

Bellingham Public Schools

Comprehensive District Review Report

February 2022



Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Office of District Reviews and Monitoring

75 Pleasant Street
Malden, MA 02148-4906
781-338-3000
www.doe.mass.edu

American Institutes for Research

Education Systems and Policy

201 Jones Road, Suite 100
Waltham, MA 02451
(202) 403-5000
www.air.org

Contents

- Executive Summary 1
- Bellingham Public Schools: District Review Overview 5
- Leadership and Governance 9
- Curriculum and Instruction.....19
- Assessment.....27
- Human Resources and Professional Development.....32
- Student Support.....38
- Financial and Asset Management.....44
- Appendix A. Summary of Site Visit Activities..... A-1
- Appendix B. Enrollment, Attendance, Expenditures B-1
- Appendix C. Districtwide Instructional Observation Report C-1
- Appendix D. Resources to Support Implementation of DESE’s District Standards and Indicators.... D-1
- Appendix E. Student Performance Tables E-1



This document was prepared by the American Institutes for Research, in collaboration with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Jeffrey C. Riley
Commissioner

Published September 2022

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, an affirmative action employer, is committed to ensuring that all of its programs and facilities are accessible to all members of the public. We do not discriminate on the basis of age, color, disability, national origin, race, religion, sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation. Inquiries regarding the Department's compliance with Title IX and other civil rights laws may be directed to the Human Resources Director, 75 Pleasant St., Malden, MA 02148-4906. Phone: 781-338-6105.

© 2022 Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Permission is hereby granted to copy any or all parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes. Please credit the "Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education."

This document printed on recycled paper.

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148-4906
Phone: 781-338-3000 TTY: N.E.T. Relay 800-439-2370
www.doe.mass.edu



Executive Summary

In accordance with Massachusetts state law, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) contracted with the American Institutes for Research® (AIR®) to conduct a comprehensive review of Bellingham Public Schools (hereafter, BPS) in February 2022. Data collection activities associated with the review focused on understanding how district systems, structures, and practices operate to support the district's continuous improvement efforts. The review focused on the six standards (and related indicators)¹ that DESE has identified as being important components of district effectiveness.

All data collection procedures for this report took place during the 2021-2022 academic year. This school year represents the third year affected by the global COVID-19 pandemic, which has had a significant impact on educational systems since March 2020. The districts reviewed during the 2021-2022 school year experienced school closures, significant illness among staff and students, shortages of instructional and noninstructional staff, transportation issues, and other challenges during the two preceding school years, and some of these challenges continued during 2021-2022 as these districts were reviewed. Site visit and report writing teams considered these factors as they collected data and wrote reports.

Leadership and Governance

BPS serves the town of Bellingham. The district is governed by Superintendent Peter D. Marano who has been in that role since 2015 and held several positions within the district before becoming superintendent, including guidance counselor and principal at Bellingham High School (BHS). The superintendent leads the district and is supported by an assistant superintendent and several directors. These school officials, particularly the superintendent, work closely with the elected school committee members who represent Bellingham residents through their oversight of the district. BPS is a department within the town governing structure. It also works closely with the town government of Bellingham, which provides support for some facilities management and human resource needs. The town is involved in the district's budgetary allotments and town funding of the schools as part of the overall annual town budget. The elected school committee has five members, each of whom has a three-year term; the terms rotate in such a way that the committee always has some committee members who are relatively new, whereas others have served multiple years. The school committee provides oversight for district management. BPS has both a strategic plan and a five-year improvement plan (2015-2020), which was updated in 2018. These plans stipulate the vision that BPS has for its schools, as well as how students are prepared for adulthood. They incorporate plans for technology use, staffing, academic opportunities, and how to meet students' needs.

Curriculum and Instruction

BPS has implemented processes and procedures to more closely align its curricula to state standards, create consistent curriculum maps, and ensure that the district achieves both vertical and horizontal alignment. The curricular review process, designed by the assistant superintendent,

¹ DESE's District Standards and Indicators are at <https://www.doe.mass.edu/accountability/district-review/district-standards-indicators.pdf>.

resulted in a selection of materials that are rigorous and well received by leaders and teachers alike. The review process will continue into the next school year and across multiyear cycles, to ensure that curricular materials meet district goals. Mathematics and English language arts (ELA) curriculum reviews are in progress, and science and social studies will follow. Some participants noted that the review processes need to result in more aligned curricula both vertically and horizontally to have consistent instruction. Through data-informed decision-making processes, curriculum review processes, and the adoption and implementation of new curricula, the district is working to provide a high-quality education to each student.

BPS has an opportunity to expand its capacity to support students with particular needs. For instance, the district has many new students from immigrant families, so more developed culturally responsive practices, pedagogy, and language resources may need to be included in future review protocols. Findings from interviews and focus groups, and evidence from supplied documentation, suggest that a variety of intervention models for students with disabilities, learners who are struggling, and students who may need additional socioemotional support are used in BPS. In addition, aggregate instructional observations indicated that instructional expectations and rigorous instruction were not being implemented consistently across all classrooms. Overall, instructional observations suggested generally strong classroom organization, and mixed evidence of student engagement, strong emotional support, and consistently rigorous instructional support.

Assessment

BPS uses a variety of assessments across the district to gather data on student performance and inform decision making. Although i-Ready benchmark assessments are now being implemented at the elementary and middle school levels, some assessments (including those administered at BHS) are targeted toward specific grades. Curriculum-specific assessments are used within each grade, and the elementary schools also use the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) and the Benchmark Assessment System (BAS) to ascertain reading levels, and Bridges Mathematics, with its embedded unit assessments, number corner assessments, and other components, used to determine numeracy mastery. At both Bellingham Memorial School (BMS) and BHS, teachers use curriculum assessments, project-based assessments, and in-class assignments that increasingly prepare students for learning and life beyond school.

Formal data systems are in place to support the consistent administration of assessments. The results of assessments appear to be more regularly communicated through the district and with students than with families. BPS uses a variety of assessments to measure and monitor student performance, including i-Ready benchmarks, DIBELS, the BAS reading assessment, Bridges Mathematics, curriculum assessments, and intervention screening tools, and curriculum-embedded assessments. BPS uses structures and protocols to guide communications about academics with families when those shared after each marking period or for specific days. These include BMS Data Driving Discussions, Bellingham Data Day, and BHS Benchmark Analysis Planning and Intervention.

Human Resources and Professional Development

BPS works closely with the town of Bellingham to manage human resource matters, from payroll and benefits to the confirmation of credentials. Although BPS identifies openings and staffing needs, the

town handles the daily matters of salaries, benefits, and contracts. Recruitment has been shaped by Bellingham's location—a region within reach of Boston, Massachusetts, and Providence, Rhode Island, but not close enough to truly be a suburb of either. The lack of public transportation options, its smaller size, and the low staff turnover rate within the district has resulted in fewer open positions and less diversity within the teaching staff compared to other similar-sized towns. The district plans for and addresses staffing needs through regular conversations between administrators, school leaders, and teaching staff. When openings or needs arise, postings are made through both BPS and the town on SchoolSpring. BPS has a mentoring program in place to support new teachers. In addition, there are opportunities to recognize outstanding teachers through leadership roles at the school level and on district-level committees.

A review of the educator evaluation system indicated that teachers received ratings and feedback on their performance based on the Standards and Indicators of Effective Teaching Practice. The sample of summative teacher evaluations reviewed were all marked as complete, but a small percentage of these evaluations did not include required components such as ratings or feedback. Summative administrator evaluations reviewed all received an overall rating of Proficient from an evaluator and, although not required by DESE, most included evaluator comments categorized as specific, actionable feedback identifying the administrator's strengths and areas of improvement.

Student Support

BPS makes a concerted effort to ensure that all school buildings, and the district overall, provide safe and supportive learning environments for all students. BPS leaders explained in interviews and focus groups that the district aims to create a positive and productive learning environment by using programs such as positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) practices and the PATHS curriculum. The district offers academic and nonacademic tiered supports, although these offerings have been affected by the pandemic and are more established at the elementary schools than at BMS or BHS. Tier 2 supports in both academic and nonacademic areas is a growth area for the district. Educators expressed the need for additional time to review student needs and collaborate with colleagues.

Students have been included in the process of creating positive learning environments, particularly at BHS. Parents have the opportunity to be involved in their students' learning and can communicate with teachers through email, online portals, and a digital application on mobile phones that provides translation services. The district engages family and community members through communications to families and school-level organizations that parents may join. More efforts to act on the feedback from students and families is an area of growth for BPS.

Financial and Asset Management

BPS' financial and asset management is led by the director of finance and three specialists, with oversight by the superintendent. BPS leaders communicate and work closely with the school committee and the town of Bellingham's leadership throughout the school year to discuss ongoing and anticipated needs, as well as identify priorities for allocating available funds. The district works closely with the town and maintains open communications with the town's government offices. Town officials, district officials, and school committee members described the working relationship as

collaborative and supportive. BPS uses funding to support the district's needs, and district leadership ensures the alignment of budget allocations with the district's strategic plan and improvement plan. BPS is actively working on improving and expanding the district's maintenance program for the capital assets, including posting for the facilities director position.

Bellingham Public Schools: District Review Overview

Purpose

Conducted under Chapter 15, Section 55A of the Massachusetts General Laws, comprehensive district reviews support local school districts in establishing or strengthening a cycle of continuous improvement. Reviews carefully consider the effectiveness of systemwide functions, referring to the six district standards used by DESE: Leadership and Governance, Curriculum and Instruction, Assessment, Human Resources and Professional Development, Student Support, and Financial and Asset Management.² Reviews identify systems and practices that may be impeding improvement as well as those most likely to be contributing to positive results. In addition, the design of the district review promotes district reflection on its own performance and potential next steps. In addition to providing information to each district reviewed, DESE uses review reports to identify resources and/or technical assistance that could benefit the district.

Methodology

A district review team consisting of AIR staff members, with expertise in each district standard, reviews documentation and extant data prior to conducting an on-site visit. On-site data collection includes team members conducting interviews and focus group sessions with a wide range of stakeholders, including school committee members, teachers' association representatives, district and school administrators, teachers, students, and students' families. Team members also observe classroom instruction and collect data using the Teachstone Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) protocol, developed by the Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning at the University of Virginia.³ Virtual interviews and focus groups also are conducted as needed. Following the site visit, the team members code and analyze the data to develop a set of objective findings. The team lead and multiple quality assurance reviewers, including DESE staff, then review the initial draft of the report. DESE staff provides recommendations for the district, based on the findings of strengths and areas of growth identified, before AIR finalizes and submits the report to DESE. DESE previews and then sends the report to the district for factual review before publishing it on the DESE website.

Site Visit

The site visit to BPS was conducted during the week of February 7, 2022. BHS, BMS, DiPietro Elementary School, and Stall Brook Elementary School were visited; the Early Childhood Center and Keough Memorial Academy were not included in this review. The site visit included 17 hours of interviews and focus groups with approximately 75 stakeholders, including school committee members, district administrators, school staff, students, students' families, and teachers' association representatives.

The review team conducted district-level interviews with the superintendent, the assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction, the student services director, and the director of

² DESE's District Standards and Indicators are at <https://www.doe.mass.edu/accountability/district-review/district-standards-indicators.pdf>.

³ For more information on the Teachstone CLASS protocol, visit <https://teachstone.com/class/>.

social-emotional learning and equity. Three administrator interviews or focus groups were conducted with two elementary school principals, one middle school principal, and one high school principal. The president and vice president of the teachers’ association also were interviewed. The review team conducted six teacher focus groups with a total of 10 elementary school teachers, 10 middle school teachers, and 10 high school teachers. Two student focus groups were conducted with seven middle school students and four high school students.

The site team conducted 52 observations of classroom instruction in four schools.⁴ The instructional observers who visited these schools are trained and certified on the CLASS protocol.

Additional information is in the appendices. Information about the review activities and the site visit schedule are in Appendix A. Appendix B provides information about district enrollment, attendance, and expenditures. The Districtwide Instructional Observation Report is in Appendix C. Appendix D contains additional resources to support implementation of DESE's *District Standards and Indicators*. Lastly, Appendix E contains student performance data.

District Profile

BPS serves the town of Bellingham. The superintendent leads the district and is supported by an assistant superintendent and several directors. These school officials, particularly the superintendent, work closely with the elected school committee members who represent Bellingham residents through their oversight of the district. The school committee has five members, each of whom has a three-year term; the terms rotate in such a way that the committee always has some committee members who are relatively new, whereas others have served multiple years.

In the 2021-2022 school year, there were 154 teachers in the district, with 1,980 students enrolled in the district’s six schools; this includes the Bellingham Early Childhood Center and the Keough Memorial Academy, which were not included in the district review. Table 1 provides an overview of student enrollment by school.

Table 1. Bellingham Public Schools: Schools, Type, Grades Served, and Enrollment, 2021-2022

School	Type	Grades served	Enrollment
Bellingham Early Childhood Center	Early childhood	Preschool	88
Joseph F. DiPietro Elementary School	Elementary	K-3	294
Stall Brook Elementary School	Elementary	K-3	235
Bellingham Memorial School	Middle	4-7	598
Bellingham High School	Secondary	8-12	744
Keough Memorial Academy	Alternative program	7-12	21
Totals			1,980

Note. [Enrollment Data \(2021-22\) - Bellingham \(00250000\) \(mass.edu\)](#) as of October 1, 2021.

⁴ DESE exempted the early childhood center and the alternative education program from instructional observations.

Between 2018 and 2021, overall student enrollment decreased by 13 percent. In 2022, students from low-income households made up 32.4 percent of the district (state rate is 43.8 percent). The district served a similar percentage of students with disabilities as the state (19.9 percent versus 18.9 percent), a smaller percentage of English learners (ELs) (3.6 percent versus 11 percent), and a smaller percentage of students whose first language is not English (6.6 percent versus 23.9 percent).⁵ Additional enrollment figures by race/ethnicity and high-need populations (i.e., students with disabilities, students who are economically disadvantaged, and ELs and former ELs) as compared with the state are provided in Tables B1 and B2 in Appendix B.

The total in-district per-pupil expenditure was similar to the median in-district per-pupil expenditure for K-12 districts of similar size in fiscal year 2020 and comparable to average state spending per pupil (\$17,621 [district] versus \$17,575 [state]). Actual net school spending was equal to what is required by the Chapter 70 state education aid program, as shown in Table B3 in Appendix B.

Student Performance

The percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations on the Next Generation MCAS (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System) is less than the state average for all tested grades and subject areas, except for Grade 10 ELA and Grade 7 mathematics. Tables 2-4 provide an overview of student performance in ELA, mathematics, and science by grade level between 2018 and 2021.

Table 2. Next-Generation MCAS ELA Percentage Meeting or Exceeding Expectations, 2018-2021

Grade	N (2021)	2018	2019	2021	3-year change	State (2021)	Above/below
3	140	46%	58%	47%	1	51%	-4
4	156	44%	33%	36%	-8	49%	-13
5	141	52%	42%	43%	-9	47%	-4
6	163	53%	51%	43%	-10	47%	-4
7	183	30%	42%	33%	3	43%	-10
8	163	37%	37%	34%	-3	41%	-7
3-8	946	44%	43%	39%	-5	46%	-7
10	127	—	57%	64%	—	64%	0

Note. Data sourced from

https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/mcas/achievement_level.aspx?linkid=32&orgcode=00250000&orgtypecode=5& (2021).

⁵ Source: <https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/profiles/student.aspx?orgcode=00250000&orgtypecode=5&leftNavId=305&>.

Table 3. Next-Generation MCAS Mathematics Percentage Meeting or Exceeding Expectations, 2018-2021

Grade	N (2021)	2018	2019	2021	3-year change	State (2021)	Above/below
3	140	45%	45%	29%	-16	33%	-4
4	156	41%	30%	25%	-16	33%	-8
5	143	34%	38%	29%	-5	33%	-4
6	162	49%	54%	25%	-24	33%	-8
7	183	40%	44%	39%	-1	35%	4
8	164	39%	44%	20%	-19	32%	-12
3-8	948	41%	42%	28%	-13	33%	-5
10	127	—	53%	46%	—	52%	-6

Note. Data sourced from

https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/mcas/achievement_level.aspx?linkid=32&orgcode=00250000&orgtypecode=5 & (2021).

Table 4. MCAS Science Percentage Meeting or Exceeding Expectations in Grades 5 and 8, 2019-2021

Grade	N (2021)	2019	2020	2021	3-year change	State (2021)
5	142	42%	—	38%	-4	42%
8	158	54%	—	41%	-13	41%
5 and 8	300	48%	—	40%	-8	42%
10	—	—	—	—	—	—

Note. Grade 10 results for the spring 2021 Science and Technology/Engineering (STE) tests are not provided because students in the class of 2023 were not required to take the STE test. Information about Competency Determination requirements is available at <https://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/graduation.html>. In 2019, 10th graders took the Legacy MCAS science test. Data sourced from

https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/mcas/achievement_level.aspx?linkid=32&orgcode=00250000&orgtypecode=5 & (2021).

In addition, the district's four- and five-year graduation rates, 94.2 percent in 2020 and 92.9 percent in 2019, respectively, are both greater than the state averages of 89 percent and 90.1 percent.

Leadership and Governance

BPS serves solely⁶ the town of Bellingham. The district is governed by a superintendent, who has been in that role since 2015. This educator held several positions within BPS before becoming superintendent. He is supported by an assistant superintendent and several division directors. BPS is a department within the town governing structure. It works closely with the town government of Bellingham, which provides support for some facilities management and human resource needs. The town also is involved in BPS’s budgetary allotments, and town funding of the schools is part of the overall annual town budget. The elected school committee provides oversight for district management.

- **Superintendent Tenure.** The superintendent was appointed in July 2015 after holding several roles within the district, including guidance counselor and principal at BHS.
- **School Committee Structure.** The district is governed by a five-member school committee, each of whom is elected for a three-year term.
- **District Improvement Plan.** The district has developed both a strategic plan and a 5-year improvement plan (2015-2020). The district improvement plan was updated in 2018. These plans stipulate BPS’s vision for its schools and how students are prepared for adulthood. They incorporate plans for technology use, staffing, academic opportunities, and ways to meet students’ needs.

Table 5 summarizes key strengths and areas for growth in leadership and governance.

Table 5. Summary of Key Strengths and Areas for Growth: Leadership and Governance Standard

Indicator	Strengths	Areas for growth
School committee governance	The school committee has a collaborative and trusting relationship with the superintendent.	Documentation of how student academics influences decision-making.
District and school leadership	Frequent and regularly scheduled meetings enable collaboration between district leaders and school leaders.	Feedback processes for district staff.
District and school improvement planning	Stakeholders are engaged in district plan development and execution.	Frequency of improvement plans reviewed by staff.
Budget development	Annual budgets are developed and monitored in coordination with the town.	Resource allocation to meet the needs of all students, particularly ELs.

School Committee Governance

The BPS school committee has a positive and collaborative working relationship with the district superintendent and his staff and with the Bellingham town leaders. Evidence shows that the school committee is fulfilling its responsibilities under Massachusetts state law in terms of oversight of the

⁶ With the exception of Keough Memorial Academy, which is not part of this district review.

superintendent and legal and fiduciary responsibilities, but there is no evidence that the school committee has a focus on improvement.

The BPS school committee has five members elected for terms of three years each; members serve staggered terms. The powers of the school committee include to the ability to (a) appoint a superintendent of the schools and other officers as allowed by Massachusetts General Laws, to fix their compensation and to define their duties, and make rules concerning their tenure of office and to discharge them; and (b) make all reasonable policies consistent with Massachusetts General Laws or DESE regulations for the administration and management of the public school system and for the conduct of its own business and affairs.

As detailed in the school committee agendas and board minutes available through the town website, the school committee officially evaluated the superintendent's performance twice in his seven years of tenure (in 2017 and in 2020). The superintendent indicated that the school committee will be evaluating him again in 2022. He added that for this year's review he provided documentation on the work he has conducted in the last 18 months, and the school committee will use this information to draft his evaluation. He also noted that the school committee gives him ongoing feedback, and he gathers that "they're proud of the work [he has] done and [his] dedication to the district." According to interview data with the superintendent himself, his contract was extended for four more years.

The superintendent indicated that the school committee has a "collaborative and trusting" relationship with him and other district and school leaders. He noted that when the school committee considers funding or staffing requests, the committee reviews the documentation and asks "probing questions [to understand] how it all works together," but, in general, the committee trusts the superintendent's expertise and supports him "however [they] can."

Stakeholders (school committee members, district administrators, school staff, students, students' families, and teachers' association representatives) agreed that the district [led by the school committee] and town have "a close working relationship." Town leaders noted, and school committee agendas support, that they attend the school committee meetings by invitation or when town leaders have information to officially share with the school committee and the district. Town leaders stated that they serve as a resource that the school committee reaches out to as needed to request information. A town leader noted,

I'm just impressed by the strong working relationship between the town and the [school district]. It is definitely not something that is prevalent in a lot of other communities. I think it's a real strength and a real asset for the town of Bellingham to have that.

District and town leaders agreed that there is a clear and appropriate division of roles between municipal officials, the school committee, and the superintendent. The superintendent indicated that the school committee "focuses mainly on budget and policy," but they work together to understand the district's needs and requests for funding. The superintendent also stated that the school committee trusts district and school leaders' decisions for ensuring that resources are distributed equitably. He noted, "They trust that we're making sure that resources get spread across the district where [they are] needed the most. They just want to make sure [requested resources] are really needed" before funding the requests.

Town leaders agreed that “there’s a great deal of trust and autonomy between the town, and the school committee, and the superintendent.” Town leaders explained that they do not “get involved in the responsibilities of the school committee or the superintendent’s office” because the town’s role is “to work with the [superintendent] to develop the funding to support what [is needed] in the classrooms [while providing] a balanced set of resources across all of [the municipal] services.” Town officials noted that they work together to understand the new programs and initiatives that the district is incorporating in each budget cycle, but BPS has autonomy to make decisions regarding the number and type of programs or professional development activities that will be implemented.

District and school leaders make the school committee aware of emerging needs during weekly meetings and when they present formal requests during the budget presentations. District leaders indicated that the school committee members “want to hear what the needs are [at each school]” so they can appropriately support funding requests. For example, in 2021, the school committee voted to add a ballot question for a \$1.5 million override so that the district could meet contractual obligations and keep key positions. Town leaders advocated in favor of this ballot. A district leader noted, “The town of Bellingham has never done [an override] before. We were successful in getting those funds and with it, we were able to keep positions that we desperately wanted to keep.”

District and School Leadership

The superintendent leads a team of district staff and school principals who meet regularly to guide BPS. This collaboration transitions to the schools as the principals meet with their teams to determine the next steps for their schools based on the superintendent’s guidance. The superintendent’s collaborative nature also includes continuing a strong relationship with town leaders as they provide input on the district’s finances. A long-standing town leader noted as follows:

I’ve always had working relationships with the superintendents and different things come into play, [but] we find ways of providing whatever service [is needed]. We have a very good relationship. From the financial point of view, budgeting wise, we stay in close contact. [The district has] their strategic plan, and we incorporate our capital plan with a lot of things they bring forward.

The district could further strengthen the collaborative process by strategizing how to diversify the school-level staff members that provide input on school- and districtwide decisions.

In interviews and focus groups, elementary, middle, and high school principals described their working relationships with each other as “very collaborative.” They cited their frequent communication with each other and the twice-monthly meetings with the superintendent and other district leaders as examples of this collaborative spirit. One principal noted, “Coming from an outside district, just seeing how transparent everything is and how inclusive the leadership team is, is really helpful. Everybody knows what is going on in everybody’s buildings. I think [this] is good for our district.” In addition, principals reported meeting with their schools’ leadership teams, including department chairs and instructional leadership team (ILT) members, to disseminate information provided during district-level meetings. A principal explained,

We have our own mini leadership teams in our school as well that can help source information and tackle whatever we’re working on in the school. So that there’s a broader

way to get information out, and to have a pulse on what people are doing, thinking, and so that we can best collaborate and work together to move forward.

Communication between the district and school is reciprocal, as noted in an example from teachers' association members. When asked about the superintendent's role in terms of advising and making staffing and collective bargaining recommendations to the school committee, teachers' association members indicated that principals communicate with the superintendent so that he understands staffing needs, and then "it's his [the superintendent's] job to advocate with the school committee and demonstrate that there's a need." The members also noted that, "if there's a goal or a vision that [the superintendent] has to try to provide for, then he tries to get the [necessary] staffing to do that."

One result from these collaborations is that district and school leaders agreed that equity is a top priority for the district, and different efforts are in place to address emerging equity challenges. Various district and school stakeholders noted that the district's demographic composition is changing, with "more students and families categorized as high need," and an increase in the population of ELs because of incoming students "from neighboring communities and other countries" in the last year. Middle and high school leaders noted there is "a lot of diversity that Bellingham had not seen before," so they are considering and implementing new initiatives to "change practices and mindsets." For example, middle and high school leaders agreed that "the district has done a lot around equity work" and reported that this year all principals are working with a consultant to "present the equity work to teachers." A district equity team is "working at a district level to look at [the schools'] documents and procedures and to make sure that [schools] are doing everything [possible] to support all students." In addition, BHS started an equity committee this year, and, with the support of the district's social worker, BHS started holding focus groups with students and parents in February 2022 so that the collected information can be used to include their voices and take "a multiprong approach [for moving] forward with equity as an overarching idea."

In addition, an elementary school principal reported collaborating with a district leader to modify the school's professional development plans so that educators could receive training geared to specifically addressing the needs of ELs because the school has had a large influx of this student population in the last year. Another elementary school principal noted as follows:

We are [also] focusing on overall equity [for] students. And this year, we've really had a major push [from the] district's equity committee. Each [school] has a group of [representatives], so we do a lot of equity work at the building level at staff meetings. There's a lot of feedback and collaborative discussion because they're the ones that see kids every day.

District and school leaders indicated that student data are used to assess and monitor student outcomes of all students. Elementary, middle, and high school teachers stated that school leaders expect them to collect and use various types of student assessment data, including benchmark and diagnostic assessments. For example, teachers shared how they use i-Ready benchmarking data at three points in the school year to gauge mastery and determine what interventions are needed, if any. Middle school teachers noted that in addition to "any of the formative or summative tools [they] are using in [their] classrooms," they collect ELA and mathematics diagnostic data (through i-Ready), as well as writing assessments, three times per year. In addition, ELA and mathematics

interventionists collect data for “growth monitoring” purposes in accordance with the district’s multitiered system of support procedures.

As schools use data to determine the needs of their students, the superintendent stated that he provides school leaders with autonomy. He explained,

When they come to me with a request, I expect that they’ve already done their homework. They’ve looked at the data; they’ve tried a couple of different things. They may come to me for advice, but I don’t dictate what they need or how they should approach problems, unless they ask for me specifically to do so.

School leaders agreed that district leaders allow them autonomy for making staffing, scheduling, and budgeting decisions. A principal noted, “I think that they [district leaders] are very much collaborative partners with us. And they respect and understand [that] we know our buildings and our crew. And when we present something to them, they listen.” Another principal added, “They might have clarifying questions [to] make sure they understand. But then they are supportive of it if it means that it’s the right thing for students and teachers. [But] I feel like I have a good amount of autonomy.” Another principal stated that although building leaders are given the agency and authority to make decisions in their schools, they do so in alignment with their colleagues “because we want to make sure that we are [aligned] with where the district needs to go.” The principals explained that they ensure alignment by presenting their ideas to their fellow principals and the superintendent. As another principal added, “And we’ve been here long enough to be able to know what the process is. So, we know to bring data; [and] if we have a challenge, we bring a solution to them.”

The superintendent reported that in 2021, a consultant worked on “revamping how [the district] does business.” The superintendent and school administrators completed workplace inventories to assess their leadership styles, and now they are using that information to “push past” some of their barriers. For example, instead of micromanaging their staff, principals are learning to delegate work by letting their staff “build the capacity to do [it].” The superintendent noted,

Now during our admin meetings, we spend about 15 to 20 minutes [talking] about leadership, what we want it to look like, and how [to] improve our leadership skills. Every two weeks when we have our meetings, one person or a team has to provide some type of article, a video, something that promotes discussion around leadership. And then we have an open discussion [about] what that means for our leadership as we move forward and grow to be better leaders.

One role of the superintendent is to ensure annual evaluations of all administrators, which are gathered and stored on the TeachPoint internet-based application. Based on a review of the summative evaluations for 2020-2021, of the 15 administrators, 60 percent of the administrators (nine administrators) did not have summative evaluations on file. The evaluations for administrators provide opportunities for administrators to receive ratings for each standard and provide a space to receive comments and analysis of each standard. All six of the summative administrator evaluations reviewed received an overall summative rating of Proficient from an evaluator. In addition, 83.3 percent of evaluations (five of six evaluations) included evaluator comments categorized as specific, actionable feedback identifying the administrator’s strengths and areas of improvement.

Educators at the schools indicated that leadership opportunities are available to them through various teams and committees, such as ILTs and the PBIS committee, the district equity committee, and culture committees at individual schools. Teachers' association members stated that leadership development opportunities usually are provided through roles in the ILTs and the department coordinator positions. They indicated that administrators try to involve staff in various teams or committees "so that there's more input and growth." However, they also noted that even though opportunities are widely announced, few new people volunteer to take these roles, so administrators end up asking the same people who already are involved in other activities. A teachers' association member shared a potential opportunity for improvement and growth in the district when he noted, "It's always the same people. I get volunteered to do it. I never apply for it. I just have to do it. As a department chair, apparently, I'm automatically on the committee." Teachers' association members also stated that department chair positions become available every year, and interested staff go through an interview process. However, if no one applies for the position, the existing department chair continues in that position by default. Because department chairs also are part of the ILT, "potentially, the same people could be doing everything—department chair, ILT, [etc., which] is not necessarily a bad thing [because] it creates consistency."

District and School Improvement Planning

BPS has demonstrated a clear commitment to engaging key stakeholders and those with improvement expertise in the development and implementation of their district and individual school improvement plans. Educators, leaders, and other key individuals are familiar with and use the plans to carry out their work within the district. The improvement plans are meant to be comprehensive to address key aspects of the district, such as the growing cultural diversity in BPS and the desire for increased rigor in academics. Although evidence of data use to develop the plans and stakeholder engagement exists, there is little evidence that the district's strategic plan and the schools' improvement plans are reviewed regularly by educators outside the leadership team.

District and school leaders reported that to develop the district's strategic and improvement plans, the district hired a consultant who worked with district and school stakeholders to guide BPS staff members in various tasks, including gathering information from staff, parents, and high school students; examining data; and developing a mission statement. The superintendent explained,

We gathered all that data and looked at the needs of our district, through that lens. From there, we developed the district's [strategic and] improvement plans, really focusing in on [the] areas that got highlighted through the data and the information from the focus groups, [including the schools'] population, special ed needs, growing numbers of English learners, budgetary concerns, and community, culture, and climate.

District and school stakeholders stated that the district's strategic plan drives the district's and schools' improvement plans, and school leaders "are held accountable" for linking their strategies and practices to the strategic and improvement plans. A principal commented, "[The strategic plan] helps me funnel why I am doing what I'm doing; why I am changing the path [toward] what [students] need." Another principal noted,

We work to make sure that we're vertically aligning up and down with the high school and with the elementary schools. And we are making sure that in line with the strategic plan,

we're being inclusive and adapting our practices to meet the needs of all learners across the board.

School specialists also indicated that the district and school improvement plans align with what they do “to meet the needs of all students and to make them feel included.” They also indicated that as a result of the implementation of their school improvement plans, they “have interventionists, the PBIS, and the culture committee” which together help BPS teachers and staff create a productive and calm learning environment. Teachers indicated familiarity with the district’s improvement plan, but those involved in some committees, such as the ILT and ELA review committees, use it more often and engage with it more closely to ensure its alignment with the pertinent decisions, programs, and initiatives.

The district’s strategic plan and the schools’ improvement plans are based on five pillars for success: academic excellence, communication, culture and climate, social and emotional well-being, and technology use and implementation. Each pillar aligns with various strategic goals and strategies (i.e., “suggested actions”). For example, the academic excellence strategic goals include using the established evaluation system to reinforce and support the implementation of instructional practices, as well as using formative and summative assessment data to guide instruction. Action items include ensuring that each school’s improvement plan reflects the expectations and action items outlined in the district’s strategic plan.

The schools’ improvement plans specify how data will be used to assess outcomes for all five of the district’s strategic plan pillars, and stakeholder interviews confirmed that school leaders and educators are using data as noted in their individual school improvement plans. For example, educators reported using formative and summative data to create the intervention groups for students, make adjustments to instructional practices based on benchmark or unit assessments or after a unit assessment, and reteach or provide the needed supports to make sure that they are meeting the standards.

BPS’s culture and climate strategic goals guide the district’s cultural proficiency/equity plan and include the goals of demonstrating an understanding and appreciation of different families’ home languages, cultures, and values, as well as creating a culture and climate based on collaboration, celebration, appreciation and validation, and care. Some action items in this pillar include examining the district’s curriculum and instructional resources for cultural bias and providing professional development to explore the potential cultural bias of BPS educators. An additional suggested activity from the district’s strategic plan is to address each school’s culture and climate, as well as examine how the work of the district office affects school culture and climate.

The schools’ improvement plans specify various actions to meet the culture and climate strategic goals. District and school stakeholders described some of these efforts, such as the work being done through the district’s and schools’ equity committees, which were formed in summer 2021. For instance, the equity committee members reviewed “documents and our procedures to make sure that [schools] are doing everything [possible] to support all students” and facilitating equity trainings during staff meetings. In addition, a district leader reported that the district and schools are using the Washington Models for the Evaluation of Bias Content in Instructional Materials and noted a desire “to make sure that curriculum materials are representative of all of [the student] groups.” She

explained, “Our students need to see themselves in the curriculum materials. We want a wide representation of ethnicities, gender, and that’s something that we’ve embedded into the process.” She added that when reaching out to publishers, the district conveys its expectation to have culturally responsive teaching embedded into the program.

The district’s strategic plan includes a vision statement for equity, stating that the district approaches all of its goals “through a culturally proficient lens” by continuing to

develop capacity in inclusive, culturally responsive practices across all district schools by engaging in professional development; by developing a district definition, vision, and expectations about cultural proficiency; and by examining policies, practices, curriculum, instruction, and communication with a culturally proficient lens.

The focus on equity outlined under the District and School Leadership section aligns with this vision.

Budget Development

Officials within the town of Bellingham and the district work together to meet the current and projected financial needs of BPS. District leaders work closely with town finance department officials and finance committee members to draw up annual budgets that will enable students to reach their potentials. Staffing, academic materials, and capital projects continue to represent the largest financial needs, but an area of recent pressing need is that for ELs. This population grew significantly in the last few school years (from 1.4 percent of the student population in 2016 to 3.6 percent in 2021) and is projected to continue to grow, requiring additional materials, staffing, and support.

The district has a collaborative budgeting process with the town of Bellingham, BPS school committee members, and school building leaders. In addition to the district’s approved budget, multiple external partnerships assist with increasing resources to meet the district’s needs.

BPS’s director of finance is a member of the district-level team, which helps her better understand the context in which requests for funding are being made and so she “can adequately look at the funding and make sure she can support all of [the schools’] key initiatives.” The director of finance added that she gathers and shares ongoing budget-related information and ensures that all information from prior years is up to date in the budget’s documentation for school leaders and department chairs. In addition, the two elementary schools use a formula “based on student population to [ensure] equity between the two schools.”

Because the school system is a department within the town government, the superintendent develops the budget with an understanding that it is part of the overall annual budget that is voted on at the annual town meeting every May. The director of finance works closely with the town’s administrator and chief financial officer to discuss the town’s revenues, projections, available funds, and the most likely requests the school district will make. The director of finance also maintains ongoing communication with the town’s human resources director regarding payroll data. The director of finance reviews “current known salaries” and “projects out for future years” and works closely with the superintendent, the assistant superintendent, the special education director, and the principals to consider “potential retirements or new requests for new positions” to then make budgetary shifts and finalize the budget for salaries.

The superintendent explained in his interview that he holds ongoing discussions with the director of finance and town leaders about the budget throughout the year. In her interview, the director of finance explained that the budgeting process starts each year with meetings with the superintendent as early as October or November, during which they discuss what the new budget is going to look like based on revenue, projections, and new growth, among other factors. In February, as part of the budgeting process, town leaders invite the superintendent to attend the town's budget workshop so that he can discuss the district's budget, needs, and what the superintendent thinks they can afford. Town leaders noted that they regularly have conversations with the superintendent so that there is a common understanding of what needs the municipality can realistically support. When asked to what extent the budget development process includes considerations about cost-effectiveness, a district leader said,

Within every conversation we have, there's no wish list items. Every request, every position, all of our supplies; it all goes back to our strategic plan. [M]aking sure that we are meeting the needs of kids within the classroom; and that each request is the most cost effective.

School leaders agreed that the district addresses school resource needs in a timely, effective, and equitable way. Middle and high school leaders stated that the process for addressing needs is collaborative, transparent, and strategic. A principal noted, "And there's always a plan. If issues can't be addressed immediately, there's always a plan to address them." The superintendent explained that when discussing the needs, school leaders and central office leaders work as a team and "sit as an administrative group [to discuss] each school's or department's needs." He added, "We try to create [a] collaborative environment so we are all looking at our schools' needs; and we sit down and hash it out together."

The superintendent stated that when doing budget presentations to the town, he includes enrollment data, as well as a breakdown of different subgroups (e.g., number of students with high needs, students with individualized education programs, students who are economically disadvantaged) and how these data relate to their requests (e.g., staffing) and the overall budget. He added, "They get a sense of the importance of all those pieces." In general, the district's 2022 budget presentation suggests that the district is targeting various areas to ensure improved opportunities and outcomes for students. For example, the presentation explained that "to address new demands put on [the district's] technology resources," BPS recently purchased tablets, performed information technology infrastructure enhancements, and created a family tech support center to provide technical support to families. In addition, the district earmarked state and federal funds to help with the health and safety protocols and potential learning gaps from the pandemic. The presentation also lists requests for positions for a districtwide social worker, a licensed practical nurse, and academic tutors.

When asked about the process for deciding on staffing allocations, district and school leaders stated that school leaders and educators discuss emerging needs, and then administrators meet as a team to decide which positions are the "most favorable" given the available funding and most urgent needs. When considering staffing needs, district leaders assess students' needs "across the board by school." A district leader explained,

We start at school level and determine staffing levels or [needed adjustments] based on the number of students, how they're achieving, their social/emotional needs, [the] need to develop a new program for the upcoming school year, [. . .]. We try to have those conversations a year in advance so we can plan for the budget for the following year.

Another district leader noted that given the current influx of ELs, the district is making projections based on data. She explained, "Knowing that there's not necessarily adequate state and federal level funding to help with [the increase of ELs], we're looking at the way that we currently support these students, and the way that we have in the past, and updating our models." For example, the district is considering reallocating funds and using alternate revenue sources toward hiring classroom teachers, contracting translation services, and making programmatic changes to cover the needs of ELs.

District leaders listed some collaborations with external partners to expand capacity and resources, including partnerships with the Hockomock Area YMCA, a local hospital, and the iCan Bike programs. In addition, the director of student services indicated that special education staff is benefitting from the district's membership with the Bi-County Collaborative, which offers professional development opportunities, such as Sheltered English Immersion strategies training for re-licensure and trauma-based workshops. The superintendent and high school specialists also highlighted the district's participation in the Blackstone Valley Superintendents' Consortium and indicated that it has been particularly beneficial for expanding dual enrollment and vocational offerings for students, as well as for opening opportunities for "combining" induction programs. The superintendent noted that participation in the consortium is significant because

I could never create a manufacturing course because I don't have the space or the money for the equipment, but Uxbridge did, so now we utilize them. We are combining our induction program. We'll have some of our new teachers, not just observe teachers here, but go to Uxbridge and see how their teachers are teaching and vice versa. It's built that nice regional connection.

Recommendations

- District leaders and school committee members should document a process for including student data in the decision-making process.
- The district should ensure that school-and district-level decision-making is a collaborative process that includes input from a variety of school-level staff members.
- District and school leaders should establish a process that ensures that district and school improvement plans are reviewed by staff at all levels.
- The district should develop a resource allocation review process to ensure that the needs of all students, and ELs in particular, are met.

Curriculum and Instruction

BPS has implemented processes and procedures to more closely align curricula to state standards, create consistent curriculum maps, and ensure that the district achieves both vertical and horizontal alignment. The curriculum review process, designed by the assistant superintendent, has resulted in the clear selection of rigorous materials that are well received by leaders and teachers alike. The review processes will continue into the next school year and across multiyear cycles to ensure that curricular materials are meeting district goals. Mathematics and ELA curriculum reviews are in progress, and science and social studies will follow. Through data-informed decision-making processes, curricular review processes, and the adoption and implementation of new curricula, the district is working to provide a high-quality education to each student.

The curricular review process was implemented because of districtwide interest in ensuring that curricula are more uniform in their rigor and quality. The process also provides more transparency about how reviews are conducted, which some educators in focus groups indicated was a strength. The review processes are relatively new, with only two subjects completed, and concerns about currently selected curricula remain. Some participants noted that the review processes need to result in curricula aligned more vertically and horizontally to have consistent instruction.

Lastly, there is an opportunity for BPS to apply greater attention to capacity and support for students with particular needs. For instance, the district has many new immigrant students, so more developed culturally responsive practices and pedagogy and language resources may need to be included in future review protocols. Findings from interviews and focus groups, and evidence from supplied documentation, suggest that a variety of intervention models for students with disabilities, learners who are struggling, and those students who may need additional socioemotional support are used in BPS schools. Table 6 summarizes key strengths and areas for growth in curriculum and instruction.

Table 6. Summary of Key Strengths and Areas for Growth: Curriculum and Instruction Standard

Indicator	Strengths	Areas for growth
Curriculum selection and use	The district implemented a curricular review process that is selecting more aligned and rigorous curricula.	Instruction of documented and taught curricula.
Classroom instruction	BPS teachers are using a number of strategies to instruct students in an engaging manner, and teachers are mindful of the developing social-emotional needs of students.	Consistently rigorous instruction for all students.
Student access to coursework	The district offers a variety of academic offerings to students at all grade levels to meet their interests and needs.	More access to additional course offerings.

Curriculum Selection and Use

The district developed a process for selecting, implementing, and reviewing curriculum. However, district leaders and staff recognized the need to enhance the curricular review process to ensure that all materials are rigorous and aligned with standards. The district leaders and staff noted that while BPS needs to adhere to the timelines designated in the curricular review process; provide greater transparency about which curriculum reviews are being conducted; and ensure that the current curriculum is more uniform, including vertical and horizontal alignment, as a result of the process.

The district currently is working on five-year cyclical curricular review processes. The *Curriculum Review Process* document noted that the current curriculum reviews began in the 2018-2019 school year, and curriculum development and revisions are still underway for all subject areas and grades. The review process has four stages: self-study, development/redesign, implementation/monitoring, and evaluation. Focus areas include mathematics; social studies/world languages; science, technology, and engineering; ELA/library; and art/music/wellness (health/physical education).

District-level respondents and curriculum planning documents reveal that Understanding by Design is the curriculum planning framework, and Google Docs and Sheets are used to store current curriculum materials and document curricular decisions. Distributed curriculum templates allow teachers to define three stages: Stage 1, desired results; Stage 2, evidence of learning; and Stage 3, learning plan/lesson sequence. District documents and staff interview responses indicate that DESE, EdReports, and CURATE⁷ are all part of the curricular review process. District administrator interview responses and documents confirm that review committees involve many voluntary stakeholders to make sure that multiple voices are represented. Although the review process is thorough, district leaders reported that staffing limitations slowed down reviews, development, and revisions. A wide range of BPS stakeholders (teachers, building leaders, and district leaders) are involved in reviewing and making decisions about district curricula to ensure that the curricula are high quality and meet student needs. This curricula review process is an area of strength for the district. The completed CURATE table provided by BPS shows that the majority of curricula in use are unrated, and new programs are under review within district review committees for the 2022-2023 school year.

District leaders prioritized mathematics, ELA, and social studies as areas to be covered first. These reviews are staggered as outlined in the district's *Curriculum Review Process* document. Some reviews are in progress, with the most documented development in ELA and mathematics, as noted by teachers, district-level respondents, and the ELA curriculum review plan.

The review status indicates that most curricular materials either need improvement or revising, or are in the midst of the review process, which is consistent with what teachers expressed about current curricula. Both district leaders and several teachers noted that the mathematics review has been completed, and science and social studies will be completed after ELA, which is currently underway. Both teachers and district representatives noted that the district has been behind on

⁷ CURATE: CUrriculum RATings by TEachers. See <https://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/curate/>.

curricular reviews. Evidence of improvement in the documented and taught curriculum since the curriculum review was completed was not yet available for this report.

According to the district's completed CURATE table, BPS schools use a wide variety of instructional materials, many of which will be reviewed for the 2022-2023 school year for the elementary schools, BMS, and BHS. Currently, Bridges Mathematics is used across the elementary grades, as are Foundations, History's Mysteries Units, and Mystery Science. These programs continue into BMS until fifth grade, when Illustrated Math and Words Their Way are added. At the high school level, the curriculum materials diverge further, based on level of rigor, subject matter, and publisher; some curricular materials are still district-designed.

Documented curriculum and materials need an overhaul to be more consistent and organized across grade levels, according to both teachers and district representatives. Documented impediments to curriculum review, development, and revision include curriculum director staff turnover, the COVID-19 pandemic, and changing policies and practices. Several teacher focus group respondents expressed frustration about both the frequency of suggested curricular changes and the lack of consistency with existing strategies. One teacher noted,

Honestly, we are all over the place. The latest and greatest thing that rolls down the road we're hopping on because it's shiny. Then, as soon as it loses the shine, we're gone to the next shiny thing. . . . We're attention deficit. We're all over the place. We've rewritten the curriculum 43 times [and] put it into six different formats just because it meets someone else's new criteria.

This respondent also noted that the curriculum director had been changed 15 or 16 times during their tenure in the district. A second teacher commented about the disjointed nature of curriculum materials and resources, stating,

This is what happened with curriculum for so long, too. There's almost too many things. It's like how do you put all those pieces together and then you feel like you might not be doing any of them very well because you're only half invested.

District leaders are still working to achieve vertical and horizontal alignment across curricula. Teacher focus group respondents noted that the curricula across classrooms for each content area is not quite uniform. One teacher reported,

We're hoping at the end of this year to have decided on and to start implementing for [fall] 2022, a consistent, hopefully K-8 ELA program to again address some of those concerns that there's a lot of materials out right now, and not all being used consistently, horizontally, and vertically.

Some departments are working to create their own curricula based on a shared textbook or by collaborating with other teachers and creating curricula based on other shared resources. Both teacher and district focus group responses confirm the use of outdated textbooks for some subjects. The district noted it will draft new curricula in the areas of history and science after the ELA curriculum review has been completed. Another member of the focus group added that mathematics is the only content area for which the changes suggested by the curriculum review had been completed. These findings also were echoed by district administrators, who noted that curriculum

revisions were still in progress. District leaders and teachers who participated in focus groups and interviews indicated that they anticipate the curriculum reviews will address and eliminate these inconsistencies. For areas of the curriculum that have been more recently revamped, teachers gave some positive feedback, particularly for mathematics. One teacher focus group respondent noted, “From my standpoint in [the upper elementary grades], I’m pleased with the shift they made for math because . . . we were able to recognize what skills they should have been receiving.” According to this respondent, this curriculum change helped teachers better identify student learning gaps, which has been critical given the COVID-19 pandemic and the increase of ELs in the district for the 2021-2022 school year.

As with the documented curriculum, the taught curriculum and curriculum interventions are growth areas for the district. Challenges expressed by staff about the taught curriculum surrounded two strands: (a) an overconcentration on academic standards that would bridge academic gaps, without considering students’ socioemotional needs and (b) administrators’ lack of curriculum knowledge and classroom experience that left teachers feeling less supported in terms of curriculum execution. Teachers suggested in focus groups that administrators were very good at handling managerial responsibilities and expressed trust for teachers, but administrators’ shortcomings in instruction made curriculum delivery more difficult. District administrator focus groups shared similar sentiments that the district was focusing more on high academic standards to close learning gaps exacerbated by interrupted instruction caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The district supplied teachers with resources such as “curriculum templates” and “scope and sequence” documents to assist with developing desired results for students, providing evidence of student learning and learning plan/lesson sequence.

Classroom Instruction

BPS teachers are using multiple strategies to instruct students in an engaging manner, and teachers are mindful of the developing social-emotional needs of students. It is evident that the district’s primary challenges to providing rigorous classroom instruction are twofold: (a) not having a cohesive, documented curriculum that challenges and supports all children and (b) the need to adopt more culturally responsive practices.

Five observers visited BPS during the week of February 7, 2022. The observers conducted 52 observations in a sample of classrooms across four schools. Observations were conducted in Grades K-12 and focused primarily on literacy, ELA, and mathematics. The CLASS protocol guided all classroom observations in the district. These observations were guided by three grade-band levels of CLASS protocols: K-3, Upper Elementary (4-5), and Secondary (6-12).

The K-3 protocol includes 10 classroom dimensions related to three domains: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support. The Upper Elementary and Secondary protocols include 11 classroom dimensions related to three domains: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support, in addition to Student Engagement. The three domains observed at all levels broadly are defined as follows:

- **Emotional Support.** Describes the social-emotional functioning of the classroom, including teacher-student relationships and responsiveness to social-emotional needs.

- **Classroom Organization.** Describes the management of students' behavior, time, and attention in the classroom.
- **Instructional Support.** Describes the efforts to support cognitive and language development, including cognitive demand of the assigned tasks, the focus on higher order thinking skills, and the use of process-oriented feedback.

When conducting a classroom visit, the observer rates each dimension (including Student Engagement) on a scale of 1 to 7. A rating of 1 or 2 (low range) indicates that the dimension was never or rarely evident during the visit. A rating of 3, 4, or 5 (middle range) indicates that the dimension was evident but not exhibited consistently or in a way that included all students. A rating of 6 or 7 (high range) indicates that the dimension was reflected in all or most classroom activities and in a way that included all or most students.

In BPS, ratings are provided across three grade bands: K-5, 6-8, and 9-12. For each grade band, ratings are provided across the overarching domains, as well as at individual dimensions within those domains. The full report of findings from observations conducted in the district is in Appendix C, and summary results are in Tables 17, 18, and 19 in this appendix.

In summary, findings from BPS observations were as follows:

- **Emotional Support.** Ratings were at the high end of the middle range for the K-5 grade band (average 5.7) and in the middle range for the 6-8 and 9-12 grade bands (average 4.4 and 4.0, respectively).
- **Classroom Organization.** Ratings were in the high range for the 6-8 and 9-12 grade bands (average 6.6 and 6.5, respectively) and just below the high range for the K-5 grade band (average 5.4).
- **Instructional Support.** Ratings were in the middle range for all grade bands (average 4.3 in the K-5 grade band, 3.3 in the 6-8 grade band, and 3.3 in the 9-12 grade band).
- **Student Engagement.** For Grades 4 and up, where student engagement was measured as an independent domain, ratings were at the high end of the middle range for the 4-5 and 6-8 grade bands (average 5.6 and 5.1, respectively) and in the middle range for the 9-12 grade band (average 4.5).

Student perceptions aligned with the instructional observations using the CLASS protocol. Students in both focus groups indicated that they enjoyed some aspects of their education, such as project work. Several members of the high school student focus group noted that they were proud of Massachusetts' reputation for providing high quality schools. A middle school student shared, "I like social studies because a lot of times we like to do big projects and we get to draw or write. And then I like science because we got to do a bunch of fun experiments." High school students also indicated that they enjoyed projects and experiments in social studies and science, and several students from different grade levels shared that mathematics classes were difficult for them and their friends. When pressed to explain why, students explained that they and their friends found the topic challenging, the curriculum materials difficult, and the instruction lacking. They described finding the lecture format repetitive, a result they surmised from teachers' "tunnel vision" when it comes to instruction. Student focus group respondents generally expressed that the classroom

materials were relatable because the materials were used real-world scenarios, and access to enrichment programming to build social-emotional-related skills. Teacher focus groups participants noted using mini lessons, group work, teamwork, warm-ups, teacher modeling, mediated tasks and assignments, station rotation models, and multimedia to keep students interested in the content.

As noted previously, adjustments to the curriculum selection and implementation processes are needed to address the learning experiences for students. In the meantime, the district is working specifically on educational equity with the taught curriculum. According to insights shared by district officials in their individual interviews, the district is making strides toward education equity, but more work needs to be done. District administrators noted a current concentration on accelerated learning to help shrink some of the gaps caused by disruptions from the COVID-19 pandemic. Accelerated learning practices may include additional reviews of past content while still presenting grade-level content. i-Ready also is being used at all grade levels to assess student performance and interventions. In terms of addressing the needs of all students, BPS district leaders have made progress by developing and issuing guiding documents for all grade levels in the *District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP) and the Response to Intervention (RTI) Guide 2021-2022*. However, respondents from teacher focus groups and district-level administrators indicated that additional progress must be made to define and incorporate culturally responsive pedagogy, cross curricular teaching and learning, and proper accommodations and modifications for ELs and students with disabilities. Advancement in these areas will be critical given the changing demographics of BPS, including growing populations of students of color, immigrant students, and ELs.

Elementary school teachers are using the Bridges Mathematics curriculum to help meet all student needs. Participants in elementary teacher focus groups indicated that a variety of education kits and models are used that allow for a much more targeted effect. For example, one elementary teacher commented on the use of interventions in the Bridges Mathematics curriculum, which is designed for K-5 mathematics teaching:

I find that our intervention is much more targeted because they use screeners before every unit. So the kids aren't just in intervention all year long; it's based on what we're studying at the time. So they do a screener before we teach a certain unit, and they use the information from the screeners to decide who's going to get intervention for that round of intervention.

According to teachers, BPS has provided its elementary teachers with the materials, training, and support needed to effectively implement this curriculum successfully.

BPS educators also identified additional instructional practices and strategies to build an inclusive and supportive learning environment for students. On the elementary level, teachers are using a workshop model to teach writing and literacy skills. After delivering a mini lesson, teachers use variety of strategies to incorporate small groups and small-group instruction. Elementary teacher focus groups revealed that some teachers prefer to organize students by similar levels of ability, whereas others choose to pair students with differing ability levels so that one student can model the practices for the other. This approach also allows students to build peer relationships. Student focus group respondents also highlighted their appreciation for group work.

In addition to teachers trying to build in activities for social-emotional learning, interventionists and occupational therapy specialists work with students individually and are on call to provide teachers with strategies to assist with classroom management. Behavioral issues are addressed by the addition of cool down centers, which are spaces meant to allow students to exercise or talk things out when conflict arises, without being removed from the classroom. Because BMS serves Grades 4-7, three instructional models are used to meet the developmental and cognitive needs of those age groups: an elementary-type model for Grade 4, a middle school instructional model for Grade 5 and 6, and a junior-high model for Grade 7. Although group work is used across all four grades, the pedagogical approaches in each level differ to reflect the instructional models used. At the high school level, as stated in district and high school teacher interviews, Advanced Placement and Honors classes are available for students to meet differentiated needs. According to participants in the high school teacher focus groups, some Advanced Placement courses are available to those who earned the highest grades in the previous year's course in that subject, whereas others are open to all who are interested.

Instructional observation ratings from the CLASS protocol provide further evidence on learning environments. On average, out of a possible 7.0, scores for the following relevant domains were in the middle range: Instructional Learning Formats (district average 4.6; i.e., how the teacher maximizes students' interest, engagement, and abilities to learn from the lesson and activities), Quality of Feedback (district average 3.7; i.e., the degree to which the teacher provides feedback that expands learning and understanding and encourages continued participation in the learning activity), and Instructional Dialogue (district average 2.9; i.e., the purposeful use of content-focused discussion among teachers and students that is cumulative). These middle-range scores indicate that teachers only sometimes meet these instructional objectives or only for some students. For example, the average score for Quality of Feedback in Grades 6-12 was in the low end of the middle range (average 3.1 in Grades 6-8 and average 3.0 in Grades 9-12), which can indicate less frequent scaffolding or discussion of how students arrived at their responses in the secondary grades. Lower scores in this dimension sometimes illustrate a tendency for teachers to be more interested in students reaching the correct answer rather than working through reasoning that may have led students to incorrect responses.

Student Access to Coursework

BPS offers a large number and variety of academic opportunities for its general education students and students with disabilities. Evidence supports a need to review course offerings to meet the needs of the district's increasingly diverse population. The district will need to consider additional ways to better support its growing newcomer population and their families.

Curriculum materials presented by the district confirm a wide range of courses, including elective courses. Teacher and district-level focus groups indicate that some programs are in place, such as challenge groups and afterschool enrichment programs, to help students who need more academically challenging work prior to entering high school. District-level interviews indicate that at the high school level, gateway course opportunities include honors classes, Advanced Placement classes, and new courses to assist students in connecting to their ambitions and interests, such as Project Lead the Way and Innovative Pathways. Student focus group respondents generally expressed satisfaction in the number of electives offered.

An area of growth for the district is providing coursework that meets the needs of students for whom English is a second language, particularly those who speak Portuguese and other languages besides English and Spanish, due to the increase in the number of students from Brazil enrolled in recent years. Elementary school teacher focus groups revealed that Google Translate was used to translate class materials into Portuguese; a more reliable way to educate this student population is needed.

Recommendations

- The district should document and clearly communicate a plan for the selection and implementation of high-quality curriculum that is both vertically and horizontally aligned.
- District and school leaders should provide professional development opportunities that aid teachers in improving the consistency and rigor of their instructional practices.
- The district should make available additional course offerings that meet the needs of all students, including students for whom English is a second language.

Assessment

BPS uses a variety of assessments across the district to gather data on student performance and inform decision making. Although i-Ready benchmark assessments are now being implemented at the elementary and middle school levels, some assessments (including those administered at BHS) are targeted toward specific grades. Curriculum-specific assessments are used within each grade. But BPS’s elementary schools use DIBELS and BAS to ascertain reading levels and Bridges Mathematics, with its embedded unit assessments, number corner assessments, and other components. At BMS and BHS, teachers use curriculum assessments, project-based assessments, and in-class assignments that increasingly prepare students for learning and life beyond school.

Formal data systems are in place to support the consistent administration of assessments. Results of assessments appear to be more regularly communicated through the district and with students than with families.

- **Data and Assessment Systems.** The district uses a variety of assessments to measure and monitor student performance, including i-Ready benchmarks, DIBELS, BAS reading assessment, Bridges Mathematics curriculum assessments and intervention screening tools, and curriculum-embedded assessments.
- **Data Use.** The district has implemented systems for supporting data use, including for individual student progress as well as school-level progress through data-driven instruction.
- **Sharing Data.** The district has established mechanisms for sharing data with families, including BMS Data Driving Discussions, Bellingham Data Day, and BHS Benchmark Analysis Planning and Intervention.

Table 7 summarizes key strengths and areas for growth in assessment.

Table 7. Summary of Key Strengths and Areas for Growth: Assessment Standard

Indicator	Strengths	Areas for growth
Data and assessment systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ BPS uses a wide variety of data to select and monitor assessments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Use of diagnostic and benchmark assessments to guide instructional practices.
Data use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ BPS teachers regularly administer formative and summative assessments to gather data on student process. ■ The district provides consistent time for analyzing assessment data at the lower grade levels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Additional time to analyze assessment data.
Sharing results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Assessment results are regularly sent home to families in formal report cards and regular updates in the online system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Communication with families that provides suggestions to better support student success.

Data and Assessment Systems

In BPS, educators have increasingly used a variety of assessments, as well as MCAS, to gauge student growth in academics. These assessments align with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, particularly at the elementary level. Evidence shows that the diagnostic and benchmark assessments need to be reviewed for effectiveness to guide instructional practices and documented at the other levels.

According to the district's assessment inventory and interviewed educators, district and school staff use the following assessments to measure and monitor student progress and performance at the elementary level: BAS reading levels; DIBELS literacy tests; Foundations unit tests; DIAL-4 Kindergarten screeners; Bridges Mathematics assessments, progress monitors, and checkpoints; and Math Recovery/AVMR/MRIS assessments. Evidence from the BHS improvement plan indicated that diagnostic and benchmark assessments were being implemented:

Goal Two: During the 2021-2022 school year, the Bellingham High School teachers will use diagnostic/benchmark assessments to identify student learning needs, plan for instructional needs, and monitor student progress towards standards mastery to ensure that all students make academic gains.

Supporting a need for a variety of assessments at the high school level, one teacher noted in a focus group that

It's like anytime you give them something that's not multiple choice, true/false, short answer, they're kind of very resistant to that. And we just kind of keep trying to build their ability to answer multistep questions, their ability to respond in writing.

Copies of assessment report presentations included in the district's documentation indicate that the questions in various formal assessments, such as i-Ready and MCAS, aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. Assessment schedules submitted by the district suggest that the assessments are administered consistently, although there was evidence that the elementary schools were more developed in this cyclic practice. A respondent shared,

We use that "using data" process, that data-driven dialogue [. . .] in all honesty, the elementary [school] is the most grounded in that practice. And really exemplify it and use it, very integrated, and the teachers are very much a part of that process. And all of those cycles are deeply rooted in everything that the elementary school does. At the secondary level, that's an area of opportunity for us.

Data Use

BPS has made a concerted effort to gather and analyze a wide variety of metrics to triangulate the data before decisions regarding instruction are made. Data review processes have been integrated across the school system so that progress from the individual student level to the district level can be measured and verified. However, evidence shows that there is a need to disaggregate data by student groups and a need to add non-assessment data to the data analysis process.

A noted strength of the district is its particular attention to data collection and analysis. District- and school-level documents, as well as interviews, confirm that BPS collects and triangulates data on multiple levels. Responses from elementary teachers and district-level documents such as BMS Data Driving Discussions, Bellingham Data Day, and BHS Benchmark Analysis Planning and Intervention indicate that a concerted effort is being made to infuse data-driven discussions and decision-making into the culture of their schools. The district administers i-Ready assessments, in both ELA and mathematics, at least three times per year. Elementary teacher focus groups reveal that students who need additional help also may be given observational assessments, check-ins, or more formal assessments before the start of the unit so that they may receive targeted help without being in an intervention category the entire school year.

District-level documents and professional development training materials, such as the BMS Data Driving Discussions slide presentation, reveal that multiple diagnostic and formative assessments are used to gather information on student strengths and weaknesses. The BMS Grades 6 and 7 Mathematics Assessment Calendar 2021-2022 and the BMS Grades 4 and 5 Elementary Mathematics Assessment Calendar 2021-2022 outline assessments differentiated by grade level. Although i-Ready, MCAS, and Bridges Mathematics were mentioned most often, the assessment inventory spreadsheet indicates that the district uses a variety of assessments to review student progress in mathematics, ELA, science, and English language development. In particular, BPS's procedures for assessing EL students' proficiency in English through the ACCESS test and students' subsequent growth as multilingual students is in place but continues to be refined as the need grows within the district. District-level interviews indicate that for students who need additional assistance, literacy and mathematics specialists have been taking an iterative approach to intervention. Specialists have data chats with their students between the beginning, middle, and end-of-year benchmark assessments to talk about student performance, strengths, and weaknesses and have students set goals for themselves. Stakeholders found that this strategy created more buy-in for both teachers and students because students found that assessments were something done with students, not to them. The majority of the aforementioned interventions were used to support students on the elementary and middle school levels. Of the 19 interventions listed, 15 interventions provided elementary school student support, 11 interventions provided middle school student support, and six interventions provided high school student support.

BPS is making clear efforts to engage in data-driven dialogues and decision making. Interviews with elementary school teachers and specialists confirm that data team meetings occur weekly. Specialists and staff discuss students who may be falling behind and what interventions or resources may be needed for additional support. The district's Data-Driven Dialogue Protocol offers four concrete steps to engage in these conversations in ways that limit stakeholder defensiveness. Teams are instructed to (a) predict what the data might say before analysis begins, (b) create easily digestible representations of the data to help sensemaking and ease defensiveness, (c) observe trends in the data with careful attention to a process of separating facts from interpretation, and (d) make inferences and create questions based on what the data are saying. At the end of the process, the team engages in decision-making based on the data about future instruction and interventions. Both district-level respondents and teachers noted that streamlining data to drive instruction was much more refined at the elementary and middle school levels. In addition, although

elementary teachers noted that they were given time to analyze their classroom data, they said that they felt it was still not enough time to be thorough in their analysis.

The district works to be transparent regarding its achievement data at both the student level and the school level. Parents looking to keep track of individual student performance can do so in several ways. Through the district's online community portal, students and families can access student attendance, behavior, academic, and assignment data in real time. Teachers are instructed to update their gradebooks electronically every two weeks to show the most relevant data. Information from the Sample Elementary Standards-Based Report Card indicates that K-5 students receive standards-based report cards that provide parents with feedback on academic performance, social responsibilities, and work habits. In addition, as mentioned previously, teacher interviews along with district documents confirm that students are assessed at least three times per school year. Parents with students in Grades 1-7 also have access to i-Ready family reports. These documents inform parents about where their students are in terms of grade-level standards, identify academic strengths and weaknesses, provide in-depth summaries of mathematics and ELA domains that may need additional attention, and contain a list of recommendations to accelerate student progress. In terms of school-level performance, the 2020-2021 student report card provided parents with up-to-date information regarding school achievement and curriculum development.

Although a system is in place to review and act on data, BPS data review documents and presentations do not include disaggregated student-level data. The BPS cultural proficiency/equity plan identifies being a culturally competent district as a priority for their action plan, but it does not identify the student groups experiencing achievement gaps or define what cultural proficiency means in practice. For example, the presentation slides that covered "cultural proficiency" contained only sample slides of trainings on how to address implicit bias and systemic inequalities, but do not provide evidence about what is being covered in equity-centered professional development trainings. Additionally, the DiPietro Welcome Back slide presentation provided additional components of diversity, equity, and inclusion that would be discussed with teachers, but it did not detail the content of the trainings.

Another area of growth for the district includes moving beyond assessment data and widening the pool of local data collected. The Bellingham Data Day slide presentation highlights combining research with district data sources; however, there was no evidence that surveys and interview data were used to evaluate student progress. Classroom observations were mentioned only minimally in this document.

Sharing Results

BPS regularly shares individual, school, and district data with stakeholders, but an analysis of documentation, focus group findings, and interviews with key stakeholders suggest room for improvement in how data are shared, particularly with families. Reports, graphs, and goals within school improvement plans and data presentations suggest that data are collected and communicated with district leaders. High school teachers also have received professional development on how to interpret and analyze assessment data.

BPS families generally felt that although communication has become more consistent, room for improvement still exists. Student report cards demonstrate that although there is regular communication with families about school performance overall, an area of growth is in communicating how to support their students in school through report cards and other assessments. Some families expressed frustration with not being able to interpret standards-based reports cards. One respondent noted, “Then I got the letter in the mail, but all it is [is] just meeting expectations. But, like, that doesn’t tell me what should I be doing,”

Although evidence shows reports are regularly sent home across the district, evidence suggests inconsistencies in the communication of assessment results between elementary and high school levels. Some elementary teachers expressed that i-Ready assessments created “buy-in” for students, and students were “motivated” and “invested.” Other evidence from BHS suggests that there is little investment in assessments from high school students, with one teacher remarking that there is “no accountability” for students, and students think that benchmark assessments “don’t count.”

Recommendations

- The district should establish a process by which data from diagnostic and benchmark assessments is disaggregated and used to inform instructional practices.
- District and school leaders should ensure opportunities for teachers and instructional staff to analyze assessment data.
- District and school leaders should establish clear expectations for how to communicate with families about student performance, which includes ways to support students to ensure their success.

Human Resources and Professional Development

BPS works closely with the town of Bellingham to manage human resource matters, from payroll and benefits to the confirmation of credentials. Although the district identifies openings and staffing needs, the town handles the daily matters of salaries, benefits, and contracts. Recruitment has been shaped by Bellingham’s location—a region within reach of Boston, Massachusetts, and Providence, Rhode Island, but not close enough to truly be a suburb of either. The lack of public transportation options, smaller size, and the low staff turnover rate within the district, has resulted in fewer open positions and less diversity within the teaching staff compared with other similar-sized towns.

- **Educator Pipeline.** The district plans for and addresses staffing needs through regular conversations between administrators, school leaders, and teaching staff. When openings or needs arise, postings are made through the district and town on SchoolSpring.
- **Evaluation and Recognition.** The district has a mentoring program in place to support new teachers. There also are opportunities to recognize outstanding teachers through leadership roles at the school level and on district-level committees.

Table 8 summarizes key strengths and areas for growth in human resources and professional development.

Table 8. Summary of Key Strengths and Areas for Growth: Human Resources and Professional Development Standard

Indicator	Strengths	Areas for growth
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ BPS has a well-organized human resource infrastructure system that it operates in conjunction with the town of Bellingham. 	
Recruitment, hiring, and assignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The district hiring systems and teaching assignment processes continue to work well for BPS. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Instructional staff recruitment, including for more linguistically and culturally diverse teachers.
Supervision, evaluation, and educator development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ BPS has designed effective professional development programming for its teachers, as well as an induction and monitoring system for newly hired staff members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Professional development supports that relate to cultural competence. ■ Number of evaluators conducting observations and providing feedback.
Recognition, leadership development, and advancement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ BPS has benefited from little turnover in the past few years in the superintendency as well as the addition of several experienced district and building leaders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Processes for the recognition and advancement of teachers.

Infrastructure

BPS human resources staff tracks staff hires, uses payroll and human resources systems to ensure accuracy in salaries, supports staff transfers within the district, and ensures accurate licensure for

teachers. The town manager's role in maintaining accurate employment records focuses on setting up benefits. The human resources department produces staffing reports for the superintendent every other week and shares a spreadsheet with the finance department to track salaries and retirements. A *New Hire Procedures* document outlines processes to inform individual departments about a new hire to ensure that their records are properly updated for technology needs, payroll, security, and the school committee.

Recruitment, Hiring, and Assignment

BPS's recruitment, hiring, and assignment systems are sufficient for the district's needs. The district has systems in place to identify staffing needs, and the human resources department has systems to post, fill, and assign positions. District staff described staff turnover as low. Evidence shows that the district needs to put strategies in place to increase diversity among teaching staff and should evaluate the results of their hiring processes annually.

Human resources staff discussed recruitment in broad terms. The department initiates the hiring process by posting open positions exclusively on the SchoolSpring website. Human resources and town staff stated there is little turnover in teaching staff, so the district has few vacancies to post. This lack of turnover has resulted in the lack of diversity among staff. However, human resources staff and teachers' association representatives commented that the applicant pool for the district would not bring an increased diversity to the staff. Human resources staff noted that BPS is a small district, competing with other small districts in the area for staff. The town management staff described the salary and benefits as competitive in the area. Human resources staff's comments about recruitment suggest the district has not successfully met its recruitment goals; they described challenges with filling certain positions, particularly related to special education services.

Human resources staff have a *New Hire Procedures* document to guide the hiring process, and the process starts with meeting with committees from each school to understand the needs for a position. Then there is a districtwide process for ranking open positions in terms of priorities. These supports allow human resources staff to identify candidates from internal or external sources. The selection process is guided by job descriptions that are standardized in the district and further augmented by the *Bellingham Public Schools Staff Handbook*.

BPS's internal hiring processes are well established. A human resources staff member stated, "If we need to transfer a kindergarten teacher to a first-grade teacher that year, we can't [simply transfer a teacher]; . . . we would have to post that and they would have to apply, and it would be awarded by seniority." Human resources also look at existing staff when particular skills are needed for an open position, especially for special education roles. The human resources department has systems in place to verify appropriate licensure, endorsements, background checks, and waivers. A point person ensures that correct documentation is collected and reviewed through the hiring process. Human resources staff confirmed that the district is focused on hiring only licensed teachers for instructional positions to ensure that no more than 20 percent of teachers' time is spent teaching outside their field. The team also monitors teachers' licenses to ensure timely renewals.

BPS's hiring systems reflect some areas for growth. Inconsistencies in hiring selection may be driven by small candidate pools. As teachers' association representatives commented, less than ideal

candidates have been hired because of limited choice resulting from a position posting. No comments were collected about how the district evaluates its hiring practices to track data particularly on student learning outcomes, but comments made by human resources and teachers' association representatives indicate that teacher retention is strong in the district with few departures. Also, the town management staff said the competitive salary and benefits are likely to attract and retain staff.

BPS aligns staff assignments with student learning needs, as indicated by comments made by human resources staff about matching skills to postings for internal hires and ensuring that individual students with special needs have staff with appropriate skills available. District leaders spoke of trying to assign current staff to open positions prior to hiring new staff. District staff also specified that they track licensure to ensure teachers who teach outside their licensed area do so for less than 20 percent of their time. Documents related to curriculum selection and use illustrate districtwide strategies for assigning students to teachers in a way that seeks to balance classrooms in terms of academic and behavioral indicators, while ensuring that each student shares their classroom with another student with whom they have a positive relationship. Less productive pairings are flagged for separation. BHS has documented processes for supporting teachers, parents, and students in course selection; teachers recommend core courses for individual students and advertise their elective courses. The district holds an annual "scheduling night" event to inform parents about pathways and course selections for parents and students, and students access their teachers' recommendations in the grade book system.

Supervision, Evaluation, and Educator Development

BPS supports its educators through staff development. All instructional and administrative staff participate in the evaluation process, which allows for staff to receive feedback on their work performance. Instructional staff also receive support through mentoring, content specialist feedback sessions, and professional development programs. A review of the evaluation files provided evidence that more consistency and accountability is needed to ensure that all staff receive feedback in a timely and effective manner. Educators interviewed identified a need for professional development supports that relate to cultural competence and a larger pool of evaluators to conduct observations and provide feedback.

As part of the district review process, the reporting team analyzed existing data on teacher evaluations in BPS. The *Bellingham Public Schools Supervision/Evaluation Cycle Overview* document describes the district's timely process for evaluating teachers across multiple statuses (from developing through self-directed educators). No documents describing the specificity or actionable nature of the evaluation process, such as a rubric, were provided or located on the district's website. In focus groups, teachers identified improvements needed in the feedback they receive from the district. Experienced and newer teachers would like the district to prioritize providing constructive feedback. According to teachers and the *Evaluation Cycle Overview*, evaluators conduct at least one announced observation (for half of the teaching period) and four unannounced observations (for 10 minutes each) during each evaluation cycle, which is annual for most teachers, biannual for teachers with the status of self-directed, and every 30 days for teachers with the improvement plan status. Observations are conducted by the same small group of administrators, with many teachers observed by the same individual every year. This situation caused teachers to question whether the

feedback they receive is free from bias; they believe that “different points of view” would make the evaluations more effective sources of constructive feedback. Teachers in focus groups explained that they would like several administrators to visit their classrooms so that they can receive feedback from several perspectives. In addition, some teachers suggested in focus groups that having a larger group of trained observers to provide feedback may help alleviate these concerns.

Teachers receive ratings and feedback on their performance based on DESE-established standards in the educator evaluation system in TeachPoint. A simple random sample was used to select 10 percent of 119 Professional Teacher Status teachers (12 teachers) with complete summative evaluations for the 2020-2021 school year. The sample of teacher evaluations reviewed were all (100 percent) marked as complete, but the review revealed a small percentage of evaluations that did not include ratings or feedback. Only 11 percent of the summative evaluations reviewed (one evaluation) were incomplete, meaning the rubric was incomplete, and the educator did not receive a rating for each standard or overall standard ratings. Evaluations also did not always include observation notes, a rationale for rating, or feedback identifying strengths or areas of improvement. In a review of the written comments provided by standard, educators evaluated received specific, actionable feedback approximately 17 percent to 83 percent of the time, depending on the standard, with staff receiving the least amount of specific, actionable feedback related to Standard 4: Professional Culture. Teachers were more likely to receive a rationale for the standard rating versus feedback identifying strengths and areas of improvement. In terms of actionable feedback, only 17 percent of the educator evaluations reviewed provided areas of improvement for educators, and 17 percent of the evaluations identified strengths or practices that teachers should continue in the overall feedback section. The review of evaluation documents indicated that all educators are not developing student learning and professional practice SMART goals. Educators received ratings on progress toward their goals in the summative evaluations; however, 100 percent of the evaluations reviewed did not have student learning SMART goals or professional practice SMART goals written in any portion of the summative evaluation document.

Leadership involvement in the evaluation process varies by school. Although teachers from some schools noted the existence of ILTs, interventionists, and coaches to evaluate instruction, other teachers conveyed that leadership presence was irregular in classrooms. Some teachers talked about strong leadership presence in classroom observations and at grade-level team meetings. Still, one teacher noted that “I would love to see more administration presence upstairs in classrooms. It’s at the point where it’s weird when we see them upstairs.” Another teacher commented that their school leader did not monitor instruction or expect modifications, saying, “There’s sort of this broad blanket statement. How we get there, I don’t think [school leadership is] very versed on.”

A review of the summative evaluations for 15 administrative-level staff for 2020-2021 included the superintendent, assistant superintendent, principals, assistant principals, district secretary, special education administrator, and directors. The evaluations for administrators provide opportunities for administrators to receive ratings for each standard and provides a space to receive comments and analysis of each standard. Each standard is assessed using Unsatisfactory, Needs Improvement, Proficient, or Exemplary. DESE recommends but does not require “comments and analysis” for any standard’s rating but requires “comments and analysis” for an overall summative rating of Exemplary, Needs Improvement, or Unsatisfactory. A majority of the evaluations (83 percent) did not

include submission of multiple sources of evidence to support performance on summative evaluation standards. All of the summative administrator evaluations reviewed received an overall summative rating of Proficient from an evaluator. Although DESE requires evaluator comments of those with overall rankings of Exemplary, Needs Improvement, or Unsatisfactory, 83 percent of the evaluations included evaluator comments categorized as specific, actionable feedback identifying an administrator's strengths and areas of improvement.

The district's plan for professional development is consistent with DESE guidelines, emphasizing the incorporation of project-based learning and cultural competency information. Teachers and superintendent interviews, the *Bellingham Public School District Professional Development Plan*, flyers for training events, and data from postevent evaluations indicate that the variety of professional development for teachers is a district strength. Offerings include teacher-led professional development and individually pursued learning. A teacher commented that they have never been denied an out-of-district professional development request, and the superintendent described openness to approving any type of professional development that will meet teachers' needs. Teachers also noted that the district reflects on professional development and consistently collects postevent feedback, as illustrated by feedback results provided by the district.

The district provided professional development designed to build staff capacity to examine and dismantle implicit biases described in their cultural proficiency/equity plan. Opinions of BPS's support and professional development were mixed. For the schools that embed common planning time for teachers in their schedules, teachers noted that this was a beneficial practice because it gave teachers, interventionists, and principals time to examine data and brainstorm next steps for students. Other teachers, however, said they did not have common planning time. Although teachers indicated that professional development sessions cover topics such as differentiation, gender equity, and cultural appropriation, one teacher noted that there was an assumption that such practices were being implemented. As mentioned in the Curriculum and Instruction section, the need for cultural proficiency in BPS continues to be a significant topic given the increasing linguistic and cultural diversity of the student body. Aligned with DESE Standards for Professional Development and district goals, district staff and teachers are building professional development on culturally responsive teaching, including bringing in outside consultants to coach principals on cultural proficiency practices, as illustrated by training event flyers focused on equitable instruction across race and gender identities. Their culturally responsive professional development trainings discuss equity work, understanding student identities, and maintaining gender inclusive classrooms. A recent influx of ELs has increased teachers' engagement with culturally responsive teaching practices, and teachers and district leaders reported that there is "still a lot of work to do" on professional development to address implicit biases.

When asked about the alignment between professional development and available instructional materials, teachers emphasized that supports from specialists are very important, as well as having time to discuss curriculum and instruction with colleagues. Thus, teachers identified that they would like more time to discuss curriculum in teams, as a support for processing new materials, which can become "exhausting."

Teacher and superintendent interviews and the *Bellingham Public Schools Staff Induction/Mentoring Guidelines* indicate that new teacher mentoring is a district strength. Initially, teachers are placed in an induction program that consists of 15 hours of instructional activities, monthly induction meetings, assigned mentors, professional workshops, classroom observation, and mentor/mentee meetings. Teachers requiring time to earn a professional license are further supported in a mentoring program in their second and third years, organized jointly between BPS and an adjacent district. Teachers reported serving as mentors for incoming teachers, and specialists are another available source of guidance to assist new teachers in their classrooms upon request. The *Guidelines* describe mentors as “experienced staff members.” The *Guidelines* also indicate that the mentoring and induction program will be reviewed annually using participant evaluations, educator evaluation data, and teacher retention data.

Recognition, Leadership Development, and Advancement

BPS provides leadership opportunities for staff, but these opportunities are not spread widely among the staff. In interviews and focus groups, teachers, district leaders, and the superintendent said the primary leadership opportunities for teachers are through committees and curriculum reviews, and the district encourages teacher participation in social-emotional learning programs and the ILT. However, teachers and district leaders noted that a small group of people are holding most leadership positions because the same people volunteer to participate. Teachers pointed to a need for bringing in different opinions and points of view: “Potentially, the same 12 people could be doing everything, department chair, ILT . . . It could create an echo chamber.” Several town officials, district officials, and teacher participants noted in interviews and focus groups that the district has little turnover in personnel from year to year, though occasionally, staff members may move to new roles within the district. The superintendent himself has held several roles within BPS schools, including guidance counselor and building leader before serving as the superintendent.

Recommendations

- District and school leadership should consider additional recruitment strategies to increase the linguistic and cultural diversity of their applicant pool.
- The district should increase the number of individuals who conduct observations to ensure that teacher evaluations contain constructive feedback from multiple perspectives.
- District and school leadership should establish a process for supporting teachers as they implement new skills addressed through professional development sessions, especially those related to cultural competency.
- The district should further develop processes of recognition and advancement for teachers to ensure that leadership positions are filled by individuals who represent a broader range of opinions and expertise.

Student Support

BPS is making a concerted effort to ensure that all school buildings, and the district overall, provide safe and supportive learning environments for all students. Tiered supports are offered for both academic and nonacademic needs. Students have been included in the process of creating positive learning environments, particularly at BHS. BPS parents have the opportunity to be involved in their students' learning and can communicate with teachers through email, online portals, and a digital application on mobile phones that provides translation services.

- **School Climate.** The learning environment in BPS is positive and productive because of programs such as PBIS practices and the PATHS curriculum.
- **Tiered Supports.** The district offers academic and nonacademic tiered supports. These offerings were impacted by the pandemic and are more established at the elementary schools than at BMS or BHS. Tier 2 supports in both academic and nonacademic areas is a growth area for the district. Educators expressed needing additional time to review student needs and collaborate with colleagues.
- **Family Engagement.** The district engages family and community members through its communications to families and school-level organizations for parents to join. More efforts to act on the feedback from students and families is an area of growth for BPS.

Table 9 summarizes key strengths and areas for growth in student support.

Table 9. Summary of Key Strengths and Areas for Growth: Student Support Standard

Indicator	Strengths	Areas for growth
Safe and supportive school climate and culture	Students, teachers, and administrators indicated in focus groups that the district provides a safe and supportive environment.	
Tiered systems of support	Leaders and teachers suggest that the district provides tiered, evidence-based, and culturally responsive supports for students.	Processes for supporting students at all grade levels.
Family, student, and community engagement and partnerships	The district effectively engages the town of Bellingham in district activities.	Opportunities for student voice.

Safe and Supportive School Climate and Culture

Providing a safe and supportive school climate and cultivating a learning environment that welcomes all students is of the utmost importance to BPS district leaders, building leaders, and teachers, as well as stakeholders such as school committee members and parent volunteers. From the various focus groups and interviews, all participants seek to ensure that BPS students are learning and growing in positive ways. Evidence from the document review, as well as the focus groups, interviews and classroom observations, suggests that efforts are underway to support such learning

environments. From offering tiered systems of support to engaging family and community members, BPS is achieving its goal of creating a positive learning environment. There are opportunities for growth, such as expanding access to educational opportunities to more students, creating a systemic planning process that includes stakeholders who are more representative of the entire school community, and increasing ways to engage more families and caregivers.

A key group of stakeholders in the school community working to ensure a safe and supportive school district is the BPS school committee. This group of elected citizens upholds its responsibilities under Massachusetts laws and regulations, including the Massachusetts Education Reform Act. The committee focuses on improving outcomes for all students and acts as an advocate for the schools in the community. Meetings are held regularly, and members are familiar with the goals of the improvement plan, as well as the challenges BPS faces regarding increasing diversity and the need for rigorous instruction.

Among the initiatives presented to school committee members for their consideration are those to encourage students' social and emotional growth. Programs are in place at BPS to address social-emotional learning needs and foster a safe and supportive environment for students and staff. These programs include PBIS, the PATHS curriculum, and Therapeutic Learning Classrooms and are used to varying degrees in all grade levels. Some schools are in the beginning stages of these programs, but district leaders highlight how social-emotional learning and PBIS work has improved and was embraced by staff. PBIS is being coupled with social-emotional learning; there are behavior promises within the classroom and a "cool down center" that students can go into rather than being put out of the classroom. Some staff feel as if PBIS is more effective on the elementary school level rather than the high school level. The PATHS curriculum is used in the elementary schools and focuses on socialization, bullying, and sharing. In addition, instructional observation scores in the high range for the Behavior Management dimension of the CLASS protocol suggest that rules and guidelines for behavior are clear and consistently reinforced by teachers. Elementary and middle school students and parents also shared that they understand that there are expectations and consequences regarding behavior for the students, but they feel as if some are enforced and some are not, with behaviors happening outside of specific classrooms (e.g., in bathrooms or hallways) mentioned as less likely to be consistently monitored and enforced. Parents of high school students who participated in the focus group did not discuss behavioral expectations to the same degree as the parents of younger students did.

Teachers reported feeling that staffing concerns play a role in not having enough support for all staff, although behavior plans are in place. As an example of student-driven change, BMS and BHS teachers mentioned the newly formed, locally created version of the Anti-Defamation League. This student-driven club gives students the opportunity to lead, speak with, and encourage other students to become involved in activities to promote inclusion and tolerance. Participants in this club learn to create an environment where everyone can feel safe. Students also stated that school values are posted in the school and enforced by teachers.

Although most middle school students reported feeling safe, they mentioned being concerned with incidents—for example, flooding the bathrooms and taking down soap dispensers—occurring based on TikTok (social media platform) trends. During the parent focus group, participants mentioned how

certain parents' concerns are handled quicker than others when they come from parents who often are volunteering at the school and are in contact with teachers. A parent stated, "I'm blessed to be able to [communicate directly with the school because of my volunteering role], and I won't take that for granted, but I know that another mom from the bus stop has been having an issue and has contacted the school on more than one occasion and has been brushed off." One parent asked, "Why are some kids less important because I don't have time to be at the school and another parent does?" Families indicated how expectations may be clear for all students, but consequences are not.

For students in Grades 4 and 5 at BMS, the 2020-2021 Views of Climate and Learning (VOCAL) student survey data indicate a relatively strong school climate, with overall school climate scores greater than 51 out of 99 for all student subgroups, which is considered "favorable."⁸ For students in Grades 8 and 10 at BHS, however, VOCAL data indicate some room to improve school climate, especially among students in Grade 10, whose data indicate a relatively weak school climate, with overall school climate scores less than 41 out of 99 for nearly all student subgroups.

With the recent increase in diversity within the BPS community, school and district leaders have developed ways to ensure that faculty, staff, and students have equal opportunities. Pillar three of the district equity plan states that the mission is to create a culturally proficient district and demonstrate an understanding of and appreciation for different families' homes, culture, and values.

To that end, elementary school teachers acknowledged in focus groups that materials are translated into Spanish but not Brazilian Portuguese, which is a challenge. One teacher stated, "We've tried to reach out to a lot of companies to say, do you have Brazilian Portuguese and they don't." Elementary leaders have used equity to drive their staff meetings. They focus on ensuring equal access at all academic levels. Based on the Stall Brook (2021-2022) equity plan, staff engage in interactive and informative equity sessions during the first staff meeting of each month and during additional professional development times. One leader stated, "There is a misconception that [special education] students are unable to do the work. They should have access to grade-level curriculum, materials, expectations, and rigor." For middle school teachers, the professional development and additional resources they received to support ELs and learn about cultural appropriation was huge considering the concern with staff shortages with an increase in the EL population. A high school teacher stated,

We can also adjust the instruction based on what society needs, too. Like the need to have more culturally diverse voices in the English curriculum. We don't have to wait for the formal review; we can have some conversations with our department head and say, "Hey, this voice might be someone to add to the curriculum," and that's always been fully supported.

The district hired an outside consultant to work with principals on how to present equity to teachers and faculty. Equity teams have been formed at the middle and high school levels. These teams have held a focus group for parents and one for students to work on equity. District and school leadership and teachers have a focus on social-emotional learning for students, teachers, and staff. Students receive help with emotional concerns, mental health, and gender identity.

⁸ See the *Views of Climate and Learning (VOCAL) Survey: User Guide for Schools* at <https://www.doe.mass.edu/research/vocal/2021/user-guide.docx>.

Tiered Systems of Support

BPS uses tiered systems of support for both academic and nonacademic needs. These systems are not as well established for the EL population within the schools, which both teachers and administrators acknowledged. Although a tiered system of supports is in place at each elementary school, such structures are not as clearly defined at BMS or BHS.

BPS implements PBIS and response to intervention models across its schools to support students in academics and social-emotional skills. Multiple teacher respondents referred to the use of i-Ready data for determining students' academic abilities and monitoring their progress, and this use of i-Ready data was substantiated in school improvement plans. Teachers described how they used digital data walls in grade-level team meetings to analyze individual students as well as address low scoring standards. Many teachers discussed the use of additional assessments, such as in-unit benchmark quizzes in curricula and MCAS benchmarks. Some teachers discussed using a screener for addressing students with social-emotional needs, although the process behind this screener was not described.

Teachers explained how the BPS tiered model of instruction operates. First, all students receive Tier 1 instruction. If students seem to be struggling with the content, they are screened to see if they would benefit from more intensive supports at the Tier 2 level (such as pull-out mathematics support) or Tier 3 (the highest level, providing special education supports). These levels are offered for social and emotional, as well as academic, needs. Still, teachers and specialist teachers remarked that many of the systems were not functioning as effectively as they were before the pandemic. Many teachers and members of the student support services team at the elementary level indicated that there are schoolwide accommodation processes for identifying students who need more support. These same teachers explained their regular meeting time to discuss student progress and how to create individualized interventions, and they also expressed finding this time useful. Teachers at the high school level indicated that although there were supports for students, there was no evidence of a process for intervention.

Teachers and members of the student support team noted the increased need to support students' social-emotional health because of the pandemic and have been intentional about using trauma-informed practices involving curriculum and counselors to support students. There are specialists and interventionists in different subject areas to support Tier 1 instruction, and many students in Tier 3 receive additional supports, such as push-in instruction and individualized behavioral plans.

As some teachers mentioned in their focus groups, BPS has been working to meet the needs of its students who are linguistically diverse. BPS teachers and faculty shared that resources to support ELs recently became a "high priority," but such resources were "spread thin." Building teachers' cultural competency and creating an inclusive school environment was named a goal in several school improvement plans. Teachers described a desire to be more culturally responsive, with one noting that their school has been "supportive" of students experiencing family trauma or questions of gender identity. Another teacher described a more informal process, wherein "the school has for whatever reason [. . .] [looks] at me for the cultural proficiency stuff. So a lot of that comes through grabbing me in the hallway."

Family, Student, and Community Engagement and Partnerships

BPS has pieces of a communication plan to actively and effectively engage students and families in the learning process. The district uses newsletters, mobile phone applications, in-person and virtual meetings, and other avenues to meet with parents and families. They surveyed students to get a sense of what their learning experiences are like while in the schools. They also entered a partnership with the local YMCA as well as parent committees at the school level. There is a need for a cohesive communications plan that includes more student voice and clear and consistent ways for parents to get involved in the school setting.

Students interviewed in both the BHS and BMS focus groups mentioned receiving and completing a survey regarding what they expect from teachers; however, besides this survey, they do not get asked for their perspectives. Students expressed appreciation at being asked for their thoughts. As one student explained, “It was kind of nice that she asked that, because I like how she wants to hear our opinions.” Several students in the same focus group agreed with this sentiment. Some students expressed how communication could be better with their teachers. In the high school focus group, a few students explained that they do not think teachers truly consider what students are sharing through conversation or emails. One student reflected that she wishes teachers “would listen more to what the majority population of the students want. Because sometimes I think they focus on others who don’t want what the majority wants, if you know what I mean.” Another student agreed, stating that she thought teachers “focus more on what they want instead of what we want or what’s good for us. It’s definitely what they want.” Other students in the focus group expressed agreement. District and school leaders mentioned that they engage students to become leaders through enrollment in clubs and activities but did not address student voice directly.

Parents and teachers meet formally once per school year. According to participants in the teacher focus groups, if the parent reaches out, the teacher will respond in a timely fashion. Parents have opportunities to participate in activities such as the parent teacher organization, “bus stop mom,” and classroom volunteer. Family members indicated that some schools are currently establishing school council meetings. District and school leaders mentioned that the pandemic enhanced their ability to communicate with families, but they distributed the Smore newsletter, an internet-based newsletter template that allows recipients to receive the shared information in multiple languages through its built-in translation feature. Teachers in focus groups also described how they have shared information with parents and caregivers through emails, telephone calls, and mobile phone applications that send text messages. Parents also can use SchoolBrains to set up meetings, and after these meetings, parents can complete a survey centered on compliance and satisfaction. Leaders have worked to change their communication processes to be inclusive of all students by having interpreters available and using Google translate because of the language diversity within the district.

The district has a partnership with community organizations, including with a YMCA, which organizes youth play groups and supports students who are homeless, and with a local hospital for student internships. The district described the Consolidated Parent Advisory Committee as once “floundering” but now being “up and running” and that they have done “lots of collaborative programs.” There also is an active Special Education Parent Advisory Committee within the district.

Recommendations

- The district should document and clearly communicate the process for identifying and providing supports for students at all grade levels, including the high school.
- District and school leadership should create additional formal opportunities for student voice to be meaningfully considered in decision-making processes.

Financial and Asset Management

BPS’ financial and asset management is led by the director of finance and three specialists, with oversight by the superintendent. School district leaders communicate and work closely with the school committee and the town of Bellingham’s leadership throughout the school year to discuss ongoing and anticipated needs and identify priorities for allocating available funds.

- **Budgetary Needs.** BPS effectively uses funding to support the district’s needs, and the district’s leadership ensures the alignment of budget allocations with the district’s strategic plan and improvement plan.
- **Collaboration and Partnership with the Town of Bellingham.** The district works closely with the town and maintains open communications with town government offices. Town officials, district officials, and school committee members described the working relationship as collaborative and supportive.
- **Building for the Future.** The district is actively working on improving and expanding the district’s maintenance program for capital assets, including posting for the facilities director position.

Table 10 summarizes key strengths and areas for growth in financial and asset management.

Table 10. Summary of Key Strengths and Areas for Growth: Financial and Asset Management Standard

Indicator	Strengths	Areas for growth
Budget documentation and reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ BPS effectively uses budget documentation tools and reporting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Documentation of budgetary policies and practices.
Adequate budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ As a town department, BPS has consistently received more than the required local contribution. 	
Financial tracking, forecasting, controls, and audits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The district has clear documentation and reporting systems in place. 	
Capital planning and facility maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Regular conversations between the district and the town related to each school’s cleanliness, safety, and access to technology, among others. ■ Needs that are not covered by the capital plan are addressed through funds from the operating budget and revolving accounts (e.g., from facility rentals). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Development of BPS preventive maintenance plan.

Budget Documentation and Reporting

Approved budget documentation and end-of-year financial reports, as well as stakeholder interview data, indicate that BPS effectively uses funding to support its needs, and district leadership ensures the alignment of budget allocations with the district's strategic plan and improvement plan. Although the documentation does not indicate how student performance data (e.g., performance, access, and opportunity outcomes and gaps) have been used to set budget priorities, the district's fiscal year 2022 budget presentation outlines budget allocations (e.g., professional development, instructional materials, staffing) to support all five pillars in the district's strategic plan.

District leaders indicated that funding sources are a mixture of grants and revolving funds, including several federal grants (e.g., 240 IDEA [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act] Federal SPED [Special Education] Entitlement and 262 Early Childhood Education grants), state grants (e.g., Digital Literacy and Computer Science Student Learning Devices grant), and other competitive grants (e.g., American Student Assistance grant for an interdistrict collaboration for workforce training, Project Lead the Way grants for both BMS and BHS). A district leader also noted that the district has a "really close relationship with the Bellingham Educational Foundation (BEF), and each year the district receives up to \$30,000 from them based on applications for individual classroom use." In addition, district leaders reported that the district has circuit breaker (i.e., state special education reimbursement program) funding to offset special education costs. All funding sources mentioned during stakeholder interviews are reflected in the financial documentation submitted by the district.

Approved budget documents and end-of-year reports include information about the allocation of resources and funding sources, including revolving funds, as well as federal and state grants. Approved budget documents for the last three years include brief descriptions of each request, along with the quantity, cost, and requested amount, as well as a breakdown of the amount approved by the superintendent, school committee, finance committee, and town. The documents also include historical spending data from the prior two years to enable comparisons and an understanding of current resource allocations. Town leaders stated, "Every single month, every budget report is always looking at historical trends" to ensure "there's no anomalies." A town leader noted, "History provides a good baseline for us to compare ourselves against, so every report, whether it's salary information, operating expenses, even utility expenses, we're always looking at historical trends to see how we're performing."

District and school leaders indicated that principals must "tie" all requests in their budget presentations to components of the district's strategic and/or improvement plans. Although the 2020 and 2021 budget presentations did not explicitly connect funding to the district's improvement planning, the 2022 budget presentation lists materials (e.g., textbooks), resources (e.g., stipends, technology services/licenses), activities (e.g., professional development, training, memberships/partnerships, internships) and staffing under specific pillars in the district's strategic plan, which also drives the district's and schools' improvement plans.

Town leaders indicated that there is a written agreement with the district for facilities management and grounds maintenance. They also noted that although employee benefits are handled centrally by the town of Bellingham, there is no written agreement with the district for this purpose. They also stated that the town does not have a cost-sharing formula with the district, but the school district's

expenses are listed as “a line item within the municipal budget.” School district leaders did not confirm the existence of a written municipal agreement, and the district did not include one in the submitted documentation.

Costs paid and managed by the municipality are clearly detailed in the approved annual budget documentation for the last three years and in the district’s fiscal year 2022 report to the school committee. As part of the end-of-year reporting process, the town provides reports with a breakdown of district costs covered by the town. The town funds transportation, snow removal operations, large infrastructure projects (e.g., roof repairs, entrapment projects, boiler replacements), and employee benefits.

Adequate Budget

BPS’s annual operating budget for 2022 is \$30,960,872 (excluding revolving funds, state and federal grants, and capital funds). Of that amount, \$27,878,917 cover salaries, stipends, contracted services, employee benefits, furniture, equipment, supplies, textbooks, technology, tuition, utilities, and vehicles. The remaining \$3,081,955 cover the district’s transportation expenses.

District and town leaders agree that across the years, the town has not only consistently provided funds to cover net school spending but also covered funding “above and beyond their required local contribution.” A district leader noted,

We work closely with the town and have a great relationship with them. [When considering school needs], it’s really a collaborative conversation each year on what we need and how the town can support [the schools]. There are open and honest conversations about what’s realistic and what’s not, but they are really very, very supportive of the schools.

Town leaders also expressed their commitment to supporting the schools’ needs. A town leader stated, “We do what we can on the municipal side to try to facilitate either infrastructure improvements or try to lessen the burden on [the district’s budget].” Town leaders also mentioned collaboration efforts between “municipal and booster groups” to gather funds to cover some of the district’s needs. For example, in previous years, the town obtained grants to build five soccer and multipurpose fields, a track field, and an artificial turf field. Most recently, in February 2021, the town of Bellingham was designated a green community and received a grant to fund energy conservation measures for municipal facilities including BHS, which are expected to “result in significant energy savings” for the district.

Financial Tracking, Forecasting, Controls, and Audits

Interview data and financial documentation received from the district suggest that the district has clear documentation and reporting systems in place. District and town leaders indicated that the district’s procurement systems meet state laws and regulations. As part of the town’s annual financial audit, BPS undergoes a financial audit, which includes a review of federal funds as well as consideration of the previous year’s report.

The town of Bellingham and BPS share the same electronic financial system, which enables close collaboration between their business offices. They share the payroll and departmental receipts

systems, so funds collected by the district's departments are documented in the shared system and turned over to the town's treasurer. The town and schools also use the same accounts payable system, "so it's very easy to collaborate, share information, and electronically exchange data." Similarly, BPS and the town have a shared budgeting process and work collaboratively to train principals, compile departmental budgets, and manage that information in a central repository. A town leader noted that "by having systems that are shared, [the district and municipal offices] are able to speak the same language, which then helps to strengthen the relationship between the business office and the superintendent's office."

The director of finance has developed various read-only tracking and forecasting reports (in Google Sheets) that are shared with specific district and municipal departments, the superintendent, school leaders, and other stakeholders (e.g., school committee, teachers). The reports are updated periodically with the district's accounting data and display different levels of expenditures, such as contracted services, salaries, and other expenses (e.g., overtime, substitutes, supplies). The information includes forecasting data, as well as links to the budget, funding sources (e.g., revolving funds, grants, capital funds), and how much money is left in each funding source.

The director of finance oversees financial matters related to the grants and ensures that funds are effectively spent. The grant manager administers the grants and works closely with the director of finance, as well as with school administrators and pertinent staff, to handle programmatic aspects related to the grants. Reportedly, no grant funds have reverted to the state, apart from a "nurses state grant," which "had very, very, very specific parameters" that the district could not fulfill because of the pandemic. However, the district is currently working with the relevant staff to ensure the upcoming funds are used.

All purchases are made through electronic purchase orders, which go through at least two levels of approvals (e.g., school level, district director of finance). Invoice approval requires the schools to send invoices to BPS's accounts payable department, where staff processes the invoices for payment (based on the purchase orders). After reviewing and initialing the invoices, the director of finance approves them electronically in the accounting system, and the municipal office performs "their own internal controls." Similarly, the district's business office and the municipal business and treasurer's offices work closely on payroll to ensure that there are multiple layers of review (e.g., review accuracy of pay codes, invoices, taxes being paid).

District and town leaders confirmed that BPS's business office meets end-of-year reporting requirements. The director of finance and her staff collaborate with the town's chief financial officer to complete the end-of-year report, which then gets reviewed and approved by the superintendent. The director of finance submits the financial end-of-year report to DESE, and the grants manager submits grant reports through EdGrants.

Capital Planning and Facility Maintenance

Although BPS does not have a formal preventive maintenance plan, district and town leaders indicated that key requests are covered because they "work very closely" to understand the district's needs, as well as their alignment with the district's strategic plan. Town leaders agreed that they are aware that "the decisions that [district leaders] make and the directions that [district leaders] take are

associated with the strategic plan,” so they try to support needs that the superintendent identifies as “top priority.” Although the district did not provide a copy of their capital plan, their 2021 capital projects presentation includes tables with capital requests for 2021-2022 and 2022-2024.

District leaders indicated that BPS’s maintenance program for the district’s capital assets “is something that is still evolving,” and they “are actively working on [it].” Leaders noted that the facilities director position is currently open, so the superintendent is currently covering some of those responsibilities. In addition, the superintendent created a partial list of building needs for the next five years; however, this list will be reviewed and refined once a new facilities director is hired.

Reportedly, to ensure that the needs of educational and program facilities are covered, district and school leaders discuss emerging needs across the year and decide on priorities, including those related to each school’s cleanliness, safety, and access to technology, among others. Needs not covered by the capital plan are addressed through funds from the operating budget and revolving accounts (e.g., from facility rentals). Town leaders noted that district and municipal stakeholders work together because they “want to see good quality public schools so [they] work hard to support each other, make sure that capital needs are met, and that facilities are well cared for and protected.” Another town leader noted, “We try to provide as much [facilities and infrastructure] support as we can so that [the schools] have the spaces [for] the programs needed by the students.”

District and town leaders stated that capital requests focus on large facilities projects, and they agreed that, historically, the town has supported the district’s key capital requests. Reportedly, BPS often “handles smaller capital outlay, repairs, and maintenance with their operating budget,” whereas the town provides the funding to address larger infrastructure needs (e.g., transportation, snow removal operations, roof repairs, entrapment projects, boiler replacements).

Although the district did not submit its long-term capital plan, BPS provided a copy of the 2021-2022 capital requests presentation. This document lists capital requests for 2021-2022 and 2022-2024. Maintenance priorities that were recently approved include creating an entrapment area at the entrance of BHS and repairing a section of its roof, as well as replacing three sets of exterior doors at Stall Brook Elementary School. Reportedly, some maintenance priorities that the district expects to obtain approval for in 2022 include replacing the boiler at Keough Memorial Academy and tying Stall Brook Elementary School to the town’s sewage line.

When asked about the district’s long-term capital plan, district, school, and town leaders indicated that capital needs are officially assessed once per year, but emerging needs are discussed during recurring budget meetings so that the plan can be reviewed and revised as needed. The school committee, the superintendent, the principals, the finance committee, and town leaders are included in this review process. Regarding this process, a district leader noted, “We try to meet the needs. We try to plan out the bigger projects as they arise. We know what’s on the pipeline, on the horizon.”

Recommendations

- District and town leadership should formally document budgetary policies and practices.
- District and municipal leadership should work together to develop a formal BPS preventive maintenance plan.

Appendix A. Summary of Site Visit Activities

The AIR team completed the following activities as part of the district review activities in BPS. The team conducted 52 classroom observations the week of February 7, 2022, and held interviews and focus groups between February 7 and 9, 2022. The site visit team conducted interviews and focus groups with the following representatives from the school and the district:

- Superintendent
- Other district leaders
- Elementary school leaders
- Elementary school teachers
- Middle school leader
- High school leaders
- High school teachers
- School committee members
- Town government officials
- Teachers' association leaders

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

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

Appendix B. Enrollment, Attendance, Expenditures

Table B1. Bellingham Public Schools: Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity, 2021-2022

Group	District	Percentage of total	State	Percentage of total
All	1,980	100.0%	911,529	100.0%
African American	36	1.8%	84,970	9.3%
Asian	50	2.5%	65,813	7.2%
Hispanic	194	9.8%	210,747	23.1%
Native American	1	0.1%	2,060	0.2%
White	1,629	82.3%	507,992	55.7%
Native Hawaiian	6	0.3%	788	0.1%
Multirace, Non-Hispanic	64	3.2%	39,159	4.3%

Note. Data as of October 1, 2021.

Table B2. Bellingham Public Schools: Student Enrollment by High-Need Populations, 2021-2022

Group	District			State		
	N	Percentage of high need	Percentage of district	N	Percentage of high need	Percentage of state
All students with high needs	907	100.0%	45.2%	512,242	100.0%	55.6%
Students with disabilities	399	44.0%	19.9%	174,505	34.1%	18.9%
Low-income households	642	70.8%	32.4%	399,140	77.9%	43.8%
ELs and former ELs	71	7.8%	3.6%	100,231	19.6%	11.0%

Note. As of October 1, 2021. District and state numbers and percentages for students with disabilities and high needs are calculated including students in out-of-district placements. Total district enrollment including students in out-of-district placement is 5,424; total state enrollment including students in out-of-district placement is 920,971.

Table B3. Bellingham Public Schools: Chronic Absence Rates^a by Student Group, 2018-2021

Group	2018	2019	2020	2021	4-year change	State (2021)
All	12.0	12.5	13.6	16.5	4.5	17.7
African American/Black	13.5	10.9	3.9	27.3	13.8	24.1
Asian	10.4	12.7	11.3	4.8	-5.6	7.2
Hispanic/Latino	25.2	28.1	30.7	39.2	14	29.0
Multirace, non-Hispanic/Latino	2.1	8.0	12.3	15.8	13.7	18.9
White	11.5	11.7	12.5	14.5	3	13.2
High need	19.8	21.8	21.0	27.0	7.2	26.3
Economically disadvantaged	21.4	25.3	25.4	32.0	10.6	30.2
ELs	16.7	17.3	28.8	38.9	22.2	29.0
Students with disabilities	20.3	22.8	21.8	27.0	6.7	26.8

^a The percentage of students absent 10 percent or more of their total number of student days of membership in a school.

Table B4. Bellingham Public Schools: Expenditures, Chapter 70 State Aid, and Net School Spending Fiscal Years, 2019-2021

	Fiscal year 2019		Fiscal year 2020		Fiscal year 2021	
	Estimated	Actual	Estimated	Actual	Estimated	Actual
Expenditures						
From local appropriations for schools						
By school committee	\$28,021,029	\$28,181,788	\$28,849,416	\$28,426,280	\$30,575,757	\$29,876,243
By municipality	\$13,250,793	\$13,257,531	\$14,467,404	\$14,504,015	\$14,780,100	\$14,566,677
Total from local appropriations	\$41,271,822	\$41,439,319	\$43,316,820	\$42,930,295	\$45,355,857	\$44,442,921
From revolving funds and grants	--	\$4,271,896	--	\$3,865,944	--	\$4,448,150
Total expenditures	--	\$45,711,214	--	\$46,796,239	--	\$48,891,071
Chapter 70 aid to education program						
Chapter 70 state aid ^a	--	\$8,573,845	--	\$8,642,425	--	\$8,642,425
Required local contribution	--	\$15,794,941	--	\$16,455,942	--	\$16,772,086
Required net school spending ^b	--	\$24,368,786	--	\$25,098,367	--	\$25,414,511
Actual net school spending	--	\$34,179,810	--	\$34,628,654	--	\$36,392,291
Over/under required (\$)	--	\$9,811,024	--	\$9,530,287	--	\$10,977,780
Over/under required (%)	--	40.9%	--	38.0%	--	43.2%

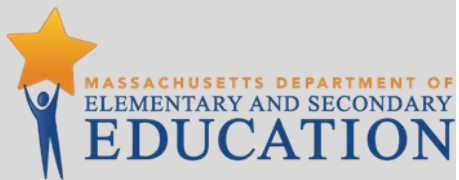
Note. Data as of June 1, 2022, and sourced from fiscal year 2020 district end-of-year reports and Chapter 70 program information on DESE website.
^a Chapter 70 state aid funds are deposited in the local general fund and spent as local appropriations. ^b Required net school spending is the total of Chapter 70 aid and required local contribution. Net school spending includes only expenditures from local appropriations, not revolving funds, and grants. It includes expenditures for most administration, instruction, operations, and out-of-district tuitions. It does not include transportation, school lunches, debt, or capital.

Table B5. Bellingham Public Schools: Expenditures Per In-District Pupil Fiscal Years 2019-2021

Expenditure category	2019	2020	2021
Administration	\$633.82	\$673.11	\$814.80
Instructional leadership (district and school)	\$843.42	\$874.66	\$1,037.27
Teachers	\$5,985.37	\$6,254.29	\$7,098.21
Other teaching services	\$1,561.77	\$1,599.97	\$1,776.57
Professional development	\$167.50	\$102.91	\$121.24
Instructional materials, equipment, and technology	\$243.55	\$237.54	\$625.94
Guidance, counseling, and testing services	\$516.60	\$561.11	\$596.51
Pupil services	\$1,534.87	\$1,616.88	\$1,730.00
Operations and maintenance	\$1,428.32	\$1,393.84	\$1,991.87
Insurance, retirement, and other fixed costs	\$3,392.83	\$3,601.27	\$3,498.29
Total expenditures per in-district pupil	\$16,308.06	\$16,915.56	\$19,290.69

Note. Any discrepancy between expenditures and total is because of rounding. Data are from [per-pupil expenditure reports on DESE website](#).

Appendix C. Districtwide Instructional Observation Report



Bellingham Public Schools

Classroom Visits: Summary of Findings

Districtwide Instructional Observation Report

February 2022



201 Jones Road
Waltham, Massachusetts
781-373-7000 | TTY 877.334.3499
www.air.org

Contents

	Page
Introduction.....	1
Positive Climate	3
Teacher Sensitivity.....	4
Regard for Student Perspectives	5
Negative Climate.....	6
Behavior Management	7
Productivity.....	8
Instructional Learning Formats	9
Concept Development	10
Content Understanding.....	11
Analysis and Inquiry	12
Quality of Feedback	13
Language Modeling	14
Instructional Dialogue.....	15
Student Engagement.....	16
Summary of Average Ratings: Grades K–5	17
Summary of Average Ratings: Grades 6–8	18
Summary of Average Ratings: Grades 9–12	19
References.....	20

Introduction

The *Districtwide Instructional Observation Report* presents ratings for the classroom observations that were conducted by certified observers at American Institutes for Research (AIR) as part of the Massachusetts District Reviews.

Observers visited Bellingham Public Schools during the week of February 7, 2022. The observers conducted 52 observations in a sample of classrooms across four schools. Observations were conducted in grades K-12 and focused primarily on literacy, English language arts, and mathematics instruction.

The classroom observations were guided by the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), developed by the Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) at the University of Virginia. Three levels of CLASS Manuals were used: K-3, Upper Elementary, and Secondary. The K-3 tool was used to observe grades K-3, the Upper Elementary tool was used to observe grades 4-5, and the Secondary tool was used to observe grades 6-12.

The K-3 protocol includes 10 classroom dimensions related to three domains: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support (listed in Table 1).

Table 1. CLASS K-3 Domains and Dimensions

Emotional Support	Classroom Organization	Instructional Support
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Positive ClimateNegative ClimateTeacher SensitivityRegard for Student Perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Behavior ManagementProductivityInstructional Learning Formats	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Concept DevelopmentQuality of FeedbackLanguage Modeling

The Upper Elementary and Secondary protocols include 11 classroom dimensions related to three domains: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support (listed in Table 2), in addition to Student Engagement.

Table 2. CLASS Upper Elementary and Secondary Domains and Dimensions

Emotional Support	Classroom Organization	Instructional Support
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Positive ClimateTeacher SensitivityRegard for Student Perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Behavior ManagementProductivityNegative Climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Instructional Learning FormatsContent UnderstandingAnalysis and InquiryQuality of FeedbackInstructional Dialogue
Student Engagement		

When conducting a visit to a classroom, the observer rates each dimension (including Student Engagement) on a scale of 1 to 7. A rating of 1 or 2 indicates that the dimension was never or rarely evident during the visit. For example, a rating of 1 or 2 on Teacher Sensitivity indicates that, at the time of the visit, the teacher was not aware of students who needed extra support or attention, was

unresponsive to or dismissive of students, or was ineffective at addressing students' problems; as a result, students rarely sought support from the teacher or communicated openly with the teacher. A rating of 3, 4, or 5 indicates that the dimension was evident but not exhibited consistently or in a way that included all students. A rating of 6 or 7 indicates that the dimension was reflected in all or most classroom activities and in a way that included all or most students.

Members of the observation team who visited the classrooms all received training on the CLASS protocol and then passed a rigorous certification exam for each CLASS protocol to ensure that they were able to accurately rate the dimensions. All observers must pass an exam annually to maintain their certification.

Research on CLASS protocol shows that students in classrooms that rated high using this observation tool have greater gains in social skills and academic success than students in classrooms with lower ratings (MET Project, 2010; CASTL, n.d.). Furthermore, small improvements on these domains can affect student outcomes: "The ability to demonstrate even small changes in effective interactions has practical implications—differences in just over 1 point on the CLASS 7-point scale translate into improved achievement and social skill development for students" (CASTL, n.d., p. 3).

In this report, each CLASS dimension is defined, and descriptions of the dimensions at the high (6 or 7), middle (3, 4, or 5), and low levels (1 or 2) are presented (*definitions and rating descriptions are derived from the CLASS K-3, Upper Elementary, and Secondary Manuals*). For each dimension we indicate the frequency of classroom observations across the ratings and provide a districtwide average of the observed classrooms. In cases where a dimension is included in more than one CLASS manual level, those results are combined on the dimension-specific pages. In the summary of ratings table following the dimension-specific pages the averages for every dimension are presented by grade band (K-5, 6-8, and 9-12). For each dimension, we indicate the grade levels for which this dimension is included.

Positive Climate

Emotional Support domain, Grades K–12

Positive Climate reflects the emotional connection between the teacher and students and among students and the warmth, respect, and enjoyment communicated by verbal and nonverbal interactions (*CLASS K–3 Manual*, p. 23, *CLASS Upper Elementary Manual*, p. 21, *CLASS Secondary Manual*, p. 21). Table 3 (as well as tables for the remaining dimensions) includes the number of classrooms for each rating on each dimension and the district average for that dimension.

Table 3. Positive Climate: Number of Classrooms for Each Rating and District Average

Positive Climate District Average*: 4.9

Grade Band	Low Range		Middle Range			High Range		n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Grades K-5	0	0	0	1	7	12	4	24	5.8
Grades 6-8	1	0	1	7	3	2	0	14	4.2
Grades 9-12	0	2	2	5	4	1	0	14	4.0

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 3, the district average is computed as: $([1 \times 1] + [2 \times 2] + [3 \times 3] + [4 \times 13] + [5 \times 14] + [6 \times 15] + [7 \times 4]) \div 52$ observations = 4.9

Ratings in the Low Range. All indicators are absent or only minimally present. Teachers and students do not appear to share a warm, supportive relationship. Interpersonal connections are not evident or only minimally evident. Affect in the classroom is flat, and there are rarely instances of teachers and students smiling, sharing humor, or laughing together. There are no, or very few, positive communications among the teacher and students; the teacher does not communicate encouragement. There is no evidence that students and the teacher respect one another or that the teacher encourages students to respect one another.

Ratings in the Middle Range. There are some indications that the teacher and students share a warm and supportive relationship, but some students may be excluded from this relationship, either by the teacher or the students. Some relationships appear constrained—for example, the teacher expresses a perfunctory interest in students, or encouragement seems to be an automatic statement and is not sincere. Sometimes, teachers and students demonstrate respect for one another.

Ratings in the High Range. There are many indications that the relationship among students and the teacher is positive and warm. The teacher is typically in close proximity to students, and encouragement is sincere and personal. There are frequent displays of shared laughter, smiles, and enthusiasm. Teachers and students show respect for one another (e.g., listening, using calm voices, using polite language). Positive communication (both verbal and nonverbal) and mutual respect are evident throughout the session.

Teacher Sensitivity

Emotional Support domain, Grades K–12

Teacher Sensitivity encompasses the teacher’s awareness of and responsiveness to students’ academic and emotional needs. High levels of sensitivity facilitate students’ abilities to actively explore and learn because the teacher consistently provides comfort, reassurance, and encouragement (*CLASS K–3 Manual*, p. 32, *CLASS Upper Elementary Manual*, p. 27, *CLASS Secondary Manual*, p. 27).

Table 4. Teacher Sensitivity: Number of Classrooms for Each Rating and District Average

Teacher Sensitivity District Average*: 5.0

Grade Band	Low Range		Middle Range			High Range		n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Grades K-5	0	0	0	2	9	13	0	24	5.5
Grades 6-8	0	0	2	4	5	3	0	14	4.6
Grades 9-12	0	1	2	3	6	1	1	14	4.5

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 4, the district average is computed as: $([2 \times 1] + [3 \times 4] + [4 \times 9] + [5 \times 20] + [6 \times 17] + [7 \times 1]) \div 52 \text{ observations} = 5.0$

Ratings in the Low Range. In these sessions, the teacher has not been aware of students who need extra support and pays little attention to students’ needs. As a result, students are frustrated, confused, and disengaged. The teacher is unresponsive to and dismissive of students and may ignore students, squash their enthusiasm, and not allow them to share their moods or feelings. The teacher is not effective in addressing students’ needs and does not appropriately acknowledge situations that may be upsetting to students. Students rarely seek support from the teacher and minimize conversations with the teacher, not sharing ideas or responding to questions.

Ratings in the Middle Range. The teacher is sometimes aware of student needs or aware of only a limited type of student needs, such as academic needs, not social-emotional needs. Or the teacher may be aware of some students and not of other students. The teacher does not always realize a student is confused and needs extra help or when a student already knows the material being taught. The teacher may be responsive at times to students but at other times may ignore or dismiss students. The teacher may respond only to students who are upbeat and positive and not support students who are upset. Sometimes, the teacher is effective in addressing students’ concerns or problems, but not always.

Ratings in the High Range. The teacher’s awareness of students and their needs is consistent and accurate. The teacher may predict how difficult a new task is for a student and acknowledge this difficulty. The teacher is responsive to students’ comments and behaviors, whether positive or negative. The teacher consistently addresses students’ problems and concerns and is effective in doing so. Students are obviously comfortable with the teacher and share ideas, work comfortably together, and ask and respond to questions, even difficult questions.

Regard for Student Perspectives

Emotional Support domain, Grades K–12

Regard for Student Perspectives captures the degree to which the teacher’s interactions with students and classroom activities place an emphasis on students’ interests, motivations, and points of view and encourage student responsibility and autonomy (*CLASS K–3 Manual*, p. 38, *CLASS Upper Elementary Manual*, p. 35, *CLASS Secondary Manual*, p. 35).

Table 5. Regard for Student Perspectives: Number of Classrooms for Each Rating and District Average

Regard for Student Perspectives District Average*: 4.2

Grade Band	Low Range		Middle Range			High Range		n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Grades K-5	0	0	8	5	2	9	0	24	4.5
Grades 6-8	0	1	3	3	5	2	0	14	4.3
Grades 9-12	1	1	6	3	3	0	0	14	3.4

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 5, the district average is computed as: $([1 \times 1] + [2 \times 2] + [3 \times 17] + [4 \times 11] + [5 \times 10] + [6 \times 11]) \div 52 \text{ observations} = 4.2$

Ratings in the Low Range. At the low range, the teacher exhibits an inflexible, rigid adherence to his or her plan, without considering student ideas or allowing students to make contributions. The teacher inhibits student enthusiasm by imposing guidelines or making remarks that inhibit student expression. The teacher may rigidly adhere to a lesson plan and not respond to student interests. The teacher does not allow students any autonomy on how they conduct an activity, may control materials tightly, and may offer few opportunities for students to help out with classroom responsibilities. There are few opportunities for students to talk and express themselves.

Ratings in the Middle Range. The teacher exhibits control at times and at other times follows the students’ lead and gives them some choices and opportunities to follow their interests. There are some opportunities for students to exercise autonomy, but student choice is limited. The teacher may assign students responsibility in the classroom, but in a limited way. At times, the teacher dominates the discussion, but at other times the teacher allows students to share ideas, although only at a minimal level or for a short period of time.

Ratings in the High Range. The teacher is flexible in following student leads, interests, and ideas and looks for ways to meaningfully engage students. Although the teacher has a lesson plan, students’ ideas are incorporated into the lesson plan. The teacher consistently supports student autonomy and provides meaningful leadership opportunities. Students have frequent opportunities to talk, share ideas, and work together. Students have appropriate freedom of movement during activities.

Negative Climate

Emotional Support domain, Grades K–3

Classroom Organization domain, Grades 4–12

Negative Climate reflects the overall level of expressed negativity in the classroom. The frequency, quality, and intensity of teacher and student negativity are key to this dimension (*CLASS K–3 Manual*, p. 28, *CLASS Upper Elementary Manual*, p. 55, *CLASS Secondary Manual*, p. 55). For the purposes of this report, we have inversed the observers scores, to be consistent with the range scores across all dimensions. Therefore, a high range score in this dimension indicates an absence of negative climate, and a low range score indicates the presence of negative climate.¹

Table 6. Negative Climate: Number of Classrooms for Each Rating and District Average

Negative Climate District Average*: 6.8

Grade Band	Low Range		Middle Range			High Range		n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Grades K-5	0	0	0	0	0	3	21	24	6.9
Grades 6-8	0	0	0	0	1	2	11	14	6.7
Grades 9-12	0	0	0	1	0	2	11	14	6.6

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 6, the district average is computed as: $([4 \times 1] + [5 \times 1] + [6 \times 7] + [7 \times 43]) \div 52 \text{ observations} = 6.8$

Ratings in the Low Range. Negativity is pervasive. The teacher may express constant irritation, annoyance, or anger; unduly criticize students; or consistently use a harsh tone and/or take a harsh stance as he or she interacts with students. Threats or yelling are frequently used to establish control. Language is disrespectful and sarcastic. Severe negativity, such as the following actions, would lead to a high rating on negative climate, even if the action is not extended: students bullying one another, a teacher hitting a student, or students physically fighting with one another.

Ratings in the Middle Range. There are some expressions of mild negativity by the teacher or students. The teacher may express irritability, use a harsh tone, and/or express annoyance—usually during difficult moments in the classroom. Threats or yelling may be used to establish control over the classroom, but not constantly; they are used more as a response to situations. At times, the teacher and students may be sarcastic or disrespectful toward one another.

Ratings in the High Range. There is no display of negativity: No strong expressions of anger or aggression are exhibited, either by the teacher or students; if there is such a display, it is contained and does not escalate. The teacher does not issue threats or yell to establish control. The teacher and students are respectful and do not express sarcasm.

¹ When observers rate this dimension it is scored so that a low rating (indicating little or no evidence of a negative climate) is better than a high rating (indicating abundant evidence of a negative climate). To be consistent across all ratings, for the purposes of this report we have inversed this scoring.

Behavior Management

Classroom Organization domain, Grades K–12

Behavior Management refers to the teacher’s ability to provide clear behavioral expectations and use effective methods to prevent and redirect misbehavior (*CLASS K–3 Manual*, p. 45, *CLASS Upper Elementary Manual*, p. 41, *CLASS Secondary Manual*, p. 41).

Table 7. Behavior Management: Number of Classrooms for Each Rating and District Average

Behavior Management District Average*: 6.0

Grade Band	Low Range		Middle Range			High Range		n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Grades K-5	0	2	0	3	2	15	2	24	5.4
Grades 6-8	0	0	0	1	0	3	10	14	6.6
Grades 9-12	0	0	1	0	0	5	8	14	6.4

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 7, the district average is computed as: $([2 \times 2] + [3 \times 1] + [4 \times 4] + [5 \times 2] + [6 \times 23] + [7 \times 20]) \div 52 \text{ observations} = 6.0$

Ratings in the Low Range. At the low range, the classroom is chaotic. There are no rules and expectations, or they are not enforced consistently. The teacher does not monitor the classroom effectively and only reacts to student disruption, which is frequent. There are frequent instances of misbehavior in the classroom, and the teacher’s attempts to redirect misbehavior are ineffective. The teacher does not use cues, such as eye contact, slight touches, gestures, or physical proximity, to respond to and redirect negative behavior.

Ratings in the Middle Range. Although rules and expectations may be stated, they are not consistently enforced, or the rules may be unclear. Sometimes, the teacher proactively anticipates and prevents misbehavior, but at other times the teacher ignores behavior problems until it is too late. Misbehavior may escalate because redirection is not always effective. Episodes of misbehavior are periodic.

Ratings in the High Range. At the high range, the rules and guidelines for behavior are clear, and they are consistently reinforced by the teacher. The teacher monitors the classroom and prevents problems from developing, using subtle cues to redirect behavior and address situations before they escalate. The teacher focuses on positive behavior and consistently affirms students’ desirable behaviors. The teacher effectively uses cues to redirect behavior. There are no, or very few, instances of student misbehavior or disruptions.

Productivity

Classroom Organization domain, Grades K–12

Productivity considers how well the teacher manages instructional time and routines and provides activities for students so that they have the opportunity to be involved in learning activities (*CLASS K–3 Manual*, p. 51, *CLASS Upper Elementary Manual*, p. 49, *CLASS Secondary Manual*, p. 49).

Table 8. Productivity: Number of Classrooms for Each Rating and District Average

Productivity District Average*: 6.0

Grade Band	Low Range		Middle Range			High Range		n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Grades K-5	0	0	2	3	4	13	2	24	5.4
Grades 6-8	0	0	0	1	0	5	8	14	6.4
Grades 9-12	0	0	0	0	1	4	9	14	6.6

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 8, the district average is computed as: $([3 \times 2] + [4 \times 4] + [5 \times 5] + [6 \times 22] + [7 \times 19]) \div 52 \text{ observations} = 6.0$

Ratings in the Low Range. At the low level, the teacher provides few activities for students. Much time is spent on managerial tasks (such as distributing papers) and/or on behavior management. Frequently during the observation, students have little to do and spend time waiting. The routines of the classroom are not clear and, as a result, students waste time, are not engaged, and are confused. Transitions take a long time and/or are too frequent. The teacher does not have activities organized and ready and seems to be caught up in last-minute preparations.

Ratings in the Middle Range. At the middle range, the teacher does provide activities for students but loses learning time to disruptions or management tasks. There are certain times when the teacher provides clear activities to students, but there are other times when students wait and lose focus. Some students (or all students, at some point) do not know what is expected of them. Some of the transitions may take too long, or classrooms may be productive during certain periods but then not productive during transitions. Although the teacher is mostly prepared for the class, last-minute preparations may still infringe on learning time.

Ratings in the High Range. The classroom runs very smoothly. The teacher provides a steady flow of activities for students, so students do not have downtime and are not confused about what to do next. The routines of the classroom are efficient, and all students know how to move from one activity to another and where materials are. Students understand the teacher's instructions and directions. Transitions are quick, and there are not too many of them. The teacher is fully prepared for the lesson.

Instructional Learning Formats

Classroom Organization domain, Grades K–3

Instructional Support domain, Grades 4–12

Instructional Learning Formats refer to the ways in which the teacher maximizes students' interest, engagement, and abilities to learn from the lesson and activities (*CLASS K–3 Manual*, p. 57; *CLASS Upper Elementary Manual*, p. 63, *CLASS Secondary Manual*, p. 61).

Table 9. Instructional Learning Formats: Number of Classrooms for Each Rating and District Average

Instructional Learning Formats District Average*: 4.6

Grade Band	Low Range		Middle Range			High Range		n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Grades K-5	0	0	0	2	12	9	1	24	5.4
Grades 6-8	0	0	6	4	3	1	0	14	3.9
Grades 9-12	0	0	4	6	4	0	0	14	4.0

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 9, the district average is computed as: $([3 \times 10] + [4 \times 12] + [5 \times 19] + [6 \times 10] + [7 \times 1]) \div 52 \text{ observations} = 4.6$

Ratings in the Low Range. The teacher exerts little effort in facilitating engagement in the lesson. Learning activities may be limited and seem to be at the rote level, with little teacher involvement. The teacher relies on one learning modality (e.g., listening) and does not use other modalities (e.g., movement, visual displays) to convey information and enhance learning. Or the teacher may be ineffective in using other modalities, not choosing the right props for the students or the classroom conditions. Students are uninterested and uninvolved in the lesson. The teacher does not attempt to guide students toward learning objectives and does not help them focus on the lesson by providing appropriate tools and asking effective questions.

Ratings in the Middle Range. At the middle range, the teacher sometimes facilitates engagement in the lesson but at other times does not, or the teacher facilitates engagement for some students and not for other students. The teacher may not allow students enough time to explore or answer questions. Sometimes, the teacher uses a variety of modalities to help students reach a learning objective, but at other times the teacher does not. Student engagement is inconsistent, or some students are engaged and other students are not. At times, students are aware of the learning objective and at other times they are not. The teacher may sometimes use strategies to help students organize information but at other times does not.

Ratings in the High Range. The teacher has multiple strategies and tools to facilitate engagement and learning and encourage participation. The teacher may move around, talk and play with students, ask open-ended questions of students, and allow students to explore. A variety of tools and props are used, including movement and visual/auditory resources. Students are consistently interested and engaged in the activities and lessons. The teacher focuses students on the learning objectives, which students understand. The teacher uses advanced organizers to prepare students for an activity, as well as reorientation strategies that help students regain focus.

Concept Development

Instructional Support domain, Grades K–3

Concept Development refers to the teacher’s use of instructional discussions and activities to promote students’ higher order thinking skills and cognition and the teacher’s focus on understanding rather than on rote instruction (*CLASS K–3 Manual*, p. 64).

Table 10. Concept Development: Number of Classrooms for Each Rating and District Average

Concept Development District Average*: 5.1

Grade Band	Low Range		Middle Range			High Range		n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Grades K-3**	0	0	1	2	8	5	0	16	5.1

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 10, the district average is computed as: $([3 \times 1] + [4 \times 2] + [5 \times 8] + [6 \times 5]) \div 16 \text{ observations} = 5.1$

**Concept Development does not appear in the CLASS Upper Elementary Manual, therefore scores for the Elementary School Level represent grades K-3 only.

Ratings in the Low Range. At the low range, the teacher does not attempt to develop students’ understanding of ideas and concepts, focusing instead on basic facts and skills. Discussion and activities do not encourage students to analyze and reason. There are few, if any, opportunities for students to create or generate ideas and products. The teacher does not link concepts to one another and does not ask students to make connections with previous content or their actual lives. The activities and the discussion are removed from students’ lives and from their prior knowledge.

Ratings in the Middle Range. To some extent, the teacher uses discussions and activities to encourage students to analyze and reason and focuses somewhat on understanding of ideas. The activities and discussions are not fully developed, however, and there is still instructional time that focuses on facts and basic skills. Students may be provided some opportunities for creating and generating ideas, but the opportunities are occasional and not planned out. Although some concepts may be linked and also related to students’ previous learning, such efforts are brief. The teacher makes some effort to relate concepts to students’ lives but does not elaborate enough to make the relationship meaningful to students.

Ratings in the High Range. At the high range, the teacher frequently guides students to analyze and reason during discussions and activities. Most of the questions are open ended and encourage students to think about connections and implications. Teachers use problem solving, experimentation, and prediction; comparison and classification; and evaluation and summarizing to promote analysis and reasoning. The teacher provides students with opportunities to be creative and generate ideas. The teacher consistently links concepts to one another and to previous learning and relates concepts to students’ lives.

Content Understanding

Instructional Support domain, Grades 4 – 12

Content Understanding refers to the depth of lesson content and the approaches used to help students comprehend the framework, key ideas, and procedures in an academic discipline. At a high level, this dimension refers to interactions among the teacher and students that lead to an integrated understanding of facts, skills, concepts, and principles (*CLASS Upper Elementary Manual*, p. 70, *CLASS Secondary Manual*, p. 68).

Table 11. Content Understanding: Number of Classrooms for Each Rating and District Average

Content Understanding District Average*: 3.8

Grade Band	Low Range		Middle Range			High Range		n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Grades 4-5**	0	0	6	2	0	0	0	8	3.3
Grades 6-8	1	2	3	4	2	2	0	14	3.7
Grades 9-12	0	2	2	5	3	2	0	14	4.1

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 11, the district average is computed as: $([1 \times 1] + [2 \times 4] + [3 \times 11] + [4 \times 11] + [5 \times 5] + [6 \times 4]) \div 36 \text{ observations} = 3.8$

**Content Understanding does not appear in the CLASS K-3 Manual, therefore scores for the Elementary School Level represent grades 4-5 only.

Ratings in the Low Range. At the low range, the focus of the class is primarily on presenting discrete pieces of topically related information, absent broad, organizing ideas. The discussion and materials fail to effectively communicate the essential attributes of the concepts and procedures to students. The teacher makes little effort to elicit or acknowledge students' background knowledge or misconceptions or to integrate previously learned material when presenting new information.

Ratings in the Middle Range. At the middle range, the focus of the class is sometimes on meaningful discussion and explanation of broad, organizing ideas. At other times, the focus is on discrete pieces of information. Class discussion and materials communicate some of the essential attributes of concepts and procedures, but examples are limited in scope or not consistently provided. The teacher makes some attempt to elicit and/or acknowledge students' background knowledge or misconceptions and/or to integrate information with previously learned materials; however, these moments are limited in depth or inconsistent.

Ratings in the High Range. At the high range, the focus of the class is on encouraging deep understanding of content through the provision of meaningful, interactive discussion and explanation of broad, organizing ideas. Class discussion and materials consistently communicate the essential attributes of concepts and procedures to students. New concepts and procedures and broad ideas are consistently linked to students' prior knowledge in ways that advance their understanding and clarify misconceptions.

Analysis and Inquiry

Instructional Support domain, Grades 4 – 12

Analysis and Inquiry assesses the degree to which students are engaged in higher level thinking skills through their application of knowledge and skills to novel and/or open-ended problems, tasks, and questions. Opportunities for engaging in metacognition (thinking about thinking) also are included (*CLASS Upper Elementary Manual*, p. 81, *CLASS Secondary Manual*, p. 76).

Table 12. Analysis and Inquiry: Number of Classrooms for Each Rating and District Average

Analysis and Inquiry District Average*: 2.8

Grade Band	Low Range		Middle Range			High Range		n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Grades 4-5**	0	0	4	4	0	0	0	8	3.5
Grades 6-8	3	5	3	3	0	0	0	14	2.4
Grades 9-12	4	4	1	2	3	0	0	14	2.7

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 12, the district average is computed as: $([1 \times 7] + [2 \times 9] + [3 \times 8] + [4 \times 9] + [5 \times 3]) \div 36 \text{ observations} = 2.8$

**Analysis and Inquiry does not appear in the CLASS K-3 Manual, therefore scores for the Elementary School Level represent grades 4-5 only.

Ratings in the Low Range. At the low range, students do not engage in higher order thinking skills. Instruction is presented in a rote manner, and there are no opportunities for students to engage in novel or open-ended tasks. Students are not challenged to apply previous knowledge and skills to a new problem, nor are they encouraged to think about, evaluate, or reflect on their own learning. Students do not have opportunities to plan their own learning experiences.

Ratings in the Middle Range. Students occasionally engage in higher order thinking through analysis and inquiry, but the episodes are brief or limited in depth. The teacher provides opportunities for students to apply knowledge and skills within familiar contexts and offers guidance to students but does not provide opportunities for analysis and problem solving within novel contexts and/or without teacher support. Students have occasional opportunities to think about their own thinking through explanations, self-evaluations, reflection, and planning; these opportunities, however, are brief and limited in depth.

Ratings in the High Range. At the high range, students consistently engage in extended opportunities to use higher order thinking through analysis and inquiry. The teacher provides opportunities for students to independently solve or reason through novel and open-ended tasks that require students to select, utilize, and apply existing knowledge and skills. Students have multiple opportunities to think about their own thinking through explanations, self-evaluations, reflection, and planning.

Quality of Feedback

Instructional Support domain, Grades K–12

Quality of Feedback refers to the degree to which the teacher provides feedback that expands learning and understanding and encourages continued participation in the learning activity (*CLASS K–3 Manual*, p. 72). In the upper elementary and secondary classrooms, significant feedback also may be provided by peers (*CLASS Upper Elementary Manual*, p. 89, *CLASS Secondary Manual*, p. 93). Regardless of the source, the focus of the feedback motivates learning.

Table 13. Quality of Feedback: Number of Classrooms for Each Rating and District Average

Quality of Feedback District Average*: 3.7

Grade Band	Low Range		Middle Range			High Range		n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Grades K-5	0	0	4	9	6	5	0	24	4.5
Grades 6-8	2	3	3	3	3	0	0	14	3.1
Grades 9-12	4	3	2	0	4	1	0	14	3.0

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 13, the district average is computed as: $([1 \times 6] + [2 \times 6] + [3 \times 9] + [4 \times 12] + [5 \times 13] + [6 \times 6]) \div 52 \text{ observations} = 3.7$

Ratings in the Low Range. At the low range, the teacher dismisses incorrect responses or misperceptions and rarely scaffolds student learning. The teacher is more interested in students providing the correct answer than understanding. Feedback is perfunctory. The teacher may not provide opportunities to learn whether students understand or are interested. The teacher rarely questions students or asks them to explain their thinking and reasons for their responses. The teacher does not or rarely provides information that might expand student understanding and rarely offers encouragement that increases student effort and persistence.

Ratings in the Middle Range. In the middle range, the teacher sometimes scaffolds students, but this is not consistent. On occasion, the teacher facilitates feedback loops so that students may elaborate and expand on their thinking, but these moments are not sustained long enough to accomplish a learning objective. Sometimes, the teacher asks students about or prompts them to explain their thinking and provides information to help students understand, but sometimes the feedback is perfunctory. At times, the teacher encourages student efforts and persistence.

Ratings in the High Range. In this range, the teacher frequently scaffolds students who are having difficulty, providing hints or assistance as needed. The teacher engages students in feedback loops to help them understand ideas or reach the right response. The teacher often questions students, encourages them to explain their thinking, and provides additional information that may help students understand. The teacher regularly encourages students' efforts and persistence.

Language Modeling

Instructional Support domain, Grades K–3

Language Modeling refers to the quality and amount of the teacher’s use of language stimulation and language facilitation techniques (*CLASS K–3 Manual*, p. 79).

Table 14. Language Modeling: Number of Classrooms for Each Rating and District Average

Language Modeling District Average*: 4.7

Grade Band	Low Range		Middle Range			High Range		n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Grades K-3**	0	0	1	6	6	3	0	16	4.7

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 14, the district average is computed as: $([3 \times 1] + [4 \times 6] + [5 \times 6] + [6 \times 3]) \div 16 \text{ observations} = 4.7$

**Language Modeling does not appear in the CLASS Upper Elementary Manual, therefore scores for the Elementary School Level represent grades K-3 only.

Ratings in the Low Range. In the low range, there are few conversations in the classroom, particularly between the students and the teacher. The teacher responds to students’ initiating talk with only a few words, limits students’ use of language (in responding to questions) and asks questions that mainly elicit closed-ended responses. The teacher does not or rarely extends students’ responses or repeats them for clarification. The teacher does not engage in self-talk or parallel talk—explaining what he or she or the students are doing. The teacher does not use new words or advanced language with students. The language used has little variety.

Ratings in the Middle Range. In this range, the teacher talks with students and shows some interest in students, but the conversations are limited and not prolonged. Usually, the teacher directs the conversations, although the conversations may focus on topics of interest to students. More often, there is a basic exchange of information but limited conversation. The teacher asks a mix of closed- and open-ended questions, although the closed-ended questions may require only short responses. Sometimes, the teacher extends students’ responses or repeats what students say. Sometimes, the teacher maps his or her own actions and the students’ actions through language and description. The teacher sometimes uses advanced language with students.

Ratings in the High Range. There are frequent conversations in the classroom, particularly between students and the teacher, and these conversations promote language use. Students are encouraged to converse and feel they are valued conversational partners. The teacher asks many open-ended questions that require students to communicate more complex ideas. The teacher often extends or repeats student responses. Frequently, the teacher maps his or her actions and student actions descriptively and uses advanced language with students.

Instructional Dialogue

Instructional Support domain, Grades 4–12

Instructional Dialogue captures the purposeful use of content-focused discussion among teachers and students that is cumulative, with the teacher supporting students to chain ideas together in ways that lead to deeper understanding of content. Students take an active role in these dialogues, and both the teacher and students use strategies that facilitate extended dialogue (*CLASS Upper Elementary Manual*, p. 97, *CLASS Secondary Manual*, p. 101).

Table 15. Instructional Dialogue: Number of Classrooms for Each Rating and District Average

Instructional Dialogue District Average*: 2.9

Grade Band	Low Range		Middle Range			High Range		n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Grades 4-5**	0	3	2	3	0	0	0	8	3.0
Grades 6-8	1	5	3	1	3	1	0	14	3.2
Grades 9-12	4	3	3	4	0	0	0	14	2.5

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 15, the district average is computed as: $([1 \times 5] + [2 \times 11] + [3 \times 8] + [4 \times 8] + [5 \times 3] + [6 \times 1]) \div 36 \text{ observations} = 2.9$

**Instructional Dialogue does not appear in the CLASS K-3 Manual, therefore scores for the Elementary School Level represent grades 4-5 only.

Ratings in the Low Range. At the low range, there are no or few discussions in the class, the discussions are not related to content or skill development, or the discussions contain only simple question-response exchanges between the teacher and students. The class is dominated by teacher talk, and discussion is limited. The teacher and students ask closed-ended questions; rarely acknowledge, report, or extend other students' comments; and/or appear disinterested in other students' comments, resulting in many students not being engaged in instructional dialogues.

Ratings in the Middle Range. At this range, there are occasional content-based discussions in class among teachers and students; however, these exchanges are brief or quickly move from one topic to another without follow-up questions or comments from the teacher and other students. The class is mostly dominated by teacher talk, although there are times when students take a more active role, or there are distributed dialogues that involve only a few students in the class. The teacher and students sometimes facilitate and encourage more elaborate dialogue, but such efforts are brief, inconsistent, or ineffective at consistently engaging students in extended dialogues.

Ratings in the High Range. At the high range, there are frequent, content-driven discussions in the class between teachers and students or among students. The discussions build depth of knowledge through cumulative, contingent exchanges. The class dialogues are distributed in a way that the teacher and the majority of students take an active role or students are actively engaged in instructional dialogues with each other. The teacher and students frequently use strategies that encourage more elaborate dialogue, such as open-ended questions, repetition or extension, and active listening. Students respond to these techniques by fully participating in extended dialogues.

Student Engagement

Student Engagement domain, Grades 4–12

Student Engagement refers to the extent to which all students in the class are focused and participating in the learning activity that is presented or facilitated by the teacher. The difference between passive engagement and active engagement is reflected in this rating (*CLASS Upper Elementary Manual*, p. 105).

Table 16. Student Engagement: Number of Classrooms for Each Rating and District Average

Student Engagement District Average*: 5.0

Grade Band	Low Range		Middle Range			High Range		n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Grades 4-5**	0	0	0	1	2	4	1	8	5.6
Grades 6-8	0	0	1	3	4	5	1	14	5.1
Grades 9-12	0	0	0	8	5	1	0	14	4.5

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 16, the district average is computed as: $([3 \times 1] + [4 \times 12] + [5 \times 11] + [6 \times 10] + [7 \times 2]) \div 36 \text{ observations} = 5.0$

**Student Engagement does not appear in the CLASS K-3 Manual, therefore scores for the Elementary School Level represent grades 4-5 only.

Ratings in the Low Range. In the low range, the majority of students appear distracted or disengaged.

Ratings in the Middle Range. In the middle range, students are passively engaged, listening to or watching the teacher; student engagement is mixed, with the majority of students actively engaged for part of the time and disengaged for the rest of the time; or there is a mix of student engagement, with some students actively engaged and some students disengaged.

Ratings in the High Range. In the high range, most students are actively engaged in the classroom discussions and activities.

Summary of Average Ratings: Grades K–5

Table 17. Summary Table of Average Ratings for Each Dimension in Grades K–5

	Low Range		Middle Range			High Range		n	Average Scores*
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Emotional Support Domain	0	0	8	8	18	37	25	96	5.7
Positive Climate	0	0	0	1	7	12	4	24	5.8
Negative Climate**	0	0	0	0	0	3	21	24	6.9
Teacher Sensitivity	0	0	0	2	9	13	0	24	5.5
Regard for Student Perspectives	0	0	8	5	2	9	0	24	4.5
Classroom Organization Domain	0	2	2	8	18	37	5	72	5.4
Behavior Management	0	2	0	3	2	15	2	24	5.4
Productivity	0	0	2	3	4	13	2	24	5.4
Instructional Learning Formats***	0	0	0	2	12	9	1	24	5.4
Instructional Support Domain	0	3	18	26	20	13	0	80	4.3
Concept Development (K-3 only)	0	0	1	2	8	5	0	16	5.1
Content Understanding (UE only)	0	0	6	2	0	0	0	8	3.3
Analysis and Inquiry (UE only)	0	0	4	4	0	0	0	8	3.5
Quality of Feedback	0	0	4	9	6	5	0	24	4.5
Language Modeling (K-3 only)	0	0	1	6	6	3	0	16	4.7
Instructional Dialogue (UE only)	0	3	2	3	0	0	0	8	3.0
Student Engagement (UE only)	0	0	0	1	2	4	1	8	5.6

*The district average is an average of the scores. For example, for Positive Climate, the district average is computed as: $([4 \times 1] + [5 \times 7] + [6 \times 12] + [7 \times 4]) \div 24 \text{ observations} = 5.8$

**Negative Climate is rated on an inverse scale. An original score of 1 is given a value of 7. The scoring in the table reflects the normalized adjustment: $([6 \times 3] + [7 \times 21]) \div 24 \text{ observations} = 6.9$. In addition, Negative Climate appears in the Classroom Organization Domain for the Upper Elementary Manual.

***Instructional Learning Formats appears in the Instructional Support Domain for the Upper Elementary Manual.

Summary of Average Ratings: Grades 6–8

Table 18. Summary Table of Average Ratings for Each Dimension in Grades 6–8

	Low Range		Middle Range			High Range		n	Average Scores*
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Emotional Support Domain	1	1	6	14	13	7	0	42	4.4
Positive Climate	1	0	1	7	3	2	0	14	4.2
Teacher Sensitivity	0	0	2	4	5	3	0	14	4.6
Regard for Student Perspectives	0	1	3	3	5	2	0	14	4.3
Classroom Organization Domain	0	0	0	2	1	10	29	42	6.6
Behavior Management	0	0	0	1	0	3	10	14	6.6
Productivity	0	0	0	1	0	5	8	14	6.4
Negative Climate**	0	0	0	0	1	2	11	14	6.7
Instructional Support Domain	7	15	18	15	11	4	0	70	3.3
Instructional Learning Formats	0	0	6	4	3	1	0	14	3.9
Content Understanding	1	2	3	4	2	2	0	14	3.7
Analysis and Inquiry	3	5	3	3	0	0	0	14	2.4
Quality of Feedback	2	3	3	3	3	0	0	14	3.1
Instructional Dialogue	1	5	3	1	3	1	0	14	3.2
Student Engagement	0	0	1	3	4	5	1	14	5.1

*The district average is an average of the scores. For example, for Positive Climate, the district average is computed as: $([1 \times 1] + [3 \times 1] + [4 \times 7] + [5 \times 3] + [6 \times 2]) \div 14 \text{ observations} = 4.2$

**Negative Climate is rated on an inverse scale. An original score of 1 is given a value of 7. The scoring in the table reflects the normalized adjustment: $([5 \times 1] + [6 \times 2] + [7 \times 11]) \div 14 \text{ observations} = 6.7$

Summary of Average Ratings: Grades 9–12

Table 19. Summary Table of Average Ratings for Each Dimension in Grades 9–12

	Low Range		Middle Range			High Range		n	Average Scores*
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Emotional Support Domain	1	4	10	11	13	2	1	42	4.0
Positive Climate	0	2	2	5	4	1	0	14	4.0
Teacher Sensitivity	0	1	2	3	6	1	1	14	4.5
Regard for Student Perspectives	1	1	6	3	3	0	0	14	3.4
Classroom Organization Domain	0	0	1	1	1	11	28	42	6.5
Behavior Management	0	0	1	0	0	5	8	14	6.4
Productivity	0	0	0	0	1	4	9	14	6.6
Negative Climate**	0	0	0	1	0	2	11	14	6.6
Instructional Support Domain	12	12	12	17	14	3	0	70	3.3
Instructional Learning Formats	0	0	4	6	4	0	0	14	4.0
Content Understanding	0	2	2	5	3	2	0	14	4.1
Analysis and Inquiry	4	4	1	2	3	0	0	14	2.7
Quality of Feedback	4	3	2	0	4	1	0	14	3.0
Instructional Dialogue	4	3	3	4	0	0	0	14	2.5
Student Engagement	0	0	0	8	5	1	0	14	4.5

*The district average is an average of the scores. For example, for Positive Climate, the district average is computed as: $([2 \times 2] + [3 \times 2] + [4 \times 5] + [5 \times 4] + [6 \times 1]) \div 14 \text{ observations} = 4.0$

**Negative Climate is rated on an inverse scale. An original score of 1 is given a value of 7. The scoring in the table reflects the normalized adjustment: $([4 \times 1] + [6 \times 2] + [7 \times 11]) \div 14 \text{ observations} = 6.6$

References

- Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning. (n.d.). *Measuring and improving teacher-student interactions in PK–12 settings to enhance students' learning*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia. Retrieved from <http://www.teachstone.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/class-mtp-pk-12-brief.pdf>
- MET Project. (2010). *The CLASS protocol for classroom observations*. Seattle, WA: Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Retrieved from http://metproject.org/resources/CLASS_10_29_10.pdf
- Pianta, R. C., Hamre, B. K., & Mintz, S. (2012). *Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) Manual, Secondary*. Charlottesville, VA: Teachstone.
- Pianta, R. C., Hamre, B. K., & Mintz, S. (2012). *Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) Manual, Upper Elementary*. Charlottesville, VA: Teachstone.
- Pianta, R. C., La Paro, K. M., & Hamre, B. K. (2008). *Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) Manual, K–3*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

Appendix D. Resources to Support Implementation of DESE's District Standards and Indicators

Table D1. Resources to Support Leadership and Governance

Resource	Description
Transforming School Funding: A Guide to Implementing Student-Based Budgeting (SBB) from Education Resource Strategies	This guide describes a process to help districts tie funding to specific student needs

Table D2. Resources to Support Curriculum and Instruction

Resource	Description
Quick Reference Guide: The Case for Curricular Coherence	This guide describes three types of curricular coherence that support student learning: vertical coherence, aligned tiers of instruction, and cross-subject coherence.
Increasing Access to Advanced Coursework	Describes how school districts can use the federal Every Student Succeeds Act to expand access to advanced coursework and increase students' achievement in these courses.
CURATE	CURATE convenes panels of Massachusetts teachers to review and rate evidence on the quality and alignment of specific curricular materials and then publish their findings for educators across the Commonwealth to consult.

Table D3. Resources to Support Assessment

Resource	Description
DESE's District Data Team Toolkit	A set of resources to help a district establish, grow, and maintain a culture of inquiry and data use through a district data team.

Table D4. Resources to Support Human Resources and Professional Development

Resource	Description
Quick Reference Guide: Opportunities to Streamline the Evaluation Process	This guide helps districts reflect on and continuously improve their evaluation systems: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What's working? What are the bright spots? ■ How can we streamline the process to stay focused on professional growth and development? ■ What do we need to adjust to ensure our system is valuable to educators and students?
Identifying Meaningful Professional Development	A video in which educators from three Massachusetts districts discuss the importance of targeted, meaningful professional development and the ways districts can use the evaluation process to identify the most effective professional development supports for all educators.

Resource	Description
<i>The Educator Effectiveness Guidebook for Inclusive Practice</i>	This guide includes tools for districts, schools, and educators aligned to the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Framework. It promotes evidence-based best practices for inclusion following the principles of Universal Design for Learning, PBIS, and social-emotional learning.
<i>Making Inclusive Education Work</i> by Richard A. Villa and Jacqueline S. Thousand	The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization that develops programs, products, and services essential to the way educators learn, teach, and lead.

Table D5. Resources to Support Student Support

Resource	Description
https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfss/mtss/	A multitiered system of support is a framework for how school districts can build the necessary systems to ensure that all students receive a high-quality educational experience.

Table D6. Resources to Support Financial and Asset Management

Resource	Description
<i>Spending Money Wisely: Getting the Most From School District Budgets</i> (scroll down to Research section)	A discussion of the top 10 opportunities for districts to realign resources and free up funds to support strategic priorities.

Appendix E. Student Performance Tables

The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on the 2020-2021 school year. Data reported in this appendix may have been affected by the pandemic. Please keep this in mind when reviewing the data and take particular care when comparing data across multiple school years.

Table E1. Bellingham Public Schools: Next-Generation MCAS ELA Scaled Scores in Grades 3-8, 2018-2021

Group	N (2021)	2018	2019	2021	Change	State (2021)	Above/ below
All	946	497.3	497.5	494.5	-2.8	496.5	-2.0
African American/Black	14	488.0	486.2	496.9	8.9	486.4	10.5
Asian	26	507.9	511.2	507.0	-0.9	508.5	-1.5
Hispanic/Latino	66	490.6	484.8	488.8	-1.8	484.3	4.5
Multirace	20	499.4	496.7	492.8	-6.6	499.7	-6.9
White	812	497.3	497.8	494.6	-2.7	501.3	-6.7
High need	381	486.2	487.5	484.9	-1.3	485.9	-1.0
Economically disadvantaged	247	490.1	491.5	487.0	-3.1	485.2	1.8
ELs and former ELs	38	491.6	488.5	489.2	-2.4	482.8	6.4
Students with disabilities	201	477.6	478.9	477.7	0.1	478.1	-0.4

Note. Next Generation MCAS Achievement Levels: 440-469 Not Meeting Expectations; 470-499 Partially Meeting Expectations; 500-529 Meeting Expectations; 530-560 Exceeding Expectations.

Table E2. Bellingham Public Schools: Next-Generation MCAS Mathematics Scaled Scores in Grades 3-8, 2018-2021

Group	N (2021)	2018	2019	2021	Change	State (2021)	Above/ below
All	948	496.2	496.2	488.5	-7.7	489.7	-1.2
African American/Black	14	488.4	484.2	483.1	-5.3	477.3	5.8
Asian	26	506.8	512.2	506.4	-0.4	508.6	-2.2
Hispanic/Latino	67	482.6	481.0	478.3	-4.3	476.5	1.8
Multirace	20	495.5	495.7	488.3	-7.2	492.1	-3.8
White	813	496.5	496.6	488.9	-7.6	494.3	-5.4
High need	382	484.1	484.2	479.2	-4.9	479.0	0.2
Economically disadvantaged	247	487.2	488.2	480.4	-6.8	477.4	3.0
ELs and former ELs	39	485.9	480.4	486.2	0.3	477.8	8.4
Students with disabilities	201	476.7	475.1	473.0	-3.7	472.5	0.5

Note. Next Generation MCAS Achievement Levels: 440-469 Not Meeting Expectations; 470-499 Partially Meeting Expectations; 500-529 Meeting Expectations; 530-560 Exceeding Expectations.

Table E3. Bellingham Public Schools: Next-Generation MCAS ELA Percentage Meeting or Exceeding Expectations in Grades 3-8, 2018-2021

Group	N (2021)	2018	2019	2021	Change	State (2021)	Above/ below
All	946	44%	43%	39%	-5	46%	-7
African American/Black	14	18%	24%	36%	18	28%	8
Asian	26	75%	68%	62%	-13	66%	-4
Hispanic/Latino	66	41%	20%	36%	-5	26%	10
Multirace	20	46%	29%	30%	-16	51%	-21
White	812	43%	44%	39%	-4	54%	-15
High need	381	24%	22%	23%	-1	28%	-5
Economically disadvantaged	247	31%	28%	26%	-5	27%	-1
ELs and former ELs	38	38%	30%	42%	4	24%	18
Students with disabilities	201	10%	9%	13%	3	16%	-3

Table E4. Bellingham Public Schools: Next-Generation MCAS Mathematics Percentage Meeting or Exceeding Expectations in Grades 3-8, 2018-2021

Group	N (2021)	2018	2019	2021	Change	State (2021)	Above/ below
All	948	41%	42%	28%	-13	33%	-5
African American/Black	14	27%	19%	14%	-13	14%	0
Asian	26	58%	68%	69%	11	64%	5
Hispanic/Latino	67	18%	23%	18%	0	14%	4
Multirace	20	42%	33%	25%	-17	37%	-12
White	813	42%	43%	28%	-14	40%	-12
High need	382	19%	22%	13%	-6	16%	-3
Economically disadvantaged	247	23%	29%	16%	-7	14%	2
ELs and former ELs	39	14%	16%	28%	14	17%	11
Students with disabilities	201	9%	10%	6%	-3	10%	-4

Table E5. Bellingham Public Schools: Next Generation MCAS ELA and Mathematics Scaled Scores in Grade 10, 2021

Group	ELA				Mathematics			
	N (2021)	2021	State	Above/below	N (2021)	2021	State	Above/below
All	127	505.6	507.3	-1.7	127	498.8	500.6	-1.8
African American/Black	7	—	494.6	—	7	—	486.7	—
Asian	4	—	518.2	—	4	—	520.9	—
Hispanic/Latino	5	—	491.9	—	5	—	485.3	—
Multirace	1	—	510.6	—	1	—	503.9	—
White	110	506.9	512.5	-5.6	110	500.7	504.9	-4.2
High need	49	495.4	493.3	2.1	49	487.0	486.5	0.5
Economically disadvantaged	31	496.5	493.7	2.8	31	488.6	486.6	2.0
ELs and former ELs	3	—	477.9	—	3	—	477.6	—
Students with disabilities	30	492.3	487.2	5.1	30	482.6	479.6	3.0

Table E6. Bellingham Public Schools: Next Generation MCAS ELA and Mathematics Percentage Meeting or Exceeding Expectations in Grade 10, 2021

Group	ELA				Mathematics			
	N (2021)	2021	State	Above/below	N (2021)	2021	State	Above/below
All	127	64%	64%	0%	127	46%	52%	-6%
African American/Black	7	—	41%	—	7	—	27%	—
Asian	4	—	80%	—	4	—	80%	—
Hispanic/Latino	5	—	39%	—	5	—	26%	—
Multirace	1	—	67%	—	1	—	55%	—
White	110	65%	73%	-8%	110	49%	60%	-11%
High need	49	39%	39%	0%	49	24%	26%	-2%
Economically disadvantaged	31	39%	41%	-2%	31	29%	27%	2%
ELs and former ELs	3	—	19%	—	3	—	15%	—
Students with disabilities	30	33%	25%	8%	30	13%	14%	-1%

Table E7. Bellingham Public Schools: Next Generation MCAS Science Percentage Meeting or Exceeding Expectations in Grades 5 and 8, 2019-2021

Group	N (2021)	2019	2021	State (2021)	Above/below
All	300	48%	40%	42%	-2
African American/Black	2	33%	50%	19%	31
Asian	10	—	80%	62%	18
Hispanic/Latino	20	20%	25%	20%	5
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino	4	—	25%	47%	-22
White	263	50%	39%	50%	-11
High need	116	30%	23%	23%	0
Economically disadvantaged	74	35%	24%	21%	3
ELs and former ELs	13	20%	23%	18%	5
Students with disabilities	64	23%	22%	15%	7

Note. Grade 10 results for the spring 2021 STE are not provided because students in the class of 2023 were not required to take the STE test. Information about Competency Determination requirements is available at <https://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/graduation.html>.

Table E8. Bellingham Public Schools: Next-Generation MCAS ELA Percentage Meeting or Exceeding Expectations in Grades 3-10, 2018-2021

Grade	N (2021)	2018	2019	2021	Change	State (2021)	Above/below
3	140	46%	58%	47%	1	51%	-4
4	156	44%	33%	36%	-8	49%	-13
5	141	52%	42%	43%	-9	47%	-4
6	163	53%	51%	43%	-10	47%	-4
7	183	30%	42%	33%	3	43%	-10
8	163	37%	37%	34%	-3	41%	-7
3-8	946	44%	43%	39%	-5	46%	-7
10	127	—	57%	64%	—	64%	0

Table E9. Bellingham Public Schools: Next-Generation MCAS Mathematics Percentage Meeting or Exceeding Expectations in Grades 3-10, 2018-2021

Grade	N (2021)	2018	2019	2021	Change	State (2021)	Above/ below
3	140	45%	45%	29%	-16	33%	-4
4	156	41%	30%	25%	-16	33%	-8
5	143	34%	38%	29%	-5	33%	-4
6	162	49%	54%	25%	-24	33%	-8
7	183	40%	44%	39%	-1	35%	4
8	164	39%	44%	20%	-19	32%	-12
3-8	948	41%	42%	28%	-13	33%	-5
10	127	—	53%	46%	—	52%	-6

Table E10. Bellingham Public Schools: Next-Generation MCAS Science Percentage Meeting or Exceeding Expectations in Grades 5 and 8, 2019-2021

Grade	N (2021)	2019	2020	2021	3-year change	State (2021)
5	142	42%	—	38%	-4	42%
8	158	54%	—	41%	-13	41%
5 and 8	300	48%	—	40%	-8	42%
10	—	—	—	—	—	—

Note. Grade 10 results for the spring 2021 STE are not provided because students in the class of 2023 were not required to take the STE test. Information about Competency Determination requirements is available at <https://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/graduation.html>. In 2019, 10th graders took the Legacy MCAS science test.

Table E11. Bellingham Public Schools: ELA and Mathematics Mean Student Growth Percentile in Grades 3-10, 2019-2021

Grade	ELA				Mathematics			
	N (2021)	2019	2021	State (2021)	N (2021)	2019	2021	State (2021)
3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
4	—	34.5	—	—	—	32.8	—	—
5	131	39.9	34.1	34.9	132	38.5	36.0	31.9
6	146	48.9	45.5	37.3	146	56.4	26.3	26.3
7	170	42.6	33.9	36.1	171	48.9	50.0	35.8
8	153	44.1	32.6	34.8	153	50.6	19.3	27.4
3-8	600	41.9	36.4	35.8	602	45.2	33.4	30.4
10	121	48.2	63.4	52.5	121	34.7	40.4	36.5

Table E12. Bellingham Public Schools: Next-Generation MCAS ELA Percentage Meeting or Exceeding Expectations by Grade and School, 2021

School	3	4	5	6	7	8	3-8	10
Bellingham Early Childhood Center	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
DiPietro Elementary	53%	—	—	—	—	—	53%	—
Stall Brook	42%	—	—	—	—	—	42%	—
Bellingham Memorial	—	36%	44%	44%	35%	—	39%	—
Bellingham High	—	—	—	—	—	33%	33%	65%
Keough Memorial Academy	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
District	47%	36%	43%	43%	33%	34%	39%	64%
State	51%	49%	47%	47%	43%	41%	46%	64%

Table E13. Bellingham Public Schools: Next-Generation MCAS Mathematics Percentage Meeting or Exceeding Expectations by Grade and School, 2021

School	3	4	5	6	7	8	3-8	10
Bellingham Early Childhood Center	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
DiPietro Elementary	34%	—	—	—	—	—	34%	—
Stall Brook	23%	—	—	—	—	—	23%	—
Bellingham Memorial	—	26%	31%	27%	41%	—	31%	—
Bellingham High	—	—	—	—	—	19%	19%	48%
Keough Memorial Academy	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
District	29%	25%	29%	25%	39%	20%	28%	46%
State	33%	33%	33%	33%	35%	32%	33%	52%

Table E14. Bellingham Public Schools: Next-Generation MCAS Science Percentage Meeting or Exceeding Expectations by Grade and School, 2021

School	5	8	5 and 8	10
Bellingham Early Childhood Center	—	—	—	—
DiPietro Elementary	—	—	—	—
Stall Brook	—	—	—	—
Bellingham Memorial	40%	—	40%	—
Bellingham High	—	41%	41%	—
Keough Memorial Academy	—	—	—	—
District	38%	41%	40%	—
State	42%	41%	42%	—

Note. Grade 10 results for the spring 2021 STE are not provided because students in the class of 2023 were not required to take the STE test. Information about Competency Determination requirements is available at <https://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/graduation.html>.

Table E15. Bellingham Public Schools: Next-Generation MCAS ELA Percentage Meeting and Exceeding Expectations in Grades 3-8 by School, 2021

School	All	High need	Economically disadvantaged	Students with disabilities	ELs and former ELs	African American	Asian	Hispanic	Multirace	White
Bellingham Early Childhood Center	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
DiPietro Elementary	53%	26%	32%	0%	—	—	—	42%	—	55%
Stall Brook	42%	29%	40%	14%	—	—	—	—	—	43%
Bellingham Memorial	39%	23%	27%	13%	48%	36%	57%	37%	25%	39%
Bellingham High	33%	13%	17%	5%	—	—	60%	—	—	31%
Keough Memorial Academy	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
District	39%	23%	26%	13%	42%	36%	62%	36%	30%	39%
State	46%	28%	27%	16%	24%	28%	66%	26%	51%	54%

Table E16. Bellingham Public Schools: Next-Generation MCAS Mathematics Percentage Meeting and Exceeding Expectations in Grades 3-8 by School, 2021

School	All	High need	Economically disadvantaged	Students with disabilities	ELs and former ELs	African American	Asian	Hispanic	Multirace	White
Bellingham Early Childhood Center	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
DiPietro Elementary	34%	10%	8%	8%	—	—	—	25%	—	37%
Stall Brook	23%	14%	33%	5%	—	—	—	—	—	22%
Bellingham Memorial	31%	14%	17%	6%	29%	18%	64%	20%	25%	32%
Bellingham High	19%	15%	14%	5%	—	—	80%	—	—	15%
Keough Memorial Academy	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
District	28%	13%	16%	6%	28%	14%	69%	18%	25%	28%
State	33%	16%	14%	10%	17%	14%	64%	14%	37%	40%

Table E17. Bellingham Public Schools: Next-Generation MCAS ELA Percentage Meeting or Exceeding Expectations in Grade 10, 2021

School	All	High need	Economically disadvantaged	Students with disabilities	ELs and former ELs	African American	Asian	Hispanic	Multirace	White
Bellingham High	65%	39%	40%	32%	—	—	—	—	—	67%
Keough Memorial Academy	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
District	64%	39%	39%	33%	—	—	—	—	—	65%
State	64%	39%	41%	25%	19%	41%	80%	39%	67%	73%

Table E18. Bellingham Public Schools: Next-Generation MCAS Mathematics Percentage Meeting or Exceeding Expectations in Grade 10, 2021

School	All	High need	Economically disadvantaged	Students with disabilities	ELs and former ELs	African American	Asian	Hispanic	Multirace	White
Bellingham High	48%	27%	30%	16%	—	—	—	—	—	52%
Keough Memorial Academy	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
District	46%	24%	29%	13%	—	—	—	—	—	49%
State	52%	26%	27%	14%	15%	27%	80%	26%	55%	60%

Table E19. Bellingham Public Schools: Next-Generation MCAS Science Percentage Meeting and Exceeding Expectations in Grades 5-8 by School, 2021

School	All	High Needs	Economically	Students with	EL and Former EL	African American	Asian	Hispanic	Multi-race	White
Bellingham Early Childhood Center	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
DiPietro Elementary	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Stall Brook	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Bellingham Memorial	40%	22%	23%	22%	20%	50%	50%	33%	33%	40%
Bellingham High	41%	27%	29%	23%	50%	—	88%	25%	—	40%
Keough Memorial Academy	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
District	40%	23%	24%	22%	23%	—	80%	25%	—	39%
State	42%	23%	21%	15%	18%	19%	62%	20%	47%	50%

Table E20. Bellingham Public Schools: Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rates by Student Group, 2017-2020

Group	N (2020)	2017	2018	2019	2020	4-year change	State (2020)
All	156	91.6	89.2	92.9	94.2	2.6	89.0
African American/Black	1	—	—	—	—	—	83.1
Asian	6	—	—	—	100	—	95.0
Hispanic/Latino	11	62.5	77.8	100	90.9	28.4	77.2
Multirace, non-Hispanic/Latino	4	—	—	—	—	—	88.6
White	133	93.0	89.2	92.3	94.0	1.0	93.2
High need	73	85.7	81.2	84.9	89.0	3.3	81.1
Economically disadvantaged ^a	45	91.3	79.5	85.7	91.1	-0.2	80.6
ELs	1	—	—	—	—	—	68.3
Students with disabilities	44	77.4	71.1	80.4	81.8	4.4	74.9

^a Four-year cohort graduation rate for students from low-income families used 2017, 2018, and 2019 rates.

Table E21. Bellingham Public Schools: Five-Year Cohort Graduation Rates by Student Group, 2016-2019

Group	N (2019)	2016	2017	2018	2019	4-year change	State (2019)
All	156	91.9	94.4	90.6	94.9	3.0	90.1
African American/Black	—	—	—	—	—	—	84.1
Asian	—	—	—	—	—	—	96.3
Hispanic/Latino	6	83.3	75.0	77.8	—	—	78.5
Multirace, non-Hispanic/Latino	1	—	—	—	—	—	90.3
White	142	92.4	95.3	90.8	94.4	2.0	93.9
High need	73	86.6	90.5	84.1	89.0	2.4	82.4
Low-income households	35	87.1	95.7	84.1	88.6	1.5	82.0
ELs	5	—	—	—	—	—	71.1
Students with disabilities	51	74.4	80.6	73.7	86.3	11.9	78.2

Table E22. Bellingham Public Schools: In-School Suspension Rates by Student Group, 2018-2021

Group	2018	2019	2020	2021	4-year change	State (2021)
All	0.6	0.5	0.3	0.1	-0.5	0.3
African American/Black	—	4.3	—	—	—	0.3
Asian	—	—	—	—	—	0.0
Hispanic/Latino	—	—	—	—	—	0.2
Multirace, non-Hispanic or Latino	—	—	—	—	—	0.4
White	0.5	0.5	0.3	0.2	-0.3	0.3
High need	1.2	0.7	0.6	0.2	-1.0	0.4
Economically disadvantaged	1.3	0.6	0.6	0.4	-0.9	0.3
ELs	—	—	—	—	—	0.1
Students with disabilities	1.0	1.0	0.9	—	—	0.6

Table E23. Bellingham Public Schools: Out-of-School Suspension Rates by Student Group, 2018-2021

Group	2018	2019	2020	2021	4-year change	State (2021)
All	1.5	2.0	1.5	0.4	-1.1	0.5
African American/Black	—	10.9	—	—	—	0.6
Asian	—	—	—	—	—	0.1
Hispanic/Latino	—	—	—	—	—	0.5
Multirace, non-Hispanic or Latino	—	—	—	—	—	0.7
White	1.4	2.0	1.3	0.4	-1.0	0.5
High need	2.3	3.0	2.5	0.7	-1.6	0.7
Economically disadvantaged	2.0	3.2	3.1	0.9	-1.1	0.7
ELs	—	—	—	—	—	0.3
Students with disabilities	3.3	3.9	3.4	—	—	1.1

Table E24. Bellingham Public Schools: Dropout Rates by Student Group, 2017-2020

Group	N (2020)	2017	2018	2019	2020	4-year change	State (2020)
All	594	0.9	0.8	1.3	0.8	-0.1	1.6
African American/Black	19	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.2
Asian	17	0.0	0.0	6.3	0.0	0.0	0.5
Hispanic/Latino	32	0.0	5.4	4.0	12.5	12.5	3.5
Multirace, non-Hispanic/Latino	16	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.6
White	509	1.0	0.6	1.1	0.2	-0.8	0.9
High need	209	1.5	2.3	2.0	2.4	0.9	2.9
Economically disadvantaged	107	2.1	2.8	1.0	2.8	0.7	3.1
ELs	8	—	0.0	16.7	25.0	—	5.6
Students with disabilities	143	1.6	3.6	1.5	1.4	-0.2	2.6

Table E25. Bellingham Public Schools: Advanced Coursework Completion Rates by Student Group, 2019-2021

Group	N (2020)	2019	2020	2021	3-year change	State (2021)
All	294	68.5	66.7	72.4	3.9	65.3
African American/Black	7	—	42.9	100	—	54.9
Asian	7	88.9	90.0	100	11.1	84.3
Hispanic/Latino	12	64.7	61.1	33.3	-31.4	50.2
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino	10	—	50.0	70.0	—	65.5
White	258	68.2	67.3	72.9	4.7	69.6
High need	109	44.8	40.7	48.6	3.8	47.7
Economically disadvantaged	60	56.6	42.2	48.3	-8.3	49.0
ELs	5	—	—	—	—	28.1
Students with disabilities	72	29.7	29.6	37.5	7.8	33.1