative time is focused on taking instruction/learning to the next level of development, and addressing the needs (health/behavior/family) of the whole child. * Systems and protocols are in place to guide collaborative discussions. |

**Easthampton High School Professional Development Model**

| **Research Based Models** | **School-wide Inquiry: Complex Active Learning**  *For more details see Professional Development Calendar* | **Department/Individual Teacher Inquiry** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Inquiry Cycle:**  **Using Data Process (Love, 2008)**   1. Building the Foundation 2. Identifying a Student Learning Problem 3. Verifying Causes 4. Generating Solutions 5. Implementing, Monitoring, and Achieving Results   **Data Collection Methods:**  Benchmark and high stakes results  3 Data Team Learning Walks (7 teachers, 2 administrators, DSAC members, 1-2 visitor teachers)  Classroom data on Inquiry Work Pre/Formative/Post Assessments Observations by peers  Student study groups and surveys, District-Determined Measures **Access for Each Student Model: Universal Design for Learning**  *Universal Design for Learning is a set of principles for curriculum development that give all individuals equal opportunities to learn. UDL provides a blueprint for creating instructional goals, methods, materials, and assessments that work for everyone--not a single,*  *one-size-fits-all solution but rather flexible approaches that can be customized and adjusted for individual needs.* (CAST) The principles are based on three primary brain networks necessary for learning. | 1. **Building the Foundation:** 2013-14 Professional Development began shift in culture and data use. 2. **Data Team Identified Student Learning Problem: August 2014:** training used to define and redefine learning problem based on 2013-14 data (Learning Walks, MCAS, AP, PSAT data) ***Each and all students need more access to complex active learning.*** 3. **Reviewing Causes: September-October 2014:** Redefine complex learning based on revised questions. Revisit complex learning and access for all students. What does that mean? What does it look like? Teachers begin group-based inquiry projects based on Universal Design for Learning and Assessment Rubrics from DESE Continuum of Practice. Learning Walk Team gathers data active complex learning. 4. **Generating Solutions:** 2013-14: Teachers completed small inquiry projects to begin formulating solutions. Data analyzed school year data (teacher, Learning Walk, student scores) to identify key areas of focus for 2014-15. **October-November 2014:** Teachers look at multiple shifts to the instructional core through collaborative inquiry based on Universal Design for Learning and the Assessment Rubrics from DESE Continuum of Practice. Teachers select an area of focus to study, test and evaluate in a collaborative inquiry process derived from the Data Team areas of focus and 2014-15 school-wide student learning problems. 5. **Implementing, Monitoring, and Achieving Results: October-March 2014-15:** Teachers (in differentiated groups based on UDL and Assessment Rubrics) implement, pre/formative/post assess for growth through a collaborative inquiry process. Teachers analyze collaboratively and adjust accordingly. Learning Walk Team gathers data on implementation of actions through 2 additional learning walks. **Processing, Interpreting, Using and Sharing for Best Practice (March-June)** 6. **March-June 2015:** Teachers work collaboratively to evaluate best practice and come to consensus on school-wide best practice to be further implemented. | **Departments**  Team SLG and PPG goal work  Data Analysis of School- wide and Department Data Time: Department meetings  **Individual/Small  Group Teacher Inquiry**  Small Group Inquiry Projects  District Determined Measures and Learning Goals  Professional Practice Goals Time: PD Days, Department meetings and individual analysis  **Common Core  Classroom Initiatives**  Complex Task Integration (PARCC)  Math and ELA Anchor Standard integration through complex tasks |

**References:**

The Data Coach's Guide to Improving Learning for All Students: Unleashing the Power of Collaborative Inquiry, [Nancy B.](http://www.amazon.com/s/ref%3Dntt_athr_dp_sr_1?_encoding=UTF8&amp;field-author=Nancy%20B.%20Love&amp;search-alias=books&amp;sort=relevancerank) [Love](http://www.amazon.com/s/ref%3Dntt_athr_dp_sr_1?_encoding=UTF8&amp;field-author=Nancy%20B.%20Love&amp;search-alias=books&amp;sort=relevancerank) (Editor), [Katherine E. Stiles](http://www.amazon.com/s/ref%3Dntt_athr_dp_sr_2?_encoding=UTF8&amp;field-author=Katherine%20E.%20Stiles&amp;search-alias=books&amp;sort=relevancerank) (Editor), [Susan E. Mundry](http://www.amazon.com/s/ref%3Dntt_athr_dp_sr_3?_encoding=UTF8&amp;field-author=Susan%20E.%20Mundry&amp;search-alias=books&amp;sort=relevancerank) (Editor), [Kathryn DiRanna](http://www.amazon.com/s/ref%3Dntt_athr_dp_sr_4?_encoding=UTF8&amp;field-author=Kathryn%20DiRanna&amp;search-alias=books&amp;sort=relevancerank) (Editor)

CAST Universal Design for Learning: <http://www.cast.org/about/index.html> National Center on Universal Design for Learning: <http://www.udlcenter.org/> DESE Conditions for School Effectiveness

Characteristics of Standards-based Teaching and Learning: Continuum of Practice EES Teacher and Administrator Rubrics

MA Common Core State Standards NEASC Teaching and Learning Standards



1000 Thomas Jefferson Street NW  
Washington, DC 20007-2835  
202.403.5000 | TTY: 877.334.3499  
www.air.org



PO Box 694

Concord, MA 01742-0694

Phone: (978) 369-3519

Toll-free: (888) 683-2826

Fax: (978) 405-0016

concordevaluation.com

1. A description of UDL can be found on CAST’s website at <http://cast.org>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)