

# Enhancing Professional Development in Melrose Public Schools:

Goals Driven and Results Oriented

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

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

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## 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

The [Melrose Public Schools school district](http://melroseschools.com/) serves more than 3,700 students in a small city located seven miles north of Boston, Massachusetts. The district includes one high school, one middle school, and five elementary schools, with a staff of more than 250 educators.

Over the past three years, Melrose Public Schools (MPS) has experienced sweeping changes to its school system, especially with respect to its approach to professional development (PD). In 2011, there was a significant change in leadership at both the district and the school level, including the arrival of new Superintendent Cyndy Taymore, new Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning Margaret Adams, and several new principals. When the new administration took the helm, they found that the district had no systemic approach to professional development; did not provide teachers with sufficient opportunities for deep learning; did not foster collaboration; and that professional development was not connected to district, school, teacher, or student goals. When the change in leadership occurred, the [Massachusetts Model System for Educator Evaluation](http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/) (educator evaluation system) and the new [Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks](http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html) (curriculum frameworks) were being implemented across the Commonwealth. Together, these changes catalyzed a sweeping overhaul over three years (2011–14) of how professional development is planned, delivered, and assessed at MPS. Most significant among these changes is that multiple layers of data are now used to select and implement more inquiry-focused and job-embedded professional learning activities for MPS teachers.

Critical components of the new system include:

* A professional development committee to support professional development planning and monitoring;
* Regular data meetings to review multiple data sources—including aggregate data from the educator evaluation system—to plan and monitor professional development;
* A professional development handbook to help ensure a common understanding of the goals and opportunities for professional development;
* A sense of urgency and a growth mindset that facilitates the uptake of professional development among educators in the district; and
* Protected time for professional development (e.g., PD time during regular faculty meetings, full-day PD sessions, monthly early release).

Melrose Public Schools also leverages the educator evaluation system to help plan and differentiate professional development for teachers. For example, the district ensures that its professional development offerings relate to components of the educator evaluation system, including teachers’ professional practice and student learning goals (as described in their Educator Plans), so that teachers have the option to address their identified development needs.

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

The city of Melrose, Massachusetts, is located in the Greater Boston Metropolitan area, approximately seven miles due north of Boston’s city center. Its public school district, Melrose Public Schools, is slightly larger than the average Massachusetts school district, educating about 3,700 students. (See Table 1 for a demographic profile of the district.) This report describes how professional development is coordinated for MPS’s more than 250 educators.

### Challenges Prior to 2011

*Professional development in Melrose* *Public Schools lacked coherence and was not tied to educators’ professional practices, students*’ *learning goals, or students*’ *instructional needs.* As Assistant Superintendent Margaret Adams explained, when the new administration arrived in 2011, they “found a district where teachers had not been developed.”

Table 1. Melrose Public Schools Demographic Profile

|  | Melrose Public Schools | State Average |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Total enrollment | 3,711 | 2,342.8 |
| Total instructional staff | 256.8 | 172.8 |
| Total elementary schools\* | 6 | 2.8 |
| Total middle schools | 1 | 0.8 |
| Total high schools | 1 | 1.0 |
| Percent low income | 16.3 | 38.3 |
| Percent English language learners | 3.1 | 8.5 |
| Accountability level | 3 | -- |

*Source:* District Analysis Review & Assistance Tool at<http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/dart/>

\*Includes one early elementary school

According to several principals in the district, professional development was limited and uncoordinated. Before 2011, professional development in Melrose was not connected to data, district goals, or school goals. The schools within the district operated independently from each other with respect to goals and professional development, rather than working on the same goals with the same vision, and created PD opportunities that did not align with the district’s goals. Professional development courses were offered in the district, but teachers did not see a connection between the courses they took and their own professional goals or their teaching practices.

*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.

One particular feature of the MPS teacher contract contributed to this lack of return on investment. The contract included salary credits for professional development points (PDPs), which meant that teachers could advance on the salary schedule when they collected a certain number of points. Assistant Superintendent Adams explained: “This is unusual in teacher contracts; usually, you have to take a college course to receive credits.” This feature led educators to collect PDPs in order to move up the salary scale, with Adams noting that teachers were “going all over the place and collecting professional development points for whatever they wanted to do, unconnected to district and school goals.”

*At the same time, there were insufficient opportunities for in-depth professional learning in the district.* For example, the assistant superintendent noted:

[P]eople were put in a cafeteria and someone from a well known, outside provider … was brought in to do a one-day overview of *Understanding by Design*, and then people were asked to start doing curriculum mapping on their own … I’ve done curriculum mapping now, I’ve listened to the same sorts of presentations five or six times, and I think now I finally get *Understanding by Design*. It’s not that easy. To do curriculum mapping by yourself is really not a very productive process.

Two principals echoed this, stating that the “one and done” model was popular prior to 2011. As Brent Conway, principal of Veterans Memorial Middle School, explained: “There wasn’t sort of this longitudinal stepping stone or sequence … For the most part, teachers were left to their own devices.”

*District educators were also, in general, uninformed about the new educator evaluation system and the new curriculum frameworks.* The superintendent and assistant superintendent’s arrival at MPS in 2011 coincided with the implementation of the new [Massachusetts Model System for Educator Evaluation](http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/) and the [Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks](http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html). When Margaret Adams took the professional development helm as assistant superintendent, she learned that no one had clearly and effectively communicated with teachers at MPS about the new educator evaluation system or the curriculum frameworks. *The absence of a shared understanding of these major reforms, which aim to improve instruction, suggested a critical need for coherent and aligned professional development.*

### Forming a Professional Development Committee

*The first step in overhauling the professional development system was to create a professional development committee that sought to bring diverse and sometimes disparate perspectives to the table.*

The administration created a professional development committee to oversee and advise the district’s professional development efforts. Even though a plan for such a committee existed in the previous contract, it had never been enacted. The committee’s work continues to this day, and the committee consists of at least 12 representatives from labor and management, including teachers and administrators from prekindergarten to high school.

The district leadership team believes that it is crucial to “give a voice” in professional development planning to administrators, teachers, and representatives from all levels (elementary, middle, and high school), and from across the disciplines. According to Adams:

Because we’re going into our third year … we’ve been able to kind of garner the lessons of the last two years and really try to incorporate as many stakeholders as possible … [We] try to make sure that we’re meeting the needs of teachers and also of the district, so that everyone is represented at the table. It allows us to have conversations about what makes quality professional development from all stakeholders’ perspectives—from the teachers’ perspective at multiple levels—and [it allows] teachers to also hear about ... the needs of their elementary colleagues, middle school colleagues, and high school colleagues.

Speaking specifically about teacher’s participation on the committee, Adams commented:

I think it is important to have teacher voices in professional development because we want teachers to be [attending professional development] and be “present.” I’m always humbled by the work that we do in planning professional development, sitting there with the teachers, hearing the information or delivering the information to teachers, and then seeing how they’re able to take it and make it happen in the classroom. If we don’t involve the voices of the teachers, then we won’t have that embedding of practice into the classroom. Ultimately, we want to have an impact on our student achievement. Our ultimate goal is for our students to achieve at the highest level possible. In order to do that, we need the teachers’ involvement.

According to Stephanie Dembro, a third-grade teacher and member of the professional development committee, the committee is geared toward what teachers need, which allows for differentiated professional development opportunities:

Last year, when I joined the professional development committee, we talked about needs from the teachers’ perspectives and I talked to the elementary teachers in my school just to see what their needs were. And I feel that, now, the professional development is geared to what we need, whereas it wasn’t before. But, we also have choices now. So, if it’s science, there’s different sections, different grade levels. Before, it was just a lot of lectures. Now, it’s a lot more collaboration with the teachers. And they are taking things away and using them in their classrooms.

The collaboration that the committee creates between labor and management facilitates communication and problem solving. According to Jenny Corduck, Hoover Elementary School’s principal:

One of the smart things that [the superintendent] did was forming a labor–management committee that included administrators alongside teacher leaders and union reps. I think a lot of issues that we could potentially have had were really well resolved and thought about ahead of time by partnering with the people who are the very vocal union people … And it’s not just the professional development. It’s also teacher evaluation. It’s the labor management [aspect]. It’s all of these pieces all working as a cohesive machine.

A diversity of opinions is welcomed on the committee. In fact, the administration encourages the most vocal naysayers or those who have concerns about professional development to participate in the professional development committee. As Corduck recalled: “We approached my biggest naysayer and said we need you on this because we need to be thinking about [your concerns].”

### Fostering a Growth Mindset and Providing a Supportive Environment for Growth

*The new leadership focused on building a safe environment in which teachers take responsibility for their own professional growth and are comfortable acknowledging what they still need to learn.*

For the assistant superintendent, an essential characteristic of a successful professional development system is giving teachers ownership for their own professional growth and creating a culture in which teachers can acknowledge what they do not know and are motivated to continuously improve their knowledge and practice. She explained: “We are trying to give teachers more ownership for the work, not just in their own classrooms but at the school level.” For example, new teachers are expected to read Carol Dweck’s book, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*,to help create that understanding.

*As with any major cultural shifts in a school district, a few teachers have pushed back or struggled to balance all of the changes, but, in response, the new leaders have listened, shared concerns, and provided support.*

Since 2011, in addition to a new administration, there have been a number of new initiatives, including the new professional development system, the new educator evaluation system, new curriculum frameworks, Rethinking Equity and Teaching for English Language Learners (RETELL), and other state initiatives. The new leaders responded to staff concerns about the number of initiatives by listening and showing support.

For example, staff were concerned about the extra work required by the new initiatives, and, initially, some teachers did not buy into learning walkthroughs or see a personal benefit to the educator evaluation system. The new leaders responded by listening to concerns, but also by highlighting the ways these new changes were benefiting educators. They also publically drew attention to teachers who welcomed the changes and embraced their benefits. According to Corduck, Hoover’s principal:

[The new superintendent] was careful in her message and it was repeated over and over in front of the school committee and in front of the teachers … She was doing the walkthroughs and visiting our buildings. Her visible presence, in and of itself, sent a strong message to the teachers that “We’re here to support you and we want to see you succeed.

The principal reported that she struck a similar tone with her teachers, telling them: “We’re starting from a clean slate. I’m going to get to know you as an educator and you’re going to get to know me as an elementary principal and we’re starting fresh.”

The administration worked arduously to reduce anxiety around all the changes. For example, to create trust and comfort with walkthroughs, Donna Rosso, director of the Franklin Early Childhood Center, explained: “When I walk through with the superintendent, I let my staff know it is related to *my* goals and it is an evaluation of *my* work.”

Creating buy-in was also important. Kim Talbot, director of Global Languages Grades 6–12 and a provider of in-house professional development, stated:

Believe in the capacity of your teachers. Believe in your teachers and value the work that they’ve done and their intentions. If you can hold that paramount in all of the decisions that are being made about professional development, then you just yield more buy-in and build a program that’s going to benefit everyone.

By supporting their educators, MPS has seen educators shift from trepidation to a growth mindset. Many educators now see the value in the changes to professional development ushered in by the new administration. For example, Stephanie Dembro, a third-grade teacher and member of the professional development committee, reported specifically about how the enhancements in professional development have supported students:

The professional development is definitely helping the students. I would think by just keeping teachers up on their best practices, trying new strategies, and not being nervous to try new strategies, because we see the benefits of it with other students, so it makes us try even more. I know that I’ve tried strategies I’ve never tried in the past before. I’ve seen it work with some kids, or I’ve seen it not work with some kids, but at least it gives me different options to use in my classroom. I’ve seen the benefits in my class’s scores, definitely, so that’s always a positive.

### Creating a Professional Development Handbook

*All of the district’s professional development components are laid out in the Melrose Public Schools Professional Development Handbook, which can be found on the district’s* [*professional development homepage*](http://melroseschools.com/faculty-and-staff/professional-development-opportunities/)*. The handbook also delineates the district’s goals and how they are connected to the district’s professional development goals.*

The handbook clearly communicates Melrose’s overall professional development strategy and is posted on the district website and on the Melrose curriculum wikispace. According to the handbook:

Professional development is a critical and essential component of developing an effective teaching force. Research shows it has a direct correlation to and positive impact on student achievement. This plan is based on district goals as well as analysis of district and state assessment data. The district also must align curriculum and instruction with the 2011 Massachusetts English Language Arts and Mathematics Curriculum Frameworks. It is developed collaboratively with input from the district leadership team (Taymore, White-Lambright, & Adams, 2014, p. 3).

In addition, the handbook clearly connects professional development to the Melrose Public Schools’ Strategy Overview, which outlines the district’s vision, theory of action, and strategic objectives across four areas—planning, content and curriculum, instruction, and assessment and data—as well as the related strategic priorities.

## Professional Development in Melrose Public Schools Today: Goals Driven and Results Oriented

This section describes the kind of professional development activities and resources provided at MPS today, including high quality professional development (HQPD). Many of these activities seem to embody the principles described in the Massachusetts Standards for Professional Development (see Figure 1), though a rigorous assessment of their alignment with the standards was not conducted.

| 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-Focused Professional Learning

*Today, professional development at MPS consists of both inquiry-based professional learning designs and courses led by “in-house” experts—Melrose teachers and building and district administrators.* Lesson studies and teacher action research provide opportunities for extended study and deeper learning for greater impact on teacher practice.

During lesson studies, teachers work in small groups to teach a lesson repeatedly, observe each other, and learn to look at student work through the lens of the best practices they have been exposed to through their professional development activities. Lesson studies are a new professional learning design for the district, and its implementation has only just begun. The district learned a lot last year about what worked and did not work with the protocols and is revising its approach accordingly this year. Last year, only a handful of teachers participated in lesson studies. To encourage teachers to do more lesson studies, the elementary school principals incorporated them into their school improvement plans by implementing lesson studies with all elementary teachers. According to the assistant superintendent:

This year, all elementary teachers will go through a cycle of lesson study, which takes us from just studying student-level data to now viewing the lesson as the subject of study. The teachers are planning a lesson together based upon a problem of practice, implementing the lesson and observing each other, and then collaborating around how to make the lesson better. Teachers are really talking about teaching and embedding some of the work that we’re doing in professional development sessions, and saying “Now, let’s talk about what [good teaching practice] actually looks like in the classroom.”

Teacher action research is another new optional course offering for teachers in the district this year. According to the Teacher Action Research course description:

Participants will discuss the principles of teacher action research with the intent of developing a year-long teacher action research project. Participants will develop a draft plan to include a question they would like to research, a plan to collect data, and strategies to learn more about their question.

Participants are expected to collect data in their classrooms on a topic of interest to them and present the information to their colleagues. The course is promoted as a way to “easily support teachers’ Educator Plans … enabling teachers to collect data, analyze, and present results that will also serve as [educator evaluation] artifacts.” Participating teachers meet several times throughout the academic year and receive 36 professional development points for their participation.

| Lesson studies and action research offer teachers an opportunity to collect and analyze data and present results that may also serve as artifacts they can use in their Educator Plans and through the evaluation cycle. |
| --- |

According to the assistant superintendent:

[The teacher action research] is really empowering. We are thinking that the first group [this year] could mentor the second group [next year] and then have this kind of action research conference be the culmination of everybody’s work at the end of the year.

### Tapping Internal Expertise

*Melrose Public Schools relies on in-house expertise to provide most professional development.* This is a cost-saving measure and likely adds to the credibility of the instructors, who are, through their very positions, familiar with the challenges teachers face in their district. In-house experts include the assistant superintendent, content directors, instructional coaches, and teacher leaders, and they offer the added bonus of being available after delivering professional development sessions to visit classrooms and help participants refine their practices and continue their learning with the help of a coach.

For example, the assistant superintendent reported:

I did a training on reciprocal teaching and then I went to see the teacher and she says, “Look, I’m doing it, but I don’t get how to make it happen.” I said, “Let’s have the instructional coach set up a small group and do it with a small group of kids.” And so, within a week, we were able to do that and then they were able to pull two other teachers having the same issue to see the model lesson and now the teacher says, “I get it. I can do it.” And she’s all set.

Examples of offerings from in-house staff include:

* *Technology Tuesdays*: These workshops are offered by the district’s academic facilitator (whose job is to support technology integration at the middle and high schools) roughly once a month. According to the Technology Tuesday description: “The goal of the training is to support teachers in using technology resources that can support learning during out-of-school time. Participants will discover and learn new tools at each session that can be used across a variety of content topics.” Each session lasts for one hour, and participants receive one professional development point per session.
* *Elementary (K*–*5) Literacy Institute Workshops*: These workshops are offered by district staff, including two instructional coaches (a position that the district did not have until two years ago). Six two-hour sessions are provided to elementary teachers, and teachers are eligible for two professional development points for each session attended. According to the Literacy Institute Workshop description: “The goal of the training is to support teachers in implementing the literacy block, writing instruction, and the Massachusetts ELA Curriculum Frameworks.”
* *Elementary (K*–*5) Math Institute Workshops*: These workshops are offered by district staff, including two new instructional coaches (again, this is a new position for the district, created two years ago). According to the Math Institute Workshop description: “The goal of the training is to support teachers in implementing the math block in grades K–5 and to support adoption of the Massachusetts Math Curriculum Frameworks.” This academic year, the district is offering 12 different two-hour sessions (two professional development points each), of which nine are new offerings and three are repeated from last year.

The offerings are linked to district and school improvement goals that were developed based upon analysis of district- and school-level data. For example, these data indicated that students in grades 3–5 struggled with fractional thinking and measurement concepts. Professional development offerings were crafted to address teachers’ need for content knowledge and instructional practices in these areas. Since teacher educator goals were linked to district and school improvement goals, the offerings could then be included as part of their action plans. In some cases, a lesson study was planned to design and implement a lesson plan that supported students’ fractional thinking. In other cases, an instructional coach supported a closer review of the assessment data and planned a lesson with a classroom teacher. These additional actions provided embedded supports for teachers beyond the face-to-face professional development.

### Two-Year Intensive Induction

*Melrose Public Schools supports new teachers through a two-year intensive induction program.* Prior to 2011, new teachers were assigned mentors, whom they met with a total of three or four times throughout the year. New teachers also participated in a new teacher orientation, which was held on a single day, and an external consultant was typically hired to do the training.

After the overhaul in professional learning, the district started a two-year induction program. The first year includes a two-day orientation, in addition to approximately a dozen meetings throughout the year (held about every three weeks). In the second year, meetings are held monthly, for a total of approximately 10 meetings. The district also added a performance-based assessment component to the new teacher program, which includes delivering a lesson to a small group of colleagues. Teachers complete and present their lesson plans or their curriculum unit and receive feedback for improving both. (The district’s perspective is that it is in a perpetual cycle of continual improvement, and there is always room for growth.) In the second year, new teachers are asked to develop a unit and present it to their colleagues and administrators, who provide them with feedback on their performance. The assistant superintendent also expects new teachers to read books such as *The Skillful Teacher* by Research for Better Teaching, *Teach Like a Champion* by Doug Lemov, and Dweck’s book, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* (noted earlier).

| The two-year induction program provides support to new teachers in creating their developing Educator Plans. |
| --- |

Within the new teacher program, the district has also embedded all of the educator evaluation components. At the start, the district participated in workshops to discuss the new teachers’ professional practice and student learning (S.M.A.R.T.)[[1]](#footnote-1) goals in the fall. Based on that discussion, the district determined that it should develop sample artifacts for new teachers to serve as models. The district then helped the new teachers write their own S.M.A.R.T. goals. The district works hard to develop a community around new teachers, trying to help them to support each other.

### Time for Learning

*Melrose Public Schools leaders also worked hard to establish sufficient time for educator learning. First, they ensured more common planning time at all levels.* Teachers were given fewer administrative duties (especially at the high school level) and more time to work together with their colleagues. Principals creatively rearranged teacher schedules so that they were freed from one or more of their administrative duties. To further support common planning time, the district offers one early-release day every month from October to May. These early-release days have allowed the district to extend more professional development to paraprofessionals—a group that previously did not have access to quality professional development.

*Second, MPS staff meetings are dedicated to professional development.* Every staff meeting is now dedicated to professional development, rather than administrative issues, which are now handled by email. According to the early education director, at every staff meeting “either the teachers are presenting something, their work that they have done [or someone is presenting to them]. It’s mapped out for the whole year.”

The chair of the global language department at the high school, who provides in-house professional development, has observed a significant change in staff meetings over time:

The department meetings [used to be] very task oriented, very housekeeping oriented. And now the shift is definitely more collaborative. All of us are going to have this experience together. Can we invite someone to come in to share with us? Can we share with each other? Can we support each other as we’re trying out these new strategies? We now have a sense of collaboration and camaraderie that you just don’t get in unfocused, sporadic professional development.

*Third, the district provides three full-day professional development days—the first day of school and then two additional days.* Melrose Public Schools has had mixed success with professional development offerings scheduled out of school time or after school. For example, the district has experimented with Saturday offerings, but these tend not to be well attended.

According to the assistant superintendent, common planning time on early-release days is teacher directed, in that teachers determine what “they would like to work on, with their particular S.M.A.R.T. goals [from their Educator Plans] in mind, and what their team is feeling are the needs of their students, their needs, and the needs of the school.” Staff ultimately decide how the time is used. The administration trusts that, as professionals, teachers are using this time in ways that help them meet their goals.

*Fourth, the district has offered voluntary summer institutes during the last two weeks of June and a week in August to provide teachers with scheduling flexibility.* To encourage attendance, the district provides offerings based upon what teachers report they need, what the educator evaluation data indicate are areas for growth among many or most of the educators, and the needs of the district.

### Melrose Curriculum Resources Wikispace Platform

Melrose Public Schools curates a set of resources related to curriculum implementation, including professional development resources, which all teachers can access at any time in the [Melrose Curriculum Resources wikispace](http://melrosecurriculum.wikispaces.com). For example, all of the professional development courses offered in the district—plus a comprehensive set of resources related to curriculum and instruction (such as information related to best practices in writing instruction)—are archived by the in-house trainers on the wikispace for all teachers to access at any time. The wiki is designed to extend the learning that teachers receive, and to reinforce and remind them about best practices. Principal Corduck recalled an example of how the wiki was useful to her during an unannounced observation in a first-grade classroom where the teacher was using round-robin reading:

When I was a first-year principal at Hoover, I knew round-robin reading wasn’t okay. But I wasn’t sure what to tell this teacher to do instead. I went right to the wiki space. I went on to the PowerPoint about literacy and reading instruction in early childhood classrooms, and I found slides that talked about why round-robin reading wasn’t okay and what the teacher should be doing instead. So it was this great thing to add to this unannounced observation.

As Cynthia Santosuosso, an instructional coach, explained:

[The wiki] is a tool where we’ve collected a lot of resources. After each professional development session, we upload our materials … It’s really a collection of anything you need to do with curriculum. There’s also some tools on here, like the mandatory yearly trainings and things involving the evaluation. So, it’s the “go-to” place if you need something.

Leveraging Professional Development Resources by Collaborating With Other Districts

| Leveraging Professional Development Resources by Collaborating With Other Districts  As in most districts, Melrose’s budget for professional development is limited. According to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Melrose’s per-teacher spending for professional development was $1,164 in 2013 (up from $339 in 2009). On those rare occasions when professional development is not provided in house, the district tries creative solutions, such as inviting other districts to come and attend courses offered in Melrose and charging them a nominal fee ($50). The district then uses the funding it has generated to support and sustain the professional development offerings provided to its own teachers. As the assistant superintendent explained: “That’s part of the challenge ... finding providers that are reasonable (in terms of cost).”  Melrose and its neighboring districts look for opportunities to pool their resources to get the most learning from their professional development dollars, including “piggybacking” on the professional development offerings in neighboring districts. For example, if a neighboring district is offering a course for foreign language teachers, foreign language teachers from several districts may attend the course, rather than each district paying separately for the course to be offered in their district alone.  In an attempt to extend professional development at a lower cost, the district belongs to two local educational collaboratives: the Salem State Collaborative, which offers professional development at the low cost of $1 per participant; and the [SEEM Collaborative](http://seemcollaborative.org). The curriculum directors meet on a monthly basis with the SEEM Collaborative, and the district has been trying to leverage its partnership with SEEM for professional development, especially for low incidence groups (e.g., physical education teachers or high school physics teachers). For example, the district does not have curriculum directors at the elementary level, so teachers have to work on curriculum mapping. Rather than pulling the same teachers over and over again for different subjects, one Melrose elementary teacher at each grade level participates in the collaborative, meeting three times during the year. As the assistant superintendent explained: “And if each one of them takes one unit, we’ll be able to have a curriculum map for elementary social studies within three days.”  The collaboratives also help provide professional development to administrators. SEEM has enabled Melrose staff to engage in job-alike groups that help its administrators grow their own practices and provide opportunities for problem solving and sharing resources. Melrose also used similar opportunities through other collaboratives and local colleges. There is a job-alike group for early childhood directors, special education directors, curriculum district leaders, and superintendents.  Another collaboration effort includes neighboring North Reading, Wakefield, and Stoneham. Melrose has recently worked on grant proposals with the other districts, such as a Title III Consortium Grant, which is a new activity for the district and another example of creatively combining forces with other districts to conserve resources across each of the partner districts. |
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## Using Data to Plan and Assess High Quality Professional Development in Melrose Public Schools

Melrose Public Schools uses “multiple layers of data” to drive teacher professional development. Margaret Adams explained: “We’re trying to balance the needs of the teachers and what they’re telling us [with] the needs of the district and what the data’s saying, [and we’re] trying to merge all of those.” As Table 2 indicates, this is a complex undertaking.

Table 2 contains all of the different data and information sources that district leaders and professional development committee members take into account as they plan, implement, and evaluate professional learning in the district. How the district uses these data sources are described more fully in this section.

Table 2: Data Sources That Melrose Public School Leaders Use to Make Decisions About 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 | N/A | |
| Changes in curriculum, assessments, interventions, or technologies | • | • | |  | • | | N/A | 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.

### Structures That Support Data Use

*Regular data meetings to review all available student and teacher data enable the professional development committee and district leaders to identify professional development needs and assess progress toward meeting goals.* Data meetings occur within schools on a regular basis (three to four times per year in grades K–12 and monthly at the early childhood level) to review any of the data available at the time (summarized in Table 2). The district’s professional development committee and the school leadership committees also review the data related to professional development (summarized in Table 2) at the district level on a constant basis. According to district leaders, data reviews are part of every meeting, and the district is always assessing and reassessing its progress and is continuously making tweaks and enhancements to better meet the needs of its staff and students.

According to Principal Corduck:

The decisions about what we need to do next in ELA or math come directly from our data meetings. They were very sporadic before and not happening in every building all the time. Now, it’s very easy to see trends when you have years of data and can pull it apart to identify what we need to do next. So it’s really organic how decisions are made.

Principal Conway agreed:

Every piece of professional development that we’re going to do this year is mapped out in that school improvement plan. And it ties back to the data. If you grab an elementary teacher’s professional practice goals and student learning goals, they’re almost word-for-word already in a school improvement plan. And then the action steps that they’re taking to meet those goals are the actions in the school improvement plan.

Talbot, the director of Global Languages Grades 6–12, echoed that sentiment:

We look at student data on a grand scheme to say: “What are our students’ needs? And what are the instructional practices or opportunities that match professional development around those?” And then we assess our staff, the directors, and principals assess staff and ask: “What are some instructional needs based around core instructional strategies, and based around what students are doing? Are students engaged? What does that look like?” And we also poll teachers as well to ask: “What do you think?” “What would you like to see?” After every professional development session, teachers fill out an evaluation form that’s specific to that session, but it also lists areas that [they] would like to see focused on.

This activity serves as a mechanism for identifying professional development needs and assessing the effectiveness of professional development in the district.

*Findings from a yearly teacher survey are also reviewed during the meetings as a way of triangulating the findings. Teacher surveys provide insight into educators’ own self-identified needs and the quality of professional development received, and they confirm or validate needs identified by other findings.* The district administers a teacher survey to gather feedback on what teachers need and want. Last year, for example, the teacher survey indicated that elementary teachers wanted new strategies on classroom management, so the district tried to find providers who could address that need. For the first time in 2015, the survey also assesses the degree to which professional development opportunities offered by the district are aligned with the HQPD standards.

*Melrose Public School professional development leaders also review student work to measure the impact of individual professional development activities.* As shown in Table 2, student outcome data are reviewed regularly in data meetings by school and district leaders, as well as the district’s professional development committee. Along with standardized assessments and other exams, student work is also reviewed. Reviewing student work enables the district to see whether specific changes in teaching practices due to the professional learning activity have had an immediate impact on students in the classroom. Prior to 2011, teachers had not routinely reviewed student work as a group, so the district began embedding reviews of student work within staff meetings, department meetings, vertical team meetings, and leadership meetings.

According to Stephanie Dembro, a third-grade teacher and member of the professional development committee:

The data is used in planning all of our professional development in one way or another. We have beginning-of-the-year tests, we have midyear, and we have end-of-the-year tests where we do assessments to check for fluency and comprehension with the children. We do math assessments to see what they know coming into the grade level that they’re at and how they’ve improved throughout the year. All of those things we have data meetings for, and we meet with the grade level, the principal, the instructional coaches, and the curriculum director, Margaret. We talk about where the students fall. We look at growth. We look at strategies that we implemented in September, how they were implemented. Were they beneficial to the student? What are some things we need to try? What are some things we need to change? We also got Title I reading, so we would pull out the students that needed that extra help and get them into the services that they needed.

We knew that by looking at the data, it wasn’t just looking at numbers anymore. We had students we could match the names with the faces, and it wasn’t just the teacher teaching them anymore. We now ask: “What strategies can you give me to help this student? What can I do in the classroom or outside the classroom?” It was a real team approach rather than just the teacher being held accountable for the student not getting great grades in something.

### Learning Walkthroughs

*Learning walkthroughs, conducted by members of the professional development committee (including teachers and administrators), also provide essential data for assessing professional development needs and selecting and monitoring professional development.* The district also uses classroom data, especially data generated on learning walkthroughs (Melrose uses the District and Schools Assistance Centers, DSAC, model)[[2]](#footnote-2) to determine areas for professional growth. The school principals formed their own professional learning community and, in doing so, realized that while they were doing walkthroughs in their own buildings, they were not supporting their teachers in ways that were consistent across the school buildings. To rectify this, Principal Conway, the middle school principal, recalled: “We tried to implement a practice where we would go and learn from each other.”

According to the assistant superintendent:

The heart of teaching is the students, and the heart of what we do happens in the classroom. Without all of us being connected to the actual work that happens every day, when students open a book and have those ‘a-ha’ moments, and they’re excited about learning, it is essential that all of us who aren’t teaching on a daily basis be in classrooms to see that happen, to see the great work that teachers do, to be able to identify the challenges that teachers are having to help support them in becoming better, to be able to leverage parts of the system that are working, and be able to identify which might not be. In order to do that, we need to be in the schools, in the classrooms, in the hallways to be able to see when that happens, and to be able to support teachers in making that happen.

The elementary school principals now do walkthroughs of each other’s buildings on a monthly basis. Walkthroughs happen in each of the buildings twice a year, including the early learning center. The assistant superintendent reported: “We’re trying to see it as a whole span … we’re trying not to leave anyone out.” Curriculum directors from grades 6–12 do a walk-through of their own classrooms in their own departments, but with each other and with the principals and the assistant principals. The district has an elaborate walk-through schedule, and all the schools are using the observational data gleaned from the walkthroughs to determine what is happening in classrooms and how teaching practice can be enhanced. Following the walkthroughs, summary statements are generated by the walk-through team and shared with staff so they can learn as a group about areas for growth.

Although there was some initial trepidation when the walkthroughs were introduced two years ago, teachers are now reportedly very enthusiastic about them. The assistant superintendent reported: “The teachers now have said they want to walk through each other’s buildings … They see their colleagues all the time, and I think they really want to see what’s going on at other places.”

According to Dembro, the learning walkthroughs have been a big success:

At first, it was scary thinking that you’re going to have a group of teachers coming in your room … The previous superintendent never came in. But the superintendent is in there all the time. The kids aren’t noticing. It’s not disruptive. We have principals coming in two, three, four at a time. It was interesting for me going into the kindergarten and the first grade and the fourth grade and the fifth grade and just seeing what they’re doing. We talk about best practices and [with this model] you’re seeing them used at different levels.

Recently, one of Dembro’s colleagues, who was initially skeptical of the learning walkthroughs but participated in the training, reported back to her: “I know you told me but I didn’t believe. I love the learning walk-through. I am excited.”

## Connections Between Educator Evaluation and Professional Development in Melrose Public Schools

District leaders have been working to connect the professional development system at Melrose Public Schools to the educator evaluation system to help ensure that the professional development educators receive is coherent and relevant, and that it advances both district and educator goals. In addition to the learning that takes places through the feedback and professional conversations that educators have throughout the [5-Step Cycle](http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/QRG-5StepCycle.pdf) of evaluation, the connections between evaluation and professional development at MPS 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 educator evaluation cycle, teachers in Melrose—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. The district reports that it does not need a formal process for analyzing goal data. The district and school leaders report that they know each teacher and his or her needs because Melrose is not a large district, and because leaders get to know teachers closely through continued conversations and working collaboratively. According to the assistant superintendent:

The teacher evaluation system allows the principal an opportunity to have conversations with teachers around their S.M.A.R.T. goals—both their student learning and professional practice goals—and to see [their desired accomplishments described in their goals] flourish. They are able to see those flourish in the classroom, in their informal and formal observations, in the artifacts that teachers present that show their work, and in opportunities where teachers are coming together in the building at grade-level meetings, at department meetings, at data meetings where we’re looking at student-level data.

Moreover, principals work with teachers to ensure that their Educator Plan goals are explicitly tied to school improvement plan goals, which are in turn tied to the district’s Strategy Overview. This means that Melrose leaders are better able to ensure coherence in teacher learning across the system. According to the assistant superintendent:

The teacher evaluation system provides us an opportunity to show explicitly the connection between district goals and professional development. One of the things we’ll often do is start a professional development session by pulling out a section of the district overview and say[ing], “Here’s a district goal, and this is why this session has been tailored this way in order to help us meet this district goal. This will help you meet your school goal, and then also your teacher and professional goal.” Doing this helps teachers make that connection.

The tight connections help the professional development committee ensure that it is fulfilling the needs of both individual teachers and the needs of the district.

Educator Evaluation Performance Ratings Are Used to Assess Professional Development Needs

Melrose Public Schools district leaders are able to analyze teacher summative performance ratings at the element level[[3]](#footnote-3) across groups of educators. They use this information to help plan professional development days, as well as course offerings. For example, the district recently noticed that a significant proportion of new teachers across the district were rated low on the following element of effective teaching: 1-A-4: Well-Structured Lessons. The district responded by adding a component to the induction program that provides additional guidance on lesson planning, as well as a performance assessment task (which consists of planning and implementing a lesson in front of a group of colleagues) as a way to ensure teachers are applying what they are learning. This also gives teachers an opportunity to receive additional feedback on their practice.

Individual teachers who receive low performance ratings on particular standards or indicators, or who do not meet their goals, meet with their supervisors and are provided with the supports they need to make improvements. Examples of supports include being paired with a mentor, joining a lesson study agreed upon by the teacher and supervisor, or attending courses that may enhance the educator’s learning.

Artifacts That Are Created During Professional Development Activities Inform Evaluator Evaluation

As described in this profile, many of the artifacts created or collected for the teachers’ action research projects can be used as evidence to demonstrate having met professional practice and/or student learning goals. Another example is the lesson plan created by first-year teachers during their professional development on lesson planning, which happens as part of the first-year induction program. During professional development, first-year teachers watch lessons in action, create their own lessons, share them with one another, and then deliver the lesson during a performance-based assessment, where they are evaluated by their peers. These lessons also serve as artifacts that can be used for evidence.

Educator Evaluation Is Used to Link Teachers With Professional Development Activities

In Melrose Public Schools, as elsewhere, teachers are encouraged to seek out professional development activities that align with the professional practice goals written in their Educator Plans, as well as the elements of their practice that could use some refreshing. The district looks across all the professional practice goals that are detailed in each of the Educator Plans to identify or design courses that would meet most educators’ needs, in addition to attending to data from other sources listed in Table 2 of this profile.

Educator Evaluation Data Are Used to Monitor the Quality of Professional Learning Activities

The district has only just begun to attempt to link educator evaluation results (that is, performance ratings) to professional development activities in order to determine the extent of the activities’ impact on certain elements of effective practice. There are challenges to this work, however, given the timeliness of the results. It can also be difficult to disentangle the many simultaneous influences on teaching practice in order to determine direct causal relationships between professional development and teacher practice improvement. The District Leadership Team plans to review this coming year’s data and past data to serve as a reference point for past professional development efforts and to support planning for upcoming programming.

Educator Evaluation Is Used to Identify Future Professional Learning Leaders

Melrose Public Schools’ principals and district leaders are able to use educator evaluation data and, specifically, artifacts gathered by teachers for the purposes of evaluation to identify teacher leaders and mentors for other teachers who may need support. In a handful of cases, school leaders select teachers who consistently model promising instructional practice, even if they are less experienced teachers, to be mentors for other teachers, including more experienced ones.

In addition, each year, principals choose one or two model classrooms within each school where promising instructional practices are exemplified. New teachers and more experienced teachers who may be struggling with some area of practice are encouraged to observe the model teachers in these classrooms. Members of the instructional team (e.g., coaches) observe the model classrooms with teachers and facilitate a debriefing after the observations to discuss what they saw and ways to implement promising practices. For example, a teacher who is struggling with classroom management may be encouraged to observe a fellow teacher who models exceptional behavioral management skills. The struggling teacher might observe with his or her principal and/or a coach and debrief after the observation to discuss what they saw. To date, the process of identifying teacher leaders in model classrooms has been informal. Melrose Public Schools has plans to formalize teacher leader roles in the future, including providing compensation for teachers in leadership roles.

Professional Development for Evaluators Is Helping Strengthen Teacher Learning Through Evaluation

To provide professional development to administrators and support them in meeting their own professional goals (established in their Educator Plans), the leadership team systematically reviews the work of supervisors. For example, according to the assistant superintendent, during the district’s last curriculum meeting, supervisors engaged in a Looking at Evaluators’ Work session, in which they brought a recent piece of feedback he or she gave to a teacher and together gave each other feedback on the feedback. They discussed questions such as “How do we make this better, and what are your next steps?” The superintendent also embeds opportunities for the District Leadership Team to review each other’s observations and formative and summative evaluations several times during the school year to support calibration among evaluators. Walkthroughs also support evaluators in using common language around the district’s core instructional strategies.

Educator Evaluation Is Being Leveraged to Accelerate the Improvement of Professional Development and Learning in the District

The new educator evaluation system also provides leverage for the new district leadership to make widespread changes to professional development. For example, because professional development helps to support teachers in meeting the expectations of the new evaluation system, there is, according to the assistant superintendent, less pushback from teachers about the new expectations for professional development that the leadership team is instituting.

### Leveraging Data to Enforce the Approval Process for Salary Credits

In an effort to ensure that teachers receive salary credits (enabling teachers to advance on the salary scale) for courses offered outside the district or by outside providers that are better aligned with their goals, the district started to enforce a (previously only loosely enforced) policy that dictates that teachers who desire salary credit for courses must first apply and receive approval from the district *before* participating in the course. The superintendent must approve all requests for salary credit. According to the assistant superintendent: “She’s turned down a lot of things. If a course doesn’t pertain to your job, if it doesn’t pertain to district and school goals, a teacher can go, but she’s not going to approve it for salary credit.” Teachers may still earn professional development points from the outside provider for attending, but they may not receive salary credits without approval.

In addition, when teachers receive approval for attending conferences, there is an expectation that they will come back to the district and share with their colleagues as a way of transferring learning. This also provides teachers with the chance to develop products and artifacts that may be used in support of their evaluation goals.

All professional development activities and certificates are produced via the Aspen student information system, which provides teachers with a record of their district professional development. The system allows administrators to look at attendance by grade, topic, and presenter. Excel is used as the tool for data analysis because Aspen does not allow for necessary analyses.

## Plans for Continuous Improvement

Going forward, the Melrose school district plans to use the Massachusetts Standards for Professional Development as an additional tool for evaluating the quality of its professional development system. Previously, the district relied only on teacher reports to assess the quality of each specific offering. Now, the district plans to develop an evaluation tool based on the 10 HQPD standards that administrators will use to monitor and evaluate the quality of professional development. This tool has been developed for use in 2015, and in fact consists of two separate survey tools, one for teachers in kindergarten through grade 5 and another for teachers in grades 6–12 (see Appendix B for the K–5 version of the survey, which was administered in February 2015).

District leaders are also seeking resources to identify (using educator evaluation results, among other things), recruit, and compensate additional teachers to serve as teacher leaders and professional learning providers in the district.

The district also anticipates that the impending Partnership for Assessment for Readiness for College and Careers assessment will present a challenge and opportunity for the system. Adams explained: “I think the rigors of the assessment require us to look closely at what we’re doing again.” The district has not seen a lot of example questions yet, so it is difficult to assess whether its students are adequately prepared. As a result, the district is currently asking questions such as: “Are our kids really prepared?” “Are our assessments as aligned as we thought they were?” As the assessments will occur in spring 2015, this is an issue that will need to be immediately addressed.

A final question facing the district concerns how to continue providing high quality professional development to the leaders themselves, specifically the principals, given ongoing budget constraints and school leaders’ demanding workload. The district has sought workarounds—for example, leveraging a “train-the-trainer” approach, where one principal attends a conference, institute, or workshop and returns to train the others, rather than sending a team to the event. Principals currently participate in a professional learning community within the district, and, through the SEEM Collaborative, engage in some ongoing professional development opportunities externally.

Additionally, while the district has been creative and strategic in relying on in-house expertise, this has meant that a small group of individuals has become solely responsible for providing all the professional development in the district, and leaders are starting to realize that it is important to avoid overtaxing those resources. Moreover, district leadership believes that no district should be dependent on the presence and personalities of a group of leaders, but should instead be a self-sustaining, reflective, and proactive group of professionals invested in continuous improvement, both for themselves and their students. To that end, Melrose is trying to create a self-perpetuating culture of professional learning that is independent of those who have led and implemented these changes by creating more teachers who can lead this work for their buildings.

While more work needs to be done, the difficult work that has occurred over the last three years to build a robust professional development system in Melrose Public Schools appears to be paying off, and the professional learning activities and opportunities in Melrose Public Schools today are more likely meet the Massachusetts Standards for Professional Development now and into the future. As the assistant superintendent explained:

I saw a group of eighth graders who were describing their independent reading books that they had selected and what genre they were reading. They were so excited about their books and about reading their books. There was such joy about learning, that they had discovered the pleasure of reading. That’s what makes it worth it—to see the looks on kids’ faces when they discover something new and they discover something about themselves. These eighth graders were discovering that they were learners and that they could be readers. That was really exciting.

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## 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:**

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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: FY 15 PreK-5 Professional Development Survey

| FY 15 PreK-5 Professional Development Survey |
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|  |
| Dear Faculty,  The Professional Development Committee requests your support in the completion of a survey to elicit your thoughts and suggestions to assist in the development of the district’s professional development offerings. It will take approximately 5 minutes to complete.  The Professional Development Committee is formed as a function of the MEA Teacher Contract. The committee is served with formulating the district’s professional development programming. The committee reviews the evaluations from full day professional development days and the afterschool/summer offerings. The information helps inform which sessions have best met staff needs and also help determine possible next steps.  The Professional Development Committee uses the staff survey you complete to closely consider your input in the development of professional development plans. Of all the data sources the committee reviews, the staff voices reflected in these surveys is our most important and valuable piece of information. It helps the committee be more responsive to the needs of the staff.  We thank you for your time in completing the survey.  Members of the Professional Development Committee  Naomi Baline, MEA President  Maureen Connell, 8th Grade History Teacher, MVMMS  Jenny Corduck, Principal Hoover School  Dave Cyr, 3rd Grade Teacher, Hoover School  Stephanie Dembro, 3rd Grade Teacher, Roosevelt School  Susan Douyotas, Elementary ETF  Lindsay Shanahan, 5th Grade Teacher Lincoln  Angela Singer, Director of ELA Grades 6­12  Kristen Thorp, School Committee Member  Margaret Adams, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning   1. Which of the following best describes the position in which you are currently employed?  * Classroom Teacher * Special Educator including OT/PT and Speech/Language * Specialist in Art, Music, Health, and Physical Education * Paraprofessional * Administrator   Other (please specify) |

| FY 15 PreK-5 Professional Development Survey |
| --- |
| 1. When do you prefer to have professional development sessions scheduled?  * Afterschool * Saturdays * Summer   Other (please specify) |
| **Standards for Professional Development** |
| The Massachusetts Standards for Professional Development is Massachusetts' definition of High Quality Professional Development. Educating all students well requires high quality professional development experiences that embody specific attributes and respond to the needs of educators. Please rate below the district's professional development in relation to these standards.   1. District professional development offerings have clear goals and objectives relevant to desired student outcomes.   Select one: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Neither Agree or Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree.  Other (please specify)     1. District professional development offerings align with state, district, school, and/or educator goals or priorities.   Select one: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Neither Agree or Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree.  Other (please specify)     1. District professional development is designed based on the analysis of data relevant to the identified goal, and audience.   Select one: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Neither Agree or Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree.  Other (please specify) |

| FY 15 PreK-5 Professional Development Survey |
| --- |
| 1. District professional development is assessed to ensure that it is meeting the targeted goals and objectives.   Select one: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Neither Agree or Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree.  Other (please specify)     1. District professional development promotes collaboration among educators to encourage sharing of ideas and working together to achieve the identified goals and objectives.   Select one: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Neither Agree or Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree.  Other (please specify)     1. District professional development advances an educator's ability to apply learnings from the professional development to his/her particular content and/or context.   Select one: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Neither Agree or Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree.  Other (please specify)     1. District professional development models good pedagogical practice and applies knowledge of adult learning theory to engage educators.   Select one: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Neither Agree or Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree.  Other (please specify)     1. District professional development makes use of relevant resources to ensure that the identified goals and objectives are met.   Select one: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Neither Agree or Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree.  Other (please specify) |

| FY 15 PreK-5 Professional Development Survey |
| --- |
| 1. District professional development is taught or facilitated by a professional who is knowledgeable about the identified objectives.   Select one: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Neither Agree or Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree.  Other (please specify)     1. District professional development sessions connect and build upon each other to provide a coherent and useful learning experience for educators.   Select one: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Neither Agree or Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree.  Other (please specify)     1. Resources for district and school professional development are adequate to meet the needs.   Select one: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Neither Agree or Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree.  Other (please specify) |
| **Feedback on the Development of Professional Development** |
| As the district plans professional development for the coming school year, please provide your feedback to the following questions. Your responses are used by the Professional Development Committee in the development of the district's offerings.   1. What time(s) after school would be the best time for workshops to begin?  * 2:45 PM * 3:00 PM * 3:15 PM   Other (please specify) |

| FY 15 PreK-5 Professional Development Survey |
| --- |
| 1. Indicate all days of the week which you would prefer for after school training.  * Monday * Tuesday * Wednesday * Thursday   Other (please specify)     1. Which formats for professional development would best meet your needs? Please choose all of the formats you prefer.  * Workshops or seminars * Webinars * Study Groups * Grade Level Meetings * Book Study * Curriculum Development * Common Planning Time * Online or Flipped Learning * Working with an Instructional Coach   Other (please specify) |

| FY 15 PreK-5 Professional Development Survey |
| --- |
| 1. Please mark all the topics of interest to you for upcoming professional development.  * Classroom Management * Behavior Management * Reading Instruction * Writing Instruction * Math Instruction * Science Instruction * Differentiating Instruction * Response to Intervention * Assessment * Meeting the Needs of Special Education Students * Working with Struggling Readers and Writers * Effective Teaching Strategies * Meeting the Needs of English Language Learners * Designing Curriculum Units * Education in the Arts * Providing Collaborative Learning * Information on Teacher Recertification * Using Technology in the Classroom   Other (please specify) |

| FY 15 PreK-5 Professional Development Survey |
| --- |
| 1. Mark all the topics of interest to you for upcoming professional development related specifically to technology.  * Use of Excel * Use of Google Apps for Education, Gmail, Google Drive * Use of IPads/Tablets * Classroom Website Development in Aspen * Creating Flipped Classroom * Advanced Features of Smartboard * Innovative Presentation Technologies * Tech Tools for Assessments and Checking for Understanding * Google Sites for Student Portfolios and Online Projects   Other (please specify)     1. As the district begins planning professional development, indicate topics or areas that you feel you will need support in. 2. Indicate any topics or areas within technology use/technology integration within the classroom that you feel you need additional professional development. |

| FY 15 PreK-5 Professional Development Survey |
| --- |
| 1. Are you applying strategies and content that you learned in professional development training with your students.  * Yes * No * Some of the Content   Please explain.   1. Other comments on the subject of professional development. |



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. S.M.A.R.T. stands for “Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely.” [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Available at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/dart/walk/ImplementationGuide.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The [Summative Performance Rating](http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/implementation/RatingEdPerformance.pdf) assesses an educator’s practice against four Standards of Effective Teaching or Administrator Leadership Practice, as well as an educator’s progress toward attainment of his/her professional practice and student learning goals. Massachusetts ESE has developed four model rubrics to encompass the roles and responsibilities across all educators: the [Superintendent Rubric](http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/model/PartIII_AppxA.pdf), the [School-Level Administrator Rubric](http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/model/PartIII_AppxB.pdf), the [Classroom Teacher Rubric](http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/model/PartIII_AppxC.pdf), and the [Specialized Instructional Support Personnel Rubric](http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/model/PartIII_AppxD.pdf). Each rubric is built around the Standards and Indicators of Effective Teaching Practice or Administrative Leadership Practice and contains indicators for each standard, and each indicator consists of one or more element of practice against which educators are assessed on four performance levels: Exemplary, Proficient, Needs Improvement, or Unsatisfactory. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)