**DRAFT District Standards and Indicators**

**Document Organization**

The first page introduces the *District Standards and Indicators* and their statutory and regulatory context. Next, there is a table of contents that outlines each standard and indicator. The following pages describe each standard and indicator in detail, along with connected “look-fors” that describe best practices. Each of the six standards begins on a new page. Indicators are bolded and left-aligned, and the “look-fors” are numbered below each indicator. Finally, the document concludes with a glossary of relevant terms and an appendix with links to resources referenced throughout each standard.

**Introduction**

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) [envisions an education system](https://www.doe.mass.edu/commissioner/vision/vision-supports.pdf) in which all students in Massachusetts will attain academic knowledge and skills, understand the value of self, understand the value of others, and engage with the world so they can be curious and creative, shape their path, feel connected, and be empowered. The *District Standards and Indicators* provide a detailed definition of effective school district policies and practices that will assist school districts in implementing this vision. Furthermore, this document is the foundation of all [District Reviews](https://www.doe.mass.edu/accountability/district-review/default.html), which provide the state, district leaders, and the public with an in-depth look into the systems, structures, and practices of a given district and the ways in which they impact student experiences and opportunities.

DESE's three Strategic Objectives (linked [here](https://www.doe.mass.edu/commissioner/vision/vision-supports.pdf) and referred to in short-hand as "Whole Student,", "Deeper Learning", and "Diverse and Effective Workforce") are embedded throughout the standards and indicators. These priorities inform DESE’s work throughout the Commonwealth and, like the *District Standards and Indicators*, were formulated in consultation with vigorous research, insights from school and district officials, and feedback from key local-, district-, and state-level stakeholders. This document is designed to align with other DESE guidance and contains links to relevant guidance and resources.

**Statutory and Regulatory Context**

The *District Standards and Indicators* fulfill the statutory requirement described under [M.G.L. Ch. 69 § 1B](https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter69/Section1b): “The board shall establish the process and standards for school and district audits and reviews conducted by the office of school and district accountability established by section 55A of chapter 15.”

The *District Standards and Indicators* are also described in [state accountability regulations (603 CMR 2.03 (6))](https://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr2.html?section=03), as follows:

(a) District reviews, improvement planning, and other forms of accountability and assistance shall be based on standards of effective policy and practice in:

1. Leadership and governance;
2. Curriculum and instruction;
3. Assessment;
4. Human resources and professional development;
5. Student support; and
6. Financial and asset management.

(b) The Department shall publish a detailed version of the standards and associated indicators, which shall be informed by research-based practices identified as characteristic of schools that have experienced rapid improvements in student outcomes.

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# Leadership and Governance

School committees, district leaders, school leaders, and advisory council members work collaboratively and strategically to promote high-quality teaching and learning that is antiracist, inclusive, and multicultural; that values and affirms each and every student and their families; and that creates equitable opportunities and experiences for all students, particularly those who have been historically underserved. They establish, implement, and evaluate policies, plans, procedures, systems, and budgets with a primary focus on achieving districtwide strategic objectives, in part through equitable and effective use of resources, that ultimately lead to high-quality teaching and learning for all students.

Leadership and Governing Structures: The district has a clear leadership and governance structure in which individuals and teams carry out their roles that support district functions and advance equitable student outcomes.

1. **School Committee:** The district has a school committee with a working governance structure that fulfills its statutory responsibilities and advances policies and programs that provide all students, particularly those from historically underserved groups and communities, with equitable opportunities to excel in all areas across all grades.
   1. The school committee has established subcommittees that allow it to address the district’s needs efficiently and effectively.
   2. The school committee has systems in place for reviewing and approving policies that are consistent with statutory and regulatory requirements, district priorities, and the statewide priorities established by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.
      1. The school committee regularly analyzes their policies, practices, and procedures to identify and address systemic issues that have historically contributed to disparities.
      2. The school committee, with the district’s support, leverages an array of data, including disaggregated student performance and demographic data, educator performance data, and stakeholder feedback during the policy review process to assess the impact of proposed policies.
      3. The school committee communicates approved policies to the relevant parties, maintains a publicly available repository (e.g., website) with all policies, and follows up with district administrators to confirm decisions are being meaningfully implemented in schools and classrooms.
   3. The school committee hires, supervises, and conducts an annual performance review of the superintendent, in alignment with the Massachusetts Model System for Educator Evaluation, and provides ongoing, growth-oriented feedback to improve the superintendent’s performance.
   4. The school committee strategically aligns resource allocations (funding, personnel, and time) to both improve student learning experiences and outcomes and reduce disparities for historically underserved groups.
      1. The school committee promotes prudent financial management by working with district leaders and the municipality (municipalities) to annually approve the district’s budget that is aligned to district priorities, and regularly review reports so that spending remains within its approved budget (see [Financial and Asset Management](#_Financial_and_Asset) standard for greater detail).
      2. The school committee explicitly connects its resource allocations to the district’s strategic goals and supports the implementation of evidence-based practices.
      3. The school committee has systems in place to regularly analyze its allocations through an equity lens that centers the learning experiences and outcomes of students from historically underserved groups, their families, and their communities.
   5. The school committee serves as the employer of record and negotiates collective bargaining agreements with its unions to develop and sustain a workforce that is diverse, culturally responsive, and well-prepared, so that all students have equitable access to effective educators (see [Human Resources and Professional Development](#_Human_Resources_and) standard for greater detail).
   6. The school committee effectively manages communication with the public, including public comment and written communications.
2. **District Leadership Team:** The superintendent establishes and leads an effective leadership teaming structure that attends to strategic planning, resource allocation, implementation, professional development, and monitoring for both instruction and operations.
   1. The district leadership team includes leaders with a range of expertise (e.g., academics; student support; diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI); special education; family engagement; and supporting multilingual learners[[1]](#footnote-2)) who lead the district in implementing its instructional vision, anchored in culturally and linguistically sustaining practices.
   2. The superintendent, with the support of the district leadership team, advises and makes recommendations to the school committee for sound educational policies and practices, including proposals that support historically underserved student groups.
   3. The district leadership team has the authority to make resource, scheduling, programmatic, and staffing decisions that create conditions for students to regularly engage in the district’s instructional vision.
   4. The district leadership team meets regularly to monitor and continuously improve the quality of teaching and learning in the district.
3. **School Leadership Teams:** The district supports every school in establishing a diverse and representative team of leaders that implements policies, programs, and practices that advance school priorities and are aligned to district’s educational vision and strategic goals (see [Strategic Planning, Implementation, and Monitoring](#One) indicator below).
   1. The district supports school leadership teams in promoting an inclusive environment in which all students and families are known and valued (see [Student Support](#_Student_Support) standard for greater detail).
   2. The district empowers school leaders to develop a collaborative and constructive learning culture amongst their staff and students (see [Human Resources and Professional Development](#_Human_Resources_and) standard for greater detail).
   3. The district equips school leaders with the necessary staffing, scheduling, and budgeting autonomies to implement evidence-based strategies, enable teachers to promote relevant, real-world, and interactive learning experiences, and provide individualized supports so that students can excel at grade-level or beyond (see [Curriculum and Instruction](#_Curriculum_and_Instruction) standard for greater detail).
   4. The district models and develops structures for school leadership teams to regularly monitor and continuously improve the quality of teaching and learning in their schools through strategies including coaching, collaboration time, professional development, and other instructional supports (see [Human Resources and Professional Development](#_Human_Resources_and) standard for greater detail).
4. **School and Parent Advisory Councils:** In alignment with state statute and regulation, the district and schools support the convening of representative [School Councils](https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter69/Section1i), a districtwide [Special Education Parental Advisory Council (SEPAC),](https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter71B/Section3) and - for districts serving 100 or more ELs - an [English Learner Parent Advisory Council (ELPAC).](https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter71A/Section6A)
   1. The district sets expectations around the formation of diverse and inclusive councils.
   2. The district supports school leaders in convening councils that advocate for the experiences of historically underserved groups and communities.

Strategic Planning, Implementation, and Monitoring:The district grounds their work in a clear vision for student learning and advances this vision through strategic planning practices, systematic implementation, and progress monitoring.

1. **District Mission/Vision**: The district develops a meaningful mission and/or vision statement based on community feedback that reflects the values of DESE’s Educational Vision (all students are known and valued; learning experiences are real-world, relevant and interactive, and individualized supports enable students to excel at grade level or beyond).
   1. The district’s mission/vision cultivates systems to support the whole student and foster joyful, healthy, and supportive learning environments so that all students feel valued, connected, nourished, and ready to learn.
   2. The district’s mission/vision promotes student engagement in grade-level work that is real-world, relevant, and interactive.
   3. The district’s mission/vision develops and sustains a workforce that is diverse, culturally responsive, well-prepared, and committed to continuous improvement, so that all students have equitable access to effective educators.
   4. The district identifies specific actions adults can take to embed their mission/vision in every school and classroom within the district.
   5. The district disseminates their mission/vision widely and intentionally builds buy-in from district and school staff, students, families, and the community.
2. **District Planning:** The district develops both an evidence-based three-year District Improvement Plan (often referred to as a strategic plan) as well as a Student Opportunity Act plan that drive the development, implementation, and modification of educational programs and practices so that students attain academic knowledge and skills, understand and value self, understand and value others, and engage with the world.
   1. The District Improvement Plan:
      1. Reflects the district’s mission/vision.
      2. Has focused and ambitious goals, clear benchmarks, and evidence-based strategies for improving opportunities and outcomes for all students particularly students with disabilities, multilingual learners, advanced learners, and historically underserved groups and communities.
      3. Is grounded in concepts of equity and closing the disparities in opportunities and outcomes for all students.
      4. Is based on analysis of historical, longitudinal, and current disaggregated student data.
      5. Incorporates feedback, goals, and findings issued by other DESE monitoring/review/support teams (e.g., Tiered Focused Monitoring, Integrated Monitoring, Statewide System of Student Support, etc.)
      6. Commits to continuous improvement and values a diverse, culturally responsive, well-prepared workforce of effective educators.
      7. Informs annual district action plans, school improvement plans and educator goals.
   2. The Student Opportunity Act plan:
      1. Addresses a subset of a district’s overall initiatives, focusing on those evidence-based programs and strategies most likely to rapidly reduce disparities in student learning opportunities and outcomes for the student groups identified as experiencing the greatest disparities.
      2. Provides critical details on how the implementation of the evidence-based programs and strategies in their SOA plans specifically addresses the needs of student groups experiencing disparities, as well as the resources they are allocating to support their implementation.
   3. The district has a systematic and inclusive process throughout the development, implementation, and review process of both plans that includes all relevant stakeholders and provides timely opportunities to offer meaningful input and feedback (see [Stakeholder Engagement](#Two) look-fors below).
   4. The district conducts a systematic review on an annual basis using disaggregated data and stakeholder feedback and identifies action steps annually that support plan implementation, reference relevant metrics, and set aspirational benchmarks to assess progress toward the improvement goals and reducing disparities.
3. **School Improvement Planning**: The principal of each school, in consultation with its School Council, develops a [School Improvement Plan](https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter69/Section1i).
   1. The district has a clear process in place for guiding the development of and providing feedback on School Improvement Plans so that they align to the district’s plan.
      1. The district’s guidance for School Improvement Plans emphasizes incorporating strategies to reduce disparities in achievement and opportunity across student groups and developing a clear instructional priority.
4. **Implementation and Progress Monitoring**: District and school leaders mobilize their communities to put their plans into action, communicate progress, and continuously improve.
   1. District and school leadership teams engage in ongoing long-term (multi-year and annual) and short-term (quarterly and monthly) goal setting and continuous improvement cycles to advance towards the district’s vision.
   2. District and school leaders visit schools and observe classrooms to measure progress against previously established implementation benchmarks.
      1. Based on interim results, the district and their schools adjust their structures, programs, and resource allocations (e.g. time, staff, schedules) where necessary to maintain or accelerate progress towards implementation benchmarks.
   3. The superintendent reports on progress toward key objectives and outcomes to the school committee at least annually.
      1. The district and schools share updates on progress against implementation benchmarks with staff, students, and families on a regular basis.

District Culture: The district establishes and maintains a leadership culture in which all leaders contribute to mutual accountability and strong working relationships. This culture enables leaders to make challenging, sometimes unpopular, decisions to advance student opportunities and outcomes. Additionally, the district prioritizes the inclusion of multiple stakeholders to shape decision-making and invests in strategies that maintain leadership and governing stability in the event of leadership turnover.

1. **Mutual Accountability**: Together, the school committee, superintendent, and district-level administrators set a tone for the district in which stakeholders (including students, families, district leaders, school leaders, union leaders, teachers, and other school staff) collaborate, make decisions, and exercise agency in advancing opportunities and outcomes for all students.
2. **Working Relationships:** Elected leaders, district leaders, and school leaders have clearly defined roles and maintain strong working relationships, which they leverage to advance the district’s mission/vision, strategic objectives, and improvement plans.
   1. The school committee and superintendent work closely to model the district’s mission/vision, set the tone for culture in classrooms, and advance policies, procedures, and practices that center student opportunities and outcomes.
   2. District administrators work closely with school leaders to advance the district’s mission and implement district policies, plans, and procedures.
      1. The district actively builds trust and brings leaders together around the district’s vision and strategic objectives.
   3. The school committee and superintendent maintain working relationships with union leaders that facilitate effective working conditions and support a culture of mutual respect.
   4. The district and municipality (municipalities) maintain a clear division of responsibilities and work together to support student opportunities and outcomes (e.g., the school committee works closely with the municipality to finalize and approve the district’s budget).
   5. The superintendent annually evaluates direct reports with ongoing, embedded feedback on their performance relative to district objectives. In doing so, the superintendent models a culture of collaboration, reflection, and growth when providing feedback to principals and other direct reports.
3. **Leadership Stability**: The district develops systems that recruit and retain diverse leaders to promote stability and sustain district initiatives in the event of leadership turnover.
4. **Stakeholder Engagement:** The district partners with all key stakeholders and intentionally reaches out to underserved communities and groups to explicitly seek their involvement in district decision-making.
   1. The district has clear systems in place for collecting and analyzing feedback from all key stakeholders to inform decision-making. These stakeholders include, at a minimum: students, families, the school committee, district administrators, school leaders, teachers, community groups, and union leaders.
   2. The district regularly assesses the participation of the historically underserved groups and families it serves, and actively recruits them for participation in district governance by removing common barriers to participation (e.g., transportation, language).
   3. The district provides students with opportunities to participate in school governance, including providing student representation on the school committee.

# Curriculum and Instruction

Curricular materials and classroom instruction are central to student learning, opportunities, and outcomes. A shared instructional vision, anchored in culturally and linguistically sustaining practices, guides all curricular and instructional decisions towards equitable outcomes for all students. The district pairs high expectations with individualized supports so that every child can engage in deeper learning[[2]](#footnote-3) and develop the knowledge and skills that will prepare them to succeed in college and/or the workplace.

Instructional Leadership: The district supports teaching and learning by developing structures and setting expectations for instructional leadership.

1. **Instructional Vision:** The district has a clear instructional vision that centers the needs and experiences of all students particularly students with disabilities, low-income students, multi-lingual learners, advanced learners, and students from historically underserved groups and communities.
   1. The instructional vision is aligned to the district’s improvement plan and strategic priorities.
   2. The instructional vision is shared and collaboratively developed among all stakeholders.
   3. The instructional vision is anchored in culturally and linguistically sustaining practices.
2. **Implementation, Monitoring, and Continuous Improvement:** The district has systems in place to implement, monitor, and continuously improve upon the instructional vision and related initiatives.
   1. The district has formal guidance and systems in place to empower an instructional leadership team (ILT) or equivalent structure at the district level and at each school.
      1. The ILT includes representation from diverse stakeholders including special educators, English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers, general educators across all grade levels, and administrators.
      2. The district sets expectations for the ILT’s authority and scope of work, including an annual action plan with goals, action steps, benchmarks, and progress monitoring mechanisms.

Curriculum and Instructional Materials**:** The district selects and invests in high-quality curricular materials so that students can interact with grade-level curricula, which can be appropriately scaffolded to meet the needs of all learners.

1. **Curricular Review and Selection:** The district has comprehensive and equity-driven processes in place for reviewing and selecting curricular materials that align to the instructional vision on a regular basis. This process aligns with the IMplement MA Guide.
   1. The district includes all relevant stakeholders in curriculum review and selection processes.
   2. The district has clear protocols in place for piloting new curricula and gathering feedback from students and educators.
2. **High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM)**: The district implements high-quality curriculum and instructional materials that align to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and include WIDA 2020 standards, for all content areas and grade levels.
   1. The district implements curriculum and instructional materials that include all components of HQIM and, when possible, have been systematically studied and shown to be effective.
   2. The district uses resources, such as CURATE, EdReports, NGSS Design Badge, and WIDA Prime to evaluate the quality of any curriculum they use.
   3. In subjects where HQIM options are severely limited or unavailable,[[3]](#footnote-4) the district implements a robust process for curriculum development that results in high-quality, standards-aligned district-developed curricula.
   4. The district selects and implements instructional materials that are vertically and horizontally aligned across all tiers of instruction.
   5. The district evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of adopted materials; it develops and disseminates clear implementation guidance and resources to support teachers in adapting as necessary to plan evidence-based, inclusive, and culturally sustaining instruction, including identifying opportunities to create meaningful, relevant connections rooted in the local context.
   6. The district provides professional learning to support educators in implementing HQIM alongside individualized supports for all students (See [Human Resources and Professional Development](#_Human_Resources_and) for additional information).

Equitable Practices and Access**:** The district maintains a culture of high expectations by pairing students with individualized supports, examining equity in their instruction and programming, and offering a variety of academic courses and extracurricular opportunities.

1. **Academic Interventions**: The district applies academic interventions as part of an adaptable Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) that targets students’ specific needs and supports all students in accessing the universal (Tier 1) curriculum (See [Assessment](#_Assessment) and [Student Support](#_Student_Support) standards for additional information on MTSS).
   1. The district uses disaggregated, student-centered data from a variety of assessment sources to select academic intervention materials that align with the universal (Tier 1) curriculum (see [Assessment](#_Assessment) standard for greater detail).
   2. The district leverages student support teams to match students to Tier 2 and 3 interventions based on regular review of data.
   3. The district allocates sufficient staff and time to implement and adapt Tier 2 and 3 interventions with integrity to meet students’ needs.
      1. The district supports schools in developing school schedules that include intervention blocks with content-strong teachers to provide students with small group support and Tier 2 and 3 interventions.
   4. The district implements robust progress monitoring procedures that support fluid access to and movement throughout the three tiers of instruction.
   5. The district intentionally engages families and students in decision-making and delivery of tiered support.
2. **Support for Historically Underserved Students:** The district provides students with the individualized supports and services they need to access the curriculum, recognizes and builds upon students’ existing strengths, and uses data to monitor outcomes and adjust where needed.
   1. The district provides multilingual learners and students with disabilities with access to the services that they need in the least restrictive setting, as required by law.
      1. The district provides appropriate services for multilingual learners and students with disabilities as a part of Tier 1 instruction.
         1. The district actively monitors the quality of instructional materials and content delivered as part of specially designed instruction and ESL instruction and implements curricula, programs, and instructional approaches that are research-based.
      2. The district continuously evaluates the effectiveness of their ESL and special education programs so that ELs have access to ESL services, and all multilingual learners and students with disabilities have equitable access to grade-level curriculum and opportunities to develop and practice discipline-specific language and skills.
   2. The district uses data to continuously monitor the academic outcomes and student experience of specific student groups and implements changes accordingly.
      1. The district disaggregates data to analyze the outcomes and experiences of students who belong to historically underserved racial and ethnic groups, linguistic backgrounds, religious identities, gender identities and expressions, sexual orientations, and/or socioeconomic statuses.
      2. The district uses disaggregated data to adjust coursework and programming to disrupt patterns of present and historical inequities.
3. **Equitable Access to Coursework**: The district provides all students with equitable access to a range of rigorous coursework, including content areas not subject to statewide testing (i.e., arts, computer science, history and social sciences, and world languages), advanced coursework, electives, and career and technical education courses.
   1. The district offers an array of elective courses and/or extracurricular activities that enrich students’ educational experiences and are equally accessible to and inclusive of all students.
   2. The district uses disaggregated enrollment data to address and redress disproportionate trends around which student groups enroll in specialized, elective, and/or advanced courses.
   3. The district offers English learners and students with disabilities pathways to access rigorous coursework taught by educators who possess the required license or endorsement.
   4. The district supports students in developing their linguistic assets by offering world language courses and supporting students in earning the State Seal of Biliteracy.
   5. The district provides coursework that challenges all students, including advanced learners, to grow and develop their knowledge and skills.

Effective Instruction and Curricular Implementation: The district supports schools in creating safe and supportive learning environments, culturally and linguistically sustaining grade-level instruction, and opportunities to engage deeply with academic content.

1. **Learning Culture**: The district develops safe and supportive learning environments in which all students can engage in academic content.
   1. The district supports educators in implementing culturally and linguistically sustaining practices that promote a sense of belonging for all students including those who have been historically underserved based on race, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, family income, and/or other identity markers.
      1. The district creates a culture in which teacher and student interactions reinforce inclusivity and respect for differences related to background, identity, language, ideas, and perspectives.
   2. The district supports educators in establishing routines and structures that promote productivity and joyful learning.
   3. The district emphasizes academic discourse and works with school leaders to develop environments in which students can exercise agency over their learning.
2. **District Systems for Curricular Implementation:** The district sets expectations and creates conditions such that educators are supported in implementing lessons that reflect grade-level demands of the content standards and practices and demonstrate a clear focus on embedded language development aligned to grade appropriate WIDA standards.
   1. The district supports educators in developing and/or internalizing units that guide instruction and curricular implementation expectations.
   2. The district requires that all lesson plans include both content and language objectives.
   3. The district requires lesson plans to identify how the teacher will provide required supports for students with disabilities and multilingual learners.
   4. The district requires lesson plans to identify how the teacher will provide temporary, data informed scaffolds or supports for all students to engage in grade level content.
3. **Supporting Effective Instruction**: The district works with school and instructional leaders to support teachers in implementing instructional practices that are evidence-based and culturally and linguistically sustaining. Multiple data sources align to show the following effective practices are in place:
   1. Students do the majority of the thinking during the lesson, in service of grade-level standards.
   2. Students engage in targeted language development as aligned to grade appropriate WIDA standards.
   3. Students receive individualized scaffolds and supports, when necessary, so that all students can engage in grade-level work.
   4. Students engage in high-quality student-to-student academic discourse (in pairs, small groups, and/or whole class) in order to clarify or improve their understanding of grade-level content.
   5. Students receive and incorporate targeted and constructive feedback that clarifies misconceptions and/or deepens the quality of student work and thinking.
   6. Students engage in learning that values and leverages their identities, experiences, and interests, home languages and cultures and that connects to their life outside of school.
   7. Students think critically about the content and resources of the lesson and real-world contexts.

# Assessment

Through the establishment of strategic data and assessment systems, the district supports a robust, data-centered culture. The district both collects a diverse array of data points and uses them to inform decisions at the classroom, school, and district levels. By analyzing assessment results, educators develop an understanding of the whole student, can examine trends across student groups, and can adjust their instruction accordingly. The data and assessment systems, therefore, undergird the district’s efforts to advance equitable student experiences and outcomes.

Data Collection**:** The district maintains data collection systems that are consistent across schools, intentional in the information they collect, and provide educators with multiple data points to provide a comprehensive picture of each student.

1. **Multiple Data Sources**: The district gathers multiple types of academic and non-academic data about each student to inform a comprehensive understanding of each student’s achievement, growth, and the opportunity barriers they may face.
   1. The district uses developmentally appropriate assessments and collection methods and consistently implements them across the district.
   2. The district provides educators with professional development and resources to support educators in building daily data collection routines that allow them to gather real-time information on student mastery of grade-level standards.
   3. The district provides the infrastructure for each school to have a clear system and process of collecting and distributing universal screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring data to inform placement and progress monitoring within its tiered system of support.
2. **Assessment Strategy:** The district strategically selects and implements assessments that provide the necessary data to inform instruction and programming while not overburdening administrators, teachers, and students with testing.
   1. The district provides all students with multiple formal and informal opportunities to display their knowledge and skills.
   2. The district implements assessments that are aligned to the strategies and content taught in classes, so all students can demonstrate their learning.
      1. The district appropriately balances the need to maximize instructional time with the need for multiple data points.
   3. The district develops and publicly disseminates an assessment plan or calendar that informs the type and frequency of assessments.
3. **Interrogating for Equity**: The district positions assessment as a critical piece of a larger commitment to equity and is responsive to feedback around its assessment strategy.
   1. The district systematically reviews its selected and/or developed assessments for bias to promote equitable access and opportunity for all students.
   2. The district provides the necessary resources and accommodations for all students (including students with disabilities and multilingual learners) to access assessments, including informal classroom assessments.

Data Use and Culture: The district maintains a robust data culture by disseminating a clear vision for data collection and use, building data literacy amongst staff, creating structures for assessment implementation and data review, and connecting student results to concrete instructional changes and available interventions.

1. **Data Vision**: District, school, and classroom-level leaders have a shared understanding of how data collection and use are connected to the district’s broader instructional vision and strategic priorities.
2. **Strategic Planning and Continuous Improvement:** The district collects, analyzes, and triangulates multiple data points – particularly disaggregated student group data – to inform district planning, decision-making, policies, and practice.
3. **Data Literacy and Access**: The district provides educators with access to relevant data and the resources necessary to understand and analyze it.
   1. The district has common definitions for each type of assessment administered (including formal and informal) and connects those definitions to the purpose and intended use for each data type.
   2. The district implements systems that provide appropriate stakeholders with access to relevant student-level data and present data in ways that are comprehensible and actionable.
   3. The district provides educators with the appropriate professional development, planning/collaboration time, and resources to merge multiple student data points into a comprehensive picture of each student.
4. **Data Review and Implementation:** The district sets expectations around reviewing student data and develops structures that facilitate regular cycles of data review and adjustments to instruction.
   1. The district works with school level administrators to identify sufficient time in the school day for teachers to review and reflect on student data.
      1. The district supports teachers and instructional leaders in explicitly connecting findings to concrete changes in instructional practice.
   2. The district sets expectations around, and models, the regular disaggregation of student data by race and other student groups (i.e., students with disabilities, multilingual learners, high needs, and low-income students) to identify trends and support students from historically underserved communities.
5. **Multi-Tiered Systems of Student Support (MTSS)**: The district analyzes trends in student data to identify appropriate interventions for each student, so that they can access Tier 1 instruction (see [Curriculum and Instruction](#_Curriculum_and_Instruction) and [Student Support](#_Student_Support) standards for additional details on MTSS).
   1. The district uses assessment and screening data to systematically evaluate each student’s academic, social emotional, and behavioral needs and determine the supports and interventions that will help them access the Tier 1 instruction and/or learning environment.
   2. The district sets clear expectations and procedures for monitoring students’ progress and regularly adjusts interventions based on each students’ needs.
   3. The district analyzes intervention outcomes to evaluate the efficacy of their programs and adjusts their offerings accordingly.

Sharing Data: The district shares assessment results and other data with students and their families in ways that are clear, timely, and easily utilized.

1. **Communication with Students**: The district sets expectations around engaging all students in data review in ways that are developmentally appropriate and promote student agency.
2. **Communication with Families:** The district regularly communicates evidence of student, school, and district performance (see [Student Support](#_Student_Support) standard for additional information on family partnerships).
   1. The district equips teachers to provide timely and effective information to families about their students’ progress toward attaining grade-level standards and, at the secondary level, whether they are on track to being college- and career-ready.
      1. The district sets clear expectations around the minimum frequency in which schools and educators communicate with families about student performance. This should include interim data on both formal and informal assessments.
   2. The district provides educators with the information and resources necessary to support families as they work with their child(ren) to meet their academic, behavioral, and social emotional goals.
3. **Grading**: The district implements a transparent and accessible grading system that communicates students’ progress toward academic proficiency.
   1. The district has a system that allows students and families to regularly monitor grades on assignments, assessment performance, and overall course grades.
   2. The district sets expectations around when and how schools and teachers communicate with families if a student is failing in a course or content area.
4. **Data Privacy:** The district safeguards all students’ confidential data.
   1. The district complies with, and has policies that align with, federal and state data privacy [laws and regulations](https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/).
   2. The district has a process by which digital platforms and applications that collect, store, and share student data are reviewed and monitored to ensure ongoing compliance with student data privacy laws and regulations.
   3. The district offers professional learning for staff around student data privacy laws, policies, and best practices for safeguarding student information.

# Human Resources and Professional Development

The district has established systems, policies, and practices that allow administrators to effectively recruit, hire, onboard, and support a highly effective, diverse, and culturally responsive workforce. The district develops effective systems and structures that provide all educators with ongoing access to high-quality professional learning and actionable feedback, and establishes a culture that fosters collaboration, retention, recognition, and advancement.

Human Resources Infrastructure, Policies and Practices, and Collective Bargaining: The district has the proper infrastructure in their central office to process all human resources functions, create and maintain the necessary policies/procedures, and support the collective bargaining process.

1. **Infrastructure and Human Resources Capacity**: The district has the necessary staff, along with modern and efficient systems, to maintain employee records, control positions, post vacancies, and track time and absences.
   1. The human resources office has the appropriate staff in place to maintain daily operations, annual planning, and data use and dissemination.
   2. The district tracks and maintains personnel records in a secure system.
   3. The district provides staff with access to necessary employment information (e.g., paystubs, benefits, W2, other employee records).
   4. The district has an established system for tracking and controlling positions, such that district and school administrators can view staff lists by department or subject area.
   5. The district has a user-friendly technology/system for posting vacancies and for candidates to easily apply to jobs in the district.
   6. The district has clear timekeeping expectations and implements efficient systems for timesheets and requesting absences.
2. **Policies and Procedures:** The district has clear human resources policies and procedures in place that are accessible, set expectations, and provide sufficient support for district staff.
   1. The district maintains one easily accessible website or platform that shares all relevant human resources policies, procedures, expectations, and resources.
   2. The district verifies that educators possess the necessary licensure by DESE and other professional organizations for their position and are supported in fulfilling requirements to advance their licensure status if needed.
   3. The district responds professionally and promptly to inquiries about salary, benefits, leave, and related topics.
   4. The district has comprehensive policies or procedures in place to resolve staff conflict and grievances.
   5. The district has [effective procedures](https://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr7.html?section=15) in place to address staff misconduct, and when appropriate, facilitates staff dismissal and reports misconduct to the relevant authorities.
   6. The district uses staffing data to continuously improve and inform human resources policies, procedures, and practices.
      1. Alongside staffing data, the district systematically reviews staff hiring policies and processes to ensure they are non-discriminatory, inclusive, and focused on meeting the needs of all learners.
      2. The district disseminates relevant data to school leaders to support their planning and decision-making.
      3. The district has a process to review and gather feedback on the impact of policies, practices, and procedures on impacted stakeholders.
3. **Collective Bargaining**: The school committee, along with district administrators, works with its collective bargaining units to implement negotiated agreements and maintain productive working relationships.

Staffing: The district implements effective practices to hire and sustain a healthy and productive workforce.

1. **Recruitment, Hiring, and Onboarding**: The district has policies and processes in place to effectively recruit, hire, and onboard new staff in support of a diverse and culturally responsive workforce, and in accordance with DESE’s hiring guide.
   1. Recruitment
      1. The district develops and implements a comprehensive recruitment plan that draws on existing community resources and/or establishes new teacher pipelines.
      2. The district develops and implements plans to recruit and hire educators from historically underrepresented groups and communities, and those whose lived experiences align with student experiences.
      3. The district partners with outside organizations (e.g., colleges, non-profits) to establish robust educator pipelines.
      4. The district monitors and continuously improves their recruitment and diversification efforts and adjusts their strategies as needed.
   2. Hiring
      1. The district has an established process for posting positions, in alignment with the position control system, and submitting employees for hire.
      2. For all candidates, the district conducts careful hiring practices by reviewing employment history, conducting the required criminal background checks, and reviewing licensure history through the Educator Licensure and Renewal (ELAR) portal.
      3. The district provides training and support to hiring leads so that hiring processes are comprehensive, efficient, and grounded in equitable practices.
      4. The district prioritizes hiring staff whose experiences and qualifications match students’ needs and who have a mindset that all students can achieve at high levels.
      5. The district clearly defines district- and school-level administrator hiring responsibilities.
      6. The district implements its hiring practices in all schools and regularly reviews its processes for continuous improvement.
   3. Onboarding
      1. The district has a clear, efficient, and effective onboarding system for new staff.
      2. The district develops a system for providing new staff with an orientation and the information and resources they need to get started in their role.
      3. The district connects new hires to the induction and mentoring supports as required (see [New Educator Supports](#Three) below).
2. **Educator Evaluation**: The district implements a strategic, transparent system for evaluation aligned to the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Framework that promotes educators’ continuous improvement in support of the district’s vision and priorities.
   1. The district completes all educator evaluations pursuant to appropriate timelines and collective bargaining agreements.
   2. The district includes all necessary components in educator evaluations, including positive and constructive feedback.
   3. The district provides training and support in effective, equitable evaluation practices, including supporting educators and evaluators to develop a common understanding of the evaluation system and rubrics.
   4. The district incorporates multiple sources of evidence, including observation data, artifacts, measures of student learning, and, as appropriate, staff or student feedback when evaluating educators.
   5. The district’s evaluation system results in setting a high bar for professional teaching status, the recognition of excellence, and progressive action planning for educators who do not meet evaluation criteria within specified timeframes for improvement.
   6. The district uses data and feedback to regularly assess the implementation of the evaluation system and makes changes as necessary to mitigate bias and advance equity.
3. **Recognition and Advancement**: The district administers formal systems for staff recognition, provides resources to support professional learning outside the district, and develops pathways for highly effective staff to advance in their careers.
   1. The district recognizes staff who demonstrate excellence and works with school level leaders to coordinate school and district recognition systems that continuously highlight strong educators and other school staff in meaningful ways.
   2. The district offers distributive leadership opportunities that allow teachers to remain in the classroom while attaining leadership roles.
4. **Retention:** The district implements effective retention strategies and creates the conditions to sustain and retain diverse, effective educators.
   1. The district implements programming that well-prepares and develops educators to be culturally responsive, skillful teachers and leaders committed to continuous learning (see Professional Learning for more details)
   2. The district established equitable employment and retention policies.
5. **Working Environment:** The district fosters a positive, productive, and inclusive work environment for all staff, particularly those from historically underserved groups and communities, in which all educators developa sense of belonging.
   1. The district invests in mental health and wellness supports for staff.
   2. The supportive work environments result in high staff attendance.
6. **Educator Assignment:** To the extent possible, the district equitably distributes licensed, effective educators across the district.
   1. The district does not assign teachers to teach more than 20% out of their licensure area, in compliance with state [regulation](https://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr7.html?section=15).
   2. The district assigns licensed, experienced, and effective educators to its high needs students.

Professional Learning**:** The district offers comprehensive professional learning opportunities for staff. Through observation and feedback, professional development, collaboration structures, and targeted supports, the district provides educators with the resources and guidance they need to support all students.

1. **Observation and Feedback:** The district supports school leaders in implementing job-embedded coaching and cycles of observation and feedback for all educators, within and beyond the educator evaluation system.
   1. The district develops guidance for observation and feedback to support administrators and coaches in providing support to educators that promotes effective instruction and culturally and linguistically sustaining classrooms in which all students are known and valued, learning experiences are real-world, relevant, and interactive, and individualized supports enable students to excel at grade level or beyond.
   2. The district provides teachers with regular, high quality, differentiated instructional coaching and feedback that is explicitly connected to the professional development provided.
   3. The district assigns staff who have expertise in evidence-based practices, including culturally and linguistically sustaining practices, to serve as coaches and/or mentors.
      1. The district trains all coaches/mentors on the Standards of Effective Practice (Curriculum, Planning, and Assessment; Teaching All Students; Family and Community Engagement; Professional Culture), as outlined in the Educator Evaluation Rubric.
2. **Professional Development Opportunities:** Based on classroom observations and educator evaluations, the district provides ongoing evidence-based, data-informed, and relevant professional development opportunities that are aligned with the Massachusetts Professional Development Standards.
   1. The district develops a sustainable professional development plan that offers coherent, high-quality, and universally designed adult learning aligned to the district’s instructional vision.
   2. The district offers professional development opportunities that build educators’ skills in accordance with the Standards of Effective Practice.
   3. The district offers differentiated professional development opportunities and gives teachers and/or administrators agency in selecting the appropriate sessions for each educator.
   4. The district uses multiple data sources to select, develop, and monitor the effectiveness of their professional development offerings to generate evidence that the opportunities result in the use of effective instructional practices and improved student outcomes.
3. **Collaborative Culture:** The district fosters a culture of collaboration and regular feedback in which educators learn from each other, share ideas, and work together around the shared goal of advancing student success.
   1. District and school leaders cultivate a climate in which staff feel trusted, respected, and heard by regularly responding to staff feedback and requests for support.
   2. The district works with school leaders to develop schedules that allow for regular professional learning and collaborative planning time within and across subject areas and grade levels.
      1. The district issues guidance around groupings for collaborative planning (i.e., Interventionists, English learner educators, and special educators, paraeducators).
   3. The district provides protocols for collaborative planning, professional learning communities (PLCs), and data team meetings to optimize limited time by engaging in evidence-based activities including examining student work and lesson internalization.
4. **New Educator Supports:** The district concentrates resources so that novice teachers, school leaders, and staff who are new to the district receive intensive supports that align with regulatory and licensure requirements, state guidelines, as well as the district’s improvement plan and instructional vision.
   1. As part of its induction and mentoring program, the district includes an orientation, a support team, and an intentionally matched, trained mentor.
   2. The district provides all beginning teachers with at least 50 hours of mentoring support beyond the induction year, in alignment with state [regulations](https://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr7.html?section=04).
   3. The district provides sufficient release time for new educators to engage in regular classroom observations and other mentoring activities.
   4. The district selects mentors who are well-qualified, extensively trained, and have demonstrated effectiveness with students and colleagues.
   5. The district continually evaluates and refines its induction and mentoring program through systematic data collection on program design, implementation, and outcomes, including student learning outcomes and educator retention rates.

# Student Support

The district supports the whole child by creating safe and supportive environments, meeting students’ health and wellbeing needs, and engaging all families. These supports are built on a robust Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) that flexibly assesses, understands, and addresses each child’s academic, social emotional, and behavioral strengths and needs.

Safe and Supportive School Climate and Culture: The district builds a supportive environment for all learners in which students are physically, emotionally, and mentally safe, as well as motivated to attend school and participate in leadership opportunities.

1. **Safe and Supportive Learning Environments:** The district uses evidence-based, culturally and linguistically sustaining practices to create safe and supportive learning environments in which all students, staff, and families develop a sense of safety, connection, and belonging to the school and/or district community.
   1. The district maintains safe and secure facilities that are conducive to healthy child development.
      1. The district works with local fire and police to develop, implement, and annually update multi-hazard evacuation plans for each school in accordance with  [emergency management planning](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/emergencyplan/) requirements.
      2. The district works with school nurses and local emergency medical services agencies to develop and implements a [medical and behavioral health emergency response plan](https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter69/Section8A) that is updated every three years
      3. The district provides faculty, staff, students and their families with information and training on procedures for preventing, mitigating, responding to, and recovering from school related incidents.
   2. The district, in partnership with school ILTs and/or other support teams, creates affirming environments that integrate students’ racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and gender identities and sexual orientations into the school environment.
   3. The district regularly evaluates students’ social and emotional strengths and needs and supports educators in building school and classroom cultures that foster social and emotional development.
   4. The district implements clear schoolwide behavioral support systems, expectations, and intervention in which specific rules, behaviors, and expectations are taught, modeled, and reinforced, and that emphasize alternatives to exclusionary practice.
      1. The district uses data to regularly examine bias and equity in their behavioral support systems and takes action to eliminate, mitigate, and replace inequitable practices and experiences.
      2. The district actively builds adult capacity to implement consistent expectations, procedures, and behavioral support strategies.
      3. The district enables school leaders to adapt behavioral support systems to best meet the needs of their students.
      4. The district builds educators’ capacity to identify, understand, and respond to the underlying causes of student behavior.
      5. The district provides resources (staff, time, specialist consultations, etc.) to address intensive behavioral support needs.
      6. The district engages students and families in developing, implementing, and continuously improving behavioral support systems.
   5. The district develops and implements an effective bullying prevention and intervention plan that includes [all elements as required by state statute](https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter71/Section37O).
      1. The district maintains a culture in which any instances of bullying are taken seriously and are addressed rapidly and appropriately.
   6. The district systematically collects and analyzes data around school and district culture and uses this data to build upon strengths and inform adjustments to practice and policy.
2. **Student Attendance**: The district implements effective strategies to increase attendance as well as engagement to prevent and mitigate the effects of chronic absenteeism.
   1. The district works closely with students and their families to devise supportive and non-punitive engagement and attendance strategies that address the underlying causes of students’ absences.
   2. The district disseminates multilingual, culturally- and family-friendly information, including an attendance policy manual, about the importance of attendance and the impact of missed school time.
   3. The district regularly analyzes and disaggregates student attendance data to analyze trends and identify students at risk of chronic absenteeism.
   4. The district recognizes the critical role of school climate and culture on student attendance and provides resources that support all schools to implement educational programming and strategies that enhance students' mental, emotional, and physical health.
3. **Student Voice and Leadership**: The district creates opportunities for all students in all grade levels to exercise voice and leadership at the classroom, school, district, community, and/or state levels.

Health and Wellbeing:The district provides services and instruction around health and wellbeing to support students in accessing appropriate care and developing the knowledge and skills needed to lead health-promoting lives.

1. **Comprehensive Health and Physical Education**: The district offers health and physical education to all students, as required by [state law](https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter71/Section1).
   1. The district ensures that health and physical education curricula is aligned to the Massachusetts Comprehensive Health and Physical Education Frameworks.
2. **Physical Activity, Sports, and Recess**: The district provides students with multiple opportunities to engage in physical activity and strengthen their bodies while attending school.
   1. The district provides sports programming in which students can build communication and teamwork skills.
   2. The district provides students with, and does not punitively remove, a developmentally appropriate amount of instructional and non-instructional, socialization and play time, including movement opportunities, each day.
3. **Nursing and Health:** The district provides school nurses at each school site who provide access to the health services.
   1. The district monitors the physical health needs of all students via routine screenings for [vision](https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter71/Section57), [hearing, height, weight, postural](https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2017/09/11/105cmr200.pdf), and [substance use](https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter71/Section97) pursuant to state statute.
   2. The district supports students and their families/caregivers by providing information on and referrals to health providers when requested or needed.
4. **Mental and Behavioral Health:** The district implements tiered mental and behavioral health services that support all students’ mental and emotional wellness.
   1. The district evaluates the mental and behavioral health needs of all students and connects them to appropriate mental health services.
   2. The district leverages community partnerships to connect students to the specialized care they need.
   3. The district implements Tier 1 social and emotional supports for all students to promote mental and behavioral health and a culture that promotes wellness.
5. **Wellness Policy**: The district maintains a local wellness policy, as required by law, that helps a school district establish an environment that prioritizes student health, well-being, and ability to learn.

Family and Community Partnerships: The district partners with families and community organizations to support all students. Through genuine outreach and employing strategies (such as those outlined in the Family Communication Toolkit), the district builds positive and authentic relationships in which all stakeholders support student experiences.

1. **Family Partnerships and Communication**: The district and schools build authentic and trusting relationships with all families that position them as equal partners in their students’ education.
   1. The district has clear and consistent multilingual communication systems in place.
      1. The district sets guidance/expectations for how school and district staff will maintain reciprocal two-way communication with all families.
      2. The district’s communication systems promote continuity in supportive communication as students move through grade levels and/or between district schools.
   2. The district works with school leaders to create learning environments in which all families, particularly those from historically underserved backgrounds, develop a sense of belonging to the school and district community.
   3. The district creates inclusive opportunities for all families to participate in school- and district-level decision-making.
   4. The district provides interpretation and translations services so that families with limited English proficiency can communicate and participate in district and school meetings.
2. **Community Partnerships**: The district works with organizations in its community to provide services and enriching experiences to students and families during both in school and out-of-school time.
   1. The district has processes to identify, establish, and manage partnerships and other community resources to engage during in-school and out-of-school time.
   2. The district defines roles and responsibilities for schools and ILTs and/or other support teams when collaborating with outside partners.
   3. The district uses disaggregated data to evaluate the extent to which partnerships are meeting their students’ needs.
3. **Wraparound Supports**: The district connects all students, particularly its most vulnerable students and families (i.e., students experiencing homelessness, students living in foster care, and newcomer students and families) with wraparound supports.
   1. The district proactively identifies needs in their community through trauma-informed outreach and interview methods.
   2. The district aligns the support they provide to the students’, families’, and community’s needs.
      1. This support might include:
         1. Academic tutoring and mentoring
         2. On-site showers and laundry
         3. Apparel donations
         4. Counseling and social work services
         5. Technological access
         6. Transportation services
   3. The district has systems to track referrals and service delivery so that services are consistently delivered.

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS): The district meets the academic, social emotional, and behavioral strengths and needs of all students through a robust and fluid MTSS system. The MTSS system is well-defined and is supported by procedures and practices at the district and school levels. (See [Curriculum and Instruction](#_Curriculum_and_Instruction) and [Assessment](#_Assessment) standards for additional detail).

1. **MTSS System**: The district implements an MTSS system aligned to the MTSS Blueprint that proactively identifies and meets students’ academic, behavioral, and social emotional strengths and needs.
   1. The district sets clear guidance for school leaders around how to implement each component of the MTSS system. This includes guidance around the:
      1. Screening and progress monitoring (see [Assessment](#_Assessment) standard)
      2. Makeup of the Student Support Teams (SST)
      3. SST meeting structures
   2. The district works with school leaders to select the evidence-based interventions and supports implemented across each of the three tiers of support.
2. **MTSS Structure:** The district clearly defines the systems’ three tiers of support: universal (Tier 1), targeted (Tier 2), intensive (Tier 3)
   1. The district implements Tier 1 academic, social emotional, and behavioral supports for all students. This includes the general classroom curriculum, school-wide behavior support systems, and classroom/school practices that promote social emotional development.
   2. The district provides Tier 2 and/or Tier 3 interventions for students who need additional support to access the universal curriculum and/or learning environment.
   3. The district provides tiered supports to all students, including students with disabilities and ELs, and does not replace or delay the implementation of special education or ESL services.

# Financial and Asset Management

Through its policies, systems, and procedures, the district strategically allocates and utilizes funding and other resources in alignment with applicable laws to improve all students’ performance, opportunities, and outcomes. The district collaborates with its partners to run daily operations, manage its assets, and develop long-term plans for sustainability.

Business Office Staffing and Infrastructure: In cooperation with its municipal partners, the district effectively runs daily business operations and maintains financial records in alignment with applicable law.

1. **Business Office Staffing:** The business office has the appropriate staff in place to maintain daily operations and annual planning.
   1. The business office is led by a DESE-licensed school business administrator who preferably possesses a current Massachusetts Certified Public Purchasing Official (MCPPO) Designation.
   2. The office has a sufficient level of qualified staff to support daily business office operations.
2. **Written Policies and Procedures:** The business office has comprehensive written policies and procedures that structure daily work, ensure compliance with state and federal requirements, and provide continuity to operations when staffing disruptions arise.
3. **Financial Management System:** The district uses and effectively implements a modern financial management system for monitoring and controlling resources.
   1. The financial management system is secure, with the appropriate permissions and controls in place to limit access to those with designated roles.
   2. The financial management system tracks year-to-date expenditures and encumbrances, and projects end-of-year account balances.
   3. Business office staff and budget managers are fluent and have been trained in their use of the financial management system’s features.
   4. The financial management system is based on a documented chart of accounts system for reporting revenue and expenditure data that aligns with the DESE Chart of Accounts - Criteria for Financial Reporting.
4. **Records Management:** In alignment with the Massachusetts Statewide Records Retention Schedule, the district has a modern system for preserving, categorizing, and, when permissible, destroying financial documents, including (but not limited to) procurement records, invoices, purchase orders, and receipts.
5. **Municipal Relations:** The district and municipality (or municipalities) have a strong working relationship in which roles and responsibilities are clearly defined.
   1. The district receives a consistent and adequate contribution of local funding.
   2. *Non-regional school districts:* The district and municipality have an established process and budget calendar for incorporating the school committee’s budgeting process into the municipality’s budgeting process.
      1. The district and municipality have a current written document or Memorandum of Understanding that establishes costs to be paid and managed directly by the municipality.
      2. The financial staff in the district and municipality have clearly defined roles and responsibilities, with the appropriate controls in place to avoid waste and abuse *(non-regional districts)*.
   3. *Regional school districts*: The district and partnering municipalities have an established regional agreement that is approved by all members and the Commissioner and outlines a process for creating the budget and how member towns are assessed.
      1. The district and partnering municipalities adhere to the budgeting process outlined primarily in statute and secondarily in regional agreements.

Budgeting and Budget Process**:** The district equitably distributes its resources through a strategic budgeting process and develops multi-year projections to anticipate future staffing and student needs.

1. **Equitable Distribution of Funds:** The district’s budget equitably funds schools and departments by providing adequate resources, based on regularly conducted needs assessments, to meet the needs of all students with particular attention to historically underserved populations.
   1. The district’s budget meets or exceeds net school spending requirements.
   2. The district’s budget provides appropriate levels of funding for high-quality instructional and intervention materials and assessments, key positions, professional development, etc.
2. **Budget Process:** The district regularly engages in a budgeting process that is aligned with the district strategic plan, transparent, and incorporates input from district administrators, school leaders, school councils, teachers, policy makers, and the community.
   1. The school committee, in collaboration with the Superintendent, sets the district’s annual budget priorities in alignment with the district’s strategic goals/plan.
   2. The district publishes an annual budget calendar that lays out critical meeting dates and milestones for the budget.
   3. As part of the budgeting process, the district reviews student performance data, enrollment projections, staffing levels, and schedules to create the basis for budget requests related to personnel.
   4. The budgeting process includes an evaluation of the efficacy of previous investments and uses that information to strategically reallocate existing resources.
   5. The budgeting process includes opportunities for school leaders and budget managers to request positions, supplies, and generally solicit budgetary adjustments.
   6. The school committee reviews and approves the budget in a timely manner.
   7. The budget process culminates in a publicly available budget book that preferably aligns with criteria set by the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA).
3. **Grants and Revolving Funds:** The district annually establishes budgets for its grant and revolving funds, which are regularly approved by the School Committee.
4. **Financial Planning:** The district has a current multi-year financial plan that incorporates projected enrollment and required staffing, cost-of-living adjustments set in its collective bargaining agreements, and anticipated increases in its service contracts.
5. **Out-of-District Placements:** The district establishes a budget for anticipated out-of-district special education placements and has a sustainable funding source to cover unexpected increases (e.g., special education reserve fund, salary savings, etc.).

Spending and Controls**:** The district works with budget managers to track current year positions and spending, strategically adjusts its spending as the fiscal year progresses, and reports on updates regularly to the School Committee. The district has controls in policies and procedures in place so that funds are safeguarded, spent in accordance with any regulatory requirements, and regularly audited.

1. **Budget Tracking and Forecasting:** The district has established systems and processes to track year-to-date spending and projected end-of-year balances of all accounts, and provides regular updates (e.g., quarterly, monthly) to the School Committee, which is responsible for budgetary oversight, and its budget managers on the status of current spending.
   1. The business office regularly reconciles its accounts.
   2. The business office collaborates with special education administrators to forecast and track out-of-district special education tuition and transportation expenses, both to ensure expenditures remain within budget and to facilitate reporting on Schedules 4 and 7 on the End of Year Report.
2. **Budget Adjustments:** When variances from the budget arise, the district regularly adjusts funding and staffing levels to optimize available resources.
3. **Position Control:** The business office has established systems for position control to track staffing and utilizes them in partnership with human resources, and within parameters of collective bargaining agreements, so that hiring remains in budget.
   1. The district has a formalized process for district and school administrators to request new positions or hires.
4. **Budget Management Support:** The district has trained principals and budget managers and provided them with access to discretionary resources that they may use to optimize staffing and purchase supplies and services that best serve students.
5. **Financial Controls:** In partnership with the School Committee and municipality *(non-regional school districts),* the district has established policies and processes for financial control.
   1. The district has policies and processes for:
      1. Transferring funds and journaling expenses
      2. Handling and depositing cash
      3. Approving and processing payroll, including timely contributions to benefit and pension plans
      4. Implementing an appropriate system of checks and balances
   2. The district or municipality hires independent financial auditing services every year, implements audit recommendations in a timely fashion, and complies with other regulations as applicable.
6. **Student Activity Funds:** The district has established student activity agency accounts that are managed by school leaders but overseen by the business office and adhere to state and district guidelines.
   1. These accounts are tracked, regularly reconciled, and used only for activities that benefit student use, as outlined by DESE's audit guidelines.
7. **Grants Management and Strategy:** The district responsibly manages and strategically applies for state and federal grants that are aligned to the district’s strategic plan.
   1. The district has systems in place to ensure that grant terms and requirements are followed in a timely manner (and any corrective actions are promptly addressed).
   2. The district manages grant funds and expenditures in separate accounts to facilitate easy tracking and reporting.
   3. The district strategically uses its restricted funds (e.g., circuit breaker, specific state grants), blended where appropriate with its unrestricted funds (e.g., local funds, Chapter 70), to maximize benefits to students.
   4. The district regularly spends down federal and state grants and rolls over funds to the following fiscal year (as needed/if allowed), so that little, if any, money is unspent.
   5. The district develops sustainability plans to continue grant-funded programming upon the culmination of the grant.

Procurement and Contracting**:** The district (or municipality) purchases supplies and services in alignment with state laws and effectively manages those contracts with vendors.

1. **Procurement:** The district (or municipality, on behalf of the district) procures supplies and services in alignment with state laws and guidance from the *Office of the Inspector General* as well as federal law and local policies, as appropriate.
   1. Budget managers have an established, simple, written process for procuring necessary educational supplies and services in a timely manner and have a wide array of vendors to choose from.
   2. For supplies and services above the required threshold, the district implements the formal bidding process (or partners with other districts to conduct bids). Bids are well-publicized and easily accessible, detailed, and provide the necessary information to receive the required supplies or services.
   3. The district uses vendors on statewide contracts or other cooperative purchasing contracts (“piggybacking”) to expand list of vendors available to staff.
   4. The district provides training on procurement laws and policies to its budget managers (and other staff involved with purchasing).
2. **Contracting:** With its municipal partners, the district executes and manages contracts with its vendors, and has established timelines to proactively track the end of contracts and provides sufficient time for renewal or re-bidding for core district services (e.g., transportation).

Accounting and Reporting**:** The district has policies and efficient systems to pay its bills and collect fees, and it accurately reports financial activity each year.

1. **Accounting:** The district has established procedures and controls for paying its bills, as well as a system for tracking all accounts payable (which may be a part of its financial management system).
   1. The district efficiently tracks information about services or supplies received, and regularly pays its bills on time.
2. **Fee Collection:** The district has an established schedule for student fees that has been approved by the School Committee, and has a modern, family-friendly system for collecting and tracking those payments.
3. **End of Year Reporting:** The district meets end-of-year reporting requirements in a timely and accurate way.

Operations**:** The district maintains regular operations for its schools, including enrollment and assignment, building and grounds, school safety, transportation, nutrition, and technology.

1. **Enrollment and Assignment:** The district leverages its enrollment and assignment policies to provide students with access to equitable learning environments and opportunities.
   1. The districtprovides families with clear, accessible information about their options for school assignment and makes it easy for families to register for school.
   2. The district regularly assesses and adjusts its student assignment system and feeder patterns, particularly the location of specialized services (such as substantially separate special education classrooms, and EL programs).
2. **Buildings and Grounds:** The district (and, in some cases, in partnership with the municipality or lessor) maintains a good state of repair of its buildings, grounds, and athletic fields and provides for accessible, clean, safe, secure, well‐lit, and well‐maintained buildings that are conducive to student learning.
   1. The district provides this good state of repair through regular day-to-day maintenance that quickly responds to district and school administrator work orders, and preferably a formal preventative maintenance program.
3. **School Safety:** In collaboration with its municipal and state public safety officials, the district provides the planning, staffing, and services necessary to provide for the safety of its students.
4. **Transportation:** As required by law, the district provides reliable transportation services, either on its own or through a vendor, so that students can easily get to and from school.
   1. Buses or vans regularly arrive on time to school and home, and families receive high-quality customer service when buses are delayed, or other concerns arise.
5. **Nutrition:** The district offers its students nutritious, healthy breakfasts and lunches at no charge to families.
   1. The district-provided meals include a diverse variety of offerings, are culturally relevant, and include locally purchased food to the extent possible.
   2. The district incorporates student feedback in menu development yielding high levels of interest and participation in breakfast and lunch.
6. **Technology:** The district provides its students and staff with the hardware, software, and support for everyday learning and daily operations.
   1. The district provides staff and students with technology (e.g., computers, tablets) and technical support to supplement and facilitate student learning.
   2. The district maintains a student information system that securely keeps all student records and grades and allows for easy communication between staff and families.
   3. The district provides its staff with licenses for email, word processing, and other software necessary for regular operations (e.g., Google Suite, Microsoft 365, etc.)

Managing Capital Assets and Capital Planning**:** The district has a system for tracking its assets, maintains and replaces them on a regular cycle, and has a sustainable long-term capital plan given building conditions and shifting enrollment.

1. **Asset Tracking, Maintenance, Replacement, and Disposal:** The district manages and tracks its inventory of assets through a catalog or modern system.
   1. The district has a funded and established replacement cycle for capital assets and critical supplies (such as computers, vehicles, and copy machines), based on their depreciation.
2. **Capital Planning:** The district has a current long-term capital plan that describes future capital needs, is based upon future enrollment projections and facility assessments, and incorporates the input from district and community stakeholders.
   1. The district plans or implements environmentally friendly solutions (e.g., recycling, solar canopy, renewable energy sources, electric vehicles) that promote a clean and healthy future for its students.

# Glossary

* **Culturally Responsive Learning Environments:** Learning environments in which culture and identity are viewed as assets and valuable resources, including students' race, ethnicity, or linguistic assets, among other characteristics. These learning environments regularly engage in culturally and linguistically sustaining practices.
* **Culturally Sustaining Practices:** Practices that support schools in “sustaining – rather than eradicating – the cultural ways of being of communities of color” through:
  + Critical centering on dynamic community languages, valued practices, and knowledges,
  + Student and community agency and input,
  + Content and instruction that acknowledges the histories of racial, ethnic, and linguistic communities,
  + Contending with internalized oppressions, and
  + Educators being able to “curricularize” (or adapt curriculum to) those learning settings.
* **Curriculum**: A sequence of student learning experiences teachers facilitate using curricular materials as a foundation (not a script!); also called enacted or taught curriculum.
* **Curricular Materials:** Resources teachers use to facilitate sequences of learning experiences (e.g., lesson and unit plans, texts); also called adopted or written curriculum, or instructional materials.
* **Deeper Learning:** Deeper Learning is the ability to understand and address the complex elements of a subject or topic and to draw connections within and across contexts — whether that means the same class, another discipline, students' community, or the broader world. Deeper Learning happens both independently and through collaboration, and it means that students' understanding of the what, why, and how of their learning is rich and multi-faceted. Deeper Learning is cultivated by engaging students with grade-level work that is relevant, real-world, and interactive and emerges at the intersection of mastery, identity, and creativity as three observed outcomes of learning.
  + **Mastery** is evident when all students develop the knowledge and/or skills outlined in the standards and practices, with the ability to transfer that knowledge across situations.
  + **Identity** is evident when all students become more invested in the discipline by thinking of and seeing themselves as capable and active agents who do that kind of work. To support a shift in thinking from “I am learning about biology,” to “I am a biologist,” educators affirm students’ complex identities, including cultural and racial heritage, and leverage their funds of knowledge, experiences, and interests.
  + **Creativity** is evident when all students shift from receiving knowledge of a discipline to acting or applying their learning to share ideas, solutions, and/or make something within the discipline.
* **English Learner (EL)**: A student who does not speak English or whose native language is not English, and who is not currently able to perform ordinary classroom work in English.
* **High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM):** HQIM exhibit a coherent sequence of lessons that target learning of grade-appropriate skills and knowledge through instructional strategies that are well supported by research and other characteristics such as engaging content and inclusive design.
* **High Quality Professional Development (HQPD):** A set of coherent learning experiences that is systematic, purposeful, and structured over a sustained period of time with the goal of improving teacher practice and student outcomes. It enables educators to facilitate the learning of students by acquiring and applying knowledge, skills, and abilities that address student needs and improvement goals of the district, school, and individual. HQPD conforms to best practices in research, relates to educators' assignments and professional responsibilities, and conforms to the ten Massachusetts Standards for Professional Development.
* **Induction Program:** A planned program of professional support for new teachers and administrators provided by the school district, including orientation, opportunities for classroom observation and conferencing, and peer group meetings. An induction program should be an integral part of a school district's professional development plan.
* **Linguistically Sustaining Practices:** Practices that promote multilingualism as an asset, honor the linguistic resources students bring to the classroom, and rely on a research-based understanding of how students acquire language. Leveraging their understanding of students and the process of language acquisition, educators unpack the language expectations embedded in classroom tasks and design scaffolds and explicit language instruction that provide all students access to rigorous content.
* **Multilingual Learner (ML):** A student who encounters and/or interacts in languages in addition to English on a regular basis. MLs include students who are commonly referred to as “English learners” (ELs), former English learners, dual language learners, newcomers, students with limited or interrupted formal schooling (SLIFE), long-term English learners, English learners with disabilities, gifted and talented English learners, heritage language learners, students with English as an additional language, and students who speak varieties of English or indigenous languages.

# Appendix

This appendix includes DESE guidance and/or resources for each of the six standards.

**Leadership and Governance**

* [Educational Vision](https://www.doe.mass.edu/commissioner/vision/vision-supports.pdf)
* [Massachusetts Model System for Educator Evaluation](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/model/)

**Curriculum and Instruction**

* [CURATE reports and rubrics](https://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/curate/)
* [Deeper Learning](https://www.doe.mass.edu/deeperlearning/)
* [DESE's List of Advanced Courses](https://www.doe.mass.edu/accountability/lists-tools/advanced-courses.docx)
* [EdReports](https://www.edreports.org/)
* [Implement MA Guide](https://www.doe.mass.edu/rlo/instruction/implement-ma-process/story.html)
* [Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks](https://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html)
* [NGSS Design Badge](https://www.nextgenscience.org/resources/ngss-design-badge)
* Observation Tool (Currently in development, will be hyperlinked upon completion)
* [WIDA 2020 standards](https://wida.wisc.edu/sites/default/files/resource/WIDA-ELD-Standards-Framework-2020.pdf)
* [WIDA Prime](https://www.widaprime.org/)

**Assessment**

**Human Resources and Professional Development**

* [Careful Hiring Practices](https://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/advisory/2020-0914reporting-misconduct.html) (State and Federal Requirements)
* [DESE’s Hiring Guide](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edeffectiveness/talent-guide/hiring.html)
* [Educator Evaluation Rubric](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/model/PartIII_AppxC.pdf)
* [Induction and Mentoring Guidelines](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edeffectiveness/mentor/default.html)
* [MA Guide to Building Supportive Talent Systems for Educators](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edeffectiveness/talent-guide/default.html)
* [Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Framework](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/default.html)
* [Massachusetts Standards for Professional Development](https://www.doe.mass.edu/pd/standards.html)
* [Standards of Effective Practice](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/model/PartIII_AppxC.pdf)

**Student Support**

* Family Communication Toolkit
* [Guidance on Updated Expectations for School and District Leaders Related to Student Discipline](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.doe.mass.edu%2Fsfs%2Fdiscipline%2Fupdated-expectations.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK)
* [Massachusetts Comprehensive Health and Physical Education Frameworks](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.doe.mass.edu%2Fframeworks%2Fhealth%2F2023-09.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK)
* [MTSS Blueprint](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfss/mtss/blueprint.pdf)
* [Safe and Supportive Schools Reflection Tool](https://sassma.org/documents/SaSS_fiveessentialelements.pdf)
* [School Wellness Initiative for Thriving Community Health (Local Wellness Policy)](https://massschoolwellness.org/local-wellness-policy/)

**Financial and Asset Management**

* [Chart of Accounts - Criteria for Financial Reporting](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.doe.mass.edu%2Ffinance%2Faccounting%2Feoy%2Fchartofaccounts.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK)
* [DESE's Audit Guidelines](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.doe.mass.edu%2Ffinance%2Faccounting%2FAuditGuidelines.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK)
* [Government Finance Officers Association](https://gfoaorg.cdn.prismic.io/gfoaorg/cb8f822f-1216-4f7d-a75a-3a2431029b17_BudgetCriteriaGuidepre2021.pdf)
* [Massachusetts Statewide Records Retention Schedule](https://www.sec.state.ma.us/arc/arcpdf/MA_Statewide_Records_Schedule.pdf)

1. In this document, “Multilingual Learners” refers to all children and youth who are, or have been, consistently exposed to multiple languages. This is an umbrella term which includes “English learners,” students who do not speak English or whose native language is not English, and who are not currently able to perform ordinary classroom work in English. See Glossary for additional details. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Deeper learning is the ability to understand and address the complex elements of a subject or topic and to draw connections within and across contexts — whether that means the same class, another discipline, students' community, or the broader world. See Glossary for more details. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. HQIM with empirical evidence of efficacy is generally available in the following subjects: ELA, Math, and Science. Other subjects, including Social Studies and Digital Literacy and Computer Science also have some high-quality published curricula available. See CURATE and EdReports for additional information. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)