Groton-Dunstable Regional School District

Comprehensive District Review Report

May 2022

Contents

MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF
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Commissioner
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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 the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District (hereafter, GDRSD) in May 2022. Data collection activities associated with the review focused on understanding how district systems, structures, and practices operate in support of district continuous improvement efforts. The review focused on the six standards (and related indicators) that DESE has identified as being important components of district effectiveness.

The following text highlights the main strengths and areas for growth for each standard that surfaced from the review by the district review team. In addition, DESE staff-provided recommendations for the district, based on the findings of strengths and areas of growth identified.

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

The GDRSD superintendent is supported by a five-person central office leadership team. The district has recently created additional district-level coordinator positions for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and social-emotional learning. These coordinators report to two members of the central office leadership team. The school committee recently appointed an equity, diversity, and inclusion advisory committee, which includes representatives from the school committee, district staff, students, and parents. As GDRSD's current strategic plan (2017-2022) ends, district leaders have laid a foundation for the forthcoming strategic plan, which includes a focus on Acceptance, Belonging, Community, and Districtwide multitiered systems of support (MTSS) that together promote Equitable outcomes for all students across the district (e.g., A + B + C + D = E).

Curriculum and Instruction

Interviews with GDRSD district and school leaders indicated that the district has the structures to support the implementation of curricula designed to meet Massachusetts standards and to prepare all students for college, career, and civic participation. Most curricular programs used in GDRSD have not been reviewed or rated by CURATE,[1] other than Eureka Math, which received a CURATE rating of meets expectations for K-5 and partially meets expectations for 6-8. District and school leaders noted interest in increasing vertical alignment across disciplines throughout the district. Overall, for the K-5 grade band, instructional observations suggest generally strong emotional

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[1] CUrriculum RAtings by TEachers (CURATE): Center for Instructional Support (mass.edu).

support, high classroom organization and student engagement (Grades 4-5), and mixed evidence of consistently rigorous instructional support. For the 6-8 grade band, instructional observations provide evidence of high classroom organization and generally strong student engagement, and mixed evidence of consistently rigorous instructional and emotional support. For the 9-12 grade band, instructional observations provide mixed evidence of strong emotional support, strong evidence of classroom organization, and mixed evidence of student engagement or of consistently rigorous instructional support.

Assessment

GDRSD leaders referenced their ongoing efforts to identify appropriate assessments and data sources to support their districtwide MTSS. They described recent progress with more consistent expectations about data collection but note ongoing efforts to identify structures and strategies to support ongoing data review and use across school-level teams. Schools administer Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS; K-3) and curriculum benchmarks (K-8) for English language arts (ELA) and administer IXL (K-8) and curriculum benchmarks (K-8) for mathematics. At the secondary level, a district-developed mathematics benchmark for grades 9-12 was noted. Evidence collected across interviews, focus groups, and district documents suggest that data collection is not yet consistent districtwide, and data use is largely teacher and/or school driven because clear district structures and expectations not in place. The central office leadership team and school leadership teams meet regularly to discuss the district's approach to using data, and district leaders seek to refine systems throughout the district to support the ongoing review, use, and sharing of data.

Human Resources and Professional Development

GDRSD is pursuing opportunities to strengthen its workforce, including expanding student teacher opportunities, and participating in DESE's job fair. District staff also expressed interest in identifying additional short- and long-term strategies to diversify its workforce, through collaboration with the newly hired coordinator of Diversity and Inclusion. GDRSD has a mentoring and induction program to support newly hired teachers and administrators.

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 Practice. The sample of the summative teacher evaluations reviewed were all complete and included both student learning and professional practice SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely) goals. A review of all summative evaluations for 2020-2021 for administrative staff showed seven administrative staff had summative evaluations available for review. A review of the available evaluations indicated that all administrators were not developing student learning, professional practice, or school improvement SMART goals.

Student Support

At the time of review, GDRSD was taking proactive steps to ensure a safe and supportive school climate and culture for all GDRSD students. Formal district initiatives related to social-emotional learning include the use of Responsive Classroom in all elementary (K-5) classrooms and a

districtwide book study of *The Power of Our Words*. A new district-level coordinator of social-emotional learning was hired to coordinate the district's Responsive Classroom initiative. A student support team (SST) process is used across all schools to identify students in need of support and develop appropriate intervention plans. Although staff are familiar with the procedures related to student support, they described the process as long and noted that there can be challenges to promptly revisiting each case as scheduled. The district has created additional district coordinator positions as well as established partnerships to expand student access to social-emotional learning and DEI related initiatives to ultimately ensure that GDRSD schools are welcoming, culturally responsive and inclusive of all student backgrounds.

Financial and Asset Management

GDRSD's Office of Business and Finance is responsible for budget development and maintenance, payroll, benefits, accounts payable, and accounts receivable. This office is led by the director of business and finance and is supported by the assistant to the director of business and finance, an accountant, the accounts payable coordinator, and a payroll specialist. Evidence from budget documents, end-of-year reports, and information provided by interview and focus group participants indicates that the community provides sufficient general appropriation funds each year to meet net school spending and that the district uses available funding effectively to support student outcomes in alignment with the district's improvement plan.

Groton-Dunstable Regional School District: 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. 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 to provide to the district.

Methodology

A district review team consisting of AIR staff members and AIR subcontractors, with expertise in each district standard, reviews documentation and extant data before conducting an onsite 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 district review 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 GDRSD was conducted during the week of May 23, 2022. The site visit included 16 hours of interviews and focus groups with approximately 76 stakeholders, including school committee members, district administrators, school staff, students, students' families, and teachers' association representatives. The review team conducted seven teacher focus groups with 15 elementary-school teachers, 12 middle-school teachers, and 11 high-school teachers.

The site team also conducted 58 observations of classroom instruction in four GDRSD schools.[4]

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[2] DESE's District Standards and Indicators are at http://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/.

[4] DESE exempted the early childhood center from instructional observations.

Certified team members conducted instructional observations using the Teachstone CLASS protocol.

Additional information is in the appendices. Appendix A includes details about site visit review activities. 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

GDRSD is led by Dr. Laura Chesson who is in her fourth year in the role. The central office five-member leadership team supports the superintendent and includes an assistant superintendent of schools for curriculum, instruction, and assessment and directors of human resources, student support, finance and business, and technology. The district is governed by a seven-member school committee, which is elected for staggered three-year terms.

In the 2021-2022 school year, there were 190 teachers in the district, with 2,315 students were enrolled in the district's five schools. Table 1 provides an overview of student enrollment by school.

Table 1. Groton-Dunstable Regional School District: Schools, Type, Grades Served, and Enrollment, 2021-2022

School	Type	Grades Served	Enrollment
Boutwell Early Childhood Center	Pre-K	PK	69
Swallow Union Elementary School	Elementary	K-4	308
Florence Roche Elementary School	Elementary	K-4	519
Groton-Dunstable Regional Middle School	Middle	5-8	715
Groton-Dunstable Regional High School	High	9-12	704
Totals			2,315

Note. Data sourced from https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/profiles/student.aspx?orgtypecode=5&fycode=2022&type=DISTRICT&orgcode=06730000 (October 1, 2021).

Between 2018 and 2021 overall student enrollment decreased by 4.2 percent, from 2,417 in 2018 to 2,315 in 2021. In 2021, students from low-income households made up 11.5 percent of the district (state average is 43.8 percent). The district served a smaller percentage of students with disabilities as the state (15.8 percent versus 18.9 percent) and smaller percentages of English learners (ELs; 1.2 percent versus 11 percent) and students whose first language is not English (16.6 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 in Tables B1 and B2 in Appendix B.

The total in-district per-pupil expenditure was greater than the median in-district per-pupil expenditure for K-12 districts of similar size in fiscal year 2020, $16,212 as compared with

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[5] Data sourced from https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/mcas/achievement_level.aspx?linkid=32&orgcode=06730000&orgtypecode=5& (2021).

$15,857, but less than average state spending per pupil ($16,963). Actual net school spending was higher than what is required by the Chapter 70 state education aid program, as shown in Table B4 in Appendix B.

Student Performance

The percentage of GDRSD students meeting or exceeding expectations on the Next-Generation MCAS (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System) is higher than the average state rate for all tested grades and subject areas. 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	Change	State (2021)	Above/below
3	167	75%	75%	73%	-2	51%	22
4	172	69%	74%	73%	4	49%	24
5	152	57%	69%	63%	6	47%	16
6	190	62%	59%	64%	2	47%	17
7	169	47%	70%	66%	19	43%	23
8	177	61%	61%	60%	-1	41%	19
3-8	1,027	62%	68%	66%	4	46%	20
10	164	—	85%	80%	—	64%	16

Note. Data sourced from https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/mcas/achievement_level.aspx?linkid=32&orgcode=00720000&orgtypecode=5& (2021).

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

Grade	N (2021)	2018	2019	2021	Change	State (2021)	Above/below
3	163	68%	62%	55%	-13	33%	22
4	174	72%	76%	72%	0	33%	39
5	149	54%	60%	46%	-8	33%	13
6	183	60%	63%	52%	-8	33%	19
7	163	69%	73%	57%	-12	35%	22
8	169	74%	71%	60%	-14	32%	28
3-8	1,001	66%	68%	57%	-9	33%	24
10	164	—	95%	81%	—	52%	29

Note. Data sourced from https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/mcas/achievement_level.aspx?linkid=32&orgcode=00720000&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	152	71%	—	65%	-6	42%
8	170	73%	—	69%	-4	41%
5 and 8	322	72%	—	67%	-5	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=00720000&orgtypecode=5 & (2021).

The district's four-year graduation rate was 97.9 percent in 2021 above the state rate of 89.8 percent. In addition, the district's five-year graduation rate was 98.4 percent in 2020 above the state rate of 91 percent.

Leadership and Governance

GDRSD is governed by a seven-member school committee, which is elected for staggered three-year terms. In April 2017, the school committee voted unanimously to hire Dr. Laura Chesson as superintendent, who started in this role on July 1, 2017.

According to the fiscal years 2022 and 2023 budget books, the school committee's primary responsibility is to establish "purposes, programs, and procedures that will best produce the educational achievement needed by students." In addition, the committee "is also responsible for wise management of resources available to the school system." Finally, the document states that the key roles of the school committee are to "function primarily as a legislative body to formulate and adopt policy, by selecting an executive officer to implement policy, and by evaluating the results."

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	■ Regularly reviews disaggregated student data ■ Takes responsibility for securing adequate funding for the district	■ Active engagement in negotiations with the teacher's association
District and school leadership	■ Central office's leadership team and senior leadership team (SLT) meet regularly and focus on consistent implementation of observations and evaluations across the schools	■ District-level engagement with educators and families
District and school improvement planning	■ District's improvement plan guides the district's budgetary and policy decisions	■ Connection between school improvement plans and the district's strategic plan
Budget development	■ Annual budgets developed through a participatory and transparent process	

School Committee Governance

Evidence from GDRSD school committee minutes and supporting documentation, as well as interview and focus group data, indicate that the school committee fulfills its responsibilities as defined in Massachusetts state law. School committee members and district leaders stated that the school committee plays an active role in securing adequate funding for the district. For example, school committee members explained that they serve as "the face of the school district" when communicating with municipal leaders. They added that because they are a regional school district, the school committee issues an assessment to both Groton and Dunstable and then engages in discussions about feasible alternatives for securing the necessary funding. They noted that the school committee plays an important role in "maintaining credibility" so that the towns know that the school committee and district leaders "are running the district in a fiscally responsible way, which is

key to maintain [the district's] funding." They added that one of the challenges they have faced in past years is that "there is always more need than money to pay for things," so the school committee has worked with the current and prior superintendents to assess and prioritize needs and then "worked with the administration to look at ways to cut costs [by] reallocating or outsourcing certain services, and then reallocating the cost savings toward educational priorities." For example, recently, the district liberated some funding by outsourcing the cafeteria and custodial services and "moving out of the group insurance."

School committee and district leaders indicated they "work together as a team" to build support within the communities for the schools. They stated that the school committee has "liaisons" who attend meetings and serve as the point of contact for various community organizations, such as the Groton Dunstable Education Foundation, which is "a fundraising arm" that provides grants for teachers. In addition, the school committee hosts public forums, as well as formal and informal open houses, to inform the larger community and "give the public an opportunity" to provide input on various decisions. For example, the superintendent said that the district is currently building a new elementary school, and district leaders engaged in "a visioning process with any stakeholders from the entire community [who were] willing to come to the table."

School committee members indicated they take an active role in negotiations with the teacher's association. They stated that "at least two to three school committee members are part of all negotiations with the different units. However, teacher association leaders expressed a desire for the school committee to have a stronger presence throughout the negotiation process. They confirmed that one or two members of the school committee are involved in the discussions but noted that "unfortunately, a lot of times those discussions are actually being run by the superintendent, so sometimes it feels like [they are] actually negotiating with [her]." They added that although

> they are supposed to be negotiating with the school committee, the superintendent is very present with all levels of negotiation [with all the units]. She definitely speaks her mind and gets her point across, so [it] feels like sometimes the school committee isn't running the meeting; they're just going off of her lead.

They also indicated that there have been "several times" when school committee members were not in attendance at some of the negotiation meetings and they only met with the superintendent and other district administrators (e.g., assistant superintendent, finance, and human resources leaders).

Interviews with school committee members and district leaders, as well as the review of available documentation (e.g., school committee meeting agendas and minutes, school committee's website) indicate that the school committee has structures in place to disseminate information to the community and provides opportunities for stakeholders to share their feedback. Meeting agendas, minutes, and all supporting documentation (e.g., presentation slides, budget documents) is available on the GDRSD website, the school committee and subcommittees open their meetings to members of the community who choose to attend. All meetings are broadcast via live feed through the local cable access channel, as well as via streaming (e.g., YouTube and Groton channel's Vimeo website at https://vimeo.com/thegrotonchannel). In addition, the school committee publishes a monthly newsletter (on its website, at https://www.gdrsd.org/page/school-committee) that highlights key information about ongoing activities taking place across the school district.

School committee meeting minutes and presentations, as well as information provided by school committee and district leaders indicate that the district regularly collects and reviews various sources of data, including DIBELS, IXL, MCAS, student absentee and discipline data, as well as "individual school-oriented data" (e.g., anecdotal data from principals' meetings with parents) and data from various behavioral screeners (e.g., Youth Risk Behavior Survey, screener for suicidal ideation). One district leader noted that the school committee has established "a clear expectation" about the committee's aim to "make data driven decisions." Similarly, a school committee member noted that the "role of the administration is to bring the data, analyze it, and provide recommendations" so the committee can consider this information for decision making (e.g., policy and budgetary decisions) and also described working "with the administration to identify other districts that [have] similar school population" (e.g., based on geographic location, demographics) and then use data from those districts to "compare and benchmark" the district's outcomes.

School committee members agreed that they work closely with the superintendent and other stakeholders to ensure improved student outcomes. They noted they receive "progress updates and data" across the school year and "translate" that information "into guidance and policy to help support the district and plan improvements in the district." For example, they said that in the previous couple of years, they approved funds to hire more reading specialists because student outcome data "indicated areas of weakness in reading." Also, after returning to "full in-person learning after COVID," data indicated students "were struggling in math," so they decided to hire additional mathematics interventionists and to implement new interventions earlier in the school year, as well as to implement those interventions more frequently in the early grade levels (i.e., Grades K-2).

In addition, school committee members noted that in 2021, they passed a "resolution on anti-racism" and as part of this initiative, they formed the equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) advisory committee, which has been charged with reviewing district policies and providing recommendations for better alignment of policies with broader goals of DEI. Further details are described in the *Policies for EDI Advisory Committee Review* document, which provides guidance about which questions the EDI advisory committee should consider when reviewing each policy. For example, the document indicates that EDI Advisory Committee Members should consider the following: Does the policy help achieve equitable outcomes for students in the district? Is the policy inclusive? Are certain groups or identities overlooked or excluded? Does the policy respect and foster diversity in the district? Does the policy contain language or terminology that might perpetuate inequities or exclusion of certain groups?

As detailed in the school committee minutes and comments from district leaders, the school committee evaluates the superintendent's performance annually as required by law. District leaders explained that at the beginning of the evaluation cycle (in late fall), the superintendent meets with the curriculum instruction assessment and accountability (CIA&A) subcommittee to collaboratively establish the indicators to be used for the year's evaluation. They noted that the criteria for selecting key indicators are "tied to the overall district's improvement plan." Once the superintendent and CIA&A subcommittee agree on the evaluation goals and indicators, the full school committee reviews and approves it. During the school year, the superintendent provides "regular feedback and updates," as well as a midyear update (in January or February). Toward the end of the evaluation

cycle, the superintendent submits all artifacts and then each committee member conducts an individual evaluation. Afterward, the individual evaluations are compiled by one school committee member into a composite "Summative Evaluation Report," which becomes the evaluation of record. Committee members noted they try to complete the evaluation prior to town elections in case there is a change in the school committee membership (i.e., so that only people who have worked with the Superintendent are involved in the evaluation). This year's Summative Evaluation Report included ratings on six indicators: Student Learning, Human Resources Management and Development, Communication, Commitment to High Standards, Cultural Proficiency, and Continuous Learning.

District and School Leadership

The GDRSD central office's leadership team is composed of the superintendent, the assistant superintendent of schools for curriculum, instruction and assessment, the director of human resources, the director of student services, the director of finance and operations, and the director of technology. In addition, the SLT comprises principals, assistant principals, team chairs, and curriculum directors. This team meets with the central office's leadership team every other Friday. Then on the other Friday, the principals meet with the assistant superintendent of schools for curriculum, instruction, and assessment; other school coordinators are included in these meetings as needed (e.g., to cover relevant topics). A district leader indicated that this school year, the SLT meetings were led by the assistant superintendent of schools for curriculum, instruction, and assessment and that this year's meetings have largely focused on observations and evaluations, so that the relevant activities are implemented consistently across the schools.

Elementary- and high-school educators and high-school specialists indicated various leadership opportunities are offered at the schools for staff who volunteer to participate. For example, they noted that recently educators were invited to attend a professional development opportunity focused on culturally responsive classrooms, and those who enrolled continue to meet as a group and share information with other educators during staff meetings. They also said that other leadership opportunities are available for those who volunteer to participate in the faculty council, which meets monthly with school administrators and brings to their attention any emerging questions, issues or concerns raised by educators and staff at the schools (e.g., disciplinary issues, matters related to learning disabilities, class sizes for certain subjects). Additional leadership opportunities are available for educators who volunteer to participate as faculty council members, curriculum coordinators, principal's search committee, members of the school council (which is composed of teachers, students, and parents), and other district task forces (e.g., safety task force) or school-based committees (e.g., positive behavioral interventions and supports and New England Association of Schools and Colleges).

Elementary- and middle-school educators expressed some concerns regarding communication between the district and educators at the schools. For example, elementary- and middle-school educators indicated that although they have noticed the creation of new positions in the district's office, the district has not communicated to them the rationale for the creation of those positions or what their role is in relation to the work being conducted at the schools. For instance, they noted that although the district hired a DEI coordinator and a coordinator of social-emotional learning this school year, they were not aware of the roles or responsibilities of these individuals.

In addition, across focus groups, educators shared concerns about communication between central office and teachers. Specifically, multiple teachers spoke to a desire for increased communication about how decisions are made, including more active participation by teachers in decision-making processes. For example, some teachers did not understand the rationale for the district's decision to relocate offices into the middle-school building this year. Similarly, unclear communication from district and school leaders about DESE's Sheltered English Immersion endorsement was noted by some teachers as particularly impactful on staff morale this year. Specifically, teachers described being told that the endorsement would be required as a condition of employment for all teachers. Because the district did not offer trainings aligned to the Sheltered English Immersion endorsement requirements, teachers found and paid for outside courses, for which they were not reimbursed. However, more recently, district leaders informed teachers that the endorsement was not in fact required for all, and as a result teachers were frustrated by this confusion.

Parents also indicated a desire for improved communication from the district regarding ongoing and new initiatives. One parent described that information is "communicated in silos, so for some people, it's hard to grab what's going on." Parents described a few examples of initiatives when district leaders are meeting with parents but indicated an interest in more authentic involvement that begins as initiatives are being selected, as opposed to when it is time to implement. In addition, some parents expressed concern that although the school committee recently established the DEI subcommittee, the group has been largely inactive this year. Parents expressed frustration with the fact that they shared concerns about equity and inclusion with the school committee and other relevant school or district teams but felt that their concerns were not adequately addressed. One parent noted that although the district "is starting to make steps forward, there's been no change on the ground" and as a result some of the issues parents raised are still occurring throughout schools.

District and School Improvement Planning

The GDRSD 2017-2022 District Strategy documentation indicates that the district conducted a needs assessment, which included input from stakeholders through surveys and focus groups, as well as trend data. The needs assessment resulted in the following five key findings: a need to reverse declining student performance caused by the loss of essential staffing and resources; a need to restore and improve programs to meet the needs of students in the areas of the arts, library science, physical/behavioral health, technology and engineering, and foreign language; a need to provide comprehensive social and emotional support to students; a need to improve performance of students with disabilities while meeting the needs of all learners; and a need to provide essential support services including kindergarten assistants, technology support staff, nursing staff, custodial and maintenance staff, business office staff, and administrative assistants.

The school improvement plans include specific action plans that focus on community relations, student performance, and resources, infrastructure, and educational environment. Each action plan lists the corresponding timeline and staff responsible for its execution. However, the school improvement plans do not specify how these goals and action plans are connected to the district's strategic plan.

School committee members stated that the district's improvement plan guides the district's budgetary and policy decisions, and that their "work is embedded and aligned with the work that

[school] administrators and [educators are] doing." As the current strategy document ends, district leaders have already laid a foundation for the forthcoming strategic plan, which includes a focus on Acceptance, Belonging, Community, and Districtwide MTSS that together support Equitable outcomes for all students across the district (e.g., A + B + C + D = E). District leaders and school staff indicated that many of the current years' initiatives have been framed by this forthcoming strategic plan structure; however, documentation was not yet available for the full strategic plan at the time of the district review.

In addition, high-school specialists and teachers indicated that across this school year, school staff has participated in various meetings (e.g., staff and department meetings) to brainstorm and provide input for the development of the "Vision of the Graduate," as part of their compliance with New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) requirements. They added that members of the community have also provided input for this work. The focus on the "Vision of the Graduate" efforts is evident in the high-school's improvement plan, which lists under the action plans for the community relations goal, the "development of a Vision of the Graduate in accordance with [their] high priority initiatives associated with [their] Decennial School Accreditation as a member of the NEASC." In addition, the action plan under the student performance goal states that "once a Vision of the Graduate draft has been determined, [they] will identify areas where specified skills will be expected to be learned/practiced within each course."

Budget Development

GDRSD is responsible for preparing the annual operating budget in accordance with school committee guidance, state policies and guidelines, and the district's key goals and objectives. As discussed in the School Committee Governance section, the school committee reviews and considers various sources of data (e.g., DIBELS, IXL, MCAS, student absentee and discipline data) for policy and budgetary decisions.

According to the fiscal years 2022 and 2023 budget books, the budget goals for the previous two school years have been "based on responding to anticipated staff and student needs as a result of COVID-19 effects on teaching and learning." The document also states that the district's focus for these years is "health safety for employees and students, educational support for students that have fallen below grade-level standards and support for students dealing with ongoing social, emotional and behavioral effect stemming from the pandemic." For example, as discussed in the School Committee Governance section, in the previous two years, the school committee has approved funds to hire reading specialists and mathematics interventionists in response to student outcome data that suggested the need for additional supports for students in these subjects.

Evidence from the fiscal year 2022 and 2023 budget books and information provided by school committee and district leaders indicates that district and school leaders—including building administrators, curriculum leaders, the finance team, and the school committee's budget and finance subcommittee—collaborate to develop the budget each year through a participatory and transparent process. In September, district leaders send budget preparation packets to all building and district administrators to support their budget projections for the following year. The director of finance and operations stated that the budget preparation packets include budget data for the previous four years. In October, the school committee approves the budget guidance and priorities

and in November it adopts the year's calendar for creating the district's budget development and deliberations take place in November and December. Principals monitor staffing needs and present information about needs and rationales throughout the budget process. Their budget requests are made in collaboration with the district leaders' priorities and timelines. Principals state that their funding is obtained through the central office (e.g., funds for basic supplies, professional development, textbooks) so they need to discuss and decide with district leaders' the priorities for these budget allocations and the funding schedule.

In December, the school committee and towns review the proposed budget and enrollment data, as well as the tentative budget placeholder for each town. In February, the superintendent presents a tentative budget to the school committee, followed by a public hearing and budget deliberations by the school committee in March. After the school committee adopts the final budget, district leaders and the school committee meet with town officials in March and April to discuss the adopted budget. Finally, each town votes on the school assessments between April and May. According to the fiscal year 2022 and 2023 budget books, the school committee regularly meets with the towns to discuss capital and technology funding.

According to the fiscal year 2023 budget book, the recommended budget is a level service budget and the general fund operating budget increased by 2.67 percent. In addition, the document forecasts a 15 percent increase in health insurance renewal and 20 percent increase in electricity expenses due to additional demand of HVAC equipment and air purifiers across the district. The document states that circuit breaker funds will help defray costs and reduce town assessments.

Recommendations

- District leadership, including school committee members, should have clearly defined roles in negotiations with the teachers' association such that each party can actively contribute to the process.
- District leadership should establish clear processes for communicating with school-level educators and families regarding new and ongoing policies, initiatives, and decisions. The process should include opportunities for educators and families to participate in the decision-making process as well as implementation.
- District and school leaders should ensure that the goals and actions included in school improvement plans are aligned with the priorities established in the district's strategic plan.

Curriculum and Instruction

GDRSD has curriculum maps developed which align curricular materials across subject areas and grades to Massachusetts state frameworks. At the elementary- and middle-school levels, district curricula include Units of Study, and their phonics supplement for ELA, and the Eureka Math program. At the school level, various texts and textbooks are used to address material outlined in scope and sequence documents for each course. Scope and sequence documents across each grade level and content area identify essential questions, standards, and assessments to ensure consistency in instruction. Teachers reported following the curriculum maps with fidelity, even as they have faced recent challenges with alignment, broad standards, and changing priorities throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. There is more variation in instruction and classroom assessments, but teachers reported basing their instruction on district standards and curricula. In addition, the district has well-developed curriculum maps aligning curricular content to Massachusetts standards across all grades and content areas. Lastly, GDRSD has a variety of academic offerings and has created structures to expand access to courses in the least restrictive environment for special education students. 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	▪ Well-developed and used curriculum maps	▪ Curriculum review and selection process that results in high quality, cohesive materials aligned with appropriate standards, and aligned vertically and horizontally
Classroom instruction	▪ Student-focused instruction, such as social-emotional learning-aligned methods, are supported through resources and professional development	
Student access to coursework	▪ Concrete plans and supports for better inclusion of special education students in mainstream classrooms	▪ Increased access to and participation in advanced courses for students with disabilities

Curriculum Selection and Use

At the elementary level, GDRSD provides Units of Study ELA programs, phonics standards and supports, Eureka Math, and Mystery Science. The middle school uses the Unit of Studies ELA program and Eureka Math. At the secondary levels, teachers reported drawing from common textbooks and guidelines. The district also has a detailed scope and sequence document showing progressions in each discipline from kindergarten through Grade 12. District leaders, school leaders, and teachers also described participation in the development, implementation, and review of standards-aligned curricula. However, district leaders noted that there is not yet a systematic review process for all district curricula. Recently, most examples of this work have been in response to specific educator concerns. For example, when a group of teachers approached the assistant

superintendent with concerns about the fifth grade social studies curriculum, a consultant was. District leaders noted that this approach was "not as systematic" as they would hope for and spoke to the importance of establishing systematic curricular review to support their district goal for MTSS. They indicated that they are currently developing plans to formalize the review schedule and process.

The district's most recent curriculum selection process led to the implementation of Eureka Math for K-8. Although the selection process occurred before the current assistant superintendent of schools for curriculum, instruction, and assessment was employed by the district, she noted that district leaders formerly worked to combine the selected curriculum with a workshop model, to align with instructional strategies already in use throughout the district. The district is currently selecting new textbooks for use at the high school. District leaders described a rigorous review process that included student voice as well as a lens on DEI, and noted that the district is close to making final recommendations following a review of feedback. Curriculum selection includes input from multiple stakeholders, including the DEI coordinator, teachers, and students; ultimate decision making rests with district leaders.

Although district staff have created curriculum guides that articulate the alignment with the Massachusetts learning standards and curriculum frameworks used in schools across the district, most curricula used in the district are either not rated or ineligible for ratings by CURATE, except for Eureka Math which meets expectations for K-5 and partially meets expectations for 6-8. Throughout focus groups and interviews, school staff generally agreed that the curriculum is vertically aligned across classrooms, though they reported increasing challenges in this area over the past two years. For example, high-school teachers claimed that time allocated for reviewing and aligning the curriculum has diminished, and some described a growing disconnect with middle-school teachers. As one high-school teacher explained, "my dissatisfaction is the lack of alignment with us and the . . . middle school . . . we are not given time." Although school leaders and teachers both expressed confidence that the curriculum was aligned in most respects, they also suggested that review and alignment work was less formal in that it relied more on meetings and less on clear, detailed documentation. District leaders explained that alignment efforts have expanded over time, but the COVID-19 pandemic caused a setback in more recent years, which is consistent with teachers' remarks.

District leaders have provided additional curricular supports, including curriculum pacing guides and supplements to established curricula. Teachers reported that the pacing guides facilitate alignment by providing a roadmap for teachers to meet specific benchmarks over time, including suggested units, assessments, and materials. Several teachers agreed supports are available to help teachers implement the curriculum, and particularly to help provide appropriate levels of scaffolding and support to students. For example, staff noted that the mathematics curriculum was language-based, presenting barriers for some ELs and students with disabilities. The district has amended parts of the curriculum, including the adoption of a "workshop model" to address these issues. However, experienced teachers explained that they have fewer opportunities to review and collaborate on these materials in structured professional development settings. Throughout focus groups and interviews, teachers agreed that the district's scope and sequence documents provide an overview while still allowing for flexibility in implementing the curriculum. As one teacher explained, the

curriculum "[is] the foundation, but we're free to, when we see a better way to teach something, to infuse that as long as we're meeting the standards."

Across focus groups and interviews, teaching staff in GDRSD most frequently cited time and challenges related to COVID-19 as the biggest barriers to implementing curricula as intended. For example, teachers claimed that following every standard is a "lofty goal" in subjects such as science and social studies, given limited instructional hours during the year. District leaders agreed and observed that the Mystery Science curriculum was ultimately selected because it is relatively narrow in scope.

Classroom Instruction

Although GDRSD maintains consistent curricular maps and resources, teachers reported flexibility in terms of instructional strategies, noting that district leaders have emphasized more student-centered and holistic approaches. These approaches include universal design for learning (UDL), social-emotional learning, a workshop model, and project-based learning. Instruction observational data suggested several areas of strength, particularly with classroom organization, as well as a need for more consistency with emotional support and instructional support.

In recent years, district leaders have favored new models that provide consistent supports and access for students, including UDL and workshop-based instruction. District leaders and school staff referred to the district's prior commitment to UDL, but they noted that changes in leadership have led to a decreased emphasis on this approach. For example, planning documents for district led professional development note that district leaders are currently identifying who will lead UDL professional development considering recent changes in leadership. Still, the District Curriculum Accommodation Plan continues to emphasize the use of UDL approaches for all students. Teachers also vary their instruction over the course of the day or each block period; school leaders, teachers, and students all provided examples of varied instructional strategies such as brief lectures, group work, and class discussions. Classroom teachers also varied their instruction in response to student needs and had access to professional development and special education support.

In addition, multiple respondents described the growing importance of social-emotional learning in the district, as well as structural supports to implementation, including scheduling, professional development, and ongoing conversations between school leaders and teachers. School leaders also rely on staff with specialized expertise to implement these approaches and provide tiered supports for students, in line with social-emotional learning principles. Teachers indicated social-emotional learning as an area of strength for the district, and multiple respondents described the district as cognizant of the whole child. A recent example of district support is Responsive Classroom, an approach for integrating social-emotional learning into classroom environments. A school leader explained that there is also coordination between the elementary and middle schools to provide students with consistent social-emotional learning experiences as they matriculate to higher grades. Although there is no specific social-emotional learning curriculum, commonalities include the advisory system, community building activities to start the school day, and a WIN (what I need) block meant to better accommodate students. Changes are planned to some of these procedures, including the WIN block, at some schools. There also is professional development in which special

education teachers work with classroom teachers to teach diverse learners in the least restrictive environment available to each student.

Four observers, who focused primarily on instruction in the classroom, visited GDRSD during the week of May 23, 2022. The observers conducted 58 observations in a sample of classrooms across four schools in all grade levels, focused on literacy, ELA, and mathematics. The CLASS protocol guided all classroom observations in the district. These observations used the 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 GDRSD, 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 district observations were as follows:

- **Emotional Support.** Ratings were at the middle range for all grade bands (5.8 for grades K-5; 4.7 for grades 6-8; 4.9 for grades 9-12).
- **Classroom Organization.** Ratings were in the high range for all grade bands (6.1 for grades K-5; 6.5 for grades 6-8; 6.4 for grades 9-12).
- **Instructional Support.** Ratings were in the middle range for all grade bands (4.3 for grades K-5; 3.3 for grades 6-8; 3.2 for grades 9-12).
- **Student Engagement.** For Grades 4 and up, when student engagement was measured as an independent domain, ratings were in the higher end of the middle range for all grade bands (5.6 for grades 4-5; 5.1 for grades 6-8; 5.2 for grades 9-12).

Overall, for the K-5 grade band, instructional observations suggest generally strong emotional support, high classroom organization and student engagement (Grades 4-5), and mixed evidence of consistently rigorous instructional support. For the 6-8 grade band, instructional observations provide evidence of high classroom organization and generally strong student engagement, and mixed evidence of consistently rigorous instructional and emotional support. For the 9-12 grade band, instructional observations provide mixed evidence of strong emotional support, strong evidence of classroom organization, and mixed evidence of student engagement or of consistently rigorous instructional support.

Student Access to Coursework

Respondents across multiple levels agreed that GDRSD provides diverse course offerings to students, and consistent efforts are underway to create more inclusive classroom spaces, particularly for special education students. Interviews and documents, such as the *HS 21-22 Course Enrollment* sheet, showed that a variety of upper-level courses are available to students, including Advanced Placement and honors courses, as well as several electives at the secondary level. Students noted the variety of courses offered at Groton-Dunstable Regional High School as a strength.

District and school leaders described ongoing efforts to expand access to electives and honors-level classes. A 2019 equity audit showed that special education students are underrepresented in upper-level classes such as Advanced Placement. Therefore, there is greater urgency within the district to address inequities for this population. District leaders explained that as all classrooms include more special education students, teachers have greater responsibilities to teach all students and support them in learning the material. One leader stated, "there's a lot of training . . . going on around that," meaning that as classes have become more inclusive, the district has attempted to build capacity for teaching diverse learners in mainstream classrooms. Disaggregated data regarding course enrollment by other student characteristics such as race or ethnicity were not available for review.

Recommendations

- The district should establish and implement a curriculum review and selection process that results in the selection of high quality, cohesive materials that are vertically and horizontally with the appropriate standards.
- The district should continue its efforts to increase access to and participation in advanced courses for all students, including students with disabilities.

Assessment

GDRSD draws on a variety of data systems to track students, monitor progress, and report out information. At the school and classroom levels, the district has several diagnostic tools, such as DIBELS and IXL real-time diagnostics. At the individual level, additional systems exist for identifying struggling students and examining data to provide the targeted support, often through SSTs. The district collects a considerable amount of data about students, and respondents were largely in agreement that assessment systems within the district are robust. District staff have emphasized the use of data across school-level teams, and school leaders indicated that there have been some data meetings scheduled to allow all staff to examine data together. School staff also described data review sessions led by reading specialists or team leaders to identify instructional groupings. The district uses several mechanisms to examine and make use of data, including professional development for novice teachers, SSTs, and consultants. However, several interviews, primarily with teachers, indicated an opportunity for more follow-up, concrete action plans for the classroom, and formal systems for helping teachers learn to understand and apply data. Lastly, multiple systems and structures provide real-time information and share results with teachers, families, and students, including Google Classroom and SchoolBrains. Parents reported some variability with classroom assessments, depending on how often some teachers update online grade reporting systems; however, they generally expressed satisfaction with the available mechanisms for sharing data.

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	■ Increasing consistency in district expectations for data collection	■ Teacher engagement in decision making about data and assessment systems
Data use	■ Collaborative approach to data review by district and school leaders ■ Use of data to guide individual student problem solving through SST and instructional groupings	■ Roles, responsibilities, and processes for regularly using student data to plan instruction during common planning time (CPT)
Sharing results	■ Systems for sharing student assessment results internally	■ Increased consistency with sharing data and assessment results with students and families

Data and Assessment Systems

GDRSD leaders referenced their ongoing efforts to identify appropriate assessments and data sources to support their districtwide MTSS. They describe recent progress with more consistent expectations about data collection but note ongoing efforts to identify structures and strategies to support ongoing data review and use across school-level teams. Evidence collected across interviews, focus groups, and district documents suggest that data collection is not yet consistent

districtwide, and data use is largely teacher and/or school driven because clear district structures and expectations are not in place.

According to the Assessment Inventory provided by district leaders, schools administer DIBELS (K-3) and curriculum benchmarks (K-8) for ELA and IXL (K-8) and curriculum benchmarks (K-8) for mathematics. Curriculum maps for ELA at the elementary level reference these assessments, as well as the Fountas & Pinnell benchmark assessments and diagnostic reading assessment. Curriculum maps for the middle school indicate the use of iReady and curriculum assessments for ELA. Neither elementary- nor middle-school curriculum maps reference the IXL assessment for mathematics standards.

At the secondary level, a district developed mathematics benchmark for Grades 9-12 was noted. Evidence from interviews indicated that the district has expectations about data collection at the school level and is interested in expanding systems to support the regular review and use of this data across school teams. School staff described recent efforts to administer Reading Plus in the high-school grades in response to declining performance in ELA. However, school staff and leaders described moving away from Reading Plus in response to concerns that it was not appropriate for all their learners, and instead use the assessment for progress monitoring students who are below grade level. Secondary teachers described reviewing student results from teacher developed assessments and MCAS data.

Across grade levels, teachers described ongoing revisions to what assessments were used throughout the district. Teacher opinions appeared to be mixed, with some teachers expressing an appreciation for more recently adopted tools, whereas others expressed frustration with moving away from previously used tools. In both cases, there was little evidence of teacher involvement in decision-making about data and assessment systems. One educator noted that curriculum directors are involved in decision making at the district level but shared "I just think that teachers [. . .] need to be more involved with what kind of data is it that you want to gather."

Data Use

GDRSD staff described examples of using student data at the district level to identify student supports. Similarly, at the school level student data are frequently reviewed by school leaders and/or SSTs to develop individual student supports. Although CPTs are scheduled for each grade level, formal structures or processes do not yet exist for the regular data use for instructional planning and decision making. As a result, the extent to which data are used and/or reviewed during CPT meetings varies by grade and by school.

District leaders described that in response to declining trends in performance, the district created interventionist positions to provide ELA and mathematics interventions within the elementary schools. District leaders referenced seeing a huge impact in their student data as a result of this staffing change, with one district leader noting that there were many students struggling with reading but that, "we dropped that maybe 30 percent by midyear, and that was directly because of that intervention. There's no doubt in my mind." Prior to the pandemic, district administrators had implemented formal protocols for reviewing various sources of data collaboratively with school leaders during SLT meetings. One school leader described that

we've had several days specifically put out from the district that these days are going to be focusing on data. And so it's a matter of actually looking at data but also talking about how do we look at data and what are practices that we can use to do so effectively?

Across interviews and focus groups, teachers described professional development opportunities that provided training in data use, as well as whole-school meetings following benchmark windows for school staff to review results. Responses from teaching staff across the district indicated some level of familiarity with the various data sources in use across the district but did not suggest any formal structures or protocols for reviewing and or using student data to plan instruction throughout common planning time periods. Likewise, district administrators described whole-school data meetings, but noted that actual systems and structures to support the continuous review and use of data are in development. At the elementary level, school staff described a data drive approach to identifying students to work with the newly created reading specialists and/or mathematics interventionists. Descriptions suggested that this data review process typically involves the school leader and the reading specialist and/or mathematics interventionist but does not formally include classroom teachers.

District and school leaders frequently referred to data use throughout the SST process. The district SST manual explains a clear process through which a teacher refers a struggling student, data about the student is collected and analyzed, and the SST meets to develop an action plan. In these meetings, SSTs discuss relevant issues, review data, and work with teachers to develop support plans which are implemented by classroom teachers. The SST then reviews the student's progress and has the option of scheduling a follow-up meeting if it is deemed necessary. Several school leaders expressed concerns that, although the SSTs are consistent with looking at data, meeting with teachers, and making plans, more follow-up work is needed, particularly to help teachers implement plans with fidelity. For example, one school leader noted "there's not that follow-up, as a team, with that person . . . they're here, they're observing, they're watching us, but then we're not really given that opportunity to sit down and get suggestions and feedback." Neither the information provided throughout focus groups nor the documents reviewed indicated any formal connection between the SST process and CPT.

Sharing Results

Systems are in place at GDRSD to support the communication of student assessment results internally amongst educators. Although how educators access and use this information varies by school and/or grade level, there is evidence that teachers and other educators throughout the district know how to access student data results across systems and content areas. However, practices for sharing student assessment data with students and parents vary by teacher, suggesting a lack of clear expectations and/or systems to support the sharing of assessment results beyond educators.

District leaders provided documents outlining district systems and procedures for communicating student assessment data among educators throughout the district. A *Description of Tiered Supports for Students not Meeting Benchmark in Reading Grades K-2* describes as follows:

The reading specialists teams use DIBELS screening data to identify students for further assessment to determine groupings and instructional focus. The reading specialists meet with the classroom teachers to discuss planned interventions and discuss instruction based on the data for the entire grade.

District leaders shared documents that summarize student performance on benchmark assessments, as well as a summary of progress monitoring data collected for students receiving interventions. In the Grade 3 ELA sample provided, student scores according to the Fountas & Pinnell assessment were reflected. DIBELS data was available in the summary of progress monitoring data for students receiving interventions. Similar documents were not provided for any content area at the middle- or high-school levels.

The district provides software systems, such as SchoolBrains and Google Classroom, to share course information, including assessment results, with parents and students. High-school students were very familiar with how to access their grades online and noted that teachers also reach out to parents if a student's grades are low. Parents also expressed familiarity with the various systems in use but noted that the level of detail and the frequency of new information varied by teacher and expressed an interest in more consistent practices about communicating information related to courses, including assessment results. Some elementary teachers reported sharing students' performance in reading and mathematics assessments with parents during parent-teacher conferences but noted that they tend to only share a description of the students' performance compared to the grade level expectations. One school leader explained, "beyond parent teacher conferences, those conversations about student progress and performance really aren't something we have structured."

Recommendations

- District and school leaders should ensure that teachers have input in the decision-making process regarding the district's data and assessment systems.
- District and school leadership should establish and communicate their expectations around the roles, responsibilities, and processes for regularly using student data to plan instruction during common planning time.
- District and school leaders should establish clear processes and expectations for sharing data and assessment results with students and families.

Human Resources and Professional Development

GDRSD has structures in place to support human resources and inclusive professional development efforts. Human Resources is overseen by a district level director who is part of the superintendent's central office leadership team. He collaborates with district and school leaders on the district leadership team to support effective practices in the employment, development, and retention of effective educators who are successful in advancing all students' performance, opportunities, and outcomes. The district plans to strengthen their workforce by expanding student teaching opportunities and participating in DESE's job fair. The district also is interested in identifying additional short- and long-term strategies to diversify its workforce. The district has a mentoring and induction program in place to support new teachers and administrators. The district offers some teacher leader opportunities, but staff note limited examples of the district recognizing staff for excellence in teaching.

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	■ Procedures, policies, and practices are in place regarding new staff, employee development and feedback, safety, and staff conduct	
Recruitment, hiring, and assignment	■ Short-term strategies to strengthen workforce	■ Short- and long-term strategies to diversify workforce
Supervision, evaluation, and educator development	■ Focused collaboration between district and school leaders about supervision, evaluation, and educator development	■ Clear expectations for conducting observations and completing evaluations consistently
Recognition, leadership development, and advancement	■ Leadership opportunities at the middle and high schools	

Infrastructure

A review of the 2019-2020 GDRSD employee handbook outlines the district's procedures, policies, and practices about staff hiring and onboarding, employee development and feedback, safety, and staff conduct. Regular meetings between the SLT and the central office leadership team provide an opportunity for leaders to have planning conversations with the director of human resources about upcoming vacancies, staffing needs, and hiring. In addition, a human resources manual provides a procedural handbook with clear procedures for hiring.

Recruitment, Hiring, and Assignment

GDRSD administrators explain that they primarily use job postings on SchoolSpring for recruitment, in addition to word of mouth and referrals from district staff. In addition, the district is beginning to implement some short-term strategies to strengthen their workforce, including building relationships with education departments from surrounding colleges, and participating in the DESE career fair. In particular, district administrators described success in recruiting recent college graduates who completed their student teaching within GDRSD and as a result, the district seeks to expand these opportunities to help strengthen their educator pipeline. District administrators noted that despite national school hiring trends regarding staff vacancies, GDRSD has generally been able to fill all vacant positions; however, multiple staff indicated that it is more difficult to recruit special education candidates.

District- and school-level staff spoke to an interest in also diversifying the GDRSD workforce. Although no current strategies help support this work, district administrators noted plans to collaborate with the newly-hired coordinator of DEI to identify appropriate short- and long-term strategies to support this goal.

District and school leaders address staffing needs and confirm the hiring process with the director of human resources. School-level vacancies are hired by school specific hiring committees convened and led by the principals; district-level vacancies are hired by district hiring committees that convened by the superintendent. In both cases, there is a variety of stakeholders represented on hiring committees. High-school teachers spoke positively about the level of student involvement in the recent hiring of a new administrator for the high school. Parents also described opportunities to provide feedback on candidates for school administrator positions.

Assignments are generally embedded into job descriptions, with school leaders leading the hiring process for all school-based positions. School leaders describe district supports as very responsive and efficient. In addition, they note that in rare circumstances, the SLT has worked together with the central office leadership team to reassign staff to different buildings to meet unique and pressing staffing needs. When staff vacancies arise, educators do have the opportunity to request to be transferred to the vacant position/assignment provided they have the appropriate licensing and/or credentials. District administrators noted that all staff are appropriately licensed for the subject area they teach, and that monitoring is straightforward because only a few instances occur at the middle- or high-school level when teachers are assigned to multiple content areas.

Supervision, Evaluation, and Educator Development

District and school leaders described a major focus on collaborative learning to support effective supervision, evaluation, and educator development. SLT meetings which brought together both district and school leaders regularly devoted time to this during meetings. The district prioritized this focus because there were many new evaluators throughout the district, as well as to support their larger vision for MTSS across the district. District leaders described a vision for educator development that reflects the MTSS framework. The described collaboration with SLT as an opportunity to calibrate universal supervision and evaluation practices that are provided to all

educators and identify additional targeted and/or intensive supports available based on educator needs.

Teacher feedback was mixed with regard to the evaluation process. Some teachers described regularly having administrators observe their instruction, including both formal and informal observations, yet multiple educators expressed concern with inconsistencies across evaluation summaries and ratings depending on the evaluator.

The summative educator evaluations of teachers were reviewed to gather further information on the evaluation and feedback processes. The documents indicated that teachers received ratings and feedback on their performance based on the Standards and Indicators of Effective Practice. Simple random sampling was used to select a sample of teachers with summative evaluations for the 2020-2021 school year. Twenty-four teachers' evaluation files were selected and of those selected, all (100 percent) were marked as complete and not missing the required components including a rating for each Standard or an overall rating. Nearly all evaluations (92 percent) included multiple sources of evidence such as observations, student work samples or other evidence to support progress toward student learning goals, professional learning goals, Standards and Indicators. All summative evaluations (100 percent) included feedback for each standard, almost all evaluations (92 percent) included feedback identifying strengths, and one evaluation (8 percent) included areas of improvement. The review of evaluation documents indicated that all educators (100 percent) are developing student learning and professional practice SMART goals. All evaluations (100 percent) reviewed contained student learning SMART goals and professional practice SMART goals.

The evaluation files of all administrators that were evaluated in the 2020-2021 school year were also reviewed and of the seven summative evaluations reviewed, all were complete with performance rating and assessment of progress toward goals. The review of evaluation documents also indicated that not all administrators were developing student learning, professional practice, or school improvement SMART goals. Seventy-one percent of the summative evaluations reviewed included Student Learning goals and 86 percent of the evaluations included professional practice goals. None of the evaluations reviewed included School Improvement goals. Less than half of the evaluations (43 percent) included multiple sources of evidence to assess performance on summative evaluation standards. All summative administrator evaluations (100 percent) reviewed included evaluator comments with specific, actionable feedback identifying administrator's strengths and areas for improvement.

Social-emotional learning has been a focus of the district's professional development. District leaders described that the majority of district led professional development this year has focused on either Responsive Classroom or a book study on *The Power of Our Words*. District leaders describe a long-term vision for professional development that supports a larger vision for districtwide MTSS. For example, one district administrator stated "we just trained everybody in this district, elementary (K to four) in Responsive Classroom, everybody. Now we have [. . .] seven new elementary teachers coming in. We—we better figure out a way to train them in responsive classroom level one if they're going to come and really be successful." Teachers noted some frustration with the emphasis on Responsive Classroom, since many teachers had already completed training previously. As one teacher described, "even though the majority of our staff were very well versed in responsive classroom, there weren't

opportunities for different levels of where you were at with responsive classroom to make choices that meant something more to you based on what your knowledge was in that area." Teachers also described changes in professional development because of changing administrators at the district level. For example, staff described "pockets" of exemplary UDL work happening throughout the district as the result of multiple years of a professional development focus on UDL; but they noted that district-level support for the approach is lacking this year because the individual leading the work left the district.

GDRSD offers formal induction and mentoring programs for new staff. A district leader described efforts to ensure that teachers and administrators cofacilitate the induction to support buy in and coherence across district initiatives. In addition, a mentoring program is available to teachers in their first year of employment with GDRSD. District leaders also described less formal mentoring experiences that have been developed when district staff are interested in pursuing administrative licensure.

Recognition, Leadership Development, and Advancement

GDRSD leaders noted that curriculum coordinator positions at the middle- and high-school level provide opportunities for leadership development and advancement for teachers. Teachers also noted opportunities such as participating on school teams such as the faculty council, or volunteering to attend specific professional development opportunities and facilitate the sharing of that content back to the larger school.

Recommendations

- District leadership, including the newly-hired DEI coordinator, should identify both short- and long-term strategies for diversifying its workforce.
- The district should establish and communicate expectations for ensuring that formal and informal observations are conducted regularly, and that evaluation summaries and ratings are awarded consistently, regardless of the evaluator.

Student Support

At the time of review, GDRSD was taking proactive steps to ensure a safe and supportive school climate and culture for all GDRSD students. Formal district initiatives related to social-emotional learning include the use of Responsive Classroom in all elementary (K-5) classrooms, and a districtwide book study of *The Power of Our Words* by Paula Denton. A new district-level coordinator of social-emotional learning was hired to coordinate the district's Responsive Classroom initiative. An SST process is used across all schools to identify students in need of support and develop appropriate intervention plans. Although staff are familiar with the procedures related to student support, they describe the process as long, and note that there can be challenges to promptly revisiting each case as scheduled. The district has created additional district coordinator positions as well as established partnerships to expand student access to social-emotional learning and DEI related initiatives to ultimately ensure that GDRSD schools are welcoming, culturally responsive, and inclusive of all student backgrounds.

Table 9 summarizes key strengths and areas for growth for 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	■ Emphasis on districtwide approaches to social-emotional learning	■ Communication of policies and practices for responding to challenging behaviors
Tiered systems of support	■ Interventionist positions to provide targeted and/or intensive ELA and mathematics interventions ■ Scheduled WIN blocks within elementary-school schedules	■ Clarify the plan for the new advisory period at the middle school ■ As CPT roles, structures and protocols are developed (See Assessment section), ensure strong alignment between CPT and SST structures and protocols
Family, student, and community engagement and partnerships	■ District improvement plan prioritizes community engagement	

Safe and Supportive School Climate and Culture

The GDRSD prioritizes the physical, intellectual, and emotional safety of all students and adults. The district also recently hired a DEI coordinator for the district, and the school committee established a subcommittee to focus on DEI as well. The district provides districtwide professional development related to social-emotional learning initiatives. At the elementary schools, Responsive Classroom has been a district priority, and the middle and high schools have recently implemented a mentorship program to promote a safe and supportive school climate and culture.

Several district- and school-level staff referenced the creation of a new position at the district level related to DEI. The DEI coordinator reports to the assistant superintendent of schools for curriculum, instruction, and assessment and the director of student supports. District leaders described this new role as integral to the forthcoming strategic plan's focus on acceptance, belonging, community, and districtwide MTSS for equitable outcomes for all students across the district (e.g., A + B + C + D = E). They noted opportunities to collaborate with this individual about a variety of systems and processes at both the district and school levels (e.g., diversifying the workforce to ensuring instruction is culturally responsive and inclusive of all student backgrounds). School-level staff expressed a lack of clarity about the job description for the district-level DEI coordinator.

In addition to this new district-level position, the school committee recently convened a subcommittee to focus on DEI throughout the district. School committee members and parents both noted that although this subcommittee is just beginning to start the work that it is charged to do. Some parents noted frustration that despite talk of urgency about the need to address DEI throughout the district, this subcommittee has not been very active. School committee members noted that the school committee member leading the subcommittee was exiting, so a new school committee member would need to be selected to lead the work of the subcommittee.

District leaders described efforts to ensure all elementary-level educators are trained in Responsive Classroom to support safe and supportive classroom environments. In addition, the district led a book study for all educators on *The Power of Our Words* by Paula Denton. At the elementary level, schedules incorporate dedicated time for Morning Meeting, which provides a structured opportunity to promote positive relationships between adults and students within a classroom. Throughout focus groups, elementary-level educators expressed familiarity with the Responsive Classroom program and expectations; however, teachers frequently described concerns about inconsistent responses to more serious behavioral infractions that occur even if responsive classroom is being implemented with fidelity. As one teacher described, "they have a skewed vision that thinks that these [social-emotional learning] programs are going to tackle the higher-level tier two and our tier three challenges." District and school leaders note that behavioral concerns have increased since students returned to in-person learning. Teachers also noted that there was a lack of clarity about the role of the newly hired coordinator of social-emotional learning and indicated that they did not know how to access supports from this new district coordinator.

The GDRSD has recently implemented a mentoring program in partnership with the Anti-Defamation League called a World of Difference. Through this program, high-school students are trained to lead lessons and activities that relate to DEI, and then introduce these lessons and activities to middle-school students.

Classroom organization emerged as a strength for the district based on classroom observation data collected as part of the district review process. Classroom organization was rated in the high range across grade levels (6.1 for grades K-5; 6.5 for grades 6-8; 6.4 for grades 9-12). Still, students and staff spoke to behavioral incidents within the schools that negatively impact the school climate. Multiple teachers expressed concern that a responsive approach to behaviors this year has meant that staff throughout buildings have been pulled from various responsibilities to respond to student behaviors. Parents also raised concerns and questions related to recent changes in practices to

support student behaviors. Although parents shared differing opinions on how behavior should be addressed, their comments suggested that further clarification of current policies and practices is warranted among a broad range of school community stakeholders.

Tiered Systems of Support

The forthcoming GDRSD strategic plan outlines MTSS as a primary area of focus for the district. Multiple respondents, including district leaders, school leaders, and teachers, described a substantial system of supports within the district, which are based on but expand beyond the Massachusetts MTSS blueprint. All students receive universal (e.g., Tier 1) supports, including advisory periods, social-emotional learning, and instructional modifications as described on the District Curriculum Accommodation Plan. Particularly for ELA and mathematics at the elementary level, the district has clear targeted (e.g., Tier 2) and intensive (e.g., Tier 3) supports. Staff also highlighted several approaches that the district has adopted and integrated, including social-emotional learning, SSTs, and interventionists, that support the MTSS.

The district and schools provide formal structures, such as the WIN block included in elementary-school schedules to provide access to more targeted interventions during the school day. The middle school recently moved away from a WIN block and instead has incorporated an advisory period into their schedule, and has plans to implement advisory groups next year, which will allow students to meet weekly with the same adult. Multiple middle-school staff described frequent revisions to the focus of the WIN block over subsequent years and expressed interest in more clearly understanding the plan and vision for the advisory period next year. The district's A + B + C + D = E framework, which is that acceptance, belonging, community, and districtwide MTSS will move the district toward equitable outcomes, informs multiple supports systems. The district is using the framework to help evaluate such supports in an elementary school, with plans to expand that evaluation out the following school year. Lastly, the district's special education programming was reported as a strong point, and special education teachers, as well as dual-certified classroom teachers, provide supports for all students. Through UDL programming and other supports, Tier 1 has systems based on special education accommodations available to all students. Elementary leaders and teachers particularly described several types of reading and mathematics supports designed to help all students learn.

Across the district, SSTs emerge as a critical team steering the MTSS process within schools. Less information is available about how the SST process connects with or builds upon work that teachers do in their CPT and/or department meetings. Educators note a lack of follow through with SST in revisiting cases and revising intervention support plans, leading to staff frustration about what they experience as a "lengthy process." Although SST protocols seem well established and data driven, there does not appear to be a systematic connection between grade-level teams or CPT and SST.

Family, Student, and Community Engagement and Partnerships

The GDRSD District Improvement Plan identifies community relations as the first overarching goal, with specific activities identified for each school related to this priority. The district supports two-way communication strategies between parents and schools and ensures that students and families have a voice in planning and decision making including hiring decisions. In addition, the district has

established partnerships with community partners to ensure GDRSD schools are safe and supportive.

District leaders communicate with families via a News Bites newsletter, as well as through mobile app notifications. Copies of four News Bites newsletters that were distributed during the 2021-22 school year are available on the district website in English. School leaders also provide regular updates to parents and families via updates and/or newsletters posted on the schools' individual websites. Parents interviewed described opportunities they had to participate in hiring processes for school administrators, even if they were not the designated member representing parents on the hiring committees. Similarly, student participation in hiring and text selection processes was highlighted by educators and parents throughout the district.

The district recently created a district-level coordinator of social-emotional learning position that reports to the director of student services. News Bites memos describe the role the coordinator of social-emotional learning has in supporting Responsive Classroom initiatives throughout the district. School-level staff noted an awareness of this new position but expressed confusion about specific roles and responsibilities and frustration that they did not know how to access supports from this coordinator.

As previously described, the district recently partnered with the Anti-Defamation League to bring the World of Difference mentoring program to the middle and high schools. This partnership seeks to expand student access to social-emotional learning and DEI related initiatives to ultimately ensure that GDRSD schools are welcoming, culturally responsive, and inclusive of all student backgrounds.

Recommendations

- District and school leaders should clearly communicate the district's policies and practices for responding to challenging student behavior to all educators, students, and families.
- Clarify the plan for the new advisory period at the middle school.
- As CPT roles, structures and protocols are developed, the district should establish a process to ensure a strong alignment between CPT and SST structures and protocols.

Financial and Asset Management

GDRSD's Office of Business and Finance is responsible for budget development and maintenance, payroll, benefits, accounts payable, and accounts receivable. This office is led by the director of business and finance and is supported by the assistant to the director of business and finance, an accountant, the accounts payable coordinator, and a payroll specialist.

Evidence from budget documents, end-of-year reports, and information provided by interview and focus group participants indicates that the community provides sufficient general appropriation funds each year to meet net school spending and that the district uses available funding effectively to support student outcomes in alignment with the district's improvement plan.

Table 10 summarizes key strengths and areas for growth for 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	■ Clear, accurate, and user-friendly budget documents	■ Explicitly link budget priorities to performance, access, opportunity, and outcome data
Adequate budget	■ Adequate funds	
Financial tracking, forecasting, controls, and audits	■ Comprehensive accounting and reporting systems in place	
Capital planning and facility maintenance	■ Five-year capital plan and appropriate preventive maintenance	

Budget Documentation and Reporting

The GDRSD fiscal year 2023 budget narratives (presented to the school committee and the public) and the budget book are clear, accurate, and user-friendly. Both documents provide historical spending data for comparisons and contain sufficient detail for stakeholders to understand the fiscal year 2023 resource allocations. Both documents also include information about allocation of resources and funding sources, including revolving funds, as well as federal and state grants.

Although the budget documentation does not explicitly connect funds to school improvement planning or demonstrate how student performance data (e.g., performance, access, opportunity outcomes and gaps) have been used to set budget priorities, the budget book does list the district's student performance goals and the goals for community relations, resources, infrastructure, and educational environment. This document also outlines the educational priorities used for creating the budget. Information in the budget book and provided by district leaders indicates that the district has a regional agreement with the towns of Groton and Dunstable, which specifies that "debt and capital assessments are calculated based on a 5-year rolling average of enrollment in each member town."

District leaders noted that the agreement was revised approximately five years ago "so that the costs are smoothed out and more predictable" for each town.

Budget documentation lists each town's contributions to the operating and capital budgets. In fiscal year 2023, the town of Groton is projected to contribute $24,527,840 to the operating budget and $577,026 to the capital budget. The town of Dunstable is projected to contribute $7,262,942 to the operating budget and $188,974 to the capital budget.

Adequate Budget

GDRSD leaders indicated that although the community has been able to provide sufficient general appropriation funds each year to meet the required net school spending, for the previous three years, the district has needed to use excess and deficiency funds to adequately fund its operating budget and capital expenses. They noted that the district's chapter 70 funding "tends to stay flat," but their budget continues to grow at a rate between 2.5 percent to 3 percent, so the towns would need to "grow [their] assessment at 6 percent to make up for [the district's] lack of growth in other revenue sources." Therefore, they reported it has been challenging to "make both ends meet" so the necessary funding is available each year.

Consistent with the district leaders' comments, the fiscal year 2023 proposed budget presentation indicates that the fiscal year 2023 assessment for Groton is $289,000 higher than the placeholder for the previous year, and $61,000 higher for Dunstable. In addition, the fiscal year 2023 minimum required contribution for Groton increased 5.23 percent and for Dunstable 3.9 percent over previous year. To help reduce these differentials, the superintendent's proposed fiscal year 2023 budget presents five optional scenarios for decreasing these percentages (to 2.67 percent, 2.5 percent, 2.31 percent, 2.26 percent, or 2.16 percent). These scenarios include a combination of the use of alternative revenue sources (e.g., excess and deficiency funds, circuit breaker funds) and expense reductions (e.g., instructional full-time equivalent cutbacks).

District leaders confirmed that the district uses available funding effectively to support student needs. The district's director of finance and operations stated that most of the district's funding comes from Chapter 70 funds and the town's assessments. She also noted that both towns (rather than the school district) received funds through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), so the district has an agreement with both towns to receive a portion of the funds (i.e., $900,000 from Groton for the next two years and $270,000 from Dunstable for the next three years). This information is evidenced in the superintendent's fiscal year 2023 proposed budget, which also specifies how ARPA funds will be used (e.g., educator salaries, building maintenance and technology related expenses). The fiscal year 2023 budget book also provides thorough details about all sources of funding and their allocations.

The director of finance and operations confirmed that the district annually reviews staffing and scheduling across the district but noted that those needs are also considered across the year. She explained that toward the end of the school year, district and school leaders more formally assess staffing needs based on various factors (e.g., enrollment, staff turnover, teacher effectiveness, student needs). Information provided in the fiscal year 2023 budget supports this information and provides further details about staffing decisions and allocations. For example, the document notes that "the district hired additional staff in fiscal year 2022 to support students such as reading and

math specialists, social worker, student services team leader and integrated preschool staff." The document also indicates that these positions are funded with district COVID-19 relief funds and ARPA funds, but in fiscal year 2024, the district "will need to evaluate these positions and strategically balance the budget within the 5-year plan."

Financial Tracking, Forecasting, Controls, and Audits

Interview data and financial documentation suggest GDRSD has comprehensive accounting and reporting systems in place. The director of finance and operations stated that the business office personnel are trained and supervised by her and the assistant director of finance and operations, both certified in procurement laws. In addition, the fiscal year 2023 budget book states that "the district follows the generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) for local government authorities put forth by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) in article 34." It also states that "the district undergoes an extensive audit process annually, [which] examines financial operations, payroll, purchasing and financial reporting."

As evidenced by financial documents and information provided by district leaders, the district's business office provides regular, accurate reports to the superintendent and the school committee on spending from all funding sources. The director of finance and operations noted that although she only officially presents quarterly reports, she reviews all accounts monthly to proactively address any issues as they emerge. In addition, the district's business office forecasts spending through the end of the year and continuously monitors expenses and potential deficits.

The director of finance and operations confirmed that the business office meets end-of-year reporting requirements and noted that the assistant director of finance and operations is leading the completion of the end-of-year reports, final grant reports, and the excess and deficiency certification. In addition, she stated that the district does not have a grant manager, but that she oversees the use of grants with the support of the assistant director of finance and operations, who continuously monitors and communicates with the pertinent school administrators so they are informed about remaining funds. The director of finance and operations also communicates with administrators as needed to ensure that all funds are spent and do not revert to the state.

Capital Planning and Facility Maintenance

GDRSD has a five-year capital plan, which describes future capital development and improvement needs. The fiscal year 2023 budget book notes that the district reduced the original capital requests for fiscal years 2021 and 2022 to direct more funding toward operating expenses. It also states that "capital requests address health and safety needs, technology support and maintenance/facility needs to fulfill the school district commitment to properly maintain school buildings and grounds." In addition, it lists capital plan allocations for fiscal years 2019-2022, as well as those in the fiscal year 2023 proposed budget. The fiscal year 2023 capital plan update presentation outlines the status of the fiscal year 2022 capital projects and lists the fiscal year 2023 recommended capital projects, which total $833,000 and include allocations for security system updates, paving and sidewalk repairs, fence repairs, purchase of cafeteria tables, stair tread replacements, HVAC control systems, roof recoating, stadium field improvements, storage sheds, projector replacement, and technology

equipment leases. The fiscal year 2023 capital requests also breaks down the assessment for both towns: $629,197 for Groton and $203,803 for Dunstable.

Recommendations

- ■ The district should explicitly link budget priorities and related requests to student performance, access, opportunity, and outcome data.

Appendix A. Summary of Site Visit Activities

The AIR team completed the following activities as part of the district review activities in GDRSD. The team conducted 58 classroom observations on May 23 and 24, 2022, and held interviews and focus groups between May 23 and 24, 2022. The site visit team conducted interviews and focus groups with the following representatives from the school and the district:

- Superintendent
- Other district leaders
- School committee members
- Teachers' association representatives
- Principals
- Teachers
- Support specialists
- Parents
- Students

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

- Student and school performance data, including achievement and growth, enrollment, graduation, dropout, retention, suspension, and attendance rates
- Data on the district's staffing and finances
- Published educational reports on the district by DESE, the NEASC, 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. Groton-Dunstable Regional School District: 2021-2022 Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity

Group	District *N*	Percentage of total	State *N*	Percentage of total
All	2,315	100.0%	911,529	100.0%
African American	33	1.4%	84,970	9.3%
Asian	165	7.1%	65,813	7.2%
Hispanic	89	3.8%	210,747	23.1%
Native American	6	0.3%	2,060	0.2%
White	1,935	83.6%	507,992	55.7%
Native Hawaiian	3	0.1%	788	0.1%
Multirace, non-Hispanic	84	3.6%	39,159	4.3%

Note. Data as of October 1, 2021.

Table B2. Groton-Dunstable Regional School District: 2021-2022 Student Enrollment by High-Need Populations

Group	District			State		
	N	Percentage of high need	Percentage of district	*N*	Percentage of high need	Percentage of state
All students with high need	595	100.0%	25.4%	512,242	100.0%	55.6%
Students with disabilities	370	62.2%	15.8%	174,505	34.1%	18.9%
Low-income households	266	44.7%	11.5%	399,140	77.9%	43.8%
ELs and former ELs	28	4.7%	1.2%	100,231	19.6%	11.0%

Note. Data as of October 1, 2021. District and state numbers and percentages for students with disabilities and high need are calculated including students in out-of-district placements. Total district enrollment including students in out-of-district placement is 2,338; total state enrollment including students in out-of-district placement is 920,971.

Table B3. Groton-Dunstable Regional School District: Chronic Absence Rates[a] by Student Group, 2018-2021

Group	2018	2019	2020	2021	4-year change	State (2021)
All	4.6	4.2	5.6	5.2	0.6	17.7
African American/Black	8.3	0.0	3.7	4.0	-4.3	24.1
Asian	4.0	3.2	9.6	2.5	-1.5	7.2
Hispanic/Latino	8.7	8.3	4.6	11.1	2.4	29.0
Multirace, non-Hispanic/ Latino	10.4	7.8	2.9	9.3	-1.1	18.9
White	4.3	4.0	5.5	4.9	0.6	13.2
High need	8.6	7.2	8.3	11.2	2.6	26.3
Economically disadvantaged	13.2	8.6	12.0	17.3	4.1	30.2
ELs	10.7	7.4	7.7	16.0	5.3	29.0
Students with disabilities	8.5	8.6	9.0	10.4	1.9	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. Groton-Dunstable Regional School District: Expenditures, Chapter 70 State Aid, and Net School Spending Fiscal Years, 2019-2021

	2019		Fiscal year 2020		Fiscal year2021	
	Estimated	Actual	Estimated	Actual	Estimated	Actual
Expenditures						
From local appropriations for schools						
By school committee	$42,702,245	$41,540,643	$43,092,963	$42,528,958	$44,269,879	$43,403,652
By municipality	--	--	--	--	--	--
Total from local appropriations	--	--	--	--	--	--
From revolving funds and grants	--	$4,361,347	--	$4,097,530	--	$4,888,771
Total expenditures	--	$45,901,990	--	$46,626,488	--	$48,292,423
Chapter 70 aid to education program						
Chapter 70 state aid[a]	--	$10,849,343	--	$10,920,053	--	$10,920,053
Required local contribution	--	$18,825,814	--	$19,528,829	--	$19,807,347
Required net school spending[b]	--	$29,675,157	--	$30,448,882	--	$30,727,400
Actual net school spending	--	$35,753,408	--	$36,594,678	--	$38,443,512
Over/under required ($)	--	$6,078,251	--	$6,145,796	--	$7,716,112
Over/under required (%)	--	20.5%	--	20.2%	--	25.1%

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. Groton-Dunstable Regional School District: Expenditures Per In-District Pupil, Fiscal Years 2019-2021

Expenditure category	2019	2020	2021
Administration	$429.58	$456.07	$496.53
Instructional leadership (district and school)	$1,135.76	$1,276.05	$1,400.50
Teachers	$6,137.50	$6,515.17	$7,157.45
Other teaching services	$1,520.39	$1,501.32	$1,768.17
Professional development	$77.96	$97.65	$102.70
Instructional materials, equipment, and technology	$220.27	$231.69	$295.74
Guidance, counseling, and testing services	$557.88	$545.99	$588.48
Pupil services	$1,480.00	$1,406.83	$1,389.39
Operations and maintenance	$1,195.80	$1,108.24	$1,676.41
Insurance, retirement, and other fixed costs	$3,083.92	$3,072.95	$3,490.42
Total expenditures per in-district pupil	**$15,839.05**	**$16,211.95**	**$18,365.79**

Note. Any discrepancy between expenditures and total is because of rounding. Data are from
https://www.doe.mass.edu/finance/statistics/per-pupil-exp.xlsx

Appendix C. Districtwide Instructional Observation Report

Groton-Dunstable Regional School District

Classroom Visits: Summary of Findings

Districtwide Instructional Observation Report

May 2022

Contents

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.

Four observers visited Groton-Dunstable Regional School District during the week of May 23, 2022. The observers conducted 58 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
■ Positive Climate ■ Negative Climate ■ Teacher Sensitivity ■ Regard for Student Perspectives	■ Behavior Management ■ Productivity ■ Instructional Learning Formats	■ Concept Development ■ Quality of Feedback ■ Language 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
■ Positive Climate ■ Teacher Sensitivity ■ Regard for Student Perspectives	■ Behavior Management ■ Productivity ■ Negative Climate	■ Instructional Learning Formats ■ Content Understanding ■ Analysis and Inquiry ■ Quality of Feedback ■ Instructional 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*: 5.2

Grade Band	Low Range		Middle Range			High Range		n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	58	5.2
Grades K-5	0	1	0	5	5	5	6	22	5.4
Grades 6-8	0	2	1	2	4	8	0	17	4.9
Grades 9-12	0	1	2	0	6	7	3	19	5.3

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 3, the district average is computed as: ([2 x 4] + [3 x 3] + [4 x 7] + [5 x 15] + [6 x 20] + [7 x 9]) ÷ 58 observations = 5.2

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*: 5.6

Grade Band	Low Range		Middle Range			High Range		n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	58	5.6
Grades K-5	0	0	0	1	3	8	10	22	6.2
Grades 6-8	0	0	1	4	2	10	0	17	5.2
Grades 9-12	0	1	3	0	5	10	0	19	5.1

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 4, the district average is computed as: ([2 x 1] + [3 x 4] + [4 x 5] + [5 x 10] + [6 x 28] + [7 x 10]) ÷ 58 observations = 5.6

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*: 4.4

Grade Band	Low Range		Middle Range			High Range		n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	58	4.4
Grades K-5	0	0	2	7	10	0	3	22	4.8
Grades 6-8	1	2	3	2	8	1	0	17	4.0
Grades 9-12	0	3	2	5	4	5	0	19	4.3

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 5, the district average is computed as: ([1 x 1] + [2 x 5] + [3 x 7] + [4 x 14] + [5 x 22] + [6 x 6] + [7 x 3]) ÷ 58 observations = 4.4

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*: 6.7

Grade Band	Low Range		Middle Range			High Range		n	Average
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**58**	**6.7**
Grades K-5	0	0	0	0	1	1	20	22	6.9
Grades 6-8	0	0	0	0	1	4	12	17	6.6
Grades 9-12	0	0	0	0	0	6	13	19	6.7

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 6, the district average is computed as: ([5 x 2] + [6 x 11] + [7 x 45]) ÷ 58 observations = 6.7

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.

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[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*: 6.3

Grade Band	Low Range		Middle Range			High Range		n	Average
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**58**	**6.3**
Grades K-5	0	0	1	2	3	4	12	22	6.1
Grades 6-8	0	0	0	0	1	8	8	17	6.4
Grades 9-12	0	0	0	0	1	9	9	19	6.4

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 7, the district average is computed as: ([3 x 1] + [4 x 2] + [5 x 5] + [6 x 21] + [7 x 29]) ÷ 58 observations = 6.3

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*: 6.3

Grade Band	Low Range		Middle Range			High Range		n	Average
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**58**	**6.3**
Grades K-5	0	0	0	1	4	5	12	22	6.3
Grades 6-8	0	0	0	0	1	6	10	17	6.5
Grades 9-12	0	0	0	1	4	6	8	19	6.1

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 8, the district average is computed as: ([4 x 2] + [5 x 9] + [6 x 17] + [7 x 30]) ÷ 58 observations = 6.3

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*: 4.8

Grade Band	Low Range		Middle Range			High Range		n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	58	4.8
Grades K-5	0	0	0	0	11	1	10	22	6.0
Grades 6-8	0	2	4	3	7	1	0	17	4.1
Grades 9-12	0	1	4	6	8	0	0	19	4.1

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 9, the district average is computed as: ([2 x 3] + [3 x 8] + [4 x 9] + [5 x 26] + [6 x 2] + [7 x 10]) ÷ 58 observations = 4.8

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*: 4.3

Grade Band	Low Range		Middle Range			High Range		n	Average
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**15**	**4.3**
Grades K-3**	0	0	5	1	8	1	0	15	4.3

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 10, the district average is computed as: ([3 x 5] + [4 x 1] + [5 x 8] + [6 x 1]) ÷ 15 observations = 4.3

**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*: 3.9

Grade Band	Low Range		Middle Range			High Range		n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	43	3.9
Grades 4-5**	0	0	0	2	3	0	2	7	5.3
Grades 6-8	1	2	5	8	1	0	0	17	3.4
Grades 9-12	1	1	5	6	6	0	0	19	3.8

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 11, the district average is computed as: ([1 x 2] + [2 x 3] + [3 x 10] + [4 x 16] + [5 x 10] + [7 x 2]) ÷ 43 observations = 3.9

**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*: 2.9

Grade Band	Low Range		Middle Range			High Range		n	Average
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**43**	**2.9**
Grades 4-5**	0	0	2	3	2	0	0	7	4.0
Grades 6-8	3	4	5	4	1	0	0	17	2.8
Grades 9-12	4	5	6	4	0	0	0	19	2.5

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 12, the district average is computed as: ([1 x 7] + [2 x 9] + [3 x 13] + [4 x 11] + [5 x 3]) ÷ 43 observations = 2.9

**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*: 3.6

Grade Band	Low Range		Middle Range			High Range		n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	58	3.6
Grades K-5	0	2	7	3	6	1	3	22	4.3
Grades 6-8	2	1	4	7	3	0	0	17	3.5
Grades 9-12	5	3	5	2	4	0	0	19	2.8

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 13, the district average is computed as: ([1 x 7] + [2 x 6] + [3 x 16] + [4 x 12] + [5 x 13] + [6 x 1] + [7 x 3]) ÷ 58 observations = 3.6

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*: 4.3

Grade Band	Low Range		Middle Range			High Range		n	Average
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**15**	**4.3**
Grades K-3**	0	0	5	5	3	0	2	15	4.3

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 14, the district average is computed as: ([3 x 5] + [4 x 5] + [5 x 3] + [7 x 2]) ÷ 15 observations = 4.3

**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*: 3.0

Grade Band	Low Range		Middle Range			High Range		n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	43	3.0
Grades 4-5**	0	0	3	2	1	1	0	7	4.0
Grades 6-8	2	5	6	3	1	0	0	17	2.8
Grades 9-12	4	5	5	2	3	0	0	19	2.7

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 15, the district average is computed as: ([1 x 6] + [2 x 10] + [3 x 14] + [4 x 7] + [5 x 5] + [6 x 1]) ÷ 43 observations = 3.0

**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*: 5.2

Grade Band	Low Range		Middle Range			High Range		n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	43	5.2
Grades 4-5**	0	0	0	1	3	1	2	7	5.6
Grades 6-8	0	0	0	5	5	7	0	17	5.1
Grades 9-12	0	0	1	2	8	8	0	19	5.2

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 16, the district average is computed as: ([3 x 1] + [4 x 8] + [5 x 16] + [6 x 16] + [7 x 2]) ÷ 43 observations = 5.2

**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**	**1**	**2**	**13**	**19**	**14**	**39**	**88**	**5.8**
Positive Climate	0	1	0	5	5	5	6	22	5.4
Negative Climate**	0	0	0	0	1	1	20	22	6.9
Teacher Sensitivity	0	0	0	1	3	8	10	22	6.2
Regard for Student Perspectives	0	0	2	7	10	0	3	22	4.8
Classroom Organization Domain	**0**	**0**	**1**	**3**	**18**	**10**	**34**	**66**	**6.1**
Behavior Management	0	0	1	2	3	4	12	22	6.1
Productivity	0	0	0	1	4	5	12	22	6.3
Instructional Learning Formats***	0	0	0	0	11	1	10	22	6.0
Instructional Support Domain	**0**	**2**	**22**	**16**	**23**	**3**	**7**	**73**	**4.3**
Concept Development (K-3 only)	0	0	5	1	8	1	0	15	4.3
Content Understanding (UE only)	0	0	0	2	3	0	2	7	5.3
Analysis and Inquiry (UE only)	0	0	2	3	2	0	0	7	4.0
Quality of Feedback	0	2	7	3	6	1	3	22	4.3
Language Modeling (K-3 only)	0	0	5	5	3	0	2	15	4.3
Instructional Dialogue (UE only)	0	0	3	2	1	1	0	7	4.0
Student Engagement (UE only)	**0**	**0**	**0**	**1**	**3**	**1**	**2**	**7**	**5.6**

*The district average is an average of the scores. For example, for Positive Climate, the district average is computed as: ([2 x 1] + [4 x 5] + [5 x 5] + [6 x 5] + [7 x 6]) ÷ 22 observations = 5.4

**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 x 1] + [6 x 1] + [7 x 20]) ÷ 22 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**	**4**	**5**	**8**	**14**	**19**	**0**	**51**	**4.7**
Positive Climate	0	2	1	2	4	8	0	17	4.9
Teacher Sensitivity	0	0	1	4	2	10	0	17	5.2
Regard for Student Perspectives	1	2	3	2	8	1	0	17	4.0
Classroom Organization Domain	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**3**	**18**	**30**	**51**	**6.5**
Behavior Management	0	0	0	0	1	8	8	17	6.4
Productivity	0	0	0	0	1	6	10	17	6.5
Negative Climate**	0	0	0	0	1	4	12	17	6.6
Instructional Support Domain	**8**	**14**	**24**	**25**	**13**	**1**	**0**	**85**	**3.3**
Instructional Learning Formats	0	2	4	3	7	1	0	17	4.1
Content Understanding	1	2	5	8	1	0	0	17	3.4
Analysis and Inquiry	3	4	5	4	1	0	0	17	2.8
Quality of Feedback	2	1	4	7	3	0	0	17	3.5
Instructional Dialogue	2	5	6	3	1	0	0	17	2.8
Student Engagement	**0**	**0**	**0**	**5**	**5**	**7**	**0**	**17**	**5.1**

*The district average is an average of the scores. For example, for Positive Climate, the district average is computed as: ([2 x 2] + [3 x 1] + [4 x 2] + [5 x 4] + [6 x 8]) ÷ 17 observations = 4.9

**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 x 1] + [6 x 4] + [7 x 12]) ÷ 17 observations = 6.6

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	**0**	**5**	**7**	**5**	**15**	**22**	**3**	**57**	**4.9**
Positive Climate	0	1	2	0	6	7	3	19	5.3
Teacher Sensitivity	0	1	3	0	5	10	0	19	5.1
Regard for Student Perspectives	0	3	2	5	4	5	0	19	4.3
Classroom Organization Domain	**0**	**0**	**0**	**1**	**5**	**21**	**30**	**57**	**6.4**
Behavior Management	0	0	0	0	1	9	9	19	6.4
Productivity	0	0	0	1	4	6	8	19	6.1
Negative Climate**	0	0	0	0	0	6	13	19	6.7
Instructional Support Domain	**14**	**15**	**25**	**20**	**21**	**0**	**0**	**95**	**3.2**
Instructional Learning Formats	0	1	4	6	8	0	0	19	4.1
Content Understanding	1	1	5	6	6	0	0	19	3.8
Analysis and Inquiry	4	5	6	4	0	0	0	19	2.5
Quality of Feedback	5	3	5	2	4	0	0	19	2.8
Instructional Dialogue	4	5	5	2	3	0	0	19	2.7
Student Engagement	**0**	**0**	**1**	**2**	**8**	**8**	**0**	**19**	**5.2**

*The district average is an average of the scores. For example, for Positive Climate, the district average is computed as: ([2 x 1] + [3 x 2] + [5 x 6] + [6 x 7] + [7 x 3]) ÷ 19 observations = 5.3

**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 x 6] + [7 x 13]) ÷ 19 observations = 6.7

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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: ■ 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
The Educator Effectiveness Guidebook for Inclusive Practice	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.
Making Inclusive Education Work 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
Spending Money Wisely: Getting the Most From School District Budgets (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 below may have been affected by the pandemic. Please keep this in mind when reviewing the data and take particular care when comparing data over multiple school years.

Table E1. Groton-Dunstable Regional School District: Next-Generation MCAS ELA Scaled Scores in Grades 3-8, 2018-2021

Group	N (2021)	2018	2019	2021	Change	State (2021)	Above/below
All	1,027	506.1	508.9	509.2	3.1	496.5	12.6
African American/ Black	15	499.5	495.9	504.9	5.4	486.4	18.5
Asian	70	510.8	513.1	523.3	12.5	508.5	14.8
Hispanic/Latino	34	503.5	498.3	502.7	-0.8	484.3	18.4
Multirace	37	505.3	513.5	518.6	13.3	499.7	18.9
White	868	505.9	508.9	507.9	2.0	501.3	6.6
High need	283	492.4	493.2	493.0	0.6	485.9	7.1
Economically disadvantaged	88	495.7	498.7	500.2	4.5	485.2	15.0
ELs and former ELs	34	494.3	496.2	502.3	8.0	482.8	19.5
Students with disabilities	198	487.5	487.9	486.8	-0.7	478.1	8.7

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. Groton-Dunstable Regional School District: Next-Generation MCAS Mathematics Scaled Scores in Grades 3-8, 2018-2021

Group	N (2021)	2018	2019	2021	Change	State (2021)	Above/below
All	1,001	508.0	510.5	503.7	-4.3	489.7	14.0
African American/ Black	15	494.6	499.3	497.4	2.8	477.3	20.1
Asian	69	517.7	521.1	516.7	-1.0	508.6	8.1
Hispanic/Latino	32	501.1	494.8	491.4	-9.7	476.5	14.9
Multirace	37	509.3	515.7	508.8	-0.5	492.1	16.7
White	846	507.5	510.2	503.0	-4.5	494.3	8.7
High need	273	495.7	494.1	488.9	-6.8	479.0	9.9
Economically disadvantaged	86	497.5	494.6	489.6	-7.9	477.4	12.2
ELs and former ELs	32	501.4	502.5	499.1	-2.3	477.8	21.3
Students with disabilities	191	491.7	490.4	485.6	-6.1	472.5	13.1

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. Groton-Dunstable Regional School District: 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	1,027	62%	68%	66%	4	46%	20
African American/ Black	15	50%	23%	53%	3	28%	25
Asian	70	68%	73%	86%	18	66%	20
Hispanic/Latino	34	65%	50%	59%	-6	26%	33
Multirace	37	65%	77%	78%	13	51%	27
White	868	61%	68%	65%	4	54%	11
High need	283	34%	37%	37%	3	28%	9
Economically disadvantaged	88	40%	51%	50%	10	27%	23
ELs and former ELs	34	41%	41%	65%	24	24%	41
Students with disabilities	198	25%	27%	24%	-1	16%	8

Table E4. Groton-Dunstable Regional School District: 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	1,001	66%	68%	57%	-9	33%	24
African American/ Black	15	33%	38%	33%	0	14%	19
Asian	69	79%	81%	78%	-1	64%	14
Hispanic/Latino	32	60%	45%	34%	-26	14%	20
Multirace	37	60%	73%	68%	8	37%	31
White	846	66%	68%	56%	-10	40%	16
High need	273	39%	34%	25%	-14	16%	9
Economically disadvantaged	86	47%	38%	26%	-21	14%	12
ELs and former ELs	32	50%	50%	47%	-3	17%	30
Students with disabilities	191	31%	27%	19%	-12	10%	9

Table E5. Groton-Dunstable Regional School District: 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	164	515.5	507.3	8.2	164	519.6	500.6	19.0
African American/ Black	1	—	494.6	—	1	—	486.7	—
Asian	10	515.6	518.2	-2.6	10	527.5	520.9	6.6
Hispanic/Latino	6	—	491.9	—	6	—	485.3	—
Multirace	3	—	510.6	—	3	—	503.9	—
White	142	515.5	512.5	3.0	143	519.8	504.9	14.9
High need	34	496.1	493.3	2.8	34	497.6	486.5	11.1
Economically disadvantaged	16	499.2	493.7	5.5	16	499.0	486.6	12.4
ELs and former ELs	2	—	477.9	—	2	—	477.6	—
Students with disabilities	23	491.4	487.2	4.2	23	491.8	479.6	12.2

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 E6. Groton-Dunstable Regional School District: 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	164	80%	64%	16	164	81%	52%	29
African American/ Black	1	—	41%	—	1	—	27%	—
Asian	10	80%	80%	0	10	90%	80%	10
Hispanic/Latino	6	—	39%	—	6	—	26%	—
Multirace, non-Hispanic/Latino	3	—	67%	—	3	—	55%	—
White	142	81%	73%	8	143	82%	60%	22
High need	34	32%	39%	-7	34	35%	26%	9
Economically disadvantaged	16	38%	41%	-3	16	38%	27%	11
ELs and former ELs	2	—	19%	—	2	—	15%	—
Students with disabilities	23	17%	25%	-8	23	22%	14%	8

Table E7. Groton-Dunstable Regional School District: 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	322	72%	67%	42%	25
African American/Black	7	–	29%	19%	10
Asian	16	65%	75%	62%	13
Hispanic/Latino	10	–	30%	20%	10
Multirace, non-Hispanic/Latino	10	–	70%	47%	23
White	278	73%	69%	50%	19
High need	88	31%	35%	23%	12
Economically disadvantaged	23	26%	48%	21%	27
ELs and former ELs	8	33%	25%	18%	7
Students with disabilities	68	27%	26%	15%	11

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. Groton-Dunstable Regional School District: 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	167	75%	75%	73%	-2	51%	22
4	172	69%	74%	73%	4	49%	24
5	152	57%	69%	63%	6	47%	16
6	190	62%	59%	64%	2	47%	17
7	169	47%	70%	66%	19	43%	23
8	177	61%	61%	60%	-1	41%	19
3-8	1,027	62%	68%	66%	4	46%	20
10	164	–	85%	80%	–	64%	16

Table E9. Groton-Dunstable Regional School District: 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	163	68%	62%	55%	-13	33%	22
4	174	72%	76%	72%	0	33%	39
5	149	54%	60%	46%	-8	33%	13
6	183	60%	63%	52%	-8	33%	19
7	163	69%	73%	57%	-12	35%	22
8	169	74%	71%	60%	-14	32%	28
3-8	1,001	66%	68%	57%	-9	33%	24
10	164	—	95%	81%	—	52%	29

Table E10. Groton-Dunstable Regional School District: 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	152	71%	—	65%	-6	42%
8	170	73%	—	69%	-4	41%
5 and 8	322	72%	—	67%	-5	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, tenth graders took the Legacy MCAS science test.

Table E11. Groton-Dunstable Regional School District: 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	—	51.4	—	—	—	62.3	—	—
5	141	51.3	39.4	34.9	138	42.3	29.8	31.9
6	183	50.1	43.4	37.3	175	52.2	25.6	26.3
7	159	65.5	43.2	36.1	153	69.5	46.6	35.8
8	168	46.3	54.3	34.8	159	60.1	39.5	27.4
3-8	651	53.2	45.3	35.8	625	57.7	35.2	30.4
10	148	57.6	63.9	52.5	150	66.3	56.1	36.5

Table E12. Groton-Dunstable Regional School District: Next-Generation MCAS ELA Percentage Meeting or Exceeding Expectations by Grade and School, 2021

School	3	4	5	6	7	8	3-8	10
Boutwell	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Swallow Union	85%	79%	—	—	—	—	82%	—
Roche	67%	72%	—	—	—	—	70%	—
Groton-Dunstable Regional Middle	—	—	63%	64%	66%	62%	64%	—
Groton-Dunstable Regional High	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	81%
District	73%	73%	63%	64%	66%	60%	66%	80%
State	51%	49%	47%	47%	43%	41%	46%	64%

Table E13. Groton-Dunstable Regional School District: Next-Generation MCAS Mathematics Percentage Meeting or Exceeding Expectations by Grade and School, 2021

School	3	4	5	6	7	8	3-8	10
Boutwell	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Swallow Union	73%	81%	—	—	—	—	77%	—
Roche	47%	68%	—	—	—	—	58%	—
Groton-Dunstable Regional Middle	—	—	47%	52%	58%	62%	55%	—
Groton-Dunstable Regional High	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	81%
District	55%	72%	46%	52%	57%	60%	57%	81%
State	33%	33%	33%	33%	35%	32%	33%	52%

Table E14. Groton-Dunstable Regional School District: Next-Generation MCAS Science Percentage Meeting or Exceeding Expectations by Grade and School, 2021

School	5	8	5 and 8	10
Boutwell	—	—	—	—
Swallow Union	—	—	—	—
Roche	—	—	—	—
Groton-Dunstable Regional Middle	66%	71%	69%	—
Groton-Dunstable Regional High	—	—	—	—
District	76%	62%	70%	—
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. Groton-Dunstable Regional School District: Next-Generation MCAS ELA Percentage Meeting and Exceeding Expectations in Grades 3-8 by School, 2021

School	All	High need	Econ. dis.	SWD	ELs and former ELs	African American	Asian	Hispanic	Multi-race	White
Boutwell	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Swallow Union	82%	55%	50%	45%	—	—	90%	—	—	79%
Roche	70%	36%	50%	23%	—	—	93%	—	69%	67%
Groton-Dunstable Regional Middle	64%	36%	54%	21%	57%	36%	82%	57%	76%	63%
Groton-Dunstable Regional High	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
District	66%	37%	50%	24%	65%	53%	86%	59%	78%	65%
State	46%	28%	27%	16%	24%	28%	66%	26%	51%	54%

Note. High need = students with high need; Econ. dis. = students who are economically disadvantaged; SWD = students with disabilities; multi-race = students who are multiple races but not Hispanic or Latino.

Table E16. Groton-Dunstable Regional School District: Next-Generation MCAS Mathematics Percentage Meeting and Exceeding Expectations in Grades 3-8 by School, 2021

School	All	High need	Econ. dis.	SWD	ELs and former ELs	African American	Asian	Hispanic	Multi-race	White
Boutwell	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Swallow-Union	77%	52%	30%	50%	—	—	90%	—	—	74%
Roche	58%	21%	24%	17%	—	—	86%	—	67%	56%
Groton-Dunstable Regional Middle	55%	22%	27%	15%	43%	18%	73%	30%	61%	54%
Groton-Dunstable Regional High	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
District	57%	25%	26%	19%	47%	33%	78%	34%	68%	56%
State	33%	16%	14%	10%	17%	14%	64%	14%	37%	40%

Note. High need = students with high need; Econ. dis. = students who are economically disadvantaged; SWD = students with disabilities; multi-race = students who are multiple races but not Hispanic or Latino.

Table E17. Groton-Dunstable Regional School District: Next-Generation MCAS ELA Percentage Meeting or Exceeding Expectations in Grade 10, 2021

School	All	High need	Econ. dis.	SWD	ELs and former ELs	African American	Asian	Hispanic	Multi-race	White
Groton-Dunstable Regional High	81%	33%	40%	18%	—	—	—	—	—	81%
District	80%	32%	38%	17%	—	—	80%	—	—	81%
State	64%	39%	41%	25%	19%	41%	80%	39%	67%	73%

Note. High need = students with high need; Econ. dis. = students who are economically disadvantaged; SWD = students with disabilities; multi-race = students who are multiple races but not Hispanic or Latino.

Table E18. Groton-Dunstable Regional School District: Next-Generation MCAS Mathematics Percentage Meeting or Exceeding Expectations in Grade 10, 2021

School	All	High need	Econ. dis.	SWD	ELs and former ELs	African American	Asian	Hispanic	Multi-race	White
Groton-Dunstable Regional High	81%	36%	40%	23%	—	—	—	—	—	82%
District	81%	35%	38%	22%	—	—	90%	—	—	82%
State	52%	26%	27%	14%	15%	27%	80%	26%	55%	60%

Note. High need = students with high need; Econ. dis. = students who are economically disadvantaged; SWD = students with disabilities; multi-race = students who are multiple races but not Hispanic or Latino.

Table E19. Groton-Dunstable Regional School District: Next-Generation MCAS Science Percentage Meeting and Exceeding Expectations in Grades 5-8 by School, 2021

School	All	High need	Econ. dis.	SWD	ELs and former ELs	African American	Asian	Hispanic	Multi-race	White
Boutwell	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Swallow Union	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Roche	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Groton-Dunstable Regional Middle	69%	39%	52%	30%	—	—	75%	—	70%	71%
Groton-Dunstable Regional High	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
District	67%	35%	48%	26%	25%	—	75%	30%	70%	69%
State	42%	23%	21%	15%	18%	19%	62%	20%	47%	50%

Note. High need = students with high need; Econ. dis. = students who are economically disadvantaged; SWD = students with disabilities; multi-race = students who are multiple races but not Hispanic or Latino.

Table E20. Groton-Dunstable Regional School District: Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rates by Student Group, 2018-2021

Group	N (2021)	2018	2019	2020	2021	4-year change	State (2021)
All	194	98.1	97.6	97.8	97.9	-0.2	89.8
African American/Black	2	–	–	–	–	–	84.4
Asian	15	92.3	92.9	100	100	7.7	96.1
Hispanic/Latino	3	–	–	–	–	–	80.0
Multirace, non-Hispanic/Latino	1	–	–	–	–	–	88.8
White	173	98.5	97.8	97.6	97.7	-0.8	93.2
High need	40	91.8	92.2	89.2	90.0	-1.8	82.4
Economically disadvantaged	21	93.3	95.5	90.9	90.5	-2.8	81.7
ELs and former ELs	1	–	–	–	–	–	71.8
Students with disabilities	27	92.5	87.9	85.7	85.2	-7.3	76.6

Table E21. Groton-Dunstable Regional School District: Five-Year Cohort Graduation Rates by Student Group, 2017-2020

Group	N (2020)	2017	2018	2019	2020	4-year change	State (2020)
All	185	98.1	98.1	98.1	98.4	0.3	91.0
African American/Black	1	–	–	–	–	–	87.2
Asian	11	100	92.3	100	100	0.0	95.8
Hispanic/ Latino	2	–	–	–	–	–	81.0
Multirace, non-Hispanic/Latino	–	–	–	–	–	–	90.8
White	170	98.0	98.5	97.8	98.2	0.2	94.4
High need	37	90.9	91.8	94.1	91.9	1.0	84.5
Economically disadvantaged	11	76.9	93.3	95.5	90.9	14.0	84.1
ELs and former ELs	–	–	–	–	–	–	74.7
Students with disabilities	28	92.0	92.5	90.9	89.3	-2.7	79.3

Table E22. Groton-Dunstable Regional School District: In-School Suspension Rates by Student Group, 2018-2021

Group	2018	2019	2020	2021	4-year change	State (2021)
All	0.1	0.8	0.7	—	—	0.3
African American/Black	—	—	—	—	—	0.3
Asian	—	—	—	—	—	0.0
Hispanic/Latino	—	—	—	—	—	0.2
Multirace, non-Hispanic/Latino	—	—	—	—	—	0.4
White	0.1	0.7	0.7	—	—	0.3
High need	0.3	1.8	1.5	—	—	0.4
Economically disadvantaged	—	—	—	—	—	0.3
ELs and former ELs	—	—	—	—	—	0.1
Students with disabilities	—	2.1	1.2	—	—	0.6

Table E23. Groton-Dunstable Regional School District: Out-of-School Suspension Rates by Student Group, 2018-2021

Group	2018	2019	2020	2021	4-year change	State (2021)
All	0.8	0.6	0.4	—	—	0.5
African American/Black	—	—	—	—	—	0.6
Asian	—	—	—	—	—	0.1
Hispanic/Latino	—	—	—	—	—	0.5
Multirace, non-Hispanic/Latino	—	—	—	—	—	0.7
White	0.8	0.4	0.4	—	—	0.5
High need	1.0	0.7	0.7	—	—	0.7
Economically disadvantaged	—	—	—	—	—	0.7
ELs and former ELs	—	—	—	—	—	0.3
Students with disabilities	—	0.7	1.0	—	—	1.1

Table E24. Groton-Dunstable Regional School District: Dropout Rates by Student Group, 2018-2021

Group	N (2021)	2018	2019	2020	2021	4-year change	State (2021)
All	716	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1	1.5
African American/Black	4	0.0	0.0	—	—	—	1.8
Asian	54	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3
Hispanic/Latino	17	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.2
Multirace, non-Hispanic/Latino	12	—	0.0	0.0	0.0	—	1.4
White	625	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.2	1.0
High need	129	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.7
Economically disadvantaged	46	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.9
ELs and former ELs	2	—	—	—	—	—	5.8
Students with disabilities	90	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.4

Table E25. Groton-Dunstable Regional School District: Advanced Coursework Completion Rates by Student Group, 2019-2021

Group	N (2021)	2019	2020	2021	3-year change	State (2021)
All	379	81.4	85.4	79.9	-1.5	65.3
African American/Black	3	—	—	—	—	54.9
Asian	36	83.3	92.3	86.1	2.8	84.3
Hispanic/Latino	9	—	—	88.9	—	50.2
Multirace, non-Hispanic/Latino	5	—	—	—	—	65.5
White	326	81.1	84.8	79.4	-1.7	69.6
High need	62	50.0	54.7	53.2	3.2	47.7
Economically disadvantaged	28	73.7	60.0	53.6	-20.1	49.0
ELs and former ELs	—	—	—	—	—	28.1
Students with disabilities	43	42.9	45.0	41.9	-1.0	33.1